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Work Experiences of New Zealand Clergy and their Wives

A study of the vocational experiences of male clergy and the impact this vocation has on their spouses

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Abstract

Church ministry is unlike any other occupation. Few other vocations require such a high level of training while offering so little in the way of material gain. Similarly, few occupations invite so much prejudgement, not only for the ministers themselves but, by extension, their families also. This qualitative study examines the experiences of eight ministers representing five main church denominations as well as the experiences of six women married to church ministers. Semi structured interviews and phenomenological analysis elicits information on both the joys and stresses of this occupation for both spouses and reveals how, with experience, those in church ministry overcome the unique pressures of this vocation while revelling in the satisfaction and sense of community this role affords. Consideration is also paid to the effects societal change has had and will continue to have on the Church in New Zealand. Findings reveal that despite the complexity and challenges of the role, ministers overall derive great satisfaction from this role. The study also found the role of the wives of ministers is slowly changing as more of these women enter paid employment and are less available for the needs of the Church.
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