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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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1. Introduction

“In our society work is a core aspect of personal identity. Work is central to how many people view themselves and how they relate to others. It is also central to how others relate to them.” (Hoge & Wenger, 2005).

Time and again throughout the literature on church ministry and throughout the interviews conducted with church ministers for this study it was stated that the decision to enter church ministry was never a career decision but a lifestyle choice. Those entering the ministry do so knowing their lives and those of their families, particularly their spouses, will change. However, from speaking with both ministers and the spouses of ministers from a wide range of Protestant denominations it became apparent that few entering ministry have prior knowledge as to the actual extent their lives will change, the unique set of pressures which will befall them post ordination or even the sometimes surprising rewards of church ministry many experience as the relationships they foster with their communities grow. If personal identity is fused with occupation then it is perhaps unsurprising that an occupation as complex as church based ministry has such a significant impact on the identities of both ministers and the families of ministers.

What might be surprising is that an occupation as old as church ministry and that has traditionally been so central to Western society is still subject to so many stereotypes,

preconceptions and misconceptions. A Dunedin based Presbyterian minister attributes a large part of the mild mannered “nerdy” stereotype church ministers have to the media, “every minister character you see on TV is balding, bespectacled and embarrassed of anyone who has anything contentious to say”. Likewise, he believes “ministry’s image problem is symptomatic of a wider crisis within church based institutions which tend to be perceived as grey and brick”, (McCurdy, 2001). Ministers’ wives too hardly escape the boring, one dimensional image of a compliant, smiling, untroubled, dutiful wife with the perfect marriage, the perfectly behaved children and the spotless home. Few professionals in society today are as prejudged as church ministers. This prejudgement is often unfair, inaccurate and based on either, comical media portrayals, a distorted sentimentality or the negative behaviour of a minority of clergy and/or Christians. The effect is that, due to these stereotypes, clergy and the families of clergy are often perceived to be different and treated accordingly, often being held to unrealistic expectations, both professionally and socially.

1.1 Objectives of this Research

A common remark that respondents made during the course of this research is that theology schools concentrate on theological instruction and possibly pastoral care but information on actually living the life of a church based minister is often lacking. All the ministers spoken to for this study had been church members prior to entering the ministry and many had some experience in lay leadership within the church, but most had only spoken to their own minister about the personal effects of ministry and so only gained limited information before embarking on ministry training themselves. Many of the

ministers and the wives of ministers felt that additional information on such issues as work/family balance, working non-standard hours and the effects on family and social life would have helped them deal with the pressures they face.

This study draws together a range of perspectives from ministers representing the major and mainstream Protestant denominations from both large and small, urban and rural based churches. Ministers presiding over larger churches in this study would commonly have close to 1000 congregants, whereas those in smaller churches might have barely 50 congregants. In their interviews they speak not only of the challenges of working in this field, but also the rewards – what drew them to this vocation, why they find their role satisfying and why they have remained in this role despite the challenges they encounter.

From speaking with people, particularly those who do not attend church, I know that a common misperception many people have of church ministers is that their role is not particularly taxing. They are thought to work a couple of hours of a Sunday morning, visit a few old ladies for tea and scones, conduct the odd wedding, the odd funeral and that is about it. My hope is that this study will reveal a fair and balanced account of what it is actually like to live as a church based minister and the affect the role has on their lives and those of their families, their own perspectives of their role and how their lives and people's perceptions of them changed once they entered the ministry.

An important component of this study is the role of the minister's wife. A common remark that was made by both ministers and the wives of ministers is that this role, though an integral part of the running of many churches, is seldom discussed or even mentioned. I hope this study also gives insight into the lives of ministers' wives. Recognition of the demands on their time, abilities and willingness to acquiesce to the needs of the Church is

long overdue. Church ministry has extensive repercussions for the entire family and this study documents the issues facing the children of ministers and the steps taken by families to ensure their children had normal, happy childhoods.

I also hope that this work might provide a useful resource for those who are considering entering church based ministry and wish to obtain an accurate account of the effects this vocation will likely have on their lifestyle and families.

1.2 Where This Research Fits in With the Academic Literature

There are many points of difference between this study and other studies in the current academic research. The most obvious difference is that this study is based solely on the work experiences of New Zealand clergy and their wives. With the exception of Philip Dewe's study in the late 1980's, which only focussed on the ministers themselves, there are very few studies which have been conducted in New Zealand. Unlike Dewe's quantitative study, this research captured the experiences of clergy and their wives through qualitative methodology. What I hope comes through clearly in this research are the personalities, the wit and the intelligence of these respondents as they discuss their vocation and lifestyles. These features would not have been revealed had, like much of the literature, the information had been obtained through surveys or questionnaires. In addition, there are many studies written from the perspectives of church ministers and few from the perspectives of church minister's wives. Even fewer studies have been undertaken which juxtapose these two perspectives and which compare and contrast them revealing the differences in their perspectives concerning their relationships with congregants, their

commitment to their respective roles, issues of self-identity and the support and appreciation they feel they receive for the work they provide for the Church and the people of the Church. Lastly, this study does not focus solely on the issues of stress and burnout which is so prevalent in the literature. Though there are of course pressures associated with this role which are discussed and analysed, the rewards of the role are revealed more fully than in previous research. The methodology used ensured the responses were largely participant driven. Though respondents spoke freely about the pressures and complexities of the role, many were also keen to reveal the satisfaction they gain from this role, its meaningfulness and the sense of purpose it provides them.

2. Literature Review

Psychological research pertaining specifically to the work experiences of New Zealand clergy and the impact this role has on family and social life is limited. This literature review therefore examines research sourced primarily from the United States, though studies from Great Britain, Canada and Australia are also evaluated. Although there are some commonalities between New Zealand and these countries, it is important to bear in mind the structural and cultural differences on the experiences of respondents when evaluating international research. The cultural differences between New Zealand and the United States are vast, particularly the influence of the church and, by implication, the clergy on politics, culture and society.

A 1987 study by Philip Dewe examining the sources of stress experienced by New Zealand ministers of religion and the methods they employ to cope with this stress is therefore particularly pertinent to this research. Dewe developed a questionnaire for this study based on information obtained from individual interviews he conducted with 38 New Zealand clergy attending a ministerial committee meeting. The questionnaire itself was comprised of three sections, biographical information, sources of stress and coping strategies. It was posted to 468 clergy throughout New Zealand and, from this, 280 completed questionnaires were returned, a response rate of nearly 60%. Although published 25 years ago, this study remains relevant as it does not limit its focus to the differing stressors church leaders are exposed to, but also examines how these stressors are recognised and directly addressed by

the church leaders themselves. Furthermore, this particular study is one of the few which firmly places the work experiences of clergy within a specifically New Zealand context.

Similarly, a 2009 study by Francis, Robbins, Kaldor & Castle focusing on psychological type and work related psychological health of clergy in Australia, England and New Zealand has also been useful to aspects of this research as it incorporates the experiences of 259 New Zealand clergy and is relatively recent. Furthermore, this study is uncommon as it highlights the somewhat obvious emphasis towards reporting negative work experiences that permeates so much of the research into the psychological health of church leaders and the pressures clerical work places onto the family members of church leaders. Indeed, a great proportion of research that has been undertaken on the role of church leaders exposes the vulnerability of the clergy to stress, burnout and job fatigue, work/family/life imbalance, impoverished familial relationships and social isolation, (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee, 2003; McMinn et al., 2005; Pargament, Tarakeshwar, Ellison, & Wulff, 2001) without delving too far into the compensating features of this work or looking at how the more adverse aspects of this role can be minimised or addressed (Meek et al., 2003).

One 2001 survey on Church of England clerics commissioned by the Archbishop's Council found that 74% of clergy rated their job satisfaction as either 'good' or 'excellent' (Francis, Robbins, Kaldor, & Castle, 2009). However, such a study may be subject to bias in so far as the respondents, even though anonymous, may be unwilling to disclose their discontent to the church hierarchy. Furthermore, studies on job satisfaction might be inherently skewed as presumably those who have deemed their job satisfaction to be poor are less likely to continue in their current position and remain available to participate in such studies. Many

clergy are well educated and qualified to readily find alternative employment should they experience severe dissatisfaction in the clerical role.

This apparent tendency towards investigating and reporting of adverse work experiences which is prevalent in so much of the literature might be exacerbated by the fact that most of the literature in this area is quantitative in nature. According to one author, 90% of the studies on religious leaders have involved surveys (Hills, Francis, & Rutledge, 2004).

Questionnaires can incorporate a large number of participants and therefore produce an extensive overview of material. However, this method is limited by the fact research participants cannot easily counter questions with a negative slant, nor can they discuss questions or introduce new topics. Furthermore, while both quantitative and qualitative research methods require participants to self-report, questionnaires are also limited in their ability to seek clarification of any inconsistencies in a respondent's answers.

Another possible reason for the negative emphasis in the literature is that, despite the more recent movement towards positive psychology, just as people do not see a doctor when they are healthy, psychologists are seldom engaged with when everything is going well. Therefore psychologists, whether working in practice or in a research capacity, are perhaps inadvertently more geared to seeking out and focusing on dysfunction.

Much, if not all of the literature on the role of the clergy stems from a Christian or Christian/psychological framework as opposed to the more conventional secular psychological framework. One implication of this is that Christian beliefs are sometimes presented as fact. This is exemplified by Francis et al., (2009) when arguing that certain personality profiles are favoured in the selection and recruitment of clergy as it is "unlikely God would call such a disproportionately large personality type into ministry". While

Francis' research provides evidence concerning the types of personality drawn to church ministry, his conclusions are not congruent with a secular research paradigm.

Research on clergy has generally been conducted within a very traditional work stress research paradigm which tends to use a transactional model to conceptualise work stress and burnout as being the result of an incongruence between individual needs, available resources and the various demands and constraints in the individual's immediate environment (Handy, 1988). This paradigm tends to emphasise the subjective experiences and personality of respondents while paying scant attention to organisational features or societal norms which might create work stress and burnout irrespective of individual differences (Handy, 1988). To give an example, according to Grosch & Olson (2000), many clergy are well aware of the standard advice for preventing burnout such as adequate rest, regular exercise and strong social support. However, given societal expectations that clergy should always be accessible, accommodating and should graciously place others' needs before their own, taking such preventive measures against burnout can violate organisational and societal norms concerning appropriate clergy behaviour.

The findings of this thesis, while broadly covering the topic of work experiences of male New Zealand clergy and their spouses are divided into five main themes. These are: response to a perceived calling and the rewards of ministry, impact on social life, impact on family, and leadership. Due to the key role ministers' wives play in the Church their experiences and perspectives are also discussed. The literature review is therefore also divided into similar themes although there is inevitable overlap between these themes and the findings section focuses more closely on the rewards of ministry than issues of stress and burnout.

2.1 Person-Job fit, Person-Organisation fit

A large proportion of the literature into the role of the clergy pertains to the twin issues of stress and burnout and much of research into work stress and burnout deals with the theoretical concepts of person-job fit and person-organisation fit. Person-job fit theory focuses on the importance of determining the requirements, characteristics and expectations of a role so a job candidate with the skills, knowledge and attributes best suited to that role can be selected. Authors such as Lui , Lui & Hu (2010) argue that, because each organisation has its own unique culture, person-organisation fit is equally crucial to ensure compatibility between a person, the role and the work environment. The ability to mesh these three factors is not only important in ensuring a role is fulfilled efficiently and to the highest possible standards, it also promotes job satisfaction, work commitment, lower staff turnover and encourages strong employee citizenship behaviours (Chuang & Sackett, 2005).

However, one limitation to these theories is that they presume work roles and organisations remain static over a long period of time. Arguably, the culture within a work environment is as dynamic as the frequency with which management, senior staff or important stakeholders change. Likewise, roles change as duties increase or decrease. Roles which incorporate a multitude of duties are also highly fluid and it is perhaps unrealistic that one person is likely to perform all duties with a high level of equanimity and competence.

The role of clergy is multi-faceted and complex. They are pastors, evangelists, teachers, preachers, students, counsellors, administrators and managers to name but a few roles

(Kay, 2000). In fact clergy may have between 15 and 20 roles they need to fulfil and problems arise when the clergy's prioritisation is not commensurate with their congregations' expectations (Barr-Jeffrey, 2008). Role prioritisation can often be determined by factors outside a minister's control, such as the age demographics of the congregation. Meek, et al., (2003) suggest that, increasingly, clergy are presented with situations which are beyond the scope of their training. For example, informal chats can quickly become intense counselling sessions perhaps best dealt with by a highly trained and qualified psychotherapist. Given the complexity of the role and the expectations of clergy from parishioners and the wider community, it is unsurprising that a great proportion of the literature on the job characteristics of this role incorporates work on personality type, job-person fit theory and the prevalence of stress and burnout in church leaders.

Although the definition of burnout is somewhat hazy (Maslach, 2001), the notion of burnout was first conceptualised by Herbert Freudenberg in 1974 after noticing a pattern of waning motivation and listlessness with accompanying physical symptoms experienced by volunteers during their first year at a drug abuse centre (Hills et al., 2004). Christina Maslach further expanded the concept of burnout, developed psychometric tools to measure this phenomenon and is arguably the most prominent figure in this field of research. Maslach suggests the phenomena of burnout centres around three core themes, depersonalisation; described as increased cynicism and detachment, lack of personal accomplishment; described as feelings of incompetency and lack of personal achievement and emotional exhaustion; described as the depletion of one's physical and emotional resources (Maslach & Leiter, 1996).

To gain an appreciation as to how prevalent burnout is within the clergy, one Australian study concluded that a quarter of clergy experienced burnout as an extreme or significant issue and half of those in the study were potential candidates for burnout (Kaldor & Bulpitt, 2001). Similarly, another more recent American study concluded that 75% of clergy respondents reported they felt they had too much work for one person to do and 60% of respondents did not feel they had enough time to adequately think and contemplate their role as a minister (Doolittle, 2010). According to this author burnout is strongly correlated to depression though burnout itself is entirely work based. Doolittle suggests burnout may manifest in poor physical health, negative communication with colleagues, a decline in professional commitment, reduced self-esteem, poor overall life satisfaction, high turnover, risk of problem behaviours such as sexual infidelity and alcohol abuse and impaired ability to provide organisational and spiritual leadership (Krause, Ellison, & Wulff, 1998; Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010).

There are two schools of thought as to the fundamental cause of burnout (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). The first being that burnout is due to personality or internal factors, that those most susceptible to burnout tend to be perfectionists, idealists, compulsives, those who are strongly driven, (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Maslach herself maintains that job-person fit theory suggests that those not well fitted to their job are more vulnerable to burnout (Maslach, 2001).

The second school of thought according to Grosch & Olsen (2000) is that burnout has its roots in external factors such as work systems that do not offer enough support or policies and procedures which require too much time to be devoted to tasks considered uninteresting or unimportant and which take time away from duties one wishes to

prioritise. Burnout can also result from an incongruence between the expectations of a role and its realities, (Wofford, 1999). In the case of the clergy this can be a difference between the work they feel they have been called to do and what is expected of them by the church structure and/or their congregants. As Meek, et al., (2003) explain, many enter the ministry believing they will be ministering to people through preaching, evangelism, and pastoral care but then find themselves with more mundane tasks such as managing conflicts over church leadership, managing factions within the congregation or balancing the church budget. Such tasks become all the more frustrating when they take time and energy away from the matters a pastor deems more crucial to ministry.

The work done by Francis, et al., (2009) on psychological types and psychological health within the clergy in Australia, England and New Zealand is significant as it argues that the rates of burnout and stress experienced within clergy is more likely due to the integration and incompatibility of personality types with current church structures and job characteristics rather than the either/or scenario Grosch & Olsen (2000) expound.

Francis', et al., (2009) study found that clergy at least in Australia, England and New Zealand tend to display a highly distinctive personality profile. This profile, based originally on Jungian theory and measured through psychometric tools such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Kiersey Temperament Sorter and the Francis Psychological Type Scales showed that clergy were more likely to be introverted rather than extraverted, sensing or logical rather than intuitive, prefer feeling over thinking and judging over perceiving. These authors state that each of these dichotomous pairs have inherent strengths and weaknesses but having a certain personality profile will place more stress on individuals within the church leadership role. For example, while an individual inclined towards

introversion might work well alone, enjoy investing time in reading, scholarship and preparing sermons and welcome one on one encounters for counselling and spiritual guidance, they are also likely to find the social expectations of the role draining, not enjoy working in large groups, meeting new people or assuming a high profile within the congregation or the wider community. Despite the prominence of introversion within clergy this study concluded that clergy who tended to be more extraverted or more outwardly orientated expressed better job satisfaction in the role of church leader than many of those inclined towards introversion (Francis et al., 2009).

These authors conclude that the clergy more likely to experience burnout are those who are introverted, are thinkers rather than feelers and are more sensing or logical than intuitive. The study did not mention whether traits of judging were more conducive to burnout than perception or vice versa. As these authors indicate, many of the characteristics that make people favourable candidates for the clergy role also pre-dispose them to potential burnout.

For most, entering the ministry is not a conventional career decision, but a response to a perceived calling from God. Being a member of the clergy is not just a job, but an identity, a way of life (Hileman, 2008). Meek, et al., (2003) found that many ministers experienced much ambivalence towards ministry as a vocation.

Christopherson (1994) delineates the distinction between career and calling by writing that:

“A calling is a task set by God with a sense of obligation to work for purposes other than one’s own.”

Whereas,

“A career is work which is chosen rather than imposed. Individuals choose the career path, the school and the job offer which best suits them. To do otherwise would be imprudent, even irrational”.

Christopherson (1994) further suggests there is an apparent ascetic and non-competitive quality to the calling that excludes the self-interest or rivalry expected in a secular career. This appears compatible with many church leaders who eschew the secular, business models believing this to be antithetical to Christian leadership more in line with the servant-leader approach (Wofford, 1999). However there appears to be some tension as, since the 1980's, researchers have likened some church denominations to secular employers who encourage competition between church leaders with an emphasis on success (Mace & Mace, 1980). The pastor is likened to the CEO with the congregants as clients or stakeholders and church finances are the “bottom line” (Cohall & Cooper, 2010). Furthermore, young clergy are expected to climb the “ecclesiastical ladder” pressured to emulate ministerial success models which are constantly paraded before them (Mace & Mace, 1980).

Role ambiguity and role conflict are just two of the many factors that can contribute to stress and burnout (Miner et al., 2010). Other contributors include work overload, long work hours, excessive job demands, both in time and professional competency and a lack of autonomy in one's work (Kay, 2000). Many clergy have great flexibility and autonomy in their work schedules (Doolittle, 2010; Grosch & Olsen, 2000). However, the reality of working for purposes other than one's own and the lack of self-interest, while an important component of clerical work, often requires working long hours, accommodating other people and other people's schedules, working non-standard hours, being permanently on-

call and the constant interruption this entails (Hill, Darling, & Raimond, 2003; Lee, 1999). Add to this the fact clergy have scant ability to measure the efficacy of their work or the success of their ministry (Hills et al., 2004; Zondag, 2004) and that many church ministers feel some members of their congregations have unrealistically high expectations of their personal and professional competency (Lee, 1999). It becomes apparent therefore why stress and burnout within the clergy is a prominent theme within the literature.

In addition to the role ambiguity and role conflict that many ministers overseas experience, the church's appeal, at least in many Western countries has diminished over the last 40-50 years and with this its influence and authority (Zondag, 2004). Zondag, (2004) states there has been a significant decrease in church attendance in Western Europe, specifically Germany, the Netherlands, England and Scandinavia, and consequently the pastoral profession has become increasingly socio-culturally marginalised. While church attendance is much higher in the United States, Spain and Italy (Zondag, 2004), other studies have concluded that the increasing conflict clergy experience with congregants demonstrates the authority and prestige the church and the clergy once had is on the wane. One study revealed that over 60% of clergy had experienced conflict with members of their congregation (Schilderman, 1998). This conflict is not always about theological or church matters. Hill, et al., (2003) note that in many congregations, members feel they can dispense unsolicited advice to clergy and the spouses of clergy on their parenting and marriage and can be very controlling.

In New Zealand conflicts between parishioners and ministers was reported as being one of the primary sources of stress experienced by church ministers (Dewe, 1987). Such conflicts include the minister not being accepted for who he/she is, differences in the congregation's

expectations of the minister and how the minister wants to utilise his/her skills and abilities, resistance to change by either the congregation or the church hierarchy and trying to coordinate administrative duties (Dewe, 1987).

That being said however, one must question how many of these studies measured conflict and whether the majority of clergy experience regular conflict with their congregants or if this conflict is more sporadic. In addition there is a difference between experiencing regular conflict with the same few individuals and experiencing conflict with the congregation as a whole.

The consequences of an incompatible person-organisation fit and/or person-job fit are immense. When the expectations placed on a church leader by either the congregation or church organisation do not marry with the church leader's own expectations, skills or attributes role conflict and role ambiguity are likely to ensue contributing to work stress and possible burnout. In most organisations a solid person-organisation fit and person-job fit are important, however given the prominent and highly visible position of a church leader, these factors become paramount.

2.2 Family Life

The Protestant reformation saw for the first time the emergence of the clergy family. Each family member had a specific role and function to fulfil and were expected to model normative Christian behaviours at all times, (Doolittle, 2010; Stoffels, 2004; Strange & Sheppard, 2001). In fact, according to Stoffels (2004), 1 Timothy 3:5 was often cited "If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's

church?" Such comparisons between church leadership and family leadership placed pressure on the family not to behave in any way that might reflect badly on their father/husband's perceived ability to lead and also placed pressure on the father/husband to control his family's behaviour sometimes leading to resentment and disharmony, deceptive or hypocritical behaviour or, more plainly put, discrepancies between 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' behaviour within ministers' families (Stoffels, 2004).

In a 1998 study, the adult children of pastors retrospectively viewed their childhood as positive when, as children, they were free to be themselves, had quality time with both parents and saw a consistency in the behaviour of their clergy parent when with church members and when with family (Anderson, 1998). These children were also more likely to maintain a commitment to Christian beliefs and values into adulthood.

Conversely, Anderson's study also found that the adult children of clergy considered their upbringings in clergy households as almost exclusively negative when they regarded their childhood as restrictive and controlled, when it comprised of a marked lack of quality family time and when they viewed religion as being forced. An expectation that church matters would always take priority and the repeated observation of an inconsistency in behaviour or attitude in their clergy parent when around church members and when at home produced similar results. According to this study, this group were most likely to reject their parents' Christian beliefs and values in later life.

Other authors, (Hill et al., 2003; Lee, 1999; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Strange & Sheppard, 2001) concur that the pressures spouses and children feel to conform to behavioural expectations are a common stressor in many clergy households, though as Anderson (1998) argues, higher expectations can also spur one on to do better, and many children of clergy

grow up feeling 'special' due to their role in a family so central to an established and close community. As much of the literature concludes, it is not so much the 'modelling of normative Christian behaviours' but the pressure to conform to unrealistic Christian stereotypes that manifest in tension and family dysfunction (Darling, McWey, & Hill, 2006; Hill et al., 2003; Lee, 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1998).

The intrusiveness of congregational demands, juggling work and family balance and maintaining a boundary between the needs of the congregation and the wider community and the need for family time and privacy is another recurrent theme in the literature. As Dewe (1987) points out, balancing work pressures with familial obligations can create role conflict and add to stress. Clergy often work long, non-standard hours with weekends and evenings being their busiest times (Darling, McWey, & Hill, 2004). Hill (2003) argues, if a spouse works standard week hours, this can leave little time for family or even time as a couple. When one considers that an Australian study concluded that 80% of church leaders use their spouse as their primary, and often only, source of social support (Whetham & Whetham, 2000), quality time together as a couple and a healthy marital relationship becomes crucial to the psychological health and wellbeing of many church leaders.

Added to this is the pressure of being permanently 'on call' day and night (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Hill et al., 2003) which, in itself can be stressful and wearying due to its unpredictability. It may also disrupt family plans (Hileman, 2008; Hill et al., 2003; Strange & Sheppard, 2001) and function as a stressor as the 'calling out' itself can often involve some type of crisis which needs immediate attention (Meek et al., 2003).

Darling et al., (2004) notes that in American culture particularly, clergy are at the forefront of cultural crises such as racial tensions, terrorist attacks and school violence, environmental

crises such as hurricanes, tornadoes and floods and personal crises such as death, illness – both physical and mental, unemployment, homelessness, marriage breakdown, substance abuse problems, addictions and family conflict. Although other professionals such as police, healthcare workers and social workers also deal with these types of problems, not only do these professionals have the legal authority and backing to act swiftly and decisively, they also have the benefit of a strong camaraderie with their colleagues to help buffer the stress and colleagues with whom to ‘debrief’ on an informal and immediate basis. As Zondag (2004) comments, in regards to clergy, “little support comes from fellow clergy”.

The need to cognitively ‘switch gears’ at a moment’s notice and to have the emotional reservoir to calmly, competently and compassionately deal with such crisis situations in addition to caring for one’s own family is often a direct stressor for the church leader and an indirect stressor for their family (Darling et al., 2004). Pressure to meet community or congregational demands can come at the expense of meeting family needs (Darling et al., 2006). In fact, as some authors have concluded, (Morris & Blanton, 1998), time clergy spent away from their families was the primary complaint of clergy wives. Additionally, clergy along with health workers and emergency personnel such as police and firefighters are vulnerable to secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002), the emotional taxation caused by continually supporting and empathising with those who are suffering. Significantly, compassion fatigue can also affect the family members and friends supporting them (Cerney, 1995; Darling et al., 2006) adding to what may already be a strained relationship.

The financial stress of the role is another recurrent theme in the literature (Hileman, 2008; Meek et al., 2003; Strange & Sheppard, 2001), but as Strange (2001) remarks, the low

income many clergy receive is seldom talked about by clergy for fears their concerns might be misconstrued as materialistic or greedy. That being said however, like everyone else, clergy still have personal and familial needs to address. One study concluded that, in America at least, 95% of clergy were “grossly underpaid” meaning they were five times more likely to hold secondary employment (Morris & Blanton, 1998). Although a secondary job increases the family income, it is also likely to take more time away from family commitments. These authors state that, despite the low income levels of clergy, most clergy are highly educated with 58% holding Master degrees and 17% with Doctorates. An Australian study in 2010 showed 19% of clergy in Australia held post graduate qualifications (Miner et al., 2010). Another American study showed 63% of the clergy participants had Master degrees or higher and yet their median salaries were slightly less than half of those in secular jobs with a similar level of education (Hileman, 2008).

According to much of the literature therefore there are far reaching consequences to this role from the challenging nature of the work and its long hours to its low financial recompense. Perhaps more importantly it becomes apparent that these repercussions are not limited to the church leader, but are felt throughout the entire immediate family.

2.3 Leadership

Much of the literature on church leadership focuses on the minister as a spiritual leader localised within his or her parish and to a lesser extent a leader within the wider community. Different styles of leadership are explored in the literature and the tension between business leadership and church leadership emerges as a key theme. Absent from

the literature is the erosion of church leadership from pivotal life events such as births, marriages and deaths and the commensurate popularity of marriage celebrants and secular funerals. Also absent is the repercussions spiritual leaders face when the families of church leaders behave antithetically to Christian doctrine and how these repercussions have changed over time.

Authors such as Zondag (2004) and Butler and Hermann (1999) explore why many church leaders may find the leadership role stressful, the difficulty of measuring leadership efficacy within the church and the different skills needed for church leadership. Other authors such as Lewis (1996) and Wofford (1999) focus on the apparent tension between Christian leadership and business leadership and the usefulness of transformational leadership within the church to bridge these two domains. Although Lewis and Wofford both make valid points regarding the benefits of using transformational leadership models within a church context, they appear to conceptualise this model of leadership in an idealised way.

Researchers such as Popper, et al., (2000), Stone, et al., (2004) and Brymer, et al., (2006) balance this view by exploring the dangers of transformational leadership in the absence of ethics or morals. Stone, et al., (2004) even explore the limited academic research on servant leadership characterised by sharing of power and equipping others with the skills and resources to perform effectively, the main disadvantage of this model and how this can be overcome. The relevancy of servant leadership in church ministry is its modelling of Christian values such as humility, helpfulness and selflessness.

Overseas literature indicates that one of the stressors many ministers experience is a difficulty in measuring the success of their ministry, and by implication, the success of their spiritual leadership. Zondag (2004) argues that pastoral leadership is marginalised in three

main ways. Firstly, pastors are often unaware of the results of their work, secondly, they have little perception of the significance or impact of their work on others and thirdly, they receive little recognition of their work by others. In Zondag's study involving 235 Catholic and Protestant clergy, awareness of the results of their work and the awareness of their efficacy are key factors in job satisfaction among pastors.

Another study showed that although ministerial leadership effectiveness is hard to define, there appears to be many commonalities between ministers and CEOs of non-profit organisations but with the two marked differences that ministers are deemed to have additional responsibility over their congregants' spiritual wellbeing and that the minister's authority is based on divine inspiration (Butler & Herman, 1999). Wofford (1999) goes on to state that, similar to businesses, the success of churches is often measured by size, growth and budget.

Effective church leaders need to be skilful managers, active listeners, relationship builders, effective communicators, problem solvers, planners, delegators, change agents, shepherds, inspirers, multi-taskers, servants and students (Butler & Herman, 1999; Lewis, 1996; McKenna & Eckard, 2009; Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001). Butler & Hermann (1999) noted that, as many of these skills can be taught and developed, there are obvious ramifications for Bible colleges and seminary schools.

Cohall et al., (2010) argues that spiritual leadership is a significant component of the clerical role, but that many Bible colleges and seminary schools in America have, in this regard, failed to keep abreast of the expectations parishioners and the wider community have of their ministers. These authors state that as spiritual leaders, ministers are more likely to be aware of the moral implications of problems encountered in the world around them and are

therefore in a strong position as public spokespeople to draw attention to such for the good of the church and society in general. They purport that many ministers quickly burnout due to inadequate preparation for this specific leadership role.

Both Wofford (1999) and Lewis (1996), acknowledge a tension between church leaders and the imposition of a business model on church governance. They promote adopting the model of transformational leadership within the church context as a type of compromise. Wofford (1999) argues that, although the church does not need the competitive, ruthless 'bottom line' leadership style that is stereotypical of business management, aspects of business acumen are useful in church administration. This author purports that transformational leadership, defined as "transforming the hearts and minds of followers [or members] so that they will strive to fulfil the visions the leaders articulate", is more appropriate and congruent with Christian leadership than the transactional leadership styles – rewards for achieving or maintaining goals - that are the basis of many business models. Palmer (2001), Wofford (1999) and Lewis (1996) maintain that transformational leadership is based on visions, values, caring for, empowering and inspiring others and easily incorporates the ideals of the servant leader.

Critics of transformational leadership have argued that manipulation is an integral part of this style of leadership and can be self-serving (Brymer & Gray, 2006; Popper, Maysless, & Castelnovo, 2000). In addition, without ethical or moral constraints, the loyalty, trust and enthusiasm transformational leadership evokes is open to abuse. Those with narcissistic tendencies thrive on asserting power and manipulating others (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004) and, in a church setting, such leaders are likely to come into contact with members highly vulnerable to this type of mistreatment.

Contrary to Palmer, Wofford and Lewis, (1999) and Stone, et al., (2004) argue that transformational leadership and servant leadership, although similar, exhibit one key difference. This is, while transformational leadership is objective focused, servant leadership is follower focused. The servant leader entrusts his or her followers to meet objectives, but the emphasis is firmly on serving and helping the follower.

This style of leadership is also not without criticism. Servant leadership can create a tendency towards reciprocity which can make others feel psychologically obligated to the servant leader (Stone et al., 2004). These authors state that abuse or corruption of this tendency can be avoided if followers are encouraged to respond not by serving the leader, but by serving others.

It appears to some extent that church leadership is becoming more complex as it constantly evolves to meet the needs of the community. At least in America, criticism has been levelled at Bible colleges and seminary schools by academic researchers for not adequately preparing students for the multitude of roles and skills clergy are expected to assume within the leadership capacity. Furthermore, leadership within a church context is difficult to quantify which can be frustrating, even demoralising for many church leaders and it appears business models have been imposed onto church work structures in an attempt to remedy this. However, all models of leadership are corruptible without the presence of appropriate ethical or moral safeguards and this is just as relevant in a church setting as it is in the corporate world.

2.4 Social Life

There is little positive literature relating to the social lives of church leaders and it would appear from the literature that many clergy and their spouses have few close friends and confidantes outside their own immediate families. Several authors have noted that up to two thirds of clergy studied report not having a close friend (Hileman, 2008; Weaver, Flannelly, Larson, & Stapleton, 2002). Authors such as Linda Hileman are exceptionally useful in understanding the impediments to a rich and fulfilling social life many church leaders and their spouses experience as she writes from the well informed perspective of both a trained and qualified marriage and family therapist as well as from the perspective of first being the child of a pastor and then becoming the wife of a pastor.

Most of the literature on this theme echoes sentiments by Maslach & Leiter (1996), Grosch & Olson (2000), Hill et al., (2003), Darling et al., (2006) and Doolittle (2010) that among the group of helping professionals such as healthcare providers, social workers and police, clergy were especially prone to burnout (Chandler, 2009; Greenberg, 1990). The primary reason Chandler (2009) gives for this is that in addition to the well-known contributors of burnout such as role conflict, role ambiguity and excess time demands (Chandler, 2009; Miner, 2007) clergy are also more likely to experience loneliness and social isolation.

Although loneliness and social isolation can be stressors in themselves (Barr-Jeffrey, 2008; Greenberg, 1990), strong social support networks can also mitigate against stress (Chandler, 2009; Maslach, 2001). Paradoxically however, one of the common symptoms of excessive stress is social withdrawal or the distancing of oneself from friends, colleagues or even family members (Barr-Jeffrey, 2008; Chandler, 2009) which, according to the literature, is likely to compound the problem leading to a downward spiral.

It is possible those with leanings towards introversion can cope better with the loneliness and social isolation that appears to be a large component of this role. Consequently, those who are more outwardly oriented or extraverted and at the extreme end of this spectrum maybe find the level of loneliness and social isolation many clergy experience intolerable and are therefore perhaps more likely to leave this profession and thus be excluded from such studies. However, there appears to be no literature either confirming or disputing this notion.

It may seem ironic that church leaders, who are in such a people-oriented role, are so likely to experience loneliness and social isolation until one looks at the job characteristics of this role. According to Chandler (2009), 56% of pastors take only one day off a week and 21% typically do not take any time off a week. Weekends and evenings, when most people socialise are often occupied with church activities (Darling et al., 2004) and, as Meek et al., (2008) observes, due to the distancing effect innate to the leadership role of clergy, meaningful and egalitarian friendships within one's own congregation can be difficult to forge. In addition, according to some authors, parishioners can feel slighted by and resent ministers or their spouses forming close and exclusionary relationships with only certain members of the congregation (Hileman, 2008; McMinn et al., 2005). This can result in clergy having many superficial relationships but few close friends or confidantes outside their own immediate family (Weaver et al., 2002).

Conversely, Dewe's (1987) study revealed that most clergy in New Zealand cope with work related stress by discussing difficulties with close friends or colleagues whether to seek advice or solace or to just vent. Interestingly, it appears from this study that in New Zealand clergy are more likely to discuss difficulties experienced at work with friends and colleagues

than with their spouses, suggesting the social isolation experienced by clergy overseas is perhaps not so prominent in New Zealand.

Hileman (2008) also claims that clergy families are often expected to attend church social functions such as BBQs, Sunday School parties and pot luck dinners. While such gatherings are often a social outlet for parishioners, as representatives of the church, attendance at these functions for the clergy family or couple is, in essence, another form of work. McMinn (2005) mentions that many church leaders perceive themselves as having been placed on a pedestal where they must always model Christian behavioural ideals and consequently can feel hemmed in by congregants' expectations concerning their behaviour. Although constantly trying to imitate Christ like virtues is an excellent ideal to strive for, it is probably more difficult to put into practice and might hinder the clergy's ability to behave as freely as other people in social situations.

Both Hileman (2008) and McMinn (2005) also mention that many church leaders and their spouses are highly aware of their pivotal role they play within the church and their high profiles. They are therefore wary of what information they can disclose to friends they may have within the congregation lest this information becomes congregational gossip and undermines their role or position within the church.

The international research therefore indicates the combination of societal norms, work structures and congregational expectations placed on church ministers may impede clergy from having fully satisfying social lives.

2.5 Spouses of Church Leaders

The international literature suggests that clergy spouses often find their position difficult. For the purposes of this research and by way of clarification 'clergy spouses' denotes the wives of clergy who are laity, not trained or qualified clergy themselves.

Janet Finch (1983) has written extensively on the enmeshment of wives in their husband's career, secular or otherwise. She states that historically, it was a wife's job to create a peaceful, relaxing, supportive and emotionally warm environment for her husband so that he could concentrate on his career and being the family breadwinner without being impeded or distracted by domestic obligations. Wives also had a secondary but no less important role as a sounding board for their husbands and as someone with whom he can discuss business matters in confidence (Finch, 1989). Wives were also expected to accompany their husbands to business/social functions, entertain the husband's associates and important clients and be a highly visible, supportive presence. Finch argues that the more socially prestigious or morally valuable one's husband's role was, the more pressure was exerted onto his wife to fulfil these 'helpmeet' obligations. Finch (1983) cites a 1973 study by Young and Willmott which revealed that the wives of professionally prestigious men such as company directors and statesmen were much less likely to work than other married women. This was partly due to their level of financial comfort and partly because they found they did not have enough time or energy to fulfil these 'helpmeet' requirements and tend to their own career obligations simultaneously. Finch (1983) contends that clergy wives are in a similar position to the wives of professionally high profile men, but without the same level of financial comfort or the reflected social prestige the wives of company directors, statesmen and diplomats enjoy. She does note however that many clergy wives

are themselves practising Christians and, as such, feel privileged as well as obligated to invest the necessary time and effort into supporting their husbands.

Although Finch's study was published nearly thirty years ago, studies by subsequent authors such as Morris & Blanton (1998), Hill, et al., (2003), Roberts (2004) and Hileman (2008) into the experiences of clergy wives show that many of Finch's conclusions remain valid. As will be discussed further, Hileman (2008) notes that, since many women now have their own careers, clergy wives may find themselves in the paradoxical position of becoming more enmeshed in their husband's role as the traditional pool of church volunteers dries up.

According to Morris & Blanton (1998) many of the stresses and pressures faced by male clergy such as intrusiveness, role conflict, role ambiguity, lack of family time and lack of social support are also shared by their wives. They conclude that added to this, clergy wives often experience additional stressors such as a lack of privacy, that they too are 'church property' and enmeshment in their husbands' vocation. Added to this, many clergy wives have a perception that their lives are, to a greater or lesser extent, controlled by outside influences. In America at least, many clergy are expected to be mobile and move wherever and whenever they are needed which can hamper their wives' own career path and the friendships she has formed (Hileman, 2008; Hill et al., 2003). Continuing the theme of perceived external control and loss of privacy, as Hileman (2008) and Hill (2008) elaborate, while many jobs require some degree of relocation, few dictate what neighbourhood to live in, if the family live at the parsonage or manse, what house to live in, what chattels to use and where to worship. And, if the family do live in the parsonage, in many cases they are also very conscious or are made very conscious of the fact congregants know when they are home, whose car is in the driveway, if they have visitors, the family's comings and goings,

when the lights in the house are on or off and even which rooms at night are illuminated and therefore being used (Hileman, 2008). Although living in a parsonage or manse helps to some extent in offsetting a low income, many clergy couples prefer to live in their own home away from the church to avoid the stress of congregational imposition, intrusiveness and scrutiny living so close to the church seems to invite (Hill et al., 2003).

Hileman (2008) states that the increase of women in the workforce from the 1980's onwards has seen a drying up of the pool of church volunteers who traditionally were housewives and at home mothers. She notes that the work these volunteers did now increasingly falls to the pastor and the pastor's family. Hileman (2008) explains that the wives of clergy, at least in America, are frequently expected to cook, teach Sunday School, lead Bible studies, clean, set up fellowship halls and rooms for Bible studies and prayer meetings, babysit, sing in the choir, play the piano, be an active member or lead women's groups, direct Christmas plays, visit the sick, do secretarial work and act as an unpaid personal assistant to the pastor. And while many clergy wives share a sense of calling felt by their husbands and enjoy their involvement in church life, others still find the pressure to fulfil these obligations overwhelming and burdensome.

The degree to which clergy wives are implicated in their husband's work can have severe implications for their own sense of identity, self-worth and self-actualisation (Roberts, 2004). Many clergy wives feel they are treated differently and that people formed preconceived ideas as to what they are like due to their husband's occupation. The different treatment they receive is not just limited to members of their husband's congregation but by society in general (Hill et al., 2003). In Robert's (2004) study, one clergy

wife complained that when it came to serious or controversial issues, people expected her to be “a holy noodle head”.

Roberts (2004) found that clergy wives whose identities were overly dependent on her husbands' positions indicated a blurring of boundaries between their own identities and those of their husbands. Such a blurring of boundaries had ramifications for the wives' own psychological health. This study found that such a vulnerability to this blurring of boundaries was not helped by congregations which specifically favoured having a married male minister so they could utilise his wife as part of a package deal, a type of two for the price of one scenario. Such notions echo Finch's (1983) assertion that thirty years ago secular promotions and employee selection practices often pivoted on whether a candidate was married and how suitable and supportive his wife was to her husband's career.

Roberts (2004) argues that some clergy wives are so enmeshed in their husband's role that congregants appear to see them to some extent as interchangeable with their husband. She cites one clergy wife lamenting that when a surgeon is unavailable, nobody expects his wife to step in and perform the surgery or consultation instead, but when her husband is not available she is expected to fill in the gaps with counselling or leading prayer meetings even though she is not trained or qualified to do so. Though this presumptive attitude towards clergy wives undoubtedly places undue pressure on them, it is also arguable that expecting laity to fulfil some of the duties of a minister in this way undermines the training the minister has undertaken and the qualifications he has earned.

2.6 Summary

Much of the literature into the work clergy undertake and the effects on family and social life emphasise the negative aspects of the profession for both the pastor and his spouse and family. Whether this one-sidedness speaks more for a bias in many psychological studies, a bias in the publication of literature or a commentary on the mainly American culture from which most of these studies emanate remains a moot point. A common remark I found in my own research on the work experiences of New Zealand clergy and their wives is that for every disadvantage there are equally numerous advantages to the role, many of which proved to be quite surprising and were never encountered when reviewing the literature.

3. Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Stance

The primary aim of this research is to elucidate the work experiences of a small sample of clergy from a range of denominations. To convey honestly and compassionately the stresses and rewards, freedoms and constraints encountered in this role and show how these are addressed by the ministers and their spouses.

Many researchers argue that Industrial/Organisational psychological research is dominated by quantitative methodologies with a positivist focus (Cunliffe, 2003; Symon & Cassell, 2006). They argue that, while conformity to a dominant paradigm provides ontological and epistemological consistency and a coherent knowledge base on which to build, such a restrictive stance can suppress the diversity of investigation and a deeper, more thorough, understanding of people's social and work experience.

In contrast to much of the organisational psychological research that has been undertaken on church ministry which stems from questionnaires and surveys and concentrates on the negative aspects of this vocation, this study uses a qualitative methodology or, more specifically interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). I have adopted this stance as it presupposes research subjects to be experts on their own experience. In order to gain a clear understanding of ministry and the implications of this role on family and social life, I

needed to employ a methodology flexible enough for the participants to introduce new themes and topics or to use examples to illustrate points they wished to convey. Many of the ministers interviewed took full advantage of this flexibility to stress the rewards of their role and the intrinsic satisfaction they obtain by tending to the spiritual needs of their congregants. This added to the study's strength as it developed a more cohesive picture which better explains why so many ministers and their spouses happily remain in church ministry throughout their lives despite the stresses and hardships documented in much of the academic literature.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis was developed by Jonathan Smith and has grown in popularity over the last couple of decades. As Smith and Osborn (2004) note, interpretative phenomenological analysis aims to explore how people make sense of their personal and social worlds. Emphasis is therefore placed on a participant's subjective experience instead of a more neutral, objective account. The researcher aims to gain an 'insider's perspective' though as Smith and Osborn contend, gaining this perspective is complicated by the researcher's own conceptions which are necessary in order to make sense of another world view. A two stage interpretative or double hermeneutic process therefore comes into play as the participants are making sense of their personal and social worlds and the researcher is making sense of the participants making sense of their world. The experiences of individual participants can then be compared and contrasted to examine emergent themes that may either diverge or converge (J.A. Smith, 2004). As Larkin, Watts & Clifton, (2006) explain, IPA has two main aims, first to understand the participants' world (through the lens of the researcher) and then develop an overtly interpretive account positioning the initial description in wider social, cultural and theoretical contexts. These

authors note that a detailed interpretative phenomenological analysis can also draw on subtext and what the participant omits to say, to glean information as to how they perceive their own world view. In a face to face interview situation, body language, posture and facial expression can also be as telling as what is actually spoken and can highlight or point to inconsistencies between what is said and what is felt.

Although interpretative phenomenological analysis is gaining popularity as a methodology in qualitative research, as Smith (2004) notes, it appears to be used more commonly in health psychology than in organisational psychology. However Smith (2004) believes interpretative phenomenological analysis has the flexibility to be used across all sub disciplines of psychology including industrial/organisational psychology. The key advantage of this methodology is that it provides direct and thorough access to people's work experiences. An example of this is the issue of safety in church which was raised in this study by one minister in particular. This was not an issue covered in the literature and not an issue I had considered. However, as this minister was able to explain, churches attract a diverse range of people including the criminal and anti-social and one of his many duties is to keep his sometimes vulnerable congregants safe. Once this minister was able to explain his stance and concerns, the issue of safety in church makes sense and is almost obvious - so much so it is an important issue for all church ministers to consider and warrants better representation in the literature. The flexibility, openness and relative newness of IPA in an industrial/organisational psychological context can add much to the research base of I/O psychology and broaden our understanding of peoples' specific work experiences.

Smith (2004) notes the characteristic features of IPA are that it is idiographic – concerned with the study of the individual, inductive – it progresses from detailed facts to general principles and illustrative or descriptive.

The idiographic characteristic of IPA enables the researcher to parse the narrative in two ways; firstly, for understanding the participants' own accounts of their experiences and secondly for themes shared by the participants. This then allows for an understanding of idiosyncratic experiences in addition to generic themes. Smith (2004) argues that by examining both the individual and the collective experience of participants IPA responds to critique that much of psychology restricts research to generalised claims while saying little substantive about specific experiences.

Most research involves the interface of inductive and deductive reasoning. With IPA the inductive stance is prominent and is flexible enough to incorporate emergent themes that were not anticipated at the study's commencement. IPA does not attempt to dispute or verify hypotheses already in the literature but, according to Smith (2004), seeks to develop broader research questions to form more expansive data.

From Smith's viewpoint, the key aim of IPA is to contribute to psychology by illuminating or interrogating existing research. Though it can certainly achieve this, IPA also has the potential to introduce new concepts and themes to the existing research thereby contribute directly to existent understanding. IPA involves in depth analysis of a set of case studies which are then examined in relation to existing psychological literature. Smith maintains that the depth, flexibility and richness of data which can be drawn from using IPA methodology can not only add to research, but view existing research from alternative perspectives.

It is for these main reasons the use of IPA was chosen to be well suited to this research. Most extant research describes a work environment in ministry which is highly pressured, lacking in privacy and confounded by a confusion of roles and expectations from both the church hierarchy and the congregants. Add to this the host of assumptions many people in the wider community have regarding the quantity and nature of work a church minister regularly undertakes and it can become easy to gain a distorted picture of clerical work. By using a methodology as flexible as interpretative phenomenological analysis participants were able to introduce new themes and topics which they regarded as an important means to understand both the advantages and disadvantages of their position. This methodology was not found in the literature on clerical work and yet, because interpretive research aims to present research as fairly as possible, I believe it provides a more balanced and moderate perspective of this vocation than much of the research using quantitative methodologies. Moreover, the aim of phenomenology is to reveal subject matter without the imposition of any preconceived assumptions or expectations (Larkin et al., 2006). Given there appears to be an abundance of assumptions regarding clergy, the work they do and their family dynamics, this methodology presents as best suited to providing an accurate account of their personal and vocational experiences.

3.2 Recruitment and Sample Selection

This study had fourteen participants, eight male clergy and six wives of clergy who are laity. Within the study are four married couples. Although the remaining six participants are all married, their spouses were not included in the study. Although two clergy who

participated in this research were relatively new to ministry, the majority had over twenty years' experience in church ministry with many holding senior positions within their parish.

Participants for this study were sourced from the lower North Island and the Coromandel Peninsula. This meant that the experiences of both rural and urban ministers as well as the experiences of ministers of both large and small congregations could be captured.

Most participants were invited via email to participate in this study, though two were telephoned directly. An outline of the nature and purpose of the study was also emailed to participants so each could make an informed decision whether to participate. Also emailed to each participant was a list of their rights as research participants to anonymity, confidentiality as well as the right to decline to answer any questions to stop the interview and withdrawal from the study at any time. Participants who were telephoned directly were given this information at interview. Once potential participants had agreed to participate in the study we arranged a time, day and location of the participants' convenience to meet for interview. Upon meeting, participants were invited to re-read the information sheet outlining the nature and purpose of the study, and asked to sign a consent form and to indicate whether they minded their interviews being tape recorded. Each participant was also asked whether they would like the tapes of their interviews and a copy of the interview transcription to be returned to them.

The email addresses of potential participants were initially provided by an acquaintance who works in this field and, later, participants who had already been interviewed suggested further people so participant recruitment took on a snowball effect. The participants ranged in age from their twenties to their seventies and represented Baptist, Presbyterian,

Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran and Pentecostal denominations. Only one minister was semi-retired, the remainder all currently work in fulltime church ministry.

Eleven of the participants were interviewed in person using a semi-structured interview technique. All interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. The remaining three participants were not able to be interviewed face to face due to time constraints experienced by the participants or due to geographical distance and participated via email interviews. Their consent was assumed by their emailing their responses to the researcher.

Confidentiality has been assured to each participant and, where appropriate, pseudonyms are used in place of real names. Details of personal experiences were also obscured so that participants cannot be identified from examples they have given.

3.3 Table One: Ministers' Details

| Clergy (All names are pseudonyms) | Years in Ministry | Interview Type |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Chris | 3 | Face to Face |
| Ross | 25 | Face to Face |
| George | 25 | Face to Face |
| Ian | 16 | Face to Face |
| Henry | 35 | Face to Face |
| Robert | 37 | Face to Face |
| Liam | 21 | Face to Face |
| Sam | 10 | Email |

| | | |
|--------------|--|--------------|
| | | |
| Clergy Wives | | |
| Colleen | | Face to Face |
| Sue | | Face to Face |
| Elaine | | Face to Face |
| Rachel | | Face to Face |
| Louise | | Email |
| Anna | | Email |
| | | |

3.5 Interviews

A semi structured interview technique was used as it is considered the best way to gain the information needed and provide consistency in the questions asked (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) while enabling the participants the freedom to expand upon the questions posed to them or digress into other areas. As Smith, Harre & Van Langenhove (1995) maintain from the phenomenological viewpoint, the research participant is considered to be the expert on the subject matter being researched and therefore needs to have the freedom and confidence to tell his or her story. This may mean introducing new topics or themes to the research data or new perspectives on already established themes. In this study the introduction of new topics by respondents was encouraged partly out of respect for the participants and partly to gain a more substantive understanding of the issues they deemed to be most pertinent.

Berg (2009), notes the semi structured interview provides the flexibility to adjust the language used in interview, to clarify both questions and answers and to reflect an awareness that individuals view the world in different ways. In this study the tone and the language used at interview was set by the participants and mirrored by the researcher. The language used by older participants tended to be more formal than that used by younger participants and the wives of the ministers tended to use more formal language than the ministers themselves. This may be a reflection of the level of comfort experienced by the participants in being formally interviewed and perhaps the wives of the ministers were less used to being asked about their personal experiences of their role in church ministry.

Semi-structured interviews are the most common method of data collection for interpretative phenomenological analysis (Brocki & Wearden, 2006), though telephone and

email interviews are also becoming more commonly used (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Murray & Harrison, 2004). Murray and Harrison found that email interviews can be more frank, more focused and more reflectively dense than face to face interviews. They attributed this to the fact that participants being interviewed via email have more time to think about their answers and consider different perspectives before responding. Other authors (Reynolds & Prior, 2003) support the use of email interviews when using interpretative phenomenological analysis as a methodology as they question whether face to face interviewing encourages interviewees to respond in a manner they think is more desirable to the interviewer. This could be due to the immediacy of the face to face interview or that participants are picking up on the facial expressions, body language or the appearance of the interviewer to structure their responses. Another reason could be that the level of anonymity that an email interview provides has a disinhibiting effect on participants.

In this research, email interviews proved to be an effective means of circumventing time and geographical restraints to interview participants whilst still achieving security of information, confidentiality and anonymity. The concern some authors raise regarding the desirability factor to augment respondents' answers in the face to face interviews appears to be unfounded in this study as the responses given in the email interviews were largely consistent with those given in the face to face interviews.

In this study, the semi-structured format using open ended questions was still employed with the email interviews to encourage full and thorough answers and as much discussion as possible. However, it was found that conducting semi-structured interviews via email is not without its drawbacks. Even more care needs to be given to the wording of questions in email interviews as it is harder for either the participant or the researcher to seek

clarification. The participant may not fully understand a question and therefore not answer it appropriately. Conversely, without the benefit of tone, intonation or facial expression assumptions in regards to the meaning or the emphasis of a participant's response can be ambiguous and too open to interpretation. The research may consequently become more weighted on the side of the researcher's skewed interpretation of the data than an accurate portrayal of the participant's worldview. Furthermore, as Smith et al., (1995) note, a similar level of empathy and rapport which are key features in the semi-structured, face to face interview are likely to be lost when the interview is conducted by email. People tend to write more formally than they speak and the use of slang and colloquialism in a face to face situation tends to have a softening effect which encourages greater rapport. Again, despite the slight differences in formality of the language used the consistency in many of the participants' accounts whether via email or face to face interviews in this study provides positive assurance that responses were understood accurately.

3.6 The Interview Questions

The interview questions were divided into five broad areas. The first set of questions gathered demographic and background information, for example whether participants had a career prior to entering the ministry, whether they were married and had families prior to entering the ministry, what influenced their decision to enter the ministry and what role did their own upbringing have on their vocation.

The second area addressed job characteristics, the rewards and pressures of a minister's role, hours a week spent on ministry related activities, the roles a church minister fulfils,

how they cope with stress, the role of professional supervision and their relationship to their congregation.

The third area addressed leadership, the changing role of church and community leadership, the role of the church and how clergy are regarded in an increasing secularised society.

The fourth area focused on family, achieving a work/family balance and how the role of a church leader impacts on family life, the management of time and whether the autonomous nature of the work can benefit family life.

The fifth area focused on the social life, where clergy source their friends from, how they relax and how they are treated by both Christians and non-Christians outside of church activities.

I have also explored the role of ministry from the perspective of those married to church based ministers. By doing so I could glean their experience of living with someone who always works non-standard hours, what it is like to be in a family which is the central focus of a small community, whether spouses of ministers feel they are treated differently by congregants and/or the wider community, what, if any, expectations are placed on them by the church or congregants and, if they are incorporated into their husband's role without the benefit of training, income or organisational support such as professional supervision as the literature suggests, how they feel about this.

All face to face interviews were conducted at a location of the participants' choosing and were tape recorded with the permission of the participants. All the couples who participated chose to be interviewed individually in their own home, and the remaining participants elected to be interviewed at their respective churches. Although notes were

also taken during interview as a back-up, the recordings were considered crucial to accurately capture what each respondent said, the language, tone and intonation used. As Seidman (1998) states a participant's thoughts are embodied in the words they use, this can be lost when a researcher paraphrases what a participant has said. Furthermore, capturing original data through tape recording is more consistent with phenomenology as it focuses attention more on the participants' perspectives rather than the researcher's take on what the participants have said at the time of interview.

3.7 Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed and themes generated by the interviewees' responses were identified and encoded. An interpretive analysis of themes enables the fullest sense of the context as a basis for understanding social phenomena (Boyatzis, 1998).

I have followed Smith's (2009) suggestions of an outline for the analysis of data within the interpretative phenomenological analysis framework. IPA is best characterised by the movement from the specific or individual accounts to broader, generic thematic interpretations.

I began by reading and re-reading each transcript to re-familiarise myself with the material and the assertions, principles and examples each participant provided. A close analysis of each transcript with particular attention to experiential concerns, understandings and insights were be made. Attention was also made to dialogue between myself and each participant and how trust and rapport was built and used to divulge more information and a deeper understanding of the participant's perceptions. As an example, one of the

participants mentioned he was uncomfortable being around people who are overly religious. Such an assertion did show some level of trust as, if I was overly religious, such a statement could have caused offence. As it did not and I in fact found such a statement to be completely understandable this assertion had the opposite effect of showing we were on the same wavelength. Initial notations were then made examining semantic content and language usage and contextualising their comments and perceptions with any contradictions, hesitations or emotional responses noted.

I then identified emergent thematic patterns within the experiential accounts and focused on how these created a deeper level of understanding and how thematic patterns were used to conceptualise and order the participants' worldview. I also looked at convergence and divergence of thematic patterns with themes recorded in the literature. I did this initially as a single case analyses and then as cross case analyses. The order of themes, at this stage, was commensurate with the order in which they emerged at interview.

I then focused on how the themes fitted together. By organising the relationships between the themes I took them out of chronological order and structured them in a way which provided the best means of understanding each participant's vocational perceptions and implications. This was achieved by identifying abstract connections between themes or, as Smith et al., (2009) state, developing super-ordinate themes by looking for similarities to form thematic clusters. Most of the participants in this study had accumulated a wealth of experience and therefore I believe contextualisation is important, the emergence of themes as participants progressed through their careers and obtained experience and confidence was also commented on.

Initially each case study or participant account was treated as an individual entity to maintain the idiographic integrity crucial to the IPA methodology. Once each case study was completed a thematic analysis was undertaken across all fourteen case studies to look for thematic similarities and discrepancies in each account and to see what the overarching themes in this study are. I focused on how themes help to illuminate participant's perceptions and how themes drawn in one case may unravel meaning in another participant's account.

3.8 Methodological Limitations

The key limitation of this study is the relatively small number of participants. Qualitative research typically uses a smaller sample of participants than quantitative research (O'Leary, 2004) and, as such, the generalisability of qualitative research can become questionable. Many of the themes that have emerged from the interviewee responses regarding the disadvantages of church ministry in this study are consistent with those emanating from the literature indicating a good level of external validity. That participants also described the advantages of this work could be attributed to the questions posed to them and the freedom they had to offer balanced responses – an advantage of the method of data capture that was used.

A limitation to Interpretative Phenomenological Interpretation itself is that the interpretation the researcher gives to the data may be influenced by the researcher's own experiences and understandings. Though to some extent this is to be expected, in an extreme situation this could have the effect of warping the original message to convey

information the research participant never intended. Arguably this is more likely to occur with subject material the researcher did not fully understand or in instances where the research participant has difficulty in articulating their experiences or thoughts. Another limitation to IPA is that multiple interpretations could be derived from the data that, due to the researcher's limited experience or understanding of the subject, were not fully examined or even mentioned. In the case of this specific research I believe the consistencies between the accounts of the participants rule out the possibility that I have misunderstood or misinterpreted any of the participants' intended meaning. Additionally this potential limitation to the methodology used was eased by the fact that the participants themselves were all highly educated, intelligent and articulate. Specifically in the case of the ministers interviewed, these men are professional speakers, they have turned articulating information into a livelihood and, as such, all are extremely proficient at communicating exactly what they mean.

Another limitation to this study is that it restricts the exploration of work experiences to male clergy and their wives. It does not examine the experiences of female clergy and their spouses or investigate whether the husbands of female clergy are expected to take a similarly active role or be as visible a presence as the wives of male clergy.

This study is also limited to male clergy who were married. The purpose of this was to examine how work/life/family balance is achieved (or not) in a role which is highly autonomous and does not adhere to standard working hours.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the interview findings. It begins by reporting the ministers' perspectives of their role and the impact this has on their lives and then moves on to consider the perspectives of their wives. A key theme weaving through both sets of interviews concerns the complex relationships ministers and their wives must maintain with their congregants, the larger community, senior members within the church, church governing bodies and their own families.

The analysis of the ministers' interviews begins by discussing what drew many of the respondents to the ministerial role, the advantages of this position such as the significant relationships ministers are able to foster with people, the access and insights ministers gain from their contact with others' lives, the experience of living and working in such a close knit community of people, the variation of work ministers experience and the freedom the role allows in practical terms.

Also examined will be the unique set of pressures church ministers face. How the role becomes a way of life and how this impacts on social life and family life. The changing role of church ministry as society becomes more secular, ministerial leadership and the challenges of having much responsibility but no real authority, the reliance they have on the support, co-operation and goodwill of others and the problems which can occur such as conflicts with parishioners and workplace bullying when this support, goodwill and co-operation is not there. Finally, this section explores the ways in which ministers perceive their partners' roles as clergy wives.

Because of the pivotal role they play in ministry, this study explored the role of wives of clergy. Through these interviews it becomes clear the impact of ministry on identity, social and family life extends well beyond that of the minister himself. The benefits as well as the pervasive pressures and expectations these women experience due to their husbands' vocation is examined and interpreted. What emerges is that many women were unprepared for the myriad responsibilities they were expected to assume. The prevailing attitude of the Church and many congregations appears to be a minister's wife will be enmeshed in her husband's vocation to a much greater extent than the wives of other professionals, she will assume a leadership role within the church, behave a certain way, be available when needed and for whatever is needed and do so without expecting any remuneration. This section describes these expectations and examines how these women have responded to them, how they believe they are regarded by the Church and by congregants and what they believe needs to be in place to feel valued and appreciated for the work they do and the time they dedicate to their church.

4.2 The Ministers' Perspectives

4.3 The Ministry as a Calling

All ministers described their role as a calling as opposed to a career. Whilst the ministers all had careers prior to entering the ministry, all based their decision to leave these careers and enter the ministry on a deep seated belief they were being called by God to do so. One minister aptly described what such a calling feels like by stating,

“Imagine you have a bungy cord around your waist, that’s what the calling is like. You can ignore the calling, even run away from it, but you’ll only get so far before you’ll eventually be yanked back”.

Such a comment implies that, despite the apparent strength of this calling coupled with the belief it is from God, there is often an initial reluctance to enter ministry training. Most of the respondents in this study waited years before embarking on ministerial training despite feeling a conviction that this is what they were destined to do. This indicates that such a calling may not be wholly welcomed or that there is a tendency to try other careers to be certain ministry is where they feel they belong. Robert, a minister in a small city parish commented he knew he would become a minister whilst still in secondary school. Even so, he trained and then worked as a secondary school teacher prior to entering ministry. Another minister commented he had remained in the banking industry for eight years after he felt called by God to enter the ministry.

Such seeming reluctance may be unsurprising given that nearly half the ministers interviewed had not been raised in Christian or religious households and so had only converted to Christianity as adults. Entering the ministry therefore would hardly have been an expected vocational choice. Moreover, many commented their wives or girlfriends at the time were not keen on the idea with reactions ranging from “very upset” or “horrified”. Nor did these ministers enjoy any particular support or encouragement into this vocation from their parents with a number of them commenting their parents could not understand why they would want to be a minister and had wanted them to do something more financially secure. Despite these considerations one minister described this calling as a sense of inner conviction and another viewed it more as intuitive,

“it was not so much a question of ‘if’ I would become a minister but ‘when’.”

After being invited by the senior pastor of his church to join the ministry his initial reaction was ‘oh, this is it’ as though during the years preceding he had merely been waiting for his cue to step up. As one minister put it, “to say ‘no’ was to say ‘no’ to God”. The comments made by the ministers, indicate that such a conviction is unlikely to simply fade away.

Most ministers stated that their best piece of advice to those thinking of embarking on ministerial training is to view the ministry as a lifelong calling. As Liam remarked,

“It’s not like a stint in the army, so I think you really have to test it. This [the ministry] is what I keep coming back to and what I’m happy to keep coming back to”.

4.4 Rewards of Being a Church Minister

4.5 Relationships with Parishioners and the Wider Community

The ministers all agreed that there were numerous advantages to this role. For the ministers, the primary advantage they described was the accessibility they have to people’s lives. That they are welcomed into people’s lives and have the “privilege” of fostering significant relationships with such a large and diverse range of people. Most of the ministers commented on the enjoyment they derive from participating in the significant events of people’s lives. The births of children, marriages and the deaths of loved ones, are all instances when ministers are often sought out and welcomed. Although they do not enjoy the deaths or the distress the deaths of loved ones cause people, many ministers remarked they find that comforting and supporting people through these times to be a

privilege. One minister commented people whom he barely knows will seek his advice and help during crisis times such as marriage breakdowns or problems with their children's behaviour. He remarked he is able to gain an understanding of them and their lives that perhaps even their closest friends do not share and it is this level of trust and accessibility into the lives of others that he finds most rewarding.

Despite this, four ministers mentioned they have noticed that in recent times church ministers need to earn the trust of others more than they had to in the past. Such a comment could be a reflection of the abuses of implicit trust some church leaders have perpetrated and/or a result of the growing secularisation of society and the corresponding decrease in Church influence and church authority.

Another advantage many of the ministers mentioned was that it is a highly communicative role. Much of their role involves leading, instructing and guiding people and it is possibly of little coincidence that many clergy have backgrounds in teaching. Robert, the minister of a small city church, stated his greatest satisfaction lies in the opportunity this role provides him to communicate a way of life he has found to be purposeful and meaningful and to "hopefully" give people a sense of direction and purpose. Other ministers commented on the satisfaction they gain from seeing people's lives change, from helping people overcome barriers in their lives such as addictions, unemployment and relationship problems.

Yet another advantage of the role most of the ministers commonly referred to was the benefit of being a part of a caring and loving community. Although much is written in the literature of the difficulties of having little or no privacy, most of the ministers I spoke to were quick to acknowledge that the drawbacks of such a public role are balanced with advantages. An example of this which one minister gave was that when his son was

involved in a serious accident, literally *thousands* of people from around New Zealand contacted him to enquire of his son's welfare. Such an incident demonstrates the speed in which news travels, but also the interest and depth of feeling for the wellbeing of this family that so many people took the time to enquire about the accident and lend support. This incident also demonstrates that though people and families may move on from a parish or area, the relationships ministers and their families form with members of their community are often significant enough to endure time and geographical distance. Many people develop working relationships with thousands of people over the course of their careers, but few could claim having a network of people so large who care and take such an interest in their wellbeing. It is probable that such a network is attributable to the central role ministers play in the so many of the pivotal, dramatic and emotional events of people's lives.

Another minister reported a similar example of communal support. He noted an occasion when his granddaughter had been born in England after a difficult birth which had caused serious complications. He and his wife decided she would fly to England to be with their daughter while he remained in New Zealand due to financial constraints. He shared this information with some members of his congregation. After much persuading by the congregants he decided to join his wife. He concluded with much emotion that upon their return from England a cheque had been placed on their dining table that offset the cost of their trip. The love, support and generosity his congregants showed him still moves him six years later. This minister's point was that, had his family not been key members of the church community, few people would have known their plight and it is unlikely he and his family would have experienced such an overwhelming show of support.

4.6 Work Variety

Four ministers commented on the variety of work they regularly undertake and the number of roles that are incorporated under the umbrella of church minister. Whilst the variety of their work can be challenging, often it is this variety that ministers claimed extends them and keeps the role interesting.

Robert claimed that listening to the concerns of others is a large part of the role, but this too is coupled with another role to educate and to challenge other people's beliefs and understandings. Ross, the minister of a large city church stated for him the challenge is to listen and remain empathic without injecting himself and his own experiences too much into the dialogue.

Robert stated that because he is dealing with the general public he never really knows what might happen. He cited an instance recently when he was contacted by a transsexual person who wanted to be re-baptised as a woman. Robert stated he had to explain that a person only gets baptised once, however they held a small ceremony for this person to acknowledge she had already been baptised and is now known as another person.

Liam concurred that he might have an appointment with someone,

“which involves untangling some simplistic philosophical concepts and the next appointment is ‘we’ve just found out our son’s a paedophile and he’s in court next week what do we do?’ and the appointment after that might be a newly engaged couple who want pre-marital counselling, or someone who’s just been diagnosed with terminal cancer.”

There appears to be no limit to the range and scope of issues people present to church ministers. Though Liam stated that increasingly he is presented with issues outside the scope of his expertise and he needs to refer people to those better qualified, most of the ministers commented they enjoyed the variety of queries they encounter.

4.7 Role Autonomy

Apart from the intrinsic satisfaction the respondents experience in their role, many also commented on more practical considerations such as the autonomy of the position. The high level of flexibility their work provided enabled them to take time off during the week to attend their children's or grandchildren's school events such as end of year productions and sports days or to help out on school field trips. Ministers Chris and Liam both commented that this autonomy allowed them to take their young children to school and, if their children were upset about going to school, they did not feel any urgency to dash off to be in time for work, but unlike many fathers, had the freedom to stay and comfort their children.

All the ministers remarked they could take a morning off or a day or, as one minister mentioned, if he felt like having a little sleep in the middle of the day he could do so. Having such an autonomous position enables church ministers, to a large extent, set the schedule and pace of their work allowing them perhaps to feel more in control of their days.

A high level of autonomy also enables ministers the flexibility to mould their role to align better with their own world view and self-identity. As well, they can focus their ministry on areas they view as important.

One minister, Ian, stated the biggest advantage of his role is that he is paid to be himself and spend his days doing what he enjoys, what he derives meaning from and what he believes he is naturally good at. Ian is the pastor of a church in a small provincial town. He claimed he enjoys the freedom of his role and in summer he can, and often does, take a service without wearing shoes.

Ian prefers to work with youth and to this end he has gone into the local school and works with at risk children – children either from dysfunctional families, or those who are known to police. He has since established a very good working relationship with the school principal because by working with these particular children, the church is taking a load off the school by helping them deal with anti-social behaviour and delinquency. Ian stated that this has led to liaising with the Corrections Department and the Police and becoming a Community Service agent. His church now organises voluntary work for young offenders and by doing so his church has access to young people and their families who need help and support. Through liaising with Corrections and the Police and CYFs Ian realised that all of these organisations were mainly dealing with the same families. These organisations now meet with Ian and other church staff on an approximately monthly basis within this small town so they can affect a co-ordinated approach.

“And we’ve got sixty or seventy kids now coming to youth group ... it’s huge considering we’ve only got two hundred at the school”

What it also means is they can organise events where these young people will be safe, supervised and off the streets and where they will be in an environment which encourages pro-social values and exposes them to alternative values and attitudes to what they are possibly learning at home. Ian believes it is the flexibility of the role of a church minister

that has enabled his church to reach out to those in need and to be at the centre of their local community. He stated that one of the biggest advantages of his role is that when he can see a need within his community he has the resourcing and the standing within the community to initiate action to address that need.

“If there’s an itch there we can scratch it”.

Another example of what Ian and his church have been able to achieve in their local community are parenting evenings. According to Ian these have been very successful due primarily to the fact that the church was able to organise older members of the congregation to go into the homes and provide free babysitting while the parents attended these parenting evenings. As Ian noted, this not only enabled parents to attend this course and gave them a mentor for future help or advice if needed, it also showed the older congregants they had a vital and appreciable role to play within their own community.

“When I first arrived this church was kind of on the fringe. Like a lot of churches end up on the fringe looking in, now we’re actually in the middle of the community. We’re not just banging on about God, but living our lives”.

Ian’s role as a church minister has provided him with an avenue to utilise his obvious skills, interests and energy to draw the community together for mutual benefit and provide practical help for hundreds of people. Ian has demonstrated how a church minister’s position can be utilised to facilitate a hands-on, grass roots approach to building a stronger, safer and more caring community. It appears he has also been instrumental in building relationships between people within his community that may otherwise not have had the opportunity to interact and clearly he gains much satisfaction from this. Ian may also be

sharing some gentle criticism of other churches which perhaps say the right things but provide no practical help to those in the community who need it most and receive little but disinterest or scorn from the community in return.

4.8 Pressures

4.9 Living the Role

When speaking to the ministers, particularly in regards to how they perceive their role as a minister, it becomes apparent that ministry is more than a career. A career implies a distinct facet of life which can be separated from other areas of life such as family, social life or outside interests. What someone does as a career is often incidental to the rest of their life. The overall impression the ministers gave was that ministry is a role that is constantly lived and therefore a role they must be mindful of at all times. Many ministers noted the awareness they have of the expectations both Christians and non-Christians hold of how ministers should behave; that they are expected to “live [their] faith” and “set an example at all times”. Ian stated he obviously cannot go out and get drunk and though he might have a beer on a Friday night with friends because he enjoys having *a* beer, some people will struggle with him doing even this. This implies that ministers are aware that they might be being watched at any given time and, as ministers, they are set apart from other members of the community.

Additionally, because ministers are highly visible and are figures others turn to during crises, there is an additional pressure to always appear calm and collected. As Robert pointed out,

“Whatever it is you’ve got to cope. No one wants to see a minister going to pieces. I can recall times when I’ve let a little bit out and it’s been counterproductive because people get upset and concerned. So much of their security is wrapped around your being together.”

Although many of the ministers commented on the deep and significant relationships they forge with others, Robert touches upon the one-sidedness of many of these relationships. The sympathy and comfort ministers show people is often not reciprocated. As Ross stated, *“The main thing is you’re there for others”*.

Robert concluded this is particularly pertinent in a bereavement situation. Often the minister has known the deceased for years, sometimes decades and given their unique role, may have known the deceased better than many of the other congregants. One minister mentioned that in these circumstances he will hold it together throughout, but a week after the funeral he will revisit the grave site alone and “have a cry”.

Liam, a minister from a large city church stated he learnt to cope with this aspect of the role by realising he is there to play a role and to fulfil that role well he sometimes needs to detach himself personally and emotionally.

“Like in the Catholic Church, when someone says ‘get a priest’ they’re not asking for Jack, they’re asking for a role, an act. So when you fulfil a role as a priest you have the ability to disengage yourself from that role Whereas when you’re going [to a funeral] as Jack or Jane and you’re engaging as friends then you’re going with all the emotions and in ministry you can’t do that all the time, you can’t, you’d kill yourself. One of the nice things about putting on the robes or the dog collar, you’re putting on the position, a bit like a cop or ambulance officer.”

Liam likened the role in this respect to roles police or ambulance officers fulfil with the robes or dog collars similar to the uniforms worn by these other professionals. The clothing makes them all instantly recognisable in their respective roles, but has the added benefit of enhancing the ability to separate themselves from everyone else and disengage from emotionally charged situations so they can perform “the act” they are required to undertake.

Quite apart from the role inhibiting any public expression of personal sadness or depression, in reverence to their role, they must also refrain from knee-jerk reactions to annoyances and instead enact a calm and measured response. George, a minister with a very large congregation stated that even little things matter, for example he “must remain gracious and smile and wave”, if someone cuts him off in traffic, because the motorist he gets visibly irate with could be someone from his congregation or someone who knows he is a church leader. Most ministers agreed that they have to be very careful of what they say particularly in social circumstances lest what they say is misconstrued or taken out of context. Robert attributed such cautiousness to the role being so much in the public domain, however this does not explain it entirely. Many public figures such as politicians, celebrities and sportspeople are routinely drunk, obnoxious and flippant despite being held up as role models and leaders. Seemingly, after such a spectacle an equally public apology and show of contrition is often all that is needed to calm the waters. I would posit that the difference for church leaders is that their behaviour reflects directly back on the Church and, given its high moral teachings, the Church must be respectable and *seen to be respectable* to have any validity or credibility.

One minister, Chris stated he sometimes feels there is a fine line between being authentic and conforming to the conservative, mild mannered, “straight-laced” image many people perceive ministers to be like and probably to some extent, what many people are comfortable with. As Ian stated,

“It’s easy to offend, especially if you don’t fit the mould.”

Chris concluded that although in reality church ministers will,

“endeavour to live out their faith and support others to do the same, the expectations often placed on church ministers can be unrealistic for the average human being to live up to”.

Robert concurred that as a minister he did not feel as free as others might to express an opinion or to just relax and go along with a conversation. He uses the general rule that he would not say anything either in public or in conversation that he is not comfortable with being repeated. Such sentiments imply ministers need to be extremely careful about what they talk about and whom they take into their confidence. It also implies that inherent to the role is a marked level of self-discipline even on a social basis and outside of official ‘work’ time.

4.10 Social Life

The constraints whether self-imposed or imposed by societal mores expressed by many of the ministers suggest church ministry can be socially isolating. This section explores whether making friends with congregants is advisable or even possible and describes some of the impediments some of the ministers found. It also examines the opportunities church ministers of differing denominations have of meeting and socialising with each other. The preconceived ideas many people have of church ministers will also be focused on as will the

stereotypes many ministers are subject to and how the ministers in this study responded to these.

4.11 Making Friends with Congregants

Entirely consistent with the literature, respondents were split as to whether they felt they could, or should, form friendships with members of their congregations. Two ministers argued that regular and continued contact with people with similar ideas and values is the basis of most friendships and therefore the formation of friendships with selected members of the congregation is likely to be inevitable. Those who had made friends with congregants saw no problem with this as long as these people were not seen to be favoured and others did not appear to be excluded.

Three other ministers contended that you can be friendly with congregants but not friends with them because the minister is there to perform a specific function. According to a number of respondents, being a church leader can mean having to make unpopular decisions and a minister's priority should always be the protection of the community/congregation rather than the protection of the individual. It is this responsibility that the minister has for the congregation that can potentially conflict with friendships made with individual congregants if those congregants behave in ways that are either illegal or immoral. As an example one minister recalled having to ask a prominent and popular church member to stand down from a high position within the church due to that person's battle with an addiction. Clearly, this is a delicate matter. The person concerned is deserving of sensitivity and discretion over their struggle whilst the other congregants are no doubt concerned or at least curious as to why this person is no longer working in this capacity. Had this person been a close friend of the minister, not only would

asking him to stand down from the position and take responsibility for his addiction have been difficult, not disclosing the problem to other congregants could feasibly lead to suspicion and mistrust levelled at the minister. Sensitivity and discretion could be misconstrued as conspiracy.

George, explained that he is wary of making friends within his congregation as it can cause a conflict of interest. He argued that needing people socially or needing to feel popular can compromise the ability to effectively lead and inhibit one from communicating honestly with congregants through fear of losing their friendship. He also recalled instances where cliques and then factions can form within specific churches due to the pastor forming close friendships with certain people or groups of people.

“There can be huge falling outs in small churches if you have a group of people who are suffocatingly close and one of them is the pastor and he has to make some hard decisions. There’s a huge likelihood you could lose some friends”.

Others believed whether to form friendships with parishioners or not is a moot point due to the fact that they often experience a psychological barrier with congregants which inhibit genuine friendships from forming in the first place. These ministers stated that egalitarian values aside, the minister is a focal point in any church and as such is not really on an equal footing with other church members. This imbalance can cause the minister to be viewed as a remote figure by many congregants and even church staff. One minister commented “you act as though you have lots of friends in church”, but clearly the reality is different. This ‘act’ is probably for the congregants’ benefit rather than the minister’s insofar it helps people feel comfortable and provides them with a sense of belonging in addition to giving each church a sense of cohesiveness.

4.12 Socialising with Other Ministers

Although many ministers had regular or semi-regular contact with other church ministers in their local area, only one minister stated he had formed a friendship with another minister and they normally see each other on a weekly basis. Opportunities to meet other ministers exist through organisations such as the Christian Leaders' Association and even informal gatherings organised by local ministers, though as one minister remarked, he does not necessarily want to be friends with people in the same line of work as he is. Although this can have its advantages, being around others sympathetic to the pressures of work, the obvious disadvantage is conversation can become restricted to work related topics and the function of social life to give oneself a rest from work becomes nullified. Chris, the minister of a relatively small church of about 100 congregants, noted that because of the number of churches in his local area, he usually encounters new people whenever he attends any of these formal meetings and feels this can have an inhibiting effect. As Chris remarked, it takes some time to establish trust with people, even with other ministers and he is not comfortable "unburdening" himself to people whom he does not know well. Further, he believes this is an unnatural type of relationship. Although, these gatherings appear to offer the opportunity to meet others in similar circumstances, it presumes there is a level of rapport and familiarity which simply may not exist. It could be that some ministers find such gatherings contrived and presumably if the rapport and familiarity already existed they would individually make arrangements to get together on a social and informal basis.

The general impression the ministers gave when speaking about their social lives was that they spend most of their spare time with their families. It appears that for many, it is only

their families whom they can trust implicitly and one minister regarded his siblings as his closest friends. Few mentioned having many friends not related to them and those who did indicated these were friendships they had formed prior to entering the ministry.

4.13 Preconceived Ideas of Ministers

Having to be somewhat guarded in their interactions with people, even those whom they have known for years, must hinder the formation of close friendships. Another and perhaps greater impediment would appear to be the preconceived ideas many people have of church ministers.

Liam recalled an incident on a plane when he was chatting to a fellow passenger and all was going well until the passenger asked him what he did for a living. Upon telling him he was a church minister the passenger immediately put his headphones back on and ceased talking to him. Another minister stated he is aware that his presence in a group will not only change the tenor of the conversation but also the actual atmosphere will change. Robert stated that,

“As soon as you become a minister, a professional Christian, you immediately put a label on yourself and as soon as you do that you give people the opportunity to dismiss you, to put you in a box.... you immediately put yourself at a significant social disadvantage because of the preconceptions people have.”

Henry, a semi-retired minister, remarked that when meeting people for the first time,

“you have to demonstrate you don’t identify with the fundamentalists”.

Most people find those with extreme views off-putting. Nobody likes to be brow beaten or have somebody else's strong opinions imposed on them. It would appear there is a presumption by many that, given his vocation, a church minister will naturally be explicitly religious or view everything in a religious context. The mere thought of this can make some people angry or, at the very least, uncomfortable.

However, this apparently goes for ministers too. Robert mentioned that,

"Though it might sound strange, I'm not comfortable being around people who are overly religious".

Robert conceded that overly zealous Christians can have an effect on others that is counter-productive. Far from generating interest in their faith they can unintentionally discourage people from learning more or ever consider attending a church service. However, being a minister, it is plausible Robert may be targeted by those inclined to voice strong religious opinions believing they have found a kindred spirit or someone religiously knowledgeable enough to debate with. Robert believes being overly religious is likely to isolate an individual and undermine any attempts to effectively communicate with others.

Similar to all the ministers interviewed, George and Chris both acknowledged they were well aware there is a preconceived idea of what they will be like by both people from the church and outside it. Like all the ministers interviewed, these ministers dealt with this by largely ignoring it. George stated,

"I'm not false, I want to be genuine and people get what they see. I think it's important not to be hypocritical in the role, to be one thing in front of my kids and another here at church, that's probably the number one thing that will drive your kids away from church".

George honed in on the damage hypocrisy can cause children and how this can distort their later perceptions of Christianity – a fact dealt with in depth in the literature. However, a falseness or pretension can often be picked up by others as well including members of the congregation. To be all things to all people and conform to unrealistic preconceptions is to risk becoming disingenuous and thereby sabotaging any credibility, not only the minister's personal credibility but also the credibility of what he preaches. By ignoring the perceptions others may have of them these ministers also avoid the trap of trying hard to counter the negative stereotypes church ministers are subject to and again coming across as insincere.

Liam stated people generally expect him to be one of three things,

“either they will assume ministers are comic Rowan Atkinson type characters, will think a minister will be a self-righteous drip or they will be genuinely fascinated.”

Certainly, as far as some people are concerned there is a stigma associated with the Church and anything or anyone connected with it. Although the literature claimed that one of the biggest impediments to a social life many ministers face is their unsociable work hours, for the ministers who participated in this study, the unsociable work hours were more a disadvantage for family time, not so much social life. It appears from this study the problem many ministers experience with having a social life is more to do with forming genuine friendships in the first place rather than maintaining them.

4.14 Family Life

Church ministry impacts the immediate family like few other vocations. This section will examine the pressures extended to the children of clergy from the ministers' perspective, the impact of working non-standard hours on family life and finding a work/family balance - the common compulsion to prioritise parish needs over time with family and the boundaries many ministers have established to prevent this from becoming the status quo. Also discussed are the difficulties some ministers face when they wish to take a vacation, the prudence required about discussing church related topics in front of their children and the difficulties of dealing with anti-social church attendees and the danger these people present to others including the minister's family.

4.15 The Pressure on Clergy Children

Often the children of ministers are set apart in the minds of many people and, as nearly all the ministers in this study commented, are frequently held to higher standards of behaviour than other children. Liam noted,

"They have a role in church too, they're not just ordinary kids in church".

Whether they like it or not the children of clergy often have a high profile within their church and, in smaller towns, within the local community. Much has been written in the literature regarding the unique pressures that are placed upon the children of clergy and the harsher criticism they are subject to if their behaviour falls out of line. This study indicates that the pressure to be well behaved is not generated from their parents but from the

church community and in some cases even the wider community. Many of the parents in this study made special mention of the lengths they have gone to ensure their children receive a 'normal' upbringing. These range from resisting pressure from some congregants to impose impossibly high standards of behaviour on young children during church services, to deliberation as to where they send their children to school.

Though Chris, who is the father of two preschool children, knows full well young children are not adept at sitting still and remaining quiet he is well aware that some members of his congregation take a close interest in the behaviour of his children during church services,

"I know there are comments that come back, not to me but to my wife that reflect an interesting theme and show that people are watching and do take notice of what's going on in our family. Some don't like that my children will try to hang out with me while I'm trying to preach a sermon or run through my legs during prayer."

Chris' wife is likely to relay the comments made about their children to her husband and no doubt this is the intention. It is interesting that Chris is not spoken to directly and this may be due to him being regarded as more a remote figure than his wife, or that a form of subtle manipulation is at play. Chris' wife may be viewed as a more malleable figure and/or, as the mother, she may be regarded as more responsible for their children's behaviour. Either way, Chris' remark shows that comments about his children's behaviour have been numerous enough to ensure the family is made aware the behaviour of all four of them is being appraised.

When speaking of different behavioural expectations of clergy children Ross recalled being telephoned by a video shop attendant when his teenaged son, along with a group of friends, tried to rent a film of questionable content. As Ross observes,

“It [the lack of anonymity] is double edged. On the one hand people are looking out for your kids, if your kids do something they don’t think is appropriate, you’re likely to hear about it”

Clearly the video store attendant knew who was in his shop and how to contact his father, but additionally he felt emboldened to do so because as a church minister, Ross’ values are well known. From the son’s perspective though, the key disadvantage of being the son of a church minister is likely to be that he is singled out, embarrassed and cannot get away with the same behaviour as his friends.

George also commented on the raised expectations people in the community have of ministers’ children. He stated he and his wife deliberately sent their children to a state school rather than the local Christian school so their children would have greater anonymity and would not be expected to be model pupils.

“Kids don’t ask for their father to be a pastor and I think they have extra pressure to behave themselves and to live up to some sort of standard that people put on them. We like to think our kids are normal kids, they can behave or misbehave. If they misbehaved in that school it would be known a lot more than if they did that in a secular, state school.”

Such comments show an appreciation for the fact that although a minister chooses this way of life and the pressures attached to it, their children do not. Several respondents commented that unrealistic pressure to behave or conform to an ideal stereotype could

deter their children from later embracing Christianity. George disclosed that when his daughter was a teenager she struggled with the image many have of what a pastor's daughter *should* be like, and resented the presumption she would be nice, good and wholesome. He implied with careful management of this issue and by encouraging his children to be themselves, they have not been tempted to reject Christianity despite the pressures placed on them by others.

"They're all married now, and all church going. I'm not boasting, just saying it's all worked out great!"

Ross stated that he would periodically ask his children what it was like to have a minister for a father so he could gauge how they were coping with the different treatment they often received. It appears that there is little a church minister can do to prevent the expectations or stereotypes others may place on their children or shield their children from being aware of these presumptions. Seemingly, the ministers interviewed have all managed this issue similarly by supporting and encouraging their children to be themselves and accepting their children as they are. This extended to enrolling their children in a secular school as George and his wife did, to ensure their children would spend the majority of their time in an environment free of unrealistic expectations of behaviour or a constant feeling they are being watched.

Apparently however, at least within some congregations, the failure of clergy families to meet traditional expectations can have surprising benefits for the church minister. As Liam remarked,

“Twenty or thirty years ago if your teenaged daughter became pregnant or your son was arrested for drugs you’d be obligated to resign, because there was a social stigma attached to that behaviour and so it would show bad parenting on your part. Nowadays if your teenager gets pregnant it’s like ‘ooh so is ours!’ Stuff like that almost becomes a badge of honour that enables you to do your job even better, because you can relate.”

Another minister mentioned he had recently disclosed to his congregation some problems he had been experiencing with his son and was “stunned” by the support he received from many people after the service.

Disclosing problems or stresses within their own families demonstrates ministers too experience real world problems and therefore can readily relate to the problems encountered by other families. In addition I would argue this type of self-disclosure is disarming and establishes a type of psychological reciprocity. Others can likewise feel comfortable disclosing shameful or painful incidents within their own families without fear of judgement or condemnation about their ability to parent. While it is safe to say much sympathy and empathy may be shown to the minister, the same may not be said for their wayward sons or daughters. Feasibly, the harsher criticism they receive stems from a prevailing feeling that this child has come from a loving and stable family with a good grounding in morals and Christian values. Consequently, there is no excuse for less than stellar behaviour.

4.16 Work/Family Balance

Finding a viable balance between work and family was one of the primary difficulties ministers in this study mentioned. Henry, father of five and a semi-retired minister from a rural town stated that, in retrospect,

“I wouldn’t have sacrificed the family so much. I think there’s a compulsion to put the parish first.”

Henry’s wife, was a fulltime stay at home mother. He appeared ambivalent as to whether his ministry influenced her decision to end a teaching career, but conceded “I think if we had only had a couple of kids it would have been different”. His admission that he often placed the needs of the parish first despite having a large family indicates his wife was left with a disproportionate amount of parental responsibilities. Sacrificing time with his family to be with his parish was the only regret Henry spoke of. Even so, it is easy to understand how, in the short term at least, visiting a terminally ill congregant in hospital or helping a couple reconcile their marriage could appear more important and take priority over playing with your children or helping them with their homework, particularly when the other parent is available to do those tasks. Henry’s comments however imply that this pattern can quickly become the norm.

Ross likened the role to that of a farmer insofar as the work is never finished. He claimed he does not often feel guilty about being unable to complete everything that needs to be done for his parish, but conceded that sometimes guilt can seep in.

“There’s always more you could do, so you’ve got to live with that and somehow keep boundaries around that. You just have to say ‘well that’s all I can do today’ or ‘I didn’t get to

do that today, I'll try to do that tomorrow'. The classic example is of someone dying and you don't actually get there before they die. You just have to accept you can't do everything, you do your best and that's to be good enough".

Seemingly at times, church ministry can involve too much work for one person to comfortably handle. As an extreme example, one minister spoke of having to conduct twenty five funerals in eight weeks. On occasion, church ministers will inevitably feel guilty either for disappointing a congregant or being absent from family. Unlike other types of work, church ministers do not have the benefit of a manager who can control their flow of work or reallocate work to other colleagues. Though many ministers rely on the support of laypeople within their own parish, there are some tasks such as conducting weddings and funerals, visiting the very ill or dying, or comforting the bereaved which people specifically want a minister for.

Other ministers concurred that being on call can also mean sacrificing time spent with family and often children will view this as their father putting the needs of the church first. Henry recalled having to cut family holidays short to return home to conduct a funeral. On one occasion his young son chose to attend the funeral with him than remain on holiday at the beach just so he could spend some time with his father.

The ministers spoken to stated, that traditionally Saturdays and Mondays were days off. However in reality Saturdays are often spent working or writing the Sunday sermons. All the ministers had at least one sermon to write a week, many had two or three for the separate services on Sunday. As Henry recalled,

"It wasn't great fun having visitors on Saturday when I had two sermons to write for Sunday".

Henry mentioned that on occasion he and his wife would take their children out of school on a Monday just so they could have some time together as a family. This shows the lengths one particular family would go to spend time alone together. Most of the ministers agreed that 'theoretically' they have two days off a week. However, most worked at least 50 hours a week and often there is too much to do to consistently take both days off. Additionally, because the weeks are so busy, Saturday is often their only chance to write their sermons. Even so, the two days off a week allocated to ministers are not two consecutive days, but instead envelope their busiest day. As a consequence, these days off are unlikely to provide the same break from work that weekends afford most people. As Ian claimed,

"I don't get the equivalent of a weekend, but I do get some time to myself".

When discussing work/family balance and being on call, Chris observed his children,

"have an expectation that sometimes people need me, but not that everyone else is more important. I really work hard to try and keep that balance, but it's hard".

Chris mentioned that most evening meetings begin at 7:30pm and so to a large extent he is able to be at home between 5pm and 7pm for the "tea, bath, stories and bedtime routine". He also maintains that in his family, there are certain tasks only he performs which he finds helps to maintain the work/family balance. This would help provide his young children with the security that comes from predictability and routine. It also would demonstrate to his family that he prioritises and values the time he spends with them in the household and contributing to its day to day running.

4.17 Defining Boundaries

All the ministers spoken to stated that, to the best of their ability, they guard one day off a week. This in itself is no easy feat considering they are on call 24/7 and the nature of their role requires them to be accessible especially in emergencies. Problems can arise when what a minister regards as an emergency is not consistent with what a parishioner considers an emergency.

“We’ve got some people here who think any minor health hiccup is a major crisis and so they’ll be on the phone at the drop of a hat”.

Another minister mentioned that some of his congregants have mental health issues and regardless of what is said to them, they will endeavour to telephone him on his day off.

Ministers in this study guarded their day off in a variety of ways. Some ministers would not answer their telephones manually but would have an answerphone so they could ascertain what the call was about before deciding whether to immediately return it. Other ministers said they have made it clear to their congregations that they are available for emergencies but they have one day a week which they dedicate to their families. They have found that generally not only do their congregations accept and respect this, but most wholeheartedly support it. A couple of ministers stated they have only disclosed their cell phone numbers to their leadership teams. The leadership team is then the first port of call for parishioners and they will vet the calls for the minister and contact him on his cell phone. The minister then knows that if his cell phone rings, it is a genuine emergency.

Six of the eight ministers interviewed mentioned they preferred to live away from the church. Most who had lived in a house or manse near or beside or opposite the church or on church property conceded that this was not conducive to maintaining boundaries between family time and church commitments. Robert stated that in one of his earlier parishes, the pastor's house was located beside the church and the side of the house facing the church had large glass doors. This meant anyone visiting the church or going onto church property could see what the family was doing. Robert recalled that one Sunday a congregant mentioned to him he had noticed Robert's young son sitting on his knee while he was working in his study. This was probably just an innocuous, thoughtless comment but this, combined with the structure of their house, made Robert and his family feel they were under surveillance.

The lack of privacy and intrusions on family time vary from parish to parish. Ministers who lived next to the church in the traditional church manse reported that parishioners visiting the church would frequently stop by. It could be that many parishioners feel that when visiting the church, to *not* go next door to say hello would be churlish. Living further away from the church means parishioners need to go out of their way to visit the minister and his family and/or they do not feel compelled to stop in whenever they visit the church.

Like many others, George is happy living away from his church.

"We're about 3km away. Sometimes people drop in, it's not too bad. Where we live is quite anonymous and we don't advertise our address everywhere so we've been reasonably successful in that respect. Sometimes people call around and that's fine – it doesn't happen all the time."

Another minister, Robert, stated they do not live near their current church and consequently people are very respectful about calling in on them. Indeed so few people were visiting them he and his wife felt it necessary to place themselves on their church visitation list. Seemingly, by living away from the church the clergy family is better able to control the flow of visitors and are not considered to be so available for people to drop by unannounced. It could also be the case that living in their own home creates a natural psychological boundary and their home and, by implication, the family is less likely to be inadvertently viewed as church 'property'.

4.18 Vacations

Whilst ministers the amount of annual leave they receive is congruent with other professionals, many contended that taking all the annual leave they accumulated would mean leaving a lot of work unaccomplished. Given the level of dedication required in this role coupled with the fact that many ministers are service-oriented and deeply committed to their congregations, leaving work undone was difficult for them. Both George and Ross conceded that even on holiday they will still check emails and George stated that, much to his wife's chagrin, he will take his cell phone away with him.

Most of the ministers agreed that, because they often work at home, holidays at home generally do not work. As Liam observed,

"In a parish with a few hundred congregants, not all of them will be aware that the minister is having a week's vacation."

The ministers all conceded that to have a holiday at home requires a sustained and conscious effort to not answer the telephone or the front door, or check emails or faxes, “because the temptation is to always check your emails and then do a bit of work”. Self-imposed isolation also affects the entire household and other family members may not find it desirable. Two ministers in particular commented their teenage children “can’t stand to let the telephone ring”.

As one minister put it,

“The thing with holidays is you’ve sort of got to go away. If you’re just hanging around, you might as well be at work”.

However, as some ministers pointed out, going away on holiday is not always an economically viable option. While some denominations are affiliated to a overseeing church body, such as a presbytery, which may have a holiday home for use by church ministers and their families, other denominations such as the Baptists are entirely autonomous and do not have such resources. Additionally, many of those spoken to mentioned they do not have the income to be able to take their families or even their spouses away on holiday.

One minister remarked he and his family go away in a caravan. This is an inexpensive holiday which is unlikely to have a landline or internet access. Depending on where he goes, he might not even have mobile phone coverage. In effect he is forced to have a break from ministry and its attendant duties.

4.19 Shielding Children from Work Stress

Most of the ministers interviewed mentioned the importance of not discussing stressful situations in front of their children or taking their work home with them too much. As Liam put it,

“It can destroy families. The kids can hate the church, hate the role, start hating the people because of what they can see it doing to their parents. So if I let too much of what goes on in church get to me and the kids see that then it starts to get to them”.

Chris too shows a similar level of intentionality when it comes to shielding his children against stress emanating from church,

“My wife and I have made a conscious decision to try not to talk about work too much in front of the kids so they don’t have a perception of what pastors talk about”.

Most parents will be judicious in discussing work related topics or office politics in front of their children even when their children are unlikely to meet or interact with work colleagues or clients. Even more prudence needs to be used by church ministers considering their children are likely to be at their place of work on a weekly basis. There is always a risk they might blurt something inappropriate or else could easily witness strained relations between their parents, church staff and congregants. As George noted,

“The second thing that turns pastor’s kids off the church after hypocritical parents is seeing their parents being hurt and offended by the church.”

One minister recounted having to learn conflict resolution skills in an earlier parish because of the inflexible attitudes he experienced from senior church members. In addition to the

type of behaviour this minister encountered from “entrenched elders”, churches can also attract those whose behaviour is outright harmful.

One of the strengths of churches everywhere is that they tend to attract people from every stratum of society. This enables people of differing occupations, cultures, ages and socio-economic backgrounds to interact, form friendships and network. However, within any congregation and particularly within larger congregations there can be individuals who are anti-social and who perhaps have ulterior motives for attending church.

Ministers are required to be aware of what is happening within their congregations to maintain a church which is safe and healthy. George, whose large congregation is comprised of many younger people, stated his role is,

“a preacher, pastor, social worker, counsellor and probation officer all rolled into one.”

George intimated that many people within a congregation are vulnerable due to their age and experiences or lack thereof. Most people expect to be safe in a church or church environment and consequently may be more relaxed, friendly and trusting towards others than they normally would. This sense of security is open to abuse from those with predatory or anti-social tendencies who are happy to exploit the vulnerable. George believes there is an onus on the minister to keep his congregants safe. He stated he has, among his attendees, people with criminal convictions for serious crime including murder and “child stuff” which he and other staff keep “a very close eye on”. The Church ethos requires it to remain open to everyone and arguably these people need strong support if they are to rehabilitate. However, George claimed that on occasion he has had problems with some people due to the direct danger they pose to other congregants. He stated there

have been incidents of male congregants stalking young women and teenage girls or church attendees passing around drugs. George said on such occasions he has tried to work with these people and encourage them to attend courses, but has had to ask some people to leave the church or limit their involvement to male only meetings due to their undesirable or threatening behaviour. He claimed he has also telephoned other churches in the area to warn them that this person might be coming their way and he would not hesitate to issue trespass orders against certain individuals to keep his congregants safe.

Although George was the only minister in this study who raised this particular issue, this is potentially a problem within any congregation. There have been high profile cases of criminals specifically targeting churches because of the accessibility and vulnerability of many of the congregants. From George's perspective, one of his many roles is also that of protector. Without doubt this is likely to make him unpopular within some circles and he, or his family, could become the target of belligerent or vindictive behaviour.

Within any regular gathering of people there are likely to be differences in opinions and values, misunderstandings and personality conflicts. Churches are hardly different. It would seem ministers tread a fine line. They need to know what is occurring within their churches without imposing themselves too much, remain authentic whilst constantly modelling Christian virtues, role model Christianity to their children without setting them impossibly high standards to reach and be an accessible, gregarious figure whilst respecting their own needs and privacy and that of their families. Seemingly, this is a role which requires highly developed social skills and as much vigilance outside of official work hours as within them.

4.20 Church Leadership

Church leadership has changed greatly over the last generation or so. Although church ministers are still considered leaders within their own parishes, their status as community leaders has diminished as society becomes more non-Christian. One minister indicated the extent of his wider community leadership centred on organising a public Christian themed Christmas display. Other ministers remarked that non church goers might seek out their advice on a certain matter but believed this was because they wished to gain an alternative perspective on an issue. While these ministers are happy to provide this perspective it illustrates that, for many people, the Christian perspective is no longer dominant. In today's society, Christianity or at least orthodox Christianity has ceased to be the norm.

This section will examine the impact of societal change on church leadership, the superimposition of a business model and the challenges this provides to church leaders, as well as the difficulties they encounter of trying to measure success. Issues surrounding workplace bullying and some ministers' experiences of this will also be explored.

4.21 Impact of Societal Change

In line with most western countries, New Zealand has become not only more multi-cultural and with that, more multi-religious, but it has also become more secularised. Increasingly people are professing not to adhere to any particular faith, claiming to be either atheist or generically spiritual rather than specifically religious, as Ian remarked,

“I’ve had people say to me, ‘I do believe in God, but not like you do’. Well what does THAT mean?”

Generally, the ministers interviewed believed that the influence of the Church is on the wane. They used either the rise in popularity of secular weddings and funerals or the decrease in church attendance, particularly amongst those middle aged and younger, as evidence of this.

Robert and Henry expressed mixed feelings about the increase in marriage celebrants and secular funerals stating that from the public’s point of view it is “nice” everyone has an option. However both appeared saddened that so many are choosing to reject the Church’s role in these ceremonies and this particular function that ministers traditionally perform appears to be diminishing. Robert commented,

“For us, it means we’re kind of left on the side lines watching what’s going on and feeling a bit powerless to do anything about it, but knowing we would have something to offer. “

Henry focused on the quality of service, alluding to the fact ministers frequently have a continued relationship with those they marry and are often available to offer counsel and support throughout a couple’s marriage.

“I’d like to know if marriage celebrants do as much preparation and follow up as we do.”

Ian believes the decrease in influence and popularity of the Church, at least in Western countries, is symptomatic of the way the Church often portrays itself and the view many people have of it.

“I think how we have demonstrated or modelled God has not been effective and so when people look at the Church they’re coming from your parents’ generational perspective and we haven’t opened the doors enough – the truth is there are barriers because of the perceptions people have of the Church.”

Ian implies that the general perception of the Church is that it is dated. People enjoy more personal freedom in their lives than they ever had in the past and this gives rise to a lot more complexity. Modern technology, higher and better educational opportunities, higher standards of living and higher costs of living have led to a different way of life and different world views than the norm even a generation ago. Gender stereotypes and gender roles are much less pronounced than they were thirty years ago. Because Church doctrine cannot change it is probable many people view it as being less relevant. By implication the role of church ministers and the functions they perform are being shunted to the side lines or rejected outright by many people.

Those who do attend church are increasingly presenting ministers with enquiries which reflect the massive changes in society as Liam commented,

“The traditional things we do used to be quite straightforward, now they’re much more complicated. Take the beginning of life for example. Science has created all sorts of options such as surrogacy and IVF treatments and people going through those have questions regarding their faith. Marriage isn’t as straightforward either because we’ve got people on their second or third marriages and blended families and custodial disputes. Even at the end of life, people might have better quantity of life, but not necessarily better quality. How does the church support people who 20 or 30 years ago would be dead? Someone has to look

after them and assist them and often it's the families – there's the reduction in quality of life for these caregivers too. That's huge and how does the church support them?

Liam touches on the need for the Church to keep abreast of the changes occurring in society so it can be helpful to those struggling with issues that stem from these changes.

Liam further observes,

“you've got the older generation who can't cope with the massive changes that are occurring in society and have moral values in conflict with the way younger generations are living.”

It appears that one of the difficulties some ministers are facing is that the majority of their congregations are in the older age bracket. This in itself is not a problem, but to cater to an older generation with their attendant sensibilities, morals and values is to potentially deter younger congregants. The problem appears that the older generation within many churches are dying off and they are not being replaced at a commensurate rate - hence the drop in church attendance. The challenge to ministers therefore is to cater to different age demographics and many churches do this by holding multiple services at different times on a Sunday. However, this requires more resources and more work on the minister's behalf and, for purely pragmatic reasons, the demand needs to be there.

Quite apart from the challenges of remaining relevant in the face of massive societal shifts is, as Henry pointed out, the state's impact on what traditionally came under the Church's umbrella - namely care of the poor and the sick.

“There are a lot of government agencies that do the job the church used to do, the church is no longer the sole provider”.

The welfare state has largely prevented the type of destitution that is prevalent in many developing countries. Government immunisation programmes and local government sanitation services have done much to eradicate communicable diseases. Additionally, a national health system provides care for life threatening and acute medical conditions and state schooling provides relatively inexpensive education for all. By and large this is a good thing. The State is better positioned financially to provide these services as it can rely on compulsory taxes rather than depend on goodwill and charity and therefore can help the masses. Although many churches still provide support for the poor through food banks, city missions, social or support services and thrift shops, the Church takes a much lesser role in helping the poor and sick than the government, at least in Western society. What this does mean however, is that in Western societies people are more likely to look to government agencies for help and support than the Church. Again the Church has been side lined.

Liam remarked,

“A lot of people don’t see the Salvation Army as a church, but as a social agency. They’re the second largest non-government agency in New Zealand. The largest up till 5 years ago was the Baptist Social Services but people wouldn’t know that”.

Apart from the Salvation Army which run annual appeals, market an instantly recognisable logo and use mass media, many of the charitable organisations run by churches do not hold a high profile and are therefore not forefront in the public’s mind. Feasibly, this is due mainly to the limited budgets such services operate on and the resources available to them go directly into helping those most at need rather than self-promotion. In many cases only people who access these services, namely those who have not found sufficient help through government organisations, are aware of the range of services provided by the Church.

Societal change has had a pronounced effect on the Church's place in the community and even the collective consciousness. Ian believes that,

"Broadly speaking, I think the church has lost its place in the community because the community has changed and the church hasn't."

However, as Ian has demonstrated through his pro-active approach, one church can have a powerful impact on its wider community. It would seem Ian is just one example of how church leaders can react to and address the strains and stresses of the community around them and become better enmeshed in the community they serve.

4.22 Following a Business Model

The overseas literature speaks in depth about the superimposition of a business model on individual churches. It appears New Zealand churches are following this trend and many of the ministers in this study introduced this topic as a concept they are not wholly at ease with. The analogy of the position of the minister to that of the CEO within a company was the primary cause of consternation amongst the ministers interviewed. This was largely due to business models emphasising a hierarchical structure within local churches which minimises the level of goodwill and cooperation needed to operate a church smoothly. The other obvious difference is that, unlike a CEO, a minister will undoubtedly have influence within his church, but no real authority. Robert implied as much when he discussed his dependence on the goodwill of others,

"So often you're reliant on volunteers, which means they are only available when they're not working which is often weekends and evenings – when you'd rather not be working."

Being reliant on volunteers requires first cultivating these volunteers and then working at the volunteers' convenience regardless of how inconvenient it may be for the minister. The reliance a church minister has on volunteers provides those people with a level of influence most employees seldom enjoy. Chris' position in relation to his church implies a similar amount of deference and well illustrates the level of sway church volunteers can effect,

"I can put in my opinions, which are well listened to but ultimately we have our strong lay leadership who tend to determine the direction of ministry more [than I do]. The ministry here is not pastor driven or pastor determined".

Unlike a CEO who ostensibly can dismiss and replace workers unwilling to fall into line, it would seem the minister is dependent on the support and generosity of others. A minister has to work in with other people, he is seldom in a position to call the shots.

Liam remarked that the trend to base church operations on business models began about fifteen or twenty years ago with the introduction of particular emphases on markers of success such as, "growth, numbers and statistics". However, five of the ministers spoken to believe there is no definitive way in which to measure success. As Liam stated,

"One model of success now is not a vocational sense of what I do is important and worthwhile to people, it's now based on how many people come".

What is important and worthwhile to people is, of itself, nigh on impossible to quantify. Superficially, at least, a higher volume of attendees reflects effective ministry. However as George noted, though the growth of a congregation indicates something positive is occurring in the church to attract people, this does not necessarily translate to successful or effective ministry. People attend church for a myriad of reasons which may have nothing to

do with religious instruction or the embrace of Christianity. For example many people, particularly the young, regard church solely as a social outlet. Certainly many parents would encourage them in this, preferring their teenage son or daughter spend their Saturday nights ten pin bowling with the local youth group than getting drunk at a party. George believes success can be more accurately measured “not by the size of the church, but by its heart”. He regards success as,

“People growing in God and changing their lives [as a result]”.

This sounds good but again it can be hard to measure and certainly hard to measure using any marker a business model would require. Unless the change is overt or dramatic it may be imperceptible to anyone but the individual concerned. Additionally, positive changes within an individual’s behaviour, attitude or outlook could take years to germinate and the person might have left the church or area well before these come to fruition. In this regard there would be ministers more successful than they will ever know.

Liam speculates that the superimposition of a business model on church operations is a reflection of the diminishing influence of the Church on a society which is quickly becoming more secularised.

“I think in part it’s a response to New Zealand being a secular society and the Church moving from being at the centre of society to now being on the edges of society. Due to this, some within the clergy who once had a reasonably important role in society now have a self-perception their role is limited. You’ve now got churches and congregations who have bought into this idea that we should aim for some sort of visual success, so if we have lots of numbers turning up then we should have a greater voice in society.”

Liam believes ministers and lay leaders who are influenced by visual success markers can waste time and energy “climbing a ladder to nowhere”. None of the ministers who spoke of the pressure to adhere to a business model were completely comfortable with it. Though ministers such as Robert and Ross could easily understand the comparison on a purely intellectual level, they rejected the notion they were comparable to CEOs. These ministers both viewed themselves more as team players willing to help and serve others than as powerful or clinically detached directors of business. Their sentiments reflect the importance they place on the interdependent relationships they have with church support staff and lay leadership in addition to how they view their congregants. The ministers interviewed were divided as to how they did view their congregations, with three viewing them as peers and the remainder viewing them as members of a community. Significantly, none of the ministers in this study regarded their congregations as clients, customers or stakeholders. Seemingly, the overlay of a business model prioritising profit, development or expansion is largely incompatible with the tenets of the Christian ethos which emphasises relationship building and the spiritual growth of the individual. To focus on the quantifiable is to risk losing sight of the original spirit of the Church.

Churches are not businesses and ministers are not CEOs. Whilst church ministers have similar responsibilities to CEOs, they do not enjoy the same privileges which CEOs can use to ease and manage those responsibilities. The absence of authority and the dependence on the support and graciousness of church members place the position of church leaders at a distinct corporate disadvantage in comparison to that of business leaders.

4.23 Conflict with Congregants

Possibly because of their lack of authority coupled with their reliance on the co-operation of lay leaders and other church members, church ministers are sometimes the victims of workplace bullying. Much has been written in the industrial/organisational psychological literature regarding workplace bullying and the stress this phenomenon produces. Indeed, there is also a sizable amount of research into workplace bullying pertaining specifically to church ministers. Arguably church ministers are even more vulnerable to this destructive behaviour as they do not have the same avenues of redress that most employees have. In the main, the bullying which occurs in many workplaces is often perpetrated by those of higher status in an organisational hierarchy. Employees can therefore take their grievances to upper management, the Employee Assistance Programme or, as a last resort, lodge a grievance with an Employment Court. Contrary to this, the overseas literature, as well as this particular study, indicates that if bullying is to occur against church ministers, the culprits are usually church members and those of 'lower' rank.

Workplace bullying can be difficult to address because it is usually insidious and the level of malice intended is frequently hard to prove. Often, it is not the result of one definitive and obvious example, but the accumulation of many little incidents that taken individually would be almost negligible. Henry recalled an incident when he moved to a new parish and wished to introduce a new programme to the church. A husband and wife who were ensconced senior church members, "were happy with the current programme and didn't want a bar of this new one". He stated that, after much discussion, eventually he and the couple had to "agree to disagree" over this issue. Shortly afterwards this couple began to criticise the sermon or the theme of the sermon he was about to give,

“It tends to throw you, you know just before you’re about to give a service”.

Henry indicated this did not just happen once, but was a common occurrence. He also divulged that in the early days of his ministry he had a sermon style he described as “weak”. The timing of this criticism could therefore hardly be worse. Criticising Henry’s sermon immediately before a church service and when Henry had no opportunity to amend anything he had written was not at all constructive. The criticism was likely to achieve nothing but diminish Henry’s already flagging confidence about preaching even further. Henry tended to minimise the amount of stress the behaviour of this couple caused him but eventually admitted that he lost sleep over it and suffered “a few nightmares”. From a psychological perspective, Henry’s reaction to this couple’s behaviour indicates severe stress or trauma. This is consistent with the literature on workplace bullying which suggests it is the primary cause of stress in the workplace and is often responsible for high staff turnover. It is also consistent with Dewe’s 1987 study which places conflict with parishioners as the leading cause of stress and burnout amongst New Zealand clergy. Henry eventually left this parish, but while he was there he conceivably dreaded every Sunday service. Henry stated in time and with experience he learnt to handle difficult and controlling congregants. At his next parish,

“Someone had a go at me and I had a go back and we became very good friends”.

The behaviour of some people needs to be directly challenged. This may be hard for a minister who is new to a parish or does not enjoy much overt support from his congregation. Additionally it can be difficult to challenge a person’s behaviour and risk becoming off side with them when you are dependent on their cooperation.

This type of behaviour is perhaps more prevalent in churches than one would initially expect. George mentioned he has had married couples trying to get him to carry messages between them and he is adamant he will not allow members of his congregation to manipulate him. George remarked that in a larger congregation such as his, the manipulative or controlling behaviour of a few individuals tends to be more diluted. They therefore have less influence on others than they would in a smaller congregation. It could also be the case that, in a larger congregation, it is easier for the minister to avoid certain people or that people are less inclined to approach the minister assuming that he is always exceptionally busy. Further, it is possible that the bigger the congregation the more remote and distant the minister appears to his congregants. Interestingly, Henry implied the problematic behaviour he personally encountered was always in smaller sized parishes. He also indicated the problems arose when he first moved to a parish which had an already established system of operation and he attempted to change things.

Although Chris was quick to praise the efforts and support of the lay leadership in his parish, he also indicated they have more control over the direction of ministry than he does. This is surprising given he is the minister and has been formally trained and ordained in this vocation. Chris implied that these people, like those in Henry's former parish, were already in place when Chris arrived and, like those in Henry's former parish, are resistant to change. Chris gave an example of wanting to keep children in church so they could witness worship being modelled. He commented his leadership team was less than impressed with this suggestion and will not even entertain the notion of a trial period. Chris stated he has expressed his strong views on this matter to them over a period of time but,

“at this point I’ve said, look we’ll keep doing what we’ve been doing, the same as it’s always been done.”

Chris also mentioned,

“We have a full time youth and family worker, I don’t have to run the youth group or the children’s ministries because I have someone doing that for me. It’s why I can spend as much time doing what I do because I’m not spending time creating bulletins or power points, it’s all done for me. The lay leadership which gate keep for me are very active and supportive of the ministry that is [already] happening. I support what they do.”

There is a certain amount of give and take in any collaborative relationship though, in this relationship, it appears Chris’ lay leadership are not even prepared to compromise with him by way of a trial period. The lay leadership within this particular church seem to have the upper hand, with Chris making most of the concessions. Chris is clearly dependent on his leadership team running the administrative side of the church, handling parishioner enquiries and assisting with the youth oriented ministries so he is free to concentrate on his own roles as preacher, pastor and trainer. Chris expressed he gains an enormous amount of satisfaction from his role due to the hands on support he receives. His comments imply however that, even though he is the minister, Chris is not in a strong position to assert any initiatives. It seems that instead he must submit to the wishes of his leadership team, lest their support be withdrawn. Chris in no way indicated at interview that he is bullied by his lay leadership, but his position in relation to his lay leadership team implies he is certainly vulnerable to this type of behaviour. Chris too is the minister of a small congregation and this may exacerbate his position as there are undoubtedly less people in the congregation who could replace the lay leaders should any of them leave.

This resistance to change and unwillingness to try new ideas echoes what Ian observed about the Church not changing with the community. From the comments of these ministers it appears it is more the smaller congregations which are inclined to steadfastly maintain the traditional elements of the church service and, by doing so, may miss out on mass appeal. This throws out the question of whether these congregations are small as a result of a higher rate of attrition. Those resisting change may appeal to the majority of their current congregation, but perhaps risk the long term sustainability of their local church.

The other side to this, which many of the ministers were quick to note, is that there are also instances of ministers who abuse and dominate their staff and congregations. This is undoubtedly true. The main difference though is that church staff and congregants who do not appreciate this type of treatment are in a better position to leave and join another church than a minister is.

4.24 Professional Supervision

All but one of the ministers interviewed stated they attended professional supervision on a monthly or near monthly basis. Though some ministers commented they sometimes could not think of what to discuss with their professional supervisor, most agreed that these sessions were helpful in venting frustration, gaining practical advice, discussing stressful or upsetting experiences or even using as a sounding board for new ideas. The one minister, Chris, who stated he does not attend professional supervision remarked it is something he has given much thought to, but as he has a mentor already in his church it appears he uses this person in much the same way. Chris stated that his church has encouraged him to

adopt professional supervision. In most cases the professional supervisors the ministers used were people outside their respective denomination. They therefore had a general understanding of the pressures and stresses ministers are often subject to, but could still offer impartial advice.

4.25 The Ministers' Perspectives on the Role of their Wives

Much is written in the literature regarding the role of church ministers' wives and their enmeshment into their husband's vocation. Traditionally the wives of ministers maintain a highly visible presence and actively participate in church life. The minister and his wife are considered by many in the church to be a team despite the fact only one gets paid, trained and supported through professional supervision. Henry mentioned that a meeting he attended only recently with senior church members to discuss the appointment of a new minister well illustrates the tacit expectations that are still placed on the minister's wife,

"They wanted a young, married male minister with a young family. And I said but you're just as likely to get a female minister or a single minister – none of this male minister with a dutiful little wife, it's changed."

The desire specifically for a young, married male minister, on the face of it, appears rather innocuous as it seems in line with the stereotypical, traditional church minister. It could also be the case that by appointing a younger minister, he might attract younger congregants and thereby bulk up the numbers of a church that is in decline. It is also possible that by

appointing a young minister he will remain in the parish for years if not decades and this prevents the disruption caused by having to appoint a series of ministers as they retire.

However, these possibilities do not explain why the young, male minister needs to be married. In this context, the desire to appoint a young, married male minister suggests an expectation his wife will become an unpaid employee of the church. A young married male minister with a young family is likely to have a young wife. Because she has a young family she will probably either be looking after their children full time or, if in paid employment, working only part time. The implication is that she will be more available for the needs of the church than a wife without (young) children and who is more career orientated. It is also plausible that, because she is young, she may be easier to control or at least subtly pressure than an older and more experienced woman. In addition a young minister is probably going to be inexperienced and therefore in need of as much support as possible. Conceivably, he will lean on his wife to ease his load and she, empathising with her husband, is likely to help him. Interestingly, those appointing a new minister mention the minister and his children, but omit to make any mention of his wife directly even though she will be expected to undertake a lot of work for the parish, behave in an appropriately seemly way for a minister's wife and carry a high profile within the church. As Henry remarked, *"It's assuming a helluva lot. Taking them [the wives] for granted. And they [the Church] are still like that."*

Given Henry's length of service coupled with his wealth of experience, his remark that the attitude of the Church has changed little over time is telling. It is also consistent with Ian's earlier statement of the Church not keeping a pace with changes in society. It appears churches still depend heavily on the unpaid and often unacknowledged work which

ministers' wives routinely undertake. Feasibly it is for this reason that married female ministers are not so sought after. The husbands of female professionals have never been subject to the same pressures to actively support their spouse's professional life as wives have. The Church is likely get more out of a minister's wife than a minister's husband.

Henry was the only minister interviewed, who explicitly acknowledged that ministers' wives are often taken for granted by the Church. Similarly, he was the only male respondent to even imply that the assumptions made about these wives are excessive. This could be due to the clarity of retrospection that Henry can fully empathise with the position his wife was in when he was a fulltime minister. Equally, it could also be the case that Henry is now semi-retired and therefore no longer needs his wife in this capacity. It would be extremely difficult and show a marked lack of respect to openly acknowledge that the wives of church ministers are often taken for granted and that the Church assumes a lot from these women, yet still utilise, and allow his church to utilise, his wife in this way.

George also acknowledged the tacit pressures which are placed on the wives of ministers, from a congregational perspective. However, unlike Henry he did not go as far as to imply they were unfair or burdensome.

"There are unspoken and unwritten expectations that come on the spouse. One is the support role they play so there needs to be quite a bit of understanding from that perspective. She needs to hear from God too. The second thing is the role she will play in church, even small things like sitting up front and being a visible presence. Everyone looks at her, what is she going to do? Is she going to lead the women's group, is she going to preach? She is automatically made a leader."

He conceded his wife does not receive any training or income from the church for this role and,

“she’s coped with that well. But that’s just been her journey and it’s probably the same story for other spouses as well. It’s not necessarily a bad story, it’s just a fact that they can get expectations put on them which are there and felt.”

George’s comments raise many points. A woman having full understanding of the support role she *will* play when she marries a church minister would appear to be sensible.

However, many of the wives interviewed in this study were already married when their husbands decided to leave their careers to join the ministry. In this respect they did not get the choice of whether they wanted to marry a church minister or more pointedly, whether they wanted to be a church minister’s wife. Robert illustrates this well by his remark,

“Sure I discussed it with my wife, but it was more a matter of her supporting me in whatever I decided to do, it wasn’t in any way her decision. I guess she married a teacher, but she had a fair idea of where I was going.”

Robert’s comment indicates his wife had little say in the matter of whether she wanted to become a church minister’s wife. He appears to have been adamant about his decision to join the ministry. The only recourse this would have left his wife, had she been equally adamant she did not wish to be a church minister’s wife, would be to have left her husband. Given Robert’s conviction, even if his wife had been able to persuade her husband from joining the ministry, she risked causing much tension and unhappiness in their marriage.

Another point George indirectly raises is, prior to actually being in the role, how a minister’s wife is to gain a sound understanding of the expectations she will be subject to, when these

expectations are unwritten and unspoken. The apparent paradox of George's statement of needing substantial prior understanding of unwritten, unspoken expectations implies that many a church minister's wife steps into a role she is largely unprepared for.

These unwritten, unspoken expectations that are placed on the wives of church ministers echoes the sentiments made by the panel appointing a new minister which Henry attended. This panel specifically wanted a young married, male minister. The minister's wife and her future role in the church was not even discussed, but instead it was left to be inferred. This throws out the obvious question of *why* the role of the minister's wife is not openly discussed by church governing bodies or church congregations. On the face of it, this glaring omission makes it seem as though the work minister's wives routinely do for their church is so completely unvalued it is not even worth a mention. I do not think this is the case. In fact I would argue that her contribution is highly valued. However, by openly acknowledging that many minister's wives are expected to work for nothing and are taken for granted is to make the unfairness of her treatment and the impositions made on her time obvious. Once this occurs there is an onus on the Church and on these congregations to change their attitude and expectations of her. The sticking point is that many probably do not want to change this arrangement. To have a 'secondary' minister who can preach, run ministries, prayer groups and the numerous other duties ministers' wives are frequently expected to undertake and, whom they do not have to pay or train, is just too convenient.

George as well as two other ministers remarked that the wives of ministers need to feel called by God also - a point which was also raised in the literature. None of the ministers ventured to explain where this would place their wives if she does not feel she has been called by God to serve her church. Additionally, if she believes she has been called by God

to lead women's ministries, take Sunday School classes, preach, hold prayer meetings, visit the sick and the other numerous tasks many are expected to do, is it likely she would still be undertaking these jobs if her husband was not the minister? If not, where does this place God's apparent calling of her? Conceivably, the active role many ministers' wives play in church is largely due to their relationship to the minister. It is possible many of these wives concede to this role out of love and respect for their husbands and a desire to support him in a role they know he will find fulfilling and from which he will derive much satisfaction from. Feasibly, the belief by some that church ministers' wives have also been called by God is very comforting. The idea that they have a sense of inner conviction equal to that of their husband's would make the unpaid, untrained and often unacknowledged work they do for the church appear to be less onerous for them.

Henry indicates the level of reliance on their wives many ministers have and the tacit pressure on both of them to present her as completely committed to her husband's ministry when he remarked,

"It's hard when you're being interviewed for a parish position to say 'it's up to my wife how much she will contribute'".

Superficially at least this statement does not make sense. Given that it is his wife's time and effort that is to be expended, that she is unlikely to receive any recompense for that expenditure in time and effort and given this is her husband's vocation, not hers, it would appear entirely reasonable for her to decide how much, if anything, she will contribute. The implication is that, to suggest he has a wife that might not be completely amenable to the needs of the Church is to possibly risk losing a parish position. This places the wives of

church ministers under pressure to play the part and acquiesce to the needs of the Church lest her husband be penalised.

George states a minister's wife is "automatically made a leader". Unless she decides to become formally trained and ordained herself, this is irrespective of whether she has the natural skills and attributes of a leader or indeed whether she wants this responsibility.

George concedes that many wives are subject to these expectations, regardless of the denomination. In the Protestant Church there is an expectation from the Church and from the congregations that the wives of clergy will be a visible presence and fulfil an active role within their husband's church. He believes this is not necessarily a bad thing and he is quite right. Conceivably, many wives do not wish to go through the process of ordination themselves, but are happy to play a pivotal role in the church, to actively support their husband's ministry and hold a high profile within their congregation. However, out of due respect for these women, the willingness to undertake these tasks, should be regarded by the Church and the congregations as a bonus, not a basic expectation.

This appears to be the situation with Chris' wife. He stated that typically in his particular denomination,

"the pastor's wife will play the church organ, lead women's fellowship and other things. My wife has been very involved in youth and children's ministries and also music ministry. It's all been voluntary, she hasn't felt pressured to do any of that, which is good. She's about to have a baby soon and has made it clear that for the next year she won't be doing anything and that has gone down very well with the congregation, they've respected that".

Chris' wife is not doing the "typical" duties pastor's wives normally undertake, but clearly she is still largely involved with her husband's church. The comment he made earlier that having someone take care of the youth and children's ministries frees him to concentrate on his own roles of preacher and pastor shows how much he has been relying on his wife's assistance. Both he and the congregation appear to support her decision to withdraw her involvement with the youth and children's ministries while she cares for the new baby. However, the fact she will no longer attend to these duties while her baby is still in infancy demonstrates that the youth and children's ministries is something of an imposition on her time. It is also questionable whether they would be equally supportive if she did not have a new baby to care for, but simply did not wish to continue her active participation in the church.

Ian's wife too has been active in his church,

"She has very much had a role and when we first got here my wife ran the worship team.

She's just stepped down from leading it because others have grown into that role."

Ian's remarks imply his wife shouldered much responsibility in his church for the first decade or so after they arrived. She has only recently eased back on an active leadership role she has maintained for approximately a decade because there are now others who can fulfil this position. Ian mentioned that other people have had the opportunity to "grow into" the role of leading a worship team. Clearly his wife did not have this opportunity. She would have undertaken this role without formal training or, perhaps even the benefit of the type of mentorship that she herself has been able to provide for others. At interview Ian mentioned his wife was initially "horrified" by the suggestion that he go into ministry but, like many of the wives interviewed, eventually accepted the idea. Ian attributes this 'turn

around' as his wife hearing God's calling too, though it could feasibly also be the case that his wife resigned herself to the idea that her husband would make a great church minister, would not be as happy in any other role and she did not wish to impede him in this endeavour.

The ministers interviewed all demonstrated sensitivity to the pressures that are placed on their wives from both the Church and their congregations. These pressures are not limited to the roles she is expected to fulfil within the church, but as Robert noted, can include pressures to behave a certain way outside of the church. When talking about the socially isolating effect church ministry can have, he also mentioned,

"It inevitably affects not only yourself, but also your family. I guess that's the biggest downer".

Robert is aware his wife is often treated differently from other people due to his position as a church minister. There is little ministers can do about this situation but Robert's comment that this is the biggest disadvantage indicates he feels strong responsibility for the negative or dismissive remarks made to his wife by some people when they discover her husband's vocation. Even George's remarks that in church, "everyone is looking at her, what is she going to do ...?" He does not necessarily mean that literally everyone is looking at her, but certainly everyone in church would know who she is so she is singled out in that respect. The questions he reiterates which people ask each other about her potential role in the church shows that both he and his wife are aware that she is talked about and mused over by congregants.

The enmeshment of church ministers' wives in their husbands' vocation is pronounced. In this study all of the wives of church ministers had maintained, at least at some point, pivotal roles within their husband's church. It would seem from the comments made by the ministers that the pressure for their wives to pick up leadership roles in the church begins early on when the couple first arrive at a parish and possibly when they are trying to make a positive impression with their congregations.

Clearly the role of church minister extends well beyond the time they spend at church as the role of church ministers is vast, varied and time consuming. Although the church itself is something of a focal point, the ministers do not really have a place of work, where they can leave work at work to resume their social and family lives with the same degree of delineation as most other people do. Ministers and to some degree their families, are singled out, they are watched and, because of the preconceptions people have of the Church and Christians in general, it appears many people assume to know what church ministers are like without bothering to actually get to know them. Despite the apparently ubiquitous pressures on church ministers to behave a certain way, to be accessible and engaging, to always cope, to always be there for others and to not really make any demands on other people, all the ministers in this study remarked of the satisfaction they gain from this role. In fact many did not regard what they did as work but instead viewed it more as a privileged lifestyle.

5. The Wives' Perspective

The wives of six ministers were interviewed to gain their perspective of the impact the role of a church minister has on his wife, on her social life, the way others perceive her, her family life and the pressures that come on her from mainly her husband's congregation.

5.1 Accepting Your Husbands' Calling

All of the wives interviewed were married before their husbands became church ministers. One wife, Colleen stated her husband had planned to become a minister prior to marrying. Even so, he was still in another occupation when they married. Another wife, Sue also mentioned that, though her husband was still teaching, he had been making noises about joining the ministry for some time. Many of these wives indicated that, although their husbands discussed their decision to join the ministry with them, in most cases this was not a joint decision as his mind was already made up. Only two of the wives interviewed were happy that their husbands were going to become church ministers, the remaining four were less than enthused.

One wife Elaine, stated she and her husband were school teachers and they already had plans to teach in country schools and share both teaching and parental responsibilities. Elaine mentioned both she and her husband were keen on outdoor pursuits and she realised that once he became a church minister his, and to a lesser extent, her weekends would be gone. She also had an inkling that she would be living in a fishbowl and remarked

that the idea of both losing her privacy as well as losing her weekends made her angry.

Elaine recalled praying to God to give her a change of attitude because, at least initially, she was “very anti” the idea of her husband being a church minister. She said that within three months she had had this change in attitude and that it was she who eventually prompted her husband to undertake ministerial training.

Colleen was more ambivalent about her husband joining the ministry,

“I was not that enthusiastic, middling I suppose”.

Colleen mentioned she “did not have a clue” what impact her husband’s ministry would have on her personally or their family life. She mentioned that, due to her lack of foreknowledge, there were many surprises. One of these was the loneliness which Colleen experienced early on. Colleen stated that while her husband was undertaking his ministry training he was able to make friends with other students whereas she sometimes felt left out.

Rachel and her husband were married in 2004, but she was already engaged to her husband when he became a youth pastor. Rachel stated she was happy for him to go into ministry because,

“it seemed perfect for him, perfect for his skill set and in line with his faith”.

Although Rachel stated she was happy to be involved with church life she was unaware of what exactly this would entail.

Sue was more lukewarm about her husband joining the ministry. Her husband,

“kind of had a feeling he wanted to go into this type of life before we married and I agreed to marry him....”

Sue stated she had an idea of her expected role once her husband became a church minister and knew she would be expected to be heavily involved in church life.

Many clergy wives remarked that although their husbands’ discussed their desire to enter the ministry with them, most were “pretty much” already decided. Such comments imply that once these men experienced what they all perceived to be a calling from God, they had a singleness of purpose to eventually go into ministry.

5.2 Rewards For the Wives of Church Ministers

Although most of the wives of church ministers acknowledged there were inherent advantages for them in this role, these advantages tended to centre on the role autonomy their husbands have and being a central part of the community. Unlike the ministers, the wives did not focus on the relationships they have been able to forge with members of the congregation and unsurprisingly factors such as work variety and role flexibility were of little consequence to the wives of clergy.

5.3 Role Autonomy

Many wives of clergy spoken to commented on the benefits of their husbands having such an autonomous role. As Elaine mentioned,

“It was handy when the kids were younger because my husband was around more during the day so if the kids were asleep I could whip out. That was helpful. Also if there were things on at school my husband could attend those too.”

She laughingly mused, she could not think of any other advantages from the perspective of the wife of a church minister. Having the availability time-wise to be with young children was also a benefit many of the ministers were quick to point out. From the wives' perspective, particularly given Elaine was an at home mother when her children were small, it means they could sometimes be free of this responsibility for a few hours a day. Colleen also mentioned the advantage of having a husband who could structure his day with greater flexibility than most people. She implied that the time her husband spent with their young children during the day went some way to offset the weekends and evenings he spent with church commitments. Sue mentioned too that her husband would be around to help their children with homework and to go on school field trips and be there for sports days. Such comments indicate the level of appreciation these women had that their husbands could participate in the day to day parental workload and they did not have to juggle the needs and activities of different aged children on their own.

5.4 Relationships with Parishioners and the Wider Community

Being a central part of a loving and caring community was an advantage that both ministers and the wives of ministers spoke of. Although to some extent this meant the family sacrificed privacy, having so many people interested in their welfare and happiness made many in this study feel loved and accepted.

One wife, Sue, mentioned that earlier on when she and her husband moved from place to place they already had,

“a ready-made family to welcome [them] and take an interest in [them] and [their] family”.

She remarked the parish they were in when their children were small were very supportive of her and helped her a lot during this time. Sue recalled taking her infant to fellowship meetings during the day and,

“she’d be passed along the row, they all wanted a turn”.

As a new mother, being part of such a community put her in touch with more experienced mothers offered her immediate advice and support. It also meant that she was not left alone in the house all day with a baby and little to no adult company but had access to other women who were also new mothers.

Anna also mentioned that being a central part of such a community meant that over the years she has been constantly surprised,

“by the good will and generosity of people who simply make time to help others in the church and local community.”

Anna touches on the positive side, the kindness, helpfulness and hospitality that is very much part of the Christian ethos. Anna stated she has been gratified by seeing people change their lives through the Church and become healthier and happier. By being the wife of a church minister she has been surrounded by those who do endeavour to live their faith and who will go out of their way to help and support other people. It is no doubt very reassuring to be in the midst of such a community and knowing numerous honest and

reliable people who can be called upon to offer assistance or support. Though there are numerous pressures to the role of minister's spouse, living in a caring community compensates greatly for the multiple drawbacks borne by marrying into this vocation.

Anna remarked that being the focus of a caring community has not just been limited to their local congregation. One of the highlights of her husband's vocation has been the opportunities they have had of travelling to third world countries and helping people over there,

"We have experienced some wonderful opportunities to help in third world countries and have experienced miraculous provision at times."

Although other wives interviewed had also had opportunity to travel due to their husband's ministry, Anna was the only wife interviewed who viewed this as an advantage. Colleen who also went overseas with her husband as part of his ministry visited a very isolated community on a prairie in Canada but found this to be a less than rewarding experience.

5.5 Pressures of Being the Wife of a Church Minister

5.6 Living the Role

Although the wives of clergy are not officially employed by the Church, they share in the pressures commonly facing their husbands. Their high profile within the church means most, if not all, congregants know who they are and therefore wives of church ministers can feel as though they are under as much scrutiny as their husbands.

This awareness that even outside of church the wives of church ministers are likely to be recognised and watched means they too must keep a level and calm countenance and be careful to not display any outward signs of irritation, anger or sadness.

Rachel, a young wife of a minister, disclosed having suffered from bouts of depression and anxiety in the past. She stated that despite feeling at times emotionally fragile, there was still an image to maintain,

“you have to have it all together. You can’t be seen to be frayed around the edges.”

Rachel intimated this is not limited to just being organised and looking cheery, but there is the expectation that ministers’ wives will “have it together faith-wise as well”. It would appear that as far as many in the congregation are concerned, a more faithful Christian would not suffer from depression or anxiety, but would be able to effectively pray these afflictions away. The anxiety and lack of hope, often associated with depression, can be seen by some as synonymous with a lack of faith. As the wife of a church minister, she cannot afford to project this.

Anna concurred there is an image that the wives of ministers need to maintain.

“I think you are conscious that you want to be a good example and not a stumbling block to others. Integrity and authenticity are important. Sometimes there is pressure to fit a certain successful image, but you just have to be yourself.”

Anna suggests there is something of a balancing act that the wives of ministers need to maintain. In terms of word and deed Anna needs to be a positive role model. Her comment that her behaviour or attitude cannot be off putting to others or make other people question whether they would want to embrace Christianity indicates that she might see

herself as something of an ambassador for her husband's church or for Christianity in general. It also touches on Rachel's comment that the wives of church ministers must be seen to "have it together faith-wise". A wife of a church minister who presents as ambivalent or sceptical about her faith or is seemingly uninterested in her husband's ministry is likely to put people off. It is possibly that, for this reason that the wives of ministers are expected to maintain a highly visible presence in church. A highly visible presence demonstrates a highly visible show of support for her husband's church. Her attendance every Sunday shows commitment to her faith and dedication to his ministry. The other side to Anna's comment is that as a wife of a minister she must also present as authentic. This shows that she must genuinely be a good example of Christianity. While this sounds good, the day to day reality of this, particularly when you have a high profile and at any time you could be watched and appraised, is undoubtedly much harder. However, to not be genuine, risks presenting as fake, superficial or worse, hypocritical.

Colleen also mentioned that part of the image of a church minister's wife is that she will be friendly with everyone. In line with basic Christian values, this is regardless of how people behave towards her or she herself is treated. Colleen mentioned that she and her husband were not accepted at their first parish. The area where the parish was located was of a low socio economic level and "quite rough" and because Colleen and her husband were both tertiary educated, Colleen believed many of the congregants thought she and her husband felt superior to them. Colleen recalled times when people in the congregation had approached her specifically for money and had become quite threatening or abusive when this was not forthcoming. She intimated that, irrespective of this, the following Sunday she would still have to appear congenial and sincerely welcoming towards them.

5.7 Social Life

In speaking to the wives of church ministers it becomes apparent that, to at least some degree, their social lives are affected by their husband's vocation. This is in part due to similar reasons church ministers can struggle with a social life, the preconceived notions of what they will be like, the difference in treatment they receive by both Christians and non-Christians and the amount of time they are expected to commit to church related activities. This section will examine these features from the perspective of the church ministers' wives and explore the methods many of these women have adopted in order to find balance, time to pursue their own interests and careers and as a means to be treated as a person in her own right.

5.8 Preconceived Ideas of a Church Ministers' Wife

Like their husbands, many women mentioned people treat them differently when they discover their husbands are church ministers. The different treatment they receive will sometimes be quite overt. As Sue remarked people will say to her,

“Oh we can't say that in front of you', or 'you wouldn't like that' so you're treated differently by people who don't have a church background, you're put in a box, but we're not all like that necessarily”.

Likewise Elaine remarked,

“People tend to treat you differently when they find out you’re the spouse of a minister. They never swear in front of you and they feel they have to behave themselves around you. It can be really awkward. I don’t advertise the fact that I’m married to a minister at least until I’ve already established myself and they know me as me”.

Sue and Elaine, like the other wives interviewed stipulated non-Christians who tend to treat them differently by assuming what they are comfortable with, what they would find amusing, or what would offend their sensibilities. The wives stated they avoid the problem of people outside the church presuming to know what they are like, by deliberately not mentioning what their husbands do for a living. This shows an awareness of the stereotype that they are subject to and an intention to not allow themselves to be categorised. As Colleen remarked,

“it’s better to meet people and let them get to know you first. You need to be a person in your own right I think, not as an attachment to someone else.”

There appears to be a concern by respondents that once they are linked through marriage to a church minister they become almost one dimensional and their personalities cannot be extracted from the context of their marriage. Their only chance to be regarded on their own terms, as other people are, is to not mention their husband’s occupation. These women felt the need for people to know them first before they would disclose this information in order for this information not to colour their relationships or subvert potential friendships. Colleen also touches on the emotional importance of not allowing herself to be viewed solely as an accessory to someone else, but as a person psychologically independent from her husband.

However, another wife, Anna, stated she is also treated differently by fellow Christians. She believed that due to her position as the minister's wife, people within the church,

"Often see you as a mentor rather than a friend."

Anna touches on the distancing effect the role of minister can have with many congregants and how this extends even to the minister's wife. A mentorship is a much more formal relationship than a friendship and highlights the status imbalance of the two parties.

Friendships are a meeting of equals and are based on a like for each other. A mentor is a role model, a person others look to for guidance and, in this case, it assumes the wife of a minister is able and willing to provide that guidance. Mentorships are based on respect and a recognition that one person has skills, attributes or experience that can be helpful to another person. It is not necessary to like a mentor. It also shows how ministers and by implication, their families are often set apart from other people, even from other Christians.

Another participant intimated that members of the congregation tended to only approach her when they wanted something. Though this sounds exploitive, it could be the case members of the congregation regard her as a remote figure and therefore only initiate contact with her when they felt they need to. Regardless of their intentions, this wife intimated that such behaviour tended to leave her feeling a bit used. This is probably because the interactions with her by congregants are not cushioned by any overtures of friendship. Like Anna, she is treated more as a resource for others in the church.

Much is written in the literature regarding whether ministers can form friendships with members of the congregation, but there is less in the literature as to whether the wives of ministers can successful form friendships with members of the congregation. In this study

many of the wives believed it was possible to have friendships with congregants but some caution needed to be exercised to not seem to exclude other people from their circle of friends and caution as to what they discussed with other congregants.

On the downside some wives commented on their experiences of some over friendly congregants. Elaine recalls,

“When I was at home with the kids I was a sitting duck really. Some of them would stop by and stay for hours and I’d be too polite to say anything. Nowadays I would set a boundary and say something like, ‘I’m only available for half an hour’. I think going into ministry this is the type of thing spouses need to be aware of so they think about this type of scenario and how they will deal with it before it actually happens”.

Elaine touches on the need to be deliberate in her dealings with members of the church given the above is not a scenario many people outside of church life would generally have to deal with and therefore few would even think about. Because Elaine was at home with children there appears to have been an assumption by some that she had nothing better to do than sit and drink coffee and chat for hours on end. This is a potentially delicate situation as, handled undiplomatically, Elaine could cause much offense which would no doubt get around church and reflect badly on not only herself but also her husband. By thinking about these common scenarios beforehand Elaine managed to limit the time she had to spend with congregants dropping in without embarrassing them or causing offence. It is possible too that people would visit during the day assuming that, because she is home with small children she may well be bored and lonely and would appreciate some company. By setting limits as to how long she has available is a subtle means by which she can let the other person know she is occupied and not in need of their ‘charity’. Setting limits when

people drop by unannounced is similar to the idea other wives have adopted of setting limits to their attendance at meetings or prayer groups and clearly stating what these limits are upfront.

The majority of the wives interviewed mentioned that, though they were friendly with everyone in church, most of their close friends were sourced elsewhere.

Five of the wives interviewed stressed the importance of having friends outside the church.

As Rachel believes,

“It is crucial to have a support group of friends outside of church”.

By having friendships outside the church the wives of ministers can gain some balance from people who do not place them on a pedestal and view them as mentors, but accept them for who they are and outside of any religious context. The wives in this study mentioned that they source their friends mainly from the paid employment or study that they currently undertake and most stressed the importance of having “a life outside church”. As Sue remarked,

“[As a wife] you really need to think about how much involvement you need to have and to be free to pursue your own career and your own interests.”

By doing so the wives of ministers can limit their involvement with church activities to a level they are comfortable with and which does not negatively impact on their quality of life. It would also mean that the time and energy they do give to their church is done so freely and not because they feel obligated.

5.9 Church Ministers' Wives' Perspectives of the Benefits of Being in Paid

Employment

Colleen, whose husband is semi-retired intimated that because she was left with much of the parental responsibilities as well as looking after an ill father *and* fulfilling the traditional role as that of church minister's wife, "trying to work outside of home was a bit silly".

However other wives indicated that, due to the sharp increase in the cost of living over the last two or three decades coupled with the fact that church ministers' incomes have always been modest, they have had to return to the workforce to supplement the household income. What many in this study noticed is that their re-entry into the workforce resulted in a subsequent decrease in the demands made on them by the church and by congregants. Additionally, many have been able to use their paid work to regulate how much time they devote to church activities or to transfer skills they have learnt in their workplace to deal more assertively with church members and the pressures to commit their time to church activities.

Being in paid employment has produced numerous benefits for the women interviewed in this study. It has afforded these women opportunities to socialise with others outside the context of church or family and establish their own identities. In addition, as Sue suggested paid employment provided an acceptable reason for her to not attend all church events or become involved in any new church programmes if she did not wish to. She also found that being in paid employment provides her with a handy ability to place 'legitimate' boundaries on the time she spends on church activities.

“If there’s something I really don’t want to be at I can say ‘no, I’m not available or, I can only be here till such and such a time, but then I need to be somewhere else’”.

Sue commented she is happy with her current rate of involvement with the church. It would seem this is largely due to her ability to directly control her rate of participation with church activities diplomatically and graciously. By letting it be known she has other, equally important commitments she is not so accessible for the needs of the church and, by implication, her availability and willingness to participate in church activities cannot so easily be taken for granted.

Elaine mentioned that it is only through her paid employment that she has been given the training she needed to assert herself with the church congregants.

“I’m only learning now to say ‘no, no I actually don’t want to do that’. It was easier just to do what was required and feel that if I really wanted to avoid something I would have to hide. I’m learning not to say ‘yes’ straight away, not feeling as though I have to give an immediate answer or having to apologise if I can’t do or don’t want to do what’s needed”.

Anna, who is very happy with her current rate of participation in church life and thoroughly enjoys her involvement with her church stated that had she known the “financial ups and downs of a pastor’s income” she would have established a better career for herself. Anna, like Rachel, stated there have been times when her husband has had to take on secondary employment so they can survive. She believes that if a minister and his wife are going to move around the country it is important for his wife to have a career back up, purely as a form of financial security. By being the primary income earner a minister’s wife can also contribute to her husband’s ministry without having to be directly involved with the church.

5.10 Opportunities to Meet Other Ministers' Wives

Many of the wives interviewed in this study mentioned there are few opportunities for the wives of ministers to get together. This is despite the similar roles they play or have played in the past and the fact that the ability to interact with each other could be a source of support for them from people who are well aware of the unwritten, unspoken expectations and pressures on them. Sue mentioned that, in a former parish,

“we had a ministers’/wives’ support group which met once a month. We talked over the issues that were worrying us and I found that really good, but that was the only place that we could have anything like that.”

However given that most of the ministers' wives were in some form of paid employment finding a time convenient for everyone would likely be impossible. As well, it is probable that many of the wives would experience the same inhibitions disclosing their feelings as some of the ministers expressed. Another hindrance could be that if the ministers were also present, some of the wives may not wish to discuss issues bothering them lest their husbands become stressed or upset. Rachel mentioned a little known electronic forum that used to be in existence whereby clergy and their wives could log on using a secured password and their comments could remain confidential from the general public. This meant any minister or spouse of minister in the country could contribute, the anonymity of the contributions could help overcome inhibitions and viewers could find support and help from each other at their own convenience.

It would seem that when negotiating relations with people both Christian and non-Christian, intentionality was important. The wives who were intentional about how much they disclosed to new acquaintances tended to be more successful socially. Likewise the wives who were intentional about how much time they were willing to devote to church activities were better able to assert themselves particularly with congregational members. This is possibly because by having a firm idea of what they were willing to do and not do they were not so easy to coerce into picking up tasks that “no one else wants to do”. Because, as many wives mentioned, church can “suck up so much time”, imposing definite boundaries on church commitments enables them time and opportunity to pursue their own interests and form friendships outside of church.

5.11 Family Life

Due to the non-standard hours church ministers keep, the impact of family life on the spouses of clergy is great. Many wives concurred with comments ministers made regarding the pressures facing their children to be well behaved, the absence of ‘normal’ family weekends and the pitfalls of living too close to the church. Notably some of the wives commented on the disproportionate amount of parenting that was left for them to do with a couple of respondents remarking they often felt like solo mothers “particularly evenings and weekends”. In addition four of the wives interviewed initiated discussion on the safety risks they felt vulnerable to when they were home alone, particularly in the evening. Their concerns were generally because they were home alone most evenings and anyone who wished to could easily find their address and appear unannounced on their front doorstep.

Though no mention of this particular issue was made in the literature, again this is a matter that could potentially be widespread and bears thinking about from a safety viewpoint.

5.12 The Pressures of Church Ministry on Children

Many of the wives interviewed could recount at least one example of their children being treated differently by others because of their father's role as a church minister. Often this came from school principals or teachers who assumed the child of a church minister would be well behaved, quiet, polite and respectful.

Colleen remembered an incident when one of her son's was singled out by the school principal for a minor infraction,

"He said 'you shouldn't behave like that, you're a minister's son', that was awful". Some people hold them to a much higher standard than other children and they're always expected to be really well behaved in church".

It is difficult to imagine a teenager not becoming resentful of the extra attention or special treatment he is subject to because his father is a church minister. It also indicates that, as far as many people are concerned, a child's or adolescent's behaviour is solely determined by their upbringing. If this is the case, it places much pressure on the clergy parents, particularly the mother as in this study, the mothers were all the primary caregivers.

Anna deals with this situation in a similar way as many ministers, by being authentic, by being herself and not trying to conform to the expectations of others.

“You can’t allow yourself to be pressured to put on a show. For example if my teenagers had a messy room I wouldn’t say clean up because other people might criticise. Nor would I tell them to behave because they’re pastor’s kids. I would say treat others well because it’s the right thing to do.”

Anna extends the importance of being authentic to her children. From her example she emphasises behaving with integrity over conforming to preconceived notions as to how they (in particular) should behave given their father’s vocation. By doing so Anna does not single her children out from other children and therefore does not enable resentment to build. Additionally, by not using their position in a church minister’s family as a determining factor in how they should behave, from her children’s perspective Anna keeps the integrity of her husband’s ministry. The ministry is not superficial or merely window dressing that the family has to pretend to comply with to look good and to satisfy the expectations of those who barely know them.

However even fellow students are not beyond singling a minister’s child out for special treatment. The wife of a senior minister in a large church, mentioned that their son was called “The God boy” at school. Though this did not particularly bother him, it is a point of difference and teenagers with a less robust personality might have found this to be alienating and upsetting.

5.13 Juggling Family Commitments with the Church

Many of the women in this study spoke of the strain of trying to organise their families around church commitments. One minister’s wife spoke of the difficulties with having a

husband working from home. She stated that due to the number of interruptions he would face if he worked at the church he would normally elect to work from home. However in doing so he would often monopolise the house and particularly the telephone. This could cause much tension when their children were on school holidays as they had to share the telephone with him and were often expected to be quiet as he may be interviewing or counselling people from the church. She believed this was the type of behaviour which indicated to the children that the church and the needs of the church were a priority over them. The fact she brought this matter up though her husband, who was also interviewed, made no mention of it indicates it was she whom their children would complain to about their father's behaviour, that she was caught in the middle. Conceivably, because church ministry dominates so much of family life, the parent who is not the minister is likely to receive most of the complaints from disgruntled children. The example this particular wife raised is likely to be typical.

Another wife, Sue mentioned that not having weekends is hard on any family. Because her husband spends Saturdays writing sermons and Sundays delivering them he is seldom available when their (now grown) children visit, nor can they ever go away on a weekend. In addition the longer public holidays, Christmas and Easter were always spent at home because of the extra services over these periods.

Two wives also recalled how church commitments would often interfere with their children's extra-curricular activities. They mentioned not being able to watch their children play sports or help car-pooling with these events because they were too busy with church activities. Elaine mentioned one of her daughters having to quit gymnastics because it meant having to go out of town on a Sunday and that was too time consuming. Feasibly

having to cease a much enjoyed activity because of the church commitments of your parents or rarely having parents attend and watch sports games could be another indication to children that church takes priority.

5.14 Safety Issues When Living Near the Church

Because many ministers work with volunteers their evenings are often committed to meetings and planning committees which are conducted away from home. However, their primary concern was that everyone in the church knew where they lived, their addresses were in the telephone directory and many people also knew that in the evenings and weekends their husbands would not be home.

Colleen remembers occasions when strange men appeared on her front doorstep at night wanting money.

"If I was home on my own with the children it could get quite concerning. They always wanted money to buy food or travel somewhere, but of course you never really knew what they intended to spend it on, whether it was really for drugs or booze or what. Sometimes they could get quite nasty. Trouble is, being a minister you can't have an unlisted number."

Two other wives mentioned when they lived in a house near the church they found men who had just wandered into their home. The wife of one minister stated her husband found a man walking down their hallway while she was in the shower. The other woman came inside to find a man wandering around their living room. It appears that, to some people, there was little distinction between the minister's house and his office and as far as they were concerned both had an open door policy. In order to prevent people from wandering

in and catching the family off guard, minister's families would have to lock their doors even when they were at home.

Another wife Sue, recalled one night a family knocked on their door who needed accommodation for the night. They had nowhere else to go and no money. Sue mentioned that in most towns and cities there is scant cheap accommodation available. She remembered that all she and her husband could do was lend them a tent for a couple of nights. Although this situation was not hostile and the family were grateful for the assistance Sue and her husband provided, it does demonstrate the level of desperation some people approach ministers and their families with. Given the obvious stress levels of a family in this situation, there is a clear potential for risk if Sue had been home alone and unable to offer this family any help.

The wives of ministers are often at home alone. This coupled with the fact their addresses are well known or at least easily locatable presents potential for harm. The fact four of six wives interviewed could recall an incident whereby they felt threatened or vulnerable to harm indicates this issue could well be widespread.

5.15 Living Away From the Church

Similar to the ministers, the wives stated they preferred to live away from the church. Four of the respondents believed that when they lived in the church house, many parishioners viewed their home as church and therefore communal property. Consequently, the inhibitions most people have of walking uninvited into somebody's home did not always apply. The wife of one minister recalled an incident, which though not threatening was

annoying. Two elderly women knocked on the door and one of these women felt she was perfectly entitled to show the other through the manse despite the fact the family was at home going about their business.

Colleen mentioned that the manse never really felt like home,

“You couldn’t re-wallpaper a room or paint the kitchen if you wanted to, but you could ask. The real trouble was the lack of privacy. Where we were our backyard faced the church. I mean you like to have a backyard to yourself don’t you?”

Such intrusions on family time and on home life would be unwelcomed by most people. It must have been doubly frustrating when as a member of a clergy family, you already hold a high profile within the church. It could easily seem that as part of the church minister’s family, being watched is not just limited to when you are in church, or school, or in the wider community if you are in a small town, but also even when you are at home. Consequently it would be hard to feel you could completely relax anywhere.

5.16 The Ministers’ Wives’ Perspective of Their Role in the Church

Four of the wives interviewed indicated that more was expected of them by their husband’s church than they had initially realised. This would appear in keeping with the sentiments made by ministers such as George that what exactly is expected of the minister’s wife is largely unspoken and unwritten. Though it could be argued that what exactly is expected of the minister’s wife would vary from church to church, it could equally be argued that each individual church would have a good idea of what it wanted from the minister’s wife. However, as Henry’s example clearly demonstrates, even when a specific church is selecting

a minister, the role the minister's wife will be expected to fill is not even mentioned amongst the selection panel let alone discussed at length. Nor, it would seem, is it discussed with the minister's wife herself. Most of the wives commented they were not aware of the extent to which they were expected to contribute. Anna remarked,

"I didn't expect to be running a crèche or cleaning buildings! There's a more practical component to it than I realised. I thought it was all about helping people have a relationship with God, that's part of it, but there's a lot more involved".

Rachel had similar comments,

"I expected to be making cups of tea and generally taking a backseat. I didn't expect to be running prayer groups or discussion groups or sitting in on counselling sessions. It's just assumed you'll come along to everything. The problem is there are not enough leaders so the minister's wife becomes the backstop".

Most of the women interviewed mentioned that one of the most basic duties they were expected to undertake was running the women's groups. None of the wives were offered any training for this role, indeed it appears their only qualification for leading such a group was that they were women. Colleen stated that,

"they expected you to know as much as your husband, but without any training and with no real support. And there would be complaints. I got a bit annoyed really, I mean you're just thrown into it".

It appears hardly a fair scenario for either the minister's wife or the women in the congregation. That they expected Colleen to know as much as someone who has studied theology at tertiary level for numerous years indicated they expected this level of

scholarship from these group meetings. Sending in the church minister's unpaid, untrained and no doubt unenthusiastic wife to run the group would appear to be rather patronising. Colleen, for her part, could only feel incompetent and out of her depth and her resentment for having been placed in this position is, understandably, almost palpable.

Rachel too displayed some resentment towards her husband's church despite stating she had initially been quite happy to help out,

"A fulltime job is fairly unusual for a minister's spouse. There is just such an assumption that you will help out. It's a real package deal, two for the price of one. It never gets talked about. If the church can't or won't pay for two workers, it shouldn't get two workers".

Rachel raises an interesting point when she mentions that few clergy wives work fulltime and indeed all the wives interviewed in this study worked on a part time basis. Rachel implies this is due to the expectations they will commit a significant proportion of their time to church activities and therefore do not have the time to dedicate to a career. People are seldom able to advance their careers if they are not working fulltime. This indicates that even though more clergy wives are entering the workforce, the Church is still impacting on and limiting this aspect of their lives.

Another wife also commented on the lack of pay and acknowledgement despite the amount of work she had put into the church over the years. She agreed that being paid even a small amount would at least acknowledge the work she has undertaken for the church and show that her contribution is appreciated. She concurred that, without even this token gesture, it is difficult to feel she is not being taken for granted.

These comments were made despite the fact many of the women in this study believed that the Church's assumptions about the work they would undertake had decreased over the last couple of decades. These women attributed this change in attitude to the fact that the wives of ministers were increasingly obtaining paid employment and therefore were not so available to meet the needs of the church. Their comments, coupled with those made by many of the ministers, indicate that though the situation may have improved somewhat, assumptions about how much a minister's wife will contribute and the lack of acknowledgement for her contribution still abound.

It could also be the case that, nowadays with most women in the workforce, increasingly women expect to be acknowledged and/or paid for all the work they do. When this is not forthcoming, they understandably feel exploited and become resentful.

It is interesting that the minister's wives noticed that when they were home with young children their church expected a much greater contribution from them. They noticed a difference in the attitude of the church regarding their expected level of contribution only when they began paid employment. It is almost as though running a home and raising small children, because it is unpaid, has never been considered to be real work. Consequently, they were freely available to help with the needs of their church. It remains questionable whether, because they are not paid for the work they do for their church, this too is not considered to be real work and therefore should not be considered onerous. This may also explain why, the duties they are expected to undertake for their church, are never discussed – they are not regarded by the church as real work. Clearly though the wives themselves view the duties they are expected to undertake as work and their comments would indicate many believe they are treated unfairly.

Considering the leadership roles many minister's wives are expected to assume, it would appear reasonable to provide them with support such as professional supervision. Both Elaine and Rachel believed many wives would benefit greatly from professional supervision as they could then obtain the direction and guidance most do not currently receive. Wives of clergy are expected to discuss with their husbands any stressful or distressing situations they encounter. However many may feel inhibited in doing so as this is likely to only add to his stress levels. Additionally, the primary benefit of professional supervision is that one receives impartial advice from someone not emotionally involved with either the professional supervisee or the work they do. The offer of professional supervision to the wives of ministers would also be a way for the Church to demonstrate its support of the work they undertake and an acknowledgement that this can, at times, be stressful.

The wives also commented on the other expectations that are upon them such as attending church and being a visible presence in the congregation. One wife stated she will often attend church but will sometimes "sneak out" early, before the service finishes and return home so she is not delayed by congregants. By attending church but then sneaking out while the service is still in session, she can go to a service, be the visible presence in church she needs to be, whilst avoiding any entanglement with congregants or church commitments after the service. This woman's husband is the senior pastor of a large church and she has been the wife of a minister for a long time. The fact she feels the need to resort to such tactics to ease the pressure that is on her to participate is indicative of the difficulty some ministers' wives experience extracting themselves from the expectations of the Church or congregants.

Colleen also mentioned accompanying her husband to weddings because this was expected of her. She stated she found this “most awkward” as she would not know anyone and her husband would be busy either with the bride and groom or facilitating the ceremony.

Colleen clearly did not enjoy these occasions, nor did she see much reason for her to attend. However, had she declined the invitation it may have appeared churlish and not in keeping with expectations placed upon her.

Rachel maintained that, due to her anxiety and depression there have been occasions when she has not wanted to go to church, but had to attend to be a visible presence for her husband. This example demonstrates the pressure exuded on this particular wife to conform to a specific image, irrespective of her mental or emotional state. It is highly unlikely that, in the grips of depression, Rachel would want to be around people, let alone play the part of a smiling, friendly, untroubled pastor’s wife.

Many of the wives spoke of the need for women whose husbands are new to ministry to be very intentional about their own involvement with the church. As Rachel mentioned,

“Church can suck so much of your time, there’s always something to do and it can be really hard to say ‘no’ when your involvement has already been assumed.”

Elaine made similar sentiments and added,

“you have to make a conscious decision not to let that [the church take so much time] happen”.

The comments made by most wives about making a conscious decision not to allow church commitments to “suck” their time and energy indicates that wives do not feel they have been called by God to devote their lives to their church. Though none of the women

interviewed doubted their husbands had been called by God, only one wife, Anna, had instigated applying for a “pastor’s credential” herself. Anna was also one of two wives in this study who had been enthused about her husband joining the ministry. Indeed, most of the women in this study had not been eager for their husbands to become ministers and looked for ways since to resist the expectations on their time that the Church and/or many congregations impose.

The impact church ministry has on the lives of ministers’ spouses is considerable. Not only is every facet of their lives infiltrated by the Church from social to family to employment, expectations imposed upon them by the wider, more secular community are also extensive. That these expectations are so pervasive demonstrates that their husbands’ vocation is a role the wives need to be constantly mindful of.

5.17 Conclusion

Few other professions require so much combined commitment from both spouses, yet provide so little external recognition or financial recompense as church ministry. According to the ministers and their wives, the advantages of their respective roles are mostly intrinsic. This includes the forging of relationships, being part of a community, the satisfaction of helping others and tending to their spiritual needs. While the pressures associated with these roles are many and varied, it appears it is primarily this intrinsic satisfaction which provides the impetus to sustain the level of commitment and dedication which underpin all aspects of ministry.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to explore the experiences of those in church ministry and the ramifications of this role on their lives. What has become apparent whilst doing this study is the impact the role of church ministry has on every facet of life for both ministers and their wives and how ministry becomes central to the identities of those involved.

While many aspects of church ministry are challenging such as the social expectations placed upon the clergy family, the impositions on family time, the lack of anonymity within their communities and the financial insecurity, it is telling that, despite being qualified in other areas, six of the eight ministers interviewed had spent decades in ministry and maintained a high level of motivation and enthusiasm for this role. Even more telling is that they all attributed their longevity in this vocation simply to the fact they enjoy it and would not find the same degree of meaning and purpose in another occupation. Significantly, all the ministers in this study had worked in other areas before embarking on church ministry and therefore, in terms of evaluating the ministerial role against other roles, all had a basis for comparison. It is clearly not the case that they have remained in church ministry because this is all they know or that they are reluctant to depart from the familiar.

Church ministers, their spouses and their children all have key roles to play within the church community. Whilst the benefits of being at the centre of such a community mean they are acknowledged, sometimes deferred to and cared about, being in this position also holds enormous responsibilities. The balance between the rewards of being in the midst of a loving and caring community and the expectations placed on the clergy family by both church congregations and the wider community to conform to various social stereotypes is

one of the many challenges clergy families encounter and is a key theme in this study. The key themes revealed in the Findings section will be examined in greater depth in this section and the implications of these findings for ministers, the spouses of ministers, those new to ministry, church congregations and the Church itself will be explored.

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first focuses on entering the ministry and the apparent anomaly between perceiving a call from God and then waiting, often years, before embarking on ministerial training. This section will discuss the repercussions of accepting church ministry as a vocation and suggests that the high level of long term commitment required by both ministers and their families helps explain why so many church ministers deliberate for so long before commencing preparation for this role. The second section examines the rewards of this occupation and the satisfaction ministers derive from their role. A tendency to habitually focus on the positive aspects of the role may strongly contribute to the overall high morale evident in the ministers interviewed for this study. The third section looks at the key theme of leadership, particularly the diminishing influence of the Church in society, the repercussions of this for those dependent on Church run social services. Workplace bullying can cause toxic work environments contributing to stress, burnout and high turnover if not addressed. This is an issue growing in prominence in the organisational/industrial psychological research. The fact it features prominently in the literature on church ministry and emerged as an issue in this relatively small study shows there are obvious implications for training colleges and the issue of congregational relations is dealt with as a theme in this study. Living with the high expectations this position engenders, not just in a professional sense but in a social capacity also, is a pressure few other professionals encounter and one which church ministers learn to absorb and is

discussed in the fourth section. The fifth section looks at the impact this role has on family and how ministers achieve a work/life balance. The final section focuses the role of ministers' wives in the Church. This was focused on as a major theme of the study as spousal enmeshment to this degree appears quite unique to church ministry and therefore warrants closer examination. The implications of this issue are also considerable. Already the participation of wives in church ministry is diminishing as more women enter the workforce and have less disposable time for their husbands' ministry. Growing societal shifts coupled with economic practicalities are likely to spur a progression in this trend causing repercussions for new ministers, churches and congregations. Over time the attitude the Church and congregations commonly hold towards the wives of ministers and the expectations that have been traditionally foisted upon them is likely to change as the culture within the Church which supports these attitudes shifts.

6.1 Entering the Ministry

One of the most surprising findings in this study was the fact that, despite feeling they had been called by God to go into ministry, nearly all of the ministers (six out of eight), interviewed had trained and become qualified in another profession prior to entering ministerial training. Though all the ministers interviewed referred to church ministry as a vocation and some felt this was an occupation they felt "destined" to do, the years spent in other professions before accepting or 'coming back to the idea of church ministry' suggests an ambivalent reaction to their perceived calling.

Though one minister remarked church ministry was a life-long commitment, this same minister also mentioned that some denominations have very high attrition rates. Ministers can and do leave the ministry. This is not so unusual that the commitment expected of them serves as a serious deterrent or adequately explains the apparent reluctance many demonstrate by the lengthy delays in pursuing this calling. Several respondents noted that many ministers do not initially believe God *is* calling them and need time to distinguish between whether they feel they really *are* hearing a call from God or whether the idea of entering the ministry has come of their own volition.

Another relevant factor is that most of the respondents were already married when they decided to enter the ministry. The level of commitment required by church ministry and the lifestyle change this would produce meant this decision would not only affect themselves, but their wives and families, or future families also. Four of the six wives who were interviewed mentioned they were not initially keen for their husbands to enter the ministry but became more amenable to the idea over time. Although many of the wives interviewed stated that, prior to their husbands' entry into the ministry, they had no real inkling of the extent of the responsibilities which would befall them as ministers' wives, their initial reservations imply most were aware their lives would be affected to some extent. Five of the ministers stated at interview that the wives of ministers need to feel called by God too. Although the term 'calling' connotes a very strong drive and no doubt it would be advantageous for all concerned for a church minister's wife to feel such conviction about her husband's ministry, the ministers' sentiments imply that their ministry is unlikely to be strong without her active participation and support. Similarly being in ministry with a spouse not amenable to the requirements of the role may also place stress on the marriage.

Though the ministers all said that the prospect of going into church ministry was always in the background, the wives' initial lack of eagerness to embrace this lifestyle is likely to have been a powerful incentive to delay ministerial training until their spouse was willing to make a similar level of commitment. The shift in lifestyle church ministry requires of both spouses is immense and the delay many ministers take is perhaps indicative of a realisation of how dramatically their lives and the lives of their families will change if they pursue their religious vocation.

6.2 Work Satisfaction

The literature focuses in great depth on the disadvantages or stresses associated with church ministry and as the respondents in this study concurred, these are numerous. However concentrating only on the downside of this vocation fails to explain why so many church ministers remain in this role for a lifetime and gain great satisfaction from their vocation. Many of the ministers interviewed revealed they enjoy their role so much they do not consider it to be work. All said they felt privileged to be in a position to meet and meaningfully interact with so many people, to bring comfort and support to those who really need and appreciate it and to spend their lives doing what they wholeheartedly believe God wants them to do. What came across in so many of the interviews is the satisfaction the ministers derived from building so many significant relationships with people, often whole families.

An interesting comment commonly made by the ministers and which is seldom mentioned in the literature is that most of the disadvantages of the role are countered by equally

positive aspects. For example, the lack of privacy they commonly experienced also made them feel they are an integral part of a very close and caring community, reliance on other people also helped them form meaningful and collaborative relationships based on trust and goodwill, the lack of anonymity also granted them access into others' lives. Most of the ministers in this study were senior pastors within their own churches and therefore had accumulated a wealth of experience. That these ministers were so quick to couple the common disadvantages of this role with an equally positive twist indicated the rewards of this vocation are fact equally abundant. Though the ministers were quite forthright in acknowledging the pressures of the role, what came across so clearly in the interviews was that their attitudes towards this vocation was overall very enthusiastic. It is telling that even after decades in the same vocation and despite the diminishing popularity of the Church and its teachings, all the ministers remained highly motivated and passionate about their vocation.

6.3 Leadership

Leadership is a large component of church ministry. Ministers are often approached in times of social turmoil and are in a position to bring the plight of others to the attention of their congregations, to rally others into action to help those who are struggling in society and who may not be receiving adequate assistance from Government agencies. Churches serve as a focal point where people who are struggling can go, where they will not be rejected and where they will find support and some form of assistance. However, the Church is in decline. It has diminishing influence in society and a diminishing ability to appeal to the masses. Much of this can be attributed to the fact the Church teaches a paradigm which is at odds with the array of conflicting beliefs and values and at odds with

the way many people wish to live. It is not a great stretch to imagine that, with the aging congregations much more prevalent now in many churches, that within another generation many churches will simply not have the numbers necessary to support their existence.

From what three of the ministers interviewed indicated, the diminishing influence of the Church is creating increasing pressure on them by church governing bodies to produce evidence of success. While many ministers observed the ebbing popularity of the Church with sadness, none of the ministers in this study were keen to adopt a business model or liken themselves to CEOs. To become CEO-like could risk ruining the loving, familial-like and collaborative relationships ministers routinely forge with congregants and their lay leaders. Many ministers commented on the already socially distancing effect their position can have with many congregants. Given the ministers all pointed to the opportunity to build relationships as one of the main advantages of their role, their primary source of intrinsic satisfaction and what more than adequately compensated for their lack of privacy, financial insecurity and non-standard hours of work, their reluctance to jeopardise this becomes understandable. Undoubtedly too, deferring to measurable success markers such as congregational growth adds an extra responsibility on ministers which they do not have the authority or real ability to meet. This is particularly so if congregations themselves are unwelcoming to newcomers or resistant to the type of changes that may attract new attendees.

Churches provide a myriad of social services to help society's marginalised such as night shelters and city missions for the homeless, budgeting services, addiction services, social support services, social services for disaffected youth and teenage mothers, support services for prison inmates and parolees, second hand clothing and furniture stores and

food banks to name a few. The constant reduction in government services and an ever increasing escalation of the social problems requiring such services results in the Church being leaned on more often. However, because of the Church's decline in popularity and influence ministers have fewer resources to work with yet more demand for their services. As the Church continues to decline in influence and congregational numbers continue to decrease, sound leadership skills in ministers will become increasingly important.

6.4 Fulfilling Others' Expectations

Much is expected on a professional basis from church ministers. Not only is the manner in which they engage and interact with people important, but they are expected to have a sage and well-reasoned answer or comment for any issue, question or problem they are presented with. The decreasing popularity of orthodox Christianity in New Zealand society and indeed in western society in general, means society has become a lot less homogeneous. There are now a staggering variety of moralities, beliefs, ideologies, lifestyles and expectations. One of the issues many of the ministers commented upon was the increasing complexity and array of issues they are being presented with. Changes in legislation and heightened societal tolerance to sexual diversity has meant church ministers today are being presented with issues that their counterparts thirty or forty years ago would never have had to deal with. In such cases ministers are in a difficult position. Christian doctrine is explicit in its views on the sanctity of life and any sexuality outside of official marriage. However this stance is no longer commensurate, much less popular, with prevailing social mores. The challenge church ministers face in these instances is to uphold the integrity of Christian values, whilst remaining compassionate - to accept the person but

reject the behaviour. This sounds good in theory but is difficult to do when the behaviour is fused with characteristics such as sexuality and identity and therefore unlikely to change. However, to explain the Christian stance on issues of morality is to risk being perceived as judgemental, discriminatory or sanctimonious and is likely to achieve little but to alienate those from the Church who may need the greatest support. The church minister is expected to constantly uphold Christian virtues and values while simultaneously show care not to alienate other people who do not share these views.

Unlike most other professionals, church ministers are not just subject to the expectations of others in a professional capacity, but in a social capacity also. Seemingly, church ministry is one of the few professions whereby many people feel it is their place to watch and appraise how a minister behaves *at all times*. Church ministers live straddling two worlds, the Christian and the secular. Both ministers and the wives of ministers all acknowledged they were subjected to unrealistic stereotypes based on their relationship with the Church. While many of the respondents claimed they deal with the pressure to conform to unrealistic stereotypes largely by ignoring them, it appears this is not always the case. The ministers in this study are clearly aware of the heightened expectations of behaviour imposed on them and that to at least some extent they do need to conform to these in order to model Christian values and to uphold the dignity and respectability of their, or their husband's, vocation. Because church ministers become so well known within their own congregations and because congregations are comprised of people from all walks of life, church ministers tend to also have a strong presence within their local communities. In apparent contradiction, despite claiming they generally ignore the expectations others have of them, most of the ministers in this study also indicated they contended with the

unremitting sense of being observed when in public by putting on a public persona, much like donning a cloak, whenever they stepped out of their front doors. This is not to say their behaviour in public is disingenuous, but that whenever they are out in public they need to consistently behave at their best. Those who had been in this role for decades said that, with experience, slipping into this persona became second nature and over time this was something they gave scant thought to. Despite claiming to give little regard to their public personae it is interesting that half the ministers instigated discussion on this topic at interview. This apparent inconsistency implies the image they present to the public is something they do think about but is perhaps more an issue they rarely speak about. The development of a public persona, particularly for those new to ministry, is likely to be profound. Gone is the level of anonymity within the community most people enjoy and they likely enjoyed prior to entering the ministry. More pointedly, gone is the freedom to behave less than ideally which is inherent with anonymity. Those new to the role need to make a conscious effort to be mindful of the expectations which are on them even when they are not officially at work. In practical terms this means always appearing warm, affable, approachable and unflappable in public regardless of what may be occurring in their lives.

The consequences of not conforming to these general expectations are likely to have direct implications on their apparent suitability for this role, their ability to appeal to church members and non-church members alike, how their ministry is regarded and how the Church itself may be regarded. Those involved in ministry cannot behave in a way that may be off putting to others interacting with them or observing them because by doing so, they risk becoming a psychological impediment for those seeking a closer relationship with God

through the Church. This then becomes counterproductive to their primary objective of ministry. A substantial component of their role centres on public relations. In this regard, they are 'at work' whenever they are out in public and whenever they interact with other people. It is a role which demands an enormous amount of empathy and personal insight.

Not behaving in ways that are expected of them can also place clergy in direct conflict with congregants. As Dewe pointed out in his 1987 study, conflict with parishioners was a leading cause of stress and burnout amongst clergy in New Zealand. The issue of conflict with parishioners was broached by some respondents in this study. Many congregants have fairly fixed ideas of what a church minister should be like and most of the ministers in this study voiced their awareness that deviation from these expectations can lead to offence being taken or tension within the church. Conflict with parishioners can escalate into workplace bullying, leading to stress and burnout. At first glance the fact that conflict with congregants is occurring within a church appears antithetical to strong leadership on the part of the minister. However, given the reliance ministers have on congregants and lay leaders within their church, coupled with their lack of authority and the model of the servant/leader which many church ministers aspire to, it seems that most ministers can be vulnerable to this type of behaviour – particularly, it would seem, those ministering to small churches where those with entrenched ideas or controlling tendencies can hold more sway. Sometimes avoiding this behaviour means moving to another parish and finding employment elsewhere is an option noted in the industrial/organisational psychological literature (Appelbaum, Semerjian, & Mohan, 2012). However, quite apart from the disruption moving entails for the whole family, the level of stress and exhaustion caused by a toxic work environment can actually prohibit looking for another position, as can the

added strain of trying to appear to be an eligible candidate before selection panels and interviewers when one is stressed, depressed, burnt out or fed up. Additionally this advice assumes a suitable position is available and, in a role as specific as denominational church ministry, this may not be the case. Another consideration is the fact that desperation to leave one position can impair one's judgement when accepting another. There is little guarantee that workplace bullying is not just as likely to occur at another parish. As far as the literature is concerned and from the relatively small sample group in this study, the issue of workplace bullying in church ministry would appear to be prevalent enough to warrant this matter being addressed as a matter of course during ministerial training. One respondent mentioned he was eventually able to overcome the domineering behaviour he encountered by being more assertive and perhaps becoming less afraid to cause offence. His experiences demonstrate that dealing effectively with difficult or bullying behaviour is an acquired skill which can be learnt and one which might be well utilised by church leaders, particularly those new to ministry.

6.5 Impact on Family

Church ministry impacts the entire family like few other vocations. As many respondents acknowledged, everyone in the clergy family is highly visible and has a role to play. What became apparent in this study is that whilst the families of church ministers tended to share in the pressures of the role, the lack of privacy, the lack of anonymity, the lack of financial comfort, the heightened expectations of behaviour and the stereotypes, the advantages of this role for the families of clergy appeared to be less clear. Many of the respondents' comments focused on how they mitigate the potentially adverse effects ministry may have

on their children by shielding them from work stress, to sending them to secular schools and not subjecting them to unreasonable standards of behaviour. Many of the ministers too commented on the importance of not continually placing parish needs above time spent with their children. What becomes apparent is that, although there are advantages in growing up in a clergy household such as positive role modelling, family stability, access to church resources such as the church hall and exposure to a wide social network, clergy parents must handle the effects on their children with care. Christian parents generally hope their children will embrace Christian life in adulthood and yet the children of church ministers have the potential to experience and witness both the best and worst sides of church or Christian life. Examples of this could include, destructive or hypocritical behaviour from church members, prejudices and scorn from non-Christians, stereotyping and being singled out, feeling marginalised in their father's life, sacrificing family weekends and holidays to name a few issues respondents brought up in this study.

A lot of the literature on church ministry is dedicated to the role of the clergy family and the impact ministry has on the children. Lack of family time, intrusiveness and the effects of witnessing inconsistent behaviour from their clergy parents are all major themes in the literature and topics both the ministers and the wives of ministers in this study were keen to raise and discuss. The heightened awareness of these issues which many of the respondents exhibited in addition to the fact many alluded to studies on clergy families indicates a familiarity and interest many clergy have with the academic literature. Such a high level of reflection implies a sharp awareness of how ministry encompasses family life, the impact of ministry on family dynamics and how their ministry will influence their children's emergent views on the Church and Christianity itself. Given the exposure the

children of clergy have to both potentially positive and negative aspects of church life, it is highly unlikely any clergy children would have a lukewarm or indifferent view of the Church or Christianity in adulthood.

Christianity emphasises the importance of family and the cohesiveness of the family unit and therefore the clergy family plays a central role in the church community. What so many clergy couples are mindful of is finding a balance between church commitments and family time, being authentic whilst modelling Christian ideals, exposing their children to the richness of church life whilst shielding them from any dysfunctional behaviour within the church. It becomes apparent that the repercussions of not getting this balance right and having their children reject the Church or indeed Christianity itself because of adverse experiences or a distorted image of the Church or Christianity is an evident concern for many clergy couples.

6.6 The Role of the Ministers' Wives

Without any preparation or training for the role of a minister's wife, many of the wives interviewed were left to grow into the role and negotiate their place within their church over time. Women observed that their introduction to the role of church minister's wife also coincided with being new mothers. While many of the wives commented that taking care of preschool children or a baby was enough to cope with without the added pressure of trying to organise prayer groups, women's groups or the church crèche, two of the women reported their new role within the church at this stage in their lives had its benefits. One wife likened being in the midst of a caring and interested community as having an instant

family. Another respondent mentioned many other women in the church were also new mothers and so she had an instant peer group. Presumably their position in the church meant they were well known and had ready access to these people – it was unlikely they would go to church and be ignored as could happen with other congregants. While some people might find the attention overwhelming, as is detailed in the literature, others are as likely to enjoy the acknowledgement. Another wife also remarked that many of her friendships she had arisen from church. While much of the literature indicates ministers and their wives need to employ some care regarding making friends at church, it can also be difficult to mix with the same people on a regular basis and not form friendships with at least some of them. The diversity of many church congregations brings enormous social networking opportunities and, given their high profile, the wives of church ministers are well positioned to take advantage of these if they so choose. Other wives reported secondary benefits such as seeing their husbands in a position in which they are happy and gain much satisfaction from as well as seeing their husbands undertaking a role in which they are well suited to and for which their skills and attributes can be well utilised. Still others stated that having a husband in an occupation as flexible as ministry meant he could organise his day to be at home when she needed him.

Though there are some rewards in being the wife of a church minister, particularly for those more gregarious or socially inclined, all of the wives interviewed indicated that the most compelling feature of this role was the multitude of expectations they were subject to and for which none had been fully prepared.

The role expectations placed on the minister's wife and the pressure placed on her to submit to these expectations emerged as a major theme. Ministers and their wives were in

agreement regarding the pressures placed upon the wives to fulfil certain roles within the Church. In addition to the fact that generally the wives of ministers are given little warning or preparation for the role, they both agreed they are they unlikely to receive any recompense, training or official support from the Church for the duties they perform. However, what was markedly dissimilar in the two accounts was the perceptions of how the wives of church ministers felt about this pressure. Most of the ministers believed their wives shared their level of conviction and dedication to church and ministry. Most indicated a belief that their wives had felt similarly called by God and that their wives were happy to respond to this perceived calling by assuming a leadership role within the church. While two of the wives interviewed did appear to share this view, most initially appeared less enthusiastic about adopting this role and indicated that they had felt both surprised and somewhat burdened by the weight of expectation placed upon them once their husbands entered the ministry.

This seeming incongruence between the two perspectives has many implications. Feasibly it suits many ministers to maintain the view their wives share their calling and conviction in ministry and the status quo of this arrangement benefits many; the minister, the congregation and the Church. Equally feasibly many wives, though perhaps not completely happy with the situation, feel resigned to this role. Unless they were particularly assertive by nature, their lack of forewarning about the responsibilities they would be expected to assume would have made voicing their reluctance to comply once they were already in this role difficult.

Despite this, nearly all of the wives interviewed believed the pressures to undertake a prominent role within the church have eased over the last thirty or so years and attributed

this to their entry into the workforce and consequent unavailability for church related activities.

Being in paid work is readily accepted as a legitimate reason by the Church and by congregations for the wives of ministers to decline accepting further responsibilities within the Church. Many of the wives interviewed considered employment away from the Church as a means of self-determination. Being in paid employment became a way of creating their own identity distinct from that of their husband's occupation. They become respected as professionals in their own right with their own interests and their own skill sets. Paid employment became a means of asserting themselves in a way that is acceptable to others and unlikely to cause offence. It also ensured they are not taken for granted, but appreciated for whatever time they do or can devote to church related activities.

Being in paid employment had practical benefits also. Having ministers' wives in fulltime employment is likely to become the norm over the next generation for a variety of reasons. In most towns and cities in New Zealand these days even a modest family home is unlikely to be bought for under a quarter of a million dollars. In order to protect family time and privacy, many clergy families prefer to reside in their own homes away from the church. Gone are the days when the average couple could pay rent or a mortgage and raise a family on only one income. These financial constraints are particularly pertinent to church ministers as their earning potential will always be modest. For most young families in New Zealand a decent secondary household income has become a necessity to make ends meet rather than merely a means to afford the luxuries in life. In addition, gone too are the days when a person could walk into a decent paying position of employment with little more than a high school leaving certificate. Nowadays, not only is a tertiary qualification

considered a bare minimum, increasingly in some industries, to be considered competitive in the New Zealand job market, a post graduate qualification is a standard expectation. For most students, becoming qualified necessitates accruing a substantial student loan debt. Like other couples, most clergy couples starting ministry are likely to be saddled with two such debts. Indeed if, like the ministers interviewed, ministers in the future continue to come to ministry after qualifying in another profession, the debt they will have accumulated whilst studying will be high. Conversely, if they repay one debt before embarking on another, they are likely to come to ministry late in life, dropping significantly in income at a time in their lives when other couples are beginning to become financially comfortable. The combined financial obligations of student loans, high house prices and a high cost of living in tandem with the relatively low income levels in New Zealand, and particularly in church ministry, will mean it will simply not be economically viable in the future for the wife of a minister to only be working on a part time basis. With women outnumbering men in many universities coupled with the societal norm that women will not only work full time but be as financially productive as men it is likely many, if not most, future ministers' wives will be tertiary educated and professionally qualified. In the future they will likely be even less available or perhaps even unwilling to take prayer groups or women's groups or run the crèche or the countless other unpaid yet time consuming tasks many are currently expected to assume.

The implications of this development are considerable and are likely to affect the marital dynamics of new clergy couples, the Church itself, the congregations and local communities. One of the subthemes many of the ministers and wives of ministers raised is the lack of income associated with ministry. A professionally qualified wife in fulltime employment is

likely to have a higher earning capacity than her minister husband. Quite possibly then she will become, or need to become, the primary breadwinner in the family and, because a minister is in a better position to structure his day than for example a doctor, accountant, teacher, lawyer or nurse conceivably it will be the minister who is likely to be left with a disproportionate amount of the childcare responsibilities. The Church will not be able to expect so much unpaid and unacknowledged work from the wives of ministers, nor will it be even remotely fair to penalise the ministers for having a wife who is not able or willing to dedicate so much of her time to the Church. One of the main criticisms often levelled at the Church and what one of the ministers in this study commented on is the Church's reluctance to change with society. I would argue that the attitude the Protestant Church has held in regards to the role of ministers' wives in church will change of its own accord and dramatically over the next generation. The current situation with ministers' wives often being taken for granted and used as an unpaid, untrained factotum is already in a state of flux with many ministers' wives finding less time to commit to church activities and less inclination to allow themselves to be utilised in this manner. Probably this situation will eventually disappear as it will increasingly become unviable for a clergy couple to survive financially without the spouse of the minister in fulltime employment. The social, cultural and economic shifts occurring in society are likely to necessitate and underpin changes in how the wives of clergy are viewed and treated within the Church.

The implications for the congregations are also great. If, in the past there was too much work for the minister himself to complete necessitating his wife to be roped in to help out, it will increasingly fall to members of the congregation to step up and fill in these gaps. If they wish to have women's groups, prayer groups, hospital visitations, a crèche, clean buildings

and all the other services churches routinely provide and for which ministers' wives are so often expected to fulfil, the congregants themselves will have to start carrying more of this load.

Any devolvement of the ministers' wife's role in the church will have direct implications on the minister himself. The reduction of his wife's responsibilities or the devolvement of this role within the church will mean he will need to rely on church volunteers even more than he currently does. Sound leadership skills are likely to become even more important in order to appeal to and motivate volunteers, coordinate different workers and maintain the church community.

The growing need for clergy couples to both be in skilled fulltime employment also has implications for local communities. Churches in provincial centres, rural areas and small towns are already suffering from a decline in congregation numbers. Limited employment opportunities in these areas are likely to make accommodating two careers more difficult and may provide a disincentive for married ministers to move to more remote locations. The probable result is that churches of different denominations will combine more frequently in an attempt to retain congregational numbers and clergy and/or the attrition rate of churches in rural locations and small towns will increase.

6.7 Conclusion

Though many of the respondents in this study balked at the notion church ministry entails much sacrifice, it is clear the disadvantages and pressures of this role are varied and numerous. Clergy couples forgo much, from financial comfort to privacy and anonymity to

weekends with family. However what I hope is that the other side of this role has also adequately been presented. That one might glimpse the enormous satisfaction church ministers derive from their role, the enjoyment they receive from being in a position where they can help and make a real impact on the quality of others' lives and the gratitude they feel in being able to spend their own lives in a role they find so meaningful. It is a shame there is a dearth in the current literature on this aspect of church ministry and that, as a result, the role of church ministry has been portrayed with such a seemingly unbalanced view. I can only hope that future studies into church ministry take this into account and for the sake of thoroughness and for those thinking of entering this vocation, present both sides.

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Appendix 2

Information Sheet for the Wives of Church Ministers

Work Experiences of Clergy and their Families

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher Introduction

My name is Sarah Schmidt and I am currently completing the research component in partial fulfilment of a Master of Science degree in psychology at Massey University. Because of the unique and important role parish based clergy play in society I am interested in understanding not only the work experiences of ministers but also the effect ministry role has on their spouses, the involvement spouses may have with church activities and the impact the ministry has on their family life and social life. Ideally, I would like my research to be of utility, perhaps as a resource for those considering entering the ministry so they too might gain a greater appreciation for the wider implications this role has on family life.

The supervisor for this research is Dr Jocelyn Handy who is a Senior Lecturer in the Massey University School of Psychology in Palmerston North.

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Researcher: Sarah Schmidt

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Both can also be contacted at, School of Psychology, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North.

Participants

Participants should be the spouses of members of parish based clergy.

Study Procedures

Participants will be interviewed separately and at the participants' convenience. Each interview should take approximately an hour. I would like to tape record all interviews which I will transcribe later as well as take notes during interview. A list of the questions that will be asked at interview is included at the end of this information sheet. Each participant will be invited to check the transcription from their interview and amend, delete or supplement its contents. After this I will analyse the transcriptions.

Information obtained in the course of this study will only be used for the purposes of this study, or possibly in academic publications.

Any information obtained in connection with this research will be kept confidential. During transcription all names or identifying information will be obscured, removed and substituted with pseudonyms. All audio tapes and notes will be kept in locked storage when not being used in transcription or analysis during the research period. Audio tapes will either be destroyed or returned to you at the conclusion of this research project as per your instructions on the consent form. Transcriptions will be retained in locked storage for a period of five (5) years following the conclusion of the research project as is usual for research data.

Participants' Rights

As a participant in this research you have the right to:

- Decline to participate or withdraw from the research at any time during the research period.
- Ask questions about the research at any point.
- Refuse to answer any particular question.
- Decline for your interview to be recorded on tape and, if you do consent to it being recorded, you may request the recording to cease at any time.
- Leave the interview or request assistance at any time.
- Request the return or destruction of your audio tape.
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher.
- Be given access to the project findings when the study is concluded.
- Request removal or amendment of any part(s) of the transcript resulting from your interview.

- Grant or decline consent for your responses to be quoted in the research report.

Ethics Approval

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249 or email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 3

Questions for Church Ministers

Demographics

- 1.. How many years have you been ordained?
- 2.. Did you have a career prior to entering the ministry? What?
 - 2.2 What made you decide to switch careers?
 - 2.3 What did you think the role would be like?
 - 2.4 Was this decision something you discussed at length with family?
 - 2.5 What prior information did you have about this role?
- 3.. Did your own upbringing involve church etc?
 - 3.1 Did this shape your career path or did you come by another route?

Job Characteristics

- 1.. What are the advantages of the job? (autonomy)
 - 1.1 Are there any disadvantages?
- 2.. What are some of the different roles you fulfil?
- 3.. What do you spend most of your time at work doing?
 - 3.1 Is this your choice, or is it due to congregational demands?
 - 3.2 Do you have support workers?
- 4.. How much uninterrupted time off do you get a week?
 - 4.1 Do you get the equivalent of weekends?
- 5.. What is your relationship to your congregation?
 - 5.1 Do you view them as clients, peers,
- 6.. How do you unwind?

7.. Do you have professional supervision?

7.1 Who with (another denomination?)

8.. Is there anything else that you would like to see implemented that might help clergy with job demands? (Electronic forum – blog)

Leadership

1.. How has the role of minister changed over the years?

2.. Do you view yourself as a community leader?

2.1 What does community leadership entail?

3.. What is it like to be a church leader in a secular society?

4.. Do you believe the role is one of leadership or service (or both)?

5. To a greater or lesser extent, is there an image to maintain?

5.1 If so, how does this effect your relations with people?

Family

1.. What effect does this role have on family life? Are you always on call?
Examples.

2.. Do members of the congregation stop by unannounced?

2.1 Is this something you enjoy, encourage?

3.. Part of the job requires you to be accessible, how do you find an equilibrium?

4.. Do you often get a chance to go on holiday?

4.1 Can you have holidays at home?

5.. Do you feel you live in a fishbowl?

5.1 How do you cope with this? Examples?

Social

1.. What do you do in your free time?

1.1 Is there much time to pursue hobbies, interests or study outside of church?

2.. Where do you find most of your friends?

3.. Do you find people treat you differently when they find out you're a minister?
Examples?

3.1 Are there aspects of the role which are socially isolating? What?

4.. Do you find you have to be mindful of your role at all times?

4.1 What effect does this have on social relations?

Are there any aspects of the role that I have missed that you believe are important or would be important to consider if you were thinking about entering the ministry?

Appendix 4

Questions for Spouses

Demographics

- 1.. Were you already married when your husband decided to enter ministry?
- 2.. Were you enthusiastic about his decision to enter ministry?
 - 2.1 Was this a decision you made jointly?
- 3.. Is the role of 'wife of a minister' what you expected?
 - 3.1 What did you think it would be like?
 - 3.2 In what ways does it differ?
4. Do you have a paid job?
5. If not, was your decision not to have a career influenced at all by your husband's role as a church minister?
6. Do you attend church and/or participate in church activities?
 - 6.1 Are you happy with your current rate of participation or would you like to attend/participate more/less?
7. Did your own upbringing involve attending church?
8. What advice would you give someone who is thinking of going into ministry or marrying someone going into ministry?

Job Characteristics

- 1.. Given your unique perspective, what do you see as the advantages in the role of a church minister?
 - 1.1 What do think may be some of the drawbacks?
- 2.. Does your spouse get the equivalent of a weekend off a week?

2.1 Does he get much downtime?

3.. Many clergy have professional supervision as a means of discussing any concerns or difficulties they may be facing, is there any other service you think would be helpful? (Blog – electronic forum)

4.. Are you ever required to participate in or attend church activities/work because there is an overflow of work?

4.1 How do you feel about that?

Leadership

1.. How do you feel the role has changed over the years?

2. Are church ministers still community leaders?

2.1 In what ways?

3. Do you think there is an image to maintain? If so, what?

3.1 Does this effect your relations with other people?

Family

1.. What effect does your husband's role have on family life?

1.1 Is he always on call, what is this like to live with?

2.. Do members of the congregation stop by unannounced?

2.2 Is this something you encourage, enjoy?

3.. Part of your spouse's role is to be accessible, how do you maintain balance between family time and time with congregants?

Social

1.. Where do you draw most of your friends from?

2.. Do you find people treat you differently when they find out you're the wife of a church minister?

2.2 Do you find this socially isolating?

2.3 Do you think people might have preconceived ideas as to what you are like?

2.4 How do you deal with this?

3.. Do you find being the wife of a church minister socially restricting?

3.1 In what ways?

3.2 Is it that you don't get opportunity to meet such a wide range of people, or because certain people would be disapproved of?

Are there any other areas you think are important that I might have missed?

Appendix 5

Consent Form

Work Experiences of Clergy and their Families

CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

- I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
- I agree/do not agree to this interview being audiotaped.
- I wish the audio tape relating to my interview to be destroyed/returned to me at the conclusion of this study.

Signature **Date**

Full Name (printed)

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor

John O'Neill (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249 or e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz.