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‘Seven whole days’: The Obligation of the Clergy of the Church of England to ‘say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer’

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All Christians are called to pray. The daily offering of Morning and Evening Prayer is a particular obligation of the clergy of the Church of England, as part of the ‘manner of life of clerks’ laid down in Canon C 26. However, despite the significant time devoted to these prayers by the clergy on a daily basis, there has been little detailed examination of this canonical obligation. This article explores the historical background to the obligation and its effect today.

Keywords: Church of England, liturgy, ministry, canonical obligation

Canon C 26(1) provides that ‘Every clerk in Holy Orders is under obligation, not being let by sickness or some other urgent cause, to say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer, either privately or openly.’ I begin by briefly examining some of the historical antecedents of this obligation. I next consider its purpose, whom the obligation binds, the meaning of the phrase ‘privately or openly’, the forms of service that may be used to fulfil the obligation, the meaning of the word ‘say’, the language that may be used, the possible exceptions to the obligation and the means by which the obligation may be enforced. I then discuss the additional obligations relating to Morning and Evening Prayer which fall upon a minister with a cure of souls. I conclude with some thoughts about the place of the obligation in the Church today.

THE HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF THE OBLIGATION

One of the earliest statements of the obligation on the clergy to recite the daily prayers is found in the Code of Justinian in the sixth century:

We further decree that all clergymen in every church shall personally chant the nocturnal, morning, and vesper prayers, and (thereby) shall not appear to be clergy merely by their use of ecclesiastical property, bearing the title

but neglecting the duty of a clergyman to the service of the Lord God . . . and those who are not found to have blamelessly acquitted themselves of their service shall be removed from the clergy.¹

It should be noted that at this date the obligation to offer prayers personally, rather than by hired proxies, is already seen as essential to the office of the clergy. Those who do not do so merely ‘appear’ to be clergy and can be removed from the clerical state.

In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council stated: ‘We . . . strictly command in virtue of obedience that [clerics] celebrate diligently and devoutly the diurnal and nocturnal offices so far as God gives them strength.’² By this time, the term ‘office’ (*officium*) was used to refer to the daily prayers of the clergy, implying in the very word that these prayers are part of the duty of the clergy. The pastoral concession ‘so far as God gives them strength’ indicates that the duty is not absolute but tempered by such limits as physical health.

In England, the 1529 Canons assume that the divine office is said by the clergy, and further order the clergy to spend two to three hours a day in Scripture study, or reading the doctors of the Church. Failure to do so was to be punished by the ordinaries during their visitations.³ The 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, in common with earlier editions, states that ‘all Priests and Deacons are to say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer either privately or openly, not being let by sickness, or some other urgent cause’.⁴

THE PURPOSE OF THE OBLIGATION

The *Book of Common Prayer* approvingly explains that the ‘ancient Fathers’ ordered the daily prayers of the Church so that the clergy ‘should (by often reading, and meditation in God’s word) be stirred up to godliness themselves and be more able to exhort others by wholesome Doctrine, and to confute them that were adversaries to the Truth’.⁵ John Cosin, the seventeenth-century Bishop of Durham, called the obligation to recite the daily prayers of the Church ‘a precept the most useful and necessary of any other that belong to the ministers of God’.⁶

Much more recently, a 2015 Act of Convocation declared the daily office to be an ‘essential’ foundation of ministry:

1 Codex of Justinian, Liber Primus 3.41.24. Translation by F Blume in B Frier, *The Codex of Justinian*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 2016), vol 1, p 111.

2 Fourth Lateran Council, Canon 17.

3 G Bray (ed), *The Anglican Canons, 1529–1947* (Woodbridge, 1998), p 48, Canon 17: ‘peractis divinis officiis’.

4 ‘Concerning the service of the Church’, *Book of Common Prayer* (1662).

5 *Ibid.*

6 J Cosin, *The Works of John Cosin*, 5 vols (Oxford, 1843–1855), vol 5, p 9.

The given daily prayer of the Church (the Daily Office) is one of the essential foundations of confident ministry centred on Christ, using the resources of the Church such as the *Book of Common Prayer*, *Common Worship*, or other authorized forms of the office.⁷

The date and formal status of this document should give reassurance, if any were needed, that the obligation is not an otiose or archaic provision.

WHOM DOES THE OBLIGATION BIND?

According to the 1549 Prayer Book, only clergy who served a congregation were bound to say Matins and Evensong.⁸ In the later Prayer Books, the instruction to say Morning and Evening Prayer daily is extended to ‘all Priests and Deacons’.⁹ The current Canon C 26 makes it clear that the obligation extends to bishops as well, binding ‘every clerk in Holy Orders’. Whereas certain canons are concerned only with ministers who hold ecclesiastical office (for example, C 28, ‘Of the occupations of ministers’), Canon C 26 includes no such restriction. It binds all clergy, even after resignation, retirement or suspension.

PRIVATELY OR OPENLY

The obligation is fulfilled by saying Morning and Evening Prayer either ‘privately or openly’. The daily office said privately may be said alone, but is not necessarily so: praying at home with family or friends would be a case of fulfilling the obligation privately rather than openly.¹⁰

The Declaration of Assent made by clergy states ‘in *public* prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon’ (emphasis added). However, Morning and Evening Prayer are forms of service according to Canon B 1(1),¹¹ and Canon B 1(2) states that ‘Every minister shall use only the forms of service authorized by this Canon, except so far as he may exercise the discretion permitted by Canon B 5.’ The obligation to say Morning and Evening Prayer daily therefore requires the use of authorised or allowed forms of service, even if said privately.

7 ‘Guidelines for the professional conduct of the clergy’, declared an Act of Convocation by the Convocations of Canterbury and York on 10 July 2015, available at <<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/Clergy%20Guidelines%202015.pdf>>, accessed 15 September 2021.

8 ‘Preface’, *Book of Common Prayer* (1549).

9 ‘Concerning the service of the Church’, *Book of Common Prayer* (1662).

10 Guidance for those praying daily prayer alone is found in *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* (London, 2005), p xv.

11 See also the definition of ‘form of service’ in the Measure which enables this Canon: *Worship and Doctrine Measure* 1974, s 5(2).

AUTHORISED FORMS OF SERVICE

Four authorised forms of service fulfil the obligation at the time of writing:

- i. Morning and Evening Prayer in the *Book of Common Prayer*. These forms of service are what the canonical obligation is primarily referring to;
- ii. A variation on the Prayer Book services according to the ‘Schedule of permitted variations to the *Book of Common Prayer* Orders for Morning and Evening Prayer’ authorised by the General Synod for use from December 2000;¹²
- iii. The shortened forms of Morning and Evening Prayer set out in the Schedule to the Act of Uniformity Amendment Act 1872;¹³
- iv. A Service of the Word. This service was authorised for use from December 2000 as part of the *Common Worship* family of services. It ‘consists almost entirely of notes and directions and allows for considerable local variation and choice within a common structure’.¹⁴ In the notes to the service it is stated that ‘This service is authorized as an alternative to Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer.’¹⁵

A form of the daily office frequently used by clergy is found in the book (or smartphone app) *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*. This book was published at the request of the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England. The forms of Morning and Evening Prayer contained in this book are not themselves authorised, but are said to conform to the notes and directions for ‘A Service of the Word’— and therefore to be examples of services permitted under that authorisation.

VARIATIONS TO THE AUTHORISED FORMS OF SERVICES

At one time, it was held that ‘uniformity . . . is one of the leading and distinguishing principles of the Church of England—nothing is left to the discretion and fancy of the individual’.¹⁶ This is, however, no longer the approach of the Church of England, and the authorised services do not always have to be followed with unvarying strictness. Canon B 5 provides that ‘The minister who is to conduct the service may in his discretion make and use variations which

12 See *Common Worship* (London, 2000), p 815.

13 See Canon B 1 (1)(b).

14 *Common Worship*, p 21.

15 Ibid, p 26. It should be noted, therefore, that ‘A Service of the Word’ is authorised as an alternative to Morning and Evening Prayer in all circumstances and not only for the purposes of Canon C 26. Wherever the law of the Church of England refers to Morning or Evening Prayer, ‘A Service of the Word’ may be used as an alternative (subject to the provisions of Canon B 3, ‘Of the form of service to be used where alternative forms are authorized’).

16 *Newbery v Goodwin* (1811) 1 Phillim 282 at para 282f.

are not of substantial importance in any form of service authorized by Canon B 1 according to particular circumstances.¹⁷ The Canon continues:

All variations in forms of service and all forms of service used under this Canon shall be reverent and seemly and shall be neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter.¹⁸

It may seem odd to consider what variations to the authorised forms of service of Morning and Evening Prayer are allowed. ‘Common Worship: A Service of the Word’, described above, already provides remarkable latitude as an authorised form of service. Nevertheless, there may be occasions when a minister wishes to vary the form of service even beyond what is authorised in that service. We can take a single example. Note 5 to ‘A Service of the Word’ states: ‘The readings are taken from an authorised lectionary during the period from the Third Sunday of Advent to the Baptism of Christ, and from Palm Sunday to Trinity Sunday.’ This note appears to cause a problem for those clergy who wish, for example, to use traditional monastic patterns of the daily office, where Morning and Evening Prayer (also known as Lauds and Vespers) are rich in psalmody and canticle but include only one short biblical reading. In this pattern, the fuller diet of Scripture is provided for at a separate Office of Readings. This is the daily practice at many Anglican Benedictine and other religious communities. While in other respects this daily office may fulfil the criteria for ‘A Service of the Word’, an authorised lectionary is not used at Morning and Evening Prayer.

Nevertheless, we have reason to believe that such a variation from Note 5 is, in fact, permitted. *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* itself states that ‘The *Common Worship* weekday lectionary may be used at Prayer During the Day, whilst the short reading set for Prayer During the Day may be used within Morning or Evening Prayer.’¹⁹ This option provides exactly for the ‘monastic’ pattern of the daily office described above, but following it would mean that the service no longer conforms to the use of any authorised lectionary. If this is permitted, it can only be because such a variation is allowed under Canon B 5. *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* accordingly states that ‘Use of other material in *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* falls within the discretion canonically allowed to the minister under Canon B5’.²⁰ Because *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* is

17 Canon B 5(1).

18 Canon B 5(3).

19 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*, p xi.

20 *Ibid*, p 877.

published at the request of the House of Bishops, this interpretation of Canon B 5 presumably carries with it the authority of that house.²¹

If this holds true for *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*, it can be used for other interpretations of 'A Service of the Word'.²² Ordained members of Benedictine and other religious communities can, therefore, fulfil their obligation by use of services in the 'monastic' pattern. This same pattern (where longer bible passages are read in an Office of Readings separate from Morning and Evening Prayer) is also found in the Roman breviary. If prayed by clergy of the Church of England for ecumenical reasons, it could on the above argument be compatible with 'A Service of the Word', and enable such clergy to fulfil their obligation.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD 'SAY'

'Saying' Morning or Evening Prayer does not necessarily mean officiating at the service. Being present in the congregation and making the responses has always been understood as fulfilling the obligation, and indeed to pray with others is generally preferable.²³

The notes to *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* say 'In the rubrics, "said" and "sung" are interchangeable.'²⁴ Canon B 11 also refers to the services of Morning and Evening Prayer in church as being 'said or sung'. The word 'say' in Canon C 26 should be understood as including singing.

On several occasions, the order for Morning and Evening Prayer in the *Book of Common Prayer* specifies that 'a loud voice' be used. This may be thought unsuitable when saying the office on public transport, and appropriate adaptation may be required. *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* recommends, but does not require, praying aloud when alone, leaving open the option of purely mental prayer when necessary.²⁵ When Morning and Evening Prayer are required to be said in a

21 In *Re St John the Evangelist*, *Chopwell* [1995] Fam 254, Bursell Ch states that 'the final arbiter of the legality of any such variation or service used pursuant to Canon B5, paragraphs 1 and 2, is the ecclesiastical court. Nevertheless, because of the commendation of [certain] service books by the House of Bishops, it is extremely unlikely that any ceremony enjoined within them will be contrary to, or indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter.' The same principle would doubtless apply to variations found in *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*.

22 We have considered the example of authorised lectionaries, and the way in which *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* indicates the extent to which Canon B 5 allows variation from the use of those lectionaries. A parallel example is the requirement of 'A Service of the Word' that authorised collects must be used. It appears that this rule too can be varied, as in *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* some of the services said to be 'within the discretion canonically allowed to the minister under Canon B 5' do not use an authorised Collect (for example, Night Prayer on pp 344–355).

23 'Guidelines for the professional conduct of the clergy', s 7.2.

24 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*, p xvii.

25 *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*, p xv: 'Even when praying alone, individuals may find that their act of praise and prayer is transformed by reading aloud.' We can compare the Roman Catholic *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* (London, 1974), s 103, which contemplates occasions when the psalm 'is said silently in private'.

church or cathedral, however, they must be said or sung ‘distinctly, reverently, and in an audible voice’.²⁶

In response to the restrictions on public worship during part of 2020, many parishes in the Church of England made greater use of online services, including, for example, Morning Prayer said over video-conferencing platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet. This would seem to be another adaptation necessary to circumstance, just as forms of services have to be adapted to the circumstance of praying alone.²⁷

THE LANGUAGE TO BE USED

The *Book of Common Prayer* orders that ‘when men say Morning and Evening Prayer privately, they may say the same in any language that they themselves do understand’.²⁸ Canon B 42 also considers the use of languages other than English. The authorised Latin translation of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* was edited by Jean Durel and published in 1670.²⁹ Latin services have frequently taken place in the Church of England since the Reformation; they have in practice used one of a number of translations of authorised services.³⁰

Canon B42(3) sets out a procedure whereby translations of authorised services into other language can be approved. However, aside from Latin, no authorised translations of Morning and Evening Prayer have been published at the present time. Therefore, in order to avail themselves of the permission granted by the *Book of Common Prayer* to use languages other than English (in private), clergy will need to use the discretion permitted by Canon B 5 in selecting the most appropriate translation available.

26 See Canons B 10 and B 11.

27 As early as 1997, the Legal Advisory Commission were considering the adaptation of services to use modern technology: see the ‘Legal opinion on baptism: the presence of godparents at baptism’, <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/legal-opinions-and-other-guidance/legal-opinions#calibre_link-51>, accessed 3 June 2021.

28 ‘Concerning the service of the Church’, *Book of Common Prayer* (1662).

29 C Hefling and C Shattuck (eds), *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer: a worldwide survey* (Oxford, 2006), p 57. This translation was required by the Act of Uniformity 1662, in which s 14 provided ‘that it shall and may be lawfull to use the Morning and Evening Prayer and all other Prayers and Service prescribed in and by the said Booke in the Chappells or other publique places of the respective Colledges and Halls in both the Universities in the Colledges of Westminster Winchester and Eaton and in the Convocations of the Clergies of either Province in Latine Any thing in this Act contained to the contrary notwithstanding’.

30 Canon B 42 now permits Latin to be used in ‘Provincial Convocations; Chapels and other public places in university colleges and halls University churches; The colleges of Westminster, Winchester and Eton; Such other places of religious and sound learning as custom allows or the bishop or other the Ordinary may permit’. The translation most commonly used since the publication of its first edition in 1865 is W Bright and P Medd, *Libri precum publicarum ecclesiae anglicanae versio latina*.

‘LET BY SICKNESS OR SOME OTHER URGENT CAUSE’

The 1662 Prayer Book and Canon C 26 both exempt clergy from the obligation when they are let (that is to say, hindered) by ‘sickness or some other urgent cause’. The word ‘urgent’ carries the sense of an immediate need. We can compare this exception to similar provisions in the canon law of other churches. In the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, for example, Canon C 24(1) orders that every cleric should say daily Morning and Evening Prayer ‘in the absence of reasonable hindrance’. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Congregation for Divine Worship has stated

A serious reason, be it of health, or of pastoral service in ministry, or of an act of charity, or of fatigue, not a simple inconvenience, may excuse the partial recitation and even the entire Divine Office . . . If a priest must celebrate Mass several times on the same day or hear confessions for several hours or preach several times on the same day, and this causes him fatigue, he may consider, with tranquillity of conscience, that he has a legitimate excuse for omitting a proportionate part of the Office.³¹

ENFORCEMENT

Disciplinary proceedings under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 may be instituted against a member of the clergy for ‘failing to do any other act required by the laws ecclesiastical’, which could include a failure to fulfil the obligations of Canon C 26.³² However, the Measure ‘deals only with allegations of misconduct which are serious in nature’, and allegations respecting the obligation to say Morning and Evening Prayer may not always pass this test, especially if they solely concern a minister’s private devotions.³³ Furthermore, if the proceedings relate to matters involving doctrine, ritual or ceremonial, they are to be

31 Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, ‘Formal response to doubt Prot No. 2330/00/L’, 15 November 2000; the translation provided by the US Bishops’ Conference is available at <<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/obligation-of-the-liturgy-of-the-hours-4604>>, accessed 3 June 2021.

32 Clergy Discipline Measure 2003, s 8(1)(b).

33 Clergy Discipline Measure 2003: Code of Practice, April 2021, p 14. This latest revision includes a suggested procedure for the resolution of minor complaints, formulated by a working party of the Ecclesiastical Law Society and endorsed by the Clergy Discipline Commission. Nevertheless, private devotions might in theory be the subject of clergy discipline. In *Rector and Churchwardens of Chapel St Mary, Suffolk v Packard* [1927] P 289, certain books used by the rector for private devotions were alleged to be contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England. In his judgment, the Dean of Arches stated, ‘I do not think it would be right to interfere with the Rector’s private devotions.’ However, that reluctance may relate solely to the faculty jurisdiction, as he went on to say, ‘If action is to be taken with reference to these books or their use, as is conceivable, that seems to me to be a disciplinary matter with which the Bishop must deal.’ Furthermore, the ‘Guidelines for the professional conduct of the clergy’, s 10.1, state that ‘there is no separation between the public and home life of the clergy’.

determined by the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963. In practice, it seems unlikely that either Measure would be used to enforce the daily obligation to pray Morning and Evening Prayer.³⁴ Enforcement therefore principally takes place *in foro conscientiae*, that is, the conscientious desire of the clergy to carry out the duties of their office. It is hoped that this article may contribute to the informing of consciences, so that clergy may be better able to fulfil their obligation.

There are certain ways in which the obligation may feature in the oversight and education of the clergy. The practice of the daily office is part of the formation of those preparing for ordained ministry in the Church of England: 'Ordained ministers are sustained by disciplined personal and corporate prayer shaped by the responsibilities of public ministry and corporate worship in the tradition of the Church of England.'³⁵ The purpose of the daily office, and the obligation laid upon clergy, can be included in programmes of continuing ministerial education, as exemplified by the presence of Canon C 26 and other Canons in 'Ecclesiastical law: curriculum for clergy in the Church of England', published by the Ecclesiastical Law Society in 2020.³⁶ Ordained ministers' pattern of daily prayer is also something that can be discussed in spiritual direction and in ministerial development review.³⁷

MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER IN CHURCHES AND CATHEDRALS

As we have seen, the obligation in Canon C 26 binds all clergy of the Church of England. An additional duty is imposed upon a priest having a cure of souls in Canon C 24(1):

Every priest having a cure of souls shall provide that, in the absence of reasonable hindrance, Morning and Evening Prayer daily and on appointed days the Litany shall be said in the church, or one of the churches, of which he is the minister.

We should note that the obligation here is not that the priest should officiate or be present at these services but that the priest should provide for these services to be said. The 'reasonable hindrance' of this Canon seems a lower bar than the 'urgent cause' of Canon C 26. The *Book of Common Prayer* suggests that the

34 The use in public prayer of forms of service which are not authorised or allowed by canon would also constitute a breach of the Declaration of Assent. For a discussion of the effect of this, see R Bursell, 'The Clerical Declaration of Assent', (2016) 18 Ecc LJ 165–187.

35 House of Bishops, 'Formation criteria for ordained ministry in the Church of England' (2014), s C: 'Spirituality and worship', available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/formation_criteria_for_ordained_ministry.pdf>, accessed 15 September 2021.

36 Available at <<https://ecclawsoc.org.uk/education>>, accessed 3 June 2021.

37 See Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009, reg 18.

priest's absence from home may count as a 'reasonable hindrance' to Morning or Evening Prayer being said in church.³⁸

Canon B 11 lays down slightly different requirements from Canon C 26 about when Morning and Evening Prayer must be said in churches. On Sundays and certain other days, Morning and Evening Prayer must be said in church, but on other days, following certain consultations, these services may take place 'elsewhere as may best serve to sustain the corporate spiritual life of the benefice (or benefices) and the pattern of life enjoined upon ministers by Canon C 26'.³⁹ Furthermore, instead of the 'reasonable hindrance' of Canon C 24, Canon B 11 says that 'The reading of Morning and Evening Prayer as required by this Canon may only be dispensed with in accordance with the provisions of Canon B 14A.'⁴⁰

Canons C 26 and B 11 are therefore at odds with one another.⁴¹ Whereas the clergy and parochial church council might decide, for example, that under B 11(2) Morning Prayer on a certain weekday should be said in one of the parish's schools or care homes instead of in church, this would only be permitted under Canon C 26 if there were a 'reasonable hindrance' to Morning Prayer being said in church. These two Canons ought to be brought into alignment so that a conscientious priest does not have to seek to fulfil both sets of conditions simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I will suggest some areas where the law of the obligation may need to be developed, and where the continuing importance of the obligation should be upheld. Situations often arise where a member of the clergy attends a daily morning or evening service of another Christian Church, perhaps while travelling, visiting friends or as a formal ecumenical guest—vespers at Westminster Cathedral, for example. Strictly speaking, the member of the clergy may not thereby have fulfilled the obligation to say Morning or Evening Prayer as those services are defined by the Canons of the Church of England. However, the ecumenical canons as recently revised offer an encouragement to see the services of ecumenical partners as in some sense 'equivalent' to those of the Church of England, and members of the clergy might reasonably consider that praying the daily prayers of and with other Christians should be sufficient

38 'Concerning the service of the Church', *Book of Common Prayer* (1662): 'And the Curate that ministereth in every Parish-Church or Chapel, being at home, and not being otherwise reasonably hindered, shall say the same in the Parish-Church or Chapel where he ministereth, and shall cause a bell to be tolled thereunto a convenient time before he begin, that the people may come to hear God's Word, and to pray with him.'

39 Canon B 11(2).

40 Canon B 11(3).

41 This discrepancy is also noted in M Hill, *Ecclesiastical Law* (fourth edition, Oxford, 2018), p 134.

on such occasions. St Thomas Aquinas, discussing a certain question of which office to say, holds that ‘debet se conformare illis cum quibus conversatur’ (‘one should conform oneself to those with whom one associates’).⁴² An authoritative statement to this effect might both assist the ecumenical endeavour and ease the conscience of the clergy.

In the Roman Catholic Church, permanent deacons are required to recite only a certain portion of the office, taking less time than that required of their priestly colleagues.⁴³ This is because permanent deacons often spend time in secular employment and the time required for the full daily recitation of the divine office may be difficult to find. In parallel, the question might be asked whether it is reasonable to expect non-stipendiary clergy in the Church of England to say the same daily prayers as their stipendiary colleagues. In response, I would refer to the findings above as to the flexibility in the forms of service which can fulfil the obligation. Several brief forms of Morning and Evening Prayer are able to satisfy the canonical obligation on those days when a minister’s secular employment fills the working hours.

In today’s Church, the ministry of the clergy takes many different forms. Some might ask whether it makes sense for any obligations to be imposed on all clergy in their varied situations. In response I would consider that, stretching back even before the Code of Justinian, the daily prayers of the Church have been understood as integral to what it is to be a member of the clergy. As we have seen, this belief was reinforced in the *Book of Common Prayer* and latterly by the 2015 ‘Guidelines for the professional conduct of the clergy’. Perhaps we should argue instead that, in a church where the ministry of the clergy is so varied, we should treasure all the more the unifying principle of a ‘manner of life’ which is enjoined on ‘every clerk in Holy Orders’ by Canon C 26.

⁴² Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, ed R Spiazzi (Turin, 1956), q 7, a 1.

⁴³ Canon 276 of the *Code of Canon Law* 1983 states that ‘permanent deacons, however, are to carry out the [liturgy of the hours] to the extent defined by the conference of bishops’.