TITLE:

LISTENING TO GOD'S PEOPLE:

A RESPONSE TO PERCEIVED DISCONNECT IN PASTORAL CARE

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Abstract

This dissertation is written in response to a perceived breakdown in pastoral care.

Chapter one allows us to see something of the hurt and disappointment which many are currently experiencing. Some of the letters quoted are by experienced clerics with decades of experience.

In Chapter 2 we consider pastoral contexts. We look at the Pastoral Great Commission of John 21:15-17. We consider the appropriateness of the primary metaphor which the dissertation uses. We finish by looking at the Trinity as a model of community.

In Chapter 3 we look at pastoral commonalities in the models and writings of four figures from the sixth to the twenty-first century. We find agreement that pastoral care must be individualised but that the context for care can vary considerably. All agree it critical that the "under-shepherd" is an example.

In Chapter 4 we consider Jesus as kenotic archetype. We look at the nature of divine love. We suggest that Jesus is to be understood in the Gospels as being genuinely dependent on God in his humanity and that he taught and modelled kenotic service.

In Chapter 5 we use criteria derived from our study which relate to the three dimensions of the Christian life. We test these criteria by examining three different contexts of pastoral care.

Our conclusion is that excellence in pastoral care will promote love for God reflected in a prayerful dependent spirituality, love for one another reflecting Trinitarian communality, and love for others in kenotic service which will include enabling sheep to also become "under-shepherds."

In "under-shepherds" promoting and valuing these three things as essential, they will, however tentatively, be responding to Jesus' commands: to "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17) and to "Follow me" (John 21:19, 22).[1]

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[1] Unless otherwise stated all quotations will be from the New International Version.