**‘Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’**

**The Church of Ireland’s Response to Alcohol Addiction and its Role in Recovery**

**by Danielle McCullagh**

Abstract

Alcoholism is a complex disease which affects a person’s body, mind and soul. Medical and psychological treatment is not available, but often the Church fails to offer appropriate spiritual and pastoral care. Alcoholism is also know and the family disease since not only the behaviour of the alcoholic change, but so does the behaviour of his/her family. The family, however, usually does not seek help for themselves, nor do medical and psychological professionals offer it forthrightly. Both the alcoholic and his/her family will have times had questions about where God is in their situation: what he thinks of them; if he can heal the alcoholic; does he love them in the state they are in.

The Church is in a good position to answer those questions and to offer pastoral care to the alcoholic and his/her family. Yet, most often, the Church fails to adequately reach out to alcoholics and their families. I would suggest that this is due to a misunderstanding of alcoholism, lack of research available within the Church, and consequently, a lack of training for clergy.

This research project asserts that recovery from alcoholism is a very real possibility, that the Church has hope to offer in that journey, and clergy have skills which can be used to support it.

Most of the literature on this topic concentrates on the medical and psychological resources which are available. The Church of Ireland currently has no research or guidance available on this topic. This research asserts the need for the more pastoral resources and training, in the area of addiction, to be developed within the Church.

This research project aims to understand, firstly, the biblical and theological place of alcohol. It consequently considers the use of alcohol in the bible, in society, in church life, and in the life of an alcoholic and their family.

Secondly, it aims to provide an overview of the main pastoral issues involved in addiction. This is done with the aim of equipping clergy and those in pastoral ministry training to recognise signs and behaviours of alcoholics, to understand the grip that addiction has on a person and then how to best respond to someone in that position, seeking recovery. Finally, it considers the impact of alcoholism has on a spouse or child of an alcoholic, and explores how clergy can respond to the family of an alcoholic.