

The science of clergy wellbeing: Empirical theology applied

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Three core building blocks

- Empirical theology
- Theology of individual differences
- Balanced affect approach to wellbeing

Structure

- Empirical theology: observing the sower
- Observing the clergy: Signs of burnout
- Theology of individual differences
- Focusing on personality
- Conceptualising burnout
- Balanced affect
- Church of Scotland Ministers

Empirical theology: Observing the sower

What is empirical theology?

- *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 1987
- International Society for Empirical Research in Theology, 2002
- Jesus the scientist

Jesus the scientist (Mk 4)



Jesus the social scientist (Lk 14)

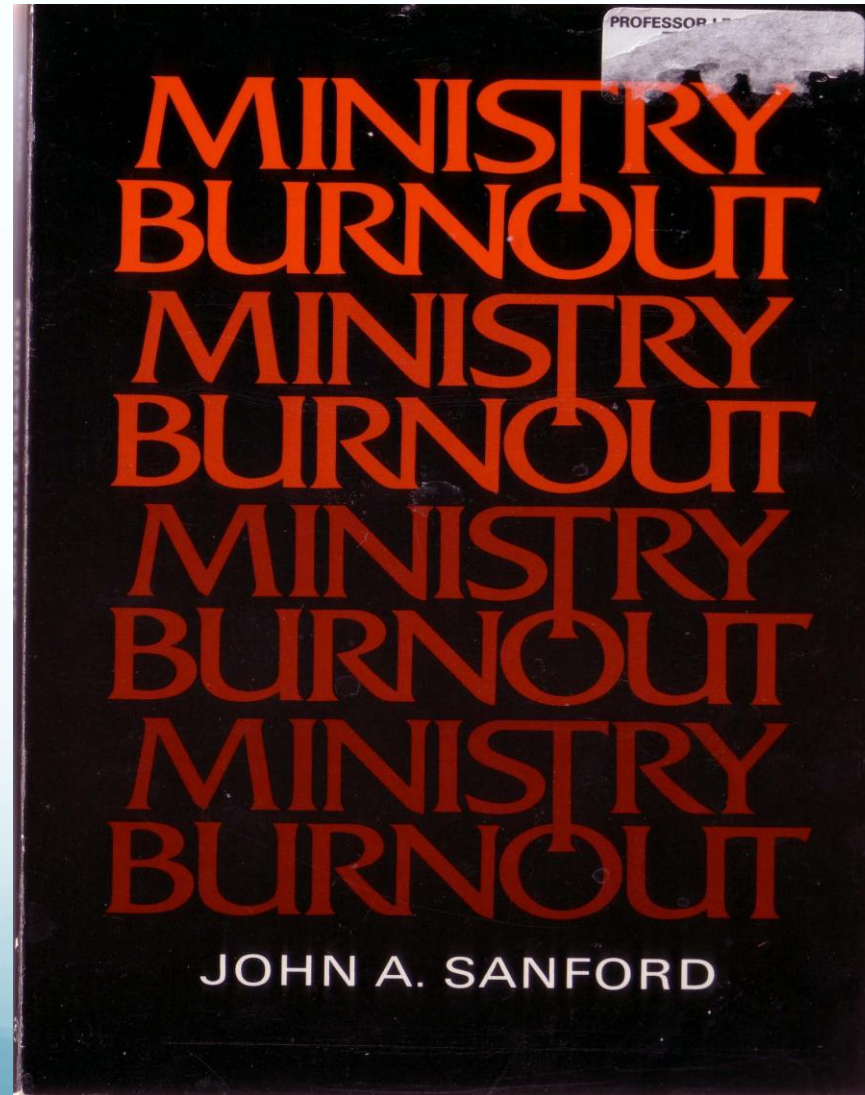


Jesus the social scientist (Mtt 11)



Observing the clergy: Signs of burnout

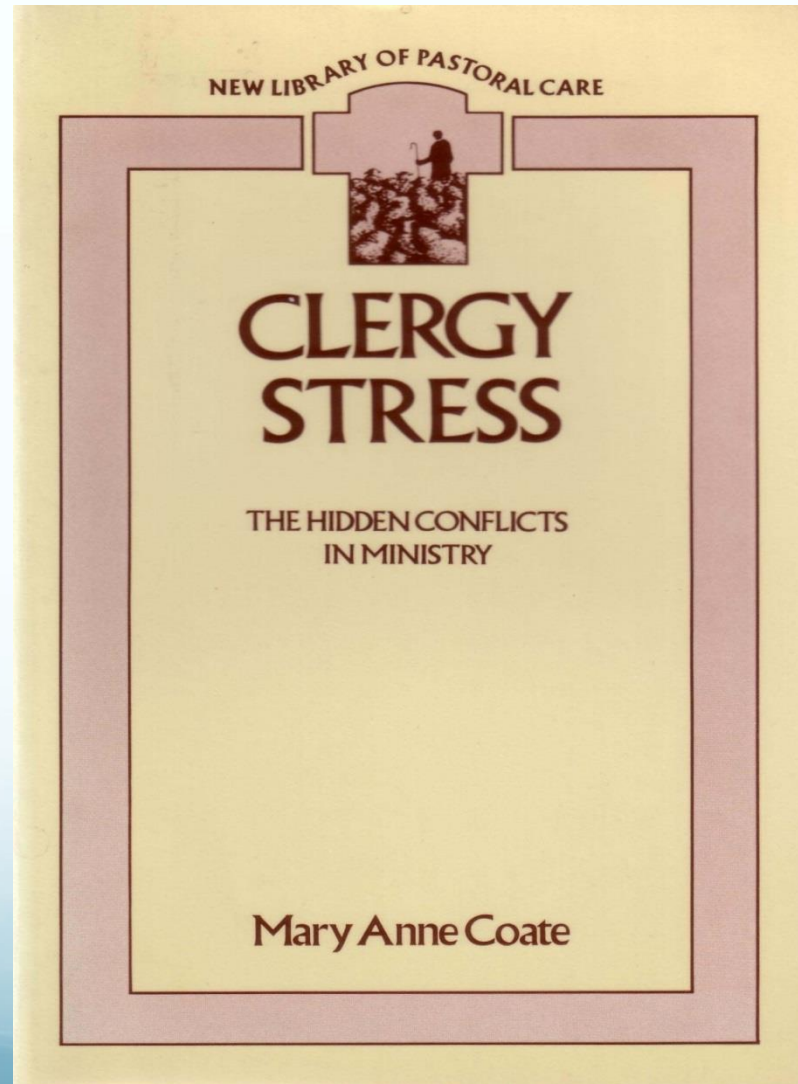
Searching the literature



John A Sanford (1982)

Sanford considered the matter from the dual perspective of Jungian analyst and Anglican priest. He argued that religious ministers are particularly susceptible in their work to that feeling of joyless exhaustion popularly known as burnout and identified eight characteristics of ministry which could generate such feeling.

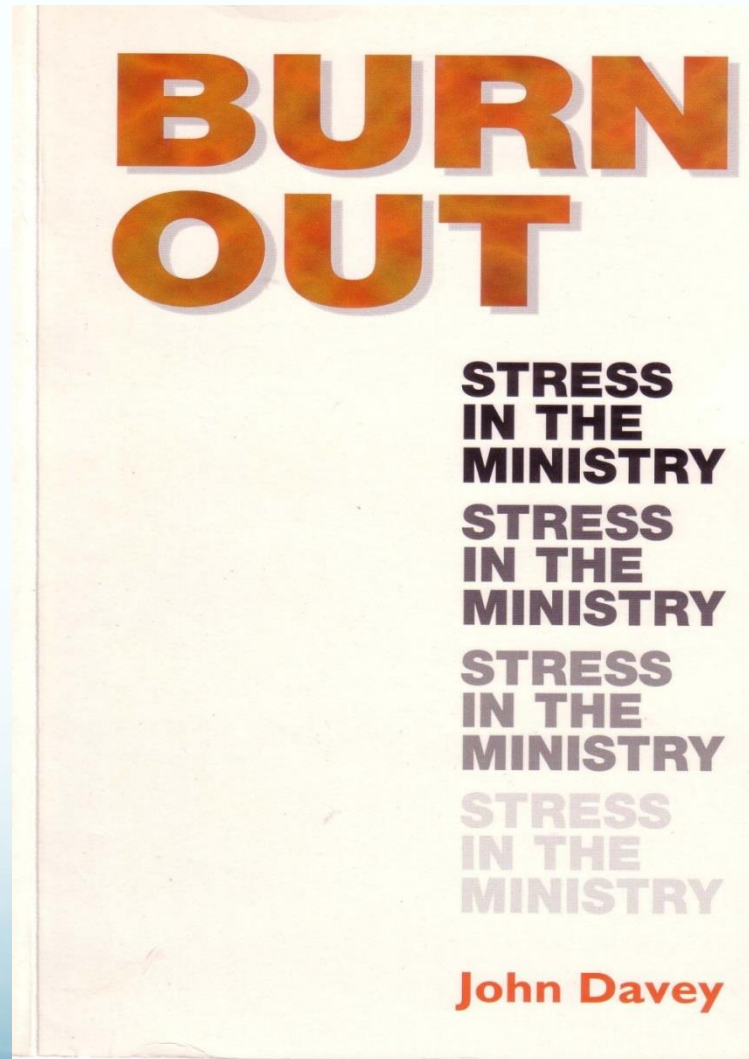
Searching the literature



Mary Anne Coate (1989)

Coate adopted a psychotherapeutic perspective, shaped by first-hand experience as a member of a religious community and then as part of a diocesan team. She argued that, although everyone is subject to stress at times, ministers often find it specially difficult to admit to the pressures of their work, feeling perhaps that they should somehow be 'better' than their secular counterparts.

Searching the literature

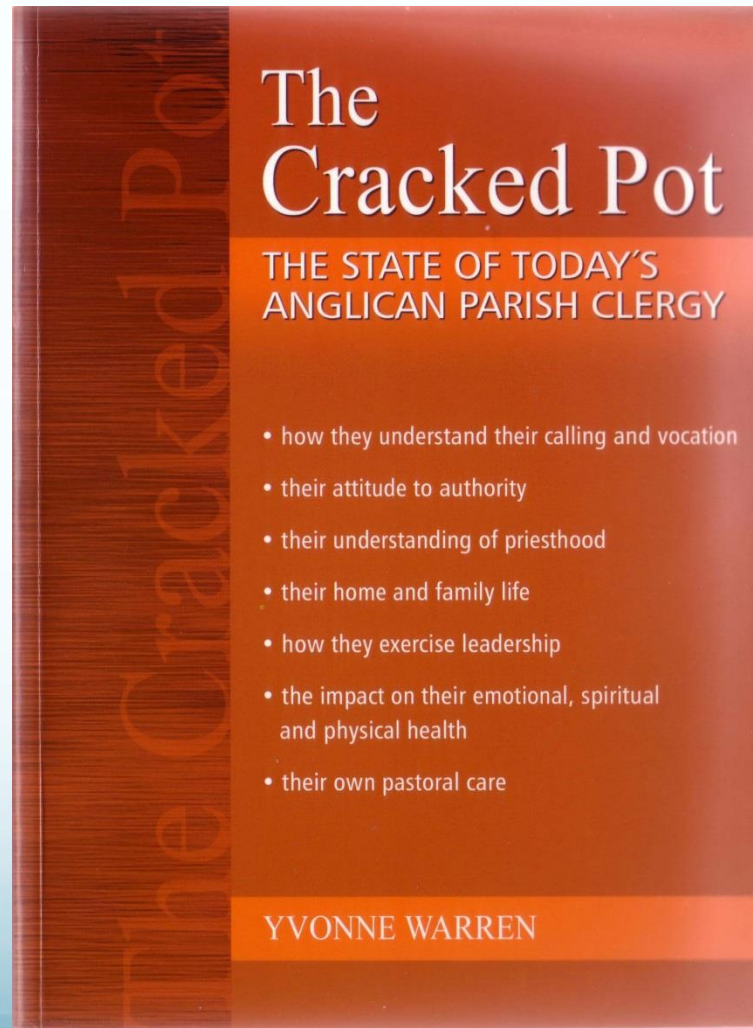


John Davey (1995)

Davey wrote from the perspective of a chartered psychologist and Anglican priest.

- disillusioned with poor attendance
- meeting expectations
- always on call
- struggling with finance

Searching the literature



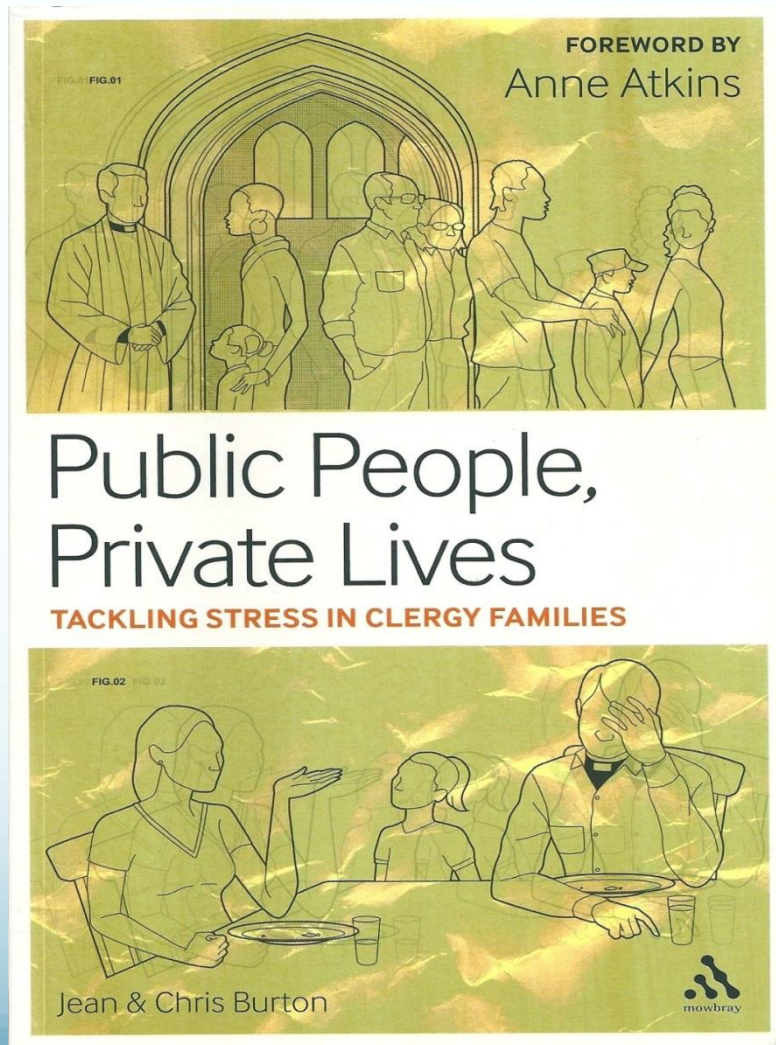
The Cracked Pot

THE STATE OF TODAY'S
ANGLICAN PARISH CLERGY

- how they understand their calling and vocation
- their attitude to authority
- their understanding of priesthood
- their home and family life
- how they exercise leadership
- the impact on their emotional, spiritual and physical health
- their own pastoral care

YVONNE WARREN

Searching the literature



Evaluation

- We know there is a problem
- Still unsure what the problem is
- Still unsure how to deal with it

Living Ministry project

Aim 1

- To understand ‘the factors that enable clergy to flourish’

Aim 2

- To understand ‘how these factors vary according to person, background, etc.’

Limitations

- Conceptualisation
- Measurement
- Prediction

Theology of individual differences

The problem

Psychology of individual differences finds it difficult to distinguish among

- Personality
- Character
- Pathology

Models of personality 1

- Eysenck's major three dimensions
- Extraversion
- Neuroticism
- Psychoticism

Models of personality 2

- The Big Five factors
 - Extraversion
 - Neuroticism
 - Openness
 - Agreeableness
 - Conscientiousness

Doctrinal roots 1

- Personality
- Rooted in doctrine of creation
- Genesis 1: 27
- Sex differences
- Ethnic differences
- What of psychological differences?

Doctrinal roots 2

- Character
- Rooted in doctrine of fall
- Rooted in doctrine of redemption

Focusing on personality

FPTETS

- Francis Psychological Type and Emotional Temperament Scales
- Orientations
- Perceiving
- Judging
- Attitude
- Emotionality

Orientations

- Source of energy
- Introverts from within
- Extraverts from without

Introverts

- Reflective
- Private
- Crowds are draining
- Re-energise alone

Extraverts

- Active
- Sociable
- Solitude is draining
- Re-energise with others

Perceiving process

- Gathering data
- Sensing types go for facts
- Intuitive types go for theories

Sensing types

- Practical
- Prefer the concrete
- Conventional
- Concerned about details

Intuitive types

- Inspirational
- Prefer the abstract
- Inventive
- Concerned for meaning

Judging process

- Evaluating data
- Thinking types go for logic
- Feeling types go for inter-personal value

Thinking types

- Justice
- Analytic
- Tend to be firm
- Critical

Feeling types

- Harmony
- Sympathetic
- Tend to be gentle
- Affirming

Attitudes

- Approach to outer world
- Judging types go for organisation
- Perceiving types go for flexibility

Judging types

- Happy with routine
- Act on decisions
- Long term planning
- Works badly under time pressure

Perceiving types

- Unhappy with routine
- Act on impulse
- Immediacy
- Works best under time pressure

Distinctiveness of type theory

- Not concerned with pathologies
- Value neutral
- Rooted in creation, not fall

Emotionality

- High emotionality
- Low emotionality

Conceptualising burnout

Christina Maslach

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

- High emotional exhaustion
- High depersonalisation
- Low personal accomplishment

Christina Maslach

- A sequential model
- One thing leads to another

Testing Maslach 1

- 1,071 Church of England clergy
- Rutledge, C. J. F., & Francis, L. J. (2004). Burnout among male Anglican parochial clergy in England: Testing a modified form of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, 15, 71-93.

Testing Maslach 2

- 1,468 Catholic parochial clergy
- Francis, L. J., Loudon, S. H., & Rutledge, C. J. F. (2004). Burnout among Roman Catholic parochial clergy in England and Wales: Myth or reality? *Review of Religious Research*, 46(1), 5-19.

Testing Maslach 3

- 1,276 Church of England clergy
- Francis, L. J. & Turton, D. W. (2004). Reflective ministry and empirical theology: Antidote to clergy stress? In C. A. M. Hermans, & M. E. Moore (Eds.) *Hermeneutics and empirical research in practical theology: The contribution of empirical theology by Johannes A van der Ven* (pp. 245-265). Leiden: Brill.

Testing Maslach 4

- 930 Pentecostal pastors
- Kay, W. K. (2000). *Pentecostals in Britain*. Carlisle: Paternoster.

What has been learned?

- More variance is accounted for by internal factors than by external factors

Balanced affect

Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI)

- Emotional exhaustion (SEEM)
- Personal satisfaction (SIMS)
- Balanced affect approach

Core hypothesis

Negative affect and positive affect are not opposite ends of a single continuum, but operate as separate systems.

Core implication

The detrimental consequences of high levels of negative affect can be mitigated by high levels of positive affect.

Practical insight

While it may be difficult to remove from clergy factors that generate negative affect, good pastoral oversight can facilitate the development of factors that support positive affect.

Testing FBI 1

- 744 clergy in Presbyterian Church USA
- Francis, L. J., Village, A., Robbins, M., & Wulff, K. (2011). Work-related psychological health among clergy serving in The Presbyterian Church (USA): Testing the idea of balanced affect. *Review of Religious Research*, 53(1), 9-22.

Testing FBI 2

- 658 clergy in the Church of England
- Francis, L. J., Laycock, P., & Brewster, C. (2017). Work-related psychological wellbeing: Testing the balanced affect model among Anglican clergy. *Religions*, 8 (118), 1-11.

Testing FBI 3

- 155 Catholic clergy
- Francis, L. J., Laycock, P., & Crea, G. (2017). Assessing clergy work-related psychological health: Reliability and validity of the Francis Burnout Inventory. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 20(9), 911-921.

Testing FBI 4

- 287 Catholic priests in Italy
- Francis, L. J., Crea, G., & Laycock, P. (2021). Factor structure, reliability and validity of the Francis Burnout Inventory Revised among Catholic priests and religious sisters in Italy. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 24(3), 271-282.

Testing FBI 5

- 358 clergy in Church in Wales
- Village, A., Payne, V. J., & Francis, L. J. (2018). Testing the balanced affect model of clergy work-related psychological health: Replication among Anglican clergy in Wales. *Rural Theology*, 16(2), 93-100.

Testing FBI 6

- 99 clergy in Church of England
- Francis, L. J., Laycock, P., & Ratter, H. (2019). Testing the Francis Burnout Inventory among Anglican clergy in England. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 22(10), 1057-1067.

Testing FBI 7

- 803 Methodist ministers in Britain
- Francis, L. J., Village, A., & Haley, J. J. (2023). The Francis Burnout Inventory: Testing the balanced affect model among Methodist circuit ministers in Great Britain. *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion*, 33, 90-101.

What has been learned?

- Positive affect decreases the deleterious impact of negative affect

The Index of Balanced Affect Change (TIBACH)

Francis, L. J., & Village, A. (2021b).
Introducing The Index of Balanced Affect
Change (TIBACH): A study among Church of
England clergy and laity. *Mental Health
Religion & Culture*, 24(8), 770-779.

Church of Scotland Ministers

Procedure

- Working group Church of Scotland
- Church and academy in collaboration
- Endorsed by moderator
- Confidential and anonymous

Participation

- 1,000 questionnaires sent
- 505 questionnaires fully completed

Sex

- 337 men
- 165 women
- 3 preferred not to say

Age

- 2 were 20-29
- 17 were 30-39
- 81 were 40-49
- 204 were 50-59
- 168 were 60-69
- 31 were 70+
- 2 preferred not to say

SEEM

- I feel negative or cynical about people 16%
- Humour has cynical or biting tone 16%
- Invaded by sadness they cannot explain 18%
- Fatigue and irritation are part of daily experience 41%
- Feel drained by fulfilling their ministry 43%

Comparing SEEM scores

• Australian clergywomen	24.3
• Newfrontiers lead elders	25.3
• Catholic priests in Italy	25.5
• Australia, England, NZ (3,715)	26.0
• Church of England clergywomen	27.6
• USA Presbyterians	27.8
• Church of Scotland	28.0
• Church in Wales clergymen	28.2
• Church of England	29.6

SIMS

- A lot of personal satisfaction from working with people 88%
- Really glad they entered ministry 85%
- Feel ministry is really appreciated by people 78%
- Accomplished many worthwhile things 75%

Comparing SIMS scores

- Newfrontiers lead elders 45.2
- USA Presbyterians 44.5
- Australian clergywomen 44.2
- Church of England clergywomen 43.7
- Church of Scotland 43.4
- Australia, England, NZ (3,715) 43.2
- Catholic priests in Italy 42.6
- Church in Wales clergymen 42.1
- Church of England 39.5

Psychological type profile (male)

- Introversion 64% (53%)
- Sensing 55% (73%)
- Feeling 59% (35%)
- Judging 77% (55%)

Psychological type profile (male)

- 16% ISFJ
- 13% ESFJ
- 14% ISTJ

Psychological type profile (male)

- 49% SJ
- 26% NF
- 19% NT
- 6% SP

Psychological type profile (female)

- Introversion 64% (43%)
- Sensing 52% (79%)
- Feeling 71% (70%)
- Judging 80% (62%)

Psychological type profile (female)

- 21% ISFJ
- 13% ESFJ
- 10% ISTJ

Psychological type profile (female)

- 49% SJ
- 34% NF
- 14% NT
- 3% SP

Emotional stability

- Mostly discontented 13%
- Panic easily 14%
- Mostly feel insecure 16%
- Get angry quickly 23%
- Tend to have mood swings 27%
- Generally anxious 32%
- Frequently get irritated 39%
- Tend to feel guilty about things 67%

The Dark Triad

The Dark Triad

- Three offensive but non-pathological personality constructs
- Machiavellianism
- Subclinical Narcissism
- Subclinical Psychopathy
- The Short Dark Triad (27 items)

The Bright Trinity

The Bright Trinity

- Emotional intelligence
- Purpose in life
- Religious motivation

Emotional intelligence

- Schutte Emotional Intelligence Scale
- Mean score for men 124.8
- Mean score for women 130.7

Mean scores for clergymen

	Mean
Anglican clergy	112.11
Anglican clergy in Wales	116.33
Newfrontiers leaders	116.62
Church of Scotland ministers	117.79
Clergy in Northern Ireland	119.01

Mean scores for clergywomen

	Mean
Anglican clergy	113.77
Newfrontiers leaders	120.41
Anglican clergy in Wales	121.79
Church of Scotland ministers	122.66
Clergy in Northern Ireland	124.91

Purpose in life

- Victor Frankl, logotherapy
- Purpose in Life Scale

Religious motivation

- Religious orientation
- Allport and Ross (1967)
- Batson and Ventis (1982)
- New Indices of Religious Orientation (2007)

Constructing models

Step 1 Personal and personality foundations of wellbeing

- *Personal factors*
 - Sex
 - Age
- *Psychological type*
 - Extraversion
 - Intuition
 - Feeling
 - Judging
 - Emotionality

Effect on satisfaction

- Sex .04
- Age .01
- Extraversion .25***
- Intuition .08
- Feeling .10*
- Judging .09*
- Emotionality $-.31^{***}$

Effect on exhaustion

- Sex -.06
- Age $-.14^{***}$
- Extraversion $-.20^{***}$
- Intuition $-.11^{**}$
- Feeling $-.11^{**}$
- Judging $-.16^{***}$
- Emotionality $.47^{***}$

Step 2 Dark Triad and Bright Trinity

- Personal factors
- Psychological type
- Emotionality
- Dark Triad
- Bright Trinity

Effect on satisfaction

- Machiavellianism .00
- Narcissism .08*
- Psychopathy .01
- Purpose in life .51***
- Emotional intelligence .25***
- Intrinsic religiosity -.00

Effect on emotional exhaustion

- Machiavellianism .11*
- Narcissism -.12**
- Psychopathy .02
- Purpose in life -.29***
- Emotional intelligence -.09*
- Intrinsic religiosity .06

Step 3 Contextual factors and wellbeing (no effect)

- Marital status
- Companion animals
- Types of community (on EE)
- Extra-parochial responsibilities
- Multiple churches or worship centres
- Some medical history
- Physical exercise
- Short programmes
- Substantial programmes
- Some support mechanism

Effect on satisfaction

- Small town .08*
- Priority area .11**
- Mentor .12**
- Counsellor -.03

Effect on emotional exhaustion

- Small town -.04
- Priority area -.04
- Mentor -.03
- Counsellor .03

Reflecting theologically

Take home message 1

- How do we see the balanced affect model?
- Can we take away the causes of exhaustion?
- Can we enhance opportunities for satisfaction?

Take home message 2

- How do we account for the effect of personality?
- High emotional exhaustion goes with
 - Introversion
 - Sensing
 - Thinking
 - Perceiving
 - Emotionality
- Does God call all types?
- Where is self-awareness in this?

Take home message 3

- Satisfaction in ministry is enhanced by
 - Mentoring
 - Purpose in life
 - Emotional intelligence

The science of clergy wellbeing: Empirical theology applied

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