



Calling Far and Wide Project: Assistant Ministers

Survey and Diary Report

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*Prepared by Dr Mike Clinton, Department of Management, Kings College London, on behalf
of the National Continuing Ministry Development Panel*



Executive Summary

- Survey data were collected from 81 assistant ministers across June 2016; of those, 69 then went on to take part in a week-long diary study in the following months.
- The sample was fairly evenly spread in terms of gender, had a good spread of locations and involved 37 dioceses; all participants reporting ethnicity were white. The average age was 61 years and only around a third had dependents.
- The large majority of the participants were part-time; 7% were full time. Most reported to assist another licensed minister (73%); others were (instead or as well) members of team ministry (22%) or part of a lay ministry (12%).
- Assistant ministers report clear and strong callings to ministry
- In terms of personality traits, assistant ministers appear to be highly conscientious, agreeable, emotionally stable and positive in outlook.
- Assistant ministers report only more modest levels of proactive orientation and resilience; while not problematic there may be areas of potential development
- The assistant ministers indicated five key activities to which they feel particularly called: preaching/teaching, prayer, liturgical duties, pastoral ministry and working with colleagues.
- Assistant ministers do not see intentional outreach as central to their calling, do not feel that they are particularly competent at it, and do not spend much of their week engaged in it.
- A particular feature of assistant ministry is the 'other activities' that they do; these may be activities beyond those typical to ministers, such as mentoring, building relationships with others or working with particular groups, and other specific roles such as being a street pastor. These activities take up more time than any other individual activity, are very central to their calling and are often what they feel most competent at doing.
- Assistant ministers do spend an hour and a half of an 'average' day engaged in administrative tasks; which is high relative to other activities but low compared with other ministers.
- Some slightly concerning findings suggest that assistant ministers experience levels of daily calling fulfilment that are a little lower than other clergy groups. However, around 80% still view the sacrifices they make through ministry as worthwhile.
- However, positive findings were much more common; Assistant ministers begin the day feeling generally optimistic and positive, they engage in activities during the day mainly out of autonomous motivation, and they report low levels of emotional exhaustion and positive mood at the end of the day.

1. Introduction to the Calling Far and Wide Project

The Calling Far and Wide (CFW) project is a collection of studies aiming to examine the activities and experiences of clergy engaged in ministry within Higher Education chaplaincy, pioneering and Assistant ministry. This research builds on an existing research project that made a comparative study of incumbents in 2013: The Patterns of Priestly Practice (3P) project.

The CFW project is formed of a mix of qualitative and quantitative studies that has been conducted via a series of interviews, surveys and diaries. The theme of the research that links the studies is the examination of 'ministry on the edge', either in terms of role or in terms of activity. The research has been carried out by a team from King's College London, led by Drs Mike Clinton, Jane Sturges and Ali Budjanovcanin on behalf of the National Continuing Ministry Development Panel. The project received ethical approval by a King's College London Ethics Panel. Questions about the overall project should be directed to Dr Mike Clinton (michael.clinton@kcl.ac.uk). Queries in relation use of the research within the Church context should be directed to Dr Tim Ling, Head of Ministry Development, Ministry Division (tim.ling@churchofengland.org).

2. The Present Report

This document reports on the findings of the quantitative data collected: A survey of assistant ministers and a subsequent seven-day diary study. In June 2016, a sample of 265 assistant ministers were invited to take part in a survey, identified as assistant ministers from their participation in the Experiences of Ministry Survey in May 2015. Willing participants were also invited to take part in a subsequent seven-day diary study soon after; with one diary entry made in the morning and another in the afternoon/evening. In total, 81 self-supporting assistant ministers took part in the survey (a further nine respondents were identified as either stipendiary or active retired ministers and not included in the analyses presented here), which represents a 34% response rate. Of those, 69 assistant ministers then took part in the diary study, each of them providing a diary entry across the seven days. The diary findings will be reported here after the survey findings.

3. Findings of the Assistant Minister Survey

Table I presents some demographic information for the 81 respondents to the survey. The vast majority of the sample is white (British). A similar proportion of women and men have responded. Less than a third of the sample have dependent relatives or children. A range of age groups is also represented in the sample, but they are very few representatives below the age of 45 years (mean age = 61 years).

Additional to information provided in Table I, on average the assistant ministers in the sample were ordained as a deacon and/or priest 9 years previously. They had on average been licensed to their diocese for 7 years previously and licensed to their present role 4.5 years previously. The national scope of the sample is very wide with a total of 37 dioceses being represented.

Table I. Sample demographic background

		Background survey sample (n=81)	
		n	%
<i>Gender</i>	Male	37	46
	Female	41	51
	No answer provided	<5	-
<i>Dependent relatives/children</i>	Yes	24	30
	No	54	67
	No answer provided	<5	-
<i>Ethnicity</i>	White – English / Welsh /Scottish / Northern Irish / British	76	94
	White - Other	<5	-
	No answer provided	<5	-
<i>Age</i>	25 – 34 years	-	-
	35 – 44 years	<5	-
	45 – 54 years	13	16
	55 – 64 years	31	38
	65– 74 years	33	41
	No answer provided	<5	-

NOTES: To maintain anonymity, responses less than 5 are not presented

Table 2 presents some information about the assistant minister role of the sample (note that for several of the questions multiple responses could be given, therefore the percentage totals often exceed 100%). The majority (93%) of these assistant ministers work part-time. The majority of the participants report that they assist another licensed minister(s) (73%), but many reported being part of a team ministry or working with lay people. A very small number of assistant ministers reported working alone or being assisted themselves, but they also reported assisting another licensed minister too. Other contexts were reported which mainly included a form of collaborative ministry or a ministry spread across multiple contexts. In terms of location, there was a good spread across the different categories. Other locations reported included a cathedral, a workplace and varied locations.

Table 2. Assistant minister role

		Background survey sample (n=81)	
		n	%
<i>Role Context</i>	Full-time	6	7
	Part-time	74	93
	Missing	<5	-
<i>Kind of Ministry Work</i>	I assist another licensed minister(s)	59	73
	Member of team ministry	18	22
	With a team of lay people / with a lay ministry	10	12
	I am assisted by another licensed minister(s)	<5	-
	I work completely on my own	<5	-
	Other	11	14
<i>Location of role</i>	City centre/Inner city/Urban	21	26
	Suburban/Large town	13	16
	Market/Rural town	30	37
	Rural remote / villages	21	26
	Coastal	<5	-
	Other	6	7

An important aim of the CFW survey is to examine several rather stable attitudes and traits of assistant ministers. Reported in Table 3 is a ranked list of scores on a set of mostly standard psychological measures of such traits and attitudes. Brief definitions of the attitudes and traits are also provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Means and standard deviation of attitudes and traits

		Mean	SD
Calling Clarity	Extent to which calling is perceived to be clear and strong	4.29	0.72
Conscientiousness	Personality trait - tendency to be organised and dependable	4.19	0.74
Agreeableness	Personality trait - tendency to be compassionate and cooperative	4.02	0.72
Calling Centrality / Intensity	Extent to which a calling to ministry is central to the self	3.97	0.70
Emotional Stability	Personality trait - tendency to be calm and unemotional	3.75	0.82
Need to Sacrifice	Extent to which sacrifice is seen to be an important aspect of ministry	3.73	0.69
Proactive personality	Extent to which people actively seek to change their environment/ selves for the better	3.72	0.62
Openness	Personality trait - tendency to be curious towards new things	3.64	0.72
Resilience	Extent to which people bounce back and recover from difficulties	3.54	0.71
Schedule Autonomy	Extent to which daily schedule is perceived to be within one's control	3.37	0.90
Extraversion	Personality trait - tendency to be assertive and social	3.16	1.20
Negative affectivity	Extent to which people have a trait to view things negatively	2.10	0.69

(all on 5-point scales)

We can see that the sample is rather high on calling clarity, suggesting that the respondents see their call to ministry as both clear and strong in nature. They reported slightly lower calling centrality, which suggests that assistant ministers are not completely absorbed by their calling, even though it was still quite high. There is a sense that assistant ministers feel compelled to make significant sacrifices as part of ministry – however 80% of assistant ministers indicated that they regularly felt that the sacrifices they make were ultimately worthwhile. This means that 20% of the assistant ministers do not feel this. These findings indicate that the majority of the sample was rather clear on what their own calling was and that it played a central and meaningful role within their lives, and that while there are frequent sacrifices to make, this is viewed as worthwhile. However a minority of assistant ministers seem to be questioning whether their sacrificial efforts equate to worthwhile outcomes.

In terms of general personality, the assistant ministers scored highly on conscientiousness and agreeableness. These are both very positive personality characteristics, likely to help assistant ministers enact their role successfully. While slightly less high, they also reported to be broadly emotionally stable and open to experiences, and report low negative affectivity, which are broadly encouraging findings. Lower however, was the score on the extraversion measure, which suggests that overall the group have a mix of introvert and extravert tendencies.

The participants were positive but not strong in their assessment of their proactive personality (i.e. the extent to which they are the type of person to seek positive change within their environment/self), resilience (being able to recover quickly from difficulties, which is an important ability for healthy psychological functioning) and also in terms of their schedule autonomy. This suggests that there are some opportunities to influence their daily schedule, that they are the kind of people that will do this, and that when facing problems they are usually able to cope with them. However, each could be higher.

The survey further asked participants to consider activities from a list of 13 activities in terms of how important each was in relation to their sense of calling. Table 4 indicates the calling prototypicality of activities across the sample, i.e. activities that are seen to be important in relation to one's calling. Three activities were seen to be particularly prototypical of assistant ministers' calling: Preaching/teaching, participation in prayer, liturgical duties. Exercising pastoral ministry and working with colleagues were also highly rated. On the other hand, use of social media, administration and running nurture courses for new Christians/members were the lowest ranked activities in relation to calling prototypicality. Intentional outreach was also rather low down on this list.

Table 4. Calling prototypicality of activities (5-point scale)

	Mean	SD
Preaching/teaching (including preparation)	4.53	0.70
Participation in prayer	4.52	0.74
Other Activity 1	4.52	0.67
Other Activity 2	4.50	0.71
Liturgical duties	4.49	0.68
Exercising pastoral ministry	4.24	0.93
Working with colleagues	4.22	0.93
Conducting and preparing for occasional offices	4.00	1.08
Leadership role in local community	3.56	1.16
Working with children	3.52	1.19
Intentional outreach	3.51	1.20
Engaging in your own CMD	3.50	1.00
Running nurture courses for new Christians/members	3.33	1.22
Administration and organisation	2.75	1.12
Use of social media	2.10	1.15

It is worth noting that two of the most highly ranked activities for calling prototypicality were activities that were not listed – additional activities were reported by almost half of participants (n=33) and included activities like working with particular groups of people (e.g. elderly, external organisations), mentoring, building networks or links between groups or organisations, and specific roles (e.g. street pastor, food bank treasurer). So it seems that these additional roles and activities are viewed centrally to the mission of assistant ministers.

In addition to calling prototypicality, participants were asked to rate the 13 activities in terms of how competent they felt when performing each of them. Overall, the assistant ministers reported levels of competence well above the mid-point of the scale and this is quite positive. As shown in Table 7, most highly rated were liturgical duties, preaching/teaching (including preparation), conducting and preparing for occasional offices, and working with colleagues. ‘Other activities’ were also reported very highly in terms of competence, emphasising again that these additional aspects of assistant minister roles are prominent. The activity on which assistant ministers felt least competent was using social media. Working with children, intentional outreach, running nurture courses and engaging in CMD were also lower in terms of perceived competence.

Table 5. Perceived competence regarding activities (5-point scale)

	Mean	SD
Other Activity 1	4.18	0.81
Liturgical duties	4.15	0.58
Preaching/teaching (including preparation)	4.00	0.79
Conducting and preparing for occasional offices	3.95	0.65
Other Activity 2	3.94	0.80
Working with colleagues	3.91	0.85
Administration and organisation	3.75	0.98
Exercising pastoral ministry	3.73	0.80
Participation in prayer	3.69	0.86
Leadership role in local community	3.40	1.00
Engaging in your own CMD	3.25	0.94
Running nurture courses for new Christians/members	3.21	0.98
Intentional outreach	3.17	0.92
Working with children	3.16	1.14
Use of social media	2.40	1.27

Perhaps with the exception of administration, there is a clear correspondence between the calling prototypicality and perceived competence ranking of the activities in Tables 4 and 5.

4. Findings of the Assistant Minister Diary Study

A total of 69 of the 81 Assistant ministers that took part in the survey also took part in the diary study. The diary asked respondents to complete a short set of questions in the morning and in the afternoon/evening for a period of seven days. All 69 respondents completed diary entries for the full seven days. While this remains a good response rate and provides an interesting insight into a ‘week in the life’ of Assistant ministers, the low sample size limits some of the analysis possible with the data. Accordingly the findings must remain rather descriptive and at a relatively aggregated level.

Each morning we asked the diary sample whether it was a ‘day off’. For the findings presented below, all days off have been removed, irrespective of whether days off have been taken. This left 347 ‘working’ days for which data were recorded.

4.1 How do assistant ministers feel in the morning before ministry begins?

In the morning diary, questions were asked about how well people slept, how much energy (vigour) people felt after they had woken, how optimistic they felt about the day ahead and about how they felt about themselves (self-esteem). Each variable was measured on a 5-point scale, and means and standard deviations are reported in Table 6 below. The findings show that overall assistant ministers sleep rather well and report high levels of optimism and self-esteem at the start of the day. Vigour is a fraction below the mid-point of the scale, suggesting that assistant ministers do not always start the day feeling full of energy. Nevertheless, the broad picture is one of positive starts to the day.

Table 6 Average level of sleep quality, morning vigour, optimism and self-esteem

		Mean	SD
Sleep quality (1=very poor; 5=very good)	Rating of sleep quality for the previous night	3.62	0.93
Morning vigour (1=not at all; 5=A great deal)	Rating of energy felt after waking up that morning	2.96	0.87
Optimism (1=Strongly disagree; 5 Strongly agree)	Rating of optimism towards the day ahead	4.10	0.70
Self-esteem (1=not at all; 5=A great deal)	Perceptions of self-worth at beginning of the day	3.94	0.60

4.2 How do assistant ministers spend their time during an average day?

In the afternoon/evening diary, assistant ministers were asked to complete a grid indicating the activities that they had engaged in that day and at what times. Table 7 presents the average number of hours reported to be engaged in the various activities across the days recorded in the diary study.

Here we can see that during an average day, assistant ministers spend the largest part of it engaged in the additional and unlisted activity (just over three hours). Then administration and organisation takes up about one and a half hours. They also spend around an hour each day engaged in each of prayer, liturgical duties, pastoral ministry, preaching and teaching, and travelling. They spend negligible or no time engaging in CMD, working with children, using social media or running nurture courses.

It is important to note that no attempt is made to ‘add up’ these hours to offer a measure of ‘total daily hours’. This is because the respondents to the diaries could enter multiple activities within an hour period. We also do not know whether an entry within an hour period refers to 5 or 60 minutes within that hour. These figures assume the latter and accordingly, they should be understood as maximum estimates.

Table 7. Average times (hours) spent in engaged in activities on an average day for assistant ministers

	Mean	SD
Other activity	3.18	4.30
Administration & organisation	1.56	1.83
Corporate & individual prayer	1.18	1.13
Liturgical duties	1.04	1.74
Exercising pastoral ministry	1.02	1.57
Travel to/from worship centres	1.01	1.53
Preaching/teaching	0.90	1.57
Working with colleagues	0.64	1.36
Leadership in local community	0.54	1.79
Occasional offices	0.37	0.98
Extra-parish activities	0.33	1.19
Intentional outreach	0.28	0.94
Engaging in your own CMD	0.18	0.83
Working with children/youth	0.16	0.68
Use of social media	0.15	0.54
Running nurture courses	0.04	0.30

4.3 How do assistant ministers generally structure their day?

We can also look at the activity data in a slightly different way to consider when assistant ministers perform the various activities during an 'average day'. Table 8 on the following page presents the data organised by time of the day. Here we can see that activities such as administration and organisation are performed throughout the day, and particularly the mornings. Pastoral ministry and liturgical duties are typically performed in the morning (with liturgical duties increasing again at 5pm). Corporate and individual prayer typically occurs just once, at the beginning of the day. 'Other activities' occur through the 24hr day and most typically during 9am-5pm.

Table 8. Percentage of assistant ministers engaging in each activity during each hour of the average day

	Preach / Teach	Liturgical duties	Prayer	Admin	Pastoral ministry	Occasional offices	Communal leadership	Work colleague	Social media	CMD	Outreach	Nurture course	Work youth	Extra-parish	Travel	Break	Other activity
04:00																14%	10%
05:00			2%												1%	12%	11%
06:00	1%	1%	12%	2%	1%										3%	9%	12%
07:00	3%	2%	21%	5%	2%	1%		1%	2%	1%					7%	10%	12%
08:00	4%	8%	26%	9%	4%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%			1%		12%	14%	12%
09:00	9%	17%	18%	16%	9%	2%	4%	5%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	11%	5%	19%
10:00	14%	19%	8%	18%	12%	4%	6%	6%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%	6%	5%	22%
11:00	9%	15%	4%	14%	12%	5%	6%	6%	0%	2%	2%		1%	4%	4%	6%	24%
12:00	6%	9%	4%	10%	11%	4%	6%	7%	1%	1%	3%		0%	2%	7%	22%	20%
13:00	4%	2%	1%	8%	9%	3%	6%	6%	1%	1%	3%		1%	2%	7%	31%	20%
14:00	6%	4%	1%	12%	9%	5%	6%	5%	0%	2%	4%	1%	2%	2%	4%	18%	26%
15:00	6%	6%	1%	10%	7%	4%	6%	5%	1%	2%	3%		1%	3%	4%	14%	29%
16:00	5%	5%	3%	10%	7%	1%	4%	4%	1%	1%	3%		2%	2%	5%	17%	27%
17:00	4%	4%	4%	6%	6%	1%	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%		1%	2%	10%	21%	24%
18:00	4%	4%	4%	8%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	10%	29%	16%
19:00	5%	4%	4%	9%	4%	2%	2%	5%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	4%	5%	24%	17%
20:00	6%	3%	3%	8%	5%	2%	3%	6%	1%	1%	2%		1%	4%	3%	22%	14%
21:00	5%	1%	1%	8%	3%	1%	2%	3%	1%		1%		1%	3%	2%	26%	13%
22:00	1%	1%	5%	4%		1%		1%						1%	3%	27%	12%
23:00	1%		4%	1%											1%	23%	12%
24:00			1%													14%	11%
01:00																14%	11%
02:00																14%	11%
03:00																14%	11%

4.4 How do assistant ministers generally feel during the day & after ministry ends?

In the afternoon/evening diary assistant ministers were asked a number of further questions about their day and about how they felt at that moment in time. The findings are reported in Table 11. They were asked about what had been motivating them that day. They reported being motivated by ‘intrinsic’ factors (fun, personal interest) for some parts of the day, but by ‘identified’ motivation factors (importance of the task) even more frequently. They were motivated by ‘introjected’ motivation (guilt, anxiety) much less, but still for small parts of the day. These are broadly positive findings with regards to motivation, as research findings have supported a link between more autonomous forms of motivation and things like well-being and effectiveness. Overall assistant ministers indicate that they are able to fulfil their calling a little more than ‘moderately’. This is perhaps an area of slight concern and one might hope this to be a little higher.

Table 11. Attitudes and experiences during the day and evening for assistant ministers

		Mean	SD
Intrinsic motivation (1=Not at all; 5=All day)	Extent to which activities motivated by fun/interest	3.05	0.78
Identified motivation (1=Not at all; 5=All day)	Extent to which activities motivated by their importance	3.63	0.82
Introjected motivation (1=Not at all; 5=All day)	Extent to which activities motivated by guilt anxiety	1.63	0.88
Calling fulfilment (1=Not at all; 5=A great deal)	Extent to which one feels that the day enabled a fulfilment of calling	3.32	1.00
Emotional dissonance (1=Not at all; 5=All day)	Acting in a way that is inconsistent with how one feels	1.52	0.61
Sacrifice (1=Not at all; 5=A great deal)	Frequency of personal sacrifices during day	2.07	0.93
Emotional exhaustion (1=Not at all; 5=A great deal)	Feelings of tiredness approaching burnout	1.78	0.76
Afternoon/Evening mood (1=Not at all; 5=A great deal)	Mood at the time of the diary survey	3.79	0.69
Psychological detachment (1=Not at all; 5=A great deal)	Whether able to distance oneself from ministry during evening (rated the following morning)	3.36	0.99

Assistant ministers report that their accomplishments each day required making sacrifices only ‘a little’. Emotional dissonance (having to behave in ways that are not emotionally authentic) does not seem to be a common experience at all. While there is some experience of emotional exhaustion/burnout at the end of the day, this is relatively low. There are also relatively high levels of psychological detachment in the evening (as reported the following morning), which may aid daily recovery. They also report a broadly positive mood at the moment they complete the survey. These are all positive findings.

5. Conclusions

The findings of the survey and diary study of assistant ministers reveals a broadly positive picture of both the respondents and their experience of ministry. The respondents report strong callings and appear to have personality traits and competencies that seem suited to their roles. During the diary, assistant ministers seemed to be broadly motivated, satisfied and fulfilled by their experiences of ministry.

This profile is similar to other types of ministers. Their personalities seem suited to ministry roles. Proactivity and resilience are perhaps areas that have scope for improvement. They are a little older in years than other types of ministers. The main difference is, unsurprisingly, in the typically part-time nature of their role, the assistance of other licensed ministers or work in team (lay) ministries, and their greater involvement in 'additional activities' which form large and highly valued parts of their roles.

There is perhaps a picture of a slight trade-off that emerges. Assistant ministers report a role that is perhaps a little less demanding than other types of ministers, at least in terms of hours, level of administration, level of sacrifice, level of psychological detachment and level of emotional exhaustion. However they also report relatively modest levels of calling fulfilment and a fifth of assistant ministers did not regularly see their sacrifices as being worthwhile. This balances a less demanding role with a slightly less rewarding experience of that role.

One interesting finding is the relatively low emphasis made on intentional outreach, either in terms of calling prototypicality, competence or time spent engaged in that activity. It may be that the responsibility for outreach falls to other non-assistant roles, but it is striking in that outreach does not feature very highly at all in the experience of assistant ministers.

Importantly, these findings should be caveated with reference to the modest sample size involved, but seen also to offer an indication of the daily experiences of a range of assistant ministers. Therefore, while we caution against seeing these findings as 'fact', we believe they should be broadly representative of that population.