Pulpit & Pew

Research on Pastoral Leadership

Factors Shaping Clergy Careers:

A Wakeup Call for Protestant Denominations and Pastors

by Patricia M. Y. Chang
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FOREWORD

Pulpit & Pew is pleased to offer this new report on clergy careers by Patricia Chang. It is a companion piece to her previously published report, *Assessing the Clergy Supply in the 21st Century.* Focusing primarily on Protestant clergy, she takes on some very difficult and controversial topics. Two themes that regularly raise the hackles of those who write and speak about clergy issues are central to her analysis: the idea of a clergy career, and that of ordained ministry as a profession. Many have argued that either or both of these concepts undercut the meaning of ordained ministry as a calling from God. Considering ministry as a career risks turning one's call into something that one manages or controls. It also often implies a career ladder that one climbs to reach ever larger and more prestigious churches. Defining ministry as a profession, an especially strong emphasis in the 1960s and 1970s, tends to define the pastor as over against laity by virtue of her or his specialized knowledge and status. Being professional also implies a desire to control one's work life and relationships, and like career, it seems to subvert calling or vocation.

Chang's report applies both of these concepts to clergy. As for career, she argues that despite protests to the contrary, many if not most clergy do indeed think of ministry in terms of a career and especially of a career ladder that will lead them to ever larger congregations—an expectation that most will never realize given the size distribution of Protestant congregations. For ministry as a profession, she shows the way that clergy are educated, deployed, supported and rewarded limits their autonomy and control over their work life and makes comparison with professions such as medicine or law very problematic.

While many—myself included—will take issue with some of her observations and conclusions, she raises questions and challenges about ordained ministry that need to be faced squarely and honestly—especially about how clergy are deployed, supported, and rewarded for their work. I view her work as a wake-up call to clergy, congregations, denominations, and theological seminaries.

Although Chang's report doesn't address stages through which clergy pass over their careers, nonetheless thinking in such terms also reminds us that issues that clergy face and resources they need in early career stages are likely quite different from ones needed in mid- or late-career. This too makes the idea of a clergy career important.

Accompanying Chang's report are commentaries by three observers of clergy careers who reflect on the issues that the report raises and offer further suggestions for responding to them.

Pulpit & Pew is a multifaceted study of pastoral leadership, both Catholic and Protestant, underway at Duke University's Divinity School, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. Its purpose is to provide credible research findings about pastoral leadership today and the changes impacting it. Three sets of questions guide the various studies, including this one:

What is the state of pastoral leadership at the new century's beginning, and what do current trends portend for the next generation?

What is "good ministry?" Can we describe it? How does it come into being? Do its characteristics vary by denominational tradition? By congregational context and size?

What can be done to help "good ministry" come into being more frequently, and how can it be nurtured and supported more directly by congregations, denominations, theological schools, and others concerned with the nurture and support of the church's ministry?

I commend this report to you.



Jackson W. Carroll, Director
Pulpit & Pew
Williams Professor Emeritus of Religion and Society

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In *Factors Shaping Clergy Careers*, Patricia M. Y. Chang examines the careers of Protestant clergy in the United States, taking a look at the typical clergy career path, prospects for advancement and other issues. While ministry is a unique vocation in which most practitioners view themselves as called by God, clergy also tend to think about and evaluate their work in much the same way as do people in other occupations. In many ways, they think of their ministries as both a calling and a career that they pursue to meet certain financial and other obligations.

In the first section of her report, Chang addresses the organizational constraints that shape clergy careers, pointing out how opportunities for clergy employment and promotion are influenced by such factors as supply and demand and organizational boundaries. Most denominations, she contends, are pyramid-shaped "structures of opportunity." At the top are senior pastor positions at large churches, below which are associate and sole pastors of medium sized churches and then sole pastors of small churches, assistant pastors and the newly ordained .

Chang finds that the clergy career pyramid is being affected by two trends she noted in an earlier Pulpit & Pew report: an overall decline in the number of large churches in the U.S. and an increase in the number of small churches that cannot afford to hire a full time pastor. As a result of these trends, Chang concludes, most clergy will spend the majority of their working lives in mid-career positions as assistant or associate pastors or pastors of small and medium-sized churches with limited opportunities to advance to senior pastor positions. At the same time, newly ordained seminarians will have fewer chances to be hired into these positions since they will be competing with clergy who already have several years' experience. Newly ordained men and women face a job market that funnels them into the most challenging positions: multi-point charges, small churches, part-time positions and non-parish positions.

According to Chang, data suggests that seminary graduates face a tighter labor market than a generation ago. Roughly 35 percent of graduates will be unable to find suitable parish work within the first two years after seminary. Some will take secular jobs and eventually be able to move into churches, but a third of those who start out in secular work will remain there. Of those who find parish positions after graduation, many are likely to be in the most challenging churches, those with smaller memberships and smaller budgets.

Chang also addresses the professional status of clergy and suggests that comparisons to law and medicine may not be appropriate. Clergy lack many characteristics of those professions such as the ability to regulate, supervise and discipline their fellow practitioners and to act together as an occupational group. Instead, clergy are a unique occupational class in that they are extraordinarily dependent upon a single organization—i.e., their respective denominations—for training, work environment and career outcomes.

Those loyalties, however, are asymmetrical. While clergy are socialized to act within and uphold the norms, values, beliefs and doctrines of a particular religious body, many denominations in turn have few mechanisms to support clergy and are unable to guarantee lifelong employment or provide health and dental insurance and retirement benefits.

In the second half of her report, Chang draws upon data gathered in two earlier studies to further analyze clergy career patterns and the effects of clergy supply and demand imbalance. She finds that a relatively high percentage of clergy remain in assistant and associate pastor and sole pastorate positions late in their careers and that a large number of clergy work in secular jobs throughout their careers. An increasing number of clergy are also working in non-parish positions. She suggests that denominations take a proactive approach to this development either by working to keep non-parish ministers connected to the church or helping to guide them in these vocational choices.

Regarding senior pastor positions, Chang estimates the likelihood of becoming a senior pastor (supervising other clergy and/or lay staff members) as quite low—about a 1 percent chance in most denominations, with slightly better odds in smaller denominations. Men have twice the chance of becoming a senior pastor than do women, while married clergy have a 50 percent greater chance than unmarried clergy.

The report also includes commentaries from three church leaders knowledgeable about clergy career issues. Robert Dale of the Center for Creative Church Leadership Development offers several practical suggestions for rethinking clergy careers and finding new ways to cultivate ministers. James A. Meek, a former administrator and faculty member at Covenant Theological Seminary (Presbyterian Church in America), challenges Chang's use of a pyramid metaphor to describe clergy career paths and its assumption that upward mobility is the goal of clergy careers. He disagrees, among other things, with her conclusions about a limited job market for clergy and notes that a large number of seminary students never intend to be in parish ministry. Matthew Price, director of analytic research for the Church Pension Group of the Episcopal Church, agrees with much of the report but finds its explanatory framework inadequate.

Introduction

This report addresses issues and concerns related to the careers of Protestant clergy in the United States. The questions the report addresses include: "What does a typical career look like?" "What are the prospects for advancement and for reaching the status of senior pastor?" " Is being a pastor today as fulfilling and satisfying a career choice as it was a generation ago?" All of these questions begin with the assumption that the decision to become a minister and pursue this vocation is like any other career choice, one motivated by lifestyle goals, aptitude, and interest. Yet in fact the ministry is a very different kind of vocation. Clergy often feel that their vocation has chosen them rather than the other way around. They think of their ministry as a call from God, not a conscious choice on their part. In fact many talk about how they resisted the call for various reasons before finally giving themselves up to what God had called them to do.

Yet, while the majority of clergy see their work as a call from God, they also think about their work and evaluate their satisfaction with their ministry in many of the same terms as other Americans. The idea of a call competes with and complements the idea of the ministry as a career. While clergy see their work as a direct connection with God, they also measure the success of that calling in terms of the kind of work they are called to do, whether or not they are given greater responsibilities and more complex goals in their vocations, whether their vocation as pastors allows them to fulfill their responsibilities to support their families, to provide health benefits for their families when illness strikes, to support themselves when they can no longer work, and whether they will have enough savings to send their children to college.

Most clergy think of their ministries in a dual sense, both as callings and as careers that they pursue that allow them to fulfill certain obligations. In fact one of the saddest stories that we hear are the stories of those clergy who were forced to leave the ministry in order to provide for their families. Because of this dual relationship, I believe that this report has value for all clergy and for the denominational leaders who supervise them. While not all of the assumptions will fit with all models of ministry represented in the audience of readers, the advantage of using economic models to describe the career dynamics outlined in this report is that it has clear meaning across denominational traditions and uses assumptions that make up the basic social categories surrounding work in American life.

The topic "clergy careers" encompasses a myriad of issues and concerns. Yet underlying them all is the basic question, "What can a young man or woman setting out in a career of ministry expect to face?" "What are the chances of success?" "What are the chances of disappointment?" "What are the opportunities, rewards and obstacles that they will need to overcome?"

As with most things in the variegated American landscape, the answers to these questions depend a great deal on the assumptions and expectations with which one begins. The concept of ministry varies in subtle yet important ways from tradition to tradition. In what I will call "apostolic churches," those who are ordained as clergy stand in an unbroken line of authority that reaches back to Jesus Christ. The laying on of hands that takes place during ordination represents the passing of the authentic charisma from Christ, to his apostles, and to their followers, and it legitimates the purity and authority of the church.

In contrast, in what I will refer to as "non-apostolic churches," ministers are less clearly set apart from the rest of the church. The Presbyterian Church, for example, recognizes both clergy and laity as elders. Clergy are Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, and lay elders serve as officers of the church. Neither is seen as being above the other in status, and both serve equally important functions within the church, even though being a Minister of the Word and Sacrament requires three years of seminary training.

In some denominations that are congregational in polity, where the authority of the local church is respected as the locus of the sacred, the emphasis is on receiving a "call" from God to serve in the local church. This call is viewed as being a more important and more authentic qualification than any educational degree or form of training, and if a local church recognizes the call in that person, it may vote to ordain him or her in the name of God.

These traditional perspectives on ministry inform the expectations of those who decide to embark upon a clergy career and also those that guide them. In traditions that have always associated the ministry with erudition, community leadership, and public presence, acquiring a

seminary degree and being ordained are the first steps into the professional class. Leaders within these traditions are often concerned when their occupation no longer attracts the best and brightest of graduating college students. (Price 2001). On the other hand, those in traditions that associate ministry with a call from God, prophetic rhetorical skills, and a deep personal spirituality may see the decision to seek ordination primarily as a way of responding as an individual to God and take a more relational, rather than professional view of their ministry. Thus a Pentecostal may have very different status expectations than an Episcopalian when embarking upon a career in ministry. Tradition informs one's concept of a "career" just as it informs one's concept of "ministry." Consequently, the challenges that one sees and the expectations that one has for a "career in ministry" have different nuances and meaning, according to one's denomination. In other words, we must be wary of taking the simplistic view that the ministry is a "profession" and can thus be compared with other secular professions.

Historical differences in the evolution of the occupation

The status of clergy in American culture has also changed over the years. Prior to the American Revolution, clergy in colonies with an established church tradition, such as those in New England, were considered to be important public officials and were supported by local taxes. After the war, the established churches saw the institution of the ministry transformed from a public sinecure to a professional position, in which the minister had to compete with others to attract and keep hold of a loyal following (Scott 1978).

The ministry within the Methodist tradition moved in the opposite direction. Early Methodist ministers were often unlettered itinerant preachers riding on horseback from settlement to settlement, speaking in homes, barns, or fields on the frontier, wherever it was convenient for a number of people to gather together. As the denomination grew more successful it slowly began to build a circuit of churches and schools, formalizing its ministerial training and building the occupational status of the role into a solidly middle class profession.

Despite the usually humble beginnings of the majority of American religious traditions, and despite the fact that there always have been, and always will be, a vibrant community of self-taught, evangelical preachers within the ministry, the image of the ministry that has caught and held the public imagination is still that of the clergy as a middle class professional. The image is usually that of a male who is serious, solidly middle class, and an educated leader within the community. Even where the minister works a full time job as a custodian or construction worker, on Sundays he comes to church in his best suit and projects the image and attitude of someone in the professional class. It is this image and this set of expectations that I address in this report, because it is the model that I believe most Protestant denominations still aspire to despite their criticism of the professional model in recent years, and it is the one that I would argue that most of the persons who have chosen to spend three additional years of graduate study most frequently adopt. What can these people expect when they leave seminary? What are the opportunities and what are the obstacles and what are the likely outcomes?

Plan of the report

This report will be divided into two sections. The first section addresses the organizational constraints that shape clergy careers, pointing out how opportunities for employment and promotion are shaped by issues of clergy supply and demand, as well as by organizational boundaries. It also points to some contradictions between what clergy expect, and how clergy labor markets are structured, and how the concept of "profession" to describe clergy occupations may be a misleading description of the role's actual status and power. The report offers recommendations directed towards increasing the professional power of clergy as a group and alternative models for envisioning clergy as an occupation.

The second section deals with a description of clergy careers based on data gathered by the Hartford Study of Ordained Men and Women in 1994 (See Appendix A). When possible, comparisons will be made with data collected from the *Women of the Cloth* study (Carroll, Hargrove, and Lummis 1983) in order to show how trends have evolved over time. This section will deal more explicitly with denominational differences and specific career outcomes, analyzing qualitative and quantitative factors that influence whether clergy become senior pastors, non-parish ministers, or take secular positions.

PART ONE: STRUCTURES OF OPPORTUNITY AND LIMITATION

What can a seminary graduate expect to face when they leave seminary? As Americans, we are taught that success is the reward of individual effort; yet, in fact, we are also the victims of circumstances. In the following pages I will discuss how factors outside individual control influence the structure of opportunities currently facing ordained clergy.

In a companion report on clergy supply and demand, I pointed out how the employment opportunities of clergy are impacted by the number of clergy in the labor market system. A labor market can be thought of as the population of churches within a denomination that are seeking, or will one day seek, a pastor. When a pastor retires, he or she leaves a vacancy that permits the next person on the rung below to move up. When this person moves up, he or she leaves another vacancy, which when filled leaves another vacancy, and so on. Because the movement of one person is linked to the movement of others in the system, this way of thinking of labor market movement is called the "vacancy chain" perspective.

One way to think of an ideal labor market is to imagine a balance between the supply of pastors and the demand for pastors. As each cohort retires, leaving vacancies in the most senior positions, a new cohort moves up, with a newly ordained cohort entering at the bottom. Where there is a regular turnover of positions and a fairly equal number of positions at each level, individuals can count upon experiencing a career of predictable upward mobility.

More frequently, however, the number of positions declines as one rises towards the more senior positions. The structure of opportunity in this scenario is shaped like a pyramid. Fewer and fewer people are able to rise higher and higher and, consequently, the majority will end their careers somewhere midway through their upward ascent.

Most denominations are pyramid shaped. At the apex of the pyramid are senior pastor positions of large churches. Below these are associate pastors and sole pastors of medium sized churches. Below these are sole pastors of small churches, assistant pastors, and newly ordained clergy. The fewer senior positions there are, the fewer opportunities there are for upward mobility for everyone below.

In my report on clergy supply and demand, I pointed to evidence of two trends that have direct implications for clergy careers. First, a growing number of small churches cannot afford to hire a full time pastor. Second, there appears to be a declining number of larger churches. While the data on available clergy positions leaves much to be desired, the distribution of jobs that it suggests has a direct impact on the opportunities for clergy mobility in these denominations. When job opportunities narrow sharply at the top, and when this is combined with a growing number of small churches unable to afford a full-time pastor, the chances of gaining a good pastoral position right out of seminary or advancing throughout one's career begins to decline.

If the number of senior pastor positions is shrinking, this suggests that the majority of clergy will spend most of their working lives in mid-career positions, that is, as assistant or associate pastors or as pastors of small and medium sized churches. This means that newly ordained seminarians will have fewer chances to be hired into these positions, since they will be competing with clergy who already have a number of years of experience. Newly ordained men and women will thus face a job market that funnels them into what are, in some senses, the most challenging positions, that is, multi-point charges, small churches, part time positions, and non-parish positions. Some will choose to drop out altogether or take a secular position until a ministry job opens up.

We see evidence of this process in multiple areas. A report on the ministry needs of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America reports that there is a significant challenge to newly ordained pastors seeking a first call. The study of candidates seeking their first calling found that, of those who were called to be sole pastors, half were in churches that were attended by less than 83 worshippers and had less than $63,000 in annual operating expenses (Ministry and Evaluation 2000).

A second piece of evidence pointing to the challenges that new seminary graduates face comes from analyzing how long it takes for newly ordained men and women to obtain their first parish position. Using a sample from 15 Protestant denominations, I found that it took roughly three and a half months for 50 percent of the men in the sample to receive their first job after graduating, and six and a half months for half the sample of women to receive their first job (Chang 1997). The probability of finding a parish job

after this initial period then declined dramatically. At the end of two years 19 percent of the men were still without a parish job and 33 percent of the women were without a parish job. When I looked at differences in the transition to the first job by cohort I found evidence that the labor market has become tighter over time. Clergy ordained between 1970-1980 had a far better chance of getting a parish job within the first two years after seminary graduation. In this cohort 85 percent of the men and 70 percent of the women could expect a parish placement within the first two years (and the majority received jobs within the first six months), but for those ordained after 1980, only 60-70 percent received parish jobs within the first two years (again, the majority received their jobs within the first six months). This suggests that in this cohort between 30 and 40 percent of new M.Div. graduates either get jobs in non-parish positions, in secular work, or drop out.

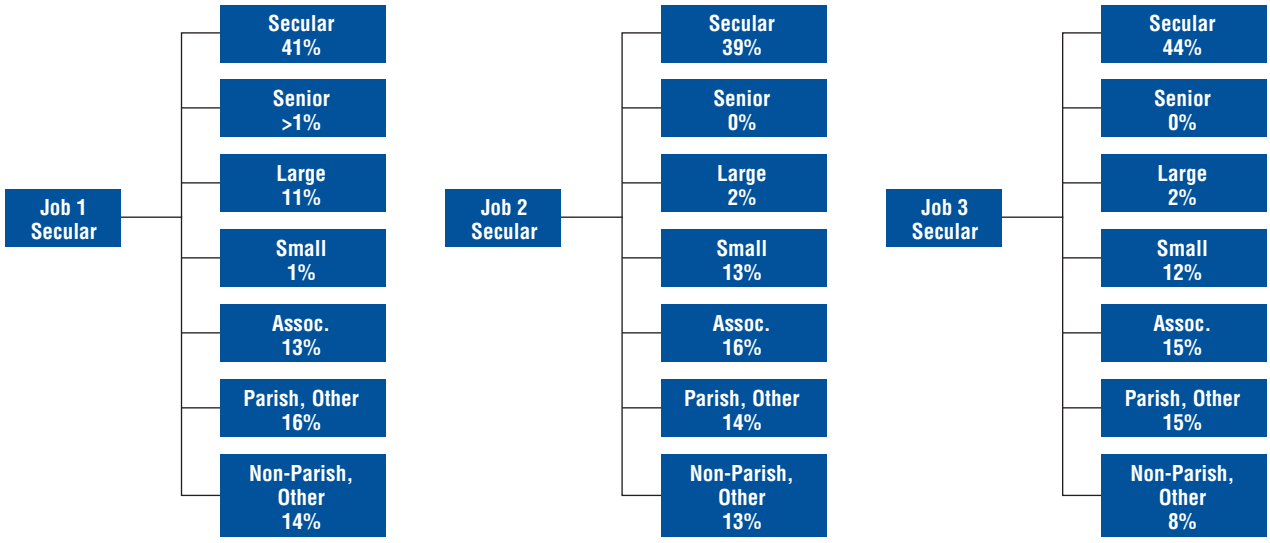
From Seminary to Secular Work

The data from the 1994 Hartford Study suggests that in our sample, roughly 6 percent reported going from seminary to secular work. Thinking that these graduates might have moved into secular work to pay off some educational debt until they could find a parish job, I looked at whether these graduates were eventually able to find ministerial work after working in secular jobs. When this group of secular workers is analyzed separately by gender (Figures 1 and 2), I find that 42 percent of the women moved from a first job in secular work to a second job in a parish (either as senior pastor, sole pastor-large church, sole pastor-small church, associate pastor, or other parish positions), 14 percent moved into non-parish or other church related work for their second job, and 41 percent moved into a second secular position

For men who entered secular work after seminary, 58 percent moved from secular work into parish ministry for their second job (either as senior pastor, sole pastor-large church, sole pastor-small church, associate pastor, or other parish positions), 6 percent went into non-parish work as their second job, while 35 percent continued in secular work.

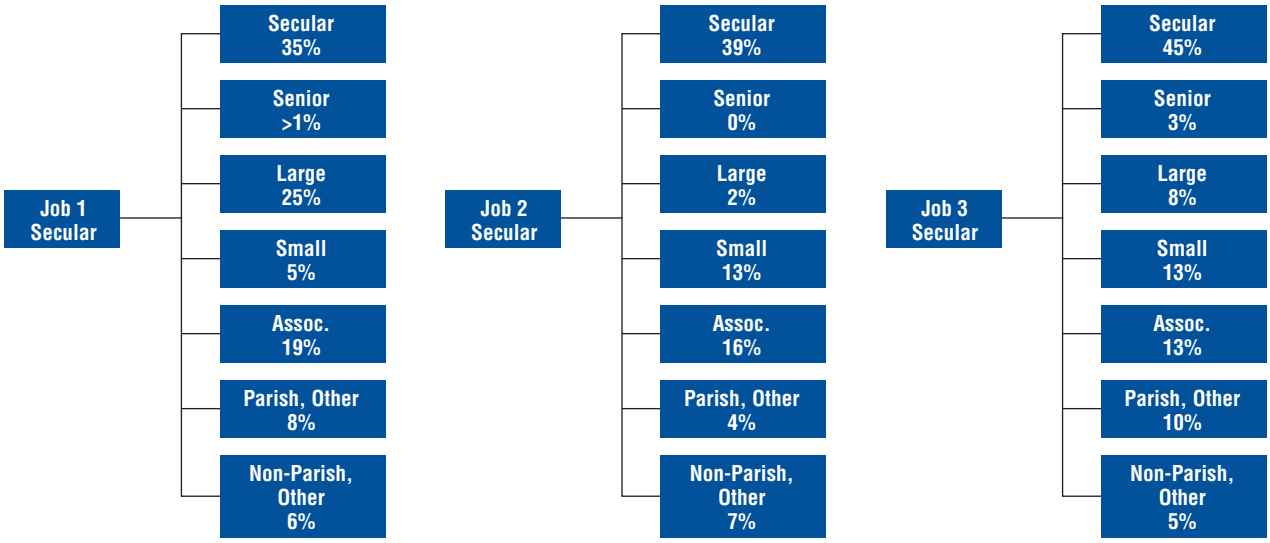
What this suggests is that even after getting an M.Div. degree, seminary graduates may have difficulty finding a ministerial job, and that for those who move into secu-

Figure 1
Job Transitions of Clergy Women in Secular Employment in Their First, Second and Third Job



Key:		
	Secular	Non-religious, non-church related
	Senior	Senior Pastor of a Multi-staff church
	Large	Sole pastor of church with over 150 members
	Small	Sole pastor of church with less than 150 members
	Assoc	Associate or assistant pastor
	Parish Other	Includes music, education, youth, interim and supply pastors
	Non-parish	Includes chaplain, seminary faculty, denominational staff, denominational executives

Figure 2
Job Transitions of Clergy Men in Secular Employment in Their First, Second and Third Job



Key:		
	Secular	Non-religious, non-church related
	Senior	Senior Pastor of a Multi-staff church
	Large	Sole pastor of church with over 150 members
	Small	Sole pastor of church with less than 150 members
	Assoc	Associate or assistant pastor
	Parish Other	Includes music, education, youth, interim and supply pastors
	Non-parish	Includes chaplain, seminary faculty, denominational staff, denominational executives

lar work after seminary, a fair percentage of them seem to stay there. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the percentage of seminary graduates going into secular work after seminary is still relatively small (6 percent) and that these figures only include those who received their M.Div. degree. In traditions that do not require an M.Div. it may be more normative to work part time in secular work while also working in a local church.

Summary

How shall we interpret this evidence? First, the data suggests that denominational leaders who worry that they face a potential clergy shortage because the number of retirements is outpacing the number of ordinations are focusing attention on the wrong issue. My companion report on the labor supply suggests that there is an imbalance of ordained clergy across the Protestant denominations I studied.[1] There is a clergy shortage in smaller churches, but this is primarily due to the fact that these churches do not have the financial resources to support a full time pastor, not because there is a shortage of qualified clergy. Also, some clergy choose not to accept calls to small churches, even when these churches can afford a full time pastor, because the congregations are located in isolated rural areas where jobs for spouses and other opportunities are limited.

The data also indicate that seminary graduates face a tighter labor market than they did a generation ago. Roughly 35 percent will be unable to find suitable parish work within the first two years after seminary. Some will take secular jobs and eventually be able to move into churches, but a third of those who start out in secular work will remain there. Finally, of those who are lucky enough to find parish positions after graduation, many, but not all, are likely to be in the most challenging churches, that is, those with smaller memberships and smaller budgets.

[1] (Eds. Note): If one counts the total number of non-retired clergy, including those serving in non-parish positions such as chaplaincies, denominational agencies, etc., and compares this number with the total number of *parish* positions, there would then appear to be an oversupply of clergy; however, many clergy choose not to go parish positions. There is no way of knowing, from existing data, how many go into non-parish positions because there is not a suitable opening for them, and how many choose these positions as their preferred option for service.

These trends affect those clergy who are already employed in small and medium sized churches. First, the pyramidal shape of the clergy job market in most American denominations means that there is likely to be a large number of applicants (or aspirants) for the larger, more desirable positions. This means that a church offering such a position will be in a better bargaining position, knowing that they have multiple qualified candidates to choose from. All things being equal, market economics suggests that they will probably be able to lower the salary offered and still get a well-qualified candidate. In other words, the pyramidal structure acts to lower wages for the entire pool.

The second way that these trends, including the shrinking number of senior positions, affect mid-career clergy is that it limits the opportunities for clergy to advance to senior positions. This means that a large number of clergy will find their career mobility "stalled." Even as they gain more experience, and perhaps have growing financial needs due to the growth of their families, many clergy will be unable to move up into better positions because of the small number of these positions available.

For better or worse, the image of success that our society paints for those who work is one in which people are rewarded over time by promotions to jobs that offer greater rewards, greater challenges, and greater opportunities to learn and gain professional experience. For a pastor, this paradigm suggests a career path that leads to bigger and bigger churches with the position of senior pastor of a large church being associated with career success. However, in a denomination in which the number of senior positions is shrinking and there is increased competition for mid career positions, fewer and fewer clergy will be able to follow this model. Furthermore, some may attribute their failure to follow this model as a result of personal failure rather than the lack of structural opportunities. This in turn may lead to a sense of discouragement and low self-esteem. In my interviews with clergy, many talked about their vocational journeys in terms that reflected some sense of conflict over the meaning of success in their careers. While most spoke of career goals in terms of personal fulfillment, they were also aware of the "successful career paradigm," and that success is typically measured by whether they had advanced in their careers and the kind of job they currently occupied relative to their years of experience. Some were either defensive or ambivalent about the fact that they had not followed this model, and unsure whether they had in some way failed to live up to expectations.

As a general rule, we can think of the opportunity structure for clergy in denominations with declining memberships as contracting, while the opportunity structures for clergy in growing denominations is likely to expand. Yet, in both of these kinds of denominations, one of the surest ways to career advancement is for the pastors to build their own church by attracting new members, thereby multiplying the resources available to them through the congregation.

The Dependence of the Clergy on Denominational Structures

The previous section has addressed the way that the dynamics of clergy supply affect opportunities for mobility but it ignores an even more crucial difference that sets clergy apart from other professional occupations and bears directly upon their inability to raise their status as professionals.

Clergy are often considered one of the oldest professions in the country alongside the legal and medical professions. Consequently, clergy status and salaries are often compared to these professions as if to say, "This is the standard we should use to measure ourselves and we are falling short." I would like, however, to argue that this is an inappropriate comparison, because clergy work is organized very differently from most other professions.

Consider the example of the medical profession. This profession is considered to be one of the strongest occupational groups in American society and is often used as an illustration of how professional groups can organize their resources to gain power and prestige. Professions tend to be distinguished from non-professional occupational groups by their ability to accomplish three things: first, by their ability to define a specialized area of knowledge; second, by their ability to control this knowledge; and third, by their ability to regulate entry into the profession.

The medical profession has been successful in part because it has been able to persuasively argue that



medical knowledge was not simply something that could be taught in textbooks, but was a special vocation that could only be taught in an apprentice-like setting. Thus aspiring doctors attend medical school, but they must also spend a number of years learning the norms, decision-making strategies, and practices of medical behavior from the mentoring of more senior members of their profession. By successfully making the argument that physicians themselves are the repositories of knowledge, doctors have been able to exert enormous power in the production of medical knowledge. Only practicing professionals who had been socialized through this kind of education and training, it was claimed, can produce legitimate medical knowledge. Physicians write the textbooks, administer the schools, teach the classes, manage the hospitals, control the knowledge in qualifying exams, ensure standards, and discipline errant members of the profession. By controlling the production and administration of knowledge, doctors control the medical schools and define what a physician (and other medical specializations) is required to know. By controlling these systems, they can also control the medical schools and the number of doctors that are produced each year. Control over the entry of new members allows them to regulate the number of doctors practicing, which allows them to regulate their market power. Theoretically (at least until the advent of managed care) the medical profession could control the number of doctors licensed to practice in any given medical field or specialization and can keep the economic power of practitioners high. In addition, since doctors also regulate the hospitals, they can exert a great deal of power within the organization to define what responsibilities they have and do not have, in other words they can exert a great deal of leverage in controlling their work environment.

The medical profession and its organizing body, the American Medical Association, exists as a trans-organizational body that can regulate, supervise, and discipline the actions of its own members. Its power comes from acting together as an occupational group. As such it exerts a great deal of leverage vis-à-vis the individual organizations that employ doctors.

Clergy, in comparison, have none of these characteristics. There is no union or professional occupational association to which clergy belong. The training, socialization, and employment of clergy is controlled largely by the different denominations rather than the profession. Furthermore, there is little coordination between the denominations in ways that benefit clergy as a professional group.

How clergy enter the profession varies across the denominations. If one wishes to become an ordained minister, one does not take a standardized exam that is recognized across the profession such as an LSAT, MCAT, or GMAT exam. One is more likely to begin the process by talking with leaders and mentors in the organization or denomination into which one seeks to be ordained. In the Episcopal Church, for example, candidates typically are expected to seek the approval of a diocesan bishop who sponsors them before they seek seminary training. There are also no universal criteria governing qualifications for ministry. Requirements and recommendations in both training and education are determined at the denominational level rather than by a trans-denominational clergy organization, resulting in a wide degree of variation in the kind of background and training that ministers have across and within denominations.[2] The fact that most denominations operate their own seminaries and can even exert direct control over what is and is not taught in the curriculum increases the dependence of students upon their denomination rather than help to foster an independent professional status.

More important is that once a person is ordained he or she is ordained specifically to one church or denomination. It is not normal for clergy to seek jobs in other denominations, and, in fact, there are costs in terms of

[2] A study by Barbara Wheeler showed that most theological seminaries are very unselective in their admissions criteria Wheeler, B. (2001).

retirement and health benefits to prevent clergy from doing so. More typically, clergy are ordained within a particular denominational and spend their entire career within the same organization. Credentials are not generally considered portable across denominations, and this increases the dependence of the minister on the denominational organization.

The work settings in which clergy operate also serve to isolate clergy from others in similar work, inhibiting the development of independent professional norms and values, or sometimes even exchange of knowledge and information. Clergy tend to work alone, as the sole pastor of a church. Although some denominations encourage or require candidates to participate in mentoring groups or to serve under a mentor's supervision for some part of their education, for much of their work lives they interact far more with laity in their congregations than with their professional peers.[3]

It would be difficult to think of another occupation where one's skills and professional future are so dependent on a single organization.

The main point that I am emphasizing is that, although we tend to think of the clergy occupation as a prestigious profession, as an occupational group clergy exhibit none of the autonomy, self regulation, or trans-organizational power exhibited by other professional groups such as physicians or lawyers. Clergy are a unique occupational class in that their training, work environment, and career outcomes are tied to a single organization in a way that makes them extraordinarily dependent. The credentials they acquire in these organizations are not clearly transferable to other organizations in the religious or the secular sector, nor to other kinds of work outside religious institutions. A Baptist minister cannot easily apply for a job within a Methodist conference or an Episcopal diocese without a lengthy process of getting his or her credentials approved, nor could a Presbyterian minister suddenly decide to apply for an opening in a Lutheran congregation without gaining approval of the Lutheran synod. For the most part, one's professional opportunities are limited by the denominational boundaries within which one is ordained. It would be difficult to think of another occupation where one's skills and professional future are so dependent on a single organization.

The way that clergy are selected, educated and trained ensures that they develop an strong loyalty to the denomination in which they serve; however, there is a grave asymmetry in this loyalty. Whereas clergy are socialized to act within, and uphold the norms, values, beliefs, and doctrines of a particular religious body, many denominations have very few mechanisms to support them as individuals. Although I may overstate the case, it seems that most denominations are unable to guarantee lifelong employment in exchange for this loyalty. In some cases, they do not even guarantee health or dental benefits, retirement benefits, or other kinds of protections that the employees of large secular organizations have come to expect. Because most denominations do not restrict the number of clergy they ordain, clergy are also vulnerable to the kinds of labor surpluses that put a downward pressure on their wages. Most denominations also do not regulate working conditions for clergy. Thus, there are few minimum wage protections, nor are there standard job descriptions that specify the number of hours to be worked. There is no assurance of time off for vacations, or protection from harassment. Clergy are not even protected under civil rights laws because of clauses that exclude their applicability to religious institutions. Gays and women can be discriminated against and be denied access to jobs on the basis of their gender or sexual orientation.

Another reason why clergy have few of the protections afforded to employees in large organizations is that they are not in fact employees of the denomination. Parish clergy are employed by local churches and are dependent upon these churches for the nurture of their professional and spiritual goals and the support of their body and soul. These churches in turn tend to operate as small, independent, entrepreneurial organizations, or at best, as in the case of denominations with more centralized forms of authority, as independently owned and operated members of a franchise. Because of their limited resources, most churches cannot guarantee lifelong employment or support for the clergy who serve them and like many small businesses in this country, choose not to offer medical or dental benefits for their clergy.

[3] Pastors often complain that one of their biggest problems is professional loneliness and the lack of professional support. Their work situation is often more governed by the local norms, culture, and expectations of the church in which they are working than by either the denomination or a professional standard.

I conducted telephone interviews with a number of denominations to discover the kinds of benefits that were available to ordained clergy and found that, while there was some variation with regard to polity, for the most part denominations provided little universal support to those they ordained. At best, they suggested guidelines for salaries, pensions and medical benefits. In addition, all denominations linked the provision of these benefits to employment, thus those who are unemployed receive no benefits from the denomination, and the size and quality of one's benefits tend to be positively correlated with one's position and salary. While a number of denominations sponsor benefits plans and offer guidelines for how much the local church should contribute, few make these contributions mandatory, and many local churches choose not to contribute.

Surprisingly, even those clergy who are employed full time by churches are often found to be without the kinds of safety nets that most organizations provide to loyal employees such as medical, dental, and retirement benefits. One denominational leader with whom I spoke assured me that the denomination did offer medical benefits, but upon further inquiry I discovered that this meant that they recommended a medical plan to churches. Clergy only receive benefits if the local church decides to make a contribution. The denomination had not negotiated any form of group plan that would have made use of its collective bargaining power to gain better service for lower rates. For the most part, congregations that wanted to offer benefits to their clergy bought plans designed for independent contractors or self-employed persons that often offer lower coverage, have high deductibles, and are more expensive. Even where benefits are available, they do not always cover the family members of clergy, and the pastor often has to pay high premiums and most of the deductible. This may be one reason why so many clergy who speak of leaving the ministry list poor health as one of the chief reasons (Zikmund, Lummis et al. 1998).

The Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) conducted a survey of the kinds of benefits offered to congregational employees (pastors and lay employees). They found that 25 percent of the congregations in the survey had full time employees, and of these congregations, 68 percent provided medical benefits, and 52 percent provided pension benefits. Congregations were then asked to report what health benefits they offered to full time employees other than through the Benefits Plan of the PCUSA specifically, whether they provided help with deductibles, co-insurance, or the cost of dental insurance offered through the Board of Pensions. The study found that 25 percent of the churches with full time pastors provided help with deductibles, 7 percent provided help with co-insurance payments, and 17 percent provided help with dental coverage offered through the Board of Pensions. The rate of aid for lay employees was even lower. Only 3 percent helped full time lay employees with deductibles, 2 percent helped with co-insurance payments, and 2 percent helped cover costs associated with dental insurance. Despite this relatively sparse record of support, it is worth noting that of the denominations we examined, the PCUSA has some of the strongest denominational guidelines and policies regarding pastoral benefits.

While the degree of centralized authority makes some difference in the way that clergy are treated, the difference is not extreme. Centralized denominations are perhaps in a better position to publicize wage guidelines, make strong suggestions with regard to clergy benefits, and exert greater normative pressure on churches to comply; yet they can only offer normative guidelines. As long as local churches are independently financed, the denomination cannot force them to make contributions to their pastor's welfare.

The case of the American Baptist Churches illustrates how the employment relationship between the clergy, the denomination, and the local church is typically handled. The local churches ordain clergy, but this ordination must be recognized at the regional level. Clergy are also hired at the local level, and the employment relationship is negotiated between the clergy person and the local church. Since the majority of these churches are relatively small, the kinds of salaries and benefits that they are able to offer to a clergyperson vary widely. The denomination has some salary guidelines available in the form of salary averages compiled from a number of churches, but cannot guarantee a living wage to clergy within its denomination. The denomination also endorses a health plan and a supplemental Medicare plan, but these are simply recommendations. All benefits are negotiated between the pastor and the local church, and each can choose whatever plan suits them. Because these affairs are negotiated locally, clergy do not benefit from collective

purchasing which might provide more benefits for less money. Most individually purchased plans only cover minimal services and require members to take on a larger proportion of the health costs. Regional associations might be able to negotiate better deals with health providers if they acted collectively.

The denomination does have a national office that manages group term life insurance, disability insurance, and a pension fund; however individual churches make contributions on behalf of their minister. These contributions tend to be calculated as a percentage of one's salary, which tends to work against those clergy who work in smaller churches with lower salaries. Moreover, these contributions are voluntary, and thus it is possible for a clergyperson to work his or her entire life for a small church and to end up with neither health nor retirement funds. The American Baptist Churches, for example, has 5,300 churches but only 2,850 individual participants in the denominational pension fund. Conservatively speaking this means that 54 percent of their churches make pension contributions for their staff. However, further investigation shows that of the 2,850 participants, only 65 percent are clergy. The remainder are lay persons. This suggests that perhaps only 1,852, or 35 percent, of the 5,300 churches are making contributions to the pension fund on behalf of their pastors (Ministry and Evaluation 2000). Recognizing the vulnerability of clergy within this system, in 1980 the Commission of the Ministry and the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches issued a set of "Recommended Procedures for Ordination, Commissioning, and Recognition for the Christian Ministry in the American Baptist Churches" that states:

> Because of the mobility and itinerancy of the ordained clergy, it is physically impossible for the local ordaining church to be responsible for the faithful service of the ordinand for the many years of an individual's ministry. Thus over the years there has been a *de facto* expectation on the part of the local church that the denomination is responsible for the counseling, consulting, monitoring and continuing recognition of clergy for service. The individual Regions, States, and Cities have been charged with this responsibility. (Church 1980)

My interviews did not turn up information on how this responsibility was being discharged.

Summary

In this section I have discussed the ways that the labor supply directly impacts the trajectories and outcomes of clergy careers. The combination of fewer senior pastor positions, a growing number of small churches that cannot afford a full time pastor, and declining denominational membership means that there are fewer opportunities for full time employment, and fewer opportunities for upward mobility within these denominations.

Those who feel that the professional status of clergy is in decline must realize that clergy have never been professionals in the sense of being an occupational class that transcends organizational boundaries. They have always been dependent upon the resources and generosity of the denominations in which they are ordained and the relative wealth of the churches in which they work. Today, when medical, dental, disability and retirement benefits are considered standard parts of the employment package at large firms, the churches have fallen woefully short in matching these standards.

Denominations have an added burden of responsibility to address issues of economic justice for clergy, not simply because they are organizations governed by higher moral standards than secular organizations, but also because the ministry occupies a very unique organizational role. Clergy are trained to work within a single denomination, and are deeply committed to this organization by virtue of their education, training and ordination. They are the chief carriers of the practices, beliefs, and traditions of the denominational church tradition and in addition they are uniquely vulnerable to the structural opportunities and limitations that the denomination imposes on their professional lives.

From this perspective, the United Methodist Church seems to take the most enlightened view of clergy labor. While no system is perfect, and United Methodism certainly has its own problems, it is able to maintain some control over the balance between labor supply and demand, negotiate minimum wages and benefits for their clergy, and go further than any other denomination towards providing life-long full employment.

PART TWO: AN ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM THE HARTFORD STUDY

In this section I present analyses based on data gathered by the Hartford Study of Ordained Men and Women in 1994. A general overview of the findings in this study can be found in *Clergywomen: An Uphill Calling* (Zikmund, Lummis et al. 1998). Here, I expand and elaborate on the findings reported with regard to clergy careers. When possible, comparisons will be made with data reported in *Women of the Cloth* (Carroll, Hargrove et al. 1983) in order to show how trends have evolved over time. This section will deal more explicitly with specific career outcomes, analyzing qualitative and quantitative factors that influence whether clergy become senior pastors, non-parish ministers, or take secular positions.

PATTERNS OF CLERGY CAREERS

There are two models of a professional clergy career: the first is that of a pastor who begins his or her career in a small church or a new church start straight out of seminary and builds ties with the community and within the church so the church slowly grows over time. In this model, clergy tend to stay in the same church throughout their professional career.

A second model follows the more typical career pattern in which people switch jobs every few years, seeking more challenges and better opportunities. In the Hartford study, very few clergy stayed within one church their entire career. In fact, roughly 80 percent had held more than one job at the time of our survey, and the majority appeared to switch jobs on an average of every three years. Thus there seems to be very active career movement by clergy.

In a typical labor market, we expect that as one's career progresses one would move into positions of increasing challenge, with greater and greater responsibility. Later in the career we would expect the majority of these persons to be in senior pastor positions. In order to examine this, I present figures that show the distribution of clergy across jobs at different career stages. These positions include secular work, sole pastor, senior pastor, co-pastor, associate or assistant pastor, interim pastor, regional executive, national executive and "other" which is largely made up of ordained clergy in non-parish positions (military, hospital or school chaplains. etc.) but also includes some seminary teachers, and evangelists.

If we consider each job as a stage in a person's career then jobs one and two might be considered a early career stage, jobs three through five as the mid-career stage, and jobs six through ten as the late-career stage, as in the following graphs. Note that these graphs omit important information: for example, they don't tell us how long people stay within one job, or which kinds of jobs people are moving to or from. The figures also do not reflect those who stay in the same position. Each progressive graph only reflects those who have made the transition to the nth job. Nonetheless, it does give us a series of snapshots of where clergy tend to cluster at different stages in their careers from a general sample of male and female clergy.

FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST JOB POSITIONS FOR ORDAINED CLERGY

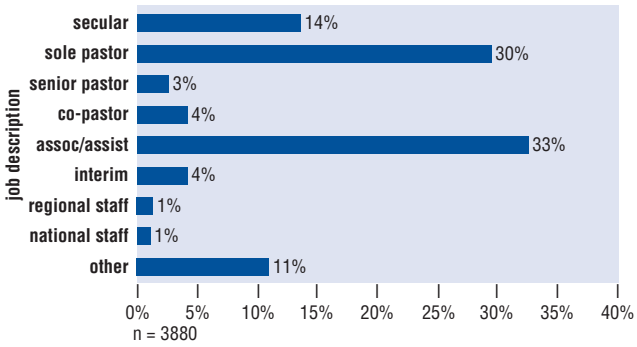
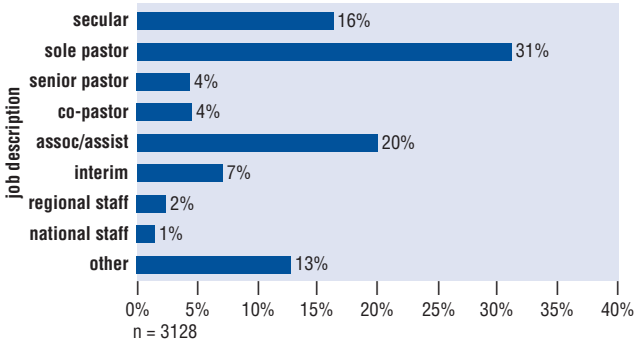


FIGURE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF SECOND JOB POSITIONS FOR ORDAINED CLERGY



Source: Hartford Study of Ordained Men & Women, 1994

Early in one's career, taking a position as an associate or assistant pastor or as the pastor of a small church is considered a good first job. In the assistant or associate position, one has the opportunity of being mentored by a senior pastor and learning how a large

Figure 5: Distribution of Third Job Positions for Ordained Clergy

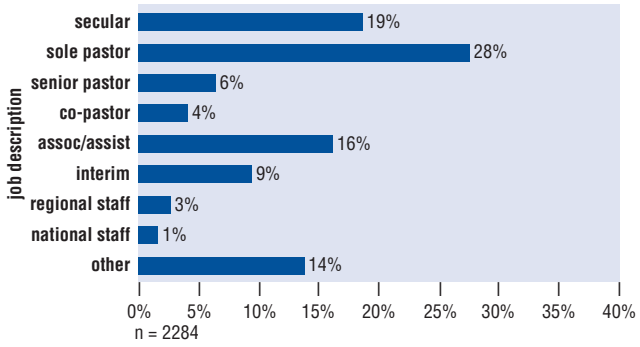


Figure 6: Distribution of Fourth Job Positions for Ordained Clergy

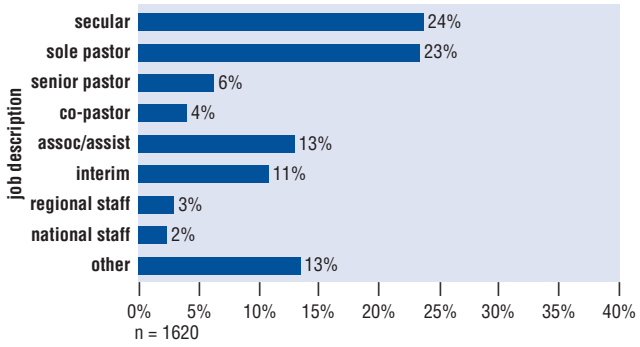
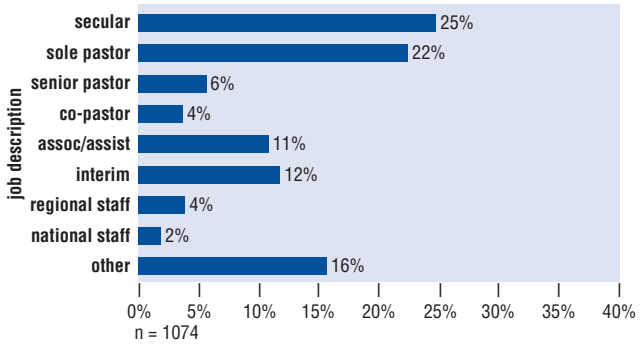


Figure 7: Distribution of Fifth Job Positions for Ordained Clergy



Source: Hartford Study of Ordained Men & Women, 1994

church operates. Other seminary graduates also seek out a sole pastorate position as a first job, with the idea that a pastor can learn the ropes of ministry in a small congregation before moving on to a larger one. Other factors, however, may make this a less-than-ideal choice, since small churches often have limited resources, and the opportunity to learn from a more senior colleague is absent.

If we look at jobs one and two, we expect that most clergy will be the sole pastor of a small congregation or an assistant or associate pastor. This is indeed reflected in Figures 3 and 4. In the first job most clergy work as assistant or associate pastors (33 percent), and somewhat smaller percentages are sole pastors (30 percent). Although we do not know the size of these sole pastorates, we might assume that since this is a first job, most are relatively small.

Another pattern to note is that there is also a relatively high percentage of the newly ordained who are in secular work (14 percent) or in "other positions" (11 percent), probably in non-parish positions. We can assume that those working in secular positions are doing so temporarily until they can obtain a parish position.

By the second job, the pattern between associate and sole pastors has shifted. The largest group of clergy at this stage in their careers are in sole pastorate positions (31 percent). We can assume that many of the former associates or assistants have moved on to handle their own churches, and perhaps some of the sole pastors of small churches have also moved into new sole pastorates of slightly larger churches. Those who are still in their first job and have not taken a second job are not represented in this figure.

A significant percentage of clergy are still in associate or assistant positions in their second job (20 percent). This might indicate a large number of lateral career moves or a movement from other non parish positions into associate or assistant positions.[4]

Again, the number of clergy who describe themselves as holding secular positions remains quite high (13 percent). We would expect that secular work is a way of earning money while seeking a parish position, or that those who pursue continued careers in secular positions would not respond to our survey; however, the percentage of ordained clergy who list their work as being in secular positions remains mysteriously high. Similarly, the percentage that lists their work as "other" remains relatively constant from the first to the second job (13 percent). This may indicate that people who start out in "other" work remain in this career path, and we should

[4] The number still in the first job can be calculated by subtracting the number for Figure 4 from the number in Figure 3.

perhaps treat it as a separate career track from those who work in parish ministries.

By the third through fifth jobs, what we consider the "mid-career" stage, we expect to see an increasing percentage of clergy in senior positions. Indeed, the percentage in these positions increases from the early career stage, and remains relatively constant through the mid- and late- career stage (6 percent). Nonetheless, it is still a relatively small percentage if the majority of clergy expect to end their careers as senior pastors.

As expected, the largest cluster of clergy is found in the sole pastorate positions (22 percent to 28 percent). In expressing their aspirations, most students say that after ordination they hope to be the pastor of their own church. More surprising is the fact that a significant proportion of clergy are still in associate and assistant positions throughout the mid-career stage (11 percent to 16 percent). Even after their third, fourth, or fifth career move, some clergy are still serving in this position. This suggests that rather than viewing these positions as a transitional job, many clergy remain in them for a significant portion of their careers. It may be that they have decided to specialize in youth ministry, religious education, or some associate position on a permanent basis.

A continuing pattern in the mid-career stage is that the percentage of clergy who list themselves in secular work remains high and, in fact, increases throughout the career. The percentage of clergy who list themselves in "other" work is also increasing. One explanation may be that by mid-career, half of the original respondents in Figure 3 are no longer making career moves. They are only represented in the later figures if they continue to move jobs. By the third and fourth job, half the sample has not made any further job transitions. Thus the people whom we are seeing represented in the mid- to late- career stages are the most mobile clergy. We do not know a great deal about these relatively transient clergy, but our figures suggest that they may be moving in and out of secular work, and in and out of non-parish positions at a relatively high rate.

We also see an increasing percentage of interim pastors in the mid- and late-career stage. This is to be expected, since interim pastors shift jobs frequently. The relative percentage of co-pastors on the other hand remains fairly constant across the career stages.

Figure 8: Distribution of Sixth Job Positions for Ordained Clergy

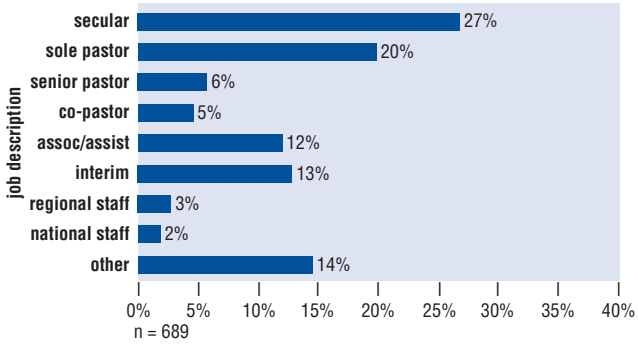


Figure 9: Distribution of Seventh Job Positions for Ordained Clergy

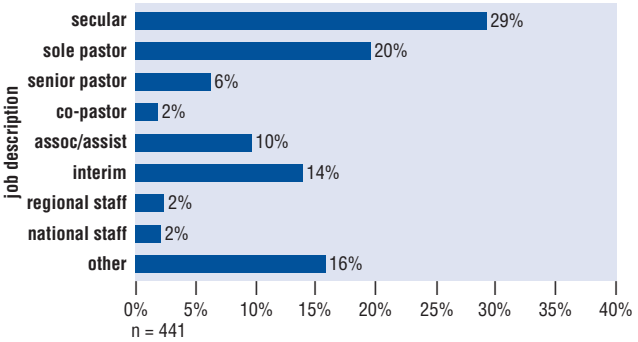
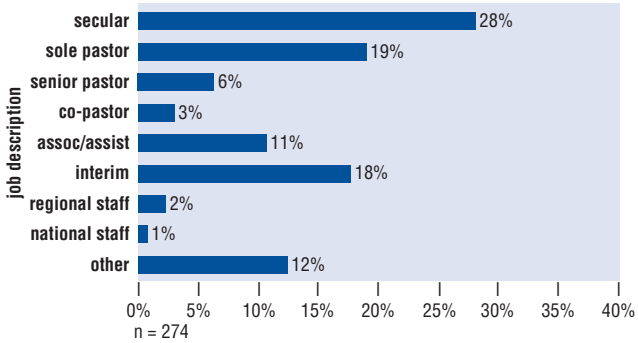


Figure 10: Distribution of Eighth Job Positions for Ordained Clergy



Source: Hartford Study of Ordained Men & Women, 1994

Since many co-pastors are married, we expect this to be a stable category, since people are not expected to move in and out of this kind of position too readily. The late-career stage includes clergy who responded to our sample that listed up to ten different jobs since ordination. The majority of the clergy in our sample have had between one and five jobs. Eighty-one

Figure 11: Distribution of Ninth Job Positions for Ordained Clergy

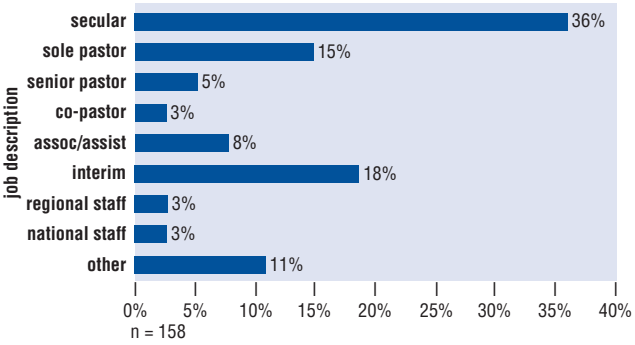
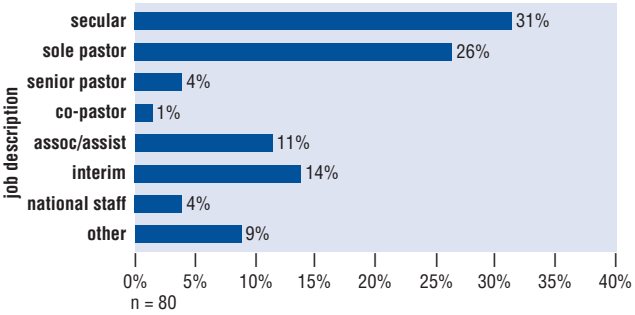


Figure 12: Distribution of Tenth Job Positions for Ordained Clergy



Source: Hartford Study of Ordained Men & Women, 1994

percent of our sample has had two or more jobs, 59 percent of the sample three or more jobs, 42 percent four or more jobs, and only 28 percent has had five or more jobs. Thus we can assume that Figures 8 through 12 represent only a quarter of our clergy sample, and that these patterns reflect those clergy who, for a number of reasons, may lead more mobile lifestyles.

Of those who have held five or more jobs, some of them continue to move into senior pastor positions; a declining percentage is moving into sole pastorate positions; but by far the largest group of them are moving into secular work. The proportion of interim pastors occupies a larger and larger share of these mobile late-career clergy, but surprisingly, there is still a relatively large proportion of assistant/associate and non-parish pastors.

The Figures taken together point to some interesting features. First, the proportion of senior positions is relatively small and the relatively high percentages of persons in assistant or associate positions and sole pastorate positions late in the career may be a sign of the "stalled" career syndrome that we mentioned earlier. Second, it is also surprising that such a large percentage of clergy is clustered in the secular category throughout the career path. One might assume that those who move into secular work eventually drop out, but the clergy in our sample continue to list their secular positions. We will examine this more closely in a later section of this report.

Similarly, the percentage of clergy in the "other" category remains relatively high and constant throughout the various career stages. This suggests that perhaps those in non-parish ministry are occupying a separate and parallel career track to those in parish ministry, moving from one non-parish position to another. We examine this group more carefully as well in a later section of the report.

The Effects of Clergy Supply and Demand Imbalance on the Labor Market and Careers

Given the imbalance of clergy and vacant positions brought on especially by the growing number of small congregations unable to afford or attract a pastor that I discussed in another Pulpit & Pew report on the job market for clergy, the obvious next question to ask is how has this imbalance impacted the career plans of clergy who cannot afford or choose not to accept positions in these congregations? Are they leaving the ministry? Are they moving into non-parish positions? Or are they simply reporting themselves as unemployed? Using data from two surveys of ordained male and female clergy collected by Hartford Seminary in 1983 and 1993, I look at these three possibilities more closely. The first possibility is that the imbalance will result in an increased number of clergy who choose to work in a non-parish, but church-related position. Recent research on clergy careers (Zikmund, Lummis and Chang 1998) shows that alternative career paths for ordained clergy include non-parish work as institutional chaplains (military, schools, hospitals and other secular and social service organizations), in various

denominational positions, in college or seminary teaching, and so forth. The second possibility is that clergy will find work in secular positions not obviously related to their ministerial training and not church related. This may include clergy who take secular positions to pay their expenses while volunteering in church settings to fulfill their vocation, or who feel that they are fulfilling their vocation through their secular work. The numbers in this category are likely to be underreported, since ordained clergy who were no longer working within church positions may not have returned our survey. The third outcome that is examined is whether there is an increase in the number of clergy who report themselves as unemployed.

In reviewing the data from the 1983 and 1993 Hartford Seminary surveys, we found that substantially more clergy are now working in non-parish jobs. What is less clear is how and why this shift occurs. One explanation is that the administrative staffs at the regional and national level have expanded, creating a larger number of non-parish jobs within the denomination. While our data suggests a slight increase in these jobs across all denominations, the actual numbers are very small and do not suggest a trend.

Another possibility might be that denominational officials and other mentors proactively work to create non-parish positions and encourage clergy to take these positions. However, in a number of interviews conducted with non-parish clergy, we found little support for this explanation. These clergy report that they received very little support or advice from various mentors when raising the possibility of serving in a non-parish position. The attitudes of denominational officials ranged from positive but not facilitating, to indifference, to strong opposition. It was clear to these clergy that denominational officials saw non-parish ministry as "outside the box" and were reluctant to deal with these career strategies. Several of the interviewees also noted that non-parish ministry does not produce goods for the denomination in the form of pension revenue or recruits and felt that this accounted for the indifference of denominations to this type of ministry.

This raises an interesting point. If roughly one-fifth of ordained clergy now work outside the denomination, how shall the denomination respond? Do these clergy



provide goods and resources to the denomination? Is their work a possible source of outreach and mission? Should their work be supported and guided by denominational officials?

In trying to understand more about non-parish clergy, the research team conducted about 30 telephone interviews with clergy who currently worked in non-parish ministry. The following profile was typical of the kind of person who was interviewed.

Larry was at first hesitant to answer my questions but warmed up about halfway through the interview and said he'd be willing to be interviewed again. He was currently working half time as a chaplain in a convalescent nursing home and half time as a mental health practitioner in marriage and family counseling. He decided to go into non-parish work due to the lack of jobs available in his denomination. He had also had some difficulty and conflict while working in a congregation, and along the way he had picked up some training as a hospital chaplain. His decision to go into non-parish ministry was made independently, without consulting with denominational supervisors or officials; although, he did receive some advice about the mechanics of getting a position—advice

about credentialing, accreditation, and training—from the Clinical Pastoral Education supervising chaplain in his area. At the time of his decision he did not have any friends or acquaintances in that job area. He has been in ministry now for 18 years. He spent five years in three parishes, ten years as a hospital chaplain, five years as a hospice chaplain, and one and a half years in a convalescent nursing home (some jobs overlapped). However he now makes most of his living as a mental health professional and is trying to establish a group practice in psychotherapy. Along the way he has acquired a masters degree in educational psychology and a license in Marriage and Family Counseling, and he sees that he is gradually moving towards a more secular career path.

Compared to working in a congregation, he finds non-parish work to be more rewarding because the results and outcomes are more tangible: "You can see immediate results. I also have more independence in planning, budgeting, scheduling and things like that. On the downside I miss taking part in Sunday worship services and being regularly involved with a congregation and having time for theological reflection." He believes that one of the things motivating greater involvement in non-parish ministry is the awareness of the need to minister outside the confines of the church, that there are more immediate problems such as homelessness and poverty that are harder to address as a congregational pastor.

The interviews with non-parish clergy reveal some of the reasons why ministers make the decision to leave congregational work. Most felt that they were proactive in choosing to work in non-parish positions rather than being pushed into it or actively recruited into these positions. Several noted that they made the decision to enter non-parish ministry while still in seminary. Some recognized that they did not wish to work with congregations or did not have a suitable personality to perform in that role. Some of these persons were directly told that their gifts lay outside parish ministry. Almost all of the clergy we interviewed had been ordained for ten to 20 years and had experienced parish ministry at some point in their careers. They decided to leave because they found themselves unsuited to working in a congregation or because of experience with church conflict. Some of the women reported leaving because of a feeling of hostility towards women or because of sexual harassment. More than one of the clergy responded that they were seeking to transform the church and were dissatisfied with the opportunities to transform the church through parish ministry. Others also reported that they were attracted to the job conditions in non-parish ministry where there were regular hours, a sense of greater control over their work, better benefits and insurance, and clearer expectations about the kind of work that was expected and what they should produce. The interviews give us some insight into the reasons why these clergy left parish ministry, and they are probably representative of some of the many reasons why clergy decided to make this change.

Our interviews with these non-parish clergy make it clear that they perceive denominations as viewing non-parish work as less important and more marginal than parish ministry. Yet it seems that an increasing number of ordained clergy are choosing this career option, and for a large number of them, it eventually leads to an increasing secularization of their ministry. Larry's career path from congregational ministry, to non-parish ministry, towards group psychotherapy seems to move him further and further away from institutionalized church settings.

Rather than ignore this trend, denominations may wish to deal with it directly, either by providing ways for non-parish ministers to stay connected with the church or guiding them explicitly in these vocational choices. Since an increasing proportion of the ordained appear to be headed in this direction, it is a trend denominations should face in a proactive manner.



Senior pastors

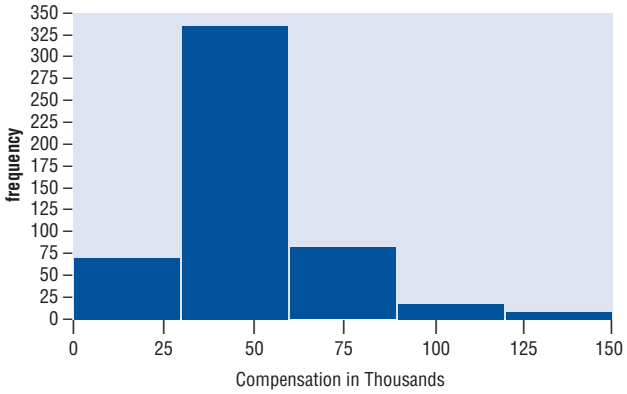
Given that most denominational traditions assume that the senior pastor position is one that represents a certain sense of career achievement, it is worth examining who they are and how they achieved this position more closely. In our sample, we found 617, or 14 percent, of our respondents reported that they were currently employed as a senior pastor. Seventy-four percent of these pastors were men and 26 percent were women. The youngest was 28 and the oldest was 78, and on average they had held the position for almost six years at the time of the survey. Their educational background varied widely. While most had attended denominational seminaries (59 percent), relatively few had attended university divinity schools (17 percent). This may suggest that the kinds of networks and credentials that one obtains by attending a denominational seminary has greater payoff in the senior pastor job search. Surprisingly, 11 percent had not attended any seminary at all and may have instead relied upon their personal spiritual charisma as their primary qualification. The remainder attended interdenominational or non-affiliated seminaries.

Of those who listed their salary (505 out of 617), the salaries (inclusive of benefits) were broadly distributed. The minimum salary was valued at $1000, and the maximum salary was listed as $150,000, with an average of $36,300. Figure 13 shows a histogram graph of how these salaries are distributed.

These figures are consistent with a salary survey conducted by the Barna Group in the summer of 2000. In this survey, his organization surveyed 600 Protestant senior pastors. He found that the average compensation package was $42,083, and the typical compensation package was more than $38,000 (suggesting that the average was pulled up considerably by some high salaried outliners). This figure includes the one third of the sample that did not have a graduate degree, most of them from African American and charismatic churches.

Barna reports that this figure represents a 9 percent increase over 1999, and a 10 percent increase from compensation reported in 1992, but that adjusting for inflation, senior pastors earn less now than a decade ago. He also reported that, as was the case a decade ago, his sample reflected a population that is mostly male (95 percent), married (94 percent), seminary educated (60 percent), with a median age of 49. In his survey, 83 percent identified themselves as "evangelical" and only 13 percent identified their churches as "theologically liberal" (Dart 2001).

Figure 13: Salary and Benefits Compensation of Senior Pastors



Given the desirability of becoming a senior pastor, it is worthwhile looking at the chance one has of fulfilling this dream and the factors in one's background that affect the likelihood of doing so. Conducting an analysis of the Hartford sample of clergy, I calculated the likelihood of becoming a senior pastor and the effect of certain background factors on that possibility. The findings suggest that the chances of someone becoming a senior pastor were quite low. In most denominations, the likelihood was about 1 percent, with a slightly higher chance in smaller denominations. Men have twice the chance of becoming a senior pastor than women,[5] and married clergy have a 50 percent greater chance than unmarried clergy. Pastoral experience has a slight positive effect on one's chances, but the effect is relatively small (roughly 8 percent). Surprisingly, the kind of seminary one attends does not seem to make a large difference in one's chances, when other variables are factored into the analysis, despite the fact that most in our sample were from denominational seminaries.

Unfortunately, this kind of information does not tell us as much as we would like to know. We do not know whether these clergy who became the heads of large churches were especially charismatic, were powerful preachers, or had exceptional managerial or people skills. In fact these characteristics that we were able to identify describe the majority of clergy (male, married, seminary trained). It may be that there are a large number of qualified clergy out there in the labor market, but

[5] The denominations in this sample were explicitly chosen for having a large number of female pastors.

there simply aren't enough positions for them to fill.

Conclusion

This report aimed to answer some basic questions about a career in ministry today. "What can a young man or woman starting out in a career of ministry expect to face?" "What are the chances of success?" "What are the chances of disappointment?" "What are the opportunities, rewards and obstacles that they will need to overcome?"

The answers to these questions vary from denomination to denomination, and are significantly impacted by labor supply issues, making it extremely important for denominations to collect accurate information on both their labor supply and the kinds of employment positions that are available within their denominations.

In a companion report to this one on clergy supply and demand, I point to data that suggests that there are fewer and fewer senior pastor positions available; an increasing number of smaller churches; and a surplus of fully ordained clergy, many of whom have chosen not to serve in parish positions. Together these facts point to two discouraging implications for clergy careers: first, that there are declining opportunities for senior advancement at the top of the career ladder, forcing many qualified clergy to stay at mid-level positions for an extended period of time, if not their entire careers; second, that entry level clergy may be competing for the same jobs as mid-career clergy who have far more experience. Consequently entry level clergy have a greater likelihood of being placed in churches that provide unique or more difficult challenges.

Analyses of experiences of Master of Divinity graduates show that, while roughly half of all graduates get jobs in parish ministry within 6 months of their graduation from seminary, the remainder have a difficult time moving into parish ministry. Even after two years, roughly 30 percent have still not found employment in parish positions.

Clergy today tend to be mobile, moving on average every three years. The average clergyperson in our sample had held three to four jobs at the time of the survey. More mobile clergy showed a greater likelihood of moving into periods of secular work during their careers.

While it is still possible to go to seminary, find a good job, and experience regular promotions to a senior pastorate position that pays well, our analysis suggests that the chances of any one person becoming a senior pastor are about 1 percent across the denominations we studied, with a slightly higher chance of doing so if one is in a small denomination.

With regard to the professional status of clergy, leaders need to recognize that clergy occupy a relatively unique niche in the occupational landscape. Because clergy tend to be uniquely dependent upon denominations for their employment, they have little ability or opportunity to exercise the kind of independent professional power that doctors, lawyers or accountants can achieve. In fact individual clergy are far more similar to independent contractors than they are to other professionals. Because they are hired by local churches that are typically small organizations, they tend to reap few of the medical, dental, disability, or retirement benefits that most employees take for granted in modern society. They also are generally limited to their denomination in terms of vocationally related job opportunities. Thus they have little power as an occupational or professional group. This may be why some clergy in England are signing up with trade unions in order to take advantage of the collective resources that the unions can offer to clergy who are legally classified as "self employed."

Since unions are a less popular alternative for most Americans, the unique dependence of clergy on their denominations creates a moral claim on the denominations and their congregations to provide greater collective benefits for employed and unemployed clergy, and to organize their collective resources to enable clergy to obtain better medical and pension benefits. Most clergy today are not compensated at comparable levels to those with similar years of educational experience. As their professional fortunes decline, they appear to be relying increasingly upon spouses and secular work to make up the difference. The trends pointed out in this report and its companion report on clergy supply and demand both suggest that the ministry of the 21st century is becoming increasingly deprofessionalized.

APPENDIX AND REFERENCES

DATA

The data for most of the analysis in this report is taken from the 1994 Hartford Study of Ordained Men and Women, which was funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. to study the status of ordained women in the Protestant Church. This study targeted denominations that had a substantial proportion of fully ordained women clergy. We primarily collected information through a mailed survey questionnaire which was sent to 9,884 male and female clergy in 15 denominations. Five thousand ninety-five questionnaires were sent to men, and 2,170 responded for a response rate of 42 percent. Four thousand seven hundred ninety-nine questionnaires were sent to women, and 2,668 responded for a response rate of 56 percent. The overall response rate was 49 percent. The questionnaire gathered information on many aspects of clergy lives, both personal and professional. As one of the principal investigators on this study, my main focus was on clergy careers, and to supplement the survey information, I also interviewed non-parish clergy and denominational placement officials. In addition to the survey information, the research team conducted over 300 telephone interviews with male and female clergy who were equally distributed amongst the denominations.



DENOMINATIONS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

This study originally included the following denominations: The American Baptist Churches, the Assemblies of God, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Church of the Brethren, the Church of the Nazarene, the Church of God (Anderson), the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Free Methodists, the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., the Reformed Church in America, the Southern Baptists, the Unitarian Universalists, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, and the Wesleyan Church. Of these 16, the Reformed Church of America handled their own mailing of the questionnaire. We were therefore unable to conduct targeted follow-ups for this denomination and subsequently received only 20 RCA responses to our survey. This low response rate may be due to unobserved factors involved in the distribution of the questionnaire, or it may reflect the efficacy of our targeted follow-up procedures. In any event, we eventually decided to eliminate the Reformed Church responses from much of our analyses, because we were not sure if this population had similar opportunities to respond, and the low response rate introduced the possibility of an unobserved bias in the mailing procedures. The remaining 15 denominations include seven (marked by asterisk) that were part of the *Women of the Cloth* study. In that research nine denominations were studied. Since the time of its completion, however, the Presbyterian Church US and the United Presbyterian Church USA merged to form the Presbyterian Church USA and the American Lutheran Church merged with the Lutheran Church of America to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, reducing the number to seven. The nine denominations in the WOC study were chosen at that time because they represented the Protestant mainline denominations with the largest representation of women. Today, they still represent some of the most active denominations ordaining women. However, the more recent project intentionally sought to broaden the scope of observation to include denominations that tend to attract less attention from religious researchers. We sought to expand variation on dimensions of beliefs, polity, and size. To this end we expanded the representation of smaller denominations, conservative denominations and Pentecostal groups. We did not, however, include representation from the

historically African American denominations, and this omission bears some discussion. While there are roughly 100 African American clergy within the included denominations, we did not include the historically African American denominations such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, or the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The omission of these denominations was due to the fielding of a large survey of African American clergy that was concurrent with our own questionnaire. In consultation with the sponsors of that study we decided not to include these denominations to avoid the risk of potentially reducing the response rate of both studies for these groups.

Sampling Design

Because this study focused on the role women clergy had come to play in the Protestant denominations, we oversampled female respondents from each denomination. This does not produce different estimates in multivariate analyses. It simply makes the margin of error smaller for women compared to men.

While many denominations have more than one level of ordination, we wanted to standardize comparisons of clergy across denominations, and so we limited the sample to those clergy ordained at the highest level within the denomination. Thus these figures do not include local pastors, licensed pastors, or those who do not have full ordination.

Another caveat is secular clergy. Although both this report and the report on clergy supply and demand discuss clergy in secular work, we must be careful in extrapolating too deeply from this data. The clergy in this study who report working in secular jobs are most likely to be those who still identify strongly with the clergy role, even though they do not work in institutionally affiliated religious positions. Those clergy who have left the ministry behind them and are engaged in secular work probably did not respond to this survey. and it is difficult to know what they are doing or how to count them. Some denominations do not keep track of their clergy after ordination and do not know where they are or what they are doing. This makes it difficult to distinguish amongst clergy who are temporarily taking secular jobs and those who have left the ministry for good.

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CONSIDER THE DANDELIONS, HOW THEY THRIVE

A Response by Robert D. Dale, director, Center for Creative Church Leadership Development, Richmond, Va.

These early days of the 21st century are anxiety-filled for America's seminaries and divinity schools as well as for the churches they serve. Our culture and our congregations are changing much faster than our institutions that provide clergy for these shifting contexts. It should be no surprise that a radical fissure between theological education and church life is occurring. That broken link raises anxieties for theological schools and worshipping communities alike.

In another era and in the face of other anxieties, Jesus said, "Consider the lilies, how they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Luke 12:27). I wonder if Jesus would use horticultural images today to describe the strain between those who educate congregational leaders and the congregational leadership setting itself? I wonder if he would switch from lilies to dandelions? Lilies are known for their beauty; dandelions, on the other hand, are legendary for their survivability. And, there may be a clue or two embedded within that contrast.

At best, dandelions are sources of salad greens from their leaves and wine from their yellow flowers. At worst, they are just troublesome weeds in our lawns. But, in every case, dandelions are durable, adaptive, and successful survivors. They hedge their bets by producing thousands of seeds from each little yellow weed, winged seeds that ride the wind to other lawns. And, they don't leave their futures to seeds alone. A dandelion's taproot can penetrate three feet into soft soil. Slicing dandelions off just below ground level with a hoe only encourages a new plant to sprout up. Consider the dandelion, how they multiple and thrive. Think of it—seeds and roots plus wings. There's more than one way to grow dandelions—thousands more ways.

There may be some lessons in that tough little yellow weed and in other living things for our seminaries and congregations? Do we need to reframe the issues and rethink the sticking points?

Ministry as a "Successful," Staged Career Trajectory: It Isn't a Pretty Picture Unless You Plant the Right Seeds

Patricia Chang's findings about the trajectories of Protestant clergy careers are stark. If you expect, as a young minister, to go to "the top" and somehow become rich and famous, aluminum siding sales is probably a better career choice. After seminary, you as a young minister are likely to discover ministry posts are difficult to find, opportunities to advance into larger ministry arenas are sparse, and professional leverage and protection are virtually non-existent. Chang's research boils down to a simple and painful finding: if your definition of a "successful" career means only becoming a fulltime senior minister, be slow to answer the call to ministry. As a career, Protestant ministry isn't a very pretty picture these days. With increasing deprofessionalization of American clergy, there are far fewer lilies than dandelions in the fields.

But, are ministry careers lost causes? Are there ways to remold some of the key factors and make ministry a better career? Hopefully. If we learn from dandelions now.

For 400 years, we've used the mental models of the Industrial Age—levers, machines and scientific proofs. We see those types of traditional images scattered throughout Patty Chang's report—chains, ladders, triangles, funnels, and charts of statistics. These metaphors make up our invisible view of reality. But, seminaries and congregations aren't machines. "Seminary" means "seed bed," and the primary New Testament images of the church are vines, flocks, families, and other living things. Thankfully, in our ripening Information and Experience Ages, organizational life is increasingly seen as organic or living. If we reframe ministry careers from a manufacturing model to a natural approach, we may discover new ways to grow ministers for more productive vocations.

Some seminary presidents are predicting the basic master of divinity degree will disappear in the next ten years. The reason for the demise of this traditional theological degree is straightforward:

congregations increasingly see academic isolation as detrimental to the kinds of leaders they require. George Barna's 2000 research on 600 Protestant senior pastors shows 40 percent are not seminary educated. Increasingly, congregations are looking for ministers—pastors and staff—in their own pews and in their local communities. Rather than blindly go out of business, what kind of diverse dandelion seeds should our seminaries plant?

Skip the sheltered greenhouse environment, and plant seeds "outside" with those pesky dandelions early.

How? Put practitioners, the folks who lead churches, in charge of instructing seminarians too. In our practitioner-based world, the leaders who are already providing professional services in congregations are tutors of the next generation. Local church ministry is more a craft than a body of knowledge and is better mastered in a ministry studio than in a classroom. Centuries ago, guilds produced their own craftsman. Some unions still do. Before law schools were established, attorneys-to-be "read for the law" under the guidance of an experienced, working lawyer. Today's physicians get medical and scientific foundations in medical schools, but they learn to practice their medical arts in teaching hospitals.

When our seminaries isolate information from practice, it's no wonder churches see our basic degree as outmoded.

A former parishioner of mine gave me a tour of the emergency room where she worked a couple of evenings each week. When I reacted with surprise since she was only in her first semester in medical school, she just laughed and said, "That's why they call it the practice of medicine!" When our seminaries isolate information from practice, it's no wonder churches see our basic degree as outmoded.

Sow seeds in two fields at the same time.

How? Create dual educational certifications. If seminaries actively provided and promoted "double majoring" in two degree areas, ministers would enjoy the breadth and security of dual career tracks—-ministry plus teaching, administration, human resources, consulting, financial planning, counseling, regional planning, and recreation leadership, just to suggest a few. We live and minister in a multicultural, multilingual, global world. Let's prepare our ministers more broadly. To use a sports metaphor, let's help them become utility infielders, not just designated hitters.

Former U.S. Senator John Danforth, who graduated from Yale with both law and seminary degrees on the same day in 1963, served as an associate rector throughout his 12 years in the Congress, mostly administering communion to shut-ins. Interestingly, some of the homebound members to whom he ministered never realized he was also a member of the United States Senate. He was prepared for and moved seamlessly between two professional worlds.

Cultivate more leaders for our most difficult ministries.

How? Patricia Chang's research shows that small churches often can't find ministers and that large churches can be so selective in employing senior ministers that few can compete. What can be done to assist the difficult-to-fill and the easy-to-fill pulpits? Let's train tentmakers. This time-honored approach of double employment helps smaller, newer, and even larger congregations have high-quality pastoral leadership. On the other side of the coin, ministers feel less vulnerable to the whims of congregational or denominational decisions when they have another employer. Remember that dandelions thrive and multiply wherever the wind may blow.

Early in my own ministry, my state's legislature established their community college system. Since I had one-and-a-half Ph.D.s, I explored teaching in a variety of sites across that network and starting new congregations. I felt I could help a new church start get stabilized in one location, and then I could transfer to another community college and begin another church. In this scenario, the church would get experience and quality, and my family and I wouldn't be totally dependent on a struggling congregation for our full support.

Grow seminaries inside model congregations.

How? Give fledgling ministers the advantage of on-the-job training inside healthy congregations from Day One of their development processes. As a professor of practical theology in seminaries, the biggest challenges for me as a teacher were those students who were "book smart" and "church dumb." These good folks with little or no congregational background had no framework for asking good questions, evaluating theological wheat from chaff, or in our case here, recognizing dandelions and lilies.

If seminary students practice ministry while at the same time learning theology, they may bridge the seminary-church chasm earlier in their careers. It's worth remembering that dandelions ignore boundaries.

Grow an integrated curriculum.

How? Bring practical theology together with biblical studies, theology, and church history early and constantly during seminary studies. To illustrate, what if an early semester in seminary was primarily dedicated to the study of the New Testament, its interpretation, languages, and context? Then, create parallel, successive, practical theology segments with single, short-term "electives"? For example, the Gospels could provide an opportunity to focus on ministers' calling, identity, and self-management; Acts and the Letters, an occasion to dig into the contemporary challenges of evangelism and church planting; the Pastorals, the issues of church administration and leadership; and the Apocalypse, an approach to crisis management. One teaching-learning session each week could be team-taught by New Testament scholars and ministry practitioners around a common question to deliberately create a whole from what are usually separate and unrelated disciplines. The same model could be extended in other semesters for Old Testament, church history, and theology.



Create ministry incubators to grow multiple ministry opportunities.

How? Challenge denominations as well as clusters of congregations to invest in new church starts, both traditionally-styled and non-traditionally-styled church plants. Create ministry posts beyond congregational life. If baptism is viewed as every Christian's ordination, congregations and denominations might share ministry work with less focus on ordination.

Planting Learning Communities of Seminaries, Denominations, and Congregations

It's time to grow lifelong learning communities of congregations, seminaries, and denominations. It's time to mimic the tenacity and adaptability of dandelions. They grow in spite of efforts to discourage them. They find ways to thrive. If ministers are to serve flexibly and ably, let's take a hint from the lowly dandelion. Let's think and work organically. Consider the dandelions, how they flourish and grow with vigor everywhere.

WE NEED TO KNOW MORE

A Response by James A. Meek, minister, Presbyterian Church in America, and former administrator and faculty member, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

Patricia Chang has highlighted a number of important issues affecting the careers of Protestant clergy. Her concerns need to be considered carefully by pastors, seminarians, denominational leaders, and church members.

Chang helpfully identifies a number of organizational and economic factors that distinguish clergy from other professionals. I was particularly struck by her analysis of asymmetrical relations between clergy and denominations—clergy must be related to and supportive of their denomination, but the denomination typically assumes little meaningful responsibility for the minister's calling or well being. Instead, clergy work for small, essentially independent businesses, much like many doctors, lawyers, or insurance professionals. Unlike these, however, pastors are dependent on others to determine their compensation and benefits. Working harder or longer does not translate into additional income for special expenses. Many small churches are unable provide a living wage. A disturbing number leave ministry for financial and other reasons. Once a friend—not a minister—wondered aloud why we gladly pay so much to those who care for our bodies but so little to those who care for our souls.

The Problem with the Pyramid

The ministry is a calling, not just a career, as Chang notes at the outset of her study. It is her failure in some ways to appreciate this that bothers me most about her study. While I understand the point of the pyramid-shaped "structure of opportunity," thinking of clergy careers in this way hurts more than it helps. The pyramid accepts the view that upward mobility is the goal of clergy careers and that those who do not continue to move up have "stalled." This view is problematic for several reasons.

First and most fatally, the pyramid, with its "top" and "bottom," is contrary to Jesus' view of ministry. Admittedly, Jesus taught that that those who are faithful with a little will be entrusted with much (Matt 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27), and it is gratifying to be asked to assume greater responsibility. However, to make career "advancement" one's goal is another matter. Jesus warned that the desire to become "great" is dangerous, insisted that it had no place among his followers ("it shall not be so among you"), and taught that greatness in his kingdom comes from serving (Matt 23:1–12; Mark 10:41–45).

In fact, many current seminary students have little interest in moving up the pyramid—but not from humility. They do not want the responsibilities of senior pastors, whom they see as distracted from "real ministry" by congregational politics and criticism. They would instead prefer a staff position where they could "just do ministry."[1]

Nor *should* we expect all pastors to become senior pastors. After all, few engineers will run General Motors and few politicians become President. This is not primarily because of the limited number of places at the "top," but because of their gifts. Many good teachers would make poor principals. Many clergy serving as assistants or associates and many pastors of small- to medium-sized churches do so cheerfully because that is where they (and their churches) feel that their gifts lie.[2] Some have special gifts in outreach, education, music, or youth ministry. Others simply have average gifts. After all, most pastors will be, by definition, average.[3] Those who are privileged to find the place where they are best suited to serve are not "stalled" in "mid-career positions," but blessed. When John the Baptist's disciples reported that that his own career had "stalled" (Jesus' crowds were now larger than his own), he wisely replied that "no one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven" (John 3:27). John understood calling.

Finally, the pyramid does not adequately represent the real complexities of clergy careers. As Chang herself notes, those who begin their careers on the staff of a larger church enjoy certain advantages over those who begin as solo pastors of small churches. Large churches typically hire senior pastors with large-church experience. At the same time, many who begin ministry in smaller churches remain in smaller churches throughout their careers. The first (or second) place of service may exercise a significant influence on the subsequent career path.[4] Starting at the "bottom," then does not

[1] This view may be naïve, but it is nonetheless widespread. Its implications for the church in the years ahead may itself merit further study.

[2] This does not mean that they do not sometimes envy a colleague's opportunities or recognition,

[3] We cannot all serve in Lake Wobegon where presumably both pastors and churches are all above average.

[4] This deserves further study. The phenomenon, however, is not unique to ministry. Major college athletic programs are more likely to hire a head coach from the ranks of assistant coaches in similar programs than from successful Division III head coaches. Large corporations look for new CEOs among the ranks of corporate vice presidents, not successful small business owners.

mean everyone starts in the same place or has the same potential to "advance." In addition, job titles do not tell the whole story. One senior pastor left a congregation of 300 to become singles pastor in a church of 5,000, where he was responsible for a "congregation" several times as large as the one he left. Another senior pastor took a staff position in this same large church as a way of continuing to use his gifts as he neared retirement. An associate pastor in a church of 2,000 left to become a solo pastor, but later returned to his former position.

We need a better model for clergy careers than the pyramid and a more biblical understanding of "success" than "moving up." Pastors' conference participants are sometimes told, with some truth, that "we are called to be faithful, not successful." Pastors in declining rural communities may be unlikely to see numerical growth. It is admittedly easier to count heads than to measure spiritual growth or maturity—even pastors, meeting other pastors for the first time, ask "how big is your church?" But, "ministries" that are all "noise, nickels and numbers" seem far removed from the ministry of Jesus and those that are too seeker friendly risk losing the confrontational aspects of the gospel. Some technique-driven church growth prescriptions seem to forget Jesus' warning that "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Faithfulness is required.

At the same time, our call to "faithfulness" must never excuse unattractive and ineffective ministry. In Scripture, faithfulness and fruitfulness typically go hand in hand. Jesus taught that those who are faithful with a little will be entrusted with much (Matthew 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27) and that "he who abides in me … bears much fruit" (John 15:5). The parables of the kingdom (Matthew 13) teach us to expect the kingdom to grow and the book of Acts repeatedly records evidence of numerical growth of the church (e.g., 2:47; 4:4; 6:1, 7; 11:21; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20). Yet, we must count Jeremiah a success, even though few listened; even Jesus appeared to "fail" (e.g., Mark 6:5). We desperately need to articulate a healthier and more biblical understanding of success—and communicate that understanding both to clergy and church members.

In addition to better articulating what constitutes success in ministry, we must also find appropriate ways to compensate all who serve with a living wage, regardless of whether they serve at the "top" or "bottom."[5] It is tempting to suggest that denominations should mandate minimal standards for compensation and benefits for clergy. This, however, is not politically possible in many evangelical denominations, where the essential independence of the local congregation is prized for theological and/or historical reasons. There is, of course, no way to require anything of independent churches. Compulsion alone, in any case, would only create other problems.

What is needed is a change of attitude and understanding in the pews regarding pastoral compensation. Congregations must take to heart that "the worker is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7), that those who receive spiritual benefits are under an obligation to share "all good things" generously with those who minister to them (Galatians 6:6; Romans 15:27; 1 Corinthians 9:11), and that if sacrifice is required for the sake of the ministry, sacrifice must be shared (2 Corinthians 8:13–15).[6] One seminary professor regularly used occasional preaching opportunities to speak on pastoral compensation; he wanted to help the pastor by saying to the congregation (from Scripture) what the pastor would find it difficult to say.

Congregations must be helped to understand the simple truth that it will likely cost their pastor as much to live as it does them (more if he or she has large debts for their ministry training)—a salary equivalent to the median income of the congregation or community is a good starting point. Seminaries, denominational agencies and other organizations[7] can be proactive in

[5] In my own church body, a church's call to its pastor contains the language "that you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of …." The amount that follows all too often only *guarantees* worldly cares, particularly if such "avocations" as taking on a second job or roofing one's own house are not viable options. No one seems to notice the dishonesty.

[6] We too often take advantage of those with a heart to serve. A friend on the board of a Christian school recently confided his desire to ask parents to evidence the same commitment to Christian education by living on the same income as the school's teachers.

[7] One thinks of the influence that Focus on the Family has with many evangelical churches. Focus is to be commended for their very substantial efforts to provide encouragement and help to pastors.

providing counsel on compensation to churches that look to them for pastoral candidates. The placement director at one seminary, which primarily serves independent, non-denominational churches, spends almost half of his time counseling churches about clergy compensation.

In some cases, regional church bodies (or ministers, depending on the polity) should advise congregations that they cannot help them find a full-time pastor if the compensation is not adequate. This must be done with extraordinary sensitivity, however, recognizing how difficult it is for churches that may have a rich history in their communities to feel that they are now regarded as second class.

Questions About Data

While I do not wish to dispute Chang's finding that many clergy find it difficult to secure a position that provides adequately for themselves and their families, I have concerns about the particular conclusions Chang derives from placement data on seminary graduates and the data on clergy careers from the Hartford study.

First, as one who has been involved in theological education for over a dozen years, I do not believe that the placement data supports Chang's conclusions about a limited job market for clergy. Chang notes that only about 60 percent of graduates are placed in traditional parish ministry following graduation, with 30–40 percent taking positions in non-parish ministries or "dropping out." Data from the seminary with which I am most familiar seems initially to support her data—about 60 percent of M.Div. graduates take positions in parish (i.e., senior, solo, associate, assistant, youth) or church planting ministries. The remaining 40 percent, however, deserve another look.

- About 5 percent take positions in campus ministry, most of these related to the denomination. Many entered seminary with this particular objective in mind.
- Another 5 percent pursue work in overseas mission, primarily through denominational channels. Some of these also entered seminary with this goal in mind.
- About 10 percent pursue further studies, in areas such as counseling, biblical studies, or theology. Some will subsequently enter parish ministry while others pursue different ministries, including (often denominational) college or seminary teaching.
- Another 10 percent pursue "other ministries." Some remain in positions they held during (or even prior to) their studies (like the minister of music who began an M.Div. to enhance his ministry role). Others assume new positions as Christian school teachers (some church-related) or chaplains, or in urban missions or denominational agencies.
- Only 10 percent "leave" ministry. In some cases, the decision does not reflect difficulty in the job market, but a variety of personal factors.[8] Some subsequently move into parish ministry. Others enrolled in seminary primarily for personal enrichment and never intended to pursue a call.[9] Still others followed the advice to test their call by coming to seminary and have learned that they are not called to vocational ministry.[10]

These outcomes seem highly appropriate. While we might differ on the ideal percentage of graduates to enter parish ministry, we would be disappointed by a seminary that never produced a missionary, prison chaplain, or seminary professor. We should also be glad to provide training for those who will never intended or have decided not to pursue a call.[11]

[8] Chang seems to assume that those who go into secular positions do so because they are unable to find ministry positions, but this assumption is not supported. There are sometimes family, health, financial or other reasons for not seeking a ministry position immediately. A graduate who takes a non-ministry job to provide income while actively raising support to serve as an overseas missionary has hardly "dropped out".

[9] Chang does not indicate whether the placement figures were for M.Div. graduates actually seeking a call or simply for all M.Div. graduates (some of whom may have chosen not to seek a call).

[10] It is important for seminaries to be open enough in their admissions policies to give applicants the opportunity to test their calling, knowing that some will determine that they are not called to ministry. At the same time, churches and seminaries must carefully assess candidates for ministry, so that they can invest limited resources strategically in training those with the greatest potential for effective ministry.

[11] Many law school graduates never take the bar exam or practice law, but use their training in corporate or other environments where legal knowledge is of value. This seems to be an accepted outcome.



Chang also believes that the length of time it takes for graduates to be placed likewise reflects the difficulty of the job market.[12] Her conclusion seems to depend on the assumption that all graduates are well-qualified for placement—a worthy aspiration, but not, perhaps, a realistic assumption. Many factors affect a candidate's ability to find a suitable position. Some candidates have many gifts and could serve in many places; others have weaknesses or unique gifts that require just the right place to flourish. Doctrinal views, issues such as worship style, ministry skills, personality, expectations regarding responsibilities, financial needs, geographical preferences, and health concerns can all influence how readily a student can be placed. Finally, despite the best efforts of seminary admissions officers and others, seminaries produce a few graduates who should simply not be placed. The fact that some graduates are not placed quickly, or are never placed in parish ministry roles, is not necessarily the sign of structural issues in the job market. More careful study, specifically documenting that talented candidates are unable to find positions, would be needed to support that contention.

I am also concerned about Chang's interpretation of data from the 1994 Hartford Study of Ordained Men and Women (the second part of her paper). Many assumptions must be made in interpreting this data and too many of these seem unwarranted. Chang herself notes that the data do not tell how long an individual stayed in a given position, or what kinds of positions they are moving to or from. Individuals who remain in the same position drop out of the statistics altogether. We cannot tell whether clergy are moving from one solo pastorate to another and one staff position to another, or whether they are moving back and forth between the two. All this calls into serious question the attempt to determine career stage by the number of positions held.[13] We are also asked to assume that solo first calls are to smaller churches, that those working in secular positions are doing so temporarily, that many of those initially in staff positions have moved into solo pastorates for their second job, that those serving in staff positions for their second position have previously moved from other staff positions or non-parish jobs, etc.[14] It "may be" that some decide to specialize in youth, educational, or other staff positions—but the data cannot tell us. Chang never seems to consider the possibility that some clergy move into non-parish or even non-ministry roles because they were not well suited to parish ministry (not the result of weakness in the job market, but a failure in screening and/or training). When so many assumptions have to be made, we begin to wonder how much we are learning from the data or how much we are merely reading our expectations into it. We need to know more about clergy career paths, but to do so, we will need more specific data on the actual career paths of individual clergy.[15]

Conclusion

Patricia Chang has raised important issues that affect the lives and ministries of clergy and churches in North America. Pastors, seminarians and church leaders need to consider seriously the often difficult vocational and financial realities of pastoral ministry today. We need to know more about the actual paths of clergy career development and further study in this area is important. We need to help pastors and churches develop a healthy, biblical understanding of career and "success." And we must help churches understand and live up to their responsibility before God to provide justly, appropriately and even generously for those who minister to them.

[12] Placement rates following graduation are much higher in my own denomination than in Chang's data. This may be due (in part) to rapid growth in my own denomination, in contrast to numerical decline experienced by some denominations in the Hartford study.

[13] A seminary classmate pastors one of my denomination's largest churches. It is his second call. Yet, nearly 30 years after our graduation, he is hardly in the early stages of his career.

[14] What support is there, for example, for Chang's supposition that the increase in solo calls in the second job is due to clergy moving from staff positions, rather then, say, from secular or non-parish positions?

[15] Such data should not be difficult to obtain.

THE DESIRE TO BE SURPRISED

A Response by Matthew J. Price, Ph.D., director of analytic research and vice president, The Church Pension Group of the Episcopal Church, New York, N.Y.

The subtitle of Professor Chang's piece "A Wake-up Call for Protestant Denominations and Pastors," is a familiar siren sound in the voluminous body of literature on the "decline of the Mainline."[1] Indeed, with an underlying cause of the shrinking horizon of opportunity for upward career mobility being traced to declining church membership, an exigency that has been front and center for mainline denominational executives at least since the publication in 1972 of Dean Kelley's *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing,* it is somewhat disturbing to think that "Protestant Denominations and Pastors" still require a "Wake-up Call." In my conversations with deployment officers in the Episcopal Church, I have a strong sense that they are aware of the gap between the expectations of clergy and the reality of the clergy job market. The problem is not that denominational executives are unaware of the issue, the problem is that they do not know what to do about it. Moreover, while I am in complete agreement with the basic themes of Professor Chang's analysis, and few denominational officials would find reason to question this portrait of clergy careers, there are enough non-conforming instances and data that do not match the basic model that, when taken together, cast some doubt on the underlying assumptions of Professor Chang's explanatory framework.

Looking at evidence concerning clergy careers, one does feel that one is looking through a glass darkly. While we can certainly point to a large number of clergy who are not in congregational ministry, or who are not progressing to larger congregations or to more senior positions, it is not entirely clear as to whether all of this is because of shrinking number of positions. A preliminary analysis of a survey of non-parochial clergy carried out by the Episcopal Church Foundation and the Church Pension Fund indicates that clergy who work beyond the congregation do so because they either felt particularly called to the ministry that they are now in, or because of a particularly difficult experience when they were in parish ministry, or because they felt parish ministry was incompatible with their obligations to their family. The clergy job market appears to play a relatively minor role in these decisions. Career choices seem to be wrapped up in a series of complex and cross cutting forces that involve family context and workplace conditions and do not have the simple linearity of a move up a career ladder. Clergy will often make horizontal career moves into diocesan administrative positions or to institutional chaplaincies. While Professor Chang goes into detail about the choice of non-parochial ministry made by many clergy, the core of the explanatory framework is still structured around the assumption that what clergy desire is to move up to a senior rector position. I would not say that this is mistaken; it is in all likelihood correct, but I do not believe we have enough evidence to actually build this assumption into our explanatory frameworks.

There is more concrete data that modify the picture presented to us by Professor Chang. When tested against data from the Episcopal Church, Professor Chang's picture of shrinking opportunities and stunted career expectations is true to life so long as one does not venture south of the Mason-Dixon line. While over the last 30 years the number of full-time Episcopal clergy has declined by 14 percent in the Northeast and by almost 20 percent in the Midwest, the South has seen an increase of 14 percent. The career patterns of clergy also look very different for those in the South versus the other regions. For example, the congregations Episcopal rectors outside the South go to in their first ten years of ministry had a median average weekly attendance of 108. For those with more than 20 years of experience this rises modestly to a median of 145, essentially the difference between a medium sized pastoral church and being just above the pastoral size category. Episcopal rectors in the South with less than ten years in ministry have churches with a median average weekly attendance of 120, not that different from the rest of the country. Those, however, with over 20 years in ministry are overseeing congregations with an average weekly attendance of 226. This means that the majority of Episcopal rectors in the South have moved to a different category of church and are very likely to have become senior rectors.[2]

Moreover, data held by the Church Pension Group of the Episcopal Church strongly suggests that this pattern of career mobility will continue in the South, just as the patterns of limited mobility will continue in the Northeast and Midwest. Thus in the South, over one

[1] Matthew J. Price, "After the Revolution: A Review of Mainline Protestant Clergy Leadership Literature Since the 1960s" *Theology Today* 59 (2002) 428-450.

[2] All data in this section is taken from Episcopal oversample of the Pulpit and Pew Congregational Leadership Survey.

third of the retirements from parishes expected in the next five years are by rectors in charge of churches with an average Sunday attendance of over 225, the Program and Resource category, with a quarter coming in the smallest Family size category averaging less than 75 attendees on a Sunday.[3] By contrast, in the Northeast, only 15 percent of the retirements are expected from the Program and Resource size Congregations, that being true of 17 percent of the retirements in the Midwest, but one third of the retirements in the Northeast are expected in Family size congregations and over 40 percent of retirements in the Midwest will come from these small congregations. One could certainly see the South as an "exception," but to do so would be to make the experience of the Northeast and Midwest as somehow normative, which is effectively what I believe Professor Chang has done. But the South is really too large a feature on the religious landscape to be an "exception." The Episcopal Church has shifted over the last 30 years from a denomination where a majority of the clergy were in the Northeast and Midwest to a denomination where the majority of clergy were in the South and West; yet, there are deep rooted geographical assumptions within our basic expectations of religious behavior that remain anchored in the Northeast.

Another significant way in which the South differs from other parts of the country is in the relative size of clergy salaries compared to others with graduate level degrees. While professional level salaries are lowest in the South, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, among Episcopal Clergy, those in the South rank second and compare better to their professional peers than clergy in any other part of the country. This phenomenon, I would argue, reflects a higher level of professional status for clergy in the South, but is only explicable using a somewhat different conception of what makes a professional than Professor Chang does. While Professor Chang's conception emphasizes control of knowledge and restriction of entry as the defining qualities of a profession, I would add to this the critical role of social authority. The exercise of authority is a discursive claim for compliance, an act of persuasion that is backed up by the possibility of sanctions. In the case of professionals, a combination of specialized knowledge and moral status allows them to act as judges as to who will receive certain prized assets. In the case of doctors it is medical treatment; in the case of teachers it is movement up the educational ladder. If clergy and the institutions in which they are located are seen as mediators of the holy, then they have the opportunity to exercise authority, to make those discursive claims for compliance and a claim on the financial resources of the community. But it is always a claim and it is a negotiated claim, the success of which is dependent both upon the cultural context and upon the skill of the social actor who takes up the professional role. In the South, because religious institutions play a stronger role, the context is far more favorable for the claims on resources that bring the clergy relatively higher levels of compensation.

The absence of cultural context and the skill of a social actor in her or his professional role as factors within Professor Chang's analysis not only means that certain empirical patterns remain unexplained, but it also points towards a higher level theoretical problem, which is that the explanatory framework used here is, at its core, static. It is a model in which a fixed number of fundamentally interchangeable actors move into and out of a relatively fixed number of places. The situation in the Episcopal Church, when looking from the outside seems fairly stable, but is perhaps better described as one of dynamic equilibrium.[4] This local context is one of relatively loose ties with individual congregations growing and shrinking through a combination of a changing geographical center of the church and the skills of particular leaders in being able to build communities of faith within their particular local context. While this dynamic equilibrium is occurring at the local level, diocesan and national deployment officers worry about how to "place" the newly ordained. They, in fact, use the same model as Professor Chang: a relatively fixed or gradually declining number of places for a set of fundamentally interchangeable candidates, and this is why Professor Chang's paper is not a wake-up call;

[3] The Church Pension Fund holds data on the age and employment of all Episcopal clergy working in the Church. Detailed data on parishes comes from the Parochial Report provided by Dr. Kirk Hadaway Director of Research at the Episcopal Church Center. The congregational size categories were first created by Arlin J. Rothauge in *Sizing Up a Congregation*, modified by Canon Kevin Martin and further elaborated by Canon Keith Brown. The West stands mid-way between Northeast and Midwest and the South on each of these measures.

[4] This insight comes from the Rev. Dr. William Sachs Director of Research at the Episcopal Church Foundation.

her model is also the model of denominational officers, the old model of an unofficial establishment in which we look to fill vacant places.

If the exercise of clerical authority has within it an element of persuasion, then we should build the difference in the skill of the professional actors into our models. Moreover, if institutions are dynamic and fluid, then their change and possible growth also have to be part of the equation. In Professor Chang's model the clergy are passively waiting to be promoted into the small number of larger congregations where they can become senior pastors, but suppose the assumptive, or at least equally possible, model was that clergy had congregations that grew to a size that they could appoint an associate; or an even more radical proposition, that clergy did not look for positions, but started new congregations. Incorporating such possibilities into a model of clergy careers would radically change the way in which denominations think about who they would accept for the ordination ministry. If the core qualification for ordination was not just whether the candidate could maintain a congregation, but whether they could grow one, or even more radically, could they start one, it would transform the current way of thinking; that would truly be a wake-up call to the Protestant denominations.

In conclusion, while I completely concur with the broad brush strokes of Professor Chang's portrait of clergy careers, I would argue that the underlying explanatory framework is too closed and does not allow for the dynamic contingencies of the interplay of culture and action. Absent is that Weberian moment of surprise, the "who would have thought" dimension of Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in which modern capitalism emerges as an unintended consequence of the Calvinist impulse. Even as a sociologist turned mid-level ecclesiocrat, I hold onto the desire to be surprised!



About Pulpit & Pew

Pulpit & Pew is a research initiative of the Duke Divinity School funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc., and aimed at strengthening the quality of pastoral leadership (clergy and lay) in churches across America. The goal of the research is to strengthen the quality of pastoral leaders, especially those in ordained ministry, through (1) understanding how changes in the social, cultural, economic, and religious context in recent years have affected ministry, (2) forming pastoral leaders with the capacity for continual learning and growth in response to these changes, and (3) identifying policies and practices that will support creative pastoral leadership and vital congregations as they respond to a changing environment.

About the Author

Patricia M.Y. Chang is the assistant director of the Boisi Center and associate research professor in the sociology department of Boston College. She has published extensively in the area of religion and organizations, including a number of articles that examine how the organizational structures of denominations affect wage inequality between male and female clergy. She is a co-author of the book *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* and is currently working on a book that examines the role of institutional networks and theology on the crafting of moral agendas in Protestant denominations.

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