

The Weekend Pastor: A Christian Spirituality Analysis from the context of the GKI Kentuk Gresi in Papua



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ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the meaning of the calling as a pastor in the context of the GKI Kentuk Gresi in Papua. A pastor is called and sent by God to serve the congregations. Service to the congregation is holistic, encompassing all dimensions of human life. However, this service cannot be fully implemented if the pastor is not in the midst of the congregation's struggles full time. This study discusses the phenomenon of weekend pastors, who visit the congregation only on Saturdays and Sundays. With a qualitative approach and using a holistic and transformative Christian spirituality perspective, this study describes the reality of weekend pastors, and constructs the concept of a pastor's spirituality. The study revealed that love for the calling is the main foundation that supports pastors amidst the pressures of ministry. However, separation from family, emotional exhaustion, and lack of support from the church community can erode this sense of calling. Thus, pastor spirituality must be fostered holistically, including relationships with God, self, family, and congregation. Referring to the insights of Henri Nouwen and Flora Slosson Wuellner, this article emphasizes the need for soul care, inner healing, and community support to maintain authentic and liberating ministry. Holistic and transformative spirituality not only prevents spiritual burnout but also strengthens the transformative impact of ministry on the lives of the congregation.

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Introduction

The pastoral profession is a noble calling that demands full dedication to serving God and His people. According to Alfius Areng Mutak, the pastoral vocation heavily depends on the element of calling. Without an awareness of this calling, a pastor is vulnerable to crises of credibility and spirituality, which may manifest in tendencies such as choosing ministry locations based on personal comfort, serving exclusively certain groups, pursuing material gain, or even abandoning ministry altogether. This element of calling distinguishes pastors from other professions. It is not merely a job but a life response to God's invitation (Mutak, 2014, p. 47). In this context, true motivation for ministry can only grow from a deep awareness of the divine calling. As Henri Nouwen emphasizes, God works through Christian leaders by an authentic experience of their ministry calling. Living spirituality is rooted in a relationship with God and is manifested in total commitment, obedience, and self-surrender in ministry (Nouwen, 2002, p. 25).

This article aims to examine the reality of pastors who only do their duties on weekends in the congregation. Congregation members usually refer to them as weekend pastors. The fact of weekend pastors is different from the ideal concept of a pastor that has been mentioned. This reality is evident in the context of ministry within the Evangelical Christian Church (GKI) Kemtuk Gresi in Papua, which is located in the Grime Valley region of Jayapura Regency. The congregations are geographically dispersed across remote mountainous and valley areas with limited infrastructure, difficult transportation, and significant distances between villages, making a continuous pastoral presence challenging. In addition to geographical constraints, many pastors face social and economic pressures, often choosing to reside in urban centers for the sake of their family's education, healthcare, and livelihood, while maintaining ministry commitments on weekends. Simultaneously, cultural expectations place a high value on pastoral dependency within Papuan congregational life, where pastors serve not only as spiritual leaders but also as mediators, counselors, and sources of emotional support. As a result, the adaptive practice of "weekend pastors"-pastors who serve congregations only on specific days, such as Saturdays and Sundays - has increasingly emerged as a normalized yet complex response to these multidimensional pressures.

Based on the author's direct observations and experience serving in the area for approximately three months, this ministry pattern is not an isolated incident. The complete absence of pastors in congregations has become an increasingly entrenched tendency, often tolerated without serious intervention by the presbytery. The presence of pastors in congregational life is not merely an institutional formality but involves essential theological and pastoral functions. In the context of GKI Kemtuk Gresi, a pastor-centric element in church life remains very strong. This is evident, for example, in much higher congregational participation when the pastor leads worship compared to services led by elders. This reality demonstrates that the pastor's presence remains a vital factor in the spiritual life of the congregation.

The absence of pastors has broad consequences. The burden of ministry tends to shift to elders who may not be spiritually, theologically, or structurally prepared to bear such responsibilities optimally. In critical situations, such as death, illness, or urgent pastoral needs, ministry often cannot be carried out appropriately due to the pastor's absence. Moreover, this absence hinders the process of building a deep spiritual relationship between the pastor and the congregation, as a healthy pastoral relationship requires ongoing and consistent involvement, not merely occasional visits. When such spiritual relationships are inadequately formed, the congregation risks feeling incompletely shepherded.

This condition reveals that the complete absence of pastors is not merely a technical or managerial issue in ministry administration, but also affects the spiritual, emotional, and relational dimensions of the congregation's life. Continuous pastoral presence plays a crucial role in forming deep pastoral relationships, strengthening congregational trust, and supporting a holistic and transformative ministry rhythm. Henri Nouwen asserts that ministry is not primarily about what is done but about who we are before God and people. He writes, "Ministry is not first of all something we do, but something we are. Ministry is the way we live out our intimate relationship with God in service to others" (Nouwen, 2002, p. 13). From this perspective, the pastor's presence is not only functional but existential. It is a tangible manifestation of a personal relationship with God embodied in congregational life. Without a consistent presence, spiritual relationships cannot fully grow, and the congregation risks experiencing a pastoral void. Therefore, this condition demands serious attention from both the presbytery as the ministry's regional authority and the local church that carries out daily pastoral functions. If left unaddressed, this discontinuous ministry pattern has the potential to erode the relational and spiritual foundations that should be at the core of church life.

It is essential to clarify that this analysis does not intend to suggest that full-time physical presence automatically reflects superior spirituality, nor that weekend ministry necessarily

reflects spiritual weakness. Instead, this research aims to explore how patterns of limited ministerial presence may serve as symptoms or manifestations of underlying spiritual dynamics. The tendency to prioritize personal comfort, family proximity, or urban convenience, although understandable in many aspects of human life, may also point to unresolved tensions in one's vocational identity and spiritual surrender. Thus, the phenomenon of weekend ministry is explored here not as a managerial issue, but as a potential window into the spiritual struggles and vulnerabilities that pastors may experience in living out their calling.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of understanding calling and spiritual aspects of ministry. For example, Alfius Areng Mutak, in his research, stresses that a servant of God must deeply understand their calling as the foundation of spirituality and ministerial integrity (Mutak, 2014, p. 1). More specifically, H.S.C. Loppies in his thesis research, underlines the importance of a living relationship with God and spiritual consistency as the foundation of pastoral ministry. Meanwhile, Y.A. Nayoan's study on the pastoral functions of weekend pastors at Bukit Zaitun Church – Oelelo – Kupang Tengah presents how weekend pastors maintain pastoral roles despite limitations of time and distance. These three studies are valuable but have not explicitly addressed the reality in Papua, especially in GKI Kemtuk Gresi. There is yet no reflective and contextual study exploring how the weekend pastor ministry model in this region affects the spirituality of the pastor's calling itself. Therefore, this article offers a theological and practical reflection on the phenomenon of the weekend pastor in GKI Kemtuk Gresi, with a focus on the accompanying spiritual crisis of calling. This article seeks to fill a gap in Papua's contextual theology studies and encourages deeper discussion on the necessity of restoring the understanding of calling in contemporary church ministry practice.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach, using a case study method, to explore an in-depth understanding of the meaning of calling and the spiritual dynamics of pastors serving with a weekend pattern in the Classis of GKI Kemtuk Gresi. This approach was chosen because it allows the author to capture the complexity of ministry experiences holistically within a distinctive social and spiritual context. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with four weekend pastors and the Classis Working Committee of GKI Kemtuk Gresi, conducted in October 2024. Additionally, the author conducted observations of ministry activities within the congregations and performed a literature review of relevant sources.

The data were thematically analyzed to identify patterns and meanings emerging from the pastors' experiences in living out their calling. Based on the focus or object of research related to the spirituality of weekend pastors in the GKI Kemtuk Gresi Classis, the churches included in the GKI Kemtuk Gresi service area will be the research locations. However, specifically, the research locations chosen are GKI Bait-El (Mamda Dumadi), GKI Mizpa Dekening (Klaisu), GKI Talitakum (Jagrang), and GKI Tirai (Bring). The selection of these locations is based on congregations that have weekend pastors or do not reside in the congregation. The informants selected in this study include weekend pastors and the GKI Kemtuk Gresi Classis Workers' Body. The selection of informants was based on their role as key actors to obtain clear information regarding the existence of "weekend" pastors, factors that cause pastors to leave the congregation, and efforts made by the GKI Kemtuk Gresi Classis Workers' Body.

Results and Discussion

Location and General Overview of GKI Kemtuk Gresi

The Classis of GKI Kemtuk Gresi is located in the Grime Valley, south of Lake Sentani, Jayapura Regency. This area is surrounded by the Gautier Mountains, stretching from Doyo to

Nimboran, and is home to the Kemtuk, Gresi, Nimboran, and small groups of Mlab peoples. Congregations are spread along the Grime River, which flows from east to west, dividing the valley into two parts. The classis covers three administrative districts: Kemtuk, Kemtuk Gresi, and South Gresi. The region is rich in tropical rainforest, serving as a habitat for Papua's endemic flora and fauna, including the bird of paradise. The Grime River provides water for agriculture, sago processing, and hunting. Timber and fruit commodities (ironwood, matoa, durian) offer economic opportunities but also pose environmental challenges due to overexploitation.

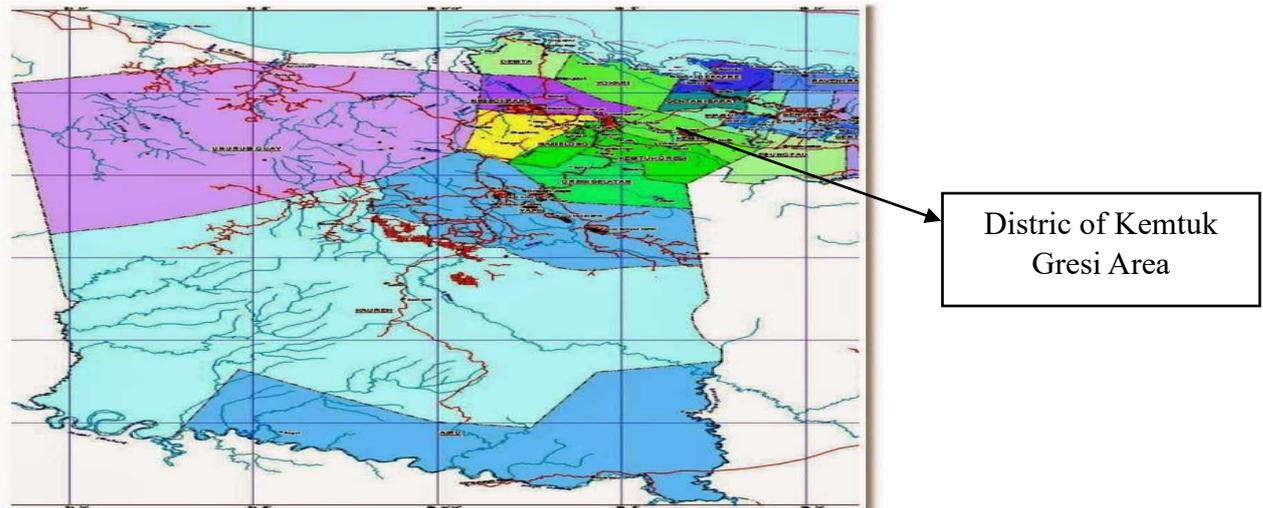


Figure 1. Map of the Jayapura Region and the District of Kemtuk Gresi

The valley is inhabited by four primary language groups: the Kemtuk, Gresi, Mlab, and Elseng. Each group occupies distinct areas. Kemtuk in Merem and Mamda; Gresi in Ihub and Sawoi; Mlab in Kwansu and Bonggrang; and Elseng in Sabeyap and its surroundings. The population is predominantly indigenous, with a small number of outsiders working as civil servants or marrying into local families. There are 29 autonomous congregations and 1 preparatory congregation, divided into four ministry zones: Damoiblo, Iwalom, Gresi, and Pay. These congregations are located in both lowland and mountainous regions, reflecting traditional settlement patterns and topographical diversity. The classis is served by 16 pastors (4 men and 12 women) and 4 church teachers (3 men and 1 woman). Two pastors serve in administrative roles as Chair and Secretary of the Classis. This leaves 18 Organic Church Ministers (POG) responsible for congregational ministry. Currently, there are only eight pastoral candidates available, while eleven congregations remain without full-time pastors. Kemtuk Gresi faces numerous ministry challenges, including:

- Underdeveloped Classis office infrastructure.
- Weak financial base from non-conventional sources.
- The emerge of local tribal religious groups.
- Growth of other church denominations.
- Limited capacity of congregation councils (majelis).
- Many pastors and teachers live outside the congregation.
- Some residing pastors fail to fulfill their ministry roles effectively.

Reality of Weekend Pastor

The reality of weekend pastors is analyzed based on direct interviews with pastors who realize that they can only visit their congregations on weekends. The following table shows the

number of days pastors spend in and outside the congregation during the three months of September-November 2024.

Table 1. Number of days the pastor admits the congregation

Informant	Months	Number of days staying in the congregation	Number of days outside the congregation	Total days
Pastor SK	September	14	16	30
	Oktober	12	19	31
	November	13	17	30
Pastor DN	September	7	23	30
	Oktober	6	25	31
	November	5	25	30
Pastor AO	September	9	21	30
	Oktober	12	19	31
	November	14	16	30
Pastor RM	September	16	14	30
	Oktober	19	12	31
	November	14	16	30

Based on these data, the average informant, such as DN and informant AO, spends more time outside the congregation. At the same time, the pattern of RM is more consistent in terms of spending time in the congregation, which may reflect a more substantial commitment to the ministry within the congregation compared to personal or family time. Based on attendance data for three months, the number of days of their presence in the congregation ranges from 5 to 19 days per month, while the rest is spent outside the congregation. The presence of the pastor in the congregation is limited to Saturdays and Sundays, so they are referred to as weekend pastors.

These data show that the physical presence of pastors among the congregation being served is minimal and inconsistent. This minimal presence cannot be separated from the pastors' understanding of their duties and functions. The results of the interviews revealed that the pastors viewed their duties as being limited to preaching the Word in worship and conducting pastoral visits. This ritualistic and administrative interpretation led them to believe that an irregular presence in the congregation could still be justified, as long as the duties of worship and visits had been fulfilled.

The ministry of a pastor in a more profound theological sense should be holistic. Pastors not only fulfill liturgical duties, but are also called to be agents of transformation in the lives of their congregation. The presence of pastors amid the congregation's struggles in the spiritual, social, economic, and cultural fields is an integral part of the actual task of shepherding. Without a consistent presence and active involvement in the congregation's life, the pastor's ministry becomes hollow and loses its transformative power. This pattern of service suggests a crisis in understanding the pastor's calling and function. The service that should shape, foster, and empower the congregation and all its dimensions is instead reduced to ceremonial activities.

A review of the formulation of the duties and functions of the pastor, as stated in the GKI Church Regulations in Tanah Papua, Chapter VII, Article 17(3), shows that the pastor's service is primarily focused on ritualistic, administrative, and internal congregation development aspects. Functions such as preaching the Word, administering the sacraments, shepherding the congregation, teaching, strengthening church servants, and organizing administration are all

centered on the internal life of the church community. There is almost no explicit emphasis on transformative tasks related to service to the congregation, such as social empowerment, justice advocacy, or community development.

The lack of a transformative orientation in the formulation of pastors' duties has a significant impact on the practical meaning of service. Based on the results of the interviews, pastors generally understand their responsibilities as limited to internal spiritual services such as leading worship and conducting pastoral visits. They rarely articulate their duties as agents of social transformation that build the welfare of the congregation in a broader sense. This suggests that the issue of meaning is not only a personal concern for pastors but also a structural problem shaped by the institutional boundaries of the church. Thus, the issues that arise are systemic. The church, in this case the synod and classis, also bears the responsibility to conduct a critical evaluation of the formulation of pastors' duties. Without expanding the understanding of service as a transformative work, the church risks perpetuating a service model that is merely ritualistic and non-contextual. Therefore, the formulation of pastors' duties should be developed more holistically, by including the dimension of social transformation as an integral part of the spirituality of service. Pastors are expected not only to be liturgical servants but also to be spiritual leaders who can discern the signs of the times, advocate for justice, promote the welfare of the congregation, and foster a community life that embodies the values of the kingdom of God in the world.

Motivation and the Meaning of a Pastor's Vocation

Understanding a pastor's calling cannot be separated from the initial motivations that lead someone into ministry. Motivation is not merely an emotional impulse but a foundational force that sustains perseverance and faithfulness in responding to the divine call, especially when a pastor faces emotionally and spiritually draining challenges. In the context of the GKI Kemtuk Gresi Classis, interviews and field observations reveal that not all pastors began their ministries with full awareness of an inner calling. Some admitted that their decisions were driven by parental insistence (such as SK), family pressure (DN and AO), or admiration for respected pastoral figures (such as RM).

This reality exposes a deficiency in the *inner call*, which Yohanis Calvin considers fundamental to the spirituality of a servant of God (Batlajery, 2008). When ministry is not rooted in an inner call, it risks becoming an empty routine—merely a duty lacking the depth of a relationship with both God and the congregation. Calvin's warning is thereby reaffirmed: ministry devoid of an inner call becomes dry and fragile, vulnerable to the pressures of pastoral work and prone to losing its authentic spiritual power. While external motivations are not inherently wrong or to be dismissed, they require purification. Ministry is not merely about fulfilling others' requests or meeting social expectations; it is an existential commitment to be a channel of God's love for others. Therefore, initial, immature motivations must continually be wrestled with in the lived experience of ministry and relationship with God, so that they grow into an authentic calling. This journey is a spiritual process that guides a person from external impulses toward genuine love for the calling itself.

Within this process, the threat of spiritual dryness becomes apparent. Flora Slosson Wuellner describes this dryness as a condition in which a servant of God loses the fervor for prayer, no longer senses God's presence, and becomes trapped in ministerial routines devoid of living inner connection (Wuellner, 1985, p. 15). This dryness is not always visible; it may be hidden beneath active participation in church rituals or a packed schedule of ministry. In the GKI Kemtuk Gresi Classis, this is evident in the *weekend* ministry pattern, where some pastors believe that merely attending Sunday services is sufficient, without being fully engaged in congregational life. Ministry, then, is reduced to ritual activity, stripped of its pastoral and relational dimensions.

Furthermore, several pastors acknowledged that this pattern is not solely driven by family obligations but also as a form of escape from ministry fatigue. This fatigue stems from feeling unappreciated, a lack of support from church councils, and the experience of laboring alone without meaningful participation from the congregation. One pastor even likened their service to “throwing salt into the sea”—a profound expression of meaninglessness. In such contexts, ministry patterns are no longer strategic choices but existential responses to emotional exhaustion and unattended spiritual emptiness. To address this crisis, Henri Nouwen offers the paradigm of a *spirituality of home and departure*—a spiritual rhythm that invites God’s servant to continually “return home” to the source of their identity in God’s love before once again “going forth” to serve the world. Without this rhythm, ministry becomes mechanical and loses its transformative power. A pastor who only “goes” without ever “returning” loses spiritual rootedness, and ministry becomes dry, formalistic, and even destructive.

Herein lies the relevance of Haryono’s concept of *vocation in vocation*. Calling is not a static entity but a dynamic process that must be continually renewed, refined, and confirmed through life experience, faith struggle, and intimacy with God (Haryono, 2012, p. 29). Love for the calling is not born instantly; it grows through a life lived honestly and openly before God’s ongoing formation. This love becomes the wellspring of strength in times of loneliness, pressure, and disappointment in ministry. London and Wiseman affirm that true motivation for ministry must stem from the desire to please God and to serve others in the love of Christ (London and Wiseman, 2003, pp. 56–59). When ministry is driven by other motivations, such as a search for self-worth or fulfilling societal demands, it can quickly become a burdensome weight that drains the soul and leads to spiritual burnout.

A profound theological reflection on the relationship between love and calling is found in Jesus’ conversation with Peter in John 21:15-17. In this passage, Jesus does not begin by issuing a mandate, but by asking, “Do you love Me?” Only after Peter affirms his love does Jesus say, “Feed My sheep.” This threefold question is not merely an act of restoration from Peter’s denial, but a reaffirmation that love for Christ is the foundational prerequisite for all ministry. Love precedes duty; relationship precedes responsibility. As John Hindley emphasizes, “The only true motivation for serving or obeying Christ is love” (Hindley, 2021, p. 136). It is this love that serves as the bedrock for a holistic and transformative pastoral spirituality. Faithful ministry is born out of love, sustained by love, and bears the fruit of love. Love for the calling is the origin of faithfulness, the source of resilience, and the path to ongoing renewal in the light of God’s unending love.

The Holistic and Transformative Spirituality of the Pastor

The ministry of a pastor never takes place in a vacuum free from personal struggles. On the contrary, ministry occurs amidst the complex and dynamic realities of life, full of color and vulnerability. This dynamic includes emotional pressures, spiritual burdens, and social relationships that do not always run harmoniously. In the context of GKI in Papua, especially in the Klasis GKI Kemtuk Gresi area, this complexity becomes very real. The pastors serving in this region face not only challenging geographical conditions but also existential dilemmas between their responsibilities to the congregation and their commitments to families, who often live in the city. This situation creates a genuine and ongoing tension—the tension between the calling to serve and the need to be present in intimate and meaningful personal relationships.

All informants interviewed expressed that the decision not to reside fully among the congregation is not merely a result of technical or logistical considerations. This choice arises from a deep need to remain involved in family life, as husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, and individuals who carry the longing to be truly present in bonds of love that shape the deepest identity of a human being. On one hand, they are aware of the great pastoral responsibility. On

the other hand, they realize that completely leaving their family for ministry can damage the emotional support structure vital to sustaining the calling itself.

Here emerges an important question, both theologically and practically: Must the calling to serve be pursued at the expense of family well-being? Or rather, in the light of the Gospel, does the calling also include the responsibility to care for and build family life as part of an authentic and transformative witness? Henri Nouwen, in his classic work *The Wounded Healer*, offers a paradigm of ministry that is highly relevant for reflecting on this question. He states that ministry is not born out of power or domination but out of wounds—wounds that are recognized, accepted, and brought before the healing love of God. The pastor is a wounded healer, a person who is wounded but has been touched and restored by the grace of God, enabling them to be an instrument of healing for others (Nouwen, 1972, p. 80). Within this framework, a healthy family life and warm relationships become an integral part of the pastor's inner healing process. Family is not merely a burden or disturbance for ministry but a sacred space where the pastor experiences God's love concretely and existentially.

In the experience of many pastors in Kentuk Gresi, the decision to spend more time in the city with their families can be understood not as an escape from ministry, but as an effort to maintain integrity and balance in life. When ministry continually pressures without providing space for self-renewal, what emerges is not faithfulness but profound spiritual exhaustion—a spiritual dryness that erodes the spirit and meaning of the calling itself. Flora Slosson Wuellner reveals that spiritual dryness often arises from a disconnection between ministry and the real life of the congregation. When ministry becomes merely routine and fails to touch real life, what remains is empty religious activity, full of motion but lacking inner vitality (Wuellner, 2007, p. 164). Wuellner emphasizes that true spirituality must restore, liberate, and heal. Such spirituality arises from the practice of deep listening—to the voice of God, to one's own inner voice, and to the voices of the congregation (Wuellner, 1984, pp. 23–25). Within this context, pastoral presence may serve as a critical expression of spiritual care, especially as pastors engage personally with the real-life struggles of their congregation. Ministry thus becomes not only an institutional duty but a dynamic relationship that nurtures mutual growth and transformation.

Nevertheless, the weekend ministry pattern, characterized by limited physical presence, invites careful reflection. While effective coordination with church elders can help sustain ministry functions, spiritual accompaniment often requires ongoing relational depth that intermittent presence may not easily provide. Physical presence alone does not automatically indicate more profound spirituality, but consistent, empathetic engagement may offer greater opportunities for pastoral formation, relational trust, and shared spiritual growth. Spirituality that separates ministry from the community served or turns ministry into an individual project without emotional ties to the congregation is a spirituality that has lost the Spirit of Christ. Faithful ministry must be transformative: it transforms both the served and the servant. Therefore, every effort to delegate tasks must be accompanied by mentoring, accompaniment, and spiritual renewal, rather than merely sharing administrative burdens.

Field observations and interviews show that much of the understanding of ministry still revolves around ritual and liturgy. This is seen in the tendency of pastors and congregation members to view ministry as a series of ceremonial activities centered on the church building, such as leading worship, administering sacraments, officiating weddings, or funerals. This mindset does not arise spontaneously but is deeply rooted in the formal and normative structures of the church. In the context of the Evangelical Christian Church in Papua (GKI in Papua), the official duties of a pastor are outlined in Chapter VII, Article 17, paragraph (3), listing eleven primary responsibilities,

1. Preaching the Word of God;
2. Administering Sacraments;

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3. Nurturing and guiding congregation members to obey Jesus Christ in fellowship, witness, service of love, and justice;
 4. Shepherding congregation members and others needing ministry;
 5. Teaching the Bible and Christian doctrine;
 6. Strengthening church servants such as a congregation's teachers, evangelists, elders, deacons, and instructors;
 7. Strengthening confirmed members of the congregation;
 8. Administering confirmation and marriage blessings;
 9. Appointing serving bodies and committees in the congregation
 10. Leading congregational worship services; and
 11. Managing general administration and financial affairs in cooperation with the church council. (Tata Gereja & Peraturan-Peraturan Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua, 2022, p. 20).

Although some points include nurturing and shepherding dimensions, overall, this structure tends to position pastoral ministry within ritualistic, administrative, and institutional frameworks. This creates an understanding that pastoral ministry primarily involves technical and organizational functions, rather than embodying a holistic and transformational relationship of love between pastor, God, and congregation. In this light, the critique is not only about how pastors perform their duties but also about how the church system itself shapes a mindset and ministry orientation that emphasizes adherence to formal structures more than deep spiritual experience. When these tasks become a mere "to-do list," pastors can become trapped in a spiritually dry rhythm, emotionally exhausted, and poor in personal relationships with the congregation.

Henri Nouwen reminds us that when ministry is carried out only as tasks and achievements, without being rooted in intimate life with God, what emerges is "spiritual activism" that alienates the pastor from actual love experience. He writes that the greatest danger in spiritual ministry is when the minister feels needed because of their activities rather than because of their presence, which flows from a relationship with God (Nouwen, 1977). Likewise, Flora Slosson Wuellner, in *Spiritual Hunger and Other Cures for the Soul*, stresses that church ministers can experience spiritual dryness when functioning too long in professional ministry roles, but lose connection to the core of their spiritual energy, which is the love and healing of God. Wuellner writes, "We are too accustomed to functioning... but we lose touch with the core of our spiritual energy: the love and healing of God" (1996, p. 22).

Therefore, the understanding of pastoral ministry in GKI in Papua cannot be separated from its structural and normative forms, which potentially narrow ministry into bureaucratic functions rather than expressions of full spirituality. In this context, the calling to ministry needs to be reflected not only by individual pastors but also by the church institution itself, so that pastoral duties are not merely seen as job checklists but as a spiritual journey flowing from God's love and reaching the congregation in a transformative way. In a holistic and transformational Christian spirituality, pastoral ministry encompasses all aspects of life—personal, relational, and social. The pastor is not only a worship leader but also a friend, shepherd, and bearer of hope. Their identity as servants of God does not erase their humanity, which includes emotions, family, and personal limits. It is precisely this acknowledgment of humanity that allows the pastor to be authentic and loving. As Nouwen said, faithful ministry flows from the silent space with God, where wounds are accepted and transformed into strength to love and serve (Nouwen, 1992, p. 30).

Thus, the understanding of pastoral calling needs to be broadened and deepened. It is not only a call to do, but also a call to be—to be a whole person in relationship with God, oneself, family, and the congregation. True spirituality for pastors is spirituality that unites all spheres of life in healing and restoring love. This is incarnational, holistic, and transformational

spirituality—spirituality that is present not only on the pulpit but also in the spaces of tears and hope of God’s people.

Formating Holistic and Transformative Spirituality of Pastors

The phenomenon widely known as the “weekend pastor” — referring to pastors who routinely and regularly leave their congregations for extended periods to return to the city and live with their families — is not an unfamiliar or new issue within the ministerial context of the GKI Kemtuk Gresi Classis. This practice has long been observed and acknowledged by the Classis Working Committee; yet, despite this awareness, no concrete, formal, or systematic measures have been undertaken to address or regulate this matter comprehensively. The Classis Chairperson explained that the Classis has adopted a prudent, empathetic, and context-sensitive approach by carefully considering the personal and family circumstances of each pastor, such as whether they have children or spouses residing in urban areas, which often necessitate the pastor’s periodic return. This approach demonstrates a thoughtful balance between institutional expectations and human realities, embodying an attitude of caution and empathy towards the pastors’ complex life situations. However, DM, the Chairperson, also stressed firmly that pastors must always prioritize their commitment to God above any other considerations. The pastoral calling, as a sacred vow, is a solemn promise made before God himself, a commitment that precedes and supersedes any familial obligations or personal preferences. From this perspective, the implication of such a divine calling is the readiness and willingness to place ministry above even the most intimate family ties, to accept the sacrifices involved, including extended physical separation from loved ones to fulfill pastoral duties faithfully.

This declaration clearly reflects a traditional theological understanding of pastoral vocation that places a strong emphasis on total dedication, unwavering loyalty, and complete self-sacrifice in fulfilling ministry responsibilities. Indeed, commitment to God remains the foundational cornerstone of a pastor’s identity and existence, as famously emphasized by influential theological figures such as John Calvin, who asserted that the office of a servant of God is not a mere profession or job, but a lifelong calling that demands full devotion and dedication (Tamaweol, 2020, p. 20). However, while such a high standard of total commitment has scriptural and theological merit, it also invites critical scrutiny when interpreted and applied in an overly rigid or legalistic manner, particularly when it results in pastors being compelled to excessively sacrifice their family life without sufficient pastoral care, support, or accompaniment.

In this regard, Henri Nouwen offers a profoundly insightful and alternative framework that is highly relevant to the contemporary realities faced by pastors. In his influential works, including *The Wounded Healer*, Nouwen articulates that genuinely healthy ministry must emerge from a holistic and integrated spiritual life—one in which the “spiritual self” is not fragmented or separated from the “personal self.” He argues that pastors are not invulnerable “spiritual machines” capable of endlessly giving without replenishment; instead, they are human beings who are vulnerable to wounds, emotional exhaustion, and spiritual dryness. Consequently, they require ongoing spiritual support and a healing community that can nurture their well-being. For Nouwen, the church should serve as a safe and restorative space where pastors can find healing, share their struggles honestly, and deepen their relationship with God and their fellow human beings (Nouwen, 1977, pp. 45–50).

Within the actual practice of “weekend pastor” ministry, many pastors may experience profound tension between their pastoral responsibilities and their essential presence for their families. This tension is often complex and multifaceted, involving emotional, psychological, vocational, and spiritual dimensions. Importantly, this does not imply a simple relationship between time allocation and spirituality, as depth of spiritual life cannot be measured merely by one’s physical presence. Instead, these tensions call for a more nuanced structural and pastoral

analysis that honors both ministerial responsibilities and the pastor's holistic well-being. Churches must be cautious not to demand maximal productivity while neglecting the personal, emotional, and spiritual needs of ministers; otherwise, the risk of burnout, relational isolation, and vocational figure remains significant.

In her thesis, Patterson quotes Eugene Peterson's memorable statement: "There is a saying among doctors that a physician who treats himself is a fool" (Patterson, 2014, p. 77). This adage resonates deeply within pastoral ministry: no pastor can effectively shepherd himself or herself alone. Pastors need a supportive community that sustains, corrects, and revitalizes their calling and ministry. Thus, the Classis' role should not be limited merely to administrative or bureaucratic functions but should also embody a proactive spiritual nurturing community that cares for the holistic well-being of its pastors.

Regrettably, DM's insistence that pastors must "recognize their calling on their own" reveals a somewhat passive and hands-off leadership approach within the Classis. This stance risks overlooking the critical reality of spiritual exhaustion, emotional voids, and even the quiet disintegration of pastors' family lives. Flora Wuellner warns that spiritual wounds do not heal spontaneously or in isolation. She underscores the importance of an active and compassionate community that accompanies pastors through processes of spiritual and emotional healing (Wuellner, 1985, pp. 47–50). Therefore, the church, particularly through the Classis, has an undeniable moral and pastoral responsibility to establish proactive systems for nurturing, evaluating, and restoring pastors, ensuring that they do not navigate their struggles alone.

Transformative pastoral spirituality cannot arise in an empty or hostile environment; it requires a healthy, supportive ministry ecosystem in which pastors are genuinely cared for as whole persons. Therefore, the church must develop policies and structures that not only prioritize ministerial productivity but also humanize the ministers themselves. Such an approach must include at least three major components: firstly, flexibility in work schedules and allowances for family visitations; secondly, structured opportunities for spiritual renewal, including spiritual leave and regular retreats; and thirdly, continuous formation that addresses pastors' mental, spiritual, and emotional health.

Spiritual retreats, training programs, and regular mentoring should not be dismissed as mere "additional rituals" or "optional extras." Instead, they should be recognized as vital and indispensable opportunities for pastors to reconnect with and refresh their calling. Both Henri Nouwen and Flora Wuellner firmly reject the misconception that spirituality is a burdensome add-on amid ministry demands. On the contrary, they affirm that spirituality is the very source of freedom, healing, and renewal (Wuellner, 2007, p. 21). From this perspective, the pastor's relationship with God must not be regarded as a mere supplement or preparation for ministry activities, but rather as the central, animating force that energizes and sustains the entirety of the pastoral work (Nouwen, 2003, p. 18). Practically, the church could implement scheduled times—whether monthly or quarterly—that allow pastors to visit their families regularly, coupled with planned rest periods to facilitate physical and spiritual recovery. During such times, pastors should also receive training in practical skills such as time management, empathetic listening, and holistic self-care. Pastors who are restored and cared for will be empowered to serve with greater authenticity, vitality, and depth, moving beyond superficial religious rituals towards truly relevant and transformative ministry.

Moreover, the church needs to equip pastors with practical knowledge and skills to empower congregations. The ministry should encompass not only worship services and sacraments, but also active and tangible engagement with the social realities faced by congregations, including economic challenges, educational needs, social conflicts, and basic life necessities. By doing so, pastors transcend the role of mere "liturgical priests" and become dynamic "agents of social and spiritual transformation." However, to reach this level of impactful ministry, pastors must first achieve holistic health—spiritually, emotionally, and relationally.

And to become healthy, pastors require a church environment that functions as a nurturing space, not merely a space of demands and expectations.

Ultimately, the ongoing debate concerning the “weekend pastor” phenomenon should not be framed as a forced choice between family and ministry. Instead, it calls the church to develop a healthy ministry system, just, and responsive to the complex and multifaceted realities of pastors as human beings with personal lives and vulnerabilities. This requires courageous reform efforts to transform the overly bureaucratic and hierarchical structures of Classis into participatory, empathetic spiritual communities. Ultimately, the integrity and authenticity of pastoral ministry do not stem from fear of punishment, formal requirements, or rigid demands, but from a continually renewed spiritual life that is nurtured and sustained within a community founded on love, grace, and mutual support.

Conclusion

In facing the reality of pastors who do not reside in the congregation, particularly in the GKI Kemtuk Gresi, the understanding of calling becomes a fundamental issue. This understanding cannot be separated from the pastor's spirituality, which serves as the source of strength and motivation in navigating the various dynamics of ministry. When spirituality declines, ministry becomes vulnerable to turning into a dry routine lacking deep meaning, often limited to mere ritual obligations. Therefore, it is essential to thoroughly examine the connection between spirituality and the sense of calling in order to establish a consistent, sincere, and holistic ministry. A deep understanding of calling begins with an awareness of the initial motivation to become a pastor, family dynamics, ministry challenges, and personal conditions. A love for the calling becomes the foundation that enables pastors to endure while also integrating their ministry, family, and individual needs. A pastor is not only a servant of the congregation but also a shepherd to their own family. A healthy ministry does not sacrifice personal life, but one that sees the family as an integral part of the calling. Through a whole relationship of love with God, the spirit of ministry can be continuously renewed, primarily through the support of a healthy church system and community.

The church has a responsibility to provide emotional and spiritual support for pastors, including flexible ministry management, continuous spiritual formation, and a community that uplifts one another. Here lies the importance of creating a structure that supports the balance between ministry responsibilities and the personal life of the pastor, allowing their spirituality to continue growing and not be eroded by excessive workloads. Ultimately, holistic and transformative pastoral spirituality is the integration of a deep relationship with God, personal and family well-being, and service to the congregation. This spirituality is not based on the routines of church tasks, but on the experience of God's healing and renewing love. As emphasized by Henri Nouwen and Flora Wuellner, pastors are fragile individuals who also need spiritual care. Without healthy soul care, pastors will easily become exhausted and lose the meaning of their calling. Therefore, spiritual formation that touches the depths of the self, honest prayer, and the experience of God's love are the keys to a ministry that not only endures but also brings renewal to both the pastor and the congregation they serve.

Therefore, alongside continuous personal spiritual formation, the presbytery and local congregations have a responsibility to develop more sustainable models of pastoral care. This may include establishing structured training and spiritual formation programs for elders, empowering them to provide adequate pastoral support during the pastor's absence. Additionally, alternative models such as rotational pastoral teams or shared ministry networks between nearby congregations could help alleviate pastoral overload while maintaining ongoing spiritual accompaniment for congregants. Developing intentional soul-care programs for pastors, offering periodic spiritual retreats, establishing peer-support groups, and providing

counseling services can also serve as crucial resources for sustaining pastoral vitality. By implementing such concrete measures, the church not only supports the well-being of its ministers but also nurtures a more resilient, transformative, and holistic pastoral spirituality within its communities.

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