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Methodist ministers in the circuits : urban and rural differences

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METHODIST MINISTERS IN THE CIRCUITS: URBAN AND RURAL DIFFERENCES

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Some text bound close to the spine.

METHODIST MINISTERS IN THE CIRCUITS: URBAN AND RURAL DIFFERENCES

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INTRODUCTION

One of the basic objectives of this dissertation is to examine the hypothesis that the experience of Methodist ministry is different in urban locations to that in rural areas. Not only that this is so, but also that those ministers who are deployed in rural areas are different in a number of personal characteristics to those who find themselves in urban ministry.

A survey by means of a questionnaire of all those ministers who were in the active pastoral work in the circuits was undertaken by the researcher. The ministers were asked to complete a questionnaire which not only ascertained information about their ministry, but also probed their own reactions to their work and the situations in which they found themselves. This self-generated information provided the database for the enquiry which follows.

The survey springs from the interest of the researcher who has had a long experience of ministry in the Methodist Church and has himself served in both rural and urban circuits as a probationer, a circuit minister, a superintendent minister, and has also experienced six years as a minister working outside Methodism and serving an ecumenical regional body. The objective focus of the study is necessarily on the data gathered from the ministers but is informed by the experience and the concerns of the researcher.

These concerns are about the future of the Methodist Church and the effectiveness of its ministry for its historic emphases of evangelism and holiness transformed into

modern terms. Much change is taking place in the Church at present, but development seems to be in following longitudinal lines in modifying the present system instead creative lateral thinking. The outcome of this comparison of the differing situations of ministry provides a challenge to the system of stationing the ministers of Methodism and also highlights critical considerations regarding specific training for rural ministry and questions relating to ministerial stress and personality.

Grateful thanks are due to John Nelson of the Methodist Connexional Integrated Database who provided the sample of ministers for this study; Professor Leslie Francis, my supervisor, who was a great encourager and support throughout; and to Dr Mandy Robbins, without whose help in encoding the results and providing print outs of statistical distributions I would have been at a complete loss. Finally my thanks are due to all those Methodist ministers who took the time to fill in the questionnaire and return it to me.

Lewis Burton

Methodist Ministers in the Circuits: Urban and Rural Contrasts.

SUMMARY

The main enquiry of this dissertation is to ascertain whether there are differences between those Methodist ministers who are employed in urban circuits and those employed in rural circuits.

The first part of the dissertation is descriptive, examining the evolution of the Methodist ministry, the background to ministry today, and whether differences between the urban and rural church can be delineated.

The second part establishes the method of the enquiry within the discipline of empirical theology, using the techniques of sociology to establish a data base. An analysis follows of the characteristics of all 1026 responses from the 1728 of those sampled.

The third part is devoted specifically to establishing urban/rural differences of ministry style. Out of the whole number of respondents those who had special responsibility for urban ministry and those for rural ministry were isolated. In the contrast between these two groups of respondents a number of differences were perceived. These were associated with differences of personal characteristics, the understanding of the accepted role of ministry within the circuit situation, the workload expected of them, the occupational stress which this imposed, the belief systems of the ministers, their practice of personal devotion, their style in the conduct of worship, and their personality type.

A conclusion is drawn that the difference between urban and rural ministers is real, but is created principally by the Methodist system which is imposed upon all churches and ministers, but which has contrasting effects on the way that ministry can be exercised in the situation of populous urban areas and that found in rural locations. A number of differences not associated with this cause, but which spring from individual differences between ministers, are also identified. Attention is drawn to various outcomes of the research which are valuable for Methodism's future.

CHAPTER 1. THE EVOLUTION OF MINISTRY IN THE METHODIST CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Any study of the Methodist ministry must take its departure point from its origins in the seventeenth century in the band of helpers gathered around and organised by John Wesley. In the early stages this embryonic ministry was a wandering band of lay evangelists which later developed into the ordained preaching and pastoral work-force of the church of today. In the course of its history, over the two hundred and fifty years of its development, the conception of the pastoral office has gone through many changes (Kent, 1966:44). These have been accompanied by different conceptions of church and ministry, and there are influences and opinions among both ministers and people today which are formed, not by modern day theologians, but through many traditional ways of viewing ministry which stem from attitudes formed by the past. In the light of this it is appropriate in this opening chapter to give as brief a review as possible of the way that the Methodist ministry has evolved into the shape it takes today. Therefore in any study of the mind-set, attitudes, beliefs, conditions of service of Methodist ministers, and their ordained status and role, such as that attempted here, one must take account of how, over the years since its inception, that ministry has developed

THE BEGINNINGS OF MINISTRY IN METHODISM

John Wesley and his helpers

Methodism grew as an evangelistic and holiness sect (Kissack, 1939:146) within the Church of England under the ministry of John Wesley after his spiritual awakening in 1738 (Edwards, 1965:51-52; Tabraham, 1995; Hattersley, 2002; Haley and Francis,

2006:3-15). Wesley's original inspiration was to re-awaken the Church of England to the challenge of spreading the gospel and meeting the needs of the people of England (Baker, 1970:59) in the rapidly changing society of the mid-eighteenth century, but it was with some difficulty that he kept his burgeoning Methodist movement within its boundaries (Baker, 1970:304-323). This forced Wesley to act in unorthodox and pragmatic ways (Edwards, 1965: 53f). The difficulties centred round the kind of ministers which his newly evangelised societies required and the matter of their appointment, compounded by the fact that Wesley was determined to remain a priest within the Church of England, yet found himself constrained by Anglican discipline (Rack, 1987:497; Haley and Francis, 2006:15-18; Lawson, 1963:73).

The problems which Wesley faced were the problems of success. After George Whitefield had convinced him of the value of field preaching (Parkes, 1992:219; Waller, 2003:71-77; Edwards, 1965:52), people in numbers responded to his message. He displayed his organisational skills in forming groups of converts in any particular locality into Methodist societies (Baker, 1970:74-87; Waller, 2003:53-5; Fitzgerald, 1932:100-101) where together they could pursue their spiritual development towards holiness, and listen to Methodist preaching. They were charged, however, always to receive communion from their own Anglican priest in their parish church (George, 1965:264; Lawson, 1965:83; Bowmer, 1961). Wesley's problem lay in sustaining the people in his societies in their quest for holiness, and in the supply of preachers for the Methodist meetings (Waller, 2003:55). Neither Wesley, nor his brother Charles, could be everywhere, and the few men in Anglican orders who had allied themselves to his cause were following their own evangelical ministries, or caught up locally in their own parishes (Lofthouse, 1965; Baker, 1970:183f). The result was that in the

absence of Wesley, laymen stepped in to attempt the task. There is some doubt who was the first to attempt this (Baker, 1970:82), though the first to do so appears to have been in 1739 when a Thomas Westell, a carpenter, a member of the first society formed by Wesley at Bristol preached (Batty, 1995:11; Milburn, 1995). This caused some dismay for Wesley as preaching by those not ordained was against Anglican discipline. Later in 1742, when Wesley left the London society to visit Bristol, he left the society in charge of a layman, Thomas Maxfield, with the instruction that he was only to pray with the people. News came that Maxfield had preached to the society in his absence (Baker, 1949). Wesley returned and found that he had indeed done so. One of the well known stories of Methodism although perhaps not absolutely true (Baker, 1970:83) is that Wesley's mother had heard Maxfield preach on this occasion, and in her forceful way had told her son that Maxfield was as much called to preach as he was (Batty, 1995:11). Wesley appointed him to preach and he was soon joined by twenty others (Sangster, 1938; Walsh, 1993). Maxfield continued to preach in London, and is regarded as Methodism's first official Local Preacher, but as early Methodism expanded he became one of Wesley's full-time helpers, and an itinerant preacher, and later sought episcopal ordination (Lawson, 1963:119; Vickers, 2000:225).

Wesley's helpers and the development of the itinerancy

In the course of only a few years, and under the force of circumstances in the growing body of converts, Wesley's grudging tolerance of lay help changed (Baker, 1970:81). Wesley's gift of organisation came again into play and his preachers were organised into a definite body where his policies could be made plain to them (Edwards, 1965:71; Baker, 1970:74-87; George, 1978). He saw that the need for the gospel to be

preached across the land was great and that preachers were few (Baker, 1970:112), and in his pragmatic way he was willing to recruit as helpers men who were untrained, but had the fire of the Spirit within them (Kent. 1966:48). To meet the need he also saw that preachers would have to travel continuously from place to place as he had done among the black slaves on the American plantations (Baker, 1970:71; Woodlock-Smith, 1999). So began the system of Methodist itinerancy.

The first conference of the preachers was in June 1744, with four clergyman of the Church of England who supported Wesley, and four lay preachers (George, 1978:144, Lawson, 1963:30-37). As Wesley's societies (Baker, 1970:77) developed, both in size and number they were gathered into geographical groupings, the circuits (Waller, 2003:53-55). Preachers were gradually divided into full-time itinerant and part-time local preachers, though the separation of the two kinds of preachers took some time. By the time of Wesley's death, however, in 1791, the division had become plain (Batty, 1995:11-34). The itinerants were appointed to the circuits by the Conference, their task being to care for the societies of the circuit and to preach around the circuit in a systematic way. The local preachers were charged with preaching in their own circuit. Wesley was led into controversy about the status of his itinerants as he was still subject to Anglican discipline (Baker, 1970:160f). However, under this pressure, Wesley insisted always that his preachers were laymen (Lawson, 1963:99-103f).

Pressures on Wesley

One particular difficulty which emerged with the growth of the Methodist societies was that those who had been converted by Methodist preachers did not necessarily have an affinity with the Church of England. Some had come to Methodism from a

position of Dissent and others, perhaps the great majority, from no church background at all (Waller, 2006:533-55, Kent, 1966:45)). Why then, many said, should we attend the parish church to receive Holy Communion? Why could they not receive it from an itinerant preacher? The itinerants felt themselves to be under pressure from their people, and some broke the rule which Wesley attempted to uphold (Lawson, 1963:85f). Wesley, however, was on the horns of a dilemma. He spent his life trying to reconcile the contrary demands of his loyalty to the Church of England and his loyalty to the Revival (Baker, 1970:163). He could still say that his helpers were unordained, did not administer the sacraments, and drew their authority to preach and teach from him. Their success however meant that they grew in popularity and their own de facto authority and created the tension on Wesley to act in different ways (Kent, 1966:49).

One solution was that his helpers should seek Episcopal ordination. Wesley then obtained ordination for Thomas Maxfield at the hands of the Bishop of Londonderry, and for another, John Jones, from Erasmus, whom he believed to be a Greek bishop (Lawson, 1963:118). There was also trouble when some other helpers secured episcopal ordination without Wesley's consent (George,1978:145). This was a great embarrassment to Wesley as throughout his life he continued to subscribe to the Anglican doctrine of the threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon (Lawson, 1963:75), but his views were considerably modified in the reading in 1746 of Lord King's *An enquiry into the constitution, discipline, unity and worship of the primitive church* (1691) (Lawson, 1963:47-48), and Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicum – a weapon – salve for church wounds* (1661) (Lawson, 1963:59-60; Baker, 1970:145-151). Both these divines subscribed to the view that the terms bishops and presbyters were used

indiscriminately in the early church, and that bishop only later became senior to presbyter. Despite being persuaded by Stillingfleet and King, it would seem from the record that Wesley was still an episcopalian, but that while he still believed in episcopacy, he did not believe that it was a distinct order, but a distinct function, and preferred the title "superintendent". For him the words episcopos, bishop, superintendent, had the same meaning (Lawson, 1963:76).

Wesley's views on apostolic succession were also changed in concert with his views concerning episcopacy (Baker, 1970:151f). In a letter to his brother Charles in 1785 he says that, "the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man can or ever did prove. But this does not in any way interfere with my remaining in the Church of England, from which I have no desire to separate now than I did fifty years ago." (Quoted Lawson, 1963:81) A crisis emerging in 1784 and the problem of providing oversight for the new Methodist societies in America brought things to a head. Anglican priests were few on the ground due to the War of Independence and no Anglican Bishop was appointed to America. The old problems of who could celebrate Holy Communion for the Methodist societies re-occurred (Edwards, 1965:69f; Baker, 1970:270).

The beginning of an ordained ministry

Wesley had been conscious of the need in the American societies, and in 1780 had appealed to Dr. Lowth, the Bishop of London, to ordain a man for America. Lowth refused (Lawson, 1963:132, Edwards, 1965:69). Wesley's only option was to take drastic action and ordain someone for America himself (Baker, 1970:262-270). In 1784 at a private house in Bristol, Wesley assisted by the Rev. Thomas Coke and the

Rev. James Creighton, who were already in Anglican orders, ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey as deacons and on the following day ordained the two as presbyters. At the same time he ordained Coke as superintendent for the American societies (Lawson, 1963:133-136). Wesley was careful, however, not to use the words ordained or consecrated to describe his actions: the vital words are " I have this day set apart as a superintendent by the imposition of my hands and prayer (being assisted by other ordained ministers), Thomas Coke, Doctor of Civil Law, a presbyter of the Church of England" (George, 1978:146). The English work already had a superintendent, Wesley himself, and now America was provided for. In America Coke ordained Francis Asbury to be his joint superintendent for the American work, (Baker, 1970: 271) and both began to use the title "bishop", hence the usage of the title in the United Methodist Church in America today (Edwards, 1965:69; Baker,1970:271).

These Methodist ordinations for America in 1784 were a turning point, and Wesley began other ordinations. The first were for the work in Scotland in 1785 (Lawson, 1963:155-157). Other ordinations followed in 1786 for societies overseas other than America (Lawson, 1963:158). The first English ordinations were in 1788, and in 1789 there were others with the word presbyter replacing the word elder on the ordination certificate (Edwards, 1965:70, Lawson, 1963:163-64).

After Wesley, the Methodist minister as a layman

Wesley died in 1791 and further ordinations without the consent of the Conference were forbidden by the Conference of 1792 (Lawson, 1963:173). In 1793 Conference decided that the distinction between ordained and unordained itinerants should be

dropped since tension was beginning to be felt between the two groups and it was divisive for both the preachers and the societies. The itinerant preachers were not to seek ordination and they were to be regarded as laymen, but were to be given their status as ministers by the Conference when they were voted into "Full Connexion". It was thus a kind of "levelling down". A further decision in 1793 forbade the use of the title "Reverend" and that cassocks, bands, and surplices, should not be used by the preachers (Lawson, 1963:173).

The celebrant at Holy Communion

The main question was not whether preachers should be ordained, but whether they should administer Holy Communion (Walsh, 1965:288). The Plan of Pacification from the Conference of 1795 (Baker, 1970:326-340) laid down that where it was desired, with the consent of Conference, Holy Communion might be administered by persons authorised by the Conference, which meant in effect the itinerant preachers in full connexion. It was this step which was decisive in the later separation of the Methodist societies from the Church of England (Tompkins, 2003:197). The itinerants had virtually become, therefore, ministers of local congregations in the Methodist societies (George, 1978:153), and for some this meant "virtual ordination" (George, 1951:156; Kent, 1966:50).

Authority in the Methodist movement

Before his death in 1791 Wesley had made arrangements for the continuity of his authority in the annual Conference of his preachers by naming one hundred of the travelling preachers as those who would exercise authority over the church. Conference would consist of those preachers who were in full connexion, but the

Legal Hundred (Baker, 1970:227-9), as it was subsequently called, one hundred of the preachers chosen by Conference, would provide the essential continuity of Conference from year to year (Baker, 1965: 245). It was in Conference that the episcope, the oversight and authority for the continuing Wesleyan church lay. It also preserved the unity of the Methodist movement by holding the local societies and circuits together, maintaining their connectedness, creating the Connexion, as it was called, a term still used today (Baker, 1970.117).

In the Wesleyan Church in ensuing years, after all the evasions and stratagems regarding whether the itinerants were ordained ministers or not (Kent, 1996:50), the opinion had grown that reception by the Conference of the intending travelling preacher into full connexion with the Conference by a vote, without the imposition of hands, was ordination. The matter was debated in the Conference of 1836. The theory that this amounted to ordination was unchallenged in the debate, but it was felt, however, that the laying on of hands was scriptural and ancient, and that it would be better not to omit it. The practice was then established of the reception of preachers into full connexion during the Conference session, and a few hours later ordination by the imposition of hands was carried out. This practice later gave rise to controversy over which was the effective element of ordination, especially as hardly any of the non-Wesleyan Methodist Churches used the imposition of hands (George 1978:154). From that time the Methodist itinerants could become regular ministers: "Their action was based on the conviction that God, acting through an earthly succession of events rather than bishops, had made them presbyters" (Kent, 1966:51).

The ministerial office in Wesleyan Methodism

All this indicates that the way in which Wesleyan Methodism developed its ministry and its concept of the pastoral office displays the fact that it was no easy journey. Wesleyan Methodism, however, in the years following Wesley, and throughout the nineteenth century developed a situation where the ministerial office became the authority and the source of power within the church. Conference was composed of ministers only, and at its heart was the Legal Hundred. Its hold of over the church was absolute and central discipline was exerted through the ministers in the circuits. It was this power over the church in the hands of ministers alone that created tensions and secessions at a time when autocratic government in the nation at large was being questioned (Turner, 1985:118-119, Kent, 1966:57). The democratic element in Wesleyan Methodism where both ministers and laity shared in the control of the church did not happen until 1878 with the entry of laymen into the conference (Rack, 1983:119). It was this decision that made it a different kind of church and enabled it to find rapprochement with the other Methodist churches.

The other Methodist Churches

The various breakaway movements from Wesleyan Methodism must be seen against the background of social, political and economic change in the latter part of the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth century. The Wesleyan Conference followed the pattern of control which was there in national life. In the hold upon its members it was autocratic and intolerant, but the same desire for political and social freedom which existed in the nation also existed in the members of the church. Thus dissident groups formed churches with Methodist style and polity, where ordinary members of the church could have a part in decision making. An illuminating division

between the breakaway churches and the old Wesleyan body is made by Kent (1996:67-76) when he distinguishes between High Methodism and Low Methodism the former was the attitude of Wesleyan Methodism which tried to be true to its Wesleyan origins by means of the strict authority structure of Conference maintained through its ministers, over against the more populist other Methodist Churches, who, in the matter of church government were much less centralised, and as time went on, became more and more to have a polity in which lay people had control (Kent, 1966:68).

The first of the secessions was that under Alexander Kilham (1761-98) (Vickers, 200:191), who was a travelling preacher with the Wesleyans but who, in the aftermath of revolution in America and France against autocratic government, led the resistance to the autocracy of the Wesleyan Conference immediately after Wesley's death. They were dubbed, "the Tom Paine Methodists" after the political agitator of the day and finally the breakaway body which resulted in 1797 took the name the *Methodist New Connexion* (Townsend, Workman, and Eayrs, 1909:495-502). Changes led to the equal representation of laymen with ministers at the annual conference, and the admittance of lay people into the governing councils of the Church. It was not until 1846 that a Deed Poll was established with a polity which reflected its origins in the Wesleyan Church. (Wilkinson, 1978:280-294).

The creation of the *Bible Christians* (Townsend, Workman, and Eayrs, 1909:502-513), a Methodist body which took shape in the south west of England, began in the evangelism of a Methodist local preacher, William O'Bryan (Vickers, 2000:259). James Thorne (Vickers, 2000:351) became the eventual leader of the newly

established societies. The early preachers were powerful evangelists and had little remuneration, and among the itinerants were some women. The first Conference was at Launceston in 1819. James Thorne secured the constitution by Deed Poll in 1831 which provided lay representation at the Conference. It bears a remarkable similarity to the constitution of the Methodist New Connexion (Wilkinson, 1978:294-303).

The *Primitive Methodist Church* (Townsend, Workman, and Eayrs, 1909:560-598) took its origins in the Potteries on the borders of Staffordshire and Cheshire (Wilkinson, 1978; Lysons, 1966; Milburn, 2002; Howdle, 2007). The two founders were Hugh Bourne (Vickers, 2000:38), a country carpenter and William Clowes, (Vickers, 2000:72) a potter. At the end of 1805 an American evangelist called Lorenzo Dow had great success with an evangelistic mission to Cheshire and South Lancashire. He was the Billy Graham of his day and his technique was to preach at camp meetings on an open site outdoors. Bourne and Clowes organised their own first camp meeting on a local hillside in May, 1807. A complaint against their conduct by some local Wesleyans was brought to the Wesleyan Conference of that year with the result that Bourne, and later Clowes, were expelled. The supporters of both men joined forces in 1811, taking the name of Primitive Methodists. The new Church took root in the industrial districts of the north of England, and in country areas, where it ministered to the disoriented poor of the expanding industrial towns and large villages (Wilkinson, 1978:304-313). There were also notable differences from Wesleyan Methodism both in the power of the laity and the role of the minister (Clark, 2007). There was an emphasis on the regional rather than the national and in mid-Victorian years it was the District Meeting rather than the national Conference which regulated the life of the Church and entry into the ministry. The role of the minister was that of

travelling preacher, and he had no sacerdotal or organisational privilege. He was not automatically the chairman of Church meetings at any level, even the presidency of the Conference, and there was a streak of anti- clericalism in the Church; gone was the authority of the minister which was so predominant a force in Wesleyan Methodism (Turner, 1983:331f). Laymen were employed in a full-time capacity, called Lay Agents, who performed pastoral and preaching tasks which were typically those of the minister. It was the Methodist Connexion which most closely became associated with the working classes and working class interests (Thompson, 1980:435-438; Colls, 1987, 1995; Moore, 1974).

In subsequent years, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, a number of secessions occurred from the parent Wesleyan body over a number of different disagreements. These were the *Protestant Methodists* in 1823 (Townsend, Workman, and Eayrs, 1909:514-516), the *Wesleyan Methodist Association* in 1833 (Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, 1909:516-520), and later the *Wesleyan Reformers* in the 1840s (Townsend, Workman, and Eayrs, 1909:527-536). In 1854 the reformers moved in the direction of union with other non-Wesleyan groups with the result that these three small Methodist Churches resulted in the formation of the *United Methodist Free Church* (Townsend, Workman, and Eayrs, 1909:546-551). In the polity of the new Church, despite still acknowledging its Methodist origins, in defining the role of its ministers it was the Church to come the furthest from its Wesleyan roots. Although still having some of the characteristics of the parent body, the polity of the Church was more akin to congregationalism, as the name of the Church implies, and ministers were hired and fired by the local Church as distinct from the process of stationing

ministers in circuits by the central authority, as in the Wesleyan Church (Wilkinson, 1978:313-323).

Change in the Wesleyan Church and union in the breakaways

The decision by the Wesleyan Conference to bring laymen into the governing bodies of the Church in 1878 was the step which removed the biggest constitutional difference between the English Methodist denominations. It involved a definite break in the old understanding of the traditional Wesleyan view of ministry (Kent, 1966:1f) As John Bowmer observed "Once Conference was made a mixed assembly, the function of a collective pastorate was destroyed and it becomes something different, a legislative rather than an Episcopal body" (Bowmer, 1975:167).

In the breakaway Churches talks were being initiated between different Churches in the more liberal Methodist traditions. Some of these were abortive, because of different attitudes to ministry and Church polity, but in 1907 union was achieved between the Bible Christians, the Methodist New Connexion and the United Methodist Free Churches to form the *United Methodist Church* (Townsend, Workman, and Eayrs, 1909:549-551). This was not achieved without some difficulties regarding polity and ministry. The United Methodist Free Church was much less homogenous than the other two, and in the progress to union feared ministerial dominance and the power of Conference to levy money from the circuits. They were anxious not to lose their freedom from ministerial and Conference control. There were also reservations from the other two Churches, each of the participants having a different perspective on the prospect and the results of union. The polity finally

adopted after negotiation was largely that of the Methodist New Connexion, nearer to the Wesleyan Church than the other partners (Turner, 1983:324-327).

The Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church was relatively short lived, lasting only for twenty five years until the union of all the main Methodist Churches in 1932. Serious negotiations for unity began in 1918. Negotiations were affected by wartime experiences in the First World War of 1914-18 in the hopefulness which the aftermath of war created, but also the movement in religious thought of the time was influential (Kent, 1966:2-5). There was strong input from influential laymen in all three Churches which saved any clerical dominance, although the Deed of Union (CPD 1, 2006), which effected the creation of the new Methodist Church incorporating the Wesleyan, the Primitive and the United Methodist Churches was the result of much positioning and compromise, especially in doctrinal matters (Kent, 1966:20-43). The resulting Methodist Church Bill, which provided the legal basis for the new Church, was enacted by Parliament in 1929. The final Conferences of the old Churches and the uniting Conference of the new Church were held in 1932 (Turner, 1983). On the doctrine of the ordained ministry, the principle of representation generally acceptable to all three Churches came to be strongly expressed: "The Methodist Church holds the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and consequently believes that no priesthood exists which belongs exclusively to a particular class or order of men" (Turner, 1983:338). Nevertheless, it supported the distinctive role of those whom the Church judged to be called to the order of ministers within the Church. The process of entering the ministry was that after testing and training and examination, and after a period of probation, those who were found worthy were received into the ministry of

the Church by Conference decision and by the laying on of hands by their fellow ministers. By calling and ordination they were ministers of the word and sacraments and were stationed by Conference in the circuits to serve the people and to maintain Methodist discipline.

After union the circuits of the three traditions remained, and ministers itinerated as they had done in Churches and circuits of their former traditions. The result was much overlapping of circuits and local Churches, especially in the towns and cities where Churches of the three traditions stood cheek by jowl. In such situations, which were common, each locality had three different ministers belonging to the old Methodist divisions, who perhaps travelled a distance to serve them. Gradually in the years after 1945 Church buildings were closed and circuits reorganised to provide a more efficient ministry, and ministers who came from one Methodist tradition found themselves ministering in Church buildings which had belonged to another, and with people whose expectations of ministry was rather different from their own (Davies, 1982:33-37). Old differences tended to remain and sometimes created difficulties, as in the controversy aroused by proposals for Anglican / Methodist union in the late 1960s (Turner, 1985:206). While gradually being assimilated, the differences of pre-union days still emerge from time to time, tending to cause controversy in matters of Church order and ministry.

Modern developments of ministry

In general there have been significant changes to the pattern of ministry in the Methodist Church, especially since the Second World War. For those coming into ministry the chief difference has been in their methods of acceptance and their

training. The former has been modified according the strictures of the times and the latter has seen a rationalisation of methods of training with college closures and reorganisation and the setting up of new types of full-time and part-time courses. A significant development has been in the setting up of Queens College in Birmingham, initially for Anglicans and Methodists, on an ecumenical basis. Other denominations now cooperate and courses are provided on full-time and part-time bases (Turner, 1985:226-234).

For those already ministering in the circuits there is now the opportunity of staying in their circuit longer, and regularity of itinerancy is not the golden rule it once was. Greater tolerance is also given to ministers with family obligations to children or parents, and to the secular employment of spouses, which can be disrupted by the necessity of moving to another circuit (Griffiths, 2002).

Methods of deployment of the Church's ministry have also changed. One of the most important is the way that the Church has allowed ministers to work beyond the confines of the Church. Before the mid-1960s ministry was confined almost entirely to circuit ministry, but under the influence of the theology of the times (Robinson, 1963; Bonhoeffer, 1953) Conference began to allow some ministers to take up secular occupations and still retain their orders. This was originally called Sector Ministry and now goes under the title, "Ministers in Appointments not in the control of the Church" (Bellamy, 2002). In 2006 there were 159 ministers in this category, with a wide variety of differing occupations, compared to the 1,728 who were still in the work of the circuits (Minutes, 2006:179-182)

Two other developments of ministry are also radical and important changes in traditional patterns. The first is the ordination of women. In the Methodist Church women were first accepted as candidates for the ministry in 1972, with ordination taking place after training in 1974 (Turner, 1998:24-27). The advancement of women ministers into significant positions of ministry has been rapid. The first woman to hold the Chair of a Methodist District came about in the West Yorkshire District in 1986. She was later elected as President of the Conference for 1992, holding later the post of one of the four Directors in the Connexional Team charged with the smooth running of all Church concerns. She was later ennobled as a Methodist minister and sits in the House of Lords. Despite this success of assimilating women into the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the Methodist Church, there have been difficulties and acceptance has not been universal (Conference, 1996).

The other notable development of ministry in the Methodist Church is the creation of the Order of Deacons, having the same status as those in the traditional ministry (Conference, 2004a), now called presbyters (Conference, 2002b). The difference between them is a functional one, the former being designated for service and the latter, though with a name change to presbyter, retaining the traditional role of being ministers of the word and the sacraments (Aitchision, 2003; Jackson, 2002). In what follows, the word "minister" is used in the traditional way, but the subjects of the study are not deacons, but presbyters of the Methodist Church.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the Methodist ministry from its first inception to the present day. Notable changes have happened with the passage of time. Wesley

certainly would not have recognised, nor agreed with the changes which have taken place. However, the pragmatism which was typical of the way in which he responded to changes and necessities in his developing mission to England, and the creation of a Church which has become world wide, is also the way that the Methodist Church in Great Britain has adapted to change over two centuries and attempts to do the same in the climate of change in today's world, though perhaps not as radically as it ought..

There are, however, three lessons which come from the past. The first concerns the views which exist in the Church relating to the pastoral office. Modern Methodism has well defined what a minister is, both in the Deed of Union of 1929, and in more modern times with definitions in various reports from Conference (Conference, 2002b; Conference 2002c; and Conference, 2004a). Older views of the pastoral office still linger in the Church despite the passage of time and the division which Kent has made between High Methodism and Low Methodism (page 19) still seem to be applicable to today's Church. Traditional attitudes which are embodied in these different views of the pastoral office are fading as time goes by, but Methodism is an aging Church and still carries people with long memories. Differences of understanding in matters of polity are also compounded by differing theological perceptions. Evidence of such division is provided by the experience of the formidable opposition in the Church to the Anglican / Methodist unity scheme of the late 1960s (Turner, 1985::202f), and at local level in opposition to the negotiations of the Anglican Methodist Covenant of 2004. Traditional attitudes regarding the polity of Methodism have been evident recently, for at the Conference of 2007, in the light of opposition from the circuits to the creation of Methodist Bishops, a decision to abandon such a move for the time being was taken (Methodist Recorder, August 2nd,

2007). Diverse opinions about the pastoral office are held by lay people and ministers, but for ministers they tend to affect what they feel the shape of their ministry in the Church today should take. Hence the relevance of the research that follows. The roots of ministry today are in the Church's history.

The second lesson which can be learnt from the history of the Church is concerned with centralised authority and its accompanying bureaucracy. Authority lies in the annual Conference and is underlined by the existence of the Church's rule book, *Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church.* In today's climate devolution and subsidiarity are movements which have gained credence in a modern world. In Methodist history Wesleyans had a highly centralised and authoritarian Church. Primitive Methodism, however, favoured the region and much of its power was devolved to the Synods, which were week-end celebrations of Church activity and where ordinations for the ministry took place. Today the Church is beginning to think regionally in certain matters such as discipline and complaints, and in the organisation of the annual Conference, but Synods, by and large, apart from gathering people together with the limited agenda of electing representatives to Conference, have little specific purpose. Questions are now being asked about the purpose and role of District Synods; the Church could learn from its past (Conference, 2002a; 2007a).

The third lesson for today is in the use of its lay people and the role of the laity. The emphasis on ordained ministry resulting from the power of the Wesleyans in the formation of modern Methodism still exists in the polity of the Church. Presbyters are ministers of the word and the sacraments and are expected to carry the burden of the pastoral office. This is despite the long tradition of a ministry which lay people have

exercised from the beginnings of the Church and through the history of its divisions. The Church is learning its lesson again in the time of shortage of candidates for ministry, as other Churches are learning also, but "leave it to the minister", because of his/her office and also because s/he is a full-timer, has long been a common attitude in local churches. A radical change came in the late 1980s when the Conference adopted the report entitled *The Ministry of the Whole People of God* (Conference, 1988), firmly laying out the principle that the ministry which the Church should offer comes from everyone in the church. The development of paid lay ministries has been startling over the last forty years. In 1970 there were 35 lay people offering some kind of ministry to the church and today there are 600 (Methodist web site, 2008). The are youth leaders, administrators, group leaders of various kinds for the young and the elderly, and many other kinds of service which offer many support services to the church and its ministers. Despite the growth of such paid full-time and part-time posts lessons have still to be learned from the history of the Church to marshal the resources locked up in the laity.

CHAPTER 2 CHURCH AND MINISTRY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

BEING CHURCH TODAY

Methodist ministers, and also the ministers of other denominations in England have had to adapt to a series of changes in their churches which are common both to those who minister in the town and in the countryside. These are the changing cultural patterns prevalent in Britain during the last five decades and their effect upon the life and progress of the Churches (Hastings, 1991). These effects can be identified as the decline in church attendance and church closure; the financial stringencies forced upon church administration; the shortage of vocations for the ministry; and the difficulties of staffing existing churches.

Changing cultural patterns

The Second World War resulted in a significant break in the life, habits, and world-view of so many people. The technological development of communications, the changes in education and health care, and the addressing of social and economic needs of the general population created a huge change in how people worked, spent their leisure time, lived their everyday lives, and were no longer held by the habits and mores, and even the morality, to which they had subscribed in earlier years. The historical cliché for this change is what is popularly thought of as the ethos of the 1960s. For the churches in England, embedded in their institutional frameworks, the cultural change was of vital importance. It altered their relationships with the world and the way that institutional religion was valued, resulting in a decline in church attendance and subsequent closure of many local churches (Davie, 1994:10-28).

Secularisation

Differing theories have been formulated to explain this decline, such as that stemming from a process of secularisation. Secularisation has been defined as "the process by which religion in the West, especially Christianity, loses its public prominence and influence, many of its former functions being taken over by state bodies" (Marsh, et al, 2004:231) The growth of educational opportunity and the dissemination of scientific opinion has created a sophistication among the general population where they perceive, consciously or unconsciously, that God is no longer required to explain what before was mysterious. Furthermore welfare provision and state aid and health care have removed the necessity for the comforts found in religious belief, all of this involving a process which results in the marginalisation of religion (Wilson, 1966; Martin, 1969, 1979), and is a process which has been at work over many years in British society (Brown, 2001). The theory of secularisation has not been without its critics (Cox, 1999) and David Martin himself has pointed out some of its disadvantages. He indicates that in the process of rationalisation which is implied in the theory, moving towards a universal secularity, minor influences involved are neglected or obliterated. One other difficulty lies in the way that the theory has to cope with cultural changes in society and with cultural meanings. It is also a theory concentrating on institutional religion, and there is a problem of relating the theory to the growth of sectarian religion and new religious movements, and even the great shifts happening within institutional religion itself (Martin, 1999). It is also a sweeping theory which ignores the complexity of religious behaviour (Bruce, 1992, 2000, 2002). Grace Davie has raised the question as to whether, in the matter of secularisation Europe is an exceptional case (Davie, 2007), suggesting that it springs

from the cultural heritage of the West. She suggests that there is still "vicarious religion", the religion performed by an active minority on behalf of and recognised by a much larger number: that there is a movement from obligation to consumption, that the pressure to engage is no longer there, but there are still those willing to consume, even at superficial levels: and that the situation today is complicated by other religious beliefs, typical of people from old colonies, who have moved into Europe. John Coffey, in an interesting paper on secularisation (2001) suggests that where the church has declined in the West, other ideologies have declined in other places and spaces have opened up for church growth: that churches, such a those in American evangelical movements like the Vineyard and Willow Creek and others are creating new expressions of Christianity: and there is the burgeoning of the whole movement towards religious pluralism in today's secular culture.

Social Capital

In the explanation of religious decline others turn to theories of social cohesion such as that of social capital (Putnam, 1995). This lays emphasis on the unwillingness of people today to associate together in social units. In his book, *Bowling Alone, the collapse and revival of American Community* (Putnam, 2000), Putman defines the concept of social capital as the "connections among individuals – the social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them", which is "most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations" (Putnam, 2000:19). The term itself calls attention to the way that personal lives are made more productive by social ties in that the interaction of individuals can build up the fund of goodwill, fellowship, and sympathy, and add to the social effectiveness and social coherence of the group. Putnam acknowledges that the forms of social

capital vary and defines two forms as bonding social capital, and bridging, or inclusive social capital (Putnam, 2000:22f). The former is concerned with the social interaction of individuals and the social networks which this creates which affect the social cohesion and the social awareness of the group itself. The latter is concerned with the way that the social interaction of the group coincides with other social networks so that social capital is generated in the wider society. To these have been added a third, linking social capital which refers to relations between individuals and groups in different social strata in a hierarchy where power, social status and wealth are accessed by different groups (Cote and Healey, 2001:42). Woolcock (2001) extends this concept to include the capacity to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the community. The usefulness of the concept has been applied to the analysis of communities, both small (Ineson and Burton, 2005; Burton, 2006b) and large (National Statistics, 2008).

Putnam's point, and those who have applied the theory to modern groups of varying size, is that the structure of modern society through social change, and the influence of technology and of modern innovations upon private lives, sends social cohesion into a downward spiral, much to the cost of the existence of social groupings, hence the import of his title "Bowling alone".

In Britain the main focus has been to apply social capital theory to explain the way that in recent years church attendance and church membership has been in rapid decline. Steve Bruce (2002), using work by Peter Hall (1999), takes the position that declining church membership is not associated with the unwillingness of individuals to associate in the social aggregates of the churches, but must be due to other factors,

such as secularisation. Grace Davie (2002) however, supporting earlier work on the decline of social capital in faith communities as a factor in the decline of the churches, maintains her original position that it is active in church decline. Robin Gill (2002), who is sceptical concerning all over-arching theories of explanation, sees the cause of decline in a variety of social and physical factors.

"Believing without belonging"

A theory which connects the effects of secularisation and the decline in social capital is that associated with the name of Grace Davie (1994:93-116). So many people when challenged about their faith, admit to their Christianity without ever admitting to going to church. Practising ministers know the feeling that there are many who would say, "My church is your church", but who never pass through its doors. Old associations and family networks are forces involved in the cause of such behaviour, but also disillusionment with the institutional Church and its belief systems. The phrase which describes this mismatch between belief and church attendance has been popularised by Grace Davie (1994:93-116), although its pedigree goes back to Carl Dudley (1979:3). The proportion of believers who confess to being Christian is still high, though on the whole declining, but this high proportion is not reflected in the much smaller proportions of church attenders which are revealed in current polls (Brierley, 2000, 2006), giving credence to the fact that many still believe but do not belong to the institutional Church. Other studies (Richter and Francis, 1998:1-13) have also revealed this disparity. It seems to be a matter of commitment that people will gladly say that they still believe, but are not prepared to make the commitment to church attendance

"New Age" spirituality

The phrase "believing and not belonging" is also related to the growth of other types of spirituality. Belief in spirituality of one kind or another can exist outside the confines of institutional religion (Davie, 1994:41f) and even outside a religious collective (Bailey, 1998), although indeed many New Age collectives do exist. What seems typical of today is the "pick and mix" spirituality of the age which is attached to a consumerist life style. Individuals find their own answers to the classic age-old questions which religion addresses: who am I, what is the purpose of life, what happens when I die? However, the old answers offered by institutional religion no longer satisfy. In fact the answers of the Christian Church find competition in a world where people come into face-to-face contact in engaging with other people on their own doorstep who subscribe to the other great religions of the world. The predominance of green issues and care for the environment and concern for the future of the natural world also bring into prominence older spirituality of pagan origin. (Davie, 1945:42) Sometimes this spills over into superstitious belief and interest in the occult which is far removed from the Christian tradition. So New Age spirituality becomes a cluster of related ideas, teachings and groups, not altogether coherent, but most of which identify with the term, New Age. It is a search for a spirituality away from the material values of the present day which can give some solutions which enable people to overcome their traumas, to realise what they hope for and to make the world a better place, (Heelas, 1996; Drane, 1999, 2005; Clifford and Johnson, 2001; Murray, 2004). It therefore has a connected theme and is related to the age old questions of identity and purpose which have inspired all religions in the past, but is a response to the fact that modernist culture cannot deliver on its promises and represents a genuine search for a new world view

Postmodernism

Postmodernism (Davie, 1994:192; Bertens, 1995; Grenz, 1996; Lyon, 2000) is an overarching theory which has been applied to many aspects of culture and also can be associated with the cultural shift which has created a different climate for spirituality and for established institutional religions in our own time. It springs from new interpretations in epistemology, the way that we know and interpret the world around us. Modernism relies on a sense of order and that knowledge is accessible to the human mind. It is based on the epistemological assumptions established in the Enlightenment by such seminal figures as Descartes and Newton. It is a belief in rationality, in progress, and that science, coupled with the power of education, can free us from our vulnerability to nature and from social bondage (Grenz, 1996:4). Postmodernism represents a rejection of these traditional ways of looking at the world and the fundamental assumptions on which knowledge of it was built. It rejects the idea that knowledge is objective but is historical, relational and personal. According to this view, science, for instance, does not have all the answers, and is historically and culturally conditioned, and our knowledge is always incomplete. Truth is dependent on the community in which we participate and is not absolute and consists of the ground rules that facilitate the well being of the community in which one participates (Grenz, 1996:8). What results is a rejection of what is seen as false, imposed unities of thought, the breaking of traditional frames of genre, and structure and forms of order which are seen to be artificial. The theory is a denial of the ideals of Modernity and has instead adopted ideas that are rooted on the reaction to the restrictions and limitations of those ideas. Postmodernism then becomes the new age. There are, however, critics of the theory who regard it as obscurantist and making charges against science which are demonstrably false. Postmodernism demonstrates a

radical cultural change which has affected the Church, and thus the church's ministers, in that the certainty of the assumptions made about world order and still promoted by the institutional churches seem to be out of place in the world in which we live today (Richards, 2003). An attempt to address the problem has been made by Pete Ward (2002) in *Liquid Church* where he indicates that the "solid" church of Christendom in the past needs to be replaced with something much more innovative, less structured and flowing, to address the spirituality of the times. In terms of the Methodist ministry this problem has been addressed by David Clark (2005).

Decline in membership and attendance - local church closure

Social and economic change, in addition to the shift in cultural values and attitudes, has also affected the values which the institutional main stream churches in England have traditionally held (Brown, 2001). This has led to a falling away of church attendance and church belonging which has been demonstrated very positively by Dr. Peter Brierley through the English National Censuses sponsored by the Christian Research Association. The first English Church Census was analysed in *Christian England* (1991) and was followed by the English Church Attendance Survey which was reported in the *Tide is Running Out* (2000), and various interpolations of the trend in subsequent years (Brierley, 1999-2003). The latest church census of 2003 was published under the title of *Pulling out of the nose dive* (2006) implying that the rate of the loss of numbers attending churches and of church affiliates had eased since previous censuses. However, this drew a retort from the head of Share Jesus International, the Methodist minister the Rev. Dr Rob Frost, who was reported as saying that there was nothing to celebrate in the fact that half a million people had left

the Church in the last seven years as opposed to the million who had left the Church in the previous nine years (Frost, 2006).

Official figures from the database of the Methodist Church indicate that over the period of the three decades from 1970 Methodism has lost 46% of its membership, decreasing in absolute numbers from 617,018 to 331,560. For the whole period the greatest loss of members was in the decade 1970 to 1980. When examining church closure this is also the decade which shows the greatest number of churches closed (Conference Office, 2005). What is instructive in any comparison of closed churches to lost membership is the ratio of lost churches to lost members. Analysis of this comparison shows that for 1980 this was 1 church lost to 93 members lost, in 1990, 1/73, and in 2000, 1/96. However, the average membership for each local church in Methodism in 1980 was 61, in 1990, 59 and in 2000, 54. Thus in 1980 if the average size of one church was 61, one could assume that for each church lost 61 members were lost, but this is not so, 93 members were lost. Thus in each decade Methodism was losing members at a faster rate than local churches (Burton, 2007a). There are thus smaller congregations in the churches which survive. This trend portends serious consequences for the continued existence of church buildings, since each church needs a variety of human resources for its continued existence. Methodism is not the only Church in England which has suffered such loss of church buildings, and losses of both churches and core membership can be seen in the experience of other English denominations (Roberts and Francis, 2006:38)

The triennial report of Methodist statistics, which includes Methodist membership and also church closures, shows the decline over the period from 2001 to 2004. This

indicates a loss of 31,469 members, or 9.7%, in 2004, from a total membership of 325,130 in 2001. The percentage loss of churches closed over the 33 districts of the Church was an average of 4.1% over 30 districts: two districts reported no change in the three years: only one showed that on balance the number of churches had increased by 4% (Minutes, 2005b:58f).

Financial stringency

Loss of membership and the closure of local churches had the consequence in Methodism of reducing current income for maintaining ministry and buildings at local level, and also maintaining the wider Church structures. In Methodism the income of the Church is raised by an assessment on the local churches. This assessment is the first charge on the local church's finances and any other costs that have to be met such as lighting, heating, cleaning, and repairs must also be met by local money-raising, but such expenditure comes second. This circuit assessment is levied by the local churches acting together in mutual decision making in the Circuit Meeting. An assessment is levied on the circuit for district expenses, and includes that which, with other circuit contributions, is paid to the headquarters by the district for the expenses of the national Church. The consequence of local church closure and membership decline diminishes the available financial resources, both for the maintenance of the circuits, and for the Church as a whole. This is illustrated by the comparative figures in national Methodist financial statements (Minutes, 2006:161; 2007:151). Ministers are paid quarterly from funds at national level, and since the stipend is assessed by a formula to take into account rises in the Cost of Living Index, and also since other costs at all levels of the Church are escalating due to inflationary tendencies, the pressure on the membership of local churches and circuits in financial matters

becomes heavier year by year. Naturally the increasing financial burden on local churches with decreasing congregations can create a crisis situation. When financial demands cannot be met the local church then questions its viability to survive, perhaps seeing the only solution to the problem as being closure. When a number of such weak churches close the consequence is that financial stringency is faced in all the other levels of church organisation, creating a dearth of funding for the circuit, the district and the national Church. When such a situation is both continuous and widespread it takes on the character of a continually diminishing spiral.

The result is a continuing concern about economy and retrenchment at all levels of the Church (Conference, 2001a, 2002a, 2007a). Over the past number of years this has been happening at national level in the way that the Methodist Conference has been obliged to effect changes in generally trimming the machinery of governance in the Church (Conference, 2001a). Notable examples of money saving, with the hope of increased efficiency, are the changes in the size of the representation to the annual Methodist Conference (Conference, 2001a), drastic cutbacks in the training of ministers, with the proposed closure of some colleges (Conference, 2005a), and the restructuring of headquarters staff (Conference Agenda, 2007a and 2007b). At the level of the circuits it impinges on the life of ministers. Costs of ministry for the circuit are always the greatest costs in the circuit's budget and so the obvious way of saving money is to reduce the numbers of the circuit staff.

Shortage of ministers

The shortage of ministers in the Methodist church has been endemic since the war years of the 1940s. The war had taken a toll of the ministers available for the circuits.

Many during the war served as chaplains, but because so many who might have offered for the ministry were in the forces, or because of training college closures during the war (Brash, 1942), there was a shortage of ministers throughout the 1950s. This resulted in the system of Pre-collegiate Probation whereby untrained ministers, directly after acceptance, were appointed to circuit work and only later were college trained. The historic requirements of offering for the ministry had been that the candidate should be male, unmarried, under the age of 27yrs, and already a Local Preacher. Marriage was not permissible until ordination, when the minister had completed three years' college training and two years' experience in both of two circuits, seven years in all. The maintenance of such conditions could not be supported in the changing climate of opinion and social change which came about after the war. Over the years the process was gradually eroded so that the only qualification that remains now, in addition to being tested for strength of call and suitability, is that of being already recognised as a Methodist member and a Local Preacher (CPD, 2007:581). The old standards became a prey to the changing social attitudes of the times and with different expectations of what ministry should be, but perhaps the strongest influence was the diminution of those who felt a strong call to the ministerial vocation

In the 1960s there were a number of factors which were responsible for men not feeling the call to the ministry as a vocation, and also why ordained ministers or ministers in training were making the decision to leave the ministry. The first was the publication of Bishop John Robinson's *Honest to God* (1963), which undermined traditional Christian belief for many people, both ministerial and lay (Davies, 1982:42). The second was the decision taken by the church at large, under pressure

from the influential theological teaching of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Plant, 2004), that the Church should be more closely associated with the secular world in all its activities "Let the world write the agenda", was the typical slogan of the times. Ministers were in fact so influenced by this teaching that they were resigning their orders and taking up employment in a variety of secular organisations. The Methodist Conference debated the issues involved and were themselves influenced by the theology of the times and set up what was called Sector Ministry in which Methodist ministers, after permission, could still keep their orders and retain all the status and privileges of a Methodist minister, but engage in secular employment. A number left the circuit ministry to become probation officers, teachers, and administrators in charitable bodies (Bellamy, 2002). The most startling was Jack Burton who left to be a bus driver in East Anglia, and has spent his entire ministry in that vocation (Burton, 1976). It was a decision not easily made when Methodist ministry up to that time, apart from certain high ranking academic appointments, had been solely for circuit ministry. There was much suspicion and dissension by traditionalists, and this itself caused some to leave the ministry, for they did not feel that it was the ministry to which they had been originally called (Clark, 1981; 1986). The third factor which influenced many ministers at the end of the decade, and into the next, was the testing of religious affiliation and churchmanship associated with the movement towards unity with the Church of England, and especially in the aftermath of the "Conversations", when the proposals failed. Some left the ministry in frustration at the outcome, whilst others, both before and after the failure of negotiations sought Anglican ordination, perhaps exercising their own unilateral decision in the matter (Turner, 1985:194-215). The fourth factor was that the decade also saw the rise and spread of evangelical and charismatic religion. For some this was created by

disillusionment with the attitudes of the established religious institutions and a desire for freedom of worship, and also the drain on their spiritual energies which they felt in their former churches, and so they left to form small breakaway evangelical and charismatic groups (Turner, 1998:24; Bebbington, 1993:240).

These influences, and also the new attitudes and polices of the Church itself under the theological and sociological influences of the times, created a shortage of ministers on the circuits. It was, however, one of the strong social pressures of the time, the growth of feminism, which ameliorated the situation. Methodism, since the later years of the nineteenth century, had had a Wesley Deaconess Order composed of unmarried women who felt called to service in the Church for the task of evangelism and social work, based mostly on Methodism's large central city missions, and also in the general support of the ordained ministry (Graham, 2000). With the rising tide of feminism and the pressure towards equality of the sexes there was a strong movement to ordain women as ministers for the circuit ministry, which had heretofore been the preserve of men. This did not happen without controversy, and some male ministers left the church in their opposition to women in the full ministry of the word and the sacraments. The deficiency in numbers was readily made up by women who offered for ministerial orders. In addition to those who had waited for the change, there was a ready pool of those who desired to do so who were already members of the Deaconess Order. The decision to ordain women was made at the Conference of 1972 (Conference Agenda, 1972) and they became available for circuit work in 1974, the first ordinations taking place at the Conference of that year after two years of training. The Deaconess Order (Aitchison, 2003; Conference, 2004a) continued, as not all deaconesses felt called to the work of the ministry, and some were not Local

Preachers as their call had been to Christian service and outreach (Burton, 2008). Other women, in addition to those in the Deaconess Order, and who had waited for the opportunity to fulfil their vocation to the Methodist ministry, also offered and were accepted. The number of women in ministry, and the proportion of women to men ministers, has gradually increased over the years. In a survey where the data were gathered in 1997 the proportion of women to men in circuit ministry was 18% (Haley and Francis, 2006:70). In a study of the ministry in the York and Hull District with data from 2003 the proportion was 43% (Burton, 2004:22). Among the ordinands at the Conference of 2005 the proportion of women to men was 61%, and in the ordinations of 2006 the proportion was 56% (Minutes, 2005a:16; 2006:17). If the trend continues it is obvious that in a few years' time there will be more women than men serving as ordained ministers in the circuits. Already there are a number of circuits throughout the connexion who have a staff composed of women only, and it is now common for a circuit superintendent to be a woman minister (Minutes, 2006: 83-150) The numbers who are appointed to be Chairs of Districts is also increasing. This is not to say that the opening of the ministry to women has been painless, as prejudice in the Church to women ministers was offered by some local people in the circuits (Conference, 1996).

Methodist appointments of ministers to the circuits are made by a system which is determined centrally by Conference decision (CPD 2007, 631-637). Due to ministerial shortages, and the changing pressures upon the ministers, such as the desire to move less often than before for a number of personal reasons, the Conference has revised the system a number of times over the last few decades (cf. CPD, 2001d:598f; CPD 2007:639f). The Conference of 2006 has set up a Stationing Review Group who have

met and published a paper of recommendations (SRG, 2008) to come to the Conference of 2008 with a view to changes in the methods of stationing ministers. Arrangements regarding new appointments are subject, whatever the system of invitation used, to final decisions taken by the meeting of the Connexional Stationing Committee before the annual Conference in late June. At that time Conference also has the opportunity to override arrangements made locally and an attempt is made centrally to fill vacancies, in order that the Circuits can be staffed for the next Connexional year beginning on September 1st. This has become an increasingly more difficult task with the perennial shortage of ministers available for appointment. The shortage of ministers to fill appointments currently runs at 2%, with 40-50 unfilled (SRG, 2008:1). By various stratagems many are filled, and perhaps a shortfall is better than a superfluity, as then there would be problems about how to pay and where to employ them (SRG, 2008:1was used to determine)

The fact that insufficient numbers of ministers available has been a perennial problem for Methodism is seen in other stratagems adopted to create a match between circuits needing ministers and ministers needing appointments. In the late 1970s and early 1980s Conference's powers in the matter of stationing were used more forcefully than before or since. A system of identifying circuits which were overstaffed, using a minister to members ratio, was employed to determine those vulnerable to a cut in circuit staffing. Ministers were moved at short notice to circuits which were deemed to have a shortage. It was an unpopular system for both circuits and ministers and was soon dropped, though changes were taking place which increased ministerial supply.

These changes were associated with two factors. One was a decrease in demand for ministers. Church affiliation and membership totals diminished at an alarming rate and church closures were numerous. The second factor was that the supply of ministers available for circuit work was increased by late entry, individuals responding to a call to the ministry in their later years as an alternative to their secular occupation, or after they had retired from a previous profession. This phenomenon occurred, not only in Methodism, but in most of the main-stream churches in England at that time. In a study of both Methodist and Anglican clergy in East Yorkshire in 2003 (Burton, 2004) it was possible to compare length of experience in ministry with the age distribution of ministers. There were many among the respondents who had not served as ministers for as long as their ages might indicate. The results of the comparative statistics from that survey confirm that the old standards of entry to ministry were long gone. Official figures indicate that the average age of entry at present is around 40yrs (Conference Office, 2004) and is increasing. In the later years of the twentieth century such late entrants made up the deficiency of numbers, but being older they could not be expected to give the length of service which is possible from younger entrants. One consequence is that their retirement after only a few years in ministry means a decrease in the numbers available for the circuits, since a situation developed where those retiring outnumbered entrants. Hence in the middle years of the first decade of the twenty-first century there is again an acute shortage of ministers to fill appointments available. This is particularly so with appointments to circuit superintendencies. The old standard used to be an experience of 20 years service before taking up superintendency. With entrants coming in at more advanced years this level of experience becomes rarer and the result is that ministers are appointed to superintendent's posts who have not had the experience in ministry which the

appointment expects. The result is a proposal that intending superintendents should be trained (SRG, 19)

Anxiety about the numbers of ministers available for the circuits has prompted the statistical office of Methodism to produce a *Forecast of Active Methodist Ministers.* This uses the actual number of active Methodist ministers for the connexional years 2001/2 to 2003/4 as a base to calculate the estimate of active ministers available for 2004/5 to 2017/18. It allows for losses due to retirements and resignations and transfers out, balanced by the gains of new probationers and transfers in. The figures calculated are for all ministers, including those who might be in appointments outside circuit work, either in bureaucratic posts or working outside Methodism. The actual number for 2003/4 is 2034, whilst the estimated number for 2017/18 is 1647, with a steady decline from year to year. In a shorter, five year term, 2008/9, the estimated number is 1907 (Conference Office, 2004).

The recommendations from the Stationing Review Group, however, is that the present system used in 2007 be retained (SRG:2) but modified, and that recruitments be directed to young people who can give long service throughout a ministerial life (SRG 13) and of those who have already been in other occupations and offer at older ages should find no barriers in candidating (SRG 15).

CONCLUSION

The whole Church of God, therefore, at the present time finds itself in crisis. This chapter has seen a number of the influences which come from the cultural, social, and

economic circumstances of the times, and which are making the structures of the established Churches problematical for their continued ministry and mission. The changing patterns of cultural life which affect the institutional church are evident in the relationship of the Church to the world and the world to the Church, which is not the relationship which existed in historic times. Various theories, such as secularisation, social capital, "believing without belonging", New Age spirituality and postmodernism, have been evolved to explain the causation of this social and cultural change.

The result of this cultural change is the decline in the influence and the support of the institutional Church measured by falling membership, attendance, and local church closure, which has restricted church income and created financial stringency.

Cultural change has also created a shortage of offers for the ministry for both Methodism and other mainstream Churches, only ameliorated by opening entry to ministry for a wider range of candidates. The general situation is that the institutional Church today must be encouraged to find new and innovative answers to the problems which it faces.

The situations and pressures upon the Church described in this chapter are also pressures on the Church's ministers, creating a new situation for ministry. New problems also mean new opportunities, but both bring pressures to bear on the ministerial task.

CHAPTER 3 URBAN AND RURAL MINISTRY: IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?

Urban / Rural differences in the church

What is rural?

A number of studies have sought to categorise churches according to their location in situations which can be said to be rural or urban or some mix of each of these two types of settlement patterns. Such categorisation has uncertainties, and the attempts to refine systems sometimes give rise to debate about the criteria to be used, and in contradictions between the resulting scales suggested by different studies.

The question, "What is Rural?" has been asked fairly frequently in recent years. It is a question which has been well exercised and various definitions and categorisations have been suggested to cover the case.

The Rural Church Project was an investigation of rural situations in five Anglican Dioceses covering large areas of countryside which provided evidence used in the production of *Faith in the Countryside* (ACORA, 1990). This document provided recommendations for the future work of the Church of England in rural situations. The findings of the project are summarised in Davies, Watkins and Winter's *Church and Religion in Rural England* (1991). In the course of their introductory chapters they ask the question, "What is Rural" (1991:57) and review some of the ways in which a church can be categorised as "rural". Following Wibberley (1972) they ask if the difference between rural and urban areas is a distinction of land use? This has something to commend it, but the difficulty is that raised by marginal cases. A more

comprehensive measurement of rurality is needed and this was attempted by Cloke and Edwards (1986) based on the 1981 Census. This has the assumption that the sparser a population and the greater distance from the urban centre, the more "rural" a district will be. From ten variables, four categories were recognised: extreme rural, intermediate rural, non-rural and extreme non-rural. Quoting Hoggart (1986) and Pahl (1968:293) they admit that the scale must be used with caution as it cannot be used in comparisons of smaller areas or as a way of explaining geographical variation in economic conditions. After the examination of these other categorisations they derive an alternative index based upon clergy assessments, a five-fold scale of totally rural, partly rural, small country town, mixed urban/rural, and urban.

The difficulties of defining what is rural are also discussed by Anthony Russell in *The Country Parish* (1986:3f) Four types of countryside are defined, each of them envisaged as concentric rings around urban conurbations: the urban shadow countryside, the accessible countryside, the less accessible countryside and the marginal remote countryside.

A brief review of the some of the suggestions for the categorisation of any individual church as urban or rural on some kind of continuum or by some significant criteria indicates that the exercise is problematical. Local situations and topography vary tremendously between one area of the country and another and the situation of one church and another. A rural village church can be in the rolling green countryside of Hampshire, or in the hill county of the Pennine moors. Can both then be placed in the same category of rurality? The same is true of urban situations, where the city can be divided into several concentric rings for classification purposes. A country town can

also have problem estates similar to those found in urban locations. Such differences make exact categorisation difficult.

Is the rural church different?

The enquiry so far has been concerned with the difficulties encountered in the classification of urban/rural settlement patterns, and there is general agreement in the reality of that difference, but is the rural church different from the urban?

A number of empirical surveys of rural churches have established that in respect of particular activities in which they are engaged there is a difference between them and their urban counterparts. A study of 1996 establishes differences in baptismal policy and church growth (Francis, Jones and Lankshear, 1996), and a study of Anglican confirmation establishes that differences exist between confirmees as being younger and with a higher proportion of males than in urban parishes (Francis and Lankshear, 1997). Using factors to identify rurality developed by Francis and Lankshear in these two studies an image of an "average rural diocese" has been created (Roberts, 2005:26). A further study based on membership statistics drawn from a comparison between a rural diocese and an urban diocese in the Church of England established that the rural church was stronger before 2000 and that it afterwards demonstrated signs of considerable comparative decline (Roberts, 2003). Longer empirical work has been carried out on the distinctiveness of parish churches in the countryside by Leslie Francis (1985, 1996), and most comprehensibly by Andrew Bowden (1994, 2003). In addition, a number of empirical studies have been published in the five volume Parish Workbook series by Francis and Martineau (listed in Roberts, 2005:26) enabling

clergy and people in rural areas to think seriously about the way their church functions and what their church could do to develop its worship and inner life.

The empirical data (Davies, Watkins and Winter, 1991) which underpinned the publication of the Archbishops' Commission on Rural Areas, *Faith in the Countryside* (ACORA, 1990) has already been noted. The fact that the Church of England felt it necessary to distinguish between its situation in rural areas as compared to that in urban areas, contained in the previous publication, the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the City* (ACUPA, 1986), indicates that the Church of England realised that the rural church was different, and needed different remedies to the church in urban locations. A more recently published symposium, with contributions from fifteen Anglican Bishops under the title *Changing Rural Life* shows modern awareness to the different problems of the countryside and the rural church (Martineau, Francis and Francis, 2004).

Methodism and its rural churches

This impressive body of work from the Church of England shows its concern for its rural areas, and also points up the fact that there is a true realisation of difference to its presence in urban communities. Many of the factors affecting the Church of England in the countryside could also apply to Methodism, but the reaction of institutional Methodism to its country churches has been slow to take place. The situation of rural Methodism was complicated by social and economic divisions which existed between the different social classes. The parish church claimed those of higher status and the Methodist chapel those in a social class below, and so the tendency grew for a church to be matched by a chapel in most rural villages (Moore, 1974; Clark, 1982;

Ashbridge, 2004). Historically the contribution of Methodists in the village chapels to the life of the countryside has been significant (Wearmouth, 1937; Colls, 1995). The contribution to the Labour Movement of some notable village Methodists, such as the Tolpuddle Martyrs (Parker and Reid, 1972:169f), and Joseph Arch, who founded the Agricultural Labourers' Trade Union (Parker and Reid, 1972:179), has been significant.

Chapel closure in town and countryside has been the consequence of modern social and economic change and also the shrinkage in church affiliation, as various factors concerned with migration from the town to the countryside, and the countryside to the town, have taken place. The social status divide between village church and village chapel has also dwindled (Burton, 2007a). Data from East Yorkshire in 2003 indicate that there were 456 rural churches in the Diocese of York matched by only 186 Methodist churches in the York and Hull District (Burton, 2005). From this data, drawn from today's church, the myth of one rural parish church to one village chapel seems, therefore, to be disproved.

From such considerations it might be inferred that Methodism is predominantly an urban church, rather than having a strong rural constituency today. It may be for this reason that rural Methodism has not claimed the attention which the Church of England has given to its rural constituency. Recent data shows, however, that of Methodist minister respondents to this survey, although 45% describe their main ministry to be in urban surroundings, 31% indicate that it is in mixed areas and 24% show it to be in rural villages. Since Methodist ministers typically hold churches in plurality many of those who indicate a mixed ministry will have a number of rural

churches in their care (Burton, 2005). Methodism, therefore, should have a pressing concern for the rural church.

Perhaps a reason why this has not been addressed with the same force as the Church of England is the fundamental way in which Methodism is organised. Methodism can adapt to the changing demands of church shrinkage and ministerial shortage by adjusting the number of ministers appointed to any circuit, and by changing the number of churches in any one minister's pastoral care. This has enabled the Church to ignore the situation in rural ministry until the point when the condition of village churches in country circuits, and the pressures upon those who minister there, could no longer be ignored.

The official position is that the Methodist Church did have a Church in Rural Life Committee in the 1950s and 1960s (Bowden, 2003:31) but until 1968 the committee had no stable representation as its members tended to change and it only met annually. Its first report came to the Methodist Conference in 1970. A local survey in the Horncastle Circuit showed the trends of the times. Between 1945 and 1970 six of the circuit's village chapels had closed (Clarke and Anderson, 1986). Circuit amalgamation became a common panacea for ministerial shortage (Bowden, 2003:25). In the report of 1970 entitled *Country Pattern* (Conference, 1970) the Rural Life Committee set out the belief that a small church could not be the whole church to its members and to the community, and that it should be brought into a wider circle of relationships. It conceived that the most effective unit for evangelism was the reorganisation of the small churches into larger units, involving church amalgamation. This was attempted experimentally on the Welsh border, centred on Leominster and

Clun, but failed in practice (Bowden, 2003:30f). The Church in Rural Life Committee was later reconstituted as a more effective unit under new leadership, and became a better instrument for change and research in the Church, and in 1970 the Luton Industrial College began to offer courses in rural ministry.

Two reports were presented to the Methodist Conference of 2001 concerning the rural church. The first was entitled, *The Future of the Rural Church* (Conference, 2001b:32-38) and the second *Our Calling in Rural and Urban Situations* (Conference, 2001c:39-40). The first report contained a survey of five country churches in East Anglia which were treated as typical of their kind. The report, from the evidence produced, determined what should be the Methodist rural policy. This was that the rural congregation should be valued, that ecumenical cooperation should be fostered, and that transformation in rural areas should be enabled. There were a number of suggestions as to how these general conclusions could be operationalised. The second report was a response to the government white paper of 2000 *Our Countryside; the Future* (Conference, 2001c:39). The resolution of the Conference after debate on this report was that Methodism "affirms and celebrates the contribution that many rural churches make" to the wellbeing of their communities, that the white paper's themes are supported by the Church, and that Methodism expresses its solidarity with the farming community and expresses its solemn commitment to rural communities.

The most recent practical support which Methodism has provided for its rural churches, which can also be used by other denominations in the countryside, is contained in the workbook entitled *Presence* (2004). It opens with two overviews of the rural church and then offers six group studies; its main aim is "to help local

churches, circuits and districts to explore different ways of being church in a rural setting". Despite these attempts of Methodism to address the problems of its local churches and circuits Methodism still answers shrinkage, shortages of ministers, and financial difficulty by making its ministers work harder with more churches in their care.

Ecumenical initiatives for rural churches

Convergence between the Church of England and the Methodist Church in their concern for both ministry and its deployment is that both churches have promoted the ministry of the laity (Church of England, 1998; Hind, 2005; Conference, 1988). The two churches have also attempted to address the way that cultural and other changes are affecting local churches by cooperating in the forward-looking movement, *Fresh Expressions*, which suggests radical changes for local churches in both urban and rural locations (Fresh expressions, 2008).

What is significant for the rural church is the ecumenical commitment which has been given in recent years to the Arthur Rank Centre at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire (ARC, 2006). This was founded in 1972 when the original building on the site of the National Agricultural Show was bought by Lord Rank. It is staffed and funded by the mainstream Churches and acts to promote rural matters, both in the Church and in secular society, not only to minister to rural needs, but also to act as a pressure group to approach and influence national government on behalf of the Church. Its training centre offers courses for ministers who are in, or contemplate rural ministry. Its web site indicates the extent of its activities. *Faith in Rural Communities: Contributions of Social Capital to Community Vibrancy* (2006) written in connection with Defra, the

government Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, is a recent contribution to understanding the value, problems, and importance of rural communities. It also seeks to promote *Fresh Expressions* in relation to rural churches.

Methodism, urban and rural similarities

The connexion, itinerancy, liturgy and church order.

The previous section of this chapter has been concerned with establishing, from a number of perspectives, that the rural church is different, whatever the denomination. The discussion above also relates to Methodism, and while we have sought to prove that Methodist churches in the countryside also demand different consideration from those in urban settings, there are distinctive similarities which must also be considered.

Mention has already been made of the historic structure of the connectedness of local churches with each other resulting from the organisation which Wesley originated to provide structure to his growing number of converts in their Societies. There is in the Methodist Connexion a specific connectedness between all local churches which does not exist in quite the same way for other denominations. The result is that both urban and rural churches find that they have a common belonging to a much wider body of believing people. This is made specific through the circuit system (CPD, 2006:504).

The polity of Methodism, applied to all its circuits and local churches, provides a strong linkage which brings urban and rural churches together in common cause. In many circuits urban churches and rural churches are together. They meet with each other at circuit level, make decisions concerning agenda items, whether they relate to the urban or the rural local churches, and share together the circuit's resources. Local

people and local churches, either of urban or rural location know that they exist in fellowship together in a community of recognition (Drake, 2004).

No minister stays in a circuit for long before moving, for the Methodist ministry is built on system where appointments are relatively short-term. On moving the minister takes the knowledge of previous circuits and people, and also the experienced gained, to another circuit, and shares them with another set of people. In the years since the Second World War there has also been much migration of Methodist laity who have made contact with other local churches and circuits elsewhere, and so what is typical of Methodism, and perhaps even more today, is the creation of a pattern of network relationships across whole of the connexion, whether in rural or urban settings. .

Methodism has its liturgy contained in the *Methodist Worship Book* (1999). In historic Methodism, however, many congregations liked prayers to come "from the heart", rather than from a book, which was often treated with suspicion. In traditional Methodist churches the order of service is a set of hymns interspersed with prayers and a sermon, affectionately know as the "hymn sandwich". The liturgical book which provides for congregational participation then becomes the hymnbook. Both in rural communities and in urban areas, this is the more regular worship pattern which is used.

Urban or rural circuits and churches in Methodism are also bound together by the Standing Orders of the Methodist Conference. The polity of the church is outlined in *The Constitutional Discipline of the Methodist Church* (CPD,2007) which is the book which contains not only the rules of the Church, but also the advice which is given to

cover various circumstances which might arise for the Church and its ministry. It is updated every year after the annual Conference and distributed to all ministers active in circuit work. The ministers, especially the circuit superintendents, are obliged to follow the discipline that its sets out for the administration of districts, circuits and local churches, whether they be in urban or in rural situations.

Chapel culture

One of the intangible qualities which can be perceived in both urban and rural Methodist churches is the ethos of Methodism. This is related to the sociological sub-culture which has been given the name Chapel Culture.

Methodism was established in the rural England of Wesley's day and quickly grew, but the rate of most rapid growth was in the days of the mid-nineteenth century in the years of agricultural decline, and the growth of industrial towns (Green, 1996; Biggs, 1999). In the town those migrants from the countryside found themselves alienated in their new surroundings (Gilbert, 1976:69). Following their faith, however, they found others in similar socio-economic circumstances in the local Methodist chapels of the burgeoning industrial towns (Burton, 1972:5-17; 1975:15). Chapel life provided a religious and cultural refuge. Oppressed by the mill owners and the harsh and long working hours of the mill, respectable working folk found in the chapel some self-worth and social standing in the various offices which the local church and Sunday school provided which they did not have in their everyday lives. In the life of the chapel, they could be somebody. The same social mechanism for the land labourer similarly existed in the opportunities provided by the local village chapel. For the dispossessed the chapel became a sub-culture in which the worker, both in the town

and in the countryside, could be valued, not for his/her economic potential, but for her/himself. In this respect, since the village chapel and the village parish church expressed the social divide in the village, the chapel in pre-industrial village communities also acted to ameliorate the social divide, and a social mechanism, already familiar in village life was carried over to town life when the agricultural labourer migrated to find new employment in a time of agricultural depression..

The chapel also became a centre where ordinary people could find some light relief in what otherwise was an arduous existence. Kenneth Young (1972) in his book *Chapel* charts the essentials of chapel culture. It was in getting together to do enjoyable things in times when leisure opportunity and leisure provision were in short supply. It was in the excitement of the big meeting, the large congregation, the visit of the travelling evangelist, the hymn singing, the chapel concert, the annual bazaar, the Whit Monday procession and the Whit Monday field day, the Sunday School Anniversary and the annual trip (Burton, 2006a). Chapel had its serious side, but as Young says, "Chapel was fun!" This development of chapel life was common to both urban and rural Methodism, but of necessity what could be done was lower key, in the less populated rural countryside (Hibbs, 1988).

The Methodist Chapels of the nineteenth century were also involved in the secular education of children and then, when state provision was made for this, the chapels developed religious work in the Sunday schools not only for children, but also general education for the working classes through mutual improvement societies for adults (Green, 1996). This resulted in many chapels, both in town and country situations, building special separate accommodation for this purpose. It was through Sunday

school activities, and in using the Sunday school premises, that chapel culture flourished in the later years of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth. This was the time when the social life of the chapel and chapel organisations grew up to provide leisure time activities for their members and also for others quite unconnected to the main purpose of the local church's religious life (Burton, 2006a). As one observer notes, "chapels and churches spawned a wide range of ancillary organisations, clubs and societies…many Englishmen chose to spend their leisure time, on their sole day of rest, in church or Sunday school" (Walvin, 1978:47). With the growth of leisure opportunity the chapel became the centre of the neighbourhood community where people gathered not only to express their Christian faith in the services, but also to seek enjoyment of various kinds. This was a feature of urban chapel life, but it also took place in the countryside, but with a slightly different agenda due to cultural and population differences (Hibbs, 1998:120-2).

Chapel culture lasted until the Second World War when other leisure pursuits such as the car and the television, combined with changing secular attitudes, diminished the possibilities of what the chapel could offer (Burton, 2006a). A new emphasis in more recent times is the way that many Methodist churches in their ancillary premises make provision for community activities out of a sense of service to neighbouring populations (Burton, 1979). This happens, not only in the town, but also in the country village (Fisher and Burton, 2006)

Social networks

The differences and similarities between urban and rural Methodist churches are also to be seen in a study which used network theory to analyse the different social

structures of the two types of church (Burton, 2007b). Interaction theory, using social networks, was used to analyse the various social network patterns which were present in two churches, one urban and one rural, and also the personal networks of individuals who were active both within and across the boundaries of each network pattern. Six patterns of social interaction between individuals were noted in the urban church, the one which was the most volatile in terms of social relationships being the church organisation network, which proved influential in not only providing Christian service to the local community, but in church recruitment (Burton, 1979). A similar social network pattern was identified in the rural church but with only four networks, the most influential being the family network, which was extensive, and through which the church gained not only it recruitment, but its main support. Although there were differences in the functions of the network patterns in both churches, similar patterns could be identified in both the urban and the rural situations.

Ministry in town and country

There are also marked differences in the pattern of ministry for those Methodist ministers who found themselves employed in town and country circuits. In the age before the motor car the town minister had the advantage of being close to the centre of his work. Ministry in rural areas was difficult to achieve efficiently, especially in widespread rural circuits. In the country a minister would visit his outlying chapels monthly or fortnightly and spend a whole day there. After a journey by public transport or bicycle, the practice was to visit in the afternoon, with an evening meeting at night. With the advent of the motor car, ministry in rural churches has become easier. The minister is more in touch with the rural members, and their needs. Differences between urban and rural ministry have diminished, but there are still

striking differences. Geographical mobility is much easier and the care of distant chapels is helped by modern communication systems, although perhaps face-to-face interchange is not as frequent or as systematic as in past times.

The effects of modern migration

Another factor in modern church life is migration of population. There has been much migration to the rural village from urban centres as retired couples seek the assumed peace and tranquillity of the countryside, or as middle class people have moved out of the town and find it advantageous to their life style to live in the country and commute (Saxbee, 2004). This has resulted in urban attitudes being imposed on village life which has generally been to the detriment of older village values. It has however, provided a new resource in person power and economic welfare for village churches. In general, however, the immigrants to the countryside have favoured the church rather than the chapel. This fact has worked against the village chapel in the matter of personal resources, since the children of chapel folk, in common with other village children, have migrated to the town due to the lack of rural housing, or to find employment. The consequence is that the Methodist chapel in the village is populated by older people and struggles to survive, since the children of chapel families are no longer available to staff leadership positions, and the chapel misses out on inward migration since incomers, if Christian people, tend to attend the parish church. This struggle is illustrated by the statistics of church and chapel closure published in 2006 in *Rural Theology* (Roberts and Francis, 2006; Burton, 2007a).

CONCLUSION

In Methodism all local churches, whether urban or rural, share a connectedness which is an essential part of the structure of Methodism, they have similar worship styles and have the same patterns of administration. Rural and urban churches have a similar cultural ethos which marks them out from the parish church. This is related to historical factors in the socio-economic history of the two. Similar patterns of social networks can be seen in urban and rural Methodist churches which are useful for distinguishing urban / rural differences. Urban and rural churches often have the same minister, and this fact gives them a common identity which would not be possible if they were independent local churches outside the circuit system.

Despite these similarities between Methodist churches in rural and urban situations there is a realisation within the Church as a whole that the rural church is different from the church in an urban situation. This has been emphasised by a number of social and economic factors at the present time. The Church of England has recognised that there are things to address, both in the rural church and for rural ministry, as distinct from the urban situation. Methodism has been tardy in giving the situation some recognition, but there is the dawning realisation that the rural church is different and needs special attention. This is the background in which modern ministry has to be exercised.

CHAPTER 4 THE METHOD AND THE MINISTERS

THE METHODIST MINISTER

It has already been illustrated in Chapter 3 that ministry in the countryside is different to that exercised in an urban situation. One could ask why this should be so when Methodist ministers are trained in similar ways and have much the same assimilation into the ethos and traditions of the Church, through either socialisation when young, or through persuasion and conviction if they came into the Church as adults. The Church has a uniform policy of treating all its ministers equally, both in financial rewards, in deployment in the circuits, and in the discipline which is expected of them (Minutes, 2007:149; CPD, 2007:735-738; Conference, 2002b). One could ask, "Is there any difference between those ministers who are appointed to work in rural as opposed to urban circuits? A Methodist minister is a Methodist minister!" However, despite the central control which the Conference exerts on the deployment of its ministers, there is an element of choice in the system. For the individual minister, choice of appointment is a limited possibility (CPD, 2007:737) One could also say the same for the circuits, whether they are urban or rural, for they might sense on interview that some ministers whom they meet in the process of appointment are more suitable than others for their particular situation (CPD, 2007:519). Since direction by the Conference, therefore, is not absolute, and since both ministers and circuits have some choice in the matter of stationing, one might suppose that differences do exist between those ministers who opt for rural ministry, rather than for urban ministry, and some circuits exist, either rural or urban, which prefer a certain ministerial type to serve them.

The most obvious difference between rural and urban circuits is their geographical spread, the more compact circuits being in the town, and scattered local churches separated sometimes by miles being the norm in the country. The nature of the work and the different stresses of town and country ministry could also, other than the travelling involved, play a significant part in a minister's choice. The possibilities open to innovative ministry in the town with its large population are different to those offered in the countryside. Larger congregations offer more possibilities in the way of organising worship and in shaping the way that the message of the gospel can be transmitted by teaching and preaching. This is not to say that there are no opportunities in village ministry, but they are different, and might be attractive to other ministers of a certain background, aspiration, or personality type. Service to the community and the shape of daily and weekly ministry can also be very different in the two situations. Since such matters are often shaped by the theological stance of the minister, then perhaps the division between those who offer for work in the countryside rather than the town is affected by their belief patterns. It would appear, then, that the enquiry into the differences between those ministers who are in rural circuits and those who are in urban circuits might be illuminating. This is the aim of this particular study.

METHOD

The general method adopted in this survey to ascertain the differences of Methodist ministers in urban, contrasted with rural appointments, is by questionnaire, using the insights provided by empirical theology.

Empirical Theology

The discipline of empirical theology, in contradistinction to systematic and dogmatic theology which have normative bases, seeks to find an empirical base for its assertions. The roots of empirical theology are in practical theology (Astley, 2002) which brings theology face to face with the rich variety of theological traditions and the practical realities of the institutions and the cultural heritage in which the Churches operate. Disciplines of systematic theology and dogmatic theology as normative disciplines are studies of God from the Godward side; practical theology, however, is an attempt by theologians to study the human experience of God. Empirical Theology was pioneered by Johannes van der Ven at Nijmeden in Holland and fostered in the *Journal of Empirical Theology*, founded in 1987. Van der Ven's perspective on theology is characterised by two key principles (van der Ven 1993, 1998), namely that the social sciences provide a legitimate methodology for addressing the agenda of the theology which springs from the beliefs of individual people, and that the tools shaped by the social sciences can become the tools of the practical theologian. This means that social scientists become implicated in empirical theology, but their thinking must not be circumscribed by the discipline of whatever social science they serve, but illuminated and expanded by the disciplines of theological study. Van der Ven has been joined by an international group of theologians who are interested in applying the discipline of the empirical sciences to the church, its ministry and its mission. This led in 2002 to the formation of the International Society for Empirical Research in Theology.

In Britain the case for the application of empirical theology was made by Robin Gill (1975) who wrote that theologians have a responsibility, not only to take the evidence offered by social scientists, but also to apply the tools of the social scientists to their

own discipline. He has put this view into practice in his later works (Gill, 1999, 2003). During the 1980s an independent initiative was promoted by Leslie Francis, who follow Nijmegen insights, but with some differences. The emphasis that Francis places on empirical theology is that the methodologies of the social sciences should be fully integrated within the discipline of practical theology, but that its relevance for theology goes beyond the restrictions of that domain. A second emphasis is that whilst van der Ven takes the view that the tools of social science should be fully integrated into the discipline of theology so that the empirical theologian acts as a theologian, with the consequence that the output of the study is properly scrutinised by the theological academy, thus promoting empirical theology as an intradisciplinary activity, Francis states that it should also be an interdisciplinary activity, whereby its results should be tested, not only by the theological academy, but also by the social science academy (Cartledge, 1999; Francis, 2002).

Francis and his associates have over the past twenty-five years applied this discipline to address a series of issues relevant to aspects of ministry and aspects of mission within the church (eg. Francis, 1985; Richter and Francis, 1988; Francis and Robbins, 1999; Loudon and Francis, 2003; Francis, 2003b; Francis, Robbins and Astley, 2005; Haley and Francis, 2006).

The present study, using the insights and methods of sociology, is an empirical enquiry into differing views of the nature of Christian ministry held by Methodist ministers in urban appointments and those in rural appointments. It is an enquiry into how the belief patterns, the understanding of the pastoral task, and the different constraints and advantages placed upon them might be different in the pursuit of their ministries in the two different geographical areas.

Sociological method

The questionnaire

A questionnaire which was used in a study of the mind set, beliefs and pastoral practice of Anglican priests and Methodist ministers in the Diocese of York and the Methodist District of York and Hull was used (Burton, 2005), after some modification, for providing the data for this present study.

The survey population

This revised questionnaire was circulated in the late spring of 2004 to all Methodist ministers, both presbyters and probationers, who were active in circuit work in British Methodism, which covers England, Scotland, and Wales, but not Ireland, where there is an independent Methodist Conference which governs all the Methodist churches in Ireland, both in the north and in the republic. Those in special appointments and not in circuit, serving the church both in national administrative posts and external organisations, were ignored. This is a population (not a sample) covering all Methodist ministers in circuit work. 1728 questionnaires were despatched and 1026 responses were received, making a response rate of 59.4%. Of those who responded 448 (44.5%) said that their main ministry was exercised in an urban area; 319 (31.7%) ministered in an area that was both urban and rural, and 240 (23.8%) responded that they ministered in an area that was mainly rural. For the purposes of this study, a comparison of those in urban and rural ministry, it was necessary to polarise those who were in urban situations and those in rural situations and so the 319 who were in pastoral charge of churches which were in the mixed situation of both urban and rural were ignored. The analysis which follows is the contrast between the 448 who responded that they were in urban circuits, and the 240 who responded that they were

in rural circuits. In other words, the categorisation is based on the perceptions of the ministers themselves.

Categories

From the discussion in chapter 2:41-43 on the difficulty of defining what is rural and what is urban, one recognises the difficulties in establishing categories of urban and rural when the population of the study comes from the whole of the three nations of the British mainland. Not only are there differences between the three nations, but also in urban and rural settlements everywhere. Any indication of the geographical location of any one respondent was impossible since there was anonymity in the process of enquiry. Thus there was no indication of where respondents lived or worked, and so regional analysis was not possible. The same difficulty applied to any exact categorisation of respondents regarding types of settlement within city or country areas. All the information was self-reported by respondents in their response to the questions relating to urban or rural location in the questionnaire.

Self-report was also used to give information regarding the type of urban or rural settlement where they were active in ministry. In Chapter 3 it was noted that Davies, Watkins and Winter (1991) used a five-fold categorisation to describe rural settlement patterns. A similar five-fold scale seemed to suggest itself for this enquiry, covering different types of urban and rural settlement on a scale which could give comparisons between rural and urban areas and facilitate the process of analysis. A fivefold categorisation of settlement patterns was therefore developed: inner city, council housing estate, suburban, country town, and rural village. It is realised that this is not ideal as inner cities, and rural villages come in infinite variety and some country towns have their own rather run down housing estates. It is recognised that these are

broad categories and perhaps not exact, but it was left to the ministers to make their own judgement between the five possibilities offered by the questionnaire.

In some parts of the analysis it was advantageous to separate the five-fold scale into the two categories of urban and rural. The separation was effected by using inner city, council housing estate, and suburban, as urban; and country town, and rural village, as rural. Constant reference in the text to urban and rural becomes repetitive and tedious and so to make for a smoother reading of the text the word town has been inserted in places to mean urban, and the word countryside to mean rural.

Analysis

Data from the questionnaires were transferred to a suitable computer programme which gave distributions of the data and contrasted the numbers and proportions of ministers in urban and rural situations. Calculations of significant statistical differences using the chi-square method were also available from this source. The main method of enquiry in the questionnaire sought to receive responses to prompts regarding the ministers' experiences, feelings and beliefs by using the Likert scale (1932) of five choices from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly". In analysis the comparative values of those who circled "agree strongly" plus "agree" were used to provide the data for the text. Certain questions were asked seeking a numerical response, from a value of 1, "very little" to a value of 7 "very much". The two extremes were the categories used in analysis, and the proportions in the following text represent those who responded "very much". Data regarding personal identification such as sex, and age were made available by the questionnaire to provide distributions which could then be compared and significances calculated.

THE MINISTERS

Although the main intention of this study is to provide a contrast between Methodist ministers who are in an urban situation as opposed to those in rural appointments, in this chapter the distributions of the data from all the respondents, 1026 in number, will be used to give the general characteristics of the whole population.

Gender and Age

The responses made by all those ministers engaged in the pastoral work of the circuits in Methodism indicate the kind of people who are in the ranks of the Methodist ministry today. They are of both sexes, but the men outnumber the women by two to one, 68% as against 32%. This compares with a previous survey of the same set of ministers, all those in the circuits in 1997 (Haley and Francis, 2006:70), when the proportions were 87% and 13% respectively, showing that over seven years the proportion of women in the circuits had increased substantially. An examination of the numbers of male and female ministers listed in the Stations of Ministers listed in the *Minutes of the Annual Conference and Directory* (Minutes, 2006) shows a smaller proportion of males than in the survey, which suggests that perhaps more females than males from the whole population are among those who chose to respond.

The age distribution of ministers is evenly spread over the older categories of ministers. This is seen from the results displayed in Table 4.1. The majority, 364 (36%) are in the category of 46-55 year olds: 236 (23%) are in the category of 36 to 45 year olds: and 343 (34%) are in the category of 56 to 65 year olds. There is only one respondent under the age of 26, and 7 who have carried on working after the normal retirement age. Seven tenths of the total ministers in the circuits (70%) are

over the age 45years which makes the ministry as a whole rather elderly. This assumption is also confirmed by Table 5.2, for it becomes clear from the age categories recorded there that if ministry were a life time occupation, say from an entry after training at 25years, a mid point of ministry to retirement at 65 would then be 45, but from that table only around 30% of ministers are under 45, and around 70% are over 45, confirming the fact that Methodism has an elderly ministry.

Length of time in ministry

The remarkable thing about the distribution of the respondents who give their length of time in ministry, seen in the second distribution shown in Table 4.1, is that nearly half the total, 434 (48%), has served less than ten years in the circuits. Numbers of those with lengthier service steadily decline over the cohorts of the distribution, 302 in the 11-20 years range, 150 in the 21-30 range, and 131 over 30. Table 4.1 is so constructed as to offer a comparison between the distributions of the years of service with that of the age of respondents. One would expect that someone entering the ministry in their twenties might have completed ten years' active ministry by the time they are thirty five, hence in the table the "under ten" category of service is compared with the 26-35 age category. Contrary to the expectation that length of service might be congruent with age, the contrary is the case. It is no longer the experience of the church that women and men enter the ministry as young adults, as used to be the case for men before the 1960s, when the maximum age for entry was 27years. The table shows how disparate the two distributions are, with a statistical difference of a probability of only one in a thousand that the two distributions are congruent, thus confirming the fact that it is now very common in Methodism, as in most

denominations, that ministry is commenced at an older age, after other occupations have been ended by retirement, by redundancy, or by choice.

One of the occupations from which some more mature people have come into the Methodist ministry is by transfer or choice from ministering in another denomination. Of the total respondents 25 (2.4%) were in this category, and the movement was from 11 other denominations, of which 2 were from autonomous Methodist churches overseas. The greatest number of transfers was 10 from the Salvation Army. Two were from the Church of the Nazarene, and two from the continuing Congregational Church.

Training

At the end of the war in the 1950s Methodism had six training colleges where entrants to the ministry were trained on full-time residential courses. The courses were of three years' duration, but there was a tendency at the time to offer four years to some. At the same time two years' training were given to those whose entry to the ministry had been delayed because of war service, or conscription in the peacetime army. This scenario of training for the Methodist ministry has completely changed. Colleges have been closed and amalgamated because of the shortage of people with vocations, and also because of the financial stringency created for the Church which is associated with the training of ministers on long-time residential courses. New ways of offering training for ministry by most of the mainstream churches in England have been developed to meet the changing situation. Ecumenical training is now commonplace with the pioneer being Queens College, founded principally for Methodists and Anglicans in 1970, after the closer of Handsworth College in Birmingham (Turner,

1985:226-232). Another development in training is the movement toward non-residential training and part-time courses which can be operated to meet the needs of the great variety of those who are offering for ministry today, although in Methodism there are still some colleges and training centres which offer both residential training and full-time courses.

This diversity of training is seen in the responses to questions related both to the type of the courses undertaken and their nature. Almost two thirds, 634 of respondents (64%) had been trained by Methodism, and almost a third, 321 (32%) had been trained on an ecumenical course. Of the remaining 4%, 15 had been trained by the Anglicans, and 18 had found training in some other way. Four-fifths of all respondents (80%) had been trained on full-time courses, while 20% had been trained on part-time courses.

Current post and years in that post

Of those who responded, 86 (9%) were probationers; just over half, 488 (53%) were circuit ministers; and just over one third, 324 (55%) were superintendents; 8 were in Local Ecumenical Partnerships; and 9 had specialist ministries associated with circuit duties. The years which the ministers had been in their present posts reflected the shape of the circuit invitation system with its break at five years' stay. An initial invitation from a circuit is deemed to be for five years, and if either the circuit or the minister wishes to curtail that appointment (CPD, 2007, 522f), then the curtailment must be referred to the appropriate district committee. Re-invitations can be offered for one, two or three more years, but after that it becomes more difficult for a minister to stay (CPD, 2007:524f). Among respondents 140 were in their first year, and the

same number and proportion in their second; 131 in their third year and 132 in their fourth; with 100 being in their fifth year. At this point in the distribution the numbers who report a stay of six or subsequent years are relatively small, and a stay of five years embraces 71% of all respondents. This proportion is an indication of the effect of the necessity for re-invitation after five years service in the circuit.

Location of manse compared to the location of main church

The ministers were asked to give the location of their place of residence and the location of their main church on a five-fold categorisation comprising inner city, council housing estate, suburbia, country town and rural village. The distributions are seen in Table 4.2. One might suppose that ministers resided near to their main church. There is, however, a strong statistical difference between the two distributions showing a probability of only one in a thousand of this occurring. This indicates that Methodist ministers certainly do not always reside where their work is; they are not, on the whole, living on the job. Some do, for 60 (6%) of the circuit ministers both work in the inner city and also live in the inner city, but there are a further 63 (7%) who report that their main church is in the inner city but who live elsewhere. This is also true of the council estate, where, 15 live where they work, but another 21 who report that their main church is there and live elsewhere. Presumably some of those with their main church in the inner city or in a council housing estate live in suburbia, as 373 (36%) of respondents report having a church there, while 526 (51%) live there. The nearest match to those whose main church and living quarters are in the same area is that of the country town where 268 (26%) live there and 298 (29%) work there. The same also applies to those in the category of rural village as 122 (12%) live there and 134 (13%) minister there. One can say then with certainty that many ministers do

not live where they work when that work is in the inner city or council housing situations, but that they are much more likely to do so when they minister in the countryside.

Plurality of ministry

The general situation has always been that Methodist ministers are appointed to the circuit and not to a local church, and within the circuit they have charge of more than one church. Table 4.3 indicates the distribution of plurality of care. Among the 1009 respondents to the question, "How many churches are in your pastoral care?" the most typical number of churches held was 2. This was the case for 234 (23%) of the ministers. It is interesting to see that despite the general rule that Methodist ministers have churches in plurality 121 (12%) of the respondents, have pastoral care of only one church. The pastoral care by one minister of 3 and 4 churches is common. The care of up to 5 churches comprises 90% of the distribution, which then diminishes rapidly. However, eight ministers, or 1.1% of the population have care of over 10 churches. In calculating the total number of churches in the care of the 1009 respondents the total is 3,328 making an average number of 3.3 churches for each minister.

Urban and rural contrasts

The urban and rural contrasts which become evident in examining the comparative data between where the ministers live and where their main church is situated in Table 4.2 is strengthened by analysing further the data regarding the location of their main church in Table 4.4, in addition to that associated with the area in which they had at least one church, Table 4.5.

In Table 4.4 there were 123 (13%) who had their main church in the inner city: 36 (4%) in a council housing estate: 373 (39%) in suburbia: 298 (31%) in a country town: and 134 (14%) in a rural village, a total of 962 individuals. The location of a minister's main church is an important concept, since when churches are held in plurality the tendency is for the main church to get the lion's share of the minister's time and energy. The mode, the most frequent item of the distribution in Table 4.4, is the category of the suburban situation where 39% of the respondents have their main church. One notes, however, that those who have their main church in a rural village are a greater proportion than those who minister with a main church in the inner city, or those in a council housing estate.

Methodist ministers, in addition to their main church, in all probability have care of churches in other situations. The question was asked whether they had at least one church in each of the five of settlement patterns. Table 4.5 gives the details: 166 (10%) have at least one church in the inner city: 144 (9%) in the council housing estate: 473 (28%) in suburbia: 361 (22%) in the country town: and 523 (31%) in the rural village. The most frequent result in this distribution is the 523 who have at least one church in a rural village, amounting to almost a third of the total of 1667. When one splits the results into the two categories of urban and rural, as described on page 63, ministers having at least one church in each of the two categories would then be 47% in the urban and 53% in the rural. The balance of ministerial care therefore seems to be weighted in favour of rural ministry.

A further question was asked of ministers as to how many churches in their pastoral care they had in each of the five areas. The distribution is given in Table 4.6. The total

number of churches in the care of the respondents can be calculated from the distribution of the number of churches in their care multiplied by the frequency of the distribution for each location. This calculation resulted in a summation of all the churches in the care of respondents totalling 2987 churches. Of these, using the two categories of the urban / rural divide, it was established that a proportion of 38% were in urban areas and 62% in rural. The total of rural village churches alone, 1342, or 45% of all churches in the distribution indicates, together with the analysis contained in the previous paragraph, that Methodism has still a strong presence in the countryside. It must be acknowledged, however, that most of the village churches will be small in size and will form the minor part of a ministerial group, and that the churches in suburbia, and also some in the inner city will be much larger and more active. However, such analysis shows that Methodism, when the calculation is based on the number of churches in pastoral care, has a great proportion of its churches in the countryside. Statistical analysis gives support to the thesis proposed in this study that Methodism still has an important presence in country areas.

CONCLUSION

The gender divide of all responding Methodist ministers in the circuits at the time of the survey shows that men outnumber women by two to one, 68% to 32%.

The age structure of all Methodist respondents shows that the ministers of Methodism are an elderly human group, 70% of respondents are over 46 years old, half of this group being over 56 years old.

The age structure of respondents contrasts strongly with the length of service which they have spent in ministry, for 73% of them have served less than ten years in the circuits. Statistical tests of age against length of service show that, in common with the experience of other Churches, people are finding a vocation later in life after retirement or a life change from other professions and occupations.

Change in the Church's policy for training ministers is clearly seen. Only 64% have been trained solely by Methodist training courses, and some of these courses are part-time. Others have been trained, both on full-time or part-time ecumenical courses, and some have been trained by other denominations.

Ministers in appointments in country towns and villages tend to live near their main church, but ministers in the inner city and in council housing estates tend to live in the suburbs.

Urban/rural contrasts are seen in the comparison of three sets of data, the location of a respondents' main church, the situation where they have at least one church, and the number of churches to which they minister in each situation. Main churches are mostly in the suburbs, 39%, with 17% being in other urban situations; 31% have their main church in a country town and 14% in a country village.

Methodist ministers, however, have churches in plurality and so offer pastoral care which stretches across the urban/rural divide. This implies that ministers can have at least one church in another situation. When this was tested, 31% of the ministers, a proportion greater than in any in of the other four situations than the rural village,

have charge of at least one church in a country area. In an urban/rural division 53% have charge of at least one church in a rural area matched by 47% in an urban situation.

The strength of ministerial deployment in rural areas is further indicated by the number of churches in pastoral care in the five different situations. The respondents have care for 1342 churches in rural villages, or 45% of the total churches in their care. Across the urban/rural divide the proportions are 38% and 62% respectively. This result, together with the other two indications presented above, leads to the conclusion that the strength of ministry offered to rural churches by Methodism is still strong, and that the Methodist Church is not yet just a church of the city, the town, or the suburbs.

CHAPTER 5 MINISTRY IN THE CIRCUITS

BACKGROUND

The Circuit

The basic unit of Methodism is the circuit, the group of churches which cluster around some central place in either the town or the countryside, as noted previously. The widespread circuits of the early days of Methodism, when the itinerant preacher travelled long distances to preach to his people, both on a Sunday and on a weekday (Dawson, 1978; Cunliffe, 1992) have evolved into the more manageable circuits of today. In the centre of cities some Methodist churches stand alone, or circuits tend to be small and compact. In rural situations they can be very large and stretch over many square miles. Circuits have no fixed boundaries and tend to evolve according to local needs and influences.

Staffing the Circuits

The circuit's staff is composed of a superintendent minister, who is in charge of the circuit and is directly accountable to the Methodist Conference for its good order. If not ministering alone s/he is supported by colleagues, the circuit ministers, responsible for their own local churches, with the addition sometimes of a probationer or a deacon. Most ministers have churches in plurality but the general custom is that the superintendent, though s/he too has churches in plurality of care, has fewer churches than his/her colleagues, as s/he has to carry the weight of the circuit's administration. Usually the superintendent has the care of the most influential church, usually the largest, and central to the circuit as a whole. In the countryside this is usually the market town on which the circuit is centred. It has been the policy of the

Conference, however, over a number of years, to attempt to eliminate what it calls "single minister stations" by circuit amalgamation. In rural areas it is difficult to achieve this as circuits are so widespread that amalgamation is impossible due to the large distances involved, since the circuit system relies on the fact that local churches should be in touch with each other through circuit networks, in order that they can recognise what they have in common and help and encourage each other.

National and District averages of churches in the care of a minister

In 2004, 1728 Methodist ministers, all those in circuit work, were sampled for this study. In that same year Methodism made the report of its triennial statistical returns and indicated that the current membership of the church was 293,661 (Minutes, 2005b:57). On average, therefore this means that each minister had 170 church members in his or her care. In 2004 there were 5909 churches in the Methodist Church in Great Britain, which makes a national average of 3.4 in the care of each minister in circuit. These averages mean little on their own, but they are used connexionally in order to give some parity to their work loads (Conference Office, 2005).

A further insight into the loading of the ministerial task regarding the number of churches and members in the care of one minister can be gained by looking at similar figures for different local circuits (District, 2006; Burton, 2007a). One rural circuit from the Yorkshire Dales has 2 ministers on its staff with 10 local churches, making an average of 5 per minister, although the superintendent has the care of 4 churches and his colleague the care of 6. The membership of the circuit is 347 which on average is 173.5 for each minister, much the same as the national average. One thing

to note is that the churches in the circuit are very different. One in the care of the superintendent minister is the church in the market town, and one in the care of his colleague, in a large village, is very alive and demanding on his time. Most of the others are small congregations in Dales' villages (District, 2006).

This variety in a country circuit provides a warning that averages do not tell the whole story, and that such circuits can be very different in their constitution. It is easy to stereotype a "typical" rural circuit, but not all of them are alike, and there are many variables and some surprises in the local churches within their boundaries. The same can be said of circuits in both urban and suburban situations (Burton, 1972; 1975). This is a consideration which should be borne in mind in the analysis of the responses of all those ministers in circuit service which is the population of this survey.

Another circuit lower down the river valley (District, 2006) is the first of the circuits which lie on the way into the truly urban community of the city. It is what Anthony Russell terms the urban shadow countryside (1986:3) and is a valley town stretching into surrounding countryside on the edge of the conurbation, incorporating a number of satellite villages. It has 3 ministers on its staff and has 11 churches, an average of 3.6 for each minister. Again the superintendent has the lighter load with 3 churches. The Circuit membership total is 516, and again the average of 172 for each minister approximates to the national average in the care of one minister.

The third circuit is in the depths of the city (District, 2006) and could not be more urban. Again it is staffed by 2 ministers, with 8 local churches in their care. The superintendent has a lighter load, for s/he has the help of a retired minister. The

average loading is 4 churches for each full-time minister. The number of members in the circuit is 323 giving an average of 161.5 in the care of each minister.

This example from one locality illustrates that despite the fact that the local churches in any circuit might be rural, urban or mixed, both in situation and strength, the averages of churches per minister, though rather more in the rural circuit, show that the number of members in one minister's care is a similar proportion. If this is so in the three circuits examined above which are in rather different rural/urban locations, and whose characteristics also seem to follow a national pattern, is there really any difference in the experience of ministers, between rural and urban circuits?

A challenge to the averages: urban and rural ministry

In the light of the correspondence of these three circuits with the national average, concerning the average number of members per minister, one might assume that Methodism has got it right. On the basis of the assumption that "a Methodist minister is a Methodist minister" and can be stationed anywhere the church would seem to be deploying its ministers well. It is the purpose of this exercise to question this, and what follows is a challenge to the concept that "one size fits all", as it seeks to establish the differences between those ministers who are in urban, as opposed to rural circuits.

THE MINISTERS

Gender differences

The ministry of women and men in the ministry of Methodism has been an established situation for the last thirty years (Conference, 1972). It has already been

observed that within the ranks of those ministers who are serving in the circuits 67% of them are men and 33% are women. When these are divided into those who state that their ministry is in an urban situation or a rural situation as shown in Table 5.1, then 315 men (71%) state they minister in urban situations as opposed to the 130 (29%) women. Of those who minister in the countryside 144 of the sample are men (61%) and 93 are women (37%). Applying a test for significant difference between these proportions they were found to be significantly different at a level of .01 which indicates that women are more likely to minister in rural circuits than in town ministry.

Age

The age range was split into three cohorts, those under the age of 45, those aged 45-55, and those aged 55 and over. Table 5.2 shows the distributions and the proportions in the three groups for urban ministry is almost equal. The cohorts, however, are not equally divided, the central cohort having only a ten years' spread. This implies that the bulk of ministers find themselves in this middle-aged category and that the peak of the distribution is somewhere around the age of fifty. This is also true for those who are in rural ministry, but the distribution shows that there is a tendency for those ministering in rural areas to be older. There is however, no significant statistical difference between the urban and rural distributions.

Duration of appointment

The length of time the respondents have spent in ministry indicate that two-fifths (41%) of those in urban appointments and a half of those in rural appointments (51%) are relatively inexperienced, having spent less than ten years in circuit ministry.

Comparing the urban and rural distributions statistically, which shows a significant difference of .001; those in rural situations are less experienced than those in the town. Comparing age distributions and length of time in ministry one can infer, as mentioned above with reference to all clergy in the discussion of Table 4.1 in chapter 4, that the age of entry to ministry is in middle age when those who offer for ministry have had a fairly considerable experience of life elsewhere. What can also be seen is that older entrants often seem to find their way into rural ministry, since the last two categories of length of time in ministry, 21years to 30, and 31 to 40, in Table 5.3 show a decided tail off in rural experience, the inference being that older entrants to ministry do not have the time to complete longer terms of service due to retirement.

Table 5.4 also considers the length of time in an appointment from a different perspective. One mark of ministry in the Methodist Church which is unique is the requirement of itinerancy. As described in chapter 4, the initial invitation to the circuit expires at the end of five years (CPD, 2007:521), when a decision on the part of both the minister and the circuit has to be made for continuing service. Table 5.4 shows the effect of this break quite clearly with two-thirds (66%) of urban ministers moving after a five year stay, and one-third (33%) having accepted a re-invitation. This compares with three-quarters (75%) of the rural ministers who go at the five year point, with only a quarter (25%) accepting, or being offered, a re-invitation. The differences are not significant statistically, but they do raise the conjecture that the rural situation is tougher, or less congenial than the urban, and ministers are glad to move after a shorter term of ministry, or alternatively that rural circuits become quickly dissatisfied with the ministry which is offered (Haley and Francis, 2006:219-223)

Keeping in touch with the churches

Location of Manse

The system of plurality of care obviously creates difficulties when a group of churches are scattered over a wide area. Access to distant churches for rural ministers, or even perhaps to some churches for urban ministers, can present problems. The first consideration is the location of the manse in relation to a minister's churches. Table 5.5 gives the distribution of urban and rural respondents according to type of area in which the manse is situated. The first thing to note is that the distributions of urban and rural in Table 5.5 have very little correspondence, with a probability level of less than .0001. The urban distribution shows much the same dispersion of where ministers live as was observed in that of the total population of respondents in Chapter 4, but that of respondents who are in rural ministry is entirely different. The most common location of residence of the urban distribution is in the suburbs where 80% of respondents live; that of the rural distribution is the 52% of respondents living in a country town. There are also 39% living in rural villages, whilst there are very few of the rural respondents who have their manse in urban surroundings

Area of main church

A second consideration regarding the way that ministers can keep in touch with their churches in a system of plurality of care is the location of their main church, especially in relation to where they live, as was noted in chapter 4:68. Taking the two distributions of urban and rural as a whole one sees again that they are entirely different, the probability of a match is again off the probability scale at less than .0001. Of those who say that their ministry is in urban surroundings, almost two-thirds (59%) have their main church in the suburbs, just over a quarter (26%) have their

main church in the inner city, and only one in twenty (6%) in a council housing estate. The logic of the distribution is that no one who says that their ministry is urban could have a main church in a rural area, and this is so, but almost one in ten, 9% of urban respondents, has a main church in a country town. Presumably what lies behind this response is that the country town is large enough to be classified as urban and that these respondents, though in a country town, do not have enough churches in country areas to describe themselves as rural.

This analysis finds confirmation when, in the consideration of the rural distribution of their main church, over half (52%) have a main church in a country town. The 44% of those whose main church is in a country village indicates that Methodism still exercises a substantial ministry in rural areas. The small percentage of those rural respondents who have a main church in an urban setting indicate that a few might have a main church in the inner city, or in a council estate, but regard their ministry as rural because of the number of churches, other than their main church, which are in rural locations. The 3% of those rural respondents who have a main church in suburbia, but regard themselves as having a rural ministry, indicates the same kind of feeling, but also reflects the tendency of ministers in Methodism to be based in a suburban church, but to minister to a number of other churches on the urban fringe.

When Table 5.5 is compared to Table 5.6 one realises that there is a startling discrepancy between where ministers live and where their main church is. The discrepancy is not so marked in the distribution of those ministers whose ministry is mainly in rural surroundings as those in urban locations. In the country town 52% work there and 51% live there. In the rural villages 44% have a main church there and

39% live there. The discrepancy between the 3% of rural respondents whose main church is in suburbia and the 7% who live there indicates the tendency mentioned in the previous paragraph of suburban ministry stretching into the countryside. The urban distribution is very positive in showing that respondents who said that their ministry was in an urban area tend not to live where their main church is. The comparison of the two tables showing the urban distributions leads to an even more positive conclusion than that shown in the previous chapter in the comparison of Tables 4.2 and 4.4 Only one half of those who have a main church in the inner city live there, and less than a third of those with a main church on a council estate live there. Those who minister in these areas are resident in the suburbs and must therefore have to commute to their work. The conclusion is that even in urban surroundings, where one might expect the minister to be in ready contact with his/her main church, this need not necessarily follow, as many live away from their work, and perhaps, in a large city area, some distance away.

Number of churches in pastoral care

Keeping in touch with all the churches in a minister's pastoral care is not easy when one recognises that some ministers, particularly those who minister in rural situations, might have a comparatively large number of local churches in their care. When considering the number of churches in the pastoral care of respondents the distributions of urban and rural shown in Table 5.7 show that there was a clear statistical difference in the number of churches held. A substantial proportion of ministers in the inner city (18%) had the care of only one church, but the most typical number of churches in the care of a minister was two, and of the urban ministers, 48% fell into this category. Three churches in pastoral care were reported by 22% of the

respondents, but proportions fell rapidly away after the 7.4% who reported four churches in their care, with a long tail in the distribution. Although some urban ministers reported greater numbers of churches in their care 90% of the distribution fell into the categories 1-3. The limit was reached by one urban minister who reported that he had care of eight churches. It is rather surprising that an urban respondent should have eight churches in his care, and one can make assumptions as to why this should be so, but there is no evidence in the data to give a satisfactory answer.

The most typical number of churches held in the distribution of the 21% who responded that their ministry was mainly in a rural situation was four, a proportion which contrasted strongly with those in urban ministry. Three or five churches in one person's care, 17% and 14% respectively, were also substantial proportions of the distribution. The whole of the rural distribution was more even that that of urban respondents. A few ministers in rural surroundings do in fact have only one church in their care, represented by 4% of the distribution. In contrast there were still reasonable proportions who reported a ministry to a much larger number of churches, the limit of the distribution being the 2% who reported that they cared for nine churches. The distribution, in Table 5.7 for rural respondents is, however, truncated for reasons of brevity of presentation. At nine churches in one minister's care, however, it does encapsulate 94% of the distribution. There are smaller percentages of those who care for ten, eleven or twelve churches and the maximum is 14 in the care of rural respondents. The urban/rural contrast in the number of churches in one respondent's care is clearly seen by the fact that 97% of the urban distribution includes one to five churches, whilst in the rural situation 97% includes one to ten churches.

In Table 5.8 percentages of churches in a respondent's care are sorted into the five types of urban/rural settlement. Here one can clearly see the strength of suburban Methodism where two-fifths (38%) of the respondents, have one church in their care, 22% say they have two churches, and 6% say they have three. With the other urban categories a sizeable proportion (22%) have one church in the inner city and in ministry in a council housing estate; 19% are similarly placed. Much smaller proportions indicate that ministers have two or three churches in their care in each of these two urban areas. Some urban respondents have charge of churches in what are in reality rural situations, 8% reporting their care of one church in a country town, and 10% in a rural village, which indicates the spread of multiple pastoral responsibilities over the urban/rural boundary. The same spread across the urban/rural divide is also seen in the distributions of churches in the different localities for ministers who responded that their main ministry was in a rural area. In comparison to those who said their ministry was mainly urban, multiple pastoral responsibilities for those in rural ministry across the urban/rural divide are less frequent. Thus the tendency is for ministers in an urban situation to have the care of rural churches, but much less so for those whose ministry is in a rural setting to have the care of churches in an urban setting.

These differences are seen more starkly when the numbers in multiple care are calculated and displayed in the urban rural contrast, as in Table 5.9. The numbers of churches in the care of ministers who responded that their work was mainly in urban or rural settings indicates the strength of Methodism in the suburbs, with 38% of urban respondents having one church there, 22% having two and 5.7% having three. Across the rural/urban divide there are impressive percentages of those who minister

to churches in country towns and in rural villages. Methodism obviously still has a care for the countryside in the number of churches that still exist in rural villages as compared to the other locations. The differences in ministry across the urban/rural divide, as observed in the previous paragraph, are more noticeable in this table. The urban ministers have pastoral responsibilities which tend to stretch across into the rural locations; rural ministers confine their ministry much more to the rural sector.

From the number of churches which ministers have in the various locations the average number of churches in the care of those ministers who minister in urban locations can be calculated, and similarly the average of those in rural ministry. The former is 2.2 churches per minister for the urban, and 4.6 for the rural. It must be stated in this context, however, that 32% of those ministers who responded to the questionnaire said that their ministry was in a mixed area. The inclusion of the responses of the mixed category to the distributions in Tables 5.8 and 5.9 would increase proportions and numbers of churches in all the five locations, but since the tendency for multiple care of churches has been seen to be typical of urban ministry, it is reasonable to suppose that the category of all those who minister in rural churches would be increased substantially, both in proportion and number. One caveat must be made in the comparative number of village churches relative to the number of suburban churches is that of church size. Suburban churches, and some inner city churches, are large both in congregational size and the number of activities they sponsor, whilst village churches are small and not as active and do not make the same demands upon a minister's time and energy.

Distances travelled

One assumes that those who reported that they ministered mainly in urban areas travelled fewer miles to minister to their people. The distributions of the miles travelled to the nearest church and the miles travelled to the further church in both categories of urban and rural ministry confirm this. This is shown in Tables 5.10 and 5.11. Of those in rural ministry 34% live very near to one of their churches, from the earlier analysis in this chapter presumably their main church, and 28% of those in urban ministry do so. The greater proportion in both categories of urban and rural together live within one mile of their nearest church, 50% urban and 47% rural. Of both categories 90% of the distributions live within two miles distance of their nearest church.

The contrast between those respondents whose main ministry is urban or rural is very marked when one considers the distance they travel to their furthest church. The most typical distance travelled for the urban ministers, 22%, is to a church within two miles distant. A journey of less than eight miles covers 95% of the urban respondents who make up the distribution, although a few travel much further than this. For those in rural ministry 10% or thereabouts, travel five, six or eight miles. The distribution of rural clergy in Table 5.11 has been truncated as the furthest travelled by one minister to his/her furthest church is 28 miles. The most typical distance travelled in the distribution to their furthest church is ten miles, travelled by 13% of rural respondents. A distance for those in rural ministry of seventeen miles forms 95% of the whole distribution. The statistical differences of the distance travelled by the two categories of ministry to their nearest church is not significant, but that to the farthest church has a probability of less than one in a thousand

Attendances at churches

Respondents were asked about attendances at their various churches. Categories of congregational size were reported in groups of ten. The following percentages are a summation of the various congregational sizes involved. In the main church almost half, 46%, of those in urban situations had over 70 people in their congregations, 33% are of 41-70 congregational size. For the rural respondents one-fifth (20%) had congregations of over 70 in their main church, with 57% with a congregational size of 21-60. When considering the second church in a minister's pastoral charge congregational size has fallen. Of urban ministers 22% do not have a second charge, and for those who do 61% have 11 to 50 worshippers. In the rural category 57% are in the same range of congregational size. With regard to rural churches, since, as we have seen rural ministers tend to have more churches in their pastoral care, so the numbers in the congregations of more distant churches tend to diminish. For the third church in a rural minister's care a congregation of 11 to 20 is typical for 44% of them, and for the fourth church 33% of ministers have congregations of that same size, although 25% have congregations of 1-10. For the fifth church 23% are in the category 1 to 10, and no congregation is more than 30. With the sixth church the typical congregation is of 1 to 10 people and similarly with the remaining number of churches in a rural minister's pastoral care. It would seem to be clear that quite consistently the congregations of urban ministers tend to be larger than the congregations of those ministers in rural situations.

CONCLUSION

Despite the general assumptions made at the beginning of this chapter, that ministry in the circuits of Methodism is much the same whatever their location, the results of the

analysis of the responses to the survey show that there are substantial differences between ministry in urban circuits and circuits in rural situations.

There is a higher proportion of females than males in rural circuits and also ministers tend to be older. As regards the length of time ministers have spent in their ministry it is those with shorter experience who serve country circuits, and they also tend to move after their first invitation of five years.

What is certainly the case is that ministers, both urban and rural do not live where their main church is. Those who minister to inner city churches and churches on council housing estates live in suburbia. Some who minister to rural villages also live there, but also in the local market town. The number of churches in a minister's care varies tremendously, but the minister in the rural situation has many more local churches to minister to than her/his counterpart in the town. This observation is matched by the distance which any minister has to travel to cover his/her pastoral responsibilities. Although the greater proportion of those both in urban and rural ministry live very near or only one mile distant from their main church, some, even those in urban ministry, have to travel a number of miles to the furthest church in their care, but it is those in rural ministry who have to travel furthest. The influence of the distance travelled is also seen on the effectiveness of the ministry they are able to offer to their furthest church, whatever the mileage. The nearer churches, being more accessible, are given rather more attention than the more distant ones.

What becomes apparent in the analysis is that the urban/rural divide regarding ministry in the circuits, though real, is not a simple one. Ministers whose main church

is in the inner city might have a rural church; ministers who minister to the villages also are in pastoral charge of their main church in the country town, or in suburbia. Distances travelled and numbers of churches in the care of one minister vary wildly. Such factors show that there are many variations between any individual minister's circuit experiences. Nevertheless the different situation of a minister in the town to one in the countryside is real. The effect of church structures in Methodism on the work patterns of the ministers who are in urban appointments, contrasted to those who are in rural appointments, is especially evident in the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 6 THE MINISTER'S ROLE

BACKGROUND

John Wesley was very keen to make sure that his helpers, the early itinerants, knew what they had to do and in 1742 gave them a job description which he called "Twelve Rules for a Helper" (CPD 1:77). These were renewed and revised by the Wesleyan Church and called "The Liverpool Minutes" (CPD 1:77). The Methodist Church has fallen into the habit of giving prescriptions to those who minister in its name and a resolution was adopted in 1971 whereby those in the ministerial session of Conference resolved eight propositions in relation to the ministerial task (CPD, 1971:724).

The calling of a minister has again been spelt out in a recent report from Conference, "What is a presbyter? (Conference Report, 2002b). This report outlines the threefold profile of a minister: firstly the characteristics of a presbyter (What is a Presbyter like? (Conference, 2002b:81). The prescription is that a presbyter is of good character, a person of faith with a strong calling to ministry, obedient to Methodist discipline and strongly rooted in the Methodist tradition. Secondly, the tasks of a presbyter (What does the presbyter do?) (Conference Report, 2002b:82). A presbyter prays, studies and interprets the bible, presides at communion and at baptisms, leads acts of worship, exercises oversight in Christian communities, represents the Church in the community, and seeks to grow as a man or woman of God. Thirdly the accountability of a presbyter (To whom is the presbyter responsible? (Conference Report, 2002b:82). A presbyter is accountable to God, to the Methodist people and to his/her colleagues (Conference Report, 2002b:81f).

Luscombe and Shreeve (2002) have written at length in expanding the official Conference statements and examining ministry in Methodism from a number of points of view (Marsh, 2002:74-78). The tasks of the minister can be summarised under five heads for the purpose of this introduction.

Ministers of the Word and the Sacraments

The Methodist presbyter is ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, which describes the primary task to which s/he must devote his/her calling (Clutterbuck, 2002:84). This primary task is fully explained in the address to ordinands in the Ordinal of Presbyters (Methodist Worship Book, 1999:302). The phrase, minister of the word and sacraments has becomes a job description for the presbyters of Methodism. Being a minister in holy things is the essential mark of the presbyter and the two sacraments of Methodism, Holy Communion and Baptism are reserved to her/his office. Although separated by the Church and ordained for these holy tasks s/he is in no way a priest except within the priesthood of all believers but is representative of the whole Church (Howcroft, 2002:140).

The pastoral Office

A minister must be a pastor, and the biblical image of the shepherd with his sheep fits the job description, for Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep" (John, 21.16 NEB). The task has its spiritual and temporal aspects (Howcroft, 2002:141-143), but is associated with the welfare of those who are of the faith. In the catholic tradition the spiritual aspects of care are expressed in such activities as confession and absolution, and whilst the tradition of personal confession is rare in Methodism the concerns which

confession addresses are still part of the role of the Methodist minister as a representative of the Church as a whole, through private counselling or other personal contacts (Howcroft, 2002:136). The minister must take active steps in face-to-face situations with the people not only to ascertain their spiritual welfare but also their temporal needs. Sensitivity in personal contacts should always be required from the minister as s/he meets people in order that information regarding pastoral needs may be ascertained. Advice for those fulfilling the pastoral task has never been in short supply, for much good advice over generations of those who have been in active ministry has been offered to ministers from the very traditional advice for Anglican priests, George Herbert (1662), Robert Martineau (1972) to their very modern counterparts, such as Kennon Callahan (1983, 1990, 1999, 2002) and Alan Roxburgh writing on his own account and with others about Christian mission and service (Roxburgh, 1997; Gibbs, Roxburgh and Romanuk, 2006). These are part of a general outpouring of advice for ministry and mission from American sources, but also are appropriate for ministry in Britain.

Because of her/his calling the minister is marked as the person who has this pastoral task, and is the one who should take the lead in the pastoral care of her/his people. The Methodist minister's focus for pastoral care is principally on the members of his/her congregation, and also on those associated with the Church, for the Methodist Church is a gathered Church. The tradition in Methodism is also that general visiting should be the task of the minister (Griffiths, 2002:18) and that s/he should occasionally visit the homes of the members and adherents of the Churches in his/her charge. In doing this a more intimate knowledge of the family life of the people can be gained which is an advantage in gaining knowledge of Church families and their

spiritual and temporal needs. Today's circumstances, where most of the adults in the household work outside the home, and where family life centres around the television when they are at home, tend to inhibit home visiting of a general kind, to the impairment of pastoral activity. Because of such changes, and also because of diary pressures, it would seem to be the case nowadays that general visiting has its difficulties (Griffiths, 2002:19) and visits are generally made to those in hospital, those who are bereaved, those who are ill at home, and those who are elderly and can no longer attend Church. There are also the visits to people not specifically connected to the Church which must claim the pastor's time such as arranging funerals or weddings or visiting those wishing to be baptised, although the custom perhaps of the latter two activities is to counsel them in the Church building. However, all this claims a minister's time and energy, but it is an activity which is part of the task of being called to serve people as a minister of the Church

Maintaining the organisation

The polity of the Methodist Church is centred in the authority of the annual Conference, which meets annually and is presided over by an ordained minister, the President, helped by a Vice-President, who is a lay person. (CPD, 2007:228).

The national Church is divided into thirty two regional units which are the Districts and the district meeting is the District Synod presided over by a presbyter appointed as the District Chair (CPD, 2007:469f, Conference, 2006).. The district has no real power but offers advice and support to the circuits and acts as an intermediary between them and the Conference.

The circuits are composed of local Churches, the administrative body being the Circuit Meeting (CPD, 2007:505-509). Local Church Councils are the administrative meetings for the local Church, but their powers are limited and they must look to the authority of the circuit (CPD, 2007:552-566).

The basis of discipline, as mentioned before is *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* (CPD) which regulates the whole life of the Church and prescribes how the Church at every level must be administered. With the centralised authority of the Church and the weight of organisation at every level of the Church's life one begins to appreciate the weight of administration which lies upon the ministers. They are responsible that the whole system functions smoothly and that the various meetings at all the levels of the Church take place. The Methodist Church Act of 1976 (CPD 1:3-28) freed ministers from some of the bureaucracy by allowing lay people to chair certain committees, but they still have to chair the main administrative meetings of the Church. Superintendent ministers have greater responsibilities (CPD2007:502 and Conference, 2005b) and carry a heavier burden than the circuit ministers as they are responsible for circuit property and also the smooth running of the circuit and its Churches. They are directly responsible to the Conference for the maintenance of Methodist discipline. Paperwork, which is the result of such a bureaucratic and centralised system, is a particular chore for the superintendents, but is also a burden to circuit ministers.

Teaching the Christian Faith

The task of teaching the faith is, however, a paramount task (Conference, 2000) and this is often done through the Sunday sermon, although this is perhaps an inadequate

vehicle for what has to be attempted. The task of using the sermon as a vehicle for teaching is made easier when the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL, 1999) is used by the preacher as the source of sermons which can be preached following the text in a consistent way, but the Methodist system of having Churches in plurality and serving them on a Sunday without consistent regularity can inhibit this particular ministerial role. Methodism publishes aids in a bi-monthly user-friendly form for preachers which illuminate the lectionary reading for general worship and also for All Age Worship (Roots, 2008). Teaching methods more appropriate to learning can be mounted at other times, perhaps more easily in urban than in rural Churches. Modern teaching techniques, not particularly suited to Church surroundings or in the context of worship, can be used in more informal settings.

Engaging in community and relating to anyone in need

One of the key doctrines of the Methodist Church is that no-one is outside the love of God. The theological disputes in Wesley's day led him to embrace Arminianism, as opposed to Calvinism. The doctrine stressed that it was possible for anyone to find salvation if they came to repentance and belief (Marsh, 2004). Methodism has always had this outgoing attitude (Clough, 2004:46) reinforced in recent years by theology which stresses the place of the Church in the world and the necessity for the Church to be world embracing rather than world negating (Slee, 2004). The role of the minister and the Church in its relationship and mission to the secular word has recently been defined by the Methodist Conference in its reports on the nature of the Church entitled *Our Calling* (Conference, 2000), and *The Priorities of the Methodist Church* (Conference, 2004b).

THE MINISTERS

The priorities of ministry

The ministers were asked to respond to seven functions of ministry on a sevenfold array from "very little" to "very much". The "very much" responses were recorded and analysed and urban/rural differences were calculated. The results are displayed in Table 6.1. None of the responses were statistically different except that relating to anyone in need, where those in rural situations gave more priority to this particular function of ministry, 64%, as against 58% of those who were in an urban location. One might suppose that the burden of need was greater in the town than in the countryside, or at least more visible among a larger population density, but it may be that with smaller population size it is easier for rural ministers, not only to perceive the needs, but to meet them. The fact that a greater proportion of rural ministers, 54%, gave more priority to engaging with the community than the urban, 48%, gives some support to this supposition. Urban priorities were much the same as rural priorities for the other functions of ministry, and the order of priority was well correlated. First priority was given to preaching the word of God; the second, teaching the Christian Faith; the third, pastoral care; the fourth, celebrating the sacraments; the fifth, relating to anyone in need; the sixth, engaging in community; and the last, the least priority, to ensuring the organisation works. The results show that Methodist ministers have a clear view of their role whether they are in urban or rural appointments and have much the same idea of the order of the ministerial task which they are needed to perform. Preaching and teaching show that the priority of declaring the Gospel, and leading their people into new understandings of what being a Christian means, fits in very well with the tradition inherited from Wesley, that of preaching for converts and encouraging them in paths of holiness.

Personal aims, expectations of congregations and possibilities of delivery

Using a similar array ministers were asked to record their opinions about the priorities which they themselves should fulfil in an ideal situation, the priority which they felt their people expected them to give, and that which they felt that in the realistic circumstances of the ministerial task, they themselves could give in relation to ten aspects of ministry. The results are displayed in Table 6.2. Significant differences across the urban/rural divide were few. In regard to what they wanted to do the greater proportion of rural ministers wished to evangelise, 47%, as against 34% of urban ministers, and this was significantly different. A much greater level of significance was attached to visiting, and again rural ministers wanted to be engaged more in this activity, 45%, than urban ministers, 31%.

Among the array of what ministers felt their people expected them to do, the statistically significant differences were in the matter of evangelism, where rural people wanted more evangelistic enterprise than their urban counterparts, 36%, as against 30%. This also applied to visiting, 76% as against 69%, and to the leading of house groups, 31% as against 22%. One can imagine that ministers in plurality, as we have already seen, are not able to give the time or energy to their country churches which visiting and evening work demands, but that at least they are conscious of their people's expectations in the matter. In the declining churches of the countryside the ministers might also have picked up their people's feeling that evangelism is a necessity if their local church is to survive.

The priority which ministers felt that they were able to give to their people, compared with what they wanted to give, fell short of the ideal. This occurred in all aspects of ministry, except administration, where ministers, both urban and rural, felt that administration took far more time and energy than they wanted it to. They also felt that they were giving more priority to the sacraments and to public worship than they wanted to do. Preaching and counselling were more or less in balance with their aims, but community leadership, evangelism, visiting, leading house groups and work among children was lower in delivery than they would have liked.

None of the priorities which urban and rural ministers felt that they could give to the various aspects of ministry were statistically different, although there was some difference in percentages, as rural ministers were prepared to give more priority to evangelism. This difference was reversed for public worship with urban ministers giving a slightly higher preference than those in rural situations. Urban ministers were also prepared to give more priority to preaching than rural ministers, but to counselling, visiting, leading house groups and children and young people's work, rather less.

In summary, the order of priority for ministers of both urban and rural situations which they aimed to give in ten ministerial tasks was: preacher, public worship, the sacraments, evangelism, visiting, children's and young people's work, counselling, house group leadership, leader in the community and administration. The order of priority which both sets of ministers felt that they could give to the ten in the actual delivery of ministry is rather different. Positions are changed and public worship comes first with preaching second followed by the sacraments. Administration takes

fourth place, much higher in actuality than in the priority of aims, followed by visiting, children's and young people's work, counselling, leading house groups, evangelism, and lastly being a leader in the community. It appears that what is happening is that the institutional and traditional tasks of ministry are being given the lion's share of time and energy, and that outreach in the form of evangelism and community service is being squeezed onto the margins.

Judging from the respondents' perceptions of the priorities which their people give to the ten tasks of ministry, it would seem, in comparing the data in the three columns of Table 6.3, that these expectations are affecting the roles which ministers choose to prioritise.

Pastoral policy of the ministers

The ministers were asked about the policy which they adopted to people who enquired about the possibility of baptism, both infant and adult, and for Christian marriage. The results are displayed in Table 6.3. With regard to both baptism and marriage discipline there were no significant differences between urban and rural respondents, except in the answer to the prompt "Baptism should only be given to those living within the parish/local boundary". For the ministers this implies the area around their local Churches, and the difference in the response was that the restriction to locality was supported by 2.5% of rural respondents, but with the larger proportion of 6.1% of those in urban situations. The small percentages supporting this restriction indicate that a large majority of respondents, both rural and urban, would be supportive to applicants coming from farther afield. This acceptance is shown in the response to the prompt that "all adults who ask for Christian Baptism should receive

it" and "all parents who ask for infant baptism should receive it", when around 42% of all ministers supported the former and 60% the latter. In both responses the rural ministers were more generous, but with no statistical difference.

The other responses, however, whilst not being significant, indicate that there is a slightly more generous attitude regarding baptismal discipline among rural ministers than those who are in urban situations. Around a quarter of the urban respondents, 27%, as against 23% in a rural situation, said that infant baptism should only be given to parents who confess the Christian faith, whilst only 8% per cent of both categories of ministers insist that it should only be given to those who regularly attend Church. These small proportions indicate that the large majority of ministers have a fairly relaxed attitude to requests for infant baptism. Almost two-thirds, however, said that they applied the Churches guidelines (CPD.2006:277), but this implies that some are freer spirits, with a rather more relaxed attitude to the Church's discipline.

The response of both sets of clergy to the question of who should be admitted to adult baptism was much more restrictive, although the proportions of around two in five, 40% and 45%, said that all adults who ask for Christian baptism should receive it implies that others were more restrictive in their policy. Even those who responded in this generous fashion had their conditions, for 92% of both sets of respondents said that adult baptism should only be given to those who confess the Christian faith, although a smaller percentage, 58% and 54%, said that they need not be necessarily regular attenders at worship.

Both urban and rural respondents had few restrictions to impose upon anyone who applied for Christian marriage. Just over half, 59% urban and 53% rural, said that all those who wish to marry should be offered a Church wedding, although around 70%, rather more than in the case of baptismal applications, said that in the case of marriages they would follow the Church's guidelines (CPD 2006:279). Proportions restricting marriage only to those who lived around their Churches, to those who had been divorced, to regular attenders at Church, and to those who were required to state their Christian faith, were very small. The restrictions which some denominations place upon the willingness to offer Christian marriage do not seem to apply to Methodist respondents.

CONCLUSION

In an examination of how respondents answer questions regarding their pastoral role and practice there is little difference between those in urban and rural situations. The importance of activities associated with traditional forms of ministry, such as preaching teaching and the sacramental offices are given high priority, the tasks of administration and keeping the organisation going are much less regarded. One of the surprises in the light of Methodism being a Church which has traditionally reached out to the unconverted and the needy outside the Church is the comparative low priority given to community service, evangelism and outreach.

When what respondents want to do is compared with what they think their congregations wish them to do, and what in reality they are enabled to do, significant differences are seen in the traditional activities of the ministerial role. People expect more than their ministers want to give, and also are able to give, in the matters of

public worship, pastoral visiting and preaching. There are a few significant differences between urban and rural categories in the three divisions of wants, expectations and delivery, all showing that rural clergy would want to give more time to both evangelism and visiting than they are able to do, and what their people expect of them.

In their response to people who ask for baptism, or parents who ask for baptism for their infants, the only statistically significant difference between urban and rural ministry is that concerning a restriction imposed on applicants who live near their Churches, but the proportion of this opinion is so small as to highlight the fact that requests for baptism, both adult and infant from anywhere, might be considered. Otherwise attitudes and discipline to baptism are similar among both urban and rural ministers, both categories being generous to baptismal requests, although the barriers to adult baptism impose more rigorous restrictions than those for infants, as one might expect from the Methodist embargo regarding second baptism.

In relation to applications for marriage, the majority of ministers follow the Church's guidelines, but have an open and welcoming policy, and there are no significant differences in their reaction to marriage applications between the urban or the rural situation.

CHAPTER 7 THE WORKLOAD OF MINISTERS

BACKGROUND

The tasks of ministry

The various roles performed by Methodist ministers, and the importance which both ministers in the town and in the countryside give to one role or another, have been outlined in the previous chapter. The specifics of the ministerial task can now be examined, and also a minister's attitudes in relation to the work loads imposed by the church. The reality should be that ministry in the countryside is different from that in an urban area, for both present different challenges and opportunities. The concentration of population and of churches is very different in the two situations, and social structures and economic conditions create a different background, not only to the general conditions in which people live, but also to church life and ministry. In the Methodist ministry there are the structures which circumscribe their work which also can create differences to the way that they must approach the task of caring for their people.

Preaching

The task of the minister as a preacher in urban as opposed to rural circuits is different as the burden of preaching preparation can be eased by economies of material and preparation in rural situations. In the urban situation the minister might have only one church in her/his care and is more often than not preaching every Sunday. In this case the burden of preparation and delivery creates a weekly work load. The minister in the countryside, however, might have three services in the day at different churches. S/he can than preach the same sermon and conduct the same service with some efficiency

of effort, although the fact that s/he has to do it three times instead of one is a multiplication of effort on the day. If the rural minister has a number of churches in his/her care and circulates between them so that s/he is at the same church infrequently, other services being taken by local preachers (English, 1995:1-10), s/he can use material originally prepared for elsewhere and need not be bound with the task of making a sermon every week. In the past this has been a common practice, especially for local preachers, who were expected to prepare one sermon each quarter and to "preach it around the circuit" (Rose, 1995:143-163). In the past the constant changing of the person in the pulpit has not encouraged the use of the lectionary, although the use of the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL, 1999) by ministers and local preachers is encouraged today. Some accept this discipline, which makes the burden of sermon and service preparation harder than in the past.

The celebrant at communion and conducting services

The same conditions of serving the churches in itinerant preaching apply also to the conduct of communion. The general historic practice was a monthly celebration, but if a minister had a multiple of village churches the celebration became quarterly. In a country circuit with a number of churches in one minister's care, every Sunday becomes both a preaching service and also a celebration in one of his churches or another, which has its disadvantages, although this is not usually the experience of the urban minister with fewer churches.

Modern innovations for services and fresh expressions of worship also create a heavier burden in the preparation of services. The tradition in Methodism was that the preacher in the pulpit was entirely in control of what s/he offered in worship to the

congregation. With the trend to evolve more worship styles, especially when they involve modern electronic forms of presentation and the cooperation of other people, the time and effort put into service and sermon preparation can be magnified considerably. One could argue that modern ways of worship are more typical of the urban church than the church in the village, and if this is so there must be some difference between urban and rural workloads in service or sermon preparation for the urban minister.

What can vary a great deal in the work load imposed upon ministers are the incidental services which s/he is asked to undertake. This burden varies greatly between individual ministers, depending upon their location and circumstances, whether they minister in the city, the suburbs or the countryside. It is not only the incidental service which creates the work load, for that may only be a small part of the time and energy involved. Baptisms, both infant and adult make, demands on a minister's time, not only in visitation and interview, but also in preparation. Those presenting for confirmation need a fairly extended series of confirmation classes. Couples who ask for Christian marriage also claim much more time and attention than the wedding itself. Funerals, depending upon the trauma involved in the death, can take time, sometimes over a number of weeks or even months, in ministering to the bereaved. As Christian funerals are still a ritual demanded by a great many people, whilst other incidental offices which the church traditionally offers are in decline, they can be a considerable work load for some ministers.

Churches in multiple care

The difficulties of ministering to a number of churches in one minister's care have been outlined in Chapter 5. In the town, with the possibility of fewer churches in the minister's care, more convenient transport and much less distance to travel, the work load associated with getting to the churches is much lighter. The distances involved in travelling for the pastoral care of the people in the villages, and in visiting sick and housebound members, and also distances travelled to hospital or crematoria for a minister based in country areas make great inroads into time and energy which could be devoted to other aspects of ministry. All this tends to inhibit the care given to the more distant churches.

Teaching the faithful

Differences can also be associated with opportunities for teaching. A minister in the town is more often the one who conducts services in her/his church and this, coupled with the opportunities provided by the lectionary, can lead to teaching from the pulpit which has some consistency. In the country church, where the congregation see the minister only once or twice in the quarter, consistent teaching through the sermon becomes impossible. Where then is teaching to happen in the country church? In the past a monthly weekday service was common, perhaps in the evening after the minister had visited his people in the afternoon. This stratagem fulfilled the purpose, but the practice has now passed away. In the town the minister can organise house groups and week day teaching occasions much more readily. Street lighting and contiguity of minister and people make a difference to the possibilities of attendance. This adds to the work load of the urban minister, and provides the rural minister with some problem as to how to bring Christian knowledge to his/her people..

Engaging in community

Engaging in community and relating to anyone in need presents the minister with very different opportunities in the city or the rural village. Many urban churches, especially in the inner cities, have programmes for ministering to the special needs of drifters, vagrants, drug addicts and alcoholics or others, and the minister is necessarily involved. The suburban church might have a full programme of weekly activities, including organisations for all the different age groups, infants, young people, the elderly, and others. Whilst the minister is not necessarily involved in every activity on the premises of the church, s/he is expected to take an interest, to maintain contact with them, and is responsible for the church's oversight and authority over each of them. In the countryside engaging in community is in a very different setting. The village churches might have some weekday activities, but there the organisation of the projects and the work they involve is usually carried out by lay people. The minister, however, has a much less hands-on role because of the fact of having such a widespread ministry, but must maintain an interest. Her/his role is often only in the task of general management if the activity is one under the auspices of the church. S/he might also feel that s/he needs to be involved in village affairs, and with plurality of care this adds to the work load considerably.

THE MINISTERS

Ministerial duties, Sunday services, baptisms, weddings, funerals, confirmations

In all the various tasks of ministry mentioned in the title there are differences between ministers in the urban and the rural situation. These differences are laid out in Table 7.1 in the appendix. Numbers of services are displayed between those in urban and rural situations and the significant differences calculated. For Sunday services,

baptisms, weddings and funerals the differences were highly significant statistically, showing that the urban, as against the rural experience of work load was very different. Confirmations also showed a high significance, but not quite as much as the other services. Almost nine out of ten (87%) of urban ministers conducted 2 or less services on a Sunday as opposed to two thirds (63%) of rural ministers. Those who conducted 3 or more services were of much lower proportion in urban churches (13%) compared with those in rural churches (37%). One suspects that among the urban ministers there were a number who conducted only one service, since evening services in urban areas are now a rarity. The experience of conducting baptism was divided into the categories 6 or less, and 7 or more, and here urban ministers baptised more in the higher category, 40% doing so, as against 22% of rural ministers. In the lower category the proportions were reversed, 60% as against 78% respectively. Rural ministers conducted fewer baptisms than those in an urban situation. The same situation applied with the conduct of weddings, 68% of urban, as against 85% of rural ministers conducted 4 or less, and 32% of urban ministers conducted 5 or more, as against 15% of those in rural situations. Much the same picture emerged with the conduct of funerals, 30% of urban ministers conducted more than 5 funerals in the year, as opposed to 15% of those in rural ministry. The statistical difference attached to services of confirmation was slightly less, but still of high significance, with 31% of urban ministers preparing and confirming more than 5 candidates in the year, compared with the 19% of rural ministers. As regards work load for all these services, one can say that urban ministers have a lighter work load than rural ministers for Sunday services, but a heavier work load for all the incidental services mentioned, together with the interviews and preparation which these involve.

The range of an individual's ministry

A number of questions were asked about how far the ministers considered their ministry stretched, both in geographical terms and notional ones. Responses to the questions are given in Table 7.2. Statistical difference was established between those who ministered in the two situations of urban/rural. Urban ministers were less constrained by geographical boundaries than rural ministers, the difference being 22% to 15%. Perhaps the rural situation, with the distance which ministers have to travel to minister to outlying churches is the inhibition, rather than any sense of boundary. In the town with its dense population, ministers feel that they can go where they will. On the other hand, the greater proportion of both sets who did not respond positively to this prompt gives rise to the inference that they felt that geographical boundaries did not limit their ministry. This view is supported by the second response where over two thirds in both situations, 65% and 71%, say that their ministry is free ranging. Responses show statistically significant difference for both prompts. The next three prompts are not statistically significant. Almost the same percentage in both areas of ministry, 63%, say that their ministry is concentrated largely on people who attend their churches, and again much the same percentage, 64% urban as against 67% rural, say that their ministry is largely concentrated on their own denomination. There is a generous and almost unanimous response, 95% and 94%, from both sets of respondents as to whether they are prepared to offer help to anyone who should call upon them.

The demands of ministry

Numbers of people in a single minister's care can make different demands in urban and rural situations. The result of prompts seeking an answer to the demands which

numbers make is in Table 7.3. It is in the town where the larger congregations can usually be found, but in the countryside there are more churches to care for, but generally fewer people at worship. Responses from those in urban ministry, 31%, indicated that numbers in their care were too many, and only 24% of those in the countryside made this response, a significant difference statistically. The next prompt, which suggested that small numbers attending church might constrain ministry, confirmed this result, for rural ministers found small numbers more of a problem than those in the town, 23% as against 18%, respectively, although this result did not have statistical significance. Both urban and rural ministers have no difficulty in coping with demands from people who do not attend their churches, and neither group felt that they were drawn too much into the neighbourhood affairs of their church communities. Responses to the suggestion that this was the case drew very small proportions from both urban and rural respondents, with no statistical difference between them.

The pressures of plurality

Possessing churches in plurality can make a high demand upon a minister's time and energy. The percentage differences between urban and rural respondents are shown in Table 7.4. When asked whether the number of churches in their ministerial care was too large the answer was in line with expectations, for although 38% of urban respondents said that this was so, 44% of rural ministers said that they would like fewer. The answer, however, was not statistically significant. However, both proportions were less than fifty percent, so the inference is that a good proportion of respondents must have been sanguine about the issue. If numbers of churches in a respondent's care were not of great importance, distances of travel which plurality

involved were. When asked whether they would like to have less distance to travel to their furthest church those in rural ministry outnumbered those in urban situations by 27% to 16%, a result of high statistical significance. This dissatisfaction was backed by the response which tested the feeling that ministers could not give enough time to their more distant churches. A significantly greater proportion of those in rural ministry, 57% as against 32%, said that this was so. Distance from the churches for ministers who minister to country villages obviously causes frustration. When asked, however, whether they felt that their furthest church treated them like an outsider, there was a slightly higher response from the rural ministers, but proportions from both sets of respondents was very low, 7% as against 6%, and there was no significant difference.

Personal feelings regarding work load

A series of prompts was put to ministers about the way they felt about the various obligations laid upon them in their ministry. The results are shown in Table 7.5. An overwhelming majority felt that they were obliged to care for the people who attended their churches, and there was little difference between those who ministered in the urban situation, 95%, compared with 97% in the rural. Many churches have not only a central core of worshippers, but also a fringe, sometimes an extensive fringe, of people associated with them. Ministers felt that they had an obligation to care for such people on the fringe, but not in quite the same proportions as they gave to those of stronger affiliation, and there was a significant difference in this between those in urban to those in rural ministry, 85% and 92% respectively. It would seem that a rural situation, and the distance travelled to get to the village, was not a disincentive to pastoral care for those who had only nominal connection with the church. The close

community of village existence might be the explanation, as described in the consideration of the network patterns of the rural church in an earlier chapter (3::53f). Further out on the fringe, and dealing with those in need who did not attend the church, the percentage of the ministers who still felt an obligation of care was lower, and very much the same for urban as for rural ministry, 74% as against 76% respectively. Extending the concept to include a ministry of care to all those in the locality of the respondent's churches, again the proportion of support diminished, but there was a large statistical difference between the two situations of ministry. The proportions of respondents who would care for all the people in the locality of their churches were 44% urban, as against 55% rural, possibly representing the difficulties of care in a populous surrounding, or again the fact that social cohesion in the village makes extended care both expected and more practically possible. Extending this concept of the obligation of care to its furthest point, ministers were asked if they would feel obliged to approach strangers who were in pastoral need. Obligation here reached its lowest point, but with still a fairly substantial proportion of respondents who felt that they ought to do this, and again there was a significant difference between those in urban ministry compared to those in rural situations, 28% as against 36%. The large proportion displayed by those who felt obliged to exercise care for different categories of people shows that the respondents had a truly pastoral heart, even though the strength of the obligation faded from those who attended their churches to those who were outside their churches' orbit. Differences appeared between those in urban ministry and those in rural ministry which can be ascribed to the different situation and opportunities which existed in the town and in the countryside.

Another series of prompts sought the strength of the hold which the ministers felt the church had on their ministry as opposed to the feeling that ministry should be offered elsewhere. The concept of "first call" on ministry which was demanded by their congregations was felt by over half the respondents, but there was little difference between urban and rural proportions, 55% as against 56%. It would appear, then, that although some congregations were restrictive, at least some others were willing to give ministers freer rein in time and effort spent for other kinds of ministry.

The ministers were asked about their own preferences in the way they spent their time and energy. There was no significant difference in any of the three responses between those in urban as opposed to those in rural ministry. Prompted as to whether concentration of their time should be for church members only met with a response of around 20% from both sets of respondents, while just under half of the urban respondents, 47%, as opposed to 45% rural, said that they were happy to be fully engaged in secular neighbourhood affairs. Over half, 58% urban, as against 51% rural, said that their ministry rightly involves serving on neighbourhood committees. It would seem, then, that almost half the ministers who responded were happy that their ministry should have a range beyond the local church. This sits rather oddly with the fact displayed in the previous section, that the respondents felt obliged to care for all who attended their churches. Perhaps the two perceptions can be reconciled by supposing that respondents felt the duty to their congregations, but that they realised the possibilities of a wider ministry.

CONCLUSION

Startling differences have emerged in the examination of the work load of ministers in urban and rural situations. Although duty on a Sunday is more onerous for rural

ministers, the burden of incidental services in urban ministry is much greater than in rural ministry.

Chapter 5;82 noted the differences of church attendance at the number of churches in a minister's care. This also is related to differences of work load as the larger congregations and smaller numbers of churches in pastoral care of ministers in urban situations has to be offset against the smaller congregations but larger numbers of churches in the care of rural ministers, and also the different distances travelled by the two sets of ministers to serve their churches.

The results indicate clearly the problems of plurality which are very different according to the location of ministry. Rural ministers, rather more than urban ministers, would like fewer churches in their care, but on the whole both urban and rural ministers accept plurality as part of the Methodist system. Rural ministers would appreciate being nearer their more distant churches and would like to give more time to them.

Various opinions were gathered relating to whether the respondents felt that their ministry was confined geographically, or was free ranging. Statistically significant answers were received showing that rural ministers felt freer to minister to where they saw the need than those in the urban situation. Both urban and rural ministers said that their ministry was concentrated largely on the people who attended their churches and their own denomination, although a large proportion of both sets of ministers said that they would offer help to anyone who called upon them, showing that indeed their ministry was open-ended.

There was a difference between urban and rural respondents in that urban ministers felt that the number of people to whom they ministered was too large. Almost a quarter of rural respondents on the other hand stated that the small numbers who attended their churches restricted their ministry.

When asked about their personal feelings regarding their work load almost all responded that they felt obliged to care for all who attended their churches. Proportions gradually diminished as the sense of obligation was extended from those who attend, to those who have contact, to those who do not attend, to those who live in the locality, and to an approach to strangers in pastoral need. Rural respondents did however have a statistically significant higher response than urban ministers for feeling the obligation to care for those who do not attend but have contact with the church, for all in the locality, and for a willingness to approach strangers in need. This could be caused by a greater feeling of neighbourhood community and social cohesion in the smaller settlement patterns in the countryside.

CHAPTER 8 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND BURNOUT

BACKGROUND

Ministerial stress

It is generally recognised today that just as those who work in business, commerce and professional occupations of all kinds can be stressed by the pressures and demands of modern life and the peculiar stresses experienced in their own occupations, so those who serve in the ministry of the Christian church, whatever the denomination, can also experience stress created by the job and the way that its demands impinge on their personal lives. This stress, when it becomes intolerable can lead to the condition called burnout, a state of nervous debility which can lead to clinical depression.

In recent years the phenomena of clergy stress has been recognised by psychologists and sociologists, and attention has been given specifically to the stress and the burnout experienced by Christian ministers as they seek to carry out their ministerial roles and responsibilities. Coate (1969) describes the hidden stresses associated with the ministerial task and Davey (1995) indicates the relationships between stress and burnout in the ministerial professions. Sanford (1982) lays emphasis on the fact that burnout is a special problem for the ministry and identifies nine factors associated with the ministerial task which can lead to that end: the task of ministry is all consuming; the fact that the feed-back from what the minister offers is not always available; the work of the ministering person is repetitive; the ministering person is dealing constantly with people's expectations; the ministering person must work with the same people year in and year out; the ministering person deals with many people

who come to the church, not for spiritual food, but for "strokes", (ie reassurance); the psychological type of the minister's personality does not always match what is required of her/him in the task of ministry; the ministering person must function a great deal of time in his/her "persona" (i.e. the "mask" which s/he wears in public; the ministering person may become exhausted by failure (Sanford, 1982:5-16).

In *Burnout: the Cost of Caring* (2003) Christina Maslach examines the concept of burnout and its causes over the wide range of the caring professions, indicating its effects on individuals and their professional tasks, with advice on how to prevent burnout and how to handle it when it occurs. In the text she makes a very useful distinction between the causes of burnout associated with the circumstances of an individual's job and her/his personality (Maslach, 2003:61). What is relevant to the job of Christian ministry is also the particular moral and organisational framework in which the minister must work, and so burnout is affected by institutional rules that structure the nature of the contact between helper and recipient (Maslach, 2003:83). She emphasises that a person's internal qualities determine how someone handles external sources of emotional stress, and this will explain how one person will experience burnout in a particular work setting while another will not (Maslach, 2003:94f). In this setting it is not every Methodist minister who might experience a similar work situation, or experiences frustration, disappointment and the limitations imposed by organisational factors, who will suffer from extreme stress or burnout. Job situation and personal factors act together in the creation of stress and burnout.

L.J. Francis, together with his collaborators, has been very active in relating personality type to clergy stress (Francis, 1997; Francis and Rutledge, 2000; Francis

and Littler, 2001; Randall and Francis, 2002; Francis, Loudon, and Rutledge, 2003; Rutledge and Francis, 2004; Rutledge, 2006). Pertinent to this study of Methodist ministers in urban, as opposed to rural circuits, is Francis and Rutledge's article, *Are Rural Clergy in the Church of England under Greater Stress? A study in empirical theology* (2000). Here the concept of clergy stress is examined and the theory that the rural clergy might be under greater stress than those in other situations is explored. Against the three component model of burnout devised by Maslach and Jackson in the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (1986) of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment, they matched data from a survey of a random sample of 1,471 full time male parochial Anglican clergy which achieved a response rate of 1,071 (73%). The conclusion was that rural clergy have a lower sense of personal accomplishment than comparable clergy working in other types of parishes, but that they suffer neither from higher levels of emotional exhaustion nor from higher levels of depersonalisation.

Rutledge again applied a modified version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory to a sample of 318 male clergy of the Church of England who had responsibility for rural parishes, to data which concerned their practice of ministry (Rutledge, 2006). The results show that in this sample there was an unacceptably high number of clergy who showed signs of emotional exhaustion and feelings of lack of accomplishment from their ministry, with signs of disengagement from the traditional roles associated with their ministry. In situations where they were in the multi-care of local churches, many felt overworked, frustrated, and 'used up' at the end of the day.

The stresses of ministry

The minister's life is marked out by Sunday. It is then that s/he confronts the congregation both in the sermon and the sacrament. It is here, most of all that his/her performance is measured (Haley and Francis, 2006:81). The source of stress is not only on the day, but in the preparation for both the sermon and the general content of worship. The tension builds up throughout the week, and has to take some priority over all other duties and diary pressures with which s/he has to cope. This might happen week after week, but lack of preparation or skimped preparation could then become obvious to the congregation (Haley and Francis, 2006, 89f). If the minister then realises the inadequacy of what s/he has delivered and feels guilty about it the situation gives rise to stress, and perhaps burnout is not far away.

The ministerial role is not only in preaching, or in celebrating the sacraments, but in the tasks of teaching, visiting the homes of the congregation, especially those of the sick, the housebound and the bereaved. There are also the tasks of administration, and the preparation involved before church councils and other administrative meetings, and the duties of chairing such councils and committees. Involvements outside the church in service to the community also create pressures for ministerial time, as do involvement in the planning needed to mount projects, both for church and secular events. All these fill the diary so that there is little time left for leisure.

In addition there are the unexpected happenings which occur which make demands on diary time but must be fitted in somewhere, including funerals, ministering to those overtaken by sudden disaster or illness, and the attention which has to be given to those things which have gone wrong in the smooth running of church life.

All these stresses are magnified when the minister has churches in plurality, and especially so when those churches are numerous and scattered geographically (Burton, 2005:16f).

The rhythms of the Church Year also impose their own demands, especially when, as at Christmas, ministers are involved in so much secular celebration. Advent and Lent are traditional penitential seasons with extra services mid-week, and when teaching courses for the season have to be arranged. Time is taken up in resourcing and planning such occasions, as well as the time taken by the meeting or house group itself. The rhythms of the Church Year are not the only seasonal pressures but also those of the minister's secular engagement. Administration has also a rhythm experienced over the year which adds to the seasonal pressure. It is when the rhythms of diary pressures are at their lowest that the minister must take a break and recuperate.

All this has consequences for the ministerial family. A full diary, created by a busy church life, or having pastoral care in plurality, creates extra pressures upon both spouse and children. This makes for stress within the family circle, especially if the spouse is in an occupation outside the home. Another associated problem is that for many ministers the home is the office, which tends to mean that the minister is always on duty as the telephone can ring at any time and the conscientious minister cannot ignore it. On the whole this arrangement does not tend towards the promotion of domestic harmony. Work becomes too involved with home, for home should provide a retreat from the pressures of the ministerial task (Haley and Francis, 2006:195-200).

One other source of stress is the expectations of people (Bowden, 1994:84-88), both in the congregation and the surrounding area of the local church. Some congregations have fixed ideas of how they should worship, or perhaps the minister is not as adaptable as s/he could be. How then can s/he be "all things to all men", especially if s/he is adamant in sticking to her/his own particular persuasion? Stress factors in this situation are very strong indeed, especially if the people who are displeased are in the authority structures of the church and on their opinion depends the decision whether the minister stays or goes (Gledhill, 2006; Griffiths, 2002:16).

The square peg in the round hole is not only a matter of accommodating the predilections of the congregation, but sometimes a minister will realise, after a short time in the appointment, that the job was not what s/he thought, or that s/he is unable to deliver the personal gifts which the appointment requires. Sometimes stress can be generated, not just because the minister feels that there is something valuable in what s/he has to give, but just in the fact that whatever is offered, and whatever s/he can do, there is the feeling that the congregations do not appreciate it (Haley and Francis, 2006:217-223).

Plurality of care might possibly ease the situation of opposition from one particular church, since the minister can perhaps feel more comfortable with one congregation than another. On the other hand, this itself can lead to difficulties. The minister than spends more time with the favoured congregation and less with those whom he finds difficult and ministry becomes imbalanced. The less favoured congregation then realises what is happening and creates more personal difficulties for the minister.

All these factors have a part to play in creating a stressful situation for anyone in Christian ministry. Not all ministers, however, are stressed by them. Some recognise what is happening, and are able to withstand the stress and still do the tasks required of them. Others perhaps do not feel the stress at all, for it may be that they do not perceive them as factors which may create stress, although they are in a situation which might overcome other people (Haley and Francis, 2006:194).

Particular stress factors for the Methodist minister.

While it is recognised that stresses and possible burnout can occur among other Christian ministers there are some stresses that come from the peculiar nature of the Methodist Church's organisation.

Probation

Facing the actual circumstances of practical ministry after training can be a shock to the newly fledged minister. Entering into the ministerial role creates a realisation that not all that one wishes to do, or expects to do in ministry is possible (Chapter 6:97-99). Disillusion can set in early for these reasons in the probationer's first experience of circuit life. In addition the probationer is still in training (CPD, 2007;592-600). Although under the oversight and guidance of an experienced superintendent, s/he has still to undergo further academic training (CPD, 2007 591f). The newly appointed probationer will have a number of churches in his/her care, and since it is common practice to give probationers authority to celebrate Holy Communion, the expectation of the local church is that s/he will function as an ordained minister with the full load of ministerial work. All this means a very heavy load and the stress factor is high.

Superintendency

The circuit superintendent is a key figure in the way that Methodism is organised. The superintendent is the agent of Conference, the minister who is responsible for its discipline and welfare (CPD, 2007:212f). S/he is in a unique leadership position in the circuit and is responsible for the proper functioning of the local churches, for the circuit's spiritual life, for its administrative burden, for the formulation of policy regarding outreach, mission and service, and also for its ecumenical engagement with other Christian denominations (Conference, 2005b). All these duties create pressure for the superintendent. In addition s/he has also the pastoral charge, usually of a large circuit church, and of other churches also.

Itinerancy, invitations and re-invitations

Methodism circulates its ministers between appointments in a system, which leaves no church deprived of the care of a minister, by means of the device of ministers moving at the same time, and taking up their new duties on a fixed date, the first of September in any year. The threat of stress for anyone is the fact that the Stationing Committee of Conference can over-rule any invitation and deploy the minister in another circuit (CPD, 2007:423-426).

For new entrants to ministry the Conference stations ministers directly in a circuit which the Conference deem to be appropriate, and for those who have had no circuit experience, but have families to settle, this could be a source of stress. The greatest time of stress for an experienced Methodist minister is when s/he seeks an invitation to a new circuit, or even more stressful when s/he seeks an extension of his/her initial five years appointment. Methodism has a procedure in place for both these

occurrences (CPD, 2007: 527f). The circuit is responsible for both the initial invitation of a minister and her/his re-invitation and the March circuit meeting is the crucial time for both. No minister can be absolutely confident that an invitation or a re-invitation will be offered. This is a very stressful time and the uncertainty is magnified by the minister's personal and family circumstances (Haley and Francis, 2006:210-216). Stress caused by the system can also lead to stress between the minister, his/her spouse, or other family members, which can lead to serious consequences for them all (Richter, 2000).

Moving house

When a move to another circuit is contemplated there are recommendations in place regarding the new manse (CPD, 2007:739f). When the process of appointment is completed a move of house is arranged for the following August. The fact that moving house for anyone is judged to be one of the greatest causes creating stress, the move for a minister is more stressful still because, although s/he doesn't have the stress of purchasing a house, almost everything else is taken out of his/her hands. The house is there, the minister has no choice about size, attractiveness or location. He/She is very dependant on the circuit stewards for making sure that the house, its furnishings and decorations are in good order, and if they fail in their task, moving house for the Methodist minister can be a very distressing time.

Retirement

At the end of a ministerial career there comes retirement. Retirement for anyone is stressful as it brings with it a radical change in lifestyle and the use of time. A minister's occupation is associating with many others in a busy life, and suddenly

most of what sustains that lifestyle falls away. Coupled with this is the anxiety of purchasing a house property, for s/he must vacate the manse and seek somewhere else to live, and although the Methodist Ministers' Housing Society does take some of the stress away from house purchase by offering homes at modest rental charges, their resources are limited. Both the uncertainties of the approach to retirement and the sudden changes which retirement creates are times of acute stress for some individuals and their spouses.

THE MINISTERS

Maslach makes the point that burnout can be created either by the stressful situation in which the individual lives and works, or by the individual's own psyche (Maslach, 2003:94f). The responses of Methodist ministers in this chapter are concerned especially with the former, the situation of ministry, and stresses associated with personal encounter, and church organisation. The data have been organised to cover seven aspects which could be causative in ministerial stress and burnout, which largely follow the categories outlined by Sandford (1982:5-16), but are more adapted to the data of this survey.

Expectations of the congregations

Table 8.1 gives the results of ministerial perceptions regarding the expectations of their people as to the ministry which they offered. The contrast was to ascertain whether a respondent's congregation expected his/her time and energy to be spent for themselves, or how much they felt ministry in the secular neighbourhood community was important. In both cases the urban church had slightly higher expectations than the rural church, but neither distribution showed a statistical difference. Around 80%

of both urban and rural ministers felt that the church had a high expectation of ministerial concentration which should be spent on them. In Table 8.1.2 only around 18% expected engagement with the secular community in social affairs.

In two other matters the urban churches were seen to be creating more stressful expectations than rural churches. The first was in relation to the minister's knowledge of the church and its circumstances. The difference was not statistically significant, 42% for the urban churches and 36% for the rural, but there appears to be a greater sense of failure to know one's churches among urban respondents than among rural. Secondly, a similar conclusion can be drawn from the results shown in Table 8.1.4 in that around two fifths of respondents, 41% urban and 36% rural, feel that their churches expect them to know names faces and personal histories more then they do.

Comments in a previous chapter (6:96) have already been made on Table 6.2, which is an array of ministerial aims compared with the respondent's perception of the expectation of their congregations and the way they feel that they are able to deliver such expectations in relation to various aspects of the ministerial task. A comparison of the columns "expectation" and "delivery" shows that in every ministerial task, except that of celebrating the sacraments, the expectation of the people is greater than the ministers feel that, in reality, they are able to give In general there are notable differences between what the ministers feel their people expect compared with what they feel they are able to deliver. This feeling that the respondents are not able to give to their congregations what they expect must generate some sense of inadequacy in the ministerial tasks expected of them, and be a source of stress for many.

Ministerial tasks repetition and variety

One of Sanford's suggestions is that the minister's task is repetitive (Sanford, 1982:7). For him this reflects the situation when a minister has a pastorate and is in his/her appointment for a number of years together. For the Methodist minister church structures are different from those which Sanford probably envisages, but there is a repetitive aspect of the minister's task in Methodism. Despite the variety which serving churches in plurality might create, the annual round of church life and church administration in each of the churches in a minister's care can be very repetitive and can create the same kind of stress as Sanford describes. It is much less stressful to chair one Church Council than have to chair ten.

The results shown in Table 8.2 indicate that a reasonable proportion of respondents felt bored by the repetitive nature of their tasks, significant at the level of .01, urban ministers felt this in stronger measure than those in rural appointments, 20% as against 13%. Perhaps having more churches in their care, or ministering in the countryside, creates more variety than ministering in the town. On the other hand those in rural appointments felt more pressure through their constant travelling, 12% rural against 7% urban, this also is statistically significant. The positive side to having more than one church, however, was noted by the high percentage of those who responded that being minister of more then one church gave them wider vision, 73% in urban appointments and 84% in rural, the result again being statistically significant. Against this is to be balanced the view of over half of the respondents, 57% of urban and 55% of rural, who said that being minister of more than one church gave them problems. Over half the respondents, 56% in both situations also said, in connection

with having a number of churches in their care, that they felt themselves spread too thinly.

Job satisfaction, feelings of success or failure

The results shown in Table 8.3 demonstrate that the respondents felt very positive about job satisfaction and about their current ministry. There were no statistical significances in the distributions, but almost three quarters of respondents (73%) said that they had accomplished many good things in their ministry, and 85% said not only that their ministry had had a positive effect on people's lives, but that their ministry was appreciated by those whom they served. Almost nine out of ten, around 90% in both rural and urban ministry, said that they got a lot of personal satisfaction from their work, and three quarters, around 75%, said that they were very positive about their current ministry. However, despite the positive response to all these promptings almost a half, 46% of urban and 42% of rural respondents, said that they felt frustrated in the tasks important to them. Despite their satisfaction with their own ministry and the feeling that they are appreciated, their ministry has its disappointments and frustrations.

This contentment with job satisfaction contrasts strangely with the results shown in chapter 6 (6:97), when in Table 6.2 there is outlined the comparison of their personal aims in relation to a number of ministerial tasks, compared to the priority which they are able to give to those tasks in the actual course of ministry. In all the tasks of ministry listed in that table, except for celebrating the sacraments, the tasks associated with public worship, and the tasks of administration, they give a higher priority to their aim in relation to what they could deliver. One could argue that any difference in

priority given to any task of ministry which is different from what the respondent can actually deliver in his/her work must create frustration one way or the other.

Relationships with people in the churches

Table 8.4 presents the data analysing the relationships of respondents with their people. There are no clear significant differences between those respondents working in an urban background and those in a rural one, but there are indications in four of the answers that ministers do feel stressed.

Just over half of the respondents (55%) felt that they understood how those among whom they work think and feel, and around one third, 40% urban and 34% rural, are sure that they deal very effectively with the problems of their people. Even among these positive responses, however, the proportions indicate that there must be a number of respondents who are not sure about dealing with people's problems, or understanding those among whom they work. On the negative side, however, 13% of urban and 9% of rural respondents feel negatively or cynically about the people with whom they work. Fairly substantial proportions, 27% urban and 22% rural, say that they are spending less and less time with their people, and 21% of urban and 16% of those in rural ministry, are less patient with those to whom they minister than they used to be. Among both rural and urban respondents, 10% state that they are becoming less flexible in their dealings with their people. Here there are a small, but nonetheless significant, proportion of respondents who feel much stressed in their relationships to the people whom they serve.

Support from other people

The support which ministers feel they have received from others in the church structures are given in Table 8.5. The rural respondents generally are more likely to feel that they received support from a number of sources, particularly those in the church hierarchy, than those in urban appointments. This is statistically significant for the support received from the district chairperson, 36% urban, compared with 48% rural, and the support received from local congregations, 51% as against 62%. Over half, 50% urban and 58% rural witness to the support they receive from their superintendent minister, and rather less than half from members of their circuit staff, 47% as against 51%. The least support respondents receive is from retired ministers, 27% urban as against 34% of those in rural appointments. In contrast over one eighth, 15% urban and 14% rural, have been discouraged by the lack of support in their present appointment.

Personal feelings of distress and alienation

Prompts were given in the questionnaire to ascertain how the respondents gauged their energy levels for the ministerial task. Generally those in urban situations felt drained and fatigued more than those in rural appointments, but only two responses show a statistically significant difference. These were the 42% of urban respondents, as against the 32% of rural respondents, who said that fatigue and irritation were part of their daily experience, and the 15% of urban and the 9% of rural respondents who said that their humour had a cynical and a biting tone. Around 40% of respondents reported that they felt drained in fulfilling ministry roles and 13% said that they were invaded by a sadness they could not explain. The proportion of those who responded

positively to these four prompts shows that a substantial number are stressed and even on the verge of burnout.

Personal assessment of a continuing call to ministry

Despite the feelings of despair which seem to be voiced in the previous section, a substantial proportion of respondents are still sure of their continuing call to ministry. Three prompts enquired about a continuing call and for each of them the differences between urban and rural respondents had statistical significance. Those in the countryside were consistently surer than those in the town. As to whether they were really glad that they entered the ministry, 83% of those in urban appointments, as against 91% of those in rural situations, responded positively, and 74%, as against 81% respectively, said that ministry gave real purpose and meaning to their life. A greater proportion of 88% of rural respondents, as against 82% of urban, subscribed to the fact that they gained a lot of personal satisfaction from fulfilling their ministry role. Despite the fatigue and despair reported in the previous paragraph it would seem that a great proportion still feel the call to ministry and are prepared to continue in the work that it entails, especially those who are in rural ministry.

CONCLUSION

Data from the survey provide indications of the incidence of stress and burnout created by factors associated with the pressures of the ministerial task, and also those associated with church structures.

The expectation of people in the congregation, as perceived by respondents, does not show any statistical difference between the opinions of those in urban or rural

ministry. Nevertheless, in comparing the proportions of respondents who feel such pressures, they are consistently greater for ministers in an urban situation than in a rural. In relation to respondents' perceptions of their ability to prioritise a range of ministerial tasks compared to their perceptions of the expectation of their people, they fail in all but one, that of celebrating the sacraments.

In their opinions regarding the repetitious nature of their role as ministers, the urban respondents felt bored with their tasks in greater proportion than the rural ones. In relation to constant travelling, repetition was felt more by rural respondents.

Wider vision of ministry was reported by a significant proportion of rural respondents, whilst both categories felt that having churches in plurality created more problems.

In relation to job satisfaction large proportions of both urban and rural respondents indicated positive reactions. This positive feeling was reflected in the way they assessed their influence on their people, and the way that they were appreciated by them.

In relation to the comparison of respondents' aims and what they felt they could give priority to and deliver to their people, aims consistently exceeded delivery. Such discrepancy indicates a possible source of ministerial stress. In response to a further prompt almost half of the respondents suggest that this led to frustration.

Whilst one third of respondents felt they could deal adequately with the problems of their people, and just over half felt that they could understand the problems of those

with whom they worked, small proportions of both categories reported feelings of negativity and alienation in dealing with their people.

Rural respondents, more than those in urban situations, consistently felt that they received more help from various sources of support. Comparative proportions show the possibility of feelings of isolation on the part of urban ministers

A substantial proportion of respondents, rather greater in urban, rather than in rural situations, felt drained, fatigued, irritated, and depressed by their ministerial roles. In contrast, a high proportion of respondents, showing a statistical difference in favour of those in rural situations, felt positive about their continuing call to ministry.

In summary, although there are conflicting responses to the various prompts offered in the questionnaire, various signs of stress can be identified both in their own attitude to their role and their perception of the opinions of their congregations, but especially in the assessment of their own feelings of distress and alienation. Nevertheless, large proportions of both urban and rural respondents still remain true to a continuing call to ministry. One is bound to wonder about those who felt that they could not respond positively to the three prompts which tested this sense of a continuing call.

A general judgement would be that ministerial stress is more typical of urban ministry rather than rural.

CHAPTER 9 THE BELIEFS OF METHODIST MINISTERS

BACKGROUND

Methodist Doctrines

The doctrinal standards of Methodism are set out in the Methodist Deed of Union of 1932 (CPD 1, 2007:3-28). This states that Methodist Doctrine "is based on the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures" which is the "supreme rule of faith and practice". In addition it notes that these evangelical doctrines are contained in John Wesley's "Notes on the New Testament", and the first four volumes of his sermons (Langford, 1998:17). The Deed of Union states also that "Methodism adheres to the fundamental principles of the Reformation", but does not define what these principles are (Turner, 1985:81). This was an advantageous omission and allows Methodism to reinterpret its doctrines as the Methodist Conference decides. Conference itself is the final arbiter of Methodist faith and practice.

A theological framework which dates from the time of Wesley himself indicates the sources and the framework of his theology (Davies, 1965:145-180). He regarded scripture, tradition, and reason as the elements, to which he later added experience (Langford, 1998:6). These sources were drawn together in what is named the Wesleyan Quadrilateral by the American Methodist theologian and historian, Albert C. Outler (1964). The difficulty which they represent as a guide to theological specifics is somewhat arbitrary as all are open to the vagaries of interpretation.

The Methodist position regarding its specific theological stance has been usefully summarised by W.B. Fitzgerald in 1903 as the "Four Alls":- All need to be save; All can be saved; All can know that they are saved; All can be saved to the uttermost.

John M. Turner (1998:39) in his chapter on these Methodist emphases describes them as the Methodist "package deal" and though to some they may seem simplistic and make no reference at all to the vital theological matters like the incarnation, or the church, or the sacraments, they express the evangelical thrust of Methodism. He goes on to examine them as to whether they are of relevance to the Methodism of today and makes a positive conclusion (Turner, 1998:39-46).

The first two of the "Four Alls" express Methodist Arminianism; the last two, though controversial today, come from Wesley's theological struggles with controversy in his own time. The origins of all four of these distinctive Methodist doctrines lie in the theological controversies of the early eighteenth century (Langford, 1998:6) and Wesley's modification and development of the religious ideas of the time. All four centre around Wesley's Arminianism, defined in Wesley's Sermons (I & V). The third, that all can know that they are saved, the doctrine of Assurance, is also defined (Sermons X & XI), as is the fourth, that all can be saved to the uttermost, the doctrine of Perfection, or, as Wesley called it Scriptural Holiness (Sermon XXXV) (Wesley, 1787; 1931). The first two were the theological ground for Wesley's evangelism and the latter two bound up with the pursuit of holiness, for in its origin Methodism was both an evangelical and a holiness movement (Waller, 2003:27-30). Conversion was not an end, but a beginning to a life whereby, through God's grace and the inward working of the Holy Spirit, a convert could find a refinement of life and purpose on the pathway to a Christ-like life (Turner, 1998:34-56; Jones, 2004:155)

All four doctrines that are typically Methodist have been attacked in recent years. Wesley's adherence to the Arminian position was in opposition to the dominant

Calvinism of his own day (Rupp, 1965:36). Calvinism still has its adherents. It remains as Article 17 within the *Articles of Religion*, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and J. I. Packer, and presumably others of a like mind, are therefore able to take a strict five point Calvinist position and still remain within the Church of England (CCU June 2002, 25:14). Similarly the Methodist doctrine of Christian Perfection has been heavily criticised from an Anglican point of view by J.I. Packer (Packer, 1984:145).

Modern Methodist theologians have themselves both commented upon and modified to a certain extent the distinctive Methodist Doctrines which Wesley outlined. Michael Townsend in *Our Tradition of Faith* (1980) has taken the traditional four elements which represent the doctrinal position of Methodism and concludes that rather than using them as standards, as Methodism has attempted to do in its official statements, they should be used as guides and not as chains. In this sense they function rather like a map, which is not the country itself, but a guide to that country which can lead to a specific destination (Townsend, 1980:40). Thus Assurance is not so much knowing that we are saved, but that it is the knowledge of our relationship to God and God's faithfulness in that relationship. Perfection or perfect love, as Wesley sometimes called it, should also be understood in relationship terms. It is the thorough love of God with heart, mind, strength, and will which that relationship makes possible (Langford, 1998:86).

The main reinterpretation in modern times of the doctrine of perfection has been by R. Newton Flew in *The Idea of Christian Perfection* (1934). Here perfection is understood, not as an assertion that a final attainment of the goal of the Christian life is possible in this world, but as a supernatural destiny. A relative achievement of that

goal, which includes growth in holiness, is possible and attainable (Flew 1934:397). The idea of perfection, for a natural reaction of the cynically minded is that no one is or can become perfect, has provided a focus for theological criticism by both Methodist theologians and others. In Methodism itself the doctrine has been a subject of much comment and re-interpretation since Wesley's original adoption of the idea (Langford, 1998:67-71).

At one time in Methodism the emphasis on holiness and sanctification became a doctrine of "second blessing" whereby holiness was viewed as a complete gift from God and had nothing to do with human achievement (Jones, 2004:158). It came to Christians as a type of second conversion experience, making anew both the spiritual and temporal life of the individual believer (Langford, 1998:69). Holiness in Methodism has, however been interpreted in other ways, not only as an instantaneous gift of the Spirit, but also as a product of work or struggle, as a product of grace bearing activities, or as the outworking of responsible grace, (Jones, 2004;157-163).

At one time the stress on holiness as the outworking of responsible grace, and the fact that those who were saved should witness to moral behaviour and responsibility for the wellbeing of others, led to a social witness for responsible living which brought about the negative policies regarding the consumption of alcoholic drinks, gambling, and other kinds of social and anti-social behaviour (Clough, 2004:42) which were seen by others to be straight laced and sometimes hypocritical. Despite this somewhat negative reputation which Methodism gained in this witness to social responsibility in what was perceived as a libertarian society, the thrust of it came from the belief that Christians should care and act responsibly for all and not just for some (Marsh,

2004:162). While Methodism today still bears its social witness, attitudes have been much modified. However the truth is still that Methodism's efforts to create social justice, both in Britain and on a world arena, and its service to the needy through organisations like Methodist Homes for the Aged and Action for Children (Clough, 2004:44), as well as the innumerable services to their local neighbourhoods offered by local churches, show that the outgoing impulse created by Arminian theology is still alive in the Church (Clough, 2004:46). It might also be the reason why Methodism has in more recent years welcomed and shared in ecumenical action and pursued actions leading to the possibility of union with other denominations (Maquiban, 2004:24).

The main theological emphasis of Arminianism and holiness still motivates Methodist thought and action. The outgoing emphasis that God's love can come to all is seen in the recent statements of Conference regarding both the calling and the priorities of the church (Conference, 1995 and 2004b) and regarding both evangelism and service.

Ministerial theological affiliations

Ministers do not necessarily follow the official theological position of their Church. Very often they show a mind of their own, despite the fact that they have to answer the question in the annual Ministerial Synod, "Do you still believe and preach our doctrines?" (Synod Agenda, 2006). Within the ranks of ministry one might even find some of a Calvinistic persuasion who are not thorough-going Arminians. Certainly there are those who follow the diverse forms of churchmanship. This is seen in the various organisations which have sprung up in the Church and which draw members from the ranks of the ministers. The Methodist Sacramental Fellowship (Minutes,

2007:473) had its origins within the old Wesleyan Church and has continued into present day Methodism. With the resurgence of evangelical opinion in the Church at large, Headway now called Methodist Evangelicals Together (Minutes, 2007:470), a movement committed to prayer for revival and witness to the evangelical faith, has many members. The Alliance of Radical Methodists appeals to those of a different persuasion. There are those who are traditionally minded in the Church and those who are exploring new ways of being church, those who conduct worship in very traditional ways, and those who are charismatically inclined. Methodism and its ministry today is a broad Church and seek to hold together those who believe and offer ministry in different ways. This chapter is designed to explore these differing belief patterns and the mind-set which are evident in those ministers who staff the circuits of the contemporary Church.

THE MINISTERS

Theological orientation

The questionnaire set out seven particular theological positions and asked the ministers to indicate on a sevenfold scale of "very much" to "very little" how they would describe themselves at the present time. The differing proportions of respondents who answered "very much" are indicated in the two categories of urban and rural in Table 9.1. A very large statistical difference indicated that almost one in five (19%) of those in rural situations saw themselves as being charismatic, as opposed to the one in ten (9%) in an urban setting. A larger proportion of almost a third (35%) of ministers in the countryside saw themselves as evangelicals, as opposed to (24%) in urban situations. The difference between urban and rural ministers in this regard was also significant statistically. Proportions of ministers were

reversed in a consideration of those who embraced a liberal position, a third of those in the town (35%) opted for this theological approach whilst only just over a quarter (26%) of those ministering in the countryside did so. This also was a statistically significant difference. Of the remaining four options there were no significant differences. The proportions of those who opted for catholic and for ecumenical were almost the same in each case for both urban and rural ministers, 10% for catholic and 53% for ecumenical. Radicals were more typical of the urban situation, 21% to 14%, and Conservatives more typical of countryside ministry, 9% as against 6%.

The largest response among the ministers was that for ecumenical cooperation with just over half stating that that was where they stood. This seemed somewhat surprising, as the impression which one gets from the formal voting for unity in the various courts of Methodism is that enthusiasm for closer ecumenical relationships with other churches is somewhat stronger than this. It does compare closely however to other recently published accounts of ecumenical attitudes among Methodist ministers (Haley and Francis, 2006:300). Comparing urban and rural responses, evangelicals seem to be in the ascendancy proportionately in rural areas, whilst greater proportions of liberals are urban, with almost exactly the same proportions, only reversed. Charismatics are stronger in the countryside: radicals are stronger in the town. Catholics are much the same proportion in both urban and rural situations, and conservatives are more typical in country areas than of the town. Considering urban and rural responses together, the order of the various theological orientations among the respondents is ecumenical first, then liberal, evangelical, radical, charismatic, catholic, conservative. It would seem to follow expectations that there are greater proportions of radicals in urban ministry, and a greater proportion of

conservatives in rural areas. One might also expect liberals, who might embrace the cosmopolitan attitudes of the town, to be of greater proportion in urban ministry, but it is puzzling why evangelicals should be in greater proportion in the country, when one would think that the town or the city would offer more opportunity for evangelical activity. The same could be said of those who say that they are charismatic by orientation, or perhaps the two categories, taken together, imply that it is the charismatic evangelicals who gravitate to country ministry?

Respondents' reactions to various theological issues

Attitudes to the bible

Scripture is one of the basic foundations of Methodist theology and the training of ministers has traditionally taken tuition in biblical subjects as of first importance. In the twentieth century Methodism produced a number of biblical scholars, such as Harold Moulton, Vincent Taylor, Norman Snaith, C. Kingsley Barrett, Kenneth Grayston and a number of others who made advances in the field of biblical studies and biblical theology. In the past there was emphasis on training in biblical studies and the tuition of the main biblical languages, Greek and Hebrew, in an effort to achieve interpretation of the biblical texts. Due to present day economies and shortage of candidates for ministry the subjects offered in training ministers and the duration and character of that training has changed (see chapter 4;66). The interpretation of scripture has also changed over the latter years of the twentieth century, following theological fashions. The rise of fundamentalist evangelicalism and the decline of the liberal tradition have created differences in how the bible is viewed and how it is interpreted. This section of the survey concerning attitudes to the bible is an attempt to explore such differences and to ascertain whether these attitudes are common

among the respondents and also whether there are differences between those whose ministry is largely urban, and those whose ministry in largely rural. The responses to the various prompts are in Table 9.2.1

Just over half the ministers in rural situations (51%) adopt what appears to be a fundamentalist position. They regard the bible as the absolute word of God. Only just over one third (38%) of ministers in urban appointments take this view and the difference is highly significant when measured statistically. Daily bible study is important for greater proportions of ministers in both urban and rural situations than those who are fundamentalists. Two thirds of those in rural situations (67%) follow this practice. Three-fifths (59%) of ministers in urban appointments also show the same assiduity. The difference is statistically significant, although it appears that though a substantial proportion of those who confess the bible as the absolute word of God, 68% of urban and 63% of rural ministers consider that the bible is only one among other witnesses to faith. When comparing the response to these two prompts one surmises that there must be a number of people who appear to be fundamentalists, but who are prepared to find spiritual truth elsewhere than in just the biblical text. It is of note that the proportion that are prepared to find other witnesses to faith is larger in the town than in the countryside, as this seems to accord with freer attitudes to the biblical text shown by the urban respondents. No matter what their position in relation to the bible is, just over 3 out of 5 ministers, 61%, in both urban and rural ministry, find that the bible is a difficult book to interpret.

Attitudes to evangelism

Two prompts were offered to ascertain the keenness of ministers to evangelise. The results are displayed in Table 9.3. From the table one can see that the ministers themselves are reasonably keen to evangelise, with over one half in both groups wanting to do so, 51% urban and 59% rural. They are even keener that their congregations do so. Rural ministers want to evangelise rather more than urban ones, 59% as against 51%. They express a stronger opinion, however, that their congregations should do so. The difference is statistically significant, 82% of rural ministers as against 75% of urban. Their own attitude to evangelism shows that the strong message to evangelise contained in recent dictates from the Methodist Conference (Conference, 2004) seem not to be getting through. On the other hand, perhaps the response of over one half which they give to the prompt of Table 9.3.1 is encouraging compared to the 29% average of respondents who in Table 9.1.2 say that they are evangelists. In both cases of ministers and congregations it appears that in the rural situation evangelism seems a more important activity, reflecting the results of this chapter which show that there are more ministers of evangelical and charismatic inclination in countryside ministry.

Arminian Theology

The next set of prompts to test the way that ministers thought about the process of salvation and how much they supported the traditional Methodist theology of Arminianism is contained in Table 9.5. Here the results were both surprising and contradictory. Two prompts to test Arminian theology and two to test Calvinism were offered to respondents. In connection with the Calvinist position, a prompt, "It is God who chooses those whom he recognises and loves", was subscribed to by almost a

third, 30% urban and 33% rural. The question plainly suggests that it is God who is sovereign, and that human choice is not involved. The other question to test a Calvinistic position shows the position of double jeopardy, "God is just, welcoming some and condemning others"; 15% of rural ministers subscribed to this and 9% of urban, and the difference was significant statistically. In contrast almost 100% were of the opinion that "Everyone can know God's love" but only one third, both sets of clergy around 31%, supported the traditional view that salvation comes through repentance and faith, expressed by the prompt, "Only those who can respond in faith and commitment can be truly is". The reconciliation of these conflicting views would offer any theologian a problem, and it is puzzling how such a large proportion of one third of respondents can sing Sunday by Sunday the thoroughgoing Arminian hymns of the Wesleys and place restrictive barriers to the possibilities of salvation for any individual in response to the gospel message they contain. Perhaps the answer is a semantic one in the way the questions are framed, or perhaps it is a matter of theological understanding regarding soteriology. If it is the latter perhaps it reflects on the inadequacy of theological training for ministers of the present generation.

Assurance and Perfection

The question arises in today's Methodism as to how the other parts of traditional Methodist theology fare, and so questions were asked regarding Assurance and Perfection. The results are given in Tables 9.6 and 9.7 and show that a large proportion of respondents seem to support both doctrines. Assurance has a greater proportion of supporters among the rural ministers than the urban, 85% as against 77%, with a significantly different result. One wonders if perhaps this is because there are more evangelicals and charismatics in rural circuits that in urban ones.

In relation to the doctrine of Perfection two prompts were offered. One, "It is possible to have the mind of Christ" was intended to reflect the popular hymn "May the mind of Christ my saviour dwell in me from day to day", and possibly to indicate that seeking the mind of Christ, which indicates the goal of Christian Perfection, is a day-to-day process. The second prompt, "Christian perfection is possible" carries no implications, but perhaps gives rise to the question for anyone attempting an answer, whether if in the real world perfection is possible. There was little difference in the response of both urban and rural ministers to these prompts. For the former two-thirds (64%) responded positively, and for the latter just over one half (51 %). The first prompt obviously did not bring forth the cynicism which the latter could generate, but both responses show that a good proportion of Methodist ministers are still faithful to the doctrines which they consider to be distinctively Methodist.

The nature of ministry and church order

In the light of the signing of the Covenant between the Methodist and the Anglican churches it would seem that it is worth pursuing the opinion of ministers with regard to ministry and church order. The various answers to prompts are shown in Table 9.7. Methodists traditionally have had a unitary ministry and there has been no status differences regarding different orders of ministry. This fact has been underlined in modern times by the insistence that the two orders of ministry, the presbyterate and the diaconate, are the same in status, but different in function. In the past deference was given to a Chairman of a District or to a President or Past-President of Conference, but not as a different order of ministry. A large majority of both sets of ministers (83%) subscribed to the importance that such status differences should not exist. It was odd, therefore, that almost a quarter (24%) of the urban ministers and

almost a third (33%) of the rural ministers said that the threefold order of ministry that the Anglicans possess was important to them, whereas in the past the social status of bishops and others in the hierarchy of the Church of England has created problems for Methodists in unity talks. The proportions agreeing to the importance of episcopal ordination, of around 12%, and those agreeing to the importance of the priestly office as being important, 26%, were somewhat surprising, when neither are part of Methodist Church order, and where in unity talks in the past a vocal majority in the church has objected to both. One wonders if those who responded are showing their zeal for ecumenism, or whether they are contemplating current intentions to move towards an episcopal arrangement within Methodism.

The ministry of the laity

Methodism, however, has always been conscious of the importance of its laity. More than that, their part in the church is underlined in the doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers (CPD1, 2007; Conference, 1988). Almost all the respondents were agreed on this. Results regarding lay participation in Methodism are in Table 9.8. Urban respondents subscribe without a single dissident to the important role that the laity plays in the church, and rural ministers are almost unanimous apart from one dissident. The ministers also subscribe to the opinion that the laity has as an important a role in the church as themselves, with a 95% agreement. There are no differences in relation to lay participation in the church between those in urban and those in rural appointments.

CONCLUSION

The response of the ministers, when given the opportunity to describe their own particular theological orientation, indicates that those of a liberal and a radical persuasion are more typical of urban ministry and that evangelicals, charismatics, and perhaps those of a conservative persuasion more typical of rural ministry. Those of a catholic persuasion, the smallest of the proportions, had equal representation between the two ministry groups.

The answers given to the prompts regarding specific theological beliefs show that there are no great differences between those respondents in urban and those in rural appointments. The respondents as a whole confirm the traditional emphases of Methodism. A proportion shows that they have an attitude to the bible which reflects a fundamentalist tendency. Just over half in rural ministry subscribe to this view, and just over a third of those in the urban ministry, but this perhaps reflects the fact that more evangelicals and charismatics are in rural ministry than urban. Daily bible study is practiced by a reasonable proportion of ministers, but they are not averse to recognising that there are different witnesses to faith other than the bible. More than half to two thirds find, however, that interpretation of the biblical text does not come easily.

The Methodist Church was raised up to preach the gospel. We have already seen how ministers regard preaching as their most important role, but in responding to the challenge of evangelism and regarding it as an important activity, only just over half of them respond positively. They would rather their congregations be involved in that particular task. It may be that ministers see themselves in an enabling role rather than

in direct engagement, and since their people are in contact with the populace through everyday engagement they have more face-to-face contact with the populace and more opportunity for evangelistic action of a personal kind.

Ministerial respondents as a group confirm their support for the "Four Alls" of Methodism in the answers which they give to God's way of providing salvation. Their views of how salvation is gained seem confused, but their Arminianism is seen by the fact that almost all of them (98%) both rural and urban, can affirm that everyone can know God's love. Their response to the prompt regarding the possibility of assurance of salvation gains a high response. Perfection however draws a smaller proportion of subscribers, but there are still over a half of respondents who are prepared to support it.

In the matter of church order, despite the fact that over four out of five of them are in favour of keeping the status quo of a unified ministry, there are a number who feel that the Anglican three-fold order of ministry, the priestly office, and episcopal ordination are important. This response, therefore, seems to auger well for the prospects for the advancement of Anglican / Methodist relations.

CHAPTER 10 PERSONAL FAITH AND WORSHIP STYLE

BACKGROUND – Personal faith

This chapter is first of all to enquire how ministers pursue the quest to maintain and renew their spiritual self, both in their private devotion and in association with others on a similar quest. In connection with seeking renewal of their spiritual life, the way that they manage their own shortcomings, and seek to be forgiven and restored to a right relationship with God, is also taken into account.

Personal faith: the value of association

The way that a minister's personal faith can find expression and enrichment is through association with other Christians, both ministerial and lay. In the early days of Methodism such meetings for the encouragement of the spiritual welfare of the individual, and for mutual confession, was in very small groups of two or three believers called the Band (Lawson, 1965:191). The Methodist Class Meeting was also a device where, under the direction and support of a Class Leader, without the bond of strict confidentiality, all the people of the Methodist Societies, in groups of about ten called a class, could find a place where spiritual conversation, mutual support, and a sharing of the faith took place. Both classes and bands were associated with the pursuit of holiness (Lawson, 1965:189) In today's church such close spiritual meetings are a rarity, but there are still meetings, both of a spiritual and educational nature, held in a member's house or on church premises, usually on a week-night, where minister and people can get together and share each other's faith and spiritual needs. One organisation that has brought ministers and laity together to consider their

faith together in recent years has been the very successful Alpha course (Alpha, 2008).

Personal Faith of ministers

The personal faith of ministers is enriched both in private devotions and in sharing faith with others. Daily bible study is a discipline which is important to around two thirds of respondents, as noted in a previous chapter (chapter 9:142), and this daily reading is often accompanied by the discipline of private devotion. This chapter attempts first of all to establish the pattern in which the personal faith of respondents is expressed, and the way that ministers seek to stretch and enrich their own personal spirituality. This can be in private devotion with prayers and meditation and reading, or it can be in company with others. There is opportunity for such devotion between ministers in the sharing of problems and experiences within the fellowship of the circuit staff meeting. This meets at the discretion of the superintendent, but a common time is on a weekday morning, usually on a monthly basis. Devotions and sharing usually precede business. In Methodism an organisation for ministers where they can meet and share their views and problems with other ministers is The Fellowship of the Kingdom (Minutes, 2007:468). The local meeting of FK is usually town or city based, and gathers those who wish to belong from the circuits of the immediate area. Attendance is voluntary, and in its activities it promotes discussion on theological subjects or topics of current secular concern, and encourages ministers in the difficulties imposed by ministry. Informal associations of close and supportive friends can also be helpful for the devotional life, and some ministers find benefit for their spiritual needs in this way. Another way of seeking spiritual help is employed by a

few ministers and that is through the ministry of a spiritual counsellor. It is in the one-to-one counselling that the bond of confidence can be ensured.

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Personal faith

The proportion of ministers engaged in daily bible study was reported in the previous chapter (chapter 9:142) in association with Table 9.2.2. Here 59% of the urban respondents and 67% of the rural were so engaged. Proportions of ministers who reported the importance for them of daily prayer time followed the same pattern, with 84% of urban ministers following this devotion and 92% of those in rural appointments. These differences are statistically significant and though for both sets of ministers these devotional activities were obviously important, those in rural appointments carried them through with greater assiduity. Does rural ministry offer the time and ethos for private contemplation, or is urban ministry too hectic, with time available taken up with other concerns? The statistical difference attached to whether the respondent found her/his faith enriched by sharing with other clergy was also significant, but with the categories reversed. Urban ministers, a proportion of 75%, found that this was their experience, against 68% of those in rural situations. This would seem to bear out the more isolated situation of the rural ministers caused by geographical location, as contact with fellow ministers was more difficult because of distance. Both urban and rural ministers found their faith enriched by other people, around 95%, which indicates that others, rather than just fellow ministers or clergy, bring benefit and advantage. Both sets of ministers, and here there is no statistically significant difference between urban and rural situations, find their faith enriched by private meditation and by private reading, around 80% for the former and 92% for the

latter. Perhaps the implication in the difference of the two activities is that meditation is introspective, but that reading injects new ideas and fresh elements into spiritual considerations.

Coming before God, a personal encounter

An essential part of personal faith is the means by which one can find a way of expressing repentance, so that shortcomings can be left behind, so that one can be assured that God has forgiven past sins, and so that the spiritual ties between the individual and God are restored. This was the ethos of early Methodism. Conversion was the immediate aim, but the process towards perfection needed constant attention, under the power of God's spirit, to attend to past and present failings and to seek spiritual improvement and the amendment of sins. In the early days, as we have seen, this was made possible in the Band (Lawson, 1963:189-193) but the situation is very different in today's world. Therefore the question can be asked, "What today do ministers do to express repentance, seek forgiveness, and renew their spiritual well being?" Is it in some formal way that this is done, or in the privacy of personal devotion?

All three responses to prompts regarding means of confession of sin in Tables 10.1.6-8 show no differences between urban and rural activities. Regular confession to a priest is felt as essential for only very small proportions of ministers (2%) probably reflecting the small number of ministers who have a spiritual counsellor. Only around 40-45% of ministers feel that formal confession is essential in an act of worship. One wonders whether this reflects the practices of those who use the Methodist Worship Book's liturgy, or whether this includes forms of other confession and

pronouncements of forgiveness within the service. One could assume that acts of confession are necessary in any service, but interpretation of this result lies in the meaning given by respondents to the word "formal" in the prompt. A surprising result is the comparatively low percentage of respondents who thought that confession was something between themselves and God alone; that it was something acted out in private. In a pattern of faith where priests are not regarded as a go-between or a bridge between the individual and God, as in Methodism, one would expect greater proportions of respondents to assent to privacy in the act of confession. Rural ministers assented to this in greater proportion, 46% as against 38%, and the difference is statistically significant. One might wonder again if this difference is also due to the relative isolation of the rural minister.

BACKGROUND – Worship style.

The most important action which ministers perform as part of their calling is to lead others to God and in the worship of the church to bring the blessing of God to them. If this is so then enquiry into the methods which they use in worship to do this is apposite.

Leading the people to God: the content and style of worship

The task is now to ascertain how the respondents expressed their personal spirituality in their conduct of worship and how it affected the forms of worship which they chose for public services. The minister in private devotion should be reflected in how s/he conducts her/himself before people when s/he becomes the person in the pulpit. It his there where s/he shows the public face, the persona (Sanford, 1982:11), and people expect there to be a match between the two. A minister's spiritual integrity should

find a match between his/her private and public persona. How, then, in the content, planning, and worship style of her/his own private faith can s/he communicate that faith to a waiting congregation? This half of the chapter attempts to show the various ways in which respondents attempt to do this in their role as worship leaders.

New Technology and worship

The worship style of many churches in most denominations today has changed and the tendency is for change to continue (Davie, 1994:68-71). The success of the Charismatic Movement (Francis, Lankshear and Jones, 2000) has encouraged much more informality in the content of worship and also provided an example of how traditional hymns and music can be rejuvenated, or replaced by songs and choruses sung in modern style and to the accompaniment of instruments other than the organ (Maizel-Long, 2004:48-58). New technology has also provided new possibilities. The overhead projector and the power point have made hymn books redundant for many churches and offer opportunities for worshipping in different ways. The fact that hands are not now needed to hold hymn books enables congregations to express their feelings in much freer ways. Organs now are giving way to the use of alternative instrumentation to provide music, with the use of traditional instruments such as violins and clarinets, or more modern instruments such as guitars and drums or a modern combo, in the attempt to enliven singing in different ways. They also make possible new innovations, such as expressing the gospel in dance, or in a number of other ways which give fresh expression to worship. New technology is also available, not only to the large churches who can afford modern sound systems, but even to the smallest church, which, when it finds itself without an organist or a musician, can buy a system to provide music for the church which works electronically through a

keyboard, as evidenced by the number of advertisements for such instruments in the religious press and the magazines which supply requisites for church worship.

New hymns and songs

With this background, how does the minister react in the preparation of the content and style of worship? There is a tradition of conservatism in Methodism which looks to the past. This was seen when in the late 1970s and early 1980s the Methodist Church contemplated a new hymnal which it hoped would be ecumenical, a hope frustrated by the fact that traditional Methodists demanded too many hymns by Charles Wesley (Macquiban, 2004:26). The new hymn book, *Hymns and Psalms*, published in 1983 (Watson and Trickett, 1988:1-6), still has the sub-title *A Methodist and Ecumenical Handbook*, and is used sometimes on ecumenical occasions, particularly in churches with Methodists in Local Ecumenical Partnership. With the rapid changes in fashion of what congregations sing in church, and the introduction of worship songs into the services of many churches, it is already outmoded, and a new, more flexible and user-friendly hymnal, is being planned (Conference, 2007c). It does, however, still provide the mainstay of what is sung in most Methodist churches, but is often used alongside other more modern compilations such as *Mission Praise.* Some churches are seeking other ways to fulfil the needs for hymnody in compiling their own hymn books, which not also give them the advantage of choosing what should be included, but also create possibilities of revisions from time to time as new hymns or songs come into their repertoire. The difficulty in which Methodism finds itself in this process is the way that hymns have had such an importance in Methodist worship in forming the style and content of worship in a way that modern worship songs do not support (Maizel-Long, 2004:48).

Traditional hymns have formed the framework of the liturgy in the Methodist tradition, for they have been the only opportunity for congregational participation (Macquiban, 2004:26). The preacher has carried the rest of the service and the congregation's only participation has been in the singing of hymns. There is no doubt that this has been an attractive part of worship, for Methodists have always enjoyed singing (see Chapel Culture, chapter 3:51).

For the Wesleyans, the hymns carried the theology of the church (Maizel-Long, 2004:48). This is still the case in the present day, and so the newer religious songs now popular within many churches have neither the seriousness, nor the theological content of many traditional Methodist hymns. Charles Wesley had the gift of putting theology and biblical content into verse, which when backed by the tunes of the day educated converts in the ways of God (Watson and Trickett, 1988:7-33). Methodists sang their theology, but if this is so, how can that particular theology of salvation, assurance and perfection find expression in the worship of today, and what is the attitude of ministers to the changing fashion of worship style at the present time?

New liturgies

As noted before, the familiar and traditional pattern of Methodist worship is hymns interspersed with prayers, scripture readings, and a sermon, the "hymn sandwich" (Turner, 1998:58). This is not to say that Methodism is not without its liturgies, (Maizel-Long, 2004:39) although many ministers and those who attend services would possibly prefer extempore prayers and a freer worship style than liturgies provide. A distinct aversion to "the Book", meaning the set liturgy, has come over

into present day Methodism, particularly from the free worship traditions of the Methodist Churches before the union of 1932 (Maizel-Long, 2004:39).

Methodism, however, has always had a liturgy, although its use has not been compulsory. Methodist liturgy dates back to 1784 when John Wesley provided a revised liturgy based of *The Book of Common Prayer* (BCP, 1662) for the Methodist churches in America, which came into general use later in Wesleyan Methodism (Maizel-Long, 2004:51). Before Methodist union a number of Wesleyan Churches had for their morning service an adaptation of Anglican Matins complete with chants and responses, although the evening service was non-liturgical and designed as a preaching service, often with evangelical aims.

The Book of Offices (1936) created for the church after the union of 1932, and published in 1936, had this Office of Morning Prayer included, and also the Wesleyan Office for Holy Communion which itself was the adaptation of the office in *The Book of Common Prayer*. The liturgy of the church after the union of 1932 was therefore principally that of the Wesleyan Church, but with the addition of a short Order for Communion designed for the other churches of the union to accommodate their non-liturgical styles. In many churches that used this shorter office for Communion, there was a hymn to round off the preaching service, and an opportunity for those who did not wish to take communion to leave. It was common in many churches for Communion to be celebrated after the evening service rather than in the morning. This *Book of Offices* of 1936 also included the offices for baptisms, marriages, funerals and other incidental services.

There was a full revision of the liturgy entitled the *Methodist Service Book*, first published in 1975 and later, with additions, in 1984. It omitted the Order of Morning Prayer, as this liturgy was no longer used by Methodism at large. It also omitted the alternative service for Holy Communion. The fact that it retained the 1936 version of the service of Holy Communion indicates that there were many who were still using the traditional form which went back to Wesley. It did, however, provide a revision of the Order for Communion in a more modern liturgical style, but provided a break where people might leave after the sermon and not stay to communion. It was more compendious than its predecessor, with the inclusion of the incidental offices which had been in the earlier book, and included rubrics as to the conduct of the services. One notable addition was the inclusion of the lectionary readings from the recommendations published at the time of publication by the Joint Liturgical Group, together with Psalms and Collects for the Day. Services were organised appropriately into different sections, and the whole book was user-friendly for both minister and congregation. It also benefited from two of the discussions typical of the period 1933 to 2000, and that was the translation of the biblical text into modern language and the use of modern terminology for forms of address (Maizel-Long, 2004:53).

A fuller revision of the liturgy for Methodism, under the influence of the progressive thought of the Liturgical Movement (Jones et al, 1986), and more thorough-going in its modernisation, was published as *The Methodist Worship Book* of 1999, which includes variations of the Communion Services for Ordinary Times and for the major Church Festivals, and many other incidental liturgical forms for special occasions, such as a Communion Service for Ash Wednesday, in which ashing takes place, and a Vigil service for Holy Saturday, both of which were startling innovations for

traditional Methodists. Its composition was also affected by the development of the Churches Joint Liturgical Commission in the light of ecumenical advance (Maizel-Long, 2004:48-58). The signs of ecumenical convergence can be seen quite clearly when the Methodist Worship Book's revisions are compared to the new liturgies of other English denominations, especially those of the Church of England.

Theological change

One of the more startling revisions which was made to the new liturgy for communion in the formation of the Methodist Worship Book was in the second service of the liturgy for communion in Ordinary Time, when the Deity is addressed as "God, our Father and our Mother" (MWB, 1999:204) which created a heated debate on the floor of the Conference. This is an indication of the shift in Methodist theology which has also occurred in the revisions of the liturgies of other denominations. A similar shift was seen in the theology of the hymnals, from a Jesus centred focus to a Trinitarian one (Maizel-Long, 2004:54). In Methodism the penitential emphasis in the communion service of the Methodist Book of Offices of 1936 has changed in the later liturgies to an emphasis of thanksgiving and joy shared by the whole congregation. In the service for the Baptism of Infants, whilst the 1936 prologue emphasises the acceptance by Jesus of children, the 1975 book emphasises that the service marks entry into the church, whilst the 1999 Worship Book includes reference to the traditional Wesleyan doctrine of Prevenient Grace (Maizel-Long, 2004:55) by the declaration to the newly baptised, "N, for you Jesus Christ came into the world...all this for you, before you could know anything of it" (MWB, 1999:92-93). The communion services by and large show a different view of humanity, not as sinners, but as people sharing in the fellowship and joy of being members together in Christ's

Kingdom and open to the Holy Spirit at work in God's World. One attributes such changes in the liturgy to liturgical convergence, and to new approaches affected by movement in theological thinking. There has also been the influence in modern times from the study of liturgies from ancient times, and from Celtic sources (Maizel-Long, 2004:56-58)

Ministerial styles in worship

Ministers vary in their choice of what is sung and what is said in Methodist services. In the worship of Methodism at the present time, therefore, what is sung and what is said can come from a number of traditions. Taize and Iona and Celtic forms of prayer and hymnody are popular, and for some services the liturgy also can come from other sources, or can be composed by the minister. On the other hand, and especially for many congregations one supposes, extempore prayers and free style worship are still acceptable.

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Content and style of worship

In all the eight prompts relating to content and style of worship there were no significant differences between urban and rural ministers. The respondents showed that there is still a place in Methodism for the traditional hymns of Wesley and Watts. Around 63% were of the opinion that these hymns were an essential part of worship, and this opinion perhaps reflects that most of them are still dedicated to old worship styles. This is supported by the substantial proportion, around 75%, who still thought that hymns carried a theological message just as much as preaching.

One surprise is the proportion, around 42%, who said that chants had a part to play in a Methodist service. One can't suppose that there are many Methodist churches which have a regular diet of traditional chants or psalms in their Sunday worship, although these are contained, with tunes, in *Hymns and Psalms.* This, however, is their opinion, but one wonders how often they can put this into practical effect as only the larger churches in Methodism have a choir to give the lead. This view, which was probably typical of old-style Wesleyan Methodism, could be contrasted with over half of respondents, around 58%, who said that songs and choruses were essential for today's church.

Over half the respondents, both urban and rural (56%), however, thought that extempore prayer was essential in worship, obviously supporting one element in Methodist tradition, and a proportion of 61% of those who thought that free-style worship was essential, seemed to support this usage. These respondents who favoured free-style worship and extempore prayer, however, were offset by around 47% of those who supported the opinion that liturgy is essential for today's church. However, around 46%, a surprising proportion considering that 47% had supported the use of liturgical forms thought that the modern practice of open prayer in public worship was also essential.

The various responses, when one prompt is compared to another, seem to be rather contradictory. Traditional worship is supported by some and more modern and freer styles by others. Traditional hymns are supported, as are also modern worship songs, and both traditional Methodist extempore prayer, as well as liturgical styles of worship. The data have already shown in chapter 9 that there are differences of

theological thought among the respondents, and these differences of worship style might be associated with their differing churchmanship. There does not seem to be a positive correspondence, however, between the two data sets, so one conclusion must be that there is no distinct Methodist worship style, and that ministers feel that they can follow a pattern determined by individual choice. In addition one can say that there is no worship style which is typical of either urban or rural ministry.

CONCLUSION

Personal Faith

The results give an insight into the spirituality of ministers and the way that they feel that their faith can be supported and nourished. They find their faith enriched by sharing it with other people most of all, but almost in equal measure by private reading and by private meditation. A substantial proportion of respondents also feel that sharing with other clergy is an enrichment of faith.

There are, however, significant differences between urban and rural ministers in their habit of daily prayer time and of finding faith enriched by other ministers. Of the two devotional activities the rural ministers state that their daily prayer time is of more importance, whilst the urban ministers find their faith more enriched by sharing with other clergy. This difference might be the result of isolation for those living in the countryside.

Worship style

In the presentation and content of worship there seem to be no differences among those ministers who serve urban circuits or circuits based in country areas. The results

show that ministers still have a use for traditional hymns and for liturgy, and even for chants in the worship life of their communities, and still feel that Methodists should sing their theology in the form of traditional Methodist hymns. There are substantial groups, above half, who think that modern religious songs, open prayer, and free style worship, must have a place in what they offer to their people in worship. It appears that both liturgy and free style worship are still alive in current Methodist practice.

CHAPTER 11 PERSONALITY TYPES

BACKGROUND

Stress, burnout, and personality type

In the examination of stress and burnout in a previous chapter (8:116) the data centred round the pressures created by the situation of the individual minister regarding the circumstances of the ministerial task. It was noted, however, in the discussion that psychological characteristics of the individual minister also played their part. As Maslach says, "What a person brings to a situation is just as critical as what the situation brings out of him/her. These internal qualities determine how someone handles external sources of emotional stress" (Maslach, 2003:94f). This factor would then appear to be an important reason why this survey should include a review of the psychological type of respondents. Further research, however, is probably needed for the data of this study to provide a precise link between the external factors and the internal factors bearing upon this particular set of respondents. What does make it essential that psychological type data should be a part of the exercise is illustrated by the title of Isabel Myers' and Peter Myers' book on personality type (1980) "Gifts Differing". The title illustrates the fact that some personality types find a task more or less congenial than others, and that some personality types match what is required of them in the circumstances and conditions of employment in some occupations and not in others. Isabel Briggs Myers and Peter Myers (1980:149-164) illustrate how psychological type is connected to occupation, and how certain occupations, on analysis, show the presence of different psychological types. Some individuals who may follow a certain occupation have a psychological type more adaptive than others to meet the particular practical responses which the occupation demands and some

will not. The Methodist respondents who have provided their data for this study follow a profession which makes various demands. All bring different gifts to the task, but the question can be asked whether only certain psychological types respond to the call to ministry, and also whether those types who do respond can offer the differing gifts which ministry requires.

Personality type theory

In the broad field of personality theory there have been two main traditions (Francis, 2005b:14). The first is linked to clinical experience which can be traced back to such thinkers as Freud (1950), and the second, which is based on the scientific observation of large groups of people and is associated with the names of Raymond Cattell (1970, 1986, 1993) and Hans Eysenck (1952, 1959).

The personality type theory which is used in this study of Methodist ministers follows the second of the two traditions mentioned above. Both Cattell and Eysenck have devised practical ways of measuring the differing psychological types. Cattell devised a sixteen factor model in the *Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire* (Cattell, Eber and Tatsuoka, 1970), which was designed for use among adults. The factors are known by a letter or a number and are described in Leslie Francis' *Faith and Psychology* (2005b:43-47). Eysenck has also developed a model based on the three major dimensions of personality, extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism. Both scales of measurement have been adapted to be used for younger people (Francis, 2005b:47)

An alternative model of personality, from which the measure used in this particular study takes its origin, is from Karl Jung, and is described in his book, *Psychological Types* (Jung, 1971). This approach differs from the Eysenck model in that it does not treat alternatives, such as extraversion and introversion, as the two ends of a continuum, but as two distinct types (Francis, 2005b:55f). The second difference is that Eysenck, with the emphasis on the three major dimensions of personality, extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism, goes into the area of unhealthy personality, and thus high scorers in neuroticism and psychoticism might in fact be regarded as going beyond the borders of mental health.

Measures which assess psychological personality type which steer clear of such difficulties have been developed. These give ease of classification and depend upon a respondent's level of self awareness and his/her clarity of preference. The better known, and well used instrument for assessing the psychological type for individuals, is the Myers-Briggs type indicator, as developed by Myers, McCaulley, Quenk and Hammer (1998), and by Kendall (1998). The theory on which this instrument is based is outlined in *Gifts Differing: Understanding Personality Type* (Myers and Myers, 1980). There are a number of other tests which are part of a growing family, which are outlined in Leslie Francis' *Faith and Psychology* (2005b:57). The test which provides the data for this study is the Francis Psychological Type Scale (FPTS) developed by Leslie Francis (2004).

Jung's theory and its categories

Jung's theory of psychological types begins with the two constructs of introversion, which is given the symbol I, and extraversion, given the symbol E. These are best

thought of as two orientations. The introvert looks inwards for psychological energy and the extravert looks outwards. The theory also emphasises psychological processes by which the individual gathers information. One process is operational through sensing, S, and the other through intuition, N. The second psychological process is the way in which an individual makes decisions, the judging process. Some people prefer thinking, T, and others prefer feeling, F. Jung suggested that people might prefer to use one of these psychological processes in the outer world and the other in the inner world, and so many who have built on Jung's theory have proposed a fourth indicator, often characterised as the attitude to the outer world. Again for this characteristic there are two forms. Some people prefer to use judging, J, and others prefer to use perceiving, P. The difference between the two presents very different images of what exists in the outer world.

Thus in the determination of psychological type there are four main elements: orientation (E or I), the perceiving process (S or N), the judging process (T or F), and one which reflects a subject's attitude to the outside world (J or P). In each of these four determinants there are two alternatives, making a permutation of sixteen possible types. Each type embraces one position out of the above possibilities, the first letter of the type being E, extravert, or I, introvert. The second is sensing, S, or intuition, N. The third letter of the type is thinking, T, or feeling, F, and the fourth is judging, J or perceiving, P. The whole permutation is seen in Table 11.1, from ESTJ, extravert, sensing, thinking, judging to INFP, introvert, intuiting, feeling, perceiving. These sixteen variants describe very different personality traits and resultant expectations of behaviour for those who are in the different categories. Descriptions of the individuals who find themselves in a certain personality type are possible, drawing upon the

knowledge of the outlook and behaviour of what one would expect of an extravert or an introvert and all the other determinants of psychological type involved in the array. These descriptions have been outlined in *Gifts Differing* (Myers and Myers, 1980:85-112) and by Leslie Francis (Francis, 2005b:59-66).

Development of the theory

There is always the possibility that an individual, to use a common phrase, might "act out of character", so that there seems to be a mismatch between the personality type by which s/he is identified and the behaviour which is observed. As Leslie Francis observes, "There are lots of reasons why some people operate outside their preferred mode for much of their life" (Francis, 2005b:56). This phenomenon has been taken into account by the extension of the theory which identifies four different functions in personality dynamics. These are the dominant function, the auxiliary function, the inferior function, and the tertiary function. They relate specifically to the two processes of perceiving (S and N) and judging (T or F). According to the theory, to be properly balanced human beings we need to access all four, S and N, T and F. (Francis, 2005b:83-86). With these refinements the theory becomes more complex but contributes to a more accurate assessment of individual personality characteristics.

Criticism of the theory

One can understand that no theory is without its critics and The Myers Briggs Indicator has found a thorough going critic in Bayne (1995), who approaches its shortcomings through five specific objections (Francis, 2005b:88-91). Since the indicator has been used extensively in relation to religious belief, and church and church-going, there have been objections from those who put forward a point of view

that faith is stronger than psychology. This objection is made by the sociologist Tony Coxon together with other objections, in a collection of criticisms from others whose point of view is shaped by their faith (Leech, 1996). A review of the eight contributors to this symposium are given in Francis' *Faith and Psychology* together with a defence of his own position (Francis,2005b:91-95). The basis of this is the validity of the application of the social sciences, in this case psychology, in the pursuit of theological insights through empirical theology (chapter 4:59). In a paper entitled *Faith and Psychology: integration and application* (2005a), Francis makes a heart felt plea that psychology should not be regarded as a stranger to theology and that there can be some integration of the two disciplines.

Personality types and church congregations

A number of studies in America and Canada have applied personality profile tests to congregations. In the USA a study undertaken by Gerhardt (1993) indicated that predominant personality types in a small sample of Universal Unitarians showed a predominance of INFI and INTJ in the congregation. Another small study in the USA by Rehak (1998) discovered that the predominant type profiles in a congregation of Evangelical Lutherans were ISFJ, INFJ, ISFP, and INFP. Research in Canada by Delis-Bulhoes (1990) and by Ross (1995) among the congregations of a number of denominations, shows that Catholic, Protestant and Anglican churches attract introverts rather than extraverts, and judging types rather than perceiving types,

Research into congregational psychological type has also been carried out in England. A psychological profile of church members was carried out by Francis, Butler, Jones and Craig (2004) and extended by Francis, Duncan, Craig and Luffman (2004), both

based on Anglicans, and leading to similar conclusions. These discovered that among women ISFJ accounted for 21% of respondents and among the men ISTJ for 27%. This is confirmed by Francis, Robbins, Williams and Williams (2007), where in a study of 185 Anglican churchgoers using the Francis Psychological Type Scale there was found to be a significantly higher proportion of individuals reporting ISFJ and ESFJ in church congregations than among the general population. It appears that a typical psychological profile of a member of an Anglican congregation would be ISFJ (Francis, 2005b:110-121).

Personality types and ministry

If the personality profile of an individual is influential in the occupational task which they choose (Myers and Myers, 1980:151), it is also influential in the way that they will perform that task once they are active in that occupation (Francis, 2005b:96). The personality type of the individual is therefore double edged in its influence.

In England one of the people who have given considerable thought to this is Dr John Payne, an Anglican clergyperson. His research has led to the development of the Payne Index of Ministry Styles which is described fully by Francis and Payne (2002). Payne's assertion is that despite the fact that there is in ministry a place for all the personality types, different psychological types might well choose to express their ministry in different ways. Extraverts might be energised by all the outgoing activities of ministry, preaching, visiting, fostering relationships with people, introverts by prayer, small group work, studying, and writing. Sensing types would be concerned about the practical tasks of ministry, caring for property, raising money, and planning events, whilst the intuitive would think about new ways of doing things in the parish,

and seeking solutions to old and new problems. Thinking clergy would operate their ministry to think through the logical consequences of their actions and to deal with parishioners justly and fairly, where the feeling type would seek to create a harmonious atmosphere in the church, fostering good relationships, and be conscious of people's needs. Judging types would be the planners, seeking to make sure the details were correct, whilst the perceiving would enjoy the unexpected in their ministry and be spontaneous in services and flexible in their relationships with others. One can readily see that the different clergy personality styles might find acceptance with some congregations and not others, whereas a minister of a particular type might not be acceptable to the congregation because her/his personality style differs from the predominant style of that congregation, or from the most influential style of a controlling group in the church. This mismatch could also happen when her/his personality style is that of an innovator, and that of the congregation leads them to follow more traditional ways. In these situations conflict is a possibility, and also stress for both clergy and congregation.

A large scale attempt in the United Kingdom to examine the personality types of clergy was carried through by Francis, Payne and Jones (2001). This was a survey of 427 male clergy in the Church of Wales over a period of eight years using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The main conclusions were that clergy in the Church of Wales were mainly ISFJ, and that the differences between the indicators were quite marked. Studies of ministers of other denominations show differences in the profile which marked the clergy in the Church in Wales. Francis, Penson and Jones (2001) found that in a study of male students in an evangelical Bible College the predominant type was ISTJ, and in a study of 164 male leaders attending Spring Harvest, the annual

evangelical/charismatic big meeting, the prevalent type was also ISTJ, whilst another study of evangelical trainees, Francis, Craig and Butler (2004) also found that the prevalent type was ISTJ. Although the main types found in these surveys were introverts, the other indicators show that evangelicals might be more tough-minded than those in other parts of the church.

Ministers and congregations: matching personality types

Considering the evidence of differing psychological types in ministers and congregations there must occur quite often a mismatch between one and the other. One wonders then about the feasibility of any matching process whereby some appointing authority could, for the sake of harmony between minister and congregation, seek a way in which ministers with certain psychological profiles could be appointed to appropriate congregations. In Methodism, with its autocratic stationing system, it is declared that one of the aims is to bring to a congregation the right minister for them. This might be possible in ideal circumstances. As it also seeks in a benevolent way to consider the needs of a minister and his/her family in the move, such a process could become extremely complicated. To attempt the matching of minister and congregation according to psychological type would therefore seem to be at the best problematical.

There is one way in which a minister of any psychological type might best reach individuals in his church who have the various psychological preferences of sensing, intuition, feeling, and thinking. This is in the task of preaching, whereby, in expounding a biblical text, s/he can interpret the text in a way that is directed to the psychological personality profile of the listener. This has received the acronym of the

SIFT method of preaching, taking the initials of the elements of the psychological profile (Francis, 2003a). This method of preaching has been outlined in three volumes which follow the readings of the appointed Gospel for successive Sundays, in the Common Revised Lectionary: Matthew (Francis and Atkins, 2001), Mark (Francis and Atkins, 2002) and Luke (Francis and Atkins, 2000). What the authors attempt is to take the gospel appointed for the day and interpret it in different ways so that each member of the congregation will be able to receive it in accordance with their own psychological preferences (Francis and Atkins, 2002:3-9).

Personality types, rural and urban

An interesting survey of rural and urban congregations was carried out by Charlotte Craig (Craig, 2005:123-130). The results of a survey of 2,656 people in 95 congregations across the United Kingdom, using the Francis Psychological Type Scale showed that rural churchgoers receive higher scores on sensing, whilst urban congregations achieve higher scores on intuition. The conclusion was that this might reflect a more conservative attitude to faith and belief on the part of rural people. No other differences were found on the other preferences of the personality profile.

As opposed to studies of congregational personal types a number of surveys have given some interesting results regarding ministers. A survey of 1998 carried out by Francis and Lankshear (1998), using the short form of the Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire on 81 male Anglican clergy in rural benefices and 72 in urban benefices, showed that rural clergy recorded higher scores on the extraversion and lie scales. A previous assumption had been that rural clergy might prefer to choose introversion, as rural ministry could be seen as an escape into the peace and

comparative isolation of the countryside (Francis, 1989). However this was denied by the findings of the survey and the discussion suggests that changes in the parish system, with multi-parish benefices becoming common, demands the extravert personality which can cope with the demands and relationships which the new system places upon clergy. The finding that rural clergy record a higher score on the lie scale is explained by the effect that rural ministry requires a more socially conforming and less radical approach than urban ministry (Francis and Lankshear, 1998:165). A follow-up survey using the same Eysenck personality test was made by Francis and Littler (2001) with 92 respondents in rural benefices in the Church of Wales, and 109 in charge of urban benefices. Contrary to the previous survey of Francis and Lankshear (1998) the rural clergy scored less than the urban on the extraversion scale. On the neuroticism, psychoticism, and lie scales there was no difference. The study concluded that in England and Wales, both urban and rural clergy were neither more or less anxious (neuroticism), nor more or less tough-minded (psychoticism). The differences regarding extraversion/introversion are explained by the fact that whilst the conditions of English ministry have become less attractive to introverts, they still prevail in Wales (Francis and Littler, 2001:4-5). A further study which built upon these earlier studies, again using the same Eysenck personality test, asked the question, "Do introverted clergy prefer rural ministry?" (Francis, Smith and Robbins, 2004). The comparison was between 94 Anglican clergy in rural ministry and 219 in urban ministry in the dioceses of Worcester and Lichfield. The conclusions tended to support the findings of Francis and Lankshear (1998), and Francis and Rutledge (2004) that rural clergy are more introverted than urban clergy in the parishes of deep rural dioceses, rather than in the rural parishes in other dioceses that are more urbanised. It would appear that the parishes in the deep rural dioceses attract

introverted clergy, and also that they may be better equipped to minister to those rural communities because of their particular personal qualities.

A more pertinent survey for this enquiry regarding the personality types of Methodist ministers are the personality profiles which come from the survey of the attitudes of Methodist ministers which led to the publication of *British Methodism; What Circuit Ministers Really Think* (Haley and Francis, 2006). The analysis of the data relating to the personality type of ministers (Robbins, Francis, Haley, and Kay, 2001:127-128) resulted in the conclusion that the women ministers have a statistically significant higher value for extraversion than the men, but not as high as that of women in the general population. There is no statically significant difference in the neuroticism, psychoticism or lie scales. On these three measures, both men and women bring equality of personal disposition to ministry which should further support the case for equality of opportunity within ministry.

In this present study of urban and rural differences in the psychological types of Methodist ministers in circuit work, the Francis Psychological Type Scale (FPTS) developed by Leslie Francis (2004) is the instrument used for the purpose and appears in the reproduction of the questionnaire which forms Appendix 3.

THE MINISTERS

Psychological type, general population of ministers

The distribution of all sixteen of the psychological types in the Francis Psychological Type Scale for all the 1003 respondents from the survey questionnaire is in Table 11.1 of Appendix 2. The largest number of respondents, 187, and thus the largest

proportion, 19%, are in the category of ISFJ, and the second largest, 112, or 11% of the distribution are extraverts, ESFJ, in the same group of preferences. Putting extraverts and introverts of SFJ together they form 30% of the general distribution. Small proportions, around 8% and 9% of the distribution are ISTJ, INFJ, ENFP and INFP, and other psychological types are represented, in proportions of 2% to 6%. The psychological types with fewest representatives are ISTP, with only 7 respondents, or 0.7%, of the distribution, and ESTP with 10, or 1% of the distribution. The psychological types of SFJ, NFJ, STJ, NFJ, both of introverts and extraverts form 70% of the whole distribution, and all these are profiles featuring the judging preference.

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Of the whole distribution, taking pair preferences, extraverts form 42% and introverts 58%; sensing types 55% and intuitive types 45%; thinking types 33% and feeling types 67%: judging types 70% and perceiving types 30%. Taking all these together the personality type of Methodist ministers which is most frequent is ISFJ, which confirms the most frequent response indicated above.

The various psychological types in terms of ministry in the churches is fully described by Francis and Payne (2002), and outlined in Francis (2005:100-104). Almost one in five of Methodist ministers have a personality profile of ISFJ. As introverts they bring to ministry the ability to work on their own, to bring concentration to bear on reading, studying, the preparation for services and events, and the ability to relate to people in close small groups or one to one situations in counselling, and are good at developing the inward life of prayer and spirituality. In their ministry, as sensing types, they would bring to ministry a sense of the situation in which they serve, and a practical

concern for the churches they serve. They would give attention to detail, both in the services they conduct and also to the facts on which judgements and choices have to be made. As feeling types they would display sympathy and empathy with others and value other people for what they are, at the same time having the ability to create good relationships among others, and with others, thus promoting harmony and peace in the church and their community. As judging types they have organising ability, both for their own lives and the organisation of their churches. They are able to meet the demands of church administration and the management of local affairs in their local communities.

This personality description of Methodist ministers is modified for just over 1 in 10 of them by the fact that instead of being introverts, they are extraverts, ESFJ instead of ISFJ, but with the personality preferences of SFJ. In this case they would be outward looking towards the world instead of inward looking towards their inner life. This would mean that they were good with people, enjoy company and being with others, energised by visiting, going around their churches, preaching and meeting people after services. Large congregations rather than small would be their preference. Since ISFJ and ESFJ types together form almost 30% of respondents those characteristic of SFJ are observed in almost one third of Methodist ministers in the circuits. The extravert/introvert split should then make possible a variety of outgoing or inward looking ministers for appropriate work in the circuits. With discernment, suitable appointments, matching needs to opportunities, might then be possible in the tricky process of Methodist stationing (Richter, 2000).

Urban and Rural Ministers

In the distributions shown in Table 11.1 it will be seen that both urban respondents and rural respondents reflect the distributions of all the respondents taken together. The most common psychological type for all three distributions is that of ISFJ, followed by ESFJ. One notable observation, however, is that for ISFJs the rural respondents form 22.3% of the distribution, almost 4% higher than the proportion of 18.6% in the general population of respondents, and the urban component is almost 2% less. This is confirmed when ESFJ type is added to ISFJ type. This summation shows that 29.8 % of both types are in the general distribution, 28.1% in urban respondents and 32.6% in the distribution of rural respondents. For the ESFJs the proportion of 11.2% of respondents is the same for urban ministers and also for the general distribution of ministers, but the proportion of rural respondents is 1% lower. One is led to suppose that the difference between extraverts and introverts in the SFJ categories shows that ISFJs are more common in rural than in urban ministry. The same difference can be seen in the table in other personality types, such as ESTJ and ISTJ, where there are greater proportions of introverts than extraverts in rural appointments. This is so in a majority of the personality types, but not in all of them. However, when each of the sixteen personality types was tested for statistical significant difference between urban and rural distributions the only categories where such differences appear are in the INTJ personality type. This gives confirmation to the judgement that introverts are more common in rural ministry than in urban. The tests applied to the pair preference of extravert/introvert does not, however, indicate a statistical difference, although when the pair preference of sensing/intuition is considered, there is a statistical difference of .036, confirming the discussion above that the presence of the sensing type of personality is typical of rural ministry.

It would appear that all three distributions, those of the general population, the urban population and the rural population have similar characteristics. A Chi-Square test was applied to test differences between the urban and the rural distributions of personality types, but no significant difference was found. Tests for correlation were also applied between the three distributions. The calculation of the correlation coefficient between the distributions of all the ministers to that of rural ministers showed the closest correspondence between the two distributions of 0.978. The comparison of the distribution of all ministers to urban ministers showed a slightly less correlation value of 0.973. The greatest difference was that in the correlation of urban to rural distributions, which showed a correspondence of 0.935. Whilst both rural and urban distributions taken against that of all respondents was close, the difference between the rural and urban was somewhat greater, but not by a large extent. This shows that the difference in the distributions of psychological type between urban ministers and rural ministers did exist, but the discrepancy of the various psychological types between the two categories was not great.

CONCLUSION

In the distributions of the data resulting from the application of the Francis Psychological Type Scale to the respondents of the questionnaire sent to all Methodist ministers in circuit work, the most common personality type was ISFJ, introverts, whose preference from the alternatives presented by the scale was for sensing, feeling and judging, as opposed to intuition, thinking and perceiving.

The second most common category was ESFJ, extraverts choosing the same preferences between alternative types. Introverts and extraverts with these same preferences taken together made up almost one third (29.8%) of the entire population.

The distributions of the personality types of urban and rural respondents closely reflect the distribution of personality types in the whole population of respondents. There are indications, however, that both distributions, urban and rural, differ slightly from the distribution of personality type in the general population of respondents. The coefficient of correlation shows that the distribution of urban respondents compared to that of rural respondents is more dissimilar in its structure than either of the distributions of urban and rural compared with that of the general population.

In the distribution of rural respondents there was a greater proportion of introverts and a correspondingly smaller proportion of extraverts than in the urban distribution. This tendency of proportional difference was noted in other personality type categories in the urban/rural divide, but not in all of them.

The distribution of the sixteen personality types in the urban/rural comparisons was subjected to a test for significant statistical difference. The only significant difference of .016 was found in the category of INTJ.

The other significant difference statistically, of .036, was the preference which the two categories of respondents gave to sensing as against intuition. This is confirmed with a calculation from the distributions whereby sensing predominates over 10% in rural responses than those from urban responses and for intuition correspondingly

10% less. On the whole it would seem that the preferred elements for a large proportion of rural respondents are confirmed as sensing, feeling and perception, SFP. This was rather more than was found among urban respondents.

In general it would seem that the results of this analysis confirm the findings of other enquiries such as Francis, Payne and Jones (2001). Therefore the conclusions of this study confirm other studies of ministers and clergy that the personality type typical of the occupation is ISFJ.

The psychological type ISFJ is someone who is quiet, friendly, responsible and conscientious. Who works devotedly to meet obligations and lends stability to any project or group. Is thorough, painstaking and accurate and whose interests are not technical, but can be patient with necessary details. Is loyal, considerate, perceptive, concerned with how other people feel (Myers et al, 1998:7).

CHAPTER 12 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to establish whether there was a difference between those Methodist ministers who ministered in urban circuits from those who ministered in rural locations. For this difference to be operationalised a contrast between the two types of ministry had to be established and this was done by separating out those who responded that their main ministry was exercised in an urban or a rural situation. Those who responded that the area in which they worked was mixed, both urban and rural in its constituency, were omitted from the sample. The resulting data were analysed and provided the results outlined above.

In the text the general characteristics of all the respondents to the questionnaire have been displayed, but in this conclusion relating to urban/rural differences one must be aware that the results do not apply to all ministers, but only to the 70% of those in urban and rural situations, although one suspects that there is much that this 70% share with the whole population of the study.

Urban/rural difference

The overall result of the analysis of the data is the powerful influence on any minister's working situation of the imposed discipline of church structures. The way that Methodism is organised, with circuits and itinerancy and a central authority, both through tradition and also in the Standing Orders, which are the directives of the Conference, generally determine how a minister operates. In both urban and rural locations the minister works within a system that is given. The most important

determinant of ministry, both urban and rural is the church structure in which that ministry is exercised.

The main differences between the service which ministers can give in town and country are determined by the different circumstances in which they find themselves. In each situation the circumstances and work conditions imposed by the nature of the different locations in which they work can be very different. Work loads are different: the stresses imposed by urban or rural ministry are different; the possibilities and opportunities presented to the minister are different; and the expectations and nature of country folk are different to those in town congregations. It is apparent that the constraints of ministry generated by what is expected of them and also those which are imposed by the system, are experienced by urban and rural ministers alike, but are different between those who minister in the two locations. Therefore ministers must adapt what they offer to their congregations, shaped by the circumstances in which they find themselves, whether in the town or in the country.

Reviewing the whole of the evidence, therefore, the most obvious factor which creates the difference between rural and urban ministry, and therefore what they can offer to their churches, is the determining influence of the system, overlaid and modified by the circumstances in which that ministry is offered. One is tempted to sum up by saying that, indeed, rural ministry is different, but the rural minister isn't, but there are other things to be said.

The data indicate that other factors are at work besides the determining power of church structures. It is not just that a Methodist minister is a Methodist minister, and

comes as a standard package which can be stationed anywhere, in rural or urban appointments. An indication that despite the policies of indiscriminate stationing sometimes adopted by the Methodist Conference, personal preferences are at work which have been demonstrated by the survey. Analysis reveals of who goes where reveals that there is a tendency for ministers of different characteristics to find themselves employed in rural ministry, as opposed to urban. There is evidence of a selective influence in the stationing of ministers, which, despite the weight of official stationing policy means that some find their way into urban and others into rural ministry.

This has been noted particularly in two of the survey's findings. One is that ministers of differing theological points of view are found in urban and rural locations. Another is related to personality type. Extraverts tend to be in the town and introverts and more sensitive personality types in the countryside. Other differences have been observed which lead to the conclusion that forces outside the system are acting to bring ministers into either urban or rural work.

Two final comments apply to the relationship of the urban to the rural in Methodism which is highlighted by the data. The first is that the results show that in Methodism there is no clear-cut divide between the urban and the rural. The spread of numbers of churches in a minister's pastoral group tends to be across the urban/rural boundary. The fact that almost one third of respondents reported that their ministry is exercised in a mixed situation, both urban and rural, gives much support to this insight.

The second is related to the question as to whether Methodism is now urbanised, a church of the town and the suburbs. That 24% of ministers who said they exercised their ministry in a rural situation, and the 32% who said their ministry was mixed, in a situation that was both urban and rural, indicates that there are still many rural churches in the Methodist Church as a whole. Methodism is not yet a church solely ministering to the towns and cities of Britain.

Lessons for the Church as a whole

What emerges from this present study is the strength of the inhibiting factors which church structures place upon present day ministry in the Methodist Church. One judgement which can be made is that the system was very functional for the establishment and the spread of Methodism, but that in today's situation it has dysfunctional elements for the task of mission and service which is laid upon its ministers. This fact has consequences for the whole of Methodism if it is to fulfil its calling in a modern world. The following facts which emerge from this investigation may point the way to re-shaping Methodism for its future mission.

Methodism today is still a centralised Church, strong in its authority structure and very directive in the deployment of its ministry. Some form of subsidiarity would enable it to be more adaptive to local and regional circumstances and needs. Lessons could be learned from it history, such as the regional character of the Primitive Methodists, or the ministerial deployment which existed in the Methodist Free Church.

In matters of deployment, the present situation is that higher proportions of women, inexperienced ministers, and older ministers are deployed in country circuits. The personal characteristics of those who minister in the countryside indicate that Methodism concentrates its ministerial strength in urban settlements. If all its local churches are to be equally valued, should there not be a more thoughtful and even-handed policy in the deployment of its ministers?

In an age when commuting is common, perhaps one should not be surprised that ministers, especially urban ministers, do not live near where they work. The question could be asked if this is desirable for the particular calling of Christian ministry. Should not a minister live among his/her people if true ministry is to be achieved?

There is a greater proportion of ministers in rural appointments who leave after the first invitation of five years than those in urban appointments. Does this indicate that they are unhappy in the rural situation or perhaps find it difficult to cope? Is this because they are inexperienced? This fact underlines the necessity for training, not just in general ministry, which presumably they have already received, but in specific training for what they can expect in rural ministry.

This raises the question of ministerial training and its adequacy for all Methodist ministers. The response all the ministers gave to the question which enquired about their training indicates the diverse pattern of ministerial training today. The results of the questions regarding their belief systems, however, show a confused understanding of theological issues. One realises that with stringent financial controls in the Church today, and the very different people who offer for ministry, difficulties are created for

the provision of training. The results of this investigation put up questions about its adequacy.

A picture has emerged of similarities and differences between the experience of urban and rural ministry. Work loads are very different, and the system places stress upon urban and rural ministers at different points. Urban ministry, as one might expect, seems to be more stressed than ministry in the more peaceful countryside, but stress leads to burnout and incapacity for ministry. Most ministers seem to have developed strategies for coping and are still confident of their calling, but a small proportion of both ministers in rural and urban situations confess to being stressed by their work experience. Attention should be given to this by the church authority.

Stress is a result of work experience, but also results from psychological factors associated with personality type. The relationship of the two is indicated by this study, but needs further investigation.

The differences revealed by the study that extraverts are proportionally greater in urban than in rural ministry is not surprising, but gives rise to the possibilities of using psychological typing as a factor in the determination of where a minister might be best deployed. In using this technique stress might be avoided and one might get the "square peg into the square hole", instead of the "one size fits all" method of the present situation. Coupled with the requests which ministers are allowed to make regarding family needs and other personal pressures in the stationing process this might be too complicated to achieve perfectly, but perhaps it could be considered as a possible solution to avoiding mismatches in ministerial deployment.

The presence of extraverts in the town, as well as liberals and radicals, seems not to be a very surprising conclusion, but one is surprised by the result that evangelicals and the charismatically inclined are more typical among the introverts of the countryside. One can conjecture why this might be so, but an answer to the question would seem to indicate the need for further research.

What is evident from the early chapters of the study is that Methodism has evolved from what some have suggested as sectarian beginnings (Wilson, 1961, Chamberlayne, 1962) into the world-wide Methodist Church of today. What is apparent is that in the changing times, created by the various cultural and socio-economic pressures described in chapter 2:22-39, Methodism must still seek some new adaptation to survive. What seems to have been the case until very recently is that thinking and adaptation have been linear, a tinkering with the system. What the Methodist Church needs to do is to engage in lateral thinking and consider radical measures if it is to survive. There are signs in these middle years of the first decade of this twenty-first century that this is beginning to happen.

If such intentions become reality the ministry of the Methodist Church will be affected in a number of ways, although it might be difficult to imagine how the circuit system, multiple care of churches, and itinerancy, will change. Hopefulness prevails. The retiring President of the Conference in 2007, in his address to the ministerial session at the end of his year of office, commented on how the fixed structure of Christendom was giving way to a more flexible living entity of Church, and that "the Methodist Church has imposed a pattern of life on the Church which was the same in

every place" and that this is beginning to change. Regarding ministry, he comments that the Church needs to move away "from the concept of the Methodist Connexion being a monolithic structure where one size fits all" (Methodist Recorder a, 2007).

We have determined in this dissertation that the Methodist ministry is not quite monolithic, but for the sake of survival it needs to be much less so and take on the flexibility of ministry which this modern age badly needs.

APPENDIX

STATISTICAL TABLES

Abbreviated column headings

Inner City	Council Estate	Suburbs	Country Town	Rural Village
I.C	CE	S	CT	RV

CHAPTER 4 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Table 4.1 Age Distribution of respondents compared to years in active ministry

	under 26	26.35	36-45	46-55	56-65	over 65	Total	ChiSq	P<
Age	1	63	236	364	343	7	1017	302.6	<.001

	under 10	11- 20	21-30	31-40	over 41	
Ministry	434	302	150	129	2	1014

Table 4.2 Place of residence compared with main place of ministry

	I.C	CE	S	CT	RV	Total	ChiSq	P<
Resid.	60	15	526	268	122	991	144.7	0.001
Minis.	123	36	373	298	134	964		

Table 4.3 Number of churches in pastoral care

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Over 10	Tot.
n	121	316	234	143	70	55	20	15	7	10	8	1009
%	12	31.3	23.2	14.2	6.9	5.5	2.0	1.7	0.8	1.2	1.1	100

Table 4.4 Area of main church %

	I.C	CE	S	CT	RV	Total
n	123	36	373	298	134	962
%	12.8	3.7	38.7	30.9	13.9	100

Table 4.5 Areas in which respondents have at least one church

	I.C	CE	S	CT	RV	Total
n	166	144	473	361	523	1667
%	10	8.6	28.3	21.7	31.4	100

Table 4.6 Number of churches in the care of respondents in each area type

n	I.C	CE	S	CT	RV	Total
1	111	127	295	256	206	
2	37	21	133	73	100	
3	11	2	34	23	79	
4		1	16	8	50	
5	1				37	
6			1		21	
7					12	
8				1	7	
9				1	13	
Cumulative Total	213	179	733	520	1342	2987
%	7.1	6.0	24.6	17.4	44.9	100

CHAPTER 5 URBAN AND RURAL DIFFERENCES

Table 5.1 Sex of ministers %

Sex	Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
Male	70.8	60.8	7.07	.01
Female	29.2	39.2		

Table 5.2 Age %

	under 45	45-55	56 and over	ChiSq	P<
Urban	32.2	35.3	32.45	1.68	NS
Rural	27.5	37.1	35.4		

Table 5.3 Length of time in ministry %

	under 10	11-20	21-30	31-40	ChiSq	P<
Urban	41.0	27.9	16.2	14.9	15.7	.001
Rural	51.1	30.4	12.7	5.9		

Table 5.4 Years in the present appointment %

	5 or less	6 or more	ChiSq	P<
Urban	66.7	33.3	4.8	NS
Rural	75.1	24.9		

Table 5.5. Situation of the manse %

	I.C	CE	S	CT	RV	ChiSq	P<
Urban	12.7	1.6	79.4	5.5	0.7	491.8	0.00000
Rural	0.4	0.4	6.8	53.2	39.1		

Table 5.6 Area of main church %

	I.C	CE	S	CT	RV	ChiSq	P<
Urban	26.2	5.5	59.4	8.9	0	486.8	0.00000
Rural	0.4	0.4	3.0	51.7	44.4		

Table 5.7 Number of churches in pastoral care %

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	ChiSq	P<
Urban	18.3	47.5	21.9	7.4	1.6	0.9	0.4	0.2	0	628.9	0.00000
Rural	4.2	8.8	17.2	20.9	13.8	15.1	5.9	5.9	1.7		

Table 5.8 Churches in the care of respondents in each area type %

		I.C	CE	S	CT	RV
Urban	1	21.6	19.1	38.4	7.7	9.8
	2	7.5	3.0	21.8	3.2	2.5
	3	2.3	0.2	5.7	0.5	0.5
Rural	1	0.4	1.7	5.0	45.8	13.8
	2	0.4	0	0.8	10.0	15.0
	3				2.9	20.0
	4				2.3	14.6
	5					12.5
	6					7.1
	7					4.6
	8					2.9
	9					5.0

Table 5.9 Number of churches in pastoral care

	I.C	CE	S	CT	RV	Total
Urban	191	117	496	76	71	951
Rural	3	4	16	191	882	1096

Table 5.10 Distance travelled to nearest church in miles

	0	1	2	3	4	5	ChiSq	P<
Urban	28.3	50.3	12.0	2.7	1.8	1.8	3.35	NS
Rural	33.9	46.9	9.2	3.3	1.3	0.8		

Table 5.11 Distance travelled to furthest church in miles

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	ChiSq	P<
Urban	3.0	21.0	22.3	17.0	13.8	8.3	4.3	3.3	2.0	0.8	138.0	0.00000
Rural	0	0.9	3.9	5.2	6.1	11.3	10.4	5.2	11.3	5.6		

Table 5.12 Area of nearest church %

	I.C	CE	S	CT	RV
Urban	23.5	5.6	61.2	8.4	1.4
Rural	0.4	0.8	3.3	49.6	45.8

Table 5.13 Area of furthest church %

	I.C	CE	S	CT	RV
Urban	21.7	13.6	45.2	8.4	1.4
Rural	0.9	0	0.9	8.9	89.4

Table 5.14 Rural ministers. Table 5.11 compared to Table 5.12

	I.C	CE	S	CT	RV
Rural, nearest church	0.4	0.8	3.3	49.6	45.8
Rural, furthest church	0.9	0	0.9	8.9	89.4

CHAPTER 6 PASTORAL ROLES OF MINISTERS

Table 6.1.1 Priorities of ministry

	Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
Teaching the Christian Faith	72.6	76.8	1.396	NS
Pastoral Care	65.4	69.9	1.437	NS
Celebrating the Sacraments	60.0	57.3	.476	NS
Preaching the Word of God	82.1	85.7	1.437	NS
Ensuring the organisation works	30.7	29.8	.052	NS
Engaging in the community	47.8	54.0	2.329	NS
Relating to anyone in need	57.9	64.4	2.74	.01

Table 6.2 Personal aims, expectation of people, and actual delivery of ministry Urban and Rural ministerial assessments

		Aims	Expectation	Delivery
Administration	Urban%	92.6	50.8	34.0
	Rural%	91.3	47.7	28.0
Leader in Community	Urban%	13.9	18.6	9.0
	Rural%	17.2	21.8	8.4
Sacraments	Urban%	48.0	50.3	51.2
	Rural%	50.0	50.0	51.7
Evangelist	Urban%	33.6	28.9	9.4
	Rural%	42.6	36.4	14.4
Public Worship	Urban%	72.3	86.0	81.9
	Rural%	72.0	86.1	76.9

Counsellor	Urban%	23.1	27.9	14.2
	Rural%	28.8	27.5	18.2
Visitor	Urban%	30.6	69.1	21.0
	Rural%	45.0	75.6	29.0
Preacher	Urban%	78.5	85.6	76.7
	Rural%	77.8	86.1	72.7
Leading house groups	Urban%	18.9	21.7	8.8
	Rural%	22.6	31.1	15.6
Children and young people	Urban%	36.8	40.9	18.6
	Rural%	41.4	43.6	20.3

Table 6.3 Pastoral policy regarding baptisms and marriages

Table 6.3.1 Baptismal policy

	Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
All adults who ask for Christian Baptism should receive it	40.2	45.3	1.65	NS
All parents who ask for infant baptism should receive it	58.1	62.7	1.33	NS
Baptism should be give only to those living locally	6.1	2.5	4.29	.05
Infant baptism should be given only within the church's guidelines	62.9	64.7	.202	NS
Infant baptism should be given only for parents who can confess Christian faith	26.6	22.5	1.38	NS
Adult baptism should only be given to those who confess Christian faith	91.6	91.9	.208	NS
Adult baptism should be given only to those who regularly attend worship	57.8	54.0	.912	NS
Infant baptism should only be given to those who regularly attend worship	7.9	8.0	.00124	NS

Table 6.3.2 Marriage policy

	Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
All those who wish to marry should be offered a church wedding	59.1	53.1	2.28	NS

Only those who live locally should be offered a church wedding	2.1	0.4	2.80	NS
Marriage in church should not be offered to the divorced	4.3	2.9	.756	NS
Marriage in church should only be within the church's guidelines	67.7	72.6	1.753	NS
Marriage in church should only be for those who confess the Christian faith	10.4	11.0	.0602	NS
Marriage in church should only be for regular attenders	1.4	1.7	.0129	NS

CHAPTER 7 WORKLOAD OF MINISTERS

Table 7.1 Ministerial duties, Sunday Services, Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, Confirmations.

Table 7.1.1 Percentages of Sunday services taken

	2 or less	3 or more	ChiSq	P<
Urban	86.8	13.2	51.38	.00000
Rural	63.2	36.8		

Table 7.1.2 Percentages, numbers of Baptisms per year

	6 or less	7 or more	ChiSq	P<
Urban	59.7	40.3	22.61	.00000
Rural	78.0	22.0		

Table 7.1.3 Percentages, numbers of Weddings per year

	4 or less	5 or more	ChiSq	P<
Urban	67.9	32.1	23.82	.00000
Rural	85.3	14.7		

Table 7.1.4 Percentages, numbers of Funerals per year

	20 or less	21 or more	ChiSq	P<
Urban	69.8	30.2	22.61	.00000
Rural	85.1	14.9		

Table 7.1.5 Percentages, numbers of Confirmations per year

	4or less	5 or more	ChiSq	P<
Urban	68.8	31.3	10.59	.00114
Rural	80.6	19.4		

Table 7.2 Opinions concerning the range of ministry

Table 7.2.1 My ministry is strictly confined within geographical boundaries

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
15.2	21.9	4.8	.05

Table 7.2.2 My ministry is free-ranging and I minister where I see a need

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
64.8	70.8	2.49	.10

Table 7.2.3 My ministry is largely concentrated on people who attend my churches

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
63.2	62.2	.069	NS

Table 7.2.4 My ministry is largely concentrated on my denomination

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
64.4	67.2	.541	NS

Table 7.2.5 My ministry is offered to anyone who calls upon me

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
95.0	93.7	.5092	NS

Table 7.3 The demands of ministry

Table 7.3.1 The number of people in my pastoral ministry is too large

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
30.5	23.5	3.672	.05

Table 7.3.2 The small number who attend my churches constrain my ministry

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
18.0	23.2	2.59	NS

Table 7.3.3 The demands of those who do not attend are irksome

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
5.5	6.3	.1985	NS

Table 7.3.4 I am too drawn in to neighbourhood affairs, not of the church

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
3.2	2.1	.6614	NS

Table 7.4 The pressures of ministry to churches in plurality

Table 7.4.1 I would like to have fewer churches in my care

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
37.8	43.8	2.509	NS

Table 7.4.2 I would like to have less distance to travel to my furthest church

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
15.5	27.1	13.113	.0003

Table 7.4.3 I feel that people in my furthest church treat me as an outsider

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
6.3	7.2	.1984	NS

Table 7.4.4 I feel that I cannot give enough time to my smaller churches

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
34.2	55.6	27.546	.00000

Table 7.5 Personal feelings regarding work load

Table 7.5.1 I feel obliged to care for all who attend my churches

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
95.0	97.0	1.60	NS

Table 7.5.2 I feel obliged to care for all who have contact with my churches

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
84.5	91.6	6.75	.01

Table 7.5.3 I feel obliged to care for those in need who do not attend my churches

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
73.5	75.8	.455	NS

Table 7.5.4 I feel obliged to care for all in the locality of my churches

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
44.0	54.7	7.01	.001

Table 7.5.5 I feel obliged to approach strangers who are in pastoral need

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
27.6	36.2	5.25	.02

Table 7.5.6 Members of my congregation have "first call" on my ministry

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
54.5	55.9	.125	NS

Table 7.5.7 Concentration of my time and effort should be for church members

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
20.5	19.4	.114	NS

Table 7.5.8 I am happy to be fully engaged in secular neighbourhood affairs

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
47.6	44.5	.589	NS

Table 7.5.9 My ministry rightly involves serving on neighbourhood committees

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
58.0	51.1	2.96	NS

CHAPTER 8 MINISTERIAL STRESS

Table 8.1 Expectations of the congregations

Table 8.1.1 My church expects me to be fully engaged in secular social affairs

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
19.5	16.5	.911	NS

Table 8.1.2 My church expects the main part of my time and energy

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
84.0	81.9	.495	NS

Table 8.1.3 I am expected to know more about my churches than I do

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
42.1	35.9	2.504	NS

Table 8.1.4. I am expected to remember too many names, faces, life stories

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
41.1	36.1	1.58	NS

Table 8.2 Ministerial tasks, repetition and variety

Table 8.2.1 I feel frustrated in spreading my ministry too thinly

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
56.6	56.2	.0126	NS

Table 8.2.2 I feel bored with the repetition of tasks in my churches

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
20.3	12.7	6.21	.01

Table 8.2.3 I feel pressured by the constant travelling

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
7.1	11.9	4.32	.05

Table 8.2.4 Being minister of more than one church gives me wider vision

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
73.3	84.0	9.47	.005

Table 8.2.5 Being minister of more than one church gives me problems

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
53.6	55.0	.119	NS

Table 8.3 Job satisfaction, feelings of success or failure

Table 8.3.1 I have accomplished many worthwhile things in my ministry

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
72.3	73.0	.042	NS

Table 8.3.2 I get a lot of personal satisfaction from my work

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
88.8	90.3	.377	NS

Table 8.3.3 I always have enthusiasm for my work

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
49.0	55.5	2.601	NS

Table 8.3.4 I feel very positive about my current ministry

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
70.2	76.1	2.61	NS

Table 8.3.5 I feel that my ministry has a positive influence on people's lives

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
84.1	83.2	.097	NS

Table 8.3.6 I feel my ministry is really appreciated by people

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
83.4	81.5	.406	NS

Table 8.3.7 I feel myself frustrated in the accomplishment of tasks important to me

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
45.6	42.0	.824	NS

Table 8.4 Relationship with the people in the churches

Table 8.4.1 I deal very effectively with the problems of people

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
39.8	34.0	2.21	NS

Table 8.4.2 I am feeling negative or cynical about the people with whom I work

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
13.2	9.2	2.33	NS

Table 8.4.3 I can understand how those among whom I work feel about things

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
55.2	54.6	.017	NS

Table 8.4.4 I feel that I am spending less and less time with my people

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
26.8	21.8	2.06	NS

Table 8.4.5 I am less patient with those among whom I minister than I used to be

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
21.0	16.0	2.55	.1

Table 8.4.6 I am becoming less flexible in dealings with those to whom I minister

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
10.3	9.7	.067	NS

Table 8.5 Support felt by ministers from other people

Table 8.5.1 Support from the District Chair

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
35.5	47.5	9.24	.002

Table 8.5.2 Support from the Circuit Superintendent

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
50.0	58.0	2.85	NS

Table 8 5.3 Support from the Circuit Staff

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
46.9	51.1	1.065	NS

Table 8.5.4 Support from retired ministers

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
26.7	33.5	3.25	.07

Table 8.5.5 Support from local congregations

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
51.4	61.6	6.52	.01

Table 8.5.6 I have been discouraged by the lack of support for me here

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
14.8	14.3	.028	NS

Table 8.6 Personal feelings of distress and alienation

Table 8.6.1 I feel drained in fulfilling my ministry roles

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
42.7	35.9	3.03	NS

Table 8.6.2 Fatigue and irritation are part of my daily experience

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
41.5	32.1	5.81	.02

Table 8.6.3 I am invaded by sadness I can't explain

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
13.6	12.7	.131	NS

Table 8.6.4 My humour has a cynical and biting tone

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
14.6	8.9	4.58	.05

Table 8.7 Personal assessment of continuing call to ministry

Table 8.7.1 I am really glad I entered the ministry

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
83.2	90.8	7.25	.01

Table 8.7.2 The ministry here gives real purpose and meaning to my life

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
73.6	81.1	4.81	.05

Table 8.7.3 I gain a lot of personal satisfaction from fulfilling my ministry role

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq	P<
81.7	88.2	4.99	.05

CHAPTER 9 BELIEF PATTERNS OF MINISTERS

Table 9.1 Self assessment by respondents of their theological orientation

Table 9.1.1 Liberal

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
35.2	26.2	5.28	.02

Table 9.1.2 Evangelical

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
24.4	35.1	8.474	.005

Table 9.1.3 Catholic

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
9.7	9.6	.0017	NS

Table 9.1.4 Conservative

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
6.0	9.1	1.97	NS

Table 9.1.5 Radical

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
20.5	14.4	3.374	NS

Table 9.1.6 Charismatic

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
9.4	19.2	11.95	.0005

Table 9.1.7 Ecumenical

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
52.3	53.8	.1414	NS

THEOLOGICAL ISSUES: Respondents' reaction to prompts regarding theological opinions.

Table 9.2 Attitudes to the Bible

Table .9.2.1 For me the bible is the absolute word of God

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
38.0	51.1	10.81	.001

Table 9.2.2 For me daily bible study is of first importance

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
59.33	67.2	4.112	.05

Table 9.2.3 For me the Bible is only one amongst other witnesses to faith

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
68.0	62.7	1.936	NS

Table 9.2.4 For me the bible is fraught with difficulties of interpretation

Urban%	Rural.%	ChiSq.	P<
61.3	61.9	.0218	NS

Table 9.3 Evangelism

Table 9.3.1 It is important to me to be engaged in evangelistic outreach.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
51.2	58.8	3.553	NS

Table 9.3.2 My congregation needs to be engaged in evangelical outreach.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
74.7	81.7	4.265	.05

Table 9.4 Response to Calvinist or Arminian theology

Table 9.4.1 Everyone can know God's love.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
98.4	97.5	.733	NS

Table 9.4.2 Only those who can respond in faith and commitment can be truly His

Urban.%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
32.4	34.5	.308	NS

Table 9.4.3 It is God who chooses those whom he recognises and loves

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
29.9	33.2	.788	NS

Table 9.4.4 God is just, welcoming some and condemning others.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
9.4	15.3	5.309	.05

Table 9.5 The Methodist doctrine of Assurance

Table 9.5.1 It is possible to be sure of one's salvation.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
76.9	84.9	6.205	.01

Table 9.6 The Methodist doctrine of Perfection

Table 9.6.1 It is possible truly to have "the mind of Christ".

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
63.1	64.1	.0682	NS

Table 9.6..2 Christian Perfection is possible.

Urban %	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
51.2	51.9	.0273	NS

Table 9.7 Ministry, Priesthood and Church Order

Table 9.7.1 The threefold order of ministry is important to me.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
24.2	32.9	5.736	.02

Table 9.7.2 It is important that there be no status differences between clergy.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
83.6	83.3	.00979	NS

Table 9.7.3 Episcopal ordination is important to me.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
11.1	13.1	.0621	NS

Table 9.7.4 The concept of the priestly office is important to me.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
26.5	25.9	.02898	NS

Table 9.8 The ministry of the Laity

Table 9.8.1 The concept of the priesthood of all believers is important to me.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
96.8	98.7	2.33	NS

Table 9.8.2 The laity have an important role in the church

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
100	99.6	1.86	NS

Table 9.8.3 The ministry of the laity is as valid as that of the clergy.

Urban%	Rural %	ChiSq.	P<
96.4	95.0	.792	NS

CHAPTER 10 PERSONAL FAITH AND WORSHIP STYLE: Methodist ministers in their private devotions and their preparation for worship

Table 10.1 Personal Faith.

Table 10.1.1 Daily prayer time is important to me.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
84.3	91.7	7.36	.005

Table 10.1.2 I find my faith enriched by sharing with other clergy.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
75.3	68.3	3.87	.05

Table 10.1.3 I find my faith enriched by sharing with lay people.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
93.3	94.6	.446	NS

Table 10.1.4 I find my faith enriched by private meditation.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
80.1	81.6	.2116	NS

Table 10.1.5 I find my faith enriched by private reading.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
93.3	90.8	1.36	NS

Table 10.1.6 Regular confession to a priest is essential for my spiritual health.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
1.6	2.1	.231	NS

Table 10.1.7 Formal confession and absolution is essential in an act of worship.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
45.5	40.3	1.66	NS

Table 10.1.8 Confession is something between me and my God alone.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
38.1	45.8	3.74	.05

Table 10.2 The content and style of worship.

Table 10.2.1 Theology is taught as much through hymns as preaching

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
73.2	76.7	.9633	NS

Table 10.2.2 Traditional chants have a part to play in church worship.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
43.1	41.6	.139	NS

Table 10.2.3 Worship songs and choruses are essential for today's church.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
59.1	56.3	.493	NS

Table 10.2.4 Traditional hymns are essential for today's church.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
63.9	61.9	.286	NS

Table 10.2.5 Liturgical worship is essential for today's church.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
49.5	45.1	1.209	NS

Table 10.2.6 Free-style worship is essential for today's church.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
61.3	61.1	.0017	NS

Table 10.2.7 Extempore prayer is essential for today's church.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
56.2	56.7	.0147	NS

Table 10.2.8 Open prayer times are essential for today's church.

Urban%	Rural%	ChiSq.	P<
43.8	47.2	.669	NS

CHAPTER 11 Differences in Personality Type

Table 11.1 Comparisons of personality type, all respondents: respondents in urban appointments: respondents in rural appointments.

Type	All		Urban		Rural	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
ESTJ	50	5.0	23	5.3	14	6.0
ISTJ	94	9.4	42	9.6	24	10.3
ENTJ	34	3.4	14	3.2	6	2.6
INTJ	68	6.8	39	8.9	9	3.9
ESFJ	112	11.2	49	11.2	24	10.3
ISFJ	187	18.6	74	16.9	52	22.3
ENFJ	70	7.0	26	5.9	19	8.2
INFJ	85	8.5	38	8.7	16	6.9
ESTP	10	1.0	6	1.4	2	0.9
ISTP	7	0.7	3	0.7	2	0.9
ENTP	22	2.2	11	2.5	4	1.7
INTP	32	3.2	14	3.2	8	3.4

ESFP	48	4.8	21	4.8	15	6.4
ISFP	30	3.0	10	2.3	8	3.4
ENFP	73	7.3	35	8.0	13	5.6
INFP	81	8.1	33	7.5	17	7.3
Total	1003	100	438	100	237	100

ChiSq 10.68 with fifteen degrees of freedom P< NS

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Part one asks some questions about yourself and your present appointment. Please write in your answer in the box provided, or tick (✔) the appropriate box.

In which church are you a minister?

Anglican	1	
Methodist	2	

Were you originally ordained in another denomination?

Yes	2	
No	1	

If yes, please write in the denomination

How long have you been engaged in ministry as probationer/presbyter or deacon/priest?

10 years or less	1	
11-20 years	2	
21-30 years	3	
31-40 years	4	
41 years or more	5	

Which ordination course did you follow?

Anglican	1	
Methodist	2	
Ecumenical	3	
Other	4	

What type was this training?

Full-time	2	
Part-time	1	

How many years have you been in your present appointment? Please write in.

Are you currently serving as?

Probationer	1	
Curate	2	
Parish Priest	3	
Rural Dean	4	
Circuit Minister	5	
Superintendent Minister	6	
In an LEP	7	
Specialist/sector minister	8	

How many services do you conduct on a typical Sunday? Please write in. | |

How many baptisms did you conduct in 2003? Please write in. | |

How many weddings did you conduct in 2003? Please write in. | |

How many funerals did you conduct in 2003? Please write in. | |

How many candidates did you prepare for Confirmation/Membership in 2003? Please write in. | |

What is your sex?

Male	1	
Female	2	

What was your age on 31 December 2003?

under 26	1	
26-35	2	
36-45	3	
46-55	4	
56-65	5	
66 and over	6	

In what type of area is your main ministry? (please tick one box only)

Urban	1	
Rural	2	
Mixed	3	

Where is your vicarage/manse situated?

Inner city	1	
Council estate	2	
Suburban neighbourhood	3	
Country town	4	
Rural village	5	

In what kind of area is your main church situated

Inner city	1	
Council estate	2	
Suburban neighbourhood	3	
Country town	4	
Rural village	5	

How many churches are in your pastoral care? | |

In what kind of areas do you have at least once church?

Inner city	1	
Council estate	2	
Suburban neighbourhood	3	
Country town	4	
Rural village	5	

How many churches are in your immediate pastoral care in each of the following areas?

Inner city	1	
Council estate	2	
Suburban neighbourhood	3	
Country town	4	
Rural village	5	

How far do you live from your **nearest** church? Please write in. | Miles

How far do you live from your **furthest** church? Please write in. | Miles

In what area is your **nearest** church?

Inner city	1	
Council estate	2	
Suburban neighbourhood	3	
Country town	4	
Rural village	5	

In what area is your **furthest** church?

Inner city	1	
Council estate	2	
Suburban neighbourhood	3	
Country town	4	
Rural village	5	

How often do you make routine home visits (as distinct from emergencies) to members in the congregation of your **nearest** church?

weekly	5	
fortnightly	4	
monthly	3	
occasionally	2	
never	1	

How often do you make routine home visits (as distinct from emergencies) to members in the congregation of your **furthest** church?

weekly	5	
fortnightly	4	
monthly	3	
occasionally	2	
never	1	

How often are you on the premises of your **nearest** church?

every day	7	
every other day	6	
twice a week	5	
once a week	4	
twice a month	3	
once a month	2	
once a quarter	1	

How often are you on the premises of your **furthest** church?

every day	7	
every other day	6	
twice a week	5	
once a week	4	
twice a month	3	
once a month	2	
once a quarter	1	

How many people attend the main service in each of your churches on a Sunday? (please tick the appropriate boxes)

congregation size	churches									
	main church	2nd church	3rd church	4th church	5th church	6th church	7th church	8th church	9th church	10th church
0-10										
11-20										
21-30										
31-40										
41-50										
51-60										
61-70										
70 or more										

How often do you make home visits to people living in the area of your **nearest** church who are **not** members of your congregation?

weekly	5	
fortnightly	4	
monthly	3	
occasionally	2	
never	1	

How often do you make visits to people living in the area of your **furthest** church who are **not** members of your congregation?

weekly	5	
fortnightly	4	
monthly	3	
occasionally	2	
never	1	

How often do you meet people in secular neighbourhood activities who are not members of your congregation(s)

weekly	5	
fortnightly	4	
monthly	3	
occasionally	2	
never	1	

In arranging an ecumenical occasion tick which group or person most often takes the lead. (Please tick only one box)

A member of the laity	1	
the Methodist minister	2	
the Anglican vicar	3	

When neighbouring churches meet together for an ecumenical occasion which individual most often takes the role of the one in charge? (Please tick only one box)

the Methodist Church Council	1	
the PCC	2	
the Anglican vicar	3	
the Methodist minister	4	

Of how many **secular committees** are you a member in each of your church communities?

church	number
main church	
second church	
third church	
fourth church	
fifth church	
sixth church	

How many of these committees do you chair? Please write in.

Apart from you, on how many of these committees is there an Anglican cleric? Please write in.

Apart from you, on how many of these committees is there a Methodist minister? Please write in.

In how many **non-church activities** other than official committees are you involved in each of your church communities?

church	number
main church	
second church	
third church	
fourth church	
fifth church	
sixth church	

When help is needed in a pastoral task, who would be your **first call?**

a ministerial colleague	1	
the Superintendent/Rural Dean	2	
a church warden/church steward	3	
an ecumenical partner	4	
other agency (please specify)	6	
other (please specify)	5	

When help is needed in an organisational task who would be your **first call?**

a ministerial colleague	1	
the Superintendent/Rural Dean	2	
a church warden/church steward	3	
an ecumenical partner	4	
a secular agency (please specify)	5	

When help is needed to substitute in a service who would be your **first call?**

a ministerial colleague	1	
the Superintendent/Rural Dean	2	
a church warden/church steward	3	
an ecumenical partner	4	
other person (please specify)	5	

Part two explores ways in which you see your ministry. Please circle one number on each line.

At the present time, how would you describe yourself on the following scale?

Liberal	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Evangelical	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Catholic	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Conservative	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Radical	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Charismatic	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Ecumenical	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much

How much support do you feel you have had from the following?

For Anglicans

Diocesan Bishop	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Suffragan Bishop	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Archdeacon	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Rural Dean	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Clergy chapter	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Retired clergy	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Local congregations	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much

For Methodists

District Chair	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Superintendent	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Circuit staff	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Retired ministers	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Local congregations	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much

Ministers and clergy have functional roles within the church. How important are the following roles for you personally?

Teaching the Christian faith	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Pastoral care	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Celebrating the Sacraments	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Preaching the Word of God	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Ensuring the organisation works	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Engaging in community	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
Relating to anyone in need	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much

Part three explores the expectations and realisation of your ministry. The same areas of ministry are presented three times. Please circle one number on each line.

How much priority do you **want** to give to the following aspects of your ministry?

administration	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
leader in the local community	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
sacraments	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
evangelist	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
leader of public worship	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
counsellor	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
visitor	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
preacher	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
leader of house groups	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
children and young people	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much

How much priority do you feel you are **expected** to give to the following aspects of ministry?

administration	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
leader in the local community	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
sacraments	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
evangelist	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
leader of public worship	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
counsellor	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
visitor	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
preacher	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
leader of house groups	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
children and young people	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much

How much priority do you **actually** give to the following aspects of ministry?

administration	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
leader in the local community	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
sacraments	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
evangelist	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
leader of public worship	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
counsellor	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
visitor	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
preacher	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
leader of house groups	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much
children and young people	very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	very much

Part four explores your views on various issues concerned with belief and ministry. Please read the sentence carefully and think, 'Do I agree with it?'

If you *Agree Strongly*, put a ring round ..... (AS) A NC D DS
If you *Agree*, put a ring round ..... AS (A) NC D DS
If you are *Not Certain*, put a ring round ..... AS A (NC) D DS
If you *Disagree*, put a ring round ..... AS A NC (D) DS
If you *Disagree Strongly*, put a ring round ..... AS A NC D (DS)

Theological issues

For me the Bible is the absolute word of God ..... AS A NC D DS

For me daily Bible study is of first importance ..... AS A NC D DS

For me the Bible is only one amongst other witnesses to faith ..... AS A NC D DS

For me the Bible is fraught with difficulties of interpretation ..... AS A NC D DS

Daily prayer time is important to me ..... AS A NC D DS

I find my faith enriched by sharing with other clergy ..... AS A NC D DS

I find my faith enriched by sharing with lay people ..... AS A NC D DS

I find my faith enriched by private meditation ..... AS A NC D DS

I find my faith enriched by private reading ..... AS A NC D DS

It is important to me to be engaged in evangelistic outreach ..... AS A NC D DS

My congregation needs to be engaged in evangelical outreach ..... AS A NC D DS

Everyone can know God's love ..... AS A NC D DS

Only those who respond in faith and commitment can be truly his ..... AS A NC D DS

It is God who chooses those whom he recognises and loves ..... AS A NC D DS

God is just, welcoming some and condemning others ..... AS A NC D DS

It is possible to be sure of one's salvation ..... AS A NC D DS

It is possible truly to have 'the mind of Christ' ..... AS A NC D DS

Christian perfection is possible ..... AS A NC D DS

The threefold order of ministry is important to me ..... AS A NC D DS

It is important that there be no status differences between clergy ..... AS A NC D DS

Episcopal ordination is important to me ..... AS A NC D DS

The concept of the priestly office is important to me ..... AS A NC D DS

The concept of the priesthood of all believers is important to me ..... AS A NC D DS

The laity have an important ministry in the church ..... AS A NC D DS

The ministry of the laity is as valid as that of the clergy ..... AS A NC D DS

Regular confession to a priest is essential for spiritual health ..... AS A NC D DS

Formal confession and absolution is essential in an act of worship ..... AS A NC D DS

Confession is something between me and my God alone ..... AS A NC D DS

Theology is taught as much through hymns as preaching ..... AS A NC D DS

Traditional chants have a part to play in church worship ..... AS A NC D DS

Worship songs and choruses are essential for today's church ..... AS A NC D DS

Traditional hymns are essential for today's church ..... AS A NC D DS

Liturgical worship is essential for today's church ..... AS A NC D DS

Free-style worship is essential for today's church ..... AS A NC D DS

Extempore prayer is essential for today's church ..... AS A NC D DS

Open prayer times are essential for today's church ..... AS A NC D DS

Ministry matters

My ministry is strictly confined within geographical boundaries ..... AS A NC D DS

My ministry is free ranging and I minister where I see a need ..... AS A NC D DS

My ministry is largely concentrated on people who attend my church(es) .... AS A NC D DS

My ministry is largely concentrated on my denomination ..... AS A NC D DS

My ministry is offered to anyone who calls upon me ..... AS A NC D DS

The number of people in my pastoral responsibility is too large ..... AS A NC D DS

The small number who attend my church(es) constrain my ministry ..... AS A NC D DS

The demands of those who do not attend are irksome ..... AS A NC D DS

I am too drawn in to neighbourhood affairs not of the church ..... AS A NC D DS

There are too many demands on me because I am a minister ..... AS A NC D DS

All adults who ask for Christian baptism should receive it ..... AS A NC D DS

All parents who ask for infant baptism should receive it ..... AS A NC D DS

Baptism should be given only to those living within the parish/local boundary AS A NC D DS

Baptism should be given only within the church's guidelines ..... AS A NC D DS

Baptism should be given only to children of Christian parents ..... AS A NC D DS

Infant baptism should be given only for parents who confess Christian faith . AS A NC D DS

Adult baptism should be given only to those who confess Christian faith .... AS A NC D DS

Adult baptism should be given only to those who regularly attend worship .. AS A NC D DS

Infant baptism should be given only for parents who regularly attend worship AS A NC D DS

All those who wish to marry should be offered a church wedding ..... AS A NC D DS

Only those within the parish boundary should be married in church ..... AS A NC D DS

Marriage in church should not be offered to the divorced ..... AS A NC D DS

Marriage in church should only be within the church's guidelines ..... AS A NC D DS

Marriage in church should only be for those who confess Christian faith .... AS A NC D DS

Marriage in church should only be for regular attenders ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel obliged to care for all who attend my church(es) ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel obliged to care for all who have contact with my church(es) ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel obliged to care for those in need who do not attend my church(es) ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel obliged to care for all in my parish/locality ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel obliged to approach strangers who are in pastoral need ..... AS A NC D DS

Members of my congregation have 'first call' on my ministry ..... AS A NC D DS

Concentration of my time and effort should be for church members ..... AS A NC D DS

I am happy to be fully engaged in secular neighbourhood affairs ..... AS A NC D DS

My ministry rightly involves serving on neighbourhood committees ..... AS A NC D DS

My church expects me to be fully engaged in secular social affairs ..... AS A NC D DS

My church expects the main part of my time and energy ..... AS A NC D DS

Church structures

I would like to have fewer churches in my care ..... AS A NC D DS

I would like a closer relationship with my congregations ..... AS A NC D DS

I would like to have less distance to travel to my furthest church ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel that people in my furthest church treat me as an outsider ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel that I cannot give enough time to my smaller churches ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel stimulated by the differences between my churches ..... AS A NC D DS

I am expected to know more about my churches than I do ..... AS A NC D DS

I am expected to remember too many names, faces, life stories ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel frustrated by spreading my ministry too thinly ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel encouraged by not being confined to one church ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel bored with the repetition of tasks in my churches ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel pressured by constant travelling ..... AS A NC D DS

Being minister of more than one church gives me wider vision ..... AS A NC D DS

Being minister of more than one church gives me more problems ..... AS A NC D DS

I am known by name by the people in the place where I live ..... AS A NC D DS

I am known as Vicar/Methodist minister in the place where I live ..... AS A NC D DS

I am known by sight in the place where I live ..... AS A NC D DS

I am known by name in my smallest church neighbourhood ..... AS A NC D DS

I am known as Vicar/Methodist minister in my smallest church neighbourhood AS A NC D DS

I am known by sight in my smallest church neighbourhood ..... AS A NC D DS

Personal feelings

I feel drained in fulfilling my ministry roles ..... AS A NC D DS

I have accomplished many worthwhile things in my current ministry ..... AS A NC D DS

Fatigue and irritation are part of my daily experience ..... AS A NC D DS

I gain a lot of personal satisfaction from working with people in my current ministry ..... AS A NC D DS

I am invaded by sadness I can't explain ..... AS A NC D DS

I deal very effectively with the problems of people in my current ministry ... AS A NC D DS

I am feeling negative or cynical about the people with whom I work ..... AS A NC D DS

I can easily understand how those among whom I minister feel about things .. AS A NC D DS

I always have enthusiasm for my work ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel very positive about my current ministry ..... AS A NC D DS

My humour has a cynical or biting tone ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel that my pastoral ministry has a positive influence on people's lives .... AS A NC D DS

I find myself spending less and less time with those among whom I minister . AS A NC D DS

I feel that my teaching ministry has a positive influence on people's faith .... AS A NC D DS

I have been discouraged by the lack of personal support for me here ..... AS A NC D DS

I feel my ministry is really appreciated by people ..... AS A NC D DS

I find myself frustrated in my attempts to accomplish tasks important to me .. AS A NC D DS

I am really glad I entered the ministry ..... AS A NC D DS

I am less patient with those among whom I minister than I used to be ..... AS A NC D DS

The ministry here gives real purpose and meaning to my life ..... AS A NC D DS

I am becoming less flexible in my dealings with those among whom I minister ..... AS A NC D DS

I gain a lot of personal satisfaction from fulfilling my ministry role ..... AS A NC D DS

***Part five** contains pairs of characteristics. For each pair tick (✓) ONE box next to that characteristic which is closer to the real you, even if you feel both characteristics apply to you. Tick the characteristic that reflects the real you, even if other people see you differently.*

PLEASE COMPLETE EVERY QUESTION

Do you tend to be more... Active	☐	**or**	☐	Reflective
Do you tend to be more... Interested in facts	☐	**or**	☐	Interested in theories
Do you tend to be more... Concerned for harmony	☐	**or**	☐	Concerned for justice
Do you tend to be more... Happy with routine	☐	**or**	☐	Unhappy with routine
Are you more... Private	☐	**or**	☐	Sociable
Are you more... Inspirational	☐	**or**	☐	Practical
Are you more... Analytic	☐	**or**	☐	Sympathetic
Are you more... Structured	☐	**or**	☐	Open-ended
Do you prefer... Having many friends	☐	**or**	☐	A few deep friendships
Do you prefer... The concrete	☐	**or**	☐	The abstract
Do you prefer... Feeling	☐	**or**	☐	Thinking
Do you prefer... To act on impulse	☐	**or**	☐	To act on decisions
Do you... Dislike parties	☐	**or**	☐	Like parties
Do you... Prefer to design	☐	**or**	☐	Prefer to make
Do you... Tend to be firm	☐	**or**	☐	Tend to be gentle
Do you... Like to be in control	☐	**or**	☐	Like to be adaptable
Are you... Energised by others	☐	**or**	☐	Drained by too many people
Are you... Conventional	☐	**or**	☐	Inventive
Are you... Critical	☐	**or**	☐	Affirming
Are you... Happier working alone	☐	**or**	☐	Happier working in groups
Do you tend to be more... Socially detached	☐	**or**	☐	Socially involved
Do you tend to be more... Concerned for meaning	☐	**or**	☐	Concerned about detail
Do you tend to be more... Logical	☐	**or**	☐	Humane
Do you tend to be more... Orderly	☐	**or**	☐	Easygoing
Are you more... Talkative	☐	**or**	☐	Reserved
Are you more... Sensible	☐	**or**	☐	Imaginative
Are you more... Tactful	☐	**or**	☐	Truthful
Are you more... Spontaneous	☐	**or**	☐	Organised
Are you mostly... An introvert	☐	**or**	☐	An extravert
Are you mostly focused on... Present realities	☐	**or**	☐	Future possibilities
Are you mostly... Trusting	☐	**or**	☐	Sceptical
Are you mostly... Leisurely	☐	**or**	☐	Punctual
Do you... Speak before thinking	☐	**or**	☐	Think before speaking
Do you prefer to... Improve things	☐	**or**	☐	Keep things as they are
Do you... Seek for truth	☐	**or**	☐	Seek for peace
Do you... Dislike detailed planning	☐	**or**	☐	Like detailed planning
Are you... Happy with uncertainty	☐	**or**	☐	Happier with certainty
Are you... Up in the air	☐	**or**	☐	Down to earth
Are you... Warm-hearted	☐	**or**	☐	Fair-minded
Are you... Systematic	☐	**or**	☐	Casual