

# *Healthy Ministry: Factors that enhance the wellbeing and effectiveness of pastors in Aotearoa New Zealand*

**HASHTAGS:** # Churchleadership, #leadershiphealthmetrics, #Discipleship, #churchhealthmetrics, #ChurchinAotearoaNZ, #Pastoralwell-being, #roleidentity, #pastor, #differentiationofself, #differentiationofselfinChrist, #calling, #identity, #identityformation, #clergyformation

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This research explores factors enhancing the wellbeing and effectiveness of pastors in Aotearoa New Zealand and discusses the intersection of pastoral identity, call, and role. Interrelated relationships in a pastoral role increase the risk of role identity, in which pastors fuse their identity with the role and role outcomes. When a pastor's performance within the role unconsciously informs their sense of worth, significance, and adequacy, this can have detrimental results.

The study considers a theology of personhood, literature from psychology and education, and case studies from churches locally and globally to define a set of health metrics for measuring health within the pastor's role. Richard Black suggests a new ministry model that views ministry through a hierarchal ordering of 1) primary calling, 2) secondary calling, and 3) tertiary calling, or identity, calling, and role.

This research includes practical suggestions for pastors and ministry training organisations, including training on differentiation of self (DoS), spiritual formation training centred on identity in Christ, regular spiritual practices to enhance DoS and DifC (differentiation of self in Christ), training for supervisors, and incorporating these practices into the regular review of a pastor's role.

The practical suggestions in this research have potential to lead to significant beneficial outcomes for leaders including enhanced self-worth, constructive conflict responses, healthier relationships, resilience and emotional regulation, and reduced burnout. It would be valued by denominational leaders, ministry training colleges, ministry supervisors, spiritual directors, counsellors, mentors, and coaches.

## Probe

*Course - The Leader's Transformation Course is specifical designed to enhance the healthier model of ministry. <https://thrivingchurcheshq.com/leadership-transformation-course/> Created by Richard Black*

*Book - Identity, Calling, and Workplace Spirituality: Meaning Making and Developing Career Fit by Thomas V. Frederick and Scott E. Dunbar*

*Book - Identity Theory Revised and Expanded by Burke and Stets*

# Insights

- Bowen systems coaching (DoS) can significantly increase pastor's sense of calling and work-related psychological health as identity is often fused with role outcomes
- Differentiating one's identity in Christ (DifC) is vital for the well-being and flourishing of pastors.
- The role of the pastor is often, unhealthily confused as being the pastor's calling. The differentiation of calling from the role is essential for both wellbeing and flourishing of those in church leadership.
- Constructive conflict resolution skills, setting boundaries, negotiating role expectations, and calling fulfilment are linked to higher levels of DoS.
- Further research into the benefits of DifC and enabling practices is critical for the well-being of pastors.

## Abbreviations:

*DifC = Differentiation of self in Christ*

*DoS = Differentiation of self from role*

# Discuss

1. Why is the 'Differentiation of self' such a critical factor in pastoral leadership and ministry?
2. How could a local congregation mitigate ambiguities around pastoral and role expectations?
3. What is one action you could take from this piece of research that would enhance the well-being of your ministry, life and practice?