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**Identifying Pastoral Care
in
Contemporary Methodism**

by David R. Burfield



Thesis Submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, May 1995

Abstract

This study is concerned with the nature of pastoral care and its practice in contemporary British Methodism. Both aspects are explored by means of postal surveys of Methodist ministers, local preachers and other lay members, as well as case study interviews with circuit ministers. These explorations take place in the context of a brief historical overview of the roots of Methodism and a characterisation of the theological viewpoints and spirituality of respondents, which are correlated with the findings of an earlier Anglican study. At the same time a detailed portrait is painted of the biography and ministry of both ministers and local preachers as an aid to understanding their contribution to pastoral care.

The nature of pastoral care is discussed and a working definition proposed which emphasises the importance of nurture rather than crisis-oriented care. The perceptions of ministers and local preachers regarding their understanding of the nature of pastoral care are examined, and the influence of theological viewpoint, gender and age is explored. Pastoral practice within Methodism is evaluated and some difficulties and areas of weakness are pin-pointed. Comparison of the perceptions and practice of pastoral care reveals that whereas ministers have a balanced view of pastoral care, frequently such care tends to be crisis-oriented and ministers driven rather than in control of the task: essentially reactive rather than pro-active.

A weakness of pastoral care is that it tends to be centred on the full-time professional rather than involving the whole community of faith. It is argued that the divisions between lay and ordained members of the church need to be removed in order to permit effective pastoral care. A working model of pastoral care is proposed, within a Methodist context, which emphasises the functional nature of full-time personnel and the importance of local leadership.

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Method

Over the past decade a significant number of authors have expressed a growing concern both with the direction, understanding and practice of pastoral care and with the sense of loss of identity in pastoral ministry. Oden (1984) and Pattison (1988), for example, have critically viewed the preoccupation, even in some cases identification, of much contemporary pastoral care with counselling and secular psychotherapy¹. Others such as Campbell (1986) and Moody (1992) reckon that pastoral care today largely neglects older traditions and has become detached from its roots. According to Tidball (1986:13) pastoral theology has degenerated into handy hints on "how to", rather than laying a foundational understanding of the nature of pastoral care. A similar critique leads Wright (1980:1) to ask the question, "What is the pastor for?", a question which in turn finds resonance with Jacob's acknowledgement that, "In the pastoral ministry too, long term aims can be submerged by the daily round of administration and requests for help." (1988:1).

The uncertainty which surrounds pastoral care has been accentuated because of the erosion of the key role of the ordained minister or priest² as the central functionary in the pastoral task. This has arisen in part because many of the traditional roles of the church, especially those involving welfare, have been taken over by the Social Services and specialist carers. At the same time, it has been intensified by the awakening and involvement of an increasingly well educated, trained and articulate laity as well as a loss of certainty with regard to spiritual realities³, particularly on the part of trained professionals. These factors have led to a crisis of priestly identity, exacerbated for some by the recent ordination of women to the priesthood within the Church of England. In the face of a growing number of trespassers onto priestly

1. This critique is supported by an examination of the *Religion Index*, produced by *Wilsondisc* on CD Rom, for the 16-year period 1975 to 1991 with respect to publications relating to the keyword *pastoral*. In this period there are some 1024 entries relating to *pastoral counseling* and 318 for *pastoral psychology*. *Pastoral care* does not merit a separate entry and titles including this term are subsumed under the umbrella of *pastoral theology* which has some 1295 entries. A limited examination of this section for the 5 year period from 1986 to 1991 shows that of about 350 entries the term *pastoral care* appears in only some 57 titles or approximately 16% of the references. Of these some are associated with counselling and many are concerned with specific and narrow areas such as *bereavement*, *abuse*, *AIDS*. This data clearly shows the overwhelming preponderance of contemporary literature centred on the field of pastoral counselling compared to a more general interest in pastoral care.

2. In this thesis the terms *priest* and *minister* will generally be used interchangeably as referring to the ordained, professional functionary within the church. The latter term is most widely used in Methodism and will usually be used in discussions relating to that denomination.

3. For example, the perception that psychotherapy is more effective than prayer.

territory the former incumbents have tended to react defensively by opposing the intruders, by retreating to the higher ground of increased specialisation and professionalism, or in a few cases, by abandoning their post.

In the author's view much of the anguish and uncertainty centres on a failure to understand the true nature of the pastoral task or in some cases being unable to live up to that understanding. The latter aspect forms one of the major themes to be developed in this thesis: that many ministers are powerless in the face of a reactive style of ministry where activity and direction are determined by crises and situations largely beyond their control. Their ministry becomes one of response. They become driven, swept along by a tide of prescribed duties, expectations and calls for help, and have little or no opportunity to plan or direct their own ministry. Part of the problem, and again this will be discussed at length in the body of the thesis, is that ministers too often feel under threat from the very people who are their potential allies and partners in ministry - the laity.

In getting to the heart of pastoral care there are perhaps four important and inter-related questions which need to be asked. What is pastoral care, its purpose and aim? Who are the carers? What is the territory of pastoral care - is it the local church, the community, the nation? What are the strategies, structures and organisation most appropriate for caring? It is in the context of these questions and the preliminary discussion about contemporary directions in pastoral care that we seek to make the attempt to: *identify pastoral care in contemporary Methodism*. The intent encapsulated in this title is twofold: firstly, through studies within Methodism to *identify* pastoral care, that is, to reach an understanding of the essential nature or essence of pastoral care; and secondly, to examine the effectiveness of such care within the Methodist Church. It is anticipated that such an evaluation will lead not only to a clearer understanding of the purpose of pastoral care but to new insights into a more effective practice of pastoral care.

The overall intent of the thesis is thus to probe the nature and practice of pastoral care. Since the research is built around the responses and views of Methodists, both ordained and lay, the conclusions drawn will be highly relevant within the context of Methodism. However, the inclusion within the study of authors from different traditions, as well as the insights drawn from biblical studies, is intended to ensure engagement with pastoral care within the wider Christian church.

Before proceeding further, and without attempting to pre-empt future discussion, it is perhaps necessary to reflect briefly on the use of the term *pastoral care*. It needs to be recognised that there are considerable difficulties in using this term because of the ambiguity in its meaning. For example, the term *pastoral* is now widely used within educational institutions, especially in reference to the oversight or care given

by staff in regard to non-academic matters involving the personal life of students. On the other hand, within the church the term *pastoral* is often associated with the duties of the ordained minister or specialist worker as in such phrases as: *pastoral ministry* or *pastoral worker* or *lay pastoral assistant*. At the same time *pastoral care* is often regarded as being synonymous with individualised care or counselling as typified perhaps by the *pastoral visit*. Throughout this thesis the term *pastoral care* is restricted in scope to that of *Christian pastoral care* but in the widest possible context and meaning. The term should thus **not** be read as referring to the peculiar task of a priest or specialist carer or narrowed in scope to individual care or one-to-one counselling.

Method

The studies reported in this thesis have employed three general approaches to building up an overall picture and understanding of pastoral care and practice within Methodism. These are in turn: postal surveys of ministers, local preachers and laity; case study interviews with Methodist ministers; situational studies which examine in some depth the functioning of Methodist churches or circuits. The findings from these approaches have then been discussed and analysed in the light of results of similar surveys, literature¹ on pastoral care and biblical studies. A brief description of the surveys and case studies is outlined in the remainder of this chapter.

Ministerial Survey

At the centre of the thesis lies a survey consisting of a detailed thirteen page questionnaire sent to 300 serving Methodist ministers on the 7th. November 1990. Their names and addresses were randomly selected from the directory listed in the 1990 Minutes of Conference². Initially every tenth name was used, except that retired ministers as well as those serving overseas were discounted and further selections made to complete the complement of 300. Since the survey was created at a fairly early stage in the research, attempts were made to construct a questionnaire the answers to which would be sufficiently comprehensive to address both issues apparent at the time of writing and those which might arise at a later stage after more reflection on pastoral care.

1. The literature which has been read and studied in depth for the purpose of the preparation of this thesis is cited in the bibliography. Many additional references, especially to original Methodist sources and documents, mainly accessed through the secondary literature, are detailed as footnotes.

2. The Methodist Church, *The Minutes of the Annual Conference and Directory held in Cardiff June 1990 and Annual Directory*, London, Methodist Conference Office. There are very approximately 2,400 active ministers listed in this directory and hence the initial sample was about 12.5% of the active ministerial staff.

An initial draft of the survey was tested out on two or three local ministers to check on clarity and lack of ambiguity. Subsequently a pilot survey was sent to some 16 ministers in mid-June 1990. Seven replies were received including 5 completed questionnaires, representing a return rate of 31%. The pilot survey underwent some minor modifications and the presentation was improved before being sent, together with a covering letter and a stamped self-addressed envelope for reply. All correspondence used the University of Nottingham address. Shortly before despatch a letter was published in the *Methodist Recorder* drawing attention to the survey.¹ The aim of the letter was to heighten the awareness of ministers and hopefully to make them more receptive to the concept of the survey.

The letter accompanying the survey included instructions for completion and a deadline for return of no later than December 7th., one month after the initial posting date. In total 174 responses were received including 142 completed or partially completed questionnaires. The majority of returns (132) were received within the specified deadline although the remainder trickled in over the next two months. Of the 32 ministers who declined to complete the forms approximately half were in specialist ministries² and judged themselves to be outside the scope of the survey, whereas others cited: illness, holidays, sabbatical leave, newness to the ministry, inadequacy³, lack of time or refusal in principle⁴. Overall the useful responses were just over 47%, which compares favourably with the results of the pilot survey (31%) and the very low rate of returns often experienced with national surveys involving Methodist ministers⁵. Judged in this light the response rate must be considered satisfactory, and in view of the length of the survey points to a high degree of motivation on the part of the ministers involved.

Despite the good response, a particular concern when survey returns are less than 50%, especially when working with only moderate sample sizes, is whether

1. The *Methodist Recorder* is the most widely read organ of the British Methodist Church; for example, results from the current study show it is read regularly by over half the Methodist local preachers surveyed. The letter was published on November 8th., 1990.

2. Such *specialist ministries* included ministers in divisional appointments, a chaplain, educationalists, a community worker and those seconded to other organizations such as: Christian Aid, Inter-Faith bodies and Race Relations.

3. Thus one respondent commented: "This paper makes me feel totally inadequate, a useless failure."

4. Another respondent was irritated by the suggestion in the covering letter that: '*...the discipline of completing the enclosed questionnaire may well provide an opportunity for personal reflection on your ministry*'. In reply he stated: "I am aware of the need for personal reflection upon my ministry, for I commit myself to such before and after every funeral, eucharist, preaching service..... . Furthermore, I do not really require a Local Preacher to remind me of the extant discipline of the Itinerant Ministry. I live that discipline. I do not analyse it from outside the glass." This response was, however, exceptional since most who had taken the trouble to complete the form and commented on the experience, found it helpful.

5. For example, a survey on *Racism* with a deadline of 31st. January 1991 achieved only a 16% response. Cited in an article by John Singleton on *Racism*, *Methodist Recorder*, 2nd. May 1991.

the respondents are representative of the initial sample or are in some way self-selecting. In order to test the validity of the survey a comparison was made between several characteristics of the initial recipients and those of the respondents, in particular: gender, nature of appointment and geographical location¹. Details of the comparison are summarised in Table 1:1 below.

Characteristic	Number Despatched	Returned	Percentage of Class
<i>Overall Numbers</i>	300	142	47.3
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	29	15	51.7
Male	271	127	46.9
<i>Appointment</i>			
Superintendent	79	39	49.4
Circuit minister	185	94	50.8
MLA ²	4	2	50.0
Other	32	7	21.9
<i>Region³</i>			
Southern	164	63	38.4
Northern	130	65	50.0
Other	16	10	62.5

Table 1:1 The Ministerial Survey: Dependence of Response Rate on Gender, Appointment and Location.

An overall examination of the above table shows that in most respects the respondents are seen to be a reasonable cross-section of those surveyed. The number

1. Ministers were given the option to remain anonymous although in practice 68 (48%) identified themselves. Geographic location was ascertained through the addresses provided by named ministers or inferred from the postmark of anonymous returns.

2. MLA is the abbreviation for *Minister in Local Appointment*. This is equivalent to the (NSM) *Non-Stipendiary Minister* in the Anglican Church. It thus refers to an ordained minister who is usually financially supported through full or part-time secular employment. The appointment is designated as *local* rather than *itinerant* because of the circumscribed possibilities of stationing.

3. The geographic locations have been divided rather arbitrarily into three regions. Southern corresponds to districts in the lower half of England including as far North as Leicester, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury (District nos.: 1-5,7,8,12,14,23,24,26, and 28). Northern includes the remainder of the English districts up to the Scottish borders (District nos.: 6,9,11,13,16,17-22,25,27,29). Others includes the remaining districts in Scotland, North Wales, Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man (District nos.: 10,15,30-33). These three regions cover all the districts listed in the *Conference Directory*.

of female ministers responding is slightly higher than that of male ministers, but the proportion of superintendents, circuit ministers and MLAs are all very close to 50%. The major discrepancy is in regard to those in specialist ministries where only 22% provided returns, but the reason for this has been discussed above. Apart from those in specialist or *sector* ministries, the main differences in returns are to be found in the geographical location of the respondents. The low response rate from the South of the country (38%) is at least in part explained by the location of those with specialist ministries. However, the increased response rate (63%) for those in locations on the margins, for example, the Isle of Man, North Wales and Scotland, suggests an added motivation for those furthest from the centre of Methodist activity and control (London), or perhaps simply reflect a less frenetic lifestyle. Overall, the respondents are seen to provide a fairly precise cross-section of those surveyed and therefore there is some confidence to suppose that the questionnaire returns reliably reflect the situation within British Methodism.

The final ministerial questionnaire consisted of a mix of *open-ended*, *multiple choice*, numerical and *yes/ no* type questions and was divided into three main sections: *Section A* - on biodata, background and training; *Section B* - on circuit and church background; *Section C* - on perceptions and practice of pastoral care. (The full text of the survey is printed as Appendix I, together with the basic return data.) The purpose of this detail was to be able to build up an overall profile of the minister and his¹ church situation as well as to probe his understanding and practice of pastoral care in the widest sense. Some of the questions paralleled those used in the *Rural Church Project*² so that comparison could be made between aspects of the life and ministry of Anglican and Methodist Clergy. (For example, questions concerning *theological persuasion* (Q.9) and work schedules (Q.52).)

The data from the survey was coded and analysed by computer using a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Full details of this programme and the related analyses are described in Appendix IV. Numerical data and responses to *multiple choice* or *yes/ no* type questions are readily amenable to processing, but the *open-ended* questions, where respondents were allowed to write creatively, pose considerable difficulty for computerised analysis. Typical of these questions is Q.18 where respondents were asked to: "Describe your understanding of the **essence** of

1. Although in the British Methodist Church about 10% of active circuit ministers are female it is somewhat cumbersome to use inclusive personal pronouns throughout the text. The use of the pronoun *his*, here and in other places, when referring to Methodist ministers, should be recognised as a shorthand embracing all ministers.

2. The *Rural Church Project* was a comprehensive study of the Anglican Church in rural Britain. The study focussed in particular on: staff and buildings; the clergy life; parish life and rural religion; the views of rural parishioners. The detailed results of the study are reported by Davies *et al* (1990a-d) and summarised and overviewed in Davies *et al* (1991).

pastoral care". Whereas these answers can be, and indeed, are used in the form of quotations in the text, it was felt valuable to attempt to classify the answers so that certain types of response or view could be cross-correlated against variables such as theological persuasion, age or gender. Thus, for example, it might be possible to discern a particularly feminine perspective of pastoral care. For this question the understanding of pastoral care was categorised into seven distinct facets which were then encoded for data processing. Details of the classifications used, for this and other questions, will be described at the relevant points in the text.

Local Preachers' Survey

The second major postal survey carried out in this study was a similarly detailed questionnaire sent to 300 Methodist local preachers¹ on the 16th. March 1992. There is apparently no national directory of local preachers with up to date correspondence addresses and so it was necessary to abstract names and addresses from Circuit plans and directories² which were obtained through correspondence with the respective Circuit Superintendents. In contradistinction to the ministerial survey, which was a national survey embracing all 33 British districts, this questionnaire was concentrated in seven districts: Bristol, London (all four districts), Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Nottingham and Derby. The concentration was in part for administrative convenience and partly to reflect some of the regions featured in earlier surveys³.

Attempts were made to select active local preachers as the names of authorised local preachers listed in the plan include those who have withdrawn from preaching due to age or for personal reasons. Names of local preachers were selected randomly (usually every fourth or fifth name) from the plan but were rejected if not scheduled to preach in any circuit churches. Seventy five names were selected from each district, save the four London districts which provided seventy five names in total⁴. An initial

1. Local preachers are lay persons trained and commissioned to lead worship and to preach in Methodist churches. In 1992 there were 10,414 active preachers who between them were responsible for the majority of the worship services in Methodist churches. Local preachers were surveyed as they form an important body of informed opinion within Methodism.

2. The basic administrative unit for organising preaching and worship services in local churches is the Circuit. Circuits featured in the ministerial survey consisted of from 2 to 34 churches with an average of 12. The Circuit Superintendent has the responsibility for scheduling the preachers in the Circuit by means of the Plan which lists the names of ministers and authorised local preachers as well as the services at which they are to preach.

3. The *Rural Church Project* focussed on five dioceses: Gloucester, Truro, Southwell, Lincoln and Durham; whereas a survey of *Anglican Readers* was concentrated in Gloucester and Southwell, Powell (1994). There is a reasonable geographical overlap between the Diocese of Gloucester and the Bristol District as well as between Southwell and Nottingham and Derby, and Durham and Newcastle.

4. For the Bristol District, preachers were selected from 7 out of 24 circuits; for the four London districts from 13 out of 118 circuits; for the Newcastle District from 9 out of 25 circuits; and for the Nottingham and Derby District from 27 out of 30 circuits.

draft survey was evaluated on a number of local preachers to test clarity but it was not deemed necessary to carry out a full-scale pilot survey because of the lessons already learnt from the ministerial questionnaire.

The local preachers' deadline for return of the forms was April 17th., approximately four weeks after receipt of the survey. A total of 211 returns were received, the majority of them (192) within the deadline and the remainder within the following four weeks. Only one form was returned from a relative of a preacher who through age was apparently no longer active in preaching. One critical letter¹ was received from a colleague of one of the preachers who had received the questionnaire, but this apart, the few letters that accompanied returns generally welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the survey.

Significantly, the response rate of 70.3% was much higher than that of the ministerial survey (47%)². Both questionnaires were similar in complexity and length so the differences in response are unlikely to be in the nature of the survey itself. There are probably a number of reasons such as: the novelty of taking part in the survey - ministers are apparently continually confronted by church surveys³; an opportunity to express their views - generally local preachers have fewer occasions when they can put across their viewpoint; greater leisure time - a significant proportion of the local preachers were of retirement age. Whatever the reasons, the excellent rate of return provides confidence that the results are likely to be representative of the local preachers in the regions surveyed.

There is just one reservation to the above conclusion and this is revealed by a comparison of regional and gender response rates. These are summarised in Table 1:2 shown overleaf. There are two important aspects to note. Firstly, there is a variation in regional response with the lowest (58%) from the London districts and the highest from Nottingham and Derby (76%) and Newcastle (75%). This seems to reflect the trends in the ministerial survey which showed higher responses from the Northern

1. The letter was from a local preacher who was, or had been, a Head of a Department of Communication Studies in a Sixth Form College. There were 4 major objections to the survey: a) "There is no precise definition of the nature of the research"; b) "There is no statement as to whether or not this is sponsored research..."; c) "Throughout, the questionnaire suggests bias/ interest/ covert planning in certain directions"; d) The author also objected to Q. 48 which included a 12 point assessment on the strengths and weaknesses of the preacher's minister on the grounds of confidentiality and the danger that the minister might be identified. Overall the tenet of the letter seemed to be that local preachers had nothing to do with pastoral care and voiced the suspicion that the survey was designed to provide support for changes in Methodist structures.

2. It also compares favourably with the 42% return rate in a survey of Anglican Readers in the dioceses of Southwell and Gloucester (Powell, 1994).

3. Thus ministers frequently made comments when responding such as: "Over twenty years of ministry I have received many such documents...", or, "This is the third survey I have received in the past two months..." .

regions. Secondly, there is a very significant gender differential with the returns from female local preachers being as high as 80% compared to a more modest 65% for their male counterparts. Perhaps the most striking contrast is provided by the London districts where female returns are as high as 90% compared to only 46% for male local preachers. There is no evidence that these differences are due to variation in age profiles since these are quite similar for male and female preachers¹. It is perhaps

Characteristic	Number Despatched	Returned	Percentage ² of Class
<i>Overall Numbers</i>			
Male	204	133	65
Female	96	77	80
Total	300	211	70.3
<i>Bristol</i>			
Male	50	30	60
Female	25	21	84
Total	75	51	68
<i>London Regions</i>			
Male	54	25	46
Female	21	19	90
Total	75	44	58
<i>Nottingham and Derby</i>			
Male	57	46	81
Female	18	11	61
Total	75	57	76
<i>Newcastle-upon-Tyne</i>			
Male	43	31	72
Female	32	25	78
Total	75	56	75

Table 1:2 The Local Preachers' Survey: Dependence of Response on Preacher Location and Gender

1. This is discussed in more detail in a later chapter but sufficient to point out here that the percentage of those over 60 years of age is 46.9% (male) and 49.3% (female).

2. There may be very slight errors in the calculated percentages as there were three missing cases in the regional data and one missing case in the gender data.

conceivable that female preachers have more leisure time or have greater motivation for their voice to be heard¹. Whatever the reason it will be necessary to be aware of gender bias in evaluations of the statistical data.

The format of the local preachers' survey was similar in structure and length to that of the ministerial one. It comprised a related mix of questions but this time was sub-divided into six sections, respectively: *Section A* - the preacher's personal background; *Section B* - experience of local preaching; *Section C* - the local church/circuit; *Section D* - local preaching ministry; *Section E* - perceptions and practice of pastoral care; *Section F* - personal viewpoints. (The full text of the survey is printed as Appendix II, together with the basic statistical returns.) The purpose of the survey was to provide an overall profile of the local preacher and the preacher's ministry as well as to probe the preacher's understanding of pastoral care and an evaluation of its practice. The survey contained a significant number of questions which were common with the ministerial survey as well as a few which bore relationship with a somewhat briefer survey of Anglican Readers undertaken by Powell (1994). The data was encoded and analysed as described earlier for the ministerial survey.

Laitie Survey

In the course of analysing the above surveys and preparing this thesis it became apparent that it would be useful to have some additional information from Methodist members who were not local preachers. Accordingly 480 copies of a much briefer two page survey were despatched on the 15th. June 1994. As with local preachers there is no national directory of members and so in order to access Methodists at a national level it was decided to work through those who had expressed interest by including their names and addresses when returning the earlier ministerial or local preacher surveys. Thus 40 ministers and 40 local preachers were each sent a set of six forms requesting them to distribute these to members and subsequently to return them in a stamped addressed envelope supplied.

1. A detailed examination of employment rates, as indicated by the survey data, suggests that leisure time may be dominant in determining the level of response since this generally increases with decreasing full-time employment with respect to both regions and gender. Thus the male full-time employment rates decrease in the order: London (64%), Nottingham and Derby (61%), Bristol (50%) and Newcastle (43%) whereas, the female rate is: Nottingham and Derby (36%), Newcastle (28%), London (26%) and Bristol (24%). With the exception of the high male Nottingham response rate, perhaps related to being close to the source of the survey, the trend clearly shows that the response decreases within groups as the rate of full-time employment increases. For example, London males with the highest employment show the lowest response (46%), whereas Bristol and London females with the lowest employment show the highest response rate (84-90%). The consequence of this is that those in full-time employment may be somewhat under-represented in the overall survey results. However, there may still be a gender bias superimposed on this as evidenced by the ministerial survey (Table 1:1).

The deadline for return of the forms was given somewhat flexibly as mid-July, some four weeks after the expected delivery date. All together some 205 completed survey forms were received, the majority of them (172) within the deadline and the remainder over the next six weeks. Overall this corresponded to a return of 42.7% based on forms despatched. However, in reality some 55% of ministers and 50% of local preachers returned forms, although on occasions both groups returned less than the full complement of six¹. Clearly in this case it was not possible to draw any conclusions about the representative nature of the returns since there was no control over how the forms were distributed once in the hands of ministers and local preachers, the sole instruction being that they should be given to members who were not local preachers and this instruction was largely followed.

The format of the laity survey was quite distinct from the earlier surveys being much briefer and consisting of only multiple-choice type questions. The survey was not sub-divided into sections but the first three questions related to basic biographical information such as age and gender. Further questions dealt with church involvement, theological outlook and sought lay views with respect to the practice of pastoral care, the role of the ordained minister and local preachers and matters relating to worship and church leadership. The full text of the survey, together with the primary statistical data, is provided in Appendix III. The data was encoded and analysed as described earlier for the ministerial survey.

Ministerial Case Study Interviews

A postal survey, even when including open questions, necessarily restricts and may sometimes misinterpret the nature of the answers. It was considered desirable therefore to conduct a series of personal case study interviews where there would be opportunity for free ranging discussion and uninhibited answers. The case studies were carried out with twelve ministers, eight drawn from the original survey and four others. The ministers were chosen from a variety of backgrounds, theological viewpoint and appointment and included two women. The case studies were designed to augment and crystallise the findings of both the ministerial and local preacher surveys and were carried out over a period from June 1993 to June 1994.

The case studies consisted of a structured interview which lasted about two hours. The interviews were conducted informally and the minister was allowed to talk freely around the topics raised. More time was given to those areas which the minister in question wished to develop or explain. No attempt was made to record the answers verbatim but extensive notes were taken at the time of the interview,

1. Returns from ministers and local preachers were distinguishable due to the use of distinctive stamps on the return envelopes.

giving special attention to significant quotes, and the whole interview was subsequently written up within a few hours of completion while still fresh in the memory. The questions posed to the interviewees covered four broad areas detailed as follows: *time* as a constraining factor in pastoral ministry; *crisis* versus *nurture* oriented pastoral care; contemporary models and images of pastoral care; the relationship between lay and ordained ministries. The basic interview schedule is listed as Appendix V. It should be noted that this text was not slavishly followed, nor the questions actually read out to the interviewee, but rather used as a means for structuring the interview and guiding the discussion.

During the course of the interview some of the preliminary conclusions from the ministerial and local preachers' survey were introduced and the interviewees asked to respond to possible interpretations. This was aimed to test the interpretations on those who might have clearer insights on the mind, motivation and working environment of ministers. For example, in this way, it was possible to probe aspects such as: the relationship between lay expectations and ministerial collusion; reasons for the perceived inability for ministers to be involved in effective delegation of tasks; motivation for increased professionalisation in ministry; the practical significance of ordination. The results from these personal case studies are not reported individually and separately in the thesis but are interwoven throughout the discussion of pastoral care and pastoral ministry.

Cwmbran Circuit Case Study

Interest in this circuit in South Wales arose from an article in the *Methodist Recorder*¹ entitled: "Real Meaning of 'The Ministry of the Whole People of God' ". The article documented the experience of the Cwmbran circuit following the sudden death of the superintendent minister - the Rev. Dennis Sanders. This was particularly of significance because the circuit is a 'single-station'² circuit and the death at the beginning of the administrative year meant that the circuit churches were without direct ministerial oversight for almost a year. Furthermore, the relative isolation of Cwmbran from neighbouring circuits meant that it was difficult for other ordained ministers actively to participate. This situation thus provided an unique opportunity to observe the functioning of Methodist churches, for an extended period of time, in the absence of a minister. This case study thus provides insight into the way in which lay persons may be actively involved in pastoral oversight in the absence of, or complementary to, the minister.

1. *The Methodist Recorder*, 2nd. May, 1991, p.5.

2. A *single-station* circuit is one in which only one minister is located. The situation at Cwmbran was compounded because of the relative isolation of the circuit from other Methodist circuits and hence ministers.

The circuit, the full title of which is *Cwmbran New Town Circuit*, comprises four churches, brief details of which are as follows. *Llanravan* is the largest of the four and has a relatively modern building built in the sixties in a pleasant residential area. The church at the time of the study had a membership of 185. *Hope* is housed in a renovated town centre chapel (127 years old) with a growing membership of 64. The church is a blend of older traditional members with a younger, more active element being evangelical/ charismatic¹. *Fairhill* has the newest building (25 years old at the time of the case study visit) and is situated on the edge of a sixties council estate. Overall it comprises a small (37 members) traditional and ageing congregation, with little effective outreach into the estate. *Upper Cwmbran* has an isolated hillside chapel situated in what was once a miners' hamlet. The church is traditional with a small (21 members) and ageing congregation.

The case study at Cwmbran took the form of a weekend visit to the circuit on the 5th. and 6th of October 1991. During the weekend the church buildings and locations were visited, with participation in Sunday services, and seven key members of the circuit were interviewed. Those interviewed included: a circuit steward and ex-circuit steward; the circuit secretary; a local preacher/ pastoral visitor/ local preachers' tutor; the local preachers' secretary; a local preacher and authorised person for marriages; the newly appointed circuit minister. The interviews were conducted in an unstructured way, allowing the interviewees to talk freely of their experiences during the inter-regnum. Occasionally specific questions were introduced to elaborate certain points or to prompt the discussion. Detailed notes of the interviews were kept and these were read through after the interviews and written up immediately after return from the weekend visit.

At the time of the visit the circuit staff consisted of a superintendent minister, a circuit secretary and an authorised person for the solemnisation of marriages². The staff are supported by a team of eleven active local preachers with five preachers 'on trial'³. As with the ministerial case studies, the results of the Cwmbran study are not reported as a separate entity but will be discussed where appropriate in the text to illustrate the practice of pastoral care, especially the involvement of the laity.

1. The meaning and significance of these labels is discussed in detail in a later chapter.

2. This is a lay person, in this case a local preacher, who has been legally designated as a local registrar of marriages.

3. 'On trial' is the official designation for trainee local preachers who have progressed from being 'on note', where they accompany and work with a recognised local preacher, to a situation where they are allowed to take a full worship service but have not yet completed all the requirements to be commissioned as a full local preacher.

Malaysian Methodist Church Case Study

The conclusions from the Cwmbran case study are of interest but their significance somewhat circumscribed by the limited period of only one year without the presence of ordained leadership. A much more extended case study is provided by two overseas Methodist churches, personally known to the author, which have co-existed almost side by side for a period of some twenty years. During this period one church has been led by the same full-time ordained minister, the Rev. Ng Ee Lin, and the other by a team of lay persons either retired or in full-time secular employment¹. The two churches are part of the Trinity Annual Conference of the Malaysian Methodist Church² which has its roots in American Methodism and is characterised by an organisational system where normally each church is assigned an individual minister. The exceptional situation in Malaysia has arisen because of the rapid growth of the church and an insufficient number of ordained ministers.

Culturally and organisationally the Malaysian Methodist Church is quite distinct from British Methodism. The churches exist within a multi-ethnic milieu comprising mainly of Malays, Chinese and Indians in a country where Islam is the official religion but there is freedom to practise the other major religions, namely: Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. The membership of the churches in question is predominantly Chinese although with a significant number of Indians. The churches of the Trinity Annual Conference are predominantly English speaking with a mainly educated middle class and professional membership.

The two churches in question are *Trinity Methodist Church* and *Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church*, both situated in residential areas on the southern edge of the Malaysian capital city, Kuala Lumpur. The Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church, of which the author of this thesis was an active member from its commencement until 1987, was started in 1973 with a small group of members from Trinity Methodist Church who met for Sunday worship first in a member's home and then in a detached house which also doubled during the week as a church kindergarten³. The two churches make an informative case study since they are part

1. A team of approximately seven lay members (now termed elders) has led the church since the American missionary who originally helped plant the church left in the early seventies. The only regular ministerial involvement has been the conduct of the monthly sacrament service and baptisms - mainly adults.

2. There are currently four Conferences of the Methodist Church in Peninsular Malaysia: the Chinese Annual Conference; the Tamil Annual Conference; the Sengoi Annual Conference and the Trinity Annual Conference (English speaking). The history of Methodism in Malaysia has been chronicled recently by Hwa and Hunt (1992).

3. By early 1987 the church had outgrown the premises and met for a few months in a rented hall at Dayang Hotel in the centre of Petaling Jaya. Subsequently it transferred to rented accommodation on two floors of an office block nearby and at the beginning of 1994 has finally located in its own recently constructed multi-purpose building in Kampung Batu Arang several miles from Petaling Jaya.

of the same denomination, are closely similar in the cross-section of their congregations, draw members from effectively the same catchment area, and have grown in parallel over the past twenty years. There are perhaps three obvious differences which have distinguished the two churches over the past twenty years: (1) Trinity Church has worked continuously on one site with a suite of purpose-built church and ancillary buildings, whereas Sungai Way - Subang Church has, until recently, made do with a series of rented accommodations designed for other purposes; (2) Trinity Church was a mature church with 667 members in 1973 whereas Sungai Way - Subang Church began with about two dozen transferred members at that time; (3) Trinity Church has been under the leadership of an experienced and respected full-time professional minister for the whole period, whereas the Sungai Way - Subang Church, apart from the initial assistance of an American missionary for about a year, has been led by a lay pastoral team.

This case study is included to provide empirical evidence that over a prolonged period lay leadership of a local church can be as effective as professional ministerial leadership in promoting the effective growth of the church despite being handicapped initially by lack of resources and a small membership¹. The 'mission' situation in Malaysia enabled this unique and innovative experiment to take place since, in the face of government restrictions on the employment of expatriate ministers, and the shortage of indigenous pastors, it became necessary for a few churches to be lay led. There is no ready parallel in British Methodism since the usual response to a shortage of ministers is to extend the pastoral responsibility of the remaining ministers. By contrast Malaysian Methodism works on an organisational structure which requires one minister per church, although this ideal has not always proved possible in the more rural areas where a minister may have responsibility for two widely separated churches.

The *Trinity Annual Conference*, to which these two churches belong, maintains annual statistics relating to all the churches in the Conference and these are published as an appendix to the *Minutes of Conference*. These documents were examined in the Conference Secretariat/ Archives in Petaling Jaya for the approximately 20 year period from 1974 to 1994 and information abstracted with regard to membership, baptisms and finance. It was felt that these figures should provide some kind of objective assessment as to how the two churches had developed under contrasting leadership styles. Membership growth should provide an indication of the

1. It is of course debatable whether a lack of a purpose-built premises is such a handicap. The lack of such plant avoided the problems of being bogged down with maintenance problems and enabled the church easily to change the accommodation as the congregation grew. Starting from scratch may also be considered as advantageous from some viewpoints; there is no church tradition to be followed and change and innovation are more readily accepted.

attractiveness or otherwise of the church to those coming in from outside; adult baptisms are perhaps some measure of the effectiveness of the outreach of the church; and lastly *per capita* giving is arguably indicative of the membership commitment¹. A summary of the membership and baptism statistics for the years 1974 to 1994 is provided in Table 1:3.

Year	Membership			Adult Baptism		
	<i>Trinity</i>	<i>SS</i> ²	<i>DU</i> ³	<i>Trinity</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>DU</i>
1974	703	-	-	2	-	-
1975	721	57	-	9	0	-
1976	807	64	-	13	0	-
1977	794	65	-	0	0	-
1978	803	84	-	10	2	-
1979	844	101	-	20	13	-
1980	868	104	-	7	0	-
1981	911	111	-	27	11	-
1982	956	127	-	5	21	-
1983	1006	144	-	3	0	-
1984	1054	130	47	31	0	1
1985	1071	147	56	18	9	3
1986	828	155	66	22	8	5
1987	847	165	70	20	7	1
1988	892	185	-	36	14	0
1989	1000	206	112	40	27	0
1990	1026	253	126	18	44	24
1991	1081	273	159	11	30	18
1992	1093	307	176	13	27	11
1993	1127	342	215	19	25	19
1994	1111	369	237	-	-	-

Table 1:3 Annual Church Membership and Adult Baptism Figures for Three Malaysian Methodist Churches

1. Clearly realistic comparisons can only be made if the *per capita* disposable income is similar for each congregation. This is believed to be the case as the two congregations are drawn from similar catchment areas and both have significant proportions of professionals.

2. 'SS' stands for Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church.

3. 'DU' refers to the Damansara Utama Methodist Church constituted in 1984 as a daughter church of Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church with the transfer of 45 members from the mother church.

The data provided in Table 1.3 also include figures for the Damansara Utama Methodist Church, an offshoot of the Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church and formed largely by transfer of members. This church is organised on a similar pattern of lay pastoral leadership. The overall figures show that Trinity Church has, over a twenty year period, increased its membership from about 700 to around 1100, an average increase of just under 3% a year. (The official membership figures dropped sharply in 1986 but this was due to a revision of the official membership list.) During an almost similar period the membership of the Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church increased from 57 to 369 an average increase of about 29% per year based on the initial figure. Over a shorter ten-year period the Damansara Utama Methodist Church has increased from an initial 47 to 237 members an annual increase of some 40% based on the initial figure. Thus over the past five years Trinity Methodist Church has increased in size by about 10%, whereas, Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church by 79% and Damansara Utama Church by 112%.

Other indications of the vitality of the lay-led churches are provided by the proportion of active worshippers and the number of adult baptisms. In 1994, the last year when figures were available, the average weekly attendance at Trinity Church was 543 (49% of the membership), at Sungai Way - Subang Church was 380 (slightly more than the membership), and at Damansara Church was 300 (significantly more than the membership). Similarly over the past five years the total number of adult baptisms at Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church (153) has significantly exceeded the number at Trinity (101) which has a much larger congregation.

A final point of comparison is in giving. The annual statistics do not include information about the church income but figures are available relating to total church expenditure and this gives some measure of regular giving since the two churches rely primarily on membership donations rather than investment income or legacies. During the past five year period (1989 to 1993) the annual expenditure of Trinity Methodist Church for all purposes was an average of M\$350,000¹ compared to an annual average of M\$438,000 for Sungai Way- Subang Methodist Church. However, when the different membership numbers are taken into account the *per capita* giving becomes M\$335 per member at Trinity Church and M\$1,590 per member at Sungai Way - Subang Church.

It is thus evident that on all the objective criteria examined: membership growth, numbers of adult baptisms and membership giving, the lay-led churches in this case study appear at least as effective as that led by full-time professionals. These observations lend pragmatic support to the proposed working model for pastoral care to be discussed in the final chapter.

1. One pound sterling (£) is equivalent to approximately four Malaysian Ringitt (M\$) at the time of writing.

Chapter 2

The Roots of Methodism

In order to understand more fully the position, context and inter-relationships of those who exercise pastoral care¹ within the contemporary Methodist Church it is helpful to examine the rise of Methodism and the roots of present-day structures. This will also help in discerning the causes of some of the tensions that exist within Methodism, especially in relation to the partnership between lay and ordained members of the Church - a crucial dimension which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. A description of the genesis of Methodist structures will also allow judgement as to their original intent and assessment as to how far they function in that way today, in particular, whether they aid or hamper the conduct of pastoral care. It is thus intended to provide, in brief outline², a sketch of the development of Methodism from the early days of John Wesley to the current day. This will serve as a natural introduction to a detailed portrait of contemporary ministers and local preachers who are regarded as key personnel in the British Methodist Church³ and who have been the subject of the comprehensive postal surveys described in Chapter 1. A more general description of the characteristics of the general membership and their involvement will also be derived from the laity survey.

The Early Years to 1792

Early Formative Experiences

It is arguable that one of the formative experiences for John Wesley was as a boy

1. Such personnel are not limited to those conventionally considered to exercise pastoral care, *viz.*, ministers, deaconesses, pastoral visitors and the like, but embrace in addition those who exercise care as local preachers, class leaders and through the general responsibilities of membership.

2. No attempt has been made to make a detailed and original study of the primary documents relating to the growth of Methodism but rather the author has drawn largely on the secondary literature to assemble an overview based on predominantly uncontested historical data. Primary sources are quoted only where they provide additional clarification of the argument. A detailed chronicle of the development of British Methodism is to be found in publications such as the compendium entitled: *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, edited by Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp, and published by the Epworth Press in four volumes between 1965 and 1988. The documentation of the Methodist heritage is also ongoing in periodicals such as *The Proceedings of the Wesleyan Historical Society*. A comprehensive bibliography to 1985, which contains some 4,500 references to Methodism has been published by Clive Field (1988:650).

3. By contrast in the American Methodist Church the role of local preachers is insignificant. In the United States the itinerant ministers became settled in communities with a local pastorate in contrast to the continuing circuit system within British Methodism. As a consequence the American local preacher was largely redundant being in competition with the resident minister. See for example discussion in: Northwood, F.A., "The Americanization of the Wesleyan Itinerant", in *Ministry and the Methodist Heritage*, Nashville, 1963.

to take part in the family devotions conducted by his mother Susannah. Thus Snyder (1980:16) records that in the prolonged absence of his father, the Rev. Samuel Wesley, Susannah opened the rectory so that neighbours and parishioners could join in their regular devotions. Thus on Sunday evenings, in early 1712, a group which eventually grew in size to 200 persons met in the rectory where Mrs. Wesley would read a sermon, pray and talk with the people. The meetings, which had the positive effect of dramatically increasing the evening church congregation, caused something of a stir at Epworth and were apparently halted on the return of the incumbent. As a small boy John could not have missed the excitement and effectiveness of these irregular meetings and perceived the contribution of his mother, a lay woman, in ministering to the pastoral needs of the parishioners. The meetings were a clear example of the possibility of unofficial group meetings complementing the pastoral care of the Church and, the author believes, could well have planted the seed for the formation of religious societies in parallel to the Established Church.

Another well-documented formative experience was his membership of the *Holy Club* at Oxford University which he came to lead in 1729. The *Holy Club* followed a strict discipline which John himself devised but which was similar in pattern to other religious societies. The primary aim of the club was the spiritual development of the members through a system of rigorous discipline and mutual encouragement. It was at Oxford that the importance of small groups in spiritual growth and care were again brought to the forefront and the somewhat pejorative tag *Methodist* was coined to describe Wesley's organised approach to spiritual development.

Following a rather disastrous three years (1735 to 1738) as a missionary in the American Colonies a rather disillusioned John Wesley returned to London. However, again the experiences had not been wasted as he had been impressed by the example of the Moravian Christians that he encountered and was later to embrace their small group or *band* structures in his organizations. Indeed, Edwards (1965:47) argues that his stay in Georgia was a key formative experience in which he began to develop his language skills, theological writing, and hymn composition. Furthermore, Edwards claims:

"...most significant of all his achievements was the use he made of the religious societies and the 'Select Bands'. Here also he used lay assistants and indulged in extempore prayer and preaching; he instituted the love-feast and even built a modest preaching-house. It is not too much to claim that in Georgia the main features of Methodist ecclesiastical policy were first outlined."

In London he joined with others in a religious society which later became known as the *Fetter Lane Society* and which, although having strong Moravian influences, was actually a religious society associated with the Church of England (Snyder 1980:27).

Following the crucial renewal¹ experience during a meeting in Aldersgate Street on May 24th. 1738, Wesley spent some time on the Continent studying the organization of Pietist centres - again storing up insights for his later Methodist organization.

The next key stage in Wesley's pilgrimage was an invitation from George Whitefield, a former associate of the Oxford Holy Club, to join him in field preaching in Bristol. This was not an easy decision for Wesley, who hitherto had preached only in regular church services in England, but it was to be a watershed. Wesley was swayed by the support of the Fetter Lane Society in London, and ever a pragmatist, by the overwhelming response to the field-preaching. Soon thousands were coming to hear his preaching and it was not long before he began to organise those who responded to his preaching into religious societies and bands for mutual support. Some months later when Whitefield returned to his work in America, John Wesley was left in sole charge, and as Snyder remarks: "The Wesleyan Revival had begun. The Wesleys preached, the crowds responded and Methodism as a mass movement was born" (1980:33).

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that both John Wesley and his brother Charles, who were ordained priests within the Church of England, viewed the Methodist organization as a connexion of religious societies complementing and not competing with the Established Church. Indeed, as Snyder points out, in many ways the Methodist societies were similar to the many other contemporary religious societies excepting one detail - they were all connected to, and under the direct supervision of, John Wesley (1980:35). Furthermore, Snyder speculates that John Wesley, at least early on, had hoped for recognition of the Methodist societies as an order within Anglicanism (1980:151). Thus the system of discipline exerted within the Methodist societies was calculated to challenge and rebuke the general body of the Church and the nation by its earnestness in pursuit of holiness (Lawson 1965:194). The overall aim of Methodism was understood as: "not to form any new sect; but to reform the nation particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land" (Lawson 1965:197).

Lay Preachers

It was not long before Wesley faced a dilemma. The work was growing rapidly: there was field preaching to attend to, as well as instruction of the fledgling societies both in London and Bristol and he could not be everywhere at once. There was

1. There is considerable debate as to the exact nature of this *heart-warming* experience. Some would interpret it as Wesley's conversion, others as a renewal or pentecostal experience subsequent to conversion. Wesley himself describes it in the following terms: "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death". [Cited by Snyder (1980:26 from *The Journal* of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., ed., Nehemiah Curnock (London: Epworth Press, 1909-16; rpt. 1938), I, 476.]

limited help to be had from the handful of sympathetic Anglican clergy who included his brother Charles. The matter came to a head in the winter of 1740-41, when during his absence from the London society, now based at *The Foundery*, a lay-assistant named Maxfield preached¹ in his absence. Wesley was initially furious but was persuaded to hear the preacher for himself and came to recognise his *gifts and grace* for preaching and hence confirm his *extraordinary* call as a preacher. According to George (1978:143) this was a crucial decision which led some forty years later to the formal ordination of Methodist lay preachers which in turn paved the way for a sacramental ministry and eventually a separation from the Church of England. It was also symptomatic of Wesley's pragmatic approach to embrace solutions that worked and were expedient even if theologically contentious. The net result of Wesley's decision was to release laymen for the preaching ministry and thus to provide the manpower² necessary to supplement the meagre handful of Anglican clergymen who supported the Methodist cause.

It was Wesley's lay preachers who were to become the pioneering force in his evangelistic outreach throughout Britain, and eventually overseas, and who were to teach and maintain discipline within the Methodist societies spread through the country and provide the link or connexion with Wesley himself. As Rack points out, during Wesley's lifetime the role and status of the preachers were often variable (1989:243). Preachers were chosen because they demonstrated *gifts and grace* for the work and people responded to their preaching. Fairly early on preachers were distinguished by those who were separated fully for the work and were thus free to travel throughout the kingdom and those who retained secular employment and thus were restricted more closely to the locality where they lived and worked. The former group eventually became known as *travelling preachers* or *itinerants*, whereas, the latter group were known as *local preachers* or perhaps in the early days as

1. Lawton (1989:81) states that Wesley's early view of the work of a lay-assistant was to: "confirm the members in the ways of God, either by reading to them, by prayer or exhortation. He was not to preach, i.e., to expound the Scriptures."

2. Although Wesley had reservations about women preachers he did recognise that a few had an *extraordinary* call. According to Graham (1993:78) : "His [Wesley's] yardstick for judging their call was their usefulness and whether God owned their ministry". After Wesley's death, the Wesleyan Conference of 1803 resolved that 'in general' women should not preach. Those with an 'extraordinary call' should preach only to women. By contrast women preachers were widely used amongst the Primitive Methodists and the Bible Christians in the first half of the Nineteenth Century (Graham, 1993:79-81). [Wesley frequently used the adjective *extraordinary* to justify ministry which was outside of the regular order of the Anglican Church, such as the employment of a non-ordained preacher. Later he was to use this term to justify his right to ordain men for the Methodist ministry [George (1978:150)].]

*half-itinerants*¹. It should be emphasised that both groups were *lay* preachers and particularly in the early days the boundaries between the two groups were insignificant. Thus in the Minutes of the 1752 Conference an itinerant who ceased to travel was to be redesignated as a local preacher² (Batty 1969:17). However, Baker (1965:250) notes that from the 1767 Conference the term *supernumerary*³ was introduced to denote itinerants who were extra to the circuit where they were stationed and who carried only a small load of responsibility. This was normally done after a severe illness and the preacher in question might subsequently return to full itinerancy. Be that as it may, the distinct terminology appears to mark a growing distinction in status between the itinerants and local preachers - a preacher no longer transfers reversibly from one status to the other depending on his ability to shoulder the full workload of an itinerant.

Although Wesley recognised⁴ that local preachers had the gifts and graces equal to many of the itinerants slowly but surely the two groups came to be distinguished. Thus for example in the 1747 Minutes⁵ the list of preachers included 23 travelling preachers as well as 38 who 'assist us in one place' (Batty 1969:15). The latter description is perhaps slightly misleading since local preachers travelled extensively⁶ around their geographical area, opening up new work as well as servicing established societies and probably from the beginning were regarded not as belonging to any particular society but to the circuit. The nub of the differentiation lies perhaps in the

1. Lawton (1989:65) states that the term *half-itinerants* appeared in *The Minutes* of 1755 and that the designation *local preacher* can be traced as far back as a letter of Wesley in 1751 (1989:72). Elsewhere Baker (1965:236) exemplifies the half-itinerant by one, William Shent, who financed his preaching of the Gospel for half a year by serving as a Leeds barber for the other half. From this account it would appear that the half-itinerant was intermediate between an itinerant and a local preacher. According to Baker this somewhat anomalous position was removed by the Conference of 1768 which prohibited itinerants from engaging in any trade whatsoever.

2. This continued to be the situation within the Primitive Methodist Church in the Nineteenth Century where female Itinerants normally reverted to local preacher status on marriage (Graham 1993: 83).

3. Baker (1965:250) notes that in the 1780's a *supernumerary* was clearly distinguished from a *superannuated* preacher. The former was still subject to stationing and supported from normal connexional funds, the latter was regarded as *worn out* and received a pension from the Preachers' Fund. This contrasts with current usage where the term *supernumerary* refers to pensioned ministers who are nominally assigned to a circuit but may or may not be involved in ministry. However, an *active* *supernumerary* may be given pastoral charge and be totally involved in the life of the circuit.

4. Thus in a letter to George Whitefield, quoted in Batty (1969:19) he wrote: "We are far from having any travelling preachers to spare that there are not enough to supply people that earnestly call for them - but some of the local preachers are equal both in grace and gifts to most of the itinerants".

5. The term *Minutes* is used to designate the minutes of the annual conference which Wesley held with his travelling preachers from the beginning.

6. Evidence for this is provided by an early manuscript account book for 1768 for the Leeds circuit which included disbursements for travelling expenses for local preachers - cited by Batty (1969:28). According to Batty this demonstrates that from early on local preachers were a recognised body within Methodism who related to the circuit rather than individual societies.

fact that the itinerants were paid workers, supported initially from Wesley's personal purse, and hence more closely under his control and discipline. To some extent local preachers could be regarded as freelancers, essential to the system because of the shortage of itinerants and limited finance, but a potential source of disaffection and embarrassment. It is perhaps for this reason that whereas the responsibilities and duties of the itinerants as well as other lay officials were frequently discussed and delineated, local preachers were generally uniformly ignored¹.

The first annual Conference in Methodism was held in June 1744 and was attended by the Wesley brothers, four other Anglican clergy and a number of lay brethren (travelling preachers). It was at the Conference that the overall work was reviewed and the itinerants were stationed in circuits². In 1746 there were 6 enormous circuits which had grown in number to 114 at the time of Wesley's death in 1791 (Rack 1989:245). The itinerants were stationed in circuits for limited periods of between one to three years since, according to Rack, Wesley considered if they stayed longer they would preach themselves and their hearers into boredom (1989:245). Another possible motivation is that restricted periods in any location emphasised Wesley's control and reduced the possibility of itinerants building a power-base for themselves. New itinerants, who would usually come from the ranks of the local preachers, were initially placed *on trial*³ and if their services proved satisfactory subsequently welcomed into *full connexion*⁴. As Rack observes, the Connexion was one of the unique features of Methodism whereby the societies, although

1. Thus Batty (1969:24) observes that over a 50 year period of journal entries John Wesley only refers to local preachers on three occasions. Batty concludes: "...considering the immense part played by the local preachers in the pioneering and sustaining of the early Methodist societies, the omission is amazing." Similarly Baker (1965:235) comments: "There is only casual mention of local preachers in the *Large Minutes* and none at all in the *Deed of Declaration*. Throughout Wesley's lifetime they seem to have been given little official recognition, apart from the occasional admonitions to the assistants that their wings should be clipped."

2. The circuits, or rounds as they were initially called, were the routes around which the itinerants were to travel which encompassed the established societies for which the itinerants were responsible. Wesley's earliest circuit included the three main centres at Bristol, London and Newcastle and would have involved preaching engagements *en route*. In the early days the large circuits would have taken many weeks to travel. Thus Baker (1965:232) notes: "In Wesley's day each preacher ...would spend a few days, including a weekend, in the chief town, where he had his lodgings. He would then set off on a round of all the other societies, taking a month, six weeks, or even two months over the task."

3. The term *on trial* for an itinerant would correspond to the probationary period, usually at least one year, for ministers in the contemporary Methodist church. The term is still used in the training of local preachers to refer to a probationary period before the preacher is fully recognised.

4. As observed by Baker (1965:230): "...the principle of connexionalism remains one of the greatest contributions made by Wesley to ecclesiastical polity. He was convinced that it was folly to preach without ensuring Christian society for his converts. He was equally convinced that the Methodist societies needed linking together if they were to grow in spiritual strength and efficacy. This became the main purpose of his amazing itineraries throughout the British Isles." Initially, Wesley himself was the link through which the societies were joined but subsequently the connexion was maintained through his itinerants.

organised locally, were connected nationally and this enabled Wesley to hold the ends of the reins in his own hands to the end (1989:247-8).

As the system developed the itinerants themselves were divided into two grades: the *Assistants*, who had overall responsibility for their circuit, and *Helpers* who worked together with the Assistant in the circuit. Both travelled the circuit but it was the Assistant who was the executive who acted on Wesley's behalf, who made appointments and took decisions and was ultimately answerable to Wesley himself. In later years, after Wesley's death, the term *superintendent*¹ was used to replace Assistant as more helpfully reflecting the nature of the position. Discipline of the membership and organization of the societies was facilitated by the *Quarterly Meeting* held under the chairmanship of the Assistant. It was at this meeting that appointments would be made and spiritual and temporal affairs discussed.

The gap between local preachers and itinerants gradually emerged as the Assistant became responsible for the appointment and regulation of the local preachers. Thus it was the Assistant who was responsible for the recruitment of new preachers and who issued *a note* to preach in the Methodist societies. The early freelance activities of the local preachers were proscribed by the drawing up of *the plan*² which regulated when and where the preachers were to operate. This was often drawn up without consultation with the preachers and could be over-ridden should an itinerant arrive at the designated location. Eventually a quarterly Local Preachers' Meeting evolved³ where the Assistant would meet with the local preachers and the conduct of the authorised preachers and probationary preachers would be reviewed.

1. The term *superintendent* was perhaps first used by Wesley in 1784 in his 'ordination' of Coke, an Anglican priest, to his role as overseer of the American mission field. Thus George (1978:146) records that Coke was provided with a certificate which read: "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 Presbyterian of the Church of England." In the American Methodist Church the term was subsequently understood to be the equivalent of bishop, a development which has been resisted in British Methodism.

2. The plan is a detailed timetable indicating the names of the societies and the dates on which preachers are assigned, usually for a period of three months. The earliest example of a printed plan is that for the Leeds circuit in the May quarter of 1777 which showed 47 preaching places and recorded the names of 26 local preachers who preached on average weekly although six preached more than twenty times a quarter. (Batty 1969:31). The plan was also important because the names of all recognised local preachers were listed and this was the sole form of public authentication. Vickers (1988:298) has reproduced the earliest known plan for the Manchester Circuit, dated 1799. It is of interest since it illustrates the wide geographic coverage of the circuit stretching from Altringham (now Altrincham) in the south to Oldham and Middleton to the north of Manchester. The plan also contains a declaration worded as follows: "The Bearer hereof, *Stephen Ruffell*, is an approved Local Preacher here, and may be employed as such wherever he comes." This is clearly a form of official authorisation of the local preacher's ministry.

3. It has been suggested that this may have developed incidentally as a meeting for reimbursement of expenses and an opportunity to inform the appointments for the forthcoming quarter. It was eventually mandated by the Conference of 1796 (Batty 1969:222).

Class Meeting and Class Leaders

Another difficulty, this time financial in nature, led to a further innovation. Wesley was concerned about meeting the financial debt outstanding on the new preaching house in Bristol. A certain Capt. Foy suggested that he would take responsibility for collecting a weekly subscription of 1d. a person from eleven other members of the society which in 1742 numbered about 1,100 persons. Wesley quickly saw that this would be an excellent opportunity for not only relieving the debt but also exercising spiritual supervision of the society members. The Methodist societies were accordingly divided into *classes*¹ of twelve persons each with a *class leader*. Initially the system involved weekly visitation by the leader to collect the subscription and to enquire into the spiritual condition of the member. Subsequently, the weekly *class meeting* evolved where the class met together in homes or other meeting place for mutual enquiry and encouragement. Regular attendance at the class meeting eventually became the basic criterion for membership of the society. Wesley or one of his delegated assistants would meet with the class leaders at least quarterly to review class attendance together with the spiritual progress of members and on that basis issue quarterly membership tickets².

Although the formation of *bands*³ within the societies preceded classes it was the latter which were to prove the cornerstone of the Methodist movement as a means of discipline, spiritual growth and care and as a seed-bed and training ground for lay workers. Within the classes members learned to speak and share their experiences and leaders learnt the art of pastoral oversight. The classes and bands met together quarterly for a *love feast*, the admission to which was regulated by membership ticket. The classes undoubtedly provided the primary pastoral care for Methodist members who usually had little close contact with the parish church and who would meet with Wesley or one of his assistants only intermittently. Thus the Methodist historian Abel Stevens notes⁴ that the preachers:

"...could never have secured the moral discipline, or even the permanence of its

1. Baker (1965:222) helpfully clarifies: "The title 'class' implied no teaching element, but was simply the English form of the Latin *classis* or division."

2. The membership tickets were effectively a disciplinary device. They entitled holders to entry to the quarterly love-feast and were withdrawn on absence from three consecutive class meetings or upon misconduct.

3. Bands were a Moravian concept and consisted of small groups of 5-6 persons, usually of the same sex, age and marital status, who committed themselves to meet regularly as a confessional cell and to pray for one another. The bands were considered to be for those who held a deeper commitment than the class members.

4. Stevens, Abel (1858-61) *The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century, Called Methodism, Considered in its Different Denominational Forms, and its Relations to British and American Protestantism*, 3 vols. , New York, Carlton and Porter, II p. 454, cited in Snyder 1980:58.

societies, without the pastoral care of the Class-leader, in the absence of the pastor, who at first was scarcely a day at a time in any one place."

In a similar vein Snyder (1980:54) considers the class leaders, both men and women, as "pastors and disciplers" and elaborates:

"Class leaders were not, however, merely a makeshift arrangement so the Methodist societies could get by without full-time pastors. Rather the class leaders were, in a fundamental sense, themselves pastors. This was the normal system based on Wesley's conviction that spiritual oversight had to be intimate and personal and that plural leadership was the norm in a congregation." (Snyder 1980:58)

These views were apparently appreciated within Methodism since, nearly a century after Wesley, a special Conference committee reporting on class meetings averred:

"The Leaders' Meeting, our first court of discipline, is, as its name indicates, mainly a meeting of 'Leaders of Classes', and its jurisdiction extends as far as the classes themselves extend. But the Leaders' Meeting represents and embodies in a peculiar way Pastoral care, because the Leaders may be described as Sub-Pastors, and are links between the members and the ministers.... Pastoral oversight is thereby made in all cases easier, and in some cases possible, where it would otherwise have been impossible."¹

Snyder's description of class leaders as 'pastors' would probably not have worn well with Wesley who was sensitive to the creation of a located pastorate which would rival the position of the Church of England or the authority of his own representatives². During and subsequent to Wesley's time the class leaders were kept firmly in their place and local initiatives were not encouraged³. As Baker (1965:225) observes:

"Neither the leaders themselves, nor the stewards (whom Wesley regarded as holding a higher office), had any executive authority in the Societies, but simply discharged administrative duties under the assistant."

Even so, Batty believes that in the early days the leaders were particularly influential due to the prolonged absence of the itinerant who may have been able to visit only two or three times a quarter (1992:29). As such the leaders had time to make their own decisions and develop their own talent for leadership.

So crucial was the class structure for the growth of Methodism that its

1. *Minutes of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference*, 1889, Appendix XI. Quoted in Vickers 1988:572.

2. Lawton (1989:81) comments: "His (Wesley's) fear of local Methodist pastorates was intense."

3. Thus, for example, Batty (1992:187) citing the arguments of Thomas Hughes against class meetings writes: "...the leaders were undermining the ministers because they regularly visited the members in their care, as well as meeting them weekly in class, 'thus diminishing the minister in his pastoral relation to the people'. He said that leaders frequently claimed to be more the pastors of the people than the ministers and were often looked on as such". [Sourced from: T. Hughes, *The Condition of Membership in the Christian Church*, (London 1868) pp. 3, 14, 83, 121.]

subsequent decline in the nineteenth century has been seen to be a major reason for the ebb in fortunes of the Methodist Church (Snyder 1980:149). Several authors have discussed the reasons for the decline. Currie (1968:126-8) argued that resentment arose because of social differences, with more affluent members resenting interrogation by semi-literate leaders. He also suggested that the meetings had become monotonous and stereotyped with the same experiences being shared over and over again. He also noted that by the end of the nineteenth century members could absent themselves with impunity as their absence would be scarcely noticed amongst groups of 70-85 members¹. Rack (1973:12-14) advances somewhat similar explanations suggesting that classes foundered in part on inadequate leadership and repetitious content. However he suggests that Wesley's attempts to prescribe and limit the duties and activities of the leaders were also partly to blame. The limited scope for pastoral initiative by lay-leaders led eventually to the loss in interest on the part of the laity and the increased involvement of ministers in leading ever larger classes.

Perhaps a core element of the decline in effectiveness of the class leaders and the concomitant failure of the class system was the lack of encouragement, training and support which the leaders received. In the early heady days of growth, as the societies multiplied, Wesley delegated his itinerants to meet *weekly* with the class leaders.² This was an ideal which right from the start was impractical for the itinerants and could never have been achieved. The leaders met regularly with the society stewards to hand over their class monies but only intermittently with the itinerants. At that meeting the main agenda would appear to have been mainly administrative - a checking of the class records and a reporting back on the attendance and conduct of class members. There would seem to have been little regular or effective pastoral care and training of the leaders themselves. This neglect continued right throughout the nineteenth century despite repeated emphases in Conference on the strategic role played by classes and their leaders. Thus Batty (1992:185) correctly diagnoses the situation when she writes:

1. A letter written in 1781 by John Valton an itinerant, recently moved to a new circuit, confirms the problem of large class sizes at a very much earlier date. Valton writes: "I would be thankful to follow some good disciplinarian for it is really very trying work to divide classes and reduce them almost in every place. I had very large classes, even to fifty nine, and nearly three hours taken up in meeting them; enough to destroy the work." Quoted in Vickers (1988:193).

2. Thus in 1743 Wesley included in his *General Rules of the United Societies* the following instructions for class leaders: "It is his business, (1) To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order to enquire how their souls prosper; to advise, reprove, comfort or exhort as occasion may require; to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor. (2) To meet the Minister and the Stewards of the society *once a week* [emphasis mine] ; in order to inform the Minister of any that are sick, or any that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov'd; to pay to the Stewards what they have received from their several classes in the week preceding; and to show their account of what each person has contributed." (Quoted from the *Works of John Wesley*, 3rd. Edition, edited by Thomas Jackson, 14 vols. 1829-31, VIII pp.269-71 in Vickers 1988:60.)

"Nobody seems to have realised that the class in which the minister could properly have fulfilled his calling to 'teach and guide' was the leaders' meeting, where he could have supplied what was needful to their development, instead of regularly subjecting them to the Conference's demands that they should improve themselves."

Other Lay Officials

Apart from the preachers and class leaders a number of other lay officials were recognised in the Methodist organization. Trustees and stewards were businessmen appointed as such to do the secular work of the chapel and were heavily involved in financial and property matters (Currie 1968:52). It was the trustees who frequently put up the large sums of money required for purchase of land or building of the preaching houses. As such Wesley was concerned that they might wield too much power and influence locally and hence effectively control the pulpits. Thus almost from the beginning (1746) Wesley drew up a *model deed* which secured for Wesley and his named successors (ultimately the Conference) the right to appoint the preachers and to lay down the doctrines to be preached (Rack 1989:245). The stewards were more fully involved in the day to day running of the society and were responsible for receipt and disbursement of the class monies under the guidance of the Assistant. That the stewards occupied a central place in the Methodist hierarchy is revealed in a statement by Wesley in 1771:

"In the Methodist discipline, the wheels stand thus: the Assistant, the Preachers, the Stewards, the Leaders, the People"

(quoted by Batty 1992:29). It should be noted that the term 'Preachers' was a synonym for itinerants and was not understood to include local preachers who are noticeable only by their absence from the above list.

The duties of stewards were clearly specified in the first Conference of 1744 as follows:

"1. To manage the temporal things of the Society. 2. To receive the weekly contributions of the Leaders of the classes. 3. To expend what is needful from time to time. 4. To send relief to the poor. 5. To see that the public buildings be kept clean and in good repair. 6. To keep an exact account of receipts and expenses. 7. To inform the Helpers, if the rules of the house, of the school, of the Bands, or of the Society, be not punctually observed; and 8. If need be to inform the Minister hereof. 9. To tell the Helpers in love, if they think anything amiss in their doctrine or life. 10. If it be not removed, to send timely notice to the Minister. 11. To meet his fellow Stewards weekly, in order to consult together on the preceding heads."¹

It is clear that, notwithstanding the possibility of confronting or reporting on the

1. *Minutes of Conference I* p.60 (1744). Cited in Baker (1965:227).

itinerants, the primary role of the stewards was in administering the temporal affairs of the society - tasks which today would be largely managed by a treasurer or property steward. With the leadership of local preachers in societies discounted and with the role of class leaders in decline, the effective *local* leadership thus lay in the hands of stewards who were chosen to exercise temporal rather than spiritual care. The legacy of this structure persists to the current day, where it is arguable that for many Methodist churches, stewards, who are the main component of local church leadership, are perceived as being mainly concerned with temporal affairs¹. This understanding is perhaps inherent in the term itself since the biblical roots, refer almost exclusively to persons concerned with household management, finance and business transactions². The emphasis on stewards, taken together with the gradual demise of the class leaders, and the exclusion of local preachers, has, in the author's opinion, resulted in a serious gap in the lay *spiritual* leadership within Methodist churches with important consequences for pastoral care.

Other lay people who had significant roles to play in the worship and spiritual life of the societies were the *exhorters* and the *prayer leaders*. The term exhorter apparently dates from as early as 1746 and refers to those who held the societies together in prayer and encouragement in the absence of itinerants or local preachers (Batty 1992:33ff.). They were normally restricted to speak in their own societies in the absence of a preacher. The exhorters had no authority of office like class leaders or stewards neither were they formally recognised on the plan as the local preachers. Many of them were probably class leaders experienced in giving a word of encouragement to their classes and ready to do the same in larger meetings in the absence of a duly authorised preacher. They were the raw material from which the local preachers emerged. The distinction between preaching and exhortation was seen in preaching from a text. Batty goes as far as to suggest that:

"It may be that the true ancestor of today's local preacher, a much less exalted personage, was the 'exhorter' of the eighteenth century. He preached regularly in a much smaller area in and around his home society." (1969:62)

While there is some merit in this suggestion, it hardly does justice to the fact that the original local preacher, as now, was a circuit appointment and officially recognised on the plan, whereas the exhorter's activities were mainly confined to his own

1. This is illustrated by the title of a recent booklet on the duties of Methodist church stewards: *It's More Than Counting the Collection* (Braddy 1989). The title highlights the prevalent conception that stewarding has to do with temporal especially financial matters.

2. See for example: Matt. 20:8; Luke 8:3, 12:42, 16:1ff. The Greek word *oikonomos* which is translated as steward in many early English versions is variously rendered as 'foreman' or 'manager' in the NIV. The original Greek word means literally 'one who manages a house'. Although used elsewhere in the New Testament to refer to those who manage God's house and hence spiritual things (e.g., 1 Cor.4:1; 1 Peter 4:10) the primary understanding is a secular one.

society¹.

From the early days of Methodism informal prayer and worship were conducted by prayer leaders, firstly in homes and then subsequently after society meetings. These were very informal occasions and often aided the evangelistic efforts but were somewhat frowned upon by Wesley because they were not amenable to control. Thus Batty (1992:60) comments:

"Wesley thought that these meetings were excellent nurseries for young preachers, more useful in many places even than the preaching, and a means of revival; but he eventually wondered whether they were getting out of hand. He then directed that they should be over by nine o' clock, and that no exhortation should be given."

In the years that followed Wesley's death the Conference acted first to regulate the informal prayer meetings and then to promulgate 'official' ones². The overall effect Batty (1992:67) maintains was to change the nature of the meeting from a participatory style in which all were encouraged to be involved to a service where the appointed exhorter did everything himself.

The Spiritual Life of Early Methodists

It was tacitly assumed that Methodists would be members of the Church of England or a dissenting denomination and as such would attend Sunday worship and receive the sacraments in church. The Methodists would of course still come under the pastoral care of the local parish for needs associated with the various rites of passage embracing births, marriages and deaths. The distinctive Methodist contributions to the support of their spiritual life were the early morning (5am) preaching services, the society meetings after Sunday worship and the various mid-week band, class and prayer meetings (Lawson 1965:190). As the years passed, preaching houses were built and Methodists were increasingly expelled from the Anglican Church or were reluctant to receive communion at the hands of supposedly decadent clergymen³. Consequently, there was increasing pressure for Methodist sacramental worship. The problem was compounded since many Methodists, especially new converts, had little or no contact with the established Church.

1. In fairness to Batty the early situation was probably confusing and thus Baker (1965:237) notes: "Indeed the term 'exhorter' was sometimes used synonymously with local preacher as in the Conference of 1770, when the assistant was asked to furnish his successor with a list of the exhorters in his circuit."

2. Thus, for example, the 1806 Conference directed that meetings should not be held without the approval of the superintendent.

3. This was clearly such a problem that Wesley was moved to affirm that the Lord's Supper was still valid when received at the hands of an immoral celebrant. Thus Wesley taught: "The validity of the ordinance doth not depend upon the goodness of him that administers". Cited by Bowmer (1951:73) from a sermon entitled: "A Caution Against False Prophets" documented in *The Sermons of John Wesley*, Standard Edition, ed., E.H.Sudgen, 2 vols., London, 1921, ii:19.

A partial solution was for the Wesleys and other sympathetic Anglican clergymen to administer the sacraments to Methodists. Thus Charles Wesley gave communion to 80 colliers at Kingswood, Bristol on June 29th, 1740 (Bowmer 1951:63). The net result of this action was somewhat counter-productive since the men were subsequently refused communion in most Bristol Anglican churches. Furthermore, the use of clergymen did not circumvent the problem of lack of consecrated buildings and in any case there were too few of them to make a significant impact on the growing Methodist Connexion. Bowmer (1951:68) notes that the actual introduction of communion in Methodist preaching houses is lost in obscurity but certainly dates no later than the end of 1745. Somewhat later, during the years 1755-1761, unordained preachers at the Norwich preaching house conducted baptisms and administered communion but were stopped by Charles Wesley (Bowmer 1951:73-4). Under no circumstances would the Wesleys allow unordained men (the itinerant lay preachers) to administer the sacraments.

Finally, under considerable pressure and with the relationship between Methodism and the Church of England already considerably strained, Wesley began at last to ordain some of his itinerants to the ministry of word and sacrament. The breaking point came in 1784 when commissioning men for the American mission-field where thousands of Methodists were deprived of the sacraments. Having been refused help by the Bishop of London he proceeded to ordain two itinerants, firstly as deacons and then as elders, as well as ordaining an Anglican priest (Thomas Coke) as superintendent for the American field. Over the next few years, up until 1789, Wesley ordained some 27 men, initially for overseas work but finally in 1788 for the English circuits. Thus after 1789 the sacraments were to some extent available in the larger town chapels at the hands of their own Methodist preachers.

After Wesley

The Succession

It may have been that Wesley's first ordinations for the English circuits were intended to pave the way for his succession. However, his preparations had started somewhat earlier in 1784 when he created the Legal Hundred. This was a legislative authority devised by Wesley in his Deed of Declaration whereby he designated one hundred named preachers to constitute the legal Conference after his death. In the document he set forth their duties in detail for governing the Connexion. The Deed determined the principle that the Conference had control over the appointment of preachers to the chapels of the Connexion for a term not to exceed three years. The 'preaching-houses' which had been settled on Wesley himself were settled on the Conference, which now became the legal heir. The preachers who had formerly been

regarded by Wesley as his assistants would now assume a different status. However, as Wilkinson (1978:277) observes:

"The Deed of Declaration was a far-sighted proposal, but it did not go far enough. In the structure of the Connexion, the laity were completely ignored in matters of administration."

In the immediate aftermath of his death and indeed for around half a century the consequences of that omission were to be seen. Little concession was given to repeated calls for greater democracy¹ and according to Currie (1968:30) :

"The Conference effectively announced its intention to replace Wesley's autocracy² with a hierarchical rule if anything more rigid and far reaching."

This stirred up continuing unrest over the issue of lay representation which was to lead to recurrent schism³.

After Wesley's death the itinerants began to consolidate their position of authority and Methodism moved slowly but surely from a para-church movement into an established denomination. The die had perhaps already been cast by the action of Wesley in ordaining some of his preachers but it was confirmed by the subsequent actions of the Conference. Almost immediately (1792) the Conference forbade further ordinations and in the subsequent year decided that the distinction between ordained and unordained preachers should be dropped (George 1978:153). This, as it turned out, was not so as to remove the distinction between the itinerants and the local preachers but rather to reinforce it. The argument, as was to surface later, was that

1. For example in 1791 laymen from the Redruth Society proposed that class members should choose their own leader; that the society members should choose the stewards and that no preacher should expel members without the consent of the majority (Wilkinson 1978:279). At about the same time Kilham, one of Wesley's assistants pressed for more lay-representation, including elected lay delegates at the Conference. He also called for members to be involved in admission/ expulsion of members and in selection of society office bearers, and that lay preachers should be approved by the circuit meetings (Wilkinson 1978:283-4).

2. As Baker (1965:282) points out Wesley had already taken a strong line against lay claims to representation in the higher echelons of Methodism. In support of this he quotes Wesley: "As long as I live, the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists". Cited from *The Letters of John Wesley*, standard edition in 8 vols. , ed. N. Curnock (1909-1916), VIII:196 . Conference it seemed was set to pursue Wesley's policies.

3. In the period between 1797 and 1850 a whole series of splits occurred in Methodism centred almost exclusively on the issues of lay involvement, control and representation, especially the relationship between the minister and the laity. Although some members simply left the Wesleyan Methodist Church to join other churches many also left to form alternative Methodist bodies. These included the following: the Methodist New Connexion (1797); Independent Methodists (1806); the Bible Christians (1819); the Primitive Methodist Church (1820); the Tent Methodists (1822); the Protestant Methodists (1829); the Armenian Methodists (1836); the Wesleyan Methodist Association (1836); the Wesleyan Reformers (1850). Several of these groups combined to form the United Methodist Free Churches in 1857 which subsequently joined with the Methodist New Connexion and the Bible Christians in 1907 to form the United Methodist Church. This in turn united with the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Primitive Methodist Church in 1932 to form today's Methodist Church.

there was no need for the laying on of hands since the itinerants were already *virtually* ordained on reception into full connexion (George 1978:153).

The crucial question in these turbulent years turned on whether the itinerants should or should not administer the Lord's Supper. This was a sensitive and potentially divisive issue since many influential Church Methodists maintained that the sacraments should only be received in the parish church¹. Furthermore, to legitimize a distinctly Methodist sacrament would be the last nail in the coffin of the presentation of Methodism as a renewal movement within the Anglican Church. In response to the growing turbulence within the Connexion the Conference of 1795 approved the *Plan of Pacification* which laid down that where it was desired, with the consent of Conference, the Lord's Supper might be administered by persons authorized by the Conference - a clear reference to the itinerant preachers. This was a clever compromise since it was an enabling decision, recognizing the authority of itinerants to administer the sacraments, allowing the views of the local societies to be taken into account², and yet still keeping the final decision in the hands of the Conference. This resolution was pivotal since, for the first time, the authority of the Leaders' Meeting (stewards and class leaders) in the leadership of the society was recognised, yet without compromising the position and influence of the trustees with their much needed financial support³. That this was a token offering towards the call for lay representation is seen in that the measure also paved the way for the raised status of the itinerants as prefigured in their new sacramental duties. This was clearly the perception of the Kilhamites who shortly were to leave the Wesleyan Methodist Church⁴ to form the Methodist New Connexion.

The Plan of Pacification was crucial in another sense too, since, together with the implementation of the Deed of Declaration, it marked the watershed between Methodism as a movement committed to the spread of scriptural holiness in the land and renewal of the Church of England, and Methodism as a distinct legal entity - a

1. Thus, for example, in 1792 trustees in Bristol prevented Henry Moore, an itinerant, from preaching in their chapels as they did not agree with his celebrating the sacrament (Wilkinson 1978:280).

2. The detail of the plan of pacification specified that the Lord's Supper would not be celebrated in any chapel unless the majority of the trustees and a majority of stewards and leaders agreed to it. (Batty 1992:97). It is again significant that local preachers do not feature in these consultations and thus have no say in the worship life of the society except in the event that they are also class leaders, stewards or trustees - a circumstance which Wesley opposed.

3. Trustees were given further acknowledgement in 1797 through an addition to the Model Deed which required that trustees had to give written consent for stationing of an itinerant for longer than a two year period.

4. The title *Wesleyan Methodist Church* is that used to describe the main body of Methodism governed according to Wesley's Deed of Declaration until reunited with the other Methodist bodies in the Methodist Union of 1932.

new denomination. Thus George (1978:153) observes:

"Wesleyan Methodism never formally separated from the Church of England, but this was a decisive step in the process which resulted in the complete separation. In course of time all the circuits availed themselves of this provision. The preachers had become *de facto* Ministers of Christian congregations and thus naturally fulfilled all normal duties of Ministers."

The ensuing years were marked by the slow accretion of the marks of a distinct church, not least in the growing respectability of the membership, the development of a ruling bureaucracy, the increasing rigidity of organisational structures and the emergence of a distinct and professional priesthood.

Development of a Distinct Methodist Ministry

One of the key features of the 50 years following Wesley's death was the emergence of a distinct Methodist Ministry within Wesleyan Methodism¹. This was partly a natural development in the life of any new denomination but was catalysed on the one hand by the pressures of laymen calling for more representation in church government and on the other by the *Tractarians* who denied that Wesleyan itinerants were ministers at all. The separation of a distinct ministry thus, at one and the same time, emphasised the exclusive authority of the itinerants over against lay claims, and buttressed their unique priestly role. The seeds of this separate ministry had been sown much earlier during Wesley's time with the selective ordination of itinerants and the failure officially to document the role and position of local preachers, but it was the Plan of Pacification, with its provision for the itinerants to administer the Lord's Supper, that was to prove the crucial turning point in the development of a distinct ministry. Hitherto, the local preachers had in many respects mirrored the itinerants involvement in the Methodist societies, although admittedly on a part-time basis and without any administrative or disciplinary function.

The distinctive role and status of the itinerants began with their authorisation to administer the sacraments but slowly evolved as various legislation was passed at Conference. Thus in 1803 the Wesleyan Conference resolved that 'in general' women should not preach but in exceptional circumstances they might preach to their own sex (Graham 1993:78). This move was a backward step from Wesley's grudging acceptance of women preachers; it not only outlawed the few female local preachers

1. Similar developments in the break-away Methodist denominations occurred much more slowly. For example, in other groups the administration of the sacraments was not restricted to the minister. Thus George (1978:158) notes: "In the other branches of Methodism the administration of the sacraments has never been confined to the Travelling Preachers, though there was some variety: sometimes each society was free to make its own arrangements, and little was made of the distinction between Travelling Preachers and others; sometimes there was a greater desire to control the administration of the sacraments accompanied by the occasional authorization within a circuit of those who were not Travelling Preachers or even preachers at all."

but prevented female itinerants from being part of the Wesleyan Connexion¹. The move probably reflected a concern to make Methodism and in particular the Methodist ministry more socially respectable at the beginning of the 19th. Century. In a similar period Batty (1969:91) records:

"Any who had been discovered eking out their allowance by business transactions were expelled, not only because they had defied the long-standing rule, but because they weakened the case of their fellows to be 'ministers' before the law, when this term meant someone set apart and maintained by the church for full time work."

The effect of this action was to underscore the distinction between local preachers and the itinerants - the latter having been set aside full time for the work.

A further development occurred with the Conference of 1814 where the Leeds District meeting had submitted a memorial which read:

"..to insert a declaration in the Minutes that the Supernumerary and Superannuated preachers be considered as enjoying all the general rights and priviledges (*sic*) of their brethren who are regularly engaged in the work of the ministry."²

Batty (1969:135) suggests this is evidence of a significant development in the widening of the gap between the itinerants and local preachers since, hitherto, an early regulation had decreed that itinerants who ceased to travel reverted to the status of local preacher³. Thus Batty argues:

".... the request of the Leeds meeting is further evidence that though at first there was one species of Methodist preacher, there were now two; and one reason for the request was that the status of the local preacher was by 1814 much lower than in 1753."

The inference of the Leeds memorial was that those accepted into full connexion or ordained obtained a new life-long and irreversible status which distinguished them from other preachers.

This newly found status was gradually marked by distinct titles. Thus, for example, Lawton (1989:98) notes that in the Conference minutes of 1822 the travelling preachers were given the title of *Reverend* and in the following year the

1. Graham (1993:79) notes that in 1825 women itinerants numbered 13 amongst Primitive Methodists and 25 amongst Bible Christians. She comments: "frustrated women preachers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church found their services readily accepted by the Primitive Methodists and that they were welcomed in a denomination which made no distinction, especially in its early days, between men and women." In Wesleyan Methodism female local preachers were only reinstated in 1918 and women ordained for the first time in 1969.

2. Quoted by Batty (1969:135) from the Minutes of the Leeds District Meeting, 17th. May 1814, source the *Brunswick Manuscript Papers*.

3. Graham (1993:83) records the practice continuing within Primitive Methodism among the women itinerants, and thus she writes: "Usually after retirement or marriage the females reverted to local preacher status and in many cases were active as class leaders."

names of all the itinerants were listed in the minutes for the first time. This is in contradistinction to the recognition of local preachers who are only listed at a local level in the circuit plan¹. Batty (1969:142) records that the use of the title Reverend began as early as 1818, some years before it was used officially in the Minutes, and that from 1827 the itinerants were officially known as *ministers*. This latter development is significant since in the early days of Methodism the term minister was reserved for the Wesleys and other sympathetic Anglican priests who alone were in a position to baptise or celebrate the Lord's Supper². A further step in the separation of the Methodist minister was the setting up in 1834 of the Wesleyan Theological Institution to train candidates for ministry. This was a source of continued lay disaffection not only because it increased the gulf between the laity and the ministerial class but also because the training of local preachers was sadly neglected.

The culmination of a separated ministry in Wesleyan Methodism came in 1836 with the restoration of 'laying on of hands' for those newly received into full connexion. This practice had been discontinued in 1792 except for those serving overseas in missionary situations. In the intervening period, according to Bowmer (1974:122), ministerial status was justified by arguing that:

" (a).....Reception into Full Connexion was 'virtual ordination', and (b) ...that the imposition of hands was not integral to ordination."

The Conference debate acknowledged that Methodist ministers were to be considered already in receipt of 'virtual ordination' through reception into full connexion but recognised that although:

"...the imposition of hands was but a circumstance of ordination,it was scriptural and ancient, and thus it was better not to omit it."³

Consequently, in future years, candidates accepted for the presbyteral ministry⁴ were first received into full connexion and then, usually within a few hours, ordained through laying on of hands with prayer. This effectively brought the Wesleyan Methodist Church into line with other churches and according to George (1978:155)

1. This distinction remains today. The names and addresses of Methodist ministers, both active and retired, are listed in the Minutes of Conference, but there appears to be no centrally maintained list for local preachers which includes a current correspondence address.

2. Hence Wesley's injunction: "Whoever among us undertakes to baptize a child is *ipso facto* excluded from the connexion." Cited from: *The Letters of John Wesley*, Standard Edition, 8 vols., London, 1931, v:330 by Batty (1969:134). However, in practice, local preachers had for many years baptised infants and this probably continued until the Act of 1837 which required the use of baptismal registers. It is noteworthy that in the case of emergencies, trinitarian baptism by lay persons is recognised by all mainline denominations.

3. *Minutes of Conference*, 1841 edn., viii: 85 (1836) cited by George (1978:154).

4. George (1978:157) notes that up until 1846 the Wesleyan service book had included separate ordination services for: Deacons, Elders and Superintendents but after that date the three services were replaced by a single service entitled: 'Form for Ordaining Candidates for the Ministry in the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion' based on the old form for ordaining elders.

signified:

"...that those whom the Church believed to be called of God became both Travelling Preachers in the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament in the Church of God."

Bowmer (1974:124-5) notes that the 'laying on of hands' had been regularly debated in Conference but had been defeated up until 1836. He suggests that the prime motivation for introducing it at this point was largely:

"... an anxiety to assert the reality of the Wesleyan ministry against the criticisms of such Anglo-Catholic leaders such as Pusey.... ."

Whatever the motivation for the reintroduction of the ritual it provided a clear outward and visible sign of the progressive separation that had occurred between the Methodist ministry and membership since the death of Wesley. This separation resulted from the development of ministerial supremacy and control which is so clearly documented in Batty's publication entitled: *Stages in the Development and Control of Wesleyan Lay Leadership 1791-1878*. Batty (1992:3) summarises the situation after Wesley's death in the following terms:

"...the Travelling Preachers became Ministers in all the usually accepted senses of the word. Organised by means of their annual Conference into a collective pastorate, they gradually increased their power in the connexion by using one particular aspect of Wesley's teaching to assert their authority over the class leaders, local preachers, prayer leaders and Sunday School teachers, and by arriving at a system of mutual support with the trustees."

Currie (1968:51-2) also reaches rather similar conclusions and thus states:

"Wesley created a vast army of lay-officials, whose efforts were essential to the expansion and survival of Methodism, but he left them in complete subservience to the ministers, who as one writer put it in 1814 'make all the arrangements in the society'."

According to Batty (1992:3) this was to prove to be of lasting significance since:

"The methods used to establish pastoral supremacy diverted the ministry from its main work, and antagonised and weakened the lay agencies."

and as a consequence:

"Wesleyan Methodism had lost much of the vitality, flexibility and responsible involvement of ordinary working people in local situations...."

As will be apparent in subsequent discussion these developments have had an important influence on the Methodist Church down to the present day and have significant consequences for the perceptions and practice of pastoral care especially the partnership between ministers and members.

Local Preachers after 1791

It is appropriate to consider in some detail the development of local preachers after the death of Wesley since they are a vital group within the life of British Methodism and have been the subject of one of the postal surveys employed in this study. An examination of their roots provides the necessary background to understand their current role within the Methodist Church. In her thesis on the contribution of local preachers Batty (1969:preface) described local preachers in the following terms:

"Local preachers are laymen who believe themselves called by God to preach to their fellows while remaining in every sense laymen. They are unpaid, carefully trained, and once accepted, their office is for life. They may preach anywhere in Methodism."

This is a helpful description since it is equally true of the early days of Methodism as it is today, with perhaps the exception of academic training which has been greatly improved. It is interesting to reflect that the term 'local preacher' has survived for 250 years and carries with it the remembrance that originally all Methodist preachers, apart from a small handful of Anglican clergy, were lay people, and hence a term such as 'lay preacher' would have been inappropriate. Furthermore, like their ordained brethren their office is for life and the names of all local preachers, whether active in preaching or not, continue to be listed in the circuit plan until death or withdrawal. Many local preachers are in fact very active long after retirement age.

Almost right from the beginning local preachers have played a vital role in the growth of Methodism and the leading of services of worship. Early local preachers were vital in evangelism and outreach, helped run the class system¹, preached in the local society meetings and were the seed-bed from which the itinerants grew. The contribution of local preachers can, in part, be judged from some early statistics. Thus in 1794, three years after Wesley's death, there were, according to Batty (1969:81) approximately 300 itinerants and an estimated 2,000 local preachers. By about 1825 it was estimated that, at least in some circuits, 17 out of 22 services were conducted by local preachers (Batty 1992:53). This dependence on local preachers has continued to the current time when a large majority of services² are still conducted by local preachers. Over the years the ratio of local preachers to ministers has gradually fallen so that in 1993 there were 2,404 active ministers³ compared to 10,282 active local preachers⁴ - although not all of the active ministers are in a circuit ministry.

1. Wesley was not in favour of Methodists holding both the offices of class leader and local preacher but according to Lawton (1989:98): "The records of the societies indicate that duplication of office was customary ...".

2. Lawton (1989:93) estimates that about 5 out of 7 services are conducted by local preachers.

3. Quoted in the *Methodist Recorder*, June 23rd. 1994, p.13.

4. Quoted in the *Local Preachers Magazine*, vol. 144/3, August 1994, p.24.

In view of the unquestionable indispensability of local preachers to the Methodist work their status within the system is remarkable - by its absence! Wesley appears to have regarded them as a second best, a stop-gap measure to fill in when an itinerant was not available. Although he recognised that many were very gifted he appeared fearful that they were not fully under his control, and was concerned that they might exert undue influence in their local societies. Consequently, from the beginning their role has been marginalised and, especially in the early days, they had no place in the leadership of the societies or circuit. Thus, for example, local preachers were not members of the society's leaders' meeting or of the circuit quarterly meeting until 1852. Even today, local preachers have no automatic involvement in the leadership of their local church.

The turbulent early years of the Nineteenth Century were particularly difficult for local preachers as it was unclear whether they were entitled to a licence to preach and hence exemption under the Toleration Act. Methodist itinerants, on the other hand, were eligible for such exemption since it was deemed that they were ministers of congregations. The Methodist authorities appeared somewhat indifferent to the local preachers' difficulties. Thus according to Batty (1992:46), towards the end of 1802 the London circuit quarterly meeting declared that local preachers did not come under the provisions of the Toleration Act, because they were not 'wholly set apart', that is, full time preachers. In the following year Conference ruled that any local preacher who applied for a licence to preach without permission of his quarterly meeting would be expelled. (Batty notes that generally those with ability and hoping to become itinerants would be approved.)

In 1811 matters were brought to a head when William Kent, a local preacher, was prosecuted for conducting a service in a house in Berkshire without a licence to preach. Subsequently, several Methodist preachers were refused licences at Leeds Quarter Sessions because they were not ministers of congregations. Shortly after, Lord Sidmouth attempted to introduce a bill in Parliament which would have prevented local preachers and exhorters from obtaining licences to preach and which if enforced would have crippled the Methodist Church. The bill was rejected, at least in part, because of massive protests organised by the Methodist circuits. So in these years we find that the status of local preachers were marginalised both within the church and within the nation.

Clearly in the period after Wesley's death there was a growing sense of rivalry between the ministers and the local preachers and the former were continually apprehensive of the possible influence and power of the latter. These trends are recorded in a variety of documents. Thus, for example, a letter written by George

Morley from Bury on March 23rd 1807 to Jabez Bunting, expresses alarm that the local preachers are organising mutual aid:

"Many of the Local Preachers in these circuits have formed themselves into a kind of independent association. Their professed design is to make provision for themselves in time of sickness, for horse-hire, and for their widows and children after their death. They themselves are to have the whole management and disposal of the above mentioned funds, without being subject to any control, either from society or circuit stewards, or Quarterly Meetings, or any other whatsoever. This would be to establish a new authority in our Connexion...." ¹

Some years later the Rev. John Emory of the Methodist Episcopal Church dined with one Mr. Samuel Drew and discussed the role of local preachers. His subsequent diary entry hints at the low esteem in which they were held:

"The local preachers, Mr. D thinks, are looked down on by the travelling [preachers] and held in too much degradation, which is sorely felt... ." ²

At about the same time, a letter from William Myles, an itinerant, to Jabez Bunting, dated August 18th. 1820, expresses ministerial concern over local preachers:

"I have some fears respecting the Local Preachers. They well know we cannot do without them. Some of them appear to be jealous and envious of us.... . I fear it would not be a good policy to get at present an exact number of our Chapels with the debts on each. It would give us to see how dependent we are on the Local Preachers, and the whole of our debts would frighten us. Some of our Local Preachers are still urging the people to build Chapels in country places where we cannot visit them on the Lord's day." ³

Batty has studied at some length the overall development of the working relationship between ministers and the various lay participants after the death of Wesley and comes to the following rather bleak conclusions (1992:252):

"The brotherhood which existed among the ministers was a strong unifying force. It provided continuity, ideas, training and discipline Yet when they recognised brotherhood developing in the lay agencies, they saw only the destructive tendencies of growing power, and cut it back. Fear of rival authority prevented them from using the groups' cohesion as a means of developing further lay service or outreach."

The apprehension which existed amongst ministers concerning possible rivalry from local preachers had various practical consequences, not least in attempts to control the influence of the latter group. Thus in 1793, within two years of Wesley's death, the Conference began moves to bring local preachers under discipline and resolved:

1. Letter reproduced in Vickers 1988:315.

2. A diary entry of the Rev. John Emory in the year 1820, after dining with one Samuel Drew, reproduced in Vickers 1988:367.

3. Extract from a letter reproduced in Vickers 1988:373.

"All Local Preachers shall meet in class. No exception shall be made, in respect to any who have been Travelling Preachers in former years."¹

The effect of this was to ensure that all local preachers came under the same discipline as other members, to meet in class - a requirement that confirmed them in a different category from the ministers². In 1796 the control of local preachers was still a cause for concern and the Conference posed and answered the following question:

"What can be done to bring certain Local Preachers more fully to observe our discipline? A.1. Let no one be permitted to preach, who will not meet in Class, and who is not regularly planned by the Superintendent of the Circuit where he resides. 2. Let no Local Preacher be allowed to preach in any other Circuit without producing a recommendation from the Superintendent of the Circuit where he lives... . 3. Let no Local Preacher keep Love-feasts without the appointment of the Superintendent, nor in any way interfere with his business as mentioned in the Large Minutes."³

This new legislation allowed prohibition of local preachers from preaching if they did not meet in class and put their activities firmly under the control of the superintendent. At the same conference the framework of a quarterly local preachers' meeting was formalised, whereby the local preachers were required to meet with the superintendent minister every three months. According to Batty (1992:43) the purpose of the meetings was to enable a closer control and monitoring of the local preachers rather than to enable their participation in the pastoral oversight of the churches. Thus at the meeting the preachers' names would be read and specific questions asked such as:

"Is there any objection to this man on moral or religious grounds? Does he believe and preach our doctrines? Does he observe our discipline? Does he meet in class?"⁴

The marginalisation of the local preachers can be seen not only in the attempts to control their activities, influence and involvement in local church leadership but also in the neglect of their care and development. Local preachers often gave unstintingly of their time to the work to the detriment of their own financial security especially in times of illness or other adversity. It was however left to the preachers' own initiative to organise some welfare benefits and even this not without opposition from ministers (see above p. 23). The local preachers' welfare arrangements were initially organised

1. *Minutes of the Wesleyan Conference*, 20 vols. published London 1862-1879, 1793 (1862) 1:276, cited in Batty 1969:67.

2. This is still a requirement for local preachers today since the CPD states that: "1. It is the duty of a local preacher: (i) to meet in class or some equivalent fellowship." *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, Peterborough, Methodist Publishing House, 1989, vol.2, p.471.

3. Minutes of Conference 1796: Q.24 as reproduced in Vickers 1988:279.

4. These questions and the agenda of the Local Preachers Meeting were formalised much later in the Conference of 1894 (Batty 1969:263) but rather similar questions were probably asked from the start.

on a circuit basis but in 1849 the *Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association* was formally constituted. This was not without controversy since the association did not differentiate local preachers who had left the Wesleyan Methodist Church to continue their ministry in other branches of Methodism, but supported all members whatever their allegiance. As a consequence many chapels were closed to LPMAA meetings and the body continued to be regarded with suspicion and disfavour by Wesleyan ministers (Batty 1969:220/2).

The neglect of local preachers could be seen not only in lack of concern for their welfare but also in the absence of any kind of training or official encouragement in their ministry. This was one of the issues which Kilham sought to address before he was expelled from the Connexion. According to Batty (1969:72) Kilham sought a more rigorous selection of local preachers involving the congregation as well as weekly or fortnightly study groups when the local preachers could meet with the itinerants. These suggestions were however rejected by Conference. The poor standard of preaching and lack of training among local preachers continued to be a cause of concern and a subject of criticism but nothing was done until almost the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when declining membership heightened concern over the standard of preaching. Thus from 1876, Conference required local preachers to have read Wesley's sermons and to pass an examination in the scriptural proofs of leading doctrines (Batty 1969:253). By 1893 a book-list was finally made available as part of a 'gradual course in reading' (Batty 1969:257). However, Lawton (1989:100) notes that it was not until Union in 1932 that written examinations for local preachers became compulsory, hitherto the single oral examination had been considered sufficient.

After the final major expulsions and secessions of members around 1850 the Wesleyan ministers were firmly in control of the church and began to feel more secure in their position. Consequently, some concessions began to be made to the laity and to local preachers. Thus, for example, in 1852 local preachers were given a seat in the quarterly circuit meeting (Lawton 1989:100). A much more significant and dramatic reform occurred in 1877 when Conference adopted a new constitution for Wesleyan Methodism which provided for Conference to be divided into two sections: *the pastoral conference* comprising elected ministerial delegates and the *representative section* comprising an equal number of ministerial and lay delegates (Currie 1968:157ff.). The latter section was concerned with business and financial affairs so that, while some concession had been made, ministers still maintained complete authority over aspects such as: discipline, doctrine and stationing.

The Conference of 1894 concerned itself closely with local preachers' affairs and organisation and the Conference decisions included several affirming aspects such as:

the institution of a public recognition service, local preacher involvement in assessing the work in their circuits and responsibility for selection/ assessment of local preachers (Batty 1969:268). Subsequently in 1918 women were admitted as local preachers¹ and a *Local Preachers' Commission* was set up to enquire into the conditions relating to the selection, training, appointment, numbers and distribution of local preachers throughout the connexion. The commission discovered that the average number of preachers per plan was 26, but only 17 of these were active and only 7 suitable for appointment anywhere in the circuit. In addition there were very few young preachers, with recruitment at levels of less than 3 every 10 years and most preachers unwilling to attend training (Batty 1969:287).

It needs to be emphasised that the description of the role and situation of local preachers provided above is typical only of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The status and role of local preachers in the other branches of Methodism was quite different. Generally, especially in the early years local preachers had much higher profiles and were much less differentiated from the itinerants. For example in the Methodist New Connexion local preachers were involved in a full range of ministerial duties² which included baptisms and funerals and in principle were authorised to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, although in practice this rarely happened (Lawton 1989:104-6). Similarly, in Primitive Methodism local preachers had ministerial responsibilities from the outset, and the first Conference in 1820 comprised a majority of lay members. In some cases local preachers were financially supported on a limited contract basis so as to perform all of the functions of full time ministry (Lawton 1989:111-2). However, notwithstanding these and many similar examples, the role and status of local preachers in the Methodist Church after union in 1932 most closely resembles, and has been most greatly influenced by, their position in the pre-1932 Wesleyan Methodist Church.

It is perhaps instructive to reflect on the changes in numbers of local preachers in the Methodist Church since union in 1932. According to Batty (1969:365) there were 34,948 local preachers in 1933 (of whom 1,422 were women) which had decreased to 20,661 in 1967 (of whom 4,086 were women). The most recent figures indicate that in 1993 there were a total of 12,953 (of whom 10,282 were active preachers)³. The fall in the number of local preachers has declined faster than the decrease in

1. Minutes of Conference (1918) p.85, cited in Batty (1969:299).

2. Thus Lawton (1989:105-6) cites the example of John Chambers, a local preacher in the Methodist New Connexion who died in 1858. He apparently did nearly all the ministerial duties including: 8,000 sermons, 6,000 infant baptisms, 4,000 funerals and travelled some 20,000 miles in visiting the sick and preaching.

3. Figures taken from *The Local Preachers Magazine* Vol. 144 /3, August 1994, p.24. The statistics from this source do not indicate breakdown into male and female preachers.

membership even though the number of women preachers has grown substantially. This caused Batty, quoting the analysis of the Local Preachers' Secretary John Stacey, to write rather pessimistically in 1969:

"The number of preachers on trial give cause for the greatest concern. In the year ending 1967, 479 candidates were received on trial, but 253 withdrew. The secretary has said that if present rates of gains and losses continue the Order of Local Preachers will cease to exist in 1991."¹

Twenty five years later, despite Stacey's gloomy prognosis, local preachers are still a vital part of Methodism and over the recent five year period from 1989 to 1993 the number of active local preachers has stayed approximately constant at around 10,400 with an annual average of 550 new candidates coming on trial and a loss of 136 through withdrawal whilst on trial.² The drop in the number of local preachers over the past 60 years is probably not as catastrophic as has been feared. In part it reflects the drop in the membership, the pool from which preachers are drawn, but it probably is substantially accounted for by the increase in rigour of the training which requires a much greater initial commitment than simply trying one's hand at preaching.

Critique of the Role of Local Preachers

The role of local preachers has changed little over the last 200 years. The local preacher is a circuit appointment and the preacher's duty is to take services, that is to lead worship and to preach, in circuit churches as prescribed by the circuit superintendent. In the author's experience there is, on the whole, little co-ordination between preachers, or between preachers and churches and it is still quite normal for the preacher to arrive with the minimal of prior contact with the church; thus the organist will often only know the hymns in the vestry a few minutes before the service, and the church will be unaware of any theme until after the service. Especially in large circuits the preacher comes as a stranger unfamiliar with most of the congregation or their needs. After the service the preacher moves on and there is little or no opportunity for any follow-up or pastoral involvement apart from the traditional casual conversation at the door.

This is not new. In 1895 a Methodist minister, the Rev. C.O. Eldridge, published similar criticisms of the system³. He argued that because preachers were rotated there was no sense of responsibility:

1. The views of John Stacey in "Westminster Scrapbook", *The Local Preachers Magazine*, April 1968, p.45, quoted in Batty (1969:322).

2. Statistics quoted from *The Local Preachers Magazine* Vol. 144/3, August 1994 p.24. Despite the continuing intake of new preachers numbers have not increased because new admissions have been balanced by: deaths, average 349 *per annum*; resignations, average 115 *per annum*; and those accepted for ministerial training, average 96 *per annum*.

3. Eldridge, C.O. (1895) *Local Preachers and Village Methodism*, London, pp. 31,142 quoted in Batty (1969:275,279).

"...any sense of responsibility was so subdivided that it vanished. Everybody's business was nobody's."

He suggested that preachers should be given particularly frequent appointments at one or two chapels, so that they would come to know the members and their needs in greater detail. He also commented that sermons were taken all round the circuit and being of a 'general character', hit nobody. Similarly, commenting on the situation of local preachers in the middle years of the twentieth century Batty (1969:317) states:

"Not only was he out of touch with his own society but with other preachers. Since each did what he thought right without reference to anyone else, a village congregation might listen to twenty-six sermons in one quarter bearing no relationship to one another."

A more precise and recent critique, appeared in the *Exordium to Garlick's Methodist Directory*, 1983 and is worth quoting at length:

"... there will need to be a considerable re-education, not only of congregations, but also for preachers, lay and ministerial. Most preachers are still individualists. They are too detached from the congregations where they lead worship. The relationship of Local Preachers to local churches needs radical revision, so that the Local Preachers share in the pastoral care of the congregation alongside the Minister. Furthermore, all preachers need help to see the full implications of a shared ministry with a congregation in the preparation and conduct of worship. Preachers must interpret their role as identifying, encouraging, and developing gifts within the congregation which will build up the whole community of worship. There is little future in a preacher appearing as a relative stranger to lead a pre-arranged service without any consultation with a congregation, and without providing in advance material with which the congregation can prepare themselves for worship."¹

The above is an important critique which is related to the attitude which has grown over the years, that the 'worship service' is the peculiar property of the preacher rather than the congregation whom the preacher serves. The 'one man band' approach is surprisingly much more prevalent in the Methodist Church than the Church of England where the involvement of the laity in the conduct of worship, for example in reading the Scriptures, is generally more widespread. The roots of this preacher individualism lie probably in the initial pioneering days of Methodism, where the preacher was often working in virgin territory and having to rely solely on his own skills. It has certainly been exacerbated by the circuit system where, at least in Wesley's day, communication difficulties would have made it unrealistic for the preacher to work closely with the societies. The attitudes, if not the difficulties, appear to have persisted and have significant implications for pastoral care.

1. Cited in Lawton (1989:139)

Growth and Decline in Methodism

By the beginning of the nineteenth century Wesleyan Methodism had grown rapidly to a size of 90,000 members and through the century continued to grow but gradually more slowly passing the 300,000 mark by 1840 and reaching about 450,000 by 1900. Any growth after this point could be substantially accounted for by 'biological growth'¹ and just before union in 1932 the membership stood at approximately 500,000. The membership of the Methodist Church after union of the Wesleyan Methodists, the United Methodists and the Primitive Methodists stood at around 841,000 and has continually decreased from that date to a figure of about 428,000 in 1989.² It would probably be accurate to say that the vitality of Wesleyan Methodism began to disappear in the first half of the nineteenth century when the church was slowly transformed from an active proselytising movement to a respectable denomination.

Clearly there were a number of external factors which mitigated against rapid church growth in the latter half of the nineteenth century but nevertheless there would appear to be a number of internal reasons which can be helpfully identified as they are related to the practice of pastoral care. Commenting on its initial rapid growth and influence compared to the Church of England, Edwards (1965:60) states:

"Methodism, on the other hand, was without traditions and without prejudices. Wesley was always ready to improvise as the situation demanded. through his mobility and adaptability he gained the attention of those new masses of the population which the cumbrous organization of the Established Church was unable to reach."

However, by the nineteenth century, what Wesley had created as tentative pragmatic structures, suited to the moment, had become fossilised and rigid. Thus Rack writes:

"Part of the problem that haunted Methodists throughout the 19th. Century was that their founder had devised a system well fitted to remedy the deficiencies of the old parish system in a time of accelerating change. But it had already showed signs of fossilizing itself in Wesley's lifetime, and it did not prove much more successful than the parish system in coping with the problems of the Victorian city. The skeleton of the original system has persisted in Methodism to the present day." (Rack 1989:552)

Consequently, traditions and disciplines continued, at least on paper, long after their significance had been forgotten and their usefulness outgrown³. The church had

1. Internal growth through children of members taking up membership'.

2. Figures taken from statistical tables in the respective Conference minutes.

3. For example, the current standing order 525:1 still prescribes that: "The ministers and probationers appointed to a circuit are responsible for visiting the Classes at least once in each quarter and for issuing tickets of membership to all members." This is despite the fact that only a very small minority of churches have classes which actually meet and the membership ticket has lost all its original disciplinary significance.

begun to live in a bygone age, governed by adherence to the letter of a law whose spirit had long since disappeared. A classic example of this is the circuit system. Established in a pioneering age when Methodism was a movement, a connexion of linked societies, and pastoral care was considered to be, in the main, the prerogative of the resident Church of England incumbent supported informally by the Methodist class leaders, the circuit continues almost unchanged to the present time. Today, the main responsibility for pastoral care falls on the shoulders of the Methodist minister who nevertheless is expected to discharge this responsibility still within a circuit appointment.¹

Apart from a growing rigidity in structures, the Wesleyan Church in particular was characterised by a growing respectability which gradually divorced it from its Methodist working class roots where the initial dramatic growth had occurred². Thus Lawson (1965:205) comments that the advent of the 'preaching house' made it possible to hold Sunday services of a more 'popular' type than the rather austere 'morning preaching' and thus as time went by a growing body of people who worshipped at Methodist chapels became regarded as Methodists even though they were not members of classes or bands and had not been involved in the original Methodist discipline. Thus towards the end of Wesley's ministry the rather ascetic societies were being transformed into prosperous Sunday congregations. This trend was enhanced by the need to meet the financial commitments involved in the building of new preaching houses and chapels and so Edwards (1965:60) notes:

"Just before Wesley's death, pew rents were charged for sitting in the chapels. The wealthy Methodist laymen had an influence out of all proportion to their numbers, and by the end of the [eighteenth] century, Methodism, whilst still rapidly increasing, had ceased in its political-social outlook to be the Church of the worker."

Batty (1992:237) in turn believes that the growing preoccupation with finance distracted the church from outreach and thus she writes:

"The Wesleyans did not now have enough room for the poor. The original missionary zeal of the connexion had dried up because local energies were spent on financing the chapel, and the constant subject of money-raising gave it a mercenary reputation."

The growing respectability has been diagnosed as one of the factors which led to the

1. Today Methodist ministers are still appointed to a circuit, although within the circuit they will normally have pastoral charge of a number of churches. In the ministerial survey described in chapter 1 the average number of churches for which ministers had pastoral charge was found to be 3.5 with a range from 1 to 9 churches.

2. Even today, more than 60 years after union, it is still possible to discern differences in some areas between the make-up of congregations that come from Wesleyan or Primitive traditions. For example, the older women in the former congregations are more likely to wear hats and gloves when attending worship.

demise of the class meetings, since it has been suggested that middle class Methodists resented interrogation by often socially inferior class leaders (Currie 1968:126-8). Undoubtedly, as has already been discussed at some length earlier in this chapter, the gradual loss of an effective class system was at least a major symptom, if not a direct cause, of the decline of Methodism.

In a recent publication Batty (1992) has discussed at length the development and control of lay leadership within the Wesleyan Church during the period from Wesley's death to 1878 when lay representatives were first admitted to the Conference. She argues that after Wesley's death all lay participation, including: local preachers, prayer leaders, class leaders and Sunday school workers, were brought progressively under tight ministerial control and that this stifled lay initiative, dampened enthusiasm and inhibited dynamic growth. For example, writing about prayer leaders Batty (1992:211) claims:

"Discipline' brought about the weakening then the death of this originally spontaneous growth of lay activity."

Similarly, Batty attributes the downward spiral of the initially successful Sunday school work to increasing Conference interference and ministerial control and thus she writes (1992:223):

"The Conference did not see that with Sunday school work as with other forms of 'spiritual' leadership, when intrinsic authority in the local setting had been removed from these offices and given to the ministers, vitality was cut off and development ceased."

According to Batty where lay involvement had been discouraged or participating laity could not be readily disciplined the concept of 'lay agents' was introduced¹, whereby lay workers would be employed under the close supervision of ministers. The advantage Batty (1992:196) suggests was that:

".... they would be paid and could be sacked if their work was not satisfactory , and fewer local preachers need be used."

In fact these paid lay workers were doing precisely the same pastoral and outreach

1. Thus, for example, the Conference of 1838 proposed: "Many individuals properly qualified for this work, by piety, zeal, intelligence, and good principles, may be found in our societies; and [the Conference] recommend that such persons be selected and employed, under the direction of the Superintendent and other Preacher of any circuit in which such a Mission shall be formed. And when a considerable number of such agents can be engaged the Conference deem it desirable that some suitable Supernumerary Preacher should be employed to direct and inspect their labours." *Minutes* VIII p.356 (1836) cited in Batty 1992:196. Subsequently the Conference of 1853 appointed 'home missionaries' - paid laymen whose work was to introduce Wesleyan Methodism to new areas - pioneer work previously carried out by local preachers (Batty 1969:214). Later in 1871 the Conference proposed a lay agency system where the paid lay agent (lay worker) would do the spadework formerly done by class leaders and prayer leaders especially in the area of home visitation of the unchurched (Batty 1992:188)

work that had been done in earlier generations by the local preachers, class leaders and prayer leaders.

Batty (1992:249) perceives that:

"...the essential life of Methodism, ... came from prolific growths at the base. These were led by lay people and touched the daily lives of ordinary men and women, through a network of support for their development as Christian persons and communities. This enabled the leaders to use their own gifts in the corporate priesthood of believers, to minister to others. This might be as class leaders, local preachers, prayer leaders, Sunday school workers, trustees....."

Consequently Batty (1992:251) concludes:

"When lively local activity was cut back in the interests of ministerial authority, the quickening breath failed."

In essence Batty is arguing that, after Wesley, the ministers were preoccupied with establishing their authority and in so doing limited rather than encouraged the participation of the laity and hence undermined the Methodist emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, which was at the heart of Methodism's initial success.

In summary there would seem to have been a number of internal reasons for Methodism's decline which can be listed as follows: (1) a fossilisation of structures which prevented adaptation to new situations and challenges; (2) a growing respectability leading to preoccupation with the trimmings of being a church, and a consequent loss in vision; (3) the demise of the class system which left the congregations without an adequate system of individual pastoral care; (4) an alienation of the laity through emphasis on ministerial authority and control which left the church bereft of its most potent workforce. Individually, each of the above would prove powerful inhibitors of growth but combined together, and exacerbated by a 19th. century scepticism towards biblical authority, the church and religion in general, the overall effect was catastrophic. As will be argued in subsequent chapters the four factors delineated above still have a strong influence on the British Methodist Church today and their resolution is crucial to the establishment of the effective practice of pastoral care within Methodism today.

Chapter 3

The Characterisation of Theological Viewpoint and Spirituality

Though it is recognised that labels can be used in a pejorative or dismissive way, nevertheless, it was felt of value to attempt to classify the theological outlook or the spiritual experience of the survey respondents and to investigate whether this had a significant effect on their perception or practice of pastoral care - in other words, to see whether, in Christian ministry, what a person believes or understands about his/her faith, or experience of it, determines or influences his/her actions. Such categorisation might also help to provide insights into the influence of a variety of factors such as: training, gender, educational background and age on Christian outlook. The use of such classifications is of course not new in survey work amongst church personnel¹ and has the advantage of allowing comparison of data with that derived from earlier studies. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to introduce the various theological labels employed in the survey work and to attempt to elucidate their significance when employed within British Methodism. This will enable the terms to be used meaningfully in subsequent discussion of the results of this and earlier studies.

Sensitivity to Labelling

Attempting to classify theological outlook is both a sensitive and difficult task. The former aspect is evidenced by the objections that are raised by respondents to this aspect in surveys, for example Brierley (1991a:155) notes, with regard to questions on churchmanship:

"A few felt strongly that the question should not have been included in the Census at all, but overall 89% of those who replied answered it."

In the current ministerial survey only 3% declined to reply to the question, but 14% supplied alternative descriptions and 8% added comments or expressed reservations.

Typical of the annotations to the survey form include:

"I answer this with great hesitation. I don't like applying labels to myself because I never feel they are a good fit"

"I refuse to answer this on principle. I am simply a Christian, Methodist by upbringing."

"I have reluctantly ticked two to give you something to work on. Honestly I don't care about the divisions and classifications. They don't seem to me to adequately represent what goes on in people's minds and hearts all the time."

1. For example the survey results reported by Ranson *et al* (1977) , Brierley (1991a,b), Davies *et al* (1991) and Powell (1993).

"Not happy with type-casting."

"I do not want to apply any theological label to myself."

Interestingly, in the local preacher survey only 2% failed to answer this question, and whereas some 10% applied alternative descriptions, none objected in principle, perhaps suggesting that ordained ministers are more sensitive to this issue.

The Choice of Categories

The problem of sensitivity should not be over-emphasised as probably a greater difficulty is devising terms which are both relevant and meaningful to the respondent. This becomes increasingly difficult for lay people without theological training as evidenced by the significant number (13%) in the laity survey who indicated that they were unfamiliar with one or more of the terms used. In the 1989 Census of churches in Great Britain, reported in Brierley (1991a), the compilers state that one of the prime reasons for their two extensive pilot studies was to formulate appropriate categories applicable to a wide spectrum of churches. Eventually, they chose nine terms¹ under the overall umbrella of *churchmanship*. Brierley (1991a:155) takes the word to indicate "the theological belief system", although he acknowledges this is not the sense in which it is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Under the system used, respondents were allowed to tick up to three categories and this leads to a very large number of possible combinations and the necessity for subsequent re-classification upon analysis, as indicated in the footnote below. The analysis was further complicated since the actual question posed was:

"Which of these terms or which combination of them would best describe your congregation." (Brierley 1991a:155)

but the survey forms were usually completed by the pastor or priest of the church concerned and Brierley anticipates that:

"Undoubtedly some ministers answered in the light of their own particular persuasion rather than for their church as a whole."

1. The nine terms are respectively: Anglo-Catholic, Liberal, 'Catholic', Evangelical, Broad, Charismatic, Low Church, Orthodox, Radical. A further box marked 'Other, please specify' was also included. Respondents were allowed to tick up to three. Upon analysis the categories were regrouped and redefined as follows: *Catholic* - all those who ticked Catholic, excepting any also ticking Evangelical; *Anglo-Catholic* - all ticking this box excepting those also ticking Evangelical; *Liberals* - all those ticking Liberal except Broad Liberal Evangelicals and Charismatic Liberal Evangelicals; *Low Church* - all those ticking the Low Church box unless they also ticked Liberal, Anglo-Catholic, Catholic and a third box, Broad and a third box or both Evangelical and Charismatic; *Broad* - all those ticking the Broad box but excluding Evangelicals, Catholics, Anglo-Catholics or Liberals; *Broad Evangelical* - all ticking these two boxes and any third; *Mainstream Evangelicals* - those ticking Evangelical only plus Orthodox and Radical Evangelicals; *Charismatic Evangelical* - all ticking these two plus any third; *All Others* - any not included in other categories.

This clearly adds another uncertainty in the overall result as the minister's perceptions may be quite distinct from that of the congregation.

The Rural Church Project (Davies *et al* 1991a-d), a study within the Anglican Church, also used the term churchmanship but sub-divided this into only five categories, namely: conservative evangelical, open evangelical, central, modern catholic and traditional catholic. However, it was acknowledged that the question of churchmanship might not be entirely easy to ascertain, 'not least because of twentieth century developments in religiosity' (Davies *et al* 1991b:19). Consequently, they also introduced a further option for the respondents to identify their *style of spirituality*. The three alternatives offered were: charismatic, liberal or radical, and in this case respondents could indicate more than one option. They suggest that churchmanship provides a basic model of religiosity and that the style of spirituality is a qualifying feature. More recently Powell (1993) has used the same categorisation in his study of Anglican readers.

In contemporary Methodism the term churchmanship is probably not so applicable or well understood as in the Anglican Church. From a historical perspective it might have been used to distinguish those from various Methodist traditions such as Wesleyan, Primitive or Bible Christians, but it is more than 60 years since union and these distinctions, although existing as undercurrents, are no longer openly recognised. Thus Ranson *et al* (1977), in carrying out a research study in the early seventies which surveyed Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist clergy, used a different approach. Respondents were asked to locate themselves theologically in an 'open' question with no categories being specified. The terms adopted by Anglicans differed markedly from Methodists. In the latter case ministers used predominantly one or more of the following descriptions: ecumenical (55.5%), evangelical (53.7%), liberal (37.9%), radical (22.0%), and to a lesser extent: catholic - including ritualist and sacramentalist (15.9%), middle-of-the-road (6.6%) , conservative (3.5%) and others (8.8%)¹. The authors note that for Methodists:

"The majority of ministers identify themselves as either Evangelical or Ecumenical in theology and usually adopt other labels, 'catholic' or 'radical' or 'liberal', to qualify their position around the central Evangelical axis - the central theological core which seems to have altered little since the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival." (Ranson *et al* 1977:51).

Rather surprisingly, despite the charismatic renewal movement of the sixties the term charismatic does not appear in any of their categories in description of either Anglican clergy or Methodist ministers.

1. Reported in Table 3:2 in Ranson *et al* (1977:45).

When selecting terms for the present surveys a compromise position was chosen in order to use categories which would be relevant to the Methodist situation and yet at the same time allow some possibility of comparison with the results from the Rural Church and Anglican Reader surveys. In common with the above surveys a two-tier system of classification was used. The questions were presented under a heading *Theological Persuasion*¹ rather than churchmanship and the following descriptions were offered: conservative evangelical, open evangelical, catholic, pluralist, traditional Methodist and an open option. Only one option was allowed. In the second tier respondents were asked to tick one or more of the terms relating to style of spirituality, specifically: charismatic, liberal, radical. This is the same classification as used in the two Anglican surveys. It is perhaps debatable whether the term catholic might not more properly appear under spirituality, as suggested by Ranson *et al* above. In that case liberal might have been moved to the first section as a counterpoint to evangelical. However, the issue was not felt to be crucial and on balance it seemed preferable to follow existing organisation.

The term pluralist has not, to the author's knowledge, been used in such surveys before but was tried out tentatively in the pilot survey since pluralism is a familiar term in Methodist circles². Although one respondent in the main ministerial survey objected strongly to the use of the term, the choice of the category was vindicated by the number responding to this alternative both in the pilot and actual surveys (20%). As with other surveys, no attempt was made to define any of the terms in the questionnaire and it is quite likely, especially among respondents of varying theological competence, that divergent interpretations might be assigned to the terms. Although it is not possible to interrogate individual respondents, it is possible to begin to understand how the terms are being used by correlating the theological labels with various key variables which are used in the survey. Where the label corresponds in a unique way, i.e., showing a significantly higher compliance than other labels with a particular variable, it indicates that it is a defining variable for the label in question. Before proceeding to examine the portraits of the pastoral carers in the next

1. 'Theological Persuasion' was the heading used in the ministerial survey but this was modified to 'Theological Outlook' in the local preacher survey and simplified to 'Christian Outlook' for the laity survey. The terms remained the same except that in the laity survey the two labels 'conservative evangelical' and 'open evangelical' were conflated to 'evangelical' again in an effort to simplify the question for less sophisticated respondents.

2. The term pluralism has been defined by John Stott as: "that philosophy which endorses a plurality of beliefs and ideologies as having equal and independent validity" (Cited in *Berita NECF*, Vol. 6/2, Feb.-March 1994, p.2.) In the Methodist church context it would be related to the idea that Methodism reflects a broad church where a range of distinct theological views are accepted as having validity. In the inter-church context it could perhaps be equated to the term 'ecumenical' which proved popular in the survey of Ranson *et al* (1977).

chapter the nature of these defining labels will be explored.

The Relation of Theological Labels to Key Variables

One key variable in the above exercise is attitude to biblical authority. This can be examined through an open question¹ which sought a response as to the importance of the Bible in the preaching ministry. A wide variety of answers was fairly readily categorised under the four headings: supreme importance, important, helpful, and one resource amongst others. The first and the last of these headings are probably the most diagnostic, and correlation of these with the various theological labels are shown in Figures 3:1 and 3:2 respectively. The bar charts show the percentage of

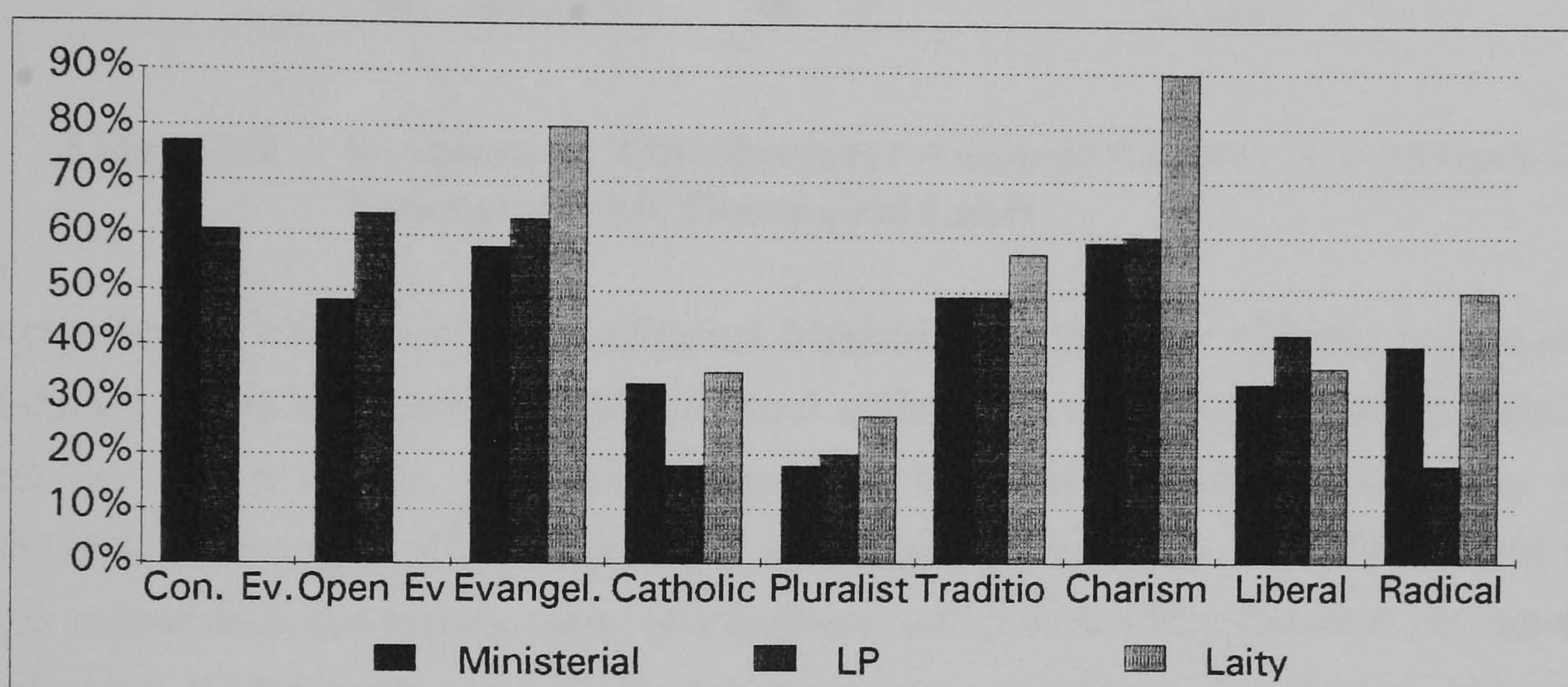


Figure 3:1 Scripture as Supremely Important: Correlation of Viewpoint with Theological Label.

each viewpoint, in each of the three surveys². The first observation to be made is that, although there is a spread of results, nevertheless there is broad agreement between the three surveys. Thus, for example, in all three series, evangelicals and charismatics are seen to have a high view of scripture, whereas more pluralists regard the Bible simply as a resource. It is interesting that in every grouping except one, the laity survey reveals a more authoritative view of Scripture. This is probably due to lack of theological training and exposure to a critical view of the nature of Scripture.

Overall scriptural authority can be seen to be a defining variable with the various groupings being ranked in the following order: conservative evangelicals > open

1. Question nos. 35c, 25a and 15 in the ministerial, local preacher and laity surveys respectively. In the laity questionnaire the question was simplified to a closed type where four options were offered.

2. The category evangelical in Figure 3:1 includes data from the ministerial and local preacher surveys where the categories conservative and open evangelical are combined under one head.

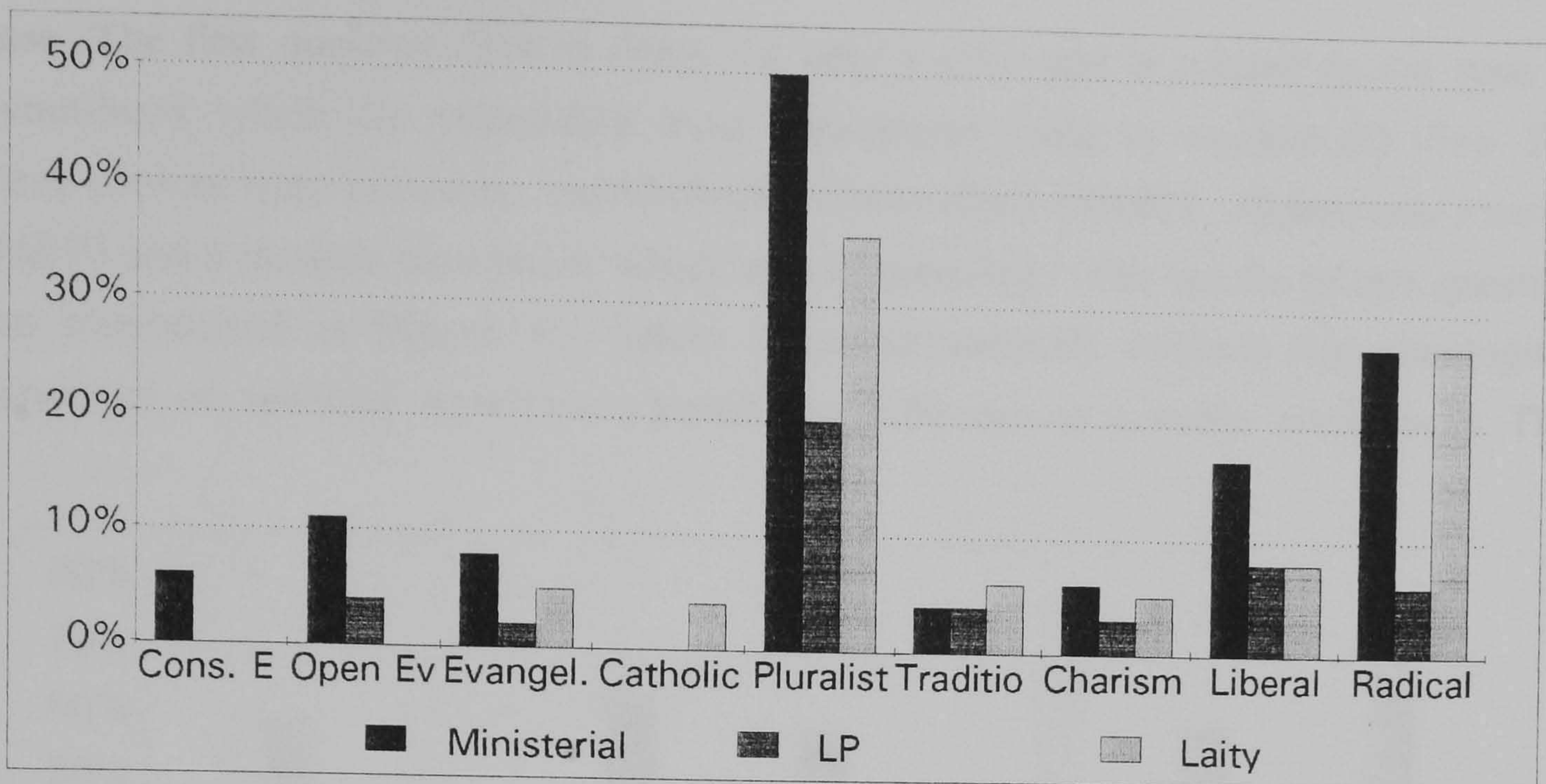


Figure 3:2 Scripture as 'One Resource Amongst Others': Correlation of Viewpoint with Theological Label

evangelicals ~ charismatics ~ traditional Methodists > liberal > catholic ~ radical > pluralists. From the viewpoint of scriptural authority, traditional Methodists may be seen to hold a broadly evangelical view and liberal is no longer seen to be the antithesis of evangelical¹. The strongly-held pluralist view that the Bible should be seen as one resource among many is consistent with the idea that pluralism recognises a plurality of ideologies and beliefs with more than one source of authority. Although the overall trends are clear there are of course exceptions, such as the very small number of conservative evangelicals (about 5%) who see the Bible as only a resource and a more significant number of pluralists (approximately 20%) who have a high view of Scripture. The close parallel between the views of evangelicals and charismatics reflects the near identity between these two groups in that approximately 70% of charismatics are also evangelicals.² This is in contradistinction to the Rural Church Survey where only 52% of charismatic Anglican priests were also evangelical (Davies *et al* 1991b:20).

There were no questions in any of the surveys relating specifically to the Holy Spirit or aspects such as spiritual gifts which might be used as defining variables for distinguishing charismatics. However, there are a number of questions relating to worship which might be expected to afford some differentiation. This is indeed the

1. For example, in both the ministerial and local preacher surveys a significant number of open evangelicals also indicated a liberal tendency.

2. The precise figures are 71% for ministers and 70% for local preachers. The figure actually rises to 90% in the laity survey but here there was more freedom to include evangelical with other categories.

case. The first question derives from the laity survey and is related to the type of hymn-book which the respondent most appreciates using in worship (Q.16a). The three choices were between: the *Methodist Hymn-Book* (MHB), *Hymns and Psalms* (H&P) and a modern alternative which was unspecified.¹ The results of this question are summarised in Figure 3:3 below. It is immediately evident that theological viewpoint or spiritual style have a significant influence on worship preferences. The

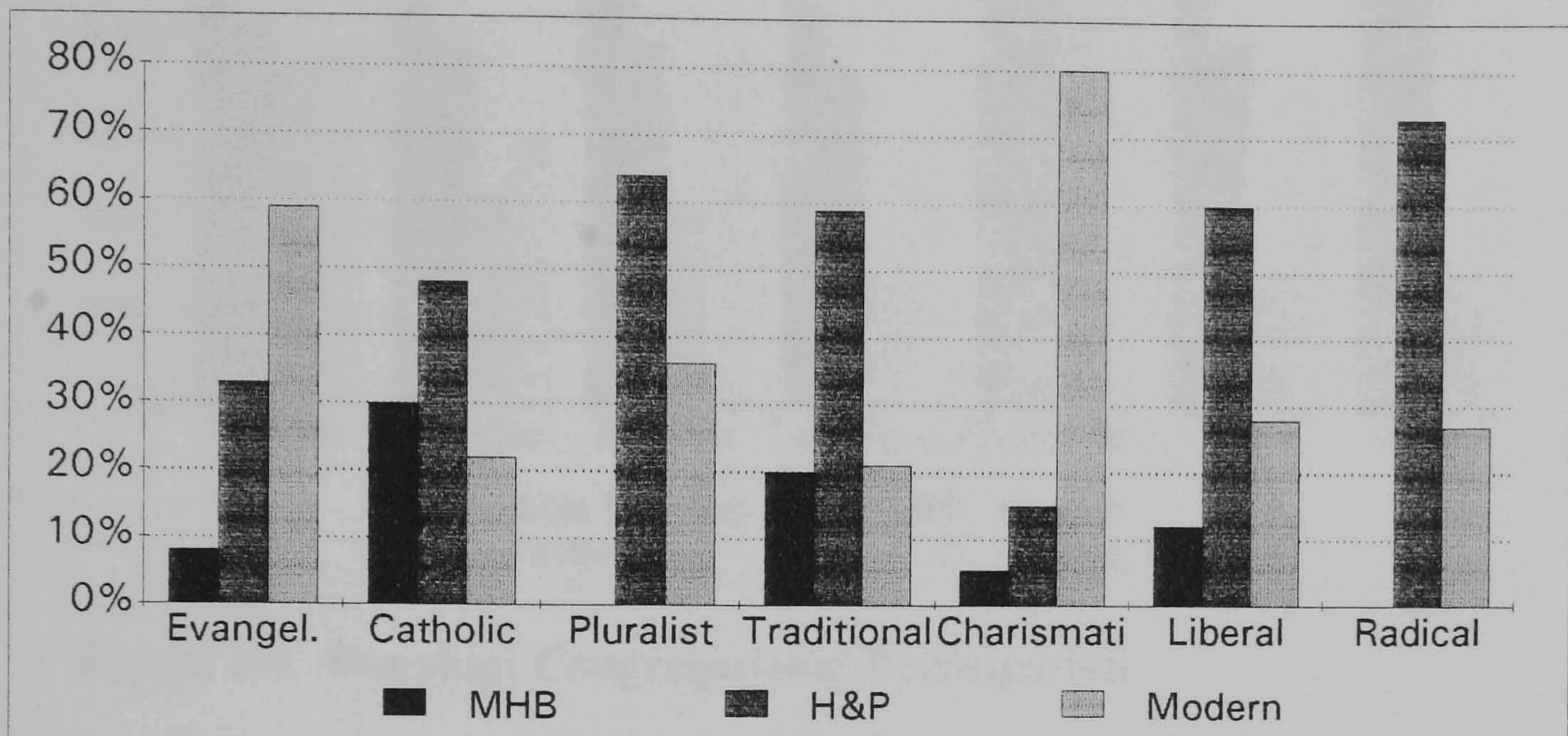


Figure 3:3 Worship: Preferences in Hymnody

use of a modern song-book containing 'worship' songs is clearly related to the preferred charismatic style of worship - the high value for evangelicals is almost certainly a consequence of the inter-relationship discussed earlier. Significantly catholics and to a lesser extent traditional Methodists have a greater affinity for the 1933 hymn-book.

Another aspect of worship that provides significant differentiation is congregational participation. Thus in the laity survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they 'appreciated' the involvement of members of the congregation in various activities such as: Bible reading, leading prayers, giving testimonies and leading worship. The results of the responses are summarised in Figure 3:4. It is immediately apparent that a distinguishing mark of charismatics is that they overwhelmingly support involvement of others, besides ministers and local preachers, in the conduct of the worship service. Overall, the majority of respondents welcome

1. The MHB was published in 1933 for the newly united Methodist Church. *Hymns and Psalms* was published in 1983 and was authorised by the Conference of 1982 for use in all Methodist churches in the Connexion in succession to the MHB. A variety of modern collections of hymns, songs and choruses are in use in Methodist churches but the two most widely used are *Mission Praise* published in 1983 and *Songs and Hymns of Fellowship* first published in 1985.

congregational participation, but there is clearly a deep reservation about the giving of testimonies which most do not find acceptable. This is intriguing, since it is testimonies that are discriminated against rather than leading prayers or worship which might have been considered a ministerial function. To the author's knowledge testimonies are so rarely shared in contemporary Methodist services that the source of

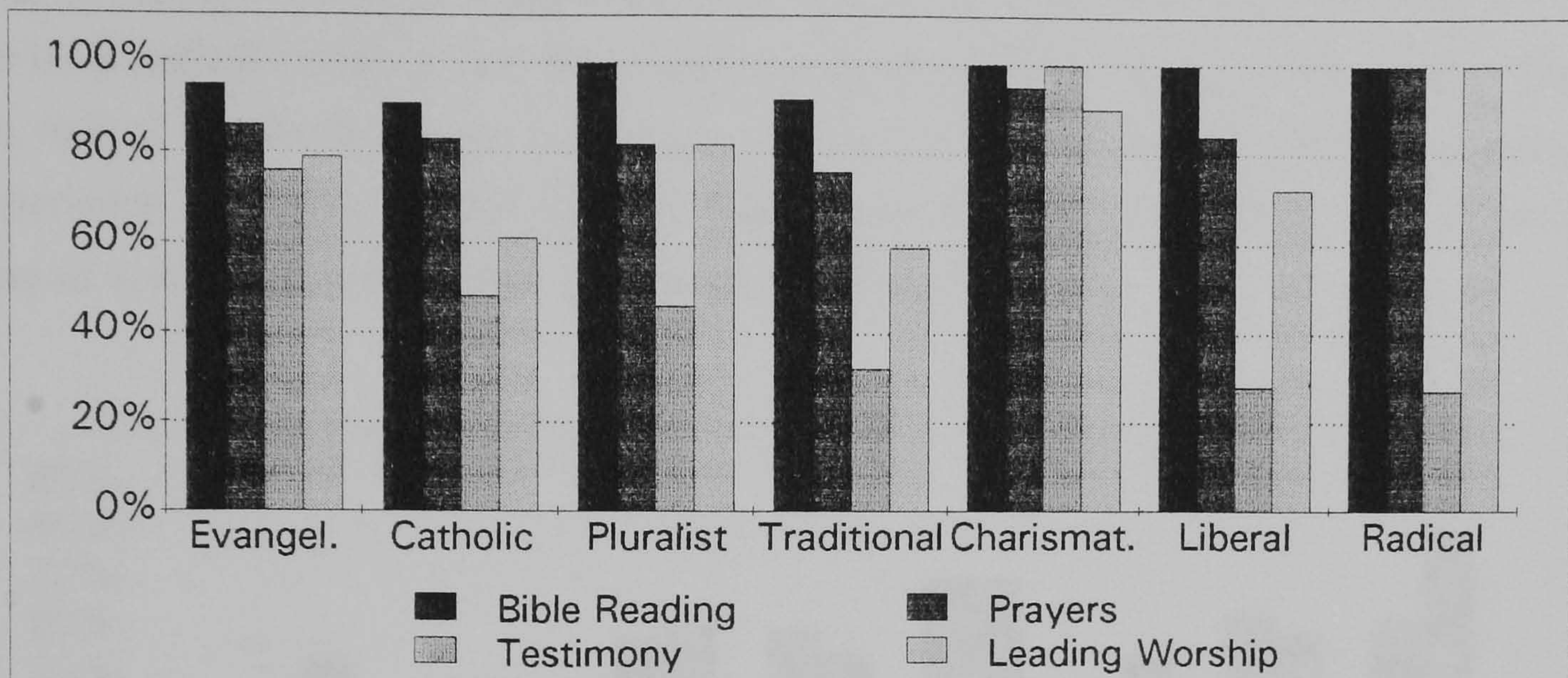


Figure 3:4 Worship: Congregational Participation

this prejudice must be very old and perhaps dates back to a time when class meetings consisted of repetitive sharing of experiences. After charismatics, and with the exception of testimonies, laity of a radical style are the most open to congregational participation, indicating a willingness to embrace new approaches to worship¹. They are also the group who have been most receptive to the use of the 'new' Methodist hymn-book, *Hymns and Psalms*.

A rather different defining variable relates to aspects of tradition. This can be probed since in the various surveys respondents were asked about parental church membership and traditions of local preaching or Methodist ministry within the family. Data relating to parental membership from the laity and local preacher surveys are summarised in Figure 3:5. The figure shows the percentage of each category where one or more parents were members of the Methodist church. The overall average of members whose parents were Methodists is 58% from the laity survey and 60% for local preachers indicating that the major source of membership within the Methodist church is through biological growth. The grouping least likely to have Methodist parents are the conservative evangelicals at 41% clearly reflecting the conversionist emphasis of this group. Those most likely to have Methodist parents within *both*

1. Contemporary Methodist worship tends to be more of a one-man-band where the preacher conducts the whole service including reading the Scripture passages. This is in part attributable to the circuit system of appointment where it is significantly more difficult to liaise with the church concerned with regard to membership participation in worship.

surveys are the traditional Methodists who poll 71% amongst both local preachers and laity. One of the markers of those who embrace the label traditional Methodist would thus seem to be a family involvement with the church spanning the generations. Interestingly the group with the highest percentage of Methodist parents in the laity survey were radicals (82%), although the value is substantially lower (63%) amongst local preachers. The high value in the laity survey may perhaps provide evidence that the term radical carries a hint of rebellion against parental values in church life. Thus the radical emphasis may be nurtured within an individual with an in-born religious experience. The secure base derived from parental membership providing a secure base or springboard for further and radical faith exploration.

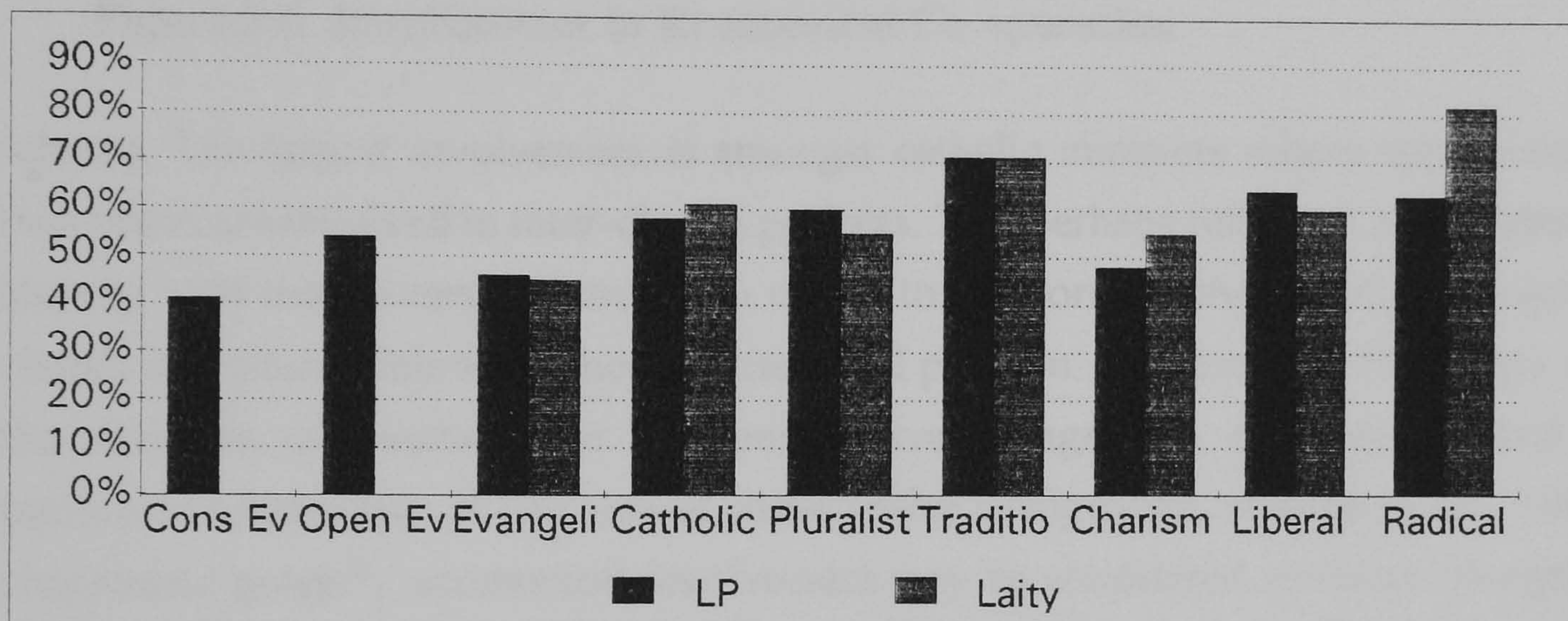


Figure 3:5 Tradition: The Influence of Parental Membership

The influence of family tradition is seen even more starkly in the ministerial survey where respondents were asked to indicate whether there was a tradition of Methodist ministry in the family (Q.3c). In this case none of the conservative evangelicals responded positively, but 18% of traditional Methodists and pluralists as well as 20% of radicals had such a tradition. A somewhat similar situation is found amongst local preachers with regard to family traditions of local preaching, although in this case pluralists at 53% represent by far the highest proportion - the overall average is 32%. Thus it can be seen that those with more traditional or liberal views are influenced by family with respect to their involvement in ministry.

A rather different set of criteria are those which reflect involvement in the wider church scene. Thus ministers were asked to indicate whether they were personally involved in any ecumenical projects or co-operation (Q.11). Notwithstanding the possibility that involvement might be dictated by the local context rather than personal initiative, it was nevertheless felt that this could prove a valuable indicator, not least because 'ecumenical' was the largest category found by Ranson *et al* (1977:45) in their

study of Methodists. The results of this question are summarised in Figure 3:6 below, which shows the percentage of each category which are involved in an ecumenical

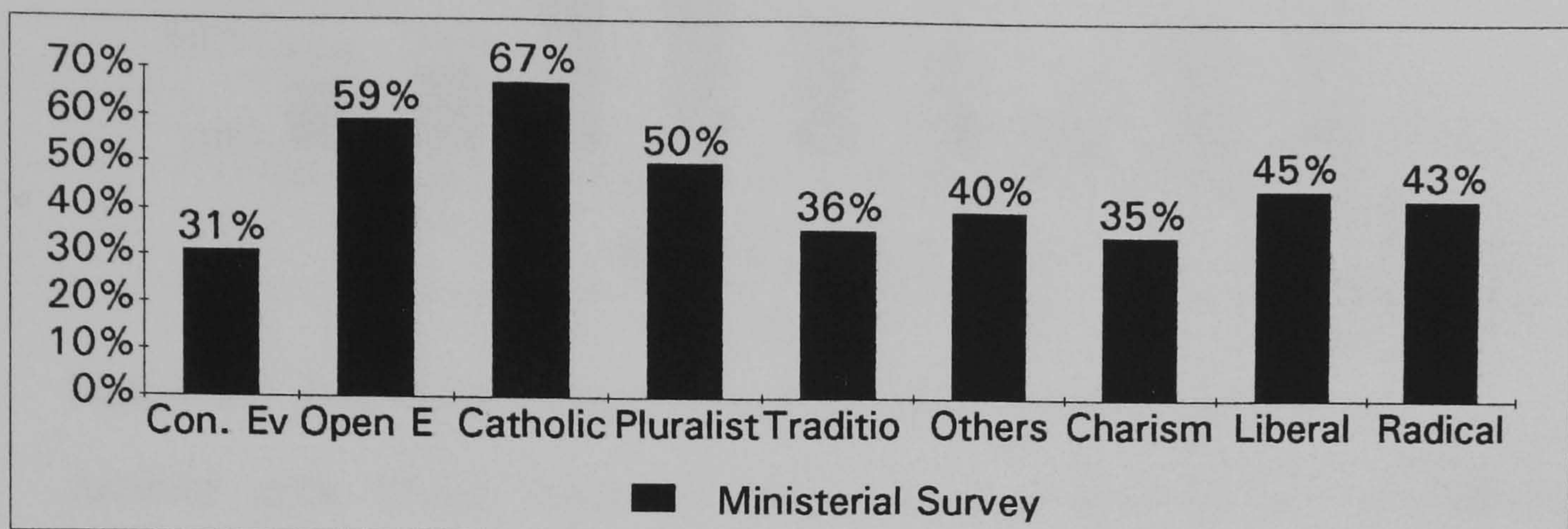


Figure 3:6 Involvement in Ecumenical Co-operation

scheme. The largest involvement is amongst catholic ministers where approximately two-thirds are involved in inter-church projects. This perhaps reflects a closer sense of identity with the universal church or a desire to be more involved with the Anglican church and hence embrace a more sacramental position. Interestingly the groups with the minimum involvement are the conservative evangelicals, charismatics, and the traditional Methodists. In the case of conservative evangelicals, and the closely related charismatic group¹, ecumenical involvement may be considered to dilute evangelical emphases, whereas, for traditional Methodists such involvement might be perceived to weaken a distinctive Methodist position. There is also a clear distinction here between conservative and open evangelicals, the latter group being almost twice as likely to be involved in ecumenical projects.

Another feature which emphasises links with the wider church, especially the Anglican Church, is the use of the lectionary as a source of direction in preaching and worship. Overall, 58% of the ministers consulted indicated that they consistently used the lectionary as the basis for their preaching ministry. However, once again there is a considerable range of usage amongst the various categories as indicated in Figure 3:7. In this case some 89% of catholic ministers consistently make use of the lectionary, which again may be seen to provide a link with the wider church outside Methodism, as well as supporting the concept of the church as an organic whole. At the opposite end of the scale, evangelicals and especially charismatics make least use of lectionary, reflecting perhaps a striving for Spirit-led personal inspiration rather than church-based (man-made) schemes.

1. Amongst the ministers surveyed charismatics were mainly drawn from amongst conservative evangelicals. See Table 3:2.

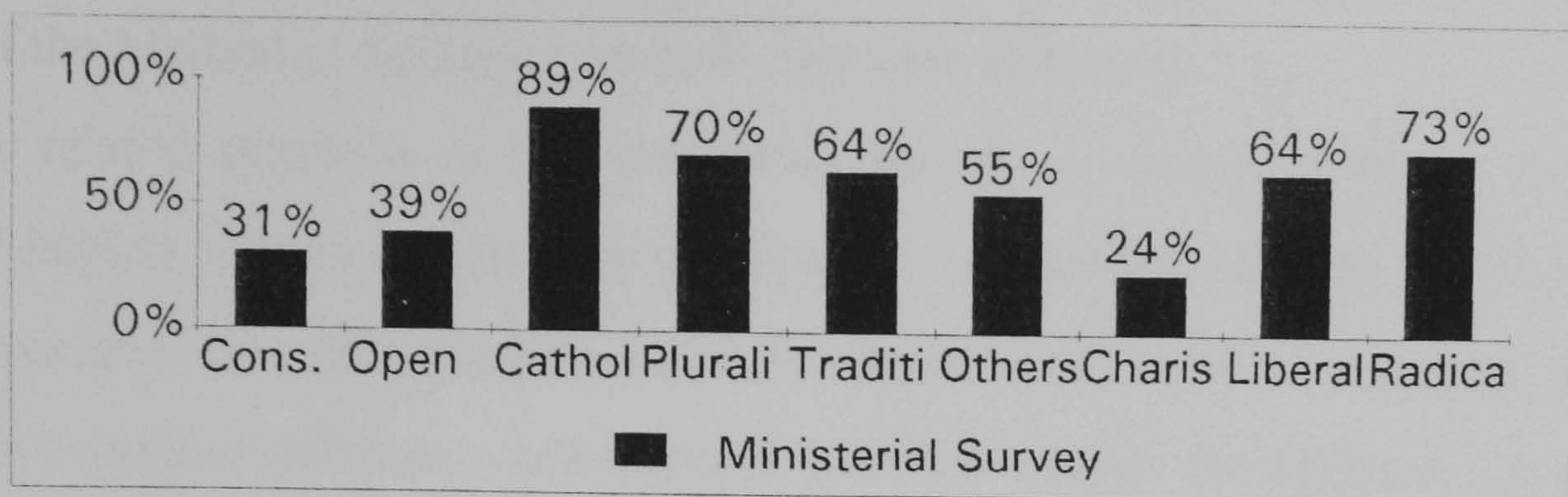


Figure 3:7 Use of Lectionary as a Basis for Preaching Ministry

Another area which might be expected to distinguish between different theological outlooks is the celebration and administration of the sacraments. Ministers were asked whether they offered any alternative to infant baptism such as services of dedication or thanksgiving (Q.30b), whereas local preachers were asked whether they were agreeable to these alternatives (Q.56b). The percentage of those who strongly objected to baptism alternatives are illustrated in Figure 3:8. While parallel

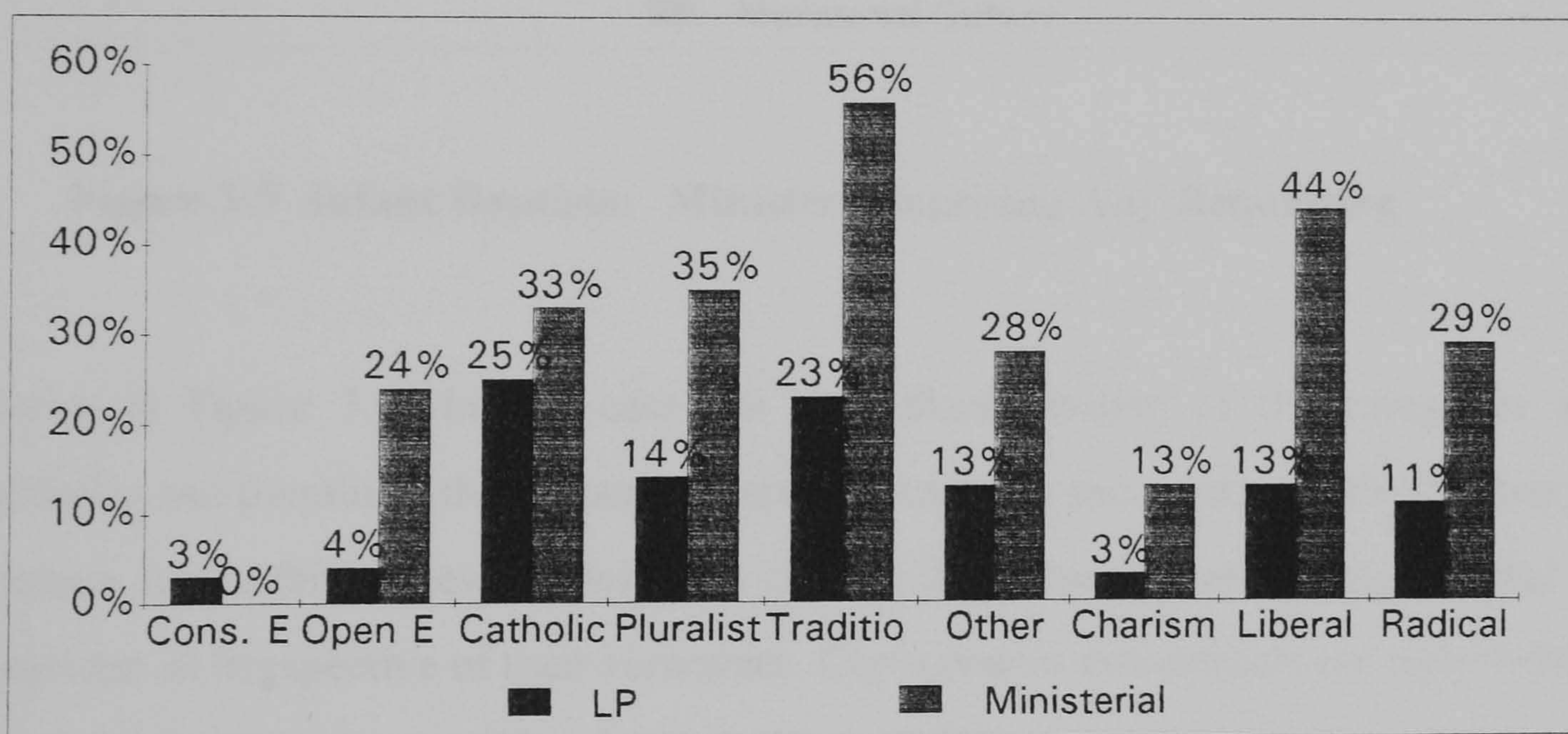


Figure 3:8 Infant Baptism - Those Objecting to Alternative Services

patterns of objection may be seen within the two surveys, these are much more strongly pronounced within the ministerial survey. Thus, overall, while 34% of ministers object to such alternatives, this reduces to some 14% for local preachers. What is even more interesting is the spread of objections across the different categories. Conservative evangelicals, together with charismatics, presumably tend to favour 'believer's baptism' and hence have little or no objection to services such as thanksgiving or dedication in place of infant baptism. By contrast, traditional

Methodists are the most outspoken against such services as presumably they are not part of the Methodist heritage to which they owe allegiance.

A related question in the ministerial survey concerned whether the minister would baptise infants irrespective of parental membership or faith (Q.30a). Overall, 76% indicated that they would baptise the children of any who requested. However, there is a marked difference in baptismal practice across the different categories as

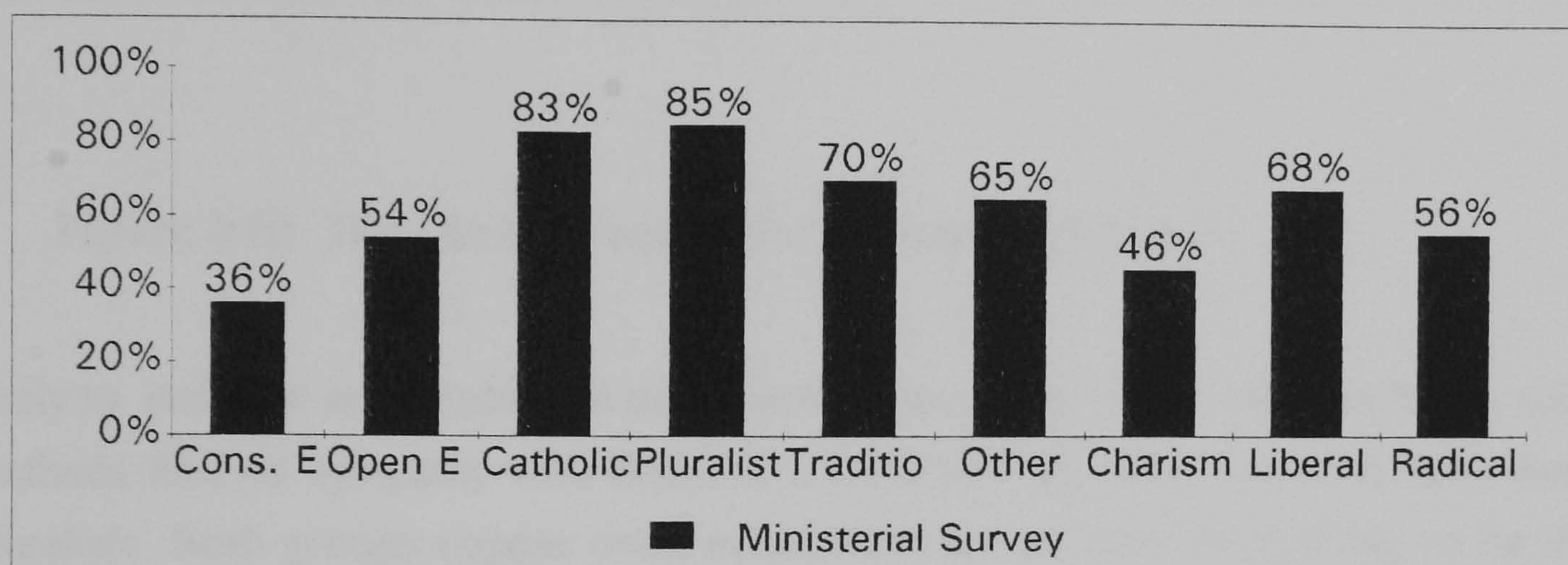


Figure 3:9 Infant Baptism: Ministers Baptising Any Requesting

shown in Figure 3:9. In this case the least discriminating of the categories are Catholics and pluralists, the former perhaps because of a sacramental understanding of baptism where faith is less emphasised, and the latter because of an inherent bias to welcome all irrespective of their viewpoint. Conservative evangelicals are seen to hold the most restrictive view with respect to those eligible for infant baptism.

Another discriminating variable is the attitude towards outreach and evangelism. This is addressed by question 40a in the ministerial survey which concerned methods of outreach used in the respondent's churches. Figure 3:10 shows the dependence of one particular method - the evangelistic service - on theological label. Not surprisingly this is favoured by conservative evangelicals since it involves a clear proclamation of the gospel message together with an emphasis on individual response. It is interesting that those who term themselves open evangelicals are significantly less

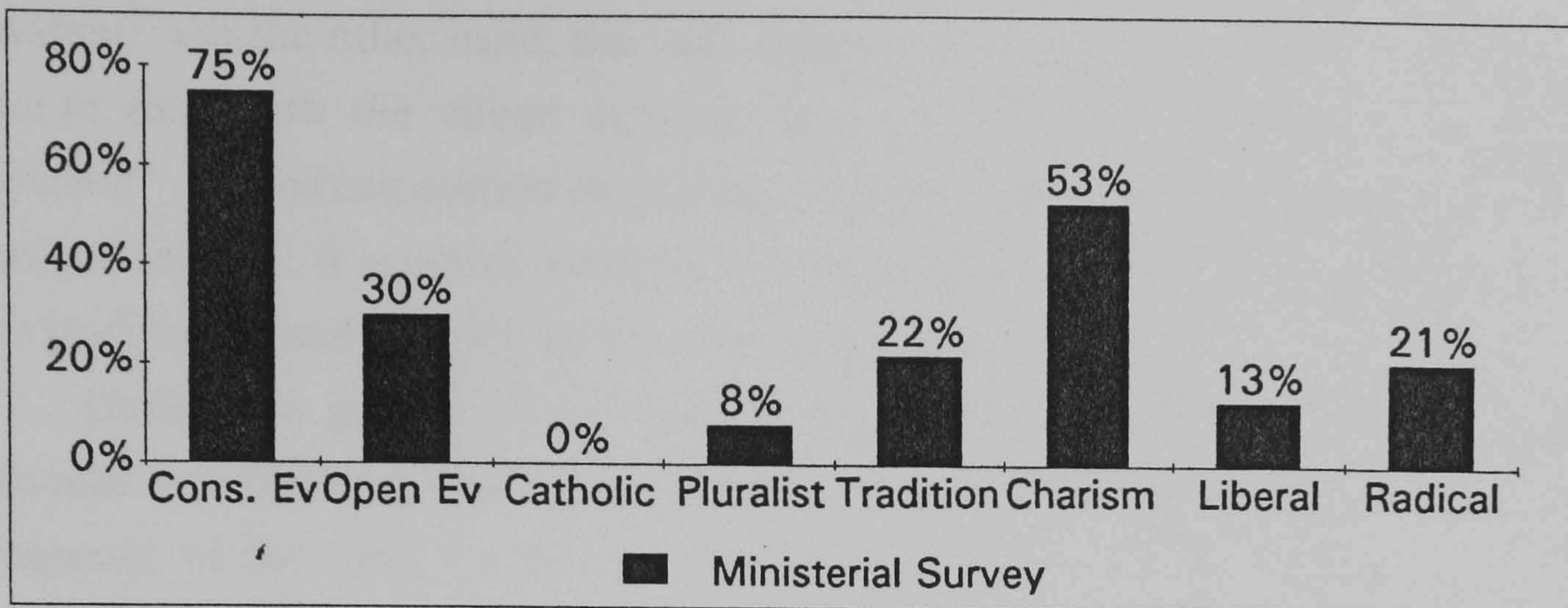


Figure 3:10 The Use of Evangelistic Services in Outreach

likely to embrace such traditional evangelistic approaches. At the other extreme, such methods find no sympathy with those of a catholic disposition and very little from pluralists. Both groups oppose overt evangelism and are thus most likely to be the product of a mature and rather static church.

The circuit system is one of the distinguishing marks of Methodism and is regarded variously as one of the strengths or weaknesses of the Methodist Church structure. The attitude of ministers towards the circuit system was probed by means of question 49a in the ministerial survey which asked whether they experienced difficulties working within the circuit system. The results of their response is summarised in Figure 3:11 which shows the percentage of ministers within each category who experience difficulties because of the circuit structure. Over two-thirds

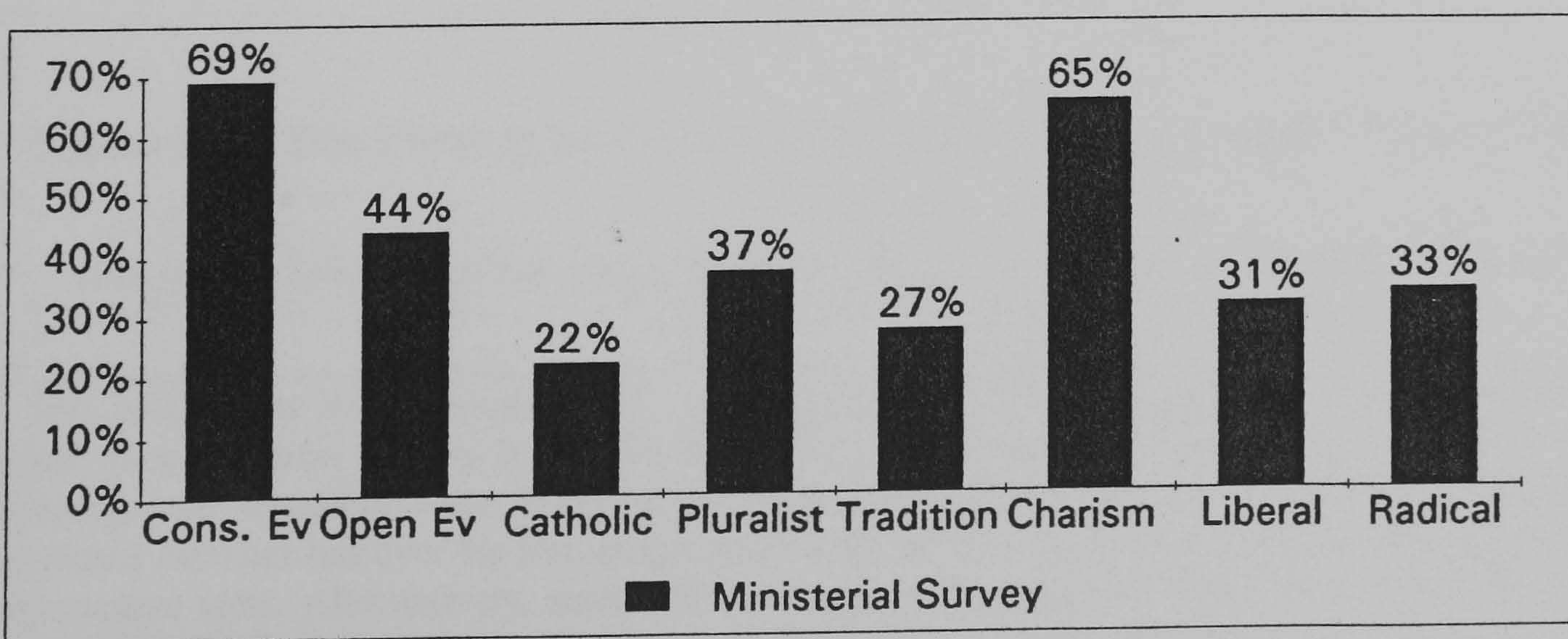


Figure 3:11 The Circuit System: Ministerial Difficulties

of conservative evangelicals are seen not to have come to terms with the circuit system¹. On the other hand, the vast majority of Catholics and traditional Methodists are at ease with the circuit structure and indeed one commented: "It is the best system!" The circuit system dates from the early days of Methodism and as one of its unique features, it is perhaps natural that those who see themselves as being faithful to its traditions should largely embrace this structure.

During the period of the local preacher survey churches had been asked to discuss the *Report of the Commission on Human Sexuality*² so as to provide a response to the 1993 Conference meeting in Derby. A major concern of the report was to define Methodist attitudes towards homosexuality and to probe whether it was acceptable to ordain or appoint as office bearers those who are homosexual or lesbian in orientation or practice. Several questions on the sexuality debate appeared in the survey including Q53(a) which asked whether the respondent believed that *practising* homosexuals or lesbians should be barred from entering the ordained ministry. Though the majority (66.3%) concurred with the suggestion, there was very significant variation with respect to theological label as illustrated in Figure 3:12 which shows the percentage of local preachers who either agree or disagree with the statement that *practising* homosexuals should be barred from the ordained ministry.

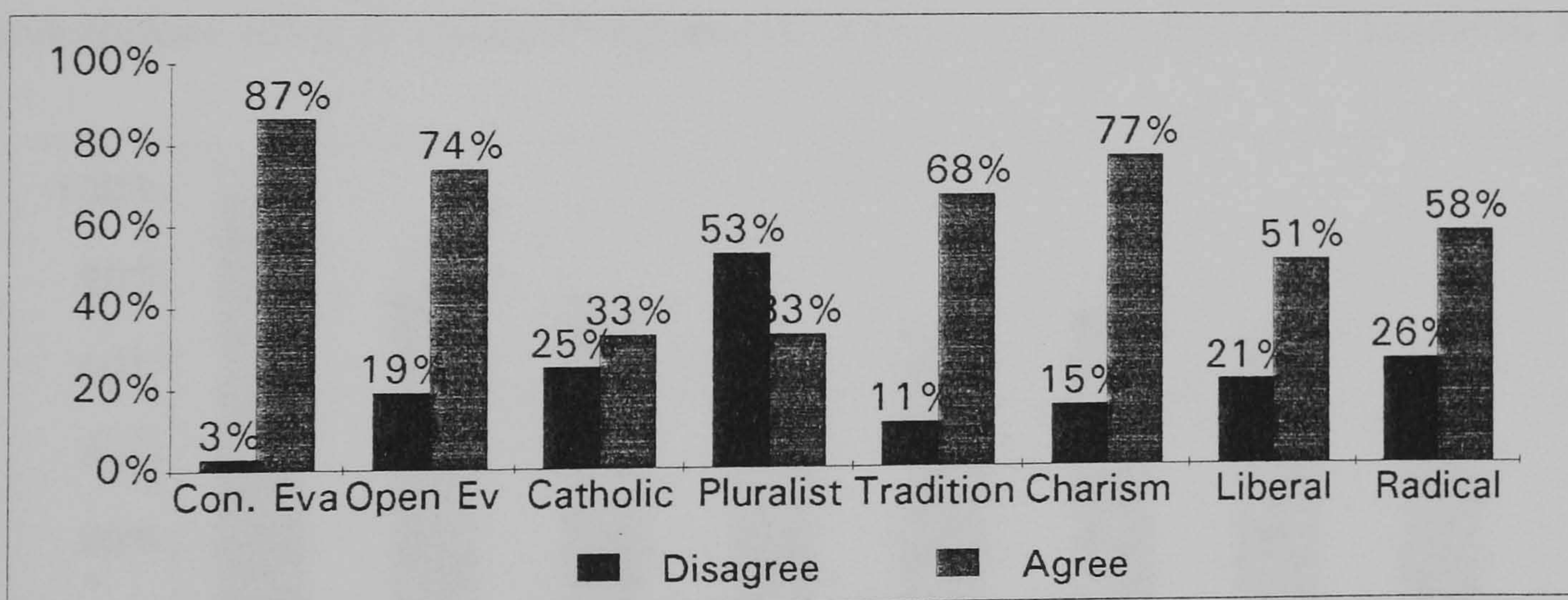


Figure 3:12 The Barring of Practising Homosexuals: Local Preachers' Views

It is quite clear from the data presented above that there are strongly contrasting

1. The reasons for the ambivalence of conservative evangelicals towards the circuit system is a matter of speculation. It may be related to the rotation of preachers throughout the circuit which encourages the spread of more divergent styles and viewpoints. This undermines the control that an individual minister has over his own pulpit and would make it more difficult to maintain a consistent conservative view. Alternatively, such ministers may be frustrated by the additional administrative tasks which the system requires which are perceived to detract from the essential nature of ministry.

2. Report of the Commission on Human Sexuality to the Methodist Conference 1990, a Conference publication printed by the Methodist Publishing House, Peterborough.

views. At one extreme, conservative evangelicals, with a strong emphasis on the supremacy of Scripture with its apparent prohibitions of homosexuality, reject almost completely the possibility of ordaining homosexuals. At the other extreme, those who accept the label pluralist are seen to be most accepting of homosexuals and in this sense are far more 'liberal' than those who describe themselves as liberals¹. Pluralists have by far the highest proportion of preachers who are single (33%) and this may partly explain a greater sympathy for alternative lifestyles. The traditional Methodists are seen to parallel evangelicals in their views, being intermediate between the conservative and open evangelical position. After pluralists, catholics are the next most sympathetic to the ordination of practising homosexuals ahead of radicals and liberals. This conceivably may have to do with a high view of the office of a priest where personal lifestyle is not such a key issue.

Yet another feature which allows differentiation of the various groupings is the part that prayer plays. Thus ministers were asked to assess how important intercessory prayer was in their ministry (Q.20). Nearly two thirds of respondents indicated that prayer was important or very important but again the response varies significantly with theological outlook. Figure 3:13, shown below, indicates the percentage of each category who stated that prayer was important or very important in their pastoral care. Although for all groups prayer is apparently important, nevertheless, there is a wide divergence of views with conservative evangelicals and

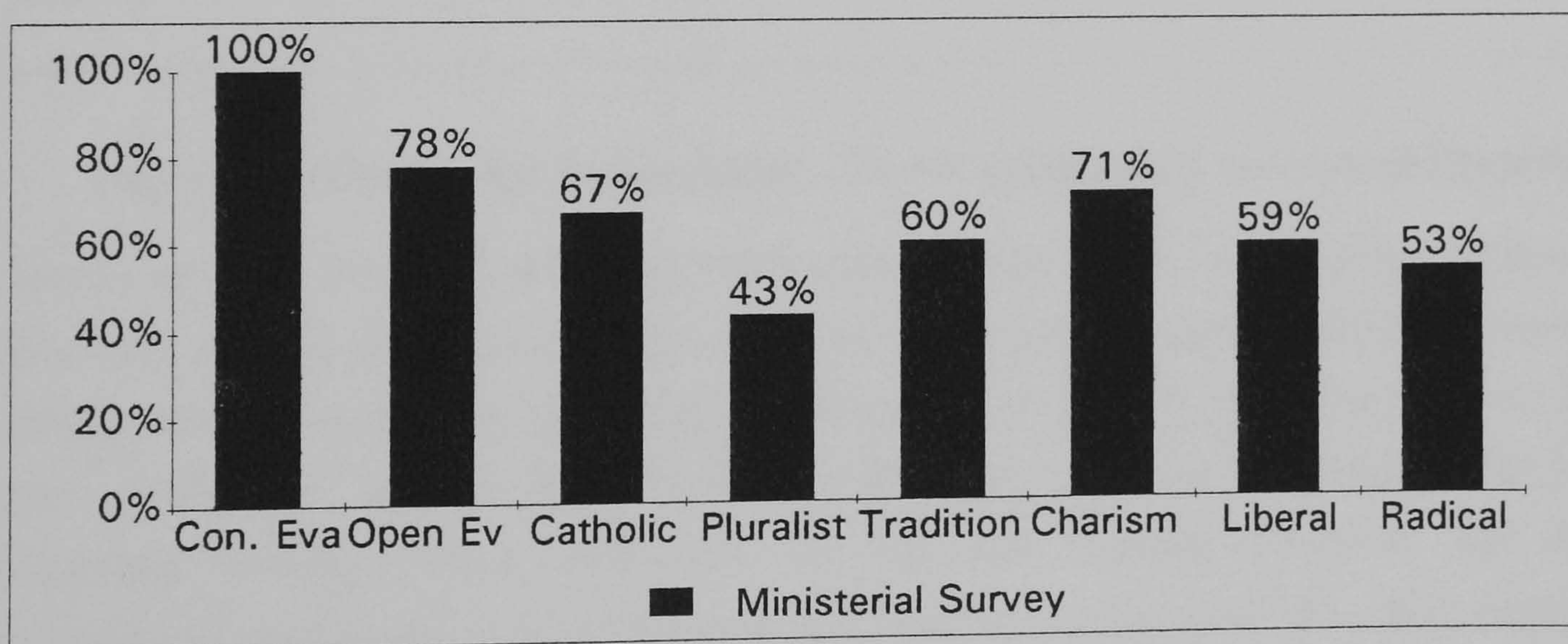


Figure 3:13 Intercessory Prayer: Importance in Pastoral Ministry

1. It would appear that the term liberal as used by the respondents to this study is no longer seen as the antithesis of evangelical. Thus in many respects critical biblical studies have *come of age* and their positive contribution to the understanding of Scripture has been embraced by many evangelicals yet without relinquishing the importance of the Bible as the primary authority for faith and conduct. The opposing wing in theological viewpoint would appear to have been replaced by pluralists who are characterised by a minimalist position with regard to scriptural authority and the distinctiveness of traditional Christian faith and practice.

pluralists once again coming at the opposite ends of the spectrum. For the conservative evangelicals there is unanimous agreement of the importance of prayer in the practice of pastoral care, but this diminishes to only 43% for pluralists. This is significantly less than the percentage for radical or liberal ministers.

A final set of variables which appear to distinguish the different groups is their background in the ministry, in particular the number of years spent as a local preacher before ordination and the number of years in the ordained ministry. This is summarised in Table 3:1 below. The data show a number of intriguing features. Firstly, there is a significant variation in the mean age of each category ranging from

Category	Mean Age	Years as Minister	Years as Local Preacher
Conservative Evangelical	49.5	11.9	11.8
Open Evangelical	47.1	16.7	5.3
Catholic	51.7	14.5	10.8
Pluralist	47.3	16.3	4.8
Traditional Methodist	53.8	21.2	6.4
Charismatic	47.6	14.9	6.3
Liberal	50.5	16.6	7.5
Radical	44.9	16	4.4

Table 3:1 Ministerial Background: Years as Minister and Local Preacher

radicals at 44.9 years to traditional Methodists at 53.8 years - a nine year difference. Secondly, despite the relatively little variation in the average age at which the various categories commence local preaching, which varies from 24.5 years (radicals) to 26.4 years (catholics), there is considerable variation in how long is spent in the local preaching ministry before ordination. At one end radicals, pluralists and open evangelicals spend only 4-5 years as a local preacher, whereas at the other extreme, catholics and conservative evangelicals spend 11-12 years in such ministry. This means that the latter categories are more mature when candidating for the ministry, hence perhaps are more set in their ways, and less easily influenced by the liberal thinking that they will encounter in their ministerial training. It is noteworthy too that traditional Methodists have, with a mean of 21.2 years, spent on average nearly 5 years longer in the ordained ministry than any other category - this is in part reflected in their high mean age.

While an earlier entry to training would appear to result in a tendency to a greater theological openness - this is seen clearly in the contrast between conservative and open evangelicals - it is not clear whether there is a transformation of viewpoint which is related to age. For example, will the radical nature of ministers (the youngest group) mellow as they mature and will perhaps an increasing number of ministers regard themselves as traditional Methodists simply because they have spent many years in the ministry? Alternatively, it could be argued that the comparative youthfulness of radical ministers reflects changes that have occurred in theological outlook or experience of the church at large. Certainly, this is likely to be a partial explanation of the relatively low mean age of charismatics, since the charismatic renewal movement has really only come into prominence in British churches in the last 20 to 30 years. Davies *et al* (1990b:21-25) in their study of Anglican priests have considered churchmanship changes that occur with age and recognise that both explanations suggested above are of some relevance.

An Overview of the Usage of Theological Labels

It is recognised that the possibility of providing distinct and discrete categories for theological viewpoints and spirituality is an illusory aim. This is well illustrated in the returns from the ministerial survey where 12 (8.5%) ministers provided alternative descriptions and a further 9 (6.3%) ticked two instead of one grouping. In the latter case traditional Methodist was linked variously with pluralist, catholic and open evangelical, the respondents apparently wishing to emphasise their Methodist identity alongside a second emphasis. The alternative descriptions also tended to emphasise either a Methodist allegiance or a radical individuality, or to some extent a blend of suggested categories¹. Despite this difficulty of imprecision and overlap, the data already presented in this chapter shows that it is possible to use the proposed categories in a meaningful way to distinguish and describe differing viewpoints and spirituality.

Before attempting to summarise some of the conclusions which derive from the surveys it is perhaps helpful to examine the inter-relationships between the different labels and in particular to see how the theological viewpoint (churchmanship) varies with spiritual style. Table 3:2, presented overleaf, summarises the percentage of each viewpoint in the ministerial survey which corresponds with a particular spiritual style.

1. The Methodist emphasis was suggested by titles such as: "High Church Methodist", "Centre of road Methodist", "Iconoclastic Methodist and theological magpie", "Evangelical Methodist". The blending of categories is seen in the following: "Liberal-catholic evangelical", "Charismatic conservative evangelical with social emphasis". Individuality is exemplified by descriptions such as: "Individual", "Progressive", "Open-minded" and by the four ministers who refused to accept any label.

Approximately two-thirds of ministers indicate a spiritual style¹, the most prominent being liberal with smaller but almost equal numbers of charismatics and radicals. There are a number of clear-cut conclusions which may be drawn. Firstly, as has already been intimated, there is a close identity between conservative evangelicals and charismatics with over two-thirds of this viewpoint indicating a charismatic style. Furthermore, over 50% of charismatics are drawn from this grouping. At the same

Category	Charismatic Liberal Radical No Indication				
	Number	17	59	15	51
Cons. Evangelical	13	69.2%	0.0%	0.0%	30.8%
Open Evangelical	23	13.0%	30.4%	8.7%	47.8%
Catholic	9	0.0%	44.4%	11.1%	44.4%
Pluralist	28	10.7%	71.4%	17.9%	0.0%
Trad. Methodist	45	0.0%	51.1%	22.0%	46.7%
Other	20	10.0%	20.0%	30.0%	40.0%
Missing Cases	4				

Table 3:2 Theological Viewpoint and Spiritual Style of Ministers

time no conservative evangelicals embrace either a liberal or radical style. This latter feature is paralleled in the study of Anglican clergy, Davies *et al* (1990b:20), but in that case the largest group of charismatics was drawn from among open evangelicals.

A clear distinction between conservative and open evangelicals is that a significant proportion (30%) of the latter also accept the tag of liberal and a small number (9%) that of radical, again in parallel to the results of the *Rural Church Study*. With respect to catholics the major style acknowledged is liberal (44%) with a small number of radical (11%) and no charismatics. This is in contradistinction² to the

1. Ministers were allowed to tick more than one style and small numbers indicated charismatic and liberal (4), charismatic and radical (1) and liberal and radical (6). However, in the table above and in subsequent analysis the first two groups have been classified under charismatic and the last group under radical. Separate classification would have created groups which were too small for any statistical significance.

2. This difference suggests that the designation 'catholic' is being used in rather contrasting ways by Methodists and Anglicans influenced to no small degree by a twenty year tradition of female ministers among Methodists and distinct views of priesthood. Amongst Methodists the term catholic may have the connotation of 'ritualist', with a particular emphasis on the centrality of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Amongst Anglicans catholic may emphasise the catholicity of the church and the unique role of the priest as a representative of Christ.

findings of Davies *et al* (1990b:20) where over a quarter of charismatics are found amongst catholics. A small proportion of pluralists are found to be charismatic (11%) and radical (18%), but the overwhelming majority identify themselves with liberal (71%). This pattern approximates most closely to the 'Central' classification of the *Rural Church Study*. There are no charismatics among traditional Methodists and only a tiny proportion of radicals (2%), but the majority consider themselves to be liberals (51%).

The results of a similar analysis from the local preacher survey are summarised in Table 3:3 below. Although the findings are broadly similar to those among

Category	Number	Charismatic 40	Liberal 73	Radical 19	No Indication 79
Cons. Evangelical	37	32.4%	24.3%	8.1%	35.0%
Open Evangelical	28	57.1%	25.0%	0.0%	17.9%
Catholic	12	8.3%	25.0%	16.7%	50.0%
Pluralist	15	0.0%	40.0%	13.3%	46.6%
Trad. Methodist	87	6.9%	39.1%	8.0%	46.0%
Other	28	18.5%	40.7%	18.5%	22.2%
Missing Data	4				

Table 3:3 Theological Viewpoint and Spiritual Style of Local Preachers

ministers, there are some differences. For example, the proportion of conservative evangelicals who are charismatic in style has dropped from 69% to 32% and there are now a significant number of those who embrace the designation liberal (24%). This perhaps suggests that the local preachers' theological understanding is less refined and that some of those counted under the conservative category would be considered as open evangelicals from a ministerial perspective. For local preachers, a much higher proportion of open evangelicals (57%) indicate a charismatic style of spirituality and this closely parallels the findings of the *Rural Church Study*. Other features are much the same, although this time a small number of catholics (8%) and traditional Methodists (7%) are also charismatic.

Overall, what may be concluded from this preliminary examination of the inter-relationships between theological viewpoint and spiritual style across the two surveys is as follows:

1) Charismatics are most closely associated with an evangelical viewpoint, at least 70% of all charismatics being drawn from this group.

2) Liberals are drawn from all the categories except conservative evangelical ministers, but form a very high proportion of pluralists and a high proportion of traditional Methodists.

3) Radicals appear in all the groups except again in ministerial conservative evangelicals, but are particularly well represented amongst catholics, pluralists and 'others'. This last group, which comprises those who indicated more than one viewpoint or provided their own definition, is the largest single group of radical ministers (40%) and perhaps indicates that an important connotation of radical is an unwillingness to conform or be labelled!

Individual Classification of Theological Labels

Conservative evangelicals are perhaps the most distinct group to emerge from the survey trends, with the sole reservation that, for ministers at least, there is a close identity between conservative evangelicals and charismatics. This group has the 'highest' view of the Bible, is most open to alternatives to infant baptism services, is the most strongly opposed to the ordination of practising homosexuals, gives prayer an important place in pastoral care and is most likely to make use of overt evangelistic techniques such as evangelistic services. On the other hand, conservative evangelicals are least likely to have Methodist parents or to be involved in ecumenical projects and are the least willing to be involved in an open baptismal policy. They are also the group which finds the greatest difficulty in working within the Methodist circuit structure. The picture that emerges is of Christians who have very strong convictions with regard to evangelism, church life and ethics, motivated by a high regard for the Bible. They tend to be outward looking in terms of evangelism but suspicious of working together with Christians of other persuasions. Their first allegiance is to the Scriptures rather than Methodist tradition or practice and hence they are more ready to criticise Methodist structures and to welcome innovations which are seen to be scriptural.

The close identification of conservative evangelical ministers with charismatics means that this group also has distinctive worship which emphasises the use of modern hymnody and a participatory style. It is perhaps interesting to speculate why, amongst Methodist ministers, there is such a close alliance between a conservative evangelical viewpoint and charismatic spirituality. Is it that a conservative evangelical view is conducive to a charismatic style or does a charismatic experience demand a conservative understanding of the Scriptures? It seems unlikely that a more narrow or rigid view would make an individual more likely to be open to embrace a charismatic

religiosity, associated as it is with the practice of somewhat unusual spiritual gifts¹. It could be the case that a charismatic experience helps to validate a more conservative interpretation of the Bible and perhaps helps to prevent the shift towards a more open or liberal understanding that is apparent with ministerial training². Hence, although there are relatively few conservative evangelical ministers, most of them are charismatic. The contrasting situation amongst Anglican clergy where charismatics are almost equally prevalent amongst conservative and open evangelicals³ requires explanation. Conceivably this may be related to patterns of ministerial training. Whereas, Anglican training colleges may be clearly differentiated according to theological emphasis, Methodist colleges tend to be more uniform. Thus a Methodist evangelical is more likely to be confronted by a theologically 'hostile' environment during training and consequently a charismatic experience may be more crucial in validating a conservative view towards scriptural authority. This would be consistent with the observation that amongst Methodist local preachers, who have not been exposed to the same concentrated college training, a much higher proportion of open evangelicals are charismatic (Table 3:4).

Open evangelicals are seen to stand in the shadow of their fellow evangelicals, paralleling their attitudes but in a less extreme way. The major distinction appears to be in their openness to working with Christians from other traditions (ecumenical activity) and in operating a more open baptism policy. This emphasis is undoubtedly reflected by the significant minority (30%) who indicated a liberal spiritual style. It was suggested by one respondent that the category open evangelical was equivalent to the traditional Methodist position. This view reflects the conclusions of Ranson *et al* (1977), cited earlier, that theologically, Methodist ministers are generally positioned around a central evangelical axis. However, clear distinctions are apparent between these two categories and open evangelicals could perhaps best be described as Methodists with a small 'm'. Thus open evangelicals are far more open to ecumenical activity than traditional Methodists (Figure 3:6) and are much more likely to cite difficulties in working within the circuit system (Figure 3:11). Open evangelical ministers are also on average nearly seven years younger than their traditional Methodist counterparts and represent a generation born at the close of the Second World War. Whether this age difference represents a true discontinuity or merely reflects an increasing recognition of tradition with age and length of service is unclear, but there can be no doubt that open evangelicals can be distinguished from

1. For example, prophecy, speaking in tongues, healing, miracle working and the like.

2. The ratio of conservative to open evangelicals amongst local preachers is 1.3:1 and this more than halves to 0.56:1 amongst ministers. Similarly the number of pluralists increases from about 7% for local preachers to 20% for ministers.

3. The percentages of conservative and open evangelical Anglican priests who are also charismatic are 55% and 58% respectively. [Davies *et al* (1990b:Table 4.1.29)]

traditional Methodists despite many shared features.

Catholic may seem to be an odd category to hold within Methodism, yet it describes a small but not insignificant group of both ministers (6%) and local preachers (6%) who might typically be members of the *Methodist Sacramental Fellowship*¹. That the percentage is similar amongst both ministers and local preachers perhaps suggests that ministerial training has no great influence one way or another on catholicity. This grouping appears to see authority residing in the church rather than the Bible, which is evidenced by a relatively small emphasis on the importance of the Scriptures in preaching and the consistent stress on features relating to the church, especially in a broader sense than just Methodism. For example, catholics are the group most involved in ecumenical projects (Figure 3:6) and put the greatest stress on the use of the lectionary (Figure 3:7) - a source of unity with the wider church. An emphasis on the sacramental aspects of baptism and ordination is perhaps seen in the high proportion (83%) of ministers who operate a completely open baptismal policy and in the relatively high support of local preachers for the ordination of practising homosexuals. The latter perhaps points to a high view of the priesthood where the accent is on the office rather than the holder of the office.

Pluralist is a label which finds more adherents amongst ministers (20%) than amongst local preachers (7%) and for ministers has a close identity with a liberal spiritual style (71%). Typically, the pluralist does not see the Bible as particularly authoritative as evidenced by the 50% of ministers who regard it as merely one resource amongst others. It is this group, more than any other, who are most diametrically opposite to conservative evangelicals. Apart from their understanding of the Bible, pluralist ministers operate the most open baptismal policy (85%) and find confrontational evangelism largely unacceptable (Figure 3:10). Pluralists are the only category where a majority favour the ordination of practising homosexuals (Figure 3:12). Amongst ministers, pluralists are also more closely identified with a radical spiritual style than any other group, apart from 'others', and this may reflect radical in the sense of belief in a non-supernatural religiosity since they also put least emphasis on prayer as a supportive activity in pastoral care (Figure 3:13). This interpretation is consistent with the absence of any charismatics among pluralist ministers. The hallmark of pluralists is perhaps seen as unconditional acceptance of others irrespective of their beliefs or practices and the emphasis on Methodism as a broad church embracing divergent views.

Traditional Methodists may be regarded as broadly evangelical with many

1. This grouping, according to their advertisements: 'affirms the Apostolic Faith and the Centrality of the Lord's Supper - in accordance with the beliefs and practices of John and Charles Wesley. It works and prays for the unity of Christ's Church.'

viewpoints that correspond with open evangelicals. However, there is a higher proportion who embrace a liberal spiritual style and among ministers no charismatics (Table 3:2). This grouping is seen to be at ease with Methodism. Thus traditional Methodists are most likely to have had Methodist parents (Figure 3:5), are not enthusiastic about ecumenical co-operation (Figure 3:6) and are reasonably content with the circuit system (Figure 3:11). The focus on tradition may be seen in a residual fondness for the old *Methodist Hymn-Book* (Figure 3:3), reservations about lay participation in the conduct of worship (Figure 3:4) and strong objections to the use of alternative services to infant baptism (Figure 3:8). With an average ministerial age of nearly 54 years, this group is by far the oldest and the average 21 years in the ministry represents some 25% longer service than the next group (Table 3:1).

Charismatics are predominantly evangelical, although interestingly not of the traditional Methodist variety. Presumably the charismatic emphases, particularly in worship, are seen to be at odds with the perceived Methodist traditions. Charismatics tend to hold views that are intermediate between conservative and open evangelicals with the exception of worship. Strikingly nearly 80% of charismatics prefer to worship with a modern hymn-book distinct from *Hymns and Psalms* and are more fully supportive of congregational participation in worship than any other group. They are, however, the least enthusiastic towards the use of the lectionary as a guide to preaching (Figure 3:7), possibly out of a concern to be responsive to the leading of the Spirit rather than to follow a human guide.

The liberal spiritual style does not appear distinctive and most closely matches radical characteristics with respect to most of the aspects discussed so far. Generally liberals have a rather restricted view of biblical authority, but even so are more conservative than pluralists. Each category of churchmanship, apart from conservative evangelical ministers, has at least 25% who indicate a liberal tag (Tables 3:2,3). Consequently 'liberal' is perhaps better seen as a qualifying style rather than a distinct group. Somewhat similar comments can be made about radicals. Perhaps their most distinctive characteristics are their high parental membership, over 80% in the laity survey, and their age. Radical ministers are by far the youngest category with a mean age of less than 45 years, which is some nine years less than the average for traditional Methodists. This is coupled with a very brief period of service as a local preacher before ordination. The keynote of the radical label would appear to be a highly individualistic viewpoint coupled with a tinge of rebellion towards authority as derived from the Bible or traditional practices.

Summary

The analysis of the three surveys show that it is possible to observe defining variables and hence draw a clear demarcation between five categories of theological viewpoint or churchmanship, namely: conservative and open evangelicals, catholic, pluralist and traditional Methodist. Three further categories of 'spiritual style' namely: charismatic, liberal and radical may help to refine further the understanding of the primary theological viewpoint¹. It is recognised that the terms are not used in precisely the same way by respondents of varying theological sophistication and that there will be overlap between categories. Nevertheless, the basic labels will provide a useful analytical tool for subsequent discussion and debate and enable comparison with the work of other authors.

1. The spiritual style is not always illuminating. For example, whereas reference to the term charismatic always provides an additional perspective, liberal probably adds little when used in conjunction with pluralist.

Chapter 4

Portraits of Ministers and Local Preachers

A main argument that is to be developed in this thesis is that within the broadest understanding of pastoral care the whole membership of the church needs to be involved in the caring and pastoring process, although it is recognised that different persons will have distinct roles to play. The validity of this approach is endorsed by a recent publication of the Methodist Church, Division of Ministries which states in an introductory paragraph:

"All Christians have a share in Christ's ministry. All have a part to play in the loving service that is Christ's continuing presence in the world today. Yet not everyone has the same ministry."¹

The document goes on to acknowledge that some Christians will recognise a call to some "very specific ministry". It then proceeds to list and describe no fewer than twelve distinct and recognised 'ministries' within the Methodist church today. These, together with a brief description, are summarised in Table 4:1 on the following page.

This list of twelve specific ministries is perhaps misleading from the viewpoint of their contribution to effective pastoral ministry within the churches, since many of the categories comprise only a small group of people² and in any case it ignores the contribution of many locally recognised workers such as: class leaders, pastoral visitors, stewards and Sunday school teachers, to say nothing of the whole army of ordinary members. In attempting to come to an understanding of the nature and practice of pastoral care within contemporary Methodism it was decided to concentrate on two main groups: presbyteral ministers and local preachers. These groups were chosen because of their importance in terms of function and sheer weight of numbers and because it was believed that they were in a position to provide a body of informed and representative opinion from both a ministerial and lay perspective. Another significant reason was that for both these groups it was possible to readily access current names and addresses which would allow for a random selection of samples.

Whereas the choice of ministers is perhaps obvious, the appropriateness of local preachers to a study of pastoral care has been questioned. Thus, a superintendent

1. *"Sharing in Christ's Ministry: Opportunities for service in the Church"*, Methodist Church Division of Ministries.

2. The only groups represented in significant numbers in the church are: local preachers, presbyteral ministers and to some extent lay workers. For example, in 1993 there were only 61 active and 21 probationer deacons and deaconesses (reported in the *Methodist Recorder* 9th. December 1993, p.14) compared to 10,282 active local preachers.

Table 4:1 Recognised Ministries Within The Methodist Church¹*Community Worker*

A community worker works with the church and neighbourhood to help the church to identify and to respond to the needs of people and so act as an agent of social change.

Deaconess or Deacon

The work of a Deaconess or Deacon is mainly in pastoral care in church and community.

Evangelist

In full time employment by circuits, districts, the Home Mission Division or other organisations. Alternatively, giving of their time to speak at special evangelistic services.

Itinerant Presbyteral Minister

Usually stationed in a circuit for periods of 5 to 10 years and responsible as a member of the circuit team for: preaching, celebration of the sacraments, pastoral care, leadership and teaching.

Lay Worker

A lay person employed full or part-time by a Circuit or District. The job varies enormously. Examples are: administration, pastoral care, evangelism, youth work.

Local Preacher

A lay person commissioned by the Church to lead acts of worship.

Missionary Overseas

A lay or ordained person who works full time overseas for the 'World Church' using his/her professional skills.

Presbyteral Minister in Local Appointment

An ordained person who works within a certain distance of home and secular commitments. Involved in ministries of preaching, pastoral care and leadership on an unpaid basis. Exercises an ordained ministry in the Circuit and in his/her secular employment.

Presbyteral Minister in Sector Appointment

An ordained person who is employed within a particular sphere (sector) of secular life. They have a particular responsibility to support the ministry of lay people at work.

Worker in Paid Employment With Children and Families

A person with a commitment to Christian values working in bodies such as the National Children's Home or local Child Care organisations amongst children and families.

Youth and Community Worker

Normally paid for by local education authorities, the worker is responsible for non-uniformed youth work.

Youth Officer

Appointed to a district or group of districts, the primary responsibility is as a source of support to youth and children's workers.

1. Descriptions summarised from the Methodist Church Division of Ministries publication entitled *Sharing in Christ's Ministry: Opportunities for service in the Church*.

minister contacted in conjunction with obtaining addresses of local preachers suggested that the survey should be more appropriately addressed to pastoral visitors. This would be a legitimate criticism if pastoral care could be restricted to visiting but, as will be argued later in this thesis, pastoral care has a much broader remit, within which the local preachers' preaching, teaching and worship leading ministries have particular significance. Furthermore, as the survey has pin-pointed, local preachers are in fact heavily involved in other ministries within the local church and indeed 31% of respondents were also pastoral visitors.

However, since it is recognised that local preachers, through their training, office and function, might in some ways be distanced from other members of the church, it was felt helpful to conduct a brief survey amongst members who were not local preachers. Consequently, in this chapter which seeks to provide a portrait of the carers within the church we shall consider in turn the biographical information and pastoral involvement which may be gleaned from the postal surveys with regard to ministers, local preachers and, much more briefly, other lay members. Comparison will also be made with clergy and readers within the Anglican Church.

Ministerial Portrait

Several sections of the ministerial questionnaire, notably Section A on 'Biodata, Background and Training' and Section C.XI on the minister's weekly timetable, focus on the person of the minister and his ministerial priorities and thus enable a picture to be drawn of the men and women who serve as Methodist ministers. Interesting features will begin to emerge: for example, how gender and pre-ordination employment are related to theological viewpoint and in subsequent chapters how the latter is determinant of the perceptions and practice of pastoral care. Not only this, but comparison with biographic data from the *Rural Church Project* will allow the identification of allied and divergent features between Methodist ministers and Anglican clergy. Similarly, when the portraits of ministers are examined alongside those of local preachers and laity the representative nature of the ordained ministry in Methodism can be assessed. But first the ministerial portrait.

Ministerial Age

The mean age of the 142 Methodist ministers surveyed was 50.3 years with a range of 26 to 66 years. This compares with a mean of 51 years and a range of 29 to 77 years for Anglican clergy (Davies *et al* (1990b:1)). The lower starting age of Methodist ministers is surprising in that Methodist ordinands will have served an apprenticeship as local preachers before training but may be rationalised since Anglican curacies are more likely to be served in urban rather than rural areas. The lower top limit of 66 years for Methodists is a consequence of a retirement age after

which the minister may continue to serve as a supernumerary, usually in a part-time or honorary capacity. Supernumerary ministers were excluded from the survey. The comparative age distributions of Anglican¹ and Methodist ministers are summarised in Figure 4:1 below. The distributions are strikingly similar bearing in mind that rural

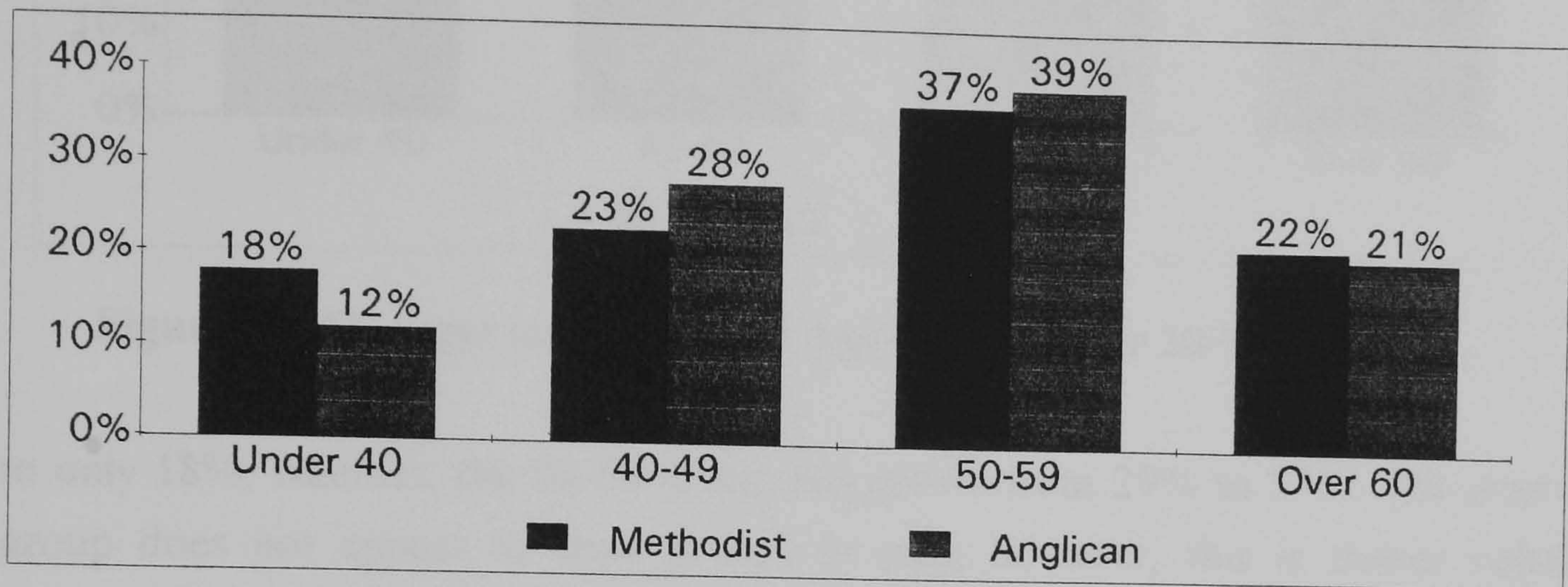


Figure 4:1 Age Distribution - Comparison of Methodist and Anglican Clergy

Anglican clergy are likely to include fewer young priests for the reasons indicated. This suggestion is corroborated from the Anglican survey itself which showed that the percentage of under 40s in totally rural areas is only 8% compared to some 17% in urban areas (Davies *et al* (1990b:Table 4.1.2).

The age distribution in both cases is skewed towards higher ages with some 60% of clergy over 50, which in turn, as we shall see later, also reflects within Methodism ageing congregations. The type of distribution is compounded by the growing tendency for ordinands to enter the ministry as mature candidates, which necessarily decreases the proportion of younger ministers. The high average age must be a cause for concern, especially within Methodism, since nearly two thirds of the present ministers will be due for retirement within the next 15 years. This will necessarily promote a radical rethinking of the concept of ministerial oversight and pastoral care.

Evidence for the gradual ageing of Methodist ministers may be deduced from a comparison of the present survey results with those reported by Ranson *et al* (1977) based on a survey conducted in the early seventies². The comparative data are displayed in Figure 4:2 shown overleaf. It is immediately apparent that over an approximately 20 year period the age distribution has shifted markedly to the higher age end. In particular, the group of those aged under 40 years has shrunk from 25%

1. Anglican data taken from Table 4.1.1, Davies *et al* (1990b:1).

2. The data is taken from Table 2.2 (p.24). The precise date of the survey which comprised data from 251 Methodist ministers is not recorded but the project was funded during the period 1970 to 1973 and the survey is most likely to have been conducted in the middle years of this period.

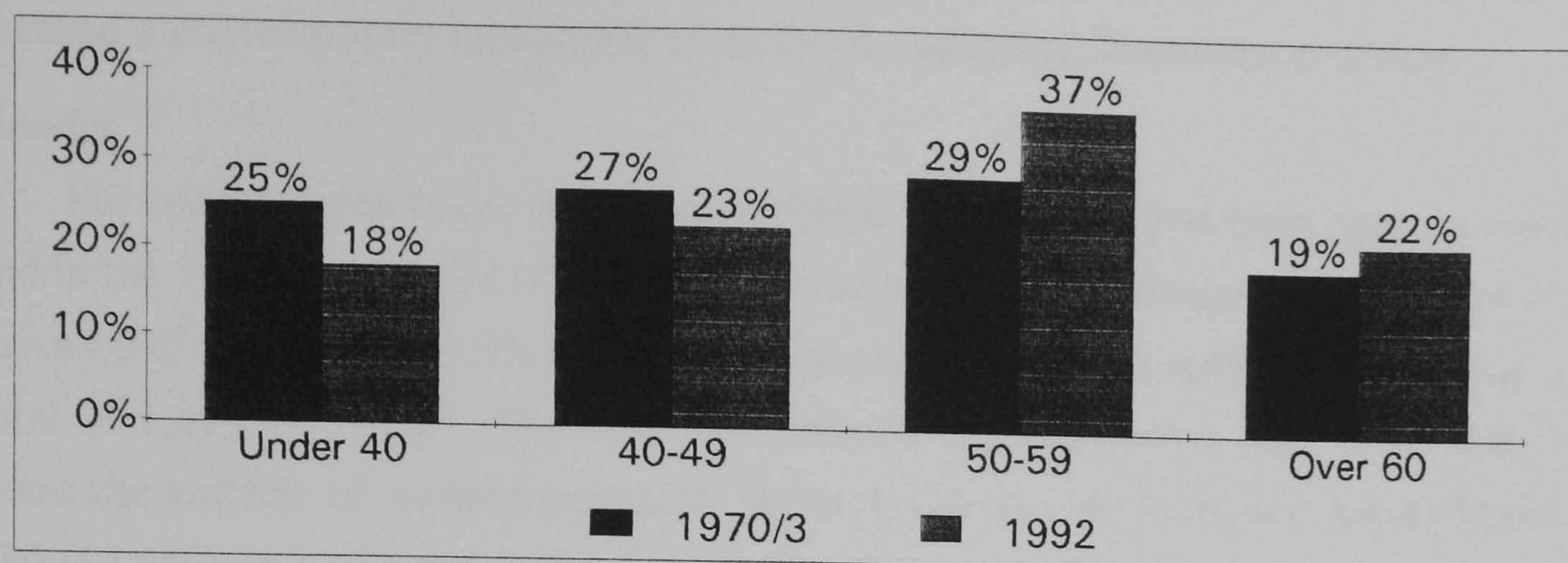


Figure 4:2 Changes in Ministerial Age Groups over 20 Years

to only 18%, whereas, the 50-60 group has grown from 29% to 37%. The over 60s group does not appear to have grown in step; however, this is almost certainly because the earlier survey included 4.2% of active supernumerary ministers, which would have bolstered this age group.

It has already been demonstrated that the mean age of ministers varies according to theological outlook, but it is now possible to show how this parameter is dependent on age group. Table 4:2 summarises the percentage of each age group with respect to theological viewpoint. Two groups, open evangelicals and pluralists, have

Age Groups	20-39	40-49	50-59	60-66
Conservative Evangelical	23%	23%	23%	31%
Open Evangelical	35%	17%	35%	13%
Catholic	11%	33%	22%	33%
Pluralist	14%	46%	29%	11%
Traditional Methodist	9%	16%	44%	31%
Other	20%	10%	50%	20%

Table 4:2 Theological Viewpoint - Variation with Age Group

more than half of their members under 50 years of age and, if the trend continues, will grow more influential in Methodism in the years ahead. The *Rural Church Project* also found a similar result for Anglican clergy in that more than 50% of open evangelicals were aged under 50 (Davies *et al* (1990b:3)). Conservative evangelicals show a fairly even spread over the age groups, but traditional Methodists are clearly concentrated in the over 50s age groups (75%). This could of course mean that

ministers more readily embrace the traditional label after many years in service, or portend a contemporary movement away from traditional Methodist practices.

Gender

For some 20 years now the ordained Methodist ministry has been open to women and in the 1990 survey 15 (10.8%) of the respondents were female. At the time of the survey there were 181 (9.5%) women ministers stationed in circuit ministry out of a total of 1,899 ministers¹. The 1994 *Methodist Directory* shows that in the last four years the number of women ministers active in circuits has increased substantially to 279 (14.6%), out of a total of 1,911 circuit ministers and this proportion is expected to increase further since up to 1998 the proportion of women ordinands is approximately 38%². The increased proportion of women ministers helps slightly to reduce the overall average age of ministers since about 60% of the female respondents were under 50 compared to 38% of male ministers. However, this figure is slightly misleading since the retirement age for women is 60 years and the comparable figure for male ministers, neglecting the over 60 age group, is 51%.

An examination of the dependence of theological outlook on gender is revealing as there are marked differences between the sexes. These are illustrated in Figure 4:3 which shows the percentage of each theological viewpoint according to gender. Before discussing these it needs to be pointed out that the sample of female ministers is small and hence the statistical significance of the female correlations must be regarded as somewhat tentative. The most significant differences are found in the

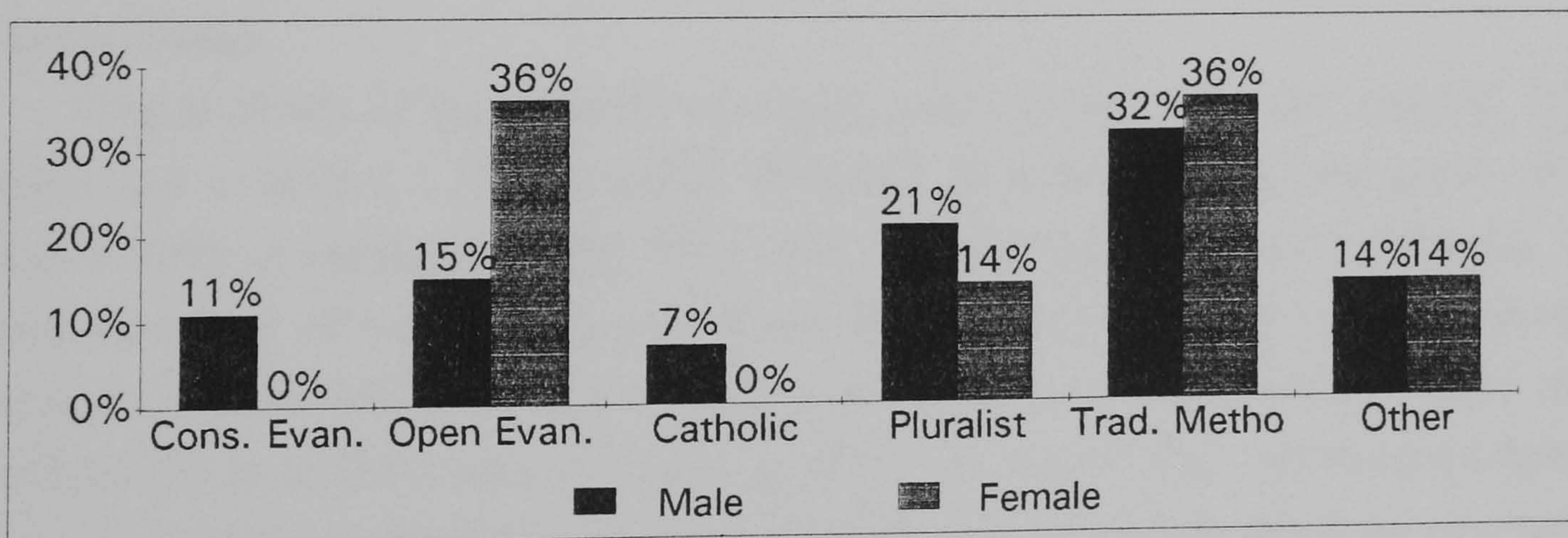


Figure 4:3 Dependence of Theological Viewpoint on Gender

1. These figures are derived from an examination of the stations of all circuit ministers listed in the 1990 Minutes of Conference and Directory. The totals include probationer ministers but exclude the 14 'ministers without appointment' (MWA) all but one of whom are women, as well as ministers in sector appointments and those designated as supernumeraries.

2. Calculated from the names listed in the 1994 Conference Minutes as due to be accepted into full connexion up to and including 1998.

evangelical and catholic viewpoints, and strikingly there are no female respondents who subscribe to conservative evangelical or catholic views but, in contrast, there is a marked increase in the size of the open evangelical group. The absence of catholics may be interpreted from the perspective of the dominance of the male priesthood in catholic churchmanship. Similarly, for conservative evangelicals the perceived scriptural emphasis on male leadership¹ must act as a deterrent for would-be female ministers. This of course does not mean that female ministers are not evangelical but rather that their expression of evangelical emphases is necessarily moved to a more liberal interpretation.

Examination of the effect of gender on spiritual style indeed confirms a more open attitude amongst women since 53% of female ministers compared to 40% male ministers indicate a liberal style. At the same time the percentage of charismatics drops from 14% for male ministers to zero for female ministers. This may well be related to the absence of conservative evangelicals since over half the charismatics are drawn from this group amongst male ministers. These figures illustrate the difficulty of statistical accuracy with small sample sizes since it is not to be supposed that there are no charismatic female ministers in Methodism - indeed the author is personally aware of at least one, but it does suggest that their numbers are small. One consequence of the sharp difference in theological viewpoint and spiritual style between male and female ministers is that the growing proportion of female ordinands will lead to a shift towards a more liberal ordained ministry - assuming of course that present trends continue.

Marital Status

Overall 89.4% of the ministers who responded to the survey were married, 7.7% single and a further 2.1% separated, divorced or widowed. This compares to an overall 86% of Anglican clergy who were married (Davies *et al* (1990b:4)). An important facet of marital status is the gender variation. Whereas only 5% of male ministers are on their own (single, separated, divorced or widowed) the figure rises dramatically to 53% for women. Since, as will be discussed later, the minister's spouse has a vital role in the pastoral care of the minister, this could be a cause for concern in the provision of adequate care of women ministers. As the proportion of women ministers increases this problem will be exacerbated in the national church and will

1. For example, such texts as: "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man", 1 Timothy 2:12 (NIV); and, "...women should remain silent in the churches.", 1 Cor.14:34 (NIV) are frequently cited in opposition to female leadership. These of course have to be balanced against other passages which appear to recognise that women do 'pray' and 'prophesy' in worship (1 Cor.11:15) and the various references to honoured female co-workers in the Gospel (E.g., Romans 12:1-3; Phil. 4:2,3). Nevertheless, the majority of conservative evangelicals would probably oppose female leadership and hence female ministers.

demand urgent attention.

Interestingly, as with the *Rural Church Project*, there are significant variations of marital status with theological viewpoint although any direct comparison is difficult because of the use of different categories. The relation of marital status to theological viewpoint is summarised in Table 4:3 below. The main contrast between this and the Anglican study is that in the latter the number of single clergy was highest amongst

	Single	Divorced/ Separated	Married	Re-married
Conservative Evangelical	0%	0%	100%	0%
Open Evangelical	9%	0%	91%	0%
Catholic	0%	0%	100%	0%
Pluralist	15%	4%	74%	7%
Traditional Methodist	7%	0%	93%	0%
Other	15%	5%	80%	0%

Table 4:3 Inter-relationship between Marital Status and Theological Viewpoint

catholics at 19% for modern catholics and 25% for traditional catholics (Davies *et al* (1990b:4)) perhaps because of an emphasis on celibacy as an ideal for catholic priesthood amongst Anglican catholics. The percentage of married ministers amongst evangelicals is quite comparable to the Anglican data of conservative evangelicals (98%) and open evangelicals (95%). The much lower percentage (74%) of married ministers amongst pluralists cannot be explained by the presence of women ministers as they represent a small minority in this group. It is probably significant that this group has the largest number of ministers who are separated, divorced or remarried (11%). This suggests that, as a group, pluralists are least bound to the ideal of marriage or, alternatively, the pluralistic viewpoint has been forced upon them by the nature of their marital circumstances. The high percentage of single ministers within this group and the demonstrated tolerance of pluralists towards the question of the ordination of practising homosexuals and lesbians (Figure 3:12) may also suggest the possibility of alternative lifestyles.

Academic Qualifications

Ministers were asked to state all tertiary level and professional qualifications and these are summarised in Table 4:4 which shows the level of education before

ministerial training¹. The data shows that the majority of ministers (56.3%) had received further education before leaving school with around 35% having a university

No Tertiary Qualifications	43.7%
Bachelors Degree	24.6%
Postgraduate Degree	9.9%
Teaching Qualification ²	8.5%
Professional Qualification	13.4%

Table 4:4 Level of Qualification before Ministerial Training

education. This compares with a figure of about 23% of Methodist ministers who had received university education in the early seventies (Ranson *et al* (1977:29)) and demonstrates an increase in the level of education before training. This probably also reflects a tendency towards candidating at a more mature age.

In the 1970s study of Methodist ministry Ranson *et al* (1977:51) suggested that:

"Those from lower social class backgrounds, with an elementary education and no university attendance, are much more likely to classify themselves as Evangelicals."

It is possible to use the current data to test that proposition. Thus Table 4:5 shows the variation of theological viewpoint with level of education before training. The suggestion of Ranson *et al* is seen to apply clearly to conservative evangelicals where

	None	University	College	Professional
Conservative Evangelical	46%	8%	31%	15%
Open Evangelical	39%	35%	4%	22%
Catholic	22%	56%	0%	22%
Pluralist	36%	43%	7%	14%
Traditional Methodist	56%	28%	7%	9%
Other	40%	40%	10%	10%

Table 4:5 Educational Level and Theological Viewpoint

1. With respect to theological (ministerial) education the ministers reported the further qualifications: 9 certificates, 13 diplomas, 44 bachelor degrees, 5 masters and 1 doctorate.

2. Qualification which is not degree or post-graduate level. (College level.)

only 8% have received a university education compared to the average of nearly 35%. Traditional Methodists, who also have a basic evangelical orientation, are also seen to be less qualified than the average but this may be partly because this category represents an older age group. Evangelicals with a higher education are more likely to have a liberal stance and be classed as open evangelicals. The data is thus seen to support the conclusions of Ranson *et al*, at least for conservative evangelicals.

Pre-Ordination Employment

Ministers were also questioned about employment prior to ministerial training. About 91% indicated employment prior to ordination training although, of these, 6% were employed in church related activities such as a 'lay pastoral assistant'. This clearly demonstrates a tendency towards some prior secular employment before candidating and may be a consequence of the requirement to serve initially as a local preacher. Ministers are found to have experience of a wide range of jobs, the largest single group (20%) being loosely classified as 'professional'. This category includes: bank managers, accountants, a company secretary, a librarian, engineers, radiologists, scientists, social workers and the like. The second largest group (18%) is classified as 'education' and involves those in the teaching and tertiary education professions. Approximately 16% were involved in 'white collar' occupations such as secretarial, clerical and book-keeping. Retail sales of one description or another involved a further 6%, while 5% had been in the armed forces. Unskilled jobs such as: porters, labourers and agricultural workers made up a further 5%. Finally 15% belong to the miscellaneous category which includes entries such as: technician, police service, ward orderly, housewife, bus driver and family business. It is evident that Methodist ministers are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds and have a rich and diverse experience of secular employment.

Training College

The Methodist ministers surveyed have undertaken their training in the range of colleges summarised in Table 4:6 on the next page. Although seventeen training institutions were named by ministers, nearly half of the ministers are trained at just two colleges: Wesley College, Bristol and Hartley Victoria College in Manchester. In their earlier survey Ranson *et al* (1977:45) concluded that for Methodist ministers:

"We find no relationship between the college attended and current self-reported theological position."

An examination of the theological viewpoint of the ministers from the colleges listed above shows that almost without exception each viewpoint has one or more representative from each college¹. Having said that, there are some discernible

1. The exceptions are: i) No conservative evangelicals from Richmond; ii) no catholics from Queen's or Headingly; iii) no pluralists from Handsworth.

<i>College</i>	<i>Percentage of Ministers Attending</i>
Wesley College, Bristol (including Didsbury)	25.4%
Hartley Victoria College, Manchester	21.1%
Wesley House, Cambridge	12.0%
The Queen's College, Birmingham	9.2%
Handsworth College, Birmingham ¹	8.5%
Wesley College, Headingley ¹	9.9%
Richmond College, London ¹	6.3%
Others ²	7.0%

Table 4:6 Ministerial Training -College Attended

differences. For example, the output from the older colleges at Handsworth, Headingley and Richmond were predominantly traditional Methodists with percentages of 55%, 39% and 44% respectively. Of the colleges still open, Hartley Victoria has produced the highest number of traditional Methodists (41%). The largest proportion of conservative evangelicals (31%) derives from Bristol, whereas the largest group of open evangelicals (30%) has come from Hartley Victoria. Catholics are to be found equally at Bristol and Cambridge and most pluralists (36%) derive from Bristol. Although the current survey information does not reveal whether there have been any significant changes in the emphases of the Methodist colleges over the years it is quite clear that the overall picture is consistent with the conclusions of Ranson *et al* that individual colleges are not tied to particular traditions. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than at Bristol, where Wesley College has produced the highest proportion of both conservative evangelicals and pluralists - the two groups which are perhaps furthest apart.

The above is not the whole story, however, since there are some significant variations amongst the spiritual style of ministers. Thus at Cambridge a high proportion (18%) of ministers are charismatics compared to overall average of 12%; similarly, at Richmond and Hartley Victoria 78% and 50% respectively of the graduates have been liberals (average 42%); whereas at Queen's some 31% of the

1. These colleges have since closed.

2. This category includes: Wesley Study Centre, Durham; Southwark Ordination Course; Teeside Polytechnic; Wesley Deaconess College, Ilkley; University of Heidelberg; Cliff College, Sheffield; United Theological College, Aberystwyth; East Midlands Ministry Training Centre, Nottingham; Carlisle Diocesan Training Unit; Luton Industrial College; no formal training.

ministers are radical in style compared to an average of 11%. From this perspective it is clear that, despite the diverse mix of students in each college, the various training institutions are not identical and do attract students or mould ministers with different emphases.

Theological Persuasion

The different categories have already been discussed extensively, but it is worth at this juncture just commenting briefly on the average values in comparison with previous studies. The overall data for theological viewpoint and spiritual style is displayed in Figure 4:4 below. Nearly one third of ministers subscribe to the traditional Methodist viewpoint and this is clearly the largest category with respect

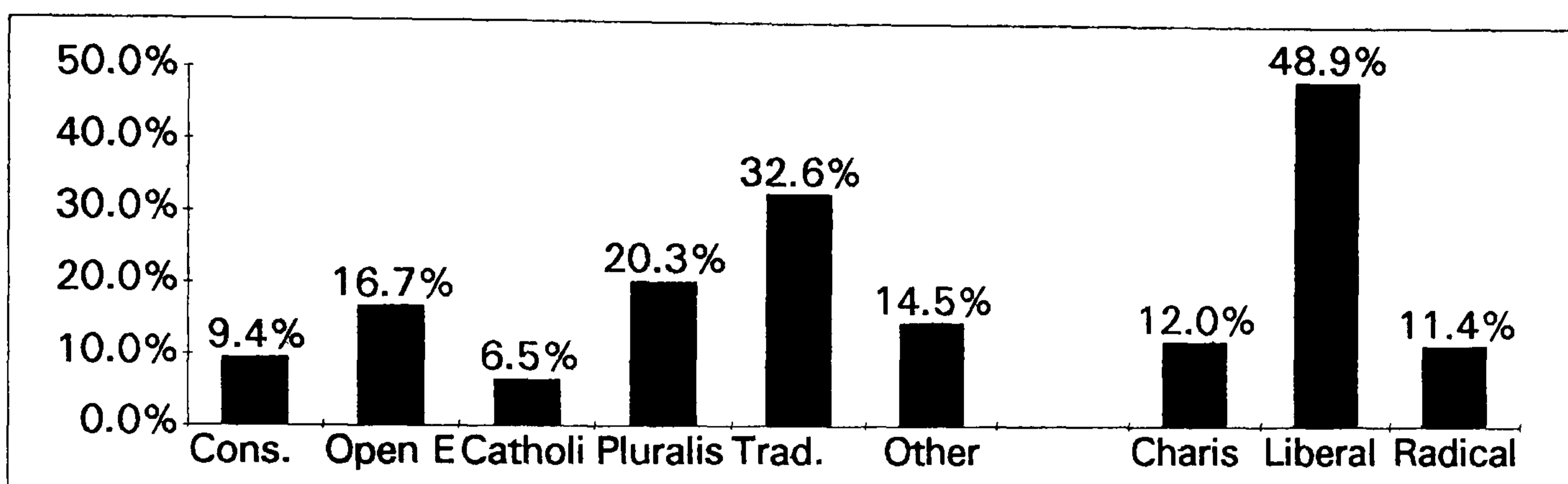


Figure 4:4 Methodist Ministers - Theological Viewpoint and Spiritual Styles

to churchmanship. Approximately one fifth of ministers are pluralists followed by the next largest group, open evangelicals. The dominant spiritual style is liberal with significant groups of charismatics and radicals. It is somewhat difficult to make precise comparisons with the earlier Methodist study of Ranson *et al* (1977) since they made use of an open question in which ministers were asked to 'locate themselves theologically' and the answers, which frequently included the use of more than one category, were subsequently coded using a different range of classifications¹. Some broad comparisons can be made. The sum total of declared evangelicals in the present survey (26.1%) falls far short of the 53.7% found by Ranson *et al*. However, addition of the traditional Methodist group, which is argued to be basically evangelical, lifts the total to 58.7% and may point to a slight shift towards the evangelical wing over the past 20 years. On the other hand, the number indicating a liberal style would appear to have increased from 37.9% to 48.9%, so any increase in the evangelical wing is perhaps a consequence of a broader understanding of the term

1. The actual classifications used together with the corresponding percentages are as follows: Evangelical (53.7%); Ecumenical (55.5%); Liberal (37.9%); Middle-of-the-road (6.6%); Radical (22.0%); Conservative (3.5%); Catholic (15.9%); Other (8.8%). [Data from Ranson *et al* (1977:45).]

evangelical which is no longer seen as the antithesis of liberal.

The groups in the present survey particularly open to ecumenical co-operation are the: open evangelicals, catholics and pluralists (Figure 3:6). The sum total of these groups is 43.5% which is substantially lower than the 55.5% of ecumenicals reported by Ranson *et al*. This may reflect a cooling in enthusiasm for ecumenical activity following the collapse of the Anglican-Methodist unification plans of the early seventies, or perhaps illustrates the difficulty in making comparisons between divergent questions. The percentage of those indicating a catholic churchmanship would appear to have dropped dramatically (from 15.9% to 6.5%), but this may in part be due to the greater restrictions placed on the options in the current survey¹. The proportion of those indicating a radical style has clearly dropped substantially, from 22.0% to 11.4%, and in this case it cannot be due to the question structure since radical is an additional unrestricted option. A possible contributory factor may be the increasing age of ministers, since it has been observed both in this work and earlier by Ranson *et al* (1977:46) that radicality is associated with young ministers. This perhaps provides further support for the idea that 'radical' is being used in the sense of commitment to a cause and openness to change rather than espousal of a non-supernatural religiosity (Davies *et al* (1990b:21)). If this is the case the fall in the number of radical ministers bodes ill for the life of the Methodist Church since it points to the growth of an increasingly moribund church.

The most significant difference between the two surveys is probably the absence of any reference to charismatics in the earlier survey. Whereas some may have been included under the heading 'other' (8.8%), this can in no way account for the significant 12% found in the present survey. The growing charismatic influence must therefore be regarded as the most dramatic change in Methodist ministers' religiosity over the past 20 years. In some ways this group compensates for the demise of the radicals since the charismatic movement is closely connected with change both in worship and ministry within the church and perhaps ultimately with structures. The other major difference between the two surveys is with regard to the clientele, since the earlier survey was conducted shortly before the ordination of women. However, the inclusion of some 10% of female ministers should not dramatically affect the overall statistics and is certainly not responsible for the increase in charismatics, as already discussed.

1. Thus in the current survey ministers would have had to tick 'catholic' as an alternative to 'evangelical' or 'traditional Methodist' instead of in addition to. The commitment to the term catholic would therefore be greater.

Certain limited comparisons are also possible with the Anglican data from the *Rural Church Project*¹. The proportion of Anglican priests who were identified as conservative evangelicals was found to be 7%, which is somewhat lower than the 9.4% of Methodist ministers, and similarly the proportion of Anglican open evangelicals (13%) is less than for Methodists (16.7%). Not surprisingly Anglican clergy are characterised by a much larger group of catholic churchmanship (39%) compared to Methodist ministers (6.5%). With regard to spirituality 22% of Anglican priests cite a charismatic style which is nearly double the Methodist proportion (12%). Interestingly, in the Anglican Church, the charismatic influence is broadly spread across the wide range of churchmanship, whereas in Methodism it is concentrated amongst conservative and open evangelicals (75%). Thus within the Anglican Church the charismatic movement has a greater potential to unite, whereas in Methodism the disproportionate spread is likely to emphasise divisions.

The overall proportion of radical Anglicans is given as 8%, which is not widely different from the Methodist figure of 11.4%. Interestingly these figures almost exactly parallel the ratio of Anglican clergy (12%) to Methodist ministers (18%) who are under 40 (Figure 3:14). This again points to a connection between age and radicality. In contrast, the percentage of Anglican priests indicating a liberal spirituality is 22%, which is substantially lower than the Methodist proportion of 48.9%. It is debatable whether the term is used in the same way by both Methodists and Anglicans and hence whether this reflects an important contrast in religiosity. For example, amongst Methodist ministers some 30% of open evangelicals identify with liberals, whereas the same group amongst Anglican priests comprises only 12% of liberals.

Ministerial Appointments

A further point of contact with the earlier survey of Methodist ministers was in the nature of ministerial appointments. A summary of the results of the two surveys is recorded in Table 4:7 on the next page. The scope of the surveys is slightly different in that supernumeraries were deliberately excluded from the present study and many sector ministers returned the questionnaire as not relevant to their current ministry². In the present study the vast majority of ministers who responded (96.5%) were active in a circuit ministry compared to 92.2% in the earlier survey, the difference being accounted for by the self-exclusion of sector ministers in this work. A feature of note in the comparison is the increase in the ratio of circuit ministers to

1. All the Anglican data in this and the following paragraph are taken from Davies *et al* (1990b) pp.18,19.

2. This arose because a significant proportion of the questions were only relevant to a circuit situation.

	This Study	Ranson <i>et al</i> (1977:22)
Circuit Minister	63.3%	56.5% (63.7%) ¹
Superintendent	27.5%	29.4% (33.5%) ¹
Sector Minister ²	0.7%	7.1%
Minister in Local Appointment (MLA) ³	1.4%	---
Minister in Other Appointment ⁴	0.7%	---
Second Minister ⁵	0.7%	---
Connexional Secretary	0.7%	---
Active Supernumerary ⁶	---	4.2%
Probationer ⁷	4.9%	2.1%
Chairman ⁸	---	0.4%

Table 4:7 The Nature of Ministerial Appointments

superintendents which over 20 years has grown by some 21% from 1.9 to 2.3. Since the number of circuit ministers has not significantly increased in this period the changes point to a reorganisation of circuits with a reduction in the number of superintendencies. This process is still continuing since, according to the stations listed in the *Methodist Directory*, the number of circuits reduced from 672 in 1990 to 649 in 1994, decline of approximately 1% a year, which would largely account for the changes observed above.

The most significant addition to ministerial appointments in the current survey is the inclusion of 'ministers in local appointment' (MLAs). These were introduced in the late eighties and are the Methodist equivalent of the Anglican non-stipendiary minister

1. Recalculated value omitting active supernumeraries and sector ministers.

2. This includes ministers appointed as chaplains and in educational work or social services.

3. The Methodist equivalent of the Anglican 'non-stipendiary minister', i.e., an ordained minister appointed to serve in a circuit near to his residence and financially supported through his secular employment.

4. A minister employed full-time in a denominational or ecumenical body not directly controlled by the Methodist Church.

5. This is not an official term and its meaning is uncertain. It is believed to refer to situations within a few large Methodist churches where a junior minister is appointed to assist the minister in pastoral charge. As such it would be somewhat analogous to the role of a curate as assistant to an Anglican priest.

6. Supernumerary means a minister who is permitted or directed to retire from the active work of the ministry.

7. Probationer is a person who has been admitted by the Conference on probation to the ministry but has not yet been admitted into 'full connexion'. This figure includes one probationer MLA.

8. Minister in charge of a Methodist district. The nearest equivalent of an Anglican bishop.

(NSM). Since 1988 some 54 MLAs have been stationed and currently there are a further 21 in their probationary year(s). The *Methodist Directory* lists seven of these ministers whose date of recognition is as early as 1959, which is before the MLA scheme was introduced. This is apparently due to ministers ordained in other denominations who subsequently transferred to the Methodist Church appointments as MLAs¹. A significant feature of those appointed as MLAs (including probationers) after 1988 is that the majority (57%) are female. This far exceeds the proportion entering the stipendiary ministry and suggests that an MLA appointment is particularly attractive to women, possibly because its localised nature obviates the problem of transfer to other parts of the country. This is especially significant for married women.

It is interesting to reflect on the relationship between MLAs and local preachers. In the early days of Methodism, itinerant preachers who located reverted to the status of local preacher. Now a new category has been introduced of part-time ministers with all the residential advantages of the local preacher but the status of a minister. It will be interesting to see in the years ahead whether the introduction of MLAs will further undermine the role and status of local preachers and lead to their eventual demise. Much will presumably depend on maintaining rigorous standards of training and entry qualifications to regulate and restrict entry to this appointment. A further point to note is that MLAs are not listed separately in Conference statistics and so they may begin to mask a fall in the numbers of full-time circuit ministers. For example, in 1990 there were 1,746 ministers including 4 MLAs in circuit appointments and this has apparently increased in 1994 to 1,750, but of these, 53 (3%) are MLAs². There is thus actually a fall in the number of full-time circuit ministers. In the current year (1994), of the 162 probationers listed in circuit appointments, 21 (13%) are MLAs. The trend thus looks set to increase.

Bias in Ministerial Appointments

Recently, as part of the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the ordination of Methodist women, questions have been raised concerning the fairness of appointments with respect to gender. Thus Moira Sleight, the assistant editor of the *Methodist Recorder*, in commenting on the number of women appointed as superintendents writes³:

1. For example, Ian Sellers (recognition date 1983) was formerly an auxiliary minister with the United Reform Church and Malcolm Hope (recognition date 1986) had been ordained into the Wesleyan Reform Union in 1986.

2. The numbers are derived from the circuit stationing lists in the respective *Minutes of Conference and Directory* and exclude those on probation.

3. "Words, words and women ministers" by Moira Sleight, *Methodist Recorder*, July 21st. 1994, p.1.

"In 1994 9.77% of active Methodist ministers are women but out of 646 superintendent ministers a mere two dozen are female (less than four per cent) Yes, it is true that the number of women superintendents is improving - in 1989 a paltry five circuits had female superintendents - but women are still nowhere near being fairly represented."¹

The results of the current survey include too small a sample of women (15) to accurately estimate the proportion of appointments, but an inspection of the stationing lists in the *Methodist Directory* for 1990 and 1994 yields the data summarised in Table 4:8. The figures summarise only those ministers involved in circuit ministry,

Appointment	1990		1994	
	All Ministers	Women	All Ministers	Women
Circuit Minister	1,070	122 (11.4%)	1,047	177 (18.0%)
Superintendent	672	9 (1.3%)	649	23 (3.5%)
MLA	4	2 (50.0%)	54	25 (46.3%)
Probationer	137	42 (30.6%)	141	43 (30.5%)
Probationer MLA	16	6 (37.5%)	21	11 (52.4%)
MWA ²	14	13 (92.9%)	35	17 (48.6%)
<i>Totals</i>				
All Appointments	1,913	194 (10.1%)	1,947	296 (15.2%)
Without MWAs	1,899	181 (9.5%)	1,912	279 (14.6%)
Circuit Ministers and Superintendents	1,742	131 (7.5%)	1,696	200 (11.8%)

Table 4:8 Ministers in Circuit Appointments in 1990 and 1994

including those listed as 'without appointment'. In 1994 there were 200 full-time women ministers active in circuit ministry representing 11.8% of the total number of such ministers. This is a somewhat higher figure than quoted by Moira Sleight above, but this is probably because sector appointments are not included. Of the 649 superintendents only 23 (3.5%) are women, indicating a less than equitable share

1. According to the author's analysis of the stations listed in the 1994 *Methodist Directory* there are 649 superintendents of which 23 are women.

2. MWA is shorthand for 'minister without appointment'. It refers to an ordained minister or probationer who: "on compassionate or compelling domestic grounds, becomes exempt from normal stationing by the conference..." (S.O. 762:1). The most usual examples are a woman minister married to another ordained minister or with a young family to care for. This is not a stipendiary position but the MWA may be reimbursed for involvement in circuit ministry.

since male ministers are three times as likely to hold such a position. However, in defence of this apparent inequality it has been argued that appointments¹ to superintendencies are largely based on seniority and that there are few superintendents with less than 20 years service. This would automatically bar many women since women's ordination was only introduced in 1974.

Analysis of the current survey results makes it possible to test the above contention. Figure 4:5 shown below illustrates how superintendencies are related to

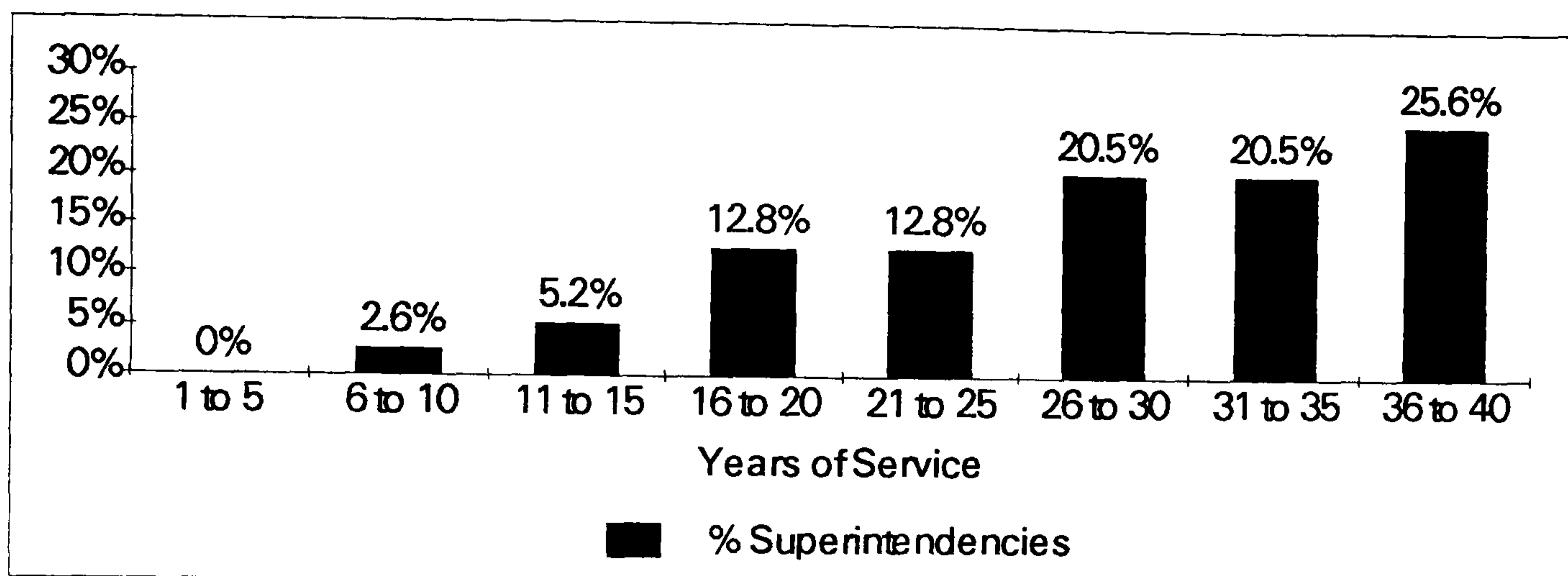


Figure 4:5 The Dependence of Circuit Appointments on Years of Service

the length of service as an ordained minister. It is readily apparent that very few superintendents are appointed with less than 15 years service and that the vast majority (80%) have 20 or more years service. In the 1990 survey, two thirds of the female respondents had less than six years service and the longest serving female minister, who was in the 11 to 15 year block, was a superintendent. These results provide a clear explanation of the paucity of women superintendents if service length is the main prerequisite for such appointments and suggest that in fact on this criterion women are fairly represented².

Another way of looking at the appointments is from the viewpoint of age groups. In the 1990 survey 44% of all superintendents were in the 60 to 66 years block, which suggests experience and age seniority are in practice important criteria³. This of course has clear implications for the proportion of women superintendents since the

1. The term 'appointment' is possibly somewhat misleading since it perhaps implies a centralised system of stationing. In practice ministers may apply for a superintendency or may be approached by a circuit for such an appointment.

2. Since only 11% of all circuit ministers who have served less than 20 years are appointed as superintendents and since all women ministers necessarily fall in this category the expected number of women superintendents should be 11% of 200 namely 22. This compares with the actual number of 23.

3. Some circuit ministers positively seek to avoid being appointed as a superintendent but the author has been told during interview that such avoidance becomes increasingly difficult as the minister becomes more senior.

current retirement age for women is 60 years. Thus many of the first women ordained in the mid-seventies who had been serving as deaconesses, have by now already retired. There are clearly other criteria which influence appointments and at first sight the training college seems to have a profound influence on future 'career' prospects since only 14% of the ministers from Wesley College, Bristol were found to be superintendents compared to some 57.1% from Headingley. However, again, the apparent bias is largely accounted for by service length as illustrated in Table 4:9 below. There are perhaps some hints of inequality. For example, Wesley College, Bristol does seem to have a rather low proportion of students who are subsequently appointed as superintendents compared to say Queen's College, Birmingham and of

<i>Training College</i>	<i>Years of Service</i>		<i>% Superintendents¹</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	
Wesley College, Bristol	13.4	12.9	13.9%
Hartley Victoria	22.2	12.3	40.0%
Wesley House, Cambridge	14.9	14.0	17.6%
Queen's College, Birmingham	7.1	5.2	15.4%
Handsworth, Birmingham	32.3	6.9	50.0%
Wesley College, Headingley	29.2	5.4	57.1%
Richmond College, London	27.3	4.2	33.3%
Others	3.9	3.2	0.0%
Average for all colleges	18.1	12.9	27.5%

Table 4:9 College Training and Superintendencies

the older colleges Wesley College, Headingley would seem to produce a significantly greater proportion of superintendents than Richmond College.

There are clearly other factors which affect appointments such as educational background and previous employment experience, but on the whole these factors are not well defined since employment and academic qualifications tend to be rather age dependent². One intriguing feature that does stand out is the very small number of ministers with a background in teaching or higher education who become

1. This is the percentage of graduates from the respective colleges who held a position as superintendent at the time of the 1990 survey. The percentage is calculated on all the respondents to the study and thus includes probationers and others.

2. For example, older ministers tend to have served in the armed forces and have fewer academic qualifications.

superintendents. Thus within this sizable group, representing nearly a fifth of all ministers, less than 8% are superintendents compared to an overall average of nearly 28% across all forms of employment. However, on closer examination even here the key factor appears length of service since ministers with a teaching background had on average only 7.9 years of service even though over 40% were 50 years old or above. The dominant pattern that appears to emerge is that the years of experience in the Methodist ministry are the determining factor in such appointments. To some extent this is not unreasonable since 'career' Methodists are more likely to have a firm grasp of the intricacies of the administrative system, but on the debit side they may not necessarily be best suited to lead a circuit team or yet have good administrative skills. Furthermore, experience gained in industry or other professions might well be invaluable to a superintendent. The 'career' Methodist has the advantage of being known within the church and having once served as a superintendent he will have the experience to continue to do so.

The most important aspect of the whole question of bias within appointments is not whether women or teachers or graduates from certain colleges are fairly represented but whether the most appropriate ministers are fitted to the particular jobs on offer. Clearly the single criterion of service length is not adequate in deciding appointments since many other considerations such as: maturity and experience, administrative and leadership skills, vision, pastoral abilities, and family circumstances, need to be taken into account. Hopefully, the forthcoming ministerial appraisal could help ministers to an understanding of their gifts and skills and hence the appropriateness of ministerial appointments.

Duration of Appointments

Amongst other questions, ministers were requested to indicate the period that they had spent in their current appointment. The responses ranged from 2 months to 31 years with an average value of 4.0 years. This value is probably somewhat inflated since some ministers may have indicated periods such as 5 years meaning that they were entering their fifth year but had actually only served 4 years and two months. Comparison with data from the *Rural Church Project* shows that for Anglican clergy the average length of time per completed appointment was 4.7 years [Davies *et al* (1990b:15)]. Although the two sets of figures are not exactly comparable, there is no evidence to suggest that Anglican appointments are very much longer in duration than comparable Methodist ones despite the itinerant system.

Correlation of the period spent in their current appointment shows that the period varies with the nature of the appointment, being on average 3.4 years for

circuit ministers, 4.9 years for superintendents and 5.9 years for those in other categories¹. Although the period for circuit ministers will be reduced by the presence of some probationers, nevertheless, the period served by superintendents appears significantly longer suggesting that they move less frequently than their ministerial counterparts in circuit life. At the same time there is a definite trend of increasing length of appointments with age group. Thus the period increases from an average of 2.7 years for the 20-39 year age group, through 3.2 years for the 40-49 group and 4.1 years for the 50-59 to a final 5.4 years for the over sixties. This strongly suggests that ministers become less mobile with advancing years, a finding that cannot be attributed solely to short initial probationary assignments. Interestingly a similar trend is paralleled in the *Rural Church Project*² for Anglican clergy.

Working Hours

A detailed analysis of the working practice of ministers is possible since the majority (82%) of ministerial respondents completed the weekly timetable (Q.52)³. Although this will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis, it is appropriate to comment on some salient features which are related to the nature of the appointment. Firstly, the overall average working week is 56.8 hours with a range of between 31 to 92 hours. The wide range probably corresponds to a diversity in working practice, but may to some extent also reflect variations in the way time is estimated⁴. Comparison with data for Anglican clergy in the *Rural Church Project* shows a similar number of completed returns (82%) and an almost identical 56.6 hour working week⁵. In this case the range of values was from a minimum of 18.5 hours to a maximum of 116.5 hours. On the whole the working hours of the average Methodist and Anglican clergy would seem quite comparable, although clearly there are a number of individuals who work extremely long hours or have a very comfortable time. At first sight the number of hours worked seems excessive, but it needs to be remembered that the hours include travel time, that the minister works from home and that a considerable number of hours spent at Sunday worship or in fellowship groups would be duplicated by many committed Christians with full-time secular jobs.

In the present study it is also possible to examine the dependence of the length of the working week on the nature of the appointment. The analysis reveals that whereas circuit ministers work on average 55.0 hours (range 31 to 78.5), superintendents put

1. The category under circuit ministers also includes probationers whereas other categories refers to the small number in sector and other appointments.

2. See data for Anglican clergy in Davies *et al* (1990b:16,17).

3. A number declined to complete this section on grounds such as lack of time, sickness or being on holiday during the specified week.

4. For example, one minister involved in leading a two-day retreat ascribed a time allocation of 48 hours, which clearly takes no account of periods of sleep, relaxation and mealtimes.

5. Davies *et al* (1990b:27).

in an average 63.1 hour week (range 35 to 92), nearly 15% longer than their colleagues. A preliminary analysis of the breakdown of the working week shows that the main difference between circuit ministers and superintendents is in the area of administration¹. Thus the average superintendent spent 17.5 hours on administrative tasks compared to only 11.4 hours for circuit ministers. This extra 6.1 hours accounts for most of the 8.1 hours difference between the two working weeks and highlights an important aspect of a superintendent's ministry.

Church and Circuit Background

Typically, ministers worked in circuits whose average size was 11.8 churches (range 2 to 34) and had pastoral charge of 3.5 churches (range 1 to 9) with a total membership of 221 (range 22 to 547). The average circuit was staffed by 3.9 ministers (range 1 to 9) together with 1.6 supernumeraries (range 0 to 9) and 22.6 local preachers (range 1 to 77). Just less than half the circuits had a lay-worker (0.41 per circuit), one in four had a deacon/deaconess (0.26 per circuit), a similar number an administrative secretary (0.26 per circuit), one in five had a lay-pastor (0.19 per circuit) and one in seven a youth worker (0.14 per circuit). Clearly there is a wide range of working situations ranging from the single station circuit, where the minister is working on his own, to the large circuits where the minister is working with a sizable team of colleagues. However, in the average situation the minister will be working with three ministerial colleagues, another full-time staff member and a considerable group of local preachers.

Attempts to describe the location of the churches (Q.13) was complicated since nearly two-thirds (62%) of the churches attracted two or more descriptions indicating that the circuits were often in mixed areas. The most common descriptions were suburban and village both being cited in 36% of cases. These were followed by rural (29%), country town (24%), council estate (22%), industrial town (17%), inner city (12%) and commuter (12%). The above is possibly misleading as to the strengths of Methodism in the various areas as it primarily refers to location of church buildings. It is possible to get some idea of the Methodist presence by correlation of the average membership per church with the various locations. This will not be an exact guide since as stated above the circuits tend to be mixed but it will nevertheless provide some hints². This analysis is shown in Table 4:10 overleaf. It is readily

1. The time spent on administration was computed from the sum of the responses to Q52.h-1 and p (Appendix I).

2. According to the choices indicated by respondents, 52 circuits were described by one location, 48 by two locations, 28 by three locations and 7 by four locations. It is not possible to separate out the size of churches in the distinct parts of any given circuit, so the quoted averages will be somewhat distorted because of contributions from other locations. However, this is somewhat mitigated since some of the combinations are similar, e.g., 'rural' and 'village' are a common combination.

<i>Circuit Location</i>	<i>Total Number of Citations</i>	<i>Mean Church Size</i>
Commuter	15	191
Suburban	48	144
Inner City	17	116
Industrial Town	22	86
Ribbon Development	3	80
Council Estates	29	70
Country Town	33	51
Village	49	50
Rural	38	42
Overall Average ¹	--	63

Table 4:10 The Location of Circuit Churches and Their Approximate Size

apparent that although the majority of the locations cited are in the rural/ country areas these represent rather small church units with average memberships of 50 or less and probably much smaller congregations. Church membership is concentrated in the urban areas, paralleling population centres, and the largest church units are to be found in the suburban and commuter districts. Council housing estates are important population centres but ones in which the Methodist Church has generally failed to build large congregations, reflecting the movement of Methodism away from its working-class origins to a more middle-class emphasis.

Clearly ministers working in distinct areas will face varying challenges. Rural work will generally involve small congregations with limited financial resources and few lay persons available to assist and to run the different church activities or to assist as local preachers. Very rural locations may well involve widely spread locations and involve considerable extra travelling time. The general mixed nature of at least some of the circuits may help to reduce the pressure on the minister involved.

1. The average number of members per church in 1989 as deduced from the triennial statistics recorded in the 1990 *Minutes of Conference* is 59, which is some 6% lower than the value deduced from the 1990 survey. This could be due to the fact that there were in 1989 a significant number (262) of other persons such as: lay workers, deaconesses and active supernumeraries, in pastoral charge of churches. It would seem likely that such persons, who are not covered in this present survey, would be in pastoral charge of smaller churches and the overall effect would be to reduce the average membership size below 63.

Local Preacher Portrait

We now turn from examining the ministerial portrait to preparing a biographical sketch of the Methodist local preacher. In so doing we shall compare and contrast the local preacher with his¹ ordained colleague as well as probing the relationship to Anglican readers. In the latter connection it should be emphasised at the outset that local preachers are far more crucial to the Methodist structure than readers are to the Anglican Church because they are more numerous and conduct a very much higher proportion of regular Sunday worship services². Without local preachers many services would cease and smaller churches close, and thus it is evident that local preachers are pivotal to the ongoing life of the church and the pastoral care of members. Most of the biographical details are taken from the first two sections of the local preachers' survey which cover the preacher's personal background as well as providing some insight into his call and preaching ministry (see Appendix II, Q. 1-14).

Age Profile

The mean age of the 211 active³ local preachers surveyed was 57.1 years with a range of 23 to 87 years. The mean age is higher than for ministers by some seven years, since local preachers do not retire at 65. The lower starting age is to be expected since ministers must first serve as local preachers before training and ordination. Comparison of the age profiles between ministers and local preachers is shown in Figure 4:6 overleaf. In this case the data employed is restricted to local preachers up to the age of 65 years so as to make a more meaningful comparison with ministers. It is immediately apparent that the two age distributions are very similar.

1. As is the case with Methodist ministers the majority of local preachers are male (see subsequent discussion under gender) and for simplicity the masculine pronouns will be used when referring to such preachers, but with the clear understanding that it refers also to a significant body of female local preachers.

2. According to Lawton (1989:130), in 1985 the number of local preachers was 13,984 compared to 7,130 Anglican readers in 1984. Furthermore he states that approximately 5 out of 7 services are conducted by local preachers [Lawton (1989:93)]. This estimate is supported by data from the ministerial survey which shows that ministers are responsible for on average 3.5 churches (Q.10b) which would be expected to hold up to 2 services each Sunday making a total of seven services. Because of the timing of services many ministers are only planned to conduct two services per Sunday which means that five of the seven need to be conducted by others, usually local preachers. Of course some smaller rural churches may only have one service per Sunday and the minister may take more than two. However, these may well be offset due to ministerial absence through: holidays, sickness, maternity leave and sabbaticals. Lawton's estimate that local preachers take about 5 out of 7 (71%) of Methodist services seems reasonable.

3. Every effort was made to select preachers who were still active in their preaching ministry. The preachers' names were selected from the circuit plans, some of which indicate with an asterisk those preachers who are no longer taking appointments. In other cases checks were made to see whether the preacher's name appeared on the plan. The sample may, however, include a few preachers who are semi-active; for example, some elderly preachers only preach in the summer months.

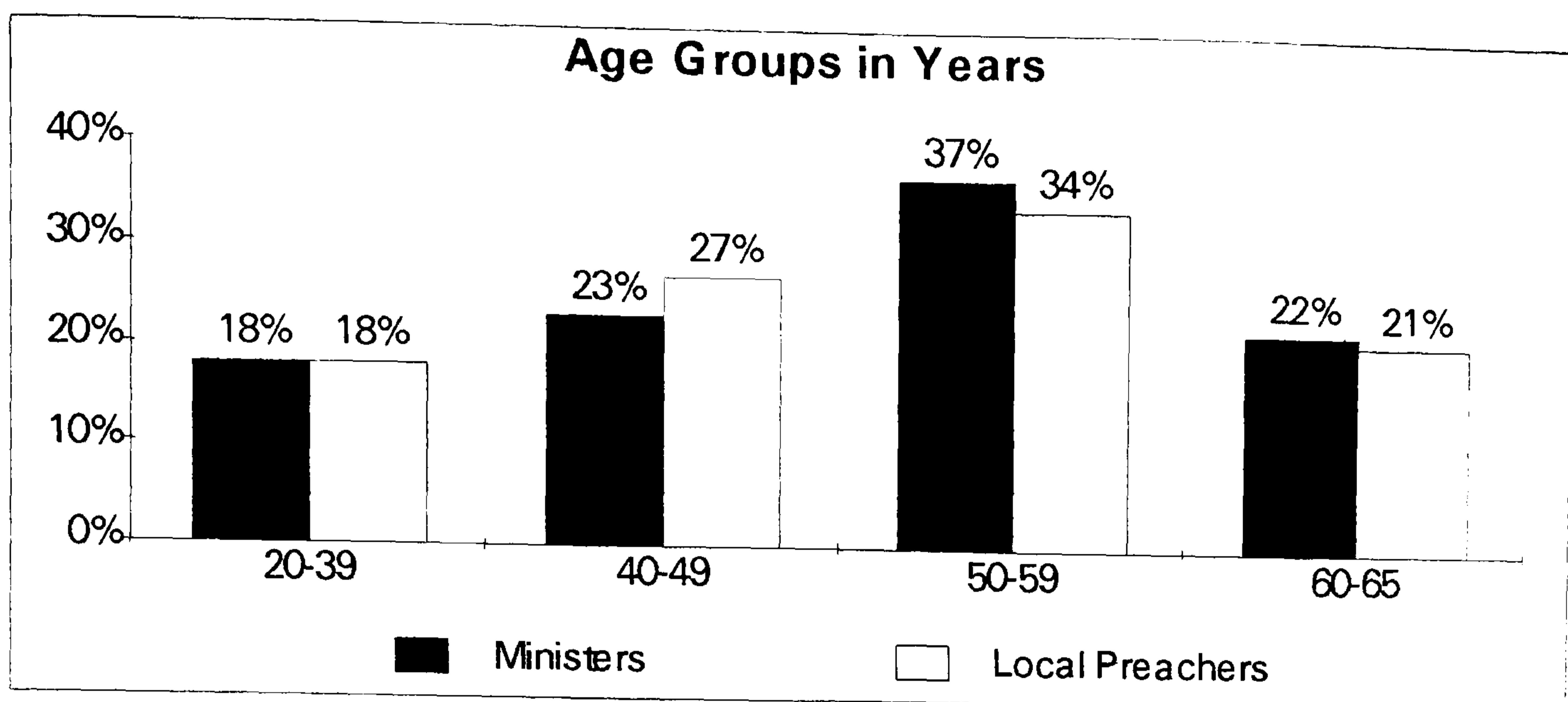


Figure 4:6 Age Profiles of Ministers and Local Preachers

This is not all together surprising since local preachers are the source from which ministers are drawn and it would be expected that the numbers of ministers would be in some way proportional to the size of the local preacher age groups. This is clearly a further incentive for maintaining the recruitment of local preachers since this in turn will feed the numbers of ministerial candidates. As in the case of ministers, the local preacher age distribution is skewed to the higher end, with the highest percentage of preachers being found in the 60 to 69 age group as well as nearly a fifth who are in their seventies (this is documented in Table 4:12 which includes data for the whole local preacher age range). Nearly half of all active Methodist preachers are over sixty. When the numbers of elderly, and hence inactive, preachers are added the distribution becomes significantly more skewed, and helps to explain the rapid decline in the numbers of preachers observed by Lawton in the 50 years since Union¹.

Powell (1993) in his recent study of Anglican readers also includes information with regard to their age distribution. Comparison between the age profiles of readers and local preachers is shown in Figure 4:7 on the following page and follows the age groupings employed by Powell. Whereas the two distributions are broadly similar the most significant feature is the much higher percentage of local preachers in the under 35 age group where local preachers outnumber readers by four to one. This suggests that the Methodist Church is more successful than the Anglican in attracting younger people into this office. Since the training and selection of local preachers is every bit as rigorous as for readers, if not more so, the reason cannot be ease of entry. Possibly

1. Lawton (1989:130) charts the decline in preachers as follows: 1932 (39,000) , 1947 (24,646), 1985 (13,984) which is significantly faster than membership decline. By 1993 the total number of preachers had declined further to 12,953. However, more recently the rate of decline appears to have eased since the number of 'active' preachers in 1988 were 10,345 and this only decreased slightly to 10,282 by 1993 (Source: *The Local Preachers Magazine*, 1994, vol. 144/3 , p.24).

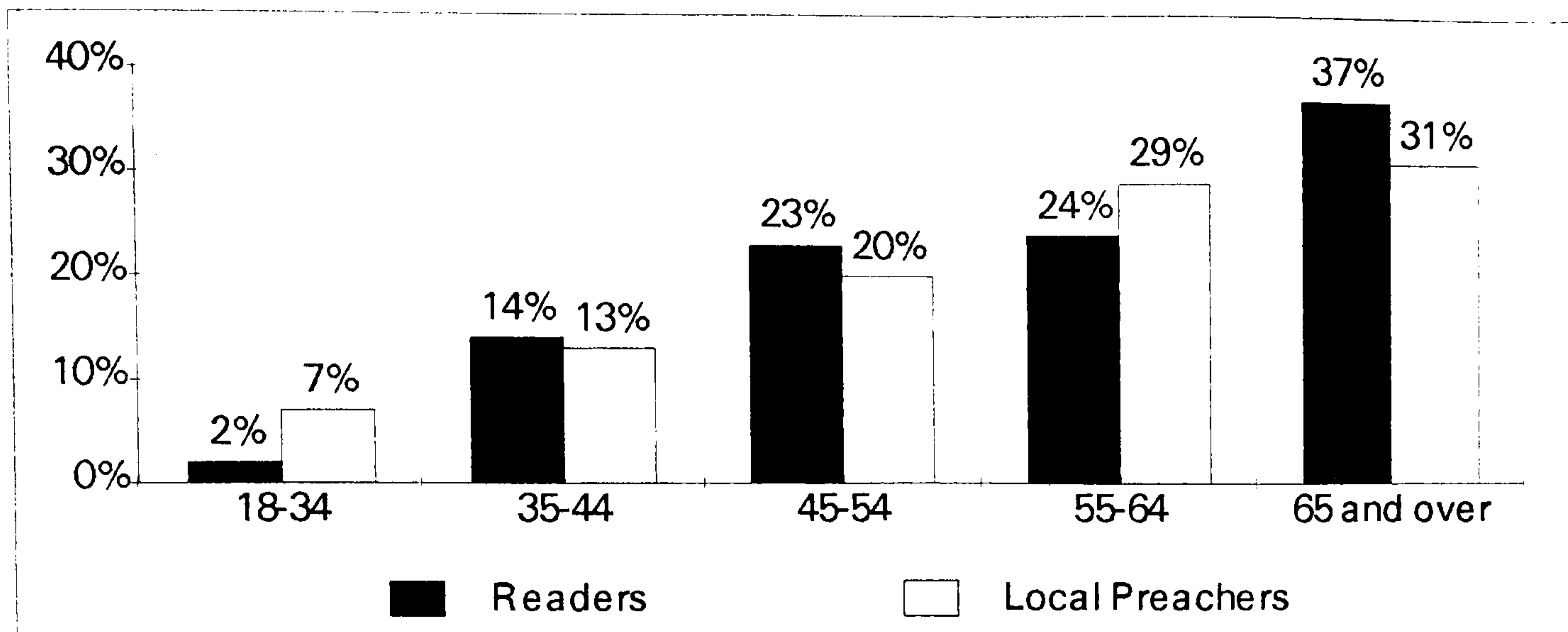


Figure 4:7 The Age Distributions of Readers and Local Preachers

the attractiveness lies in the greater responsibility given to local preachers and the wider opportunities for service. In Anglican circles the reader is often there to assist the incumbent or to take his place on the rare occasions when he may be absent through illness or an interregnum. By contrast, in Methodism the local preacher takes complete responsibility for the whole service and is expected to preach and lead worship outside his own church, and may indeed legitimately operate outside his own circuit without special permission.

Amongst ministers it was shown that theological outlook was age dependent (Table 4:2) and it is now possible to examine that finding with local preachers. It is evident from Table 4:11 that similar trends persist. Thus again open evangelicals and pluralists are the two groups which have the majority of their members under 50 years

Age Groups	20-39	40-49	50-59	60-65	Over 65
Conservative Evangelical	19%	19%	22%	16%	24%
Open Evangelical	24%	28%	28%	16%	4%
Catholic	0%	25%	17%	50%	8%
Pluralist	27%	33%	7%	20%	13%
Traditional Methodist	5%	13%	21%	19%	42%
Other	6%	14%	19%	42%	19%

Table 4:11 Theological Viewpoint - Variation with Age Group

of age - despite the inclusion of the over 65 tail. As before conservative evangelicals are found to have a fairly uniform spread over the age groups and traditional

Methodists are largely confined to the over 50s (82%) with a particular concentration (37%) in the over 70 age group. The close similarity between the trends for both ministers and local preachers suggests that within Methodism there is a gradual shift away from traditionalism towards a more open evangelical and pluralistic outlook. The abiding presence of the conservative evangelical viewpoint may possibly be related to the influence of the charismatic movement which provides renewed support for biblical fundamentalism.

Gender

Although women local preachers and indeed itinerants had been part of the first hundred years of Methodism, women local preachers were not admitted into the Wesleyan Methodist Church until 1918¹. Their recognition naturally continued in the Methodist Church after union in 1932. Since the admission of women local preachers preceded women's ordination by more than 50 years it is hardly surprising that they form a very significant proportion among local preachers - approximately one third. As far as the author is aware there are no official statistics relating to the gender of local preachers and unfortunately the results of the present survey do not enable the proportion to be fixed with any confidence; there are two reasons for this. Firstly, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, the response rate was gender-dependent with approximately 80% of women returning the survey compared to 65% of men. Secondly the survey was organised on a district rather than a national basis and this led to the discovery of distinct regional variations². Of the total responses received 37% were from female local preachers and this corresponds to a figure of 32% for those who were actually sent a form. Since the latter was based on a random selection process of active preachers it probably more realistically reflects the actual situation.

The regional variation of female local preachers, based on forms despatched, is as follows: Newcastle (42%), Bristol (34%), London (28%) and Nottingham and Derby (24%) and shows very large differences. The reasons for this variation are obscure. It may have to do with the blend of traditions that were fused together on union in 1932 with differing emphases on women's involvement in ministry. On the other hand, it might be related to employment opportunities for women which are probably higher in the Nottingham and London Districts. It is perhaps worth mentioning that there does not seem to be any clear connection with variations in

1. Cited in Lawton (1989:98).

2. This is both a strength and weakness of the survey procedure. The strength, as will be discussed later, is that it makes it possible to demonstrate significant regional variations. The weakness is that the exact national picture cannot be predicted with confidence.

theological viewpoint since, although Nottingham and Derby have the highest proportion of conservative evangelicals (26%) who might be predisposed against women in leadership roles, the London districts have the lowest (14%), but the proportion of women local preachers are somewhat similar.

It is also of some interest to see how the proportion of local preachers is age sensitive. Table 4:12 below reveals that the percentage of women local preachers increases with age. The proportion of women is particularly low in the under 35 age group, reaches a plateau in the 45 to 65 age group, and thereafter gradually increases, presumably because of the increased longevity of women. The pattern suggests that women are entering into local preaching at a later stage than men, probably in their forties. For women with families this might be the point at which they would be beginning to be free from the responsibility of caring for small children. This, however, does not answer the question as to why women do not take up local preaching before the onset of family responsibilities. It might be speculated that

Age Groups	20-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Over 65
Total Numbers	14	26	42	59	64
% Female	21	31	36	37	42
%Male	79	69	64	63	58

Table 4:12 Variation of Gender of Local Preachers with Age Group

preaching is perceived to require a certain 'authority' which is not so readily recognised in younger women. Thus women might only be encouraged to consider local preaching after they have reached a certain maturity through motherhood or through work experience.

There are some important consequences of the trends observed above. Firstly, as the proportion of young women local preachers is small, this must necessarily limit the number of potential candidates for the ordained ministry - at least with regard to those who are likely to have a long service contribution. If the proportion remains at this level it would seem highly likely that the number of women active in ordained ministry is unlikely greatly to exceed the current level of around 15%. The apparent high proportion of women (38%) due to be ordained up until 1998 (see earlier discussion) is thus likely to include more mature candidates who will serve for shorter periods and will not increase active women ministers to the 38% ordination level. The second, and related, consideration is that women are more active as local preachers in their later

years. This suggests that the current retirement age for women ministers at 60 is inappropriate.

A further aspect that shows some gender dependence is theological viewpoint. In Figure 4:8 the theological viewpoint is expressed as a percentage of male or female local preachers. A significant contrast with the ministerial data (Figure 4:3) is that amongst women local preachers a significant number are conservative evangelicals (15%) and catholics (7%) compared to none amongst female ministers. It is possible that views of male leadership or male priesthood respectively, may deter these two groups from being fully represented amongst ordained ministers. Amongst women who become ministers there would appear to be a shift from conservative evangelical to open evangelical - a more liberal position. It is interesting that the gender difference among conservative evangelicals is duplicated amongst Anglican readers where 20% of male and 15% of female readers are conservative evangelicals¹. However, in contradistinction, female readers (36%) form the largest proportion of open evangelicals compared to 22% male readers.

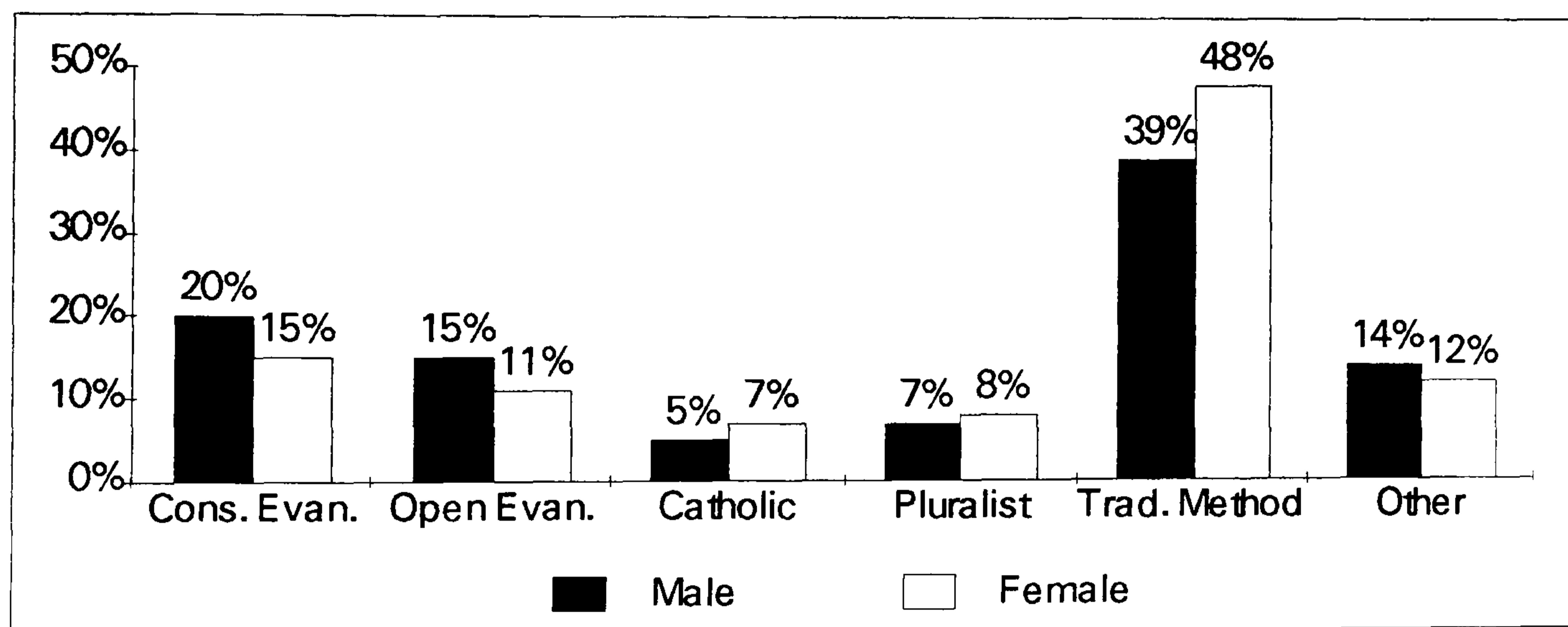


Figure 4:8 The Gender Dependence of Theological Viewpoint for Local Preachers

The aspect of spiritual style also shows some gender bias. Thus, whereas 21% of male local preachers are charismatic, this drops to only 14% for women. On the other hand, as with ministers, a higher proportion of female local preachers (39%) describe themselves as liberal compared to 33% in the case of men. Women local preachers (11%) are also slightly more radical than men (8%). The consistent pattern that emerges throughout the study of ministers and local preachers, and Powell's study of Anglican readers, is that positions of lay or ministerial leadership amongst women are accompanied by a shift to a more open or liberal theological viewpoint. This becomes more accentuated in the shift from lay to ordained status.

1. Data from Powell (1993) p.222, Table 78.

Marital Status

Overall 79.1% of the local preachers surveyed were married compared to 89.4% of ministers and 74% of Anglican readers. The classification of marital status according to gender is summarised in Table 4:13 for both local preachers and readers. Overall, the patterns for local preachers and readers are similar with a significant difference according to gender. Thus women holding one of these offices are more likely to be single or widowed than men, with the differences being greater for readers than local preachers. Female local preachers show a much higher percentage of widows than their reader counterparts and this doubtless reflects the fact that there are fewer older Anglican women readers because women were only admitted to the order in 1969. Of particular significance is the observation that the number of single women local preachers (21%) is less than half the proportion found for women ministers (53%), whereas the percentage of single male local preachers (9%) is about

<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Single</i> (28)	<i>Married</i> (166)	<i>Widowed</i> (14)	<i>Divorced</i> (2)
<i>Local Preachers</i>				
Male (133)	9.0%	87.2%	2.3%	1.5%
Female (77)	20.8%	64.9%	14.3%	0%
<i>Readers¹</i>				
Male	5%	84%	4%	2%
Female	28%	53%	8%	2%

Table 4:13 Marital Status of Local Preachers as a Function of Gender

the same as for male ministers (8%). This clearly suggests that married women are significantly less likely to enter the ordained ministry presumably because of difficulties such as child care and stationing clashing with husband's employment. If these factors persist they must severely limit the number of women local preachers who feel free to offer for ministry.

The number of single persons among local preachers is sufficiently high to be able to investigate the relationship of marital status to theological outlook. This is shown in Figure 4:9 for the two categories of single and married. It is immediately

1. Data for readers taken from Powell (1993) p.233, Table 90.

apparent that marital status is a more important determinant of theological viewpoint than gender. Married preachers are almost twice as likely to be conservative evangelicals, whereas single preachers are characterised by almost three times as many pluralists. This latter observation strengthens the earlier tentative conclusions that pluralists are least bound by the ideal of marriage or that their viewpoint has been to a large extent formulated by their marital circumstances. Again it is significant that Catholics do not feature among single preachers.

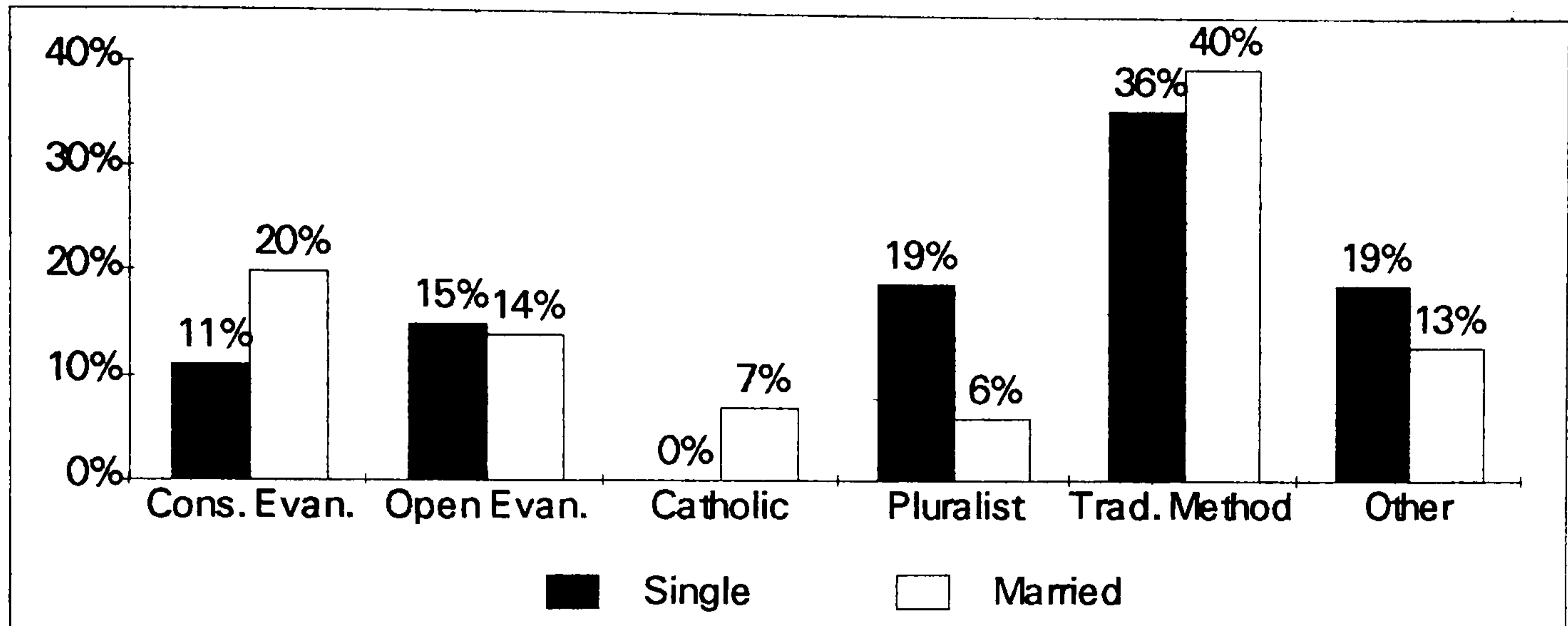


Figure 4:9 Local Preachers: Theological Viewpoint and Marital Status

The relationship of marital status to spiritual style approximates that of gender, with single preachers being similar in attitude to women. (This may in part be related to the fact that a high proportion of women are also single.) Thus charismatics comprise 15% of single preachers but 21% of married preachers, whereas 43% of single preachers are liberals compared to only 35% of those who are married. Single preachers are also more likely to be radical (11%) than their married counterparts (7%). Overall, single preachers are more likely to be liberal and radical and less likely to be charismatic.

Academic Qualifications

The results of the two surveys together with Powell's survey of Anglican readers makes it possible to compare the academic qualifications of the three groups, *viz.*, Methodist ministers, local preachers and Anglican readers. This comparison is summarised in Table 4:14 below. Slightly different information was obtained from each survey as is evident from the table, but nevertheless the overall trends are clear cut. Although there is some difference in detail, the academic qualifications of local preachers and readers run closely parallel. Thus, for example, 43% of local preachers have a recognised college or university qualification compared to 44% of readers.

Similarly, 27% of local preachers are professional non-graduates compared to 26% of readers. Overall, less than a third of both readers and local preachers have not

<i>Academic Level</i>	<i>Minister</i>	<i>Local Preacher</i>	<i>Reader</i>
Postgraduate	9.9%	12.3%	--
Degree	24.6%	13.3%	39%
Degree + Professional	--	10.4%	5%
Professional	13.4%	27.0%	26%
Diploma	8.5%	6.6%	--
A Level	--	4.3%	5%
O Level	--	9.5%	4%
Other	--	2.4%	--
No qualifications	--	13.7%	21%
No tertiary qualifications	43.7%	29.9%	30%

Table 4:14 Educational Level of Ministers, Local Preachers and Readers

received tertiary education. There are however obvious differences when comparing with ministers. A somewhat similar proportion (34.5%) have been educated to degree level compared to 36% of local preachers but the number with a professional qualification¹ (13.4%) is very much lower than the 37.4% observed among local preachers and the 31% of readers. In some ways this is a rather false distinction since it could be argued that ordination is the equivalent of a professional qualification, being an outward recognition of professional ministerial skills both academic and practical, but it does show that those with a secular professional qualification are less likely to enter the ordained ministry. Ministers also have a larger proportion (44%) who have received no higher education (outside theological training college) compared to local preachers or readers (30%). This difference is particularly significant since the average age of local preachers/ readers is much higher and these groups would be expected to have a much higher proportion of those with only basic education.

It is clear from the above figures that Methodist ministers can no longer feel

1. The term professional qualification is being used in a somewhat restricted sense in that it applies to qualifications awarded and recognised by professional bodies such as organised for: doctors, engineers, architects, accountants, bankers, solicitors and the like. As such it is **not** taken to include qualifications relating to the teaching profession. Teaching qualifications would be included either under the university or college (diploma) groups.

superior or set apart from lay leaders in Methodism on the grounds of academic qualifications since frequently ministers must encounter those with equal or higher standard of education than their own. This perhaps adds to the feeling of insecurity amongst many ministers concerning their professional distinctiveness, a factor that is seen to hinder the development of partnership and team-work with the laity, and which will be discussed at some length in subsequent chapters. The figures also show that both ministers and local preachers possess academic qualifications that are significantly higher than the national average¹.

Employment and Nature of Occupation

Local preachers were asked for two pieces of information with regard to employment, firstly, whether they were currently employed and, secondly, what was the nature of their employment (Appendix II , Q.5,6). Of the respondents 39.0% were in full-time paid employment, 4.8% worked part-time and 5.2% were self-employed with only 0.5% indicating that they were unemployed. A further 35.5% indicated that they were retired, an additional 8.1% were retired but involved in voluntary work and 6.2% described themselves as home-makers. There were no preachers in full-time studies. Overall, about half were in some kind of paid employment, just under half retired and a small proportion concerned with raising a family.

Preachers were requested to indicate their present or, if retired or unemployed,

<i>Nature of Occupation</i>	<i>Percentage of Preachers</i>
Tertiary Level Education	11.6%
Education	25.6%
Professional	16.4%
Management and Administration	11.6%
White Collar	10.6%
Health and Social Services	7.2%
Semi-skilled	4.3%
Church/ Charity	3.9%
Sales	2.9%

Table 4:15 The Occupations of Local Preachers

1. The national average, as quoted in *HMSO Social Trends 23*; 1993 Table 3:26, shows that 21% of the population have undergone higher education, a further 9% have reached A Level standard and 31% O Level or school certificate. Those with no qualifications at all total 39%.

their former occupations. These are summarised in Table 4:15 on the previous page. An interesting aspect is that over a third of local preachers (37.2%) are involved in education. This compares to 33% of readers who are teachers and to 0.9% of the working population¹. This observation is consistent with the expectation that teachers would have inter-personal skills, teaching ability and experience of public speaking which enable them to fit easily into the rather public role of the local preacher. A second aspect that is abundantly clear is that the average local preacher at the end of the twentieth century is a far distant cousin of the preachers of early Methodism who were largely made up of unskilled workers and artisans.² This change probably arises for a multiplicity of reasons which include: improvement in general educational standards, the slow drift of the church from working to middle class and the insistence on higher academic achievements in the training of local preachers³.

The above trend is also accentuated by a residential system of theological education for ministers which removes the preacher from his roots and impresses on him the importance of academic achievement through the emphasis on formal education and examination success. Since the minister may be considered the paradigm of what a preacher should be, this influence inevitably filters through to local preachers who become increasingly well educated and articulate. The criterion of success becomes an 'A' grade on a written sermon assignment rather than hearers brought under conviction and lives changed and transformed - the original Wesley standards. It could be argued that in some ways the charismatic movement is a corrective for this stance with its emphasis on heart knowledge rather than head knowledge and its concern with the spiritual rather than the temporal and professional. Thus within charismatic churches there is a much greater emphasis on spiritual gifts and experience than on knowledge and training.

These tensions are clearly exemplified in *Haven of the Masses*, D'Epinay's study of the pentecostal movement in Chile. Within the Chilean Methodist Church he describes a bipartite system where much of the field work, outreach and pastoral oversight is done by committed lay persons who work under the direction of professional pastors. There is no natural graduation from lay-work to ordained ministry and thus D'Epinay (1969:74) comments:

"... the pastor-presbyter is drawn from those who have undertaken full-time study in a seminary not passed up the ladder... The situation is of committed

1. C.S.O., 1993 : Table 3:27.

2. For example, in an appendix Batty (1969) lists the biographies of 13 early local preachers. Of these one was a doctor, one a schoolmaster and one a gentleman farmer, but the remainder included: one joiner, one blacksmith, one dock worker, one sailor, two soldiers, two merchants and two farmers. (Appendix I pp.354-364).

3. Up until the Union in 1932 there were no compulsory written examinations for local preachers, the single oral examination being sufficient (Lawton 1989:100).

lay-people who lead their communities under direction of professionals in the Gospel who are recruited by a different method."

and again:

"The present Methodist system is the result of a historical compromise between the theory of the priesthood of all believers and the desire for a body of pastors who are highly professional."

By contrast, D'Epinay also describes the Pentecostal Church in Chile, formed by dissenters from Methodism in the early 1900's, in which the barriers to ministry become broken down. Within this church the potential pastor will have to "mount the principal rungs of the lay hierarchy" (D'Epinay 1969:75), but there is no sharp divide between lay and cleric. Selection for full-time ministry is based not on academic qualifications but on demonstrated gifts and leadership skills. Thus D'Epinay quotes one pentecostal superintendent as follows:

"We take the men who seem to us the most suitable, and we send them into the country; if the work produces results, then they are called to the ministry; if it has no results, they are not called and they go back home." (1969:76),

an approach much more akin to Wesley's selection of his preachers on the grounds of 'gifts and graces'. There are two consequences of this approach. Firstly, there is little sense of division between pastor and people - the pastor is simply the one who has reached the top of the ladder and who has demonstrated gifts of leadership. Secondly, training is akin to apprenticeship - the pupil works with his master and learns through a combination of observation and doing; intellectual training is neglected in favour of practical training. The net result of all this is that the Pentecostalist (member or pastor) is not distanced from his roots, and the Pentecostal Church remains firmly part of the masses and not the intellectual elite.

Theological Persuasion

The overall data for theological viewpoint and spiritual style of local preachers is summarised in Figure 4:10 overleaf. As with ministers the predominant theological persuasion is traditional Methodist, although this is more marked in the case of local preachers perhaps because of the inclusion of those over 65 years of age who are known to be more traditionally minded. If traditional Methodists are understood to be evangelical then nearly three quarters of local preachers (73.4%) have evangelical sympathies compared to 59% of ministers. A significant difference is that for local preachers the proportion of conservative evangelicals is almost double that observed in the case of ministers. Furthermore, the proportion of pluralists is about a third the value for ministers. When comparing spiritual style it is noticeable that the percentage of charismatic local preachers (18.9%) is significantly higher than that of ministers (12.0%), and the percentage of liberal preachers runs at about two thirds

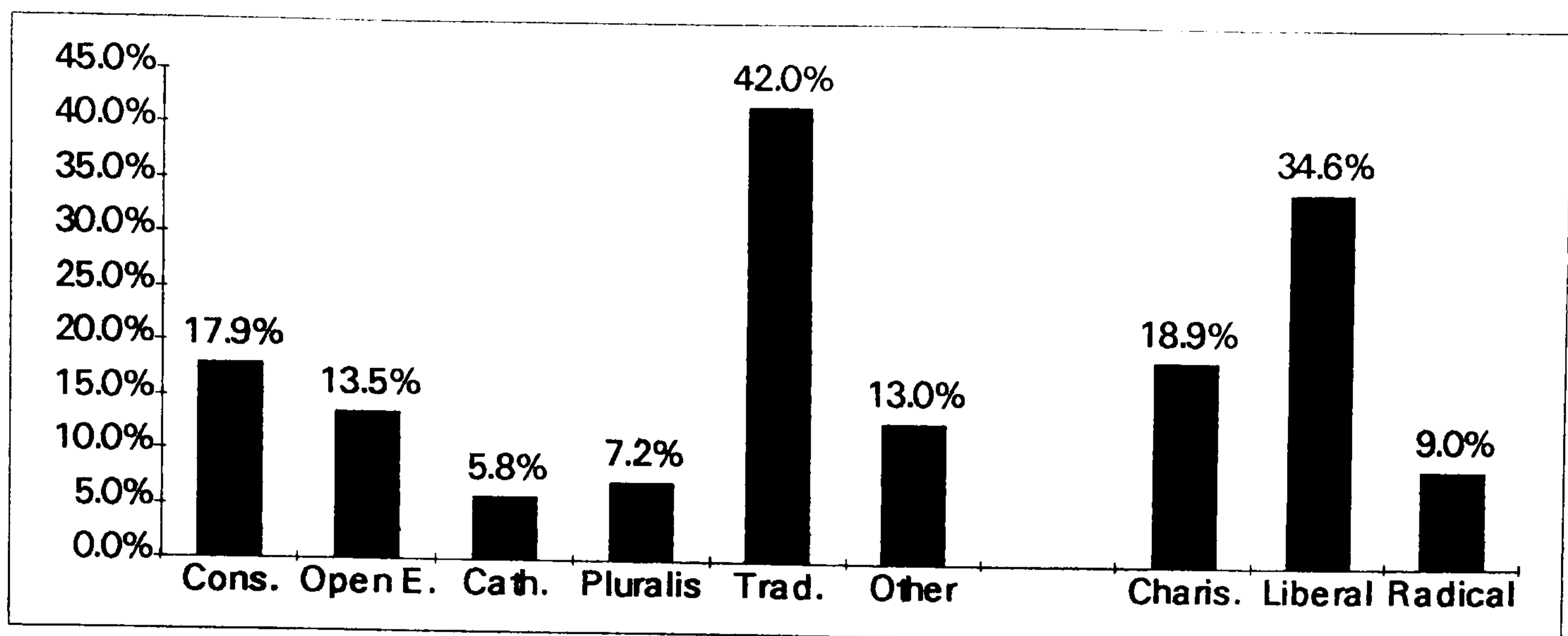


Figure 4:10 Local Preachers - Theological Viewpoint and Spiritual Styles

that of the ministerial level. Overall, it would appear that ministerial training encourages a shift towards more liberal tendencies, although having little influence on the radical nature of the individual. It should perhaps be emphasised that it is theological education rather than education in general that produces this shift, since local preachers are at least as well educated as ministers.

It is also possible to make some comparison with the data assembled on the churchmanship and spiritual style of Anglican readers¹. The proportion of conservative evangelicals is almost identical but open evangelicals are almost twice as numerous among readers at 26%. Interestingly, the charismatic movement would appear to have been somewhat more influential in the Anglican church since the percentage of charismatic readers is about a third higher at 26%. This conclusion is also supported by the earlier results which showed that almost twice as many Anglican priests (22%) have been influenced by the charismatic movement as Methodist ministers (12%). This is intriguing, as is the earlier observation that the charismatic influence is more widely spread in Anglicanism but restricted largely to conservative or open evangelicals amongst Methodists². It is possible that amongst Anglicans the distinctive influences of the theological colleges and the 'hot house' effect of the parish system is more conducive to raising spiritual enthusiasm than the rather diffuse influence encouraged by theologically broad colleges and the dilution effect of circuit ministry which ensures that no single influence predominates.

Years of Service

The survey shows that active local preachers have served on average for 24 years

1. Anglican reader data from Powell (1993), Tables 193, 196.

2. The charismatic influence is somewhat more widely spread among local preachers than ministers with 30% amongst conservative evangelicals, 40% amongst open evangelicals, 15% amongst traditional Methodists, 12.5% amongst others and 2.5% amongst catholics.

with the longest serving preacher reaching a staggering 62 years of regular preaching ministry. This contrasts sharply with the average service length of Anglican readers which was found to be 10 years¹. Undoubtedly, part of the reason for the significant difference is that Methodists begin their preaching ministry at a much earlier age. It is of some interest to see the overall distribution of service length and how it varies with

Service Length (years)	Period of Recruitment	Total Percent	Proportion of Women
1-5	1988-92	19.0%	43%
6-10	1983-87	12.9%	44%
11-15	1978-82	5.2%	36%
16-20	1973-77	5.7%	33%
21-25	1968-72	5.7%	42%
26-30	1963-67	12.8%	33%
31-40	1953-62	23.7% ²	30%
41-50	1943-52	10.0% ²	30%
Over 50	Pre-1942	4.8% ²	50%

Table 4:16 Local Preachers - Distribution of Service Length

gender since this will show the peak periods of recruitment and any trends in the gender of local preachers. This information is summarised in Table 4:16 above. Inspection of the figures suggests that the rate of recruitment has not been constant over the last fifty years. In the fifteen-year period from 1953 to 1967 recruitment was running at approximately 2.4% per year³, but over the next fifteen-year period from 1968 to 1982 the rate dropped dramatically to 1.1% per year⁴. More

1. Powell (1993), Table 88, p.231.

2. These values are for periods of ten years or longer compared to the previous values which are for five years. Hence the percentages need to be reduced for comparative purposes.

3. The rate of recruitment is expressed arbitrarily as percent per year based on the total number of local preachers who responded. This will fairly closely reflect the actual recruitment rate providing that the number lost in any period through death, resignation or candidating for the ordained ministry remains approximately constant. This is clearly not the case for long service lengths since older preachers have a much higher mortality rate. Consequently, this is almost certainly the reason for the rapid apparent fall off in 'recruitment rate' above 40 years of service, i.e., above about 74 years of age, since the mean age for commencing local preaching is 34 years.

4. Evidence that recruitment was entering a parlous state in the late 1960's is provided by Batty's comments: "The number of preachers on trial give cause for the gravest concern. In the year ending 1967, 479 candidates were received on trial, but 253 withdrew. The secretary has said that if the present rates of gains and losses continue the Order of Local Preachers will cease to exist in 1991." [Batty (1969) p.322]

recently the rate has sharply increased being 2.6% per year during 1983 to 1987 and 3.8% over the most recent period. It is possible to cross-check the latter results since the number of new admissions as well as the number of active preachers have been published for the period 1988 to 1992. The number of new admissions for this five-year period averaged 477 per year corresponding to 10,389 active preachers¹, and this is equivalent to an admissions rate of 4.6% per annum. This is somewhat higher than the value of 3.8% calculated from the survey data, but the agreement is not unreasonable bearing in mind the provisos already discussed² and the possibility that national rates might diverge somewhat from the average of the districts surveyed. Even if the precise national figures are in contention there can be little doubt that the overall trends are correct. The reason for these marked fluctuations is not clear, but the recent rise in recruitment rate must be regarded as an encouraging trend.

Accompanying the changes in recruitment rate there has been a steady increase in the proportion of women preachers³. According to this data the proportion of women amongst new preachers has increased from about 30% in the forties and fifties to around 43% in the late eighties and early nineties, although, as discussed earlier, the precise values may be rather too high because of the gender bias in the response rate. This increase parallels, but is some years in advance of, the documented increase in the proportion of women preachers since 1932⁴. This increase suggests that the proportion of women local preachers will continue to increase for the foreseeable future and this will of course influence the number of women who are subsequently ordained.

Age at Recognition

Although preachers were not asked to state the age at which they were accepted on full plan, it is possible to compute this by the difference between their stated age and their number of years of service. The results of this computation are significant and are summarised in Table 4:17 as a function of both gender and marital status.

1. *Local Preachers Magazine*, 1993, vol.143/3, p. 111.

2. The apparent recruitment rate from the survey will be influenced by a significant number who become local preachers as a stepping stone to the ordained ministry. During the five-year period 1988 to 1992 an average of 91 local preachers per annum were accepted for ministerial training compared to an annual intake of 477. It is likely that a significant proportion of these were in their first five years of service as a local preacher and this would thus disproportionately reduce the numbers in this period.

3. The very high proportion (50%) of women pre-1942 must be regarded as atypical, and almost certainly has to do with the higher mortality rate amongst men which reduces the number who might live long enough to serve more than 50 years.

4. The absolute proportions of women local preachers in various years are as follows: 1932 (4.1%), 1940 (5.6%), 1950 (10.0%), 1960 (16%), 1967 (19.8%) as quoted in Batty (1969), Appendix II.

Marital Status	Age at Recognition in Years		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>All Preachers</i>
Single	24.8	31.8	28.7
Married	32.3	36.1	33.4
Widowed	37.7	39.2	38.9
Divorced	31.0	----	31.0
Mean	31.7	35.7	33.2

Table 4:17 Age at Recognition as a Function of Gender and Marital Status

These results confirm earlier suggestions that both marriage and gender influence the age at which individuals become local preachers. Thus, on average, males become local preachers four years earlier than females and single preachers nearly five years earlier than those who are married. This difference in the starting age of married and single preachers actually rises to 7.5 years when only male preachers are considered. This is surprising, especially as the marital status is the status **now** rather than at the time of recognition. It might well have been supposed that many who were single at the time of becoming a local preacher subsequently married and if that were the case the age of recognition would tend towards the same value. Thus the real difference between those who were single at the time of recognition and those who were married at that time is likely to be even greater than the observed 7.5 years.

Equally fascinating is the observation that marriage is associated with a greater delay in becoming a local preacher for men than for women. Clearly marriage is not such an obstacle for women as for men and this supports the earlier suggestion that marriage (and probably motherhood) helps women to have an appearance of maturity which aids their acceptability in the pulpit. Alternatively, it may be that it is not the process of marriage which is the main hindrance to local preaching; after all, a young married male without children may well be better provided for and have more free time for study. It is conceivable that the attitudes of those who remain single are different. They are perhaps more motivated and single-minded in relation to Christian ministry and it is this motivation that leads them to begin local preaching at a much earlier age and helps them to avoid the 'distraction' of marriage¹.

1. This is perhaps the implication of the Apostle Paul's advice to the Christians at Corinth: "An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs - how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned with the affairs of this world - how he can please his wife - and his interests are divided." (1 Cor. 7:32-34).

Preaching Ministry

The primary responsibility of the local preacher as laid down in the standing orders is, "to conduct worship and preach with competence"¹. In fulfilling this duty the preachers follow the schedule drawn up by the superintendent in the circuit plan to preach in the various circuit churches. As opposed to the common practice within the Anglican Church of shared ministry, the tradition amongst Methodist local preachers is to conduct the whole service, including preaching, without any assistance. Documentary evidence for this is provided by the local preacher's response to Q.28 (Appendix II) concerning participation in worship services. Some of the features of this are summarised in Table 4:18 below. While about one third of preachers

	Scripture Readers	Leading Prayers	Worship Leaders
<i>Frequency of Involvement</i>			
Usually	33.2%	3.4%	0.9%
Occasionally	62.5%	58.7%	37.4%
Not at all	1.9%	15.9%	29.9%
No indication	2.4%	22.1%	29.9%

Table 4:18 The Local Preachers' Involvement of Others in Worship

regularly use members of the congregation to read the Scriptures, this reduces to only about 3% who involve others to lead the prayers and 1% who seek others to lead worship, on a regular basis. If, as is likely, those who gave no indication do not involve others in the worship service, then it is evident that about 38% of preachers have never involved others in public prayers and almost two thirds have never preached at a service which others have led.

In another question (Appendix II, Q.21) preachers were asked about their preaching load, in particular how many times they were scheduled to preach in their current circuit plan². The mean value for circuit appointments was 5.0 with a range from 0 to 14. That a few preachers had no appointments showed that the attempt to only include active preachers was not completely successful. Local preachers were also asked about their preaching activities outside the circuit and in this case 85% of them preached on average 1.9 sermons per quarter in other churches, with some

1. CPD, Vol.2, p.471, S.O. 578(v).

2. In order to aid calculation of preaching load preachers were also asked to indicate the length of their circuit plan. Of the respondents 97.6% indicated a 3 monthly interval, 0.5% a two monthly interval and 1.9% a different period. The vast majority follow the quarterly three monthly plan.

having as many as 9 additional appointments. Of these the majority were in Methodist churches but a significant number were non-Methodist churches. These figures provide a further opportunity to estimate the importance of local preachers to British Methodism. Perusal of circuit plans in the Nottingham and Derby District shows that ministers have on average 22.7 appointments a quarter¹. Since there are approximately 1,746 active circuit ministers compared to 10,414 active local preachers in 1992 and since the latter preach on average about 6.6 sermons per quarter in their own and other circuits, then overall, local preachers fill approximately 63% of all ministerial and local preacher appointments. This is somewhat lower than the 5 out of 7 services (71%) estimated by Lawton and corroborated earlier in this chapter from estimates of the pastoral charges of ministers. The discrepancy could partially be accounted for by the contribution of others such as active supernumeraries and ministers from other denominations. However, whatever the reason, it is quite clear that local preachers are responsible for nearly two thirds of the preaching appointments². They are indispensable to the system.

In comparison, Anglican readers were found to preach on average 1.7 times in a thirteen week period which is only about a quarter of the preaching load of the local preacher. However, readers also lead the whole service about four times in the same period³, so their involvement in services is probably similar although their preaching responsibility much less. Since readers form a much smaller proportion compared to the ordained ministry in the Anglican Church their overall significance to the Anglican ministry is not comparable to that of local preachers in Methodism.

Local preachers spend on average 7.8 hours (range 1 to 36) to prepare a completely fresh sermon and service (Appendix II, Q.26) but approximately one third of preachers will usually use the sermon on another occasion and nearly two thirds will do so occasionally. Only one in twenty stated that they never reused a sermon. The possibility of repeating a sermon is one of the advantages of the circuit system where the preacher may well be assigned to preach in numerous different churches. This could also be partly the reason why about 42% of those questioned would not wish to preach more often in their local church (Appendix II, Q.20c). On average, Anglican readers⁴ spent some 2.9 hours weekly in preparation for preaching or leading worship, which may well approximate to about the same time as

1. This was based on a circuit of nine churches with 3 full-time ministerial appointments for the 1994 calendar year. This value would of course be significantly less for probationer ministers, ministers on maternity leave or ministers on sabbatical leave - approximately 3 months every seven years.

2. This statement perhaps over-represents their influence since local preachers are usually assigned to cover the smaller congregations.

3. Data from Powell (1993), Table 154, p.298.

4. Data from Powell (1993), Table 93 p.237.

local preachers¹.

Sacraments and Other Ministries

Although in Methodism it is the minister who is ordained to 'word and sacrament', local preachers can celebrate the sacraments or baptise under exceptional circumstances. Table 4:19 summarises the involvement of the preachers surveyed both over the past 12 months from the date of the survey, and also over the whole of their ministry which, at least for one, dates back to 1930, two years before Union. Whereas nearly half of the preachers had assisted with the sacrament of holy

	The Past Year		Whole Ministry	
	Assist	Preside	Assist	Preside
Holy Communion	48.6%	3.8%	48.6%	11.8%
Baptism	2.9%	2.9%	8.1%	17.6%
Funeral	5.3%	4.8%	9.1%	8.6%
Marriage	2.9%	0%	5.7%	3.3%

Table 4:19 Local Preacher Involvement in Sacraments and Other Ministries

communion over the previous twelve months an almost similar number had never had such involvement in the whole of their ministry. Interestingly, nearly one in twenty five had presided at the sacrament during the previous year and nearly one in eight had done so during the course of their ministry. It is not certain whether this occurred within Methodism or through involvement in other churches. In the past twelve months only a small number have been involved in baptisms, although over the years more than one in six have done so. Approximately one in twenty preachers have been involved in taking funeral services over the past year, but their greater use is probably hindered because of the problem of fees². In the Anglican church some readers are licensed to conduct burials and Powell (1993: 261) cites an example of two readers who have conducted a total of nearly 200 funerals.

1. Local preachers preparing new services and sermons would take on average about 4 hours a week. If 25% of the material was repeated this would bring it close to the readers' preparation time.
2. Within Methodism there is no agreed system for the pooling of funeral fees and many ministers see these monies as an integral part of their income.

Local Church Involvement

Apart from their specific responsibility for preaching and worship, local preachers also tend to have an extensive involvement in their local church and may well hold other offices as exemplified in Table 4:20 below. The most common involvement of preachers is as members of the church council. Thus nearly two-thirds of preachers are on this governing body of the local society even though preachers are not members by right of office. Local preachers also contribute very significantly to the life of the church through leadership of bible studies and fellowship groups with some 40% of their number involved in this way. Many local preachers are also pastoral visitors or class leaders - the two terms are often used almost synonymously in contemporary Methodism since there are few regular class meetings and the leader's main role is in the pastoral care/ visitation of his class¹. Several local

Responsibility	Percentage of Local Preachers Involved
Church Council Member	61.0
Bible Study/ Fellowship Leader	40.0
Pastoral Visitor	30.5
Class Leader	19.0
Society Steward	17.6
Committee Chairperson	12.3
Sunday School Teacher	5.2
Organist	4.7
Sunday School Superintendent	3.8
Circuit Offices	12.3
District and Connexion	3.0
Miscellaneous	36.7

Table 4:20 Local Preachers - Their Church Involvement

preachers bracketed the two designations together and about 10% of preachers ticked both. Overall, well over one third of preachers would seem to be involved in some kind of visiting or personal pastoral care ministry.

1. The *CPD*, in standing orders 620 and 621, discusses in detail the responsibilities of class leaders and comments: "A pastoral visitor undertakes the duty of a class leader, except that he or she will not be expected to meet a class" [S.O. 621 (2)].

Only about one in six preachers exercises responsibility as a church steward. This is perhaps in part a consequence of the days of early Methodism, when Wesley tried to limit the powers of local preachers by discouraging them from holding any additional office. It also reflects a practical concern since stewards are required to oversee the arrangements for the worship services and to be in attendance on the preacher. This duty could conflict with the local preacher's preaching responsibilities if he is extensively planned in other parts of the circuit. There is often a tendency to limit the significance of the steward's role and in popular understanding the steward's main tasks are often thought of as preparing the church building for worship much as the traditional verger might do in an Anglican church. Even publications such as Kerridge (1983) and Braddy (1989), on behalf of the Division of Ministries, still tend to emphasise the practical duties of the steward and in so doing reflect the thinking of John Wesley who laid down the primarily temporal role of the steward¹.

However, the above understanding does not adequately reflect the constitutional position of the steward in contemporary British Methodism. Thus the Methodist Church Discipline states that:

"The church stewards are corporately responsible with the minister or probationer having pastoral charge of the Local Church for giving leadership and help over the whole range of the church's life and activity. They are particularly charged to hold together in unity the variety of concerns that are contained within the one ministry of the Church. ... In the discharge of their responsibilities they are encouraged wherever possible to draw other members with appropriate gifts and skills into a leadership team to be appointed by the Church Council." ²

It is clear from the above that it is the church stewards who are expected to form the primary leadership of the church, charged with responsibility for both spiritual and temporal affairs. This, in the author's opinion, is one of the primary weaknesses of the local church structure in Methodism, since stewards, who are elected on the basis of practical skills and abilities, have leadership responsibility for both temporal and spiritual affairs, whereas local preachers, who must in part be chosen for their spiritual standing, are excluded from the spiritual leadership of the local church. That only one in six preachers are also stewards is likely to impoverish the leadership of the local church unless they are involved in an alternative way.

About one in eight local preachers have responsibility for chairing church committees and a further one in ten are involved in Sunday School work either as teachers or as Sunday School superintendents. Greater involvement in children's work is probably precluded by their Sunday preaching appointments. Preachers are also

1. See chapter 2, p.28.

2. CPD, Standing Order 623, p.490.

involved in a wide variety of other ways including as organists, as circuit, district and connexional office bearers and in a whole range of other activities under the umbrella heading of miscellaneous. The largest grouping under the miscellaneous head are those involved as committee or organizational secretaries.

It is evident from the above description that the average local preacher is deeply involved in the life of the local church in duties embracing teaching, visiting, administration and, to some extent, leadership roles. This picture would not have matched Wesley's conception of the local preacher and is not universally accepted by the preachers themselves. Thus one respondent commented:

"Where more than two or three appointments are taken a quarter I consider preaching a 'full-time part time' commitment, done properly."

A second preacher was even more forthright:

"In an ideal world I would like some of the positions barred to local preachers as they are not compatible with a full-time preaching ministry. I have recently resigned as pastoral visitor... ."

There are perhaps two reasons why preachers are so extensively involved in their local church. Firstly, local preachers are committed members of the church and in the face of a shortage of members willing or able to take up some of the posts, local preachers shoulder this additional burden. At the same time it could be argued that it is difficult for local preachers to function in isolation. In order to preach effectively they must know their hearers in their daily life situation. This is greatly aided if the preacher has some involvement in pastoral visitation or works together with church members in other contexts. Furthermore, in order to exercise any recognised leadership role within the local church it is necessary to go beyond the confines of the local preacher's office.

Anglican readers were found to have a rather similar broad involvement in the life of the church, although they are perhaps more clearly recognised as part of the local church leadership. Thus, whereas only 51% of readers were members of the parochial church council (PCC), some 26% were part of a staff planning meeting and hence formally included in a leadership team¹. However, as against that, only 9% of readers believed that the congregation accepted them as leaders². About three quarters of readers were involved in some aspect of pastoral work with 51% conducting home visits and 53% being involved in bible study and prayer groups³. About a quarter of readers were active in counselling and 15% led preparation groups for baptism, confirmation or membership⁴. The parallel extensive involvement of

1. See Powell (1993), Tables 131 and 133.

2. Powell (1993), Table 73.

3. Powell (1993), Tables 96 and 101.

4. Powell (1993), Tables 95, 109.

readers can be explained in a similar way, i.e., on manpower needs and in support of a more meaningful preaching ministry.

The Local Preachers' Call

A dominant feature of both local preaching and ordained ministry is a 'call' to the office. While the call is understood to be divine in origin it requires authentication by the church so that individuals do not mistakenly put themselves forward. Local preachers were probed in connection with the origin of their call by a question which asked them to: "indicate the **dominant** influences which led to your becoming a Local Preacher" (Appendix II, Q.10). The response to this question, which also allowed preachers to add optional answers of their own, is summarised in Table 4:21 shown

Nature of influence	
Encouragement of minister	41%
Christian friends	38%
Discovery of gifts	27%
Encouragement of local preachers	26%
Family influence	20%
Pulpit challenge	16%
Call	10%
Need	4%
Local preachers' <i>Sharing Day</i>	0.5%

Table 4:21 Dominant Influences in the 'Call' of Local Preachers

above. On average, preachers ticked nearly two options, so it is clear that in most cases more than one factor is important. About 10% of preachers supplied the alternative answer 'call', but this in no way helps to understand what constitutes a call or the influences which might affect it. Not surprisingly the dominant influence is the minister, but almost equally important is the encouragement of Christian friends. One might have expected the minister to be considerably more significant, but possibly his influence is moderated by the breadth of his pastoral charge and the comparative importance of small groups in promoting fellowship and pastoral care.

The third most important influence is cited as 'discovery of gifts'. This emphasises the importance of members being given opportunities in taking part in speaking, teaching and leading worship, so as to enable them to discover their skills in this area. These kinds of gifts may helpfully be explored through involvement in Sunday School

teaching, leading and participating in home fellowship groups and, perhaps most importantly, taking part in the leading of public worship. The author speculates that the observed substantial increase in the rate of recruitment of local preachers in the last decade is due to the increasing involvement of members in leading and participating in worship, fuelled, at least in part, by the charismatic renewal.

The encouragement of local preachers is also seen to be influential perhaps because preachers are more likely to know the local church member well and to be a source of advice and encouragement for potential local preachers. The other significant influences are family (20%) and pulpit challenge (16%). The somewhat humble position of the pulpit challenge might suggest that the need for preachers is rarely presented from the pulpit, or done with insufficient clarity as to provide overwhelming conviction of the call. A small number of preachers cite the 'need' as constituting a dominant influence. This is perhaps a reflection of manpower shortages, especially in smaller churches and circuits with large rural constituencies. Only one preacher cited a *Sharing Day*¹ as a dominant influence, but in fairness these are a rather recent innovation and will only have influenced those just coming on plan.

The response of Anglican readers concerning their call to ministry is rather different². The largest proportion (48%) indicate that they are drawn by the needs of the work. This is in stark contrast to the Methodist picture where only 4% indicate that need is a decisive factor. This may well be because in Methodism local preachers are in relatively abundant supply and are in any case 'pooled' on a circuit basis so that weak churches are supported by the strong. An almost equal-sized group (45%) simply cite 'divine leading' but provide no hint as to how that insight is arrived at. This compares to the 10% of Methodist local preachers who cite 'call' as this term may be understood as equivalent to 'divine leading'. Just over a third of readers indicate that the clergy were influential and this is the factor which is closest to the Methodist scenario. Only a very small number (3%) of readers point to the influence of either family or congregation in their call to ministry. The influence of their fellow readers, Christian friends and discovery of gifts is conspicuous by its absence.

As opposed to the Anglican office of reader, becoming a Methodist local preacher is a first step in testing the call for the ordained ministry, although of course many who become local preachers do not have ordination in view. Altogether 43.5% of respondents had seriously considered ordination at some point in their ministry but for one reason or another had not become ordained. Nearly half of these (20.2%

1. The local preachers' *sharing day* is a device suggested by the Division of Ministries to promote local preaching. Normally potential local preachers are invited to a programme where they meet with local preachers to listen to talks about local preaching and have opportunities to discuss and find out about training and the responsibilities of local preaching.

2. See Powell (1993), Table 52, p.188.

overall), simply stated that their call had not been confirmed. It is perhaps implied that their apprenticeship as a local preacher had enabled them to test their calling and to discover it was not to full-time ministry. Indeed this is one of the strengths of the Methodist system that it allows an individual thoroughly to test out his gifts and skills as a preacher, teacher and liturgist before candidating for the ministry. A very small number (1.5% overall) indicated that they had candidated but had not been selected and the remainder provided a variety of reasons such as: family and financial reasons, health grounds and educational qualifications as perceived bars to ordination.

Local Preacher Training

The vast majority of local preachers (72.8%) expressed themselves satisfied with the training that they had received although 13.4% disagreed and an identical percentage were not sure. The preachers made a wide variety of comments on their training which are somewhat difficult to summarise concisely. Generally, the comments on earlier forms of training tend to be critical but the more recent training based on the *Faith and Worship* syllabus has been well received. Thus preachers who had used earlier training schemes made comments such as: "Original, too book oriented," or, "In the old days very dry and theoretical," or, "Too book and exam based," although by contrast one preacher commented: "Old training had deeper spiritual challenge," and another "Better than now". Even though most of the comments on the new modular training scheme were favourable, it was not without criticism. Thus one preacher felt that there was: "Currently too much emphasis on academic prowess," and another commented, "Present training emphasises theories and theology at the expense of Bible knowledge," and another, "Current training much to commend it but have doubts about liberality of theology."

Quite a number who had become preachers early on confessed to having no formal training and others felt that the new course could form the basis for a revision course. Apart from the course content the critical factor appeared to be the local preacher tutor. About 16% specifically commented that tutors and other local preachers had been most helpful, but others expressed difficulty with their tutor, often on theological grounds. Preachers in rural areas often felt isolated and with insufficient support. A number had studied by correspondence and this could well be a way forward for those in remote areas especially if supported by occasional weekend residential schools.

Some pointed to the need for ongoing training and though it is in fact mandated¹ that local preachers should attend refresher courses, this aspect tends to be somewhat neglected. Nearly half of the preachers (49.5%) indicated that they would value further training although a further substantial proportion were unsure

1. CPD, SO 578(vi).

(32.0%) [Appendix II Q.33(a)]. When asked to respond to an open question with regard to the content of that training a variety of responses were given and these are summarised in Table 4:22. It is interesting that the priority topic should be worship. This is perhaps an indicator that worship has become an important focus of debate spurred on from the fringes by the influence of the charismatic movement and from the centre by Conference initiatives such as that on 'all age' worship. Not surprisingly, amongst preachers who have strong evangelical leanings, the Bible, its background and biblical languages, all proved to be subjects in demand. There was also a significant emphasis on theology, especially twentieth-century developments such as

<i>Aspect Suggested</i>	<i>Percentage of Preachers</i>
Worship	25.0
The Bible and its context	23.9
Theology	19.3
Preaching and communication skills	12.5
Ministry and pastoralia	9.1
Church History	4.5
Biblical Languages	3.4
Spirituality	2.3

Table 4:22 Local Preacher Suggestions for Further Training

feminist and liberation theology. Preaching, especially communication skills, was also suggested as well as practical aspects of ministry and pastoralia. These latter aspects are related to preachers' concerns which range beyond the pulpit. The inclusion of church history is perhaps an indication that there is today less clarity with regard to Methodist roots and the relationship of Methodism with other churches. Spirituality was particularly geared at understanding 'things of the Spirit' and was prompted by questions raised through the charismatic movement.

Anglican readers proposed rather different priorities in suggesting areas for further training¹. Thus the priority area was in pastoral care and counselling (20%) with a further 9% concerned with death, bereavement and funerals and 4% with healing ministry. Thus nearly a third of readers are concerned with pastoralia compared to only about one in ten local preachers. Some 16% of readers were

1. All the data on Anglican readers in this paragraph is taken from Powell (1993), Table 63, p.204.

interested in liturgy and worship with the majority concerned with new ideas. This is less than within Methodism and perhaps reflects the perception that there are fewer opportunities for innovation and exploration in worship in the more rigid liturgical context of the Anglican Church. Teaching and preaching were just slightly less at 8% but the Bible and doctrine (18%) are much less than the local preachers combined total of the Bible and theology (43%). Overall, local preachers are more clearly focussed on training in support of their pulpit ministry, whether it be practical techniques or Bible knowledge and theology to feed their preaching. By contrast readers appear more concerned to develop skills in areas of pastoral ministry which are distinct from their liturgical function. This may reflect limits placed on their liturgical and preaching ministry as much as an awareness of pressing needs in the wider context of pastoral care.

Local Church

As in the case of the ministerial survey preachers were requested for information about the location, membership and composition of their local church (Appendix II Q.15-17). In the case of the local preachers' survey this is the church at which the preacher's membership is held rather than the churches in which he exercises a preaching ministry. It is illuminating to make a comparison between the church locations cited in the ministerial survey¹, which are representative of the national scene, and the locations at which preachers have their membership (Figure 4: 11). On

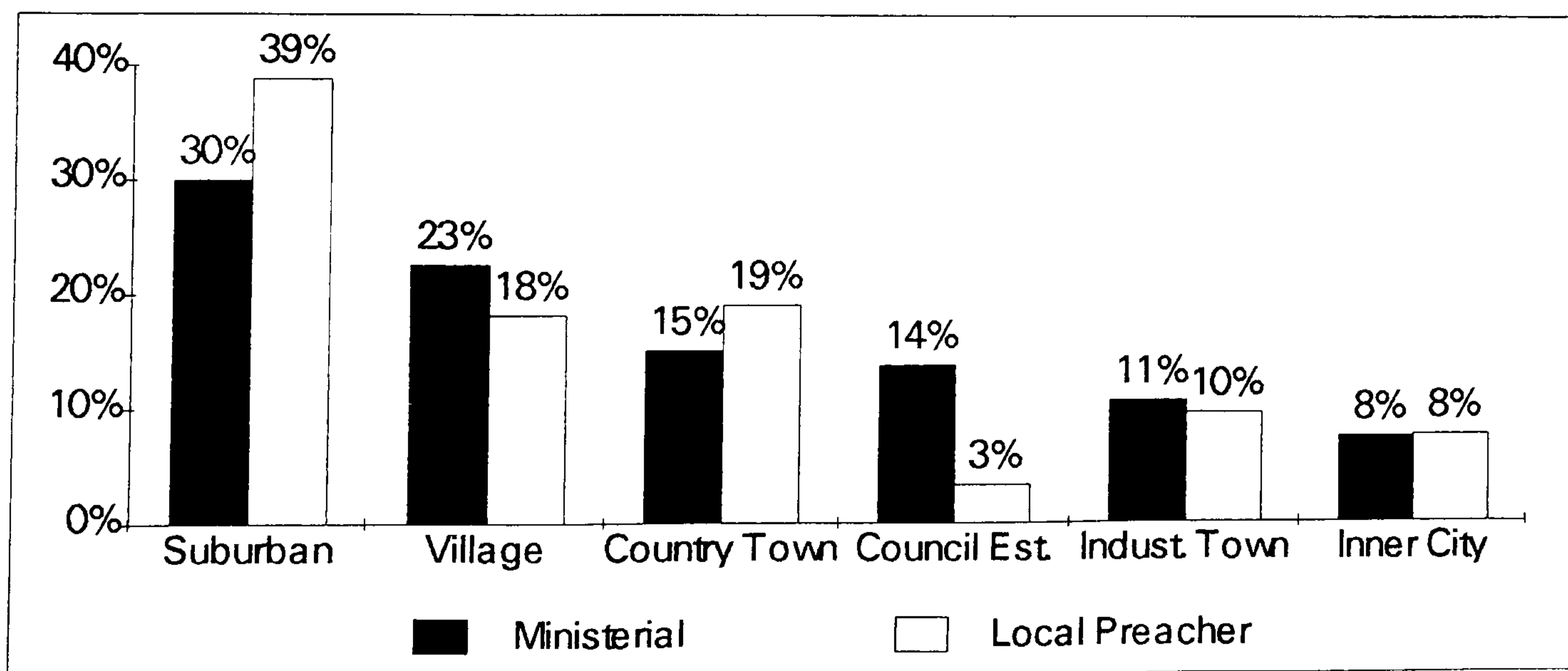


Figure 4:11 The Location of Methodist Churches

the whole there is a reasonable parallel between the location of Methodist churches cited in the ministerial and local preacher surveys. However, local preachers are more

1. The ministerial data had to be slightly modified to effect the comparison. Thus in Figure 4:11 the ministerial data indicated as suburban also includes commuter and the village and rural categories have been combined.

likely to be found in suburban and country town locations than in the village or rural areas. The most glaring discrepancy is, however, on council estates whose churches form 14% of the ministers' pastoral charges but attract only 3% of local preachers. This is undoubtedly related to the fact that local preachers are drawn largely from professional, middle-class backgrounds unlikely to reside on council estates. Interestingly, the same discrepancy is not evident for inner city areas - although, of course, not all inner cities form deprived housing areas.

The author speculates that the problem with council estates runs somewhat deeper. Many churches built on post-war estates are rootless. They were often built with money raised from the closure of redundant buildings or through grants to establish a Methodist presence in what was considered to be a priority area. Congregations were drawn largely from Methodist members moving into the new area who had little involvement in financing the construction of the new building. Money was largely spent on plant rather than personnel to pioneer the new work. The net result was that buildings were erected but the church itself was not properly planted and the church has never grown. Consequently, Methodist work on council estates, despite their large reservoirs of population, has been largely a failure¹. Thus the Methodist presence on many council estates today is marked by a small and ageing congregation preoccupied with defensive rearguard actions against young vandals and fund-raising to repair modern, but often poorly designed, flat-roofed buildings. Because membership has relied on those moving into the area it is hardly surprising that relatively few local preachers, with middle-class backgrounds, have chosen to join such churches. Furthermore, because the congregations are small and ageing there has been little possibility of producing local preachers from within.

The current average membership of the churches which local preachers attend was found to be 142 with a range from 4 to 650. This is interesting because the figure is more than double the average of 63 members found in the ministerial survey and provides evidence that, as would be expected, local preachers are more numerous in larger churches. This provides a continuing rationale for the circuit system since it enables the smaller churches to receive manpower support from the larger. The downside of this argument is that it is possible to maintain churches in existence that are no longer viable and resources are wasted in keeping comatose churches on the life support of outside preachers, ministers and circuit finance.

It is also possible from the local preacher data to get some idea of the size distribution of Methodist churches, or at least those which provide a home for

1. One example of this is found in the case study of the Cwmbran Circuit described in Chapter 1, but the author is aware of several other examples.

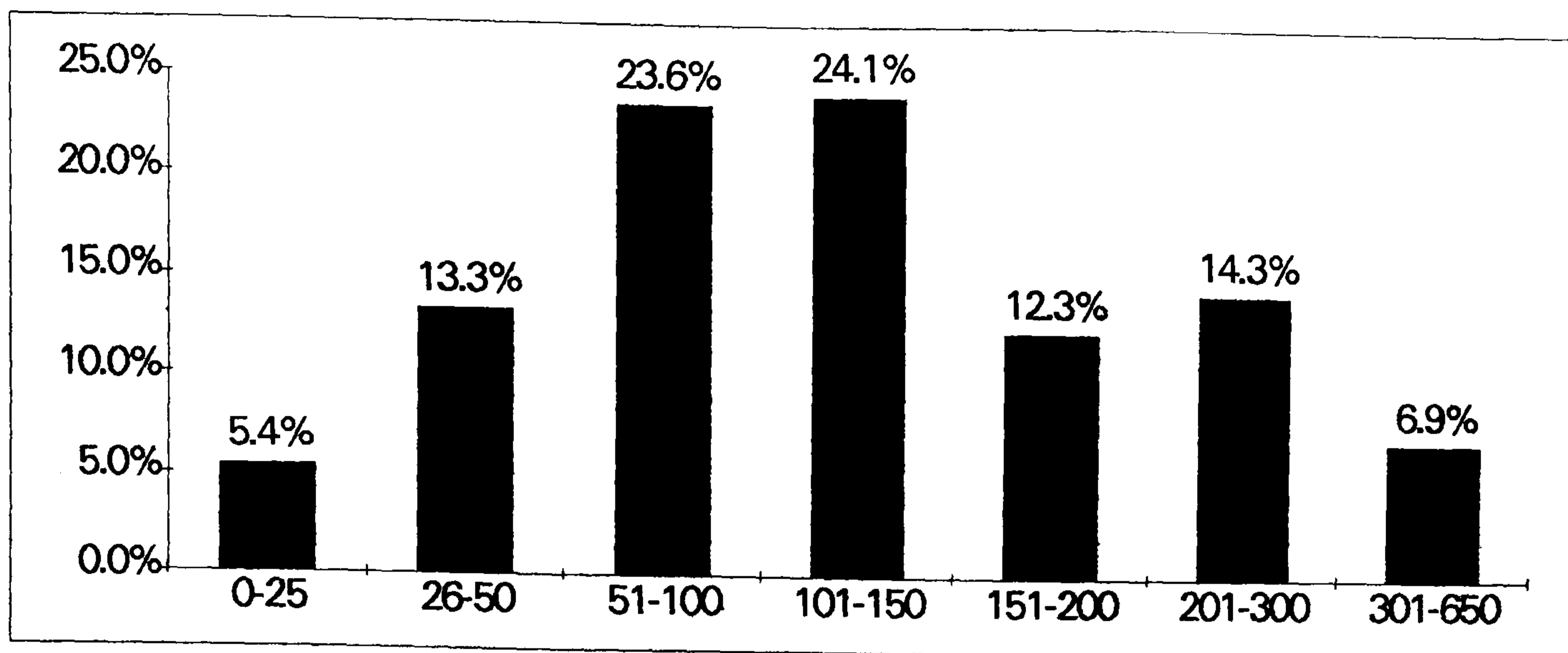


Figure 4:12 The Size Distribution of Methodist Churches from Local Preacher Data

local preachers. This is shown in Figure 4:12 above. Almost a quarter of the churches are in the 50-100 bracket with a similar number sized between 100 to 150 members. About one third of the churches are over 150 members in size and one in five below 50 members strong. It should be emphasised that this distribution reflects that reported by local preachers and that the true distribution is expected to be shifted very significantly to the lower end with a median of 63 rather than 142. Correlation of the size distribution with location shows that council estates have the highest proportion (86%) of churches with less than 50 members, a higher proportion even than village communities at 54%. The largest churches, with a size of more than 300 members, are located exclusively in the suburbs and country towns. The smallest churches, with less than 25 members, are located predominantly in villages.

The data from the local preacher survey is of particular value since, through comparison with the ministerial survey figures, it is possible to pin-point the locations where local preachers tend to be concentrated. A summary of these figures is shown in Table 4:23 on the next page. The largest discrepancy between the two surveys is in country town churches where the average size reported by local preachers is 201 compared to only 51 in the ministerial survey. Whereas the latter figure may be somewhat low because of association with figures from rural areas, nevertheless, it is clear that on average most preachers must be associated with large country town churches in order to sustain such a high membership average. In every other case, except for council estates, the estimate of church size from the preacher survey is similar to or significantly higher than the ministerial one, showing that in almost all areas the larger churches enjoy the largest proportion of local preachers.

Church Location	Number of citations	Mean Church Size	
		<i>Preacher Survey</i>	<i>Ministerial</i>
Country Town	37	201	51
Suburban	81	166	144
Industrial Town	20	121	86
Inner City	16	114	116
Village	37	67	50
Council Estate	7	47	70
<i>Average Church Size</i>	--	142	63

Table 4:23 Comparison of the Apparent Size of Churches from the Local Preacher and Ministerial Surveys

The situation with respect to council estates is intriguing since it appears to show a reverse trend with local preachers concentrated in smaller churches, hence providing a lower average. Almost certainly this is misleading. It is more likely that the membership size of churches on council estates is actually smaller than suggested by the ministerial survey - this would arise, for example, if an estate church is in a circuit together with suburban churches. It seems probable that the average membership size of churches on council estates is actually below 47 if preachers tend to come from the larger churches. Thus, according to the local preacher league table, churches on council estates probably represent among the smallest churches in British Methodism and this provides further confirmation that contemporary Methodism has overwhelmingly failed in these areas.

Both ministers and local preachers were also questioned as to whether the churches under their care or the ones to which they belonged were growing, constant, or decreasing in membership. The responses are summarised in Table 4:24 below. These show a distinct difference in that the ministerial survey reports that the number of churches with diminishing membership outnumber growing churches by about three to two, whereas the local preacher survey indicates a fairly even balance between growing and decreasing numbers. The former observation is more in accord with the continuing decrease in the national membership of the Methodist Church. However, both sets of data are rather more pessimistic than the results of the census of British churches conducted three years earlier in 1989 where, although 73% of

Survey	State of Church Membership			Average Size
	Growing	Constant	Decreasing	
Ministerial	18.7%	51.8%	29.5%	63
Local Preacher	27.5%	45.4%	25.1%	142
Church Census ¹	16%	73%	11%	

Table 4:24 Changes in Church Membership

Methodist churches were static in congregation size; growing churches outnumbered decreasing by about three to two. The somewhat larger proportion of static churches may be due to a more rigorous definition of growth or decline employed in the national church census². It also needs to be recognised that, whereas the church census data applied to congregation size, the Methodist surveys refer to membership and the two are not identical.

It is also possible to examine the local preacher data in more detail and investigate how the growth or decline diagnosis varies with membership size. Such data is shown in Table 4:25 below. It is apparent that the situation is complex. Very

Church Size (number)	0-25 (11)	26-50 (27)	51-150 (97)	151-300 (54)	Over 300 (14)
Growing	9.1%	33.3%	32.0%	22.2%	21.4%
Constant	45.5%	37.9%	41.2%	61.1%	57.1%
Decreasing	45.5%	29.6%	26.8%	16.6%	21.2%

Table 4:25 Growth Trends as a Function of Church Size

few of the smallest churches are growing and nearly half of them are decreasing. However, whereas the bulk of the largest churches are maintaining their membership

1. These figures are taken from data relating to Methodist churches obtained in the census of British churches in 1989 and reported in Brierley (1991a:132).

2. The following definitions of 'growing' or 'decreasing' were used in the national census. "A church with a congregation of 50 or more on a Sunday in 1989 which had grown by 20% or more over the previous four years (average 5% per year) was counted as growing. When the 1989 congregation was less than 50 a 100% increase over the four years was required..." Similar criteria were required for declining churches. [Brierley (1991a:128)].

at fairly constant levels, the highest proportion of growing churches are in the small to middle-size groups. These observations are similar to the findings of Brierley (1991a:139) who drew the following conclusions based on estimated growth rates of British churches over the period 1985 to 1989:

"A sizeable percentage of growing churches are the smaller churches."

"Declining churches are often small or middle sized."

"Very few of the largest churches are declining."

The observed trends perhaps suggest three things. Firstly, that there is a need for a 'critical mass' of membership below which a church is liable to decline and above which there is possibility of rapid growth. This number is probably about 40 to 50 in size, but the actual value will depend on other circumstances such as the balance of membership and the surrounding neighbourhood. Secondly, the largest churches tend to reach a plateau in size around which the numbers oscillate. This may relate to complacency in having a full church or the practical constraints in accommodating more members into a building of limited size. Thirdly, small to medium-size churches (50-150) seem to have the most potential for growth and this may well be related to factors such as an intimacy in fellowship, more effective utilisation of manpower and sufficient room for expansion.

Data from the local preachers' survey also provides some information as to the location of growing churches and this information is summarised in Table 4:26 below. Interestingly, it is the village situation which is marked by the highest growth rates, but at the same time over a quarter of village churches are in decline. This is understandable since these locations will encompass both very small churches with numbers less than the 'critical mass' as well as churches in the small to medium-size bracket which have high potential for growth. Not surprisingly, inner city churches show the slowest growth rates and nearly a third are in a state of decline. Suburban

Church Location	Inner City	Suburban	Country Town	Village	Industrial Town	Council Estate
Growing	12.5%	23.8%	32.5%	36.8%	20.0%	20.0%
Constant	56.3%	57.6%	50.0%	36.8%	40.0%	20.0%
Decreasing	31.3%	18.8%	17.5%	26.3%	40.0%	60.0%

Table 4:26 Growth Trends as a Function of Church Location

areas are seen to hold the churches which are most static and this again is consistent with the picture of large and somewhat complacent memberships. For some reason country town areas, which are also the home of some large churches, have significantly higher growth rates than the suburbs. In industrial towns churches with decreasing membership outnumber growing churches by two to one. Arguably the weakest locations are the council estates where almost two thirds of churches are in decline. This observation reinforces earlier conclusions that Methodist work on council estates has largely been a failure. There is, however, a glimmer of hope since at the same time local preachers report that about one in five of such churches are actually growing in numbers.

Affiliations and Reading Interests

In order to gain a more complete picture of the local preachers' sense of belonging to a national body they were asked about their membership of the Methodist Local Preachers Mutual Aid Association (LPMA) as well as their readership of the *Methodist Recorder* and *Worship and Preaching*¹. Overall, nearly two-thirds (64.3%) of the local preachers who responded to the survey were members of the LPMA, and the rate of membership did not appear to be greatly polarised according to theological viewpoint, although pluralists were below average at 53% and catholics highest at 75%. It may be that the variation has more to do with age rather than viewpoint since the LPMA is primarily a welfare organisation and theological viewpoint would appear to be an unlikely determinant.

Some 53.3% of the local preachers surveyed read the *Methodist Recorder* regularly with a further 29.5% as occasional readers. In this case the smallest group of regular readers was found amongst open evangelicals (39%) with the most avid readers being traditional Methodists, 60% of whom read the paper. However, here again it may have more to do with age than viewpoint since the highest readership levels are amongst the over-sixties with 68.5% of the 60-69 age group reading the publication on a regular basis compared to only 34.7% for the under-forties. The format and style of the paper may well appeal more to an older readership and this perhaps makes sense since this comprises the bulk of the potential readership.

A much smaller proportion (27.8%) of surveyed local preachers read *Worship and Preaching* with a slightly larger proportion (33.2%) as occasional

1. The LPMA is essentially a preachers' welfare organization which provides help for preachers and their dependents, especially in the area of residential care homes for the elderly and sheltered housing. The Association is currently run independently by local preachers and membership is voluntary. The *Methodist Recorder* is a weekly Methodist newspaper and is probably the most widely read Methodist publication. *Worship and Preaching* is a quarterly magazine, published by the Methodist Publishing House, and intended as a resource for all preachers. A significant part of the publication is 'The Preacher's Calendar' which provides both liturgical and preaching notes as an aid to using the lectionary.

readers. In this case there is a marked variation with theological viewpoint with as many as 58% of catholics using this publication regularly and as few as 8.6% of conservative evangelicals. Other groupings are around the 20 to 30% readership region. It is perhaps worth noting that this trend almost exactly parallels the enthusiasm of the different groups to the use of the lectionary as a basis for their preaching ministry (Figure 3:7). This perhaps suggests that this publication is primarily read for its development of lectionary themes and hence its connection with the wider Church.

Interestingly, there is also a significant age variation but the pattern differs markedly from the readership of the *Methodist Recorder*. In this case the highest proportion of readers (34%) is found in the 40 to 60 age group with much lower levels of readership amongst those under forty years (17%) and those over sixty (22%). The generally lower levels of readership amongst younger age groups may have to do with different patterns of reading amongst a more television-oriented generation. The similar low levels of readership in older generations is at first sight puzzling but may be related to the fact that these local preachers were trained before the first publication of *Worship and Preaching* in 1971. These suggestions seem to be borne out by an analysis of readership with respect to service length. The peak regular readership (45.5%) is associated with those who were recognised as local preachers during the period 1972 to 1976, i.e., the years immediately after the launching of *Worship and Preaching*. After 1976 the readership levels gradually decline and then reach a second peak of 40% for those who have served less than 5 years as local preachers. For those who were established as preachers before 1971 the regular readership levels average around 23%. Thus it could be argued that personal recommendation by supervisors or tutors during the receptive years of training is of crucial significance in determining readership patterns, and if so, there is a lesson to be learnt here for promotion of this style of publication.

Difficulties of the Preachers' Ministry

Local preachers were probed as to the areas which they found most difficult or considered most rewarding within their preaching ministry (Appendix II, Q.34.). This was an open question and, as might have been expected, they provided a very wide range of responses which reflected both their personal circumstances and their church/circuit context. A summary of the major perceived difficulties, gathered into various categories, is shown in Table 4:27 overleaf. It is immediately apparent that only a very tiny proportion of preachers claim to experience no difficulties in connection with their preaching ministry. The major problem area was identified as 'general preparation' and under this heading the vast majority of comments referred to lack of time. This was expressed in a variety of phrases such as: "Finding the time";

"Insufficient preparation time"; "Choosing hymns is very time-consuming"; "Too many appointments for adequate preparation"; and similar comments where time was

Nature of Difficulty	Percentage of Preachers
General preparation	24.4
Congregation	15.5
Sermon	12.4
Personal aspects	11.4
Needs	10.4
Lack of feedback	5.2
Physical limitations	5.1
The Prayers	4.1
None	2.1
Miscellaneous	8.8

Table 4:27 Local Preachers' Perceived Difficulties

specifically mentioned or alluded to. A smaller group referred to general difficulties in preparation such as: "Being up to date".

Interestingly, the second area of difficulty was with the congregation and the response to worship and preaching. Most comments under this heading talked of congregations which were: 'cold', 'unresponsive', 'disinterested', 'negative' and 'insensitive to worship'. Preachers also commented on lack of congregational participation in worship, an unwillingness to change, the difficulty of maintaining enthusiasm amongst small congregations, and talking within the service. It is possible that the aloofness of the congregation, which is so often pictured here, may be a product not only of spiritual immaturity but also the long tradition of Methodist preaching which has emphasised the preacher's role in worship at the expense of the congregation. The congregation thus becomes an accessory to, rather than a fundamental and integral part of, the worship service and tends to act accordingly.

Another important area of difficulty was in the sermon and sermon preparation. Apart from very general comments, preachers drew specific attention to aspects such as: 'choosing themes', 'illustrations', 'children's addresses', 'beginnings', and 'structures'. Interestingly, the most common problem area identified here was in identifying appropriate themes. This is presumably a problem area for the majority (56.1%) who do not consistently follow the lectionary, and again illustrates the lack of adequate

communication with the congregations to which they minister. This problem is illustrated again amongst the 10.4% of preachers who expressed difficulty in knowing the needs of their hearers - a typical comment being: "In the dark about needs". This group, however, were also concerned with the problem of trying to cater for the wide variety of needs presented by congregations ranging from small children to pensioners. Several pointed to the lack of continuity in preaching with a different preacher every week, and one summed it up as a 'hit and run style' preaching.

A further significant area of difficulty was related to 'personal aspects'. This covers a number of comments such as: "Personal imperfection"; "Sense of inadequacy"; "Anxiety of compromising truth"; "Depressed when not getting through"; and aspects such as nervousness, especially before the service. It could be argued that some of these may reflect healthy concerns since preachers perhaps need to retain a sense of dependency and inadequacy, providing that the personal perception is not debilitating to actual ministry. A rather distinct set of personal difficulties is summarised under the umbrella of physical limitations and this has to do exclusively with poor health and problems in travelling. A number of preachers commented on the lack of 'feedback' and this relates back again to the difficulties with congregations, i.e., lack of responsiveness as well as problems of a circuit ministry.

A small group of preachers mentioned difficulty with public prayer, especially with intercessory prayer and the opening prayers in the service. A rather larger group presented a whole miscellany of difficulties with the most common being about small congregations in large buildings. It also included the following thought provoking cry from the heart:

"Lots! Wish it wasn't a job for life."

This incisive comment is a salutary reminder that in many ways a local preacher's job is one for life with no obvious break or retirement short of resignation and all that implies. At least for the circuit minister a decisive break occurs with his change of status to supernumerary and that provides an opportunity to retire gracefully into the background of circuit life in a new circuit. Not so the local preacher, who, as is evident from this study, may continue his ministry into his retirement years until ill health affords an opportunity to withdraw to the side-lines.

In the Anglican readers survey¹ the following open question was posed: "What do you see as the main difficulties in fulfilling your ministry as a Reader?", and this is rather similar to the question directed to local preachers. However, although there are similarities, the overall pattern of difficulties cited is rather different, including as they do problems encountered with the office of reader rather than the practice of the

1. The question and corresponding data is from Powell (1993) , Table 204.

reader's ministry. As before, a small minority (4.1%) of the respondents had no difficulties, but the largest group (25.6%) referred to the limited amount of time that readers were able to give. This is somewhat similar to the 24.4% of local preachers who mentioned time in the context of preparation difficulties, although in that case it was more focussed on the actual preaching ministry. Some 11% of readers listed personal factors such as: age, mobility and family, and this compares to approximately 5.1% of local preachers with physical limitations.

Only a very small group (3.5%) of readers alluded to spiritual inadequacy either in themselves or the congregation. This is in striking contrast to local preachers where 15.5% were concerned about the unresponsiveness of the congregation and 11.4% with their own personal, often spiritual, deficiencies. This difference suggests that local preachers have rather different expectations of themselves and their congregations. It may be that the underlying evangelical tradition of Methodism is one that at heart demands some outward response whereas the more catholic context of the Anglican church is more at ease with the effectiveness of liturgy and ritual with or without overt congregational response. Even the terms 'reader' and 'local preacher' can be seen to enshrine these contrasts. 'Reader' emphasises the conduct of the liturgy whereas 'preacher' highlights the act of delivery of the preached word which inevitably demands response. Notwithstanding that today the actual practice may be quite similar, it can be argued that the roots of the offices appear still influential and affect the outlook of the individuals concerned.

The other major difference between readers and local preachers is that amongst the former a very significant proportion (19.1%) felt that their ministry was not accepted either by clergy or laity or both. Other readers (8.7%) felt that they could do more if they were allowed, that there was no overall plan for their utilisation (6.4%) and that their licence was too restrictive (2.9%). These views, which represent over one third of readers are not paralleled at all amongst local preachers. Clearly many readers are insecure with regard to the status and recognition of their office, an insecurity not shared by local preachers. Almost certainly this difference may be traced to the history of the two offices. Local preaching was with Methodism from the start and has been thoroughly incorporated into the life of the church - it is the norm. By contrast, Anglican readers have a less certain past. Thus whereas Lawton (1989) points to the presence of readers in the early English Church, he also notes that this office died out and was only restored in 1866 and even then the main purpose was to aid the clergy, to read lessons, prayers and the Scriptures and to explain them when allowed by the bishop¹. By 1905, parochial readers were still restricted to

1. Lawton (1989) p. 52.

reading from approved or supplied texts in consecrated buildings¹ and it was not until 1969 that the scope of the reader's license was expanded². Not surprisingly, readers do not share the same sense of acceptance as their local preacher counterparts.

Rewards of the Preachers' Ministry

Local preachers cited a wide variety of aspects which they found most rewarding in their ministry and these are summarised in Table 4:28 below. The most frequently cited reward is that of receiving positive feedback from the congregation. Preachers were encouraged by being told that the hearer had been 'uplifted' or that 'they needed that'. Even a positive sense of response on the faces of the congregation or some adverse comment was more reward than indifference. Preachers wanted to know that the message or worship had touched people's lives. Somewhat similar sentiments are expressed by significant groups of preachers under the headings of 'changed lives' and 'seeing God at work'. In both cases preachers mentioned people being 'blessed' or 'coming to know Christ' or 'knowing the Spirit was at work'. Others were rewarded by

Most Rewarding Aspect	Percentage of Preachers
Feedback	29.8
Fulfilling Call	13.1
Participation	13.1
Changed Lives	11.1
God at Work	11.0
Personal Enrichment	5.1
Privilege	4.5
Joy of Worship	4.5
Holistic	2.0
Miscellaneous	5.6

Table 4:28 Local Preacher - Rewards of Preaching Ministry

a sense of congregational participation - and cite aspects such as: 'togetherness and uplift', 'joyous participation', 'warmth', 'a good atmosphere' and 'enthusiasm and support'. Yet others emphasise the joy of worship and comment on aspects such as 'a deep sense of worship'.

1. Lawton (1989) p. 53.

2. Lawton (1989), p.55.

A rather different emphasis is supplied by those whose reward is more self-centred. Thus for one in eight preachers the most significant aspect is fulfilling their call as a preacher. For others it is the personal enrichment that accompanies their preaching ministry both through preparation and a personal awareness of God. For yet others it is the sense of privilege which their preaching ministry brings as evoked in phrases such as: 'privilege of speaking for the King of kings' and 'privilege of proclaiming Jesus'. A small number of preachers are unable to pin-point specific areas but refer to the whole of the ministry from preparation to preaching, whereas others cite a range of miscellaneous aspects such as one preacher who enjoys 'preaching on obscure topics'.

Readers were asked to list the three most rewarding aspects of their ministry and provide answers which are distinctly different from local preachers¹. To begin with, the 'aspects' are interpreted largely in terms of function and thus readers list in decreasing order of reward activities such as: preaching and teaching, pastoral service, liturgy and worship, small group activity, and eucharistic activity. This provides a fascinating insight into the divergent self-understanding of the nature of the office of reader and local preacher. For the reader the office embraces a whole range of discrete functions which include pastoral activity outside of the worship service. In contrast, the local preacher's ministry is focussed narrowly on preaching and worship and the two are not distinct entities but inseparably intertwined. The local preacher may well lead bible study or preparation groups or be involved in pastoral visiting, but these are **not** part of his ministry as a local preacher.

Admittedly, the readers' citations also included aspects which were related to the effect of their ministry on others and saw rewards in encouraging, helping, empowering and deepening the faith of others, but the proportion (22%) of readers who cited these aspects as their first choice is small compared to the majority of local preachers who found their reward in this way. These findings reinforce the conclusions from the discussion of the preachers' difficulties and confirm that the local preacher seeks affirmation through the response to his ministry, whereas the reader is more likely to find satisfaction and reward through the faithful conduct of his ministry and the recognition of his office.

1. Powell (1993), p. 371 and Table 201.

Laity Portrait

Besides the surveys that were distributed to ministers and local preachers a brief two page questionnaire (Appendix III) was sent to lay members of the church through ministers or local preachers who had responded to earlier surveys. It may well be that those selected to respond to this laity survey will be more involved in the life of the church than the average member and for that reason there is no attempt to argue that the portrait that follows is representative of the average member. Nevertheless, the responses provide the basis for an outline sketch and give some clues as to the type of members whose views will be discussed in later chapters. The portrait will also be somewhat hazy since the questionnaire was brief and the biographical questions necessarily circumscribed.

Age

The mean age of respondents was 56.3 years with a range of from 18 to 84. This is very close to the mean of 57.1 years found for local preachers, although in that case the youngest preacher was 21 years of age. The age distribution of lay respondents is summarised in Figure 4:13 in comparison with local preachers. It is immediately apparent that the two distributions are closely similar and that both age distributions are skewed to the high age end. Just over a third of the lay respondents are 65 years or older and this is consistent with the high proportion of pensioners reported by local preachers in response to the question about social groupings (Appendix II, Q.16). The reasonable correspondence between the two distributions suggests that

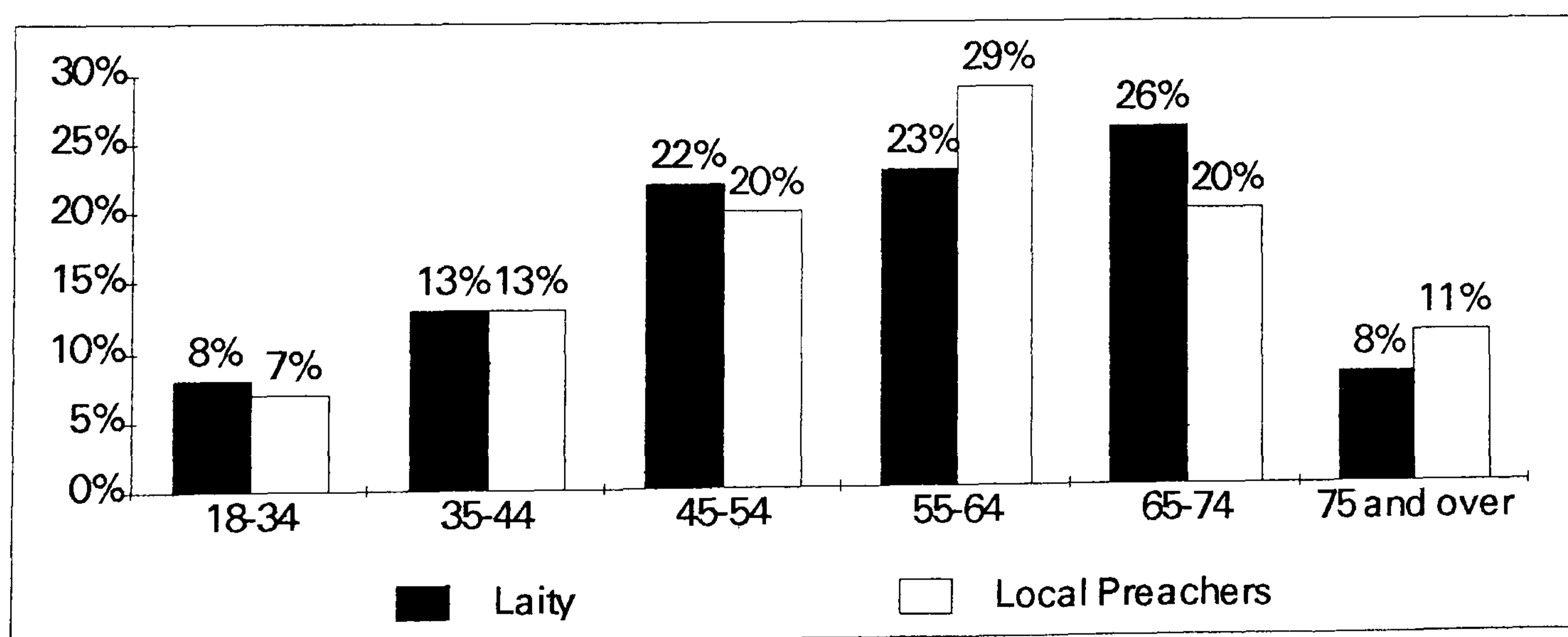


Figure 4:13 The Age Distributions of Laity and Local Preachers

the selection of lay persons may have been effectively random with respect to age group since the number of local preachers would be expected to be in some way proportional to the numbers of laity from which they are drawn. The smaller proportion of local preachers amongst the 65 to 74 years age group followed by the

surfeit in the next youngest age group may have to do with dislocations brought about by Second World War which influenced the rate of entry into local preaching. This would seem to be borne out by the data presented earlier in Table 4:16 which shows that the recruitment rate in the decade 1943 to 1952 was less than half that of the subsequent decade. Clearly the dislocation affected not only the war years themselves but the period immediately after the war. Some of those who would normally have begun local preaching in that period delayed their training and others missed out completely.

In the case of both ministers and local preachers it was found that theological outlook was age dependent (Tables 4:2,11 respectively). Rather similar findings are revealed in Table 4:29 with respect to the laity, which again shows that

Age Groups		18-39	40-49	50-59	60-65	Over 65
<i>Theological Viewpoint</i> ¹						
Evangelical	(58)	20.6%	27.6%	15.5%	17.2%	19.0%
Catholic	(14)	--	21.4%	42.9%	7.1%	35.7%
Pluralist	(6)	--	--	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
Traditional Methodist	(67)	6.0%	21.0%	11.9%	13.4%	47.8%
Other	(28)	7.1%	28.6%	28.6%	10.7%	25.0%
<i>Spiritual Style</i>						
Charismatic	(22)	27.2%	27.2%	18.2%	9.1%	18.2%
Liberal	(21)	--	38.1%	28.6%	4.8%	28.6%
Radical	(10)	20.0%	10.0%	20.0%	20.0%	30.0%

Table 4:29 The Laity's Theological Viewpoint and Spiritual Style - Variation with Age Group

1. In the laity survey respondents were allowed to indicate more than one theological viewpoint as well as spiritual style. In consequence, although the majority ticked only one viewpoint, 25 ticked two viewpoints and a further 8 ticked three or more in addition to an indication of spiritual style. In order to simplify presentation and analysis of results the following categories were used: evangelical includes the 41 who only ticked evangelical together with 17 who ticked evangelical and traditional Methodist; catholic includes the 9 who ticked only catholic together with 6 who ticked catholic and traditional Methodist; pluralist and traditional Methodist were restricted to those who only ticked those categories; other refers to those who ticked evangelical and pluralist, as well as those who ticked three or more (8), or ticked none at all (18). Those who indicated that they were not familiar with the terms (28) were not included in the statistical analysis. With regard to spiritual style the situation is much simpler and only a small number (4) who ticked both liberal and radical were re-categorised under radical.

Christian outlook varies with the age group concerned. As before, the highest proportions of Catholics and traditional Methodists are concentrated in the older age groups and this suggests these emphases are beginning to fade amongst younger members. In this case pluralists are located exclusively amongst the over 50's and this is at variance with the data from the survey of ministers and local preachers, since in their case pluralists tended to be most noticeable in the 40-49 age group. As before, evangelicals tend to be spread across the age groups and have a much higher percentage of their group in the under forties than other theological viewpoints. This table also includes data on the spiritual style of the laity. It can readily be seen that it is the charismatic style which dominates the under-40's. On the other hand, liberals are strongest in the 40-49 age group - the group which owns the highest proportion of pluralists amongst ministers and local preachers. Overall, those who consider themselves as radicals seem fairly evenly spread amongst the age groups, which is somewhat of a contrast to earlier conclusions amongst ministers and local preachers where the radical element was usually concentrated amongst younger groups. However, the numbers of radicals involved are small and this may not be statistically significant.

Gender

Of the 205 lay members who responded to the survey the majority (59.1%) were female and this is in line with the predominance of women in the composition of most Methodist congregations. Clearly this proportion greatly exceeds the percentage of women amongst ministers and local preachers and shows, as is true of probably all churches, that women are under-represented in leadership positions. It is of some interest to see how the proportion of women who responded to the survey varies with age group and this is summarised in Table 4:30 below. These results are most

Age Groups	18-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and Over	Overall ¹
Total Number	16	25	44	46	69	200
% Female	50%	52%	59%	72%	54%	59%
% Male	50%	48%	41%	28%	46%	41%

Table 4:30 Variation of Gender of Lay Members with Age Group

1. Although there were 205 respondents, three failed to give their age and two others their gender so there are five missing cases in this data.

interesting since they show similar numbers of men and women responded to this survey in the under 45's age groups but in the 55 to 64 age group women outnumber men by almost three to one. Why this should be so is by no means clear but it is worth noting that this age group of men would have been born in the period 1930 to 1939 and thus would have been children or teenagers during the Second. World War.

The earlier study of local preachers showed some small differences between sexes with regard to theological viewpoint and it is of interest to see whether that is paralleled amongst the other members of the laity. In Figure 4:30 the theological viewpoint is expressed as a percentage of male or female members for the 176 persons who responded to this question. Overall, it is clear that there is not a considerable degree of gender bias amongst lay men and women as regards theological viewpoint. The only case where there is a large difference is amongst pluralists, and in that case the sample size is too small to be sure that this is significant. The effect of theological education or change in status to local preacher or minister appears to emphasise the gender differences, although not in a consistent way. Thus, for example, there were no catholic women ministers in the ministerial survey sample, even though amongst local preachers a higher percentage of women were catholic than men.

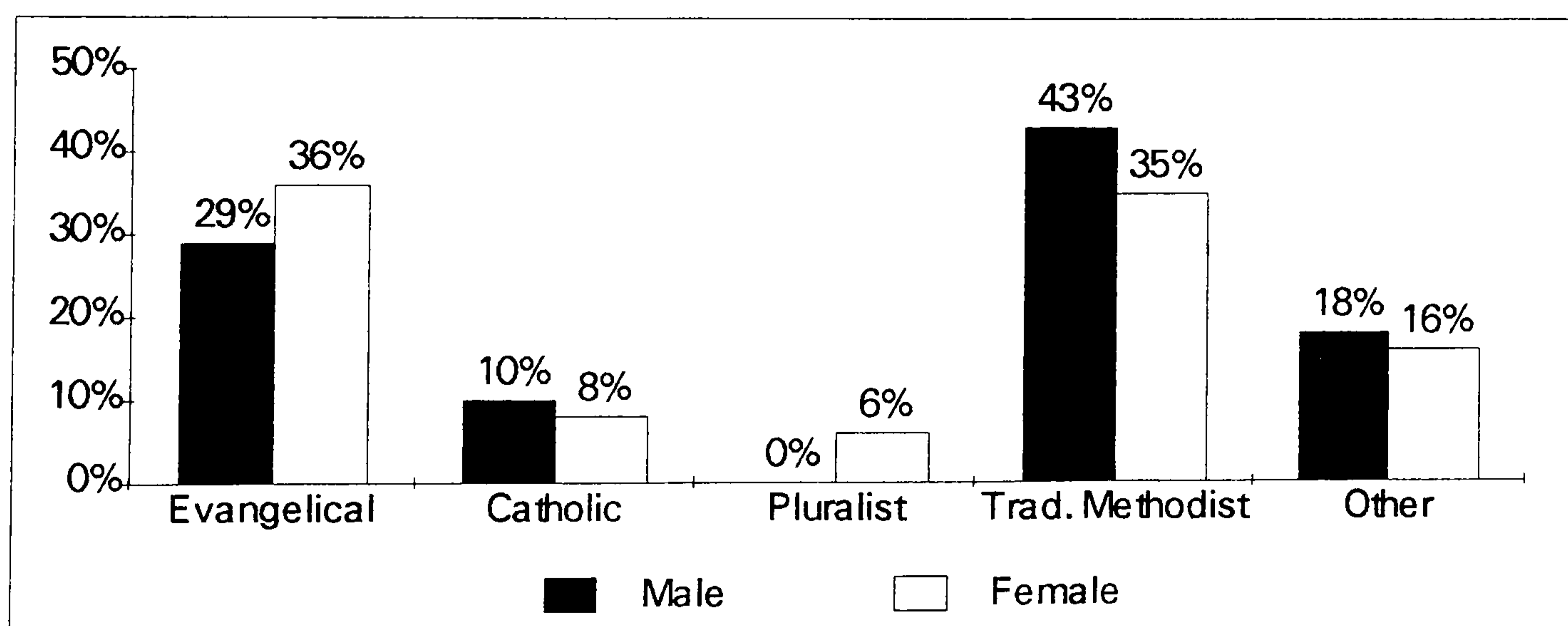


Figure 4:30 Gender Bias in Theological Viewpoint of the Laity

Perhaps the most informative aspect has to do with gender bias in spiritual style. Thus of the 104 women who completed the question on 'Christian outlook', 13.5% identified with a charismatic spiritual style compared to only 11.1% of the 72 men. In contrast 21% of male local preachers were charismatic compared to only 14% of women, whereas for ministers, 14% of men were charismatic compared to no women. There is thus a clear transition in passing from lay members, where women charismatics outnumber men, to local preachers where male charismatics outnumber women, to the ordained ministry where the number of female charismatics appears

vanishingly small. This pattern provides further evidence that charismatics tend to be associated with a more conservative understanding of the Scriptures which is interpreted to proscribe female leadership and hence acts to deter women charismatics from becoming local preachers and, even more so, ordained ministers.

In contradistinction, the pattern for those who identify themselves with the liberal spiritual style appears to be quite consistent throughout the three categories. Thus amongst lay members 12.5% of women identify with this term compared to 11.1% of men - a very similar female excess is evident both for local preachers and ministers. Similarly with the radical style, a higher proportion (10.5%) of women identify themselves with this style than men (1.4%), and once again this pattern is repeated across all three categories. The consistency of the trends for both radicals and liberals further underlines the significance of the charismatic variations.

Family Background

In the laity survey respondents provided details of parental membership of the Methodist Church. Overall, the majority (56.5%) of respondents indicated that one or both of their parents had been Methodist members. When one takes into account that a significant proportion of the remainder may have become Methodists through marriage, the figures suggest little conversion growth within Methodism as opposed to biological growth. With decreasing birth rates and reducing parental influence on their children in contemporary society, the rate of biological growth is likely to become rapidly eroded, and this is consistent with the present decline in membership within British Methodism, since this is almost certainly the main mechanism for growth within this church.

Evidence for the increasing dependence of the church on biological growth is provided by an analysis of the variation of those with parental membership as a function of age group. This is shown in Table 4:31 below. It is clear that for the youngest age group, the under 35's, four out of five have parents who are members, a much higher proportion than any other age group. It is possible that this reflects a contemporary trend towards attendance rather than membership and it is those young

Age Groups (Numbers)	18-34 (16)	35-44 (25)	45-54 (44)	55-64 (46)	65 and Over (69)	Overall (200)
Parental Membership	81%	40%	54%	58%	45%	57%

Figure 4:31 Variation of Parental membership with Age Group

people with parents who are members who are most likely to be encouraged to join. Alternatively, it may indicate that the church is not effectively reaching this age group amongst those outside the church and this must be a real cause for concern.

Theological Persuasion and Spiritual Style

In order to simplify the laity survey, the question relating to theological persuasion was headed 'Christian outlook' as it was felt that this would be more user-friendly for church members without the benefit of theological education (Appendix III, Q.6). Included within this question were opportunities to respond to the terms relating to both theological persuasion and spiritual style. Respondents were allowed to tick more than one option and this led to the necessity of re-categorising the descriptions as detailed earlier¹. Principally this meant the inclusion of a new category 'other' which covered those who identified with none of the suggested viewpoints as well as those who responded to three or more viewpoints. In calculating the percentage values of theological viewpoint and spiritual style the two groups were considered independently and in each case the percentage was based on the total number of 176 persons responding to the question. The results of these evaluations are summarised in Figure 4:31 below.

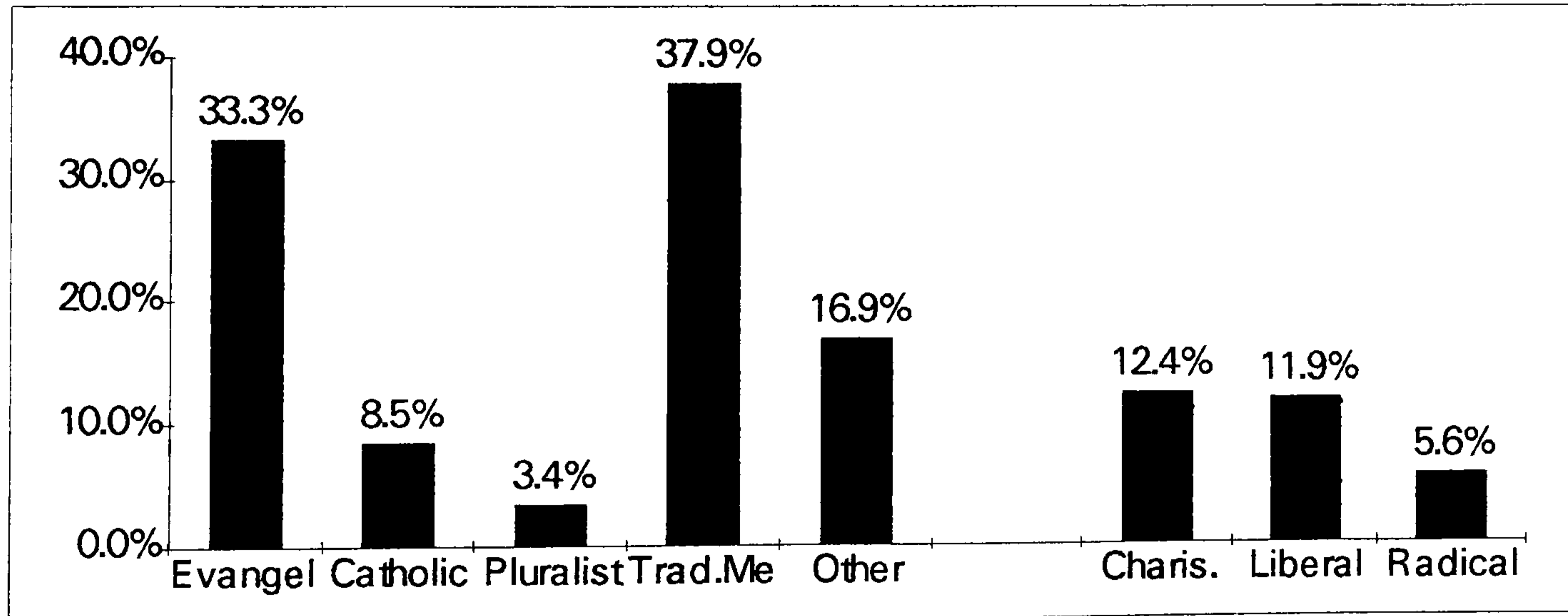


Figure 4:31 Laity - Breakdown of Theological Viewpoint and Spiritual Style

Quite clearly the two largest groupings are evangelical and traditional Methodist and the sizes of these groups compare quite closely to the percentage of evangelicals (31.4%) and traditional Methodists (42.0%) reported for local preachers (Figure 4:10). The percentage of catholics is marginally smaller amongst local preachers at 5.8% and the proportion of pluralists somewhat higher at 7.2% but otherwise there are no real differences in the overall theological viewpoint. The most significant difference between the theological outlook of laity and ministers is the very high

1. See p. 137, footnote 1.

proportion of pluralists (20.3%) amongst the latter. Amongst ministers pluralists are about six times as common at the expense of both evangelicals at 26.1% and traditional Methodists at 32.6%. There is thus a significant shift in theological viewpoint between the laity, including local preachers, and the ordained ministry, the shift being towards a more liberal viewpoint. It is evident from these comparisons that the shift is not due to theological education alone, since local preachers undergo training and are theologically aware. It may in part be due to the effect of residential training, which removes the students from their roots and hence renders the student more exposed to change in views. It could of course have to do with the type of person selected for ministerial training or even the insights of pastoral practice after training, but, whatever the explanation, that there is a shift cannot be disputed.

With respect to spiritual style both charismatic and liberal are similar sized minority groups each representing about one in eight laity. Radicals are much smaller in number at about one in twenty. The proportion of charismatics among laity is very close to the proportion amongst ministers (12.0%) but is, surprisingly, significantly smaller than amongst local preachers (18.9%). The liberal influence is much more prominent among local preachers at 34.6% and even more so amongst ministers at 48.9% - a clear influence, perhaps, of theological training. Radicals are also more numerous amongst local preachers at 9.0% and amongst ministers at 11.4%. Again, the clearest shift is towards a more liberal style from lay member to local preacher, and from local preacher to minister.

It is also possible to use this data to make some comparison with the result of the national church census conducted in October 1989 and reported in Brierley (1991a). In that census, which covered all Christian churches within England, questions were asked about the 'churchmanship' of each church, a term which was taken to effectively embrace the categories of theological viewpoint and spiritual style¹. The summary of these results for the Methodist Church section of the report are recorded in Table 4:32 overleaf. It is somewhat difficult to make an exact comparison with the results of the surveys reported in this study because different terms are used, and in the census, theological viewpoint and spiritual style are counted within the same group. However, certain conclusions can be drawn.

To begin with, the 32% of evangelicals found in the census is comparable with the 33% observed in the laity survey. Notwithstanding this apparent agreement, if the traditional Methodist position is understood to be basically evangelical, then the census figure is much too small. The broad churchmanship position is most readily understood in terms of the pluralist position and, if this interpretation is correct, the census figure is much closer to the ministerial survey than the laity one. Liberal is a

1. The details of the actual classifications used are described in Chapter 3.

Churchmanship	Percentage of Methodist Churches
Broad Evangelical	23.7
Mainstream Evangelical	4.2
Charismatic Evangelical	3.8
<i>(Total Evangelical)</i>	<i>(31.8)</i>
Low Church	19.3
Broad	24.5
Liberal	20.7
Catholic	1.5
Radical	2.2

Table 4:32 The Churchmanship of Methodist Churches¹

term common to both the census and the present surveys but overlaps with the pluralist classification, e.g., nearly three-quarters of pluralist ministers also indicate liberal. Consequently, the census figure of 21% liberals appears significantly higher than the 12% observed in the laity survey. The very small minority of catholics (1.5%) is very much less than the figures for any of the current surveys which range from 5.8% to 8.5%. Radical at 2.2% would also appear to be under-represented in the census. Lastly, the figure of 3.8% charismatics is clearly much lower than any of the current surveys where charismatics range from 12.0% to 18.9%. This substantial difference can only be explained to a very small extent through charismatics hidden under other headings such as catholic, since the vast majority of charismatics in Methodism are associated with an evangelical viewpoint.

Overall, the census appears to underestimate the minority groupings in Methodism and to present a picture which reflects as much the churchmanship of the minister as the congregation. The former shortcoming probably arises as the person in pastoral charge was asked to respond to the question²:

"Which of these terms or which combination of them would best describe your congregation?"

The census thus applies to whole congregations. The consequence of this, since respondents were limited to only three descriptions, is that minority groupings are unlikely to be cited. This is particularly a problem in Methodism where the

1. Data taken from Brierley (1991a), Table 60, p.162.

2. Brierley (1991a), p.155.

churchmanship of different churches is less well defined because of the circuit system with its shared pulpit ministry¹. The second problem with the census data is, as already suspected by Brierley², that ministers will tend to answer according to their own particular persuasion rather than accurately reflecting the stand-point of the congregation. This problem is partly mitigated in churches served by one established minister since congregations will tend to mirror the views of their clergy. However, this aspect is likely to be a significant factor in Methodism where the influence of the individual minister is diluted by shorter periods of ministry and the regular presence of other preachers. The fact that the census results for Methodism show some close similarities with the ministerial viewpoint tends to confirm this suggestion. The conclusion must be that the results of the rather circumscribed laity survey are probably a better guide to the theological viewpoint of the Methodist laity than the comprehensive national census with its returns from 76% of Methodist churches in England.

Local Church Involvement

The lay respondents were asked to indicate how they were currently involved in their local church. This was a closed question with a choice of fourteen options together with the possibility of adding additional items (Appendix III, Q.4a). A summary of the responses to this question is given in Table 4:33 overleaf. The table lists the overall percentage involvement of the whole sample as well as the percentages of men and of women involved in each responsibility. It is immediately apparent from an overview of the table that this group of lay people is heavily involved in their local church in a wide variety of areas averaging just over three commitments per person, and with men and women almost equally involved. It is worth examining the individual responsibilities to see whether this balance is maintained throughout.

There is some evidence from the table that a higher proportion of men tend to be involved in leadership positions than women; thus nearly 21% of men lead Bible studies or fellowship groups compared to 14% of women, and some 35% of men are stewards compared to 20% of women. However, these observations are somewhat

1. This point can be demonstrated by comparison of the reporting of minority groupings within the Methodist and Anglican churches. In the case of charismatics the census reports 9.2% of charismatic evangelicals amongst Anglicans compared to only 3.8% amongst Methodists. This is a ratio of 2.4:1 which compares with a value of only 1.4:1 when matching the proportion of charismatics amongst Anglican readers and Methodist local preachers, and of 1.8:1 amongst clergy. When it is borne in mind that a significant proportion of Anglican charismatics are found amongst non-evangelicals, e.g., 48% of charismatic Anglican priests have a central or catholic churchmanship, Davies *et al* (1990b:20), then it is apparent that charismatics amongst Anglicans are already grossly underestimated. When all these considerations are brought together it is clear that the proportion of charismatics among Methodists is not sensibly reflected in the census data. This will clearly apply to other minority groupings such as radical.

2. Brierley (1991a:155).

Responsibility	Extent of Lay Involvement		
	% of Men	% of Women	% of Total
Bible Study/Fellowship Leader	21	14	17
Chairperson	2	6	4
Choir Member	11	20	16
Church Council Member	57	56	56
Class Leader	4	16	11
Committee	37	35	36
Door Steward	30	27	28
Local Preacher	7	6	6
Musician	11	10	10
Pastoral Visitors	17	46	34
Secretary	16	13	14
Church Steward	35	20	26
Sunday School Teacher	6	12	10
Youth Worker	8	7	7
Miscellaneous ¹	36	32	34
Overall Total	298	319	310

Table 4:33 The Local Church Involvement of Lay Members

tempered by the opposite trend amongst chairpersons where only 2.4% of men are involved compared to 5.8% of women; and class leaders, where only 3.6% of the men are involved compared to 15.8% of women. The latter example is perhaps misleading since class leadership has probably more to do with pastoral visiting than leadership roles. In terms of involvement on committees and the church council one has to be impressed by the equality of representation amongst men and women - the percentages are almost identical in both cases. Interestingly, the percentage of local preachers who were involved on the church council (61%) is only marginally higher

1. The miscellaneous category includes activities such as: counsellor, toddler club leader, minister support group, treasurer, lettings officer, newsletter editor, property steward, creche helper, cleaning, prayer healing ministry, communion steward, publicity officer, Christian Aid co-ordinator, worship leader, ecumenical representative, overseas missions, driver and theatre group. The most common added designation was treasurer.

than the average for other lay members (56%), showing that local preachers are not significantly more involved in local leadership positions than other lay people.

Further inspection of the table reveals several areas where women are dominant. One of the most obvious areas is in pastoral visiting where 46% of women are involved compared to only 19 % of men. This, together with an even greater proportion of women in class leadership positions, show that women dominate the area of pastoral visiting. Whether this is because women are more skilled in the area of visiting and caring or because of an enduring stereotype that this is a woman's role is debatable. It almost certainly means that there are not enough men to adequately care for their fellow male members in the church - at least in the area of visitation. In comparison nearly 31% of local preachers indicated involvement as pastoral visitors, and since two-thirds of these were men, it suggests that local preachers are more involved in pastoral visiting than the average member. Another area where women are dominant is in Sunday School teaching where the percentage of female involvement is about double that of men. This trend is reversed, however, with youth work. The third area where women are disproportionately involved is as choir members where the female percentage is about double the male one.

In other areas such as music, committee secretaries, door stewards and a whole host of miscellaneous items, men and women are proportionately represented. Overall, bearing in mind that women outnumber men in Methodist membership, women would appear to be fully involved in every official position within the local church. Whereas women are somewhat under-represented as society stewards, they tend to dominate the area of pastoral visitation. Of course, there are more women to visit, and women are less likely to be in full-time paid employment and may be more able to tie in their family concerns with visiting. Nevertheless, the dearth of men involved in pastoral visiting is unlikely to encourage other men to be involved in church activities.

Apart from their involvement in official positions, members were also questioned about their attendance at small group meetings (Appendix III, Q.5). The responses are summarised in Table 4:34 overleaf for both the respondents from the laity survey and local preachers. In both cases the largest numbers attended some kind of home fellowship group; about a third of members and over half the local preachers were involved in a Bible study; a quarter participated in a prayer meeting, compared to two out of five local preachers; and just over one in seven went to a class meeting, the same proportion as local preachers. The rather small numbers attending class meetings compared to fellowship groups and Bible studies reflects, at least to some extent, availability. Thus, whereas over two-thirds of the churches represented held home

Activity	Availability in Local Church	Attendance	
		Laity	Local Preachers
Class Meeting	24.9%	14.2%	14.6%
Bible Study	70.7%	37.6%	55.6%
Home Fellowship	68.8%	43.9%	61.6%
Prayer Meeting	53.2%	25.4%	41.4%

Table 4:34 The Involvement of Laity and Local Preachers in Small Groups

group meetings or fellowships, only about a quarter had class meetings. To a large extent the activities of the home fellowship group are likely to be very similar to the class meeting both in content and venue - all that has really changed is the name which perhaps increasingly reflects a greater emphasis on informality and voluntary attendance. It is perhaps significant that local preachers are, on average, more involved in the small-group structure of the local church. It is, in fact, a disciplinary requirement that local preachers 'meet in class or some equivalent fellowship'¹ and this may be an added spur to attendance. A further important consideration is that some 40% of local preachers are involved in leading Bible study and fellowship groups. Notwithstanding the above reasons, the prime cause is probably a deeper spirituality reflected in their call to preach and expressed in small group opportunities to pray, study the Bible, worship and have fellowship with other Christians.

Not surprisingly, in view of the extensive involvement of members highlighted in the preceding text, nearly two-thirds (63.9%) would not wish to be more involved in their local church. Having said that, one in eight (12.7%) indicated that they would value further involvement and nearly a quarter (23.4%) would consider it. There is clearly additional potential amongst those who are already involved in their local church as well as, presumably, many skills and gifts that have not yet been tapped. In conclusion, it is quite clear that the church members who responded to this survey are extensively involved in the life of the local church both as office bearers and within the small group structure. Undoubtedly these persons are also involved in other church groups which were not the subject of the survey. Although it is likely that those asked to respond to the survey were drawn from among the more active members, nevertheless, the responses provide clear indication that Methodism is able to draw a broad spectrum of people into involvement in the life of the local church. Whether the skills and talents are being effectively used is, of course, another matter.

1. Cited under standing order 578(1)(i), CPD p.471.

Summary

This completes the biographical description of the ministers, local preachers and members of the British Methodist Church. In a final comparison we link the three groups to show that the Methodist Church in Britain is made up of an ageing membership a consequence of an over-dependence on biological growth. The high average age of ministers will necessarily lead to the loss of nearly 60% of present ministers within the next 15 years due to retirement. The survey suggests that about two-thirds of the membership is female, but this proportion reduces to about one third of local preachers and currently about one in seven circuit ministers. Generally women are fairly represented throughout the structures of the church. The apparent lack of women in the higher echelons of the church structure is largely accounted for by late entry and early retirement.

Educationally, local preachers match or exceed the standards of ministers in secular qualifications. Theologically, the church is basically evangelical, although there is a strong movement away from conservatism and a particular emphasis on traditions unique to Methodism. The charismatic movement has made a significant impact in Methodism not least in its growing influence on worship styles, but is less developed than in the Anglican Church. Ministers' theology is significantly more liberal than the laity with a large minority taking a pluralist position. This is in part due to residential training and in part due to theological emphases which limit entry into the ordained ministry. The circuit system tends to reduce theological polarisation and aids a broader (pluralistic) understanding.

Ministers work on average a 57- hour week, but this is probably only comparable to the involvement of local preachers and other committed members who are extensively involved in the Methodist organisation. The average church size in British Methodism is about 60 members, but this is highly dependent on location; the church is failing most badly on council estates. Churches most likely to be growing are in the small to medium membership size and in village locations. Local preachers tend to be based in the larger churches and are small in number where the church is weak. Local preachers are heavily involved in pastoral work outside of their preaching ministry, but are not adequately represented in the leadership of the local church. Local preachers have most difficulties with limited preparation time and unresponsive congregations. Their main reward is seeing a tangible response to their message.

Chapter 5

The Nature of Pastoral Care

At the outset of this chapter we turn our attention to the central concern of this thesis, namely the nature of pastoral care. In order to bring this into sharper focus the following working definition of pastoral care is proposed, namely that:

Pastoral care is a partnership in God's shepherding of the community of faith, by the whole community, amongst whom certain members may have particular defined responsibilities, and is intended to nurture and build up both individuals and the community itself into a maturity of faith and Christian living, by means of the whole range of activities within the community, both personal and corporate, to the end that the community is enabled and empowered not only to live and work to God's praise and glory but to reach out to those outside its boundaries and so advance the Kingdom of God.

The *raison d'être* of this definition will be explored later in this chapter after first considering the descriptions of pastoral care offered in the literature. The varied interpretations found amongst theologians and practitioners of pastoral care are of help in probing a number of important questions on which the working definition rests, which include: i) a consideration of the context of pastoral care, i.e., whether pastoral care is properly restricted to the community of faith; ii) the persons involved in offering pastoral care; iii) the breadth of pastoral care, i.e., whether such care is sufficiently described by one-to-one relationships such as in pastoral visitation or formal counselling situations; iv) the legitimate aims and direction of pastoral care. The final section of the chapter will comprise an examination of the response of Methodist ministers and local preachers to the survey question which sought to pinpoint their understanding of the 'essence of pastoral care' and a comparison of these findings with the proposed working definition. The working definition will serve as a touchstone in this and subsequent evaluation.

Defining Pastoral Care

It is perhaps necessary to reiterate at this point that the term 'pastoral care' is understood in this thesis to refer to 'Christian pastoral care', i.e., pastoral care as practised by Christian communities and not pastoral care as used in a secular context, such as within educational institutions, to denote general concern with the well-being of the students or staff. It should also be recognised that the derivation of the term 'pastoral care' has been criticised on at least two grounds. Firstly, 'pastoral' is seen by some to be a misleading and antiquated adjective; thus Deeks (1987:252) comments:

"But why the word 'pastor' at all? Its origins lie in a cultural and historical setting which is utterly remote from contemporary life... Pastoral scenes belong for most of us in the realm of nostalgia, and idyllic fantasies about pre-modern times."

This criticism will be addressed more fully later in this chapter where the appropriateness of the 'shepherd' (pastoral) motif will be discussed, but suffice it to say at this point the term 'pastoral' is very widely used, and has indeed been endorsed by modern secular institutions. Yet others have reservations about the adequacy of the use of the word 'care'. Thus Greeves (1960:4), in an earlier publication, prefers to use the phrase '*cure* of souls'. He argues that the term 'care' is inadequate since it does not fully embrace the concept of healing. Etymologically his argument is probably correct, but language is a living entity and word usage changes. Today, some thirty years on, 'cure' is rarely used in a pastoral context and 'care' increasingly carries with it a therapeutic connotation.

Although much has been written about the practice of pastoral care, definitions are rather few and far between. Campbell (1986:18) suggests that this is because pastoral care is largely intuitive and hence resists logical analysis. He argues that words alone are inadequate to describe pastoral care and that instead images are important to capture the imagination. However, at the same time, Campbell acknowledges that:

"The problem with images (like Tillich's symbols) is that they grow old and die! The image may be blurred to a point where it is no longer recognisable."

In addition, there is the further attendant problem that the message which images convey is highly dependent on the perceptions and prejudices of the observer. Nowhere is this more true than in the central pastoral image of the shepherd. To define pastoral care in terms of images alone is clearly inadequate.

Pattison (1988:5,6) also shares the concern as to whether it is possible adequately to define pastoral care since he judges that its multi-faceted nature may preclude satisfactory analysis. However, he is critical of the many authors who make no attempt at definition and instead are content to equate pastoral care with pastoral activity or 'doing'. After examining a number of alternative definitions Pattison (1988:13) proposed that:

"Pastoral care is that activity, undertaken especially by representative Christian persons, directed towards the elimination and relief of sin and sorrow and the presentation of all people perfect in Christ to God."

This definition is wide-ranging in that it touches upon the nature of the pastor, the aims of the care, the recipients of the care and emphasises the transcendental element in such care. It is also helpful in that it in no way restricts such care to an individualistic approach and hence does not allow pastoral care to be equated with

personal counselling. Similarly, the definition provides an important balance between the healing and nurturing elements of pastoral care. However, it is debatable whether or not the phrase 'representative Christian persons' over-emphasises the official or perhaps professional character of the carer and whether the encompassing term 'all people' provides too broad a context for this care, implying, as it does, that this care is extended universally to all.

Perhaps the most widely quoted and influential definition of pastoral care is that of Clebsch and Jaekle (1967:4) who understand pastoral care to be:

"...helping acts, done by representative Christian persons, directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of troubled persons whose trouble arises in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns."

Resonances from this definition frequently appear in more recent discussion of the nature of pastoral care. For example, a report to the Methodist Conference (Methodist Church 1986:058) contains the description¹:

"Pastoral care involves Christians in God's continuing work of *healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling* and enabling people to co-operate for the well-being of human communities and in the struggle for justice, freedom and peace."

which in turn is echoed closely by Deeks (1987:1) who writes:

"Pastoral care in itself is a broad category including many sets of actions: *healing, sustaining and guiding individuals; reconciling* people to one another; enabling people to co-operate for the well-being of human communities and in the struggle for justice, freedom and peace in society,"

while Schlauch (1990:359) states:

"I am using the words 'pastoral care' to refer to those activities by and on behalf of members of the community of believers which serve to *heal, guide, sustain and reconcile*, ... as those members understand, and come to understand anew, the prophetic meanings and transformative purposes of their life in light of and in relation to the Christian story,"

and the phrase "representative Christian persons" frequently surfaces in discussion of pastoral care as in Pattison's definition quoted earlier.

The Clebsch and Jaekle definition is broadly welcomed by Wright (1982:24) who observes that it: "... is fairly comprehensive, and when broken down, is extremely useful," and then proceeds to expand on and interpret the four key elements of healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling. It is instructive to note that Wright almost invariably interprets these four facets of pastoral care from a problem-centred perspective. Thus healing is associated with "wounds" (p.24); sustaining with "illness, grief or anxiety" (p.28); guiding with those who are "disturbed, anxious, troubled" (p.31); and reconciling has to do with those "who are beset by problems" (p.31). This

1. Here and in the subsequent definitions the keywords common to the Clebsch and Jaekle definition are italicised.

perception highlights one of the deficiencies of the definition in that it does not adequately focus the nurture aspects of pastoral care. In the author's view this is an important defect since, as will be discussed, nurture is arguably the pre-eminent facet of pastoral care.

The definition would also appear to be somewhat clerically oriented since it sees pastoral care as an activity of "representative Christian persons" which would reasonably be understood as a shorthand for ministers or priests. It may be for this reason that the description of pastoral care given in the Methodist Church report cited above, a report which incidentally was concerned with the 'Ministry of the People of God', replaces the above phrase by the more universal "Christians". This report also adds the activity of "enabling", perhaps an attempt to sign the missing element of nurture as an important component of pastoral care. The Methodist description is also attractive since it pictures pastoral care as the Christian's partnership in "God's continuing work". This is helpful since it is a reminder that both the ends and means of pastoral care have a spiritual dimension. Where perhaps this latter description loses its way is in its attempt to be all-embracing and to paint a canvas for pastoral care which covers the pursuit of justice, freedom and peace in *all* communities.

That Christian pastoral care cannot be separated from a spiritual dimension is frequently emphasised in attempts to describe the nature of such care. Evans (1961), for example, argues that pastoral care is more than just a specialised activity within a church context; it is an activity which needs to be rooted in the purposes of God. Thus Evans perceives that pastoral care involves more than simply the activity of caring, it is a caring that is motivated, informed and directed by a consciousness of the divine, as is illustrated by his statement:

"Pastoral Care cannot be a mere benevolent interest in people, a mere effort to help and heal, although it is called to this. It is first of all the concern about every individual from the stand-point of God, from the point of view of God's purposes for a new community, a New Heaven and a New Earth." (1961:20)

In a rather similar vein Marshall (1986:22), during a discussion of pastoral care as a priority in Christian ministry observes:

"It must be confessed that there is little directly on this topic in the New Testament, but the little that we do have suggests that pastoral care is primarily a spiritual matter. It is easy for pastoral care to be equated with a friendly call or the provision of some kind of social care. While there is proper place for the latter, it should be stressed that the spiritual element is the primary one and it must not be forgotten."

This emphasis is perhaps more directly evident when using phrases such as the 'cure of souls' with its reminder that mankind is part of and yet distinct from the animal

kingdom and thus needs a care beyond that of the temporal body alone. Thus McNeill (1952:vii) states:

" 'Cure of Souls' is the sustaining and curative treatment of persons in those matters that reach beyond the requirements of the animal life."

It is the inclusion of this element which makes Christian pastoral care distinctive from care in a secular context, although it is not always at the forefront of many definitions. Thus, for example, the description cited earlier from Deeks (1987) makes no reference to this aspect and might well be indistinguishable from a description put forward by secular carers.

Many contemporary definitions or descriptions of pastoral care tend to be ambiguous or uninformative. For example, writing in the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care*, under the entry "Pastoral Care, Nature of", the nearest Campbell (1987:188) comes to a definition is the statement that:

"Pastoral care is that aspect of the ministry of the Church which is concerned with the well-being of individuals and communities."

The use of the phrase 'ministry of the Church' could be taken to reflect the institutional nature of such care, although equally it could be interpreted as the involvement of the whole people of God in such care¹. Similarly, the term 'well-being' is rather a vague notion with no clear allusion to the spiritual nature of such care, and the phrase 'individuals and communities' gives no indication as to boundaries or the perceived recipients of such care.

Yet even more imprecise are descriptions where pastoral care is identified with potent but abstract concepts such as love. Thus Deeks (1987:9) perceives that pastoral care is: "...the practice of love in word and deeds." Similarly, Campbell in his book entitled *Paid to Care?* in which he considers the paradox that pastoral care should be seen as a paid, professional activity, proposes that:

"Pastoral care is, in essence, surprisingly simple. It has one fundamental aim: to help people to know love, both as something to be received and as something to give," (1985:1)

and later in the book (p.32) he suggests a basic definition of pastoral care as: "...the increase of love of God and neighbour." This identification of pastoral care with the out-working and development of 'love' may provide a profound and engaging challenge to carers, especially professionals, but otherwise does not give any clear insights into the nature of the pastoral task, not least because of the nebulous nature of love in twentieth-century society. Does love, for example, embrace justice and

1. The latter interpretation would seem to be the intention since elsewhere Campbell (1985:31,32) criticises the concept of focussing the ministry of care in one person and argues that pastoral care should be considered within the ministry of the 'whole people of God'.

judgement, discipline and discernment or is it only concerned with temporary happiness and the avoidance of harm?

The Context of Pastoral Care

Little progress can be made in seeking to define the nature of pastoral care without a consideration of the context of such care. Although there is general agreement that it is the church, whether 'representative Christian persons' or the whole community of faith, who offers pastoral care, there is a certain ambivalence as to who are the recipients of such care, specifically, whether pastoral care is for the gathered flock or for all people irrespective of creed or belief. Is pastoral care for the Christian community or the whole of society? This is a crucial question since it will not only determine the basic understanding of the nature of pastoral care but also strongly influence its day-to-day practice.

This dilemma is encapsulated neatly by Hutchins in his discussion¹ of the relationship of evangelism and pastoral care when he states:

"The tension of whether pastoral care is offered in order to convert or whether we convert and then care is seen historically in models of pastoral care."

The former approach is frequently the argument of those who would offer the services of the church to all in the community, sometimes seemingly on an indiscriminate basis, seeking their response to God's love offered in this way². Others would see this as a diversion from the central task of pastoral care, a 'casting of pearls before swine'. Though from the time of Christ, individual Christians³ and Christian communities have demonstrated God's care for all humanity through acts of kindness and generosity beyond the confines of the Christian community, should these acts be defined as pastoral care or simply seen as the natural outcome of lives changed and transformed by the love of God, part of the total proclamation of the Kingdom of God?

One school of thought believes that there can be no distinction between pastoral care and evangelism and thus for example Greeves (1960:9) maintains:

"Even more foolish than the alleged distinction between a preaching and a teaching ministry is the supposed contrast between pastoral work and evangelism. It is the lost sheep whom the Shepherd seeks; it is the scattered sheep whom he would gather in. Although there is all the difference between those who are in and those who are outside the fold, those who are without are His 'other sheep' (John 10:16)."

1. Hutchins, Charles H. "Evangelism and Pastoral Care" in *A Dictionary of Pastoral Care*, Campbell (1987).

2. For example, baptism of the children of parents who have no connection with the church concerned.

3. A good New Testament example is Dorcas who was: "...always doing good and helping the poor." Acts 9:36 (NIV).

Rather similar conclusions have been reached more recently by Moody (1992:2) who asserts that:

"...it is impossible to distinguish too closely between pastoral activity on one hand, and missionary or evangelistic activity on the other."

This conclusion still leaves some difficult questions unanswered, so at a later point in a chapter entitled: "Painful Encounters. Pastoral Care of the Unchurched", he pointedly asks:

"How should we use the occasions like baptism, marriage, and funerals when the world of folk religion comes into contact with the world of organised religion? As evangelistic opportunities? As claims upon our professional services which cannot be ignored, but which are at some remove from the real focus for ministry?" Moody (1992:108)

Here Moody raises two vital questions. Firstly, can pastoral care be *genuinely* and unconditionally offered if it is perceived as essentially a means to an end, even if that end is the worthy cause of evangelism? Secondly, is this care really at the heart of pastoral care or is it actually a distraction from 'the real focus of ministry' and offered simply out of necessity in order to demonstrate that the church *actually* cares?

The concept that pastoral care extends beyond the confines of the Christian community is implicit in several of the definitions of pastoral care already examined. Pattison, for example, maintains that pastoral care is aimed at: "the presentation of *all* people perfect in Christ to God." In expanding this phrase Pattison (1988:16) argues that pastoral care is not limited to Christians but is part of a ministry to "serve a needy world" and ultimately to bring "*all* to maturity in Christ". However, these references to 'maturity in Christ' are almost certainly allusions to biblical passages where the writer is concerned with the ministry to the church as the 'body of Christ'.¹ These verses would thus seem to be taken out of context since in them pastoral care is seen to be focussed on and within the community of faith and not on the whole of humanity.

In a similar way Campbell (1987:188) develops his assertion that pastoral care is 'concerned with the well-being of individuals and communities' by arguing that:

"The corollary of this account of the providers of care, is that the recipients are not defined by religious boundaries ... in place of a chaplaincy to the religious, there is required a pastoral care which responds to human distress wherever it is found, especially when that distress leads to a loss of hope in the power of love."

Quite clearly, for Campbell, the reference to 'individuals and communities' is analogous to Pattison's 'all' and is clearly not restricted to the community of faith. It is apparent that Campbell, in wishing to deny that pastoral care is the province of the

1. For example, "...so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ." (Colossians 1:28, NIV) and "... become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13 NIV).

professional, identifies pastoral caring with the 'arduous and lifelong task of loving one's neighbour in need' (1987:188). Thus instead of pastoral care being the professional shepherding of the flock, its primary derivation is seen to be from the basic discipleship of all Christians, which entails caring for others as exemplified in Matthew 25:31-46. As a corollary to this argument he suggests that terms such as 'lay pastoral care' are in fact misleading, pointing as they do to a false dichotomy in pastoral care between the services of the clergy and the laity.

Elsewhere in *Paid to Care?*, in which Campbell elaborates his concern that specialized counselling by clergy should not be seen as normative for pastoral care, he attacks the clergy's perceived clientele of the community of faith with the words:

"... there is always the tendency for pastoral care to become merely a form of chaplaincy to the religiously committed. Images of shepherds, flocks and sheepfolds are used to suggest that a small community of believers are to be tended in a safe refuge far from the harshness of the world outside." (1985:59).

Even though Campbell recognises that some are committed to a diametrically opposed view and hence acknowledges the possibility of the other extreme, namely that:

"...pastoral care may become detached from its locus in the Christian community and establish itself as a separate activity within the society at large," (1985:59)

nevertheless, it is evident that Campbell believes the context of pastoral care is wider than the care of the Christian community.

Although Brister's agenda is rather different, and *Pastoral Care in the Church* seeks to affirm both the unique role of the professional pastor as well as the involvement of the whole Christian fellowship, nevertheless, he comes to rather similar conclusions about the intended recipients of pastoral care, when he comments:

"Biblically and practically, Christian pastoral care is the mutual concern of Christians for each other and for those persons in the world for whom Christ died." Brister (1992:12).

Thus although pastoral care belongs rightfully within the fellowship, it is not imprisoned there and overflows into the world outside. This viewpoint is even more clearly stated in his discussion of the ministry of social concern:

"A minister's first concern is the mission and spiritual well-being of the congregation. Christian pastoral care anticipates inclusive interest in all persons without distinction of race, gender, social class, age or religious condition." Brister (1992:43)

Here again Christian pastoral care is not seen to be limited to the community of faith but rather is intended for all people.

It is interesting to speculate whether this perception of pastoral care is influenced by other than theological interpretation. An indirect hint of possible motivations

behind the emphasis on pastoral care in the world is provided by Wesley Carr in his discussion of leadership in ministry. Thus Carr suggests that it may arise from an attempt to try to escape the expectations of the congregation by moving into the world outside, and he notes:

"This results in immersion in structures of society, often at the expense of owning the church. Usually this takes the form of social action..." (1985:44)

The consequence of this is that all boundaries are removed and all recipients of pastoral care are equally affirmed. However, Carr perceives that this does not necessarily lead to a happy ending, and he comments:

"The church's caring activity becomes meeting the needs, or presumed needs of society's casualties. God's works are performed, but the demand for such ministry ultimately proves insatiable." (1985:44)

This then is the dilemma. If the boundaries which limit pastoral care to that of the Christian community are removed new limits have still to be sought in order to prioritise the overwhelming needs with which the pastor is faced. The danger is that he will be seduced into dealing exclusively with those which appear to be the most urgent, the crisis situations, to the neglect of those things which, although less urgent, in the long term prove to be the most important and beneficial to the overall practice of pastoral care.

The above consideration leads naturally to a discussion of the alternative proposition that pastoral care, as is perhaps intimated by its terminology, is more rightfully focussed within the flock, the gathered community of faith. Although in this chapter Pattison has been cited as an advocate of open-ended pastoral care, this does not do justice to his arguments in *A Critique of Pastoral Care*, in which he challenges the tendency to equate pastoral care with counselling or with social work and in which he seeks to reassert the importance of building the Christian community. Thus Pattison (1988:66) maintains that pastoral care must be there to help shape and disciple Christians and to equip them for mission. In this context he quotes approvingly the Roman Catholic theologian, Regis Duffy:

"Pastoral care is the continuing effort to assist Christian communities and their members to deepen their baptismal commitment and penitential recommitment so that they may do the work of the Gospel in our time."¹

Pattison (1988:66) goes on to affirm that the importance of pastoral care is: "...to forge credible communities of Christians..." , a statement which can be interpreted as locating the Christian community as a central focus of pastoral care.

In a similar way, Jacobs, in his *Towards the Fullness of Christ*, seeks to steer pastoral care away from a preoccupation with problems and crises and the fragmented ministry which so often results, towards a concern for growth and maturity. He

1. Duffy, Regis (1983) *A Roman Catholic Theology of Pastoral Care*, Philadelphia, Fortress, p.40.

caricatures much of contemporary pastoral care in portraying its perception as:

"The ninety and nine can be left to their own devices in favour of the more appreciative rewards of supporting the one who is lost." Jacobs (1988:7)

The picture of pastoral care which is implicit to this book concerns helping Christians along their journey of faith towards 'maturity in Christ' and hence is a care which is principally focussed on the Christian community. A discussion of the Apostle Paul as a pastor prompts Tidball (1986:101) to rather similar conclusions. He points out that Paul's main pastoral concern, as evidenced in his letters to Christian communities, is to bring the believer to Christian maturity and to do this within the context of the church, which is to be 'built up into Christ'. This understands pastoral care as largely confined within the believing community and Tidball (1986:100) rather neatly summarises this attitude towards pastoral care with the words:

"Pastoral work is simply bringing to full flower the bud of the Gospel."

Similarly, Snyder, in his book entitled *The Community of the King*, shares the same understanding and sees the pastoral (shepherding) function in terms of the edification and growth of the church, i.e., the pastor's primary function is the care of the Christian community.

If pastoral care is seen as exclusively focussed on the Christian community, how can this be consistent with Christ's injunction to love of neighbour and expression of practical concern for others outside the community of faith? Does this not inevitably mean that the church becomes inward-looking and preoccupied with its own agenda? Manson (1948:32) helpfully addresses these questions as he writes of the church:

"It is a society within a society. But it is not an isolationist group, carefully fostering a private life of its own secluded from the contaminations of the world. It has to discharge a task in the world as well as to maintain its own inner life. It has to present the Gospel to those outside; and it can only do that effectively as its members live according to Christ in their relations to one another. In other words the church has a dual role - apostolic in relation to those outside, and pastoral in relation to those within."

Thus Manson perceives that the focus of pastoral care needs to be directed onto the Christian community not so that it becomes insulated from the world but rather so it is equipped to go out into the world. Pastoral care thus builds up the individual and the community of faith so that both are enabled and empowered to take the Gospel and with it Christ's loving care into the wider community. The church must first be taught and feel what it is to be loved before it has the necessary vision to channel that love to others. This concept is perhaps illustrated by the received wisdom that children from disturbed or broken homes who have not been brought up in an environment of loving care are likely to have difficulty in caring for their own offspring. To love others necessitates first receiving love.

The author suggests that it is precisely this vision of pastoral care, that is, care geared to the growth of the Christian community, which needs to be restored so as to rescue contemporary pastoral care from its preoccupation with counselling and crisis-centred ministry, and to free ministers from the tyranny of the urgent needs that press upon them from all directions. This is not to turn one's back on the world but rather to prioritise the empowering and equipping of disciples to go out to change the world in which they already live and work. This is clearly the understanding of David Prior (1980:3) who argues:

"As individual Christians find their place and are properly nurtured in the community of faith, so the limitless resources resident in the members of each congregation will be released."

The direction of pastoral care is of course crucial since it determines the methodology appropriate to that care. Thus within the community of faith aspects such as prayer, worship, preaching, and the use of the Scriptures will come to the fore, whereas in the world secular-based counselling techniques are likely to be more acceptable. That being the case, it could be argued that the concern to extend pastoral care into the wider community may reflect a loss of confidence, by pastors, in the effectiveness of the traditional approaches to care and perhaps mask a hidden desire to work in areas where psychotherapy, rather than God, is king.

The Providers of Care

Even if it is accepted that the main context of pastoral care should be the community of faith, that does not immediately answer the question as to who should exercise this care. Traditionally this task has been the province, almost exclusively, of the ordained minister but, at least in principle, this is changing. Thus Hutchins asserts:

"Pastoral care has in the main been seen as the role of the ordained ministry, but the more recent emphasis on lay ministry has changed that."¹

Whereas this may be true in principle, and much contemporary literature on pastoral care would support that assertion, in practice membership expectations may chart a rather different course, leading Snyder to observe:

"Biblical images of pastors as equippers and disciplers are beginning to yeast their way into the church. On the other hand, in many local churches the expectation, both official and unofficial, is that the pastor is the professional religionist, the expert not the equipper and catalyst. The pastor is the one who does the religious work for the people, not the one who turns 'laymen into ministers'." (1983:168)

But why should this preoccupation with ministerial care have such a strong hold over the imaginations of the membership? Sunderland (1988:160), in a paper which centres on lay pastoral care, suggests that one of the reasons for the lack of acceptance of

1. Charles H. Hutchins "Evangelism and Pastoral Care" in Campbell (1987:84).

such pastoral care is because, despite the current emphasis on lay ministry:

"... clergy were educated to provide the congregation's *pastoral* ministry, while lay people were expected to witness to their faith in 'the world'; that is, to be responsible for the church's evangelism efforts."

This is a view to some extent shared by Allen (1986:66) who, whilst recognising that both clergy and laity are 'ambassadors and representatives' of the church's total ministry, nevertheless sees two distinct ministries. The ministry of the shepherd, which is set apart in the church, and the ministry of the laity, which is set apart in the world.

This same approach appears implicit in the writings of Wesley Carr when he states:

"Ministry is an activity of the whole church, clergy and laity together. Within that ministry accredited ministers have particular roles. Clearly they have responsibility for teaching and caring for the people of God, ..." Carr (1985:38)

The concern to differentiate between the role of ordained and lay persons, and their ministry of pastoral care, is also evident in Oden's *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*, where he describes his agenda in the following terms:

"A major part of the task ahead is to sharpen anew the needed distinction between clergy and laity, while at the same time respecting a continued stress on the general ministry of the laity - but not so as to deny or accidentally misplace the ministry of the clergy." Oden (1983:13)

This distinction, which we shall return to in later chapters, is described by Oden (1983:26) in the following way:

"All believers are called to witness to the gospel, visit the sick, serve the needy, and assist in building up the community. This general ministry is committed to every Christian,"

but,

"Ordained ministry is different from the general ministry of the laity in that one is duly called, prepared, examined, ordained and authorized to a representative ministry on behalf of the whole people (*laos*) of God."

Here, whatever else is intended, may be detected an underlying assumption that the ordained minister is an expert, professionally set apart for a distinct pastoral ministry. It is this same perception among the church membership which hinders the development of more widely acceptable pastoral care by lay people.

It is precisely this attitude which Campbell seeks to reform in *Rediscovering Pastoral Care*. Thus he argues that the key to pastoral care is relationship skills which are not predicated by training and paper qualifications. Thus Campbell (1986:11) claims, provocatively:

"The stress on relationship rather than knowledge forces us to ask whether any person may not be a pastor to another simply from the depths of his or her own humanity, and whether the male clerical dominance of the field from the past up to the present time may not be still obscuring many of its richest resources."

This opinion is consistent with a passage in his earlier book where, during the course of exemplifying pastoral care, he notes:

"The following description of a provider of pastoral care suggests that the gifts and experience which some 'ordinary' members possess prepare them as well for a ministry of care of others as any ordained minister." Campbell (1985:33)

Campbell goes even further than this and suggests that some lay persons may, in fact, be more competent than the highly trained and articulate professional to offer pastoral care. That this is not a completely idiosyncratic viewpoint is borne out by the testimony of Ronald Sunderland, a clinical pastoral supervisor, who acknowledges:

"...it is salutary to recognise that lay people gifted with the *charism* of pastoral care can minister as effectively as clergy, and often with greater effectiveness," (1988:169)

and subsequently concludes:

"In summary I hold that pastoral care is one of the tasks for which members of the congregation are 'gifted', and, therefore, should be called upon to fulfil." (1988:170)

The obvious conclusion of these assertions is that both Campbell and Sunderland believe that lay people have a vital role to play in pastoral care and that this is not a ministry over which the professional should hold a monopoly.

Others point out that not only are lay people gifted in pastoral care but that a one-man-band form of pastoral care is ineffective. Thus Harper (1988:64) perceives that inappropriate models of pastoral care restrict church growth, and thus he claims:

"Without proper pastoral care the Church will not grow, and it is hopelessly impractical to expect one man, or even a team of ministers, to cope with the pastoral needs of the entire church... If the sheep are multiplying, then the shepherds must multiply also ... Because of the basic one-man or professional style of ministry, it is impossible to cope properly with growth, and so it falls off."

In other words, if the church is to grow it is vitally important to share the responsibility of caring amongst members. In this context Harper suggests that the role of the ordained professional could be rather different to the traditional one:

"In fact the purpose of the so-called ministry today could be seen almost entirely in the training of shepherds, rather than in shepherding itself." (1988:65)

The need to break the shackles of the ministerial monopoly of pastoral care and to promote a sense of partnership amongst the whole people of God is highlighted by Deeks who uniformly uses the term 'pastor' to refer to *all* those who practise pastoral care. He elaborates on this usage in the following way:

"So much of the Christian tradition and ordinary parlance confines 'pastor' to an authorized church leader, normally an ordained minister. My emphasis, in contrast, has been to break out of the clerical monopoly and argue that pastoral care is a ministry in which all God's people participate." (1987:252)

This concern is similarly echoed by Campbell as he argues for the use of the phrase 'pastorhood of all believers' to point to the pivotal role of the laity; thus he writes:

"Leaders and teachers of congregations have no special prerogatives in this central meaning of shepherding. We must learn to speak of the *pastorhood of all believers* and to explore the idea that *each* person has a call to lead in that special way characteristic of the Good Shepherd." (1986:31)

Campbell's use of the expression 'pastorhood of all believers' is a helpful one since it brings into focus something that is implicit in the more traditional phrase 'priesthood of all believers'. The latter is often used to emphasise that individual believers have direct access to God, whereas it also carries with it the concept that Christians have a responsibility of priesthood to one another. This aspect is illuminated by the term 'pastorhood'¹.

Of course this understanding has been with the church since the Reformation which brought with it a completely new insight as to the role of the laity. Thus Tidball (1986:183) quotes the following words of Martin Luther in order to illustrate Luther's understanding of pastoral care:

"Surely we are named after Christ, not because he is absent from us but because he dwells in us, that is because we believe in him and are Christs one to another and do to our neighbours as Christ does to us."²

Luther's words remind us that the involvement of the laity in pastoral care is not about the current fashion in ministry, or about the pragmatic needs of today's church, but rather about the essential nature of what it means to be a Christian. Thus the New Testament is replete with teaching which instructs and exhorts Christians to be involved in a caring ministry, for example: to meet the practical needs of others (Matthew 25:34-36); showing brotherly love, especially hospitality (Romans 12:9-15); carrying each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2); encouraging and building up one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11); ministering to the sick, confessing sin and praying for one another (James 5:13-16); serving each other and administering God's grace (1 Peter 4:10).

The overall conclusion of this section must be that pastoral care necessarily involves the whole 'people of God' amongst whom different persons will have varying roles to play according to their gifts and skills. Precisely what this means for the role of the ordained ministry is an important aspect which must, however, await later discussion.

1. The appropriateness of this term is not shared by John Stott who comments: "The church is a universal priesthood, a universal diaconate, but the church is not a universal pastorate, ... The chief function of the pastor is teaching and to feed and pastor his sheep" (1969:45). It should be noted, however, that Stott has a very narrow view of pastoral care which he seems to interpret predominantly as preaching; admittedly not all have this gift.

2. Quoted from: Luther, M. (1955) *Luther's Works*, Vol. 31, p.368, Philadelphia, Fortress Press.

The Purpose of Pastoral Care

One of the major issue which lies at the heart of this discussion and has profound implications for the practice of pastoral care is the fundamental question as to what are the aims and objectives of pastoral care. An examination of much clergy-centred care might lead one to conclude that pastoral care was essentially reactive and its purpose was to respond to the debilitating crises which affect humanity. This conclusion would find support in the overwhelming bulk of pastoral publications which seek to engage with the therapeutic aspects of pastoral care, and frequently provide deep insight into dealing with particular specialised problem areas. However, a number of recent publications which have sought to grapple with and discuss the purpose of pastoral care come to rather different conclusions, since they recognise the importance of a care which is pro-active and aimed at nurture and growth. This is evident in the work of Willimon, who discusses pastoral care in the context of worship, and is cognisant of both dimensions of care as seen from an historical perspective, and thus he writes:

"The history of pastoral care shows two dimensions of the care of souls: (1) the preservation of spiritual health through preventive or protective care as well as guiding and sustaining care and (2) the restoration of spiritual and emotional health, if and when dysfunction occurs, through healing or therapeutic care." (Willimon 1979:100).

The first category of care listed above is most akin to the concept of nurture whereas the second describes more closely the response to crises.

In some respects, Jacobs in his important book *Towards the Fullness of Christ*, provides a synthesis of the two approaches since he suggests that the principal concerns of pastoral care should be directed towards the believer's maturity in Christ with emphasis not only on individual growth but the individual in relationship to others. In this regard Jacobs sees crises not as personal problems to be resolved but rather as opportunities for growth and development (Jacobs 1988:5, 100). Rowe is sympathetic to Jacobs' approach, although he is sufficiently pragmatic to acknowledge that crises can overwhelm other forms of care, and this is evident in his comment that:

"Alongside responses to critical events in people's lives or the important transition periods there is the chief work of pastoral care, often squeezed by crisis work, of helping people to grow." (1992:12).

Thus, whereas crises have to be taken into account, the real priority in pastoral care is seen to be nurture and development.

This concern for growth and maturity is shared by a number of authors. For example, Harper (1988) sees that pastoral care involves helping Christians grow in Christ (p.64), and that the goal of pastoral care is to: "... present every man mature in

Christ ..." (p.180). This is echoed by Rowe (1992:22) who asserts that: "Pastoral care needs to be directed primarily to personal growth." A similar vision is shared by Tidball (1986) who talks about enabling Christians to grow into the fullness of Christ but sees this growth placed firmly in the context of the local community of faith which needs to be simultaneously built up (p.101). Parallel ideas are shared by Campbell (1986:82) who pictures the Christian life as a journey and sees pastoral care as the means of nourishing and strengthening faith throughout life. Such writers perceive the objectives of pastoral care to be thoroughly nurture-oriented, helping believers to grow as whole people into full maturity in Christ.

This growth in maturity and discipleship will also lead to development in Christian service both within the community of faith and the outside world. Thus the Conference report (Methodist Church, 1986:058) states:

"One main purpose of pastoral care is to enable Christians to develop as ministers in a general sense, i.e., increasingly to dedicate their lives to the way of loving service. Necessarily, therefore, pastoral care includes the help given to Christian people to discern their charismatic gifts and to discover their vocations, in the church and in the world."

This is a view shared by Lesslie Newbigin who regards training of disciples as an integral part of pastoral care, and thus writes:

"... it is clear that our Lord's own use of the parable of the Shepherd cannot be made to justify this form of clericalism. He did not treat his disciples merely as sheep to be guarded in the field. He trained them to be sent out into the world as his representatives and witnesses. The sheep are themselves trained to be shepherds!" (Newbigin 1985:75)

The advantage of this nurture-oriented pastoral care is evident from the comments of William Still, a pastor, who wrote:

"My pastoral work of personal dealing, considerable though it is, has been greatly reduced through the years, because the building up of men's faith by the ministry of the Word of God solves so much in their lives, and enables those who receive it and seek to live by it to understand and solve so much in other lives that instead of becoming a liability on my time and energy, they become pastors themselves."¹

Thus care aimed at nurture has a dual effect. Firstly, it acts in a preventative way to circumvent or ameliorate the effect of crises. Secondly, it produces mature Christians who can minister to others. This complementarity of nurture to crisis care is also seen in the following quotation from Don Browning:

1. Still, W. (1976) *The Work of the Pastor*, Aberdeen, Didasko Press, p.15. Quoted in Tidball (1986:328).

"The minister has a clear duty to counsel the ill and dying but he should first have helped create a community with a religio-cultural view of the meaning of illness and death. Certainly the minister should counsel persons with marriage problems, sexual problems, and divorce problems, but he should first have helped to create among his people a positive vision of the normative meaning of marriage, sexuality and even divorce."¹

If the community of faith has been taught and nurtured this not only helps to prevent crises but also provides a solid foundation from which to respond to crises should they occur. Thus nurture helps the individual and the community to "... grow from life experiences ..." and to "... integrate them, in order to transform them into causes for growth," (Allen 1986:177).

The views of the authors presented here paint a picture of pastoral care which, although it recognises the necessity of dealing with life crises, sees the over-riding objective as maturity of the believer in Christ through the process of continuing growth. This is a view of pastoral care which upholds nurture as a means of preventing crises and sees crises, in turn, as an opportunity for promoting maturity. However, it is one thing to postulate aims and objectives – it is quite another to achieve them. All too often noble intentions are overwhelmed by the reality of the situation and this is exemplified in the section which follows which discusses the apparent dominance of crisis-centred care. This gap between perceptions and practice in pastoral care is a crucial aspect to which we shall return in the next chapter as we consider contemporary Methodist ministry.

Crisis-Centred Contemporary Care

Whereas probably few would object to the notion that the priority of pastoral care should be nurture of individuals and communities with the objective of growth towards maturity, however that is defined, the reality would appear to be quite different. Thus one of the major criticisms of much contemporary pastoral care is that it is directed towards crisis management. Typical of the comments relating to current practice are the following:

"Pastoral care and counselling tends to be preoccupied with crises and problems..." (Jacobs 1988:1)

"Much of the frustration that is experienced by the caring professions is due to the fact that their time is taken up with an 'ambulance' or 'first aid' work ..." (Jacobs 1988:10)

"Pastoral care seems to focus on people's problems ..." Taylor, M.H. (1983:15)

"... much of the pastoral counselling movement seems to centre upon giving first aid to stunted congregations and ailing Christians, rather than ensuring a growing

1. Browning, D. (1976) *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care*, Westminster Press, p.108-9, quoted in Green (1987:11).

up together into Christ." (Barker 1984:245)

"The pastoral counsellor's concern has tended to be with states of emotional distress, e.g., problems and problem solving, emotional strain, periods of crisis." (Leech 1977:100)

Admittedly, several of the above quotations relate, at least in part, to pastoral counselling which is arguably more problem-oriented, but nevertheless, it is felt that these accurately reflect much of contemporary ministerial care which increasingly sees 'counsellor' as an important role model.

Hints that at least some view the minister's role as predominantly crisis intervention are also found, for example, in comments by Brister in his pastoral care textbook:

"There has been a tendency in some discussions of pastoral care to conceive the pastor's job as a crisis ministry, a sort of contingency program for the accident victims of life," (1992:40)

and again:

"Pastoral care has been viewed mistakenly in the past as superficial do-goodism; as a crutch for life's cripples; as God's psychiatry aimed at 'peace of mind'; or as a form of faith healing that might save us from suffering, fear and death. This is the mistaken, theologically incapacitated caring of some who have viewed Christianity as a handy palliative administered by pastoral practitioners to sufferers in crises." (1992:12)

The view which Brister criticises is also evident, as has already been pointed out, in the problem-centred way in which some classical definitions of pastoral care have been interpreted¹.

This concentration on healing rather than growth and wholeness is initially perhaps surprising, but in fact there are a number of reasons which have been advanced for this particular emphasis. Thus Jacobs (1988:7) comments:

"Healing is more interesting, more tangible, and perhaps more immediately rewarding, than the encouragement of a concept as intangible as wholeness..."

According to Jacobs it is not just that crisis care is thrust upon the pastor but rather there is an inherent attraction in helping to overcome personal problems, a sense of achievement which helps to create and affirm pastoral identity. On the other hand, Hulme (1970:10) perceives that it is pastoral education which has helped to shape this emphasis. Thus he writes:

"The trends in pastoral education have emphasised: visiting the sick; comforting the dying; counselling the emotionally disturbed; relating to the socially delinquent...";

in other words he suggests that the very nature of ministerial training has tended to

1. Thus, see the discussion (pp.151-2) with regard to Wright's interpretation of the Clebsch and Jaekle definition of pastoral care. Taylor, M.H. (1983:30) provides a rather similar interpretation.

concentrate on the problem areas in ministry and this has had the effect of making that a focus of pastoral care. Although written nearly 25 years ago, there is little doubt that the suggestion is still valid as evident from the content of pastoral care handbooks and specialist texts¹.

Harper, who is a vigorous advocate of nurture care, believes that the level of demands on the ordained minister push him inevitably towards a concentration on problems. In support of this view Harper (1988:65) quotes the conclusions of a report on pastoral care in Anglican parishes². The report observes that as workload increases so:

"Care becomes geared to crisis rather than promotion of growth... Meanwhile the population at large finds the pastor occupied phrenetically with the chosen few... The retention of radical care based on one person per parish, whatever its population, strangles the growth of the church numerically, personally and corporately ... and points to a pastoral mis-match between intention and action which demands reformation."

Harper believes that church structures based around a one-man ministry are unworkable and inevitably lead to a collapse of nurture and growth. He argues that:

"... a church will never be a caring community and fulfil its pastoral role until it is able to share that pastoral responsibility among its members." (Harper 1988:66)

This view is shared by Sunderland (1988:167) who comments that:

"One of the tragedies of a model of pastoral care restricted to clergy is that the congregation's pastoral ministry is reduced to crisis response - and not even all these visits can be fitted into the pastor's busy schedule!"

There can be little doubt of the validity of the argument that excessive workload pushes pastoral care in the direction of the 'urgent', which almost inevitably means a ministry of crisis management. Support for this view will become more evident in subsequent chapters as the response of Methodist ministers is examined with regard to their practice of pastoral care.

Amidst the acknowledgement that contemporary pastoral care is often crisis-led are the twin realisations that this pattern is detrimental to the overall caring ministry and that it is not inevitable. Thus Taylor, M.H. (1983:94) recognises that:

"... there are relatively few examples in the Gospels of Jesus being involved in pastoral care, understood rather narrowly as dealing with individuals and their problems."

It would seem difficult to argue, as Taylor appears to do, that Jesus was not involved in pastorally caring for people, but in mitigation it is evident that the care Jesus gave

1. For example, a fairly recent publication is entitled: *Pastoral Care Emergencies: Ministering to People in Crisis* (David K. Switzer, New York, Paulist Press, 1989.)

2. The report is entitled: *Divide and Conquer*. Urban Project Workpaper 2, sponsored by the Archbishop's Council on Evangelism.

does not appear to parallel much contemporary pastoral care with its preoccupation with crisis management. Thus the four gospels record that Jesus spent a considerable amount of time with an inner core of disciples in what can best be understood as a ministry of nurture and growth. Again, although Jesus frequently addressed personal crises in the lives of individuals, the resolution of these crises was invariably attended by personal growth or integrated into teaching and faith development¹. Additionally, when appropriate, Jesus was ready and willing to delegate tasks to others and involve the disciples in his ministry - this in itself provided opportunities for personal growth and development².

Clearly Jesus exemplifies a different pattern of ministry which majors on nurture and seeks to integrate crisis resolution into an overall strategy of growth and development. Moody (1992:24) argues that this is typical of the scriptural concept of shepherding, and thus he writes:

" ... the biblical understanding of pastoring is proactive rather than reactive. It is not a matter of keeping people where they are, but of keeping pace with God where he is leading."

Such a viewpoint reflects the ministry of Jesus with its clear vision and direction, constantly and purposefully moving people on in the direction of maturity. A proactive, nurture-oriented ministry is necessarily also prophetic, especially in relation to structures within society that are harmful and prevent wholeness. Thus Brister (1992:127) comments:

"The *preventive prophetic level* of concern is essential in order to avoid simplistic solutions to life's threats and crises, many of which are produced by grave social problems."

and this is reinforced emphatically by Campbell (1987:189) who claims:

"A pastoral care which deals only with the distressed individual but ignores or condones social forces which cause the distress can be regarded as worse than useless, a tacit acceptance of injustices inimical to love. Thus the prophetic and the pastoral must be viewed as two aspects of a single ministry of love, and caring must include a critique of the structures of both church and society."

Once again, Jesus' own ministry provides a paradigm of prophetic care as exemplified by his repeated critique of the legalism of the religious authorities which hindered the

1. For example, the 'healing of the paralytic' in Mark 2:1-12. In this account, Jesus not only deals with the paralytic's physical need but also addresses the inner spiritual need of forgiveness (v.5). This provides an opportunity of affirming the faith of the man's four friends (v.5); confronting the critical thoughts of the teachers of the law (vv.6-10); teaching about his own authority (v.10); and encouraging public faith in the goodness of God (v.12).

2. For example, John records that it was his disciples rather than Jesus himself who baptised (John 4:2) and on a number of occasions the gospel writers note that Jesus sent out his disciples on missions which involved a very similar ministry to his own (e.g., Matthew 10:1-16; Luke 10:1-20). Even failure in his disciples' ministry was turned into learning situations (Mark 9:14-29).

spiritual lives of the ordinary people.

It is apparent from the above discussion that there is concern with the problem-centred nature of much contemporary pastoral care. The author believes that such a direction in pastoral care is detrimental to the life of Christian communities and is a consequence of present patterns and emphases within ministry. Alternative approaches embracing more nurture-directed care are possible and these will be elaborated in due course.

The Breadth of Pastoral Care

Increasingly, professional pastoral care is equated to pastoral counselling¹, whereas lay pastoral care is often regarded as synonymous with visiting, especially the sick or the elderly. In both cases pastoral care is seen in terms of a one-to-one relationship either in a formal counselling situation or an informal home visit. Such is the fixation with this understanding of pastoral care, at least in Methodism, that a number of correspondents, both ministerial and lay, queried the appropriateness of including local preachers in a survey concerned with pastoral care. For example, one local preacher responded to the inclusion of local preachers in a survey on pastoral care as follows:

"To the best of my knowledge, at the moment there is no direct link between Methodism's pastoral work and its local preaching except in the fact that any preacher is inevitably leading the congregation's outlook on any matters he/she cares to mention, at least for a while."

while a minister commented:

"I think you are asking for the wrong documents from Methodism for this kind of enquiry and research. Local preachers are not necessarily involved with pastoral caring - that is the task of pastoral visitors/ class leaders!"

As we shall argue in this section, this is an inadequate view, since pastoral care is much more than pastoral visiting or counselling, and preaching, along with many other activities, forms a vital part of the overall care and nurture of the faith community. That this narrow view of pastoral care is not confined to Methodism is illustrated by the comments of Carey and Hind (1987:52) who, in writing about ministry from an Anglican perspective, state:

1. For example, Allen (1986:216) writes: "... the picture has become so confused that the distinction has been lost between pastoral care and pastoral counselling."; similarly Tidball (1986:20) in discussing approaches to pastoral theology comments: "A fourth arm which has held sway in recent years is in danger of completely identifying pastoral theology with pastoral counselling"; again, Hulme (1970:10) states: "Sometimes the terms pastoral care and pastoral counselling are used synonymously..."; and Pattison (1988:24) urges that: "Pastoral care must be much wider than just counselling people." Willimon (1979:11), in turn, acknowledges that initially: "... For me pastoral care had been interpreted mainly in terms of pastoral counseling - and rather limited circumscribed models of counseling at that"; and Green (1987:5) claims that: "The popular image of pastoral care is a meeting between two people relying heavily on individual skills derived from psycho-therapeutic models."

"The proclamation of the gospel message, the dominical sacraments, the oversight of the Church correspond to the traditionally identified categories of the prophetic, priestly and royal aspects of the ministry of Christ. To these we should add the diaconal ministry of pastoral care."

Here again, pastoral care is described as an area of ministry distinct from preaching, worship and the sacraments, whereas we shall argue that all three form an integral part of pastoral care.

In line with the conclusions that we eventually reach, several writers express the view that pastoral care is not a separate aspect of ministry but rather a common thread which ties distinct parts of Christian ministry together. Thus in discussing the implications of various definitions of pastoral care Pattison (1988:16) argues that its aim is: "...to help people to know love...", and that this aim serves to link pastoral care with ministry as a whole. For example, he suggests that although the aim of worship is to glorify God, nevertheless, worship functions as pastoral care through encouragement and forgiveness. Similarly Hulme (1970:10) identifies pastoral care with the whole ministry when he writes:

"Broadly speaking, pastoral care is synonymous with the entire ministry. Everything a minister does as a minister is pastoral care,"

although he does acknowledge that normally it is associated with pastoral conversation or dialogue. Again, Willimon (1979:2) believes that the most effective pastors are those who make this connection and integrate their pastoral care into the whole of their ministry, especially worship, and Brister (1992:113) echoes this understanding when he writes:

"The wise pastor sees shepherding possibilities, not only in personal counselling, but in preaching, worship experiences, calling, correspondence, and social encounters in the community."

It is clear from the above that there is a significant body of opinion which argues that pastoral care should not be understood as limited to one-to-one relationships as exemplified by pastoral counselling and visitation but has to be seen as an integral part of all the ministry of the community - to belong to the whole life of the church. We turn now to look at this in more detail.

In contradistinction to those who think local preaching in particular and preaching in general have no connection with pastoral care, others believe that preaching is the most vital activity in caring for the community of faith. Thus, for example, Barker (1984:244) proposes that a biblical model of pastoral care is not:

"... primarily the model of healer, facilitator or counsellor, nor the finder of appropriate texts for problems, but rather that of nourisher and feeder who provides food and makes sure it is appropriate and received."

In keeping with this assertion he quotes approvingly from W. Still:

"The pastor is the shepherd of the flock and feeds the flock upon God's Word and therefore the bulk of pastoral work is done through the ministry of the Word. Only the residue of problems and difficulties which remain following the ministry of the Word require to be dealt with in private."¹

and also from Archbishop Trench:

"For the pastor the feeding of the flock, the finding for them of spiritual nourishment, is the first and the last. Nothing else will supply the room of this, nor may be allowed to put this out of that foremost place which by right it should occupy. How often ... the *preaching* of the Word loses its pre-eminence; the feeding falls into the background and is swallowed up in the shepherding which presently becomes no true shepherding because it is not feeding as well."²

Tidball (1986:213) also recognises that for some, and he cites the famous Baptist preacher Spurgeon as an example, preaching was part of the essence of pastoral ministry since through preaching came conversion and growth in Christ, especially where preaching was earthed in daily practical experience.

In a chapter entitled *Contemporary Preaching*, Allen (1986) argues powerfully that preaching is at the heart of pastoral care; thus he asserts:

"The proclamation of the Word can never be separated from how the community is cared for," (p.155)

and again,

"... preaching is part of pastoral care because it is the word spoken verbally and powerfully by the preacher (who in most cases is the pastor), in order to change or influence those who hear those words," (p.156)

and once more,

"The words which are spoken are to facilitate, to prepare the soil of the soul, to cause the heart to be receptive and responsive to the Word of God, as it now flows through our human words. Surely this is the central function of pastoral care; preaching, in this case, falls fully within the scope of 'ministering' on the part of the pastor." (p.158)

This enthusiasm for the role of preaching is also shared by Oden (1984:116) who maintains:

"... pastoral care can and must be attempted through preaching... The pastor in public communication continues to care for souls publicly but within a communication context that differs from that of individual dialogue."

and Brister (1992:131) who understands that:

"Pastoral preaching is a powerful event in which one speaks for God in order to affect the life situations of other persons."

1. Still, W. (1976) *The Work of the Pastor*, Aberdeen, Didasco Press, p.1, quoted in Barker (1984:244).

2. Trench, R.C. (1880) *Synonyms of the New Testament*, 9th. Edition, London, Macmillan, p.86, cited by Barker (1984:244).

From these, and a multitude of other references, it is quite clear that preaching is recognised as an important part of the pastoral care of the community of faith. However, a certain caution is necessary in this emphasis, since in the majority of Christian churches preaching is seen largely as the preserve of the ordained minister and the inherent danger is always that pastoral care is identified with the clergy. Thus we maintain that preaching is an important part of the web of pastoral care within the community of faith but is not its sum total.

Of course, contemporary preaching rarely occurs in isolation, and many consider that the worship environment plays an equally important part in caring for the church. In particular, Willimon (1979) in a book entitled *Worship as Pastoral Care* and Green (1987) with his book subtitled *Worship and Liturgy from the Perspective of Pastoral Care* both argue that worship, together with the sacraments, is a fundamental part of the church's caring ministry. Thus Willimon's declared intention is to:

"... see some of the many ways in which worship and pastoral care can inform, challenge, enrich and support each other..." (1979:12)

and his essential concern is that:

"Worship is a major, if recently neglected, aspect of pastoral care." (1979:47)

Willimon sees corporate worship as a redressing of the over-emphasis on individualism and an unhealthy preoccupation with counselling. Thus in a chapter entitled *Worship as Pastoral Care* he explains:

"My thesis in this chapter is not that we should use the liturgy as a new method of pastoral care but that the liturgy itself and a congregation's experience of divine worship already function, even if in a secondary way, as pastoral care. The pastoral care that occurs as we are meeting and being met by God in worship is a significant by-product that we have too often overlooked." (1979:48)

Willimon elaborates on the complementary nature of worship as pastoral care with a revealing quotation from an editorial comment by Charles Scott¹:

"We need to be aware of the close relationship between pastoral care and worship ... however skilled and empathetic the counselor may be, he cannot in his own person reflect the caring and sharing community that epitomizes worship at its truest ... it should not be forgotten that one of the advantages the pastoral counselor has over his secular counterpart is that he works within the context of a worshipping community."

One particular example that Willimon discusses in Chapter 5 is the way in which liturgy functions as a means of coping with life crises such as birth, marriage and death

1. Scott, Charles W. , editorial in *Pastoral Psychology*, February 1972, pp. 5-6, quoted in Willimon (1979:48)

Green (1987), who wrote nearly a decade later, has a similar high view of the potency of worship to address the human condition. Thus he argues:

"If liturgy, focussed on Jesus Christ, is about the mutual giving and receiving of worth then it must act directly as pastoral care because it confronts the basic human need." (p.18)

Interestingly, Green is less centred on the priestly role of the ordained minister than Willimon and understands that worship enables pastoral care by the whole community. Thus he observes:

"... the Peace opens up the way to our being touched not just by another person but by God's love, which both purges and heals ..." (p.28)

and again,

"Worship puts us in touch with threatening and liberating truths. Resistance to them is almost invariably a moment of pastoral opportunity and potential growth. They are occasions for Christians to minister to each other..." (p.32)

In both cases he recognises that care is exercised through the congregation. Green also discusses a number of the elements of worship which have particular significance for pastoral care and these include both confession and intercessory prayer. As with Willimon before him, he also recognises the significance of funeral services as a means for helping people deal with guilt, with unfinished business, and with their own preparation for death.

The importance of worship as pastoral care is also acknowledged by a number of other authors, although in a less detailed way. Thus Moody (1992:104), drawing on the insights of Green, again highlights the involvement of the whole community of faith in the caring effects of worship, and thus he writes:

"Worship includes the more-than-verbal. The details of how people are seated, how they greet each other, what non-verbal expressions are encouraged, or discouraged, the silences, the balances of formality and informality, as well as what images of God and of human life are promoted in the preaching and liturgical texts, are all pastorally significant."

For Wesley Carr the importance of worship is perceived in a different light. Worship, especially the occasional offices, are seen as educative; thus he writes:

"Pastoral care based on the resurrection involves worship. This is more than inviting people to take part in services in church. In pastoral work we enable them to bring whatever aspects of their individual and corporate lives they wish. We can then attempt an educational process which is programmed through a liturgical act. Baptisms, weddings and funerals are instances of how people may still expect the church to do this." (Carr 1989:209)

Still others note the fundamental importance of the sacraments, especially the eucharist, in the overall balance of pastoral care (Allen 1986:94, 207).

Aside from preaching and worship, pastoral care of the faith community has been seen to involve a whole variety of aspects such as: prayer (Allen 1986:94,207); education and training (Jacobs 1988:11,14 and Snyder 1977:93); discipline (Pattison 1988:55ff.); letters and visitation¹ (Allen 1986:94). Not only is pastoral care made up of diverse aspects but it is seen to be centred, not in any one individual, but in the whole body of believers. Thus Evans (1961:25) avers that:

"Pastoral care is not a solitary activity, as it were, of a lone official called a Pastor..."

rather, he argues the very community needs to be a 'fellowship of pastoral care'.

From this brief examination of the breadth of pastoral care, it has become apparent that many authors understand such care to involve far more than personal counselling or pastoral visiting. Pastoral care is a concern which is discovered within the whole spectrum of the activities of the church and is a vital part of the ministry of the whole people of God.

The Working Definition of Pastoral Care

Now we return to look in detail at the proposed working definition of pastoral care which seeks to draw together the various threads which have emerged in the above discussion. In so doing it is recognised that there is no general agreement as to the nature of pastoral care and, hence, the proposed definition would not receive universal support. Nevertheless, a working definition is helpful at this juncture as a part of the identification of pastoral care within contemporary Methodism, since it will provide a benchmark for evaluating the notions and practice of pastoral care within the church. Because of its pivotal importance it is worth reiterating that:

Pastoral care is a partnership in God's shepherding of the community of faith, by the whole community, amongst whom certain members may have particular defined responsibilities, and is intended to nurture and build up both individuals and the community itself into a maturity of faith and Christian living, by means of the whole range of activities within the community, both personal and corporate, to the end that the community is enabled and empowered not only to live and work to God's praise and glory but to reach out to those outside its boundaries and so advance the Kingdom of God.

Much of the content of this working definition is based on the preceding discussion and analysis, but some additional explanatory comment is probably helpful.

1. There is of course a considerable literature on pastoral visiting and indeed counselling, but this is not being considered in detail here. Pastoral visiting will be reviewed in more depth in the following chapter in the discussion of pastoral practice.

Firstly, pastoral care is seen as a 'partnership in God's shepherding of the community of faith'. The concept of shepherding will be dealt with in detail in a subsequent chapter on metaphors of pastoral care, but the aspect which is stressed here is that human care is seen as an outworking of God's loving care for the community and Christians understand themselves as co-workers with God in extending this care to one another¹. As a consequence of this approach, God is seen to be the shepherd of the community of faith and the community itself is delegated the responsibility of 'under-shepherds'. This introductory phrase is also a reminder of the transcendent quality of Christian pastoral care as well as pointing to the community of faith or the gathered believers as the domain in which such care is exercised.

This latter point, which understands pastoral care as focussed upon God's gathered people, the church, is perhaps the most controversial and yet at the same time probably the most crucial, since it determines not only the boundaries of pastoral care but also the aims and means employed. The criticisms of this focus have already been rehearsed in earlier sections in this chapter and largely see such care as the mark of an inward-looking church which seeks to monopolise God's loving care within the boundaries of the fellowship or, as Campbell (1987:188) described it, to provide: "... a chaplaincy to the religious...". This criticism ignores the apparent distinctiveness of the church which is emphasised throughout the New Testament writings. Thus although all people are God's creatures and belong to him, nevertheless, the community of faith stands in a special relationship to God as described for example in Peter's first letter:

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (I Peter 2:9, NIV)

This special relationship of the believer with Christ and so with God is expressed throughout the New Testament with a wide variety of metaphors and images. Thus the community of faith is variously described: as 'saints'², i.e., those set apart from the world for God's service; as 'children of God'³; as 'fellow-citizens' and 'members of God's household'⁴; as 'God's temple'⁵. Jesus himself recognised that his disciples were 'not of this world' (John 17:16) and Peter was given that initial

1. The concept of Christians being in partnership with God is an idea expressed by the Apostle Paul in writing to the church at Corinth where he describes the ministry of himself and Apollos among the Corinthian Christians in the following terms: "For we are God's fellow-workers; you are God's field, God's building." (1 Cor. 3:9, NIV).

2. A word widely used in the New Testament, especially in the Pauline epistles. See, for example, Phil. 1:1.

3. A description favoured in the Johannine writings, e.g., John 1:12 and 1 John 3:1.

4. Ephesians 2:19 5. 1 Corinthians 3:16.

charge to take care of and feed Christ's sheep (John 21:15-17). Similarly Paul, in writing to the churches in Galatia, urges:

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." (Galatians 6:10)

again recognising the uniqueness of the Christian family. Thus, as is evident from these and other New Testament references, believers are understood to stand in a special relationship with God which is distinct from that of the remainder of God's creation. Pastoral care is thus centred upon God's flock in a special way.

Over the centuries the distinction between the church and the general populace in countries where Christianity was widely embraced gradually disappeared, resulting in notions such as 'Christian Britain' with an established church seeking to care for the whole population. Whether this was ever a reality is doubtful and it is apparent that even in Wesley's time a large part of the populace had little active relationship with the established church. The concept of the church caring for the whole community would appear far less a serious proposition in twentieth-century Britain where the large majority of the population have little contact or desire for relationship with the church and where significant proportions, especially amongst ethnic minorities, follow other faiths. With the dominance within Britain of a secular humanistic ethic, the boundaries between the communities of faith and the wider population have the potential to be more clearly defined and for pastoral care to be more narrowly focussed – not so the church may turn its back on the world but rather so it is equipped and prepared to challenge and confront the world with the message of the Kingdom of God.

A point that is often lost in discussion of pastoral care is that such care is not the prerogative of specialists but the responsibility of 'the whole community'. This is a clear New Testament principle. Thus whereas certain persons may have special responsibility in pastoral leadership, all Christians have an obligation for the loving care of the community including the care of those in leadership positions¹. It is a general care of the community which is exemplified and detailed within the corpus of the New Testament epistles, especially in those written to churches rather than individuals, and ranges from provision of practical needs such as food and clothing, to responsibilities to pray for one another, to share difficulties and to build each other up

1. Consider, for example, Jesus' command to the disciples to: 'Love one another.' (John 13:34) and the many Pauline injunctions, such as: 'Share with God's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.' (Rom. 12:13); '... serve one another in love.' (Gal.5:13); 'Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up ...' (Ephesians 4:29); 'Each of you should look not to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.' (Phil. 2:4); 'Therefore encourage one another and build each other up ...' (1 Thessalonians 5:11); 'And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.' (Hebrews 10:24).

in the faith. Notwithstanding this principle of shared concern in caring, certain individuals were given particular responsibility in oversight of the flock – not so that they would shoulder the whole burden of pastoral care but to ensure that it was done effectively and to provide motivation and direction to such care. The role of pastoral leadership is an important aspect to which we shall return in subsequent chapters.

The purpose of pastoral care is to be seen primarily as intended 'to nurture and build up both individuals and the community itself into a maturity of faith and Christian living'. This means that such care will be aimed at growth and development rather than crisis management. That is not to say that crises will be ignored, but it does mean that the involvement of key personnel in the ongoing response to crises will need to be reassessed. More emphasis will be given to preparation and prevention rather than seeking to pick up the pieces, and crises will be understood as opportunities for growth rather than simply emergencies to be contained or problems to be responded to. A key aspect which will be developed is the need to share the burden of emergencies around the community rather than constantly tying up the leadership. In this way not only are the leadership freed to concentrate on the *important* rather than the *urgent*, but also the members of the community learn and are built up through service and involvement.

This caring is of course brought about by 'means of a whole range of activities within the community, both personal and corporate'. This emphasises that pastoral care is not limited to, or identified with, personal visitation or counselling. It covers a whole spectrum of activities amongst which: preaching, worship, training, the sacraments, visiting, prayer, and fellowship groups all have an important part to play. Care is exercised by individuals for groups and by groups for individuals as well as by personal encounters. None of the caring activities exist in isolation and each should be designed to work together to reinforce the overall structure of the oversight of the faith community. This is a further reason why pastoral care is most effectively targeted on the body of believers since it is only such persons who are open to all the possible channels of pastoral care that are available within the church.

The conception that such pastoral care is necessarily inward-looking and incestuous is rebutted by the declared intent of such care 'that the community is enabled and empowered not only to live and work to God's praise and glory but to reach out to those outside its boundaries and so advance the Kingdom of God.' Here we see that the community of faith is built up not for its own sake but rather as part of its rightful worship of the living God. Furthermore, a strong body of believers is able to reach out effectively into the surrounding community, bringing to bear the whole range of strengths and skills of the church and not just the services of one overstretched Christian professional or specialist.

The Essence of Pastoral Care - Some Methodist Perceptions

So far we have been considering the picture which may be discovered in the contemporary literature as to the nature of pastoral care and in the light of this we have argued for a particular definition of pastoral care which highlights the main concerns which have been discussed. We now turn to examining the perceptions of pastoral care as expressed by both ministers and local preachers in response to the survey question on the 'essence of pastoral care'¹. Responses to this open question were many and varied and 132 (93%) ministers offered definitions ranging from one word² to a whole paragraph. A few of the definitions tended to detail pastoral activities without necessarily drawing out their purpose, for example, one minister explained pastoral care in the following terms:

"1) Pastoral visitation of *community roll* in houses. 2) Hospital visitation of sick and elderly. 3) Counselling of bereaved. 4) Counselling of parents for baptism and marriage counselling in preparation for and following marriage."

Several focussed more on the qualities necessary for pastoral care. Thus another minister described the essence of pastoral care as:

"Openness. Acceptance. Love."

A small number expressed a very circumscribed view of pastoral care with descriptions which seemed to imply a solely ministerial activity. Typical of such comments is the following:

"...availability without fuss. There is no point in getting any more involved than the Doctor does. He cannot be checking up on the effectiveness of his attentions all the time. It is wrong for me to fuss to the point where people feel abandoned when it is time for me to move to the next Circuit. I don't like to feel that I am abandoning them,"

which seems to indicate a viewpoint in which pastoral care is understood as largely ministerial care which it is better not to overdo since it may be sorely missed when the minister moves on.

Whereas it is possible to use individual definitions to emphasise or illustrate particular points, it is clearly advantageous to have a mechanism whereby the whole body of viewpoints is taken into account. This can only be achieved in the case of open questions, such as the one encountered here, by categorisation of the responses so as to make them amenable to analysis, and correlation with other variables. In this case the problem has been approached by initially browsing through the whole stock of material and devising categories into which the responses could be classified. This

1. In both the ministerial and local preacher survey the respondents were asked to: "Describe your understanding of the essence of pastoral care" (Appendix I, Q. 18) or, "Please describe briefly what you consider to be the essence of pastoral care." (Appendix II, Q.37).

2. The single Greek word 'Αγαπη'.

is necessarily a somewhat tentative procedure since it requires interpretation of the meaning of often brief texts, and frequently each definition may embrace a range of understandings of pastoral care. Notwithstanding these difficulties, seven distinct categories have been proposed which are believed to encompass and take into account the bulk of the material supplied in the pastoral care definitions. These categories, together with associated keywords¹, are summarised in Table 5:1 overleaf. After adoption of these classifications the material was reworked and the responses were evaluated according to the overall sense of the phrase, sentence or paragraph, using the keyword as an initial indicator.

The Seven Categories of Pastoral Care

It is to be expected that variables such as: gender, age, status, experience, location and theological viewpoint would colour a minister's understanding of pastoral care and thus even in a cohort drawn from one denomination a wide variety of views is to be anticipated. This is indeed the case as is evident from the seven categories necessary to take account of the range of views expressed. These categories are now briefly described and explored as a preliminary to a more thorough discussion and analysis of the survey results.

Many ministers perceive that an essential aspect of pastoral work is 'relationship development' between pastor and people. Consequently, descriptions of the essence of pastoral care often focus on qualities of the pastor such as: acceptance, approachability, attentiveness, availability, *etc*, which may be regarded as prerequisites to effective relationship development. Even within this category two distinct emphases may be discerned: a reactive approach, as exemplified in terms such as 'accessible' or 'available' and a more pro-active stance revealed in terms such as 'befriending' or 'knowing'. Possibly the most frequently quoted keyword in this general category is 'availability' or one of its cognates. Thus one minister writes:

"The essence of pastoral care lies in the ability to make oneself totally available at need. The difficulty is in managing it!"

However, availability is not just about having time for people but also in relating to them in such a way that the pastor is perceived as available. This understanding is expressed in the following ministerial description of the essence of pastoral care:

"Always being available to people in times of need: being supportive and helpful in every way possible. This requires building up a relationship of trust which is done by visiting, praying with and for them, and observing absolute confidentiality."

1. These keywords or key phrases point to the understanding of the category although they cannot be used without reflection since their meaning may be nuanced or indeed transformed by the actual context.

Table 5:1 Keyword Classification of Pastoral Care**1. Relationship Development**

Acceptance/ Accessible/ Available/ Aware/ Approachable/ Attentive/
 Befriending/ Compassionate/ Concern/ Contacting/ Knowing/ Meeting/
 Openness/ Relating/ Respect/ Sensitive/ Sympathising/ Trustworthy/
 Understanding/ Visiting.

2. Mediating God

Assurance/ *Agape*/ Being Christ/ Bringing Jesus/ Conveying/ Channel (Grace,
 Jesus)/ Evangelise/ Expressing (God's love)/ Father (in God)/ Forgiveness/
 Intercession/ Jesus (central)/ Justice/ Love/ Leading(to God)/ Mediating (Jesus)/
 Opening to God/ Presence of God/ Reflecting God/ Representing/ Showing.

3. Sharing Common Humanity

Alongside/ Being a person with/ Belonging/ Contributing/ Friend/ Feeling/ Giving
 Oneself/ Involvement/ Impartial/ Mutuality/ Receiving/ Reciprocating/ Sharing/
 Sharing (pain)/ Standing with.

4. Crisis Care

Caring/ Counselling/ Helping/ Healing/ Hanging-on/ Problem solving/
 Perception/ Provision/ Releasing/ Resourcing/ Responding/ Supporting/
 Strengthening/ With in Crisis.

5 Growth (through enabling)

Affirming/ Allowing (development)/ Empathise/ Enabling/ Encourage/ Empower/
 Fullness/ Fulfil potential/ Listening/ Nurture/ Space for self-discovery/ Potential
 development/ Recognition/ Setting free for service/ Well-being/ Wholeness.

6. Growth (through direction)

Arousing/ Advising/ Assisting/ Building/ Curing soul/ Directing/ Enrich/
 Guidance/ Identifying needs/ Insight/ Nurture/ Oversight/ Provoke to action/
 Responsibility/ Teaching/ Vision.

7. Body Ministry

Amateur/ Belonging/ the Body/ Dispensability/ Linking/ Whole church/ Whole
 community.

For some, as in the quotation above, the importance of building relationships through means such as regular visitation is because such an activity is a necessary precursor to effective crisis care, i.e., if people know the pastor then they will come to him when they are in trouble. For others, relationship development would appear to be an end in itself.

A second important response is expressed by the idea that in pastoral care the minister is 'mediating the presence of God'. This entails being a channel of God's power, of being His representative and of making real the presence of God in pastoral encounters, and is expressed particularly in keywords/ phrases such as: 'being Christ', 'bringing Jesus', 'channel of grace', 'father in God', 'reflecting God' and the like. This understanding is further exemplified, on the one hand, by a zeal for evangelism which seeks to bring the Gospel to the lost, and on the other, by an incarnation of the love of God which assures the individual of God's forgiveness and seeks God's blessing. The underlying emphasis is priestly in the sense that the pastor is seen as the means by which God is brought to the people and by which the people are brought to God. He is a mediator. This, of course, does not preclude the involvement of lay persons in pastoral care since much the same understanding could be uncovered within the concept of the 'priesthood of all believers'. A priestly emphasis within pastoral care is also a powerful reminder of the importance of worship and the sacraments as integral parts of such care and these aspects are central to the writings of Willimon (1979) and Green (1987) which have been discussed earlier in this chapter. This category, with its focus on the presence of God, also draws attention to the transcendent character of pastoral care.

In contradistinction to the above understanding, the third grouping emphasises that pastoral care involves 'sharing common humanity'. This approach minimises the distinction between the pastor and the one cared for and highlights the need to identify with and to share in the pain of the distressed. Keywords/ phrases which encapsulate this understanding include: 'alongside', 'being a person with', 'giving oneself', 'sharing', 'standing with'. The pastoral relationship is seen to be reciprocal, with the pastor both giving and receiving in the act of caring. The power of such a pastoral relationship is based upon a realisation of shared humanity, of identity with the weak and powerless rather than access to the transforming power of a transcendent reality. The model is of 'the wounded healer' type, Nouwen (1990), the incarnate Jesus who understands and empowers because he shares our humanity and our suffering. Possibly the most common phrase encountered under this umbrella is 'being there', a phrase which epitomises a sharing and standing with another. This category is normally described in the context of problem-centred or crisis care and

just occasionally combined with the concept of mediating the presence of God, as in the quotation below:

"Standing alongside, weeping with those who weep, laughing with those who rejoice; providing some strength to people who are vulnerable - hopefully helping them onto firmer ground. And praying for them and with them, especially if prayer is hard for them, and assuring them of the God who loves and cares - especially if they have lost sight of him."

There is no concept of a priest or Christian professional required in the above understanding of pastoral care and this is emphasised pointedly by the minister who wrote of the essence of pastoral care:

"An amateur rather than a professional occupation. Takes place between two equals rather than a helper and client. It is a matter of crying with those who cry and rejoicing with those who rejoice."

Another important aspect of the pastoral task is 'crisis care', and this forms the fourth of the designated categories. This is understood to characterise that aspect of caring which is controlled by emergencies and crises which arise from time to time within the life of the membership or the surrounding community. Typical examples would include: bereavement, marriage-breakdown or family crisis, sickness or hospitalisation. Such care is necessarily reactive in nature and may in extreme cases completely dominate the pastoral timetable of the minister¹. Of necessity, funerals have to be conducted and the hospitalised member expects visitation. With aging congregations the needs of crisis care have the potential to grow almost exponentially, thus overwhelming other aspects of care. In such a situation relationship development may be seen as an adjunct to crisis care and does little more than enable the minister to function more effectively in emergency situations. The most commonly encountered phrases are typically: 'support in times of stress or crisis' and 'being alongside in illness'.

Where crisis care has not commandeered the pastoral task many ministers recognise the need for 'growth' or 'nurture' care. Nurture is understood to be that process by which the individual is enabled to develop to his/her full potential, to grow to maturity in Christ. A strong emphasis on personal or congregational growth may minimise the deleterious effects of crises and so may be seen to parallel the role of preventative health care within the National Health Service. More than that, such nurture can be recognised as part of the process of 'making disciples' an integral, but often neglected, part of the dominical commission². In the process of 'discipling', as it

1. One minister, for example, stated that in the past year he had taken: 100 funerals, 50 weddings and 120 baptisms and commented, "Great openings if there were more of me!"

2. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19,20).

is sometimes known, Christians are taught, trained and prepared to share in the work of caring for others and so such nurturing has vital long-term consequences in the overall strategy of pastoral care. The growth category may be seen to have two distinct sub-divisions depending on how the growth is initiated or developed. On the one hand, the growth may be seen to be brought about by 'enabling' where the pastor acts simply as a catalyst for change; on the other hand, growth may be considered to result from 'direction' where the pastor is integrally involved in the process through advice, guidance or counsel.

Although the two categories will tend at times to overlap, nevertheless, it was felt that there were sufficient differences to allow meaningful distinction. 'Growth through enabling' is characterised by such keywords as: 'affirming', 'enabling', 'encourage', 'empower', 'fulfil potential' and the like, and is exemplified in the following ministerial definitions of the essence of pastoral care:

"To enable people to grow to maturity in Christ."

"Supporting and encouraging church folk and others in their Christian and daily lives. Helping them to experience the presence of God in their lives, to lean on him and grow in him. Helping them to find a language verbal and otherwise to relate to God and generally to grow in the Christian faith."

The latter description clearly also has an emphasis on mediating the presence of God as an integral part of the growth process. 'Growth through direction' has, as we shall see more clearly at a later stage, a closer association with the concept of 'shepherding' and is intimated through keywords such as: 'arousing', 'advising', 'assisting', 'curing', 'directing', 'guiding' and so on. It is a style of helping people to grow which is perhaps not currently in favour in the light of all the emphasis on non-directive counselling techniques.

The final category, 'body ministry', marks not so much a different approach to pastoral care but rather a commentary on who should be actively involved. Thus a significant number of ministers felt it important to emphasise that it is the whole 'worshipping community' or the whole 'body' which is involved in the caring process and hence the proposed definitions on the essence of pastoral care included the following statements:

"The local worshipping community along with its minister both recognising and reacting to the various needs of all the people associated with the church."

"Helping people. So one tries to care for the needs of each person including the spiritual needs as perhaps the priority. This is the task of the whole church. The minister does his part largely as a token of the whole caring of the church. Not as a specialist."

"Body ministering to each other. Resisting one man model."

Such an outlook, of course, makes a crucial difference to the practical outworking of pastoral care since a minister holding this view will tend to move from an emphasis on crisis management to a stress on nurture and growth, thus mobilising a larger effective care-force.

Apart from these seven categories or emphases within pastoral care it is also possible to glean some information with regard to views concerning the context of such care, that is, whether such care should be restricted within the boundary of the local church. Although the definitions of the great majority of ministers were ambiguous with regard to the context of pastoral care, the remainder were fairly evenly balanced between care focused on the community of faith (13%) or including the wider community (11%). This balance shifts significantly in the case of local preachers, where, although a similar 13% emphasised care of the local church, only 5% mentioned the wider community.

The Essence of Pastoral Care

Having outlined the basis of the scheme used in this study for classification of the material provided by the respondents in describing the essence of pastoral care, it is now possible to progress to an examination of the survey results. It is immediately apparent that the concept of pastoral care held by most ministers and local preachers cannot be narrowly pigeon-holed under a single category as is demonstrated by the summary in Table 5:2 below. Thus the majority of respondents require two or more categories to describe their concept of pastoral care and some as many as four or five. Interestingly, ministers tend to express a broader concept of pastoral care requiring an

Number of categories	<i>Ministers</i>		<i>Local Preachers</i>	
	Cases	%	Cases	%
Missing values	10	7	25	12
1	35	24	90	42.5
2	55	39	65	31
3	33	23	30	14
4	8	6	1	0.5
5	1	1	0	0
Total	142	100	211	100

Table 5:2 The Breadth of Pastoral Care Definitions as Illustrated by the Number of Defining Categories

average number of 2.1 categories for complete description of their definitions compared to only 1.7 categories for local preachers.

For the ministerial definitions requiring only *one* category the largest emphasis (37%) is on 'mediating God', followed by 'enabling growth' (23%), and 'sharing common humanity' (14%). Surprisingly 'crisis care' shares fourth place with 'relationship development' at only 9%. However, this picture is misleading and when all the responses are taken into account a substantially different picture emerges. This is demonstrated in Table 5:3 which summarises the overall analysis of both local preacher and ministerial definitions of pastoral care. Before examining the actual figures it is helpful to dwell briefly on the three methods used to cite the results. The simplest citation is the '% Cases' which indicates what percentage of ministers or

Category	<i>Ministers</i>			<i>Local Preachers</i>	
	% Cases ¹	Normalised ² %	Weighted ³ %	% Cases ¹	Normalised ² %
Relationship Dev.	32	16	15	39	23
Mediating God	37	19	22	32	19
Common Humanity	15	9	9	17	10
Crisis Care	47	24	23	34	20
Enabling Growth	38	20	20	28	17
Directing Growth	13	6	5	9	5
Body Ministry	13	6	6	10	6
<i>Total</i>		<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>		<i>100</i>

Table 5:3 The Essence of Pastoral Care: Summary of Ministerial and Local Preacher Understandings

1. This is the percentage of respondents who cite the particular category. Since most cited more than one category the total citations exceed 100%.

2. This is the same data as in 1 but normalised so that the total number of categories cited corresponds to 100. This maintains the same relative proportion of each category but allows an easier comparison in situations where the total number of categories cited varies.

3. This is the same data as in 1 but normalised and weighted to take into account the fact that some citations may comprise a single category whereas others up to five categories. The weighting is calculated as follows. If the response is described by a single category it is given a weighting = 1; for multiple responses the weighting factor is: two categories (0.5), three categories (0.33), four categories (0.25), and five categories (0.2).

local preachers includes the specified category in their definitions. Direct comparison of this figure between the two groups does not, however, necessarily provide the most meaningful information since ministers provide much broader definitions which effectively inflate the number of citations. An alternative, which is more immediately comparable, is to normalise the data. This essentially retains the relative proportions of categories but quotes them as a percentage of the total number of categorised cases within the group being examined.

A final concern is that the analysis described so far does not in any way distinguish between a pastoral emphasis which is quoted as a sole category and one which is cited together with two or more other emphases. It would seem logical that a 'sole category' is given more emphasis. One way to address this problem is to 'weight' the responses according to the number of times they are cited within one definition. This has been carried out for the ministerial data as detailed in the footnote to Table 5:3. Comparison between the normalised and weighted data from the ministerial definitions shows that weighting the responses does affect the calculated percentages; however, the differences are not dramatic and the overall importance of the various categories is not significantly changed. As the method of weighting was somewhat arbitrary and the results not greatly altered it was decided not to employ weighting for analysis and comparison of the remaining results.

Examining the overall ministerial data from Table 5:3 shows how atypical the *one* category results cited earlier are. Thus, whereas only 9% of single category definitions mention crisis care, this becomes 24% when all the definitions are taken into account, and crisis care emerges as the single most important concern. This marked difference presumably arises since, whereas few ministers would see crisis care as the essential focus or sole preoccupation of pastoral care, nevertheless, a significant proportion recognise its overall importance within their pastoral ministry which presumably influences their understanding of the essence of pastoral care. Interestingly, the second largest category, not far behind crisis care, is 'enabling growth' at 20%. This indicates a fundamental concern with the nurture aspects of pastoral care and a recognition that this is almost as important as crisis management. 'Mediating God' is seen to be of similar importance at 19%, and in this can be seen an expression of the fundamental spiritual or transcendental nature of Christian pastoral care. The importance of relationships and inter-personal skills in pastoral care is highlighted by the 16% proportion of this category and point to skills which may not be discovered through academic learning and institutionalised training. The remaining categories which stress 'common humanity', 'directing growth' and 'body ministry' are all significantly less emphasised.

It is also of some interest to compare the descriptions of pastoral care put forward by ministers and local preachers. As already mentioned the ministerial descriptions tend to be significantly broader and this can be accounted for by deeper insight through training or practical experience. However, the overall patterns are fairly similar over the range of categories. The most significant difference is in the area of 'relationship development' which is cited as some 23% of local preacher categories compared to only 16% of ministerial ones. This perhaps suggests that amongst the laity there is a stronger perception that pastoral care involves visitation and that this in turn is crucially dependent on personal relationship skills. On the other hand, ministers have a stronger emphasis on 'crisis care' but also at the same time on 'enabling growth'. The former could be ascribed to a deeper knowledge of the reality of the job and the latter to a greater awareness of growth issues within pastoral care. However, overall there are no great differences between the views of ministers and local preachers with regard to the essence of pastoral care.

Gender and Pastoral Care

One of the arguments in favour of women's ordination was that women would bring a distinctive contribution to the ordained ministry, not least in their approach to pastoral care. It is intriguing therefore to see whether the current data supports the concept of a distinctive feminine approach. Table 5:4 summarises the breakdown of ministerial and local preacher pastoral concerns according to gender. It is immediately apparent that there are some gender differences but these are not necessarily the same

Category	<i>Ministers</i>		<i>Local Preachers</i>	
	Normalised Percentage		Normalised Percentage	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Relationship Dev.	23	24	16	14
Mediating God	19	19	18	21
Common Humanity	8	14	10	10
Crisis Care	24	25	22	16
Enabling Growth	20	22	17	16
Directing Growth	7	5	6	4
Body Ministry	7	0	4	9
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 5:4 The Essence of Pastoral Care: Gender Influences

amongst the two groupings, and the differences are probably less than that between ministers and local preachers. There are four areas where gender differences are about 40% or more and are possibly significant. The largest difference is in the area of 'body ministry' and interestingly this is where the gender influence is markedly different for ministers and local preachers. No female minister indicated the importance of the ministry of the whole worshipping community in pastoral care, whereas, among local preachers, more than twice as high a proportion of women (9%) compared to men (4%) cited the importance of body ministry. If this marks a significant difference, it perhaps suggests that women's attitudes are changing on ordination, or that those women who are ordained are not necessarily representative of women actively involved in the church as local preachers. The data suggests that ordained women are more likely to aspire to pastoral care which is minister-centred rather than incorporating the whole body of the church.

The next most significant difference is in the area of sharing 'common humanity'. In this case, male and female local preachers are in accord, but whereas the relative proportion of this aspect is only 8% among male ministers, it rises to 14% for female ministers. The greater stress on this aspect amongst women is perhaps understandable since it is a pastoral care which is based on empathy, sharing and weakness - attributes traditionally identified as female characteristics. Again, not surprisingly, both female ministers and local preachers give less emphasis to 'directing growth'. The only other noteworthy difference is in attitudes towards crisis care. Generally female local preachers give a much lower priority (16%) to 'crisis care' compared to their male counterparts (22%). The reason for this difference is not obvious but it is just possible that because women in their daily lives are more actively involved in dealing with sickness, family crises and death, they tend to take crises more in their stride and hence give less emphasis to this aspect of pastoral care. However, this gender difference is erased amongst ministers perhaps because women ministers are confronted by the need to deal with crisis situations as part of their ongoing pastoral care.

In summary, whereas there do seem to be some distinct gender differences in attitudes to pastoral care, these seem to be significantly modified on ordination. In particular women tend to become more concerned with crisis care, put greater emphasis on sharing a common humanity but appear to lose sight of the importance of body ministry.

Theological Viewpoint and Pastoral Care

It is to be expected that theological convictions should help shape attitude towards ministry and hence pastoral care. This is borne out by the data summarised in Table 5:4 for Methodist ministers where it is readily evident that theological

viewpoint has a more significant influence on the understanding of pastoral care than either gender differences or ordination. In fact there are so many differences between the various groupings that it is difficult to provide a simple summary. There is a broadly similar pattern for conservative and open evangelicals with less than average emphasis on 'relationship development' and sharing 'common humanity' and above average on 'crisis care' and 'body ministry'. The emphasis on 'body ministry' is particularly high amongst conservative evangelicals probably because of the high proportion of charismatics in this grouping. The main difference between these two groups of evangelicals is that the open evangelicals seem more concerned with 'mediating God', that is, the spiritual dimension of pastoral care.

Catholic ministers are fairly close to the average in their understanding of pastoral care except that there is a much greater emphasis on growth by direction and less on growth by enabling. This perhaps reflects a more traditional view of pastoral ministry and the role of the priest in directing the flock. Pluralists are also reasonably close to the overall mean value except that there is less stress on 'relationship development' and a greater emphasis on sharing 'common humanity' and 'enabling growth'. The focus is more on the potential within individuals and their role in overcoming crises than on the pastor's involvement in forging relationships and in channelling the power of God. Traditional Methodists show certain parallels to evangelicals except that there is a greater concern with 'relationship development', and

Category	<i>Normalised Percentage</i>						
	Overall	Cons. Evang.	Open Evang.	Cath.	Plural	Trad. Meth.	Other
Relationship Dev.	16	7	9	16	11	21	27
Mediating God	19	15	27	21	15	18	18
Common Humanity	9	7	2	10	15	7	12
Crisis Care	24	30	30	21	22	26	16
Enabling Growth	20	19	16	11	26	22	16
Directing Growth	6	7	7	16	6	4	9
Body Ministry	6	15	9	5	5	2	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 5:5 The Essence of Pastoral Care and the Influence of the Theological Viewpoint of Ministers

a weaker focus on 'directing growth' and especially 'body ministry'. This perhaps reflects long traditions of minister-centred pastoral care where the focus is particularly upon visiting.

The final category to be examined is the 'other' of miscellaneous group of ministers who provided alternative definitions. It is apparent that this grouping has the most individualistic approach and differs most completely from the average understanding of pastoral care. The highest attention is to 'relationship development' and 'crisis care' is surprisingly low on priorities. There is also above-average concern with 'directing growth' and correspondingly little emphasis on 'body ministry' and the involvement of the whole community of faith in the caring process. The viewpoint hints at a minister-centred approach to pastoral care where the minister is firmly in control of the process and less involved in reactive crisis caring.

Spiritual Style and Pastoral Care

A further feature which might be expected to influence attitudes towards pastoral care is the spiritual style of ministers, and the data relating to this is summarised in Table 5:6 below. On the whole, spiritual style seems less influential than theological viewpoint in determining an understanding of pastoral care. Charismatics appear to put less emphasis than average on 'relationship development' and 'mediating God' but put considerable store by 'enabling growth' and 'body ministry'. The latter emphasis is consistent with the charismatic focus on every-member ministry. The liberal spiritual

Category	Normalised Percentage			
	Overall	Charismatic	Liberal	Radical
Relationship Dev.	16	7	15	13
Mediating God	19	13	21	16
Common Humanity	9	10	14	10
Crisis Care	24	27	21	23
Enabling Growth	20	27	21	22
Directing Growth	6	6	5	13
Body Ministry	6	10	3	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 5:6 The Essence of Pastoral Care and the Influence of Spiritual Style of Ministers

style shows little variation from the average except that there is significantly more concern with stressing 'common humanity' and less attention paid to 'body ministry'. Radical ministers are again not that different from the average in their attitudes to pastoral care. Although 'relationship development', 'mediating God' and 'body ministry' are slightly less important, much greater emphasis is given to 'directing growth', suggesting perhaps that radicals are highly-motivated individuals with clear vision and direction.

Age and Pastoral Care

One final parameter which is worth exploring is the influence of age on concepts of pastoral care. The pattern of pastoral care definitions for different age groups of ministers is summarised in Table 5:7 below. Although the differences are not as pronounced as the influence of theological viewpoint, nevertheless, there are several definite trends. For example, ministers over 50 years of age appear to put much greater store by relationship development than their younger colleagues. This may reflect a more traditional emphasis amongst older clergy on the importance of routine visitation. The emphasis on 'common humanity' would appear to be the mark of younger ministers, and those under forty years, in particular, are also not keen on the idea of 'directing growth'. This suggests that younger ministers envisage a type of pastoral care in which the pastor is less distanced from those in receipt of care and indicates a trend towards a greater informality - as evidenced perhaps by being on

Category	<i>Normalised Percentage</i>				
	Overall	20-39 yrs.	40-49 yrs.	50-59 yrs.	60-69 yrs.
Relationship Dev.	16	12	12	20	18
Mediating God	19	21	19	13	27
Common Humanity	9	12	16	6	6
Crisis Care	24	24	23	25	23
Enabling Growth	20	21	21	21	14
Directing Growth	6	2	7	8	7
Body Ministry	6	8	2	7	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 5:7 **The Essence of Pastoral Care and the Influence of Age Group of Ministers**

Christian name terms. Whether the younger minister actually enjoys a deeper intimate knowledge of his congregation is perhaps debatable because older ministers accentuate relationship development aspects. The emphasis on problem-centred or 'crisis care' is notable by its uniformity throughout the age groups, showing that this is an important fact of life for ministers in all generations. There is also a fairly consistent concern with enabling growth over all the age groups, although this interest is somewhat diminished among the over-sixties.

Pastoral Motifs and Images

Having examined something of the essence of pastoral care it is perhaps appropriate to conclude this chapter by turning attention to the motifs and images which are used to describe such care, looking closely at whether the motifs are meaningful in the contemporary context. Without doubt the classic and most enduring image is that of 'shepherd' which draws its strength from its biblical roots and personal endorsement by Jesus as the 'good shepherd'¹. Interestingly, the pastoral imagery is not so widely used in the New Testament to describe the caring leadership of the church and increasingly today many are questioning its appropriateness as a helpful metaphor for pastoral care. At the same time a plethora of rival images has been proposed which, according to their supporters, more aptly picture the pastoral process. The critique of the shepherd imagery together with an exploration of some of the alternative metaphors will be considered shortly, but first we look at the reaction of ministers, local preachers and the general laity to the pastoral metaphor.

Methodist Views of the Shepherd Image

Both ministers and local preachers were asked in an open question what they primarily associated with the shepherd metaphor (Appendices I, Q.19 and II, Q.38). The responses were classified using the categories derived for describing pastoral care but included one additional group 'inapplicable'. This classification was used for those who regarded the shepherd image as inappropriate for a variety of reasons which are typified by the following descriptions: paternalistic, patronising, condescending, dated, hierarchical, authoritarian, implies silly sheep. The overall understanding of the image is summarised in Table 5:8, shown overleaf, alongside the data on the essence of pastoral care which is provided in parenthesis. Several pertinent observations can be made. Firstly, comparison of the views of ministers and local preachers shows quite close concordance for the majority of the categories, the most significant differences being that far fewer ministers regard the image as suggesting 'enabling' or

1. See, for example: John 10:11,14, 'I am the good shepherd'; Hebrews 13:20 'that great Shepherd of the sheep'; 1 Peter 2:25 'the Shepherd and Overseer'; and 1 Peter 5:4 'the Chief Shepherd'.

Category	<i>Ministers</i>			<i>Local Preachers</i>		
	% Cases ¹	Normalised ²		% Cases ¹	Normalised ²	
		%	%		%	%
Relationship Dev.	12	8	(16) ³	14	8	(23)
Mediating God	20	14	(19)	21	13	(19)
Common Humanity	7	5	(9)	11	7	(10)
Crisis Care	39	27	(24)	40	25	(20)
Enabling Growth	7	5	(20)	15	9	(17)
Directing Growth	37	26	(6)	40	25	(5)
Body Ministry	4	3	(6)	8	5	(6)
Inapplicable	17	12	---	12	8	---
<i>Total</i>	<i>143</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>(100)</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>(100)</i>

Table 5:8 Understanding the Shepherd Image: Summary of Ministerial and Local Preacher Views

evoking 'body ministry' and a higher proportion, about one in six, consider it an inappropriate image compared to about one in eight local preachers.

The second noteworthy observation is the way in which the shepherd metaphor is at variance with the general understanding of pastoral care. Probably the closest agreement is found in the area of 'crisis care' which is heavily cited both as an integral part of pastoral care and as an understanding of the shepherd image. There is also reasonable agreement in the area of 'mediating God', although the concept is less frequently (about two-thirds) associated with the 'shepherd'. 'Common humanity' and 'body ministry' are similarly less identified with the shepherd metaphor, although the perceived differences are smaller amongst local preachers. There are three areas where the contrast is most marked. 'Relationship development' is cited nearly three times as often, by both ministers and local preachers, in association with pastoral

1. This is the percentage of respondents who cited the particular category. Since most cited more than one category the total of citations exceeds 100%.

2. This is the same data as in '1' but normalised so that the total number of citations corresponds to 100. This maintains the same relative proportion of each category but allows an easier comparison in situations where the total number of citations varies as is the case between the ministerial and local preacher data.

3. The numbers in parenthesis are the equivalent normalised percentages referring to the understanding of the 'essence of pastoral care' and is the same data as presented in Table 5:3.

care. The difference is even more marked in the area of growth. Here, 'enabling growth' is considered to be an important function of pastoral care but is not closely identified with 'the shepherd'. This is most marked in the ministerial perceptions with 'enabling growth' being cited over five times as often in describing pastoral care. By contrast, 'directing growth' is seen to be a fundamental mark of 'the shepherd', being mentioned much more frequently by both ministers and local preachers in association with this image.

Thus the picture that emerges is that 'the shepherd', although having a similar significance in terms of crisis management and being the divine representative, is yet a more distant and authoritarian figure than corresponds to the ideals of pastoral care. The image of 'the shepherd' is seen to portray a remote carer; weak on relationship with others and sharing in common humanity, with little emphasis on team-work and sharing in the ministry of the whole fellowship, and poor at getting alongside others to enable them. The most potent and distinctive feature is of one who leads and directs the affairs of others and promotes growth through instruction, command and confrontation rather than as an enabler. Perhaps not surprisingly this mismatch leads a significant minority (17%) of ministers and somewhat fewer local preachers (12%) to dismiss 'the shepherd' as a suitable metaphor for the contemporary church. The main concerns, apart from the suggestion that it was outdated and empty of meaning, was that it portrayed a too authoritarian and patronising view of the pastor; it negated the involvement of others and emphasised the contrast between the shepherd and the sheep.

On the whole, ministers and local preachers hold remarkably consistent views, although the former are somewhat more disparaging of this pastoral image. It was thus of some interest to probe how the 'shepherd' image was understood by a more general group of laity who would be expected to be less theologically sophisticated. This was done in two ways. Firstly, the concept of 'shepherd' was introduced as one of seven possible descriptions of a minister in the laity survey (Appendix III, Q.10) and the respondents were invited to indicate which description most aptly summed up their conception of a minister. 'Shepherd' was cited by 20% of those surveyed, coming third behind 'pastor' (33%) and 'leader' (22%), and way ahead of 'preacher' (11%), 'servant' (6%), 'professional' (4%) and 'priest' (3%). When it is realised that 'pastor' is in a sense a derivation of the 'shepherd' image it suggests that these metaphors still have resonance with a good proportion of church people.

A more illuminating question, in the same survey, asked the respondents to indicate up to three terms which they associated with the title of 'shepherd' (Appendix III, Q.13). The responses are summarised in Table 5:9 shown on the next page and

Rank	Category	Percentage of Respondents Citing
1	Care	75
2	Jesus	54
3	Friend	26
4	Serving	25
5	Leader	22
	Protection	22
	Feeding	22
8	Sacrifice	12
9	Rescue	10
10	Healing	8
	Provision	8
12	Authority	2
	Silly sheep	2

Table 5:9 Lay Associations with the Term 'Shepherd'

are particularly revealing. The primary association cited by three-quarters of the laity was 'care'. This, taken together with rather less cited options such as: 'protection', 'rescue' and 'healing', probably coincides, to a large extent, with the heavy emphasis on 'crisis care' evident in the thinking of ministers and local preachers. Interestingly, the second response is to identify the shepherd with 'Jesus' and this is cited by over half of those surveyed. It is difficult to make exact comparisons but this could be understood to be related to the idea of 'mediating God', which is reasonably prominent amongst both groups of preachers. What is perhaps unusual is that the third idea generated by the shepherd imagery is seen to be 'friend'. This is surprising because parallel concepts such as 'relationship development' and sharing 'common humanity' are perceived to be fairly weakly pointed to by the shepherd metaphor by Methodist preachers.

Probably the most unexpected feature of the lay picture of the 'shepherd', when contrasted with the earlier interpretations, is that there is very little emphasis on an authoritarian and remote figure. Admittedly, the idea of 'leader' is cited by nearly a quarter of respondents, but this is balanced by a slightly larger number who understand the image as portraying a 'serving' capacity. At the same time, the idea of the metaphor being associated with 'authority' is almost vanishingly small, this concept

being marked by only one in every fifty respondents. Similarly, the idea that the cognate of 'shepherd' is 'silly sheep' is hardly cited, and the emphasis, already noted above, on the shepherd as 'friend' is much more dominant. Thus the general laity appear to have a rather more benevolent and welcoming view of the shepherd image than is perhaps hinted at by both groups of preachers. This suggests that the preachers are over-pessimistic about the views of the laity and probably underestimate the power and usefulness of this image.

Biblical Roots of the Shepherd Image

Before looking at a critique of this pastoral image it is appropriate to consider very briefly the rich and positive picture associated with this metaphor in its biblical derivation. Thus, in the Old Testament, written in the context of a largely pastoral and initially semi-nomadic society, the term 'shepherd' is full of meaning, speaking first of the mundane duties of herdsmen and women¹ looking after their flocks. That shepherding was considered a worthy occupation may be judged from the biographies of outstanding leaders of God's people such as: Moses², David³ and the prophet Amos⁴, all of whom appeared to have worked as shepherds at a formative period in their lives. The functions of the shepherd were multi-faceted but his overall responsibility was for the flock's safety, welfare and growth. The principal tasks were pro-active in nature, requiring the shepherd to find the sheep food and water, to lead them to places of safety for rest and sleep, and to keep them out of danger from the terrain, the elements or predators⁵. Occasionally there would be need for a more reactive stance as in fighting off wild animals⁶, rescuing sheep which had become lost⁷, healing the sick and injured⁸ or helping the ewes with their young⁹ but, nevertheless, the overall concern would be seen as the nurture, welfare and growth of the whole flock¹⁰.

Such is the importance given to the role of the shepherd in a pastoral society that the metaphor was applied to leaders, and ultimately to God, to describe their

1. See, for example, Genesis 29:9 where it is recorded that Rachel was a shepherdess and looked after her father's sheep, and Exodus 2:16 which refers to the seven daughters of a priest of Midian (Jethro) who looked after their father's flock.

2. Exodus 3:1.

3. 1 Samuel 16:11; 17:15, 34, 35.

4. Amos 1:1

5. These ideas are beautifully applied to God's shepherding of the psalmist in Psalm 23.

6. See, for example, David's testimony to Saul in 1 Samuel 17:34-36.

7. Ezekiel 34:11,12.

8. Ezekiel 34:16

9. Isaiah 40:11

10. Thus there are several positive affirmations about flocks growing and multiplying. See, for example, the account of Jacob's flocks, Genesis 30:29-43; and the expectations of the Israelites in the Promised Land, Deut. 8:13.

relationship with the people. Thus David's role is described as being a shepherd of God's people¹, and elsewhere, even a foreign king such as Cyrus² is understood to have a role in working as God's under-shepherd in carrying out his plans and designs. Notwithstanding such references, the dominant use of the metaphor in the Old Testament refers to God as Israel's shepherd; in this context, kings and the priestly leadership are understood as shepherds by delegation of the divine office. This concept is expressed in specific statements such as in Genesis 49:24 where God is described as, 'the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel', and in Psalm 80:1 where the psalmist addresses God as, 'Shepherd of Israel'. Such references apart, there are a number of major passages in the psalms and the prophetic literature where God is described as shepherding his people or speaks of so doing. This is personalised in the opening verse of Psalm 23, 'The Lord is *my* shepherd ...', but is expressed more corporately elsewhere, where the psalmist states: '...for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.'³, and again, '...we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.'⁴.

There are two disasters which can befall God's flock: one is to be shepherdless and the other is to be led by false shepherds; the two are often one and the same. Thus Ezekiel, in the face of dereliction of duty by worthless shepherds, recounts of the people: 'So they were scattered because there was no shepherd' (34:5); and Zechariah, expressing God's anger against the 'shepherds' and 'leaders' of the people, notes that: '... the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd.' (10:2). Furthermore, at times of wilful disobedience⁵, God's people remove themselves from God's protecting and benevolent shepherding and suffer the consequences, but always there is the hope held out of restoration of God's leadership. Thus Jeremiah proclaims: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd,' (31:10); and again, Ezekiel provides the assurance: 'For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep,' (34:11,12).

The picture that emerges in the Old Testament of God as the divine shepherd very much parallels the work of the human shepherd. The shepherd's role is to lead and care for his sheep and to seek their long-term welfare. The relationship that is

1. Ezekiel 34:23; 37:24.

2. Isaiah 44:28.

3. Psalm 95:7.

4. Psalm 100:3.

5. Isaiah describes this wilful disobedience in the evocative and well-known refrain: 'We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way ...' (Isaiah 53:6)

emphasised is not that of an authoritarian control but of tender loving care and solicitude as expressed so well in Psalm 23 and passages such as Ezekiel 34:11-16. By contrast, worthless shepherds: live off the sheep¹, desert them² and lead them astray³, neglect their welfare⁴, rule them harshly and brutally⁴, fail to understand them⁵ or care for them⁶. God's care for his people indisputably sets the paradigm of the worthy shepherd.

In the New Testament writings it is with Jesus that the metaphor of the shepherd is most closely associated. This is especially developed in John chapter ten where further insights are given into the shepherd ideal. Thus at the heart of the shepherd's work is the idea that he is there so that the sheep: '... may have life, and have it to the full' (v.10); in doing this the good shepherd: '...lays down his life for the sheep' (v.11), knows his sheep in an intimate and personal way (v.3,14) and is known and trusted by them (v.4,14,27). Furthermore, the shepherd: '...goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice' (v.4). Thus the picture painted by John is not of the shepherd as harsh authoritarian ruler of the sheep but as a leader who is trusted and respected, who relates to them in a personal way and who seeks their welfare even at great personal cost and sacrifice.

As already mentioned, the title shepherd is reserved in the New Testament for Jesus and is not generally used as a technical term for a leadership position within the church. Nevertheless, Christian leaders are called to do the work of shepherding God's people. Thus Peter is called to 'feed' and 'take care' of Jesus' sheep⁷, and in Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders he challenges them:

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

Note that here it is a corporate charge and the elders have responsibility of mutual care as well as care for the church. Elsewhere, Peter charges the elders to whom he writes:

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (I Peter 5:2-4).

once again emphasising that Christian shepherding means service not rule. Here, as

1. Zechariah 11:16; Ezekiel 34:3.

2. Zechariah 11:17.

3. Jeremiah 50:6.

4. Ezekiel 34:4.

5. Isaiah 56:11.

6. Jeremiah 23:2.

elsewhere, shepherding means the responsibility of caring for God's people; it is a position of trust and stewardship. Finally, in Ephesians 4:11, the author lists among God's gifts to the church some who are to be pastors (shepherds) or perhaps 'pastor-teachers'.¹ The purpose of this shepherding is to equip and build up the people of God, the community of faith.

Thus the overall picture which emerges in both the Old and New Testaments is of a positive view of the shepherd. Admittedly the Bible recognises those who are worthless shepherds, who either neglect their duties or harm their charge by overbearing attitudes or harsh rule, but these are the exceptions. The paradigm of the shepherd is God's fatherly care for his people brought to full expression in Jesus, the 'good shepherd' who seeks and works for the long-term welfare of his flock and entrusts that loving care and oversight to the leaders of the community of faith.

Critique of the Shepherd Motif

It is evident already, from an overview of the opinions of Methodist ministers and local preachers (Table 5:8), that a significant minority have a very different perspective of the shepherd image. This is reflected also in contemporary literature on pastoral care where, not infrequently, the shepherd motif comes under fire. One of the most sustained criticisms is provided by Deeks (1987:252,3) who, although acknowledging that the metaphor has 'a rich and suggestive use in the Bible and Christian tradition', believes the arguments against its continued use are incontrovertible, unless a new derivation and foundation is supplied². Deeks advances three specific criticisms:

1. The shepherd/ sheep imagery is alien to contemporary society.
2. 'Sheep' is a very poor metaphor for human beings; for example, they are portrayed as being dumb, stupid, have no insights and are unable to protect themselves and find pasture.
3. Sheep *need* a shepherd, and this gives rise to a dependency image and a tendency towards a patronising and autocratic style.

These criticisms fairly accurately reflect and summarise the critical views of the

1. Lincoln (1990:250) provides a fairly up to date comment on this debate. He notes that whereas the definite article is omitted before 'teachers' in the verse, which would seem to imply the identity of the pastors and teachers, he doubts that there is sufficient evidence that the two ministries were always exercised by the same person. He suggests that perhaps these were overlapping functions and whereas almost all pastors were teachers, not all teachers were pastors.

2. Thus Deeks, although wishing to reject the shepherd motif, argues for retention of 'pastor' and 'pastoral'. He suggests that inspiration for these terms could be found in the Shakespearean use of the word 'pastoral' as denoting a type of play which synthesizes the insights of the comedies and tragedies, and which he believes provide profound commentaries on life which are 'resonant with the Christian gospel'. In the author's view this seems a rather tortuous derivation which is perhaps even more remote to the majority of people than the concept of a shepherd.

Methodist preachers surveyed in this study, as well as others writing on pastoral theology, and so they are worth considering in a little detail.

The first criticism relates to the assertion that 'shepherd' is an outdated metaphor which makes little sense in today's largely urban society. This view is expressed vividly by Birchall, who comments:

"In the concrete jungle or in the rows of red brick terraces, the sheer irrelevance of sheep and shepherd, and the natural rejection of the implied status gap between shepherd and sheep both raise questions about the word 'pastor'." (1985:56)

and in so doing actually touches on two distinct problem areas. Tidball (1986:14) also believes that the pastoral imagery is outdated because the concept of 'shepherd' only 'makes sense in rural communities but is irrelevant to a world dominated by urban societies and the technological world-views.' He asserts: 'The shepherd analogy no longer communicates.'

However, this criticism is not completely irrefutable. Thus Campbell (1986:23) believes that *because* the image has largely faded the term pastoral can be considered as a 'blank cheque to be rewritten', and in any case he believes there are aspects of worth in the shepherd figure. Others would not need to go that far, and thus Oden (1983:51) argues that modern secularised man has retained a deep hunger for natural, rural, and pastoral images. This argument would appear to have continuing currency in the nineties with the on-going interest in ecological concerns and the development of groups which may be described under the umbrella of the *New Age Movement*. Oden suggests that the shepherding image, especially that outlined in John chapter 10, is a moving, straight-forward image which can be readily grasped. This is an important point. An image does not have to be contemporary in order to be meaningful; for example, the Royal Automobile Club are currently promoting their services by picturing their breakdown service men as 'knights of the road'. The 'knight' is inevitably mainly a dim recollection from the realm of fiction, with perhaps some historical overtones, yet potential members of the RAC are clearly expected to be able to identify positively with this gallant figure coming to the rescue. The shepherd has far more contemporary significance than chivalry and the knight, since, even outside the borders of the church the concept of shepherding has not been completely erased from the public consciousness and is focussed through the media¹ and the education process. Moreover, within the church, this metaphor together with the myriad of other biblical images and symbols which have no apparent contemporary

1. An apposite example is the success of the books written by James Herriot featuring the life of a rural vet. The stories were also turned into a very successful TV series and the focus on rural life also included incidents relating to shepherds.

significance, can be filled with meaning. The richness of this biblical image has already been attested in the current chapter.

Deeks' second criticism has to do not with the shepherd, *per se*, but with the idea of sheep. According to Deeks, the idea of a shepherd conjures up a picture of dumb and stupid sheep needing to be cared for and Melinsky (1992:146) supposes that most Christians do not take kindly to being thought of as sheep! This criticism also finds echoes amongst Methodist ministers who variously observe:

"I find it most unhelpful and inappropriate in today's society, and I dislike being likened to a sheep."

"Limited metaphor since sheep are often referred to as 'silly'."

"Negatively, I note that the sheep tend to follow without a great deal of thought."

Interestingly, this does not appear to be a problem for the majority of Methodist laity and thus it has already been noted (Table 5:9) that only a tiny minority associate the pastoral metaphor with 'silly sheep'. It is noteworthy that this is also not a significant biblical portrayal of sheep. The characteristics of sheep highlighted in the scriptures tend very often to reflect the human condition; certainly there is wilfulness, but not usually stupidity. Sheep get lost, they follow a herd instinct, they get injured and are sick, they need the provision of food and shelter, they need protection, they often live in fear and in danger of being exploited, they face death - all experiences shared with humanity. According to Matthew, Jesus had compassion on the crowds because: 'they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd' (9:36). He identified in the crowd the lack of direction, vision and leadership which is probably as relevant a description of humanity today, as it was in Jesus' day.

However, perhaps the real mistake of these critics is the attempt to read too much detail into the metaphor and to fail to realise that the shepherd, whether used of God in the Old Testament or Jesus in the New, is never the sole motif. Thus even in John 10, Jesus not only portrays himself as the 'good shepherd' but also 'the door' of the sheepfold. The idea of the metaphor is to provide some insight into the way God relates to his people. The same is true of the image of 'sheep'. Thus in Psalm 100, in the same verse, the psalmist switches from the idea of being 'his people' to the 'sheep of his pasture' (v.3). The concern here is not that God's people are acting like sheep but God is acting as shepherd in his love and faithfulness and through his provision for them. It is wrong, as it is with many of Jesus' parables, to attempt to read too much significance into the minutiae of the image or the story. The shepherd image has to be understood both in terms of the mundane figure of pastoral life as well as through the biblical interpretation of that image which informs and draws out its significance. In biblical passages which use the imagery of sheep the context often points to the

limited parallel that is being drawn and hence its significance. For example, in Isaiah chapter 53, the wilful behaviour of people in their tendency to sin is illustrated by reference to sheep: 'We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way ...' (v.6); there is no suggestion here that people are ignorant or stupid rather than disobedient. Furthermore, in the very next verse, the Lord's 'suffering servant' is likened to a lamb, but again not in any derogatory sense, and this makes one aware of the versatility of the image¹.

Deeks' third criticism, and this is the area in which he shares most common ground with other Methodist ministers, is the perception that this is a dependency image which may well lead to a patronising and autocratic style. Typical of the comments of Methodist preachers are the following:

"To be handled with care! An authoritarian and dependency metaphor which needs to be avoided."

"Condescension and 'Daddy knows best'. This is not being alongside people, and therefore not pastoral care in my view."

"I do not use it in terms of my work. Rightly or wrongly it seems to now have connotations of paternalism and it does not give value to the congregations."

"I reject the control overtones of the image."

"A patronising relationship between an expert and those who go astray."

This criticism is also shared by Campbell (1986:23) who asserts:

"The major problem with the imagery of shepherding is that it seems to encourage an alien and demeaning form of paternalism:- the sheep are errant, feckless, easily led astray; the shepherd is dedicated, powerful and always knows best."

Certainly, if the shepherd metaphor is used to the exclusion of all others in describing the relationship between the pastoral leadership and the members of the community of faith then these criticisms would appear to be valid. The shepherd is the expert, the guide, the authority and the sheep have nothing to contribute but to be members of the flock and to look after themselves. But, as has already been hinted, the pastoral metaphor can never be an exclusive metaphor and it needs to be understood alongside the 'servant' image and the 'body of Christ' metaphor with its understanding that every member of the community of faith has a ministry to undertake, and that the shepherd himself needs to be shepherded and fed, and not just through some hierarchical structure.

It seems possible that this criticism of the shepherd motif derives not so much

1. The frequent reference to Jesus in the New Testament as the 'Lamb of God' (e.g., John 1:29) is a much harder metaphor for contemporary society since any concept of ritual sacrifice is very remote and the penal systems in Western societies, in recent years, have tended to emphasise education and rehabilitation rather than punishment.

from the image itself but from the practice of pastoral leaders which may be considered to be autocratic and paternalistic and who treat their congregations like dumb sheep. Thus it is arguable that practice has tended to shape the image rather than to be shaped by it. This suggestion is supported from the case study interviews where a quarter of those interviewed put forward the opinion that the image was being distorted by pastoral practice. Thus one minister suggested that the problem derived from the United States, where in some 'new' churches there was an emphasis on authoritarian-style shepherding. More particularly, two other ministers cited the leadership style of 'house churches' as the likely cause of this negative critique. It is possible, of course, that the problem lies nearer to home. Thus in chapter eight it will be argued that the contemporary practice of ordination within the mainline churches acts to exacerbate the difference in status between the leadership and the community, and it is this, rather than the shepherd model, which leads to the problem of an autocratic and sharply differentiated style of leadership.

Alternative Metaphors of Pastoral Care

Although without doubt the shepherd remains the overarching motif for pastoral care, in recent years a bewildering array of alternatives has been suggested. During the case study interviews ministers were asked whether they found images other than the shepherd motif helpful in describing their ministry. Two ministers found the image of the 'midwife' helpful, pointing as it does to 'enabling people to bring to birth new things', and 'bringing to the light of day'. This is a concept cited by Metcalf (1981:107) where the emphasis is interpreted in helping ideas and gifts of ministry to 'come to birth' and in 'offering encouragement and advice and always returning to ensure that these are nurtured to maturity'. The idea implicit here is of an enabling ministry, although it should perhaps be noted that this idea could also be found in the shepherd motif. 'Enabler' is another related term that was cited, but in a sense this is more of a descriptive title than a metaphor since 'enabler' is very abstract compared to a 'midwife' who is a recognisable person within society. 'Encourager' was also cited and this is in a sense a twin to 'enabler' and, although emphasising an important aspect, suffers from the same criticism.

Another minister suggested the idea of 'stage manager' with the idea that this included the roles of someone who prompts, produces and directs. This image recognises that others are involved in the production but points to the importance of a leadership role. A related metaphor, suggested by Mosedale (1989:33,34), is that of choreographer. According to Mosedale, the 'choreographer' embodies three important principles of pastoral leadership, namely: training, encouragement and co-ordination. Mosedale argues that this image is more appropriate than rival metaphors such as 'conductor' since 'the choreographer is out of sight when the show takes place'. This is

consistent with Mosedale's conviction that the role of the pastoral leader is essentially 'behind the scenes'.

A variety of other metaphors was suggested which emphasised personal relationships and these included: 'mother', 'lover' and 'friend'. The significance of 'mother' was not elaborated but may be taken to mean an emphasis on a maternal loving care. 'Lover' is potentially capable of being misunderstood if it is interpreted in the contemporary usage of the word which centres on personal fulfilment, but was intended to suggest the desire to love and care for others as Jesus did. 'Friend' or more specifically 'soul-friend', Leech (1977), is helpful in that it emphasises mutuality and thus implies that the pastor may also receive care. Deeks (1987:262) introduces a related image in describing the pastor as the 'eucharistic companion'. Here Deeks understands the eucharist as emphasising a corporate and collaborative act of ministry and understands that those who share the eucharist are bound together as companions who are 'empowered to travel outwards taking God's peace'. The importance of this as a pastoral image is that it emphasises the place of worship and in particular the eucharist. Another metaphor that emphasises relationship is care by the 'family' of the church of whom the minister is part. This is helpful in that it points to the corporate responsibility of the whole community of faith, and not just the leadership of the community.

Nouwen's 'wounded healer' metaphor was only mentioned by one minister who commented that he found the concept 'interesting'. The image was developed by Nouwen in response to what he perceived were fundamental changes in a 'fatherless' society which led to the rejection of authority figures. As a consequence Nouwen believes that Christian pastoral leadership should focus on drawing alongside, of leading 'from the midst of the people'. Thus the strengths which Nouwen perceives in the Christian leader have less to do with professionalism and expertise than with a compassionate heart generated by shared experience; consequently increased emphasis on skills-training is not the answer. Nouwen suggests that the compassion derives from the wounds that the pastor shares with the community. In particular Nouwen (1990:83) identifies these wounds as: alienation, separation, isolation and loneliness but suggests that perhaps loneliness best fits the minister's situation. Thus he comments:

"The loneliness of the minister is especially painful; for over and above his experience as a man in modern society, he feels an added loneliness, resulting from the changing meaning of the ministerial profession itself." Nouwen (1990:83)

The metaphor of the 'wounded healer' emphasises the sense of shared humanity but perhaps unfortunately the outworking of the concept, according to Nouwen, is

predicated upon a ministry which feels itself alienated and isolated. There is little understanding here of a corporate or shared ministry and perhaps a hint that failure is something to be welcomed.

Campbell (1986:37) understands the power of the above image to rest on the Christian understanding of Christ's death. Thus Christ as the 'wounded healer' *par excellence* 'restores the fractured relationship between God and man and the whole universe'. According to Campbell, what is at stake is being vulnerable. Thus Campbell argues that we respond to the wounded because of vulnerability and that such wounds have positive effects in creating a sense of community (1986:39,40). For Campbell, the 'wounded healer' is able to help others because he has plumbed the depths of his own weakness and sense of loss, and found hope again. The 'wounded healer' enables others fully to acknowledge their own weakness and hence open their lives so that the power of God's love can flow in.

A variety of other images has been proposed from time to time but did not strike any resonances with the ministers who were interviewed. Thus Campbell (1986:48ff) has discussed the model of the 'wise fool', which he sees as emphasising: simplicity, loyal love and prophetic folly. The metaphor is seen to play down the virtues of professional paid expertise and to emphasise aspects which are considered antithetical to the values of contemporary society. Although the 'wise fool' was not referred to, a related image, 'the clown', was mentioned by two ministers, who confessed they found it meaningless. Meanwhile, Deeks (1987:255ff), in rejecting the shepherd metaphor, suggests that the pastor could be thought of as a 'community artist'. This motif recognises the pastor's involvement in: 'interrogating the silence', 'uncovering the glorious', 'entering human pain' and 'living from the inside' and thus Deeks understands that pastoral care is founded upon 'shared creative insight into the presence and call of God'.

Leadership and Pastoral Images

The various images cited above all provide some insight into pastoral care but, by and large, the images all tend to be considerably more circumscribed than the shepherd metaphor. In particular, whereas many of the images emphasise a shared common humanity and the importance of relationships, the majority fail to provide any concept of pastoral leadership. As will be discussed in due course, it is precisely in the area of pastoral leadership that weaknesses are to be found in contemporary Methodism. It seems possible that the unease that is expressed with the shepherd motif relates to an unease with respect to exercising leadership within the community. Thus ministers perhaps criticise the shepherd pattern because subconsciously they are aware of the poverty of their own pastoral leadership.

Of all the metaphors discussed 'the shepherd' is probably the most complete. To begin with it is a concrete metaphor corresponding to a mundane paradigm. It has the advantage of biblical precedent and is very broad in concept, spanning aspects as diverse as: crisis and nurture care; 'up front' leadership and companionship along the way; personal knowledge, love and care; growth by both direction and enabling; courage, responsibility and self-sacrifice. The main weakness is that, if used alone, it could be taken to imply an unscriptural division in status between the leadership and the remainder of the community of faith and an emphasis on hierarchical rule rather than servant leadership. However, when used in the context of its biblical understanding it must, in the author's view, still be rated the foremost metaphor of pastoral care.

Some General Conclusions

This chapter has been concerned with examining concepts of pastoral care described in the literature, proposing a working definition of pastoral care, and evaluating the understanding of Methodist ministers and local preachers with regard to the essence of pastoral care. Ministers are found to have widely diverging views as to what constitutes the kernel of pastoral care and these views are shown to be somewhat dependent on gender, age, spiritual style and, more particularly, theological viewpoint. This is, of course, a declared understanding of pastoral care which may or may not correspond to pastoral practice, which will be examined more closely in the following chapter. The degree of correspondence between understanding and practice is an important issue since it is an indicator as to what extent the minister is in control of his pastoral care rather than reactive to perceived needs.

Finally, comparison of the overall essence of pastoral care distilled by Methodist ministers shows significant common ground with the working definition proposed in this chapter, as well as some differences. Both concur that pastoral care includes a divine or spiritual element, that pastoral care is concerned with nurture and growth, and that pastoral care involves the whole community of faith or body ministry. Differences may be seen in the significant preoccupation with crisis or problem-centred care amongst the average Methodist minister, the rather limited emphasis on every-member ministry, and the tendency to have no boundaries with regards to the recipients of pastoral care. The most crucial difference in emphasis argued in this thesis, and this will be discussed in detail in future chapters, is that the main preoccupation of pastoral leadership should be concerned with the building up of the community of faith to care for others, whereas the archetypal pattern hinted at by Methodist ministers is of a leadership which is too thinly spread in attempting to respond to the whole range of pastoral situations.

An examination of the 'shepherd' as a pastoral metaphor has revealed that Methodist preachers perceive it is generally not an adequate image for conveying the essence of pastoral leadership. 'The shepherd' is seen to emphasise an authoritarian style of leadership, to be concerned with direction rather than enabling, to underemphasise personal relationship and common humanity, and to neglect body ministry. However, an examination of the shepherd image reveals that, if properly understood, it provides the best all-round metaphor for pastoral leadership. It is speculated that unease with the shepherd image is related to failure in effective pastoral leadership amongst Methodist ministers.

Chapter 6

Pastoral Practice in Contemporary Methodism

In the last chapter we probed the nature of pastoral care, sought to arrive at a working definition and examined the understanding of the pastoral task as revealed by the survey responses of Methodist ministers and local preachers. In this chapter our intention is to progress from the discussion of the principles of pastoral care to focus on how these principles work out in practice. In particular it is of interest to see whether the divergent views presented by ministers of differing theological leanings translate into distinctive pastoral practice, or whether the nature of the pastoral task is such that pastoral care is necessarily reactive, and reflects more closely presented problems rather than conscious deliberate planning and strategy. If the former is the case then pastoral care can be seen to be essentially 'driven' and the minister is consequently not in control. Such a scenario has crucial implications for the balance of nurture versus crisis-oriented pastoral care.

The Minister's Working Week

A helpful starting point is a consideration of how Methodist ministers spend their overall working week, bearing in mind that we have argued that pastoral care is embraced by a wide range of ministerial activities which extend far beyond visiting or personal counselling. Such an overview is possible since ministers contacted through the survey were asked to maintain a log of their activities for a period of one week between 12th. and 18th. November 1990 and to report these under various headings. (Appendix I, Q. 52.) Altogether some 116 out of 142 ministers (82%) fully completed this section of the questionnaire with the remainder declining because of illness and holidays or without reason. The earlier parallel study of Anglican clergy had a similar exercise based on the week of the 6th to 12th. November 1988 and interestingly obtained an identical proportion of usable returns (Davies *et al* (1990b:26)).

The results of this analysis together with the comparable data from the Anglican study are summarised in Table 6.1, using, as far as possible, the breakdown of categories proposed in the earlier study¹. The overall evaluation is similar in both

1. The earlier classification is in fact somewhat arbitrary in the light of the discussion in Chapter 5 since we would not wish to limit 'pastoral', and hence pastoral care, to aspects such as visitation and counselling. Furthermore, even under the earlier classification used in the Anglican study it is arguable that activities such as 'Leading preparation classes' or 'Bible study or prayer groups' would be equally at home under a pastoral as under a sacerdotal heading.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Working Time in Hours</i>					
	<u>Methodist Ministers</u>				<u>Anglican Clergy</u>	
	Mean	σ^1	Range	% of Total	Mean	% of Total
<i>1. Sacerdotal</i>						
Service preparation	6.3	3.5	0-20	11.1	4.7	9
Attending services	4.9	2.0	0-12	8.6	8.9	16
Preparation Classes	1.0	1.3	0- 6	1.8	1.5	3
Bible/ prayer group	1.4	1.5	0- 6	2.5	1.3	2
Fellowship meetings	2.3	1.7	0-11	4.0	---	---
<i>Total 'Sacerdotal'</i>	<i>15.9</i>			<i>28.2</i>	<i>16.4</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>2. Pastoral</i>						
Counselling	1.8	0.9	0-13	3.1	1.8	3
Visiting	7.4	4.0	0-20	13.0	7.1	12
Chaplaincy	1.4	2.2	0-10	2.5	0.8	1
Church Social	1.7	1.8	0- 7	3.0	1.0	2
Youth Work	1.0	1.9	0-16	1.8	0.9	2
Schools	0.8	1.2	0- 7	1.4	1.5	3
<i>Total 'Pastoral'</i>	<i>14.1</i>			<i>25.0</i>	<i>13.1</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>3. Administration</i>						
Committee meetings	4.4	3.1	0-16	7.7		
Correspondence	2.5	2.0	0-13	4.4		
Circuit Plan	1.0	2.0	0-12	1.8		
Writing Reports	0.7	1.1	0- 4	1.2		
Other Administration	3.5	2.9	0-15	6.2		
Writing Articles	0.9	1.2	0- 6	1.6		
<i>Total 'Administration'</i>	<i>13.0</i>			<i>22.9</i>	<i>13.4</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>4. Private Devotion and Study</i>						
Private Prayer	2.7	1.9	0- 8	4.8	3.7	7
Private Study	3.1	2.6	0-12	5.4	3.2	5
<i>Total 'Devotion/Study'</i>	<i>5.8</i>			<i>10.2</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>5. Travel</i>						
Travel	4.7	2.9	0-15	8.3	3.3	6
<i>6. Other</i>						
Local Community	1.0	1.5	0- 7	1.8	2.2	4
Miscellaneous	2.0	3.7	0-24	3.5	1.3	2
<i>Total 'Other'</i>	<i>3.0</i>			<i>5.3</i>	<i>3.5</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Mean Total</i>	<i>56.8</i>	<i>13.5</i>	<i>31-92</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>56.6</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 6:1 Breakdown of the Working Week for Methodist Ministers and Anglican Clergy

1. σ is the standard deviation of the values.

cases, except that the items under administration have somewhat different labels. The separate section in the Anglican survey titled 'Diocesan or deanery duties' has been subsumed under the overall figure for administration as it was felt that these would be the Anglican equivalent of the Methodist circuit-based responsibilities. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the comparison between Methodist ministers and Anglican clergy is just how similar the total working hours and breakdown of activities are. The total working hours are essentially identical and all the main groupings: sacerdotal, pastoral, administration, private devotion and study take up very similar proportions of available time. This is already an early hint that working practice is shaped by factors that are not determined by denominational character or emphases but rather by external influences common to the professional clergyman.

There are, however, some minor but probably significant variations within the sub-groups. For example, Methodist ministers devote more time to sermon and service preparation than their Anglican counterparts even though they only spend half as much time in services. This probably arises since Anglicans rely more fully on services which are wholly liturgically based, thus requiring less work in preparation. It is conceivable that Methodists also put a higher priority on preaching and hence spend more time in preparation, whereas their Anglican counterparts are more likely to be involved in daily or mid-week services or perhaps have a heavier load of occasional offices to perform. The other difference in the sacerdotal section is that, whereas Anglican clergy spend more time attending services, this is compensated by the fact that Methodist ministers are somewhat more involved in informal small group meetings - perhaps a throwback to the Methodist heritage of class meetings.

Amongst other activities, where the categories are directly comparable, Anglicans appear to signal a greater involvement in private prayer which takes up to 7% of their working week compared to only around 5% for Methodist ministers. Anglican priests also seem to have a somewhat higher profile in the community with about twice as much involvement in schools and other local community concerns as their Methodist counterparts. This may perhaps reflect, amongst other things, an involvement of Anglicans with church schools and a greater expectation for Anglicans to be involved on civic occasions. Interestingly, Methodists appear to spend a significantly greater proportion of their time (8.3%) in travel between activities than their Anglican colleagues (6%), despite the fact that the Anglican sample is focussed on the rural church where travelling between far-flung rural churches might have been expected to be more time-consuming. Conceivably in urban areas shorter distances may be more than compensated by higher traffic density, or perhaps, and this is the more likely explanation, the observed difference is due to the Methodist circuit system in which the ministers typically are responsible for an average of three

to four churches. Consequently Methodist ministers are likely to have to travel further to take services and to visit their members.

An overview of the breakdown of the working week for Methodist ministers shows a fairly equal balance between sacerdotal, pastoral and administrative activities with the bulk of the remaining time taken up by private devotion and study, and travel between activities. There is obviously some overlap between the different categories since, for example, it may be difficult to draw the line between private devotion and study, and service and sermon preparation. Similarly, one female minister, interviewed in the individual case studies, viewed committee meetings as pastoral occasions as much as administrative devices. Notwithstanding these reservations the observed mean values do provide a clear indication of the balance of activities. The final category in Table 6:1 labelled 'miscellaneous' covers a very wide variety of aspects but the most commonly cited were: staff or ecumenical fraternals and preparation time for various activities. Other concerns, which were included somewhat less frequently, were: property related, entertaining visitors, phone calls, choir practice and seminars and training occasions. Just one or two felt motivated to include personal aspects such as hobbies, general reading and the 'day-off'.

A number of general conclusions can be usefully drawn from the tabulated data about Methodist ministry. The principal preoccupation of ministers is pastoral visiting, which, without including travel time, takes up some 13% of ministerial time. This is closely followed by the amount of time put into service and sermon preparation (11%) and by actual participation in services (9%). The involvement of ministers in small group meetings including preparation classes consumes about 8% of the working week, approximately the same time as spent in committee meetings. Overall, administration-related tasks consume nearly a quarter of the minister's time, far exceeding the time spent on visiting, and this raises the question as to what training is given in preparation for this time-consuming activity. Finally, although there is no indication as to how the 13% of visiting time is spent, it would appear that the overwhelming majority of ministerial time is in fact spent with, or preparing to be with, the community of faith rather than the wider community outside the doors of the church.

Before any further analysis it is probably worth emphasising that the average figures that are being discussed disguise a tremendous variation in individual activity. This is particularly noticeable in Table 6:1 amongst Methodist ministers as the data also includes the range of hours worked in addition to the mean. A few random examples will illustrate this. With regard to service and sermon preparation, whereas the mean value is 6.3 hours, some ministers have used as much as 20 hours in this activity. Similarly for visitation the mean is 7.4 hours, but some spent 20 hours in this

activity. Lastly, whereas the average time taken in committee meetings was found to be 4.4 hours, certain ministers had spent as long as 16 hours in this occupation. To some extent the range of values is due to weekly variations, but a significant proportion is probably also due to factors such as the nature of the appointment or personal emphases.

The Working Week and Ministerial Appointment

It has been noted earlier that the total working hours varies with the nature of the ministerial appointment, with superintendent ministers working significantly longer hours than their colleagues. It is now possible to probe this in more detail. Thus Table 6:2 summarises the breakdown of the working week for circuit ministers, superintendents and non-stipendiary MLAs. It is apparent that the overall working week is broadly similar for circuit ministers and superintendents except in one area, namely, administration, and it is this area alone that mainly accounts for the difference in their working hours. Thus superintendents devote 17.5 hours (28%) of their time to administration compared to only 11.3 hours (21%) for other circuit ministers. Superintendents put in more hours in all the areas of administration but notably in committee work, correspondence and plan making. This clearly reflects additional administrative responsibility largely arising from concerns with oversight of the circuit. Rather interestingly, superintendents do not seek to compensate for this increased administrative activity by reducing pastoral visiting; on the contrary, their average of 8 hours is actually somewhat higher than their colleagues at just over 7 hours.

The other significant finding is the contrast between the working hours of the full-time and the non-stipendiary ministers who, in this case are in secular employment. Admittedly the sample of MLAs is very small, comprising as it does only three cases; nevertheless the overall hours were very similar for all three and it seems probable that the figures will provide at least a pointer towards the activity of the average MLA in full-time employment. Significantly MLAs put in over half the hours (57%) of their average full-time counterpart. It can be seen that for the three major categories: sacerdotal, pastoral and administration, the balance of time essentially parallels that of the circuit minister. However, in the areas of travel and especially private devotions and study, MLAs put in a significantly higher proportion of time. In fact at 4.4 hours a week MLAs engage in significantly more private study than their colleagues. Overall, it must be concluded that MLAs have a rather similar pattern of work to full-time circuit ministers, but at a level of activity of approximately half the number of hours. Consequently, taking into account only the hours worked, it would

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Working Time in Hours</i>			
	Mean	Circuit Minister	Superintendent	MLA
<i>Number of Cases</i>	116	79	34	3
<i>1. Sacerdotal</i>				
Service preparation	6.3	6.5	6.1	3.5
Attending services	4.9	4.9	5.0	1.5
Preparation Classes	1.0	1.1	0.9	0
Bible/ prayer group	1.4	1.9	1.0	0.3
Fellowship meetings	2.3	2.2	2.7	2.5
<i>Total 'Sacerdotal'</i>	<i>15.9</i>	<i>16.3</i>	<i>15.7</i>	<i>7.8</i>
<i>2. Pastoral</i>				
Counselling	1.8	1.7	2.1	0.5
Visiting	7.4	7.3	8.0	3.4
Chaplaincy	1.4	1.6	1.3	0
Church Social	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.0
Youth Work	1.0	0.9	1.2	0.8
Schools	0.8	0.9	1.2	0.8
<i>Total 'Pastoral'</i>	<i>14.1</i>	<i>14.1</i>	<i>14.7</i>	<i>6.7</i>
<i>3. Administration</i>				
Committee meetings	4.4	4.0	5.6	1.6
Correspondence	2.5	2.1	3.6	0.8
Circuit Plan	1.0	0.5	2.1	0.1
Writing Reports	0.7	0.6	1.0	0.1
Other Administration	3.5	3.2	4.2	2.0
Writing Articles	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.3
<i>Total 'Administration'</i>	<i>13.0</i>	<i>11.3</i>	<i>17.5</i>	<i>5.9</i>
<i>4. Private Devotion and Study</i>				
Private Prayer	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.3
Private Study	3.1	3.0	3.0	4.4
<i>Total 'Devotion/Study'</i>	<i>5.8</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>5.7</i>	<i>6.7</i>
<i>5. Travel</i>				
Travel	4.7	4.7	4.8	3.8
<i>6. Other</i>				
Local Community	1.0	0.9	1.1	0.3
Miscellaneous	2.0	2.0	2.2	1.1
<i>Total 'Other'</i>	<i>3.0</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>1.4</i>
<i>Mean Total</i>	<i>56.8</i>	<i>55.0</i>	<i>63.1</i>	<i>32.2</i>

Table 6:2 Breakdown of the Working Week for Methodist Ministers According to Appointment

be necessary to appoint two MLAs to replace one circuit minister.

The Working Week and Ministerial Age

It is probably not necessary to reproduce the detailed breakdown of the influence of age on working activity, but a summary of the main categories, shown in Table 6:3, reveals a number of points of interest. Firstly, there is some variation in the total number of working hours with younger ministers under 36 years of age having significantly less, and those over 60 somewhat more, than average. The latter observation is related to the fact that this group comprises a much higher percentage of superintendents. That the youngest ministers work on average 15% fewer hours than other ministers may be partly explained by probationer ministers amongst this number with fewer responsibilities. It is noticeable that this grouping has much less involvement in administration as well as far fewer activities in the miscellaneous category. Comparison with the data for Anglican clergy reveals that the overall working hours show slightly different trends in the upper and lower age groups. Thus Anglicans under 40 years of age only work a 2% shorter week than the average, whereas Anglicans over 65 are about 12% down on average (Davies *et al* 1990b:46).

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Working Time in Hours</i>						
	<i>Age Groups (yrs.)</i>	20-35	36-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	61-69
<i>Number of Cases</i>		14	25	18	14	28	18
<i>Sacerdotal</i>		15.9	15.9	16.9	15.0	14.9	16.8
<i>Pastoral</i>		13.3	14.2	13.7	13.1	13.3	16.0
<i>Administration</i>		8.0	11.5	12.6	14.7	14.4	15.7
<i>Private Devotion and Study</i>		5.9	6.0	4.8	5.3	5.8	6.3
<i>Travel</i>		4.0	5.2	5.1	4.2	4.8	4.3
<i>Other</i>		1.1	4.8	4.4	2.1	2.8	1.4
<i>Mean Total</i>		48.3	57.5	57.4	56.9	57.1	61.1

Table 6:3 Breakdown of the Working Week for Methodist Ministers According to Age

Consequently there would appear to be more pressure on Methodist ministers who are senior in age compared to their Anglican counterparts and this is largely due to increased administrative responsibility with age amongst Methodists.

A number of pertinent comments may also usefully be made about the finer detail of the working patterns. Firstly, those in the middle age ranges are more likely to cite counselling as one of their pastoral activities than young ministers or ministers near to retirement. This may reflect a tendency for members to be more hesitant to consult a younger pastor and perhaps a lack of familiarity with counselling techniques amongst older ministers. It is also noteworthy that the greatest emphasis on pastoral visiting is seen amongst ministers in the over 60s age group who average 9.4 hours per week, some 27% above the mean value. This perhaps gives some support to the oft-quoted remark amongst the laity that in the 'old days' ministers used to visit more often¹. As might be expected, ministers under 36 years are more involved in youth and school work with an activity level some 55% more than average. However, for those churches who see the 'young minister' as an answer to the paucity of their youth work it should be noted that such age groups only invested an average of 1.4 hours a week in such work compared to about an hour a week for ministers aged between 36 and 60 years. The difference would seem to be marginal. The much-reduced administrative load amongst younger ministers is seen particularly in fewer hours spent with committees, in correspondence, and in plan-making. These savings do not seem to be compensated by heightened activity in other areas and perhaps hint at a drift towards a shorter working week amongst younger ministers following the expectations in secular working life².

Gender Influences on Ministerial Activity

It has sometimes been argued that women bring a distinctive contribution to pastoral ministry and it is conceivable that this factor might be evident in the pattern of working hours. Since it has already been shown that the working week is influenced by the nature of the appointment, and bearing in mind that a much lower proportion of women ministers act as superintendents, it was felt necessary to examine any gender influence appointment by appointment. In doing this it is

1. Thus one minister annotated his survey form with the comment: "Older members think they remember a day when the ministers constantly visited ... the myth dies hard."

2. This equating of the ministry to a secular job is seen in the remarks of a 34 year old minister in response to the survey question (Appendix I, Q.27) concerning whether his spouse was employed. He comments: "Why perpetuate the expectations of the Methodist people that a minister's spouse should be involved in the minister's ministry, other than as an ordinary member? My spouse could be an atheist, a Buddhist, or a Sikh. She is her own person , not my unpaid assistant, curate, or third arm. She does not, nor does she wish to be, involved in the day to day aspects of my job , and it is a job. anymore than the spouse of a bank manager, a debt-collector, or a docker. "

recognised that the values observed for superintendents and MLAs have no real statistical significance for women because they are based on only one case each. The summary data broken down by gender and appointment is listed in Table 6:4. Overall, women circuit ministers are found to work slightly shorter weeks but at 5% less this is probably not highly significant. The sole woman superintendent worked considerably more hours than her average male counterpart but less than the maximum weekly return of 92 hours. An examination of the different categories of activity show both uniformity and some interesting differences. Sacerdotal activity is essentially indistinguishable on a gender basis except perhaps for the MLA where the woman minister was less involved in taking services. The pastoral category shows some very surprising differences. Overall, female circuit ministers are about 20% less involved in pastoral work, and in particular put in an average of only 5.9 hours visiting compared to the male value of 7.6 hours. Women ministers are also less likely to be involved in chaplaincy than their male counterparts. However, the reduction in visiting hours is partly compensated by a greater preoccupation with counselling where female ministers average 2.5 hours compared to the male 1.6 hours. An interesting counterpoint to this reduced pastoral activity is the case of the female MLA who leads

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Working Time in Hours</i>					
	Circuit Minister		Superintendent		MLA	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<i>Gender</i>						
<i>Number of Cases</i>	67	12	33	1	2	1
<i>Sacerdotal</i>	16.2	16.3	15.7	16.0	8.8	5.5
<i>Pastoral</i>	14.3	11.5	14.9	15.0	3.8	12.5
<i>Administration</i>	11.4	10.2	17.5	18.0	8.0	2.0
<i>Private Devotion and Study</i>	5.6	6.7	5.4	13.0	7.1	6.0
<i>Travel</i>	4.4	6.1	4.5	15.0	4.3	3.0
<i>Other</i>	3.1	2.1	3.4	1.0	1.2	2.0
<i>Mean Total</i>	55.4	52.6	62.6	78.0	32.8	31.0

Table 6:4 Summary of the Working Week for Methodist Ministers According to Gender and Appointment

proportionally fewer services but has significantly more visiting than her male colleagues.

Administratively, female circuit ministers are somewhat less (11%) involved than their male colleagues; especially noticeable is their minimal contribution to preparing the circuit plan and in writing reports - both perhaps vestiges of male authority. By contrast, they actually put in some 20% more committee hours than male circuit ministers, but this does not make up time-wise for deficits in other areas of administrative concern. Private devotions and study are one of the main areas where women circuit ministers put more emphasis than men and this occurs both in the areas of prayer and study. The other most noticeable difference is in the area of travelling between activities and here women put in nearly 36% more time than men as circuit ministers. This is somewhat surprising, not least because women have been found to carry out significantly less pastoral visiting with which travelling might be expected to be related. It is conceivable that women ministers are more likely to be stationed in smaller and more dispersed churches where travelling assumes greater importance.

The overall conclusions from this data must be that there is no overwhelming distinct gender differences in circuit ministry. Women exactly mirror male sacerdotal activity, are marginally less involved in pastoral activity, and are possibly squeezed out of some administrative duties which might be considered to challenge male authority. On the whole, women circuit ministers would seem to be shaped in the mould of the masculine minister stereotype. The data relating to part-time non-stipendiary ministers possibly hint at a more creative situation since here there is a radical difference in the operation of the male and female ministers with the female minister putting much greater emphasis on the more personal pastoral activities such as visiting. Unfortunately the data rests on too few cases to draw any firm conclusions.

The Influence of Theological Viewpoint on Ministerial Activity

We turn now from looking at the influence of criteria such as appointment, age and gender to the crucial issue of whether ministerial activity is significantly influenced by theological viewpoint. The relevant data are summarised in Table 6:5 and show the breakdown of the working week as a function of viewpoint. It is immediately apparent that there are some differences in the working patterns of ministers holding different viewpoints. Particularly noticeable is the observation that conservative evangelicals and catholics have a working week approximately 11% shorter than the average. Whereas this could be partially explained by a smaller number of superintendents amongst these groups, this is by no means the whole story

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Working Time in Hours</i>							
	<i>Viewpoint</i>	Mean	Cons. Evan.	Open Evan.	Cath.	Plur.	Trad. Meth.	Others
<i>Number of Cases</i>	116		10	19	7	23	38	16
<i>1. Sacerdotal</i>								
Service preparation		6.3	6.4	5.5	7.1	6.4	6.9	5.6
Attending services		4.9	5.6	4.7	4.9	4.4	5.0	5.2
Preparation Classes		1.0	0.5	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.3
Bible/ prayer group		1.4	2.3	1.8	1.1	0.8	1.4	1.4
Fellowship meetings		2.3	1.7	2.5	1.0	2.7	2.0	3.2
<i>Total 'Sacerdotal'</i>		<i>15.9</i>	<i>16.5</i>	<i>15.5</i>	<i>15.4</i>	<i>15.3</i>	<i>16.3</i>	<i>16.5</i>
<i>2. Pastoral</i>								
Counselling		1.8	1.3	3.0	1.0	2.0	1.3	2.4
Visiting		7.4	7.0	7.7	5.2	6.2	8.6	7.0
Chaplaincy		1.4	2.0	1.4	2.5	1.8	0.9	1.4
Church Social		1.7	1.3	1.4	1.6	1.1	2.2	1.6
Youth Work		1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.7	2.1
Schools		0.8	0.6	0.6	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.8
<i>Total 'Pastoral'</i>		<i>14.1</i>	<i>13.2</i>	<i>15.0</i>	<i>12.2</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>14.4</i>	<i>14.4</i>
<i>3. Administration</i>								
Committee meetings		4.4	4.0	4.3	3.3	5.3	4.9	3.2
Correspondence		2.5	2.0	2.6	1.1	2.6	2.6	3.3
Circuit Plan		1.0	2.1	0.7	0.1	0.6	1.1	1.2
Writing Reports		0.7	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.7	0.7	1.2
Other Administration		3.5	2.2	5.2	3.0	3.4	3.0	3.7
Writing Articles		0.9	1.1	1.0	0.5	1.4	0.7	0.9
<i>Total 'Administration'</i>		<i>13.0</i>	<i>12.0</i>	<i>14.1</i>	<i>8.6</i>	<i>14.0</i>	<i>13.0</i>	<i>13.5</i>
<i>4. Private Devotion and Study</i>								
Private Prayer		2.7	2.4	3.1	3.4	2.3	2.3	3.5
Private Study		3.1	1.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	3.6
<i>Total 'Devotion/Study'</i>		<i>5.8</i>	<i>3.9</i>	<i>6.1</i>	<i>5.9</i>	<i>5.3</i>	<i>5.8</i>	<i>7.1</i>
<i>5. Travel</i>								
Travel		4.7	4.3	5.3	4.3	4.0	4.9	4.6
<i>6. Other</i>								
Local Community		1.0	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.3	0.9	0.9
Miscellaneous		2.0	0.7	2.5	3.3	2.5	1.6	1.6
<i>Total 'Other'</i>		<i>3.0</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>3.4</i>	<i>4.3</i>	<i>3.8</i>	<i>2.5</i>	<i>2.5</i>
<i>Mean Total</i>		<i>56.8</i>	<i>50.6</i>	<i>59.5</i>	<i>50.8</i>	<i>55.3</i>	<i>56.9</i>	<i>57.6</i>

Table 6:5 Breakdown of the Working Week for Methodist Ministers According to Theological Viewpoint

because the working week is still lower than the average for circuit ministers. At the same time open evangelicals put in the longest working week, altogether some 18% longer than their conservative colleagues. Surprisingly, these results are rather at odds with the data from the Anglican survey. Thus Davies *et al* (1990b:42) found a much smaller spread of working hours among Anglican priests ranging from 54.3 to 58.5 hours, and more particularly the values for conservative and open evangelicals were essentially identical in the range 55.5 to 55.8 hours. From the Anglican survey modern catholics had the longest working week. These results, especially the discontinuity amongst the working practices of Methodist evangelicals, reflect differences observed earlier, notably the close identity between the charismatic wing and conservative evangelicals amongst Methodists, an identity not characteristic of Anglicans.

Having noted these striking differences, it is appropriate to examine the working week in a little more detail so as to pin-point where these differences arise. Once again, as with all the previous investigations, there is relatively little difference in overall sacerdotal activity with the range varying from 15.3 to 16.5 hours. This almost certainly arises since the taking of services, together with the necessary appropriate preparation, are essentially prescribed duties over which the Methodist minister can exercise little personal initiative. Notwithstanding the above comment, it is interesting that there is variation among Methodist ministers with regard to service and sermon preparation but that this is much less than their Anglican counterparts. Thus for Methodists the range of values over the different theological viewpoints is from 5.5 to 7.1 hours (mean 6.3 hours) compared to 3.9 to 7.1 hours (mean 4.7 hours) for Anglicans. Clearly there is a more uniformity of preparation, and perhaps service styles, amongst Methodists. Predictably, conservative evangelicals invest the most time in conducting bible study groups and pluralists the least and this exactly parallels attitudes of these groups towards the scriptures (Figure 3:1). That this is a fairly universal characteristic of those who embrace the evangelical label is confirmed by a similar trend amongst Anglican clergy where both conservative and open evangelicals devote 2 to 3 times as much time to bible study and prayer groups as other groups (Davies *et al* 1990b:44).

In the pastoral category there is a slightly wider range of emphasis with the allotted times ranging from 12.2 to 15.0 hours. A closer examination of the various sub-categories reveals some interesting differences. Thus open evangelicals are by far the most involved in counselling, whereas conservative evangelicals, catholics and traditional Methodists play a much more limited role in this area. This suggests that the term 'open' may be taken to indicate a willingness to embrace more secularly-based approaches such as counselling. Catholic ministers are probably the most distinctive group in the overall pastoral category being the least involved in pastoral

visitation and the most involved in institutionalised forms of care such as in schools or as chaplains. Average weekly hours spent in visiting range from a low of 5.2 hours (catholics) to a high of 8.6 hours (traditional Methodists). The particular emphasis on visiting amongst traditional Methodists accords with a widespread expectation amongst Methodist laity that one of the prime roles of the minister is visitation. The amount of involvement in youth work is almost uniformly low across all viewpoints with only the miscellaneous group of 'others' exceeding the average of an hour a week.

There is a notably wider range of hours in the third major category, administration. Here, the weekly quota ranges from a minimum 8.6 hours for catholics to the maximum 14.1 hours put in by open evangelicals. The low catholic figure is derived from right across the board of administrative activities and suggests that in some way this group has managed to minimise its involvement in the administrative affairs of the local church and circuit. As suggested in the discussion of the significance of the various theological labels in Chapter 3, catholic ministers are especially keen on involvement in ecumenical activities (Figure 3:6) and this is in accord with the apparent catholic emphasis on institutionally-mediated care, where the ecumenical dimension might be expected to come to the forefront. The corollary of this is that catholic ministers perhaps minimise their organisational activity within the Methodist Church.

In the area of private devotion and study, again there is a reasonably wide range of between 3.9 to 7.1 hours involved. In this case conservative evangelicals dedicate significantly fewer hours than other groups, although this largely arises because of the much less attention paid to private study. This again marks an important difference between conservative and open evangelicals with the latter group committing double the time to private study. Possibly this reflects a distinctive attitude to the Bible which may by conservatives be seen to speak for itself and by open evangelicals to require the attentions of modern scholarship.

The Influence of Spiritual Style on Ministerial Activity

Another possible influence on working patterns is the spiritual style of the minister and this is examined in Table 6:6 overleaf. As before, there is little apparent variation in the overall sacerdotal activity, although this masks the charismatic minister's involvement in bible studies and prayer meetings which at 2.8 hours is significantly higher than the approximate one hour dedicated by liberals and radicals. Pastoral activity is again fairly uniform between the different spiritual styles, although radical ministers tend to specialise in counselling (3.6 hours) and also do more than an average amount of visiting (8.4 hours). With regard to administrative duties there is a slightly wider range with radicals notable by their rather low overall contribution and

slightly wider range with radicals notable by their rather low overall contribution and charismatics by their preoccupation with the circuit plan, which at 2.5 hours exceeds even the contribution of the average superintendent (Table 6:2). As rather few charismatics are also superintendents this suggests that charismatic ministers are particularly concerned with planning and overseeing the preachers within their circuit churches whereas others are more likely to leave this to the discretion of the superintendent.

Charismatics are further distinguished by a much lower than average time involved with private devotions and studies, even lower than conservative evangelicals. As before, this is mainly attributable to a very small amount of time (1.1 hours) taken up with private study, only one third the time given by radical or liberal ministers. This perhaps indicates an emphasis on revelation rather than intellectual discipline as a key to knowledge. Having said that, there is no indication that charismatics spend more time in private prayer than other ministers.

The above results are broadly in keeping with the Anglican study where it was noted that these orientations do not appear to greatly influence the apportionment of

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Working Time in Hours</i>					
	<i>Spiritual Style</i>	Mean	Charismatic	Liberal	Radical	No Indication
<i>Number of Cases</i>		116	12	50	14	40
<i>Sacerdotal</i>		15.9	15.9	16.9	16.8	15.3
<i>Pastoral</i>		14.1	14.6	13.4	15.6	14.1
<i>Administration</i>		13.0	14.5	13.5	11.3	12.8
<i>Private Devotion and Study</i>		5.8	3.6	5.9	6.1	6.0
<i>Travel</i>		4.7	4.7	4.5	3.9	5.1
<i>Other</i>		3.0	1.6	2.8	5.1	2.9
<i>Mean Total</i>		56.8	56.6	56.4	58.6	56.9

Table 6:6 Breakdown of the Working Week for Methodist Ministers According to Spiritual Style

time (Davies *et al* 1990b:44). Anglican priests appear to parallel their Methodist counterparts in that again charismatic priests tend to be significantly more involved in Bible study and prayer groups. There is, however, little variation in the time set aside for private devotions and study amongst Anglicans and this marks a small point of difference.

Overview of Ministerial Activity

What clues does this initial examination of the minister's working week reveal about the practice of pastoral care? First of all it needs to be reiterated that average values can be misleading since they may mask a great variation in individual activity. Notwithstanding this reservation, the average values are a useful indicator of factors which may affect the overall balance of ministerial activity. So far we have considered five principal factors which might influence the pattern of the working week: ministerial appointment, age, gender, theological viewpoint and spiritual style. A summary of these considerations is given in Table 6:7 which shows the range of influence of each of these factors on the various ministerial activities. It is apparent

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Range of Working Time in Hours</i>					
	<i>Category</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Status¹</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender²</i>	<i>Viewpoint</i>	Spirituality
<i>Sacerdotal</i>	16	16	15-17	16	15-17	15-17
<i>Pastoral</i>	14	14-15	13-16	12-14	12-15	13-16
<i>Administration</i>	13	11-18	8-16	10-11	9-14	11-15
<i>Private Devotion and Study</i>	6	6	5-6	6-7	4-7	4-6
<i>Travel</i>	5	5	4-5	4-6	4-5	4-5
<i>Other</i>	3	3	1-5	2-3	1-4	2-5
<i>Mean Total</i>	57	55-63	48-61	53-55	51-58	55-59

Table 6:7 Overview of the Working Week for Methodist Ministers According to Five Influencing Factors

1. This refers to ministerial appointment and relates to circuit minister and superintendent only.
2. The gender data applies to circuit ministers only.

that these factors have a marginal influence on the sacerdotal activities, a somewhat larger influence on the pastoral category and a substantial influence in the area of administration. However, in the last case it should be recognised that age and nature of appointment, both inevitably intertwined, have a much more pronounced effect than gender or theological viewpoint or spirituality. Thus it would appear that church structures and prescribed ministerial responsibilities are greater determinants of the working week than personal viewpoints or inclinations. The sole possible exception are ministers of a catholic persuasion who appear to marginalise the Methodist bureaucracy by involvement with ecumenical projects and an emphasis on institutionalised care through schools and chaplaincies.

The areas which showed most dependence on theological viewpoint and spirituality are private devotion and study, and the miscellaneous category, precisely those areas where a minister would be expected to be free to stamp his personal mark. The overall picture which is being built up is of a fairly stereotypical working practice where some 85% of the working week is spent on the three major activities: sacerdotal, pastoral and administrative, together with related travel time. There are, of course, ministers who challenge the system¹, but by and large individual flair, gifts and emphasis are normally found in the fine detail of these activities rather than in a radically different work pattern. There is perhaps one potential exception to this conclusion and that concerns non-stipendiary ministers (MLAs). In their case it would appear that they are not necessarily *identikit*, reduced-hours ministers, but there is flexibility in determining their duties according to their personal skills and inclinations. This perhaps stems in part from the fact that their services are voluntary and hence they must inevitably have a stronger negotiating base in determining what would be an appropriate working pattern.

The Pastoral Visit

In common with the Anglican study the pastoral visit represents the single most important activity for Methodist ministers, at least from the viewpoint of the proportion of time ascribed to this task. It is also of significance for local preachers since 30.5% of that group are also pastoral visitors, 28.6% do regular visiting and a further 40.9% visit occasionally. The perceived importance of visiting as an integral part of pastoral care can be deduced not only from the time spent in visiting but also from ministerial affirmation. Thus 95.1% of the ministers surveyed were of the opinion that the pastoral visit was an important aspect of their pastoral oversight (Appendix I, Q.24(a)). Local preachers also recognised the value of visiting as part

1. For example, one minister interviewed in the case studies commented how on one occasion he had delegated the taking of the morning service less than an hour before it began in order to be at the bedside of a member having an abortion.

of the minister's overall pastoral care: 54.5% judged it very important, 33% important, 9% helpful, 2.5% expected and only 1% were uncertain of its usefulness (Appendix II, Q.43). Visiting also forms a key part of the lay expectation of ministerial activity. Thus in the laity survey visiting comes in the centre of a list of important ministerial tasks being eclipsed only by tasks such as leadership, the sacraments, worship and preaching (Appendix III, Q.12).

The centrality of pastoral visiting is also alluded to by a variety of ministerial comments in responding to the survey. For example, several ministers made comments almost word for word identical to the one that follows:

"I consider it (*pastoral visiting*) a very important part of my ministry."

Another minister ranked visiting as a more crucial task than administration and meetings and thus he wrote:

"I could do a lot more if the infernal burden of administration was lifted and 'Methodist Meetings' were banned! Visits do more good than 'talking about' doing it!"

Yet another commented:

"I believe in it most fervently. I further believe insufficient is done by ministers and laity."

So far we have tapped into the rich seam, both amongst ministers and laity, which suggests that visiting is important, but this is only the beginning and it leads naturally to further important questions such as: what is the purpose of visiting? How should the visit be conducted? Who should be visited and who should visit? To such questions we now turn.

The Purpose of Pastoral Visiting

It has been said that: 'if you aim at nothing, you can be confident of achieving your target'. Nowhere is this more true than in pastoral visiting and it may go some way to explaining the lack of satisfaction that some ministers feel in this part of their ministry - an aspect which will be returned to later in this section. The *purpose* of visiting must be a primary concern since unless this is established it is not possible to come to firm conclusions with regard to the other questions which have been noted. It was for precisely this reason that the purpose of pastoral visiting has been probed in all three postal surveys. Thus ministers were requested to state their 'main purpose in visiting' (Appendix I, Q.24(d)); local preachers were asked to express their opinion as to what 'the main purpose of pastoral visiting should be' (Appendix II, Q.46); and the general laity were faced with selecting three out of eleven multiple-choice answers to the question 'What do you think should be the *main* purpose of pastoral visits?' (Appendix III, Q.8).

As was the case in the treatment of the responses to the open questions on the 'essence of pastoral care' it has proved necessary to categorise the answers to the question on the purpose of pastoral visiting so as to facilitate the discussion and analysis of the results. In so doing it has proved possible to utilise the earlier seven categories supplemented by three additional ones. As before, keywords have been identified from the text of the responses which relate to the proposed categories and these are summarised in Table 6:8 below. The keywords were used to give an initial indication of the appropriate category but were considered within the overall context of the statements. The three additional categories are: 'Knowing their situation', which is similar but distinct from 'Relationship Development' and is concerned with assessment, receiving feedback, and listening to views; 'Facade', which embraces a sense of disillusionment with pastoral visitation and sees it in terms of meeting expectations and 'being seen to be doing'; 'Showing Care', which sees visitation as a *visible demonstration* that the church is concerned, with the emphasis on the visitor as the church's representative.

The overall conclusions draw on data from both the ministerial and local preacher surveys and include a comparison with the earlier results on the understanding of the essence of pastoral care. In this table the information is presented as the percentage of cases, i.e., the percentage of respondents whose

Category	Percentage of Cases			
	<i>Ministers</i>		<i>Local Preachers</i>	
	Pastoral Care	Visit Aim	Pastoral Care	Visit Aim
Relationship Development	32	46	39	33
Mediating God	37	32	32	24
Sharing Common Humanity	15	16	17	18
Crisis Care	47	38	34	42
Growth Through Enabling	38	16	28	25
Growth Through Direction	13	4	9	8
Body Ministry	13	7	10	11
Knowing Situation	--	7	--	12
Facade	--	5	--	2
Showing Care	--	11	--	24

Table 6:8 Comparison of the Purpose of Pastoral Visits and the Essence of Pastoral Care for both Ministers and Local Preachers

Table 6.9 Keyword Classification of Visit Purpose**1. Relationship Development**

Appreciation/ Available/ Compassion/ Contact/ Communication/ Foundation (for crisis care)/ Initial contact/ Housebound/ Keep in touch/ Know (Be known)/ Meeting/ Maintaining Relationship/ Relationship Development/ Trust (build)

2. Mediating God

Assurance/ Awareness of God/ Bring Jesus/ Convey God's love/ Communion/ Challenge of Gospel/ Discover God/ Evangelism/ Kingdom presence/ Love/ Mediate God's love/ Outreach/ Pray/ Presence of Jesus/ Represent God

3. Sharing Common Humanity

Alongside/ Being a (not expert)/ Be there/ Be with/ Conversation/ Discussion/ Friendship/ Giving self/ Identify with/ Provide a break/ Share concerns/ With people.

4. Crisis Care

Arrange help/ Caring/ Crisis/ Comfort/ Counselling/ Emergency/ Help/ Need/ Problems/ Resources/ Sick/ Support.

5. Growth (through enabling)

Affirm/ Enable (growth)/ Encourage/ Help (to grow)/ Listen/ Maintain faith/ Nurture/ Well-being/ Wholeness.

6. Growth (through direction)

Advise/ Build up/ Reinforce worship/ Relate faith and experience/ Shepherding/ Spiritual Direction/ Spiritual Growth.

7. Body Ministry

Be supported/ Build fellowship/ Encourage Involvement in Body/ Encourage service in family/ Family of God/ Generate Belonging/ Link/ Promote Family Feeling.

8. Knowing their Situation

Assessment/ Discover/ Feedback/ Get Feel of Views/ Hear Views/ Understanding.

9. Facade

Assuage Personal Guilt/ Being seen to be doing/ Show Interest/ Show Face.

10. Showing Care

Remind God cares/ Represent church/ Show God (church) cares/ Sign of Care

answer related to a particular category. The answers concerning the purpose of pastoral visits are revealing. Overall, ministers and local preachers have a roughly similar list of priorities. In both cases relationship development and crisis care are in the top two, although it is interesting that ministers see the main purpose of visiting to be the development of personal relationships rather than crisis care. There is significant divergence of opinion as to what follows in importance. Local preachers cite mediating God, enabling growth and showing care as almost equal priorities at 24-25% of their responses. By contrast, for ministers the clear third priority at 32% is mediating the presence of God and perhaps reflects a deeper awareness of their priestly role. Local preachers seem much more preoccupied with the concept of 'showing care', that is, for the minister to be clearly seen to be demonstrating that the church is concerned for individuals through personal home visitation, since this is mentioned by only 11% of ministers. Enabling growth is drawn attention to by 25% of local preachers but only by 16% of ministers. Since this is one of the key understandings of the ministers' formulation of the essence of pastoral care, it suggests either that in practice this ideal is somewhat difficult to realise, or that pastoral visiting is not perceived as an appropriate way of tackling this.

There tends to be rather general agreement on the remaining items on the list with 'sharing common humanity' referred to by 16 to 18% of both groups. Clearly this is a significant proportion and underlines a concern that the minister should not be too distanced from the people he visits. Local preachers are somewhat more interested in using visits to 'know' the situation and circumstances of the individual and to obtain feedback from them. This emphasis is perhaps understandable from a group who see visiting as a complement to their preaching ministry. Thus elsewhere over 50% of local preachers believe that visiting is relevant to their own preaching ministry and amongst the chief reasons cited they include: identifying concerns, understanding the local situation and using the visit as a sounding board (Appendix II, Q.42(b)). About one in twenty ministers recognise that visiting, at least from their own personal perspective, is a rather meaningless facade. For example, for one minister the purpose of visiting is:

"To assuage my personal sense of guilt. If I visit some, at least I have done some visiting."

Others find the purpose of visiting lies in meeting expectations of the membership and rationalise their pastoral visiting with comments such as:

"To be seen to be doing what people expect."

"Much expected pastoral visitation is about keeping people happy."

Yet another is not overwhelmingly convinced of the need to visit and confesses:

"I find it difficult to motivate myself to ordinary pastoral visiting. On the rare occasions I have free time I am inclined to feel entitled to an afternoon off."

These are clearly the views of a very small minority but nevertheless they emphasise the point that not all ministers regard pastoral visiting as a valuable and effective part of their ministry and have very little motivation for such visiting.

It is also of interest to see how far the ministers' understanding of pastoral care is reflected in visiting. On the whole, there is a reasonably close parallel, although visiting is cited more often from the viewpoint of relationship development and less often with regard to crisis intervention and help. The former is perhaps expected, the latter slightly surprising since it would seem reasonable that personal presence was an appropriate response in times of crisis. Again it may hint at an underlying tension that what is perceived to be a priority, namely care and support in crisis situations, is not so easily carried out in practice through the means of a pastoral visit. This is perhaps evidenced by a minister who pointed out that, whereas visiting was generally satisfying, he found it particularly difficult to deal with crisis situations such as a child's death and a suicide. This same tension has already been alluded to as a possible explanation to the much more marked discrepancy with 'enabling growth', which is cited by 38% of ministers in connection with the nature of pastoral care but only 16% in relation to pastoral visiting. This discrepancy barely exists amongst local preachers who assign a fairly high priority to enabling growth in both their understanding of pastoral care and the purpose of visiting, but a much smaller proportion of these are involved in active visiting and consequently a smaller percentage have had to face up to the real world of visiting and the tension between what you would like to achieve and what is realistic.

Pastoral Visit Patterns

In relation to their practice of pastoral visiting, ministers were questioned about the persons whom they visited in an average week, the actual content of the visit and whether they were generally satisfied with the outcome (Appendix I, Q.25,26). Not surprisingly, the two most visited groups were the sick and the elderly, visited by 97% and 92% of ministers in a usual week. Not far behind were the general membership visited by 82% of ministers and then, on a much lower priority, lapsed members (33%), followed by general contacts outside the church (30%). Visiting, relating to groups such as young people, Sunday school children, cradle roll¹, and those who were bereaved was much less frequent in the region of 5 to 13% of ministers in a normal week. This pattern suggests that visiting is mainly centred on the church

1. The cradle roll is a list of children who have been baptised in the church. The child is kept on the list until the age where he or she would normally be expected to attend Sunday School and during this time attempts are usually made to maintain contacts with the family concerned.

membership and that crises, that is people seen to be in visible need of a visit, are the main priority.

In order to probe their visit pattern, ministers were asked to respond to a multiple choice type question in which ten possible components of a visit were listed (Appendix I, Q.26(a)). The two most important ingredients of the visit were seen to be informal conversation and prayer, which were *usual* parts of the visit for some 80% and 55% of ministers respectively. Having said that, there were a small number (4%) of ministers who only rarely chatted or prayed with the people they visited. The next most quoted ingredient was informed discussion, which was encountered on some 22% of normal visits but again rarely entered into by about one in ten ministers. Prayers for healing and practical help were the norm only for about 10% of ministers. That is perhaps somewhat surprising bearing in mind that the sick are in the most targeted category to receive visits. Other aspects such as silence, holy communion, reading of the Scriptures, confession and discipline were not a usual part of the visit for the vast majority of ministers, and although most made occasional or rare use of these aspects, there was a small minority (10-20%) who never found these relevant to their pattern of ministry.

The overall pattern of visit that seems to emerge is of the minister dropping in for an informal chat which occasionally leads to deeper discussion and may or may not end in prayer. The initial impression is of rather unstructured visiting which hopefully leads to a developing relationship with the person, and if achieving nothing else shows the individual that the minister (church) cared enough to visit. This picture is reinforced by the casual way in which the visiting is arranged since only about 4% of ministers normally indicate in advance their intention to visit or the purpose of their visit (Appendix 1, Q.25(a)). This approach inevitably leads to frustration and thus one minister was prompted to note:

" Much time is wasted when people are out."

That ministers sometimes struggle to make visits a meaningful event is evident by the range of comments arising from the questions on pastoral visiting, a selection of which is given below:

"I suspect the church has little idea of what pastoral visiting is for. Rarely does it deal with matters of importance."

"Most lay people are uncomfortable about anything other than informal conversation."

"Unfortunately it is considered by too many to be no more than a social occasion."

"They often lack any real spiritual input, and end ... social occasions."

"Too often just a chat. Don't always get down to meaningful talk."

"I think perhaps I ought to give a higher priority to religious/ spiritual conversation."

"Some unease on how to help people develop their spirituality through visiting..."

"Often I have difficulty getting a word in edgeways."

"Not enough prayer; but despite my dissatisfaction I still feel very shy of offering to pray with people."

"They lack purpose and structure; rather nebulous, but very occasionally striking gold."

"Would like people to be willing to share at a deeper level."

"At times hard to move from a general chat."

Clearly, at least some ministers, and one suspects these quotations are fairly typical, find it difficult to move from the social, relationship development aspects to the more sacerdotal aspect of mediating the presence of God.

A major difficulty seems to be how people perceive the minister's visit. There is at least a hard core of members who enjoy the kudos of the minister's visit but keep him at arm's length when it turns into more than a social event. That it is the minister's coming rather than the visit itself which is valued is underlined by the refusal of at least some to recognise the validity of other visitors. This perspective is highlighted in the following ministerial comments:

"People do not regard themselves as having had an official visit from the church unless the minister undertakes it."

"No amount of visiting by lay members counts as being visited."

"Visit from the minister highly valued even if only a social chat."

It is perhaps pertinent at this stage to pause and consider the general laity's view of the purpose, and hence appropriate patterns, of pastoral visits as evidenced from responses to the laity questionnaire. Lay people were asked in a multiple choice style question to indicate up to three main aims of pastoral visiting out of a dozen possibilities (Appendix III, Q.8). Their responses are ranked in order in Table 6:10 which follows. It is perhaps worth noting that almost no alternative suggestions were given as to the purpose of a pastoral visit and this suggests that the tabulated list is reasonably comprehensive. It is fascinating to observe that the most common purposes have little directly to do with any priestly function, are descriptive of normal social intercourse and could be offered as well by a lay visitor as an ordained minister. The first hint of the importance of the minister comes in the fourth priority that an important point of the visit is that the church is represented. This perhaps is related to the 24% of local preachers who understood a visit to embody a demonstration that the church cares (Table 6:8). Whether the church can be adequately represented by others, apart from the minister, is a matter which we shall return to presently.

<i>Aims of Pastoral Visiting</i>	<i>Percentage of Persons Responding</i>
1. Offering Friendship	58
2. Listening	51
3. Encouraging	40
4. Representing the Church	32
5. Help in Crisis	30
6. Getting to Know	29
7. Praying for Needs	27
8. Comforting	18
9. Spiritual Growth	18
10. Advising	7
11. Reading the Scriptures	3
12. Others	1

Table 6:10 Lay Perceptions of the Main Purpose of Pastoral Visits

The more sacerdotal aspects such as prayer, spiritual growth and direction, and sharing the scriptures are seen to be much less important. It would seem that the laity, on the whole, expect a friend, a listening ear and encouragement and not a religious agenda to the visit. They also value the affirmation that they are important enough for the official church representative to call. These expectations seem to parallel ministers' stated difficulties in their attempts to make more out of a visit than a social event. It is significant that these views are propounded by church members, many of them active office bearers in the church, and not by outsiders. It is at first surprising that such a clientele should be so cool towards spiritual matters but it is perhaps indicative of the privatisation of religion. There are of course other signs of this elsewhere in Methodism such as the failure of the class meetings, a meeting which originally emphasised and probed individual spirituality, as well as the marked reluctance to include testimony in preaching services (Figure 3:4). This divergence between lay perceptions of the main purpose of the pastoral visit and ministerial understanding of what it *ought* to be, is clearly a potential source of tension which must inevitably colour a minister's satisfaction in visiting and to this we now turn.

Ministers were asked to comment as to whether they were 'satisfied with the conduct/ outcome' of their pattern of visiting (Appendix I, Q.26b). This was an open

question but it was relatively straightforward to group the responses into categories which are summarised in Table 6:11 below. A number of ministers avoided directly answering the question, for example, one commented:

"Satisfied is a bad word. I would never want to be satisfied."

Semantics apart, the main responses which appear under the category 'other comments' tended to relate to the possibility of doing more if time permitted or that the visit was dependent on the needs of the person. It is evident from the tabulated results that whereas nearly half of ministers are satisfied or usually satisfied with their visiting, about one fifth are only satisfied on some occasions, and a similar number have serious reservations about their visiting.

<i>Satisfied with visit</i>	<i>Percentage of Ministers Responding</i>
Yes	15
Usually	32
Sometimes	20
Not really	7
No	10
Other Comment	15

Table 6:11 Ministerial Satisfaction With Pastoral Visiting

There are some very significant differences with respect to theological viewpoint and to a lesser extent age group concerning satisfaction with visiting. About half (48%) of ministers under 40 years of age are generally satisfied with visiting; this drops to around 40% for those in the 40 to 59 age range and then jumps to nearly two-thirds (65%) for ministers aged sixty and over. We can only speculate on the reasons for these variations, particularly the renewed satisfaction with visiting nearer to retiring age. One might suppose that initial youthful enthusiasm wanes in the middle years as a more cynical view of the effectiveness of visiting emerges with the realisation that it is not after all going to transform the life and ministry of the church. In the final years, as retirement approaches, ambitious plans for church growth and development are set aside, and ministers concentrate on one of the things that all the years of experience have fitted them for, and which finds endorsement among their membership. That satisfaction is closely related to practice is seen by the excessive

hours actually put in by ministers aged sixty and over, as already discussed earlier in this chapter.

If age is a significant factor, theological viewpoint is even more so, as revealed in Table 6:12. Conservative evangelicals are the least satisfied with the pattern and outcome of their visiting, with only just over a quarter (27%) being generally satisfied and over a third (36%) definitely not satisfied. Catholic ministers have a similar proportion who are generally satisfied but a much smaller proportion (13%) who are not really satisfied. Of the other groupings, open evangelicals and 'others' show rather similar patterns with nearly half being generally satisfied and a much smaller proportion expressing unease with visitation. Finally, pluralists and traditional Methodists have the largest proportion (53-56%) who are at ease with the outcome of their visiting and a very much smaller proportion (16-17%) who express dissatisfaction. Before beginning to grapple with why these differences occur it is worth noting that, on this occasion, there is no clear correlation between satisfaction in visiting and the amount of time devoted to this pastoral activity (Table 6:5). Thus amongst the two groups who are the least satisfied with visiting, although catholic ministers put in about 30% fewer hours in visitation, conservative evangelicals are only slightly below average. Similarly, at the other extreme, although traditional Methodists put nearly 20% more effort into visiting than average, pluralists are much lower than the average. This perhaps suggests that with the clear exception of catholics, who have to some extent managed to opt out of the Methodist system through involvement in institutions and ecumenical concerns, the pastoral activities are to a large extent determined by factors beyond the control of the individual

<i>Satisfied with Visit</i>		<i>Percentage of Each Category</i>					
<i>Viewpoint</i>	Mean	Cons. Evan.	Open Evan.	Cath.	Plur.	Trad. Meth.	Others
<i>Number of Cases</i>	124	11	22	8	25	36	20
Yes	15	0	23	0	20	14	15
Usually	32	27	23	25	36	39	30
Sometimes	21	27	18	50	20	19	10
Not Really	8	0	9	13	4	6	15
No	10	36	0	0	12	11	5

Table 6:12 Ministerial Satisfaction with Visitation According to Theological Viewpoint

minister. This implies pastoral activity which is generally reactive to crises and membership expectations.

To understand the variation in levels of visit satisfaction it is necessary to briefly consider how theological viewpoint is related to visit purpose. This is summarised in Table 6:13 below. In this tabulation a key factor is believed to be the desire to use the visit to mediate the presence of God since this category most nearly corresponds to the priestly emphasis which, as already discussed, is largely rejected by the membership. It can be readily seen that it is precisely the conservative evangelicals who put most store by this aspect who are least satisfied with their visiting. On the other hand, pluralists and traditional Methodists put least emphasis in this area and are most satisfied with their visitation. Further contributing factors are probably categories such as 'knowing the situation' and 'showing care'. It is probably significant that those who put more store in these areas are more likely to be satisfied with their visiting since these aspects do not particularly require a positive client response. For example, whether or not the visit progresses to some depth, the minister has still 'shown care' through his presence.

These explanations are also consistent with the observed variation in the level of visit satisfaction with gender (Table 6:14). The results show that two-thirds of female

<i>Category</i>	<i>Percentage of Each Category</i>						
	<i>Viewpoint</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Cons. Evan.</i>	<i>Open Evan.</i>	<i>Cath.</i>	<i>Plur.</i>	<i>Trad. Meth.</i>	Others
<i>Number of Cases</i>	124	11	22	8	25	36	20
Relationship Dev.	46	50	55	50	42	40	40
Mediating God	32	50	41	38	31	23	30
Common Humanity	16	17	9	25	19	13	20
Crisis Care	38	42	32	50	23	43	50
Growth (Enabling)	16	8	18	0	19	18	15
Growth (Direction)	4	0	9	0	4	5	0
Body Ministry	7	8	14	0	4	13	15
Knowing Situation	7	0	0	0	4	13	15
Facade	5	8	5	0	4	3	15
Showing Care	11	0	9	0	15	15	10

Table 6:13 Visit Purpose According to Theological Viewpoint

ministers are generally satisfied with the outcome of their visiting compared to considerably less than half of their male counterparts. This level of satisfaction exceeds even the 56% of pluralist ministers who were generally content with their visiting. The prediction of our former discussion is that high levels of satisfaction are inversely related to the priestly concern to mediate the presence of God in pastoral visits. This again proves to be the case since only 14% of women ministers cite 'mediating the presence of God' as a visit concern compared to 35% of men. Once again, however, the enhanced levels of visit satisfaction do not spill over into heightened activity and in fact women ministers were found to devote 20% less time to visiting than their male counterparts. This may reflect the fact that women are less pressured to be involved in pastoral visiting, perhaps because members have yet to determine a stereotype for women ministers, and this could therefore have something to do with their enhanced enjoyment of this area of ministry.

<i>Satisfied with Visit</i>	<i>Percentage of Each Category</i>		
	Mean	Male	Female
<i>Number of Cases</i>	124	109	15
Yes	15	14	20
Usually	32	30	47
Sometimes	20	21	13
Not Really	8	9	0
No	10	9	13
Other Comment	15	17	7
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 6:14 Ministerial Satisfaction with Visitation According to Gender

The overall conclusion of this section must be that there is considerable variation in attitudes towards visitation and the degree of ministerial satisfaction achieved. However, this leads to relatively little variation in visit patterns and the amount of visiting carried out, since these are significantly determined by membership expectations and by 'essential' visiting such as response to sickness and bereavement.

Lay Visitors

So far we have concentrated mainly on ministerial visiting, but in Methodism a substantial amount of visiting is carried out by lay persons, the most important category of whom are the pastoral visitors. Thus when ministers were questioned as to who else carried out *regular* visiting, 86% of them indicated pastoral visitors (Appendix I, Q.24(b)). Some 14% of ministers also indicated the efforts of undesignated members, 6% mentioned lay workers, 4% referred to class leaders and a further 6% stated that there was no-one to assist. It is also clear that a significant minority (about one third) of local preachers are also involved in regular visiting although most of these are probably pastoral visitors.

A key question that needs to be aired is the acceptability of lay visiting *vis-à-vis* the minister's visit. Various ministerial comments hint at this problem. Thus one minister, presumably echoing his perception of his members' views, commented:

"No amount of visiting by lay-members counts as being visited."

A second minister explains the rationale behind this view:

"People do not regard themselves as having had an official visit from the church unless the minister undertakes it."

This brings us back to the high priority ascribed by the laity to 'representing the church' in their understanding of pastoral visiting (Table 6:10). Clearly for many, including many ministers, it is the minister alone who is the true representative of the church. This is brought out in many statements of the significance of ordained ministry, which we shall discuss in more detail in a subsequent chapter but can be adequately illustrated here by a quotation from '*The Ministry of the People of God*', a report to the 1986 Methodist Conference which talks of the ordained ministry in the following terms:

"In their office the whole Church is focussed and *represented*, and it is their responsibility as *representative* persons to lead the people to share with them in that calling. In this sense they are the sign of the presence and ministry of Christ in the Church and through the Church to the world." (Methodist Church 1986, para 067)

Clearly such understanding, which emphasises the distinctive role of the minister as a 'representative person' and a 'sign of the presence and ministry of Christ', is likely to promote the idea that lay visiting is necessarily less representative and consequently less valid and less to be desired than the ministerial visit. From this viewpoint whether or not the minister is incompetent, has poor relationship skills, or simply has no time is irrelevant. He is the representative person and it is his visit that counts and provides the affirmation that the church cares and the member is regarded as important enough to merit a visit by the official representative.

The question as to whether members regarded lay visiting as an appropriate alternative to the minister's visit was probed in all three surveys and we are thus able to compare the perceptions of ministers, local preachers and the wider body of the laity. To begin with, only 6% of ministers believe that lay visiting is acceptable to the whole membership, some 44% feel it is welcomed by a majority and an almost equal number (42%) regard lay visiting to be welcomed only by a minority of members (Appendix I, Q.24(c)). The question was posed somewhat differently to local preachers who were asked about the acceptability to various groups of: 'pastoral visits carried out by lay people in *lieu* of the minister' (Appendix II, Q.44). The results of this are summarised in Table 6:15. Not surprisingly, local preachers are surest about their own views but are much less certain as to what other members think and especially the opinion of people outside the church. Having said that, nearly nine out of ten local preachers are happy to be visited by a lay representative, but only about one in three think the majority of members would find this acceptable and this reduces to one in five for adherents. In reaching these conclusions they are probably slightly more pessimistic than ministers, among whom approximately half feel that lay visits are welcomed by a majority.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Acceptability of Lay Visits</i>		
	Yes	No	Not Sure
Local Preachers	87%	7%	6%
Majority of Members	30%	30%	40%
Majority of Fringe Contacts	18%	35%	47%

Table 6:15 Local Preachers' Perceptions of the Acceptability of Lay Visiting

Turning to the laity survey, some 71% of Methodists stated that they would be happy to receive a visit from a pastoral visitor *instead* of the minister (Appendix III, Q.7(c)). A further 17% were uncertain and only 12% firmly rejected the idea. This data suggests that in fact over two-thirds of the membership are reconciled to the concept of lay visitation and only a small minority are definitely opposed. There is clearly a much higher proportion of the general membership who are sympathetic to the concept of lay-visitation than suggested by either ministers or local preachers. The discrepancy may be because a small number of vociferous complainants about lack of ministerial visitation may make an impact out of all proportion to their number. Alternatively, ministers especially may subconsciously magnify the emphasis on the importance of ministerial visitation in order to retain a sense of distinct ministerial

identity and role¹. Overall, the response would seem to suggest that lay visiting could be used extensively and acceptably amongst the majority of church members.

A good proportion of the ministerial comments relating to visiting concern the limited time available. One obvious answer is to supplement or replace ministerial visiting by lay visitors. This solution is evident in comments such as:

"We have a good group of visitors who relieve the minister of much visiting."

However, before lay visiting can be used to its full potential, a number of hurdles have to be overcome, not least the question of acceptability. Thus one minister notes:

"The importance of visits by members and pastoral visitors needs to be raised."

This acceptance starts with ministers as they are willing to recognise lay pastoral gifts and to surrender what, for some, has become part of their ministerial identity. The acceptance will grow as lay visitors demonstrate their skills and are found to have the time to form deep relationships with those whom they visit.

Acceptance is, of course, only one stumbling block. Ministers were able to identify a series of difficulties in promoting lay visitation (Appendix I, Q. 27(c)). Of these, lack of volunteers was the most common (28%), followed by limited experience (13%), lack of acceptance (9%), confidentiality (5%) and lack of training (3%). In addition a whole range of miscellaneous reasons was advanced, the most common of which were that lay people were too busy or lacked confidence. It seems likely that many of these difficulties are inter-linked, for example, people may be reluctant to volunteer because they have no experience in visiting or because there is no training available and lacking experience and training they have little confidence for the task. Creating a network of visitors is clearly a long-term solution but will initially require additional work. Apart from the selection of visitors and subsequent training there is the continual need for on-going oversight and encouragement. This is recognised in comments on lay visiting such as:

"A vital part of local church ministry. Team meetings for prayer, review and planning are important"

and,

"Our pastoral team meets quarterly for training and discussion. Each visitor is visited quarterly."

Whereas training is clearly helpful there is no substitute for practical experience and this could often best be obtained initially through some kind of apprenticeship scheme where a new visitor accompanies the minister or other experienced pastoral visitor.

1. It is perhaps significant that the minister's view of whether lay visiting is acceptable to the laity varies markedly with theological viewpoint. Thus whereas 67% of conservative evangelicals believe that lay visiting is acceptable this reduces to only 38% for catholic ministers. This is consistent with the former group putting more emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and having a 'lower' view of the ordained ministry.

Bereavement Visiting

A specialised aspect of visiting which all of the surveyed ministers were involved in was visiting following the death of a family member or close friend. These must be among the most stressful of visits because of the nature of the visit and frequently because of their suddenness, which clearly pre-empts planning. This aspect is attested to by the following comments made by a minister during the course of a case-study interview:

"Crises frequently arise concurrently. On one occasion I had to deal with a suicide, an abortion, three deaths and a hospital case within three to four weeks. I became stressed out."

Dealing with death is clearly very time-consuming especially in churches with an ageing membership where the number of funerals, especially in the winter months, can significantly affect work patterns. Another case study minister reported approximately forty funerals in the preceding year and reckoned that the minimum time allocated to each would include: an initial visit, a visit in preparation for the service, service preparation time and the funeral, which might include a service in the church and at the crematorium and an invitation to the home. In these circumstances the minister acknowledged that time for after-care was minimal.

Clearly the degree of involvement of ministers is dependent on their circumstances. However, of the ministers contacted in the postal survey, whereas all were involved in at least an initial pastoral visit, only four out of five usually did any follow-up after the service (Appendix I, Q.33(a)). This reduces to three out of ten who were usually concerned with any serious attempt in bereavement counselling. The follow-up support, where offered, was extremely variable and, although some make the valid point that it should be tailored to individual needs, one suspects that the level of post-bereavement visiting owes as much to the time available and the minister's inclinations as need. Thus some ministers have a clear-cut programme to implement, such as:

"Four follow-up visits after two weeks, one, three and six months."

but others who aspire to such order are overwhelmed by the size of the task, and one minister comments:

"In theory I would visit: one week, one month, three months, six months and one year after the funeral. In practice this does not happen. Other church members help informally."

For some, the extent of follow-up depends on whether the bereaved are church members or from the wider community. Typical of the remarks relating to this is are:

"Twice for unconnected. More often for members."

"Extensive caring only for members, a consequence of fifty funerals a year."

"One week after, except for members who receive regular visits."

This differentiation in care is rationalised by another respondent who sees it as related to varying expectations and thus he suggests:

"For outsiders, often very little follow-up. The minister is regarded as a technician."

Be that as it may it is further evidence that in practice pastoral care is largely focussed on the community of faith rather than the wider community.

As with general pastoral visiting one approach to cope with the overwhelming task of bereavement visiting, especially the follow-up visits, is to involve the laity. This point is not lost on a number of ministers as is evident from the following comments:

"So many funerals that it is impossible to do effective follow-up. I aim to train and establish a bereavement support group, so that local churches can do this work."

"Go once or twice, then offer visits from church team of 'Bereavement Support'".

"Just started training for members to form such a group."

Others observe that in their churches there is a caring network and members necessarily take up the task of visiting without any formal arrangements. Whereas such informal networks are clearly desirable they are not the complete answer since they usually do not cover the wider community and the visits may be less focussed on meeting the needs of the bereaved.

The involvement of bereavement visitors does not, of course, solve the time-consuming aspects of the funeral with its attendant preparation. Furthermore, some ministers would not wish to separate the initial process of dealing with death from the subsequent follow-up of the bereaved. There would seem to be two approaches in dealing with this criticism. Firstly, a lay visitor could accompany the minister from the point of his initial visit and this would provide the continuity for continued visits after the funeral. Alternatively, and more radically, the whole process could be entrusted to a lay team consisting of perhaps one or more local preachers together with pastoral visitors trained for bereavement support and possibly trained bereavement counsellors. The local preacher, perhaps accompanied by a support visitor would make the initial contact, the local preacher would then conduct the service, and the bereaved would then be followed up either by the local preacher or the visitor.

This suggestion is not wholly revolutionary since local preachers are authorised to conduct funerals and, in fact, some 5% of those surveyed had conducted at least one funeral in the previous year and some 9% had done so at some point in their ministry (Appendix II, Q.31(a)). Furthermore, ample precedent is found within the Cwmbran Circuit case study. Thus, in the absence of a minister for a period of nearly

a year, in this single station circuit, local preachers undertook the conduct of funerals and together with pastoral visitors the related visiting. There can be little doubt that at least some local preachers have the skills and ability to fulfil this kind of ministry. Since there is no legal objection the only major difficulty is acceptance. In the laity survey the question was posed: 'Would it be acceptable to you if designated local preachers were allowed to conduct services such as: baptism, communion, funerals and weddings?' The results are fascinating and are worth recording in full.

<i>Service</i>	<i>Acceptability of Local Preacher Conduct</i>		
	Yes	No	Not Sure
Baptism	46%	39%	15%
Funerals	36%	44%	20%
Holy Communion	57%	34%	9%
Marriage	28%	53%	19%

Table 6:16 Lay Views as to the Acceptability of Local Preacher Involvement

The tabulated data shows that there is a major problem of acceptability amongst the lay members with just over one in three feeling it appropriate for local preachers to conduct funerals. What is especially interesting about these results is the variation with the different type of service, which defies theological logic. Thus it is precisely the sacramental services of baptism and holy communion, where a priestly presence might be considered most necessary, which are most readily surrendered to local preachers. The more peripheral the service to the central life of the community of faith the more the perceived need for the validating presence of the minister. Of course, it may have to do with lay experience of local preacher activities since the decreasing order of acceptability probably parallels the involvement of local preachers in those services. Thus, for example, lay people are much more likely to encounter local preachers assisting with holy communion than in a marriage service. That acceptability is related to experience is supported by the Cwmbran case study. In the Cwmbran circuit it was noted that initially the reaction to lay conduct of baptism, funerals and weddings was tentative, but after a year people began to welcome the lay conduct of such services¹, especially when it was recognised that the standard was

1. It is worth remarking that whereas the church authorities allowed lay-conduct of baptisms, funerals and weddings, outside ministers were brought in to conduct the services of holy communion - precisely the opposite of lay sensitivities.

high. Indeed, the level of acceptance was such that when a new minister was appointed some still requested the services of local preachers. It was also pointed out, during the case study, that those outside of the church community frequently could not distinguish between the minister and a local preacher and hence the problem of acceptability did not arise.

There is, of course, a second area of acceptability and that relates to the ministerial response. Two issues are at stake here, the first relating to ministerial identity and the second to finance. With the role of ministers being ever challenged and narrowed by the increasing competence and confidence of the laity, the sacerdotal area may be considered by some to be non-negotiable. If the priestly function is not reserved for the minister, what is there left of a distinct ministerial identity? (This is an important issue which will be returned to at length in a later chapter.) Possibly equally problematic are the financial implications. A good proportion of ministers receive a significant supplement to their income through funeral fees and this would be lost if such services were delegated to others. This is a very sensitive issue and such ministers would argue that it is a rightful compensation for the additional work involved and that it is necessary to top-up a rather meagre stipend. It seems doubtful that ministers with large numbers of funerals actually work longer hours than their colleagues; rather, there tends to be some internal compensation with a reduction in other pastoral duties. A much healthier system would clearly accrue if all such monies were paid into central church funds and redistributed in higher allowances to all ministers. This would reduce the temptation for some ministers to be funeral-chasers at the expense of other pastoral duties, and remove a major problem in ministerial acceptance of lay involvement.

An Overview of Pastoral Visiting

In our brief examination of pastoral visiting it is evident that there are very wide-ranging views as to its purpose. Some ministers see the value of visiting as establishing relationships or as a practical demonstration that the church cares; others are concerned that the visit should have a definitely spiritual dimension, whereas for many visits are a practical response to crisis situations. On the other hand, the laity understands that the pastoral visit is more of a social occasion focussed on friendship, listening and encouragement, much as the ideal visit of a neighbour to a neighbour. This mismatch of understanding leads to a sense of failure on the part of some ministers when their aspirations are not achieved and this, further compounded by time constraints, detracts from satisfaction with pastoral visiting.

One response to the limited time-availability of the minister is to encourage the development of lay visiting. For this to be acceptable to the vast majority the lay visitor has to be seen as an official representative of the church (Christ) and not

merely as one member visiting another. The difficulty of this emphasis is that it calls into question the distinctive role of the minister and may be perceived to undermine ministerial identity. As such many ministers may subconsciously approve the hostility to lay visiting and in practice may reinforce this attitude.

A fairly widely supported attitude amongst ministers is that visits are important for developing relationships and for opening up problem areas. One minister, who appended an extensive memo on visiting, argues rather differently. In his experience, over a period of years, very few serious needs have turned up through casual visiting. Furthermore, referrals by third parties for a visit to address a perceived need were frequently unproductive. He states that the most useful visits were to those who had specifically requested a visit and that in the modern age where most people have access to a telephone this should be the norm. From this understanding the most pressing need is to educate the membership or wider community as to how the minister can help and then to encourage them to phone him when in need. Frequently, help and consultation could be given by phone much more time-efficiently than from a home visit. This is an interesting approach but would depend to some extent on how willingly people would seek the help of an effective stranger who had not invested time in befriending them. This model of visiting is analogous to the professional relationship of a modern GP to his patient. Whereas it is probably efficient in crisis management, it is unlikely to address the nurture aspects inherent in good pastoral care.

One final point that can perhaps be helpfully made is that many highly visible needs such as the elderly or bed-ridden probably are not best served by the minister. Such persons need visiting frequently and regularly, something that the minister will never have sufficient time to do. These categories are ideally dealt with through dedicated and reliable lay visitors, but it is imperative that such visits are understood as being representative of the church, otherwise the individual will still feel neglected and suppose the church (Christ) does not care since the minister does not visit. Effective pastoral visiting must therefore include a recognised ministry of lay visiting to complement the ministerial visit.

Small Group Meetings

The Class Meeting

Methodism began with an *ad hoc* system of individual and mainly lay pastoral visitation in order to meet the spiritual needs of those who belonged to the Methodist societies but also to reach out to those who had no contact with the Christian message. It was soon realised that regular personal visits were very time-consuming and that much could be gained by gathering individuals to meet together in small groups, initially in homes. Thus began the system of bands and more especially classes which were to form the bed-rock of the personalised pastoral care of the Methodist people. Not only did this allow regular weekly oversight by the class leader but it also added a further dimension of learning and growth through group interaction and the occasional visit of the itinerant preacher. The great potential of such groups is that the emphasis is on nurture and growth of the members rather than dealing with crises and the groups can be made self-propagating by using them as a training ground for new leaders.

As has already been detailed in chapter two the class structure began to decline not long after Wesley's demise and by the twentieth century it is present in Methodism more in name than in reality. Thus many Methodist churches still have a notional system of classes where the membership is divided into small groups and individuals are appointed as leaders, but the groups rarely meet and class leaders are frequently understood to be the equivalent of pastoral visitors. Thus the wheel has turned full circle with leaders largely visiting homes rather than meeting with a group. That the concept of classes lingers on is shown by the significant numbers of local preachers (19%) and general laity (11%) who still held the position of class leader at the time of the surveys. That the position is essentially honorary is shown by the small numbers who actually attended class meetings on a regular basis, 8% of local preachers and 14% of the laity. That the pastoral visitor is seen to be more involved in caring for the majority of the membership than the class leader is evident from the laity survey where 31% acknowledged being cared for by pastoral visitors compared to only 7% by class leaders (Appendix III, Q.7(b)).

Sources of Pastoral Care

Part of the gap created by the decline of the class meetings has been filled by ministerial visiting and to varying degrees pastoral visitors and the general caring network of the wider membership. The perceived balance of these activities was probed with a question in the laity survey which asked how pastoral care was mainly provided (Appendix III, Q.7). The responses are summarised in Table 6:17. Not surprisingly the minister is the most cited source of pastoral care quoted by 58% of the membership, but interestingly the informal network of care by the general church

membership follows closely. Of particular significance is that the care offered by small groups is marginally ahead of pastoral visitors as a source of care. This is

<i>Source of Care</i>	<i>Percentage of Members Receiving Such Care</i>
1. Minister	58
2. Church Members	52
3. Small Groups	34
4. Pastoral Visitors	31
5. Class Leader	7
6. Others	6

Table 6:17 Sources of Pastoral Care as Perceived by Lay Members

especially interesting since less than half of the membership actually attends such meetings and many are not intended as a source of pastoral care. These figures are a powerful testimony to the efficacy of small groups in providing personal pastoral care. As already intimated in earlier discussion, class leaders are relatively unimportant sources of care for the average member. The final miscellaneous category 'others' refers mainly to paid church personnel such as lay workers and deacons and deaconesses. Overall these make a relatively small impact, not because they are not heavily involved and effective in pastoral visiting, but because they are few in number.

Small Groups in the Local Church

All three surveys sought to probe the nature and relative importance of small groups within the life of the local church as a source of pastoral care. According to 95% of ministers the churches under their supervision had fellowship groups which provided some form of pastoral care, but on average only about a quarter of the membership attended such groups (Appendix I, Q.39 (a,b)). About 43% of ministers attended such groups regularly and a further 50% on an occasional basis. However, less than one in five met with group leaders for regular training and feedback although about half did occasionally. A somewhat similar proportion of local preachers (94%) stated that their local church held regular group meetings for fellowship and or bible study so it would appear that small groups are indeed a significant feature in most Methodist churches.

Of course, the term 'fellowship' meeting could be understood in a variety of ways and might be taken to include groups such as a youth or ladies fellowship rather than a small group open to a wide and diverse membership. In order to test this the laity

survey sought to probe what types of small group meeting were held in the local church and which, if any, the respondent attended (Appendix III, Q.5). The results of this, together with responses on attendance from the local preachers' survey, are summarised in Table 6:18 below. According to the laity survey class meetings are still held although only in about one quarter of the churches and attended by a small minority of members. It is not certain whether these are strictly class meetings in the sense of a designated membership and how often they meet. It is possible that some may use the term 'class' in a loose way to describe other small group meetings. Bible study and home fellowship groups are held in around 70% of churches, but here again there may be some overlap in nomenclature since a home fellowship group may study the bible as one of their activities. Prayer meetings are to be found in about half of the churches.

<i>Type of Meeting</i>	<i>Meetings Held</i>	<i>Regular Attendance</i>	
		Laity	Local Preachers
Class Meeting	25%	14%	8%
Bible Study	71%	38%	39%
Home Fellowship	69%	44%	46%
Prayer Meeting	53%	25%	24%

Table 6:18 Small Group Meetings and their Attendance in the Local Church

An interesting observation on the attendance patterns for general members of the laity and local preachers is that, class meetings apart, the patterns are identical, indicating a similar level of interest in small group meetings amongst the two categories. This must be seen in the light of the injunction to local preachers that it is their duty 'to meet in class or some equivalent fellowship'¹. It is apparent that such prescribed duties are ineffectual in modifying patterns of involvement in small groups, attendance at which is seen to be voluntary, a far cry from the discipline of the early class system. It is also interesting to note that the most popular groups, in terms of attendance, are the home fellowships followed by bible study groups and some way behind by prayer meetings and then, of course, very much in last place the class meeting. In this order there is perhaps just a hint of the same priorities encountered in lay perceptions of pastoral visitation whereby the social element is highlighted at the

1. CPD Standing Order 578 1.(i).

expense of the spiritual and more clearly religious. The fellowship meeting with its emphasis on social interaction is at the opposite end of the spectrum to the prayer meeting where personal involvement in a religious activity is anticipated, with bible study perhaps occupying the middle ground. The attendance at class meetings is not really comparable because of the much lower number of such meetings being held. The overall declared attendance at these small group meetings by both local preachers and members exceed the 25% estimated by ministers. This suggests, not surprisingly, that these groups are more committed and involved than the average membership.

Although local preachers do not necessarily follow the letter of the law in their attendance at small groups, nevertheless they probably form the backbone of the leadership of such groups since some 40% of local preachers indicated that they were also bible study/ fellowship group leaders. This compares to about 17% of those who responded to the laity survey. Although a similar proportion of ministers (43%) regularly attend such meetings, it is by no means certain that they actually exercise a leadership role, and in any case the overwhelming number of local preachers means that they must have a dominant influence in the leadership of such groups.

In summary, small groups of a diverse character are held in most Methodist churches with particular emphasis on fellowship, bible study and prayer. They are attended by a large minority of members and led significantly by local preachers. These small groups are perceived to be an effective way of caring for the general membership of the church, apparently contributing to a greater extent than pastoral visitors. If the proportion of members attending could be increased their potential would be even greater. At the same time, the effectiveness of such groups could probably be enhanced if ministers shifted their emphasis from regular attendance at such groups to regular meetings with leaders for training and feedback.

Preparation for Baptism and Membership

Infant Baptism

The results of the ministerial survey show that the great majority of those preparing for membership have been baptised as infants (Appendix I,Q.31(a)). Thus 18% of ministers note that all their membership candidates have been baptised as children and a further 77% that the majority have. This is a clear mark of an established and rather static church where the principal type of growth is biological. There is also a demand from the community outside the church for baptism of infants, although this is likely to be less pronounced than for Anglican churches. In keeping with a concern to be as welcoming as possible to those coming from the wider community, some three-quarters of ministers (76%) operate a completely open baptism policy, although a further minority (13%) have certain provisos. The provisos include a willingness to attend church services or preparation classes. Only one in ten

ministers insist that the parents should be practising Christians and a very tiny minority (1%) require the parents to be church members.

One might suppose that the question of 'open' baptism would be a highly contentious issue where ministers would be sharply divided by theological viewpoint. On one end of the theological spectrum conservative evangelicals might be expected to emphasise a conversionist view, which opposed indiscriminate baptism, and at the other catholics and perhaps pluralists might be anticipated to emphasise the sacrament as a means of grace not to be denied to any. In practice, although there are some minor differences, and evangelicals are more likely to include provisos, the vast majority (85-90%) of all groups support an open policy. Thus although 15% of conservative evangelicals would restrict infant baptism to the children of Christian parents, the same is true of 11% of catholics and pluralists and 9% of traditional Methodists. This would appear to be another example where pastoral practice is shaped by expectations and expedience rather than theological conviction. Interestingly, local preachers expressed a more conservative view since only some 62% thought that infant baptism should be open to any requesting (Appendix II, Q.56(a)). This is perhaps to be expected from a group which is one remove from the position of having to take these hard pastoral decisions.

Where ministers were less unified was in the provision of alternatives to infant baptism. Thus, whereas 20% of ministers offered both thanksgiving and dedication services, 20% only thanksgiving services and a further 10% only dedication services, there were a further 16% who would only offer these on request and 34% who would not do so under any circumstances (Appendix I, Q.30(b)). In this case there was greater division upon theological lines with all conservative evangelicals being willing to carry out such alternatives compared to only 44% of traditional Methodists, some of whom objected vehemently to the very idea. Local preachers tended to be less enthusiastic about these pastoral alternatives with only some 12% favouring thanksgiving services and 26% services of dedication (Appendix II, Q.56(b)). At the same time only 14% strongly objected to such services and about half gave no comment. This probably suggests that local preachers are rather less aware of these alternatives and their theological significance than their ministerial colleagues who are either more supportive or more strongly opposed.

Since one of the pragmatic justifications of an open baptism policy is as a form of outreach into the wider community it was of interest to see what use was made of this opportunity. Thus ministers were asked what preparation was given to those bringing their children for baptism (Appendix I, Q. 30(c)) as well as how outside families were followed up (Appendix I, Q.30(d)). The details of preparation offered by ministers are summarised in Table 6:19. It is apparent that for the vast majority (97%) of

<i>Means of Preparation</i>	<i>Percentage of Ministers Offering Such Care</i>
1. Discussion of service	97
2. Literature	44
3. Introduction to Church Members	36
4. Preparation Classes	29
5. Other	14
6. Video Tape	3

Table 6:19 Baptismal Preparation for Parents of Infants

ministers the main form of preparation is through discussion of the service with parents. At best, this could be taken to mean a thorough discussion of the meaning of the service and the significance of baptism; at minimum, this could merely refer to briefing on the mechanics of the service, what to do and say and when. Nearly half the ministers supplement this briefing with appropriate literature and just over one in three arrange to introduce the parents to church members so as to provide the outsiders with some church contact. Less than a third provide preparation classes for parents and this must call into question just how seriously ministers regard infant baptism as a means for clearly explaining the Christian message and for forging contacts with those outside the community of faith. Only a tiny minority make use of video tapes and this is a reminder of how far behind many Methodist ministers are in using modern technology.

The means used for follow-up of families whose children have been baptised are recorded in Table 6:20 and show a variety of different approaches. The major response of nearly three-quarters of the ministers is to ensure that the child's name is entered on one of a variety of church rolls such as the cradle roll, the baptismal roll or the community roll. This ensures that there is a record of the child (and family) and potentially enables follow-up at some future date. Having ensured that the name has been entered on the appropriate roll, some two-thirds of ministers then entrust the follow-up to the cradle roll or baptismal roll secretary, usually through visits but occasionally through other means. About a quarter of ministers include the families on the general visiting list and the families may then receive a personal visit from the minister or a lay worker or pastoral visitor. Another method favoured by about one in nine ministers is the sending of cards on the child's birthday or the anniversary of the baptism. Slightly smaller numbers try inviting the families to appropriate services such

as: Mothering Sunday, family services and pram services. Other rather infrequent methods include sending the church newsletter, visits by Sunday School teachers, presumably at a later date, and the use of church sponsors. The latter is an innovative approach where a church member is appointed as a sponsor who meets the family before the baptism and then continues to maintain a contact with the family afterwards.

<i>Means of Follow-Up</i>	<i>Percentage of Ministers Offering Such Care</i>
1. Church Rolls	74
2. Visit from Roll Secretary	66
3. General Visit	25
4. Cards	11
5. Invitation to Worship	9
6. Sunday School Visit	5
7. Newsletter	4
8. Sponsors	3
9. None	16

Table 6:20 Follow-Up of Baptismal Families

Overall most ministers indicate the use of only one of the cited means of follow-up and of course about one in six have no means of follow-up at all. Only a minority of ministers appear to be personally involved in visits, which is advantageous from the viewpoint of sharing the workload but problematic since outside families may only have a relationship with the minister and much depends on the efficiency and sense of responsibility of the lay secretaries concerned. Many of the methods reflect long term strategies with annual cards and invitations for the child to start at Sunday School at the appropriate age. The drawback with this approach is the mobility of young families who may well have moved out of the area or changed address before the necessary action can be implemented. Almost certainly it would seem necessary to 'strike while the iron is hot' and make a concerted effort to incorporate the family into the life of the church without delay. The idea of a church sponsor who forms a rapport with the family before the baptism and maintains the relationship afterwards seems a promising approach which would help to forge a link between the church and the outside community.

Preparation for Membership

The preparation of individuals for membership is a key process since in this activity the foundations are laid for the future involvement of the member in the wider life of the church. It is at this early stage that the trainee member is most open to guidance and influence and there is an incentive for participation in training classes and small groups which is unlikely to come again. In the early years of Methodism much of the training and preparation of new members would have been carried out by means of the bands and classes. Today most of that training is in the hands of the minister. Thus, in providing details about membership classes, four out of five ministers (79%) indicated that they took them personally with the others indicating the involvement of: lay persons (8%), stewards (4%), local preachers (4%), lay worker (2%), deacon/ deaconess (2%) and others 1% (Appendix I, Q. 31(d)). Rather surprisingly, local preachers, who have been theologically trained, are not particularly high in the list of helpers and this is confirmed from the local preacher survey where just under 5% had been helping with and 3% in charge of membership classes over the year preceding the survey (Appendix II, Q.31(a)).

It is significant that, according to ministers, most people come through to membership because of personal encouragement by the minister (82%) (Appendix I, Q.31(b)). The next most influential method is through advertisement of the classes, cited by 58% of ministers, and then family recommendation (27%) and pulpit exhortation (18%). The spread of influences is a reminder of how pastoral care is implemented through a variety of avenues as well as the importance of nurture and encouragement to lead individuals on in their Christian pilgrimage.

Almost all (98%) of ministers organised membership classes and whereas the majority of these were held annually, others were organised more, or less, frequently as required. Courses varied tremendously in content and length with the shortest being just one session and the longest twenty sessions. The most common length of course was six, but eight, ten and twelve sessions were also common. Almost half of the ministers used their own material in full or in part to conduct the course and most others used a variety of mainly Methodist material¹. Only one indicated using videotapes. With regard to the content of the course and related preparation the following aspects were included by the indicated percentage of ministers: introduction to a fellowship group (42%); exploration of gifts (25%); introduction to stewardship (18%); opportunity for testimony (19%); training for service (10%), Appendix I, Q.31(c). Only about one in five ministers organised any follow-up for individuals

1. The most popular materials used were: *Exploring, Deciding, Joining, Church Membership Resource Pack*, (14%); *Catechism* (8%); *Guide to Church membership*, (6%); and, *One More Step*, (5%); all produced by the Methodist Publishing House (MPH).

after being accepted into membership. There must be some concern with the above preparation that despite often lengthy courses rather little emphasis has been placed on encouraging the new member to take up important responsibilities of membership such as stewardship, witness and service.

Overview

Despite the open baptism policy, with the potential for serving the community outside the church, rather little effort seems to be expended by ministers in developing relationships with these fringe families before baptism and in adequately following-up afterwards. Preparation tends to be brief and follow-up, especially by the minister, somewhat tentative. It may well be that many such families have no interest in closer links with the church and their coolness to visits inhibits further contact. If that is actually the case it is questionable whether it was appropriate to agree to the baptism in the first place. Follow-up could be eased by involving lay people in the initial visitation and possibly in the training.

Ministers appear to invest considerable time in preparation classes of new members. Here again there would appear to be more opportunity for involving lay trainers in the classes, possibly a training team, and for using the sessions to get the new members more practically involved in the life of the church. It would seem desirable for all new members to be able to share briefly their faith, to be introduced to a fellowship group and to be committed to stewardship and service within the community of faith.

Worship and Preaching

As already discussed in chapter five, both worship and preaching are important avenues of pastoral care and, together with preparation, take up a large part of a minister's working week. British Methodism is perhaps almost unique in that the greatest proportion of this task lies in the hands of lay preachers (approximately two-thirds of all worship services) and so in this section we shall be examining both the ministerial and local preacher contribution. It is perhaps worth commenting at the outset that, on the whole, the local preacher is something of a specialist and is involved in nowhere near the range of duties of his ministerial counterpart except in so far as he also dons another hat such as steward, pastoral visitor, or fellowship group leader. There is a further difference too in that whereas the minister normally concentrates his preaching in the three or four churches under his particular care, the local preacher is normally expected to fill the pulpits around the circuit.

It is appropriate to discuss together worship and preaching since in Methodism these two disciplines are welded into a seamless whole. For a Methodist it is almost inconceivable to have worship without preaching and thus in Methodist circles it is

not unknown to refer to the worship service as a preaching service. Similarly, it would appear equally strange to have preaching without worship. One of the consequences of this is that the minister or local preacher normally expects to take the whole service, that is to lead the worship and to preach. This contrasts with many other traditions where, depending on the availability of suitably qualified assistants, one may preach and another, or several others, lead the worship. The advantage of the Methodist system is that it is possible to dovetail together the preaching and worship in an unique way, so that each supports and relates to the other. The disadvantage is the tendency to a one-man-band approach where the skills and gifts of the congregation are neglected and undeveloped, and there is often a lack of variety - an important point if it is an indifferent preacher. The roots of this distinctive Methodist approach almost certainly lie in the circuit system which, certainly in the past, would have hindered the visiting preacher from collaboration with the local congregation.

Aims of Preaching

Certain aspects of the worship and preaching ministries have already been touched on in the fourth chapter in presentation of the portraits of ministers and local preachers and that will not be repeated here. An understanding of the relevance of preaching to pastoral care becomes evident as the aims of preachers are considered. In this connection both ministers and local preachers were asked to: 'Describe briefly the main aims of your preaching ministry' (Appendix I, Q.35(a), II, Q.22). This was an open question and as before it was necessary to try to categorise the aims so as to be able to analyse the results and aid comparison. This proved to be not an easy task and altogether twelve categories have been proposed, nine only being used for ministers and three additional ones introduced for the local preacher responses. It should perhaps be pointed out that much of the material supplied was closer in nature to the content of the preaching rather than aims, which was the actual question.

The content of the different categories is best comprehended by reference to the keywords or key phrases summarised in Table 6:21. As before some of the categories may appear somewhat arbitrary and a number of phrases could be equally classified under varying heads; nevertheless it is believed that the different umbrella headings do reflect distinct emphases within Methodist preaching. 'Proclamation' emphasises the preacher as herald and the main concern here is to declare the Gospel or proclaim the Kingdom of God in such a way that people are confronted with, and called to respond to, Christ. This preaching is essentially evangelistic and is in some ways more relevant to those outside the church than the gathered community of faith. The second category is the 'Presence of God'. Here the preacher's aim is to make the hearer aware that he or she is in the presence of God, to emphasise the reality and power of God

Table 6:21 Keywords/ Phrases Used in Categorising Aims of Preaching1. Proclamation

Awaken/ Bring Christ to people/ Call to faith/ Challenge/ Change lives (people)/ Commend Christ/ Commitment to Christ/ Convert/ Convey faith/ Convince/ Decision for Christ/ Declare Gospel/ Declare greatness of God/ Declare Kingdom/ Draw to Jesus/ Encourage belief/ Evangelise/ Evoke response to Jesus/ Find Christ/ Good News - share/ Gospel - declare whole, offer, challenge/ Lead to God/ Offer Christ/ Point to Christ/ Preach Christ/ Proclamation/ Proclaim Christ/ Respond to Jesus/ Redemption (of the world)/ Response (enable).

2. Presence of God

Discern presence of God/ Eternal Word speaking/ Focus on God/ God's message/ God's power/ God's presence/ Hear God speaking/ Holy Spirit's - baptism, help, healing/ Jesus - knowing/ Joy in God / Know - God, Christ/ Mediate God's love/ Open eyes/ Presence - Jesus, God daily/ Reality of God/ Relationship with God/ Remind of God's love/ Spiritual dimension.

3. Personal Faith

Affirm/ Build/ Deepen/ Encourage/ Going-on/ Inspire/ Optimism/ Reassure/ Reinforce/ Share faith, doubt/ Stimulate/ Support/ Testify/ Uplift.

4. The Faith

Celebrate/ Communicate/ Describe/ Doctrine/ Educate/ Expand understanding/ Explore faith/ Faith (for today)/ Inform/ Interpret/ Intellectual/ Jesus-central/ Lectionary/ Modern problems/ Promises of God/ Raise questions/ Rationale/ Social comment/ Teach/ Theology/ Think (about ultimate concerns)/ Understanding of life.

5. Daily Christian Living

Apply Christian truth/ Applying Gospel to - needs, life, situation/ Christian living/ Contemporary issues/ Daily life/ Daily issues/ Enrich life/ Enthuse/ Guidance/ Life-an act of worship/ Life in the world/ Life - relevance of faith/ Lifestyle challenge/ Live faith/ Message - contemporary/ Moral issues/ Practical Christian living/ Relate to real world/ Social obligations/ Strengthen Gospel values/ Today's experience/ Walk with Christ/ Witness/ Word for today.

6. The Bible/ Scriptures

Contemporary relevance/ Explore the Scriptures/ Expound the Scriptures/ Illuminate/ Interpret/ Let Bible speak/ Make interesting/ Open / Preach the Word/ The Word - appreciate, hear, respond/ What it says.

Table 6:21 (continued)7. The Local Church

Build body/ Build church/ Church's life/ Enrich fellowship/ Into life of the church/
Lead/ Mission/ Outreach of (encourage)/ Reconciliation/ Service in the community/
Shape - direction, life, ministry, mission/ Social outreach/ Strengthen fellowship/
Unify/ Vision.

8. Discipleship

Challenge/ Commitment/ Discipleship/ Growth in commitment/ Lifestyle challenge/
Live for Christ/ Promote service/ Will of God (discover).

9. Personal Holiness and Growth

Build up / Build devotional life/ Enable/ Exhort/ Holiness/ Maturity/ Nurture.

10. Share Personal Faith

Personal experience/ Share my faith/ Share insights/ Share personal belief/ Witness to
personal faith.

11. Fulfil Call

Answer calling/ Fulfil call.

12. Enable Worship

Conduct worship/ Enable (worship)/ Encourage (worship)/ Help people worship/
Lead (worship)/ Provide meaningful worship/ Stimulate worship/ Worship
enrichment/ Worship.

and the importance of an intimate relationship with him through Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

The next section is 'Personal Faith' and here the aim is to enable and inspire the hearer to grow in his/ her personal faith in God. Doubt is recognised and shared as a legitimate Christian experience, but the concern is to move the person on from doubt to a deepened faith and relationship with God. 'The Faith', on the other hand, is concerned not so much with personal struggles of belief but on an intellectual understanding of the Christian faith as expressed in summaries such as the creed. The purpose of this kind of preaching is to feed the mind, explain doctrine, enable people to think and try to make relevant findings of modern scholarship. Following that, 'Daily Christian Living' seeks to draw out the general principles of Christian teaching as they affect our lives and the society in which we live. This category deals with

Christian ethics and morals and how they are relevant to our daily life. There is a concern with Christian lifestyle and Christian responses to contemporary issues.

Other preachers are more concerned with 'The Bible'. Here aims include a desire to interpret the Bible, to make it interesting and relevant to the hearer, and enable the congregation to hear God speaking to them through 'the Word'. 'The Local Church', as its name suggests, represents a preoccupation with developing the life of the local congregation. This emphasis includes the building up the fellowship, providing direction for the overall mission of the church and stimulating outreach and service in the community. On the other hand, 'Discipleship' is concerned not so much with the church as a body, but rather the need for individual Christians to live lives which are fully committed to Christ and this involves a challenge to radical Christian living and especially service. 'Personal Holiness and Growth' has a similar focus on the individual, but here the concentration is on personal being rather than activity and service. The preacher seeks to encourage and nurture Christian character, especially the evidence of the 'fruit of the Spirit', notably love, which is seen as the essential mark of the Christian.

The remaining three categories are slightly different in that they tend to be somewhat more 'preacher-centred'. Thus some preachers see that the main purpose of preaching is for them to 'Share Personal Faith'. The heart of this group is the desire to share the preacher's personal testimony with the hearer, both his conversion and ongoing daily Christian experience. 'Fulfil Call' is a section which equates the importance of the act of preaching as enabling the individual preacher to fulfil his divine calling. Finally, as already remarked, in Methodism, worship and preaching are closely intertwined. This last category, to 'Enable Worship' sees preaching as an adjunct and complement to worship. Preaching is understood as the component which helps to render the worship meaningful and stimulates and enables the congregation to worship God.

Having briefly outlined the means of classification, we turn now to examine the declared aims of both local preachers and ministers. The overall breakdown of aims for both groups is summarised in Table 6:22. In both cases the most frequently quoted aim of preaching was 'Proclamation'; for ministers this came narrowly ahead of 'The Faith', but for local preachers it was really the dominant purpose with over half the preachers citing this aspect, the number of citations being more than twice any other. The most common aim of Methodist preaching is thus seen to be basically evangelistic, seeking to call people to faith and to change lives by a declaration of the Gospel of Christ. This emphasis probably has its roots in the early days of Methodism when Wesley and his preachers went out to preach among the wider community in homes, fields and public places, seeking to change and transform lives through

conversion to Christ. The irony of this dominant emphasis is that most contemporary Methodist preaching is done in the context of the community of faith and this evangelistic message is only likely to fall on the ears of the converted or those hardened to indifference through decades of chapel attendance.

<i>Aims of Preaching</i>	<i>Percentage of Respondents Citing</i>	
	<i>Ministers</i>	<i>Local Preachers</i>
1. Proclamation	38	55
2. Presence of God	22	16
3. Personal Faith	29	24
4. The Faith	34	18
5. Daily Christian Living	23	24
6. The Bible/ Scriptures	16	13
7. The Local Church	12	4
8. Discipleship	19	21
9. Personal Holiness and Growth	9	12
10. Share Personal Faith	---	5
11. Fulfil Call	---	2
12. Enable Worship	---	15

Table 6:22 The Aims of Preaching for Ministers and Local Preachers

For ministers, the next most common aim was 'The Faith', cited by just over one in three. By contrast this came lower down on the local preachers list and was cited by less than one in five. It would appear that the extra years of theological training have given ministers an added concern or ability to teach about the intellectual aspects of the Christian faith. This is also borne out, although less noticeably, by the greater emphasis ministers place on interpreting the Bible. This is not an indication that ministers put a greater emphasis on the authority of the Bible in preaching, in fact the reverse has been shown to be the case, but rather they have a greater concern to expound and explain the Bible in a systematic way which attempts to feed the mind.

'Personal Faith', and 'Daily Christian Living' are each quoted by around a quarter of ministers and local preachers, showing an awareness of the need to make the Christian message relevant to everyday life and to enable the congregation to hang on to and develop their faith amongst the trials and tribulations of modern life. This concern must necessarily comprise both an intellectual and exhortational component

as the preacher wrestles with ethics and morals and contrasts the Christian view with that of contemporary society. Other related preaching aims, although cited less frequently, include 'Discipleship' and 'Personal Holiness and Growth'. Discipleship is noted by about one in five of both ministers and local preachers and denotes a concern to encourage the congregation to a deeper and radical commitment to Christ as not only Saviour but also Lord. This aspect is likely to be characterised by exhortation and challenge. Somewhat surprisingly, considering Methodist roots and Wesley's emphasis on the spread of scriptural holiness throughout the land, personal holiness is not very high on the agenda of either ministers or local preachers being cited by only about one in ten. This perhaps reflects a tendency within the Methodist Church to soft-pedal talk of sin and concentrate on acceptance, to stress toleration and forgiveness rather than judgement and repentance.

A further significant aim of preaching, rather more commonly cited amongst ministers, is an emphasis on the 'Presence of God'. Here the stress is on a sense of the immanence of God within the context of worship, and a concern that the people might have an experience of God and not just an intellectual understanding. There is a desire that the congregation may be able to 'hear God speaking', to receive guidance, direction and empowerment. Often, although by no means exclusively, this is described in terms of the Holy Spirit and his coming to baptise, help and heal. This is preaching which is born in prayer rather than study and longs for a spiritual event, for the divine to break through in an unmistakable way. It is preaching which is most closely identified with worship and may sometimes hardly distinguish the two.

Crucially, in the author's view, there is one aim of preaching which is neglected by ministers and even more so by local preachers. Thus less than one in eight ministers put emphasis on the 'Local Church', and this reduces to only about one in twenty-five local preachers. This is the aim which is concerned with the building up of the local congregation, which seeks to promote the local society as a vital unit in the overall mission of the wider church, and seeks to provide unity, vision and direction. This failure is almost certainly related to Methodist structures where in many respects the circuit has more significance than the local society. Thus, as we have already seen, local preachers, and in principle ministers, are appointed to serve the circuit and not the local society. Whereas in practice this is somewhat mitigated for ministers who are usually given particular pastoral responsibility for a 'section', local preachers, right from the beginning of Methodism, have always been appointed to and have preached around the circuit. In these circumstances local preachers, especially, are not leaders within the churches where they preach, even if it happens to be their home church, and hence there is little possibility of their providing a sense of direction for the local

church in their preaching. This is an important issue which we note here but shall return to in subsequent chapters.

There remain three aims of preaching which appear to be largely peculiar to local preachers. The most significant of these named by about one in seven preachers is to 'Enable Worship'. In some ways this is similar to the category concerned with emphasising the 'presence of God' except that the role of preaching is seen to be clearly subordinate to the act of worship and the principal role of the local preacher is understood not as preacher but as worship enabler. This perhaps hints at another limitation in the organised Methodist structures in that, apart from ministers and local preachers, there are no other persons officially and connexionally recognised to lead the congregation in worship. In earlier days 'prayer leaders' and 'exhorters' were officially recognised and their role allowed those with a gift for leading worship to do so without necessarily having also to preach. Very recently there has been a renewed interest at local church level in worship and in greater involvement of the membership in leading worship. This has led the Methodist Conference to begin to think through the possibility of recognising 'worship leaders' as distinct from local preachers¹. It may well be that some of those local preachers who see the main aim of preaching as enabling worship would be more comfortable as leaders of worship rather than preachers.

The second aim which is referred to only by local preachers is a desire to use preaching as a means of sharing their personal faith or testimony. This is suggested by only a small minority (5%) of preachers and perhaps reflects their initial motivation for taking up preaching, namely a desire to be able to articulate their testimony of conversion or the way their faith has been dramatically renewed or their life changed. That this is a small but significant aim of preaching suggests that in contemporary

1. A memorial to the 1992 Conference from the London North East Synod requested clarification about the appointment of 'worship group leaders'. This was referred to the Division of Ministries who reported back to the 1993 Conference. They agreed that there was at that time no clear guidance as to the appointment of worship leaders. At the same time they recognised that: "...certain people feel called to the role of 'Worship Leader'. Such people do not feel called to the ministry of preaching or proclamation, but often develop considerable skills in the construction of liturgy and the leadership of worship." Part of the final recommendation was that: "Worship leaders and the members of worship teams/ groups should be appointed by, and act under the guidance of, the Church Council and normally lead worship only in the church(es) which have appointed them..." The Division went on to suggest that such appointees should receive appropriate training and the Division would offer guide-lines for such training on request. [Abstracted from the printed agenda of the 1993 Conference at Derby, p.139, section 052.]

The above extract shows that the Conference is aware of movements to the use of worship leaders at the local church level but at the current stage appears reluctant to introduce a connexionally-recognised scheme with designated training and assessment. The developments are to be contained within and authorised at the local church level.

Methodism there may be few opportunities for testimony outside of the pulpit. Thus we have noted the decline of the classes centred on a weekly sharing of personal experience and the reservations that have been expressed in the surveys with regard to the sharing of testimonies within the worship service. While the preacher's personal experience of God is foundational to his preaching ministry, preaching itself needs to go beyond sharing of testimony and thus preachers who had only that aim would have a rather restricted ministry.

The final concern of local preachers, articulated by only some 2%, was that their main aim in preaching was to fulfil their call. This again reflects a feature of Methodism where much emphasis on local preaching and more particularly on the ordained ministry is in being 'called' to exercise such a ministry. Although the call has to be tested and affirmed by the wider church, often these days through academic tests, nevertheless the emphasis still remains on the personal call. This tends to heighten the difference between preachers and the congregation since the same terminology is rarely used to denote a call to become a Sunday School teacher or a steward; these categories are people who are asked or voted for democratically and do not appear to receive the divine imperative for their form of service¹.

The Aims of Preaching and Theological Viewpoint

It is to be anticipated that if theological viewpoint has an influence on pastoral activity then this is likely to be revealed in the content of the preaching ministry, since preaching provides an opportunity to express one's deepest held convictions and the content is probably less governed by the congregation's expectations than say the time spent in visiting. The ministers' aims of preaching, broken down by theological viewpoint, are summarised in Table 6:23 and show that there is indeed a significant variation, some at least expected. For example, over two-thirds of conservative evangelical ministers cite proclamation as an aim of their preaching. This is almost twice as frequent as the average citation and fits the characterisation of this group as conversionist in intent. Catholics and pluralists in particular are at the opposite extreme, underlining a lack of evangelistic zeal in these groups.

Catholic ministers are considerably above average (approximately double the number of citations) in the three areas of: the presence of God, personal faith and daily Christian living; all areas which concentrate upon the believer both in the context of worship and in living out the faith in the world. The catholic viewpoint appears to fit the situation of a mature church where the emphasis is on servicing the needs of the faithful rather than mission to an unbelieving world. The idea of using preaching to

1. This apparent dichotomy is critically explored by Steve Walton (1994) in a popular book entitled: *A Call to Live: Vocation for Everyone*, in which he seeks to argue that all Christians have a vocation and hence a call.

teach 'the Faith', i.e., a more intellectual approach to understanding the Christian faith, seems to be a common strand among all viewpoints and there is not a great deal of variation in this aim. Catholics and traditional Methodists are the most concerned with seeking to interpret and make the Bible relevant to the hearer, whereas pluralists, as might be expected from their rather low view of the authority of Scripture, have rather little emphasis in this area. Traditional Methodists are the group who put most emphasis on the local church and holiness, pointing perhaps to the rich sense of fellowship in the traditions of Methodism as well as its roots in the spread of scriptural holiness.

<i>Aims of Preaching</i>	<i>Percentage of Viewpoints Citing Each Aim</i>					
	Mean	Cons. Evan.	Open Evan.	Catholic	Plur.	Trad. Meth.
1. Proclamation	38	69	35	22	26	31
2. Presence of God	22	23	22	44	33	16
3. Personal Faith	29	39	17	56	33	27
4. The Faith	34	39	35	44	30	33
5. Daily Christian Living	23	8	30	56	22	16
6. The Bible/ Scriptures	16	15	13	22	7	22
7. The Local Church	12	0	9	11	7	18
8. Discipleship	19	15	17	0	33	16
9. Personal Holiness	9	8	4	0	7	16

Table 6:23 Ministers' Aims of Preaching According to Theological Viewpoint

Overall, rather similar trends are to be found amongst local preachers with regard to the breakdown of preaching aims according to theological viewpoint so those results will not be presented here.

Instruction and Teaching

Although preaching is a medium for instruction and teaching, it is not the only one nor necessarily the most effective; indeed, it could be argued that a largely non-interactive monologue was a most ineffective means of teaching. Consequently ministers were asked about other means at their disposal for a regular teaching and instruction (Appendix I, Q.36). A wide variety of means was disclosed and these together with their relative frequency in citation, are summarised in Table 6:24. The most frequently-quoted category is the bible study, mentioned by over a third of

<i>Opportunity for Teaching/ Training</i>	<i>Percentage of Ministers Citing</i>
1. Bible Study	38
2. Fellowship meetings	33
3. House-groups	20
4. Training Office-bearers	10
5. Formal Sessions	7
6. Youth Work	2
7. Personal Encounters	2
8. Retreats	2
9. Miscellaneous	13

Table 6:24 Ministerial Opportunities for Regular Teaching and Training

ministers. This category normally refers to a small group often meeting in a home whose activities are concentrated on studying the bible either through formal instruction or more usually through informal discussion and interaction. Fellowship meetings are cited by one in three ministers and involve a variety of different groups such as ladies' and men's fellowships as well as more widely attended church and circuit meetings. These will usually be somewhat larger groups than the bible study and the medium of instruction is more likely in the form of a talk or epilogue. House groups provide an opportunity for some 20% of ministers, and in many ways these are somewhat similar to the bible study groups, except that there is probably more emphasis on informal group discussion and more activities than just bible study.

Training of office bearers and church workers involves regular teaching and instruction for about one in ten ministers. This covers a wide range of concerns which include: Sunday School teachers, local preachers, pastoral visitors, stewards, worship leaders, bible study leaders and the general membership. This would appear to be of fundamental importance and it is surprising that more ministers are not involved in regular training exercises for those involved in leadership positions within the church. The next in importance is the formal sessions cited by about one in every fourteen ministers. These normally involve mid-week evening meetings relating to: adult Christian education, topical study courses, workshops, night schools and formal bible teaching sessions. These are available to the general membership and meet the needs of those who are concerned for intellectual growth as well as practical training. There is clearly much scope for development.

A number of other opportunities for instruction are mentioned but these are only used by a very small minority of ministers. Thus some 2% of ministers have a regular meeting with young people through avenues such as school assemblies, the Boys' Brigade, and youth fellowships. Once again contact with young people seems quite minimal compared to other areas of concern within the church. A similar small percentage of ministers mention personal encounters, which refers to one to one meetings, self-awareness groups and inner healing. Clearly this is related to personal counselling, which is discussed in detail in the following section. Another small minority cite church retreats as an avenue for teaching and training and this would include church weekends and conferences - a probably rather unexplored means. Finally, the miscellaneous section covers a whole range of activities which include: prayer breakfasts, newsletters, open forums, full printed address, Sunday specials, Christian Aid project focus and Advent and Lent courses. There is obviously a very wide potential for teaching and instruction outside of the Sunday preaching ministry, much of it untapped in many churches.

Personal Counselling

The Breadth of Ministerial Counselling

Approximately two-thirds (63%) of ministers who were surveyed indicated that their ministry involved a significant amount of counselling (Appendix I, Q.37(a)). Ministers were also asked to indicate the dominant area of their involvement (Appendix I, Q.37(b)) and the results of this are summarised in Table 6:25. By far the most regularly cited area was that of bereavement counselling and this is again consistent with a pattern of ministry centred on ageing congregations where the incidence of death, and hence bereavement, is rather high. This is compatible also with the observation that one of the most frequent calls on the minister by the outside community is the request to take funerals; bereavement counselling might be expected to follow naturally from this interaction. This category also includes a ministry to the dying in helping them, and close relatives and friends, come to terms with death.

Family and marriage counselling were the next most dominant areas, being cited by around one in six ministers each. The importance of these areas, despite a rather lower proportion of families within congregations, undoubtedly reflects the overwhelming pressures that marriages and families are under in contemporary society. The marriage counselling category also, for some ministers, covers the help given to couples in preparation for marriage¹. In a separate question, ministers were questioned whether their ministry involved counselling those seeking divorce or

1. This was the subject of a separate question (Appendix I, Q. 32(b)). The help offered by ministers varied widely, ranging from, 'just a chat' and 'going through the wedding service' to extensive preparation involving up to six sessions sometimes as groups sometimes as an individual couple.

separation (Appendix I, Q.32(d)) and 56% of all ministers replied in the affirmative, again underlining the extent of marriage and family related problems. At the same time ministers were also asked whether in the past *five* years their church or circuit had organised any meetings with regard to marriage enrichment (Appendix I, Q.32(c)); less than one in twelve had done so. These statistics are dramatic because they bring into sharp focus the whole question of nurture versus crisis care. The picture that emerges is of ministers tied down in time-consuming crisis-counselling of those whose marriages have perhaps already irretrievably broken down and neglecting opportunities to encourage and nurture healthy marriages and so prevent such crises occurring in the future.

<i>Dominant Counselling Area</i>	<i>Percentage of Ministers</i>
1. Bereavement	27
2. Family	18
3. Marriage	15
4. Illness	10
5. Personal	9
6. Student	3
7. Spiritual	2
8. Sexual	2
9. Specialised	2

Table 6:25 The Most Important Areas of Counselling for Ministers

The next most dominant counselling areas, engaged in by one in ten ministers, concern illness and other personal problems. The term illness is used as a broad umbrella to cover a range of difficulties including depression, stress and AIDS. With the increasing emphasis on 'care in the community' it might be speculated that there are likely to be ever increasing demands for support for those suffering from mental disorders and this can be very time-consuming, both in terms of the client and his or her family. Most presenting personal problems feature aspects such as: relationships, identity crises, inner healing and personal development.

Much less frequently cited aspects of counselling include those concerned with: students, spiritual problems, sexual areas and other specialised needs. Student counselling covers areas such as problems of bullying and, increasingly today, student financial problems. The sexual problems addressed include sexual abuse, both past and present, and helping the client to come to terms with their sexuality with especial

focus on the area of homosexuality. The 'Specialised' category covers a whole range of miscellaneous needs which include: prisoner rehabilitation, drug dependency, alcoholism, financial and business counselling. Clearly most of these rather specialised areas are only counselled by the small proportion of ministers with particular expertise and would more normally be referred to other professionals.

Perhaps surprisingly, spiritual counselling is only a dominant area for a very small proportion of ministers, although of course this may have to do with how the respondents understand the terminology of 'counselling'. For some, counselling may be understood as an in depth pastoral conversation, whereas for others it may refer to the discipline of non-directive secular counselling with a rigid structure of interview¹ and a definite counsellor-client relationship. In the latter case spiritual counselling may not be deemed an appropriate discipline. In this regard, one minister questioned in the case study interviews on what special a minister had to contribute to counselling replied:

"Nothing. Religion should not come into counselling."

This, however, was an isolated view, and most ministers felt that they had something positive or unique to contribute notably in the spiritual arena, especially areas such as prayer, forgiveness, and faith, alongside a deeper motivation to help without being entangled in financial considerations.

Practice, Motivation and Training

Evidence that the term counselling is being used rather loosely, or that ministers are not adhering to good counselling practice is provided by answers to the question concerning whether or not their counselling was supervised (Appendix I, Q.37(d)). Only 6% of ministers indicated that they received supervision and this suggests that the vast majority of ministers involved in counselling have no supporting network where cases can be confidentially reviewed, stress relieved and advice given. This probably arises since most ministers have not been formally trained as counsellors and supervision is time-consuming and usually expensive. One minister notes:

"The church is the only caring agency that does not provide for supportive supervision of its counsellors."

This is an indicator of the lack of care of the minister which we shall review in more detail shortly.

1. This will often include a 'contract' which regulates the length of the sessions and puts the onus firmly on the client to take up his or her responsibilities. This may include an agreed fee and a tentative arrangement as to the number of sessions which are appropriate. The meeting will normally take place in a 'formal' situation where complete confidentiality and an uninterrupted session can be assured.

That ministers have a growing interest in counselling is supported by their response to the question: 'What would you most like to learn?' (Appendix I, Q.45(e)). By far the most common answer was counselling, with 28% of ministers indicating this option, and this was supported by a further 13% who expressed an interest in psychology. But why this preoccupation with counselling? Ministers involved in the case study interviews were set this question and provided a variety of answers. Several felt that it was a natural response to the sheer level of need and that the interest was client-led. Some felt that it was a necessary development, that counselling training would help ministers build up their expertise and that it would help ministers to be able to identify and if necessary refer problems to other specialists. Possibly the most common view was that such training would help the minister to feel more of a professional, it would bolster a sense of identity, and for some, provide a meaningful role for their ministry. These answers hint at an anxiety concerning ministerial role and identity and these important concerns will be further explored in due course.

Ministers were also probed about the adequacy of their training with respect to counselling skills (Appendix I, Q.37(d)). Less than one in five (18%) felt that they had received adequate college training in this area and several supported this indication with comments such as:

"Grounding at college minimal. Reading 'help' has been necessary. More in depth and concentrated counselling courses helpful."

"I have taken several courses in counselling skills all on my own initiative. College actually discouraged this."

"The much repeated, 'there isn't time' to give grounding in counselling skills by those responsible for theological education is unacceptable."

Many ministers actively involved in counselling indicated training through organisations such as: CRUSE, The Samaritans, Relate, and CAB. Others had attended counselling course offered by academic institutions. One of the consequences of the neglect of specific counselling training in theological colleges is that there will be little Christian or spiritual orientation in the skills taught. A significant number of ministers suggested that many years in ministry had provided a sufficient basis of experience to equip them in counselling without additional training.

Pastoring the Pastors

Care of the Minister

It has already been hinted at in the previous section on counselling that pastoral support for ministers leaves much to be desired. This important issue is now explored in more detail with information from all three postal surveys. Ministers were pointedly asked whether they perceived that their own spiritual, emotional and intellectual needs were being met (Appendix I, Q.48(a)). Just about half (52%) indicated in the

affirmative with an almost equal number feeling that they were not being adequately cared for, and a small handful not answering. This suggests that within Methodism a large body of ministers feel inadequately supported. Local preachers were also asked whether in their opinion ministers and their families received adequate pastoral care (Appendix II, Q.50(a)). Just under half (47%) were uncertain, almost a quarter (24%) thought they were and a slightly larger number (29%) thought not. A rather similar response was received from the laity survey (Appendix III, Q.9(b)) although in this case a larger number (60%) were unsure but again those who thought care was inadequate (21%) just outnumbered those who thought it was adequate (19%). Interestingly, there is a remarkable consistency throughout all the surveys with similar numbers answering yes or no, and the main variable being in the proportion who were uncertain.

Ministers were requested to elaborate their answers by indicating who it was that mainly provided such care (Appendix I, Q.48(b)). A wide range of answers was provided and these are summarised below in Table 6:26. The most widely cited support comes from the minister's spouse and this is significantly ahead of any other provision. In making this observation it needs to be recognised that nearly 10% of ministers are single, widowed, separated or divorced and hence cut off from this avenue of care. The next most important provision was through the minister's circuit superintendent or in the case of a superintendent his district chairman. This is one of the main avenues of official Methodist sources of care and whereas it works for a majority, there is a very large minority (40%) whom the system appears to fail. Ministers also get important support from their colleagues, often in the form of regular staff meetings or ministers' fraternals.

<i>Providers of Ministerial Care</i>	<i>Percentage of Ministers Citing</i>
1. Spouse	80
2. Chairman or Superintendent	60
3. Fellow Ministers	54
4. Members	50
5. Stewards	40
6. Friends	15
7. Local Preachers	11
8. No-one	6
9. Others	12

Table 6:26 Providers of Ministerial Care

Almost equally important is the informal support network provided by church members, although of course this is neither prescribed or organised. In commenting on this one minister observed:

"All my ministry I have rejoiced in the love and care of the Methodist people. If you bear their burdens they will give you a lift with words."

Stewards are also frequently cited as providers of care, although there appears to be no formal requirement for church stewards to exercise this role and circuit stewards are only bidden to:

"...be sensitive to the needs of the ministers and probationers and their families."¹ and this is in the context of discharging their other duties. After stewards, from whom 40% of ministers derive support, the remaining providers of care are relevant to only a small minority. These groups include friends, local preachers and a miscellaneous assortment ranging from spiritual directors to organised support groups both within and outside the circuit. For example, one minister commented:

"I have a support group. Six of us who were at college together meet for a day once a quarter and for a two day retreat in the Summer."

Others were desirous of such an arrangement.

Despite the wide range of potential providers of care, of particular concern must be the small minority (6%) who indicated that they had no-one to provide pastoral care. Principally at risk in this area are the significant number of women ministers, especially the majority who are single, since it has been observed above that the minister's spouse is the most common source of care. Several women ministers made comments which illustrate this anxiety, for example:

"The isolation of my situation is personally damaging."

"Being single, loneliness is a problem. I have little time for friends and relatives who live away and there is so much to do when one is alone."

"My spouse receives no care. Because of the nature of his work, my husband does not live in the manse with me. Neither he, nor any of my family are Christians. I am hurt that he is never visited by the minister of his village church."

Another woman minister who wrote at length pointed out the discrimination between male and female single ministers, whereas the former would be 'mothered' by the women of the church with offers of domestic help and invitations for meals, women ministers were expected to be fully independent and experts in domesticity.

It is perhaps also significant that women much more frequently cite friends as a source of pastoral care than their male counterparts. This may in part be due to the

1. Standing Order 530A (3) (i), CPD p.450.

absence of a spouse but may also reflect the lack of acceptance that many women feel in their ministry both from colleagues and church members. In these circumstances the instinct is to turn for support to friends outside the church. Almost certainly women ministers are exposed to additional pressures not shared by their male colleagues. Apart from the issue of singleness, married women may also have other conflicting interests such as responsibility for child care, and the home, and possibly relatively little support from a husband who is following his own career and, as in the quotation above, may be forced to live away from home.

It is also possible to probe how the gender of ministers affect the perceptions of the laity and local preachers as to the adequacy of their care since in both these surveys the respondents were required to indicate the gender of their minister. The outcome is summarised in Table 6:27. It is immediately apparent that there is a difference in the perception of the adequacy of ministerial care with respect to gender, although there appear to be some mixed signals especially amongst local preachers. Thus more local preachers feel that the care of male ministers is adequate than is the case for female ministers, however, at the same time, a higher proportion also regard it as inadequate. The reason for this appears to be that a much higher proportion are unsure about the care of female ministers.

In the case of the laity survey the situation is more clear cut with fewer respondents feeling that female ministers are adequately cared for than their male counterparts and a greater proportion considering that their care is not adequate. Both surveys thus support the idea that female ministers are less adequately cared for,

<i>Survey</i>	<i>Gender or Marital Status</i>	<i>Pastoral Care of Minister Adequate</i>		
		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
<u>Local Preacher</u>				
	Male	24%	31%	45%
	Female	18%	18%	64%
<u>Laity</u>				
	Male	20%	20%	60%
	Female	12%	33%	55%
	Married	23%	17%	60%
	Single	9%	38%	53%

Table 6:27 The Perceived Adequacy of the Care of Ministers

although the laity survey is more conclusive on this point. It seemed conceivable that the reason for the difference between the two surveys was related to the fact that the local preachers surveyed were predominantly male (63%), whereas the respondents to the laity survey were predominantly female (59%). However, a closer examination of the data with respect to the gender of the respondent showed this not to be the case. Thus it would appear that local preachers, *per se*, are less sympathetic than the general laity towards female ministers.

The laity survey data also enables one further deduction about perceptions of the adequacy of care since respondents were also asked to indicate the marital status of their minister. The response shows that there is in fact a greater disparity in the considered adequacy of care between married and single ministers than between male and female. This suggests that marital status is actually the most important factor in people's perceptions as to the adequacy of individual care. The interplay between gender and marital status and the adequacy of care of the minister is shown even more clearly in Table 6:28 and reveals some fascinating results. According to this breakdown the order of decreasing adequacy of care is: married females > married males > single males > single females. The underlying assumption would appear to be that married persons are adequately cared for by their spouses and that men are particularly good at looking after their wives. Single women are perceived as particularly vulnerable, whereas for men, marital status is not especially crucial in establishing care. Whereas these perceptions probably correctly diagnose the difficult position of single women, they probably overestimate the favourable position of many married women ministers.

The other factor which it is probably worth drawing attention to is the high

<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Adequacy of Pastoral Care</i>		
		Yes	No	Not Sure
<u>Married</u>				
	Male	22%	16%	62%
	Female	43%	14%	64%
<u>Single</u>				
	Male	20%	33%	47%
	Female	0%	44%	56%

Table 6:28 Lay Perceptions of the Adequacy of the Care of Ministers

proportion of respondents (a half to two-thirds) who expressed uncertainty with regard to the care of the minister, and this is from groups who are active members in the church, not those on the margins. This seems to suggest that not many of the laity know their ministers well.

Care of the Minister's Spouse

It might be argued that it is inappropriate to discuss the care of the minister's spouse as a separate and distinct category since in principle she or he is an ordinary member of the church (assuming they are Christians and members of the church) and should be cared for in the same way as every other member. In practice, this is simply not realistic since, justified or otherwise, members have certain expectations of the minister's spouse which sets him or her apart. This aspect is illustrated by one minister who noted:

"I don't think my wife receives adequate pastoral care. Not really possible within circuit because of minister's wife expectations."

Quite distinct from this, there is the problem of which of the minister's three to four churches the spouse should belong to, and whether or not the spouse accompanies the minister to the church at which he is preaching, or attends the home church. Whatever course of action is taken there is bound to be tension. Then, of course, there is the problem of who cares for the spouse. Is it possible for the minister to care adequately for the spouse in the way other members are cared for? This was perhaps at the back of the mind of the minister who stated:

"No she doesn't. I can't be her minister."

If the minister's spouse makes close friends or joins one particular fellowship group then there is the problem of perceived favouritism. The situation is complex, and in reality the spouse is probably more in limbo, as far as pastoral care is concerned, than the minister. This conclusion is in sympathy with the minister who remarked that his spouse received less pastoral care than he did.

Ministers were invited to comment on this problem area, and in particular whether they felt that their spouses received adequate care (Appendix I, Q.48(c)). Of the 56% who replied to this question only 1% felt that they were well cared for, 3% cited mutual care and a further 20% that the care was adequate. The majority (32%) believed that the care was not adequate. From these figures it is apparent that only a quarter of ministers were satisfied with the care that their spouses received. This must be a cause for concern since, whether or not their perception is accurate, this anxiety must be a potential cause of stress in their ministry. Thus a minister observes:

"One is affected if spouse not adequately covered. There are not many who understand situations faced by minister's wives."

The lack of effective care for the spouse is underlined by a variety of ministerial comments, typical of which are the following:

"My wife has occasionally commented that she does not have a minister."

"My spouse feels isolated and does not get sufficient care."

"My wife certainly does not receive care of any real depth although people are kind and helpful."

"My wife's pastoral care comes from a friend made since coming here. In my previous appointment there was no-one."

There is also the difficulty posed by the increasingly common situation where the spouse is also a minister. Thus one respondent notes:

"Spouse is a minister as well. When we both need pastoral care it can cause us extra tension and problems."

This, of course, is not the whole picture and a significant minority are of the opinion that their spouse is adequately cared for, most commonly by friends, often from outside the circuit, or by mutual care. The latter may often be adequate although perhaps founders where problems arise within the marriage partnership which could best be help by a third party. Other sources of care mentioned were pastoral visitors, class leaders, stewards and fellowship with other ministers and their spouses.

Care of Local Preachers

So far in this section we have thought exclusively about the care of ministers but it is illuminating to contrast this with the care of other groups such as the local preachers. Some insight on this can be gleaned from a question which probed the means of support for their preaching ministry (Appendix II, Q.32). The responses, together with the level of support are shown in Table 6:29. In common with the

<i>Support Personnel</i>	<i>Percentage of Preachers Indicating Support</i>			
	Considerable	Some	Little/None	Not Applicable
1. Spouse	56	23	5	16
2. Fellowship Group	24	34	24	18
3. Local Preachers	20	57	23	--
4. Minister	19	45	36	--

Table 6:29 Local Preachers and Their Support Personnel

findings on ministers it is the spouse, for married preachers, who is seen to provide the most active assistance with over half of preachers acknowledging considerable support in this area. Interestingly the category that comes next in offering considerable aid is the fellowship meeting, even though about one in five preachers do not belong or have access to such groups. What is particularly significant is that this means of support does not feature at all in ministerial pastoral care, and this perhaps underlines the difference in perceived status of ministers and local preachers. Ministers certainly attend such groups but their role is as religious expert or teacher, whereas local preachers are still 'one of us' from the lay person's perspective and can be supported, whereas the minister may be regarded as almost beyond lay help.

Following fellowship groups, local preachers' colleagues, and ministers also provided important help and encouragement, with, on balance, local preachers getting rather more assistance from their peers. With local preachers carrying such a key role in the worship and preaching ministry of the church it is rather surprising that they do not receive more ministerial attention. Indeed, over one third of local preachers claim that they get little or no support from ministers with their ministry. In part this may be because of the logistics of circuit appointments which means that it is unlikely that ministers ever sit in a service led by a local preacher and hence are effectively ignorant of their ministry¹. Ministerial care of local preachers was also probed by a question which asked whether the preacher had been visited in his home by the minister in the previous 12 months or, indeed, ever? (Appendix II, Q.45(a)) Home visits had been received by some 63% of preachers in the previous 12 months but about one in eight (13%) of local preachers had *never* been visited by their minister. It might be argued that ministers meet with local preachers at least quarterly at the local preachers meeting as well as on other church committees and functions, but such encounters are hardly substitutes for a personal visit and cannot be expected to deal with the important personal agendas that are part of preachers' lives.

Summary

In this chapter we have overviewed a wide range of pastoral practice within Methodism ranging from personal pastoral activities such as visiting and counselling to corporate activities such as small group work and worship and preaching. We have also briefly reflected on the problem of who cares for the pastors. A central underlying question in this chapter has been whether divergent theological views lead to distinct pastoral practice. The answer in the main would seem to be negative. Thus

1. Circuit ministers very rarely have any free appointments or work together with local preachers in sharing the worship leading and preaching. Most free Sundays are usually holidays or times spent away from the circuit.

with regard to the average working week, church structures, prescribed ministerial duties and congregational expectations would appear to be greater determinants of the pattern of the working week than theological viewpoints or personal gifts or inclinations. This is clearly illustrated by the overwhelming influence of the nature of the ministerial appointment on working patterns compared to viewpoint or gender.

There is also evidence that ministerial pastoral care tends to be reactive rather than pro-active and emphasises crisis management rather preventative or nurture care. This is aptly seen in the finding that ministers are seven times more likely to have been involved in counselling those seeking divorce or separation than being involved in marriage enrichment. The reactive nature is also seen in the way ministers deal with bereavement and those bringing children for baptism. Whereas the presenting need is dealt with, to varying degrees of thoroughness, there is rather little careful follow-through of the individuals concerned, despite the perception that these pastoral contacts provide vital links with the wider community. The nurture and training of key personnel such as local preachers and small group leaders also seems to be neglected in favour of the more general visitation of members, especially the sick and elderly. This arises at least in part from ministerial concern to match lay expectations.

Chapter 7

A Critique of Pastoral Practice

So far we have explored the nature of pastoral care through the eyes of Methodist ministers and local preachers and in the last chapter have examined how these concepts are implemented within contemporary British Methodism. We now progress to a more detailed critique of this pastoral practice drawing on comments made by both ministerial and lay respondents in the postal survey which are interpreted in the light of subsequent conversations with Methodist ministers in case study interviews. This analysis makes it possible to identify and evaluate some of the aspects which are perceived to hinder pastoral practice within Methodism. At the same time we wish to return to the vitally important question of the balance within pastoral care, in particular the relative importance assigned in practice between nurture and crisis care. In the author's view this balance not only determines the long-term effectiveness of pastoral care but is also an indicator as to how far the minister is in control of the care which he offers or to what extent he is driven by circumstances and events which determine the ministry he has to offer.

Hindrances to Pastoral Care

General Overview

Both ministers and local preachers were questioned as to their perceptions of the hindrances to pastoral care so as to obtain two distinct viewpoints. Ministers were asked to respond to a multiple-choice-style question where a number of difficulties were suggested but space was also provided for additional suggestions and comments (Appendix I, Q.46). The overall results of this enquiry are summarised in Table 7:1. It is immediately apparent that the most cited difficulty, which pointedly had not been included as one of the given options, was 'lack of time'. This is a rather vague 'umbrella' difficulty, yet it is clearly of paramount importance to be noted unprompted by nearly a quarter of ministers and will thus be discussed in more detail shortly. 'Church structures' was next on the list of problem areas, being cited again by nearly one in four ministers and this too will be explored shortly. The other major hindrance which ministers draw attention to is the lack of helpers and this is the concern of over one in six ministers.

Other less prominent concerns indicated by about one in twenty ministers include aspects such as: lack of prayer, lack of training, lack of secretarial assistance, lack of skills and from a very small minority lack of finance or equipment. The miscellaneous category 'others' embraces a variety of aspects such as: expectations, lack of vision, administration, committees and sheer numbers. It is evident that in addition to the

three key areas of time, church structures and helpers, which are together cited by two-thirds of ministers, there are a number of other factors which are believed to hinder the pastoral work.

<i>Nature of Difficulty</i>	<i>Percentage of Ministers Citing</i>
1. Lack of Time	24
2. Church Structures	23
3. Lack of Helpers	17
4. Lack of Prayer	6
5. Lack of Secretarial Assistance	5
6. Lack of Training	5
7. Lack of Skills	4
8. Lack of Finance/ Equipment	1
9. Others	15
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 7:1 Ministers' Perceptions of Hindrances to Pastoral Care

The ministerial results were examined before constructing the local preacher questionnaire and consequently local preachers were asked to respond to the whole range of difficulties raised by ministers, with the exception of 'lack of time', which was considered too general, and 'church structures', which forms the basis of a separate question. This was done by means of a multiple-choice-type question in which they were requested to indicate to what extent each of nine different factors acted as an obstacle to pastoral care (Appendix II, Q.49(a)). The response to this question is summarised in Table 7:2. Whereas there are some similarities to the ministerial view, several of the major emphases are quite different. For example, the obstacle most cited by local preachers was lack of prayer, which is ranked as one of the minor hindrances by ministers. A second notable difference is that local preachers class 'lack of vision' as one of the top three hindrances compared to just a small number of ministers. However, both groups are agreed that lack of helpers is an important difficulty.

Other areas where local preachers perceive extensive weaknesses are in a lack of lay-training, in poor leadership and in ineffective committees. Interestingly, there would appear to be general agreement with ministers that problems with buildings, lack of secretarial assistance and finance/ equipment are only of marginal significance.

What is instructive is the difference in the nature of the major problems cited by ministers and local preachers. For the former, the major obstacles: time, church structures and helpers are all beyond their control and hence responsibility, whereas for local preachers, the majority of the important issues: prayer, vision, lay-training, leadership and committees reflect, rather uncomfortably for the minister, areas where he would be expected to make a major contribution and acknowledge responsibility.

<i>Nature of Difficulty</i>	<i>Percentage of Local Preachers Citing</i>			
	Major Obstacle	Problem	Unhelpful	No Hindrance
1. Lack of Prayer	22	37	18	23
2. Lack of Helpers	20	40	15	25
3. Lack of Vision	20	31	23	26
4. Lack of Lay-training	16	40	22	22
5. Poor Leadership	11	26	26	37
6. Ineffective Committees	9	28	21	42
7. Poor Buildings	4	13	11	72
8. Lack of Secretarial Assistance	3	14	19	63
9. Lack of Finance	2	16	16	66

Table 7:2 Local Preachers' Perceptions of the Hindrances to Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care and Church Structures

Local preachers were asked in a separate question whether they believed that operating in a circuit system posed particular difficulties for pastoral care (Appendix II, Q.51(a)). The majority of local preachers (57%) thought that the circuit system did not pose such problems, 20% were unsure and the remainder (23%) believed that it did. It is perhaps not surprising that a group organised to operate within the circuit system is generally supportive, but it is perhaps significant that nearly a quarter of preachers recognised shortcomings in pastoral care due to the circuit system. The forty-eight local preachers citing the circuit structure as a problem area were asked to elaborate their criticisms and thus provided the perceived difficulties listed in Table 7:3. It seems likely that these difficulties reflect, at least in part, problems that they

have personally encountered during the course of their ministries and hence accentuate aspects related to pastoral care mediated through worship and preaching.

<i>Circuit Difficulty</i>	<i>Percentage of Local Preachers Citing¹</i>
1. Too many churches	29
2. Distance	17
3. Too many needs	14
4. Too minister-centred	10
5. Lack of Co-ordination	10
6. Ignorance of needs	4
7. Variation in response	4
8. Problem of follow-up	4
9. Interferes ecumenically	2
10. Miscellaneous	6

Table 7:3 Problems with the Circuit System According to Local Preachers

The most widely mentioned problems have to do with the sheer size of the circuit in terms of the number of churches (up to 34 churches in one circuit from the ministerial survey) and the travel distances involved. This must be a daunting prospect for preachers in a circuit-based ministry because the range and number of needs must be enormous, and very often remain unknown to a local preacher who may visit a particular church less than once a year². Related to this is the wide variety in the nature of the congregations, their theological outlooks and worship styles. This inevitably means that a similar service will attract widely differing responses from different congregations. Furthermore, it means that a local preacher's involvement is essentially 'hit and run' with there being almost no opportunity for the preacher to follow up his pulpit ministry.

At the same time some local preachers also perceive that the circuit structure leads to a system which is too minister-centred. This criticism probably arises since,

1. This percentage refers to only the 48 local preachers who cited difficulties and not to the whole sample of 211.

2. The active local preachers surveyed preach on average 5 times a quarter. If the preacher is planned all around a circuit of 20 churches he will on average visit each church once a year. However it also needs to be noted that many churches have both a morning and evening congregation which may be significantly different so that in the above example meaningful contact with each congregation may be substantially less frequent than once a year.

although local preachers are planned to preach around the circuit, ministers are normally concentrated in a much smaller section comprising the usually three or four churches for which they are responsible. Ministers thus have much more opportunity for a more meaningful ministry where they know their churches and the needs of their people and can meaningfully follow up any pulpit initiatives. Furthermore, the minister's preaching role is enhanced by his leadership position in the churches where he preaches, which means that the preaching can be used to provide direction and guidance to the churches. On the other hand, local preaching gives no leadership status in the home church, and in any case he is rarely planned to preach there¹.

The other significant criticism is a lack of co-ordination which is a consequence of the circuit structure. From the superintendent's viewpoint the co-ordination is provided by the plan which ensures that each week a preacher arrives to conduct a worship service in each chapel in the circuit. However, from the local preacher's viewpoint it often means arriving at the church a few minutes before the service having no idea what has taken place in previous weeks and having had no prior contact with the church officers. This is borne out by data from the local preacher survey which shows that only one in five (20.8%) local preachers are regularly contacted by a church steward before the service and about one in four (24.3%) are regularly contacted by the organist (Appendix II, Q.27(a)). That the system works so effectively in filling Methodist pulpits week by week is a testimony to the sense of the responsibility of the preachers, but the lack of any effective contact between the preacher and church officers must surely limit the relevance of the ministry which is offered to the needs of the people and hence the adequacy of the pastoral care offered. In effect local preachers are largely being used in the role of pulpit fillers with the 'real' pastoral work being perceived as accomplished by ministers. This attitude perhaps finds its roots in the early days of Methodism when local preachers were often the pioneers for opening up new work but the oversight, once the work was established, was taken over by the travelling preachers through the class system.

A number of other observations were made by a small number of local preachers and two at least are worthy of further comment. Firstly, the circuit system is not very compatible with the development of close ecumenical ties, for example, a covenant relationship with a local Anglican church. Inevitably the Methodist church concerned is divided in loyalty between being part of the circuit and developing a close relationship with the partner church. Frequently such relationships founder since, although the Anglican church may have clergy dedicated to serving the needs of that

1. Nearly half (47%) of local preachers indicated that they would prefer to be planned more frequently in their home church (Appendix II, Q.20(c)).

particular church, the Methodist minister has to share out his time with other churches in his section and shoulder circuit responsibilities. The presence of local preachers in the Methodist church concerned is of no consequence in cementing the relationship since they probably have less representative status than an Anglican reader, since their identity is provided by the circuit and not the local church.

The other insight provided in the responses is that strong local lay-leadership is crucial if the circuit system is to prosper. It is significant that local preachers list lack of vision and leadership as two of the most significant hindrances to pastoral care and almost certainly these are related to the circuit structure. Within the practice of Methodism ministers are expected to shoulder the main leadership role. Local preachers are not in the picture and local church stewards have historically been more concerned with the fabric, finance and practical issues¹. The difficulty with this approach is that ministers frequently have to exercise leadership in their absence. For example, the perusal of one circuit plan where three ministers have pastoral responsibility for nine churches, a somewhat better position than the average, reveals that in the quarter examined the average *congregation* met with the minister with pastoral charge at best twice in five weeks, on average just over once in four weeks and at worst once in six weeks. Under these circumstances it is hardly possible for the minister to provide effective leadership unless leadership is in some way delegated to the local church. This is a crucial issue which will be returned to in a later chapter.

Local preachers are not alone in their criticism of church structures and nearly a quarter of ministers (23%) pin-pointed this area as the main obstacle in pastoral care (Table 7:1). In a subsequent more focussed question nearly two out of five ministers (38%) acknowledge that the circuit system was a stumbling block to their pastoral ministry (Appendix I,Q.49(a)). The stated difficulties are recorded in Table 7:4. The dominant criticisms are quite similar to local preachers' views since the category 'spread' refers to the size of the circuit, the numbers of churches and the travel distances involved. A typical comment which illustrates this is the one given below:

"A spread of churches over a wide area limits regular on-going pastoral contact. I am too thinly spread to have an effective pastoral relationship with many of the folk."

Again, another minister observes:

" ... Partly a consequence of the geography of the circuit, i.e., the main hospitals here involve an eighty mile round trip for a visit."

1. Thus whereas the CPD directs that: "The church stewards are corporately responsible with the minister ... for giving practical leadership and help over the whole range of the church's life and activity." (SO 623) in practice stewards have largely been appointed to take care of the practical aspects of the conduct of worship (SO 624:1-5) rather than the spiritual leadership of the congregation.

Similarly, the ministers' preoccupation with 'workload' covers the enormous range of tasks which have to be covered, ranging from caring for individuals to property concerns, and is thus closely related to the local preachers' 'too many needs'. Thus one minister observes:

"There is always conflict between the needs of pastoral care for funerals and weddings etc. and the on-going care of members. One can never do enough and as for young Mums, youth club etc. they just get left out."

Ministers are also aware of other needs such as the conflicts which arise between church, section and circuit and the latent jealousy that can quickly surface if the minister is deemed to give too much time to one church rather than another. There is

<i>Circuit Difficulty</i>	<i>Percentage of Ministers Citing¹</i>
1. The Spread	33
2. Workload	22
3. Lack of Support	11
4. Conflicting Needs	9
5. Meetings	9
6. Administration	4
7. Miscellaneous	12

Table 7:3 Problems with the Circuit System According to Ministers

also a sense of trying to serve too many masters with each church pulling in a different direction. For example one minister commented:

"One minister can care for one church. You can 'be' there for two churches, but you cannot serve two masters/ mistresses."

At the same time some ministers within the circuit system felt isolated, effectively working on their own with little sense of support from their colleagues or of supervision of their ministry. In a sense this is not so much a fault of a circuit system but rather of a 'sectional system' where each minister devotes his time and energy to the churches within his pastoral charge and has limited involvement in the circuit. On the other hand, other ministers resent the calls of the circuit on their time in the sense of the additional time required for circuit meetings and administration.

1. This percentage refers to only the 54 ministers who cited difficulties and not to the whole sample of 142.

No ministers commented on the need for local lay-leadership and only a very small number mentioned problems of co-ordination and inconsistency in preaching. Not surprisingly perhaps, the hindrances to pastoral care identified by ministers relate mainly to the restrictions of their own ministry rather than problems relating to the overall ministry of care provided by the whole church within the circuit. It also needs to be said that the majority appear to find little difficulty within the circuit system and two ministers described it as 'the best'.

Time and Pastoral Ministry

The most widely quoted hindrance to pastoral care, noted by ministers, was 'lack of time', even though this was not cited as one of the given options. The overwhelming picture which is built up as one examines the comments provided in this section, as well as comments peppered throughout the questionnaires, is of ministers under pressure and feeling constrained in their pastoral care through having insufficient time available to engage in the necessary, prescribed or expected tasks¹. This portrayal is created by a very broad range of comments ranging from terse statements such as 'lack of time' to the more reasoned selection of views cited below:

"Lack of time. The demands of the ministry are ever growing but I do not believe you can be a minister by refusing to do certain aspects of the work. I cannot be a preacher without a pastor or pastor without running a church or without serving in the community. Or an evangelist without caring for property."

"Lack of time. Bereavement, marriage, baptism, membership could all be fuller and I would like to have time to train likely helpers in some areas."

"Lack of time. The needs and expectations are huge."

"Mainly it is just lack of time. So many things have to be done because church structure demands it. Then emergencies have to be met ..."

"Lack of time related to church structures and also lack of training. Churches assume an inordinate amount of committee work. I have reduced this by lay-chairman and not attending meetings! I then find additional meetings to take their place."

There can be no doubt that the perception² of 'lack of time' is widespread throughout the Methodist ministry, from circuit ministers to superintendents, and again hints at a situation where ministers are not in control but are driven by external needs and duties.

1. It is perhaps worth noting that eight out of ten ministers responding to a survey on causes of ministerial stress pin-pointed pressure on time as the number one source of stress in their life as a Methodist minister. (Reported in *The Methodist Recorder* April 4th., 1991, pp.1,18.)

2. It appears that there is in fact a correlation between ministers who comment on 'lack of time' and the length of their working week. Thus circuit ministers making such comments put in 58.8 hours compared to an average of 55.0 hours and superintendents 70.0 hours compared to the mean of 63.1 hours.

Since 'lack of time' was such an apparently universal explanation for difficulties encountered in effecting pastoral care, it was examined at depth in the case-study interviews. In a preliminary question the interviewees were asked whether this sense of lack of time was significant in their own ministry. Three-quarters of those interviewed acknowledged that it was very significant with comments such as: 'a big issue', and 'enormous pressure'. One minister described the effect it had on his ministry, in the following words:

"Yes, all the time. Sometimes so many priority visits. Often a sense of inner guilt."

The minority whose ministry was not greatly affected by this pressure advanced a number of reasons for their seeming immunity. One commented that she was used to working under pressure in the health service, another felt more relaxed after a sabbatical since the church had evidently survived in his absence, and a third supposed that it was all about time-management.

Having confirmed that a sense of 'lack of time' was recognised by the case study ministers, an attempt was then made to establish some of the factors which led to this perception; possible explanations were discussed in turn. Initially it was suggested that one factor was the 'open-ended' nature of the ministry. This struck chords with some of the ministers and one of them observed:

"Yes very much so! The job can be everything. I was very much struck by visiting a supernumerary minister in hospital. His job was his whole life and without his collar I nearly couldn't recognise him. There was complete loss of identity. Wesley's ideals: never unemployed, never triflingly employed are perfectionist."

It was also observed that this could be a particular problem for younger ministers although the general feeling was that this kind of pressure was often self-inflicted and it was possible to set some boundaries. A particularly important point was that the ordination service only provided a very general job description of ministerial duties and it was desirable for some kind of agreed contract between minister and people, and a sense of shared responsibility. This was rarely the case.

Although most ministers in answering the above question suggested that it was possible to set some boundaries, in reality that was easier said than done. When questioned about boundaries to their pastoral work most cited attempts to have a day off. The majority stated that they tried to have a day off but most of them admitted that it had not proved practical to have a fixed day off unless they went away from the manse. One stated that there was more strain in insisting on a day off than it was worth. Most had a notional day off, supplemented by other periods to compensate when they felt compelled to work. A number used an answerphone at various times, for example, meal-times, but one admitted that he would normally listen to the

messages as they came and respond if appropriate. A few intentionally avoided getting involved in certain responsibilities such as property matters or ecumenical activities.

Another factor posed to interviewees was the suggestion that ministers were perhaps pressurised by church structures and the corresponding prescribed duties. This suggestion received a mixed response with most ministers not feeling overwhelmed by their circuit duties. This was somewhat surprising since church structures had been cited in the survey as one of the chief hindrances to pastoral care but it appears that the perhaps more experienced ministers interviewed in the case studies had come to terms with the structures. Thus one minister remarked:

"No. I sit lightly to the structures and delegate chairmanship of meetings, e.g., property and finance,"

and another used the network of meetings connected to her six churches as part of her pastoral oversight and thus she observed:

"With six churches I have six church councils and related meetings, but I see these as pastoral opportunities to meet with members I might not easily encounter at other times."

Other ministers noted a change after a recent Conference relaxation on what meetings were mandatory.

Membership expectations was another suggested cause of pressure within ministry which was tested out on the case study interviewees. Ministers were sharply divided in their response. At one extreme was the comment:

"Enormous pressure. Led me to move on in four years instead of five years. Can't handle criticism. Time off strikes deep at one's call and integrity,"

but this was completely rejected by a second minister who stated:

"Don't buy any of this. The constraints are that people don't have imagination and vision."

A number were rather philosophical about membership expectations with observations such as 'Can't be popular with everyone', but most recognised that they did have an influence. Again it was observed that there was no real opportunity to negotiate the job with the people they were working with.

When pressed as to the nature of membership expectations a range of views was aired. For some it was the quality of the worship and preaching; for many it was expectations of being visited, where only the minister would do; for others it was a high level of administrative skill and attendance at business meetings; for yet others it was the role of minister as trouble-shooter or miracle worker to heal divisions and arrest decline. One older minister felt marginalised because he perceived the members' ideal was of a married man in his late thirties with a family and with boundless energy. The problem with all these expectations is that not only are they often unrealistic but

they also take no account of the skills and gifts of the minister in question; they relate to an ideal stereotype.

A cognate of membership expectations is unrealistic ministerial aspirations. This was identified as a particular besetting sin of younger ministers and thus one interviewee responded:

"When I was first out of college I had too high an aim. I suffered from a 'burn out' experience. I still have a sense of failure at not meeting expectations."

This was reinforced by the remarks of a second minister who observed of unrealistic ministerial aspirations:

"This is probably true of those coming fresh from college. They expect to lead, guide and share new insights. They soon find out that very few people are interested in their findings."

Another remarked how the best laid plans of the probationer minister are soon cast aside by the onslaught of crises such as bereavement and funerals. This was exemplified by yet another minister who had set out to visit the whole membership in his first year only to discover that his wife felt abandoned by his constant absence. That unrealistic ministerial aspirations are not the sole province of younger ministers is revealed by the reflections of a mature minister who supposed that an ever-present danger was trying to take old successes to a new situation. Thus his previous churches had appreciated his teaching ministry whereas in his new station the membership was not in the least interested.

The last avenue that was explored was the pressure that arose from working at home. All of the ministers except one, who had a church office with secretarial staff, worked predominantly from the manse, which frequently doubled as office, counselling suite, church meeting place and home. Ministers with families felt particularly under pressure since it was not usually possible to separate the work place from the home. As one minister put it:

"We don't live over the shop, we live in it!"

He went on to point out that members of the family were often involved in dealing with visitors or callers or answering the phone. A few ministers liked the idea of a church office and of going out to work, but some felt that their resources, such as books, would be spread between home and the church office. There were also mixed feelings to working at home with small children. Some felt that it was difficult for young children to understand that the manse was more than a home and that often the study was too accessible. On the other hand, some felt there were advantages to working in the manse since this freed the spouse to be away from home and reduced the need for child care.

In the preceding pages we have examined some of the factors which give rise to a sense of pressure in ministry and a preoccupation with 'lack of time'. One thread that ran through the case study interviews was that, although all ministers were exposed to a wide variety of potential pressures, the individual response varied enormously with some ministers appearing almost overwhelmed, whereas others wondered what the fuss was about. Time out of the pastoral ministry for reflection, as in a sabbatical leave, was evidently helpful in relieving this stress for at least one minister. Another helpful approach was in positive attempts at time management.

Most ministers tried to plan their work and the almost universal pattern attempted was: mornings - study; afternoons - visiting ; and evenings - meetings. One minister divided his day into these three sessions and then opted to work only two of them. Several ministers, while acknowledging the importance of a routine admitted that this was frequently overtaken by events, such as deaths, illness and family crises which not only disrupted their time-table but consumed precious time. None of the ministers felt that the topic of time management had been adequately dealt with in their college training although a few had benefited from courses since leaving college or during prior work experience.

The majority of ministers operated a system where they tried to set priorities for the coming week and would review their diary or memo pad weekly. None of them looked forward more than a month and no attempts were made at annual planning or review of their activities other than formally prescribed long-term Methodist organisation. One commented that although he set weekly priorities he tended to respond to things as they cropped up. Others seemed to be content to put things in their diary as they came up and then to follow the agenda set by the diary. One tried to keep a few blanks in the diary for emergencies. Overall, ministers appeared resigned to having a diary of events largely dictated from outside and potentially disrupted by the unexpected. There was little or no attempt at long-term planning.

There was also a considerable variety of response to the suggestion of an annual planning retreat where the minister would be freed from his other duties for a period of days so as to engage in prayer and seek a vision for the church's work. A number felt this would be very useful and affirming of their ministry, but others were appalled by the idea; one said he was not into spiritual retreats and another felt that it would not fit in with family obligations. One felt that it would be more useful to have a retreat with stewards but doubted they could afford the time; another agreed that it would be better with a church group since the minister is 'here today and gone tomorrow'. A different minister warmed to the idea but pointed to the difficulties of acceptance of such an idea:

"Yes, a good idea, but can't see it happening. People wouldn't think of suggesting it. There is already resistance to the idea of sabbaticals as the church has to pay ministers to cover services."

Delegation

There is clear evidence that many ministers perceive that their workload exceeds the time available. The consequence of this is that some ministers work excessive hours (up to 92 hours recorded in the survey) and most seem unable to maintain the discipline of a regular day off. This must inevitably lead to a sense of stress within their ministry and a consequent reduction in the quality of the service which is offered both to the membership and the wider community. Since financial constraints together with manpower limitations will normally preclude the employment of additional ministers, alternative approaches need to be sought to deal with this unsatisfactory situation. The usual approach to date has been the continuing rationalisation of churches, with the closing and amalgamation of sparsely-attended chapels so as to reduce the administrative responsibilities of ministers, especially property concerns. That there is still plenty of scope for such closures is evident from the survey where the average membership per chapel was found to be sixty-three but with some as low as only three members, and actual congregational attendance likely to be less. However, chapel closures are very unpopular with elderly members who may have spent the whole of their church life in one building and thus the rate of closures is slow and probably parallels the gradual decline in numbers of ministers.

There would appear to be only two remaining alternatives in seeking to address the problem of minister's workload. One possibility is for the minister and membership to agree definite boundaries to the scope of the ministerial task, to set priorities in the pastoral work and restrict either the nature of the care offered or the people who are eligible to receive it. This could mean, for example, a reduction in the number of Sunday services, restrictions in pastoral visiting or a limit to the number of funerals which the minister would be authorised to take. Alternatively, it might be agreed that the minister only offers pastoral care to those on the membership role or only services the wider community. Clearly any such restrictions would be very unpopular but they could be negotiated and the minister's sense of guilt removed by means of an agreed contractual arrangement in which his duties were specified and in which the church shared the responsibility. The one advantage of such a system is, apart from relieving the workload, it would help the church to think through and seek to understand what its priorities really were.

The second alternative is delegation, that is, for the pastoral task to be shared with others so that the workload can be spread among several persons rather than restricted to the minister. In principle, the idea of sharing the pastoral task is

thoroughly biblical, has been encouraged by Conference reports, is enabled by church structures and is supported by the vast majority of ministers. Thus 96.4% of ministers who responded to the postal survey agreed that lay involvement was essential for the provision of effective pastoral care (Appendix I, Q.38(b)). However, in practice, there is very little evidence that much of the pastoral task is effectively shared with lay people. In part, this may be because in many churches, with ageing congregations, there are very few persons who can help to share the pastoral task. This would be consistent with the observation that 'lack of helpers' was cited as a major hindrance by both ministers and local preachers. However, there seems to be a second and probably more important reason, ministers are unwilling to delegate tasks to others.

Evidence for this assertion comes in local preacher responses to the strengths and weaknesses of their own minister's ministry (Appendix II, Q. 48(a)). In this question they were asked to evaluate their own minister on the basis of eleven different criteria. The category which came lowest in the evaluations was 'delegation', with only a quarter of local preachers stating that their minister was good at delegating and an almost equal number saying he was poor in this area. As this seemed a crucial aspect, case study ministers were invited to suggest why they thought that ministers were reluctant to delegate tasks to others. A variety of views were expressed and are summarised below.

One factor suggested by several interviewees had to do with the minister's role and sense of identity. There was felt to be a generally held view of the minister's omnicompetence which was fuelled by lay expectations and reinforced by ministers who tried to live up to the ideal. Because of this, ministers were not at ease in disclaiming an area of expertise. For some, the more jobs that are the peculiar property of the minister the greater his identity; if any of these functions are divested then the minister is very naked. Another commented that ministers like to see themselves as unique, as the expert. Others felt that it had to do with a sense of responsibility and that the act of sharing a task created a sense that ultimate responsibility was being stripped away from the minister. One expressed something of the sense of apprehension that ministers have with the remark:

"If I don't do it, I may feel unwanted. I am threatened by the thought that others may do it better and fear that there may be no role left for us."

There was also the sense of pride, or perhaps guilt, of a paid professional asking a volunteer to do his job.

Another deep-seated fear that was evident in the discussion was that delegation of ministerial duties could lead to the creation of a rival leadership drawn from amongst those who were there before the minister came and would remain after he

left. Thus one interviewee asserted that there was a very real danger that local preachers would take over and give the impression that they were ministers. One minister told the story of a colleague who had recently moved to a new station where there was a resident lay-worker. To his deep annoyance people were taking their pastoral problems to the lay-worker rather than coming to him. He saw the lay-worker as usurping his position rather than sharing the burden of the pastoral work. A somewhat similar situation was documented in the Cwmbran case study where even after the appointment of a new minister some local preachers were still being asked to conduct funerals and marriages in preference to the new minister.

For other ministers the problem of delegation had to do with lay expectations and competence. Some simply stated of certain tasks:

"The church feels it is the minister's job,"

and acknowledged there was a need to re-educate the laity. Another pointed out that in his set-up he had thirty-six pastoral visitors working with (under) a lay pastoral secretary and that these did all the routine pastoral visiting. He commented that people were gradually coming to terms with this and were accepting lay ministry. Some were concerned about aspects such as confidentiality and competence and found it difficult to trust lay people to do a job well. Others, particularly in the area of administrative/ secretarial help, observed that it was necessary to have regular, rather than sporadic assistance, and that this was often difficult on a voluntary basis.

For some it was simply a matter of time. They recognised the validity of delegation and that in the long term it would enable their ministry but they simply did not have the time to implement it. Initially it was quicker and easier to do a job yourself than to find someone to do it, and to train and supervise him/ her. Such ministers are thus locked helplessly into a vicious circle of not having enough time to do the one thing which might enable them to have more time. Overall there is a rich mixture of reasons offered for the reluctance of ministers to delegate tasks to others. Some of these have to do with the laity, their expectations and willingness to be involved but the primary reasons seem to relate to a deep insecurity on the part of ministers with respect to their own identity and worth and a consequent fear of having their ministry usurped by lay rivalry. There seems little evidence of a sense of partnership and a shared task.

The Balance in Pastoral Ministry

The Issues at Stake

We return now to the crucial question of balance in pastoral ministry and in doing so draw on the views expressed by ministers and local preachers in the postal surveys and case study interviews. But first, what is at stake? It has been suggested during the course of the thesis that there are basically two quite different directions in which pastoral care can move. On one hand, pastoral care can be seen as a sort of emergency service which seeks to deal with people at crisis points in their life, especially those associated with rites of passage and breakdowns in their personal well-being or relationship with others. There are several attractions in this approach: it is often seen to require the attentions of an expert, and hence validates the role of the professional minister; it is one of the few occasions when people from the wider community will acknowledge that the church has a role in their lives, and thus provides an opening for outreach¹; it is an opportunity to make a good impression on people when they are weak and vulnerable, and in doing so the church is seen to care. The downside of this approach is that to a large extent lay help is marginalised and crisis demands expand to fill the minister's time available. The former arises because of the notion that the minister is the expert and he has no time to pass on his expertise to others or to validate their gifts and skills as part of the caring team. The latter is a natural consequence of failure to emphasise preventative care and so avoid crises before they occur².

The alternative emphasis sees pastoral care as primarily concerned with the nurture and growth of the individual and Christian community. The minister comes across less as the expert and more as the enabler or catalyst, often working quietly in the background and mobilising others to share in the pastoral task. The approach recognises that the minister is limited in his range of skills and the amount of time available to care for those in crisis and at the same time recognises there are lay people who may not have the training but do have the potential and time available to contribute to the pastoral care of the community. Crises are prepared for, and sometimes prevented or their effects ameliorated, by Christian teaching, prayer, emphasis on personal growth and by training and encouraging others to share in the

1. It is extremely debatable how effective such outreach actually is. In the ministerial survey some two-thirds of ministers thought there was some benefit through contacts made in baptisms, weddings and funerals and one in five judge them to be very fruitful (Appendix I, Q. 34). However, the survey also shows that few ministers actually have time for effective follow-up of these contacts and their importance, compared to the considerable time invested in them, is questionable.

2. This is of course not a problem peculiar to the Christian ministry. For example, recently a Fire Service spokesman pointed out that, whereas the service was paid £400 per emergency turn-out, no money was allocated for fire prevention work which he estimated had the potential to save 300 lives a year.

task of pastoral care. Crises are dealt with not as emergencies to be contained but as opportunities for further growth.

There are at least three major difficulties with this approach. Firstly, many ministers would have to completely rethink their role, which would dramatically change from that of prima donna to that of partner with lay people in the pastoral team. For some this would challenge their notion of call to an exclusive ministry and question the whole meaning of ordination. At the same time the laity would need to be re-educated to accept this transformation and lay expectations might have to be radically altered; for example, no longer could they rely on the minister being their personal chaplain. A third, and perhaps even more difficult, task would be to find time for nurture when the demands of crisis care are ever increasing, and some ministers cannot find time to delegate tasks to others, even if they desire to do so. These are vital questions which require substantial answers and so will be addressed in subsequent chapters. The advantages of such a reorientation of pastoral care are enormous. In the long term the manpower resources available for such care are dramatically increased, enabling more extensive and better quality care. Further, the training and pastoral experience gained by lay people will help to nurture and mature their own Christian lives in the process of helping others.

Crisis versus Nurture in Methodist Ministry

Having outlined the issues at stake, it is now appropriate to return to the survey and case-study evidence to try and establish the current balance of thinking and practice with respect to pastoral care within the Methodist Church. Ministers were asked to try to assess the proportion of their time devoted to crisis versus nurture care by ticking the appropriate percentage range (Appendix I, Q.21). The results of this exercise are summarised in Table 7:4 below. It needs to be emphasised that ministers were not required to keep any kind of log in order to make the assessment and hence the results must be taken as indicative only. Notwithstanding this reservation, it is immediately apparent that there is a very wide range of pastoral practice indicated here, with the overall indication suggesting an approximate balance in pastoral activity between nurture and crisis care. Thus the single largest group of ministers, nearly a third, lies in the 40% to 60% bracket. Having said that, large groups of ministers are also both less and more active in crisis care with about one in eight concentrating almost exclusively on crisis care. Whether this difference in emphasis has to do with distinct pastoral strategies or simply reflects contrasting pastoral situations is not clear, although evidence from the case studies and miscellaneous comments on the returned surveys suggests that needs vary considerably from circuit to circuit and have an influential effect on pastoral response. Thus one minister who indicated that almost all of his care was devoted to crisis situations also commented:

"With five churches and a prison chaplaincy, plus thirty-five funerals and eighteen weddings a year as well as baptisms, where does pastoral care fit in?"

This perspective seems to imply that the duties outlined precluded pastoral care rather than were an integral part of such care.

<i>Proportion of Crisis Care</i>	<i>Percentage of Ministers Indicating</i>
0-20%	8.6
20-40%	27.9
40-60%	30.7
60-80%	20.7
80-100%	12.1

Table 7:4 The Balance of Pastoral Practice

The question of the balance of pastoral care formed an important part of the case-study interviews and ministers were offered a health-care analogy as a basis of discussion of their own ministry¹. Those who expressed an opinion of what they thought they ought to be drew parallels with the general practitioner, but most acknowledged that their ministry was crisis-oriented. Some comments which encapsulate the tension between the ideal and reality include the following:

"See myself as a GP but growing expectations of a multifaceted specialist. I am too often responding to crises."

"In theory preventative but in practice surgical."

"Aim at preventative but frustrated by the crises."

The majority of the remainder of ministers interviewed acknowledged that most of their ministry was crisis-oriented, although they did not see this as the ideal. One saw an additional element to his ministry and that was attempting to change the structures of society which adversely affected the 'health' of his community.

Overall, the sample of twelve ministers interviewed in the case studies tended to give a much more crisis-oriented picture of their pastoral care than would perhaps be deduced from the results of the postal survey. When asked to give examples drawn from their own ministry which exemplified nurture, a variety of aspects were cited which included: marriage preparation, parenting courses, house groups as a source of

1. The contrast was drawn between a GP who might seek to prevent heart disease by advice on diet and exercise and a specialist involved in dealing with open heart surgery or treating heart attack victims.

primary pastoral care, working with the housebound, and training in bereavement counselling. A number of ministers were not able to share anything in this area except perhaps pointing to the nurture aspects of the preaching ministry.

Some, however, were involved in a counselling ministry and one minister reckoned that he had spent about sixty hours working with one individual alone, although on the whole ministers were somewhat wary about ministerial involvement in professional counselling. One remarked that the previous minister had spent too much time with individuals and had thus neglected the majority of members. Another suggested that, preoccupation with counselling will mean that the minister is not free to do other things which will suffer as a consequence. Yet another commented:

"I don't believe there is enough time to do thorough professional counselling. Other things would have to go, but it really depends on what the church wants."

It would also seem debatable as to whether counselling should be considered as nurture or crisis care as it often arises from crisis situations.

The balance of crisis versus nurture care was also raised with local preachers who were asked to express their opinion as to the appropriate balance for the conduct of the minister's pastoral care bearing in mind the limited time available (Appendix II, Q.40(a)). Their viewpoint is summarised in Table 7:5. The overwhelming response by nearly three-quarters of local preachers was that ministerial pastoral care should be finely balanced between nurture and crisis care, although nearly one in five felt that it should be mainly concerned with crisis care. There was very little support for a preponderance of nurture. The overall local preacher 'ideal' has a much narrower range than the actual practice reported by ministers (Table 7:4).

<i>Balance of Ministry</i>	<i>Percentage of Local Preachers Indicating</i>
Crisis Care Only	1.5
Mainly Crisis Care	19.4
About half and half	71.4
Mainly Nurture	6.1
Nurture Only	1.5

Table 7:5 Local Preachers' Viewpoint of the Balance of Pastoral Practice

A more complete understanding of the local preachers' views is provided by observations which accompanied the data reported above. One important aspect that

was highlighted was the perceived relationship between nurture and crisis care. Thus local preachers variously noted:

"Crisis care can only be effective on a firm nurture care foundation."

"Nurture care can help avert or lay a foundation for crisis care."

"More concern for nurture may reduce crises."

revealing an understanding that the two types of care cannot be helpfully separated. The local preachers' ideal situation was also tinged by the reality that in practice things were rather different and that the amount of crisis care was often determined by the circumstances. Thus one respondent comments:

"Ideally I think the minister should be involved entirely with nurture care, but in times of crisis people want the minister. Many crises come from the community and the church may be neglected."

A number of local preachers expressed views which indicated that they saw the minister's pastoral care being driven by circumstances and this inevitably meant a preoccupation with crises. The irony of this situation was not lost on one local preacher who observed:

"Our minister gives a wonderful funeral service but it would be more beneficial if he were more interested in how they lived."

It was also recognised that crisis care presented a greater sense of urgency, and in some senses was easier; thus a local preacher remarked that:

"Crisis care is so imperative. In a sense it is easier because the issues are clear cut and immediate. Nurture care demands planning, forethought and long-term follow-up."

The above comment underlines the tension between crisis and nurture care with the former inevitably being the more urgent but not necessarily in the long term the more important.

Another respondent raised a quite different issue and suggested that ministerial training fitted the minister more adequately for crisis care. However, this is debatable. It might be supposed that the most important strengths in times of crises, such as sickness or bereavement, are not actually deep theological insights into the mystery of suffering and death but rather a sensitivity to human pain and grief, qualities which may be equally found in a lay person who has not undergone ministerial training. It is certainly arguable that the imperative of crisis care is pastoral presence, the best training for which is a rich experience of life, and that the minister's training actually best enables him for nurture rather than crisis care, where the teaching element is more likely to come to the forefront. It is perhaps significant that when ministers were asked which of a range of qualities most fitted them for the task of pastoral care (Appendix I, Q.45(a)) two out of five (39%) cited pastoral experience, a quarter (27%) personal spirituality and only one in twenty-five (4%) theological training.

Thus it is not the academic training which is primarily perceived to equip the minister but rather rich and diverse pastoral experience.

The evidence accumulated so far suggests that whereas both ministers and local preachers acknowledge the importance of a balance of nurture and crisis care within pastoral ministry, the context in which the care is exercised almost inevitably tips the balance towards crisis care. This is largely dictated by the sheer number of crises which present themselves and the perception that it is the minister who is the most appropriate person to deal with them because of his status as minister and his ministerial training. That some ministers are completely overwhelmed is illustrated by the comment of one of the case study interviewees:

"We are running around all the time. In six months I have had forty-eight funerals. There is no possibility of follow-up and no lay help. There have also been numerous baptisms and I can only spare an hour or so for interviews."¹

The problem with such a crisis-oriented ministry is not only the time consumed but the unpredictability of crises completely disrupt any regular programme. Thus another minister acknowledged:

"Some weeks I drive the job . Some weeks I am driven. Better if there are not too many emergencies such as deaths, illness or family crises."

It is only if the minister is in control that nurture care can take root and flourish; if he is constantly driven by the job, nurture must always remain an unrealised ideal.

Of course, it is not only crises that cause ministers to be driven. Quite apart from the problem of ageing congregations with high incidence of sickness and death, there are also the organisational and administrative workloads which arise through having the average three or four chapels to keep open. Under the Methodist structure it is the minister who is ultimately responsible for seeing that the congregations pay their way and that a roof is kept over their head. Even with the simplified organisational structures permitted by Conference there will be enough committees and council meetings at local and circuit level to keep the ministerial diary fairly full. Add a good sprinkling of crises and the minister is soon out of the driving seat and running to keep up.

1. One minister has estimated that each funeral is about 7 or 8 hours work. Consequently, allowing for holidays and a day off a week, the quoted number of funerals would be expected to take up about one third of the minister's total pastoral time.

Pastoral Practice and Pastoral Principles

As we close this chapter it is pertinent to reflect briefly on the relationship between the pastoral practice described in Chapter 6 and evaluated in this chapter and the definition of pastoral care proposed in Chapter 5 and reiterated here.

Pastoral care is a partnership in God's shepherding of the community of faith, by the whole community, amongst whom certain members may have particular defined responsibilities, and is intended to nurture and build up both individuals and the community itself into a maturity of faith and Christian living, by means of the whole range of activities within the community, both personal and corporate, to the end that the community is enabled and empowered not only to live and work to God's praise and glory but to reach out to those outside its boundaries and so advance the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps the first reflection is the general absence of a sense of real partnership within the description and analysis of pastoral care. Admittedly, the absence of a sense of partnership with God is difficult to document but is perhaps hinted at by the local preachers' analysis that pastoral care was hindered by a lack of prayer, and by the overwhelming sense of busyness, stress and dissatisfaction with ministry which so frequently characterises the minister's description of his work, and which seems incompatible with a deep sense of the divine presence. Secondly, and more clearly documented, is the fragile nature of the partnership between the ordained ministry and the laity and the failure to adequately involve the whole community in pastoral caring. For example, there appears to be a sense of rivalry and distrust between ministers and local preachers with ministers anxious that local preachers may usurp their distinctive role and hence threaten their sense of identity and distinctive calling. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the laity still distinguish between services offered by minister or laity, such as visiting, even though the lay person may be more skilled or competent.

The second observation is that pastoral care is not generally understood or implemented as a concentration on the whole community of faith. On the one hand, ministers are constrained, or choose, to invest considerable time with those outside the community of faith, especially in regard to sacerdotal activities such as funerals, marriages and baptisms. On the other hand, within the community of faith most particular attention is generally given to the sick and elderly rather than across the whole membership. Relatively little time is focussed on enabling growth to maturity.

This leads naturally to the third reflection that, although ministers seek to maintain a balance between nurture and crisis care, in reality the balance always tilts towards the latter because crises inevitably have the added dimension of urgency and to meet them enables the church visibly to demonstrate that it cares for people's needs, and the minister to feel affirmed in his distinctive role. The consequence of this

is that the nurture of the community of faith is correspondingly neglected. This leads to a smaller proportion of the membership being challenged, encouraged and trained to be involved in caring for others and perpetuates the cycle to the point where the minister is increasingly submerged in a sea of crises. In practice, the emphasis on nurture is also undermined by the extent of the minister's administrative responsibilities in the practical concerns of maintaining the organisational structures and plant of three or four distinct churches.

Fourthly, there is little evidence that the whole range of activities, both personal and corporate, are brought to bear together in nurturing the community of faith. A particular weakness is the general lack of coordination in the preaching ministry with, by and large, ministers and local preachers working independently of one another and the churches whom they serve. Furthermore, local preachers will normally have little opportunity to visit amongst the congregations with whom they are assigned to preach. Ministers also appear to have a rather muted role in liaising with and training leaders of fellowship groups and hence in coordinating their activities. Perhaps this is best summed up by the observation of local preachers that one of the main hindrances to pastoral care is the lack of overall vision.

Lastly, because nurture has been neglected, the faith communities tend to be stunted and inward-looking and are largely failing to reach out to the community outside the church. The outreach work is thus left in the hands of the minister who seeks to make contact by offering the services of the church to those outside its doors. Whether these activities, particularly an open baptism policy, effectively proclaim the Kingdom of God outside the doors of the church or merely confirm the recipient in their 'folk religion' is controversial, and is certainly not aided by the minimal amounts of time available for follow-up. The emphasis, especially by local preachers, on proclamation of the gospel message is unfortunately levelled mainly at the membership, and presumably the converted, and is unlikely to play a significant part in reaching out to those outside the community of faith.

In summary, the practice of pastoral care in contemporary Methodism falls short of the suggested model of pastoral care in a variety of ways¹. In the two remaining chapters we shall consider why this is so and propose practical steps by which the mismatch could be overcome.

1. It needs to be emphasised that this is a criticism of the overall or average picture. There are certainly some situations where this critique is not applicable but these are believed to be the exception rather than the norm.

Chapter 8

The Role of the Whole Community of Faith

Our working definition of pastoral care has drawn attention to the fact that such care is a responsibility of the whole community of faith and, faced with an ever increasing task, few of those in pastoral leadership positions would dissent from this proposition on pragmatic grounds. Some three decades ago, Gibbs and Morton (1964) in their provocative publication *God's Frozen People* argued that the laity were essentially being treated as second-class Christians or at best, as in the case of local preachers and pastoral visitors, as substitute clergy. They maintained that this division crippled the work and mission of the church, leaving the laity as a largely frozen and untapped asset. Since that publication, and catalysed particularly by the charismatic renewal movement with its emphasis on 'body ministry', repeated discussion of the basic theme has occurred. For example, the Methodist Conference has commissioned and accepted two detailed reports dealing with the theme of '*The Whole People of God*' in which the role of the laity has been discussed¹. However, it would probably be fair to say that these reports, which sought to emphasise the importance of the laity, have had only marginal impact at the grass-roots level with pastoral work continuing much as before.

It will be argued in this chapter that it is insufficient to examine the role and status of the laity in isolation from that of the clergy and that if revolutionary progress is to be made in freeing the laity for ministry this must mean overthrowing the status divide which separates laity and clergy and identifying the appropriate roles and functions of all who make up the whole people of God. In constructing this argument we will look briefly at the meaning of ordination from the perspectives of: the New Testament, early church history, and official Methodist sources, as well as considering the viewpoints of Methodists, lay and ordained. We shall also examine leadership roles in the local church since it will be argued that it is not enough to thaw out the laity but rather, structures and concepts of leadership have to be modified not only to permit but also affirm, recognise and enable the ministry of the whole community of faith. But first we turn to the records of the first century church to discern a picture of the life and ministry of the early Christians.

New Testament Metaphors of the Community of Faith

A variety of metaphors is used in the New Testament to describe the community of faith and these are pivotal to our understanding of the nature of that

1. The Methodist Church (1986 and 1990).

society and thus will be briefly described. Firstly, Christians are understood to be the 'people of God'. This is a metaphor which has its roots in the Old Testament description of the relationship between God and Israel and, although there are a number of other New Testament references which clearly identify the Christian believers as God's people¹, this is perhaps most clearly stated in the Petrine reference:

"But you are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the *people of God* ..." (1 Peter 2:9,10)

A point that has not been lost in earlier discussions is that the Greek word translated as 'people', is λαός, and it is from this root that the term 'laity' is derived. Thus the Methodist commission in reporting to the Conference (Methodist Church 1990:4) noted:

"But what perhaps even Methodism has been less able to resist is a corruption of the word 'lay' - a term which should refer to the **whole** people of God in their common priesthood and ministry, but which instead has taken on the connotation of being inexpert, unskilled and unqualified - in short, 'non-ordained'!"

A second significant New Testament term used to refer to the gathered people of God is the Greek word ἐκκλησία normally rendered in modern English versions as 'church', when referring to believers². The Greek word essentially refers to a meeting or assembly and the commonest use was for the public gathering of citizens summoned for a purpose, as on the occasion when Demetrius called together the silversmiths in Ephesus³. The term was also used in the *Septuagint* to refer to the 'congregation of Israel' which was constituted at Sinai. The essence of the term in a Christian context thus refers to God's people called out of the world and assembled in Christ's name. Interestingly, it is used to refer to both individual local congregations met together for worship, as at the home of Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:5), and on other occasions, in a more general sense, to the universal and eschatological congregation of God's people (Ephesians 1:22). The term is, however, nowhere used in an institutional sense but always refers to God's people assembled in his name. It is perhaps worth noting that, whereas in Methodism the term 'calling' is usually associated with phrases such as a 'call to preach' and as such is connected with local preaching or the ordained ministry, the New Testament writers are much less exclusive and primarily see God's call as the divine summons to be gathered together as the people of God, a call to be 'saints', those set apart for his purposes⁴.

1. See for example: Acts 15:14; Romans 9:25; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19; Revelation 21:3.

2. See for example: Acts 5:11; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 4:17; and Ephesians 1:22.

3. Thus the word ἐκκλησία is used in Acts 19:32,41 to refer to the 'assembly' of silversmiths.

4. Thus Walton (1994:24) comments: "...out of over 200 New Testament uses of the 'call' word group, only four are to do with the call to a particular task or role." The primary calling of the body of believers is exemplified in phrases such as 'called to be saints' (Romans 1:7).

A third, and even more widely debated, New Testament term, in the context of the role of the community of faith, is 'priesthood'. Apart from references to Jewish priests the only other reference to individual priests in the New Testament is to Jesus as the 'great high priest' of the new covenant¹. The term 'priesthood' or 'priests' is, however, directly applied to believers on some five occasions, twice in 1 Peter and three times in the book of Revelation². The concept is also hinted at in a number of other passages where the actions of Christians are interpreted in priestly language. Thus believers are urged to offer their very selves to God as 'living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1); are thanked for gifts which are described as 'fragrant offerings' (Phil.4:18); and are urged to '...continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise ...' (Hebrews 13:15). However, what is notably absent is reference to any cultic priest to lead the people in worship. Worship is the primary responsibility of the *whole* people of God, and extends beyond the liturgical setting to their whole way of life.

The fourth key metaphor is the description of the community of faith as the 'body of Christ', a concept which is extensively developed in the Pauline letters³. This is a particularly rich metaphor which is explored in detail in the epistles and emphasises the inter-relationship between members of the community of faith and with Christ himself. Several points are worth noting from the metaphor. Firstly, it is Christ who is the head of the body (Eph. 4:15) and in whom the body coheres; it is the primary relationship with Christ which brings members of the body into relationship with one another (Rom.12:5). Secondly, a principal aim of all service within the community of faith is that the body of Christ should grow and be built up (Eph. 4:12,15,16). All members of the body have a role to play in this (1 Cor.12:7): each has a gift; some may have leadership tasks but these are largely directed at enabling, encouraging and co-ordinating the other members of the body in their ministry (Eph.4:11,12). There is no hierarchy within the body; it is a unified whole where the concerns of an individual member are the concerns of the whole (1 Cor. 12:25,26) and every part has significance and is to be honoured and nurtured (1 Cor.12:21-24).

Taken together these four descriptions of the Christian community: 'people of God', 'called out assembly', 'priesthood' and 'body of Christ', paint a picture of the community of faith as a unified organic whole with a common purpose. There is no hint of any hierarchical structure or differentiation in status within the community, although there is a clear demarcation between those within and without the community. Admittedly, there are different roles and functions to be performed but

1. See for example references such as Hebrews 4:14,15.

2. The term is rendered as 'priesthood' in 1 Peter 2:5,9 and as 'priests' in Revelation 1:6; 5:10 and 20:6. It is significant that the references are to a corporate priesthood and not individual priests.

3. The main passages are: Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4:1-16.

these are not part of a command structure and those with higher profile or leadership tasks to enact are seen to be there to *serve* the wider community and so Christ¹, and not to rule. All this seems strangely foreign to the contemporary church situation where there is frequently a yawning gulf between leaders and followers, between ordained and lay, between the clergy and the people, and it is to examine this divide we now turn.

The Lay-Clergy Divide

Whereas some might deny the existence of such a divide, and others believe it is a necessary distinction to be maintained², an increasing number of authors are critical of the gulf that exists and recognise the harm it occasions to the overall ministry of the community of faith. Thus, for example, Campbell (1985:21), in discussing the role of ordained professional leaders observes:

"Instead of being viewed as merely functionally necessary to ensure some kind of order and continuity, the nominated or ordained leaders became paradigmatic for all Christian ministry, and those Christians who are not ordained become viewed as 'lesser' Christians, followers of human leaders rather than followers of Christ. Clerical status thus seems to place a barrier between Christ, the suffering servant who summons *all* to follow him, and those people whose way of following is not to seek office in the church."

Elsewhere, Snyder (1977:95) argues that this clergy-laity distinction is not only unscriptural but also a major hindrance to the growth of God's Kingdom in our age. Thus he writes:

"The clergy-laity dichotomy is a distinct carry-over from pre-Reformation Roman Catholicism and a throwback to the Old Testament priesthood. It is one of the principal obstacles to the Church effectively being God's agent of the Kingdom today because it creates the false idea that only 'holy men', namely ordained ministers, are really qualified and responsible for leadership and significant ministry. In the New Testament there are functional distinctions between various kinds of ministries but no hierarchical division between clergy and laity."

This sense of a two-tier system was pin-pointed much earlier in the work of Gibbs and Morton (1964:9) who noted:

1. The most general Greek word for servant or slave in the New Testament is δούλος and although it is on occasions applied to the whole community of believers (1 Peter 2:16) it is particularly the choice of church leaders, and thus Paul, for example, refers to himself as the 'servant (δούλος) of Christ' (Rom.1:1) and even on occasions as a servant of the believers (2 Cor. 4:5). This usage is discussed in detail in Bennett (1993).

2. Thus, for example, Oden (1983:13) comments: "A major part of the task ahead is to sharpen anew the needed distinction between clergy and laity, while at the same time respecting a continued stress on the general ministry of the laity - but not so as to deny or accidentally misplace the ministry of the clergy."

"The assumption is that a layman is one of the privates in God's army, and the officers are the clergy. As if there were two grades of Christian - first class: parsons, and second class: laity,"

whereas, they argue, the true New Testament picture puts the clergy and everybody else in a fundamental equality under God.

The Catholic theologian Hans Küng (1968:382) in examining the priesthood of all Christians also recognises with some disquiet that:

"... the name *priest* has generally been reserved for the leaders of the community in recent centuries, while the idea of the priesthood of all believers has at best, if at all, been commemorated."

Küng goes on to state boldly that these priests have:

"... become a separate caste, after pagan and Judaic patterns, standing between God and men..." Küng (1968:382).

Although some might take issue with Küng's assertion of the mediating role of contemporary priests, there can be little doubt that in effect they represent a distinct class of Christians, set apart by their training and ordination, distinguished by their clerical dress and titles, monopolising the leadership of key liturgical functions and frequently attempting to reserve for themselves areas of ministry for which they have neither the aptitude nor the time. In this, British Methodism, despite its emphasis on lay involvement, is no exception. These attitudes are perhaps illustrated when those becoming members of the clerical profession refer to themselves as: 'entering the Church', or 'called to the Ministry', as if church and ministry were somehow separate and distinct from their former lay existence.

Houtepen (1980) also draws attention to the problematic situation in the Roman Catholic Church where, in practice, pastoral workers who are called 'laymen' do effectively the same work as their ordained colleagues. He contends that this dogmatic distinction between laity and clergy is inadequate and thus he writes:

"Although the term 'laity' is derived from the Greek *laikos*, the most comprehensive term for all the members of God's people, it has taken on narrower connotations of being ignorant and without competence. The tragedy of the use of both terms as opposite poles (ministers and laity) is that it produces a split in the church which is quite unbiblical, violates the universal scope of the gospel, and is unworkable in pastoral practice."¹ Houtepen (1980:22)

Similar anomalous situations have arisen in Methodism where non-ordained lay-workers may have effective pastoral charge of several churches and may even have a

1. But note the comment by Küng (1968:386): "The expression 'layman' (*λαϊκός*), which in the Greek sense meant the uneducated masses, and in the Jewish sense a man who was neither priest nor Levite, does not occur anywhere in the New Testament." It thus seems doubtful whether the terms laity and lay are strictly related to the New Testament 'people of God', *λαός θεοῦ* (1Peter 2:10) and hence to: "... the most comprehensive term for all the members of God's people ...". The Greek-English lexicon of Liddell and Scott (New ninth edition, 1940) confirms the sense of *λαϊκός* as meaning 'unofficial' or 'common' as opposed to 'consecrated' or 'holy'

dispensation to preside at the Lord's Supper, thus performing the same work as a minister, but being distinguished from him by ordination.

One approach that has been taken to defusing the controversy of the apparently unscriptural distinction between clergy and laity is to interpret this differentiation as resulting from unique 'spheres of activity'. Thus it is sometimes argued that the laity's rightful ministry is in the world whereas the clergy are set apart for ecclesial activity. This is the interpretation perceived by Anton Houtepen in his analysis of the deliberations of the Catholic Church with regard to the lay-clergy divide. Thus he observes that whereas Vatican II:

"...extricated this split from the magical ontological connotations which attached to earlier distinctions between 'clergy' and 'laity' as between two states in the Church ... the Council did that by giving the 'laity' its own sphere of activity and its own right to initiatives, not by attaching greater importance to the fact that the Church's ministers also held an essentially 'lay' position." Houtepen (1980:22)

A rather similar conclusion seems to have been reached by the Methodist Commission on the *People of God in the World*, though perhaps stated more subtly. The report begins by asserting that:

"...the Ministry of the People of God in the World is both the primary and normative ministry of the church. By primary we mean it comes first,"
Methodist Church (1990:4)

and goes on to argue that the ordained ministry should be defined in terms of the 'priesthood of **all** the faithful, within which the priesthood of the ordained is a specialization'. The overall thrust of the report, although not precisely stated in these terms, is that the primary sphere of activity of the laity is in the world, with the implied corollary that the ordained ministry is the professional and specialist branch whose valid realm of activity is the church. An ancillary aspect of this, hinted at in the opening paragraphs of the report, is that lay-ministry within the church is a side-track from the true ministry of lay people and is interpreted as 'a clericalisation of the laity'. There would seem to be little scriptural support for this dualistic view of ministry which identifies the lay person as serving Christ in the world and the ordained as a specialist serving Christ in the church.

The above interpretation is also clouded by the introduction of non-stipendiary ministers in both the Church of England and the Methodist Church. Whatever the reality, the justification of such ministry is frequently argued not so much on the grounds of their pragmatic usefulness as 'mass priests', but from their value in representing the church in the work-place. Melinsky (1992:236) gives voice to this sentiment when he comments of non-stipendiary ministers:

" ... one may properly speak of ministers in secular employment celebrating secular sacraments when they help those around them to see an ordinary event

take on an extra depth and significance on occasions of celebration, forgiveness or renewal."

The NSM, argues Melinsky (1992:234), is not a 'part-time priest' but rather is seen as being the church's 'authorised representative' in the work place and it is his role to make explicit what others do implicitly.

A similar concern with the work-place is seen in official Methodist statements with regard to non-stipendiary ministers, for example:

"The Minister in Local Appointment exercises an ordained ministry **both** in the Circuit and in his or her secular vocation."¹

On the basis of these representations it would appear that the role of the ordained minister is not restricted to the ecclesial arena but encompasses equally the world of work, not, one must hasten to add, as a lay person but as a clergyman. If this is a valid argument then it would seem difficult to defend the concept of 'the world' as the rightful sphere of activity of lay persons and 'the church' as the distinct centre of activity for the clergy. Bennett (1985:46) appears alert to this difficulty and suggests there is a danger that NSMs may be trespassing on lay territory, and thus he writes:

"In so far as non-stipendiary ministers are those who 'go before' the Christian, as a sign and a fore-runner of the Christian people, they are doing a valuable job. In so far as they are acting in the place of the Christian lay-persons they are causing confusion and making it harder for others to accept authority for their own fundamental ministry as God's people."

The position of the NSM is clearly somewhat anomalous and it is an issue which will be returned to later in this chapter.

There are probably few theologians today who would wish to maintain that the lay-clergy divide is derived from a New Testament pattern of the church, but many would perhaps argue that it is a necessary and inevitable development in the life of a mature institution. Furthermore, Hanson (1979) asserts that it is not possible to turn the clock back and thus he writes:

"If by unanimous consent all Christian denominations were to abolish altogether tomorrow the distinction between clergy and laity, within ten years groups would begin appearing everywhere throughout the church who by their dedication, their expertise and their activity would earn the status, if not the name, of clergy... The dream of a wholly formless, wholly charismatic, wholly spontaneous church in the twentieth century is a fantasy. The official ministry of the church is a permanent feature of its life." (p.94,95).

The inevitability of a lay-clergy distinction is not, however, a view shared by all, and Henry Rack in his book which ponders the future of John Wesley's Methodism raises

1. Cited from the Methodist Church, Division of Ministries leaflet entitled: *Sharing in Christ's Ministry as a Presbyteral Minister in Local Appointment*. Minister in local appointment (MLA) is the Methodist equivalent of a non-stipendiary minister (NSM).

the question:

"Should we then erase the clear distinction which some traditions have made between clergy and laity, and think instead of one people of God in equal relationship with Christ: all of them possessing only fragments of knowledge of Him; all of them exercising a variety of ministries based on the different contexts of their lives and experiences? This seems, indeed, to be one reason for the varied ministries of early Methodism, rooted in life and oriented to evangelism and pastoral care, rather than fixed in advance by some 'revealed' pattern." (1965:75,76)

Rack recognises that within early Methodism there was indeed a blurring of the distinctions between clergy and lay and hints that, though perhaps now forgotten, this might be worthy of re-exploration. The view that Methodism failed to build on Wesley's pragmatic use of lay people in ministry, an act which threatened to undermine the lay-clergy divide, is also shared by Kreider (1993:94) who writes:

"In other traditions such as Methodism, there have been at times more imaginative experiments; but even these have succumbed eventually to a preponderant clericalism. The mono-pastoral model - in which it is the 'ordained minister' whose ministrations really count as ministry, who really can preside at communion, by whom one really has been visited - has proven to be wonderfully indestructible."

However, it needs to be recognised that despite his experiments Wesley, as an Anglican priest, had a continuing high view of the priesthood, especially with regard to the sacraments, and it was this view that held sway after his death. His lay travelling preachers simply donned the mantle of a distinct priesthood which separated them from their local preacher colleagues and fellow Methodists.

Attempts to overcome the problem by opening ordination to wider groups of people, such as those in secular employment, to married men (in the case of the Roman Catholic Church), or to women as well as men, is no real solution. Thus some years before the ordination of women in the Anglican Church, Harper argued:

"To ordain women will only add to the confusion; it will simply perpetuate the caste system, only include women as well as men. We shall be no better off." Harper (1988:38)

His argument is poignantly illustrated by a letter published in the *Methodist Recorder* in connection with the twentieth anniversary of women's ordination in the Methodist Church. The letter records the feelings of a female candidate who was not accepted for the ordained ministry:

"Twenty years ago many others who had not the advantage of having been deaconesses offered, and were turned down ... For some the rejection was a total experience and in the saddest cases the Church neither saw nor heard of them again. A few went to other denominations. Some plugged away and eventually succeeded. For the rest of us, who didn't make it, time simply ran out, leaving all

kinds of emotions: at the least a question-shaped void, at the worst, bitterness. It is hard to let go of something you feel convinced of and committed to. Some, perhaps, did find alternative fulfilling ministries, but that is not always the case and one is then faced with approaching those last traditionally productive years with a sense of purposelessness which is almost as hard to come to terms with as rejection itself."¹

The letter illustrates the frustrations implicit in the lay-clergy divide where gifted and committed lay people feel that they are unable to use their God-given gifts and show the highest devotion that is associated with the status of ordination. The ordination of women has thus added very little to the empowerment or recognition of the gifts of the vast majority of women in the church and nothing to the more serious problem of the deep-seated prejudice that lay ministry is, by its very nature, a second class ministry.

The failure to recognise the legitimacy of lay ministry or to rank it with ordained ministry is frequently evidenced in Methodism in the wording of obituaries as is clearly demonstrated by the following example. In 1927, some years before union, the Rev. F. John Oliver was admitted as a lay pastor in the Primitive Methodist Church. After thirty-four years as a lay pastor he was accepted for the presbyteral ministry in the Methodist Church in 1961. Following ordination he served for some twelve years and then was in retirement for a further twenty-one years before his death in 1994. In summing up his career and contribution to the church the obituary concludes with the statement:

"John died suddenly in the 86th. year of his life and 33rd. year of his ministry."²

What is particularly striking about this conclusion is that it completely ignores the thirty-four years spent serving full-time as a lay pastor but includes the twenty-one years spent in retirement as an ordained minister. The major part of his ministry as a pastor is completely unrecognised. The understanding conveyed by this reporting is that 'ministry' begins at ordination and continues to the deathbed irrespective of whether the person concerned is *functioning* as a minister. It is an interpretation which is centred on the distinctive status of the minister and underlines the wide gulf that in practice exists between clergy and lay people and the ministry which they undertake.

The Origins of the Lay-Clergy Divide

Having reflected briefly on the divide that exists between laity and clergy in contemporary mainline churches and having noted that this pattern cannot be deduced from the New Testament records, it is perhaps worthwhile to consider how it has

1. Patricia Batstone, *Methodist Recorder*, July 7th. 1994, p.5.

2. Philip Seaton, *Methodist Recorder*, June 9th. 1994, p.30.

developed.

According to Melinsky (1992:31), whereas the authentic Pauline corpus of letters describes a church life where there is no elite and all members are equally involved in ministry under the sovereign rule of the Holy Spirit, the earliest hints of a distinct clergy status are to be found in I & II Timothy which supposedly represents an early second-century, non-Pauline tradition. Thus he cites II Timothy 1:6 as a possible example of an official rite of 'ordination' understood as a sacramental act for bestowing power and the gift of the Spirit.¹ More definitely, Barrett (1985:94) states that the writings of Ignatius, dated from the early part of the second century, reveal a church structure with three orders of ministry: bishops, presbyters and deacons. What is particularly significant is that in his writings there is no longer any equivalence between presbyters and bishops, the bishop being a lone figure. According to Barrett, Ignatius also draws a parallel between the three orders of ministry and the Old Testament sacerdotal figures of high priest, priest and levite. Furthermore, with Ignatius developed a discipline whereby the eucharist was only valid if presided over by the bishop or his appointee (Barrett 1985:96).

Melinsky (1992:39) suggests that in the early part of the second century the 'pneumato-charismatic' and the 'official-sacramental' conceptions existed side by side without strain but that the excesses of the Montanist renewal movement (around AD 172) disturbed the church and caused a shift away from charismatic leadership to an official ecclesial leadership, thus paving the way for the formation of a church hierarchy. Hanson and Hanson (1987:132) confirm that by AD 200 the threefold ministry was securely established almost everywhere throughout the church and from about that year the practice began of calling the bishop, and less often the presbyter, a 'high-priest' (Greek *archiereus*, Latin *sacerdos*.) The Hansons comment:

"As the ministers began to do what the whole people of God were originally called to do, i.e., witness, preach, worship, heal, administer discipline, so the chief minister now fulfils the priestly role of the people of God." Hanson (1987:133)

and go on to elaborate:

"There is no evidence ... that Christ or his apostles or anybody else in the ancient church 'instituted a priesthood' ... an existing ministry began to be *called* a priesthood about the year 200." Hanson (1987:133)

At the same time they note that from about the third century onwards the order of deacon begins to be reduced in importance and eventually, disappears.

Richard Hanson (1979:38) notes that, about AD 200, Tertullian was the first

1. This is a questionable interpretation which is discussed later in this chapter.

writer to use the term 'priesthood' to refer to the Christian ministry and throughout his writings he variously refers to bishops as either *sacerdos* (priest) or *sacerdossummus* (high priest). Hanson (1979:42-46) speculates that there were three main reasons for this development at this time. Firstly, to regard bishops as high priests enhanced the significance of Christian clergy and allowed reclamation of the priestly ideas of the Old Testament. Secondly, he believes the development reflected the social esteem accorded to priests in contemporary pagan religions which the Christian clergy desired to emulate. Thirdly, Christianity was sufficiently distanced from Judaism so that the embracing of the Old Testament patterns could not be criticised as returning to the Jewish religion.

The yawning gulf between the pastoral epistles and the early third century *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus is noted by Wright (1985). He observes that:

"In this work not only is a clear-cut clergy-laity distinction already operative but also a sharp distinction between bishop, of whom high-priestly language is now employed, and presbyter, and between both and deacon," Wright (1985:7)

and concludes that the use of the language of priesthood demonstrates little discernible continuity with the New Testament. Melinsky (1992:37) adds that in the writings of Hippolytus a clear understanding of ordination as sacramental, with special grace for each office, is presented for the first time. However, Harvey (1975:50) notes that Hippolytus' description of ordination implied that the role of the priest was principally to govern and nothing is said about liturgical functions or power.

The writings of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (AD 240-250), represent the next step in the development of the clergy-laity divide and so Melinsky (1992:47) can state:

"... by the middle of the third century Cyprian has a clerical class sharply differentiated from the laity, headed by the bishop without whom there is no church."

This arises because:

"Now clerical ordination must always be confirmed after due election by the prescribed bodies, by a special sacramental act. For the first time it is this which makes a priest a priest, as a result of which he can pass on spiritual gifts in baptism or penance, and as bishop he can ordain new clergy, can offer the eucharistic sacrifice, and can make effectual intercession for others. No layman is competent for these things," Melinsky (1992:43)

and thus power to minister in the name of Christ is no longer dependent on the Spirit's charisma alone but on an ecclesial act.

Further details of Cyprian's pivotal influence are summarised by Hanson (1979). Thus according to Hanson, Cyprian, amongst other things: taught that bishops were directly instituted by Christ via the twelve apostles and thus had a line of authority independent of the church; supposed that bishops were priests and, by analogy with

the Old Testament, hence sacrosanct; emphasised priestly character and thus the close connection between priest and altar (1979:54). In particular Hanson suggests that what is new with Cyprian is:

"... the close linking of the priestly character of the ministry with its functions in celebrating the eucharist, and particularly in offering a sacrifice ... of the literal body and blood of Christ." (1979:57).

and thus he sees that Cyprian has moved a long way towards defining Christian priesthood in terms of the sacrificial cult. Hanson concludes:

"A church which began by contemptuously rejecting all forms of sacrifice except the most immaterial has come perilously near to instituting its own sacrificial cult, with altars and priests who offer sacrifices ..." (1979:59).

Thus the church has moved from the New Testament concept of the priesthood of all believers offering the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to a cultic priesthood offering the sacrifice of Christ himself in the consecrated elements.

Schillebeeckx (1981) confirms Hanson's analysis and argues that the sacerdotalizing of the church's ministry occurred under the influence of Cyprian whom he describes as the first to equate the Christian eucharist with the Old Testament priestly sacrificial terminology (1981:48). He observes that:

"... in the ancient church the whole of the believing community concelebrated, albeit under the leadership of the one who presides at the eucharist ... The one who is recognized by the church as leader of the community also presides at the eucharist." (1981:49)

This pattern had with Cyprian been broken.

The next major and dramatic change came in the fourth century with the conversion of the Roman emperor, Constantine. This had a profound influence on the development of the Christian church since overnight it was transformed from a religious sect to the official religion of the Roman empire. As Hanson (1979:62) notes:

"... Christianity... found itself basking in the sun of imperial patronage, and loaded with money, privilege and responsibilities... It became an advantage instead of a handicap for ambitious and worldly and powerful people to become Christians... To be numbered among the clergy was ... to escape the necessity of paying tax,"

and as a consequence there was a strong motivation for people to become Christians. As a reaction to this influx and the possible profanation, Hanson suggests that the clergy responded by making the sacraments harder to access, hence enhancing their status and power.

The close link of church and empire inevitably meant that the structures of the church were influenced by Roman society and the priesthood became increasingly a hierarchy, a career structure modelled on the imperial civil service, Krieder (1993:92).

Thus Schillebeeckx (1981:39) points out that in the Roman empire, *ordinatio* meant entry into a particular *ordo* as an imperial functionary. The term *ordo* also had a secondary meaning in referring to social classes differing in status.¹ Schillebeeckx concludes:

"... after the time of Constantine the church *ordinatio* or appointment to the 'order of office bearers' clearly became more attractive because the clergy were seen as a more exalted class in the church in comparison with the more lowly believers. The clericalism of the church had begun!" (1981:39)

In the relationship of the church's ordination to the *ordinatio* of Roman society it is easy to see how ordination came to be viewed as a setting apart of the clergy as a distinct class with a status different from the laity.

Yet another development in the divide is seen towards the end of the fourth century in the work of Chrysostom. Writing as a deacon in AD 381 a book on the priesthood, he emphasises the immense power possessed by priests in administering penance and controlling the sacraments (Hanson (1979:65)). Thus Chrysostom muses that if baptism is a means of access to heaven, then priests control the very gates of heaven itself. Hanson concludes:

"The thought of the priesthood of all believers has completely disappeared before the priesthood of the clergy, with the exclusive capacity to control access to God." (1979:65)

Hanson notes that although Chrysostom mentions other aspects of a priest's work, he defines him virtually in terms of the cult.

From this point on the gulf between clergy and laity gradually widens throughout the Middle Ages. Melinsky (1992:60) points out that from about the seventh century onwards only the orthodox and obedient could enjoy the full rights of citizenship and thus the church had become a compulsory society entered by baptism. The overall effect of this was that baptism became devalued as the sacrament which distinguished the community of faith from the world. Thus Schillebeeckx (1981:56) observes:

"At a time when virtually everyone was baptised, the boundary between 'the spirit of Christ' and 'the spirit of the world' came to lie with the clergy. As a result the priesthood was seen more as 'a personal state of life', a '*status*', than as a service to the community; it was personalized and privatized."

It is thus ordination rather than baptism which separates from 'the world' and indicates a life set apart and consecrated for the service of God.

The distinctive priestly functions gradually developed and by the late eighth century 'binding' and 'loosing' (absolution) were added to the priestly repertoire (Harvey (1975:51)), and in Western mediaeval rites there was an increasing

1. The upper class in Roman society were the knights (*equites*) and senators and the lower class the *plebs* or common people. The ceremony of admission to an upper order was *ordinatio*.

concentration on the priestly liturgical function as the minister of the eucharist. Melinsky (1992:61) concludes that by the Age of Growth (1050-1300):

"The clerical hierarchy now asserted their claim to be the only channel of supernatural authority..."

and thus the priesthood of all believers had become totally obscured. In this period, significant changes as to priestly status were legislated in church councils. For example, the much earlier Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) had specified that:

"Only someone who had been called by a particular community (the people and its leaders) to be its pastor and leader authentically receives *ordinatio* ... " Schillebeeckx (1981:38)

but now the Third Lateran Council (1179) broke with the Chalcedonian view since men no longer had to be ordained to a particular community. Schillebeeckx (1981:52) speculates that this act marked the beginning of the concept of absolute ordination.

This development was taken a step further by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) where, according to Hanson (1979: 80), it was determined that:

" ... the priest, once ordained, possessed not merely authority to consecrate the bread and wine so that they became the body and blood of Christ, but also the power (*potestas*) of consecrating them so as to effect this conversion."

A related development, Hanson observes, was that:

"... the doctrine of priesthood was that the priest's orders conferred an indelible character ... so that once a man was a priest he must of necessity always be a priest, do he what he may ..." (1979:80).

Furthermore, the above council declared that the eucharist could only be celebrated by a priest who had been validly and legitimately ordained (Schillebeeckx (1981:54)).

The overall effects of all these changes were twofold: firstly, the community of faith became completely marginal to the celebration of the sacrament and to the choice and recognition of their leaders, and the significance of ordination shifted from leadership of the community to bestowal of power to perform the consecration of the eucharist. Thus Schillebeeckx concludes:

"In comparison with the ancient church, circumstances here have taken a fundamentally different direction: a priest is ordained in order to be able to celebrate the eucharist; in the ancient church it is said that he is 'appointed' as minister in order to be able to appear as leader of the community; in other words the community called him as leader to build up the community, and for this reason he was also the obvious person to preside at the eucharist." (1981:58)

Thus cult priesthood has replaced leadership of the community of faith. Melinsky (1992:66) observes the logical consequence of this process is that now a priest may be ordained without even having a community to preside over. This conclusion, although interpreted in a Mediaeval setting, has close parallels in the contemporary Methodist Church where priests may be ordained as non-stipendiary ministers or employed as

sector ministers where, in both cases, leadership of the community of faith is not central to their ministry.

In the preceding pages, we have seen how the New Testament pattern, with its emphasis on every-member ministry with functional distinctions but equality of status, gradually evolved to a point where the priest and lay Christian have little in common. The Christian priest, influenced by Old Testament patterns, pagan ritual and Roman Imperial tradition, had become a cult priest, a 'holy man' who commanded the very gates of heaven and monopolised the making of the rules that governed priesthood and the appointment of successors. Priests were ontologically different to believers with an apostolic succession which linked them directly to Christ and an ordination which provided them with power and an indelible character. By the time of the Reformation, the clergy had a stranglehold of both the means of grace and forms of recognised ministry.

Consequently, it was the nature of the priesthood that was central to the concerns of the Reformers, with attempts being made to re-establish the concept of the priesthood of all believers. Luther in particular attacked the idea of the indelible character of the priest and denied that ordination conveyed sacramental grace. Thus Luther claimed:

"... a priest in Christendom is nothing else but an office holder. As long as he holds office he takes precedence; where he is deposed, he is a peasant or a townsman like everybody else."¹

Hence Melinsky (1992:76) understands that for Luther ordination was to be understood as a public confirmation of the call, drawing its meaning from service to a particular community. It is interesting that the early Wesleyan principle, soon lost sight of after Wesley's death, that itinerant preachers who ceased from travel should return to the status of a local preacher, is consistent with this Lutheran principle of status related to a specific office or function.

One consequence of the Reformation was that most churches which followed the Reformed tradition abolished priests and bishops altogether (Hanson (1987:135)) although in a few places such as Sweden and England the offices of priest and bishop were reformed rather than abolished. Thus the Hansons note:

"They were not defined by (though not deprived of) their cultic capacity nor activity. They were given power to forgive sins and celebrate sacraments, but their significance was stated in terms which were much more deliberately pastoral." (1987:135)

British Methodism is, of course, an off-shoot of the Anglican Church, but for historical reasons², and unlike American Methodism, has no episcopal system. In

1. From *Works* 44:130, quoted in Melinsky (1992:74).

2. See earlier discussion where Wesley argues for the right of the presbyteral ministry to ordain.

principle, Methodism, from the time of union, does not have a distinct priesthood and this is enshrined in the Deed of Union which states:

"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 order or class of men but in the exercise of its corporate life and worship special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required and thus the principle of representative selection is recognised."¹

However, the traditions of Wesleyan Methodism with its high view of the ministerial office die hard and the implications of ordination have not been clearly thought through² since the 'representative person' continues to hold a unique status in Methodism which continues long after he ceases to function as an active minister.

Though not speaking specifically of Methodism Peter Cotterell concludes:

"The Reformation produced changes, but they were changes of emphasis rather than essence. The presidential ministry remained. The unbiblical distinction between clergy and laity was not removed." (1993:38)

This critique is not strictly true of Methodism since, in principle, lay persons could preside at the eucharist. However, the unique function which is perceived as most characteristic of the minister is still his sacerdotal function of celebrating the sacraments. In the face of ministerial shortages, this is safeguarded by the ordination of non-stipendiary ministers (MLAs) rather than authorisation of local preachers who already undertake the technically more difficult function of preaching and teaching. Of course there is much more at stake than presiding at the eucharist. As Tiller and Birchall (1987:60) note:

"From the representative sacramental role is derived an authority which extends to every part of their ministry. This has powerfully reinforced the dependence of the congregation upon a single (priestly) minister and made it much more difficult to recover a biblical emphasis upon shared leadership."

It follows that if the priest is especially qualified by his unique status as an ordained person to preside at the eucharist then he is also especially qualified to pray for others, to visit, to counsel and undertake all forms of ministry. Necessarily, lay ministry is a substitute for the real thing. It is this perception which feeds lay expectations of the minister, undermines the worthwhileness of lay ministry, and fuels the lay-clergy divide - even in Methodism.

1. Methodist Church (1989:229)

2. The implications of ordination are discussed more fully later in this chapter.

The Ministry of the Whole Community of Faith

In our working definition of pastoral care we have argued that the pastoral task should be the responsibility of the *whole* community of faith. However, the early part of this chapter has documented the dichotomy of the lay-clergy divide whereby recognised or meaningful ministry is effectively monopolised by a small minority of the community with a distinct status. This duality is found even within Methodism which, although born amidst a renewed emphasis on lay ministry, is not exempt from the lay-clergy polarisation. The result of this divide is that often ministers are involved in areas of service for which they are neither skilled nor gifted, or simply do not have the time, whereas, frequently, lay persons' gifts are neither acknowledged nor utilised. The consequences are deleterious for the life of the community of faith. As has already been noted in this chapter, it has been suggested by some that the divide can be justified from scripture or by long-standing church tradition, and in any case is necessary in a mature institution, or is, at very least, inevitable. These are contentions which are refuted in this thesis and the reasons for so doing will be developed in the pages which follow.

The Status of the Community of Faith

At the beginning of this chapter we began to explore the status of the community of faith in terms of four New Testament metaphors. The priesthood of all believers is one of these key images which aids our understanding of the biblical view of the role and status of Christian believers and their inter-relationship and we return to it now. As a starting point, the way in which this phrase is understood within Methodism as indicated by the survey responses of ministers and local preachers will be briefly described. Both groups were asked in an open question to explain how they understood the significance of the *priesthood of all believers* (1 Peter 2:9) in relation to pastoral care (Appendix I, Q.38(a), Appendix II, Q.39(a)). The responses to this question were categorised into six distinct groupings so as to facilitate analysis. The overall findings for both ministers and local preachers are summarised in Table 8:1. It is evident from the table that there are somewhat different perceptions between ministers and local preachers with regard to the significance of the priesthood of all believers. Thus nearly half of local preachers and about a quarter of ministers suggested that the phrase implied that **all** should be involved in the ministry of pastoral care. This was most commonly expressed in phrases such as: 'all are involved', 'all can minister/ have a ministry' or 'all have responsibility'. The emphasis being on the concept of 'every member ministry' with each having a role to play. Interestingly this is much more commonly cited amongst local preachers than ministers. This suggests that ministers have a more egocentric view of ministry and this

<i>Category</i>	<i>Percentage of Those Responding</i>	
	Ministers	Local Preachers
All are involved	27	47
Body Ministry	28	20
Partnership	26	14
Assist	14	1
Miscellaneous	5	16
No significance	-	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 8:1 The Relevance of the Priesthood of All Believers

seems to be confirmed by the observation that some 14% interpreted the priesthood of all believers as signifying that lay people could assist *them* in their ministry compared to only 1% of local preachers who share this view.

The viewpoint of about one quarter of ministers and one fifth of local preachers can be fitted into the 'body ministry' category. In many ways this is quite similar to the 'all' category, although here there is a greater emphasis on mutuality, fellowship and the sense of the whole church being involved in ministry. Frequently, respondents would mention phrases such as 'body ministry' or 'the whole church' or 'the whole people of God' and convey the idea of the body being built up as well as ministering to others. The 'partnership' category again describes the views of about a quarter of the ministers but only about one in seven local preachers. Key phrases in this category include: 'partnership', 'shared ministry', 'team ministry', 'complementary'. Again there is a close similarity to 'all' and 'body ministry', although perhaps there is a slight hint of a more minister-centred view in this category.

Most of the responses summarised under the miscellaneous category highlighted the Reformation thesis that all have direct access to God through Christ without need of a human intermediary. In addition, a number of local preachers expressed the rather pessimistic view that the phrase had no significance or was irrelevant. One commented that the priesthood of all believers was only theory in Methodism. However, overall, 81% of both ministers and local preachers recognised that the priesthood of all believers pointed to a corporate ideal where ministers and lay alike were in partnership and each had a vital role to perform. This seems to suggest,

amongst the large majority of Methodist preachers, lay and ordained alike, a sympathy to a vision of the church where the lay-clergy divide is at least minimised if not eradicated.

The significance of the priesthood of all believers has been developed by a number of scholars and K ung (1968) in particular has explored the concept in detail and is concerned to demonstrate that it is not simply a proof text to reject the idea of priestly representation and mediation. He argues that the idea embraces at least five aspects, namely:

1. Every believer has direct access to God through Christ¹; the need for a priest as a human intermediary has been superseded. (1968:373)

2. All Christians are called to offer spiritual sacrifices², which K ung describes as 'worship in the world, in the midst of everyday life'. (1968:373-4)

3. All believers are called to preach the word³, not only through a life spent in loving self-sacrifice, but also through their personal Christian witness. (1968:374-7)

4. Every Christian has the power to baptize (and teach) and to take part in the Lord's Supper⁴. (1968:379-80).

5. The role of every believer is to mediate between God and the world by devotion to, and prayer for their fellow men⁵. (1968:380-1)

In K ung's hands the phrase 'priesthood of all believers' is a positive term covering a diverse and rich range of meaning and pointing to a deep involvement of the Christian in service *both* in the church and the world. This emphasis is an important corrective since in recent years it has become fashionable to identify lay ministry with service in the world. For example, the 1990 Methodist report on *The Ministry of the People of God in the World* discusses and affirms solely the role of lay people in the world even though the Methodist Church promotes the involvement of ordained ministers in secular employment as sector ministers and ministers in local appointment. The clear implication is that it is the world which is the true sphere of activity for a lay person. An earlier Anglican working party (Church of England (1985:67)), comes to much the same conclusion, namely, that the primary location of the laity is in society at large. Similarly, Bennett (1985:46) argues that, for the lay Christian, the home and secular work place are his fundamental spheres of ministry. However, K ung is not completely alone in his views since the Tiller Report also argues that:

1. Supporting texts: Rom. 5:2; Eph.3:12; Heb. 10:22; Eph. 2:18.

2. Supporting texts: Rom. 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5; Phil. 2:17;4:18.

3. Supporting texts: Heb. 13:15; 1 Peter 2:9,12; 3:15.

4. However, K ung concedes that a right to take an active part is not the same as determining who may be responsible for administering the sacraments.

5. Supporting texts: Gal.6:2; 1 Tim. 2:1 .

"... it is a false distinction to see the sphere of ordained ministry as being solely within the Church while that of lay ministry is specifically 'in the world'." Tiller (1983:69)

The real danger of this false dichotomy is that it exacerbates rather than diminishes the lay-clergy divide.

The above is a point also appreciated by Snyder (1983:170-2), who understands the priesthood of all believers to describe a balanced ministry where all believers have responsibility both for the internal life of the church and for the world. With respect to the former aspect, Snyder emphasises that 'we are priests to each other' and that 'the church is a fellowship in which each person serves as a priest to others'. There is no divide between lay and clergy in this interpretation. This understanding is also consistent with apparent New Testament patterns in which the whole community actively participated in corporate worship with each member free to contribute as described in the Pauline instructions on worship (1 Cor.14:26). Indeed, throughout the New Testament, there is no hint of worship or even the sacraments being presided over by officially appointed leaders, let alone priests. These were the corporate responsibility of the priesthood of all believers.

Baptised into Priesthood

An idea that is increasingly discussed in reports on lay ministry is that the sacrament of baptism should denote the commissioning or authorisation of Christians for ministry since it is baptism which marks entry into the priesthood of all believers and indicates the change of status described variously in the New Testament as the 'new birth' (John 3:3-8) or the 'new creation' (2 Cor. 5:17). This is, of course, not a new idea since Martin Luther himself declared: 'Through baptism all of us are consecrated as priests.'¹ The suggestion is found, for example, in the 1990 Methodist report which states that:

"Baptism ... is the way in which individuals are incorporated into the body of Christ and into the priesthood of all believers. One becomes a priest at baptism, and a small minority will become ordained ministers later," Methodist Church (1990:4,5)

although, even here, the writers of the report cannot resist pointing out that for some there is a second 'ordination'. The Anglican Tiller Report also argues that it is baptism which is the authorisation for Christian service, Tiller (1983:63). Most recently Vera Sinton, an Anglican, writes:

"Every Christian believer who affirms faith in the Father who created the world, the Son who redeemed it and the life-giving Spirit and who turns to Christ, repenting of sin, renouncing evil, *is by baptism* a publicly accredited minister of Jesus Christ and his gospel." (Sinton (1993:146)

1. Address to the Nobility ii.66, quoted in Beasley-Murray (1993:125).

Kreider, in a chapter entitled *Abolishing the Laity*, suggests that, for the New Testament church, baptism was in fact their ordination. Thus he writes:

"They had entered into this common ministry by baptism, through which they had moved from death to life ... Through the laying-on of hands, they had been commissioned to a life of ministry, entered into a new order, and experienced 'ontological change'. And they had been empowered for this new life of service by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God. For them, baptism was their ordination." Kreider (1993:87)

In this interpretation he couples baptism with change in status as a baptised believer, empowerment by the Holy Spirit and authorisation for ministry. The importance of baptism is that it can be understood as denoting not only a rite of commissioning as argued in the Anglican report on deacons, Church of England (1988:94) but also it marks 'the *sacramental* incorporation of a person into Christ' (Bennett (1985:46)).

The foundational importance of baptism as the Christian's ordination can be argued on several scriptural grounds. Firstly, there is the example of Christ himself, since, in all three synoptic gospels¹, Christ's baptism is seen as the preparation or prelude to his ministry. At baptism, Christ is authorised by the Father and empowered by the Spirit - it is his ordination. Secondly, baptism is associated with receipt of the Holy Spirit, and thus Peter on the Day of Pentecost urges the people to repent and be baptised and promises 'you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38). Thirdly, baptism is a sign of incorporation into the body of Christ² or the priesthood of all believers.

Then, of course, there is the question of succession. For many the distinctiveness of ordination lies, in part, in the idea that the tradition can supposedly be traced back to the hands of the apostles and there is this sense of having a direct link with their commission. This sense of unity and oneness is expressed vividly in the words of an Anglican woman priest:

"A chain of touch from one set of hands to another going backwards and forwards through history links me physically with nearly everyone else who has been ordained in the Christian church." Sinton (1993:138)

However, as Küng (1968:357) argues, the true apostolic succession means 'following the faith and confession of the apostles'. Furthermore, it is baptism rather than ordination which can be traced back to Christ's institution and commission (Küng 1972:44). If ordination provides a tangible link with the community of saints past, present and future, as argued by Sinton, then this is even more certainly true of baptism.

1. Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23.

2. 1 Cor. 12:13.

The major obstacle to viewing baptism as the believer's 'ordination' lies in the devaluation of this sacrament which has been alluded to in the historical section of this chapter. Once baptism is offered on a fairly indiscriminate basis, especially in the case of infants, the value of this rite as an authorisation for ministry completely vanishes. This is a problem acknowledged in the Tiller Report which advocates baptism as a form of commissioning for ministry (Tiller (1983:63)). The effect of the 'open' baptism policy encountered amongst the majority of Methodist ministers, and described earlier in this thesis, is to cheapen the significance of baptism and render it insignificant from the viewpoint of 'ordination' to ministry. Thus, in seeking to serve the wider community, ministers are in fact undermining baptism as a significant rite for the members of the community of faith and depriving them of a meaningful commissioning for service. It would seem perhaps preferable to make use of a service of dedication or thanksgiving for infants and to reserve baptism to a later time when individuals could understand the full implications of becoming part of the priesthood of all believers. This would, of course, mean that baptism preparation classes would need to focus more effectively on Christian service, on exploring gifts and talents and on the responsibilities conjoined with the membership of the body of Christ.

The Varied Ministry of the Community of Faith

The clear conclusion to be drawn from the description of the community of faith as 'the priesthood of all believers', as well as the other New Testament metaphors cited earlier in this chapter, is that ministry belongs to the whole community and is not the prerogative of a distinct professional clergy. This is an understanding shared by numerous authors and is perhaps best summarised in the phrase 'every-member ministry'. It is stated forcefully by Brunner, who writes:

"One thing is supremely important: that *all* minister and that nowhere is to be perceived a separation or even merely a distinction made between those who do and those who do not minister, between the active and passive members of the body, between those who gave and those who received." (1952:50).

Similar sentiments are expressed by Tiller and Birchall (1987:45) in describing the true nature of the gospel community realised at Pentecost:

"It is one in which all shared in the ministry of the Spirit, all participate in the priesthood of Christ as ministers of the sanctuary, all have access to the Most Holy Place ... This is fundamental to the nature of the Christian Church."

This is such a foundational issue for Snyder (1983) that, in his book entitled *Liberating the Church*, two of his central theses are:

1. "Every believer is a minister, servant and priest of God. Every believer is called to ministry, and all God's people must be equipped to minister."

2. "Every believer receives grace for ministry. Therefore spiritual gifts must be identified and employed to God's glory." (1983:17)

These he believes are vital for a renewed understanding of the church and its ministry.

A central tenet of these views is that no single person is omniscient and that the whole ministry of the community of faith is only complete when each member plays his or her part. An important part of community life, therefore, revolves around the discovery, encouragement, recognition and utilisation of the God-given gifts and skills of individual members. Whereas this principle is probably widely recognised, in practice it is undermined in most churches by the presence of a distinctive ordained ministry¹. This is disruptive because, whatever the intent, the minister is usually regarded as the professional God-authenticated expert; after all, he has been called, selected, trained, ordained and is paid to do the job. Thus, on the one hand lay, people are intimidated into feeling deskilled and thinking that their contribution is insignificant and, on the other, the professional is wary of being shown up by the untrained amateur or made to feel less essential than he thinks he is. This, of course, raises the not insignificant question, as to how far one can legitimately be a professional (paid) carer² or an expert³ in spiritual things?

Although this is basically a single problem, it presents itself in two ways. Firstly, the presence of the ordained ministry leads, as pointed out above, to a failure to recognise and utilise the skills of the laity. The corollary of this, which is equally important, is that ordained ministers are treated stereotypically as if they had the whole church's gifts combined in one person. In Methodism, and one suspects in other churches too, the underlying assumption is that the minister will, amongst other things⁴: preach, teach and lead worship; visit, care and counsel; chair meetings, administer, do secretarial work; supervise building work, raise funds, oversee accounts; take funerals, comfort the bereaved, provide practical help for the

1. This view is supported by Tiller and Birchall (1987:21) who contend: "Expectations of ministry from a representative figure in clerical dress have also limited what can be done to develop an 'every member' ministry in some local churches."

2. This question is considered in detail by Alistair Campbell in his book entitled *Paid to Care?*, in the preface of which he poses the question: "Do we really dare claim a competence to Christian love?" It is also brought into sharp relief in contemporary British society where caring for individuals often seems at odds with the principles of the market place. For example, the privatisation of home care workers is arguably leading to lower standards of personal care since minimising contact time and hence costs has become the chief criterion.

3. This is perhaps a criticism hinted at in Jesus' story of the religious expert (pharisee) and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14).

4. Tiller and Birchall (1987:129) make a similar point by summarising the typical job description given to a solo minister which they perceive to include the following: Worship leader/ Intercessor/ Encourager and enabler/ Planner/ Thinker/ Communicator of vision/ Pastor/ Spiritual director/ Prophet/ Evangelist/ Teacher/ Administrator/ Co-ordinator/ Manager of resources. They conclude: "But few clergy have the gifts, and none have the time, to fulfil every section of that job-description except in a very small scale and static operation... One man on his own cannot enable, equip, pastor and teach the whole local church..."

widow(er); caretake the church, operate the PA system and the central heating ... the list is endless. The minister is expected to be theologian, administrator, musician, writer, teacher, visitor, counsellor, accountant, electrician, architect, youth worker ... to say nothing of pastor and visionary leader. Where is the man or woman adequate for the task?

The answer, of course, is the ordained minister. The perception is that he has been selected because he is already multi-gifted and any shortcomings are then supplied by his training and, if anything is still missing, by ordination. The problem is, in practice, things do not work like that. Firstly, not many brilliant all-rounders are called to the ministry. Secondly, residential college training, the usual norm for ordained ministers, does not address many of the practical skills required in ministry and, in any case, many aspects can only really be learnt 'on the job'¹. Lastly, it is debatable whether the prayers and expectations accompanying the service of ordination reflect a clear theological understanding. The idea that is implicit is that through prayer and the laying-on of hands the Holy Spirit will come upon the candidate and equip him for his ministry², and, as it were, supply any deficiencies. This view is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the New Testament teaches that: '... he (the Spirit) gives them (gifts) to each one, just *as he determines*' (1 Cor. 12:11), and the majority of examples in the book of Acts pictures the Spirit coming upon the church or individuals in an unexpected manner³; consequently, there is no sense in which the Spirit or his gifts can be subpoenaed. Furthermore, in the New Testament, the principal criteria for choosing leaders are that they *already* have the gifts of leadership⁴ and are *already* 'full of the Spirit'⁵ rather than any other criteria. This part of the liturgy of the ordination service could thus be interpreted as trying to dictate the Spirit's actions rather than acknowledging what he has already prepared and

1. Thus ten times as many Methodist ministers believe that practical pastoral experience is more valuable than theological training as a preparation for their pastoral care ministry (Appendix I,Q.45).

2. Thus in the Methodist service for ordination of ministers the President prays first: "... we pray that they may receive the gifts which they need for their calling." and then subsequently, "... send the Holy Spirit upon N., for the office and work of a Minister in the Church of Christ." (Methodist Church 1975:241)

3. See for example: Acts 2:4; 4:31; 10:44-6. Admittedly in another passage (Acts 8:15) Peter and John pray for the Samaritan believers with laying-on of hands that: "... they *might* receive the Holy Spirit." But there is no sense here that the Spirit can be commanded and indeed Simon the sorcerer was taken to task for implying that the Spirit was a commodity to be used. In Acts 19:5,6 the Holy Spirit is given in association with baptism and the laying-on of hands, prayer is not specifically mentioned, but again Luke seems to imply that the initiative lies with the Spirit.

4. Romans 12:8

5. Acts 6:3

directed. This criticism is noted by Brunner (1952:81-2), who contrasts subsequent practice with that of the early church:

"... (in the early church) a special type of ministry is assigned to any one who has received a gift of grace, a *charisma* of the Holy Ghost ... Now, the theory is that the gift of the Holy Spirit which qualifies for a specific office is dependent upon the laying-on of hands ... and is assured by the performance of this rite... At least in practice, if not in theory, one now exercises a control over the Holy Spirit: by the rite of ordination the person appointed to the office is equipped with spiritual grace."

In a similar vein Harper (1988:113) observes:

"... the Church can only authorise those whom God has authorised, and can only recognise those whom God has gifted and empowered. No amount of theological training or human pressure can bestow *charisma* on a person."

Thus it is apparent that the significance of the laying-on of hands is an important and controversial issue which will be returned to shortly under a more detailed consideration of ordination.

Quite apart from the failure to develop lay ministry, and hence the full body life of the community, there are two major shortcomings with the one-man-band approach. Firstly, there is insufficient time to accomplish all that needs to be done, and, as we have already seen, this leads to frustration, stress and the possibility of breakdown¹. Equally however, it means that ministers are treated stereotypically and are quite unable to develop their own particular ministry gifts or interests. In this connection, Campbell notes:

"There is no compelling reason why an individual who is gifted in public speaking and teaching will be equally gifted in communicating privately with individuals, in sustaining them patiently through their unhappiness, in mediating a healing power or in enabling others to exercise this ministry of care." (1985:33)

Nevertheless, despite the pragmatic sense of Campbell's observation, in practice each minister *will* be expected to exercise both a public and personal ministry irrespective of his or her own gifts or personal inclinations. This is true even within Methodism, where ministers are appointed to a circuit rather than individual churches, and where there is potential for developing some kind of creative team ministry where each minister majors on his or her gifts. Possibly the one saving grace of the revived Methodist Diaconate is that it does allow the mould to be broken and to acknowledge the competence of pastoral workers whose forte is not necessarily public speaking. However, the problem that besets the diaconate is that deacons and deaconesses, who are paid on the same stipend with the same housing benefits as ministers, are difficult to station since churches prefer to have the services of an

1. In an unpublished report entitled *Towards an Understanding of Stress in Ministry* the Rev. Stephen J. Clark, a Methodist minister, found from a survey of 237 circuit ministers that the most frequent general cause of stress was time pressure.

omniscient minister who is perceived to be able to do the pastoral work of the diaconate and more besides. In these circumstances there is no real room for a specialised diaconate without a specialised presbyteral ministry too.

Leadership of the Community of Faith

The preceding discussion argues that the present pattern of ordained ministry has an unintended yet significant inhibitory effect on the development of the ministry of the *whole* community of faith, allowing neither the minister, nor the members of the community, to use their gifts and talents to their full potential. If this is true, what solution can be found? In the author's view the nub of the problem lies in the unhelpful pattern of leadership which the ordained ministry today exemplifies. This model is understood to follow the model of early church leadership, but in reality the mould has been corrupted by nearly two millennia of church tradition, the effects of which were only partly stripped away by the Reformation. It is helpful, therefore, at this point, to make a brief exploration of the New Testament documents to glean insights as to principles of leadership embraced by the early church.

Whereas the actual structures of leadership in the early church are not at all clear, the New Testament leaves little doubt as to several of the important principles of leadership and these will be briefly considered. Arguably the most important is that leadership means servanthood, since throughout the New Testament, and starting with the ministry of Jesus himself, the emphasis is on a servant leadership rather than on office and hierarchy. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in Jesus' rebuke of the sons of Zebedee when they sought positions of authority in the Kingdom. Thus Jesus taught the disciples:

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:25-28).

In these few verses, Jesus lays down the underlying principle on which New Testament leadership was to be based, and from which even he himself was not exempt. The principle of servanthood is seen to embrace the willingness to give one's life to and for others, in a way which is characterised by humility, as illustrated by Jesus' actions at the Last Supper (John 13:1-17) and by Paul's commentary on Jesus' ministry in Philippians 2:5-8.

It is significant that in the brief passage above Matthew introduces the two Greek words *διάκονος* (servant) and *δούλος* (slave), which are key words used in the New Testament to refer to Christian leadership and ministry in general. Thus Paul frequently refers to his work amongst the Gentiles and within the churches as

διακονία¹ (service) and to himself as δούλος². Similarly, Luke uses the same Greek word διακονία to describe both the role of the Seven to 'wait on tables' (Acts 6:2) and the Twelve's 'ministry of the word' (Acts 6:4). Furthermore, Peter, although not using these actual terms, emphasises the servant nature of leadership by urging the church elders to:

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." (1 Peter 2:2-3)

using words which are reminiscent of Jesus' instructions to his disciples.

It is ironic that now, in British Methodism, the terms for the two distinct ordained orders are the presbyteral ministry and the diaconate, and that attempts have been made to justify the latter by pointing to it as a unique 'focus for the servant ministry of Christ and the Church'³. Whereas the term 'diaconate' is derived from the Greek διακονία, 'ministry' comes from the Latin *ministerium*. Both, of course, mean service and both are appropriate to describe a servant leadership. However, it is misleading to suggest that the diaconate, through its practical caring ministry, is more closely related to servanthood than the presbyteral ministry of word and sacrament. It is a mistake to identify servanthood solely with practical, and possibly menial, tasks, and fail to appreciate that the essence of the Christian's attitude to his whole life's work, whether member or leader, is service, serving first Christ as Lord⁴ and then one another⁵.

A second key characteristic is that leadership is seen to be God's gift to the church or 'charismatic' in the original sense⁶. Thus Beasley-Murray (1990:22-24) notes that the idea of leadership, if not the actual term, occurs in all three of the Pauline lists of spiritual gifts. For example, the term 'leadership' appears in most recent English translations of Romans 12:8; in 1 Cor. 12:28 there is reference to 'gifts of administration' (NIV) but the underlying Greek should apparently be literally translated 'helmsmanship', which provides the idea of steering a ship, which in turn parallels leadership within the church. Lastly, in Ephesians 4:7-13 the passage describes the gifts which the ascended Christ gives to his church and here 'apostles' and 'pastor-teachers' are understood in terms of leadership in the church.

Hanson (1979:16) holds a somewhat similar viewpoint of leadership within the

1. See for example: II Cor. 3:7-9, 4:1, 5:18 and 6:3.

2. Thus Paul speaks of himself as: 'slave (servant) of Christ' in Romans 1:1 and Philippians 1:1, as well as the servant of the believers at Corinth (I Cor. 4:5).

3. Report of the Faith and Order Committee on The Methodist Diaconal Order, from the 1993 Derby Conference Agenda, para 10.13.

4. See, for example, Colossians 3:24

5. See, for example, Galatians 5:13.

6. Since charismatic derives from the Greek χάρισματα, meaning 'gifts of grace'.

early church and thus he writes:

"Ministry in Paul's time is a matter of what we today call charisma. It is something given by the Holy Spirit to the individual for the benefit of the whole local Christian community. It is not an office to which the person endowed with the charisma succeeds. It does not confer permanent authority. Ministry of this sort is occasional and purely functional; it rests upon gifts either natural or supernatural; it is directed by the Spirit ..."

Thus, the distinctive feature of New Testament leadership was that its authority derived from the leaders' personal gifts for the task rather than from the office which they held. This conclusion is affirmed by Küng (1968:401), who writes thus:

"Authority in the community is derived not from holding a certain rank ... but from the performance of a ministry in the Spirit."

Thus early church leadership followed the pattern laid by Jesus himself whose authority lay in his personal gifts and not in any official recognition of his ministry¹. As pointed out by Bray (1990:195), charismatically-authenticated, non-ordained ministers such as Billy Graham are still accepted by sections of the church even today.

It is interesting to reflect that charismatic leadership was the initial model employed by Wesley in recruiting his army of helpers. Preachers, except for the handful of Anglican clergy who worked with him, were selected on the basis of their 'gifts and graces', in particular their effectiveness in the work. This led to a much wider base for recruitment with preachers not being especially drawn from educated middle classes. Wesley's preachers included the labourer and the artisan as well as the teacher and the squire, women as well as men. In principle, the system continues today with the ordained ministry being drawn from local preachers who, through an extensive period of both academic and practical training, are tested on their 'gifts and graces'. However, both the training and assessment tend to be weighted towards the academic and technical correctness of preaching and worship leading rather than being assessed in terms of converts and changed lives - the pragmatic standards employed by Wesley and more recently by the pentecostal churches of Chile studied by D'Epinay (1969).

One New Testament feature of leadership which stands in stark contrast to the practice of most contemporary churches is that the leadership of the church was *not* identified with the leadership of the cult. Thus there is no reference to presiding at the Lord's Supper as one of the responsibilities of leaders and frequently baptisms² were

1. Thus Mark records of Jesus: "...the people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law" (Mark 1:22) . Here the charismatic authority of Jesus is contrasted with those of the 'official' teachers.

2. For example, from Acts 10:48 it would appear that Peter instructed others to baptise the converts and elsewhere. Paul seems to have had remarkably little involvement in baptisms at Corinth even though he clearly exercises some kind of spiritual oversight. Furthermore, in the Johannine tradition, there is the emphasis that it was the disciples and not Jesus who undertook baptisms (John 4:2).

carried out by those who would not appear to be the principal leaders. This view is summarised by Colin Buchanan (1993:22) in his proposition:

"... there is in the New Testament no discernible link between leadership of the flock in general, and what we would call liturgical leadership."

Furthermore, Schillebeeckx (1981:29-30) comes to a somewhat similar conclusion when he observes:

"Throughout the development of the ministry in the New Testament one striking fact is that the ministry did not develop from and around the eucharist or the liturgy, but from the apostolic building up of the community through preaching, admonition and leadership. No matter what different form it takes, ministry is concerned with the leadership of the community ... "

The perspective of the early church is thus seen to be quite distinct from the contemporary situation where the unique or identifying feature of the ordained minister is seen to lie in his ability to preside at the sacraments, and non-stipendiary ministers are appointed predominantly to meet the sacerdotal rather than leadership requirements of the local church.

In this connection, Terence Card (1988) raises an important question concerning the priest's role: is he primarily celebrant or community leader? Thus Card writes:

"Is a person leader because ordained as a celebrant of the eucharist and minister of the word, or a celebrant and minister because the appointed leader? (1988:121)

This is a vital question since it addresses the issue as to whether the sacerdotal role or the leadership function is considered paramount. For the early church there can be no question but that leadership of the community has primacy; for today's church it would seem that often it is the priestly rather than leadership role which comes first and must be sustained at all costs. This is perhaps one of the reasons why leadership skills come near the bottom of the local preachers' assessment of the abilities of Methodist ministers (Appendix II, Q.48). The stand-point that is taken will clearly influence the selection of persons for ministry since the requirements for a priestly role will not be identical to one who is chosen primarily as a leader. Whereas it is appropriate that the leader(s) of the community should preside at the sacraments, it does not necessarily follow that this will be an ordained minister who may well have no other relationship with the community aside from a priestly one, and indeed, on occasions, may come to the eucharistic celebration as an essential stranger.

As already discussed in this chapter, by the second century the hierarchical threefold order of ministry encompassing: bishops, presbyters and deacons, was already recognised, but it is helpful to consider how this structure relates to the church leadership described in the New Testament documents. It needs to be reiterated that the New Testament does not outline a rigid and consistent pattern of

church leadership; different terms and titles appear to have been used by different writers and perhaps in different geographical locations. The three Greek terms ἐπίσκοπος (overseer or bishop), πρεσβύτερος (elder or presbyter) and διάκονος (deacon or minister) are to be found in the New Testament but do not appear to be used in the way favoured by later traditions, which are characterised by hierarchical and clearly differentiated offices.

It seems likely that ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος are in fact equivalent terms used in the Gentile and Jewish churches respectively¹. The use of 'elder' in the Judaeo-Christian communities would be consistent with terms used for leadership in the Jewish synagogue and imply, though not exclusively², that 'elders' were generally chosen from older men. 'Overseer' is a word derived from secular Greek use and appears to be a more functionally descriptive term which sees the leader as someone who takes care of or oversees the community, and this is perhaps close to the idea of shepherding described in 1 Peter 5:2, which interestingly is also seen as a function of the elders addressed in verse one of the chapter. It is quite clear that at the time of writing of the New Testament documents there was no agreed terminology with regard to leadership positions and so Luke writes of Paul appointing elders in each church³, even though this term is not used in the generally recognised Pauline epistles where bishop is the preferred description⁴. Küng (1968:408) notes that Luke uses both designations in Acts and speculates that perhaps he was attempting to unite the two traditions.

The situation is further complicated since, as detailed in Acts, the leadership of the Jerusalem church included apostles as well as elders and in other churches none of the above terms are used⁵. Thus, at Antioch, the leadership appeared to consist of men described as prophets and teachers (Acts 13:1), whereas, at Corinth, the Pauline letters are simply addressed to the church without any explicit mention of leaders, although, as at Antioch, the content of the letter seems to imply the presence of prophets and teachers. Even so, at Corinth, it is the *whole* community that is challenged to overcome divisions in the midst (1 Cor. 1:10), to discipline the immoral (1 Cor. 5:4), and to reform their disorderly worship (1 Cor. 11:33; 14:26), indicating a form of corporate decision-taking hinted at in Acts 6:3 when 'The Seven' are

1. This is suggested by a number of scholars including Knight (1992:175) who observes that in the following pairs of verses: Titus 1:5,7 and Acts 20:17,28, both terms are used to apparently refer to the same group of men. Similar conclusions are drawn by Küng (1968:408), Yoder (1969:39) and Barrett (1985:52).

2. For example, Timothy was clearly in a position of leadership as a younger person (1 Timothy 4:12).

3. See, for example, Acts 14:23, 20:17.

4. See, for example, Phil. 1:1

5. See Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, and 23 where elders and apostles are described as part of the decision making Council of Jerusalem.

appointed. Again, in writing to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul does not address those in positions of leadership but in his letter cites Christ's gifts to the church as including: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Some argue that the last two categories refer to one person, e.g., a 'pastor-teacher' and that this function is essentially equivalent to a teaching elder¹. The term 'apostle' (Greek ἀπόστολος) appears to be used to refer to others apart from the original Twelve and probably refers to a group of leaders who had a church-planting or pioneering role coupled with a responsibility for oversight of the wider church². These apostles would thus appear to have been the equivalent of a cross between a modern-day missionary and bishop.

Whereas it seems that most established congregations had a leadership consisting of overseers or elders who functioned as pastor-teachers, much greater uncertainty surrounds the office of deacon. Knight (1992:175) points out that, whereas a two-fold order of overseers and deacons is detailed in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and acknowledged in Philippians 1:1, it is strangely absent from the remainder of the New Testament. He argues that this pattern reflects a division of duties into oversight and service ministries. He supposes that in newly established churches the elders or overseers themselves supervise the welfare aspects of the church's pastoral care. Subsequently, as the work grows, there is a sub-division of labour as in Acts 6:1-6 which describes the appointment of 'The Seven'. Knight suggests that deacons are rarely mentioned in the New Testament letters since these are addressed either to the whole congregation or to the main leadership with responsibility for oversight of the congregation.

Others, such as Yoder (1969:42), are sceptical as to whether the so-called office of deacon was a fixed leadership role in the New Testament. He points out that the Greek term *διάκονος* simply means 'one who serves' and carries no implication of office. Elsewhere, Barrett (1985:85), although recognising that in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 deacons are represented as a special class of minister, goes on to point out that a few verses later the writer states that if Timothy behaves well he will be a good *διάκονος*³ and that both he and Paul have a *διακονία*⁴. Barrett concludes that the term used to refer to deacons has yet to be used fully in a technical sense.

The appointment of 'The Seven' described in Acts 6:1-6 is the usual passage cited as pointing to the origin of the order of deacons as an administrative or servant arm of the church, but, as has been pointed out earlier, the same Greek word *διακονία* is

1. Thus in 1 Timothy 3:2 one of the qualities of the overseer is that he must be 'able to teach'.

2. For example, Paul frequently refers to himself as the 'apostle of Christ' or the 'apostle to the Gentiles' and Barnabas is styled as an apostle in Acts 14:4,14 as are Andronicus and Junias in Romans 16:7.

3. 1 Timothy 4:12.

4. 1 Timothy 1:12 . 2 Timothy 4:5.

used to describe both the ministry of the apostles and the service of 'The Seven'. Furthermore, it is quite apparent that this group of men included those whose gifts were far more than administrative skills; for example, Stephen had gifts of miracle-working¹ and public speaking², whereas Philip was renowned as an evangelist³. Notwithstanding this critique, it seems likely that towards the end of the New Testament period larger churches included officers with special responsibilities, possibly in the area of financial oversight and administration of welfare needs. The precedent for this could probably be seen in the responsibility held by Judas who acted as treasurer for Jesus and the disciples⁴, although, for obvious reasons, he is hardly likely to be cited as a paradigm for this office.

That financial oversight was increasingly necessary followed from the early church practice of sharing their goods and having a common purse⁵. It was the apostles who were originally burdened with this concern since, bereft of Judas, the financial contributions were laid at their feet⁶. It is perhaps this supervision of the finances and the welfare distribution to the poor which was at the heart of the apostles' decision to appoint 'The Seven' and which Luke describes as *'διακονεῖν τραπέζαις'* (Acts 6:2) and is variously translated as 'to wait on tables' (NIV) or 'to look after the accounts' (Phillips)⁷. The problem of financial control was, of course, not confined to the Jerusalem church since, as noted in the letter to the Corinthians, there was also the developing system of inter-church financial aid with the need to arrange a collection and supervise its despatch⁸. Furthermore, the mature church described in 1 Timothy has provision for the welfare of widows and presumably this also involved some financial oversight.

Additional hints that the role of the deacon came to have financial overtones are provided by the character requirements of a deacon which principally specify that he should be: 'worthy of respect', 'not indulging much wine', 'not pursuing dishonest

1. Acts 6:8.

2. Acts 6:10

3. Acts 21:8.

4. See for example John 13:29 where Judas is described as being 'in charge of the money' and acted both as purchasing and welfare officer.

5. See for example Acts 2:45; 4:32

6. Acts 4:35

7. Barrett (1994:311) notes that whereas the primary meaning of *τράπεζα* is table, and that the probable meaning in this passage is to supply food to the widows, the same word is also used to refer to a banker's counter, see for example Luke 19:23, and it is possible that the Twelve have in mind the supervision of financial arrangements.

8. In 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15 Paul appeals to the church to give generously in support of the saints and cites the example of other churches who had already done so. Interestingly this act of giving is described as *διακονία* (2 Cor. 9:12,13.), a term that is also used to describe financial relief in Acts 11:29 and 2 Cor. 8:4.

gain', and 'manage his children and household well'¹. All these it could be argued are the basic criteria for an honest treasurer. It may also be significant that Philippians is the only letter in which deacons are included in the address, albeit together with the overseers and congregation since it also happens to be the one letter where Paul is talking about gifts and financial contributions and personally acknowledging that their gift sent with Epaphroditus had been safely received; a matter surely of some interest to the church financial officers². The later developments in the second and third centuries, when, according to the Hansons (1987:157), deacons had distinctive functions as assistants to the bishops with particular responsibility for financial and administrative duties in connection with welfare, would seem a logical outcome of the above role. As the bishop becomes a monarchical position, subsuming the powers of the whole congregation, the deacon who had originally served the church as a kind of welfare and finance officer now becomes assistant to the bishop. Eventually, as the bishop assumes an increasingly sacerdotal role, the deacon is more and more involved in official cultic activities as assistant to the bishop and ultimately loses his original role³.

Two important characteristics of local church leadership not hitherto detailed are that such leadership was both indigenous and plural. Thus Luke records that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each church (Acts 14:23) and this parallels the instruction given to Titus to ordain elders in each town in Crete (Titus 1:5). Thus it is clear that in addition to any itinerant ministry conducted by Paul, the apostles and their cohorts, each congregation had their own local leadership. Most importantly, the local church never had a *single* leader but a team of leaders. Thus whenever overseers or elders are referred to in the New Testament it is *always* in the plural⁴. Leadership is seen to be local and corporate, thus making full use of the diversity of gifts available to the church through its members. The idea of plural leadership in the New Testament church is generally accepted and Snyder (1983:247) provides a typical endorsement when he writes:

1. 1 Timothy 3:8,12.

2. Paul also writes about giving in his second letter to Corinth but in that case no leaders are mentioned at all, and in any case he was not actually acknowledging any gift unlike the case at Philippi.

3. Thus in the Anglican church today a deacon is essentially a probationary priest, whereas in Methodism the diaconate is focussed mainly on pastoral care. Only in the Baptist church is the office of deacon closely related to what was apparently the early church model. In Methodism the closest parallel is probably the role of steward.

4. See the many examples in the following citations: Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4; 20:17,28; 21:18; Phil. 1:1; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1.

"In the understanding of New Testament writers, a *pastor* (that is, *shepherd*) was not the sole leader of the congregation. The 'one church, one pastor' idea is simply not found in the New Testament. The New Testament concept is plural leadership based on the recognition of leadership gifts and the appointing to leadership of those who demonstrate maturity."

This concept of corporate leadership is of vital importance and its practical relevance will be developed in the final chapter.

In addition to the characteristics of New Testament leadership detailed above, it is probably worth mentioning that there is no indication that such leaders were *necessarily* full-time or paid¹. Furthermore, the leaders were not separated by status from the fellow members of the congregation but only by function. Thus letters written by church leaders frequently address the believers as brothers or emphasise a servant relationship². All members are perceived to have a role; the elders are simply members gifted with a leadership function to be exercised for the good of the whole community and not for personal advantage.

In conclusion, although it is difficult exactly to describe and pin-point the precise nature of the leadership in the New Testament church, the following characteristics of that leadership are fairly clear: i) the ethos of leadership was servanthood not power and control; ii) leadership was concerned with function not office and status; iii) leadership was charismatic with leaders being acknowledged because of their gifts rather than their position; iv) leaders were *not* defined in relation to the sacraments or cultic activity; v) there are a variety of kinds of leadership which include the missionary-apostle with inter-church concerns, elders/ overseers responsible for the local congregations as pastor-teachers, and deacons who probably had oversight of finance and welfare concerns in larger churches; vi) local leadership was corporate and collegial.

1. Clearly there is reference in the pastoral epistles to financial provision for elders (1 Timothy 5:17,18) and Paul certainly received gifts from the Philippians whilst in prison as well as support from the Macedonian brothers (1 Cor. 11:8,9). However, at other times, Paul makes a point of the fact that he is self-supporting and hence cannot be accused of ministering for gain. Thus Luke records that Paul worked as a tent-maker (Acts 18:3) and in writing to the church at Corinth Paul pointedly argues that he did not burden them with his support whilst ministering there (1 Cor. 11:9; 12:13-16).

2. See for example the letter from the Jerusalem church leaders in which they designated themselves as 'your brothers' (Acts 15:23).

The Ordained Ministry

Ordination - The Seal of Separation

There are probably several factors in people's minds which serve to distinguish 'the minister' from others in the community of faith and these include aspects such as: training and education, being a full-time salaried professional from outside the community, and being ordained. Of these it is probably ordination which most sets apart the clergy since increasingly lay people may be equally theologically qualified or experienced in people-care, and may even work in a full-time professional way in the church doing many things that the clergy do. Ordination sets apart in a number of ways: there is the sense in which it represents the special call and seal of God on a person's vocation; it speaks of empowerment to conduct the sacraments and by implication the 'ability' to lead worship and preach in a way beyond an ordinary person; it points to a special 'holy' status which is emphasised by title and distinctive dress and requires an exemplary lifestyle; it marks out as God's (the church's) local authority and representative.

The overall effect of ordination is to create and maintain a distinct boundary between the clergy and laity which is as pronounced as that between the community of faith and the world. The argument of this thesis is that such a divide and such a distinction is damaging to the community of faith and its work of pastoral care, since it downgrades the role and status of the whole people of God. Thus believers too are called¹ and have a vocation within the community of faith; they too are 'set apart' to be a holy people, God's saints²; they too are empowered by the Holy Spirit for works of service³; they too are called to be God's (the church's) representatives⁴; they too are full-time life-long servants⁵. Much contemporary discussion on the relationship between laity and clergy recognises the fact that *all* belong to the *laos*, the people of God, but nevertheless goes on to affirm that the clergy are distinguishable because they have a special and representative role among God's people. It is usually argued that lay people are needed to assist in the church and support the clergy or to serve in the world. What is lost sight of is that the whole community is part of *one* body, each has his or her own *special* task to do, and each is of *equal* status, each is empowered by one and the *same* Spirit. All are called to serve one another, to work together in partnership, to play together as members of one team. It is this wholeness that ordination, as practised today, threatens to undermine within the community of faith.

1. For example of the believers calling see: Rom. 1:6,7; 1 Cor. 1:9; Gal. 5:13; Ephes. 4:1.

2. 'Saints' is one of the most common New Testament titles for believers.

3. The promise of power is for all (Acts 1:8).

4. Christians are Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20).

5. Jesus' radical call was to full-time whole life discipleship.

'Ordination' in the New Testament

It has been suggested that ordination is potentially disruptive to the concept of the unified community of faith since it both creates and symbolises two distinct classes of Christians. But why should this be so? Is it because ordination is necessarily a divisive tool or is it perhaps that the meaning of ordination has been misunderstood? In order to respond to this question, and because the practice of ordination is of vital significance to the life of the community of faith, it is helpful to try and trace ordination back to the New Testament documents in an attempt to understand its significance. However, is it possible to recognise ordination in the New Testament since it has been argued already that these writings provide no hint of a separated priesthood distinct from the priesthood of the whole people of God? The usual approach is guided by church tradition which recognises 'laying-on of hands' as the unique symbol of the ritual of ordination and so it is this 'ritual' which is looked for in the New Testament documents.

On the above criterion there are five key passages which refer to ordination. The first is Acts 6:1-6 where the Seven are appointed to the task of overseeing the financial or welfare needs of the widows in the church at Jerusalem. Here we find that the whole community is involved in the selection of the men for the task (v.3). It is significant that filling the posts does not appear to be a question of volunteering, or a sense of *personal* calling, but rather a recognition by the community of those who had the appropriate gifts for the work. After the choice was made the seven men were presented to the apostles and were subsequently recognised and consecrated to the appointment through prayer and laying-on of hands (v.6)¹. According to Beasley-Murray (1993:3), it is not clear whether it was the apostles or the church who actually did the commissioning, but the apostles were certainly on hand to ensure a proper authorisation and through this procedure the Seven were given a specific mandate to handle the financial concerns of the church. There is no suggestion that this was a life-long commitment and, indeed, at least Philip and Stephen were later, or maybe at the same time, involved in other ministries.

The second passage is Acts 13:1-3 which describes the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas by the church at Antioch for their missionary and church-planting role. Here again, it is not a volunteer system but it is the Holy Spirit, possibly through a prophetic word, who directs the church to send out two of their key leaders for a new work. The call is heard and recognised by the church and, after fasting and prayer, hands are laid on the two and they are sent off. It seems likely that the whole church was involved in recognising the call and may have been involved in the laying-on of hands. Quite clearly, the 'ordination' is not about a new status since Paul and Barnabas

1. The Greek phrase used is ἐπέθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας and is translated 'laid their hands on them' (NIV).

were already recognised leaders in the church; rather, they were commissioned to a new task¹. This suggests that 'ordination' is related to function rather than status and provides no hint that ordination is for life.

The third reference is in Acts 14:23 where Luke records that Paul and Barnabas 'appointed elders ...with prayer and fasting' in each congregation that they visited on their journey. In this case the underlying Greek verb used is *χειροτονέω* which in secular usage of the day meant to 'appoint' or 'choose' but subsequently in ecclesiastical usage came to mean 'to impose hands in ordination' (Beasley-Murray 1993:7). The origin of this verb apparently lies in raising the hand to express agreement in a vote. As such there is no specific indication of the laying-on of hands in these appointments, although the same intention seems to be there since both the ideas of recognition and of committing or consecrating the persons to God for their ministry (v.23) are present.

The remaining two references come in the pastoral epistles the authorship of which is disputed². In I Timothy 4:14, Paul³, in writing to Timothy, reminds him not to neglect his gift (*χαρίσματος*) which was given him in response to a prophetic message accompanied by the laying-on of hands (*ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν*) by the elders. This is generally interpreted as 'ordination' by a body of elders and Knight (1992:208) understands Paul to be referring to an act of public recognition of Timothy in which he receives the gift equipping him for his ministry. In this case, as in Acts 13:1-3, a word of prophecy precedes the 'ordination', thus indicating God's choice of Timothy for particular service. The gift may be seen to be given as the fulfilment of the prophecy rather than necessarily the laying-on of hands, which could be understood as the church's means of formally recognising Timothy's ministry.

The final text which is usually quoted as an example of ordination is found in II Timothy 1:6. Here again Paul is reminding Timothy of God's gift within him, but this time recalling an occasion when this resulted from the laying-on of Paul's hands. The key question here is whether this refers to the same incident related in the first

1. Thus Barrett (1985:51) observes: "This act can hardly be thought of as ordination; the two men were in the group of prophets and teachers and, according to the narrative in Acts, had already for a long time been engaged in Christian work. The imposition of hands, like the prayer by which it was accompanied, sought God's blessing upon them in the new venture to which they were being commissioned."

2. The self-testimony of the letters points to a Pauline authorship, but since the nineteenth century this has been disputed on a number of grounds including: inconsistencies with Paul's biographical details in the Acts account, distinctive non-Pauline vocabulary and style, and the apparent developed nature of ecclesiastical organisation. Knight (1992) has recently reviewed the arguments and believes that Pauline authorship provides the most satisfactory solution to the question. If this is correct the epistles must then be dated to the early sixties or mid-sixties rather than early second century as others have supposed, Knight (1992:54).

3. In this section we shall accept Knight's argument on authorship and refer to the writer of the pastoral epistles as Paul.

letter or whether Paul is mindful of another situation. The *prima facie* case would seem to point to two separate occasions since in I Timothy, Paul refers to a context of prophecy and identifies 'the elders' as those who were involved in laying-on of hands, whereas, in this passage, Paul specifically refers to 'my hands' and seems to imply a personal time of prayer for Timothy. However, the conclusion that one reaches is likely to be strongly informed by one's presuppositions. If it is assumed that these incidents refer to ordination as traditionally understood, which can no more be repeated than baptism, it immediately follows that Paul must be referring to the same incident but describing it from two standpoints: on one occasion from a congregational perspective and on the other from a personal perspective. Similar logic forces Knight (1992:209) to conclude that the apparent 'ordination' of Saul and Barnabas described in Acts 13:3 must actually be 'a commissioning of those already ordained'. This arises since these two workers were already leaders within the church in Antioch and hence must already have been ordained.

The above dilemma raises an even more fundamental question: must the laying-on of hands necessarily be identified as 'ordination' or is this simply a back-projection of a much later ecclesiastical understanding? In the Old Testament, the imposition of hands seems to have been used in a number of ways: in bestowal of a blessing (Gen. 48:13-20); in identification with sacrificial victims (Lev. 1:4; 3:2; 4:4); and in public acts of commissioning (Num. 27:23). In the New Testament there are several references to laying-on of hands which cannot be associated with ordination. For example, this act is used by Jesus to bless children as recorded by Matthew: "Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them (τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιθῆναι αὐτοῖς) and pray for them"¹. Elsewhere, in obedience to a vision, Ananias places his hands (ἐπιθεῖς ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας) on Saul the recent convert so that he may receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). In this case Luke records only that the ritual is accompanied by the prophetic words given to Ananias rather than prayer for healing. In Malta, Paul, after prayer, 'placed his hands' (ἐπιθεῖς τὰς χεῖρας) on Publius' father as part of an act of healing (Acts 28:8). On other occasions², the laying-on of hands is associated with the receipt of the Holy Spirit, so much so that Simon the magician attempted to purchase this perceived ability from the apostles (Acts 8:18,19).

What conclusions may be drawn safely from this? Firstly, the New Testament church practised the ritual of laying-on of hands in a variety of manners: sometimes, it is in response to prophecy, on other occasions, a follow-up from a preaching ministry; sometimes, it is accompanied by or preceded by prayer; sometimes, it involves one

1. Matt. 19:13 and a parallel passage in Mark 10:16.

2. Acts 8:17 ; 19:6.

person, on other occasions, a group of people; sometimes, it occurs in the midst of congregational worship, at other times, in a private home. The ritual is also used for a variety of purposes which include: blessing, healing, seeking the empowering of the Holy Spirit, and for commissioning or authorising for particular service. The performance of the ritual is not restricted to recognised leaders, although that may be the case for acts of commissioning where public recognition is paramount¹. It is tempting to suggest that the distinguishing mark of 'ordination' is performance of the ritual by the body of elders or the apostles, that is the recognised leadership. However, the body of elders also appears to be involved corporately in other events such as prayer for healing (James 5:14) which is likely to include laying-on of hands.

Consequently, the only certain means of distinguishing an act of 'ordination' would seem to be where the act of laying-on of hands is specifically linked to a commissioning to a particular task as in the case of: the Seven (Acts 6:1-6), and Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1-3).² It is noteworthy that in these cases the 'ordination' was not to a permanent commission and did not involve the receipt of particular empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The references in the pastoral epistles to Timothy's 'ordination' must be treated with some reserve. In both cases there is no specific reference to a commissioning; rather the laying-on of hands is accompanied by the receipt of a gift from God. In the context of 1 Timothy 4:13 the gift might well be identified as skills in preaching and teaching, but it is going a step too far to say that this is a gift of 'ministry', in the sense of being ordained to a distinct leadership position. If, as briefly discussed earlier, the early date for the pastoral epistles is correct, this makes it even less likely that the references in 1 and 2 Timothy refer to ordination as later practised in the second century church.

The above brief survey of the New Testament evidence shows that laying-on of hands was used in a variety of ways and is not restricted to a ritual of 'ordination'. The picture of appointment to leadership positions, that is evident from these writings, is of the ritual being used to acknowledge and recognise individuals *already* gifted by the Holy Spirit and now set apart for a specific task. There is no evidence that this 'ordination' was needed to equip the person for his ministry or was accompanied by any ontological change leading to a permanent and distinct status. Thus there are few

1. Thus Barrett (1994:315) argues that the clear grammatical reading of Luke's words in Acts 6:6 in the earliest texts implies that it is the whole company of believers, and not the apostles alone, who laid their hands on the Seven. Furthermore, Wright (1985:7) argues that the natural exegesis of this passage would assign the action to the community as a whole and for precedent cites the role of the Israelites in consecrating the Levites (Numbers 8:10).

2. The case of the appointment of the elders in missionary congregations (Acts 14:23) is somewhat anomalous since the ritual of 'laying-on of hands' is not explicitly stated and can only be assumed. Thus Brunner (1952:80) asserts that *cheirotonein* has nothing to do with the laying-on of hands but rather election to office.

points of congruence between the concept of appointment in the New Testament and later traditions of ordination which have been influenced by the developments discussed earlier in this chapter. It can be speculated that the apparent facile identification of ordination in the New Testament must be largely attributed to a reading back into the text much later ecclesiastical traditions in which the act of laying-on of hands had become synonymous with ordination, and was no longer in day-to-day use for the purpose of healing, blessing and the Spirit's empowerment.

Ordination in Methodism

The historical roots of Methodism, discussed in the second chapter, have tended to make a Methodist understanding of ordination less well defined. For most of Wesley's ministry, his full-time itinerant preachers were not formally ordained, but their ministry was recognised by being accepted into 'full connexion'. The only distinguishing mark from the handful of ordained Anglican priests who assisted Wesley was that the priests were authorised to preside at the Methodist sacraments. However, towards the end of his life, Wesley did formally ordain, with the imposition of hands, a small group of his itinerant preachers, although this was principally for service in territories not under the supervision of Anglican bishops¹. After Wesley's death, the ritual of laying-on of hands was discontinued and it was accepted that reception into full connexion as itinerant preachers was synonymous with ordination and consequently such preachers could legitimately preside at the sacraments. However, slowly but surely, the status of the Methodist full-time preachers was raised and ultimately the reintroduction of a formal ordination service in 1836 and recognition as ministers completed the separation from the laity, which includes, of course, local preachers.

Strictly, the historical Methodist position is that imposition of hands, whilst in keeping with the wider church tradition, is not essential to the setting apart of persons to the full-time ministry of word and sacrament. Hence ordination is not the *sine qua non* for presiding at the sacraments and, in principle, this is still the official Methodist position². Wesley accepted into full connexion those in whom he recognised the gifts and graces for the ministry that they were to undertake and this would appear to parallel the New Testament position where the laying-on of hands was used to recognise and authorise those who were *already* gifted for ministry. Wesley

1. Wesley had come to the same conclusion as reached in this chapter that in the New Testament bishops and presbyters referred to the same group of leadership and thus it was legitimate for him as an Anglican presbyter to ordain others.

2. Thus, for example, probationer ministers are frequently given permission to preside at the sacraments before ordination and in exceptional circumstances lay persons, such as local preachers, receive similar authorisation.

distinguished between the itinerant and local preachers only on the basis that the former were full-time and thus able to be stationed as directed. In the early days a preacher who ceased to be itinerant reverted to a local preacher status, again emphasising, in Wesley's mind, that the only distinction was functional and not ontological¹.

The uncertainty in Methodism with regard to ordination shows itself in the variety of church orders in world Methodism. Thus, British Methodism, following Wesley's stand on presbyteral ordination, has found no room for bishops, whereas American Methodism and other world Methodist Conferences related to it are based on an episcopal system of church government. Furthermore, in British Methodism, ordination is used to recognise several distinct groups of men and women which include: itinerant presbyteral ministers, presbyteral ministers in sector or local appointment and deacons and deaconesses. On the surface, British Methodism has apparently a two-fold order of ministry, presbyters and deacons, but these orders are not now comparable to other mainline churches, such as the Church of England, since the diaconate is a distinct and permanent order and not a prelude to presbyteral ministry. Thus, in Methodism, presbyters are ordained to 'word and sacrament', whereas deacons and deaconesses are ordained to 'focus the servant ministry of Christ'. The functional distinctiveness of the diaconate compared to other recognised groups in Methodism, such as lay-workers, is not immediately obvious and this has added to the confusion surrounding ordination in Methodism.

An understanding of ordination is hinted at in a variety of Methodist sources. The most general statement appears in the Deed of Union, a small section of which is reproduced below:

"Christ's Ministers in the Church are Stewards in the household of God and Shepherds of His flock. Some are called and ordained to this sole occupation and have a principal and directing part in these great duties but they hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to all the Lord's people and they have no exclusive title to the preaching of the gospel or the care of souls. These ministries are shared with them by others to whom the Spirit divides His gifts severally as He wills."

"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 order or class of men but in the exercise of its corporate life and worship special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required and thus the principle of representative selection is recognised."

Methodist Church (1989:229)

1. This viewpoint is enshrined in the section of the Deed of Union cited above in which the distinctive role of the ordained minister is argued for on the basis of church order and not a distinct priestly office.

The first paragraph of the statement appears to portray ordination as an appointment to a position of leadership ('a principal and directing part') within the church and in so doing uses the rich metaphors of shepherd and steward. However, this is tempered by the acknowledgement that others (lay people) also share in the Spirit's gifts and are in partnership ('These ministries ... are shared by others...') with the minister. Ordination is understood in functional terms, with ministers ordained to leadership, and the concept of a distinct priestly office is clearly proscribed.

The second paragraph, whilst affirming that there is no distinct priesthood, acknowledges that ministers are those with 'special qualifications' (gifts and graces?) and introduces the idea of 'representative selection'. This phrase is delightfully ambiguous, since it could equally refer to selection by God as his representative, and this would perhaps be in accord with the emphasis on 'personal call', or it could be understood as selection by the church as the church's representative. In more recent years, the idea of the minister as a 'representative person' has been more fully developed and thus the 1974 report on *Ordination* summed up the theology of ordination as follows:

"As a perpetual reminder of (the calling of the people of God) and as a means of being obedient to it, the Church sets apart men and women, specially called, in ordination. In their office the calling of the whole Church is focussed and represented, and it is their responsibility as representative persons to lead the people to share with them in that calling. In this sense they are the sign of the presence and ministry of Christ in the Church and through the Church to the world."¹

The initial sentence holds up ordination as being a 'reminder of (the calling of the people of God)'. The significance of this is obscure since ordination, by emphasising the distinctiveness of a specialised, professional and Spirit-called and equipped ministry, functions in precisely the reverse way by anaesthetising a sense of lay calling and ministry.

The second sentence acknowledges the leadership role of the ordained minister but goes on to suggest that 'the calling of the whole Church is focussed and represented' in his office. What is the calling of the whole church? It is the proclamation of the Kingdom through deed and word, embracing all aspects of the life of the community of faith in its service of God and the world. The idea of 'focus' carries perhaps two connotations: to bring into sharp definition, so that the matter can be clearly comprehended; and to serve as the centre of activity. Is it really possible that one person can bring the calling of the whole Church into focus, to exemplify it and be at the centre of all activity? Elsewhere the Methodist Church's answer appears

1. The 1974 Faith and Order report on *Ordination*, para. 14. quoted in Methodist Church (1986:067).

to be no, for the diaconal ministry has apparently been instituted to: 'call into focus the servant ministry of Christ'. Thus now, within Methodism there are two¹ distinct foci: the presbyteral ministry and the diaconate. Perhaps this process needs to be taken a step further in the acknowledgement that often it may not be the ordained minister who is the most appropriate focus of the church's calling in: evangelism, or pastoral visitation, or preaching, or theology, or serving in the world. Furthermore, to what extent can the minister be the ubiquitous representative of the church and to what extent is it actually desirable?² Is this actually the minister's core function or should representation be made by those whose skills or location make them the logical choice? Admittedly, the second sentence concludes that it is the ministerial responsibility to 'lead the people to share with them in that calling' but, nevertheless, this does not detract from the concept that it is the ordained minister who is primarily the exemplifier and the centre of activity.

The third sentence concludes that the ordained minister is 'the sign of the presence and ministry of Christ in the Church and through the Church to the world'. How should this be understood? In what way does the minister indicate or point to the fact of the presence of Christ or provide evidence of the ministry of Christ in the church and the world more so than other members of the community of faith? Is it in his exemplary lifestyle, or honed professionalism or because in some unique way he embodies the being of Christ through his ordained status as a priest? Rowe (1992:44), a Methodist superintendent minister and formerly General Secretary of the Methodist Church's Division of Ministries, expresses something of the unwritten Methodist agenda on ordination and hints that it is in fact the last aspect that is intimated. Thus he observes:

"Ordained ministers direct the minds, hearts and spirits of the Christian community by being symbolic, significant or sacramental people. Methodism has found it difficult to speak directly in these terms and has tended to code its high theology of ordination in phrases like 'representative persons' and those in whom 'the calling of the whole church is focussed and represented'... So we need people who in their own flesh and blood are symbols, signs, sacraments of the presence of Christ who presides over his supper, of the Christ who is standing by a bedside or in the home of a bereaved family, of the Lord who blesses a marriage or as the conqueror of death comforts at a funeral."

It is hard in this description not to see a priestly figure and thus to understand why,

1. It could be argued that there are three since those ordained to sector or local appointments are often argued to provide a focus in the work-place. Thus Baelz (1985:7) maintains that the non-stipendiary minister is 'consciously representing the Church in the secular world ...'

2. For example, as discussed in earlier chapters, some ministers are overwhelmed by the task of being the church's official representative in the conduct of funerals and other services to the community.

for a significant proportion of Methodist laity, only the ministrations of the ordained minister are considered acceptable.

It is perhaps in the best Wesleyan tradition that the pragmatic step to ordain deacons and deaconesses was taken in the 1988 Methodist Conference but only subsequently was the Faith and Order Committee asked to consider the theological implications and to clarify the distinctive role of the diaconate. In so doing, the committee provided some revealing insights into the Methodist understanding of ordination. Thus the report to the 1993 Derby Conference included the following statement:

"In a Methodist context, there is nothing that deacons and deaconesses do that cannot be done by a presbyter or (at least in an emergency) by a lay person. Presbyteral ministry includes elements of service (*diakonia*) as does the ministry of the whole people of God. But a purely functional view of diaconal ministry is, in the end, as unsatisfactory as a purely functional view of presbyteral ministry. The three important features of both diaconal and presbyteral ministry identified in "The Ministry of the People of God" are much more concerned with *being* rather than *doing*. A person *is* ordained; *is* committed for life; *is* available for stationing."¹

This statement is revealing since it recognises that the Methodist diaconate cannot easily be distinguished functionally from Methodist lay persons and, indeed, very often in practice it is hard to distinguish between the duties of an ordained deacon(ess) and a full-time lay worker².

The Faith and Order Committee's view appears to point to a break with the early traditions of Methodism, and certainly with the New Testament patterns, since it maintains that the fundamental significance of ordained ministries has to do with *being* (ontology) rather than *doing* (function). This viewpoint is undergirded by a later statement in the report which affirms the status of an ordained person amongst most branches of the Church:

"Once ordained, a person *is* a minister (deacon, presbyter, bishop). Although he or she may be debarred from acting as such under the Church's discipline, the reality of the ordination or its permanence is not in doubt; and if subsequently

1. Faith and Order Report : *The Methodist Diaconal Order*, 1993 Methodist Conference Agenda, p.237.

2. Since the diaconate is on the same remuneration and benefits as the presbyteral ministry it appears that deacons and deaconesses are difficult to station because individual churches feel that the same job can be done by a lay worker at a much lower cost. There is a very real danger that the diaconate may revert to becoming a substitute minister when a presbyter cannot be stationed. This was apparently the situation before women's ordination in 1973 and described by the Faith and Order Report in these terms: "Many deaconesses had been used as substitutes for presbyters, they had been in pastoral charge appointments with dispensations to administer the sacraments." *Agenda* (1993:232)

such a person is permitted to exercise ministry again, no further ordination takes place. Ordination has been regarded for life ... " *Agenda* (1993:239)

The Committee expands on the ontological principle by pointing to three distinctive features of the diaconal and presbyteral ministries: ordination, life-long commitment and availability for stationing. The first feature is essentially tautological, that is, the significance of ordained ministry is ordination; although underlying the statement may well be the idea that ordination is sacramental, leading to a distinct and permanent change in the nature of the person being ordained. This would be consistent with the idea that ordination is for life.

The emphasis on life-long commitment as a distinguishing mark must have an increasingly hollow ring in contemporary Methodism with growing numbers of candidates entering the ministry at a mature age or after early retirement; ministers resigning or moving to effectively secular appointments; ministers ordained in full-time secular employment (MLAs) and women ministers taking time out to raise a family. When, in addition, serving ministers retire at 65 years (women 60 years) as opposed to local preachers whose ministry, subject of course to health, continues to death, the argument of life-long commitment as a distinctive feature does not carry great weight. The final distinction, availability for stationing, is also called into question not least by the decision to ordain 'ministers in local appointment'. Here is a group of persons who are patently not available for stationing since their location is determined by their secular employment. The problem is also compounded by the ordination of women ministers, since this has led to situations where both husband and wife are ministers, which increases the problem of stationing, as well as situations where the spouse's location for employment is in conflict with the ministerial appointment. The same will, of course, be true of the diaconate since celibacy is no longer required¹.

This brief review of ordination within Methodism points to confusion, or more charitably to a breadth of understanding, and to a tension between the views that the ordained ministries have to do with function or with being. Whereas the Deed of Union appears to emphasise the functional aspects of ministry, more recent Methodist reports seem to put increasing emphasis on the ontological point of view. This development perhaps parallels the growing uncertainty as to the distinctive role of the ordained ministry, which in turn forces it to fall back on a priestly understanding to justify its continued value to the church and society. The assumption implicit in the more recent discussions is that ministers, and now the diaconate, are set apart not for a distinct function, but by a distinct nature implanted by ordination, and it is precisely

1. The original Wesley Deaconess Order required celibacy, but the 1965 Convocation agreed that ordination was for life, and there was no need to resign on marriage.

this type of thinking which continues to fuel the lay-clergy divide. It follows that the reason why the presbyteral ministry normally preside at the sacraments is not so much to do with preserving church order, since others could clearly be authorised to do so, but because they are ordained. Such presidency helps to provide a rationale for ordination and is almost certainly the only logical explanation for the introduction of a localised ordained ministry, the duties of which could readily be covered by others such as local preachers or lay workers.

Ministerial and Lay Views of Ordination

This Methodist uncertainty about the significance of ordination is also reflected in the responses of the case-study ministers, who represented a wide range of views. Probably the majority view was that ordination represented a recognition by the church and an authorisation for ministry. Typical of such comments were:

"I see it as the church's recognition. Being given a job to do. Ordination is for life but I don't have a high view of ordination."

"Principally recognition and commissioning. A confirmation of call."

"Enables you to do by right what formerly by dispensation. It is a recognition and commissioning. Confirmation that after training you are equipped. A sort of graduation ceremony."

"I don't think Methodism has a line. It is a recognition by the church of one's role."

Whereas one minister commented that he had no theory of ordination and saw the event simply as the culmination of five years of training, others looked to the receipt of a particular blessing through ordination:

"Imposition of hands and blessing. Holy Spirit's enabling."

"Hope it would be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit but not in any mechanical way."

"Methodism confused because of probationary year, i.e., one is already ministering before ordination and some have a dispensation to preside at the sacrament. My view of the Holy Spirit has changed since entering into a renewal experience."

These ministers apparently had expectations that ordination would be accompanied by some kind of empowerment for ministry. The third comment is significant since it points to the challenge that the charismatic movement is making on this aspect of ordination. The minister in question had entered into a renewal (empowerment) experience which was subsequent to ordination.

The third understanding of ordination, put across somewhat tentatively, embodied a more sacramental or priestly understanding:

"Ordination is something indelible. I used to say that ordination was to a ministry of leadership, now I want it to be sacramental, ontological, about being. Ordination gives confidence and affirmation."

"Called, tested, set apart. A priestly function."

Thus the twelve ministers interviewed in the case studies expressed a wide spectrum of views which are probably typical within Methodism. These range from one extreme which sees ordination simply as a graduation exercise, through those who understand it as an act of recognition or commissioning, to those who seek in ordination the Spirit's empowerment for ministry, and on the other extreme those who have a fully sacramental understanding which relates ordination to ontology. Of course, in reality the positions are not so clear cut.

In the laity survey the respondents were asked what they considered to be the main significance of ordination (Appendix III, Q.11). This was a multiple-choice type

<i>Significance of Ordination</i>	<i>Percentage Response</i>
Given authority by the church	68
Set apart to serve	62
Becoming a priest	31
Receiving the Holy Spirit	30
Recognition of gifts and graces	22
Graduation after training	14

Table 8:2 Lay Understanding of Ordination

question which permitted up to three choices out of six options. The results are summarised in Table 8:2 above. It is apparent that the dominant view held by over two-thirds of the laity surveyed was that ordination had to do with being given authority and this perhaps reflects the tradition, particularly in Wesleyan Methodism, where the minister is an authority figure whose permission or approval is constantly needed in the life of the church. However, an almost equally-held view is that in ordination the minister is set apart to serve, and thus ordination may be seen as a commissioning or consecration.

The remaining responses were much less frequently cited, being indicated by less than a third of the laity. Thus 31% understand ordination from a sacramental perspective and see this as the point when the probationer becomes a priest, even though at that point some will already have been fully involved in priestly duties. A very similar proportion suggest that ordination has to do with receiving the Holy Spirit and being empowered for ministry. A smaller proportion, about one in five, suggest that ordination is about recognition of the gifts and graces which the ordinand

already possesses, and finally, about one in seven regard it simply as some kind of graduation ceremony after completion of training.

The lay understanding of ordination again shows a spread of opinion but also some divergence from the ministerial case studies. Thus none of the ministers mentioned 'authority', although this was prominent among lay concerns. Similarly, whereas a significant proportion of ministers understood ordination as a recognition of their gifts and graces, this was almost bottom of the lay understanding¹. Probably there is common ground in the sense of understanding ordination as a commissioning or setting apart to serve, as this featured significantly for both groups. In both cases, receiving the Holy Spirit and becoming a priest have significant but not overwhelming support. It is noteworthy that the lay understanding of being 'set apart' is largely in terms of being set apart to serve rather than being set apart ontologically.

The Role of Ordained and Recognised Ministries

In our New Testament survey we have observed that ministry (*διακονία*) is a function of the whole 'people of God' who are called upon to serve according to their gifts. At the same time it is evident that certain individuals are recognised or set apart to serve in various specific leadership functions but not in such a way as to imply any distinction in status or being. Thus amongst the various leadership roles Paul identifies the 'pastor-teacher' whose primary purpose is to 'prepare God's people for works of service' (Eph. 4:12) and thus enable the whole community of faith to be involved in ministry. Nowhere in the New Testament do we encounter individual Christian priests or worship specialists since participation in worship and prayer is understood to be the prerogative of the whole body of believers (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19,20; Phil. 4:4-7). Certain ministries which require public recognition such as the eldership (pastor-teachers) and financial administration (The Seven), together with those specifically set apart by the church for a particular task (Saul and Barnabas), are marked with prayer and the laying-on of hands. Other ministries such as the prophetic ministry, evangelism, hospitality, generosity and the like do not appear to be marked in such a way, but those serving in these and other ways may well be blessed through such prayer.

When we come to Methodism, a rather different picture emerges. Again, in principle, there is the acknowledgement that every member has gifts and skills and should be involved in some kind of ministry; there are also procedures where those in

1. This divergence is interesting not least because 'recognition' is enshrined as fundamental to the meaning of ordination in the Deed of Union which states: "Those whom The Methodist Church recognises as called of God and therefore receives into its Ministry shall be ordained by the imposition of hands as expressive of the Church's recognition of the Minister's personal call." Methodist Church (1989:229)

certain key roles can be publicly recognised and commissioned. However, there are now two distinct types of recognition: on the one hand, there is ordination which is given to those becoming presbyters or deacons/ deaconesses, and on the other, services for 'recognition and commissioning' which are considered appropriate for local preachers, class leaders and children's workers and lay-workers. The main differences between these two forms of recognition are that ordination includes the imposition of hands and is usually conducted in a location remote from the local church where the person is to serve, and in the presence of people with whom he or she will have little future connection. The distinction becomes even more curious in the case of non-stipendiary ministers whose role and working life may be effectively indistinguishable from a local preacher, except in one thing, he may preside at the sacrament without additional special authorisation.

It has already been argued that the ordained ministries can no longer be sharply differentiated from lay ministries on grounds such as: stipend, monopoly of expertise, and life-long or full-time commitment. So what is their distinctive role? For the presbyteral ministry, there are probably only two functions which are not regularly undertaken by others and these include presiding at the eucharist and leadership. In a sense it is appropriate that these two functions should go hand in hand and thus Schillebeeckx (1981:30) summarises the New Testament position in the following words:

"Thus the general conception is that anyone who is competent to lead the community in one way or another is *ipso facto* also president at the eucharist (and in this sense presiding at the eucharist does not need any separate authorization)."

Following this argument it is appropriate for the presbyter to preside at the sacrament not because he is ordained but because he is a leader of the community¹. It also follows that it may well be appropriate for others to preside at the Lord's Table who, although not ordained, are yet recognised as leaders of the community.

The role of the ordained minister as leader may thus be judged to be pre-eminent and this is attested to in the extract from the Deed of Union, quoted earlier, in which the minister is understood to have a 'principal and directing part' in shepherding the flock and as we have already seen in chapter five the major focus of the shepherd metaphor is leadership. That this is an understanding shared amongst the membership

1. The failure to observe this principle has led to great unease amongst congregations from time to time. One example, known to the author, involved a Methodist church where, due to shortage of ministers, the monthly sacrament was presided over by an ordained minister who having resigned his ministerial appointment was in full-time employment in the commercial sector and had no role in leading the local community. He presided only because at one time he had been ordained to a full-time and life-long ministry from which he had since withdrawn. In the view of the congregation it would have been more appropriate if local lay leaders had been authorised to preside.

is evident from the returns of the laity survey. Members were questioned as to the most important ministerial tasks in a multiple-choice style question in which they were permitted to indicate three out of twelve options (Appendix III, Q.12). The responses are summarised in Table 8:3 below. It is noteworthy that 'leading the church' is seen as the priority and this is closely followed by 'conducting the sacraments'.

<i>Ministerial Duty</i>	<i>Percentage Response</i>
Leading the church	53
Conducting the sacraments	51
Preaching	34
Leading worship	31
Visiting	25
Encouraging	22
Teaching and training	21
Evangelism	20
Prayer	16
Counselling	15
Discipling	5
Administration	4

Table 8:3 Lay Understanding of Ministerial Duties

Nevertheless, that leadership rather than priestly activity is the main concern is evident by the answers to a further question in which they were asked to indicate what they considered a minister in essence to be (Appendix III, Q.10). In this case only one answer was permitted and they ranked the allowed descriptions in the following order: pastor (33%), leader (22%), shepherd (20%), preacher (11%), servant (6%), professional (5%) and priest (3%). The first three descriptions account for 75% of the nominations and point to a leadership role compared to only 3% who emphasise the priestly function.

However, it is precisely in this crucial area of leadership that the presbyteral ministry appears to have its main weakness. Thus in the local preachers' assessments of ministerial skills and abilities (Appendix II, Q.48a), it is in the area of leadership that the greatest defects are observed with nearly a quarter of preachers rating their ministers poor in leadership. This could in part be that not enough emphasis is given

to leadership skills in selection or training but, perhaps more likely, it has to do with the system and how ministers operate. The evidence accumulated in this thesis through examining the working practices and local church contexts of ministers suggests a number of reasons why leadership skills do not come to the fore. Firstly, too much is expected of ministers in terms of their all-round skills and the amount that they can do. Thus the minister is: priest, preacher, worship leader, teacher, visitor, administrator, chairman, counsellor, evangelist, public relations officer and much else, and because of these overwhelming demands there is no possibility of developing individual gifts or inclinations. Thus the minister's most important contribution to the life of the community often drowns amidst a sea of demands on his time. This problem is accentuated since the system demands that the minister leads services and preaches, and chairs and attends meetings irrespective of whether this is his strength. Membership expectations, fuelled by the priestly concept of ordination, require that it is the 'representative person' rather than a more skilled lay person who must attend their needs. Without risk of giving offence to a considerable proportion of the membership there is simply no time available to invest in the vision, planning, prayer, research, preparation and teaching which are an integral part of the leadership programme.

Secondly, with an average of three to four churches under his pastoral charge and with possibly up to half a dozen or so distinct congregations, the minister is not sufficiently available for leadership. There will be many key occasions in the life of the church when the minister is unable to be present because of the conflicting interests of the other churches. Since the minister is only present on a minority of occasions, it makes it extremely difficult for him to be adequately in touch with the life of the church and hence to exercise an adequate leadership. The appointment of local ordained ministers with responsibility for only one church could be a possible way forward, but that would not answer the expectations for a multi-talented individual or provide sufficient time in view of secular work commitments. In any case, Methodism has long resisted the concept of any kind of settled and localised ministry even so far as local preachers are concerned, and it is unlikely that MLAs will be allowed to develop in that restricted way without a circuit commitment.

The development of a non-stipendiary ordained ministry in Methodism parallels its growth in the Anglican Church where the real driving force has been the need to provide priests to preside at the sacraments in view of the shortage of full-time clergy. Attempts have been made to justify such appointments on the grounds that the priest with a secular job is variously: acting as a bridge with the outside community, being an accredited representative in the work-place, affirming the role of the laity in the world and allowing the church to learn from the experiences of secular life. However,

none of these arguments are particularly convincing since it is not clear in what way the ordained minister would function in a distinct way from any committed and trained Christian in the work-place. Vaughan (1990:314), in his discussion of the non-stipendiary ministry in the Church of England, acknowledges that in the final analysis the justification for NSMs turns on their ability to preside at the sacraments. It is not clear why in a Methodist context this aim could not have been achieved by authorisation of appropriate lay persons holding positions of leadership in the local church.

The development of an ordained diaconate is at first sights surprising, but it perhaps marks the beginning of the recognition of people with skills that differ from the leadership role of the presbyteral ministry. Here in the diaconate is an opportunity for those who may not have preaching and teaching gifts and yet have particular interpersonal skills which fit them for a role in the personal care of individuals or outreach to the wider community. Such persons could well have a role in working alongside a presbyter whose major orientation was in preaching and teaching in the public arena and yet felt limited in personal or outreach work. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to occur since financial constraints will in almost every case mean that the deacon is an alternative to a presbyter rather than an addition to him.

The suggestion that the concept of the diaconate finds its roots in the appointment of the Seven in Acts 6 and its main purpose is to focus the servant ministry of the church is misleading in both cases. As has already been argued, the role of the Seven probably bears a closer resemblance to a modern day treasurer than personal care of individuals, and furthermore, the essential character of *all* ministry within the church, not least leadership, must be considered as service. A closer New Testament parallel is probably provided by the officially unrecognised ministries of individuals such as Dorcas or groups such as the widows referred to in the pastoral epistles¹. It is doubtful whether a paid ministry can be an effective paradigm for service amidst the unrewarded and unrecognised loving service of committed members of the community of faith. The inherent danger is that these will be even further devalued.

The ministers interviewed during the course of the case studies were generally bewildered by the re-introduction of the diaconate and were uncertain as to its distinctive role particularly *vis-à-vis* other full-time lay workers. Typical of the comments made about the perceived role of deacons/ deaconesses are those recorded as follows:

1. Thus Luke briefly refers to the ministry of Dorcas 'who was always doing good and helping the poor'. Similarly in writing to Timothy, Paul refers to widows who are to be recognised because 'she is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds' (I Timothy 5:10).

"We (the Methodist Church) have got ourselves into a mess. The situation is all very confused. The role of deacons and deaconesses is not at all clear. Perhaps a deacon is like a lay-worker but with a life-long commitment instead of a contract?"

"In the past their role was mainly visiting and women's meetings. I am not sure what their role is now since lay-workers can assist and provide secretarial help."

"I don't know what their distinctive role is. When deacons were paid on a separate salary scale from ministers then they had the advantage of being cheap labour. But now they have nothing special to offer. Nowadays lay-workers fill the gap. Probably enthusiasm is more important than a lengthy training."

"I suspect the situation is a bit like a kitten enmeshed in a ball of string which has fought very hard to get there! The whole thing is very unclear. Deacons are ordained but to what? The job description is open-ended."

"I would love to know their role! Often deacons are used as stop-gaps, e.g., put in stations where no minister can be found. I can't see the difference between a deacon and a lay-worker. Maybe the diaconate was reintroduced because Methodism wanted to become more 'churchy' within an ecumenical context. Maybe next step bishops?"

The overwhelming consensus of those interviewed was that it was not at all clear in what way the diaconate was distinct from other recognised ministries within the Methodist Church. A small proportion of ministers suggested a distinct pastoral role, for example, the deacon could be 'a local church pastor' or 'another pair of ears and eyes for the minister', but these views are frankly unrealistic in the light of the financial implications. The suggestion that the reintroduction of the diaconate might be a help in renewed moves towards unification with the Anglican Church has really come too late since with the introduction of women's ordination in the Church of England there is no longer a need for a permanent diaconate on these grounds. The significance of the diaconate in the overall pastoral care of the community of faith must be judged to be somewhat limited.¹

A much more significant recognised ministry, at least in terms of numbers, is the lay worker. He or she may be employed full or part-time and may be voluntary or paid. The range of duties is very wide, may be at circuit or district level, and include, for example: pastoral care of an individual church, administration, evangelism, youth work or community relations. The officially quoted distinction between the lay worker and the deacon is that the latter: 'is ordained to an order with a life-long commitment and a willingness to be stationed in any part of the country'². In reality the main

1. This is, of course, not to deny the valuable contribution of individual deacons and deaconesses in individual areas, but the judgement is an evaluation of the financial implications, the numbers involved, and the lack of any unique role compared to other recognised pastoral workers.

2. Methodist Church, Division of Ministries information pamphlets entitled: *Sharing in Christ's ministry as a Lay Worker*.

differences are that lay workers are: cheaper, more flexible, receive on the job training and are contracted usually on a short-term basis to work in specific areas. Lay workers are far less homogeneous than the diaconate in training and experience and may bring a whole range of skills to their work, ranging from secretarial and administrative skills to youth work qualifications. Often their main contribution may be enthusiasm and availability at low cost and the position may be useful in testing their call with respect to more permanent employment. Apart from the cost advantage the flexibility of appointment and the opportunity to 'hire and fire' if the individual does not live up to his or her potential, or the needs change, are aspects not shared by the diaconate where ordination is for life and the church has an obligation, at least morally, to provide employment for life. The main disadvantage of this pattern, which incidentally reflects secular employment prospects in Britain in the nineties, is that there is less incentive to invest heavily in long-term training. It could however be argued that a good preliminary education followed by specific task-related and on-the-job training is actually more helpful.

By far the most important recognised lay ministry in Methodism is local preaching. In terms of our survey results, local preachers outnumber deacons and deaconesses by about a hundred to one and ministers by six to one. Overall they lead worship services and preach on more occasions than ordained ministers. They have a life-long commitment but on a voluntary unpaid basis and receive a thorough academic and practical on-the-job preparation with an emphasis on continued in-service training after being received as fully accredited preachers. Local preachers have a clearly-defined and circumscribed role which is to 'lead acts of worship', but the local preacher survey has revealed that many are also involved in pastoral visitation and in leadership of home fellowship groups and bible studies. According to the survey, a small proportion are involved in taking funeral services and occasionally conduct baptisms and preside at the Lord's Supper - although it is not completely clear whether the latter is in Methodist churches.

The main difference, at least from ministers in local appointment, is that they are not *ordained* and do not have any leadership position in their local church as a consequence of their office. Furthermore, local preaching is a circuit-based ministry and the effect, and possibly the intention of this, is that the influence of the local preacher in his home church is limited.¹ However, the net result of this is that the

1. This indeed seems to be one of the reservations raised concerning the locally ordained ministry (MLAs) since some expressed concern that the MLA would have undue influence in the local church and it would not be possible to remove him or her if the appointment was unsatisfactory, Methodist Church (1986:136). The counter to this was seen to be that the MLA would have a clearly specified job description which might include an initial term of service and continuing critical evaluation. Ultimately, the MLA's appointment could be withdrawn, in which case he or she would then have the status of a supernumerary. Methodist Church (1986:140,1)

leadership of the worship and the word is often divorced from the leadership of the local church, with dire consequences. From a New Testament perspective, it is curious that ministers are 'ordained' whereas local preachers entrusted with the same ministry of word, and occasionally sacrament, are only recognised or commissioned. This inconsistency is reinforced by the ordination of voluntary, part-time ministers whose only difference may be more rigorous selection and some additional training. This discrepancy is clearly related to the issue of presiding at the sacrament and to this we now briefly turn.

From a purely technical perspective it is evident that celebrating the eucharist does not involve arduous or elaborate training and is within the competence of lay-people in contrast to more demanding undertakings such as preaching¹. In Methodism the foundational position is that there is only one common priesthood shared by all God's people, and ministers normally preside at the sacrament not because of a distinct priestly status but for the sake of church order. This causes Mosedale (1989:33) to ask: "Why do we not go the whole way in Methodism, and allow all accredited preachers to lead Communion services?" The answer is, he suspects, because of the desire to maintain a special ministerial status. Harvey, in turn, is critical of the creation of non-stipendiary ministers as 'mass-priests' and argues:

"The right approach to the shortage of clergy in this matter is surely not to ordain men to something less than a full ministry, but to authorise laymen to celebrate the Eucharist in such a way that the *normal* presidency of the minister is seen to be assured." (1975:63)

In the context of Methodism, why not authorise local preachers rather than ordain part-time ministers?

One immediate answer has to do with the question of acceptance. Of the 205 lay members surveyed, a majority (57%) supported the concept of local preachers presiding at the sacrament, with about a third (34%) opposing the idea and about one in eleven (9%) unsure. Perhaps, not surprisingly, a high proportion of local preachers (73%) favoured the idea with only 16% in opposition and a somewhat similar proportion of those unsure (12%). Although ministers were not asked to respond to this question in the postal survey, the matter was raised in the case study interviews. Only two of the twelve opposed the idea and the remainder were generally in favour, although some had certain reservations. It is perhaps significant that one of the two opposing the idea commented:

"I do not think that local preachers should preside. Local preachers could take a reserved sacrament to the sick or housebound. Church members already ask local preachers to take funerals instead of me. This denies me pastoral contact and rejects my own ministry."

1. See for example the comments quoted in Vaughan (1990:276) and Tiller (1983:162).

In this statement the clear implication was that lay presidency was seen to undermine the status and affirmation of the minister's distinctive role. One minister who had certain reservations stated:

"Yes. Providing there were certain safeguards. Local preachers have quirks. They shouldn't mess about with the service. Probably best to authorise only certain local preachers. This could involve synodical authority and would not be automatic with status. Positively it would help to overcome the infrequency of the sacrament in rural churches as well as for the sick and infirm."

In his view, authorisation should be restricted to certain preachers only and not as an automatic right. This view was echoed by others, one of whom suggested that it might be more appropriate to involve those with some pastoral contact with the people, such as class leaders.

On the whole, acceptability does not seem to be a major problem; the majority of the laity, local preachers and ministers appear to be in favour and, if the Cwmbran case study experience is typical, then acceptance would increase with competent discharge of duties. There is, however, one reservation and this has to do with the argument discussed earlier that presidency at the sacraments should be related to leadership of the community of faith. On this criterion, local preachers would not normally qualify as their office and employment often denies them a role of leadership even in their own local church. Even ordained ministers would often barely qualify on this criterion and this is particularly true of supernumerary ministers and sector ministers who may have little or no involvement in the leadership of the community.

Leadership of the Community of Faith in Methodism

In drawing this chapter to a close it is helpful to briefly reflect on the leadership of the community of faith in Methodism. In the laity survey, respondents were asked to indicate who they considered to be the leaders within their local church. This took the form of a multiple-choice style question where individuals could tick as many as seven distinct options (Appendix III, Q.14). The response are summarised in Table 8:4 shown overleaf. Not surprisingly, ministers feature as the number one choice with some 91% of members perceiving them to be leaders. What is perhaps surprising is that nearly one in ten did not do so.¹ Ministers are followed fairly closely by stewards, cited by nearly three quarters of the laity, and church council members, indicated by over half of the respondents. Significantly, for our discussion, local preachers were only considered as leaders by just over one third of the membership, even though it is almost certain that the churches in question were regular serviced by local preachers and probably had such preachers on the membership role. Not far behind local preachers are class leaders and lay workers even though far fewer in number.

1. It is conceivable of course that some of these were under the pastoral charge of a lay-worker.

<i>Perceived Leader</i>	<i>Percentage Response</i>
Minister	91
Stewards	74
Church Council Members	56
Local Preachers	38
Class Leaders	30
Lay Worker	20
Not Sure	2

Table 8:3 Lay Perceptions of Local Church Leaders

It is interesting that the general lay perception of the leadership role of local preachers varies markedly from the preachers' self-assessment, since about two-thirds (67%) of such preachers thought that they enjoyed a leadership position in their own church (Appendix II, Q.20a), which is almost twice as high as the general perception.

It is understandable that stewards and church council members are seen to comprise the lay leadership of the church since constitutionally these consist of those with responsibility for the government of the local church. Furthermore, they may be considered more 'of the people' since the membership may well have a role in their appointment through the Church General Meeting.¹ Having said that, it would appear anomalous that local preachers, who are presumably spiritual and mature Christians with leadership qualities and theological training, are effectively excluded from a leadership role. To a large extent, this is due to the strict circuit nature of the local preacher's appointment in which the local church membership has little say², and which, at the same time, limits the amount of time an active preacher can be present with his own congregation. Although, as might be expected, the case-study ministers were generally in favour of a circuit system, several did find the position of local preachers anomalous and were trying to introduce local leadership teams which involved such preachers, or preaching teams which enabled them to preach more regularly in their own section.

1. This is an annual meeting of the church membership at which the church's activities are reviewed and office bearers such as stewards elected.

2. Recent changes mean that it is now unnecessary for the local church council to recommend or approve those desiring to become local preachers, and all subsequent appraisal and discussion is carried out by the local preachers' meeting.

Summary

This chapter has sought to probe the role of the whole people of God in the shepherding of the community of faith. Examination of New Testament metaphors shows an understanding that each member of the community is gifted and has a responsibility in its care. Historically, the role of the whole people of God has been distorted by the gradual evolution of a sharp lay-clergy divide, unknown of in the New Testament church and persisting to the current day. This separation has been exacerbated through the devaluation of the significance of baptism as the distinctive marker of the priesthood of the people of God and the elevation in status of a distinct priestly class. The leadership of the community of faith in New Testament times involved a flexible, local and plural leadership, recognised in a public way, which probably included prayer and the imposition of hands. However, ordination as we know it today was absent from the New Testament; specifically, there was no ordination for life or sacramental understanding of ordination leading to the creation of a priestly nature. Leaders were set aside for specific tasks, often by the whole congregation, and were chosen because they had already proven and recognised gifts. Leadership represented servanthood rather than hierarchical authority.

Today ordination continues to act as the seal of separation which distinguishes clergy from lay members of the body and in so doing undermines the recognition of lay gifts. In Methodism today there is a confused understanding of ordination which seeks to combine functional and sacramental perspectives of ordination. The doctrinal basis of Methodism affirms a functional conception of ordination, but in recent years greater emphasis has been given to an ontological viewpoint, the latter being the underlying rationale for the introduction of non-stipendiary ministers. The argument that presidency at the eucharist should be related to leadership of the community is endorsed and this may open the way for more extensive lay presidency drawn in particular from amongst local preachers. One of the greatest hindrances to the development of the shepherding of the community of faith is the failure of the leadership structures. Ministers are often ineffective because of the overwhelming nature of their task and limited presence, and local preachers, who should be amongst the natural local leadership, are denied such involvement because of the Methodist system and structures.

Chapter 9

Towards a Working Model of Pastoral Care

In this final chapter we seek to bring together the ideals of pastoral care and the critique of such care within contemporary Methodism, that have concerned us in earlier chapters, and to weave them into a working model of pastoral care within the context of British Methodism. In so doing it is recognised that the end-model is contingent on the paradigm of pastoral care that is adopted and this is clearly somewhat controversial. The understanding of pastoral care which forms the basis for these conclusions derives from the working definition stated in the opening paragraph of Chapter 5 and expounded during that chapter. The definition provides clearly-stated answers to the questions posed in the introductory chapter and of particular significance are the following aspects:

1. The main aim of pastoral care is to nurture and build up individuals and the community into a maturity of faith and Christian living, so that the community is enabled and empowered to live and work to God's praise and glory and, in so doing, to reach out to those outside its boundaries.
2. The *whole* community of faith needs to be involved in the process of care but particular individuals will have special roles and responsibilities.
3. Pastoral care is centred on the community of faith and not on those outside its boundary.
4. Care is afforded by a whole range of activities both individual and corporate.

The above exposition shares both common ground and points of divergence with much current thinking on pastoral care. Thus the understanding of pastoral care is often broader, in that it emphasises the involvement of the *whole* community of faith rather than select, trained professionals, and a whole range of pastoral activities, rather than focussing on one-to-one visiting or counselling situations. At the same time it is more restricted in that it sees Christian pastoral care as largely centred on the community of faith. This allows a concentration on nurture and growth rather than a preoccupation with crises and this is another distinctive emphasis.

A Final Overview and Critique of Contemporary Pastoral Practice

Overall Impressions of Pastoral Care

It is probably necessary to preface this section with a caveat. The picture painted here is of the *overall* impression of pastoral care that is evident in British Methodism on the basis of the survey work and case-study interviews. Whereas the surveys are believed to be representative of the situation at large, there will be exceptions to these perceptions and perhaps many individual examples where the critique is inapplicable.

Nevertheless, because of, amongst other things: the nature of the structures, the range of prescribed duties, workloads and membership expectations, the representation will resonate with the majority of pastoral situations.

In the vast majority of Methodist churches pastoral care centres on the minister. This does not mean of course that the minister is the chief pastoral worker in terms of the hours set aside for pastoral work or that he does the major part of the visiting, but it does mean that he is responsible for setting the direction and determining the ethos of such care. This is fully consistent with the idea, expounded in the doctrinal section of the Deed of Union¹, that the minister is expected to have 'a principal and directing part' in shepherding the flock. The direct consequence of this is that the minister's attitude towards, and practice of, pastoral care will have a determining effect on the overall pastoral care of, and by, the community of faith.

On the basis of the surveyed ministers' declared understanding of the essence of pastoral care and declared priorities it would appear that, in principle, the average minister seeks for a balance in his pastoral work between the needs of crisis care and the concern for nurture. However, in practice, it appears that the balance frequently tilts towards crisis care not least because it is always more urgent than nurture. The overall impression is of ministers who are driven by the needs that confront them and by the dictates of their diary and who have little opportunity to think about, let alone implement, planned nurture. Evidence for these assertions is drawn from a variety of sources which include: (1) The declared number of crisis events which confront at least some ministers; (2) The apparent lack, or limited nature, of appropriate follow-up to baptisms and funerals; (3) The preoccupation with marriage breakdown rather than marriage enrichment; (4) The singular lack of attention to planning, which is a necessary prerequisite of nurture care; (5) The minimal observed differences in pastoral work patterns despite divergent theological emphases; (6) The sheer weight of administrative duties derived from pastoral oversight of several churches.

The consequence of the above pattern is that ministers feel pressurised, are constantly aware of time constraints and tend to be reactive rather than pro-active in their pastoral care and this in turn leads to a sense of powerlessness in their ministry. The problems are exacerbated for the majority of ministers through working from home, being constantly on call and not being able to get away from the job, even sometimes on a day off. About half of the ministers surveyed did not feel adequately supported in their work and this problem is particularly acute amongst single women ministers. Again approximately half of the ministers surveyed did not find their practice of pastoral visiting satisfying and a small minority visited only to satisfy membership expectations or to assuage a sense of personal guilt.

1. Methodist Church (1989:229)

An underlying assumption that is implicit in the role of the minister is that he is perceived to be a jack-of-all-trades or, more precisely, a master in every aspect of church life. In the present structure of circuit ministry it is necessary for the minister to be an expert and gifted in a wide range of disciplines which may be briefly summarised as: teaching, prayer and worship, finance and administration, personal counselling and visitation, evangelism and outreach and enabling leadership. The minister's background of call, selection, training and ordination is seen to confirm and endorse this assumption and provides him with final authority in all these areas. This stereotyping of ministerial gifts has a number of consequences. Firstly, ministers are often forced to serve in disciplines in which they have little or no competence, the work suffers, ministers become frustrated and the laity antagonised and irritated because there are lay persons who have the gifts, abilities and training to do the particular task more competently, but are precluded from so doing by the concept that it is the minister's duty. Common examples are ministers who lack leadership, teaching, administrative or even inter-personal skills.

The second consequence is that because of the call of other duties ministers are impeded from making the full use of their gifts. The teacher may be forced to expend most of his efforts in visiting, the evangelist bogged down with administration. The only escape is to retreat from the circuit ministry and to become involved in some more specialised ministry, but the opportunities are few and far between. This may well be one of the attractions and indeed the justifications of having a distinct diaconal order in that it does allow men and women to work in a more specialised area of ministry without the necessity of being a leader, a teacher or an administrator. Unfortunately, as is evident from the lack of overwhelming demand for deacons and deaconesses and the approaching shortage¹ of circuit ministers, the circuit churches want people who are omnicompetent and not specialists restricted to certain areas and without a priestly ordination².

The third outcome of ministerial stereotyping is that lay gifts and talents are often overlooked, under-utilised and underdeveloped. As a consequence the whole community of faith is not adequately involved in the practice of pastoral care and the range of pastoral activities is necessarily restricted to the competence and availability of one key person. This has a dual effect: on the one hand, the extent of pastoral care is significantly limited, and on the other, lay people are denied opportunities for

1. The Conference Office publication entitled *Ministers and Stations Available for 1995* indicates that there is a shortfall of fifty ministers compared to the number of stations due to the excess of the numbers retiring compared to those being recruited. This is consistent with the predictions in this thesis, based on the age distribution of ministers, that two-thirds of Methodist ministers serving in 1990 would be due for retirement by 2005.

2. The diaconate is not ordained to preside at the sacraments and hence lacks the inferred priestly character which is consciously or subconsciously regarded as authenticating the ministerial duties.

growth and maturity because of limited opportunities for service and the consequent Christian experience so generated. In this context it is worth noting that according to many of the ministers surveyed the developmental benefit of pastoral experience outweighs formal academic training.

Perhaps the most crucial criticism of the contemporary pastoral situation is the lack of competent and confident pastoral leadership. This shows itself in the local preachers' evaluations of circuit ministers with regard to their leadership gifts, as well as the admissions of ministers themselves. Ministers frequently lack confidence in their own abilities, are defensive with regard to skilled and gifted lay persons and fearful of being usurped by rival lay leadership in the affections of the people. There is thus inbred a sense of rivalry and suspicion rather than partnership and a sense of shared purpose. There are a number of reasons for this, some of which will be enumerated shortly, but it may not be insignificant that the breeding ground for ministers is local preaching, and whereas local preachers are trained and tested with regard to their preaching and worship leading ability, they are divorced from any leadership role in the local churches; this may have an unfortunate effect of retarding the development of leadership skills in ministerial candidates. One of the side-effects of this leadership insecurity is that some ministers attempt to keep an even firmer grip on the church reins and are unwilling to share or delegate tasks and responsibility. Without confident and competent leadership there is lack of vision and direction and inevitably pastoral care becomes increasingly committed to the crises which demand urgent attention and nurture becomes overlooked and forgotten.

So far in this overview we have concentrated on the minister. This is because the minister in contemporary Methodism has by far the greatest influence on the practice of pastoral care, and his role and perceptions have been most carefully studied in this work. Notwithstanding this preoccupation with the minister, without doubt, the greatest opportunities for pastoral care lie with the laity since collectively they have more time available, a greater range of gifts and are closer to the situations of need than the itinerant minister. Quite apart from local preachers, who exert a pastoral influence through their ministry of preaching and worship leading, there is a vast number of members who have important contributions in positions of responsibility such as stewards or pastoral visitors or class leaders or through being part of a fellowship group or some other unrecognised channel. Whereas the potential is enormous, the concern of this thesis is that it is grossly unrealised not least because of the leadership problems already discussed. Thus even within recognised ministries such as local preaching these are rarely fully developed and local preachers, in particular, often seem to be viewed as 'pulpit fillers', a second best to the ordained minister.

The Central Problem Areas

Having looked at an overall critique of the practice of pastoral care in contemporary Methodism, and before proposing some strategies for addressing some of the observed shortcomings, it is necessary to look at the fundamental causes of the problem areas identified. A major part of the perceived difficulty can be summarised simply by saying that only a small part of the body of Christ is attempting to do a major part of the work, often in areas in which it is not skilled. This diagnosis is of course not new and in the past few decades has led to many attempts, including within Methodism itself, to mobilise the laity. However, in this author's view, a major stumbling-block to this whole enterprise is not the unwillingness of the laity to participate but the very presence of an *ordained* ministry with the implicit assumption that certain members of the community of faith are distinct in the very nature of their being and are thus inherently the preferred persons to serve in every area of pastoral concern since, by their very presence, whether or not they have the requisite gifts, they are seen to bring uniquely the presence and power of God. This distinction begins with the sacraments but flows through every area of ministry; whether preaching, or prayer, or visiting, the ministerial contribution is irreplaceable.

The laity will only be mobilised and released if this major hindrance is removed and ministers no longer try to live up to a false ideal, and at the same time members cease to collude in this by their unrealistic expectations. Thus the idea that the minister is a 'special' person, who is set apart in terms of his character, power and expertise, is a comforting concept to many lay people since it removes from them the onus to live up to the New Testament ideals as 'saints' and servants of the Kingdom of God. Instead such lay persons are content for the ordained ministry to shoulder the full responsibility for exemplary living and committed service and to reserve their involvement for a brief while on an occasional Sunday. What is necessary to overcome this debilitating outlook is an abandonment of ordination as practised today and a rediscovery of the biblical significance of imposition of hands and a return to the early days of Wesley with his pragmatic concern to make use of those with 'gifts and graces' appropriate to the task. A more appropriate term would probably be 'commissioning' or 'recognition' as already used in Methodism in referring to the authorisation of local preachers and class leaders¹. The fundamental meaning of commissioning would thus become a setting apart of individuals for a task, not to a distinct status, and would thus be seen as a public recognition of their God given gifts and calling, as well as an authorisation to serve. Prayer and the imposition of hands

1. It is probably preferable to jettison the terminology of ordination as its roots infer separation by class and it would be difficult to escape from the traditional understanding of the term.

would be part of this act of recognition and a seeking of God's empowerment for ministry. Several implications would flow from this:

1. Commissioning with laying-on of hands would not be for life. Recommissioning would be appropriate for each new major task or duty. It may therefore occur on several occasions as is evident in the case of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1-3).
2. There would be no distinct titles such as 'reverend' implying a distinct 'being', although descriptive titles may be appropriate to indicate function such as: preacher, pastoral visitor, pastoral leader and others.
3. Commissioning would be to specific and circumscribed tasks according to ability and would not imply a blanket proficiency in every area.
4. Celebration of the sacraments would be the prerogative of the leadership of the local community of faith and no-one would need to be specifically commissioned to preside at the sacraments as this would be part of the role of the pastoral leadership.

The idea of a commissioning for a specific task and for a limited period has biblical precedent, is already practised in some religious communities¹, and is perhaps the logical direction in which the present practice of ordination in Methodism is heading.

Thus the declared Methodist distinctives of ordained ministry, *viz.*: ordination specifically to word and sacrament; life-long commitment; full-time, and by implication, financially supported ministry; and willingness to be itinerant; are being progressively undermined. For example, the decision that the diaconate is *not* a lay order and yet has no jurisdiction in presiding at the sacraments already undermines the specifically priestly significance of ordination and its relationship with the sacrament. Furthermore, the ordination of men and women in secular employment, who are located in particular areas and are financially self-supporting, as well as the ordination of mature candidates who have perhaps taken early retirement, clearly undermine the traditional understanding described above. With the apparent growing shortage of presbyteral ministers this process can only accelerate, especially if Methodism follows the Anglican trend towards frequent eucharistic celebration. The sacerdotal activities will inevitably become increasingly divorced from the full-time ordained and itinerant minister on pragmatic grounds, just as it did in the early days of Methodism. This will provide an excellent opportunity to review the present practice of ordination.

1. For example, in the Mormon church the leader of the local congregation is the bishop. The bishop presides as 'high priest', speaks once a month and has overall responsibility for temporal affairs, for welfare, for youth work and judicial matters. The bishop is a non-stipendiary position and he may revert to a position of lower status depending on his abilities and other calls on his time. All 12-18 year olds are ordained to the 'Aaronic priesthood' and this is considered permanent but serving in particular offices such as bishop is not. In the Mormon church only administrators are paid and all members are expected to participate. [Source: Julian Jones, Religious Studies Seminar entitled "Mormon Bishops". University of Nottingham, 28th. March 1994.]

The rejection of ordination as a sacrament which sets apart a small minority could helpfully lead to a re-examination of baptism as the central sacrament through which all Christians were set apart ontologically as 'saints' and members of the community of faith. This may well mean rescuing baptism from those who see it as a proselytizing instrument for reaching out to the unchurched and those of nominal faith. Such an approach would probably necessitate the abandonment of infant baptism and substitution by alternative services such as dedication or thanksgiving, which, as we have observed, are already widely practised in Methodism. This would enable baptism to be re-established as the mark of the committed Christian and would allow baptism preparation to be an opportunity for exploring gifts and skills for future service. Baptism would lead directly to membership and a commitment to serve in the local community of faith. This approach is consistent with the increasingly common suggestion, already discussed, that baptism should be seen as the lay person's 'ordination', and furthermore, it would follow the pattern set by Jesus, in which his baptism was the point at which he received divine recognition at the beginning of his ministry. If baptism, rather than ordination, became the central sacrament for setting apart as a member of the royal priesthood and for priestly service, then the lay-clergy divide would be effectively ended.

The second major problem area is ineffective leadership and this arises for a number of reasons. In the current Methodist structures leadership is essentially provided by three main groups: the minister, church stewards and the church council, of which the minister has by far the most important role. Before considering why the leadership is ineffective it is perhaps helpful to reflect on what is the essential role of leadership in church life. The role of leadership is a thesis in itself but, concisely, some of the important characteristics of Christian leadership are: (1) it is a spiritual, or in biblical terms a 'spirit-filled' leadership; (2) it is a visionary leadership, which is able to discern God's plan and way ahead for the local community; (3) it is a wise leadership with a wide experience of life, of the church and people, which is able to evaluate the local situation and see how to move towards the goals inspired by the vision, to make plans and implement them; (4) it is a communicating and inspiring leadership, which is in constant touch with the wider community and so is able to share the vision and to motivate them to action; (5) it is a sensitive leadership, constantly aware of the concerns and anxieties of the community, and constantly listening and learning from others; (6) it is an enabling leadership, which recognises skills and talents, implements training and constantly encourages members of the body in their service; (7) it is a co-ordinating leadership, which ensures that efforts are not duplicated and that nothing is neglected; (8) it is a serving leadership, which emphasises humility and partnership.

Amongst other things the above characteristics necessitate a plural and local leadership and one which meets together on a regular basis to pray, learn, plan, review, implement and support one another. It needs also to be a leadership which is recognised and supported by the community and will thus usually be made up of those who have proven their gifts and spirituality by prior service within the fellowship. From the above characteristics and these derived criteria, it is not difficult to see the weakness of much Methodist leadership. First the minister; he comes from outside the community and, although recognised by the wider body of the church, he will need to demonstrate, in the local context, that he is worthy of his leadership role through his skills, wisdom and personal character. In the midst of an increasingly anti-authoritarian society it is no longer sufficient to be an office holder such as the minister in order to command the respect of the people; such respect needs to be earned. Unfortunately, although most ministers have the inherent gifts and skills, the pressures of the job, the unrealistic demands, and the structures within which they work, frequently mean that it is impossible for the minister to demonstrate his leadership ability and hence establish his credentials.

A major part of the problem for ministers is that they are expected to exercise leadership of a number of communities, often geographically remote from one another and the minister's residence, and frequently with conflicting claims on his time. Because of the nature of his Sunday preaching responsibilities the minister may well meet with the whole congregation only on an irregular basis, which is insufficient to maintain adequate contact and provide leadership direction. To exacerbate the problem the minister will usually have no connection with the others, mostly local preachers, who fill the pulpit in his absence and who act as transient leaders of the community on his behalf, leading it in their own idiosyncratic direction. The difficulties are probably most acute in the smallest churches, which the minister usually visits less frequently, and where, because there may be little local leadership, the minister has to be more fully involved if the community is to survive and grow. Furthermore, since many of the important events in the life of the congregation are determined by the common liturgical calendar, it is inevitable that on many central occasions, for example, Easter Sunday morning, the minister will not be leading the community in its celebration.

Quite apart from the limited opportunities for the minister actually to be with the whole congregation, it is evident, from the criteria of leadership discussed above, that the task is more than can be managed by one person; it requires a team of people with differing gifts, people who have an intimate knowledge of the local situation and with the time and motivation to shoulder the burden. Although, in principle, Methodism is good at sharing the responsibility of the leadership load by a complex of committee

structures, these do not usually provide the necessary overview and central co-ordination which is essential for effective leadership unless the minister is involved in each, or at least kept informed of their decisions. In practice, many committee meetings simply act to fill the minister's diary and give a sense of work being done, when the reality is often very different.

The best potential for a leadership team within the local community is structurally the group of church stewards, and this is clearly the intent implied by the standing orders, which state:

"The church stewards are corporately responsible with the minister or probationer having pastoral charge of the Local Church for giving leadership and help over the whole range of the church's life and activity."

Methodist Church (1989:490)

However, it would appear that the stewards rarely function as an effective leadership team, probably for a number of reasons. Firstly, notwithstanding the excerpt from the standing orders quoted above, stewards tend to be appointed on the understanding that their main function is to manage the 'temporal things of the Society' and this dates right back to early days of Methodism¹. Thus the main duties of stewards are usually understood to centre on the physical preparations for the Sunday worship service, and are essentially practical in nature. Consequently stewards are not especially chosen to be part of a spiritual leadership team and may well not be fitted for that purpose. Secondly, stewards rarely meet on a sufficiently regular basis to fulfil the criteria of leadership outlined above. Ideally, if prayer² and mutual pastoral support are to be a significant activity alongside the overall leadership of the community, this points to a regular weekly meeting. Such frequency would be automatically precluded if the minister is part of the team because of the restrictions of his diary, and in practice many steward groups meet only on a quarterly basis or as particular needs arise. Thirdly, the stewards have little opportunity, nor often the confidence and ability, publicly to address the congregation to communicate the corporate vision and to encourage the participation of the whole community.

The remaining constitutional leadership structure, which is acknowledged by the laity in the postal survey, is the church council. In favour of such a body it can be noted that it is sufficiently large to embrace a wide range of skills and gifts and to provide a good representation of all sections of the community. However, on the negative side, the council usually only meets biannually, except for emergency business, and its agenda tends to be preoccupied with routine matters. The group is, in any case, too large to mould into an effective leadership team and does not have

1. See the discussion of stewards and their duties in Chapter 2.

2. Lack of prayer is seen by local preachers to be the leading hindrance to adequate pastoral care (Table 7: 2).

any natural mouthpiece for the wider community, except through the minister. Overall, none of the prescribed means of authority: minister, stewards or church council, usually functions in a way which provides an adequate basis for effective leadership.

It has been argued that a central difficulty is the presence of the ordained minister which undermines the validity of lay ministry and restricts areas of involvement. However, even where lay ministry is clearly validated, as in local preaching, the structural organisation tends to restrict its usefulness. Local preachers are highlighted because this is a group of people who are presumably highly motivated, have particular gifts and skills and have undergone extensive academic and on-the-job training. Despite this their role and potential is diminished by operating in a circuit system where there is minimal contact between preacher and church and between preacher and fellow preacher. Thus preachers tend to operate in an individualistic style with little cooperation with the churches concerned and very few opportunities for follow-up of the proclaimed message. Furthermore, as the local preacher takes services rather infrequently in his local church, he is precluded from the possibility of being actively involved in communicating the leadership vision. As we have seen, the reason for this practice has historical roots in Wesley's particular concern to minimise the influence of the local preacher *vis-à-vis* the itinerant minister. However, with the increasing localisation of ministers, and in particular the appointment of MLAs, the time has surely come to review the way in which local preachers are employed.

A Tentative Proposal for Pastoral Structures in British Methodism

It is relatively easy to review and criticise pastoral structures within Methodism; it is quite another to find workable solutions to the perceived problems. Cure is necessarily dependent on correct diagnosis and so the appropriateness of the proposals that follow are highly dependent on the adequacy of the analysis presented during the course of the thesis. Much will be controversial, not least because many may disagree with the reading of the situation, and many of the proposals will go against years of Methodist traditions. However, after a quarter of a millennium of Methodism, and in the face of rapidly declining membership and a growing shortage of full-time ordained ministers, now is perhaps the time for a radical reappraisal of the structures which served the church so well in its early years. In preparing the proposals that follow three distinct strands have been interwoven: (1) the starting point is the present Methodist structures and manpower resources; (2) attempts have been made to apply biblical principles of leadership and ministry, as discussed in Chapter 8, but with the full recognition that the New Testament does not provide an inflexible blueprint to follow; (3) ideas have been drawn from various successful and innovative practical experiences in leadership and lay ministry such as revealed

through the Cwmbran case study and the example of the Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church in Kuala Lumpur.

The logical outworking of the scheme would eventually lead to the disappearance of a distinct ordained ministry, although *not* to the exclusion of full-time paid staff, but ultimately those currently ordained would be integrated into the system according to their skills and abilities but would not be regarded as holding a distinct status. At the same time the focus of local preachers would be shifted from the circuit to the local church situation where usually they would have some leadership responsibility. The circuit would still be the main locus for the employment of paid staff, although, as now, persons might be employed directly by the local congregation for specific tasks.

The Local Leadership Team

Without doubt one of the most important factors in revitalising the pastoral care of the whole community of faith is the creation of an appropriate leadership team. New Testament precedent indicates that leadership should be plural, local and spiritual. The Methodist standing orders in fact already allow for the formation of such a team and thus in reference to stewards it is stated that:

"In discharge of their responsibilities they are encouraged wherever possible to draw other members with appropriate gifts and skills into a leadership team to be appointed by the Church Council." Methodist Church (1989:490)

It would be possible for the leadership to be based on the stewards providing that the stewards had been selected with a view to spiritual leadership of the church. Almost certainly the team would include local preachers who had membership at the church concerned, as well as MLAs and active supernumeraries, and any other key worker in the church. The ordained minister, currently given pastoral responsibility of the church, would not be a formal member of the team but would have a distinct role to be described shortly. The other local ordained ministers who might be on the team would no longer have a distinct ministerial status but would contribute according to their gifts and experience.

The team, which would probably comprise five to eight members, would not need to have a formal leader but each member, by mutual agreement, would be given responsibility and oversight of different activities within the community of faith. Ideally the leadership team should be representative of, or have good contact with, every section of the church. The team would meet regularly for prayer, for mutual support, to learn together and to oversee the whole life of the church. The team would also have representative members who maintained contact and practical links with the wider church, both Methodist and other denominations. The advantages to such a team approach to leadership are manifold: firstly, there is mutual support, with overall responsibility for decisions being taken on a corporate basis; secondly, the

team is in much closer contact with the grassroots of the community than is possible with one person; thirdly, it is possible to draw on a much wider range of skills and wisdom than would be available through one individual; and fourthly, the group can spread the load of communicating and implementing the decisions that are taken.

Beasley-Murray (1990:21), in quoting anecdotal evidence that only about one in twenty persons are leadership material, makes the point that the leadership will probably be drawn from a relatively small proportion of the membership. This could well pose problems for the many Methodist churches with small memberships, especially as the present studies appear to show that those with leadership potential, such as local preachers, tend to be disproportionately located in larger churches. This would probably necessitate some difficult decisions. The potential of small churches, with less than viable congregations from the perspectives of economic support and leadership base, would need to be appraised and decisions taken as to whether to relocate the congregation through amalgamation with a neighbouring church, or to designate the church as ripe for 'replanting'¹. If a church fulfilled the criteria for replanting this would involve the setting up of a mission leadership team, possibly drawn from members of neighbouring well-established churches, who would be challenged to be involved in the work of pioneering a fresh work in an old area. Some of the members of the team might even consider relocating in the area of the church replant. Such a procedure would probably only be viable for a minority of churches on the critical list.

One of the core functions of the team would be to provide direction and vision for the local church, based on what was seen to be God's leading. The vision would encompass the nurture and growth of the community, including development of its worship life, appropriate response to crisis situations that may arise, and outreach outside of the boundaries of the community. The team would be responsible for overseeing and coordinating the overall pastoral care of the community, whether through visitation, or worship and preaching, or teaching, or the creation and encouragement of small fellowship groups within the church. The team would work together with those responsible for preaching and leading worship to ensure that these important activities aided and assisted the vision of the church, and to ensure appropriate follow-up to such events. The team would be supported, trained and equipped by the circuit full-time staff.

1. The Methodist Church currently has an emphasis on the planting of new churches but equally it might well be appropriate to consider the replanting of churches which have apparently not taken root in the local community. Important criteria in considering whether to close or replant would include aspects such as: (i) attitude of existing membership towards replanting; (ii) long-term viability of the buildings; (iii) potential for church growth; (iv) needs of the local community. These would obviously take into account whether there was an alternative Christian witness in the area.

Small Group Meetings

Part of the genius of early Methodism was the creation of the small fellowship groups meeting variously as classes or bands, and it was these that provided the intimate care and nurture of the members in the absence of a local minister. Sadly in many Methodist churches these particular groups have disappeared, although it is evident that the term 'class leader' lives on even though the main role appears to be that of pastoral visitor. However, it is widely acknowledged that the small group meetings or cell groups are a vital building block of community life and thus the Tiller Report¹ argued for an Anglican church strategy based on three distinct units: the 'cell', i.e., the house group; the 'congregation' or local church; and the 'celebration'-sized unit, made up of the deanery or diocese. This suggestion is readily applicable to Methodism with the celebration-sized unit identifiable as the circuit². Although classes, with their overtones of discipline, ritual testimony and baring of the soul, are clearly in sharp decline, the surveys conducted as part of this work indicate that there is an extensive network of small groups within contemporary Methodism, variously described as: home fellowships meetings, bible studies or prayer groups. Thus the majority of churches hold some kind of fellowship meeting or bible study and around half of those replying to the laity survey indicated that they attended such meetings.

The suggestion here is that small home fellowship groups or 'care groups'³ should become the prime focus for pastoral care rather than through a system of pastoral visitors. Ideally the whole congregation would be encouraged to be part of a care group and to meet together with other Christians on a regular basis. Although the group leader would have the overall responsibility for the oversight of the members, the emphasis would be on mutual care as a group. Regular weekly meetings would provide opportunities for sharing: problems, needs and joys, and care would be expressed through prayer and in practical ways. The care group would not only provide fellowship and pastoral support but also opportunities for: worship, for learning together, for prayer, for service and for outreach. The groups would also be used as communication channels for making known the vision of the leadership group and for stimulating and encouraging active support. As in the early days of the class meeting the care group would be a place where individuals could test out their gifts and calling and be motivated for service within and outside the community. Individual care groups could be made responsible for those with particular needs in the

1. Tiller (1983)

2. The idea behind the 'celebration' unit is the belief that Christians, especially those from smaller congregations, draw encouragement and inspiration from meeting together in larger groups of 200+ for the purpose of worship and instruction.

3. This is the terminology used by the Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church where the pastoral oversight is mainly organised through such groups..

community, such as the elderly and those chronically sick, and support them not only through regular prayer but in visits and in practical ways.

The advantage of care groups rather than pastoral visitors is that the latter puts all the emphasis on individuals whereas the group is able to share the burden of care among several persons. Care thus does not stop if the pastoral visitor is sick or he or she neglects their duties. Moreover, the group is a constant learning situation where new Christians can learn how to pray, care and serve through following the example of others. It may well be that the pastoral visitors become group leaders. On the other hand, there will still be need for home visits, but these will increasingly be focussed on outreach to those on the fringes or outside the boundaries of the community rather than on care of members of the community itself. Such outreach visits would be, for example, to the homes of non-church members of the Sunday school or youth clubs, or to casual contacts or to follow up funerals or other crisis events. There would, of course, still be a need, on occasions, for individual pastoral care or specific counselling and such cases could be referred by the care group leaders to those with the appropriate gifts to undertake this work.

A network of care groups cannot easily be set up overnight since there will be a shortage of experienced leaders and members of the congregation may not be amenable to join. However, if the concept is carefully explained and encouraged, then starting from one group, within a few years a whole network of groups can be created. The initial group is used to train new group leaders as well as to recruit members. When the group reaches a certain size, maybe fifteen to twenty, the group divides and the process repeats itself. The repeated growth and subsequent division of the group prevents it becoming moribund and inward looking. The setting up of care groups would be an excellent starting point in replanting ailing churches, and here initially, the leadership of the group might well come from another church¹.

The Role of Full-Time Personnel

If local community leadership in Methodism no longer requires a full-time ordained minister, is there any role for such committed and trained personnel? In the proposed working model there definitely is the need for trained and dedicated staff who are freed from the distraction of providing their own financial support, but not in the current mould of ministers. Thus, there would no longer be a requirement for a group of men and women set aside especially to preside at the sacraments since this role does not require specialised training or experience and would be normally taken up by the leadership of the local community. Instead, the key role of such full-time

1. This might indeed be one of the criteria in deciding whether to replant the church, i.e., whether the existing small number of members would be willing to take part in care group structures.

workers would be to support, equip and train the local church leadership as well as supplying an overall vision for the work, liaising with the wider body of the church, and providing specialised talents which would not normally be available locally. In the structure of Methodism as it stands today the majority of such appointments would be made at circuit level, although some more specialised roles could be district posts. Some would be full-time, some part-time, but all would be geared to the specific gifts and inclinations of the persons concerned and the needs of the church. There are already existing examples of such appointments. Thus in the five-year period from 1990 to 1995 the Long Eaton Circuit of the Methodist Church, in the Nottingham and Derby District, appointed a lay worker to enable church growth and to promote lay training in the circuit churches, the appointment being made in conjunction with a reduction of the number of circuit ministers from four to three.

A wide variety of personnel could be envisaged, each gifted and trained appropriately. Many current ministers, deacons and deaconesses and lay-workers could naturally fill these posts but in a way which, especially for ministers, was refreshingly new. Thus the staff would no longer be required to fit a particular stereotype but, in every case, great care would be taken to match gifts, inclinations and interest with function. There would also be opportunity for training and redeployment in new areas. Some, for example, might be teachers and trainers whose full-time role would be to teach and train in the circuit and local churches. Such individuals could be responsible for the oversight of the training of local preachers, Sunday school teachers and other local church personnel. They might also be involved in the preparation of localised material for care groups, for preaching series and for membership training. Others might be chiefly pastoral workers with particular skills in visitation and/ or personal counselling. Such workers would normally work alongside members of the local congregations and have, at least in part, a training role through some kind of apprenticeship scheme¹. They might also work with the care group leaders in a support and training role. Yet others might be skilled in evangelism or outreach or youth work and would be used by the local churches in enabling and promoting these areas and giving added momentum to particular local projects. Still others might have particular administrative or organisation skills or technical skills which may have derived from a secular training rather than a traditional theological course.

At district level certain staff might be employed with even more specialised skills,

1. This would emphasise practical on-the-job training rather than the academic 'head knowledge'. Individuals would learn by working with an experienced person, observing how things were done, and being increasingly allowed to do things himself or herself with constant encouragement and appraisal from the trainer.

for example, to advise or supervise design and construction of new buildings or the maintenance of the existing plant. Some may be experts in working with the media and could advise and assist with media interviews, press reports and preparation of videos. Others might have particular gifts in enabling worship or music ministry or promoting drama groups. Yet others might be set apart to work in full-time outreach projects in the wider community. In every case the concern would be to appoint people to meet a particular need and because they had the gifts to meet such needs. Appointments would be for fixed terms with the potential for renewal and subject to regular appraisal for the support of the personnel and the effectiveness of the work. The use of fixed-term appointments, part-time working and flexible work patterns could effectively obviate the need for 'ministers without appointment'. Skilled women, in particular, could continue to work part-time or from the home whilst bringing up a family, although with perhaps reduced hours of responsibility, and hence there would be no need for them to be withdrawn from active ministry.

As a consequence of this approach there would no longer have to be designations such as presbyteral minister, deacon, lay worker, lay pastor, where often the title disguises considerable overlap in function. Rather there would be titles related to the nature of the work actually done, such as teacher, evangelist, musician or administrator. Together with the job title there would be a clear description of what the job entailed, the responsibilities and the means of support. In the circuit, as in the district, there would be an emphasis on working together as a team. As with the local church, the circuit would have a leadership team which would include those in full-time employ of the circuit as well as other appropriate personnel. The team would meet regularly and would be responsible for planning the overall circuit strategy, ensuring that the local leadership teams were functioning well and liaising with the wider church.

An important outcome of the proposed structures would be that no full-time worker would be left without adequate pastoral care, an aspect which appears to be a significant problem in the present system where ministers are frequently serving very much on their own with very little active day to day support. The circuit leadership team, to which all circuit appointed personnel belong, would meet weekly and one of the key aspects of the gathering would be for prayer and mutual support.

The Local Preacher

Amidst all the above changes the role of the local preacher would need to be re-examined. To begin with it is proposed that the local preacher's ministry should primarily be focussed in his local congregation rather than as a circuit-wide ministry; this would make his position more akin to a reader in the Anglican Church. Preachers who were particularly gifted would probably have a wider ministry, but this would be

dependent on invitations from other local churches rather than a circuit plan. Such an invitation system would encourage the use of the best or most effective preachers and would thus improve the overall standard of preaching. At the same time local preachers would normally be involved in the local leadership team as well as belonging to, or having responsibility for, care groups. This heavy work load would be somewhat ameliorated by increasingly making the Sunday worship service more of a corporate congregational concern rather than a preacher-centred affair. The congregation would take increasing responsibility for the worship and this would be promoted through increased congregational participation in the service and the training of worship enablers, who would work with the local preachers. Eventually the local preacher's role within worship might be mainly that of preaching rather than leading the worship, and much of the time-consuming preparation, especially that which had a particular local emphasis, could be shared.

The role of the worship enabler would develop naturally from involvement in the care groups where he or she would learn to pray out aloud and to lead the group in acts of worship. Those who proved gifted in this would receive some additional training and begin to be involved in leading parts of the worship, eventually graduating to leading the whole service. Those worship enablers with a gift for teaching and preaching might then move on to becoming local preachers, although most would not. At first, many smaller churches would not have sufficient preachers and these would still have to be supplied from other churches in the circuit, but in each church there would be an emphasis on indigenous local preachers and every congregation would be encouraged to begin by providing worship enablers, even if this only meant at first those who could read scripture lessons.

The worship and preaching programme would no longer be at the mercy and whims of one individual. The leadership team would work together with the preachers in developing a preaching programme which both reflected the relationship with the wider body of the church and also was relevant to the local church context and vision. Preachers would be regularly encouraged and supported through appraisal and opportunities for continued training. The constant concern would be to improve the standard and effectiveness of the preaching and teaching within the church and yet not lose sight of the divine inspiration which cannot be engineered or manipulated. The leadership would work together with the preaching team to follow through the insights that arise within the course of the preaching ministry. The wider community would also be more involved in congregational worship since care groups would focus prayer especially on the preaching ministry and Sunday worship.

Preachers would be encouraged to have a wider vision of pastoral care and, in particular, to learn the value of pastoral visitation as an important adjunct to their

preaching ministry. Visitation would become more meaningful since, as preachers were localised, they would be able to visit those to whom they preached on Sundays. Involvement in visitation would enable them to have a clearer understanding of the lives and backgrounds of their hearers and hopefully would allow them both to follow up, and receive relevant comment on, their preaching ministry. For those not skilled in pastoral visitation it might well be appropriate for them to work as a member of a team, visiting in partnership with a gifted visitor. That many local preachers already appreciate the value of visitation is shown by the one in three who, according to the survey, are pastoral visitors.

The Sacraments and Occasional Offices

As already intimated there would no longer be a full-time ministry set aside to lead sacramental worship and officiate at the occasional offices. Usually it would be appropriate for a local preacher who was also a member of the leadership team to preside at the eucharist. This would not be the right of every preacher but of those who enjoyed the recognition as leaders of the community and who had the necessary skills to appropriately conduct the service. Every effort would be made to share the responsibility and not to centre the presiding function on a single individual as this may simply recreate an unofficial ordained ministry. It may well be that several persons would be involved in the eucharistic celebration with perhaps one preaching, one presiding, another leading worship and yet others involved in distributing the elements. The celebration could also involve active retired ministers or those in full-time employ of the circuit who happened to be located in the local church, but, in every case, the presidency would be focussed on the leadership of the local community.

Baptisms would need to be treated in a similar way to the eucharist with probably a number of people involved in the preparation for baptism and the conduct of the actual service. Emphasis would be increasingly focussed on adult baptism with the sacrament as a sign of becoming incorporated not only into the universal church but also on becoming an *active* member of the local community of faith. Within the service the accent would be on the corporate involvement of the whole congregation in welcoming a new member, as well as the individual responsibility of the baptism candidate in acknowledging the lordship of Christ and his responsibilities for service. The leaders of the community would have a natural part in conducting the baptism, as representatives of the whole body. Again it would be a shared responsibility to avoid focussing on the role of one or two individuals and the temptation to set them apart as distinct priestly figures.

Funerals, together with the accompanying bereavement care, comprise one of the most disruptive crisis situations currently facing ordained ministers. Deaths are

unpredictable, cannot be fitted into a neat schedule and inevitably interfere with planned work. Furthermore, bereavement often entails dealing with intense emotions and working with people who need to be dealt with particularly sensitively. Some ministers, as we have seen, report huge work-loads, sometimes averaging one or two funerals a week. Inevitably in the present system the pastoral care of the local community of faith suffers and there is rarely time to care properly for bereaved families. What is more, very often the funerals are 'private' affairs, involving only the deceased's family and close friends and the local church has no involvement apart from the loan of a building and the services of the minister. This is unlikely to provide effective outreach, a common justification for extensive involvement in funerals, as few tangible links are being forged with the faith community. Thus the outsider frequently perceives that he or she is purchasing the services of the church and minister, much in the same way as that of the undertaker. The undertaker visits, so does the minister; the undertaker provides a service, so does the church. Once the funeral is over, especially if there are no follow up visits, the bill is paid and the transaction is complete with no further contact until the next crisis occurs and once again the services are required. It seems doubtful that distraught family members are likely to be in any position to be particularly aware of what is said at the funeral service, and may be as moved by the courtesy and care of the undertaker's staff as by the minister. Some kind of follow-up is therefore essential, an activity which is often beyond the resources of a hard-pressed minister, especially those with a heavy workload of funerals.

The unpredictability of death, and the wide range of skills and time needed to follow-up the bereaved and deal appropriately with the deceased, demand a team approach. Ideally each local congregation would have a team of people trained to deal with bereavement and death, although on occasions the resources might be drawn from members of the circuit team. The team would include persons qualified to make the initial visit, to lead the funeral service, to conduct follow-up visits, and if necessary to provide bereavement counselling. Normally the team would work at least in pairs, perhaps a visitor and the one designated to lead the service initially contacting the family concerned. This would allow for mutual support and consultation in the face of a particularly difficult death, such as that of a baby or a child or a young parent. The team would be in a position to call on the assistance of others to follow-up any practical needs and care group members might be encouraged to attend the funerals to support and befriend non-church families. In Malaysia, admittedly in a completely different cultural context, the coffin and body of the deceased would be kept in the home until burial. Church members would gather in the home each night preceding the funeral, possibly on two or three occasions, to grieve,

to provide corporate support and to surround the whole event in acts of worship and prayer. Such a tradition was not only tremendously supportive of the bereaved but acted as an effective contact point with the wider community, neighbours and friends, who would be drawn into the activity. Furthermore, meeting together as a group rather than visiting as individuals defused the possible embarrassment of not being sure what to say or whether it was appropriate to visit or not.

One of the key questions in the current proposals is whether those outside the church as well as those within the community of faith would find it acceptable for those who were not ordained ministers to conduct the funeral services. The evidence from the Cwmbran case study is that often those outside the church were unable to readily distinguish between an ordained minister and a lay officiant at funeral services, and providing that the service was taken competently the latter was quite acceptable. However, the results of the laity survey suggests that, at present, nearly half (44%) of the church membership would find the situation unacceptable. This is perhaps understandable since the opinion relates to the contemporary situation where there is a sharp distinction between the laity and the ordained ministry and the minister is seen to be the representative person. A quite different situation was found to occur within the Sungai Way - Subang Methodist Church where, in the absence of a distinct localised ordained ministry, members responded favourably to the services taken by competent members of the lay pastoral team who were not even formally recognised local preachers. Competence, skill, sensitivity and knowing the leader all contributed to making the services acceptable.

Many of the above structures could already be implemented within the current Methodist system with lay persons working with ordained ministers. There is, however, one major difficulty, the financial considerations. Many clergy look to funerals as an important source of income in addition to their regular stipend. Methodist ministers are no exception and several who were questioned during the course of case study interviews and on other informal occasions have proved extremely sensitive to any discussion of this matter, and consistently argue that because of the low stipends the funeral fees should be considered an essential part of their income. The financial difficulties faced by young ministers with children was cited by several ministers in support of their position. However, in the author's view, while strong feelings are understandable on matters relating to income, it seems difficult to justify the current situation. Very often one suspects that it is not young ministers with children who are involved in conducting the majority of funerals, and in any case, this would hardly be most appropriate since such ministers would lack the experience to cope adequately with the additional workload. A more equitable system of financial remuneration is surely possible.

The situation is also clouded by a number of related issues since ministers have varying approaches to charges with some not charging fees for church members or providing a reduced tariff. It also raises the matter of how far it is appropriate to be 'paid to care', the question raised by Campbell (1985) in his book of that title. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence from undertakers indicates that some clergy have gained the reputation as 'funeral-chasers' by actively soliciting for business. In one case, reported to the author, a retired Methodist minister caused something of a stir by offering to undercut local Methodist tariffs in order to promote his share of the market. It would appear vitally important that the concept of supplementary income or 'overtime' is removed from this arena so that financial gain is not, neither is it perceived to be, the driving motivation for such care. In the proposed system any fees charged, if this was deemed appropriate, would go into the local church funds and be used for the support of necessary paid staff, not necessarily connected with dealing with funerals and bereavement.

In the case of marriages, although it is necessary to have an individual who is recognised by the secular authorities to officiate at weddings, this does not preclude a team approach. Members of the team can be involved in marriage preparation and in leading and taking the service, and in any appropriate follow up of the couple. Although the laity survey showed that less than a third (28%) of members agreed that local preachers would be acceptable as officiants, the actual experience in Cwmbran was found to work quite well with the lay person designated to conduct services being approached even after the eventual appointment of an ordained minister. Increasingly what appears to be important in contemporary society is not so much the authority of office but the charismatic authority that resides in an individual who is skilled for the task. For this reason, the services of outstandingly gifted and competent lay persons are likely to become increasingly acceptable, excepting perhaps to those who continue to hold a high view of the priesthood.

Every-Member Ministry

An implicit assumption behind the structures for pastoral care outlined above is that each member of the community of faith would be involved in some aspect of service within the community. The concept would be encouraged by the removal of the lay-clergy divide with its implicit assumption of an omnicompetent and multi-gifted elite. As already recognised, there would still be the need for an effective leadership, but the team of leaders would be distinguished from other members of the community not by status but by function. This would be emphasised, especially in services of recognition or commissioning where the general membership could be amongst those who pray for or lay hands on their leaders. The whole ethos of

leadership would emphasise partnership and servanthood; it would be an enabling not a ruling leadership.

The outworking of every member ministry would be fostered through the care groups where the group leaders would get to know their members and their potential for service. Every effort would be made to explore the use of practical talents as well as inter-personal skills and spiritual insights. Adult baptism (or confirmation) would become the special focus for exploring the individuals initial involvement in the faith community with equal emphasis being put on both the 'blessings' and 'responsibilities' of baptism and church membership. An initial preparatory year could be devised, following baptism, where the new member was exposed in turn to working for short periods in different aspects of church life so as to get to know other members and also to discern areas of gifting and future service. Such areas of service would encompass the whole activity of the church and typically might include: Sunday school work, youth work, pastoral visiting, evangelism, worship enabling, finance and administration, catering, property maintenance, social concern and so on. The programme would be designed to reflect emphases within the church and in every case the individual would work-shadow an experienced worker. During the year the newly baptised might experience half a dozen different areas of involvement and only after that decide where he or she would wish to be more fully used. In conjunction with the work experience scheme outlined above specific training could be provided on a wider circuit or district basis to support the local church activity. The full-time personnel would have an important role in this work of training.

The importance of the involvement of every person in some aspect of the church's life is amply illustrated by the depth of commitment and corresponding growth which has accompanied movements such as the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses where precisely this emphasis is made. Furthermore, it can be argued that this was one of the reasons for the phenomenal growth of the early church where this aspect was stressed, and in the slow decline of many mainline churches today where church life is centred on the ministry of the paid professional and the concept of every-member ministry is consequently undermined. Of course, the transition from minister-centred activity to a corporate ministry will not be easy since long-standing traditions are difficult to overcome. However, the probable continuing decline in numbers of full-time ministers and the need for church replants will bolster the argument for a radical reorientation of present practice. An additional positive aspect of the proposed shift in emphasis is that in an increasingly fragmented society, where the family unit is constantly under threat, the 'church family', in which every member has involvement and responsibility, will help to provide some compensating stability and a sense of belonging.

Some Objections to the Working Model

It has only been possible to sketch in broad outline the proposed working model in which professional, minister-centred care of the community of faith is replaced by a more corporate model drawing on a wider skills-base, but not ignoring those who work full-time or who have some particular qualification to offer. Limitations of space prohibit a completely detailed description of the model with an analysis of the full implications, but it seems helpful to address briefly some of the objections that are likely to be raised, particularly those associated with dismantling the concept of a distinct ordained ministry.

Catholicity and the Wider Church

Traditionally the ordained ministry has been seen to provide the essential link with the church universal, both the historical connection with the apostles and corresponding ties with other churches. Thus if ordination were to cease, the apostolic succession would be irrevocably broken and churches would revert to an inward-looking and independent type of congregationalism. The concept of apostolic succession is particularly pertinent to an ontological view of ordination where the priestly power and character is perceived to be handed on down through the centuries, and it is this more than anything else which is understood to safeguard the life of the church. However, in reality it is extremely doubtful whether any unbroken chain of ordination can be traced back to the apostles in any church and consequently some prefer to talk in terms of the succession of apostolic truth being handed down from generation to generation¹. The widespread decadence of the church in the Middle Ages and the discontinuity implied by the Reformation would seem to cast doubt on even that interpretation. Certainly within British Methodism there is no unbroken chain of ordination since after Wesley's death the practice of imposition of hands was interrupted for nearly half a century, and when it was reintroduced there was no continuous link with Wesley's presbyteral ordinations. This was precisely one of the stumbling blocks in the Anglican-Methodist union discussions of the 1960's since Anglicans sought the re-ordination of Methodist ministers.

It is arguable that the strongest connection with the 'community of saints', past and present, should not be through the process of ordination, which is in any case not mutually recognised in all churches, but through the more fundamental sacrament of baptism which can be traced back to dominical command and more certainly provides a link both with Jesus and the early church. At the same time, with the renewed interest in the mainline churches in the Holy Spirit, evidenced by the widespread charismatic movement, it could be argued that it is the Holy Spirit who provides an

1. For example, K ung (1968:357) writes: "...Apostolic succession means following the faith and confession of the apostles."

equally fundamental common link with other Christians, the church through the ages, the apostles and Jesus himself. Consequently, the abandonment of the ordained ministry would not, as some might suggest, leave the church rootless or without strong links with other Christian churches and a real sense of catholicity. This is perhaps pointed to by an increasing number of those, especially in the charismatic movement, who regard themselves as Christians first and only members of a denomination second.

Contrary to all this, the absence of distinct ordained ministries, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and others, may in fact be constructive and aid co-operation and links at local level and create the sense of a geographically local church. This is illustrated particularly in local Methodist-Anglican covenant schemes where it is arguable that distinct hierarchical church structures actually inhibit co-operation at grass-roots level. Furthermore, the schemes often tend to be one-sided in favour of the Anglican churches since the covenanting Anglican church often has its own priest whereas the Methodist church may often only provide effectively a third or a quarter minister. This imbalance would be rectified if the dominance of the ordained minister was removed.

Representative Ministry

As already discussed in the previous chapter, a key understanding of ordination in Methodism is that the ordained minister acts as a 'representative' person. What is not clear in Methodist explanations of ordination is the precise nature of this representation. If the connotation is that the minister acts as God's unique representative to the church and the wider community, then this is a concept which is foreign to the argument of this thesis and to our understanding of the New Testament. There is a fundamental sense in which all Christians are Christ's representatives and are the basis on which the validity of the Christian message is judged, and the channels through which the Holy Spirit works. In any case, the divine spokesman in a New Testament context is closer to the charismatic prophet than to an authorised position in a hierarchical structure.

However, there is a further sense in which the minister can be considered in a representative capacity. This is in the circumstance in which the minister represents the local church to the wider community, for example, taking part in some civic occasion or serving on a local board of school governors; or, in which the minister represents the local church within the denomination, or is the denomination's representative to the local congregation; or, in which he represents the local church to the wider ecumenical community. At first sight the demise of the ordained ministry would apparently cause great difficulty in all these areas. However, on deeper reflection, there would seem no particular reason why in all these and other

representative positions the minister should not be replaced by others such as members of the leadership team. For example, a member with educational expertise could function effectively as the church's representative on a board of governors, and possibly a local preacher might represent the church at some civic occasions. In Methodism, a system of lay representation at synods and at annual conferences is already in effect and there is no reason why members of the local leadership team could not effectively represent the local church in these forums. The same is true of ecumenical bodies.

It could well be objected that the minister not only acts as a representative but also as a figurehead and a contact person. It is his name that appears in the telephone directory, on notice-boards and in church communications. Without the minister those in the wider community and from other churches would not know how to make contact with the church. This is, of course, a completely fallacious argument and perhaps illustrates how much ministerial time is currently wasted. There can be few public companies where the switchboard is manned by the managing director! From the viewpoint of communications, contact and co-ordination there is nothing that the minister does that could not be done by an efficient part-time or full-time secretary. In every location where the minister's name formerly appeared as a contact person the church (secretary's) telephone number or address could be given. He or she would be in a position to answer basic enquiries and to pass on particular requests to appropriate individuals or the leadership team. In a smaller church without an office the secretary, aided by modern technology, might well work from home and this might provide a unique opportunity for the employment of skilled but disabled or housebound individuals. In some situations one person might act as a secretary for several churches in a way which parallels the activity of many Methodist ministers at the present time. Almost certainly the level of communication efficiency would be superior to the current situation since calls and correspondence could be directly routed to the appropriate personnel, the secretary would be more consistently available and would be chosen for his or her skills in this area.

Shortage of Personnel

A further difficulty that can be envisaged is that the proposals are over idealistic and cannot work since lay people do not have sufficient time to take on all the duties that are proposed and this is precisely the reason that the paid full-time ministry is so essential. In support of this it can be noted that many churches have great difficulty in obtaining volunteers to help with Sunday schools and youth work or to do pastoral visitation. Furthermore, most of the work of the church is being done by fewer and fewer committed persons. There are probably two worthwhile responses to this critique. Firstly, it is the present lay-clergy divide that feeds the current dire situation

with many church members not realising their responsibilities and others being discouraged from involvement because their gifts are not recognised. There is thus plenty of scope for developing the corporate involvement of the whole church.

The second response is related to the changing nature of today's society and especially work practice. Currently an increasing number of people are leaving the employment market early because of redundancy or through early retirement. At the same time there is an increasing trend towards part-time working and job insecurity. In this context there is probably an increasing number of people who could be motivated to be more involved in the life of the church and actually have the time to do so. For some this might be part-time paid secular employment and part-time paid or voluntary work in the church; for others who are long-term unemployed or who have taken early retirement there might be meaningful service for them to do in the community of faith. Such recognised service, without excessively lengthy training procedures, would be not only a valuable assistance but also a boost to their own self-esteem and dignity.

Of course, there will still be an important contribution provided by those in full-time employment, and this is no different from the current ordination of ministers in local appointment. However, such persons, especially if members of the leadership team, could be given additional support perhaps by means of secretarial assistance or child-care so as to use their time most efficiently.

Lack of Professional Expertise

The final objection that could be cited is that without a professional ordained ministry there would be a grave shortage of expertise available to the local church. In point of fact the reverse is likely to be true. Those currently employed as ordained ministers would, for the most part, continue to be serving within the church, although now enabled to use their gifts and expertise to the maximum benefit of the church. Furthermore, their expertise and experience would be passed on to lay persons who worked alongside them in their ministry. The recognition of lay ministry would in turn release a whole range of new expertise, some garnered from secular training and others from life experiences and Christian service. Learning through experience would continue to accelerate as all members of the community of faith were more fully involved in the work.

Quite clearly in the long term, ministerial or theological training would undergo radical transformation in order to meet the new situation. Increasingly those who were going to work in full-time paid Christian work and those who were working on a voluntary basis would be trained alongside each other. This would probably mean the development of localised training courses and perhaps short-term, for example, weekend, residential training courses. Training would be geared to equip the

individual for the particular task to be undertaken and would continue throughout the working life rather than attempting to provide a lifetime's training at the beginning.

The Working Model in Summary

The working model is prompted by an analysis of the practice of pastoral care within contemporary Methodism, which sees such care as overly minister-centred. As a consequence, ministers tend to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task and much pastoral ministry tends to be driven by crises and the requirements of structures. Such pastoral care is inclined to neglect the nurture of the community of faith, which remains a largely under-utilised resource in pastoral ministry. The situation is exacerbated by the gulf that is evident between ordained and lay members of the community of faith, which leads to unrealistic expectations of the capabilities of ordained ministers and failure to release and recognise lay potential.

The long-term aim of the proposed working model is a complete removal of the lay-clergy divide, not by clericalising the laity but by transforming the concept of ordination as practised today. In particular, recognition or commissioning could helpfully replace ordination and be considered as a setting apart to a function and not a status. Such recognition would apply equally to members of the community serving in a full or part-time capacity, and would be for a specific function or task and for a circumscribed period. It is recognised that the long-term aim is an ideal which could not be introduced in the near future within British Methodism since it would be at variance with the majority of contemporary thinking amongst both lay and ordained members of the community. However, a number of short-term changes could be introduced without much controversy and these would lay the foundation for future more substantial alterations. These innovations include:

1. The creation of local leadership teams in every church and, where necessary, the formation of mission leadership teams.
2. The increasing localisation of local preachers, and the involvement of the local congregation in the conduct of worship.
3. The formation of networks of small, self-propagating 'care groups' to spearhead the pastoral care and growth of members.
4. The development of circuit teams where the full-time personnel are not necessarily exclusively ordained ministers and are appointed to form a balanced team which meets the specialised needs of the circuit rather than individual churches.

Conclusion

Almost certainly British Methodism faces a rapidly changing future, not least because of the projected substantial turnover of full-time personnel which will occur over the next decade, through retirement of serving circuit ministers. Assuming that there is no sudden upsurge in recruitment, the church has the option of *reacting* to such changes by: substantially increasing the numbers of part-time ministers, or through permitting lay authorisation of the sacraments, or perhaps through precipitous moves towards union with the Church of England, leading to the wholesale closure of many Methodist chapels. The alternative, and this will require a much more *pro-active* choice, lies in a rediscovery of the roots of Methodism, in particular a reassertion of the merits of a circuit system, combined together with the recreation of true local pastoral leadership and a network of pastoral groups.

Such developments will logically require the dismantling of the lay-clergy divide, which has been strongly advocated in the latter part of this thesis, and in so doing it will be possible to answer *positively* the question posed by the Methodist historian Henry Rack some 30 years ago, and reiterated below:

"Should we then erase the clear distinction which some traditions have made between clergy and laity, and think instead of one people of God in equal relationship with Christ: all of them possessing only fragments of knowledge of Him; all of them exercising a variety of ministries based on the different contexts of their lives and experiences?" (1965:75)

Appendix I

Ministerial Questionnaire With Results

Note: The original questionnaire was produced printed on both sides of seven A4 sheets, and comprised thirteen pages in total. The basic survey data derived from 142 returns is summarised within the overall format of the survey form. Where the numbers are less than the total of respondents this indicates missing cases.

PASTORAL CARE IN METHODISM - MINISTERIAL SURVEY

SECTION A - BIODATA, BACKGROUND AND TRAINING

1 Age [Mean 50.3 yrs., Range 26-66yrs.] 2 Sex Male [127] Female [15]

3 Family background

a) Marital Status : Single [11] Married [125] Separated [1] Divorced [1]
Widowed [1] Remarried [2]

b) Number of children (if any) [Mean 2.4, Range 0 to 5]

c) Is there a tradition of Methodist ministry in your family ? Yes [22] No [120]

4 Qualification :

(Summarise tertiary level / professional qualifications)

None [62] Secular degree [35] Postgraduate [14]
Teaching Qualification [12] Professional Qualification [19]

5 Name of Training College

Bristol [36] Hartley Victoria [30] Cambridge [17] Queens [13]
Handsworth [12] Headingley [14] Richmond [9]
Others [10] None [1]

6 Pre-ordination employment

(Give type of employment and approximate number of years)

None [13] Church [8] Education [26] Unskilled [7]
Professional [28]
Armed Forces [7] White Collar [23] Sales [8] Other [21]

7 Church involvement :

Indicate number of years as :

- a) [Mean 5 , Range 0 to 31, 96 cases]
b) Local Preacher [Mean 7, Range 1 to 40]
c) Ordained minister [Mean 18, Range 1 to 40]

(You may like to indicate other designations, e.g., Youth Worker or Sunday School teacher etc. under a) .)

8 Current Appointment

a) Status (*E.g., Circuit minister, Superintendent etc.*)

Circuit Minister [94] Superintendent [39] Other [9]

b) Period in current position:

[Mean 4.0 years, range 1 to 31 years.]

9 Theological persuasion

a) Although it is difficult to classify views it would be helpful if you could tick **one** of the following or provide a preferred description.

Conservative Evangelical	[13]	Pluralist	[28]
Open Evangelical	[23]	Traditional Methodist	[45]
Catholic	[9 ]	.....	[20]

b) And any of these if they apply to you :

Charismatic [12] Liberal [59] Radical [9]

{Liberal + Radical [6], Charismatic + Radical [1], Charismatic + Liberal [4].}

SECTION B : CIRCUIT/ CHURCH BACKGROUND

I The Circuit

10 Circuit Size

a) Number of Churches in circuit [Mean 11.8, range 2 to 34]

b) Number for which you are responsible [Mean 3.5, range 1 to 9]

11 Ecumenical projects

Please give brief details of any ecumenical projects/

co-operation you are involved in. { 62 indicated projects, 78 none. }

12 Circuit Staff

Please indicate the number in each category

ministers [Mean 3.9, range 1 to 9] supernumeraries [Mean 1.6, range 0 to 9]
 lay-pastors [Mean 0.2, range 0 to 9] deaconesses [Mean 0.3, range 0 to 9]
 youth worker [Mean 0.1, range 0 to 9] lay-worker [Mean 0.4, range 0 to 9]
 other [Mean 0.2, range 0 to 9] local preachers [Mean 22.6, range 1 to 77]
 secretarial/ administrative [Mean 0.3, range 0 to 9]

II. The Churches

13 Location

Attempt to indicate the type of setting of your churches. (*Tick the most appropriate*)

Inner City	[17]	Industrial Town	[23]
Suburban	[50]	Council Estate	[30]
Country Town	[34]	Ribbon Development	[3]
Rural	[40]	Village	[50]
Commuter	[16]	.....	[ 6]

14 Social Background

Please give some impression of the background of your congregations :

	<i>None</i>	<i>Few</i>	<i>Numerous</i>
Working class	[2]	[72]	[55]
Lower middle class	[2]	[56]	[68]
Middle class	[4]	[53]	[69]
Professional	[5]	[88]	[38]
.....	[-]	[1]	[8]

15 Social Groupings

Please indicate whether you have significant numbers of any of the following groups.

	<i>None</i>	<i>Few</i>	<i>Numerous</i>
Students	[45]	[78]	[5]
Ethnic minorities	[70]	[46]	[8]
Young marrieds	[6]	[98]	[31]
Pensioners	[-]	[2]	[136]
Single parents	[15]	[103]	[4]
Teenagers	[4]	[110]	[22]

16 Membership Role

a) What is the sum total membership of all the churches for which you are responsible? [221]

b) Is the membership of the churches in your care :

Growing [26] Constant [72] Decreasing [41]

c) Very briefly indicate any clear reasons for such changes.

17 General Comments

Any other comments relating to your churches or appointment.

SECTION C PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICE OF PASTORAL CARE**I. Pastoral Care**18 Definition

Describe your understanding of the **essence** of pastoral care.

19 The Shepherd Model

The term pastoral care is derived from the *shepherd* metaphor. What do you primarily associate with this description ?

20 Intercessory Prayer

Assess the part that prayer plays in your conduct of pastoral care and tick **one** box only :

Very important	[9]	<i>(E.g., more time in prayer than visiting)</i>
Important	[81]	<i>(E.g., prayer before and during visits)</i>
Helpful	[49]	<i>(E.g., prayer before or during visits)</i>
Unimportant	[3]	<i>(E.g., little or no prayer directed to pastoral issues)</i>

21 Priorities in Pastoral Care

Pastoral care may be considered to embrace the aspects of crisis care (e.g., response to bereavement, illness etc.) and nurture (e.g., encouraging and enabling personal growth and development). Estimate the relative amount of time you spend in crisis care by ticking the appropriate range :

0-20% [12] 20-40% [39] 40-60% [43]

60-80% [29] 80-100% [17]

(E.g., ticking 80-100% would indicate you spent the predominant amount of your pastoral care time responding to crisis needs.)

22 Pastoral Contact

Please indicate the extent of your pastoral contact with various groupings by ticking the appropriate boxes.

	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>Monthly</i>	<i>Some Contact</i>
Local preachers	[11]	[38]	[80]
Church office bearers	[59]	[47]	[31]
Members	[74]	[26]	[34]
Regular Worshippers	[73]	[26]	[36]
Local residents	[31]	[14]	[83]
Baptism/ marriage contacts	[16]	[39]	[73]
Funeral contacts	[23]	[32]	[73]

23 Other Pastoral Responsibilities

a) Outside of the Methodist Church

(E.g., hospital, schools, old peoples' homes etc.)

{Schools (9), Hospital (15), Old People's Home (5), Others (81). }

b) Internal circuit appointments

{LP Tutor (1), Education and Youth (6), Mission Sec. (8), Circuit Min. Sec. (7), DSR Sec. (6), Other (30). }

II The Pastoral Visit

24 General Aspects

a) Do you consider the *pastoral visit* an important aspect of your pastoral care and oversight? Yes [135] No [6]

b) Apart from yourself who else does **regular** pastoral in your churches:

No-one [8] Pastoral visitors [122]
 Members [20] Lay-worker [8] Class Leader [5]
 Others [29]

c) Are pastoral visits carried out by others , *in lieu of the minister*, acceptable to :

All [8] A Majority [62] A Minority [60]

d) Please state briefly your **main** purpose in visiting.

25 Specific Details

a) Normally do you give advanced notice of:

	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>
i) Your intention to visit	[6]	[108]	[23]
ii) The purpose of your visit	[8]	[108]	[20]

b) Which categories of people do you usually visit :

(Tick only those whom you visit in an average week)

The Sick	[138]	Elderly	[131]
Backsliders	[48]	Members	[113]
Cradle Roll	[7]	Neighbourhood	[43]
Sunday School	[12]	Youth	[19]
Bereaved	[10]	Others	[17]

26 Visit Patterns

a) Although it is appreciated that every visit is different, please try and indicate, by ticking the appropriate boxes, the main components of your visits :

	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
Informal chat	[112]	[21]	[5]	[-]
Informed discussion	[32]	[77]	[16]	[-]
Silence	[8]	[33]	[50]	[22]
Prayer	[77]	[58]	[5]	[-]
Reading of Scriptures	[3]	[57]	[51]	[15]
Holy Communion	[6]	[93]	[38]	[2]
Prayers for healing	[13]	[77]	[29]	[13]
Confession	[4]	[26]	[65]	[28]
Discipline	[-]	[14]	[77]	[28]
Practical Help	[17]	[106]	[12]	[1]

b) Comment briefly on whether you are satisfied with the conduct/ outcome of your visits as outlined in a) .

{Yes (18), Usually (40), Sometimes (25), Not Really (10), No (12), Other (19).}

27 Resource Personnel

a) Within the churches for which you are responsible, please indicate whom of the following make an important contribution to the provision of pastoral care.

minister	[131]	minister's spouse	[67]	other staff	[25]
local preachers	[37]	professional counsellors	[5]		
class leaders	[66]	pastoral visitors	[111]		
stewards	[69]	ordinary members	[103]		

b) Is your spouse involved in paid employment ?

Full-time Yes [31] Part-time Yes [33] None [61]

c) In your experience what is the **main** factor that limits lay visiting ?*(Please tick one only)*

Lack of volunteers	[39]	Limited experience	[18]
No training	[4]	Confidentiality	[7]
Lack of acceptance	[13]	Other	[58]

29 General Comments

Please use the space below to add any comments you might like to give on pastoral visiting.

III Relating to the Sacraments and Specific Ministries30 Infant Baptism

a) Do you baptise the children of :

Members only [1] Christians only [13] Any requesting [106]

b) Please indicate if you offer any alternatives to infant baptism, e.g., Dedication , Thanksgiving etc. .

{Thanksgiving (22), Dedication (11), Thanks & Ded. (22), Other (18), Certainly Not (38).}

c) What preparation do you give to those bringing their children for baptism?

Discuss service	[136]	Preparation classes	[41]
Literature	[61]	Video tape	[4]
Introduce to church members	[51]	.....	[20]

b) Please indicate whether you carry out any follow up programme for parents who are not church members or regular worshippers, so as to maintain contact.

{Rolls (88), Cradle Roll secretary (78), Visit (30), Invitation (10), Sunday School visit (6), Newsletter (5), Cards (13), Sponsors (4), None (19).}

31 Adult Baptism/ Confirmation/ Church Membership

a) Please indicate the proportion of candidates for membership who have been baptised as infants :

Few [3] About half [4] The majority [103] All [24]

b) How do people **normally** come through to church membership ?

(Please tick as many as appropriate)

Follow-up of infant baptism	[11]
Exhortation from the pulpit	[24]
Personal encouragement	[111]
Recommendation by family	[36]
Advertisement of classes	[79]
.....	[33]

c) What preparation/ follow-up do you undertake for new members?

(Please tick as many as appropriate)

	<i>Preparation</i>	<i>Follow-up</i>
Membership classes	[103]	[28]
Introduction to Stewardship	[18]	[10]
Exploration of gifts	[15]	[22]
Training for service	[4]	[20]
Opportunity for testimony	[15]	[8]
Introduction to fellowship group	[19]	[48]

d) If you conduct membership classes please provide the following information.

Number of sessions []
 Who takes the sessions
 Material used for course

 Frequency of the course

32 Marriage

a) As a matter of conscience would you decline to marry those who were :

Not Christians	[17]	Divorced	[7]
Not members of a church	[1]	Co-habiting	[5]

(Please 'tick to indicate your unwillingness to officiate
 and add any comments you feel relevant)

b) Summarise the help you give to couples to prepare them for marriage.
 (Indicate any assistance from others)

c) In the last five years has your church/ circuit organised any meetings with regard to marriage enrichment? Yes [11] No [126]
 (If yes please give details)

d) Does your ministry involve counselling those seeking divorce or separation ?
 Yes [79] No [58]

Any comments ?

33 Relating to bereavement and funerals

a) In the event of bereavement what assistance do you offer?

	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>
Help with practical arrangements [27]. (E.g., contacting undertaker)		[86]	[19]
Pastoral visits	[142]	[-]	[-]
Follow up visits	[113]	[29]	[-]
Financial assistance/ advice	[4]	[58]	[49]
Bereavement counselling	[44]	[80]	[6]
.....	[6]	[1]	[-]

b) Please comment on the extent of your bereavement counselling after the funeral. (E.g., period, frequency of visits and whether you have people who can assist in this.)

{ 1 to 2 visits (15), 2 to 3 visits (14), 3 to 4 visits (7), 4 or more (10), variable (58), limited or no visits (10), missing cases (28). }

34 The influence of the above ministries

In your experience, how effective are the contacts made through baptisms, weddings and funerals in introducing outsiders to the church ?

Of no significance	[5]	Some benefit	[99]
Very fruitful	[28]	.....	[ 9]

IV Preaching and Teaching

35 Preaching

a) Describe briefly the main aims of your preaching ministry.

{Proclamation (53), Presence (31), Personal faith (41), The Faith (48), Daily Christian Living (33), Bible (23), The Church (17), Discipleship (27), Personal Holiness (12).}

b) With respect to your own preaching ministry do you ?

	<i>Consistently</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>
Follow the lectionary	[82]	[52]	[6]
Plan thematic preaching	[10]	[86]	[19]
Engage in expository preaching	[57]	[63]	[3]
Address topical issues	[24]	[106]	[2]
.....	[1]	[3]	[-]

c) Comment briefly on your view of the importance of the Bible in your preaching ministry.

{Supreme (60), Important (48), Qualified Importance (10), Resource (19).}

d) Indicate which of the following you have used in the last twelve months in conjunction with your preaching.

Overhead Projector	[48]	Card aids	[57]
White/ blackboard	[45]	Slides/films	[32]
Objects	[104]	Printed notes	[52]
Audio effects	[47]	.....	[16]
None	[13]		

e) Any comments you might have:

36 Instruction/ Teaching

Apart from your regular preaching ministry please describe briefly any other means used by you for regular teaching/ instruction.

{Bible study (54), Fellowship (47), Housegroups (28), Youth Work (3), Training Office bearers (14), Personal (3), Formal (10), Retreats (2), Miscellaneous (18).}

V Counselling

37 Personal Counselling

a) Does your ministry involve you in a significant amount of counselling?

Yes [89] No [46]

b) If yes, please indicate the *dominant* area of your involvement, e.g., marriage, bereavement, family etc.

{Marriage (21), Bereavement (38), Family (26), Illness (14), Personal (12), Specialised (3), Student (4), Spiritual (3), Sexual (3)}.

c) Does anyone actively supervise your counselling ?

Yes [8] No [124]

d) In your opinion did your ministerial training provide you with sufficient grounding in counselling skills? Yes [25] No [109]

e) Do others assist with your counselling ministry? Yes [58] No [65]

f) Any comments ?

VI The Role of the Laity

38 The Priesthood of all Believers

a) Explain how you understand the significance of the *Priesthood of all believers* (I Peter 2:9) in relation to pastoral care.

{Partnership (31), Body ministry (34), All (33), Assist (17), Miscellaneous (6), No significance (5).}

b) In your view , is lay-involvement essential for the provision of effective pastoral care in your churches? Yes [135] No [1]

c) If yes, how are you promoting this concept?
{Encouragement (31), Preaching and teaching (31), Training (35), Lay-leadership (8), Lay-visiting (41), Specific ministry (20), House groups (10), Stewards review (5), Miscellaneous (12).}

39 Pastoral Care and Fellowship Groups

a) Do the churches under your supervision have fellowship groups which provide some pastoral care? Yes [134] No [6]

b) If yes, approximately what percentage of members belong to such groups?
[Mean 25.3%, range 2 to 80%]

c) If there are such groups do you :

	<i>Regularly</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Rarely</i>
i) Attend	[57]	[66]	[10]
ii) Meet with leaders for training/ feedback?	[21]	[56]	[39]

VII Evangelism

40 Methods of Outreach

a) Indicate which of the following methods of outreach are being employed in your church(es). (*Tick to indicate yes*)

Evangelistic services	[33]	Missions/ rallies	[35]
Door to door visiting	[31]	Personal evangelism	[76]
Literature	[40]	Films/ videos	[13]
Evangelistic Bible study	[28]	.....	[32]

b) Who are involved in this outreach ?

(*Tick to indicate yes*)

Members	[113]	Minister	[99]
Evangelist	[8]	Lay-worker	[13]
Lay-witness	[20]	.....	[ 9]

c) What is the main difficulty you encounter in promoting outreach?

{Apathy (27), Lack of commitment (29), Inexperience (19), Ignorance (10), Inward Looking (11), Other reasons (23).}

VIII Administration

41 Keeping of Records

a) Do you keep records of pastoral care visitation and important information about your members? Yes [123] No [17]

b) If yes, please indicate how they are kept :

Notebook [59] File cards [82] Computer [24][3]

42 Computers

a) Do you use a computer for word-processing/ record keeping?
Consistently [51] Occasionally [11] Not at all [75]

b) If you use a computer please indicate who provides the hardware .
Yourself [54] The Church [7][3]

c) If you do not use a computer what hinders you?
No Equipment [38] Lack of expertise [20] Unnecessary [14]

d) i) Are you aware of *Methodist Software* ? Yes [94] No [34]

ii) Do you use it ? Yes [10] No [92]

iii) Any suggestions for software development?

43 Secretarial/ Office Staff

a) Please indicate the number of staff (if any) available to assist you with office/ administrative work.

i) *Part-time* Paid [11] Voluntary [40]

ii) *Full-time* Paid [2] Voluntary [2]

b) Briefly indicate the type of work you believe could be delegated by ministers to administrative/ secretarial staff.

{Typing (44), Correspondence (52), Clerical (57), General Office (36), Artwork (9), Administration (30), Reception (22), Miscellaneous (18), None (8).}

44 Oversight of Committees

a) How many committees are you responsible to chair? [Mean 9.6, range 1 to 28]

b) Do you delegate lay chair-persons for some of the committees?

Yes [85] No [46]

c) If you have answered yes to (ii), what percentage of meetings are chaired by lay-persons? (*Please tick*)

0-25% [49] 26-50% [19] 51-75% [10] 76-100% [7]

d) When chairing a meeting do you provide a written agenda?

Always [55] Usually [51] Sometimes [23] Never [9]

e) On important issues do you prepare or request others to prepare a background discussion paper summarising the possibilities / pros and cons?

Always [14] Usually [39] Sometimes [72] Never [12]

f) Do your committees spend time in prayer before reaching crucial decisions ?

Always [27] Usually [45] Sometimes [49] Never [12]

IX Overview of Pastoral Care**45 Qualification for Pastoral Care**

a) Which of the following do you consider to be of *most* importance to your practice of pastoral care. (*Tick one only*)

Theological training	[6]	Professional qualification	[3]
Ordination	[4]	Pastoral experience	[56]
Personal Spirituality	[38]	.....	[ 6]
{ Two or more of above (29)}			

b) Any comments ?

c) Would you value the opportunity for further training? Yes [111] No [21]

d) How do you envisage that training could most effectively be accomplished?

Correspondence	[10]	Weekend / Midweek conference	[78]
Sabbatical	[38]	.....	[15]

e) What would you most like to learn?

{Spiritual retreat (5), Sharing (12), Healing (4), Lay-participation (10), Time-management (2), Psychology (10), Counselling (22), Miscellaneous (12).}

46. Hindrances to Pastoral Care

a) Which of the following do you consider to be the main obstacle in your pastoral care ministry? (*Tick one only*)

Lack of training	[6]	Church Structures	[30]
Lack of helpers	[22]	Lack of skills	[5]
Lack of finance/ equipment	[1]	Lack of secretarial assistance	[6]
Lack of prayer	[8]	{Lack of time}	
[31]			

b) Any comments?

{Time (38), Administration (8), Structures and meetings (16), Numbers (5), Expectations (9), Lack of Vision (5), Helpers/ support (4), Training (3).}

47 Assessment of Pastoral Care

a) Is there any assessment of the effectiveness of the pastoral care in your churches? Yes [36] No [100]

b) If yes, who does it? If no, would you welcome such an assessment?

{Welcome (9), Oppose (4); Family Committee (22), Church Council (2), Pastoral visitors (6), Class leaders (2), Stewards (3), Others (2).}

48 Care for the Carer

a) Do you find that your own spiritual, emotional and intellectual needs are adequately met? Yes [69] No [61]

b) Who provides you with pastoral care ?

(Tick all those which apply)

Spouse	[111]	Chairman of District	[]	No-one	[8]
Stewards	[56]	Superintendent	[83]	Fellow ministers	[75]
Members	[69]	Local preachers	[15]	Spiritual director	[-]
Friends	[21]	Others	[16]		

c) Any comments? (E.g., does your spouse receive adequate pastoral care ?)
 {No (19), Not really (25), Mutual care (4), Adequate (28), Well cared for (1)}

X Pastoral Care and Methodism

49 Pastoral Care and Structures

a) Do you experience any difficulties in your pastoral care ministry due to operating within a circuit system ? Yes [53] No [81]

b) If yes, please outline the nature of those difficulties.
 {Spread (21), Administration (3), Meetings (5), Work-load (14), Conflict (6), Support (7), Structures (3), Others (4), The best (2).}

50 Models of Pastoral Care and the Church

Comment briefly if you have any specific models of pastoral care or ideals of ministry upon which you base your own ministry?

{ Body (5), Group (7), Church (6), Proactive (7), Reactive (14), Images (6), Individuals (10), Jesus (9), Miscellaneous (11).}

51 Methodist Heritage

Describe briefly any particular aspect of Methodism which has formed an inspiration for your ministry?

{Class meetings (18), Laity (12), Preachers (4), Family (25), Wideness (6), Balance (3), Emphases (9), Wesley (21), Miscellaneous (16).}

XI Weekly Timetable

52 Please estimate approximately how many hours you spent on each of the following activities in the week of **12-18th. November 1990.** (*You may find it helpful to keep a log*)

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Number of Hours</u>
a) Service and sermon preparation	[Mean 6.3 , range 0 to 20]
b) Attendance at Sunday and other services (<i>funerals etc.</i>)	[Mean 4.9, range 0 to 12]
c) Leading preparation classes (<i>Marriage, baptism, membership</i>)	[Mean 1.0, range 0 to 6]
d) Bible study or prayer groups	[Mean 1.4, range 0 to 6]
e) Fellowship meetings	[Mean 2.3, range 0 to 10.5]
f) Travel between activities	[Mean 4.7, range 0 to 15]
g) Counselling	[Mean 1.8, range 0 to 13]
h) Committee meetings	[Mean 4.4, range 0 to 16]
i) Correspondence	[Mean 2.5, range 0 to 13]
j) Preparation of Circuit Plan	[Mean 0.96, range 0 to 12]
k) Writing reports	[Mean 0.67, range 0 to 4]
l) Other administration	[Mean 3.4, range 0 to 15]
m) Pastoral visiting (excluding travel)	[Mean 7.4, range 0 to 20]
n) Private prayer	[Mean 2.7, range 0 to 8]
o) Private study	[Mean 3.1, range 0 to 12]
p) Writing articles/ newsletter	[Mean 0.93, range 0 to 6]
q) Chaplaincy work	[Mean 1.4, range 0 to 10]
r) Church social events	[Mean 1.7, range 0 to 7]
s) Youth work	[Mean 0.97, range 0 to 16]
t) Work with schools	[Mean 0.76, range 0 to 6.5]
u) Work in the local community	[Mean 1.0, range 0 to 24]
v)	[Mean 3.7, range 0 to 24]

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

Note : If you would like to you may add your name and address in the space below.

7 Theological Outlook

a) Although it is difficult to classify views it would be helpful if you could tick one of the following or provide a preferred description.

Conservative Evangelical	[37]	Pluralist	[15]
Open Evangelical	[28]	Traditional Methodist	[87]
Catholic	[12]	Others	[21]

b) And any of these if they apply to you:

Charismatic [34]	Liberal [73]	Radical [15]
{ Charismatic & Liberal (4), Charismatic & Radical (2), Liberal & Radical (4). }		

SECTION B - LOCAL PREACHING BACKGROUND**8 District**

(Please indicate in which of the following districts you are normally planned to preach.)

Bristol [51] London North-East [16] London North-West [8] London South-West [9]
London South-East [11] Newcastle -on-Tyne [56] Nottingham and Derby [58]

9 Years of Service

a) How long have you been a fully accredited Local Preacher? [mean 24 range 1-62 yrs.]

b) How many years have you been preaching in your present circuit? [mean 18 years]

10 Inspiration

(Please indicate the dominant influences which led to your becoming a Local Preacher. Tick more than one if appropriate.)

Encouragement of Minister	[85]	Family Influence	[41]
Encouragement of local Preachers	[53]	Pulpit Challenge	[34]
Local preachers' <i>Sharing Day</i> .	[1]	Christian Friends	[78]
Discovery of Gifts	[55]	Call	[21]
Need	[9]		

11 Ordained Ministry

a) Have you ever seriously considered entering the ordained ministry? Yes [91] No [118]

b) If yes, what has prevented you?

Not selected	[3]
Call not confirmed	[42]
Family reasons	[10]
Financial reasons	[5]
Health grounds	[5]
Educational qualifications	[3]
Others	[17]

12 LPMA

Are you a member of LPMA? Yes [135] No [75]

13 Methodist Publications

Do you read :

a) *The Methodist Recorder*
Regularly [112] Occasionally [62] Not at all [36]

b) *Worship and Preaching*
Regularly [57] Occasionally [68] Not at all [80]

14 Training

- a) Are you satisfied with the training you received to qualify as a Local Preacher?
 Yes [147] No [27] Not sure [27]
- b) Any comments on the training?

SECTION C - LOCAL CHURCH / CIRCUIT

(The designation *local church* is taken to be the Methodist Church at which your membership is held.)

15 Location

(Please indicate the setting of your local church)

Inner City	[16]	Suburban	[81]	Country Town	[40]
Village/Rural	[38]	Industrial Town	[20]	Council Estate	[7]

16 Social Groupings

(Please indicate whether you have significant numbers of any of the following groups in your local church.)

	None	Few	Numerous
Students	[50]	[115]	[7]
Ethnic minorities	[105]	[64]	[6]
Young marrieds	[13]	[125]	[56]
Pensioners	[-]	[18]	[183]
Single parents	[58]	[102]	[4]
Teenagers	[3]	[149]	[38]
Unemployed	[30]	[131]	[5]
Professionals	[3]	[104]	[85]

17 Membership

- a) What is the current membership of your local church? [mean = 104, range 4-650]

- b) Is the membership of your local church:

Growing [57] Constant [94] Decreasing [52] Not sure [4]

- c) Does your church have any emphasis on outreach?

Yes [135] No [52] Not sure [21]

- d) If yes, how is this expressed?

{Miscellaneous (20), Direct evangelism (23), Visiting (13), Coffee Bar (17), Toddlers (15), Advertising (4), Youth Work (19), Women's Meetings (4), Hospitals and Homes (3), Social Concern (22).}

18 Involvement (Please tick to indicate any positions you hold in your local church/circuit.)

Sunday School Teacher	[11]	Steward	[37]
Sunday School Superintendent	[8]	Circuit Steward	[8]
Committee Chairperson	[26]	Class Leader	[40]
Local Preachers' Tutor	[8]	Pastoral Visitor	[64]
Local Preachers' Secretary	[10]	Organist	[9]
Bible Study/ Fellowship leader	[84]	Church Council	[128]
District and Connexion	[7]	Other	[77]

19 Bible Study/ Home Fellowship Groups

- a) Does your church have regular meetings for fellowship and / or Bible study?

Yes [196] No [12] Not sure [1]

b) If yes, please indicate whether you attend such meetings:

	Regularly	Occasionally	Not at all	N/A
Class Meeting	[13]	[12]	[47]	[99]
Bible Study	[72]	[32]	[34]	[49]
Home Fellowship	[88]	[29]	[27]	[46]
Prayer Meeting	[42]	[32]	[42]	[63]

SECTION D - LOCAL PREACHING MINISTRY

I General Aspects

20 Leadership

a) As a Local Preacher do you feel that you have a position of leadership within your local church?

Yes [137] No [43] Not Sure [26]

b) Do your preaching responsibilities away from your local church make it difficult to be fully part of the fellowship/ leadership?

Yes [42] No [149] Not Sure [10]

c) Would you like to preach more often in your local church?

Yes [95] No [85] Not Sure [22]

21 Frequency of Preaching

a) (i) How many times have you been planned to preach in your current plan?

[mean = 5.0 +- 2.6, range 0-14]

(ii) What is the period covered by the plan? 3 months [203] 2 months [1] Other [4]

b) Are you generally happy with the way you are planned to preach?

Yes [109] Usually [82] No [16]

Any Comments? [E.g., comments on the frequency or locations of preaching etc.]

c) Do you preach outside of your Circuit?

Frequently [42] Occasionally [135] Not at all [31]

d) If yes, please indicate the number of times you will do so during the period of your current plan: [mean = 2+- 1.7, range 0 to 9]

e) Are any of these appointments in non-Methodist churches?

All [20] Some [74] None [77]

II Preaching

22 Aims

Please describe briefly the main aims of your preaching ministry:

[Answers to this open ended question were categorised under the following headings]

Proclamation	[109]	Christian Living	[48]	Personal Faith	[47]
Discipleship	[42]	The Faith	[36]	Enable Worship	[31]
Bible Exposition	[26]	Growth/ Holiness	[23]	Faith Sharing	[9]
The Church	[7]	Fulfil Call	[4]		
Enable Worship	[29]	Presence of God	[31]		

23 Themes/ Subject Matter

a) With respect to your own preaching ministry do you:

	Consistently	Sometimes	Not at all
Follow the lectionary	[90]	[103]	[12]
Take part in sermon series	[7]	[100]	[69]
Engage in Expository preaching	[46]	[117]	[17]
Address topical issues	[34]	[142]	[10]

b) Any Comments?

24 Preaching Aids

a) Which of the following have you used in the last 12 months in conjunction with your preaching:

Overhead Projector	[34]	Card Aids	[52]
White/ Blackboard	[35]	Slides/Films	[15]
Objects	[133]	Printed Notes	[61]
Audio Effects	[40]	Dialogue/Interview	[61]
None	[15]		

b) Any comments?

25 The Bible

a) Comment briefly on your view of the importance of the Bible in your preaching ministry.

[Answers to this open questions categorised under four headings as follows]

Supreme	[100]	Important	[79]
Qualified Importance	[16]	Resource	[10]

b) Please indicate which versions of the Bible you use when *preparing* a service/ sermon and when actually preaching or leading a service:

	<i>Preparation</i>	<i>Church Use</i>	<i>Both*</i>
AV (King James)	[49]	[11]	[23]
RV	[17]	[1]	[7]
RSV	[67]	[7]	[47]
NEB	[36]	[6]	[55]
GNB (TEV)	[20]	[27]	[91]
NIV	[18]	[10]	[74]
Phillips	[48]	[1]	[14]
Amplified	[11]	[-]	[2]
Living	[29]	[5]	[17]
Jerusalem	[30]	[-]	[14]
Hebrew/ Greek texts	[21]	[1]	[-]
Other	[16]	[5]	[28]

* [This category added in analysis and indicates those who use the same version for preparation and in church]

26 Preparation

a) Approximately how many hours do you take to prepare for a whole worship service, assuming that you are preparing a completely fresh sermon and service?

[Mean = 7.8 +- 5.8 hrs. , Range 1-36 hrs.]

b) Do you use the same sermon in more than one service?

Usually [72] Sometimes [127] Not at all [10]

c) Any Comments?

III The Worship Service

27 Arrangement of Services

a) Do any of the following contact you to make final arrangements for the service?

	Regularly	Occasionally	Sometimes	Not at all
Steward	[43]	[70]	[59]	[21]
Plan Secretary	[6]	[11]	[22]	[81]
Organist	[50]	[58]	[61]	[16]
.....	[9]	[9]	[3]	[1]

b) Have you ever missed a preaching appointment due to an oversight on your part?

Yes [64]

No [145]

c) Any comments?

28 Participation in Worship Services

a) Please indicate if you involve others in the worship services which you lead.

	Usually	Sometimes	Not at all
Lesson readers	[69]	[130]	[4]
Prayers of intercession	[7]	[122]	[33]
Worship leading	[2]	[79]	[63]
Solos	[2]	[93]	[57]
Testimóny	[2]	[63]	[71]
Drama/dance	[2]	[73]	[63]
Music group	[6]	[102]	[44]
Children's speaker	[-]	[27]	[99]
.....	[3]	[9]	[4]

b) Any Comments?

29 Use of Hymn/ Song-books

a) Please indicate which of the following hymn/ song-book you use in the conduct of worship services:

	Regularly	Occasionally	Not at all
Methodist Hymn Book	[40]	[71]	[40]
Hymns and Psalms	[196]	[3]	[2]
Songs and Hymns of Fellowship	[17]	[41]	[59]
Songs of Fellowship	[6]	[30]	[65]
Junior Praise	[6]	[31]	[66]
Mission Praise	[34]	[103]	[29]
Youth Praise	[2]	[19]	[82]
Partners in/Spirit/Power Praise	[10]	[43]	[62]
Others	[6]	[25]	[29]

b) Any Comments?

30 Prayer in Worship

a) Please indicate something of the style of prayer which you use in your worship services:

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Not at all
Extempore	[55]	[65]	[72]	[6]
Personally written prayers	[18]	[66]	[75]	[30]
Prayers from books	[9]	[41]	[13]	[15]
Litanies/Responsive	[6]	[20]	[123]	[23]
Silence	[22]	[54]	[110]	[3]
Sung prayers (E.g., Chorus/hymn	[1]	[3]	[80]	[70]
Invitation of prayer topics	[3]	[12]	[92]	[52]
Open prayer	[1]	[3]	[83]	[79]
(E.g., an opportunity for members of the congregation to individually pray aloud)				
Corporate prayer	[8]	[15]	[108]	[40]
(E.g, congregation are given or know the words and can join in together)				

b) Please indicate aspects of prayer covered in your worship services:

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Not at all
Drawing Near	[113]	[56]	[24]	[4]
Confession	[171]	[33]	[5]	[-]
Praise	[173]	[29]	[2]	[-]
Thanksgiving	[187]	[23]	[-]	[-]
Intercession	[189]	[18]	[-]	[-]
Dedication	[123]	[49]	[24]	[2]
Blessing	[163]	[28]	[7]	[1]
.....	[]	[]	[]	[]

c) Any comments?

IV Specialised Ministries

31 Sacraments and Specific Ministries

a) Please indicate whether you have been involved in any of the following:

	<i>The Past 12 Months</i>		<i>Your Whole Ministry</i>	
	Assist	In Charge	Assist	In Charge
Holy Communion	[102]	[8]	[102]	[25]
Baptism	[6]	[6]	[17]	[37]
Funeral	[11]	[10]	[19]	[18]
Marriage	[6]	[-]	[12]	[7]
Healing Service	[15]	[7]	[25]	[6]
Membership Class	[10]	[7]	[20]	[13]

b) Any comments?

V Overview of Your Ministry

32 Area of Support

Please indicate what support the following give to your ministry. (E.g., prayer, encouragement, feedback etc.)

	Considerable	Some	Little / None	Not Applicable
Spouse	[114]	[46]	[9]	[32]
Minister	[36]	[86]	[68]	[1]
Local Preachers	[39]	[114]	[46]	[-]
Fellowship Group	[44]	[61]	[44]	[32]
.....	[]	[]	[]	[]

33 Further Training

a) Would you value opportunity for further training?

Yes [96] No [36] Not Sure [62]

b) If yes, what would you most like to learn about?

{ Pastoralia (4), Worship (22), Preaching (20), the Bible (18), Biblical languages (4), Bible background (7), Church history (6), Theology (28), Spiritual life (4), Ministries (8). }

c) What would your preferred form of training be?

Correspondence	[51]	Weeknight meetings	[41]
Saturday	[33]	Weekend Conferences	[18]

d) Any comments?

34 Difficulties and Joys

a) What do you find most difficult about your Local Preaching ministry?

{None (4), Physical (11), Personal (22), Congregational (30), Needs (20), General Preparation (47), Sermon (24), Prayers (8), Feedback (10), Miscellaneous (17).}

b) What is the most rewarding aspect?

{Miscellaneous (11), Personal enrichment (10), Fulfilling call (26), Participation (26), Changed lives (22), Privilege (9), Feedback (59), God at work (22), Holistic (4), Joy of worship (9).}

35 Circuit Perspective

a) Do you currently have preachers in your circuit who are :

i) On Note Yes [158] No [40]

ii) On Trial Yes [201] No [9]

b) Does your circuit have any emphasis on the recruitment of new preachers?

Yes [121] No [49] Not Sure [37]

c) If yes, how is this emphasis put into practice?

{ Personal (52), Sharing Day (42), Local Church (5), Small Groups (3), Appeals (22), Publicity (5), Involvement (6), Prayer (3), Miscellaneous (8).}

36 Team Ministry

a) Do you have any sense of operating in your preaching ministry as a team with:

i) Other Local Preachers Yes [83] No [81] Not Sure [22]

ii) Ministers Yes [69] No [91] Not Sure [22]

iii) The Local Church Yes [91] No [65] Not Sure [27]

b) Any comments?

SECTION E - PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICE OF PASTORAL CARE**I Pastoral Care Overview**37 Definition

Please describe briefly your understanding of the essence of pastoral care.

38 The Shepherd Model

The term *pastoral care* is derived from the *shepherd* metaphor. What do you primarily associate with this description?

39 The Priesthood of all Believers

a) Explain how you understand the significance of the *Priesthood of all believers* (1 Peter 2:9) in relation to pastoral care.

b) Do you think lay involvement is essential for the provision of effective pastoral care?

Yes [187] No [4] Not Sure [9]

c) Any comment? (E.g., in what ways should/ should not lay people be involved.)

40 Priorities

a) Bearing in mind the Minister's limited time do you think his/her efforts should be mainly directed to *crisis* care (response to bereavement/ illness/ family problems etc.) or *nurture* care (encouraging and enabling personal growth and development). [Please tick one box only to indicate your viewpoint.]

Crisis care only	[3]	Mainly crisis care	[38]
About half and half	[140]	Mainly nurture	[12]
Nurture only	[3]		

b) Any comments?

41 Preaching and Worship

a) Do you feel that worship/ preaching form an important aspect of pastoral care?

Yes [167]	No [13]	Not Sure [24]
-----------	---------	---------------

b) Any comments?

II The Pastoral Visit42 Personal Involvement

a) Are you personally involved in pastoral visiting?

Regularly [58]	Occasionally [83]	Rarely [44]	Never [18]
----------------	-------------------	-------------	------------

b) Does visiting have any relevance to your own preaching ministry?

Yes [96]	No [55]	Not Sure [40]
-----------	----------	----------------

c) If yes, please comment briefly:

{ Understanding (20), Identify concerns (26), Develop relationship (12), Sounding Board (6), Integral Ministry (19). }

43 Importance

Do you consider that pastoral visiting should be an important aspect of an ordained Minister's pastoral care?

Very Important [109]	Important [66]	Helpful [18]
Expected [5]	Unimportant [-]	Not Sure [2]

44 Acceptability of Lay-Visiting

a) Are pastoral visits carried out by lay people, *in lieu* of the Minister, acceptable to:

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Yourself	[167]	[14]	[12]
Majority of Members	[55]	[56]	[75]
Majority of fringe contacts	[31]	[61]	[83]

b) Any comments?

45 Personal Visit

a) Have you been visited by your Minister at home:

In the past 12 months?

Yes [122]	No [70]	Not Sure [3]
-----------	---------	----------------

Ever?

Yes [103]	No [16]	Not Sure []
-----------	---------	--------------

b) Any comments?

46 Purpose of Pastoral Visits

Please state briefly what you consider the main purpose of pastoral visiting should be:

{Relationship Development (61), Mediating God (44), Common Humanity (34), Crisis Care (77), Enabling (46), Directing (14), Body Ministry (21), Knowing (22), Administration (3), Showing Care (44).}

III The Minister and Pastoral Care

47 Qualifications

a) Please indicate your view of the relative importance of the following *qualifications* for the Minister's effective pastoral care.

	Crucial	Important	Helpful	Optional
Theological Training	[39]	[65]	[64]	[18]
Professional Qualification	[6]	[25]	[70]	[70]
Ordination	[28]	[45]	[60]	[46]
Pastoral Experience	[68]	[89]	[32]	[1]
Personal Spirituality	[130]	[59]	[5]	[-]
Relationship Skills	[100]	[76]	[14]	[-]

b) Any comments?

48 Assessment of Your Minister

a) Assess your current minister from the viewpoint of the following aspects which contribute overall to pastoral care. [This information when collated will provide an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of training and selection of ministers and should not be regarded as a personal critique of your minister.]

	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Not Sure
Preaching	[86]	[84]	[24]	[1]
Worship Leading	[87]	[95]	[11]	[1]
Visitation Skills	[83]	[62]	[33]	[15]
Vision	[75]	[70]	[33]	[13]
Enthusiasm	[112]	[56]	[16]	[10]
Leadership	[71]	[72]	[44]	[4]
Delegation	[47]	[82]	[42]	[16]
Chairing Skills	[65]	[80]	[39]	[10]
Administration	[61]	[82]	[25]	[20]
Teaching Ability	[55]	[77]	[26]	[28]
Personal Lifestyle	[129]	[50]	[4]	[7]

b) Any comments?

c) Do you agree with your minister's theological viewpoint?

Completely [71] In Part [107] Not at all [3] Not Sure [21]

49 Hindrance to Pastoral Care

a) Indicate whether you consider the following are obstacles to effective pastoral care in your church:

	Major Obstacle	Problem	Unhelpful	No Hindrance
Lack of Helpers	[36]	[73]	[28]	[46]
Lack of finance/equipment	[3]	[28]	[27]	[113]
Poor buildings	[6]	[22]	[18]	[125]
Lack of secretarial assistance	[5]	[24]	[32]	[106]
Ineffective Committees	[14]	[46]	[35]	[70]
Lack of prayer	[38]	[65]	[31]	[40]
No vision	[33]	[52]	[39]	[45]
Poor Leadership	[19]	[44]	[43]	[62]
Lack of lay-training	[27]	[69]	[38]	[38]

b) Any comments?

50 Pastoral Care of the Minister

a) Do you think that your minister (and his/ her family) receive adequate pastoral care?

Yes [47]

No [59]

Not Sure [94]

b) If yes, who or what group(s) provide that care?

c) What is the gender of your minister?

Male [190]

Female [12]

51 Pastoral Care and Structures

a) Do you believe that operating in a Circuit system poses particular difficulties for pastoral care?

Yes [45]

No [113]

Not Sure [41]

b) If yes, please outline the nature of those difficulties.

{Minister centred (5), Ignorance of needs (2), Too many churches (15), Problem of follow-up (2), Variable response (2), Lack of co-ordination (5), Distance (9), Interferes ecumenically (1), Too many needs (7).}

52 Methodist Heritage

Describe briefly any particular aspect of Methodism which has formed an inspiration for your ministry.

{Class meetings (9), Laity (19), Local Preachers (13), Methodist Family (36), Wideness (8), Balance (4), Emphases (29), Wesley (40), Miscellaneous (30).}

SECTION F - PERSONAL VIEWPOINTS**53 Sexuality Debate**

a) Have you:

i) Read the 1990 Commission's report? Yes [100] No [102]

ii) Been involved in discussion meetings? Yes [71] No [128]

b) Would you agree that:

i) Sexual *orientation* should not be a bar to ordination?

Agree [96] Disagree [52] Not Sure [41]

ii) *Practising* homosexuals/ lesbians should be barred from entering the ordained ministry?

Agree [134] Disagree [32] Not Sure [36]

c) Any comment?

54 Role of the Local Preacher

Would you support moves for Local Preachers to officiate at:

i) Baptism Services Yes [132] No [40] Not Sure [29]

ii) Holy Communion Yes [150] No [32] Not Sure [24]

55 Salvation

What do you think the idea of salvation embraces?

{Forgiveness (70), Right relationship (45), Wholeness (24), New life (40), Heaven (25), All (24), Through Christ (58), By Faith (49), Grace and love (52), Miscellaneous (31).}

56 Baptism Policy and Practice

a) Do you think that infant baptism should be restricted to children of:

Members only [4] Christians only [64] Any Requesting [115]

b) Please tick to indicate whether you are agreeable to alternatives to baptism such as:

Thanksgiving [22] Dedication [48] Strongly object to these [26]

57 Decade of EvangelismWhat is your reaction to the *Decade of Evangelism*?

{Dangerous (18), Ongoing, unnecessary (38), A Spur (26), Good idea (35), Difficulties (38), Miscellaneous (21), Renewal preferred (8).}

58 Any Other Comments

(You might like to comment on how long it took you to complete this survey, your reaction to it, or some other aspect within Methodism. Continue over the page if necessary.)

Mean = 2.1 hours, range 0.5 to 12 hours.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**Note:** If you would like to you may add your name and address in the space below.

Named [116] Anonymous [94]

Appendix III

Lay Questionnaire with Results

Note: The original questionnaire was produced printed on both sides of a single A4 sheet. The basic survey data derived from 205 returns is summarised below. As is evident there are a small number of missing cases in response to some of the questions, for example, only 203 persons responded to the question on gender.

PASTORAL CARE IN METHODISM LAITY SURVEY

[Please respond by filling details or ticking boxes as appropriate]

1. Age [mean 57yrs. range 18-82] 2. Gender Male [83] Female [120]

3. Family Background

Were either or both of your parents Methodist members? Yes [113] No [87]

4. Church Involvement

(a) [Please tick to indicate any positions you currently hold in your church/circuit]

Bible Study/ Fellowship Leader	[34]	Local Preacher	[14]
Chairperson	[9]	Organist/Musician	[21]
Choir member	[33]	Pastoral Visitor	[69]
Church Council Member	[116]	Secretary	[29]
Class Leader	[22]	Steward	[54]
Committee Member	[74]	Sunday School Teacher	[20]
Door Steward/ Greeter	[57]	Youth Worker	[15]
Other (<i>Please specify</i>) ....[69].....			

(b) Would you like to be more involved in your local church?

Yes [26] No [131] Not Sure [48]

5. Small Groups

Please indicate whether your church holds any of the following meetings and if yes whether you attend.

	<i>Meetings Held</i>			<i>Personal Attendance</i>		
	Yes	No	Not Sure	Yes	No	N/A
Class Meeting	[51]	[68]	[86]	[29]	[31]	[144]
Bible Study	[145]	[18]	[42]	[77]	[73]	[55]
Home Fellowship	[141]	[26]	[38]	[90]	[56]	[55]
Prayer Meeting	[109]	[37]	[59]	[52]	[62]	[91]

6. Christian Outlook

Please tick if you identify with any of the following viewpoints or spirituality:

Catholic [24]	Charismatic [23]	Evangelical [71]	Liberal [25]
Pluralist [11]	Radical [11]	Traditional Methodist [98]	

If unfamiliar with these terms please tick here [32]

7. Pastoral Care

(a) Do you feel that your personal welfare and spiritual needs are adequately met by the church?

Yes [156] No [28] Not Sure [21]

(b) If yes, how is this care mainly provided

Minister	[119]	Pastoral Visitors	[64]	Class Leader	[15]
Small Groups	[70]	Church Members	[107]	Other	[12]

(c) Would you be happy to receive a visit from a pastoral visitor *instead* of your minister?

Yes [146] No [25] Not Sure [34]

8. Pastoral Visits

What do you think should be the *main* purpose of pastoral visits? [Tick **not more than three**]

Advising	[19]	Comforting	[38]	Encouraging	[80]
Getting to know	[58]	Listening	[102]	Offering friendship	[110]
Praying for needs	[58]	Reading the Scriptures	[6]	Help in Crisis	[64]
Representing the Church	[63]	Spiritual growth	[35]	Others.....	[2]

9. Ministerial Support

(a) Please give the following details about your current minister¹

Male [176] Female [25] Married [147] Single [33]

(b) Do you feel that your present minister *receives* adequate pastoral care?

Yes [40] No [41] Not Sure [124]

10. The Minister

Which of the following words is closest to your understanding of what a minister is? [Tick **one only**]

Leader	[45]	Pastor	[67]	Preacher	[24]	Priest	[6]	Shepherd	[39]
Servant	[11]	Professional	[8]						

11. Ordination

What do you think is the main significance of ordination? [Tick **no more than three**]

Becoming a priest	[59]	Receiving the Holy Spirit	[58]
Graduation after training	[27]	Given authority by the church	[136]
Recognition of gifts and graces	[46]	Set apart to serve	[126]

1. Exceptionally there were 22 missing cases in the data on the gender and marital status of the respondent's minister.

12. Ministerial Duties

Which of the following do you think are the most important ministerial tasks? [Tick three only]

Administration	[8]	Conducting the Sacraments	[103]	Counselling	[31]
Discipling	[11]	Evangelism	[40]	Encouraging	[44]
Leading the Church	[107]	Leading Worship	[62]	Prayer	[35]
Preaching	[69]	Teaching and Training	[45]	Visiting	[52]

13. The Shepherd

Which of the following do you most associate with the title *shepherd*? [Tick three only]

Authority	[5]	Care	[149]	Feeding	[44]	Friend	[56]	Healing	[15]
Jesus	[113]	Leader	[45]	Protection	[47]	Provision	[15]	Rescue	[20]
Sacrifice	[23]	Serving	[52]	Silly Sheep	[3]				

14. Leadership

Who do you consider are the leaders within your church? [Tick all that apply]

The Minister	[188]	Stewards	[150]	Local Preachers	[76]	Class Leaders	[60]
Lay Worker	[44]	Church Council Members	[113]	Not sure	[3]		

15. Preaching

In your view how important should the Bible be as the basis for preaching? [Tick one only]

Of supreme importance	[110]	Important	[69]	Helpful	[8]
One resource among others	[17]				

16. Worship

(a) Which of the following hymnbooks would you most like to use in worship? [Tick one only]

Methodist Hymn Book	[35]	Hymns and Psalms	[100]
A book of modern hymns and songs	[68]		

(b) Do you appreciate the following involvement of church members in worship?

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
Bible Reading	[197]	[1]	[7]	Leading Prayers	[162]	[14]	[29]
Testimonies	[88]	[41]	[76]	Leading Worship	[134]	[23]	[48]

17. The Sacraments and Other Services

Would it be acceptable to you if designated local preachers were allowed to conduct services such as:

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not Sure</i>
Baptism	[96]	[79]	[30]	Communion	[121]	[66]	[18]
Funerals	[76]	[90]	[39]	Weddings	[59]	[106]	[40]
Region:	South (131)		North (70)	Other (4)			

Thank you very much for filling in this questionnaire which is part of a wider study being conducted by Dr. David Burfield at the University of Nottingham on the Methodist Church. Please return the form to the person who gave it you having answered as many of the questions as possible.

Appendix IV

Computerised Analysis of Postal Survey Data

The data from the three surveys was coded and analysed on the Cripps Computer Centre *VME* System using the *IBM* Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-X) Release 3.0. Basic background to this package together with descriptions of the simpler statistical procedures are available from a variety of sources¹. A brief description of the creation of the SPSS data files and their manipulation and analysis are summarised below.

Creation of Data Files

The surveys of ministers and local preachers required the listing of several hundred different variables resulting from the analysis of over 50 distinct questions. Since the creation of the data files was limited to 80 screen columns, and hence could accommodate only about 30 variables in each file, it was necessary to create a series of sub-files which could be subsequently merged to form a single data system file. For this purpose, each case (returned survey form) was assigned an unique code number which was listed in each sub-file. Each data sub-file consisted of the following information: *data list* - which assigned a column number(s) to each variable; *variable labels* - which provided a full title or description to each variable; *value labels* - which provided a key to the number code used (for example, 1 = Yes, 2 = No); and lastly the data listing using the numeric codes 0 to 9. An abbreviated example of the data sub-file, *file name* 'secacom', is given below:

```
data list / code 1-3 anon 5 region 7 age 9-10 sex 12 marstat 14 kids 16 tradit 18 edstat 20
           college 22 employ 24 involv 26 .....
variable labels code 'Code Number' anon 'Anonymity' region 'Region' marstat 'Marital
           Status' kids 'Number of Children' tradit 'Family Tradition' .....
value labels anon 1 'Anonymous' 2 'Named' traditn 1 'Yes' 2 'No' region 1 'North' 2 'South'
           3 'Other' sex 1 'Male' 2 'Female' ..... /
begin data
001 2 1 31 1 2 0 2 3 4 9 4 00 09 02 1 01 2 0 20
002 2 3 34 1 2 2 2 1 4 9 1 04 05 04 1 04 1 1 33
end data
```

The numbers in bold print are the code or case numbers. The ministerial survey consisted of 142 cases with 389 variables summarised in 13 data sub-files, whereas the local preacher survey embodied 211 cases with 283 variables in 8 data sub-files. The integrity of these files were tested before combining into the total system file by issuing the command shown overleaf:

1. Two useful and readable reference sources are as follows: (a) SPSS Inc., (1984) *SPSS-X Basics*, McGraw-Hill; (b) Norusis, Marija, J. (1988) *SPSS-X Introductory Statistics Guide*, 2nd ed., SPSS Inc.

```
rspssx3(*src.seccacom, list=*src.secaout)
```

The effect of this instruction is to run the specified file, *secacom*, and to list the file, together with any error statements in an output file named as *secaout*. Errors are corrected by editing the original file.

Formation of System Files

In order to carry out statistical analyses of the whole survey data it was necessary to combine the data sub-files into one system file. This necessitates the creation of a file entitled *mergecom* for each survey data set which will merge the sub-files by code number. Details of this command file are summarised below for 13 sub-files named *secacom*, *secbcom* *et seq.* through to *secmcom*.

```
set head=no.
inc 'secmcom'.
save out= 'msys'.
inc 'seclcom'.
save out='lsys'.
.....
inc 'secacom'.
save out='asys'.
match files file='asys'/ file='bsys' / ..... file='msys' by code.
execute.
desc code.
disp.
save out= 'totalsys'.
disp.
finish
```

The *mergecom* file is brought into operation by issuing the following command:

```
rspssx3(*src.mergecom,*src.totout)
```

The effect of this command is to create a series of system files for each data sub-file with file names: *asys*, *bsys*, *msys*; as well as a total system data file named *totalsys*. It is the total system file which is used in the overall analysis of data.

Statistical Analysis of Data

The SPSSX package contains a wide variety of executive commands for analysing the survey data. This includes: summaries of the data; calculations of means and averages; cross-correlation of the variables. The package also contains commands to facilitate re-categorising of the variables before analysis. For example, the original data input included the *age* of each respondent. However, for purpose of analysis it is often helpful to reclassify the *age* variable into a new variable, *age groups*. This is readily accomplished through a *recode* command. A summary of the most widely used commands used in analysing the survey data is provided on the following pages.

Recode

The recode command is used for regrouping or reclassifying variables prior to analysis. By providing a new variable label as well as maintaining the existing label it is possible to analyse for both the original and reclassified variable in the same programme. The following commands recode the frequency variable *age* (spanning the range 20 to 89 years) into nine distinct age groups with a new variable label of *ager*.

```
get file = '*src.totsys'
recode age (20 thru 34 = 1) ..... (75 thru 89 = 9) into ager
variable labels ager 'Age Group'
value labels ager 1 '20-34' ..... 9 '75-89'
```

It is also possible to reclassify sets of sub-variables. For example, the initial analysis of the variable *theol2* permitted categorisation into the following sets: *charismatic*, *liberal*, *radical*, *liberal and radical*, *charismatic and radical*, *charismatic and liberal*. The number of cases relevant to some of these categories were too small to be statistically significant and so *theol2* was recoded into a new variable *theol3* with a reduced number of sets. This was accomplished with the following set of commands:

```
get file = 'totsys'
recode theol2 (1, 5, 6 = 7) (2 = 8) (3,4 = 9) (0 = 10) into theol3
variable labels theol3 'Spiritual Style'
value labels theol3 7 'Charismatic' 8 'Liberal' 9 'Radical' 10 'No Indication'
```

The effect of this recoding is to include the small number of those who indicated radical and liberal together with charismatic under the single umbrella of charismatic and to include liberal and radical under radical.

Analysis of Frequency Variables

A number of variables which consist solely of numerical data such as age (*age*), number of churches (*churches*) or working hours (*timtot*) can be analysed by a variety of techniques as illustrated in the following set of commands:

```
get file = '*src.totsys'
(a) frequencies variables = age/ barchart
(b) frequencies variables = age/ histogram
(c) means age by gender
(d) condscriptive age
(e) oneway age by apptmnt (1,3) / statistics = des / format = labels
```

These commands will in turn present the age data in the following ways: (a) in the form of a barchart; (b) in the form of a histogram; (c) as the mean age of male and female respondents together with standard deviation; (d) as the mean together with standard deviation and maximum and minimum values; (e) as the mean age of each type of appointment together with other statistical information.

Summary of Sub-sets and Responses

In order to summarise the data arising from answers to multiple response type questions the following commands can be utilised:

```
get file = '*src.totsys'
freq var = gender, marstat, lptrad to district
```

This will lead to the output of the number of male and female cases indicated under the variable *gender* expressed both as a frequency and percentage including any missing cases. A similar breakdown of information will be supplied for *marstat* (marital status) as well as all the variables listed between *lptrad* and *district*.

A more complex analysis can be used where respondents indicate varying number of answers within one set of data and it is deemed helpful to *weight* the number of answers. This arises, for example, in the classification and analysis of the open question concerning the aims of preaching. Examination of the responses allowed classification into nine distinct aims with individual respondents indicating up to five distinct aims within their response. The following programme allows one to distinguish between cases with a single aim and those with multiple aims:

```
(a) get file = '*src.totnsys'
    mult response groups = aim 'Aim in Preaching' (aim1 to aim9 (1)) / frequencies = aim
    count naim = aim1 to aim9 (1)
    freq var = naim
(b) sort cases by naim
    temporary
    select if naim gt 0
    split file by naim
    mult response groups = aim 'Aim in Preaching' (aim1 to aim9 (1)) / freq = aim
```

The above programme is in two parts. Part (a) leads to a listing of the number of cases which provide between one to five aims. Part (b) then leads to a more detailed listing where the frequencies of each of the nine aims are listed according to whether it was indicated as the only aim, or one of two aims *etc.*.

Cross-tabulation of Variables

An important aspect of the data analysis is the inter-relationship between different variables. Thus for example one can probe the relationship between gender and theological outlook or between theological outlook and theological college. An illustrative series of commands are as follows:

```
get file = '*src.totsys'
crosstabs gender by theol1/ gender by theol2/ .....
sta = chisq/ cells = count exp row col tot
```

The effect of these commands is to categorise male and female respondents according to their theological outlook. The tabulation includes a *chi square* statistical analysis which indicates whether the differences in the two groups are significantly different. The crosstabulation command will compute up to twelve pairs of variables with each instruction.

Computation

It is also possible to manipulate numerical data as in the following series of commands:

```
get file = '*src.totsys'  
compute sacerdot = sum (tima to time)  
compute pastoral = sum (timg, timm, timq to timt)  
compute admin = sum (timh to timl)  
compute devot = sum (timn + timo)  
compute travel = timf  
compute othtime = sum(timu, timv)
```

The effect of this series of commands is to create a new series of variables which are the sum of numerical variables already defined in the system file.

Running the SPSSX Programme

Having prepared the aggregated systems file and the required analysis programme (as in the examples illustrated above) the *SPSSX* programme is run by issuing the following commands:

```
runspssx3(*src.analnum, *src.output)
```

where, *analnum* is the name given to the analysis programme and *output* is the name of the file which will hold the output data. This latter file can be inspected on screen and if processed without error can be printed out as a hardcopy. The analysis file can be as extensive as required, linking together any of the described functions. However, it is probably more helpful, at least initially, to restrict the length so as ease troubleshooting of programme errors.

Appendix V

Case Study Schedule for Ministerial Interviews

[The following topics were used as the basis for the individual case study interviews with Methodist ministers. The conduct of the interviews and the manner of use of these materials is described in Chapter 1.]

Time and Pastoral Ministry

Introductory Comment

Over half (54%) of ministers who responded to the survey comment on, or cite, *lack of time* as the major hindrance in their pastoral ministry even though their working week was on average 57 hours (range 31-92). How much does this sense of *lack of time* impact on your own ministry?

Perceived Pressures in Ministry

I would like to explore the reasons which perhaps contribute to this pressure in your own (other's) ministry.

a) Is the perceived pressure due perhaps to the "open-ended" nature of the ministry where there are few boundaries as to what is to be done? Do you consciously fix boundaries to your ministry? If yes, can you illustrate what such boundaries are?

b) Is the perceived pressure due to the requirements of the system/ structures within Methodism which prescribe an unrealistic number of mandatory tasks? Can you give some examples of these tasks which you are obliged to undertake?

c) Is the perceived pressure due to the unrealistic expectations of the membership?

Can you give some examples of these expectations? Do you think ministers perhaps collude with the membership in fostering these expectations? If so, why?

d) Is the perceived pressure perhaps due to the unrealistic aspirations of the minister? Can you give some examples of these aspirations?

e) Is part of the problem of time pressure related to working from home, where the minister is never away from the job? Do you think the problem can be mitigated by having a church office or perhaps implementing a rigid time schedule for working at home?

f) Are there other reasons of which you are conscious that give rise to a sense of pressure of time in ministry?

Time Management

a) How conscious are you of positively managing your working time? Do you think *Time-management* skills are relevant to pastoral ministry? Do you daily/

weekly/ monthly or annually plan or review how you will spend your time? Are you aware of how much time you spend on different tasks?

b) Do you consciously prioritise or tend to respond to needs as they arise? Could you give some examples of the essential (priority) tasks, which failure to do would compromise your role as a minister?

c) I recently spoke with a minister who is released annually by his church for a week to review, pray and plan for his ministry and the life of the church. Do you believe such a process would be helpful in your own ministry? Are there constraints which would make such an idea impossible?

d) In proposed ministerial appraisals do you feel it would be appropriate for the appraisers to help ministers consider aspects such as use of time and priorities in ministry?

e) One of the solutions to limited time availability is delegation of tasks to others. In a recent survey of local preachers "delegation of tasks" was perceived as the weakest of eleven aspects of ministerial competence. Why do you suppose this is?

The Balance in Pastoral Ministry

Introductory Comment

In some ways pastoral care is analogous to health care. Both are concerned with the overall health or wholeness of the individual in the context of a community. In health care one is constantly faced with the problem of the use of limited resources. For example, in respect to heart disease decisions have to be made as to whether to invest heavily in training and techniques for dealing with cardiac arrests, and in centres for open heart surgery, or to concentrate resources on preventative measures such as: advice on diet and exercise and screening of those with high risk factors.

Personal Ministry

a) Using the above analogy how would you rate the emphasis in your own ministry between preventative and crisis care? Can you give some examples of what you consider preventative pastoral care? Do you feel your ministry is typical of the wider Methodist ministry? Explain briefly.

b) How do you perceive the developing emphases in pastoral care? (Particularly in the literature and training for pastoral ministry). Do you feel there is, as it were, a movement away from the general practitioner to the specialist?

c) In the recent ministerial survey the area of skill development in which ministers were most interested to receive training was counselling (28%). Do you think this could be seen as a movement towards increasing specialisation? What do

you think is the motivation for this trend? What, if anything, do you feel a minister has to offer which could not be provided by secular counselling? Might the emphasis on time-consuming counselling be a distraction from the main pastoral task?

Contemporary Models for Pastoral Care

Introductory Comment

In the ministerial survey respondents were asked what they associated with the "Shepherd" motif (model) for pastoral care. A significant proportion (18%) commented that the "Shepherd" image was no longer an appropriate model. Reasons given included: 1. The image is archaic and no longer relevant or comprehensible in modern industrialised society. 2. The metaphor generates a patronising and directive image which is not compatible with contemporary society or pastoral care.

a) Would you agree with these criticisms? If not, how would you respond?

b) The second criticism is linked with the idea that the church is placed within a democratic, egalitarian society where all have equal rights and some may be more qualified than the minister. [Hence what right has the minister to direct others?] Do you think this overlooks the sense of divine call and God given authority?

c) Other skills that came somewhat low down on the local preachers' appraisal of ministers were a sense of vision and leadership. Do you think the unease in relation to the leadership aspects of the "Shepherd" may reflect inadequacy in leadership concepts amongst ministers?

d) In recent years alternative metaphors have been used to describe the essence of pastoral ministry, for example the pastor as: doctor, fireman, mid-wife, conductor, enabler, clown, wounded healer and so on. Do any of these images resonate with your own ministry or do you perhaps have an alternative image?

Relationship between Lay and Ordained

General Comment

In principle the Methodist church subscribes to the concept of *the ministry of the whole people of God*. In the ministerial survey ministers overwhelming support this principle by the view that lay involvement is essential for effective pastoral care. In practice this is often not the case. Many lay-people express the view that the minister has been called, trained, ordained and is paid to do the pastoral task - he should therefore get on with it! Some ministers have somewhat similar attitudes.

The Ordained Ministry

a) In what way do you consider the ordained ministry differs from the ministry of lay Christians?

b) Of the four criteria cited above, viz.: calling, training, ordination, and salary which do you feel most sets apart ordained ministry from lay-ministry?

c) What constitutes a "calling" to the ordained ministry? Is it an inner conviction, abilities and gifts for ministry, recognition of those gifts by others, or something else?

d) What is your understanding of ordination? Is it simply a recognition and commissioning or more than that? Does something else happen at ordination which fits the person for a priestly function?

e) Would you agree that in the eyes of the laity ordination leads to a change of status as well as function as perhaps is evident in use of titles such as reverend? If so do you feel this undermines the acceptability of lay-ministry?

Local Preachers' Ministry

a) Whereas ministers are "ordained" local preachers are "commissioned". In both cases individuals are set apart for specialised ministry. Why do you think there is this distinction?

b) About three quarters (73%) of local preachers surveyed felt that preachers should be allowed to conduct the sacraments. Would you be sympathetic to that view or would you consider that conduct of the sacraments was part of the ministerial function?

c) Local preachers would appear to have a somewhat anomalous position within Methodism. On average local preachers are probably responsible for the major part of the worship and teaching life of the church and yet are not fully involved in the leadership of the local church. Do you recognise this as a problem? Have you work out some way of dealing with this?

d) On the whole most local preachers have circuit preaching responsibilities? Do you think this is a strength or weakness of the system?

Local Church Leadership and Structures

a) One minister confided that the problem with Methodist ministers is that they attempt to combine itinerant and parish concepts of ministry. Would you agree with this critique? Which do you try and emulate in your own ministry?

b) Would you agree that the implications of a fully itinerant ministry are an autonomous local leadership? Is this realised in practice? How is the church leadership organised in your own ministry?

c) What do you consider is the role of a deacon/deaconess. How does that role differ from a lay-worker or minister?

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