How are you, vicar?

A study in scripture, psychology and clergy wellbeing in an English diocese
Why are clergy worth studying?

• Peculiarities of the role
  – C of E Common Tenure is not employment or worker status
  – Freedom and autonomy bring their own challenges

• The job may be getting harder
  – Fewer stipendiaries, still as much work

• I'm a bishop, I'm meant to care

• We have the data
Why another study?

• Wellbeing is less studied than stress
  – The concept of balanced affect
• Updated national context
  – Guidelines for the professional conduct of the clergy
  – Clergy in a Complex Age
• Scripture largely peripheral to the literature
• And we have the data!
What does the data contain?

• 101 responses from stipendiary clergy in parish ministry in the same diocese (another 80 SSM)

• Questions around:
  – Sources of support
  – Positive experience in ministry
  – Work-life balance
  – Housing

• No data on age or sex, to protect anonymity
Stability – the context

- House and stipend form the stable base from which ministry is exercised
- Dual function of the house as home and workplace
- A standard house in a wide range of settings
- Living and raising family in an area out of one’s natural cultural context
- Partners and children needing access to work
Stability – the Scripture

• Leviticus 25:32
  – As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites shall forever have the right of redemption of the houses in the cities belonging to them

• Matt 10:11-14
  – Disciples accommodated by and among those to whom they are sent

• John 10:27
  – The shepherd who knows and is known by his flock
Stability – the results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction with clergy housing</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My house…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provides me with a suitable living environment</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provides me with a suitable working environment</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is secure</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is adequately maintained</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is adequately heated and insulated</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Success and Support – the context

• Balanced affect suggests successes matter
• Dioceses provide a range of services which might provide support
  – MDR, Training, Chapters, Synods
• Poor support from above may leave clergy feeling isolated and exposed
  – Bishop, archdeacon, rural dean
• Poor support from the locality may add to stress
  – Church wardens, PCC
Success and Support - Scripture

• Genesis 1:26; Exodus 35:30-35
  – Made in Creator’s image; human work as creative and worthy of celebration
• Luke 10:18
  – Jesus celebrates his disciples’ achievements
• Luke 10:1
  – Disciples sent out in pairs
• Mark 9:33-34; Matt 20:20-21
  – Disputes about status
• John 21:15-16
  – Peter takes up responsibility for supporting the flock
Success and Support – the results (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive experience in ministry</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy my ministry in the Diocese</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ministerial development review was a positive experience</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I value the services of clergy support and training</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find chapter meetings valuable</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find deanery synod meetings helpful</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But..... 7 clergy disagreed with all 5 items
Success and Support – the results (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeling affirmed in ministry</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the Bishop</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By my archdeacon</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By my area dean</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the churchwardens</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the Parochial Church Council</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But…. 4 clergy felt unaffirmed by all 5 sources
Success and Support – the results (3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of support in ministry</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a spiritual director</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a work consultant</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a member of a cell group</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get support from a prayer group</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get support from members of my congregation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get support from family and friends</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But…. 5 clergy accessed none of these sources of support
Sabbath – the context

- 6 day week in a society that has settled on 5
- Clergy stipendiary numbers have reduced more rapidly than churches or congregations
- Ever increasing complexities of regulation
  - Safeguarding
- Surveys show a persistent pattern of clergy working excessive hours
Sabbath – the Scripture

• Genesis 2:3
  – God rests on the seventh day

• Matt 12:8-12
  – Sabbath is for human benefit, good actions should not be prevented
  – But clergy always have more good works to do!

• Biblical pattern of annual cycle eg Luke 2:41-44

• Jesus lives a balanced life of activity and withdrawal

• James 5:13-16
  – The priority of restoring the sick to health
Sabbath – the results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managing work-life balance</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with how my time is divided between work and leisure</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One day a week taken off</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full holiday entitlement taken</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No time taken off sick in past year</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sabbath – the follow up

Why do many clergy not take their full holiday entitlement?

• Don’t need that much
• Hard to be off work whilst in the parsonage
• No bolt hole and too expensive to go away that much
• Too much trouble to get cover for all the services expected
Conclusions

- Scripture can bear the weight of being a basis for discussing wellbeing
- Overall high levels of satisfaction with the living environment
- Overall high satisfaction with support and affirmation available
- A small number of the deeply dissatisfied
- Work life balance remains a concern
- There’s always room for more research!
Thank You!

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