

SURVEY OF
CHRISTIAN
MEN 2005

REPORT

Published by

 **GENERATION**NEXT

January 2007

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Role of Minister	5
3. Gifts and Calling	10
4. Training and Nurture	15
5. Pay and Benefits	22
6. The Church and Church Leaders	26
7. Other Issues	31
8. Summary	33
Appendix A	34

*In memory of
Richard Glover
1972-2005,
the best of men.*

I. Introduction

The issue of the lack of young men going into Christian ministry has been a focus of attention over the past few years. Much has been written and spoken on the subject and a number of potential answers put forward. But there was one vital source of information that seemed to have been untapped – young men themselves. Would they identify the same barriers to entering ministry that the church was focusing on in seeking solutions? What would they highlight as the key issues?

During the summer of 2005, a nationwide survey was carried out by *Generation Next*, in association with *Affinity*. Young men were asked about barriers associated with entering pastoral ministry. In total 400 men responded, mainly between the ages of 21-40. The men questioned came from a wide range of locations, church backgrounds and church situations. The survey was targeted at those who had just recently started out in full-time pastoral ministry, were in some sort of training or were at the stage of considering full-time ministry. Table I.1 shows the profile of the respondents.

Table I.1

Current situation with regard to full-time ministry	Count	% of all respondents ¹
More than 5 years in ministry	38	10%
Less than 5 years in ministry	108	27%
In training	108	27%
Preparing to enter training	39	10%
Seriously considering ministry	71	18%
Uncertain about ministry, open to possibility	58	15%
Have considered but rejected	6	2%
Not actively considering	9	2%

Other key facts about the profile of the respondents were:

- the vast majority, over 95%, were UK based with around 50% based in the South-East of England.
- the split between Anglican and Free Church men was approximately 1/3 Anglicans, 2/3 Free Church.
- 56% of those responding were under age 30.
- men coming from congregations of less than 100 people made up 40% of the total.

Men were asked for their views on a wide range of issues including the role of the minister; pay and finance, the church and church leaders. Most responses required a tick box approach but there was also opportunity to provide comments on why men felt there was a lack of young men entering ministry. 80% of men provided some additional comments, indicating that there was a strong desire to contribute to the research. Appendix A provides analysis of the additional comments.

The rest of the report analyses the responses in detail.

¹ Most men selected one category but some respondents did complete more than one, e.g. 'in training' and 'seriously considering ministry', so the total count exceeds 400.

2. Role of Minister

Summary

- Young men view it as a privilege to serve as a minister.
- There is general acceptance that loneliness, criticism and workload are all issues a minister will face.
- Bad treatment of ministers puts young men off from entering ministry.
- Poor role models are a barrier that some need to overcome.

The survey investigated views on the role of the minister: Is there anything inherent within the role that puts men off from taking up the challenge? Areas such as status, criticism, workload, demands of church members and loneliness were considered. The results are in Table 2.1 below.²

Table 2.1

Question	Agree %	Disagree %
It is a privilege to serve God as a minister.	99%	0%
The role of minister is no more or less important than any other role in a church.	31%	61%
Churches expect ministers to be multi-talented.	93%	2%
It is generally easier to be a minister than work in a secular environment.	3%	82%
Being a minister is a lonely job.	69%	13%
A minister is respected by members of their congregation.	72%	4%
Ministers face an undue amount of criticism.	67%	7%
There is little emphasis on excellence in the pastoral ministry.	37%	38%
Being involved in gospel work is the best job a man could have.	76%	7%
The status of the minister was/is lower than my secular job.	41%	27%
The workload of a minister is about right compared to other secular jobs.	23%	53%
I find the prospect of having to deal with complex pastoral problems daunting.	79%	14%

Everyone recognised that serving God in the role of minister was a privilege. Three quarters felt that being involved in gospel work was the best job a man could have. There was also strong agreement that churches expect multi-talented ministers. Almost no-one felt it was easier to work in full-time ministry than in a secular environment. The vast majority agreed that dealing with complex pastoral problems was daunting.

Only around one in four felt that the workload of the minister was about right compared to secular jobs. Despite 72% agreeing that a minister was respected by members of their congregation, 68% still felt that ministers face an undue amount of criticism. In addition more agreed than disagreed that the status of the minister was lower than their secular job. Around 70% felt that it was lonely being a minister.

Finally, there were split views on the question of whether there was an emphasis on excellence in the pastoral ministry.

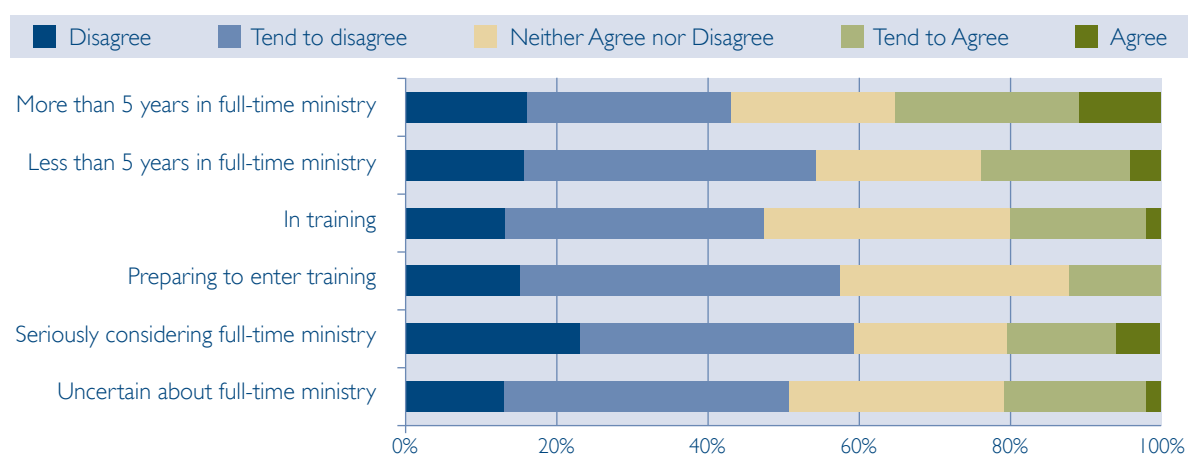
² The total for each question does not add up to 100% as there was an option to 'neither agree nor disagree'.

2.1 Tough Working Conditions

a. Workload

Graph 2.2 shows a more detailed breakdown for replies to **‘the workload of a minister is about right compared to other secular jobs’**. For men in different situations with regard to ministry, the graph shows what percentage agreed or disagreed with the statement. If the bar is mainly blue then the majority disagreed, if the bar is more green then the majority agreed. The light cream colour denotes those who were undecided.

Graph 2.2



Men in all situations disagreed that the workload of a minister was right compared to secular jobs. Having said that, those who had been in full-time ministry longest gave the most positive assent to the idea that the workload is appropriate (35%). This compared to just 12% of those preparing to enter training. This might suggest that the perception of those not already in full-time ministry, is that the workload is more demanding than in reality.

One man who strongly disagreed that the workload of a minister was about right made the following comment:

‘In the different churches that I’ve attended I have not seen many good models of full-time ministry, balanced with a healthy family life. In many cases wives and children have suffered due to the pressures of ministry. I often think that if a friend in secular work worked the kind of hours our vicar does, then many people would be telling them that they shouldn’t be working so long!’³

Another respondent observed that the *‘workload of ministers is high but so is the workload in many secular jobs. Neither side seems to appreciate this.’*

³ Comments provided by men are shown in blue italics throughout the report.

b. Loneliness

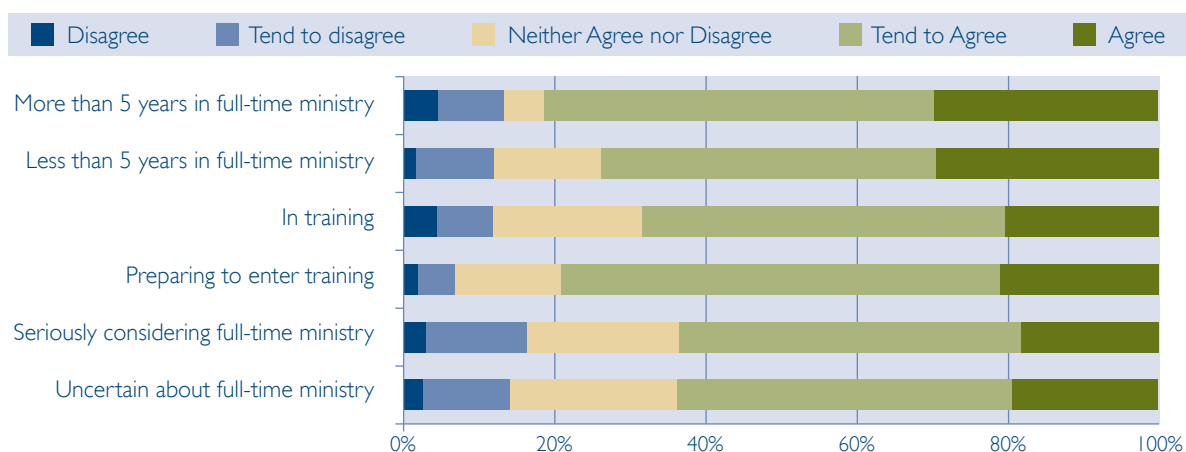
Looking at the statement, **‘being a minister is a lonely job’**, Table 2.3 shows responses split by those in churches with different numbers of full-time workers.

Table 2.3

Number of full-time workers	Agree %	Disagree %
None	78%	7%
One	78%	6%
Two	69%	20%
Three, Four or Five	68%	15%
Six	63%	15%
Total	69%	13%

It is perhaps not surprising that those in churches with a limited number of full-time workers see the role as a lonely one. However even the majority of those in churches with larger team ministries still view the ministry as a lonely occupation. Graph 2.4 shows the replies to this issue broken down again by situation with regard to full-time ministry.

Graph 2.4



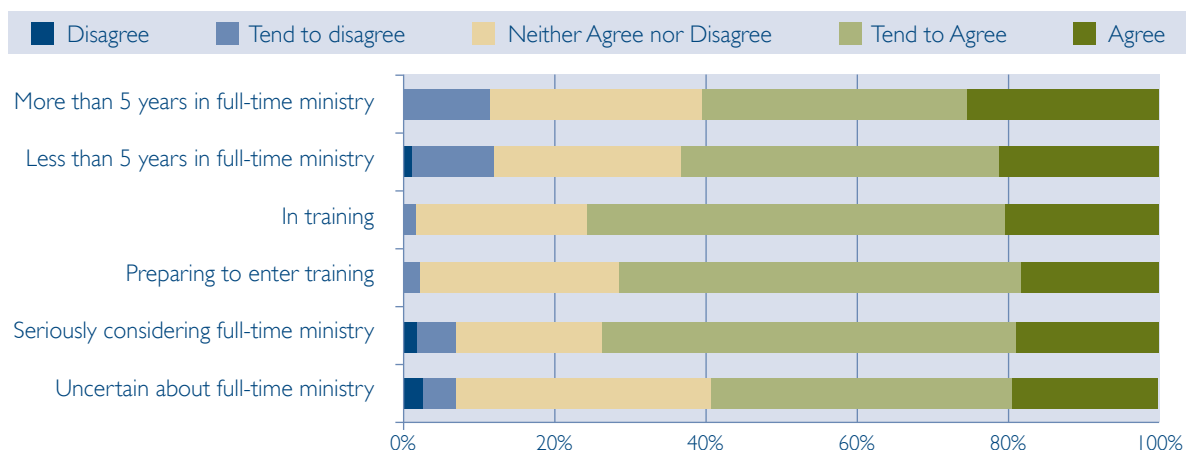
There is a broadly consistent pattern in the responses given. Men longest in full-time ministry gave strongest agreement (82%) to the view that it is lonely being a minister. This compared to a figure of 64% for those uncertain or seriously considering ministry. It may be that those in this situation are either not fully aware of the extent of the loneliness or are envisaging a situation where it is at least reduced e.g. a team ministry.

No-one providing comments mentioned this as a key barrier to entry into ministry (see Appendix A). One man already in ministry highlighted it as *‘tougher, more lonely and more demanding’* than his previously demanding secular job. It seems that loneliness is an accepted downside but not significant enough to prevent men entering ministry.

c. Criticism

There was general agreement that **‘ministers face an undue amount of criticism’**. Graph 2.5 shows some further detail of the responses to this question.

Graph 2.5



For those in training or preparing for training, there was over 70% agreement on the question of criticism. This fell to around 60% for those in ministry already.

The criticism levelled at ministers, or ministers being badly treated by church members, was regarded as an issue by some when considering full-time ministry:

‘I suspect that another reason for the paucity of men entering ministry is that some younger men witness church leaders being treated very badly by the congregation and not shown due respect by those they are seeking to love and serve.’

‘Too much criticism is levelled at ministers. There does not seem to be enough biblical respect paid to church leaders.’

Some comments highlighted that although ministry is tough, the need for sacrifice and to ‘endure hardship’ is an inherent part of the role:

‘I think the ministry can appear a thankless task with little respect and rewards for long hours of work. In addition, we live in a culture that is increasingly selfish with the desire for quick results and rewards. Perhaps the call to sacrifice and suffering that is part of ministry is something many in our western culture are not prepared to make.’

Finally, there were comments that highlighted the tension between young men struggling to make the sacrifices required and churches making things unnecessarily difficult. For example:

‘Young men may be drawn away from ministry by better prospects. Maybe there is a lack of desire to make sacrifices for God? Are men simply not being ‘men’? Also, churches have treated their leaders/workers badly and maybe seeing churches behaving in this way puts off younger men.’

2.2 Pursuit of Excellence

There were split views on the question of whether there was **'little emphasis on excellence in the pastoral ministry'**, with the same percentage of men agreeing and disagreeing this was the case.

The most interesting breakdown was by the secular career men had come from. Table 2.6 shows the breakdown of the data for careers with more than 10 respondents⁴.

Table 2.6

Career	Number of respondents	Agree %	Disagree %
Engineering	34	56%	24%
Legal	14	50%	29%
Management	20	44%	33%
Public Sector	13	42%	33%
Finance	24	42%	25%
Construction	13	39%	31%
Administration	12	33%	50%
Student	66	33%	37%
Education	59	33%	46%
Health	18	29%	53%
IT	35	9%	53%
Total (All respondents)	400	37%	38%

It is notable that the careers appearing at the top of the table are likely to have involved professional training.

Several men did mention that bad examples of ministry and poor role models were a hindrance to men entering ministry. Two quotes, both from men currently in full-time ministry are shown below:

'I believe that one main reason why young men are not entering the ministry is because we pastors are not good examples - in terms of a lack of passion and a spirit of defeatism.'

'Whilst undoubtedly good role models played a part in encouraging me into ministry, the Lord's clear calling (shouting!) was necessary for me to hurdle the obstacle of more not so great models that had pervaded my life.'

⁴ Accounting for over 75% of all respondents.

3. Gifts and Calling

Summary

- Young men considering ministry are confused over the issue of call.
- The nature, assessment and existence of a 'special' call into full-time ministry is a serious hurdle for many.
- Confusion over call is leading to confusion over the process for considering whether a man should go into full-time ministry.
- Gifts are being recognised but not always nurtured and developed.

A crucial area investigated in the survey related to the subjects of gifting and calling. Men were asked about their understanding of calling and whether they had felt a sense of call (however 'call' might be defined). Other questions asked men about their gifts and the recognition of those gifts. Within this section of the survey, questions about the effect on family of full-time ministry were also covered. The headline results are shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

Question	Agree %	Disagree %
I feel a sense of calling is necessary in order to enter full-time ministry.	73%	17%
I am confused over what constitutes a 'call' to full-time christian work.	29%	59%
Christian leaders have recognised my gifting.	93%	2%
I have felt a 'special' call to full-time ministry.	46%	36%
I have felt a sense of call but this has not been recognised by others.	5%	82%
I am uncertain whether God has gifted me for full-time ministry.	21%	73%
I am not sure if I have the right character for full-time ministry.	28%	55%
I get a buzz out of teaching the bible to others.	92%	2%
I would like to spend more time in bible ministry than I do.	76%	4%
I am/was frustrated that my secular career is/was not directly benefiting God's kingdom.	42%	38%
My wife shares my commitment to ministry.	89%	1%
My family would be/have been adversely affected by my entering full-time ministry.	37%	41%

There are some very positive results in the data above. Only 2% felt that their gifting had not been recognised by leaders and just 5% had felt a sense of call that was not recognised by others.

Three of the standout results in this section were

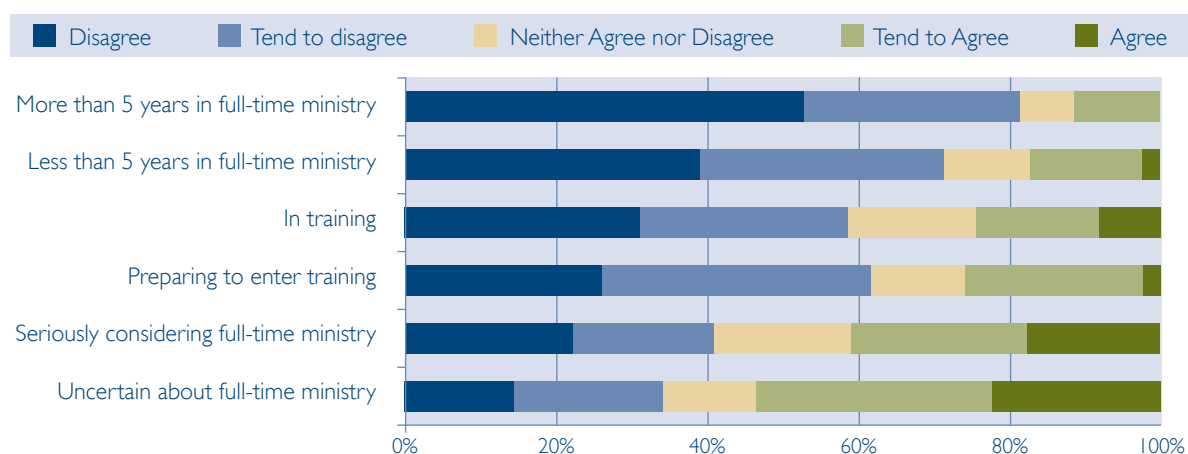
- 30% of men said they were confused over what constitutes a 'call'.
- 46% of men said that they had felt a 'special' call to full-time ministry.
- 37% said that their entering full-time ministry would adversely affect their family.

More detailed analysis of these three areas is shown below.

3.1 Confusion over Call

When the responses to the question **'I am confused over what constitutes a 'call' to full-time Christian work'** are analysed further, some clear patterns emerge. Graph 3.2 shows the split of responses by situation with regard to ministry.

Graph 3.2



It wasn't surprising that those further down the road of full-time ministry are less confused about the issue of call. However, even 10% of those who had been in full-time ministry for more than 5 years felt they were still confused! Most notable was that 41% of men seriously considering full-time ministry agreed that they were confused. This rose to 55% of men uncertain about full-time ministry.

It is clear that this is a significant issue, especially for those who are in the earlier stages of working out whether they should go into full-time ministry. However, even one in four of those undergoing training or preparing to enter training were confused about what a 'call' is.

A number of men who provided comments about the key reasons for men not going into ministry highlighted confusion over 'call'. This centred on how far calling is objective or subjective or both.

One young minister highlighted the crux of the dilemma:

'The question of what constitutes a call to the ministry is very important. People tend to emphasise the subjective and ignore the objective advice of others or vice versa. Where does the balance lie? Is the often given advice "don't enter the ministry if you can do anything else" helpful and biblical advice? Equally, isn't it a mistake to approach the ministry in the same way as any other job?'

Strong views were expressed that emphasising either a subjective or objective aspect of the call was leading to difficulties. The majority commenting on this did feel that an over-emphasis on the subjective call was detrimental. One man in training commented:

'In my judgment, the notion of a 'calling' to ministry is a major barrier to, and distraction from, the recruitment of pastors and teachers. The notion of a 'call', if understood as an internal 'feeling,' discourages level-headed young men from considering full-time ministry, even if they have all the gifts and encouragement in the world.'

Others felt that rejecting any concept of a subjective call was causing men to sit back and wait to be approached:

'In my experience the main reason many young men do not enter ministry is that they have rejected the model of calling that begins with a subjective sense of call, which must then be tested by the church. Many young men would prefer to let God take the initiative through the church leadership.'

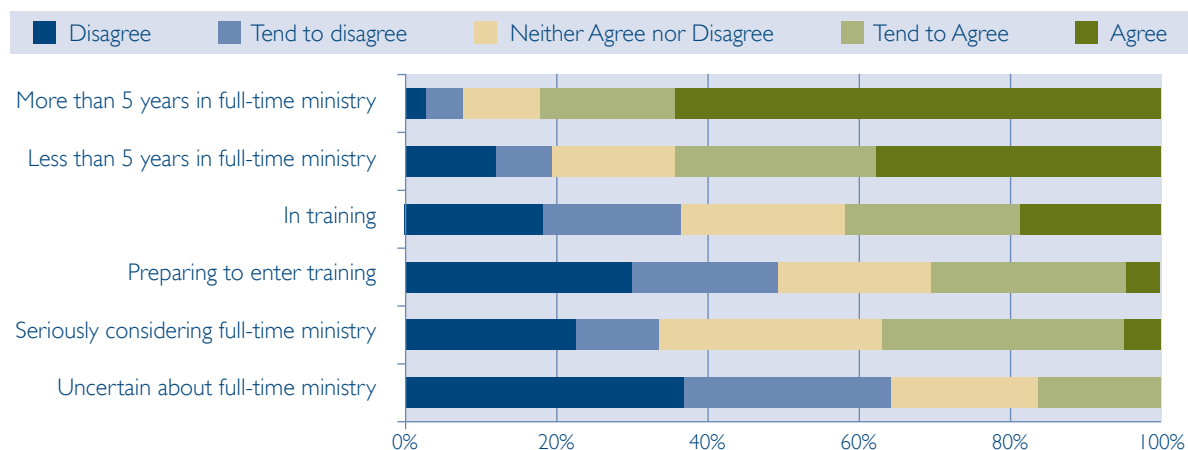
One man revealed how this dilemma over 'call' impacted his own considerations of future ministry.

'There is a lack of men entering ministry because of the lack of clarity on what constitutes a 'call'. I regard a 'call' as possessing appropriate gifts (and graces/character) recognised by others (elders), having the personal desire to enter full-time ministry and having the active encouragement of my church elders to send me out. However my elders wanted to get to the point at which they could say definitely 'Yes we think you are gifted and would make a suitable minister'. On the other hand they wanted me to more urgently push myself forward to know that I was definitely committed. The two views are opposing since I waited for their encouragement to go, without pushing myself forward, while they waited for me to come forward before they encouraged and sent.'

3.2 A 'Special' Call?

Moving on to the question, **'I have felt a 'special' call to full-time ministry'** again there are some revealing patterns. Graph 3.3 shows the results.

Graph 3.3



81% of those who had been in ministry more than 5 years agreed that they had felt a 'special' call to full-time ministry. This reduces to around 40% for those at the point of training or seriously considering ministry and down to only 20% for those uncertain about full-time ministry.

As well as confusion over what a call is, some commented that the term 'call' was understood to mean different things. This probably accounted for the relatively high numbers saying they neither agreed nor disagreed that they had had a 'special' call.

For example:

'The section on call was difficult to answer because it is such a loaded word. If calling means an inner feeling or conviction then I haven't had a call. I don't believe scripture leads us to expect one. If by call you mean a thought through decision based on the biblical list of character traits and ability to teach as spotted and encouraged by church leaders then yes, I have had a call.'

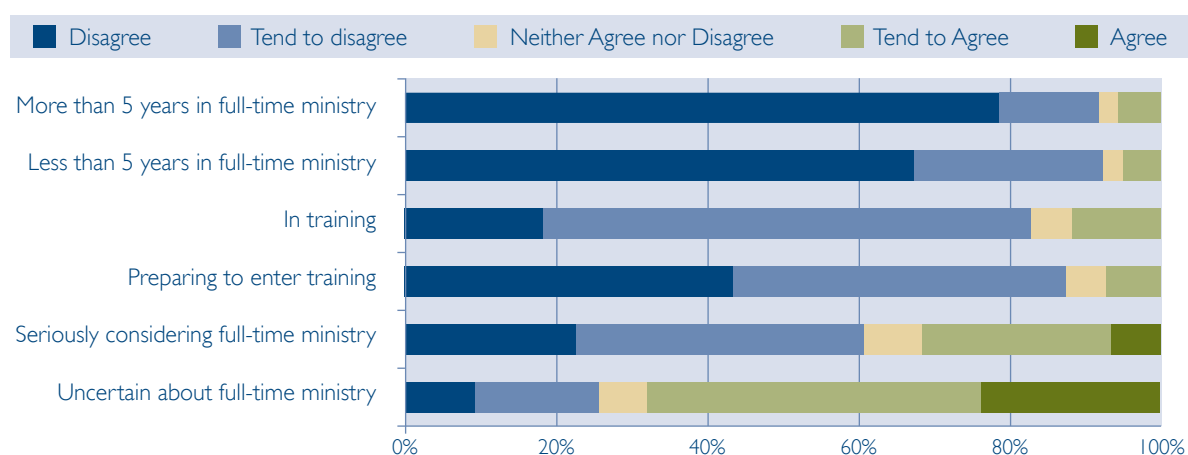
One young man talking about the idea of a 'special call' made the following observations:

'The issue of 'calling' is a large one. I can see no biblical justification for the idea of a 'special call' to full-time ministry. If the church urgently needs more people to serve as full-time pastors and/or teachers and there are people identified as having the appropriate gifts, then that should be sufficient. Many people are, I fear, waiting for some mystical call before they will consider full-time Christian work; most probably couldn't tell you what such a call would be like.'

3.3 Recognising Gifts

Graph 3.4 reveals how responses varied for the question **‘I am uncertain whether God has gifted me for full-time ministry’**.

Graph 3.4



As expected, those at the stage of considering ministry gave the most agreement. What is slightly surprising is that over 60% of those seriously considering ministry disagreed they were uncertain, implying they did feel God had gifted them for full-time ministry. This suggests that recognising gifts is not the key issue. This is further backed up by the very high percentage of men agreeing that their gifts had been recognised by Christian leaders. The difficulty seems to lie with the development, testing and encouragement of those gifts.

One young man encapsulated the thought that whilst gifts can be recognised there may not be a focus on seeing those gifts developed.

‘As a young man I’ve found churches are not great at encouraging gifts and making opportunities for young people generally. There can be a mentality of using their gifts in church work and for the benefit of the church and not necessarily training them to develop them personally.’

This issue is covered further in Section 4 on ‘Training and Nurture’.

3.4 Family Affairs

There was a fairly even split as to whether men felt entering ministry would have an adverse impact on their family. In total, 37% agreed it would, 41% disagreed.

Table 3.5 shows that men with children were more convinced there was an adverse impact.

Table 3.5

Family situation	Agree %	Disagree %
Married	30%	45%
Married with children	41%	35%
Total	37%	41%

There are some indications that those furthest from full-time ministry have more concerns about the impact of ministry on their families. Table 3.6 contains the detailed breakdown of this data for those married with children.

Table 3.6

Current situation with regard to full-time ministry	Agree %	Disagree %
In ministry	39%	33%
In training/preparing for training	35%	47%
Seriously considering/uncertain about ministry	51%	27%
Total	41%	35%

A reasonable number commented about the impact on family of entering ministry. Some made reference to expectations of the minister's family or the demands of family life, but the majority highlighted the financial pressures.

The following two comments illustrate these views:

'One particular reason I feel that young men do not go into ministry is the level of pay. Many independent churches these days can only offer a part time position. Often there is very little security in some posts and if a young man is married with children it would be difficult for him to provide for his family fully.'

'I think finance has a part to play as family commitments are an important responsibility. Giving up a decent standard of living must be hard. The long hours and unsocial hours make family life very difficult.'

A small number of men also commented that there were family pressures relating to parents. Either men felt that parents wanted to see them pursuing successful secular careers or they didn't want to be a financial burden to parents during training.

4. Training and Nurture

Summary

- The issue of training is a major concern to young men.
- Although most men said that their churches were committed to training and viewed it as a priority, lots of feedback was given that more could be done.
- Churches were not as proactive in this area as they might be.
- Opportunities to test gifts and receive mentoring and feedback were there for some men but not all.
- Men considering ministry felt there were not enough preaching opportunities.
- Funding for training was also a big issue for some.
- The need to have central funds available, to support training, was proposed by several men.

Questions were asked about the priority of training within churches, the type of training and the opportunities given to young men. Also covered was whether there is enough information and suitable advice in this area. The issue of training received more focus than any other in comments received back (see Appendix A).

Table 4.1

Question	Agree %	Disagree %
My church is committed to seeking out and training young men.	69%	20%
Leaders in my church view the nurture of young men as a high priority.	60%	24%
A Christian leader is discipling or mentoring me.	56%	35%
I receive regular feedback on my preaching.	61%	29%
I have enough preaching opportunities.	74%	18%
I believe there is a reluctance to give young men preaching opportunities in case they fail.	35%	46%
I have been given enough opportunities to test leadership gifts.	76%	13%
There is enough information about what training is available.	59%	26%
There is conflicting advice about what training is appropriate.	50%	28%
Attending theological college on a full-time basis is important prior to entering full-time ministry.	59%	24%
Finding sufficient funding for any training is/was not a major issue for me.	54%	36%

Although almost 70% of men felt their churches were committed to seeking out and training men, 20% didn't agree this was the case. There were slightly less, 60%, who felt their church leaders saw this as a high priority. Over 60% of men received feedback on their preaching and over 50% were being mentored by a Christian leader.

Three quarters of men felt they had enough opportunities for preaching and testing leadership gifts. Despite this over one in three felt there was a reluctance to let young men preach.

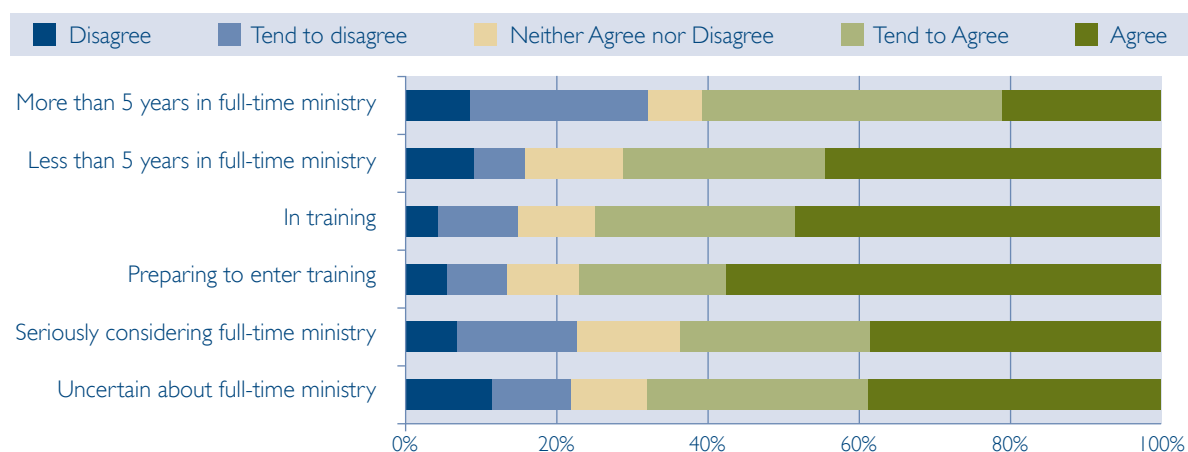
On the specific area of training, half of the men agreed there was conflicting advice about what was appropriate. The majority of men did feel there was enough information about what training was available. 54% said that funding for training was not a major issue, although more than a third disagreed this was the case.

4.1 Church Focus

a. Commitment

Men at different stages with regard to ministry gave varying responses to **'my church is committed to seeking out and training young men'**

Graph 4.2



The most positive response to the question (about 75% agreement) came from those who were already in training or preparing to enter training. This result is understandable on the assumption that most men in this position had reached that stage through the support of their church. More surprising was that over 30% of those more than 5 years in ministry disagreed that their church was committed to seeking out men for future ministry.

Despite the general agreement that their churches were committed to training, many commented that this was an area where churches were not as proactive as they could be. Here is a selection of comments made on this point:

'If lads aren't tried out, disciplined and given detailed feedback, how will they get any sense of call? There needs to be a discerning willingness to seek out the men God is calling.'

'I was privileged to be a member of a church that actively recruited young men for full-time paid gospel ministry. In my opinion, too many churches and especially church leaders are nowhere near proactive enough in implementing 2 Timothy 2:2, and tend to wait for men to approach them.'

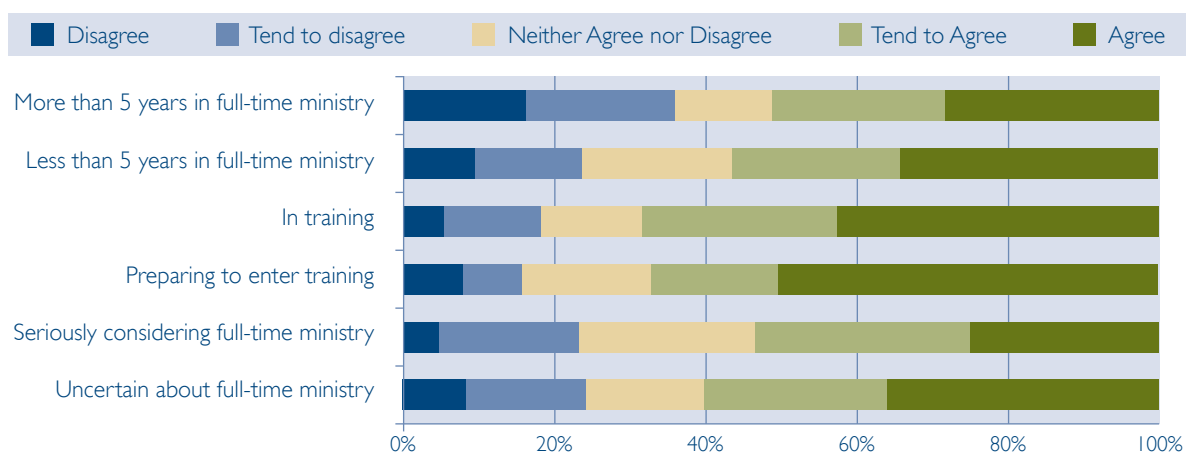
'It seems to me that the main reason for the lack of young men entering full-time ministry at the present time is a lack of people praying Matthew 9:38, together with a lack of enthusiasm from churches and current leaders to identify and train young men.'

'Maybe the church is not taking seriously its role in the calling of ministers. Personally I've found people would not give me advice or opportunity until I'd said I thought I was called to the ministry. I think this is the wrong way round. The church should take the initiative.'

b. Priority

Responses to **‘leaders in my church view the nurture of young men as a high priority’** were similar to those about the commitment to train young men. Graph 4.3 shows the details.

Graph 4.3



The least positive view was expressed by men in ministry more than 5 years or by those seriously considering ministry. The most positive responses came from those at the point of training.

Even though the graph above suggests most of the respondents had leaders who do see this as a priority, a good number of comments highlighted this as an area of concern:

‘It’s not a high priority within local churches so that ministers are normally reactive (they respond when someone comes to talk about the possibility of entering Christian work) rather than proactive (actively seeking out the next generation of leaders).’

‘Are church leaders seeing 2 Timothy 2:2 type ministry as a priority? Are they planning to tithe congregations (1 in 10) to full-time gospel work every year?’

‘The reason for the lack of those going into full-time ministry is the lack of encouragement by pastors and seeing training as a high priority. I do feel many pastors forget that training and experience can develop younger or inexperienced men into future leaders.’

One man currently in training highlighted that whilst the desire and intention to train might be there, other issues can crowd this out:

‘Whilst leaders in churches would state that seeking and selecting people for ministry is a priority, much of the time other more pressing needs tend to deflect their attention. It takes a heavy investment of time and leaders who are busy in church, at home and at work, seldom have time to devote to the non-urgent.’

c. Church Size

It is also worth noting that men who were in larger congregations were generally more positive about the commitment and priority given to training and developing young men. Table 4.4 shows a split by congregation size for both of these questions.

Table 4.4

Congregation size (average Sunday morning attendance)	Agree %	
	Church committed to seeking and training young men	Leaders view the nurture of young men as a priority
< 25	50%	56%
25 - 49	52%	39%
50 - 99	62%	58%
100 - 149	76%	58%
150 - 299	77%	69%
300 +	80%	72%

Some of the varied challenges faced by smaller congregations in this area of training are highlighted by the following three comments:

'Within my context the biggest problem is the lack of funding for training. It means gifted men from small churches have no help towards training whatsoever. For these men, training in ministry isn't even on the radar because nobody in their church leadership is offering them the possibility.'

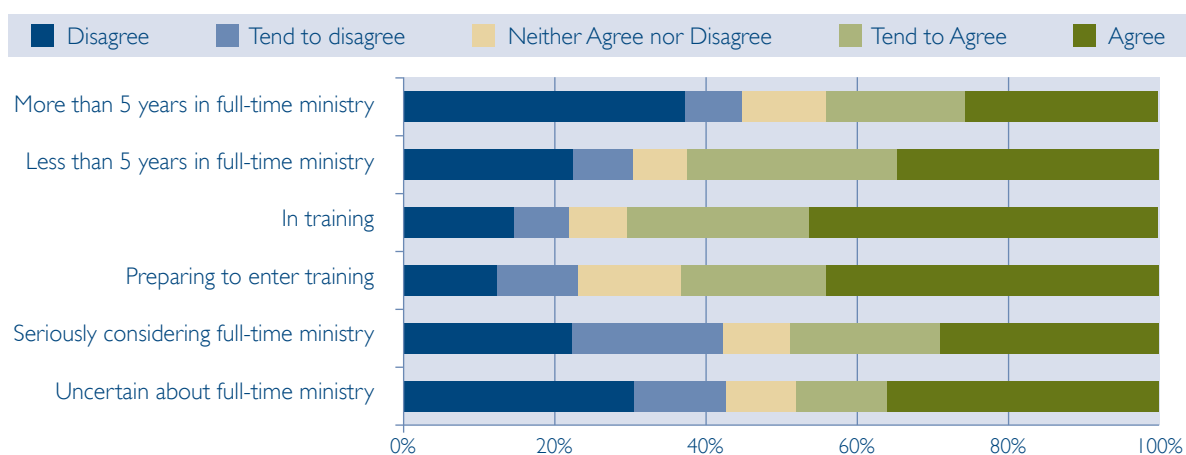
'There are a large number of small churches where team ministry is impossible and thus few assistant posts.'

'If you live in London or another large student conurbation then there are loads of opportunities for young men to get inspired about full-time ministry. If you live in a rural area or in a town where there is not a large student population, opportunities are very limited.'

d. Mentoring

Graph 4.5 compares the feedback for **'a Christian leader is discipling or mentoring me'**. The data highlights differences between those training and those still thinking about ministry. Just under 50% of men thinking about ministry were being mentored. This increased to over 70% for those in training. This does raise the question of whether men who are mentored are more likely to get to a position of training. It could be that leaders are more likely to mentor once a man gets to the stage of being trained.

Graph 4.5

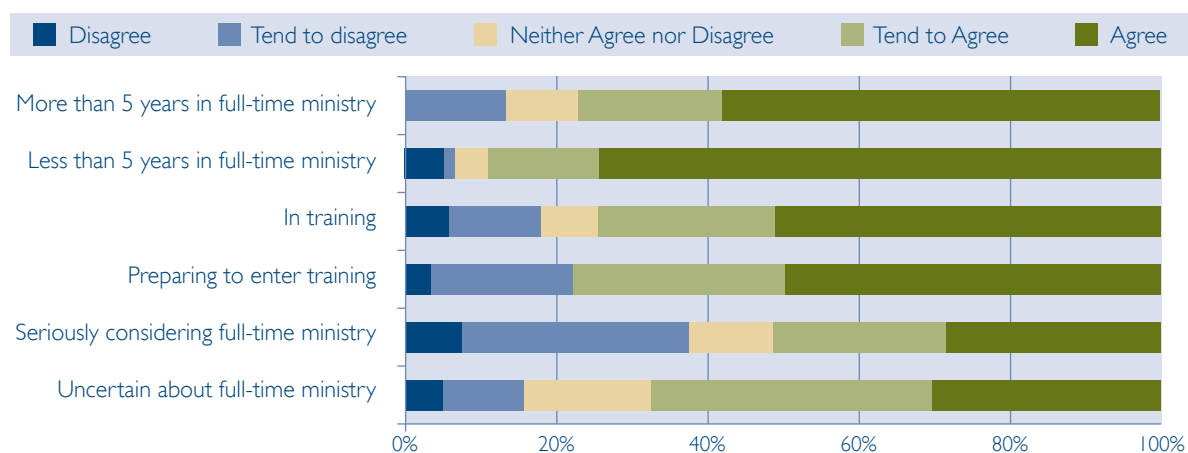


A number of young men mentioned that mentoring can be a facilitator for helping young men into full-time ministry.

4.2 Giving Opportunities

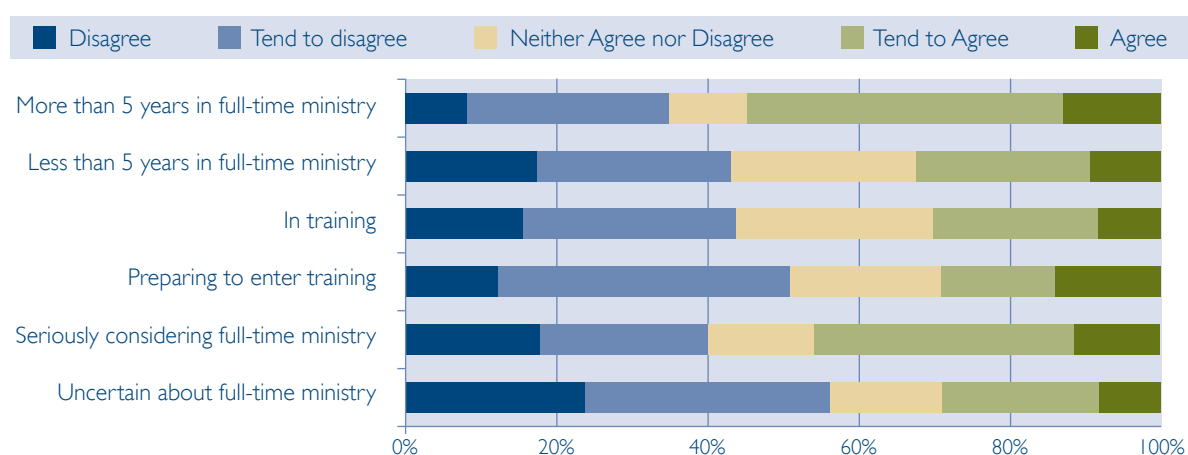
Overall 74% felt they had enough preaching opportunities. However when the responses to the question **‘I have enough preaching opportunities’** are broken down, it is clear that those seriously considering ministry are least positive about this. Graph 4.6 shows that almost 40% of these men disagree that they have enough chances to preach. This is probably the group most eager to be given opportunities and test gifts. It was concerning that such a large percentage felt they were not getting enough preaching opportunities. Responses to the question **‘I have been given enough opportunities to test leadership gifts’** were very similar.

Graph 4.6



Replies to **‘I believe there is a reluctance to give young men preaching opportunities in case they fail’**, showed some differences based on situation with regard to ministry.

Graph 4.7



Over 50% of those more than five years in ministry agreed there was a reluctance to give young men opportunities. Men who were seriously considering ministry also felt this was an issue. Those in training or recently in ministry tended to disagree with the statement.

It is interesting to compare the results of this question with the results in Section 4.1. Over 60% of men seriously

considering ministry felt their church leaders viewed the nurture of young men as a priority. However only 40% felt there was a readiness to give them opportunities.

Lots of comments expressed concerns about the training up of a new generation of pastors and the opportunities provided. The following are a sample of the observations made:

'My greatest concern is whether leaders are actively seeking to develop and train new leaders and to provide them with sufficient opportunities to grow and mature. One man ministry models are particularly difficult to square with training and developing leadership.'

'In my experience there is very little encouragement of young men to take up ministry roles and also very little investment to train up leaders. There are also fewer opportunities as a whole for young men to exercise preaching gifts. Apparently there are not enough young men entering the ministry and many churches without pastors. I was willing and available to preach but there was no 'network' to link the churches with the need, to the young men with the gifting/willingness. In general, churches will tend to invite older men from within their own congregations and mainly those who already have an established lay preaching network.'

'No, or little, push from churches to seek out men to go into full time pastoral ministry, especially in many free churches. Few opportunities to test gifting within many smaller/medium sized churches.'

On a more positive note some men recorded experiences where churches had been supportive. Two comments from men, both in training, illustrate this.

'Reading through the questions I am very aware that I have been privileged with a supportive route into ministry. The church I used to attend nurtured me and gave me some opportunities. The elders recognised my gifts and gave me good advice on training.'

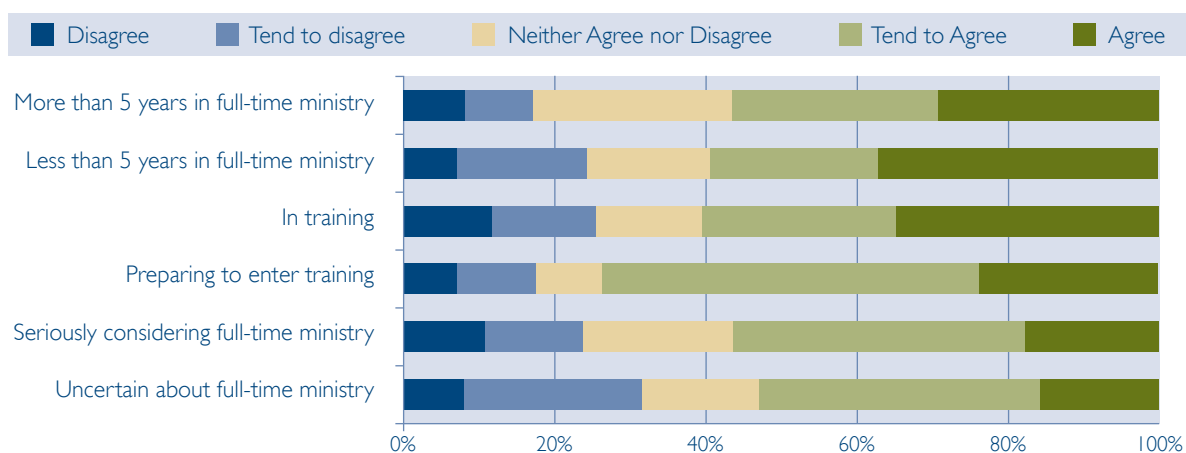
'I am encouraged by my pastor who allows me opportunities in preaching, leadership and pastoral roles. I believe this is key in young men being encouraged into ministry.'

4.3 Formal Training

Most men (59%) felt that **'attending theological college on a full-time basis was important prior to entering full-time ministry'**. Graph 4.8 shows a more detailed breakdown. There was not significant variation although those preparing to enter training were most in agreement.

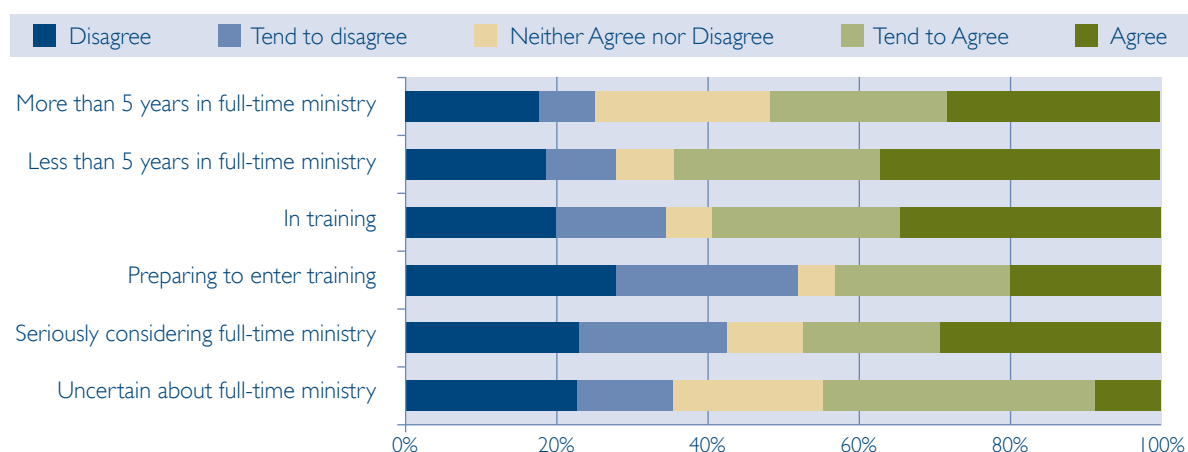
If the data is analysed by those with and without a theological qualification those with a qualification agreed more strongly with the statement. 67% of those with a theological qualification felt that attending college was important, compared to 56% of those without one.

Graph 4.8



Those preparing to enter training also gave a slightly different response on the issue of **'finding sufficient funding for any training was not a major issue for me'**. More of them disagreed and felt it was a major issue. Given that some of these men were probably at the point of trying to secure funding it is not surprising that this was of most concern to this group. For those seriously considering ministry, there was virtually an even split between those who saw it as a major issue and those who didn't. The details are shown below in Graph 4.9.

Graph 4.9



Comments made in this area highlighted that availability of funds was certainly a major concern for some. It was a potential 'showstopper' for entering training and therefore possibly entering ministry.

'... lack of financial support structures to enable training. The most able younger men are often in their 30s and have worked and have families - going to Bible college is a massive strain. We need to look at training on the job in churches, distance learning programmes and an established structure to generate finance for them i.e. an interdenominational trust fund'

'Funding is a major issue that prevents many going to college. I thank the Lord that our sending church supported 50% of the cost of three years at bible college. Churches need to plan and save in advance in order to send people out.'

Lastly one man preparing to enter training highlighted his personal dilemma:

'I have calculated that it will cost approx £40K+ to receive three year training. The majority of this has to come from personal finance or self-sacrifice. Is this right? Should the 'church' not have a fund to finance training?'

These points all make mention of a fund for training. Amongst the ideas received for ways to facilitate getting men into ministry, one of the most prevalent was the need for central funding.

5. Pay and Benefits

Summary

- Financial sacrifices are needed and young men are not unwilling to make them, though for some this is a big challenge.
- Financial considerations are an issue for those thinking about full-time ministry, particularly those with commitments.
- Whilst there is acceptance that sacrifices are needed, it is felt that the expectations of churches are unreasonable.

For most young men there will be financial implications of entering full-time ministry. This includes both the costs of training and ongoing remuneration. One potential barrier often suggested for young men not going into ministry, is a reluctance to accept the material sacrifices necessary. Questions were asked in this area and the results shown in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1

Question	Agree %	Disagree %
I am willing to make financial sacrifices to be in full-time Christian work.	96%	1%
Financial considerations are/were a major issue for me entering full-time ministry.	23%	66%
I know of gifted young men who cannot financially afford to go into the ministry.	30%	48%
Entering full-time ministry would/did see a large reduction in my standard of living.	53%	30%
I believe ministers get a fair wage for the job they do.	22%	43%
I am confident that the church in general sets appropriate financial terms for their workers.	28%	44%
I believe churches expect ministers to sacrifice too much.	49%	21%
I think there is more satisfaction in full-time Christian work than in a secular career.	69%	10%
Seeing people grow and serving God is the main reward for the minister.	84%	6%
Ministers should have the opportunity for further study and training.	97%	1%

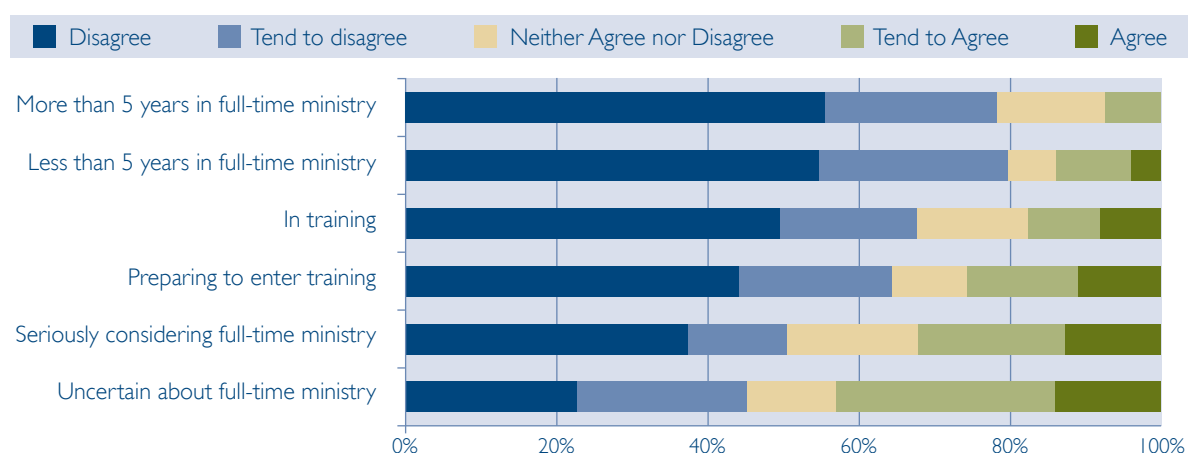
There was almost complete agreement amongst those surveyed that they were willing to make financial sacrifices. The majority agreed that serving God was the main reward for a minister and that there was more satisfaction in full-time Christian work than a secular career. Over half said that entering full-time ministry would see a large reduction in their standard of living. 30% of respondents said they knew of young men who couldn't afford to go into full-time ministry.

Although two thirds of men said that financial considerations were not a major issue for them entering full-time ministry, there were still almost one in four where this was an important consideration. There was limited confidence in the way the church determines what it should provide full-time workers. Almost half felt that ministers were expected to sacrifice too much and less than a third were confident that the church sets appropriate financial terms.

5.1 Counting the Cost

Graph 5.2 shows some further detail on responses to the question **‘financial considerations were a major issue for me entering full-time ministry’**.

Graph 5.2



The graph shows that those in the earlier stages of thinking about full-time ministry see this as a bigger issue. Over 30% of men seriously considering full-time ministry agreed financial considerations were a major concern. This increases to 40% for those uncertain about full-time ministry. Less than 10% of men more than five years in ministry agreed with the statement.

Table 5.3 analyses this question for those who are seriously considering or uncertain about ministry by family situation.

Table 5.3

Family Situation	Number of Respondents	Agree %	Disagree %
Married with Children	46	55%	27%
Married	31	40%	43%
Single	52	18%	71%
Total	129	37%	49%

For those who are uncertain about ministry and married with children, then the percentage agreeing increases to 65% (based on 21 respondents in this category). These results are consistent with the data shown in Section 3.4. The table reveals that there is a clear correlation between financial considerations being an issue and family commitments.

In Table 5.4, the responses to the statement **‘entering full-time ministry would see a large reduction in my standard of living’** are shown split by secular career.

Table 5.4

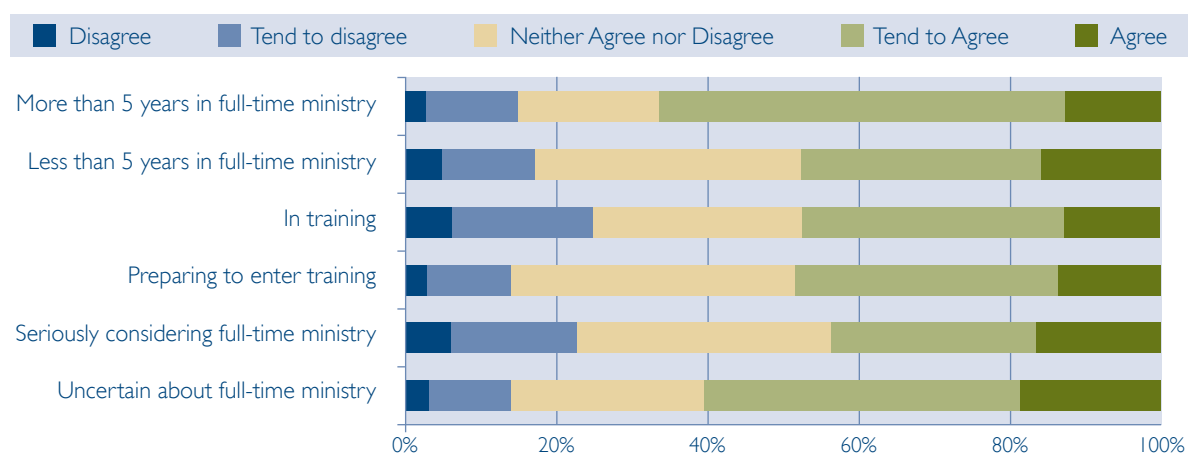
Career	Agree %	Disagree %
Management	90%	10%
Finance	82%	5%
Legal	79%	7%
IT	55%	29%
Health	53%	35%
Education	50%	28%
Manufacturing	50%	0%
Engineering	48%	24%
Public Sector	46%	38%
Construction	38%	38%
Student	32%	42%
Administration	25%	50%
Total (All respondents)	53%	30%

As expected, the careers that would tend to have higher salaries feature at the top of the table.

5.2 Unreasonable Sacrifice?

As Table 5.1 showed, half of the men responded positively to the question **‘I believe churches expect ministers to sacrifice too much.’** Graph 5.5 shows there are also some differences according to the situation a man is in.

Graph 5.5



Perhaps not surprisingly, those who had been in full-time ministry longest were most sure that churches expect men to sacrifice too much. Men uncertain about future ministry also believed churches demand too much sacrifice. This indicates that this could be one of the areas that stops someone seriously thinking about ministry.

When the data is analysed according to age, it becomes apparent that those who are older are more certain that the sacrifices are disproportionate. Table 5.6 shows the split by those younger or older than 30.

Table 5.6

Age	Agree %	Disagree %
30 or less	40%	28%
Over 30	61%	12%

With only 22% of men feeling that **'ministers get a fair wage for the job they do'**, there is a consistent view that the financial sacrifices required are more than should be expected.

5.3 A Double Challenge

Men did highlight in their responses that the financial burden of entering ministry was a factor in their thinking. This seemed to fall into two main areas. Firstly, there was the unreasonableness of the financial implications. Secondly, the struggle with being prepared to make large material sacrifices, particularly when financial responsibilities have increased. The sacrifices needed, financially but also in terms of time and status, were one of the most frequently mentioned issues in comments received (see Appendix A).

Here are a number of quotes highlighting these twin challenges for young men considering ministry.

'I think that our culture tends towards financial success and security and not sacrifice and suffering which can accompany full-time ministry. Consequently young men are groomed and educated towards jobs in which they can be financially secure. I do think that full time workers are underpaid according to the job they do.'

'Do we catch potential ministers early enough? Often we encourage secular work for a few years 'to gain experience' and then let them drift until they become too tied - married, kids, career etc. Let them past 25 and it becomes an increasing sacrifice that is simply too great!'

'Sometimes the role of minister can be unattractive because they are often made to live at a level below those in their congregations and life is a struggle because of that. Whilst there is much to be said for a life of sacrifice, this obvious disparity can reflect a church's view of the minister and therefore peoples desire to take up that role.'

'Finance is another huge issue. These days, a salary must cover the cost of a house purchase. And houses cost far more than they used to! Asking a man with a family to support to accept less than £20K (and no housing allowance) is simply impractical. A man may be willing to sacrifice salary, but that should be his sacrifice, not the church's expectation!'

'Materialism and the temptation to be squeezed into the worlds mould of consumerism, self-indulgence and a minimalist commitment to God (speaking from personal experience!).'

In addition to these points, men also mentioned large students debts to overcome and funding for training (covered in Section 4 above).

6. The Church & Church Leaders

Summary

- Young men view serving and leading God's people as a privilege.
- The problems of dealing with difficult church situations can dissuade men from entering full-time ministry.
- A lack of assistant positions and the absence of a clear process for finding a church are both hindrances for someone seeking to enter ministry.

The final section of the survey covered issues relating to the care and leading of church members. The way that current leaders view young men was also explored along with the process for finding a ministerial position. Table 6.1 contains the results.

Table 6.1

Question	Agree %	Disagree %
Being entrusted with the care of God's people is a privilege.	100%	0%
I believe most churches would be receptive to changes I would make.	26%	33%
I am willing to suffer for the gospel.	95%	1%
I am selective about the type of situations where I would be willing to minister.	67%	20%
Many church members are difficult to deal with.	53%	25%
I relish the challenge of moving a church on to greater maturity.	90%	2%
Churches are willing to send their best young men to serve elsewhere.	37%	33%
I believe leaders in my church view younger men as a threat.	9%	81%
I am/was not concerned about finding a ministerial position at the end of training.	47%	34%
There is a clear process for finding a church at the end of training.	27%	49%
There are enough apprentice/assistant positions where young men can learn and develop.	26%	54%
I have seen great role models of ministers that inspired me to think about the role for myself.	85%	6%

There was widespread agreement that being entrusted with the care of God's people is a privilege. A willingness to suffer for the gospel was present amongst all those questioned. The vast majority of men relished the challenge of moving a church on to greater maturity. A large percentage felt they had seen great role models of ministers that had inspired them.

A less positive view emerged when dealing with the issues of caring for and leading the church. Only one in four men felt churches were receptive to change although most were unsure on the issue. Over half agreed that church members were difficult to deal with.

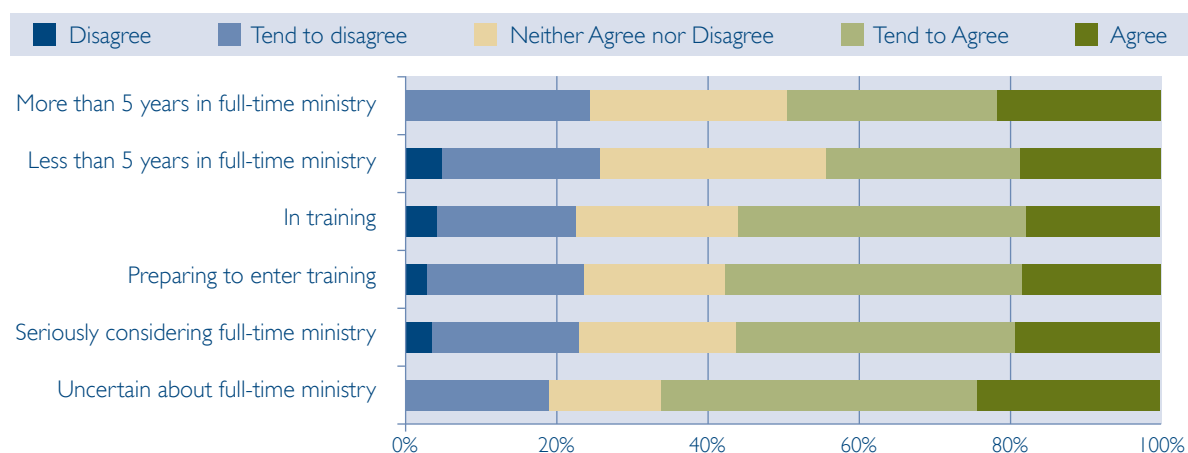
Less than 40% agreed that churches were willing to send their best young men elsewhere. Only one in four felt there were enough assistant/apprentice positions available and a similarly low proportion felt there was a clear process for finding a church at the end of training.

6.1 A Tough Environment

a. Difficult Church Members

Graph 6.2 shows more detail on the responses to the question **‘many church members are difficult to deal with.’**

Graph 6.2



There was general agreement across all respondents that church members were difficult to deal with. The strongest agreement to this was amongst those yet to go into full-time ministry, including two thirds of those uncertain about ministry.

Some men commented on the 'unattractiveness' of dealing with difficult church situations. The following are a couple of examples.

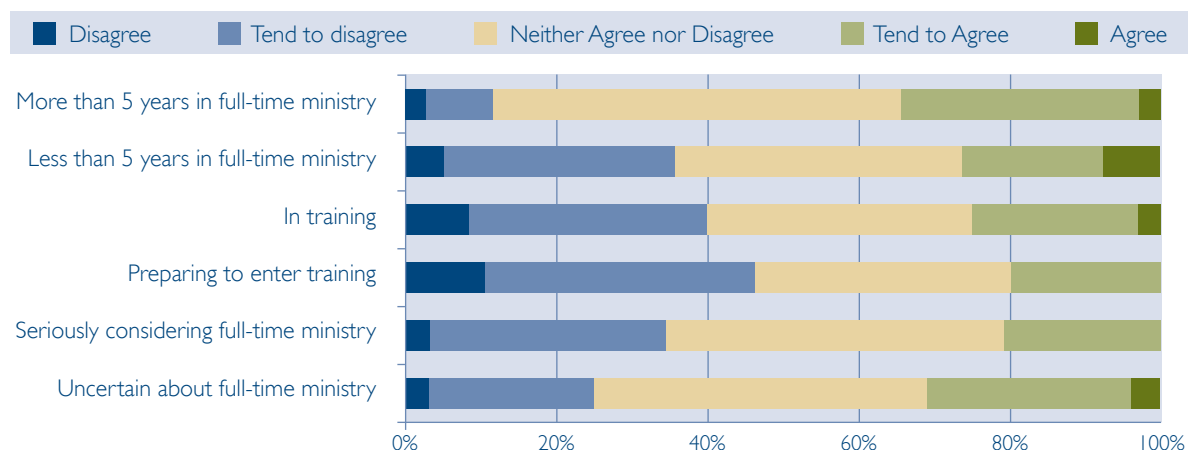
‘Many churches have torn themselves apart through schisms and disunity. Brought up in this environment is it any wonder that young men decide ministry is a poisoned chalice?’

‘...a growing laziness and lack of real commitment from many church members make the prospect of entering ministry a daunting one. I think the ministry can appear a thankless task with little respect and rewards for long hours of work.’

b. Openness to Change

The data relating to the question of **'I believe most churches would be receptive to changes I would make'** is broken down in detail in Graph 6.3.

Graph 6.3



There were large numbers of men who neither agreed nor disagreed with this. However some men commenting on this area did see it as a major hindrance for some young men considering ministry. A couple of examples are shown below:

'An issue preventing many of my acquaintances from considering full-time church based ministry is that many churches are resistant to change, so that one feels one could do very little good there.'

'If you have a desire to reach the lost and have a vision to reach today's culture, it can be a major disincentive if you are first faced with the prospect of churches stuck with tradition and resistant to change.'

6.2 Sending Out

There was a relatively low 37% who felt that **'churches were willing to send their best young men to serve elsewhere.'** There was little variation when the data was split by situation with regard to ministry. Some patterns do emerge when the data is split according to the size of church, with smaller congregations being less positive about this. In fact men in congregations of less than 150 were more likely to disagree that churches are willing to send out their best men.

Table 6.4

Congregation size (average Sunday morning attendance)	Agree %	Disagree %
< 25	20%	30%
25 - 49	25%	45%
50 - 99	34%	41%
100 - 149	34%	37%
150 - 299	43%	26%
300 +	48%	24%
Total	37%	33%

There was a relatively high percentage of men who selected 'neither agree nor disagree for this question'. This was particularly true for the very smallest churches. The uncertainty could be because lots of men have not seen their churches dealing with the issue of sending a man elsewhere.

6.3 Finding a Church

There was general disagreement that **'there are enough apprentice/assistant positions where young men can learn and develop'**. This was most evident when men were in churches with fewer full-time workers. Where men can see evidence in their own situation of a 'team ministry' then they are more likely to feel there are training positions available. Table 6.5 gives details.

Table 6.5

Number of full-time workers	Agree %	Disagree %
None	7%	59%
One	14%	69%
Two	12%	66%
Three, Four or Five	31%	51%
Six or more	45%	33%
Total	26%	54%

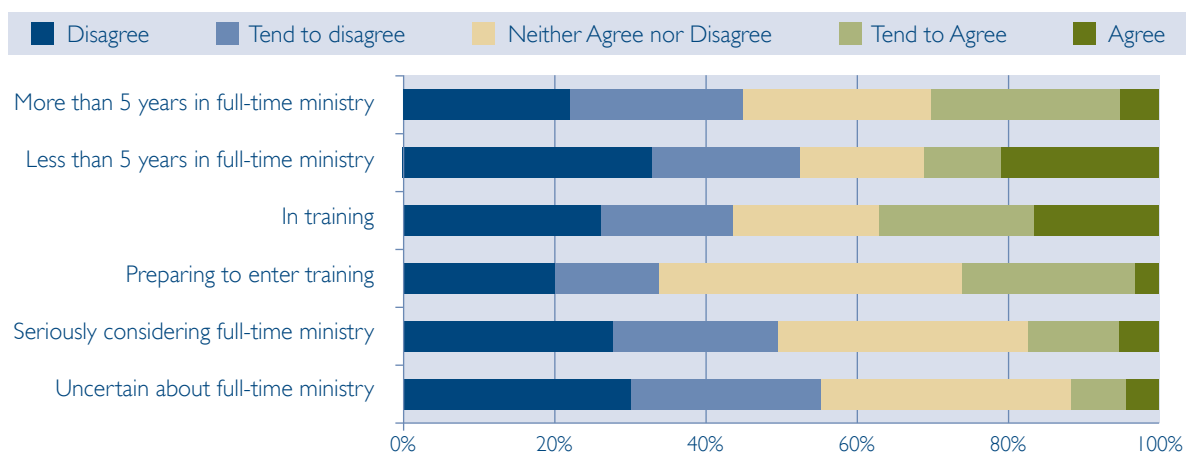
Concern about the lack of assistant positions was highlighted as a difficulty for some getting into ministry. Reasons suggested for the lack of positions included unwillingness on the part of churches to consider this. Also mentioned was the absence of funds or small churches where an assistant position wasn't tenable. The two comments below highlight some of the problems:

'There is little in the way of assistant pastor roles. Churches often look at what they get, not what they can give. Many churches when looking for a minister look for a man who has a lot of experience. However the problem is with a lack of assistants. How will a young man gain experience? If this cannot be done, he can be discouraged from entering the field.'

'Once you are at college there are very few assistant positions in churches to go to afterwards. There are lots of apprentice schemes but there needs to be positions where someone can serve in a leadership capacity under an experienced pastor.'

When men were asked about whether **'there is a clear process for finding a church at the end of training'** there were some differences comparing those in ministry with those still considering. Graph 6.6 shows the split with only 12% of those uncertain about ministry feeling there is a clear process compared to just over 30% of those in ministry.

Graph 6.6



Men did comment that the general process for finding a position was confusing. Not only this, but the expectation of churches was a problem when it came to younger men actually securing a position.

'I believe a big problem is that many churches are too quick to set unrealistic expectations on the sort of minister they call. Many would only consider an exceptionally gifted young man. Many are lacking the faith to give the inexperienced and young an opportunity to serve them.'

'There is a reluctance on the part of churches to accept the need for new men to come into the ministry. Folk can seem intimidated and fearful of the younger men, and perhaps threatened.'

7. Other Issues

Summary

- Men are not going into full-time ministry as they are serving in alternative ways.
- Churches may have few men of spiritual maturity to choose from.
- Lack of clear teaching has produced men who lack clear convictions.
- The shortage of ministers is not always recognised, nor the reasons why gospel ministers are required.
- There is a crisis of masculinity in some quarters.

The additional comments provided back highlighted some issues that were not specifically researched within the survey. The most significant of these are covered below.

7.1 Alternative avenues of service

Some mentioned that men were not entering full-time pastoral ministry because they were being directed into alternative roles. Youth ministry was one of the alternatives mentioned, as in the quote below.

'Young men are being swayed to stay in youth ministry at the expense of thinking about full-time bible training with a view to church leadership and church planting.'

Others felt that men were not going into ministry because they realised they were called to serve in the work context they were already in. Some raised the challenge that an over emphasis on getting men into pastoral ministry could be detrimental, if it undermined the need for many to be serving in a 'secular' workplace.

'I am concerned that we need good men (and women) in the secular work place as that is where they are most likely to reach people for Christ. I have some concerns that highlighting paid ministry can prevent others seeing the workplace as a ministry. I think we need to do a better job of equipping the saints for ministry in the places the Lord has put them.'

7.2 Lack of Men

Comments highlighted that the scarcity of Christian men in general is an issue, with few men to choose from and sometimes none at all within a smaller church. Related to this was the calibre and spiritual maturity of men within the church. The following two comments illustrate these points.

'Perhaps there is a lack of Christian young men altogether. The majority of mature young men I know are considering or involved in Christian ministry, yet the base from which they come is very small. I think this is particularly acute in deprived inner city areas.'

'The main reason is the lack of young men being saved and once saved being totally committed to service in the local church. There are a lot of weak men.'

7.3 Gospel Teaching

Related to the spiritual maturity of young men was the issue of clear gospel teaching that instructs men on their responsibilities and inspires service. The following three quotations give some varying perspectives on how this was felt to be impacting men going into ministry.

'I think there's not enough clear teaching to young men and the church in general of what the church is and what role we all need to play. Young men subsequently don't feel the conviction they should.'

'The main reason in my opinion (for men not entering ministry) is due to the lack of gospel centred, Christ exalting preaching. Young men don't want to serve because they don't know how Christ came and served. When the gospel is preached appropriately men will be inspired to serve the Bride of Christ and His Kingdom.'

'The evangelical church has, by and large, failed to teach the gospel as the Bible does, and failed to explain how the Bible tells us we should exercise and discover our gifts to serve God.'

7.4 Awareness of the Need

Two different areas were highlighted relating to the need for ministers.

Firstly there was a lack of awareness of the shortage of ministers. One man suggested that part of the reason for this was *'that in a 'good' church it is difficult to see needs elsewhere in the nation.'*

Secondly, there was a lack of awareness of why ministers are needed, including the view that evangelism would be better served by operating in 'secular' environments.

'I think there can be a misunderstanding about the important strategic role of the minister in God's plan for reaching the world with the gospel. I frequently hear lines such as "If I say working as a doctor then surely I will be able to reach more people than if I was a minister?'

7.5 Crisis of Masculinity

Finally, some men felt that the undermining of male headship in the church was having a detrimental effect and also that men were not being courageous enough and taking on the challenge of ministry. These two areas are illustrated by the following quotes.

'The increasing feminisation of the church in many denominations, both amongst leaders and congregations, discourages some young men.'

'Further, men don't seem to be capable of being men and just 'doing it!' We seem to have got a little soft and become afraid of getting stuck in with God's work.'

8. Summary

There were many different reasons given in the survey responses for the lack of young men going into full-time ministry. As this report has shown, the importance of those reasons varied according to situation with regard to ministry, age and church size amongst other factors. Differences were also present between Anglican and Free Church respondents although this data has not been included in this report.

Men recognised that serving as a minister, serving God and his people, was a privilege. There was acknowledgment that sacrifice would be required, not only financially but also facing the challenges of criticism, heavy workloads and loneliness. The bad treatment some ministers face was certainly a barrier for some. Financial sacrifices can be significant and difficult to make, especially for those with family responsibilities. The church often expects unreasonable sacrifices to be made.

There was certainly confusion over what is meant by a 'call' to ministry, particularly amongst those still thinking about the prospect of full-time ministry. Greater clarity in this area would help young men evaluate whether full-time ministry is what they are gifted for and what God wants for them. It would also help churches understand how to facilitate rather than hinder getting men into ministry.

Three areas that make it difficult for young men committed to enter full-time ministry are problems with funding training, the lack of assistant positions and no clear process for finding a church after training.

If there was one area that was highlighted consistently by those providing feedback it was the area of training and opportunity. There is a commitment and desire to train, but it appears that this doesn't always get the focus and priority that it demands. Some churches are reactive rather than proactive in this area. There were mixed views about the extent of the opportunities given. The support of churches and church leaders in developing, encouraging and supplying opportunities to young men was key in getting men into ministry.

Amongst other reasons given why men are not going into full-time ministry were the lack of awareness of the need for ministers, the clarity of teaching in churches and the spiritual calibre of potential men.

The survey inevitably focused on the issues and barriers young men face, the 'human' reasons why men are not getting into ministry. This was not to suggest that there are not major spiritual reasons why there is this issue in the UK today. A number of men commented on these spiritual reasons and one extended comment below sums this up:

'There are probably many reasons, but I suspect an overarching one is that the UK church is going through dark times. We live in the "day of small things". Many churches are small and struggling. Many Christians are compromised and prayerless. The gospel flame does not burn brightly in this country. To mix a metaphor, Christian ministry is a call to plough stony ground. I sense God's hand of judgement on this culture. Is the lack of candidates an effect or a cause of this situation? More the former, I think; but it becomes a contributing factor when leadership is absent. There are other factors that come into play (vision, nurture, finance, confusion over what constitutes suitability etc) but I suspect the principle reasons are spiritual. We need a fresh generation to forsake all they have and follow Him.'

The purpose of the survey was to give young men the opportunity to add their voice to a growing crisis. The Lord Jesus urged us in Matthew 9:38 to 'Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.' And yet he was also proactive; in the very next verse he commissioned 12 disciples and sent them out.

Jesus' approach has much to teach us today. We must certainly obey his command to pray, but surely we must also follow his example by being proactive: by identifying, equipping, mentoring and commissioning.

God help us to both pray and act, that the 'called' men of our generation might be gathered in and sent out.

Jonathan Dyer
George Hawkins
Richard Lacey

Appendix A

At the end of the survey, there was an opportunity for men to comment on why they thought there was a lack of young men entering ministry. Table A.1 shows the issues that were highlighted and the frequency with which they were mentioned⁵. The issues have been classified under eight broad headings – Training & Nurture, Financial, Personal, Need, Role, Spiritual, Gifts & Calling and Church. It is notable that of the top ten issues, six related to Training & Nurture.

Table A.1

Category	Issue	Number of Mentions
Training & Nurture	Churches not encouraging and training young men	61
Training & Nurture	Opportunities lacking	43
Personal	Need for sacrifice	40
Financial	Financial support for training	38
Church	Process for getting into ministry/finding positions	31
Gifts & Calling	Confusion over 'call'	27
Training & Nurture	Time availability of leaders/ priority of leaders	25
Training & Nurture	Mentoring missing or poor quality/ no feedback	25
Training & Nurture	Availability/Quality of training positions	21
Training & Nurture	Limited training options	20
Personal	Feeling inadequate for the task	20
Need	Alternative avenues of service pursued	20
Financial	Financially detrimental	20
Role	Bad treatment of minister by churches	19
Church	Unrealistic expectations of churches/experience required	18
Church	Churches not committed to sending men	18
Spiritual	Spiritual weakness in the church	17
Spiritual	Lack of men in general	17
Church	Gospel not being taught clearly in churches	17
Church	Lack of good role models	16
Role	Negative view of the role of minister	16
Financial	Financial support in general	15
Church	Church not preaching to challenge men	15
Need	Desire of men to serve in this way	14
Personal	Secular career sucking people in	14
Need	Understanding the importance for gospel ministers	13
Personal	Family – financial implications	12
Role	Fear of role difficulties	10

⁵ Only issues mentioned at least five times are shown.

Need	Awareness of the lack of ministers	10
Personal	Feminisation of the church/Crisis of masculinity	10
Church	Lack of team ministry opportunities	10
Personal	Spiritual weakness in men	9
Church	Young men a threat/ poorly regarded	9
Role	Insecurity	9
Church	Prospect of seeing little growth/change	9
Training & Nurture	Inability of leaders to deal with men	9
Personal	More life experience needed before entering ministry	9
Church	State of the church	9
Personal	Impact on family in general	9
Gifts & Calling	Men not recognising their gifting/suitability	8
Spiritual	Lack of prayer	7
Role	Uncertain on the requirements of role	7
Personal	Parental pressure	6
Financial	Student Loans/Debt	5

Table A.2 shows the same data but accumulated at the level of the eight broad headings. The table highlights that men who mentioned training & nurture, generally recorded a number of underlying issues.

Table A.2

Category	Number of men commenting on the issue	Number of individual mentions
Training & Nurture	138	282
Church	127	153
Personal	100	131
Financial	74	78
Role	53	61
Need	52	57
Spiritual	43	48
Gifts & Calling	36	37