



The **Methodist** Church

Methodism, ministers and management: how Methodist presbyters think about their management skills

Professor Yvonne Guerrier and Christopher Bond
Business School, University of Roehampton London.

Principal Investigator:
Professor Yvonne Guerrier
Business School
Southlands College
University of Roehampton London
80 Roehampton Lane
London SW15 5SL

Tel 020 8392 3063

Email: y.guerrier@roehampton.ac.uk

A Research Project funded and supported by Southlands Methodist
Trust

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Executive Summary	4
Section one: Introduction	5
<i>Aims of the project</i>	6
Section two: Context for the research	7
<i>Structure of the Methodist Church</i>	7
<i>The role of the presbyter</i>	9
<i>Challenges for the Church</i>	9
Section three: Methodology	11
Section four: Data, findings and discussion	14
<i>What do presbyters do?</i>	14
<i>What influences presbyters' values and approaches to management and leadership?</i>	20
<i>How do presbyters work with and lead others?</i>	27
<i>How do presbyters manage change and conflict?</i>	34
Conclusions	40
Recommendations	46
References	47

Acknowledgements

The authors of this report gratefully acknowledge the support and cooperation that they have received in undertaking this study. Thanks are due to members of Southlands Management Trust for agreeing to support and fund the project, members of the Connexional team for assisting with the scoping of the project and offering advice throughout (Rev. Mark Wakelin, Dr Sue Miller and Dr Christopher Stephens) and finally but most importantly all of the interviewees who freely gave of their time and expertise without which this project would have not been possible.

Executive summary

This project, funded by the Southlands Methodist Trust, concerns the way Methodist presbyters construct and develop management and leadership skills.

Rather than thinking about management as a static bundle of skills and competences that can be identified and 'taught', this research starts from the assumption that it is more revealing and interesting to consider the way in which professional identity at work is developed and sustained. The questions that this research poses are 'in what way and to what extent do presbyters think of themselves as managers?'; 'are they expected to have management skills by those they work with?'; and 'how confident are they in the management skills that they feel that they need?' The research is informed by and supports literature that explores notions of job crafting (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), resistance by some professionals to identify themselves as managers (Grey, 1999; Brocklehurst et al, 2009) and previous studies into the role and attitudes of presbyters (Shreeve and Luscombe, 2002; Haley and Francis, 2006).

The overall approach to conducting this research was based in a qualitative tradition. The research approach used was one of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In total data was gathered from 22 transcribed semi-structured interviews that were undertaken with presbyters, lay employees of the Church and lay volunteers. These interviews were analysed using qualitative data analysis software and several themes related to the research questions were identified.

The findings are reported in four main sections that explore: what presbyters do; what influences presbyters values and approaches to management and leadership; an exploration of how presbyters work with and lead others; and a review of how presbyters manage change, conflict and decline. Overall the findings support a view that, in the context of a rapidly changing society, a decline in active church membership and increased requirements for managing, many presbyters need more support and development in gaining the skills and competencies necessary to be effective managers.

The recommendations identify key areas that the authors feel the Church could consider in strengthening its support and development for presbyters and circuits to ensure effective management and leadership of the Church in a time of uncertainty and rapid change. These include an increased emphasis on management and leadership in initial training and first stationing, increased discussion and sharing of good practice at local, regional and national levels and the development of strategies for managing decline. These recommendations are offered as a starting point for discussion within the Church.

Section one: Introduction

This project, funded by the Southlands Methodist Trust, concerns the way Methodist presbyters perceive that management and leadership skills are constructed and developed within their role. The idea for the research was generated from a conversation between members of the Connexional team and researchers engaged in work related to identity, leadership and management at the Business School at the University of Roehampton.

Rather than thinking about management as a static bundle of skills and competences that can be identified and 'taught', this research starts from the assumption that it is more revealing and interesting to consider the way in which professional identity at work is developed and sustained. In most jobs, and especially in a role as multi-faceted as that of Minister, there is considerable scope to 'craft' the role (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001): emphasizing those elements we like, feel comfortable with and feel represent our view of ourselves and down-playing those elements that we are less comfortable with. This crafted role is influenced by our sense of our professional and work identity. During a period of change, this professional identity comes under challenge. The notion of who you have to be (or not be) and what you have to do (or not do) and know about to manage a role effectively needs to be re-evaluated. The questions that this research poses are 'in what way and to what extent do presbyters think of themselves as managers?'; 'are they expected to have management skills by those they work with?'; and 'how confident are they in the management skills that they feel that they need?'

Whether they are done by people called managers or not, all organizations require people to 'do' management activities. Thus church ministers, as much as systems managers, need to 'manage' church resources (property, finances), get people to do things for them, and implement changes. How people manage may be context specific - it may not be appropriate for the church minister to manage in the same way as the systems manager- and the skills may be acquired through practice as much as through formal training (Mintzberg, 2009) but it can be argued that there are aspects of managerial practice that transcend all contexts and apply whatever values underpin the organization that is being managed (Tengblad and Vie, 2012).

Nevertheless, some writers argue that there is inevitably an ideological component to the use of the term 'management'. Grey (1999) contends that 'the use of words is not innocent, and in the case of management it carries irrevocable implications which are associated with industrialism and modern Western forms of rationality and control,' (p577). Milbank (2008) goes further, asserting: "'Management" cannot be ethicized, since the term denotes the meaningless but efficient manipulations which are all that is left to do with things once they have been de-sacramentalized' (p128).

Thus the notion of 'management' is a contested one within a church context. On the one hand, the mere use of the term 'management' may be regarded as a

'cuckoo in the nest' which is opening the way to a de-sacramentalized way of thinking. On the other, management techniques may be regarded as a useful toolbox which can be applied as comfortably within a church setting as elsewhere if done mindfully.

It is worth recognising that 'management' is a contested concept outside the Church setting as well. On the one hand, this is an 'age of management': more and more people are doing jobs where they are designated as managers or making use of management skills. On the other hand, the status of managers as an occupational group is in decline and people do not necessarily want to identify themselves as managers (Brocklehurst et al, 2009). In sectors like health care and education, the implementation of New Public Management, which aims to make public sector organizations more business-like and focused on performance, has increased the number and importance of managers but, some would argue, at a cost to the traditional values of the public sector such as 'care' and 'duty' (Diefenbach, 2009, Bond and O'Byrne, 2012). Within the private sector too, recent failures in the banking sector and elsewhere can be partially ascribed to business and management models which privilege performance, growth and profitability before ethics and values. A study of the way Methodist ministers think about management is valuable not just to consider what they may need to learn about management but also as a way of exploring different models of 'doing management' that may be transferable into other sectors.

Aims of the project

This project is an exploratory study which aims to understand how professional and management skills are embedded within the role of Methodist presbyters and how the requirements for these skills are changing.

The specific objectives for the research are to:

1. explore with opinion leaders within the Methodist Church how the role of the minister is changing and what are the challenges in defining and developing the management and professional skills required by ministers;
2. explore with a sample of Methodist ministers the way in which they construct their professional identities and employ or struggle with management and professional skills;
3. explore with a sample of lay church members and others who work with ministers the way in which they construct the role of the minister and what behaviours and approaches they saw as helpful or less helpful.

Section two: Context for the research

Structure of the Methodist Church

The Methodist Church is the fourth largest Christian Church in Britain. It was founded by John Wesley, an eighteenth century Anglican minister, who became an itinerant preacher attracting massive crowds of working class men and women from the newly industrialised cities to his open air revivalist meetings. Wesley's radicalism led to tensions with the Church of England and although he had wanted to keep his movement within the Anglican Church, it became inevitable that a separate Methodist Church should be developed. Methodism is, therefore, a non-conformist movement, as it does not conform to the rules of the Church of England (BBC 2011, Haley and Francis, 2006). By the mid-1800s, despite some internal schisms, 4.5% of the British population were members of the Methodist Church (Haley and Francis, 2006).

The key precepts of the Methodist Church have led it to develop a structure which is different from the structure, for example, of the Anglican Church. The Church places an emphasis on egalitarianism, inclusiveness and openness (Clutterbuck, 2011). This means that distinctions between lay members and clergy are minimised. There is an expectation that lay people will take on formal roles in organising, managing and setting the direction of the Church at local and regional and at national level. The 5000 church communities, each of which will have an ordained minister, are structured into about 500 circuits with a superintendent minister who provides oversight and pastoral leadership (Methodist Church 2011, BBC, 2011). Circuits are then structured into Districts each with a Chair of District. Whilst the Chairs of District may in some respects resembles a Bishop (BBC, 2011), the important distinction for the Methodist Church is that a Chair of District is placed in a role which requires oversight but is not an overseer. The circuit structure is designed to provide a Connexion which supports and holds the Church together (Clutterbuck, 2011).

The Church also has a commitment to ensure that decisions about the direction of Methodism are made in as open way as possible and that all views are able to be heard and taken seriously (Methodist Church website, 2011). Methodism is governed through Conference; a gathering of representatives, both lay and ordained, which meets every year in June. The President of Conference is a Methodist minister and this is an annual appointment. Conference decisions are brought together into a document called Constitutional Practice and Discipline (CPD) which acts as a rule book defining the way in which the Church should operate.

Methodism has been described as a child of modernity (Richter, 2002). There is an emphasis on reason and critical thinking. "We need to think through things in the light of reason" (Methodist Quadrilateral, 2012). There is also a strong commitment to social justice and social change. But attitudes that were traditionally associated with the 'non-conformist conscience', disapproval of drinking, smoking, gambling

and sports events on Sunday, have shifted. A survey of Methodist ministers (Haley and Francis, 2006) showed that only a small proportion (6%) thought that church members should not drink and only a minority (23%) disapproved of small-scale raffles (which had been construed as gambling).

The role of the presbyter

There are two routes to ordination within the Methodist Church: becoming a deacon (with the emphasis on service and witness) and becoming a presbyter (Methodist Church, 2010). The focus of this report is on the presbyters and specifically on those presbyters who are serving as church ministers or circuit superintendents rather than as chaplains. The ministry of presbyters is characterised under three headings: ministry of the word (including preaching and evangelism and the informal and formal sharing of faith); ministry of sacrament (presiding over acts of celebration and devotion, especially baptism and Holy Communion); and ministry of pastoral responsibility (including oversight, direction, discipline, order and pastoral care) (Methodist Church, 2002, 2010). A particular characteristic of the Methodist Church is that all ministers are expected to be itinerant and to be available for 'stationing' by Conference at the beginning of each church year in September (Richter, 2002).

In the 1970s, the typical presbyter was male and over 50 with many years of service as a minister: it was a major challenge to attract young people. Since then there has been a major shift, not just because of the ordination of women, but also because more people are choosing to become presbyters later in life bringing with them experience from other careers (Griffiths, 2002). There has also an influx of presbyters from different national and ethnic backgrounds, particularly with Afro-Caribbean or African backgrounds. The Church also affirms the ministry of gay men and women (Methodist Church, 2012b). Within Methodism, as in other Churches, there is some tension between those with a more 'liberal' set of views about Christianity (more provisional about claims of truth, more liberal in attitudes about society, more concerned about issues of social justice) and those with a more 'evangelical' set of views (a more conservative view about scripture and about society) (Clutterbuck, 2011). Haley and Francis's study (2006) argues that younger ministers are more likely to hold more conservative attitudes.

Challenges for the Church

The Church has suffered a steep decline in membership since 1960: in 2010 it had only 1/3rd of the members that it had in 1960 (down from 729,000 (Haley and Francis 2006) to 238,000 (Stephens and Clutterbuck, 2010)). There is particular concern about what is termed 'the missing generation', those in the age range 25-40 who are largely absent from congregations (Clutterbuck, 2011).

This decline presents a number of challenges. Firstly there is the structural challenge of, what in a lay organization would be termed, downsizing. Unsurprisingly, it is difficult to close churches and so presbyters are increasingly responsible for multiple, but smaller, congregations. Haley and Francis (2006) note that, in their survey, many ministers felt frustrated that they were being spread too thinly. Decline is also problematic because of the reliance within Methodism on the contribution of the lay members. Ministers, therefore, often have to rely on lay support from within an increasingly elderly congregation. Where congregations

have grown, new member may not understand (or agree with if they do understand) the way in which the Methodist Church functions and is structured. It is argued that people increasingly see church as something they 'consume' rather than co-create (Clutterbuck, 2011, p49).

At the moment, there are discussions within the Church about what type of strategies and structures might respond best to the demands of the current situation of decline and allow time and effort to be given to mission and the development of fresh expressions. One idea is to move towards larger circuits that will allow for ministers to support each other, for some specialisation, and perhaps to bring in more specialist support. This will inevitably put more focus on the role of the superintendent minister, who will have more management responsibilities and who will need to focus more on building a team within the circuit rather managing than a series of one to one relationships.

Section three: Methodology

The overall approach to conducting this research was based in a qualitative tradition. The research approach used was one of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Such an approach, which values the collection of data from a variety of sources and the generation of theory from this data, fitted well with the main objectives and motivation for this study. The goal of generating deeper understandings that explain people's actions is also consistent with grounded theory and supported our goal to explore how those in ministry and those who work with them conceptualize and enact aspects of their role that involve management and leadership. In this respect the study seeks to develop situated knowledge and deeper insight into how a number of presbyters and those engaged with presbyters perceive ministers roles in respect to activities that relate to management and leadership. The study uses insights gained from a series of interviews conducted with Methodist ministers (presbyters and superintendents), interviews with training providers from theological colleges, lay workers and employees of the Methodist Church.

The main method used for gathering the data that underpins this research and contributes to the report was via semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with 22 participants, comprising of 13 presbyters (of which 5 were superintendents) and 9 others, comprising of a mixture of lay workers and employees of the Methodist Church. Interviews were either conducted face to face or via telephone. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and fully transcribed via a secure transcription service. A summary of the structure adopted for the interviews is attached in appendix one.

The interviewees were selected through a mix of quota and convenience sampling. Quota sampling involved seeking to ensure that those interviewed represented a broad spread of gender, ethnicity, role, locality and length of service. Convenience sampling was employed in that all those that participated volunteered to participate after email invitations were sent to a range of potential participants in various locations. A limitation of using these forms of sampling is that participants are largely self-selecting and thus may not be entirely representative of the full spectrum of views and opinions held by ministers and others in relation to management and leadership in Methodism. It is also likely that those that volunteered to participate had clear views on the research topic.

Given the focus on managerial and leadership identity, the study centred on how these individuals made sense of their own roles and how they enacted and engaged with those aspects of their role that involved management and leadership. Questions focused on respondents' educational and career backgrounds, their role and activities as a minister, the nature of the context in which they were ministering, values and beliefs that underpinned their approach and actions with respect to leadership and management and a review of specific critical incidents that they identified.

Table one gives an outline of the basic demographics of the participants. In order to ensure anonymity biblical names from the Old Testament have been assigned to the participants.

Participant	Role	Length of service in ministry	Gender	Ethnic Origin
Adam	Presbyter	< 5	Male	White
Jacob	Superintendent	11 - 20	Male	White
Joseph	Presbyter	11 -20	Male	White
Moses	Presbyter	> 20	Male	White
Rebekah	Superintendent	11 - 20	Female	White
Sarah	Presbyter	< 5	Female	White
Ruth	Presbyter	5 - 10	Female	Black
Gad	Presbyter	< 5	Male	Black
Elizabeth	Presbyter	5 - 10	Female	White
Hannah	Superintendent	11 - 20	Female	White
Isaac	Superintendent	>20	Male	White
Samuel	Superintendent	> 20	Male	White
Esther	Presbyter	5 - 10	Female	White
Mary	District		Female	White
Abraham	Employee		Male	White
Ezekiel	Training Provider	N/A	Male	White
Leah	Training Provider	N/A	Female	White
Benjamin	Employee	N/A	Male	White
Josiah	Employee	N/A		White

Naomi	Employee	N/A	Female	White
Asher	Lay volunteer	N/A	Male	White
Zadoc	Lay volunteer	N/A	Male	White

Table one: Demographic characteristics of participants in the study

Data analysis involved the use of the qualitative software *QSR NVivo* which allowed for an iterative process of coding, thematic mapping, testing and recoding (Crowley et al., 2002). Initially, interview transcripts were analysed by focusing on interviewees' perceptions of their organizational role and various approaches and forms of management and leadership activity. Later stages of coding involved more focused interrogation of the interviews and literature around specific themes.

Section four: Data and Findings

This section of the report presents and discusses aspects of the data in relation to the original objectives that were set for this research. Throughout our analysis of the data the researchers have coded and re-coded data in various categories to inform, test, validate and gain deeper insight into the rich commentaries that form the interviews. For the purposes of this report we have organised our presentation, analysis and discussion of the data into the following sections:

- What do presbyters do?
- What influences presbyters' values and approaches to management and leadership?
- How do presbyters work with and lead others?
- How do presbyters manage change and conflict?

What presbyters do?

The role of presbyters as defined by the Church involves three elements: the ministry of the word (including preaching and evangelism and the informal and formal sharing of faith); ministry of sacrament (presiding over acts of celebration and devotion, especially baptism and Holy Communion); and ministry of pastoral responsibility (including oversight, direction, discipline, order and pastoral care) (Methodist Church, 2002, 2010).

As one of the respondents explained, the routine requirements of Methodist ministry help shape much of a minister's time:

An awful lot of Methodist ministry... is highly governed by routine – timing of meetings; they are laid out so that your week, month, year is patterned by a series of meetings, from circuit meetings to church councils, and all the rest of it, so there's... And Sunday comes around all the time, which is the focus of much of what a minister does, so there's a lot of routine (Samuel).

However, using a term drawn from organization psychology, there is considerable scope for individual presbyters to 'craft' their roles because they tend to work independently and with limited supervision: so in practice the role may be enacted in different ways. Job crafting (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001) means shaping the tasks and relationships in a role in a way which affects and is affected by the meaning given to work and one's work identity, as the following quotes indicate.

.. there's a lot of flexibility; I mean we have a great privilege, really. I mean you can do all sorts of things with your time (Isaac).

I mean, one of the real joys of the job is just how many different strands it does have, which also means that each of us, I guess, can be our own man or woman, as a presbyter, because we're able to use the different gifts that we

have, and actually perform the task in very different ways, and yet be equally be valid and accepting... accepted as presbyters (Adam).

But this flexibility also can also cause problems: in terms of knowing what to prioritise. We explored with the ministers their preferences and dislikes in relation to different parts of their work. Most felt that they had been drawn to ministry because they enjoyed engaging and sharing their faith with people. These were some typical comments:

Well, I'm a people person, so anything that involves engaging with people makes, you know, brings me to life (Sarah).

I became a minister because I wanted to meet people, to talk with people about the faith and to, sort of, to share various key aspects, key points of their lives (Jacob).

I enjoy interacting with people, I find it a huge privilege when open their front door and allow you across the threshold, and share things about themselves which perhaps they don't share with a lot of other people (Esther).

These responses chimed with a comment from a training provider who argued that students for ministry tended to see ministry as a 'people business.'

However, ministers also have to cope with a large amount of routine administrative and management work. When we asked ministers what aspects of their work they least liked to engage with, it was frequently these aspects that they highlighted. For example:

I suppose, dealing with... sometimes, dealing with a lot of nitty gritty issues, like property, and so on, is something that I'd rather not have to do quite so much of (Adam).

I do far more in the way of property stuff than I would like to do and some of it is isn't properly coped with at all, I freely admit that (Hannah).

Some of those who worked with presbyters could become frustrated because they felt that many presbyters had misunderstood what the role actually entailed and the importance in practice of these management elements as the following challenging comment illustrates:

Preach a sermon or two on Sunday, and they'll be nice to me the rest of the time. Then they come in, realise that they've got to fill out reports, written annual returns, you know, they have to be accountable for some church, you know, funds, etc, and they cave in (Benjamin).

However, from the presbyters' point of view, they felt that they were sometimes required to do tasks which were outside their competence. For example,

Things like the finance and the property, and things like that which are completely out of my expertise, knowledge (Elizabeth).

Initial training providers admitted that in programmes with limited time to cover a wide range of aspects these aspects of a minister's work could only be touched on. At the same time, even if training was given, a trainee presbyter might not recognise the importance of an aspect until they had to cope with it in practice.

Some presbyters also felt that others might not always recognise the practical problems that were incurred in relation to what might seem like quite simple requests for compliance to regulations.

Things like disability discrimination, criminal records, bureau of safeguarding checks and asbestos... you know, various, kind of, building style. All of which has to be done. I don't, I don't decry it... Arguing with, you know, people in congregations who find even the thought of... the prospect of abuse so dislocating to, you know, to, sort of, say, well, no, actually, we do have to do this. This does happen in our church and, you know, then, sort of, to, sort of, get that through, and then the sheer number of hours it took to, sort of... in that small circuit at that point to, sort of, go through people's applications with them and sign them off and verify their identity and send them off and this, sort of, thing... I think it was just uncomfortable to be in at the sharp end of that, I think (Jacob).

Haley and Frances (2006), in their survey of Methodist ministers, commented that many found it difficult to cope with the competing demands in their roles and felt that they were not able to give enough time to study, do pastoral visiting and prepare worship. At the same time, routine administration and management (even if resisted) can be used as an excuse to avoid making more difficult decisions about what one should be doing, as the following observation suggests:

I mean, really, all your pastoral stuff has to fit in around your management stuff. Now you've got the opportunity when that management stuff is eased to do other things and you don't know what you're supposed to do sometimes. Because you're so used to keeping busy that, you know, you know you've got to see Mrs So-and-so but you fit it in between meetings, don't you? You pop in there and say how busy I am (Isaac).

These dilemmas are familiar ones in relation to other types of professional role. In addition, most ministers are no longer responsible for just one church but have responsibility for multiple pastorates. This was another issue identified by Haley and Frances' (2006) survey: many of their respondents felt frustrated that they were spreading themselves too thinly. One of our respondents who worked with presbyters (Josiah) also noted that, although the numbers of members each presbyter was working with had not increased, these now tended to be spread across different pastorates and so administrative functions needed to be repeated for each. Some pastorates can be quite widely geographically spread so the presbyter will be spending quite some time travelling.

Stationing

One of the specific features of Methodist ministers is that ministers are itinerant. All ministers are stationed by Conference. They should be willing to be moved each year to a new appointment, although, in practice, ministers stay about 5 years in each appointment (Richter, 2002). To facilitate itinerancy, all presbyters are provided with a manse. The benefits and disadvantages of itinerancy are much debated: it has been suggested that it can produce 'servile' ministers who feel unable to challenge and fully lead their congregations (Haley and Francis, 2006; Richter, 2002). Certainly some ministers were very aware of the need to ensure that the congregation takes ownership of the development of the church since the minister would not be there permanently, as this quotation from Ruth indicates:

And, how do I help you and enable you to own what those are, and to do them? So that when I'm not here anymore you know what it is, but equally it's not that something has been started or has happened, which as soon as I'm not there everyone's like, oh, thank God, we can stop doing that now.

Josiah also identified some of the negative aspects of the stationing process and the way it tended to create peaks and troughs of activity:

...the first year that a presbyter is there and they're sort of getting used to it, and the last year they say well, I've only got another year so why bother. So actually, you get these little peaks for three years and then... So I think the system itself is a problematic system, and I think it also leads to things like presbyters having ideas, setting things up, doing it, but actually running it all themselves, and the minute they go that all folds, because people relied on them and they go to do it somewhere else, which is good for them because they feel they're doing something quite positive. But actually, for the organisation as a whole and the local church, it's a disaster because you build people up, you get them going, you get them enthused, and then the catalyst to all that disappears.

One of the consequences of the stationing process and the fact that presbyters are living in a manse is that it can be quite difficult to draw boundaries between work and non-work activities and for presbyters to ensure that they made time for their families and for themselves. One presbyter compared the role to working as a teacher:

You can never say, there is nothing I have to do. There's always somebody in here that... in this role, there's always somebody else you can visit, there's always a book you can read, there's always some work on the computer that you could do... the difference here, you're living on the job. I am not very good at shutting the study door and not answering the phone, and if I need... I have to go out or away to switch off (Rebekah).

Ironically, it can be those presbyters who live on their own who find it most difficult to manage their workload, as Adam argued:

I'm on my own, I'm widowed, which apart from all the other disadvantages, it also means there's nobody to, sort of, apply the boundaries to me.

From an outside perspective, however, some of those working with ministers questioned whether having a manse freed ministers to focus on their work or separated them from the day-to-day concerns of their congregations.

I do believe that residency, you know, in a sense takes a lot of the power out of the ministry. I think it creates a lethargy, because, you know, you don't have to pay council tax, other people, you know, oh, this window's rotten. Okay, we'll fix it. You know, you're not having to budget, you're not having to, you know, do these sorts of things (Benjamin).

Preaching and pastoral work

Most of the presbyters we spoke to defined leading worship and preaching as core to their role and many were proud of their skills in this aspect of their calling as the following quotes illustrate:

Leading worship, preaching is really something that is core to my ministry and calling (Gad).

Worship and preaching is core to who I am, and to my calling, and although it is obviously the most stressful thing that one does every week, it is, on the other hand, a significant thing to be doing, and I feel, I get positive feedback from that (Adam).

I am a minister of word and sacrament and I'm a... my best gift is preaching (Joseph).

Haley and Frances (2006) noted that the majority of Methodist ministers in their survey had little confidence in the quality of preaching within Methodist churches. However, we found no evidence that the presbyters we spoke to were concerned about this.

There was a wider range of views about pastoral work. Some of the presbyters we spoke to felt that this was also a core part of their work as well as something they enjoyed and were good at:

I love visitation. I love being there for the people. I love being there always. I am not that, sort of, surgery type minister. I have to make an appointment to be seen. No, just tell me you want to come, I'll make myself available (Gad).

And one of my colleagues is saying, pastoral work, no, he'd rather make somebody do that, and I'm saying, pastoral work, yes, and get somebody else to do some of the paperwork. Like, pastoral work, I'd rather do that, you see. So, yes, whereas that's an issue for some of my colleagues, that for me is the best part of my ministry. That's one of the things I really enjoy doing, you know, so, yes (Ruth).

As Ruth indicated, some ministers felt that pastoral work was not one of their gifts and was something that could be better handled by someone else. Joseph did not regard it as part of his ministry.

I've become more and more convinced that that's what I'm good at it and you should mainly do what you're good at. You've got to cover as many bases as possible, but then I said I don't have the pastoral care and visiting all that stuff (Joseph).

Clearly if pastoral work is done badly or inappropriately by a minister, it may be best managed by other members of the team. Elizabeth told the following story of an inappropriate visit:

A story that somebody told me once where a minister was obviously really, really behind and desperately knew that he had to go and visit this lady who was in her 80s, so he went on the way back from church council at ten o'clock at night, and she was in her, sort of, nightgown and absolutely mortified that this young man was on her doorstep and what would the neighbours think, you know, and he, bless him, had just not thought that through of how that was for her (Elizabeth).

Some of those working with presbyters, however, questioned whether it was appropriate for a minister to avoid what was seen as a central element of a presbyter's calling:

But Wesley used to visit people. I'm afraid it's being driven by ministers not liking something... I don't see why a group of people, Methodist ministers, should be any freer from such temptations as cherry picking, being lazy and fearful. And courage and honesty and effort I'd have thought are required. But, yes, I do agree with specialisation, I think it's daft to, you know, get a sprinter and make them a cart horse and so you need to work with that (Abraham).

What influences presbyters' values and approaches to management and leadership?

In the interviews presbyters were asked a number of questions to explore what factors and values had influenced their approach to and beliefs about management. Within this context we explored with interviewees how previous experience in management roles, in secular contexts, had informed or shaped their practice in presbytery. We also explored with those interviewed the role that their own theological beliefs had played in shaping their practice in respect of leadership and management.

Many of those interviewed had previous management experience prior to entering the ministry. In exploring how their experiences in secular management roles had impacted on their approach to management in the context of ministry there were some interesting findings. Whilst many had been successful managers in a secular context they struggled with approaches to using concepts drawn from secular management or their previous experience in their role as a presbyter.

A key factor influencing approaches to management and leadership in Methodism appears to stem from deeply held values and principles that shape individuals' attitudes to and enactment of managerial activity. For many the attraction of Methodism lies in its roots as a participative, non-hierarchically structured movement that values people as much as it does structure and organisation. Some of the statements below capture the essence of why many of those

interviewed had been attracted to Methodism and how these core values impact upon their philosophy and practice of management.

I think what's particularly... probably the reason, above all, that I am a Methodist, is the lack of hierarchy in Methodism, and the sense of sharing, and of equal responsibility, and so therefore, any attempt to put a minister on a pedestal, which some congregations still like to do, and obviously was very typical, again, you know, a generation or two ago... I mean, it's natural for me to resist anything of that sort, and it's not natural for me to try to impose anything, or even to want to try to impose anything. I think I've got a, sort of, natural, sort of, democratic way of working (Adam).

... one, kind of, principle, one, kind of, vision that I would, sort of, be running with, it would be to, sort of, say to everybody, what is the contribution that you think... what is it that you bring to the table to, sort of, do? And then to, sort of, try and find a way in which they can actually use that, which I think, kind of, runs against... I don't know whether it counts as a management model because, I mean, in my experience of management, it's about somebody telling somebody else what to do, whereas I think actually it needs to, sort of, run the other way around. This is what I can do. Can you give me the opportunity? Can you help me find the place to actually, sort of, do this? (Jacob).

For many Methodism provides a place where communities can work together and people are the centre of the organisation. Typically presbyters spoke about approaches to management and leadership that were non-directive, participative, shared, distributed and inclusive. Many discussed the role of management and leadership in relation to ownership of churches, stressing that the presbyters role was to lead and direct in collaboration with the wishes of the members who were the core of the church. The following comments exemplify the values expressed by many of the interviewees:

I would like to think that I'm not too directive; I like to encourage people, I like to give people space to discuss things. I don't like to impose things, I like to work collaboratively as far as I can, although I'm aware, particularly in leading worship, that that sometimes involves a lot more energy and a lot more time than it would to do it yourself; but I think it's really important, I really do. And I think that applies to the kind of leadership/management stuff as much as it does to the worship (Sarah).

Methodist congregations would, in my experience and understanding, be more independent. They will be better able to, sort of, speak their mind. They will be better able, more inclined, to, sort of, be involved in the processes of management and leadership (Jacob).

Presbyters also recognised that the Church provided a home for many who faced challenges in the secular world and held a strong belief that the Church was a place that could help them find a role and purpose and sense of belonging within

its community. These values can raise challenges for presbyters when it comes to managing well-meaning but inefficient volunteers.

And I think also the church rightly, I hope, would offer a place and a home to a great variety of people, some of whom perhaps would find it difficult to be accepted in other contexts, and therefore that can raise issues in terms of how one includes and values and channels and everything else, what they have to offer (Elizabeth).

Although Methodism appears to operate around a set of core values that seek to embody participation, democracy, shared responsibility and distributed leadership it also functions within a complex set of rules, regulations and operating practices defined by influences such as CPD, Conference and government legislation. For the presbyter on the ground dealing with these external requirements and balancing these with local expectations can be a challenge. The following statements indicate how these very values and loose-tight models of organisation can be challenging as well as empowering.

I'm conscious as well that I'm doubly cursed by the, kind of, management models of ministry that seem to me... I mean, and it might just be my perspective, but this, kind of, management model that we seem to be running on in terms of the Methodist Church at the minute... and I'm not sure of what value that's going to be in the long-term (Jacob).

it's all about people, that's the thing; I have to keep telling myself, it's about people. The more you talk about management and leadership or oversight, you can easily start to think about it's about policy and plans and visions and goals. And you think no, you've got to limit that. I sometimes think people like me should just have it up on your door - it's about people stupid (Joseph).

The enactment of Methodist principles and values in practice can also leave some working with presbyters confused, particularly with respect to notions of overseer and oversight as the following comment indicates:

I think one of the first questions I had in an induction meeting with my manager here is I said, so I don't understand who manages the ministers?And she burst out laughing. And when you have people who are technically employed by God, I think, isn't it, I think their employer is God, then I think immediately one starts to understand the issues. I think partly there's that issue that people don't see themselves as operating within a corporate structure and believe their allegiances and alliances, you know (Naomi).

A further factor which became apparent in conducting interviews was a general distrust among many presbyters around secular notions of business and management. As noted previously many presbyters entered ministry out of a desire to work with people and as a result of a calling to engage with ministry of

the sacrament and the word. Throughout the interviews it became apparent that many presbyters perceive a tension around the very concept of management and the way in which it has been both conceptualised and practised in the business world.

Milbank (2008) articulates this tension well when he describes sitting next to a man on the GNER train going north. He is wired up to his laptop and on his mobile talking about hiring and firing, developing new initiatives and closing down unprofitable activities. "Yes," says Milbank (2008), 'he may well be a systems manager for an information technology firm. Or, he may equally well be a Baptist minister,' (p.117).

This example encapsulates some of the debates about management with which the Church struggles. On the one hand, it is an example of the way in which managerialism has, as Grey (1999), argues, insinuated itself into areas of life which would normally have been regarded as outside its domain. On the other hand, it raises issues about the appropriateness of this ubiquity: should we be as appalled as Milbank (2008), writing as a theologian, is to see a minister of the church behaving in the same way as a systems manager?

This resistance to secular conceptions of business and management practice can be ideologically rooted and equally can manifest itself in a reluctance to work with the dominant market-led nomenclature that surrounds modern day conceptions of organisations be they public, voluntary or private sector. The following comments from presbyters illustrate the challenge that they feel in engaging with a discourse about the Church that draws on secular management approaches and language.

I'm not their boss. Now whether in the paperwork, I am, it is written in the job description, I'm the line manager. But actually the Church is their boss, but then I'm the one who manages and works with them (Joseph).

There are differences, great differences in being a manager outside in the world and within the Church. Well, I think there should be. There are some... having said that, I mean, I'm a believer in the kingdom of God and the right way to do things, and I feel very sorry, but... for those who can't do... who don't feel that they can do things in a Christian way out in the wide world, particularly in business (Rebekah).

You know, if there are people who are difficult to manage in a business situation, there are various pathways to deal with that. But when you're ministering to people that's a whole, to me it's a whole different thing, because you're there for them pastorally as well, and you're doing a holistic approach (Sarah).

Those working with presbyters can find this reluctance to engage with notions of organisation based on secular business practices frustrating. The following comments illustrate the challenges that this can pose for those employed in

secular roles that are expected to work with presbyters to effect change and development in the Church:

I mean, there is a huge, I don't think it's resistance it's almost like a fear of anything from the world outside the Church. I find that I often have to adapt my language to say things in some kind of weird churchy way where you'd normally just use the shortcut of a management speak. You know, say, for example, this one circuit there's a group been set up to look at it, well,...it's a project isn't it? It's a project with a defined time and end in which we need to define the jobs that need to be done and allocate them, da-di-da-di-dah (Naomi).

...I think the Church is scared of the language, and I think they use that as an excuse for not doing it. So as soon as you say anything that sounds vaguely business-like, it's condemned. Yes, I mean I think that, you know, within the non-church world there's some extremely good models of management and of leadership, and many of those could easily be transferred into the church, and I think would greatly benefit the life of the church, and for some reason we seem to be frightened of that, and I'm not quite sure why that is.... and I think that all comes back to where we started, which is people don't understand the business and the culture and all those sort of issues, and feeling that all this is the church becoming a business rather than being a faith community, or whatever language you want to use (Josiah).

One interviewee who works closely with presbyters is critical that ministers see themselves as being above managerial activity and that many congregations rely on lay people to ensure that these aspects of the role are delivered effectively. He contends that many late entrants to ministry seem motivated to do this to escape the pressures of management in the real world and effectively abdicate their responsibility for the management functions that their role requires. He contends that even those who have held management roles outside the Church 'come to the Church as a good place to hide.' In discussing presbyters' attitudes to engaging with the more secular aspects of their work he states:

they come to the church doors, take their brains out, hang them up, and come in, then they mismanage the building, the property, they mismanage people. And that's their way of being holy, by rejecting common sense from the world around them (Benjamin).

Perhaps the most interesting finding relates to the lack of any discourse amongst presbyters relating to marketing. Some, given, their theological stance are even reluctant to talk about evangelism. This lack of a discussion around outreach, engagement and ministry within the context of a decline in UK church attendance and membership appears to imply a resigned acceptance amongst many that they are managing in decline. Some of those involved with working with the Church comment:

But I don't think a lot of ministers do see that (marketing) as their role and particularly if they're in a particularly big church where they're incredibly busy anyway and they think, I've just got to concentrate on what I've got to do. But, you know, people aren't going to, sort of, come back to church unless something is done and the churches that tend to get the big numbers are the charismatic evangelical churches like the Baptist church here in our village which packs it out with lots of children. So I do think it should be an important part of because the Methodist church grew out of the big evangelicals, the Wesleyans, you know, going round and saying to people, hey, come on come and talk to us. It didn't come of people saying, by the way here's today's lesson. They actually went out and sold it (Zadoc).

I know. And that worries me for two fundamental reasons. One is because they are under-estimating the value set that comes with a management discourse. So talking about managing people and all that, sort of, stuff is not neutral. So I'd like our ministers to put their theological hats on and engage with the value system that accompanies the language of organisational management. And, secondly, I'm disturbed because marketing is no different. It is a second discourse with values that you need to engage with but lends us all sorts of useful tools, as does management, for helping us do our job better.... And the language of strategy by and large is similar to marketing they will not use and it troubles me because they will use some aspects of management as if, as if that was a neutral technology that was delivered by the divine or something and you can use it without worrying and I just think they need to engage with it and see what does it mean to manage people? You know what's that about in terms of values? And I think, I personally think we should engage enthusiastically and head on with organisational theory of management techniques, but do so as people who understand there's no such thing as neutral technologies. And I think we should engage in marketing in exactly the same way but with exactly the same set of questions. Neither should we reject, out of hand, or swallow unquestioningly; we should in all engage intelligently as people who want to say, oh, what are the assumptions that are going on here? And which bit, why are we uncomfortable with this? You know what is going on for us? So, there are manipulative marketing techniques which give it a bad name, but some marketing's just plain good communication - learn from it (Abraham).

Presbyters were specifically asked how theologically informed their approach to management was. This was an interesting question as many struggled to formulate an immediate answer. The struggle that a number of presbyters had in answering this particular question further reinforced the divide that many perceived between the spiritual and secular aspects of their role.

In probing further it became clear that many presbyters' approach to managerial activity was governed by their personal theology and personality. The following

comment exemplifies this strong connection that some felt between their personality and their theology:

Oh, yes. Oh, that's a very – oh, a very good question, a very good... No, you are absolutely right, and it's a... yes, no, I think it's been governed heavily by my own personal theology. I mean, it... well, I think it's been governed heavily by my theology and by my personality (Isaac)

Many of the presbyters and lay workers we interviewed expressed a view that they adopted a liberal theology. Many were influenced by notions of social justice, liberty and social inclusion and openly discussed issues related to race, gender, poverty and social isolation. Despite this strong emphasis on social justice and ministry there was no direct articulation or identification with such notions as liberation theology. The comments below reinforce the tendency amongst many of those that we interviewed towards espousing a liberal theology:

I mean I'm a leftie and I think if I had to take a stance on theology I'd be a liberal, but you always preach to the right of your theology (Isaac).

I mean I come from seriously theologically liberal roots, I take as theologically liberal a stance on pretty well every issue you want to choose but I still don't see why we can't share our stories with other people. I'm very interested in theirs – I always have been (Abraham).

I'm a Liberal by theological instinct, so I was less concerned about evangelism and evangelistic campaigns – deeply suspicious of evangelistic campaigns, and I, in the end, was... I mean, I talked about friendship evangelism; that is, I think the best way of recruitment into the life of the church is by having a warm open community where... and to provide a worship that has something about it and is sufficiently interesting that people wouldn't feel embarrassed about inviting friends to it (Samuel).

For others their theology and approach to leadership and management was grounded in their everyday lives as a Christian operating in the context of a presbyter. Some articulated this as 'Kingdom Living'. Many of the responses suggest that there is an implicit tendency towards practising a notion of pastoral theology with regards to a presbyter's responsibilities and actions relating to management. The following comments support this type of approach to management:

what matters most is making the connections between who you are on a Sunday, and who you are in the week, and being able to be completely and utterly natural about them with the people that you meet, and, therefore, them seeing that what you do on a Sunday and your Christian faith is just as an integral part of who you are (Esther).

part of my theology is that, you know, we are all loved by God, and God actually has a purpose. We all have gifts and skills that can be used to build

his kingdom, and I see part of my role as being, as the manager and leader or whatever, as being to try and draw that out of people (Sarah).

I see part of my role with the team is to talk theology with them as well. Encourage theological reflection. So the vision thing is the sort of the management sphere, where are we going? But why are we doing this, where's God in this? Not just a God outcome, not just our calling outcomes, but like where do you see God in this, you know? So it's enabling reflective... you know the reflective practitioner thing. So there's a kind of pastoral reflective, spiritual director role, almost in that (Joseph).

Some spoke about reframing their managerial activity as a central part of their ministry and thus appreciated that effective management of resources, relationships, committees etc. were fundamental to their role as a presbyter. One presbyter describes how he managed to reframe the annual accounts as a crucial aspect of his service to God.

I mean, there was a shaft of, a blinding flash of reality when someone said to me, you look at accounts – oh, God, budgets; budgets, you know? And then he said to me, well, budgets are moral documents; it's where you put your priorities; what are your priorities? And suddenly when you realise that actually budgets are moral documents – ooh! Brilliant! Absolutely brilliant! (Samuel).

How do presbyters work with and lead others?

The core relationship that presbyters have is the one with their congregation. This is not always a straightforward relationship to negotiate. On the one hand, the presbyter's role immediately gives them status within the local community as Isaac explained:

...lovely, lovely family and you're the centre of attention and you've got... and when you move it's no problem. You don't have to make friends everywhere; you're just bumped right in the centre of it all and you've pre-formed relationships. And your role and your status and you haven't got to earn it, you're just given it; it's a given.

However, the importance of the role can also act as a barrier and make it difficult to forge real friendships as Elizabeth explained:

..you come across people within the church who are able to relate to you as a person and not just a minister, and there are other people who can never forget that you're the minister and actually don't want you to be anything other than the minister, so while you endeavour to be friendly to everybody, actually, in my experience anyway, the amount of people that become friends in terms of having some sort of parity within that relationship, are actually very few.

A number of the presbyters were working with congregations who were very different in age, or class background or ethnicity, and whilst all valued these differences, it also meant it was an additional challenge to find an appropriate way of communicating and developing the church. Those with multiple churches also observed how they had to vary their approach to meet the needs of very different congregations. Joseph explained:

I'm going to the council estate now, I've got to lead in a different way there, I've got to think, relate, they don't follow any rules, so I've got used to that. And then we go to the village and again it's very different again.

Relating to the congregation probably involved some compromises on both sides. Isaac commented that:

'If I was not a Methodist minister I wonder whether I would actually attend the churches where I minister. I don't think I would probably, because I mean fundamentally I don't like two-hour services.'

But if presbyters neglected the less formal aspect of this relationship, it could put at risk the other aspects of their ministry. Samuel described this happening with a junior colleague:

And his relationships with people broke down, you know, and I'd say, for God's sake, you know, just press the flesh a bit! They actually want a piece of you! It's very important, actually; they want to love you and like you, and give some time to them, you know, to that. So that he wasn't managing his time, and it seemed like a waste of time, but actually it's a crucial piece of time.

Delegation

Beyond general relationships with the congregation, presbyters obviously have a different type of relationship with those lay members who took on specific roles within the church and were responsible for getting things done. Ministers need to decide which aspects of the work they do themselves and which they delegate and to whom. That is not an easy process, as Esther explained:

...it takes time to discover what those are because there'll obviously be people who are fulfilling roles within the life of the church, and it's immediately apparent what they're doing and how they do it. It can take more time to discover the other abilities and gifts which are available within the life of the church, and sometimes it's a case of facing up to actually there really isn't anybody who can do this. And that's been a kind of interesting learning process, and certainly, for me, with the different congregations I've had thinking, where is it appropriate for me to hold this because it is necessary for it to be done? And, where can I see within the congregation people who could actually do that?

The issue of not finding people who have the time or the ability to take on particular designated tasks was a thread through many of the interviews. There was more of a problem in some parishes than others, as Elizabeth explained:

I think also we're fortunate in this area that there are a number of professionals or retired professionals that can offer expertise. My previous appointment was quite different to that, and so I think, you know, I found myself doing, kind of, things there that I don't have to do now because someone's actually competent to do it.

As Elizabeth also explained, an additional problem was that a more professional approach was expected now in the tasks that lay people were expected to take on:

...the things that we're asking volunteers to do are increasingly professional. You know, I was saying they have to fill in these forms and there's a legal obligation and, you know, whether that's with safeguarding, whether that's with the finance, the property, the health and safety, whatever it is, you know, it's no longer acceptable that Mr Bloggs keeps a record on the back of his envelope of what the church is up to, what the collection was.

This often meant that the people who were ideal to take on particular tasks had to fit them in around already busy work and home lives, as this comment from Hannah illustrates:

Because if they're the people with the relevant skills, they are working very long hours...And we find this, for example, with the circuit treasurer. He's in middle management with xxxx and he is working an absurd number of hours per week, seven days a week very often....which means that he just has not got the time or the energy to do the treasury... the treasurer bit as he would want to do it and as would be ideal.

Alternatively, in other churches ministers find themselves dependent on one or two, often older, people who have often had a long family connection with the church, with no obvious plan if that person cannot continue to do the work. Isaac described the treasurer at his church:

If she dies, she's going to die one day, I mean, she's mid 70s now and her sister died and it was her and her sister then; before that it was her and her sister and her father. And then before that her and her sister and her father and her mother and that family's influence is very strong here. And when she dies it'll probably... well, I mean, God forbid that she dies soon or anything, and she's still very fit, I mean she could keep going, but you never know in this world.

The 'Missing generation study' conducted for the Methodist Church (Clutterbuck, 2011) investigated some of the reasons for the lack of members in the 25 to 40 age group: people who might be expected to begin to take on some of the important lay roles. This study also commented on the way that church-goers increasing do

not choose to go to a Methodist Church because of a deep knowledge or commitment to the particularities of Methodism. Many see church as something which they 'consume' rather than they co-create (Clutterbuck, 2011). Several respondents talked to us about the Methodist memory and the way that it was less common to have members of the congregation with a strong knowledge of the way lay involvement works within Methodism.

Some respondents admitted that they found it difficult to persuade people to take on tasks, as the following comment from Adam illustrates:

I suppose one... again, one of the challenges that partly fall to me is to identify people can be persuaded in one way or another to take on roles like that. But that's probably part... the more difficult part of my job. I mean, I'm not... I'm not a good arm twister. I'm not very good at... or, at least, I don't enjoy having to persuade people to do something that they're reluctant to do.

Ruth explained how she managed this by reframing the term 'volunteer'. Instead of thinking of members of the church as volunteers, she thought of them as disciples.

When people see themselves as a volunteer, and when I look at them as a volunteer, I find it very difficult to get them to do things, or tell them what to do. Oh, they are just a volunteer, you know, you are the paid minister and you have to do it until you die. But, I think what I'm trying to do is to get people to see it as part of their discipleship, and then it's doing it all for the Lord, not for the minister. You are not helping the minister out, in a way. You are doing your own call, fulfilling your own ministry, your own call to the Lord...

Some respondents described how they attempted to redefine jobs, or split them up, in order to make them do-able by the volunteers available. Esther described how she had decided that a particular task could no longer be done when she was unable to find someone who could take it over.

I had one congregation where somebody moved away to another church and there were a number of things that she was doing, and I just had to think within this congregation, although she's handed over lots of things in really good order, a number of these things just cannot be picked up at this point. And they're not absolutely vital to the on-going life of the church so they'll just have to be in a holding state.

Once they have found a suitable volunteer to take on a task, presbyters often also struggled with the process of managing that person's work, especially if the person was not doing what they were supposed to. Some presbyters felt that it was difficult to be directly critical when they also had a pastoral relationship with the volunteer. Samuel explained:

... I mean, I think it's a challenge for any Methodist minister, actually, working with volunteers; it is a, it is one of the causes of, most familiar causes, of ministerial stress. And it's... so that there is, there has to be, a particular skill, almost, in working with volunteers. Now, I think I was good at encouraging people, and I think I am an encourager; I was less good at actually speaking the hard words, because always afraid of breaking that pastoral relationship, you know, that was going on.

Lay volunteers also noted that ministers generally found it difficult to be directly critical. This volunteer found this inability to be direct both mystifying and frustrating:

Yes, there are difficult decisions to be made and there's the anecdote whereby you cannot make an omelette without cracking eggs. Sometimes you have to, I'm afraid you have to. Whichever minister I've been with - doesn't matter who - has always found that difficult, you are going to upset somebody. Look, I've got a department here, much the same as you have and I'm afraid that I can do this for so long but there comes a point when, you know, you have to be succinct and to the point, and sometimes it hurts, I'm afraid. Sometimes you and I get it wrong and they get it wrong, that is the part they find very hard. I don't know why, it doesn't appear to be for easy popularity, I don't think so (Asher).

For some presbyters this meant taking a pragmatic approach to performance management and accepting that someone may not be able to do everything laid out in a role.

... when you're ministering to people that's a whole, to me it's a whole different thing, because you're there for them pastorally as well, and you're doing a holistic approach; it's not just about are they performing and are they doing the job... I must admit I tend towards allowing people to make the role what they want to, depending on what their gifts are, which you probably couldn't do in the same way in a secular situation (Sarah).

Some respondents felt that there were still excellent examples of lay leadership especially in churches that could draw on retired professionals who had both the skills and the time to contribute to the development of a church and could make a better contribution to, for example, building projects, than most clergy.

A trend, especially with the move towards larger circuits, is to employ more lay people especially in administrative roles. This is another way of freeing up the presbyter to focus on ministering. Some ministers struggled with delegation and felt that they did not really know how manage an administrator in the best way:

For the first time in my life we had a circuit administrator, and... I mean, I think I'll need to tell you at some point that I was hopeless at managing that because it was... I was fairly new to it and it was very new and it just felt easier to do it myself (Samuel).

In other cases it may be difficult to justify the decision to take on an administrator when perhaps the choice might be between another presbyter and an administrator in the circuit. Hannah, a superintendent, who did not have a circuit administrator, explained that she had not been prepared to push for an appointment of one when the cost would have competed with the other demands on the circuit's finances. She feared that she would not have been able to justify a pay scale sufficient to recruit someone who would be really useful: *'And that you would have been having to make do with somebody who was, well, not really terribly helpful.'*

Those working with presbyters often felt that one of the skills they lacked was that of really knowing how to engage support and delegate effectively. Naomi summed this view up:

I don't think presbyters are very good at empowering teams of people to do things so they all end up trying to do everything themselves, or some of them do, and then they run around and they stretch themselves really, really thinly and then they get all overworked and, you know, worn out (Naomi).

A lay volunteer commented that competent volunteers were not always trusted to take decisions and get on with a task, with the result that it took longer than necessary to get things done.

They do, do you know this is the most infuriating thing, this particular business I'm in... and quite frankly if I put the phone down on you and I make a decision, it nearly always gets done. I've got a responsibility obviously to the shareholders, but as long as I'm not spending hundreds of thousands, then, you know, ...I'm free to do it. So, that hasn't happened at our church and that's something which really does need to happen, and people who are given jobs who want to take it on have that predicament of how much can I spend, what can I go up to? So, it's down to us as a church to say, spend up to £1,000 or something. You know, it's taking responsibility for what you do, and people are largely very responsible, in actual fact perhaps too responsible. We all come across the previous but not the latter (Asher).

Working within the circuit, and with district and connexion.

Many of those working with presbyters felt that ministers had traditionally seen themselves and been developed to be 'solo artistes' who preferred working on their own. Indeed, some presbyters remembered on their first posting being essentially 'thrown in' and expected to 'get on with it'. However, ministry can be lonely and isolating; and respondents also emphasised the dangers of not having a good support network. Currently the Church is encouraging circuits to work more collegiately, to encourage ministers to support each other, and to enable more specialisation. Just because there is a circuit leadership team in place does not necessarily mean, however, that the ministers in a circuit are functioning as a team. Ministers within a circuit will often only see each other at occasional meetings and if these are run purely as business meetings, it may be difficult to build the type of

relationships necessary to allow trust and mutual support. Additionally, ministers in the circuit might come from very different traditions and backgrounds and might not naturally feel comfortable with each other. So it could be easy for everyone to do their own work and 'just come together when you have to'.

Several of the respondents, however, did feel they benefited from working in 'healthy' circuits with supportive superintendents who encouraged ministers to share problems and solutions. Esther, Elizabeth and Adam, for example, all spoke about being well-supported by their superintendents and benefiting from useful circuit leadership groups. But it is interesting that both Elizabeth and Adam noted that they felt 'fortunate' that this was the case. Elizabeth explained:

And I think also relationships with colleagues, as in other ministers, is quite key, and I've been very fortunate that the two superintendents that I've had I've got on, you know, well with, and I've found to be very supportive, but I've, kind of, friends that have very different experiences, one that was called the probationer throughout the time she was there rather than by her name, how can you do that? (Elizabeth).

The general view amongst respondents was that the role of superintendent was critical to the success of the Church: and, with the move towards larger circuits, this was becoming even more the case. However, the quality of performance within that role was seen as very variable: there were seen as being 'some very bad superintendents around.' From a lay volunteer perspective, it seemed astounding that people could be appointed to superintendent roles who were not capable of fulfilling them:

They made an error of judgement, they had somebody put somebody in charge of the circuit who is a lovely person, I don't know how that person got the job but they did. I mean, I run a business here and I run other businesses and I have to have people who are, it may sound course but, fit for purpose. You know, if you're in charge then you're somebody who is in charge and you are responsible, and you're fit enough to take responsibility and I think that has put us back a little. (Asher)

Perhaps because presbyters did not have confidence that they would consistently be able to get good support within circuits, many had built their own informal support networks, often keeping contact with people that they had trained with, that they felt were more valuable than the formal networks. Gad explained:

He's an Anglican priest. We trained together in xxx, and we meet every month and pray and socialise, because he's different, I can test something with him, and say, this is going on, and this is how I've done it, and that sort of thing, but in terms of things that are not good, and you need to deal with it.

General distrust between Circuit, District and Connexional level was voiced in several interviews. But in practical terms, when presbyters need support at District

or Connexional level, they were complementary about the support they received. The following comment from Rebekah is illustrative:

And despite what you may hear, I have always been served very well by... despite what I've said about... by the Connexion, you know? When I've needed somebody... and there have been occasions that... they've been there because... well, you need their expertise.

But those who worked with presbyters, particularly those who came from a lay corporate background, were surprised by the lack of commitment of some ministers and superintendents to broader Church and conference decisions. Naomi commented on the behaviour of a couple of superintendents she worked with who were continuing to lobby against a decision that Conference had taken:

Once the organisation has said this is what we're doing, as a leader in the church you have a responsibility, in my book, to knuckle down and support that, even if you can't resist occasionally putting the odd oar in, but that's your job, it's your role.

How do presbyters manage change and conflict?

Within the interviews two key themes emerged around the way in which presbyters manage their churches, work within circuits and relate to the members for whom they are responsible. These themes are broadly classified as managing conflict and managing change. By its very nature Methodism as both a movement and an institution is comprised of competing and conflicting theologies, views, approaches, opinions and aspirations. In common with any large and complex organization differences in these fundamental values and orientations can lead to conflict and disagreement.

One of the key areas that presbyters discussed in relation to conflict related to the complex relationships that abound in Methodism. Interviewees often cited that a key tension they had to work with was balancing their responsibilities for management and oversight with those of having a responsibility to serve the needs of members in their churches. The following comments illustrate how this tension was perceived by presbyters:

And I think there's also within the church quite a strange, well, unusual relationship in that, effectively, I'm employed by the congregation and yet in a position of oversight over them, and that's quite an interesting tension and sometimes means when things happen that people don't like, you know... I remember at my previous appointment we had to cease worshipping in an evening because we were down to, kind of, six or so, and it was a decision that was discussed and taken by the church council. I don't think I even voted because I didn't need to, it was so overwhelming, and yet afterwards someone said to me, you closed our... You know, when you... Actually we decided, but, you know, there is that kind of stuff... (Elizabeth).

I think if you look at the ordination service anywhere, there is, within the role, this tension between discipline and pastoral care, which sometimes are the same thing, but there are times when I think when I have asserted myself, hopefully for the good of the church, and other times when you actually think, for example, that closing evening worship, is actually, I need to take a step back and this is the people's decision, you know, because if they decide to carry on I'll carry on leading it (Samuel).

Whilst roles and responsibilities within Methodism tend to be clearly specified, through publications such as CPD and managed through clearly defined structures such as church councils and circuit and district reporting channels the reality on the ground focuses on working with complexity and bureaucracy within the often limited available resources. Several interviewees commented on how the over bureaucratisation of these procedures can lead to inertia in dealing with change or conflict. The comment below, by an interviewee who works closely with presbyters, on managing conflict and change exemplify the tensions that these elaborate structures can present:

I did actually get the Bible out and look at how many pages it had got and I added up the Old and New Testament and it had got just a few more pages than CPD and I decided once one overtook the other you had to burn CPD and go back and start again because something has gone wrong. I think it's got itself so tangled up into these bizarre systems and when you just try and change anything it's really hard. You know, all these interdependencies on things and people just, you know... (Naomi).

For others, tensions can be more ideological and focussed around the role, purpose and mission of the Church and Methodism as a wider movement. Many presbyters and those who worked closely with them gave accounts of the challenges associated with engaging with the membership on issues wider than local church matters. Others were concerned that owing to a decline in numbers of new members and an increasingly ageing membership that some churches were losing vision and sight of Methodism as a movement embedded within a wider agenda for social justice. An interviewee comments:

I don't feel altogether comfortable sometimes in my middle class congregations because of the experience of unemployment, of low paid work that I've had. There's an awful lot of bubbles, I think, that need to be burst in some of my congregations, who are just so far out of touch with so much of what's going on in the world. I think my experience of, sort of, stuff has made me to be quite gentle with people, which I do think is actually quite vital. I mean, at the end of the day, God sets out to be so gentle with us, so hospitable to us, and I think whatever else, we ought... we are doing... if we're not, kind of, mirroring that and reflecting that, then we're, kind of, losing our way sometimes (Jacob).

I think also as the Church is trying to change, and look to change, it's also got a clientele who are mostly much older, and for them, the church is the last bastion of a place that doesn't change. So I think trying to, there's a strong conflict within the Church quite often about all those sorts of things. Any sort of change, well, any change anywhere is difficult, but it does need a particular sort of leader to take that through really. I think many presbyters do struggle with that side of things (Josiah).

Some of those who worked closely with presbyters were critical of their ability to handle conflict and change, labelling many presbyters as 'conflict avoiders' (Thomas and Kilmann, 1974) or believing that they developed parent-child relationships (Berne, 1964) with those for whom they are responsible. This it was claimed became most apparent in areas of managerial activity related to inter-personal conflict or managing performance. The following extracts from interviews with those who work closely with presbyters illustrate this perception further:

The one I work with at the moment, as I say, he's a very good pastoral minister, very good at building bridges, very intelligent and a good preacher. I think he gets very nervous at church councils sometimes particularly when he knows that some of the issues could be quite contentious and I think he's quite... I think he's quite pleased... it sounds arrogant but I think he's quite pleased to have me sitting next to him because he knows that my background and experience is quite different and if necessary I will intervene to make sure things go in the right direction (Zadoc).

You know, if we don't talk about it, it'll go away.....And, so, you know, I'm no longer surprised, but I'm still aghast that this is the level of management skill that is acceptable to people.....It's largely the lay folk who hear this speak, and are willing to work with us around ministers to make things happen in the churches (Benjamin).

They struggle to know what isn't their problem. So they always think it's their problem and being responsible doesn't mean everything is your problem. So they parent, if you know the sort of games people play, that kind of stuff - they parent people and they elicit childish behavior. So what they want to do, leadership, not just... lay leadership as well, needs to stop worrying about things that are not your problem and allowing people to fail, make a mess of it, be alongside them and elicit the adult in the other and accept the risks of that, but out of it you create people who are adults rather than children. That's my main observation of working with ministers particularly, who've got themselves into a pickle, you know, they're overworked, they're overstressed, and they think it's their problem and it just isn't their problem. So they charge around they sort people's emotional rise out, they get fretted about their financial arrangements and all the rest and, actually, it's not their problem and they need to just... I call it the ministry of benign neglect (Abraham).

In discussing these issues with presbyters there was a sense that they were not afraid to deal with conflict and that many recognised that within their leadership and management role there were difficulties and tensions that had to be managed. Whilst some perceived delicate tensions in balancing their roles in relation to pastoral care, oversight and discipline, most were able to articulate various strategies that they used in trying to resolve these conflicts and dilemmas:

...it took me a while to realise that actually it wasn't always the best thing to smooth over the conflict, that actually it was better to work out how to help people articulate what they wanted to say, and then help us, together, see what does that mean? And sometimes, on some issues, people are not going to come to a common ground, but within the life of the church you've still got to live together (Esther).

When one of my colleagues came here as a probationer, one of his problems was the length of the church councils. And I said to him, well, when you were managing, did your meetings used to go on to this long? And he said, oh, no, but I can't talk to them the way I talk to... because I'm in pastoral charge of them. And that's a bit sad, really, because there are times when you... not in so many words, but you have to tell people to shut up (Rebekah).

I remember, I think, almost the first week I was in ministry, they'd made this decision before I arrived about some part of the church, and someone phoned me up saying that decision should never have been made at the next church council, you know, I want to discuss it again and all the rest of it. If I hadn't had the lay work experience I would have gone, oh all right then, but I kind of knew that I had to say, actually the Council discussed it, they made that decision, you know, and I don't think anything's changed so I'm afraid, you know, we have to live with it, I wasn't here, I didn't know but, you know, I'm afraid we just have to move forward (Elizabeth).

Another feature of managing conflict that presbyters discussed was related to managing change that had symbolic relevance and how things that on the surface might appear very trivial could cause considerable disagreement amongst members of the church. Some were significant such as the future use of a church that was consecrated and had symbolic meaning to members whose family had held their baptisms, marriages and funerals in this space. Others on the surface appeared very trivial such as which set of Christmas lights to use or where to place the candlesticks. The following comments illustrate the types of tensions and disagreements that presbyters have to deal with as part of their role:

the thing that people get het up about in churches is quite funny - a big thing about whether they should have these candlesticks in the church or not, and whether they should be at the front of the church, and half the people thought they should, and half the people thought they shouldn't, so week in, week out, they were in, out, in, out and it just got credulous. So in the end I took them away and put them somewhere and I said, you know,

and I preached a couple of sermons on let's get some perspective, you know, and what was really important (Samuel).

That's the... there was a real hunger for that and it was really quite interesting actually sort of just observing superintendents coming through that particular session, how little people had reflected upon sort of models of change and why, you know, certain things happen in a context of change. And, you know, I mean just simple things about the kind of disruption in a person's symbolic world and, you know, people were just sort of saying, oh no, I can see why it is that people find it so difficult when we take pews out. That was the pew from which that person got up to get married from or, you know, they're grieving (Ezekiel).

One of the challenges that presbyters and those who work with them face when seeking to effect radical or transformational change relates to the role that history, tradition and symbolism plays within the Church. As stated earlier many of those who are members see the Church as the last point of stability and enduring tradition in an ever-changing and fast moving world. The following comment made by one of the interviews clearly expresses the challenges that this can present when trying to effect change.

And I've never tried to work in an organisation where the roots go down that far and try and get people to change. You're dealing with emotions, you know, in a way that I think you don't in a lot of organisations. You know, we can't move out of this church because I was married here. I kind of understand that at some level but they're not normally the kinds of things that you'd be having in an office move discussion (Naomi).

One of the major challenges facing the Church, presbyters and Methodism as a whole relates to the fall in numbers of active members, ageing congregations and a general decline in the role of the church in local communities. Lay members appear to be very aware of a bleak future for Methodism and a realisation of a need for radical change if the movement is to survive. Issues related to decline become particularly focussed and difficult to manage when they relate to church closures. The following comments illustrate the significance that many feel related to this issue:

So I see the precipitous decline in Methodism in a few years if we are unable to address some of the issues that we're unable to address (Abraham).

I can see certain churches closing, I really can. They have to, you just cannot continue. It's an economic as well as a practical conundrum that you have. Running a church is like running a business, you know, you have x amount of income coming in to which you have to provide a service with, and whilst I may not sound very Christian, I'm afraid it's the reality (Asher).

Whilst church closures might be inevitable there was a general feeling amongst both presbyters and lay workers that the Methodist Church in general does not

handle these very well, and indeed often fails to take appropriate action where closures should have been effected. Josiah comments:

And that's the problem, so they drift on and drift on and drift on. We have rules, you know, if you've got less than 12 people you can't be a church. But of course it needs somebody to implement that rule, and if we don't want to have any conflict, we sort of think oh well, we'll just let it go on a bit longer and a bit longer and a bit longer, and you know, you have a church with two people and things like that, which is just hopeless.

Josiah and others are also critical about the role that circuits play in managing decline and church closures. This again suggests that circuits are not operating as effectively as they could and to some extent are neglecting their responsibilities to ensure the viability of churches within their oversight. The following comments illustrate some of the tensions that both lay workers and presbyters feel in relation to managing this decline.

Unfortunately, we've lost the understanding of what circuit was about, which was enabling that sort of thing to happen, and we've become much more congregational where we're so focussed on ourselves. A lot of that is to do with the fact that we're in decline, and the problems that we've already talked about are focussing on these churches, and many of them are a hundred plus years old, etc., etc. you know. But I think you're right, and I think the dynamic in the lively churches are the ones who recognise that and have put a lot of effort and resource into the mid-week stuff (Josiah).

Instead of discussing these things behind my back and not talking straight with the church, be open with what you are thinking and begin the conversation better, for people to begin to think, and ask the questions. They are not saying we're going to shut you down, but eventually that's what's going to happen. Let's look down the road for five or ten years, and let's begin to talk about it. These things take years to do, but at least you begin the process of thinking, and looking at what we'll put in place. Where will you go? We still care about you. It doesn't mean that because you are old you should stop worshipping. You know, how will we do that? We begin to put these plans in place, and see how it goes, so maybe by ten years' time you will be able to shut the door (Ruth).

Conclusions

What presbyters do?

Using secular, management language, the role of the presbyter might be described as a role requiring hybrid skills (Glover and Guerrier, 2010): a mix of the professional skills that have developed through formation as a minister and the management skills required in the day-to-day running of the church or churches they are responsible for. Certainly, the presbyters' description of their work was reminiscent of classical descriptions of management work as involving a hectic work pace and long working hours, fragmented days with regular interruptions, and the requirement to respond to unexpected events (Tengblad, 2012, Mintzberg, 1973). There was evidence that the management dimension of the work was increasing both due to increased regulatory demands, for example, in relation to safe-guarding, health and safety and charity governance, and to the changing nature of the church, with ministers increasingly responsible for larger numbers of smaller churches. The management and administrative aspects of the work is obviously greater for those ministers who are superintendents. Presbyters usually felt less prepared for the management aspects of their work, and indeed discussions with training providers would indicate that they were less prepared as inevitably initial training had to focus on theological formation. It would not be surprising if there was some resentment against those aspects of their work which might be felt to take them away from those activities which drew them into ministry in the first place. It also meant that they felt locked into 'maintenance' ministry and could not focus on 'mission' ministry. There was an interesting comment from one of the people who worked with ministers who also felt that the role of presbyter was beginning to be seen as less attractive than the role of deacon:

They don't get time to do the other bits and pieces, what they perceive as the more exciting bits, or the bits of ministry that they actually came in to do in the first place. So I think that's leading to quite a feeling of dissatisfaction and unhappiness in their roles, and a feeling that it's a fairly mundane, what they would term a maintenance role, and that their opportunity to grow the church, to look at its mission and that sort of thing, is being sucked out of them simply because the role itself is overrun (Josiah).

The flexibility and ambiguity of the role allows the possibility of 'job crafting'. Some of the older and more experienced presbyters, particularly, had used this flexibility as an opportunity to engage in community activities. But job crafting is a two edged sword. It may allow presbyters to create jobs for themselves which increase their job satisfaction and match their skills and gifts. On the other hand, it is problematic if ministers are withdrawing from aspects of their work which they need to attend to.

A further aspect of the role of presbyters is that they are stationed for relatively short periods, so the nature of their role may vary in terms of the how new or

established they are in a particular role. They are also living in a manse so there are additional issues about negotiating boundaries between when they are working and when they are not. We spoke to a couple of presbyters who were working part-time, so there was evident good practice in terms of allowing flexible working. Several respondents noted that single presbyters might have particular challenges managing workload and boundaries as there was no other 'obvious' call on their time: needing time for oneself was a less acceptable 'excuse' than needing time for the children.

Influences on values and approaches.

There was a strong preference amongst the presbyters we interviewed to espouse a participative and democratic style of leadership. Organizational theorists have long noted that there can be a difference between the approaches that people espouse in relation to leadership and how they act in practice (Argyris, 1977) and we were not able to research leadership in action. Nevertheless, those who work with ministers felt that in general they try to be participative and inclusive: sometimes, it was felt, too much so. One of the main reasons that many cited for adopting this approach was its fit with the principles of Methodism: indeed it was the lack of hierarchy and principle of shared responsibility that had drawn many to Methodism rather than to other Christian denominations initially.

There are a number of models of leadership which are currently being discussed within the field of organizational studies which would seem relevant to Methodism: notably models of distributed or shared leadership (Buchanan et al, 2007; Raelin, 2003), models of leadership in the plural, (Denis et al, 2012) and models of servant leadership (van Dierendonck, 2010; Greenleaf, 1977). The training providers that we spoke to described how they made use of models drawn from organizational behaviour in initial presbyter training. However, there is limited time available during the initial training period and leadership training is probably more meaningful when presbyters are working and can relate what they are learning to the practical issues they are facing. We noted that, given that organizational theorists increasingly use myths and stories to help managers reflect on their practices, there was no reference to Biblical stories as a way of thinking about leadership beyond one reference to Jesus as a servant leader.

Whilst presbyters recognise they need to be leaders (even if participative ones), there is more ambiguity about management. Many presbyters had previous management experience and recognised that this was helpful in approaching some aspects of their work (for example, in chiring meetings). But they were often keen to emphasise what was different about being presbyter compared with being a manager in a secular organizations: notably that it was essential that they always acted authentically and recognised they had a pastoral role to others as well as other roles. For some of those working with presbyters, the unwillingness of some presbyters to engage with management language was both frustrating and mystifying given that their role inevitably meant that they were doing management tasks. In particular we noticed a reluctance to use the language of

marketing: which for lay members might seem unproblematic, no more than thinking about how to make the church look attractive and welcoming (e.g. by painting it and having glass rather than wooden doors).

The presbyters were also influenced by their individual theological position. Haley and Francis (2006) noted in their survey that younger Methodist ministers tended to be more orthodox and more influenced by the Evangelical movement than older ministers, who were more likely to espouse a liberal theology. Many of our older respondents positioned themselves clearly as liberals: their theology was closely associated with their politics and engagement with the community was an important part of their ministry. One of the training providers (Leah) argued that evangelicals often had fewer problems with the concept of management than liberals. However, she also argued that distinctions between liberal and evangelicals were becoming less marked than in recent years.

Although they all thought it was an interesting question, presbyters often struggled to give a coherent answer to the questions about how their management practices were informed by their theology. Some talked about 'kingdom living' and there were also some interesting ways in which some reframed aspects of their work to emphasise its spiritual and moral character: thus budgets became 'moral documents' (Samuel), volunteers were disciples (Ruth), and church meetings were 'acts of worship' (Joseph).

Working with and Leading other people

Given the varied tasks that a minister has to cope with, the engagement of lay members is necessary for churches to function well. Methodism began as a lay movement and there are clear expectations and roles for lay members. Many congregations are clearly blessed with skilled and dedicated lay workers who can share tasks with the presbyters. In other cases, presbyters struggle to find people with the right skills and sufficient time to take on roles. There are numerous and obvious reasons for this: increasing and different demands on people's time, the loss of Methodist memory, with the expectation that people should co-create the church, and declining numbers in the congregation, so there are fewer people to share tasks between. Additionally, volunteers need to be able to do their work professionally: it is no longer acceptable to keep accounts on the back of the envelope. For the Church as a whole, there are clearly some strategic decisions about how far Methodism can remain a lay movement. Some respondents noted that, despite Methodism's commitment to lay participation, the Church had become more and more dependent on the leadership of clergy.

Leadership has become far more clerfified and that's been going on since the war. Methodism is not a lay movement anymore; we like to say it is but that its myth that it likes to live in but isn't true (Abraham).

Most presbyters reported that they struggled to recruit and manage volunteers. Whilst they described imaginative ways of re-formulating roles and perhaps stopping doing certain tasks because there was no-one to do them, it was

noticeable that presbyters thought of volunteer management in tactical rather than strategic terms: that is their main focus was on 'filling a gap' rather than thinking about how to develop and empower a team of people who can be drawn on. There is an extensive academic literature on the management of volunteers in a variety of settings which suggests that it is important to look beyond the 'problem' of recruitment and focus more on sustaining and developing volunteer commitment (e.g. Brudney and Meijs, 2009). One of the respondents, who worked with presbyters and who had extensive voluntary organization experience, explained for volunteering to work successfully, it has to be planned and managed strategically.

I work across the sector and it doesn't matter which organisation you are working with many of them will tell you they have problems recruiting the right trustees. I mean, that is not unique. However, organisations that do manage it successfully are those that really think about the skills and competence that they need from these people and they go out and find them, actively encourage them and support them and make it worth them spending their precious spare time there and make them feel valued. Ensure they're listened to and, you know, that their skills are really worthwhile (Naomi).

Most presbyters had a preference for a democratic and encouraging approach, making use of people's gifts whatever they are. However, they often struggled when they had to manage poor performance or inappropriate contributions. Lay members also noted this and were sometimes frustrated that issues were not dealt with directly. From the presbyter's point of view, an additional complication in terms of managing poor performance was that they were mindful of their pastoral as well as their managerial relationship with someone.

There is currently a debate within the Church about the nature of a healthy circuit and it is being suggested that there should be a move towards larger circuits. These offer more possibilities to use resources creatively by sharing them, allowing presbyters to specialise and allowing lay members to be employed. This requires a major shift in the way many circuits operate. Most of the presbyters we spoke to were naturally focused primarily on their local churches and, when they needed support, they did not necessarily look for it within the circuit. There were exceptions: some of the presbyters described working in well-functioning, supportive circuits. But the quality of circuit functioning and leadership currently is felt to be variable. Clearly the role of the superintendent and his or her capacity to build strong teams is crucial to this. But presbyters also need to be good team players: something which can conflict with the need to train people to cope individually and independently.

If presbyters are sometimes remote from circuits they are even more remote from concerns at district and Connexional level. We were interested to observe how few presbyters used a Methodist.org email and asked one of our respondents who worked with them if there was any reason for this.

...because they're too frightened of being seen as one organisation. I mean, Methodist ministers can have a Methodist.org.uk address, and many of them do, but some of them would not go near it, and they'll say oh, the system doesn't work, it's not very well supported, etc, etc, but actually, it's more to do with the fact that they don't want to be seen as, they don't wish to be seen as one big organisation. That's some of the difficulties, I think, and I think that all comes back to where we started, which is people don't understand the business and the culture and all those sort of issues, and feeling that all this is the church becoming a business rather than being a faith community, or whatever language you want to use (Josiah).

Managing change and conflict

The Methodist Church is a complex organization including people with different approaches, different personalities and different theological positions. It also faces some important decisions about what it prioritizes and how it organises itself in the future. So it is not surprising that some of the major issues that presbyters face are related to conflict and change. Some of the situations that were described to us might, to an outsider, seem trivial: where to place the candlesticks in the church, what songs to sing at Christmas or how to merge two choirs. But these changes often have a symbolic and emotional meaning to those affected by them: taking out pews and replacing them with chairs may seem different if that was the pew I sat on when I buried my partner. This is obviously also the case when considering changes in other types of organization but the emotional impact can be magnified in the case of a church. Some training providers felt that there was a great interest, particularly amongst superintendents, in considering the process of change and the way it affected people. Presbyters had not always thought about this and were not always familiar with models of change that might be helpful to them.

We found examples of presbyters tackling some difficult situations, even if there is a perception from some of those who work with them that many tend to avoid conflict. But some feel that their own authority is ambiguous: they both have a responsibility to lead but also are answerable to the congregation and, as they are itinerant, they are anxious about implementing changes that may not be sustainable when they leave.

One of the hardest decisions, but one which is not uncommon, is the decision to close a church. This can obviously have great symbolic as well as practical significance for members of the congregation. Several respondents noted how decisions were allowed to drift on, churches that really should be closed were kept open, and this had implications for the rest of the circuit. It is clearly good practice to start discussions early and transparently with the congregation where the future of a church may be at risk. Difficult as it is, it is worth remembering that many lay members, particularly those with business background, may have a realistic response.

Presbyters learning from secular managers, and secular managers learning from presbyters.

Many elements of a presbyter's work involve management work. The presbyter has to manage resources, manage people, manage projects and manage change. As in other walks of life, there is an increasing requirement that those elements of work are managed professionally, amongst other reasons to ensure compliance with legislation. Further development of these skills should help presbyters to feel more confident and capable in what is a complex role. 'Management development' tends to be more effective when done after initial training so people can relate what they are learning to their actual experience. It is also important that presbyters understand from the outset that the role includes these elements: and we note a lack of clear and shared expectations across the Church about what a presbyters do and particularly what is good performance in the role.

There is some resistance to the use of management language and concepts within the Church. We would certainly not wish to argue that 'management' is value-free or that more 'managerialism' inevitably leads to 'better' organizations. The introduction of New Public Management into the UK health service, civil service, schools and universities has demonstrated that there are many downsides from a blind focus on efficiency, cost reduction, targets and 'customer' focus. It was refreshing, in this study, to speak to people who were not touched by this discourse and who emphasised authenticity, integrity and care for the whole person when thinking about how they managed situations. These are ideas that can usefully be taken back into a consideration of management in other sectors. And who better than a Church to lead a debate about how to manage mindfully and ethically?

Recommendations

Having conducted these interviews with a cross section of presbyters and those that work closely with ministers the following recommendations are offered for wider discussion and debate within the Church:

1. That consideration is given to the place and scope of learning about management and leadership in ministerial training programmes. This could involve a review of the current curriculum and approaches with a view to assisting trainees to develop basic managerial competencies as part of their training.
2. That a structured approach is developed to support probationers in their first station in developing managerial and leadership skills. Local mentoring support could be more formalised, together with a structured programme of development supported through on-line and action learning.
3. That clearer specifications for and accountability of superintendents in relation to their managerial and leadership roles are developed, and that training of superintendents assists in the development of the required management and leadership competencies to perform these complex roles.
4. That a strategy for managing decline and promoting growth is developed at national, district and circuit levels. It is important that these strategies are both vertically and horizontally aligned.
5. That more investment is made by the Church in training and development and management of lay volunteers/workers including increased sharing of expertise and good practice within and between circuits.
6. That the Church promotes more discussion on the values and principles that underpin management, leadership and organization within Methodism, with an increased emphasis on developing and articulating approaches that are theologically informed.
7. That further consideration is given to the role of circuits, districts and the Church nationally in respect of management and accountability.
8. That the Church produces 'good practice guides' on areas such as safeguarding, health and safety, managing performance, financial management etc. Such guides could be developed in e format enabling easy access.

References

- Argyris, C. (1977) Double loop learning in organizations, *Harvard Business Review*, 115-125.
- BBC (2011) The Methodist Church, accessed at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/subdivisions/methodist_1.shtml (accessed on 24.7.12).
- Berne, E. (1964) *Games People Play*. New York: Grove Press.
- Bond C. and O'Byrne, D. (Forthcoming) If it moves measure it: Taylor's impact on UK higher education, in Evans, C. and Holmes, L. (eds.), (Forthcoming), *Re-Tayloring Management: Scientific Management a Century On*, Gower, Farnham: UK.
- Boyd, I. (1995) What are clergy for?: Clerical role Uncertainty and the State of Theology, *Theology*, 98, 187-196.
- Brudney, J. and Meijs, L (2009) It Ain't Natural : Toward a New (Natural) Resource Conceptualization for Volunteer Management, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38, 564-581.
- Buchanan, D., Addicott, R., Fitzgerald, L., Ferlie, E. and Baeza, J. (2007) Nobody in charge: distributed change agency in healthcare, *Human Relations*, 60, 1065-90.
- Brocklehurst, M., Grey, C. and Sturdy, A. (2009) Management: The work that dare not speak its name, *Management Learning*, 4,1, 7-19.
- Clutterbuck, L. (2011) *The Missing Generation Research Report*, Methodist Conference Report, London, Methodist Church.
- Crowley, C. Harre, R. and Tagg, C (2002): Qualitative research and computing: Methodological issues and practices in using QSR NVivo and NUD*IST, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 5,3, 193-197.
- Denis, J.L., Langley, A. and Sergi, V. (2012) Leadership in the Plural, *The Academy of Management Annals*, 6,1, 211-283.
- Diefenbach, T. (2009) New Public Management in Public Sector organizations: The Dark sides of Managerialistic 'Enlightenment', *Public Administration*, 87,4, 892-909.
- Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Co.
- Glover, J and Guerrier Y. (2010) "Women in Hybrid Roles in IT Employment: A Return to 'Nimble Fingers'?" *Journal of Technology, Management and Innovation*, 5 (1) 85-94.
- Greenleaf, R. (1977) *Servant leadership: a journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*, New York: Paulist Press.

Grey, C. (1999) 'We are all managers now'; 'We always were': On the Development and Demise of Management, *Journal of Management Studies*, 36,5, 561-585.

Griffiths, L. (2002) What is a presbyter? in Shreeve, E. and Luscombe, P. (eds) *What is a Minister?* Peterborough: Epworth, 8-21.

Haley, J and Francis, L (2006) *British Methodism: What Circuit Ministers really think*, Peterborough: Epworth.

Methodist Conference Report (2002) *What is a presbyter?* London: Methodist Church.

Methodist Church (2010) *Is God Calling you?* London: Methodist Church.

Methodist Quadrilateral, (2012a) accessed at: <http://www.methodist.org.uk/who-we-are/what-is-distinctive-about-methodism/the-methodist-quadrilateral> (accessed on 28/7/12).

Methodist Church (2012b), *Getting Equal: Response from the Methodist Church*, accessed at: <http://www.methodist.org.uk/search-results?q=gay+men>, (accessed on 27/7/12).

Milbank, J. (2008) Stale expressions: the management-shaped church, *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 21, 117-128.

Minzberg, H. (1973) *The Nature of Managerial Work*, New York: Harper Row.

Mintzberg, H. (2009) *Managing*, Berrett Koehler, USA.

Raelin, J. *Creating leaderful organizations: how to bring out the leadership in everyone*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Richter, P. (2002) Do moving ministers move congregations? Rational choice theory and Methodist ministerial itinerancy, *Religion*, 32, 39-50.

Shreeve, E. and Luscombe, P. (eds) *What is a Minister?* Peterborough: Epworth.

Stephens, C. and Clutterbuck, L (2011) *Methodist statistics: Are we yet alive?*, London, Methodist Church.

Tengblad, S. (2012) Overcoming the rationalistic fallacy in management research, in Tengblad, S. (ed) *The Work of Managers*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3-18.

Tengblad, S. and Vie, O. (2012) Management in practice: overview of current studies of managerial work, in Tengblad, S. (ed) *The Work of Managers*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 18-46.

Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1974, 2007). *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*. Mountain View, CA: Xicom, a subsidiary of CPP, Inc.

Van Dierendonck, D. (2011) Servant leadership: a review and synthesis, *Journal of Management*, 37, 4, 12228-1261.

Wrzesniewski, A and Dutton, J. (2001) Crafting a job: revisioning employees as active crafters of their work, *Academy of Management Review*, 28,2, 179-201.