The Benedictine concept of balance offers a way for a dean to survive and thrive in an Anglican cathedral today.

**Benedict, Balance and the Deans**

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Table of Contents

1: Introduction ................................................................................................................ 3
2: Key Themes in the Rule of St Benedict ................................................................. 5
   Introduction .............................................................................................................. 5
   Intentionality ......................................................................................................... 5
   Prayer ..................................................................................................................... 6
   The Monastic Vows of Benedict ........................................................................... 7
   Obedience .............................................................................................................. 7
   Stability ................................................................................................................ 9
   Continual conversion .......................................................................................... 14
   Balance ............................................................................................................... 20
3: Balance and Cathedral Models ............................................................................. 22
   The Balancing Ministry ....................................................................................... 22
   Cathedral Models .............................................................................................. 25
   Semi-Monastic Canons ...................................................................................... 25
   Rule of St Augustine .......................................................................................... 25
   Benedictine Monasticism .................................................................................. 26
   Prebendary Model ............................................................................................ 27
4: Hospitality and Leadership .................................................................................... 30
   Introduction .......................................................................................................... 30
   Hospitality ............................................................................................................ 30
   Leadership .......................................................................................................... 37
5: Rhythm in Life ....................................................................................................... 48
   Introduction .......................................................................................................... 48
   Feeding the soul ................................................................................................. 49
   Feeding the mind ............................................................................................... 54
   Feeding the body ............................................................................................... 56
   Pulling things together ...................................................................................... 58
6: Conclusion .............................................................................................................. 60
Bibliography .............................................................................................................. 64
Appendices ................................................................................................................ 68
Appendix 1: .............................................................................................................. 68
   Research Task and Method ................................................................................. 68
   Data Collection ................................................................................................... 68
Appendix 2: Information Sheet for Participants ...................................................... 70
Appendix 3: Consent form for Participants ............................................................. 72
Appendix 4: Outline for Interviews ......................................................................... 73
Appendix 5: Acknowledgements ............................................................................. 74
1: Introduction

More than twenty years ago I was introduced to the Rule of Benedict by Esther de Waal. It was a revelation to me that centuries ago (Benedict’s dates are 480 – 547 AD) a man had the vision to set out a way of living a balanced life for God in the midst of apparent chaos. While the Rule remains the basic underlying rule for western monasticism I realized too that the Anglican Church owes an immense amount to Benedict. My experience as a priest suggests that Anglicans have drifted towards a management, and increasingly congregational, style of being church, with emphasis on numbers and personality of clergy. The Rule suggests we may have lost something worthwhile. There is something unexpectedly contemporary about the challenge of the three vows – obedience, stability and continual conversion – to today’s church, and especially today’s cathedrals. One English cathedral that I am aware of has specifically tied itself to Benedictine principles. While only one model of cathedral, this indicates that Benedict’s vision continues to be relevant today.

As I thought about a topic to fulfill the requirements for the M Min research essay I found myself increasingly drawn to asking whether the Rule of Benedict might have some suggestions for a busy dean trying to cope with the many demands on his/her time. This thinking was further encouraged in the words of a university lecturer who, on introducing me to his class of business administration students, reminded them that business models are relatively recent, often built either on that of the church or the military.

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1 Author of two well-known books on the Rule, both of which have served to inform and encourage me in my ministry for the past 20 years.

2 Durham being one example. I was intrigued to see an advertisement run in the Church Times through January 2010 from Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin including, in very Benedictine language, “the Cathedral continues to fulfil its primary mission of prayer, education and hospitality.”

3 Nicols Alldrit, “Cathedrals and their Communities”, in Flagships of the Spirit: Cathedrals in Society, ed. Stephen Platten and Christopher Lewis (London: DLT, 1998). Four specific models are listed:
   - semi-monastic canons
   - Rule of St Augustine
   - Benedictine monasticism
   - Prebendal model

4 Prof Richard Norman, Victoria University Wellington, March 2010
Drawing on my own experience in a number of cathedrals, and the reading and talking I have done (including meeting regularly with my New Zealand dean colleagues and a small group of international deans over the past few years), a thesis topic developed.

The Benedictine concept of balance offers a way for a dean to survive and thrive in an Anglican cathedral today.

This topic would give me the chance to

- reflect on my own ministry as a priest over a period of more than thirty years (much of it in cathedrals)
- delve deeply into the Rule of Benedict and some of today’s commentators on, and practitioners of, the Rule
- look critically at the way in which the Rule has influenced some of the decisions and practices I have made as Dean of Wellington
- through a process of interviews with deans and former deans in New Zealand, seek to discover whether my thesis has any validity and usefulness, both to deans and the wider church.

5 Cathedral of St Andrew and St Michael, Bloemfontein, South Africa; Cathedral of St Michael and St George, Grahamstown, South Africa; Cathedral of St Mary the Virgin, Johannesburg, South Africa; Christ Church Cathedral, Christchurch, New Zealand; Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Hong Kong; Wellington Cathedral of St Paul, Wellington, New Zealand.

6 For details of the processes followed see Appendix 1.
2: Key Themes in the Rule of St Benedict

Introduction
The Prologue to the Rule of St Benedict (the Rule) sets out many of the key themes that will emerge and be enlarged upon in the rest of the Rule\(^7\) which makes these first few pages of the Rule worthy of a careful and detailed look. As well as drawing directly on the Rule of Benedict I will introduce some ideas of contemporary writers and practitioners of the Rule, enter into conversation with the deans that I interviewed in the course of my research, and make comments from my own experience in working in six different cathedrals.

The first two things to note are the very intentional nature of the Rule, and the central place of prayer.

Intentionality
Benedict is very clear that the Rule is not for everyone. It is for those who feel called to turn to Christ. In the opening paragraph of the Prologue we discover that this involves a clear turning away from “the pursuit of your own self-will”. It involves asking “to enlist under Christ”, and “following him”. Benedict accepts that it will not be easy to “persevere in obedience”, and that the “strong and blessed armour of obedience” will be needed.\(^8\) While the cathedrals I have worked in, and those the deans interviewed work in, are not monastic communities, they do all have a clear focus and intentionality about their life, work and ministry. Foremost of these would be to provide a place for the worship of God for the different constituencies and

\(^7\) For the purposes of this chapter all references to the Rule of Benedict are taken from Patrick Barry OSB’s translation as found in Patrick Barry, Richard Yeo, Kathleen Norris and others, *Wisdom from the Monastery. The Rule of St Benedict for everyday life.* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005). In referencing the Rule I use the abbreviation RB followed by chapter and paragraph number (which I have inserted for easier reference). So, for example, chapter 4 paragraph 7 becomes RB 4: 7. I have not, however, always followed the inclusive language used in this translation – except where quoting directly from it.

\(^8\) RB Prologue 1.
people who claim the cathedral as theirs – whether that be a parish community, a diocese, or the various city communities.9

At the very beginning of the Rule is the same dynamic of intentionality at work in Baptism – a turning from, and a turning to. This marks the beginning of a life-long journey towards God, and comes about through an awareness of God’s love and a desire to respond to that love.

It is interesting to note the musings of Michael Casey, a modern day Cistercian.

Monastic life is the diametric opposite of aimless living. It has a goal and it has a tried and ordered network of means by which that goal is realized. The train is running on tracks to a single destination; if you don’t want to go there, you had better get off at the next stop.10

Prayer
For Benedict the starting point of the journey is prayer – sustained prayer. This must be the number one priority, and, as we will see, nothing must get in the way of, or displace, prayer. Prayer is the human’s response to the love of God, and it should be done with both perseverance and confidence. Benedict understands prayer as becoming increasingly aware of God in our lives, and so responding to God’s love by “seeking to obey his will for us.”11 Michael Sadgrove, dean of Durham, points to this in an introductory address to a Benedictine Day in Durham when he says, “When people ask me what I regard as the most important activity of the Cathedral, I unhesitatingly reply: its daily prayer.”12

It is never too late to respond to God through prayer. Paragraph 3 of the Prologue invites the reader to “rouse ourselves from lethargy.” Benedict underlines this idea of alertness and arousal by quoting widely from the Bible (as he does frequently

9 Deans interviewed were clear on these three basic constituencies, though there are some differences in bias e.g. one towards the nation, another towards tourists.
11 RB Prologue 2.
throughout the Rule). Fully awake, with eyes open, ears listening and heart receptive we must “run … before the darkness of death overtakes you.”

The theme of prayer will be further explored under the section Rhythm of Life in Chapter 5.

**The Monastic Vows of Benedict**

The monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience are known as the evangelical counsels. These particular three were adopted by St Francis in the twelfth century. The Rule of Benedict predates Francis by some hundreds of years and the vows are slightly different – obedience, stability and *conversatio morum*.

**Obedience**

The idea of obedience to God is raised several times in the opening lines of the Prologue. It will develop as a key theme in the Rule. Anyone who embarks on the journey to God, through following Christ, must be obedient to the will of God. But just what is meant by obedience?

Commentators on the Rule are agreed that we are not talking about ‘blind obedience’. Esther De Waal makes the very careful point that obedience is about listening, and that the word ‘obedience’ comes “from the Latin *oboedire* which shares its roots with *audire*, to hear.” Joan Chittister, in a chapter entitled “Listening: The Key to Spiritual Growth” makes the point that Benedictine spirituality, which includes obedience, “is about listening to four realities: the Gospels, the Rule, one another, and the world.” She goes on to say that real obedience comes through the way one’s life is changed through this process of listening, something one does particularly, but not exclusively, in prayer.

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13 RB Prologue 3.
16 Ibid., 15.
The purpose of listening to one another (as well as the abbot) is picked up in Benedict’s understanding of obedience and the need for living in community: the individual does not decide for her or himself what to do, how to live. Benedict is scathing of those who do so, dismissing them as *gyrovagues* who “seek the satisfaction of their own gross appetites.”¹⁷ The opening chapter of the Rule makes it clear that Benedict is writing for those who choose to live in community – those whom he calls *cenobites*.¹⁸

In practical terms obedience (to God) is lived out under the Rule of the abbot, who holds the “place of Christ”¹⁹ in the monastery. At a later stage (Chapter 3) we will need to explore more fully the role of the abbot in leadership over the other monks. Enough for now to note the requirement that monks obey the abbot as if he were Christ. This proviso is teased out in chapter 5 of the Rule. Monks must obey immediately any orders given, leaving immediately whatever they were doing.

Yet we cannot read chapter 5 in isolation, either from the rest of the Rule, or the way in which it has been, and is, interpreted. Chittister writes about dependence, license and domination²⁰ – all distortions of obedience. Dependence avoids responsibility, license leans completely towards self, and domination seizes power which is not the person’s to take. This is not to say that any, and all, of them have not, at times, been common in monastic life. Chittister develops her argument by speaking of authority as the “call to growth,”²¹ which really takes us on into one of the other vows – that of continual conversion (see page 14).

Obedience can be understood as the exercise and development of responsibility under authority. This is seen quite clearly in some of Benedict’s advice – the abbot should be aware at all times that he is like a shepherd who will have to answer to God for what he has or has not done.²² But he is also answerable to his community and must, for example, listen to the youngest in community first when they gather to discuss an

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¹⁷ RB 1:4
¹⁸ RB 1: 1.
¹⁹ RB 2:1.
²⁰ Joan Chittister, *Wisdom distilled from the Daily*, 136 - 142
²¹ Ibid., 143.
²² RB 2:1.
issue. While it is the responsibility of the abbot to make the final decisions, the abbot himself is obedient, in the sense of listening for the voice of God coming through the youngest, or indeed any, of the community. This idea of listening for God’s voice in the unusual or unlikely is nicely brought out by Casey in his reference to the musings of Dorotheos of Gaza and Balaam’s donkey. By not being prepared to listen to others, the abbot (or monk) shows that he is more pre-occupied with himself and his own ideas, than listening to (obeying) God.

The first hint of the balance that is really the subject of this thesis comes through in an offering by Chittister of a diagram used to show that a Benedictine community is neither hierarchical nor egalitarian. The illustration she favours is that of a wheel with hub and spokes. “In the Benedictine community, there is a centre to which all the members relate while they relate to one another.”

Stability

Obedience to the Abbot (and so to Christ) makes for a stability that will become pivotal within the community. In the first paragraph of Chapter 1 of the Rule we find Benedict writing about those who “are based in a monastery and fulfill their service of the Lord under a rule and an abbot.” As becomes clear later on in the Rule, monks in a Benedictine community exercised stability literally. They committed themselves to a particular place for life. (One of the unique and pleasing features of the Rule is the sense of humanity that pervades it, and provision is made, reluctantly it has to be said, for a monk who feels he must leave.)

23 RB 3:1.
24 In interviewing Dean 4 he talked about the occasional practice in the cathedral of having a parish forum. People are encouraged to talk about what is happening in the life of the cathedral, to name what is lacking, to ask questions about what is happening. “Tell us what’s not working for you. It’s all very well for us sitting at the front to think we’ve got it – what’s not working for you? … The focus is always about the liturgy as the vehicle for allowing people to engage with the divine.” Dean 4, interview by author, tape-recording. 20 January 2010.
25 Michael Casey, Strangers to the City, 93, citing Dorotheos of Gaza, Instruction 5 #68, SChr 92, p.264.
26 Joan Chittister, Wisdom distilled from the Daily,135.
27 RB 1:1.
28 So for example: “Their lay clothes are kept safely in case – which God forbid – any should listen to the enticements of the devil and leave the monastery discarding the monastic habit as they are dismissed from the community.” RB 58:5.
However, there is a hint of another sort of stability in the Prologue where Benedict refers to the words of Jesus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount about those wise enough to build on a rock. In the context of Matthew 7 Jesus is referring to those who hear his (Jesus') words and act on them. Benedict refers time and again to the need to pray the Psalms and read the Gospels. He quotes frequently from the Epistles of Paul and, indeed, many other parts of the Bible. We have already seen that prayer is the bedrock of the life of the Benedictine monk. Prayer should be based on the Bible, especially the Psalms, Gospels and Epistles. Stability then might be more widely interpreted as spiritual rather than physical stability: a way of life on the journey with Jesus Christ to God.

Indeed, it is this focus on God that is brought out in their discussions on stability by all of the authors of contemporary commentary on the Rule used in this thesis. Esther de Waal expands on Benedict’s reference to the Gospel man who built his house on rock. Referring to the process of testing a monastic prospect, de Waal draws attention to the way in which Benedict makes it difficult for a newcomer to join the community. Chapter 58 of the Rule makes it clear this will not be an easy task, but will need perseverance and commitment on the part of the newcomer. After two months, and again after a further six months, if the prospects “show promise of remaining faithful to stability” – stand firm – they are allowed to move to the next stage of development. Nor is it just the outward observance of the Rule they must stand firm in, but the focus of their whole lives must be on God – after all, the whole point of the Rule is to enable people to turn from the world towards God, and continue faithfully in that way until the end!

In her discussion of this concept of stability Joan Chittister begins by noticing that the cross is very evident in Benedictine communities. The cross for her is the constant reminder that “stability is what enables us … to live totally for God and totally for others.” These words at the end of a chapter remind us that Christian living is to be done in community – a real challenge for those of us who live in the modern western world where constant change is likely to be the norm. Chittister puts it this way:

29 RB Prologue: 6.
30 RB 58:3.
“We’re a society of pop-up tarts and instant cocoa and microwave ovens and same day surgery.”32 All the writers on Benedict I have read make the point that it is through stability in community that one discovers one’s real self. There is no chance of running away. The individual must face up to who s/he really is. Ironically, but logically, it is precisely when one stays long enough in one place, situation, community, relationship, that the possibility of change comes about. In a Protestant take on the Rule, Dennis Okholm used the delightful analogy of “Crockpot Christianity” where, he says, “I stew slowly in one place until I become what God intended.”33

Words such as commitment, fidelity, steadfastness, consistent, perseverance and stickability litter the literature on this topic. It is Cistercian monk, Michael Casey, who puts the focus most helpfully for me when he says that “stability is not focused on the non-variability of community life, church, society. Stability is focused on the unchanging fidelity of God.”34 Similarly Chittister talks about “certitude in the faithfulness of God.”35 This focus on the unchanging fidelity of God throws a somewhat different light on the subject of stability and is one that I readily embrace as a Christian and priest (and now Dean). Although Benedict himself, as do today’s Cistercians, expected monastics to be literally stable (enclosed), spending the rest of their lives in one place, even the Trappists (the most rigorous of today’s Cistercian monastics) recognize that stability can mean more than enclosure. Examples include the illustration of Catherine de Hueck Doherty who likened stability to

a woman pregnant goes about her daily business with the only difference between her and other people being that she is carrying a child. She carries that secret life round within her, and the mystery of this, which applies to both men and women, is that it is totally there whatever the circumstances.36

Casey helpfully continues his discussion by suggesting we think of stability rather like a building that is built to withstand earthquakes (such as Wellington Cathedral). The earthquake certainly moves the building, it totters even, but it does not fall – it remains standing. It is stable. Another example he suggests is that of a surfer who

32 Ibid., 148.
33 Dennis Okholm, Monk Habits for Everyday People, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 96.
34 Michael Casey, Strangers in the City, 190. (italics mine)
35 Joan Chittister, Wisdom distilled from the Daily, 156.
36 Catherine de Hueck Doherty, Poustenia (Fount Paperbacks, 1975), 89 cited in Esther de Waal, Seeking God, 46.
must pay careful attention to balance, and will run up and down the board, in order to remain standing.\footnote{Michael Casey, \textit{Strangers to the City}, 190 – 191.} Again Casey writes that “the magic of stability lies in a sustained and dynamic application of the means that lead most surely to the goal we have chosen.”\footnote{Ibid., 192.}

A different slant on stability emerges in the writing of Susan Hill in \textit{Flagships of the Spirit}. In a beautifully poetic introductory chapter to the book she muses on cathedrals, what and why they are.

And then the voice begins, murmuring quietly, soothingly. The cadences like the coming and going of the sea. A second voice in reply.

‘In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.’

‘Amen.’

The first service of the day. The first prayer, breaking into the huge hollow silence of these spaces. Holy spaces.

The priest. The attendant. Plain, in plain robes. Bare headed. In the long nave, perhaps two or three gathered together.


A few pages later, while writing about Coventry Cathedral being “self-consciously, proudly modern, of its day, up-to-date” she adds; “The words associated with it were reconciliation, unity, peace – and those key words still apply. They are timeless words.”\footnote{Ibid., 10.} Not only does the daily round of worship give stability, but the concepts on which a cathedral is grounded do too.

In a later essay in the same book David Stancliffe writes about the cathedral as a community practicing hospitality (another key theme in Benedict), and finding “at the centre of the community’s life is a stillness, a waiting on God.”\footnote{David Stancliffe, “Walking in Patterns,” in \textit{Flagships of the Spirit. Cathedrals in Society}, ed. Stephen Platten and Christopher Lewis (London: Dartmon, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1998), 58.} Stancliffe understands this idea of stillness, born out of the daily round of worship, as being
incarnational – this is where God is. In my own experience, particularly of the cathedral in Johannesburg in the late 1980s, it was the stability of the daily round of worship by the cathedral and (once a week) diocesan communities that enabled us to keep functioning in the midst of a civil war with its myriad of demands on the church. In Wellington Cathedral I invited a retired priest to join the staff specifically because I knew he would be faithful in joining me at Morning Prayer each day. Surely one of the geniuses of Benedict was the knowledge that it is much easier to be faithful in prayer together than alone.

It came as something of a surprise then to discover, in the course of interviews, that not all of my dean colleagues see regular daily worship in community as an important part of a cathedral’s life. What was really interesting is how the patterns of training have influenced this “stability” of prayer and worship. Those who trained at a residential theological college up until about 1980 all spoke of the importance in formation of the regular round of worship in college. Some of those who trained later spoke of their time as curates (one in a cathedral, one in a parish) where the importance of being grounded in daily prayer, generally using the Offices, became apparent. As one dean put it “as a young person it felt imposed, all the stuff you had to be at – actually what it’s also doing without you realizing is creating that pattern and that rhythm which you come to appreciate.”42 This is not everyone’s experience and another dean had this to say, “I’ve never actually had what you would call a Benedictine Morning or Evening Prayer or whatever … and I’ve eventually come to the conclusion that that pattern simply does not suit my personality.”43

Becoming a dean means that one steps into a position that has a certain stability inherent in it, in the sense that the dean is an existing office. The individual holding the office may change, but the position remains.

This brief discussion on stability can benefit from reference to a passage in Ephesians which is quite at odds with much of the current obsession of the church with numbers and growing the church. Like Benedict some centuries after him, St Paul knew that following the way of Christ was not going to be easy. He encourages the Ephesians to

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42 Dean 4, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.
43 Dean 3, interview by author, tape-recording, 24 January 2010.
“take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”44 One of our Anglican Eucharistic liturgies picks up this Benedictine concept of stability in this prayer: “God of peace, let us your people know, that at the heart of turbulence there is an inner calm that comes from faith in you.”45

As Benedict knew, it is in stability that one hears the voice of God and begins to respond, which leads us into consideration of the next vow.

Continual conversion
The previous section takes us straight into another key theme, and the third vow, for Benedict – that of conversatio morum, continual conversion.46 There has already been more than a hint at this theme. The Rule itself is aimed at those who wish “to turn from the pursuit of your own self-will and ask to enlist under Christ.”47 The whole point of the Rule is that of a journey towards God. A journey that will inevitably discover new places, people and things, which will, just as inevitably, bring about change. We have also seen that prayer, the heart of Benedictine life, includes an awareness of God – wake up, open your eyes, listen with your ears, run – that will influence the whole of one’s life.

Continual conversion will keep the monk focused on the way of Jesus Christ; open to listening to God in his life; constantly aware of the danger of slipping back into the “laxity and carelessness of disobedience;”48 always looking towards the fulfilled life in the presence of God. Benedict makes use of Psalm 34: 12 – 14 to underline the need to change the way of life. “If you wish to have that true life that lasts for ever, then keep your tongue from evil; let your lips speak no deceit; turn away from wrongdoing; seek out peace and pursue it.”49

44 Eph 6: 13. (Italics mine)
46 Commentators on the Rule of Benedict agree that the Latin ‘conversatio morum’ is difficult to translate. I have chosen to use the translation of Esther de Waal in Esther De Waal, Seeking God. The Way of St Benedict (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1999). Other words that are helpful in understanding this concept embodied in the third vow are change, openness, mindfulness, response.
47 RB Prologue 1.
48 Ibid.
49 RB Prologue 4.
In Chapter 4 of the Rule we find Benedict’s detailed working out of his understanding of *conversatio* as he gives seventy-three guidelines (some would call them directions or instructions) for monastic living. Most of these come directly from the Bible. At the top of the list are the two great commandments – to love God and to love neighbour, followed immediately by the Ten Commandments. The ethical demands of Scripture such as found in the Sermon on the Mount and the writings of St Paul follow. Chittister suggests three main divisions viz. those relating to God and the world, those relating to elements of community life, and those concerned with personal maturity and spiritual growth. She is at pains to point out that the Rule, proscriptive as it may seem to us today, is anything but – the very purpose of it is to lead the monastic to a life more closely modeled on that of Jesus. In this context Casey’s referral to “peasant-like plodding” makes a link between the stability undergirding the process of conversion, which is not gained overnight.

Benedict himself recognizes the possibility of the Rule being interpreted as proscriptive. Just when it seems there is no flexibility in how to pray and which Psalms to read when, Benedict adds “we have no hesitation in urging that, if any are dissatisfied with this distribution of Psalms they should re-arrange them in whatever way seems better.” In Chapter 55 we read the very detailed list of what each monk should receive in the way of clothing, footwear and bedding, together with an admonition against anyone found with extra belongings. The reminder follows that the “superior must always bear in mind, namely that proper provision was made according to the needs of each.”

The vow of *conversatio* invites the monastic to live a life of continual openness to change, well beyond that first ‘conversion’ experience that brings us to Christ. This is the careful refashioning, reshaping, remolding of life, in response to the call of Jesus and taking seriously the paradox of the cross, that in death is new life. In Protestant terminology we might say that this is the process of sanctification (following on the

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50 Joan Chittister, *Wisdom distilled from the Daily*, 165ff
51 Michael Casey, *Strangers to the City*, 192.
52 RB 18:6.
53 RB 55:4. The biblical reference is to Acts 4: 35.
realization of justification) – though Benedict is quick to caution against anyone thinking they can aspire to become holy!

The way to become holy is faithfully to fulfill God’s commandments everyday by loving chastity, by hating no one, by avoiding envy and hostile rivalry, by not becoming full of self but showing due respect for our elders and love for those who are younger, by praying in the love of Christ for those who are hostile to us, by seeking reconciliation and peace before the sun goes down whenever we have a quarrel with another.54

There is no doubt about it, the monastic life, following in the footsteps of Jesus, is hard work. So it is a relief to find that Benedict has not forgotten God’s role in it all, and ends the long list of guidelines by adding: “and finally by never despairing of the mercy of God.”55

In the final paragraph of the Prologue Benedict comes to the point of the Rule.

With all this in mind what we mean to establish is a school for the Lord’s service … as we progress in this monastic way of life and in faith, our hearts will warm to its vision and with eager love and delight that defies expression we shall go forward on the way of God’s commandments.56

The Rule is only the beginning of a life-long journey in monastic living.

Can we take this vow of continual conversion and use it as a springboard for further thought and discussion? David Stancliffe57 links the liturgy found in cathedrals to the redemptive work of Christ, especially in terms of those many different organizations and groups which seek the help of cathedrals in expressing their offering to God. In the parlance of deans we talk about these services for groups outside of the cathedral as “specials”. There is another conversation to be had later regarding “specials” and hospitality, but first we need to explore how cathedrals, and the dean as leader of a cathedral, are involved in continual conversion, or transformation – the redemptive act of Christ.

54 RB 4:11.
55 Ibid.
56 RB Prologue 8.
57 David Stancliffe, “Walking in Patterns”, 51.
Joan Chittister points us back to the Rule of Benedict and specifically Chapter 4 which begins by reminding the monks of the two great commandments: to love God and to love our neighbour:

> The spiritual life is not a matter of not doing evil to the other; the real spiritual life depends on our doing good for the other. If Benedictine spirituality demands that I “relieve the poor and clothe the naked and visit the sick and console the sorrowing” (RB 4: 14 – 18), then my spiritual life is incomplete as long as I make subsidized housing and soup kitchens and AIDS victims and refugees no business of mine. Prayer is simply not enough.

Benedictine spirituality, in other words, is a spirituality of cosmic connectedness. Time, land, people, things are all to be held in reverent hands, all to be seen as vehicles of the Holy.\(^\text{58}\)

Two deans interviewed spoke specifically of their involvement in community activities outside of the cathedral, which could loosely be described as social justice. Dean 7\(^\text{59}\)’s cathedral career actually started as canon for social services, charged with working alongside others to get the city to be a healthy city – working in areas such as family counseling, men against violence and the Mission to Seamen (sic). Dean 9\(^\text{60}\) spoke of his being instrumental in getting an industrial mission going. Two deans interviewed spoke of their concern in bringing a prophetic voice to their cities (specifically those who do not normally enter a church for worship) – one using debates\(^\text{61}\) the other by writing articles for the media.\(^\text{62}\) Two deans spoke specifically of almost always preaching at “specials”: “I never give that away to anyone else … I spend a lot of time thinking about ‘what is the context’ … where is the point of connection, how does the Gospel speak into that?”\(^\text{63}\) “It’s an opportunity to engage in public theology … through my preaching I’m endeavouring, certainly to convey a Christian message, but to do so in a way that connects with who they are, what they’re about.”\(^\text{64}\)

As Dean of Wellington I have sought out opportunities to engage with city and nation – not only through preaching. Among others,

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\(^\text{58}\) Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from the Holy*, 166.

\(^\text{59}\) Dean 7, interview by author, tape-recording, 25 January 2010.

\(^\text{60}\) Dean 9, interview by author, tape-recording, 11 January 2010.

\(^\text{61}\) Dean 2, interview by author, tape-recording, 21 December 2009.

\(^\text{62}\) Dean 4, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.

\(^\text{63}\) Dean 3, interview by author, tape-recording, 24 January 2010.

\(^\text{64}\) Dean 4, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.
• an annual Conservation Week brings challenges to people about sustainable living
• in 2009 an intentional group was formed to explore with civil servants and other city professionals the implications offered in the concept of public theology
• a farmers’ market on cathedral property suggests much greater community involvement on the part of the cathedral.

Some of these initiatives to bring about change in the community eventually have their own life, such as that of the Samaritans (started under the initiative of the dean more than forty years ago) still operating out of cathedral premises in Wellington.

In terms of conversion and making real changes to the world however it is to my experience in South African cathedrals that I look. During the Apartheid years, and especially from 1976, the Anglican Church (along with the Methodist and one or two other English-speaking churches) was both at the fore-front of challenging Apartheid and among the few places where people were allowed to gather. My practice of writing out the full text of every sermon came from the days when we never knew who might be in the congregation, waiting to make accusation (of terrorism and treason). In Grahamstown Cathedral the bell was rung daily at midday as a reminder to people of children held in detention, sometimes for months and years.

Johannesburg Cathedral, along with Cape Town Cathedral, was the rallying point of many protest services and marches against Apartheid, and frequently the venue of choice for prayer vigils (often simply a smoke screen for protest meetings). A full time social worker was employed to bring professional help to the many unemployed and desperate people who came to the cathedral doors. The Dean of Johannesburg (while I was there as sub-dean) worked closely with the city council in getting public toilets built for the tens of thousands of people who flocked past the cathedral from the railway and bus stations en route to work daily.

While working in Hong Kong I was part of the very real ministries of St John’s Cathedral to Filipina migrant workers and to those living with HIV/AIDS, at a time when the government denied there was any such thing. While visiting Toronto in 2008 I saw the way in which cathedral people work closely alongside the city
management in revitalizing slum areas, many occupied by immigrant communities. Visiting Cape Town in 2009 I was introduced to the way in which the dean and cathedral people are engaged in projects to educate people about the Apartheid years and continue the reconciling work still so necessary in that damaged and fragmented society.

One visual expression of conversion was a powerful public statement made some years ago when, following a dignified vigil of prayer (at which the Prime Minister was present), a cross-led procession made its way out of Wellington Cathedral, across the road to Parliament, to present a case in the ‘anti-smacking’ debate. For some, this experience could be likened to a pilgrimage: it was life-changing.

David Stancliffe points out that most cathedrals are actually built for movement, especially processions! They are, he says, “designed primarily as processional spaces in which pilgrimage might be made.” As an example he describes the Easter Vigil at Salisbury Cathedral, which begins outside round a camp-fire. The ancient biblical stories are related (a bit of stability and obedience perhaps?) before everyone moves into the cathedral following a flickering candle – reminiscent of the pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the wilderness. God’s people are on a journey; they are being transformed, and showing that transformation through physical movement. John Inge adds to the idea of the cathedral as a place of pilgrimage when he writes, “Not only were they intended to be the destination of pilgrimage but the pilgrimage continued within them upon entrance.”

This pilgrimage to transformation, conversion, is clearly shown through baptism and confirmation during Wellington Cathedral’s Easter Vigil. Having followed the newly lit paschal candle into the cathedral, the movement continues from the font to the chancel steps, from baptism to confirmation, and ends with the words of the dismissal. “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen. We go in the name of the Lord.”

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Did Benedict have pilgrimages, social workers and the like in mind when he wrote about continual conversion? It’s hard to answer that question. On the surface the Rule focuses attention on the individual monks and the communities they live in. Yet, as the witness of Benedictine communities down the centuries shows, the strong heart of such a community almost inevitably meant that change would come about, both in the lives of the monastics and the wider communities in which they lived.

**Balance**

At this point it is worth pausing and taking note of the last three sections, for they are key to understanding the Rule. Obedience, stability and continual conversion make up the essence of the vows taken by Benedictines at profession. There is a dynamic tension between them which is finely balanced; one that keeps the whole thing alive and moving. Stability flows out of obedience. Obedience, as Benedict envisioned it, demands an openness to change – continual conversion. Continual conversion is only possible where it is fed both by stability and obedience.

The tension is clear. Within the stability of obedience the monk is open to hearing the voice of God and so changing constantly to become more Christ-like. It is this very tension that makes for such a lively dynamic in the Rule, and, without question, that keeps the Rule as the most important underlying concept for western monastic life today, as it has done for the past 1400 years.

In trying to understand the tension, and often contradiction, found in this balance between obedience, stability and continual conversion, it may be helpful to think of some of the images of the Trinity. I particularly favour the diagram that shows the Trinity as a triangle. God is firmly in the centre, with Father, Son and Holy Spirit at each point. Each of the person’s is God, none of the persons is each other. Each is complete in their own right, yet none is complete without the other. (As with any analogy or metaphor, it is of course limited.)

Robin Greenwood explores the nature of the Trinity as a model for the church, particularly the aspect of the communion between the three persons of the Trinity. He suggests the western church has been impoverished by its development of an
ecclesiology based primarily on Jesus Christ (thus Christological in focus). While not specifically Benedictine, Greenwood suggests the need for balance even in our ecclesiological models. “The lack of concern for the work of the Spirit (pneumatology) leads to a rigid, oversolid and controlling ecclesiology.”

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Chapter 3: Balance and Cathedral Models

The Balancing Ministry

When I took on one new post my excellent secretary gave me a card on the front of which was a circus tent with a dog balancing on a unicycle on a high wire. The dog had a hula hoop round its waist; in his mouth was a cat; on his head he was balancing a vase and at the same time he was juggling several balls. The caption read: ‘High above the hushed crowd Rex tried to remain focused.’

This picture invites us to consider the question of balance within the ministry of a dean. While the research is based on interviews with deans and former deans in the Anglican Church in New Zealand, and looks to see whether Benedict’s concept of balance is helpful in sustaining the ministry of a dean, a number of writers have some very interesting things to say about the need for balance in ministry. It is worth quoting some to get a flavour of the diverse nature of priesthood (which, after all, is where being a dean fits). John Pritchard bases the main sections of a book on priesthood on a model described to him by Bishop Jack Nicholls, who “was once told by his spiritual director that the only things he had to be concerned with as a priest were the glory of God, the pain of the world and the renewal (repentance) of the Church.”

Pritchard then goes on to list sixteen different categories or roles that he sees a priest having to operate in. The number of categories adds meaning to the metaphor of the juggler on the unicycle. Interestingly, when asked what advice should be given to a new dean, one of the interviewees said, “Figure out how to keep all the balls in the air at once – yeah, become a juggler.”

Michael Ramsey’s book, The Christian Priest Today, remains something of an icon a generation and more after he delivered the ordination sermons that make up the content. Ramsey explores the idea of a priest displaying, enabling and involving

- displaying the baptism (or ordination) response to Christ that should be every Christian’s
- enabling that response by his own professional training and work

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70 Ibid
71 Dean 3, interview by author, tape-recording, 24 January 2010.
• involving the whole church even when the individual priest is apparently
acting on his own (say visiting someone who is sick).

Ramsey goes on to list some of the tools he thinks are essential for a priest, which
resonate to some extent with those of Benedict: viz. theology (steeped in the tradition
and teaching), reconciliation (the idea of continual conversion), prayer (see Benedict’s
emphasis on prayer known as the opus dei), and Eucharist (which can of course, only
be celebrated in the context of a community – the very place where Benedict has his
monks work out their lives for God).72

Gordon Lathrop adds a Lutheran perspective when he says that “Christian spirituality
may then be understood as the continual questioning and redirection of human lives
that occurs in the encounter with central symbols of the faith, symbols that live
primarily in the assembly life of the community.”73 This is pure Benedictine thinking
as he emphasizes the paradox of continual conversion rooted in tradition/stability. A
little later Lathrop draws attention to the way in which Luther “thought he had to be
always beginning again, learning with the newest newcomer, the youngest child, the
surprises of God’s grace.”74 Luther, of course, would have been steeped in
Benedictine thinking in his training as a monk. As tools for the ministry Lathrop
emphasizes the importance of the Lord’s Prayer (in the Rule, Benedict insists on the
whole of the Lord’s Prayer being said daily after both Lauds and Vespers75), the
sacraments, the Creed and the Commandments. This ‘continual conversion’, always
beginning again, that Luther encouraged, draws on the ancient texts and liturgies of
the church, thus giving stability to the conversion process.

In his intriguingly titled book, If You Meet George Herbert on the Road, Kill Him,
Justin Lewis-Anthony is scathing about the model of ministry for the English vicar
which, he claims, is based on George Herbert. After debunking much of the ‘myth’
surrounding Herbert (patron saint of English vicars) by challenging the idea that a
priest should be a jack of all trades76 in a world which has long since become

72 Michael Ramsey, The Christian Priest Today. (London: SPCK, 1972), Chapter 1
74 Ibid., 17.
75 RB 13:2.
76 Though it is worth noting a few lines of 5th century Bishop Narsai quoted by Edward Schillebeeckx.
“Through him [the priest] all the mysteries in the church are performed. The priest consecrates the
font with the water for baptism … without a priest, no woman would be given to be married to a man
specialized and professionalized, Lewis-Anthony has this to say about balance – “if the parish priest can’t model a balanced and integrated discipleship to his or her parish, then no amount of running around will compensate.” He goes on to suggest that the parish priest make sure there is a clear job description, drawn up in consultation with “responsible representatives of the parish,” and which includes areas which are not the responsibility of the parish priest. The present Covenant system practiced in the Anglican Diocese of Wellington goes some way to meeting this excellent suggestion.

In a short article in The Tablet some years ago Daniel O’Leary writes about the cantus firmus as “the fixed song, the plainchant cadence unadorned by harmony or counterpoint. During the time of our lives many notes will weave their way in and out and around the steadfast refrain, but the basic melody endures. There’s always a bit of firm ground that never alters.” As all the deans interviewed spoke about the special place that music (particularly choral) holds in their cathedrals, this idea of the cantus firmus is, perhaps, an especially apt one.

It is easy to assume that the model for ordained ministry (and in the Anglican Church that essentially means the parish priest – which is still the predominant expectation of where and how most of the ordained will spend their ministry) is a static model which has always been there. This is simply not the case. Schillebeeckx is at pains to tease out the development over the centuries of what today we call the ordained ministry, and the various influences of different eras and social mores. Lewis-Anthony too, makes the point several times that within the Church of England models of priesthood have changed, and are changing. New Zealand Anglicans have mostly looked to... without a priest the water would not be blessed and the house would remain impure. Those who do not possess the ordines cannot celebrate the eucharist.” Edward Schillebeeckx: The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry. (London: SCM, 1985), 52. It appears that the omni-competent priest was around long before George Herbert’s short tenure as a parish priest.


Ibid.


Edward Schillebeeckx: The Church with a Human Face, 124 ff. Part 3 for example begins with tracking ministry development from the second century to the early middle ages, which take us into the time of Benedict.

Justin Anthony-Lewis, If You Meet George Herbert on the Road, Kill Him, see especially Chapter 3.
England for their models, until recent decades when the American developments have also had a look in. So we need to be aware that it is quite likely that models for being a dean are no different to the more generalized patterns and models of ministry – i.e. there will be various different models, all of which work. (Trevor Beeson’s *The Deans*\(^2\) shows clearly that each dean written about is unique in his interpretation of his role and function.)

**Cathedral Models**

Nicolas Alldrit\(^3\) draws our attention to four different cathedral models that have existed over the ages.

**Semi-Monastic Canons**

First there is the model of *Semi-Monastic Canons*. Alldrit talks of one Eusebius Vercellensis (d. 370AD) who gathered a number of clergy into a cathedral-type church under a rule of life. The Greek word for rule is *kanon*, hence the name often associated with cathedral clergy. By 750 Bishop Chrodegang had his own rule which managed the life of the *familia*, a community of clergy gathered around the bishop, having pastoral and liturgical duties. They received a living allowance or stipend and, while living in their own homes, nonetheless resided within the cathedral close. While not explicitly a model of balance it allowed effective administration of the diocese by a close-knit community of bishop and clergy, with their families.

**Rule of St Augustine**

The Rule of St Augustine followed a slightly different pattern, much more monastic in shape. The difference of course was that Augustine, and those who followed this particular model, lived the monastic life of balance often in tension with the life and needs of the diocese. As the years went by Augustine’s Rule was favoured over the

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previous model as a way of more tightly controlling the clergy. Apparently Pope Gregory (became pope in 1073) saw it as “a way of getting rid of simony, clerical marriage and concubinage.” Leaving aside these reasons for adopting the Rule, I was interested to hear Dean 5 say “what I’m trying to create is a minster system” and then go on to talk about how he intentionally seeks out people to be canons of the cathedral who have connections into the diocese and community, and who will be able, from the cathedral as a base, to support ministry in the wider diocese. He envisages canons working in the university, hospital and parish context, as well as making links between the cathedral and the tangata whenua. Clearly his use of this model provides a framework in which to order the variety of the cathedral’s ministries.

Benedictine Monasticism
The third model, Benedictine Monasticism, as its name implies, gives the cathedral a life of its own outside, or alongside, the diocese and community. This model, which allows the rhythm of Benedictine life within the cathedral to continue without the demands of the diocesan administration, was the favoured model for cathedrals in England from the time of the Norman conquest. However, among the tensions in the model was the place of the bishop, often a monk from the community appointed by the prior of the monastery (cathedral). One can understand the tension that a vow of stability would cause the bishop, who increasingly had to be outside the monastery administering the diocese, and therefore not available for the common life of the monks in the abbey. Alldrit has this to say

At times this tension erupted into bitter conflict. The bishop’s time was largely taken up with administration of the diocese, which could be enormous, and increasingly he became involved in secular affairs as, in effect, a royal minister and diplomat, so that episcopal functions had to be performed by suffragans. The bishop needed clerical assistants, diocesan administrators and canonists to a greater extent than ever before. But the community of monks might not include any people suitable for such tasks. Had there been such people, then the community of monks might have regarded them as extraneous to the Benedictine life. A Benedictine community could not be the bishop’s familia in any real sense, and the bishop commonly formed his real familia outside the community.  

84 Ibid., 39.
85 Dean 5, interview by author, tape-recording, 19 January 2010.
86 Nicolas Alldritt, “Cathedrals and their Communities”, 42.
In the light of this tension I was keen to ask the interviewees about their role within their respective dioceses. In my experience in South African cathedrals, all deans were automatically vicars general and the second in rank in the diocese after the bishop, detracting from a purely cathedral role. This is not the case in New Zealand (though some deans are, or have been, the vicar general). Dean 9, now retired, talked of the tension his appointment as vicar general caused with some of the clergy in the diocese, and recalled with some amusement the amazement of a Presbyterian colleague who commented

‘I’ve never known a job such as yours, you presided over the farewell to the bishop, took over as vicar general, were a leading candidate for bishop, organized an electoral synod, after the result was announced you became the archbishop’s commissary, organized the consecration service and then the new bishop appointed you vicar general!’

Dean 1 lamented the fact that, while he had always thought of the dean as senior in the diocese, in his diocese the dean “has been pushed out a bit – not the vicar general.” Dean 2, on the other hand, was very happy to hand back the job of vicar general after a few years after he “decided the job of dean was quite big enough.” I have to say that I agree with Dean 2 and am very happy not to have the added burden of diocesan responsibilities, while still enjoying the monthly meetings with bishop and archdeacons, enough to know what is happening in the diocese. In fact the independence of New Zealand cathedrals suggests we are more closely aligned to the Benedictine model than we might realise. By and large, the bishop functions outside of the cathedral, appearing from time to time to claim his/her right to preside and sit in the *cathedra*, but otherwise largely leaving the dean to get on with running the life of the cathedral.

**Prebendary Model**

A fourth model, the *Prebendary Model*, appeared in England in the late eleventh century. This model was specifically developed for cathedrals that were not monastic (i.e. following neither the Augustinian nor Benedictine rules) and was based on the bishop being given land and money with which to pay clergy to run cathedrals. The

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87 Dean 9, interview by author, tape-recording, 11 January 2010.
88 Dean 1, interview by author, tape-recording, 8 March 2010.
89 Dean 2, interview by author, tape-recording, 21 December 2009.
“prepend” was the money used to pay cathedral staff (canons), viz. the dean, precentor, chancellor and treasurer. The problem with the model was that those receiving the prebend largely delegated their responsibilities to others: the vicars, who fulfilled the duties of the absentee canons. Despite the model, in an ironic twist often found in the church, the vicars in fact formed the worshipping community of the cathedral, leaving the canons to come and go pretty much as they pleased. As the worshipping community the vicars copied the model they observed in the monasteries – one of balanced daily worship which we associate with modern cathedrals.90

Alldrit goes on to discuss too the role of laity in cathedrals, especially since the Reformation and the emphasis on “edification”91 which brought lay people into the cathedrals to worship and hear the sermons, to sing in choirs and to do much (if not most) of the actual work needed to keep a cathedral going. This means that, while in the past the cathedral was dominated by clerics, in fact “the worshipping body of a cathedral comprises mainly laity – and thus the cathedral is like the whole Church of God of which it is an earthly manifestation.”92 Whether a cathedral is also a parish church or not, there is a recognizable community (often made up of many smaller specialist communities such as bell-ringers, choir, volunteer guides etc) that forms the basic heart of the worshipping community. As deans we have to wrestle with balancing (juggling) the demands of each of these specialist communities.

Despite all the quirks and failings of the monastic system of cathedral governance and life, Alldrit says “the monastic tradition in its various forms is also a quarry in which may be discovered appropriate models of community today.”93 It is in this “quarry” that a dean can find structures with which to maintain the equilibrium of a cathedral.

Each of the models described above has a structure which facilitates a balance of sorts. While none of these models is precisely replicated in our New Zealand cathedrals, elements of them are evident in the relationships between diocese and cathedral, bishop and dean, church and city. Michael Sadgrove, dean of Durham,

90 For more detail on this fascinating topic see Nicolas Alldrit, “Cathedrals and their Communities”, 44ff.
91 Nicolas Alldrit, “Cathedrals and their Communities”, 47.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid., 49.
intentionally encourages the present cathedral community to engage with its Benedictine past (while still acknowledging the even older Saxon roots, likely to have been fashioned along the model of semi-monastic canons). He suggests that the Benedictine vows offer a metaphor for life – “we are called by our baptism to stay true to the path in which God leads us, rooted and grounded in his love, resolute in our purpose as disciples.”\textsuperscript{94} The dynamic tension between the three Benedictine vows of obedience, stability and continual conversion offers a way for a dean to stay balanced on the surfboard.

\textsuperscript{94} Michael Sadgrove, \textit{On being a Christian in Durham}, 7.
4: Hospitality and Leadership

Introduction
In this chapter I explore in some depth two particular areas where a dean might be challenged to find balance: hospitality and leadership.

Hospitality
Benedictines are known for their hospitality. Cathedrals too are known for their hospitality. Yet this is a topic where, at least in New Zealand, there is much discussion and some variance of practice and understanding among the deans. I wish to explore this area a little by looking at the position taken by three deans, one of them myself. All of us are in the larger city cathedrals.

There are two chapters in the Rule that deal specifically with the question of hospitality. Chapter 53 deals with the proper way to greet anyone and everyone who comes to the monastery door – they “should be received just as we would receive Christ himself.” No effort is to be spared in welcoming the guest, with the superior coming in person to greet the guest, along with a prayer and the kiss of peace.

Chapter 61 sets out the way to receive and deal with monastic pilgrims – travelers from other monasteries who arrive as guests. They too are to be welcomed and invited to stay as long as they wish, “provided that they are content with the local style of life they encounter and cause no disturbance in the monastery by any excess in personal behaviour.” Quite what Benedict had in mind is not clear, but he does go on to write about the way a pilgrim guest may make criticism of the monastery, and even ways in which the guest may ask, or be invited, to join the community.

Benedict is equally quick to spell out under what conditions a visitor may be asked to leave. Behind this harsh treatment is the welfare of the community as a whole. “Such

95 Ibid. Richard Guillard’s popular hymn The Servant Song includes the line “let me be as Christ to you” – perhaps an echo of Benedict’s instruction.
96 RB 61:1.
a guest should quite openly be asked to depart for fear that such a wretched example
might lead others astray.”97 In a paragraph of interest to those of us who have to deal
with the phenomenon known as “church-hopping” a pilgrim monk who wishes to join
the community, or who is asked to join, must “first have the consent of the
appropriate superior and a letter of commendation.”98

While RB 53 encourages the guest to be welcomed as if he were Christ, there are
clear parameters around hospitality. Guests must be treated with respect, but the
initiative is firmly in the hands of the abbot. Not only will he pray with the guest, but
will read some scripture and engage in conversation. Special provision is made for the
abbot to entertain, even to the extent of breaking a fast. But we note that this does not
apply to the rest of the community, and a special kitchen is to be provided for guests
specifically so that the guest does not intrude on the lifestyle of the community as a
whole and “unsettle the community by arriving, as they do, at all times of the day.”99
Those delegated to the task of hospitality and care for guests serve only for a year and
may receive assistance if the work is onerous. There is a specific prohibition on
members of the community associating in any way with guests other than to greet and
farewell with the deepest respect.100 The inference is clear. The routine of the
community must not be disrupted.

My own reading of this chapter of the Rule is that the rhythm of the community is not
to be interrupted by guests and visitors. There is a sacred pattern of life that continues,
into which, at least to some extent, guests are welcomed.

Cathedrals attract, indeed encourage, visitors of all kinds: the tourists who wander in
looking at the sights on offer, people who come from other churches, members of the
diocese, and those who come for what we call “specials”. These last are the services,
which all the cathedrals I am aware of are involved in to a greater or lesser extent,
which draw an eclectic congregation. Typically they will be community focus groups
– schools, military, community organizations such as Rotary, university, and the like.

97 RB 61:2.
98 RB 61:3.
99 RB 53:5. I am particularly interested in this aspect of hospitality as it relates to our cathedrals and
what are called “specials” – the services put on from time to time for specific groups in the
community.
100 RB 53:6.
Some will want to hold an annual service and thus are regulars. Others will be one-offs, a good example being the services often held in times of disaster (the Boxing Day Tsunami of 2006 for instance).

How should these “guests” be treated? When should the “specials” be held? What role does a cathedral dean and community have? What sort of service should be offered? Should the “special” replace a normal service? How does one (the dean) keep the balance between the rhythm of cathedral life, and the demand for these “specials”?

Two examples at Wellington Cathedral will serve to illustrate some of the questions raised around “specials” and the level of hospitality offered them. In March each year Wellington Cathedral is approached by members of the Commonwealth Society to hold an annual observance. The service itself is closely modeled on that held in Westminster Abbey, and is very definitely a multi-faith event. Invitations are sent to a long guest list, which includes all Commonwealth diplomats in Wellington, and a large number of seats are reserved. Every year, without fail so far, the Commonwealth representative on the planning committee (who happens to be a member of the Cathedral congregation) will raise the question of using a trinitarian blessing. In my first years (following a long established custom) this observance was held on Sunday morning at 10.00am; thus displacing the Choral Eucharist with a non-liturgical, multi-faith event. This felt more like making available a venue for hire, complete with dean, choir and vergers, than offering hospitality on the part of the cathedral community.

The second example is the service on Remembrance Sunday in November each year. This too is held at 10.00am on Sunday morning. It is non-eucharistic, but Christian. My first experience, in 2004, was a real shock for me. An hour before the start of the service, military personnel arrived and took up position in the narthex, handing out booklets and conducting people to their places. Eighteen army colours were marched up to the altar rail under armed escort, including naked bayonets, before being handed over to me as dean to be placed in the sanctuary for the duration of the service. I personally found the whole experience offensive and intimidating. Hospitality is one thing but both of these events seemed like a take-over of the cathedral, pushing both cathedral people and the routine of Sunday morning worship out.
Much discussion has ensued over the years with my dean colleagues both in New Zealand and Australia. There are different schools of opinion.

Dean 2 feels that hospitality should be extended at all costs, even to dispensing with the normal routines. Working in an area with large tourist numbers, this dean recognises that every Sunday will be different, and works hard to welcome tourists and visitors. He talks about “building community on the hoof,” people coming as tourists and leaving as pilgrims, and that the role of “regulars” (not parishioners for this is the one cathedral in New Zealand that is not technically a parish) is “to do what a cathedral does, offer hospitality to outsiders.”\(^{101}\) Each service a new community is built with whoever happens to be there. So, in one sense, it doesn’t matter what sort of service is being offered, as each is unique. The liturgical season of Lent has its Sunday morning interrupted by three “specials” and a floral carpet, coinciding with the city events’ time-table. (Interestingly, the same dean also stresses the fact that the dean has final sign-off on all services, and that the service times are always the same - a mixture of stability and fluidity.)

On a different tack, Dean 5 spoke of the way in which “we are always offering hospitality, every Sunday morning,”\(^ {102}\) and that hospitality included the offering of the cathedral itself for use by other churches, such as the Mar Thoma Church and the Romanian Orthodox – mainly on Saturdays, outside of Anglican service times. Would Benedict understand the latter point (other churches using the cathedral on Saturdays) as hospitality from the cathedral community? Is it not more like a venue hire too?

Another colleague has a different take again. Dean 4 inherited a pattern where “specials” were invited to be part of the normal Sunday morning service – perhaps being invited to contribute through readers and special intercessions. Dean 4 is clear too that part of being a cathedral, and part of being part of a cathedral congregation and team, is to offer hospitality. He says for example that we’re the people who allow (special) events to happen and provide the hospitality on the day, vergers, servers and sidespeople and choir and all those huge numbers of people – and they’re the ones who do it, it’s not the people

\(^{101}\) Dean 2, interview by author, tape-recording, 21 December 2009.
\(^{102}\) Dean 5, interview by author, tape-recording, 19 January 2010.
who turn up on the day and pick up a job and do it – it’s the cathedral that offers our hospitality.103

However, Dean 4 has also been questioning the timing of these “specials”. Does inviting people to come to the normal Eucharist where the theme may be “tweaked” and some acknowledgement of their presence be made do justice to them?

Now to my mind that’s really inadequate. I think that really says to this group that actually you’re just something else we need to fit in. We’re not really interested in you. And we expect you to take part in an Anglican Eucharistic liturgy. There will be communion and actually, whatever faith tradition you come from, that may be really awkward for you because you’re being asked to take part in a really overtly Christian rite and act of worship.104

The practice adopted in this cathedral now is to put on a specially tailored liturgy at a different time for the particular group; still Christian, but not sacramental. The dean interviewed made the point that this gives him the chance to speak directly into the arena he calls public theology.

Does Benedictine spirituality offer any guidance in these instances? New Zealand cathedrals follow different practices. On the one hand there is a cathedral where the regular pattern of worship is routinely dispensed with in order to offer hospitality; on the other there is a dean saying that the normal Sunday routine should be followed, and “specials” held at different times, thus honouring the guests. As I have wrestled with similar issues, including the two outlined earlier, I have come to think that Benedict offers the stronger way: that a cathedral should keep the rhythm going, the stability, but be flexible in how “specials” are dealt with.

Stephen Pickard offers a useful addition to the discussion when, using the model of many Australian houses, he talks of the church as “a kind of verandah: on the one hand open and welcoming to the world and on the other attending to the deep needs of people in the inner life of individuals and communities.”105

It may help to note three points.

103 Dean 4, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.
104 Ibid.
i. The members of the regular Sunday congregation are in effect the community that holds the rhythm of worship. It is their place, and they are the ones to welcome guests, led by the dean. Dean 3 made the comment that the bishop had given a brief to turn “this back into a cathedral which is also a parish, rather than a parish which is occasionally a cathedral,” and so has had to work hard at getting people to recognize they are the hosts, and that is the role of a cathedral.

ii. People coming to a Christian cathedral should expect the service to be set in a Christian context, even when it is a multi-faith event. This point was nicely brought home to me by a Hindu lady who said something like: “Frank, we know we are coming to a Christian cathedral. We expect there to be Christian hymns and prayers!” Dean 2 agreed with me when I mentioned this story, saying that it had been a surprise to discover it is often the Christians who are most afraid of offending people of other faiths. Dean 8 spoke with some passion about the flak he received from within the church when he invited leaders of other faith communities to be involved in a public prayer meeting in the cathedral.

iii. There are times when it works very well for guests to be incorporated into the normal Sunday morning choral Eucharist, and at Wellington Cathedral we often do this. There are other times when it is inappropriate to have “specials” either in the context of the normal rhythm, or breaking the rhythm. In the case of Wellington Cathedral and the Commonwealth Observance, after considerable listening and talking to and with interested parties, the event has been moved to a Monday evening (the actual Commonwealth Day). Numbers have gone up, and the Sunday Eucharist remains.

I found Benedict’s advice to the abbot particularly helpful when dealing with the military over the Remembrance Day service. Following a few rocky years, after I, as dean, banned guns in the cathedral, and the military refused to bring in their colours (using service flags instead), we have now reached a compromise. Weapons are stacked at the door, and the colours brought in and placed in the sanctuary. From a

107 A new angle on this question was brought home to me in a recent conversation with the Dean of St Paul’s London. He had no problem with weapons being brought into that huge cathedral. His
Benedictine point of view, we are able to offer hospitality (with cathedral sides people doing the initial welcoming), and, through careful listening (obedience) have been able to craft a new liturgy (continual conversion) which does justice to the established pattern of honouring the dead by the playing of the Last Post and Reveille (stability) and now includes prayers for those presently serving overseas. The climax of the service is now the lighting of a peace candle by junior members representing each of the uniformed services. I like to think of this as a good example of continual conversion, hospitality and obtaining that all important balance between competing constituencies.

This idea of balance between competing constituencies is nicely focused on by David Stancliffe. Talking about the way in which cathedrals do try to be hospitable to competing demands without losing their identity, he reminds us that “cathedrals which offer everything to everyone can thereby easily fall into the trap of losing their own identity and integrity.” In similar vein Kathleen Norris, a Presbyterian writing on her experiences in Benedictine communities, adds this comment: “People who give so much of themselves that they lose their identity are not truly hospitable.” Her words had particular poignancy when Wellington Cathedral hosted six hundred Girl Guides in February 2010. At their request they came to the 10.00 am choral Eucharist. The guests, many of whom had never been in a church or cathedral, had little idea of what to expect or how to participate, and completely swamped the congregation.

Stancliffe goes on to tease out the “two visible realities coexisting uneasily.” They are the structure of the building with its built in routines and round of services, and the enormous variety of people who come to a cathedral for all sorts of reasons. The deans I interviewed all spoke of this tension in their own situations. One mentioned the desire to cater for tourists and the enormous cost of having sufficient staff. Another discussed the odd tension between wanting to move beyond a Christendom

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model yet realizing that it is precisely because of the Christendom model that
cathedrals still attract many of the “specials.” Still another spoke of the sorrow that
the “specials” have all but disappeared from the cathedral because of unwelcoming
decisions made in the past. Stancliffe brings us back to the need to balance the
competing claims.

All these make up the complex diet of the cathedral’s liturgical life - or do they?
Making such a list of what goes on raises the question as to whether cathedrals
are just institutions which provide an umbrella under which a whole host of
different activities take place – a building and resources which can be hired out
to all comers – or whether cathedrals consciously embrace and own these
different activities as manifestations of their multifarious, but ultimately
coherent, life.111

A “multifarious, but ultimately coherent, life” really focuses the question for a dean
and a cathedral. How, in all the competing demands made by different constituencies,
does a cathedral maintain its integrity as a place where God is worshipped as a
primary focus? While all the deans I interviewed were quite adamant that worship of
God, through the very best liturgy and music that could possibly be offered, is the
primary focus, it is not an easy balance to obtain and maintain. In the struggle to be
relevant and ‘out there’ in the community by offering an open door, there is a
seductive process at work. It is not always clear where the verandah begins and ends.

While Benedict is clear that guests are to be welcomed (as if they were Christ) he is
equally clear that nothing should interfere with or disrupt the opus dei, the worship of
God by the community. In the end, each dean and cathedral needs to weigh up just
where the balance lies in extending hospitality.

**Leadership**

As I interviewed the deans it became clear that most of us have little if any specific
training for the leadership and management roles being a dean calls for. This was well
articulated by, among others, Dean 6 who, on looking back at his ministry as a dean,
thought he had been too laissez faire, “works well in a one person situation, but being
in a cathedral with a staff for the first time … I could have been more keeping people

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111 Ibid., 53.
on task [sic];”112 and Deans A4 and A5 who both commented on the need to have better conflict management skills in a staff situation.

In this section I turn again to the Rule of Benedict to see what it offers on the topic of leadership, and how that might feed into the overall sense of maintaining balance in the life of a dean. The key chapter of the Rule is Chapter 2, with Chapter 64 (which deals with the election of the abbot) running a close second. Scattered throughout the Rule are snippets which feed into the overall picture. Chapter 2 of the Rule contains eight principles or characteristics that Benedict suggests are necessary for the abbot to have. While we should not expect them to be replicated in a dean, they do provide some interesting thoughts for us to work with.

First and foremost the abbot is to be Christ-like: “it is the place of Christ that the superior is understood to hold in the monastery.”113 As such the biblical image of the shepherd features prominently in Benedict’s model of the ideal abbot, one who takes the responsibility entrusted to him seriously. In the spirit of the vows of obedience (listening to God) and stability (in the sense of being committed to the community and steeped in knowledge of the faith and Bible) the abbot “should be like the leaven of the holiness that comes from God infused into the minds of their disciples.”114 One hopes that this Christ-like nature is true for all who are deans, indeed all who aspire to live the life of the baptized.

In an important document “Toward a Theology of Ministry” coming out of the US Episcopal Church, mention is made of the Zaccheus Project. In discussing the nature of ministry, one of the key findings in this report was that the “locus of Episcopal identity is shifting from being a hierarchically ordered, clerically focused institution to being a living icon of God’s gracious presence in the local sacramental community.”115 A “living icon of God’s gracious presence” would, I feel, find acceptance with Benedict in his vision for the perfect abbot.

112 Dean 6, interview by author, tape-recording, 14 January 2010.
113 RB 2: 1.
114 Ibid.
Although the abbot is to be like Christ in the community, he does not act alone. Chapter 3 of the Rule urges the abbot to listen to the voice of the whole community when important matters are being considered, especially that of the youngest. By listening and consulting carefully and widely, the temptation to think of oneself as the “last stop” is lessened. “If you act always after hearing the counsel of others, you will avoid the need to repent of your decision afterwards.” And of course, the abbot is elected by the whole community, and therefore, one trusts, has the support of the community when decisions are to be made. How different this is to the perception one bishop had, “I realized that now there was no one person above me … to whom I was directly accountable. I was, both structurally and spiritually, directly responsible only to God.”

Robin Greenwood makes a pertinent comment which is at odds with the above quote, and perhaps more in tune with Benedict. In exploring the nature of the church and ministry using a Trinitarian model, he has this to say:

A triune God whose inner life may be expressed in terms of perichoretic being, implies a Church in which there are no permanent structures of subordination but rather, overlapping patterns of mutual relationship. The same person or group of persons will be sometimes subordinate and at other times superordinate, according to the gifts and graces being exercised appropriate to the occasion.

Second, the abbot should be a mentor, leading by example both in word and deed. I was interested to listen to the deans talk about those who had been mentors to them, and what they had learned from their respective mentors. Dean 5 for example compared the role models of two deans he had served under (neither in New Zealand). In one he saw “a really dedicated priest, who was very competent, knew his mind,” while the other “hid behind a veil all the time, had similar expectations but was not able to voice them … wasn’t able to bring people on side so that they had the same vision he had.” This idea of holding and articulating the vision is so important, and stressed by Benedict in the seventh point on leadership below.

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116 RB 4: 3; quoting Ecclus 32: 24.
117 RB 64: 1.
120 Dean 5, interview by author, tape-recording, 19 January 2010.
Dean 4 also talked about the importance of role models for him in his earlier days, and compared being a curate under two different deans. In my own experience the role modeling, both good and bad, has profoundly influenced me. I think back to one annual meeting where a difficult question was asked of the treasurer. The dean got to his feet, took full responsibility for the situation, apologized, and the meeting moved on, not needing to get bogged down in the potential cat fight. It was a salutary lesson in humility – the subject of a whole chapter of the Rule (Chapter 7). In quite another situation a dean was involved in some quite scandalous personal behaviour\(^\text{121}\) which went unchallenged by the cathedral authorities. Benedict comments about the way in which a community can collude to cover up a situation which ought not to be.\(^\text{122}\)

Third, there should be no favouritism shown, either in promotion or discipline – free-born are no better than slave. The \textit{ordo} of the monastery, the order in which monks are professed, reigns supreme, unless there is very good reason for it to change, such as a person with exceptional gifts (recognized by the whole community) in a particular area.

One of the real difficulties expressed among the deans is how to deal with those who believe they have some ‘right’ to preferred treatment. One spoke about a particular group who fronted up each year expecting the dean to fall in with their wishes; another spoke of a person who resisted every attempt to move forwards on a building issue because the person claimed to have a greater stake than the dean (money had been given in the past by a distant relative); yet another spoke of difficulties with the “politics of the place”\(^\text{123}\) which meant that people became factionalised, siding with different members of the clergy.

Writing in a footnote to RB Chapter 5 (where the subject is obedience) Patrick Barry comments on what Benedict calls \textit{murmuratio} – variously translated as murmuring, muttering, grumbling. Barry speaks about this phenomenon in this way:

\begin{quote}
In monastic life obedience and love are so intimately bound together that each becomes an expression of the other. Nothing is so corrosive of that ideal as the
\end{quote}

\(^{\text{121}}\) The sensitivity of this event precludes any details being given here.

\(^{\text{122}}\) RB 64: 2.

\(^{\text{123}}\) Dean 4, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.
sort of constant complaining St Benedict has in mind when he writes about ‘murmuring’ and ‘murmurers’ in a Benedictine community. The damage is done not by the fact that there is a complaint. There are always procedures for legitimate complaints … murmuring is not like that; it is underhand and quickly becomes part of the ‘underlife’ of a community. Thus it destroys confidence and is incompatible with the ideals of monastic life.124

This is not an easy concept for a dean to have to deal with, despite being all too common. Dean 5 comments, “Things that always get me down are break downs in personal relationships … they’re the things that are most debilitating in ministry … people take offence then refuse to have anything to do with you – and operate counter productively.”125 One person commented on the way in which a dean had gathered a small coterie of people around him, excluding others; and another had to deal with so much ‘murmuring’ that he eventually resigned his position.

This concept of murmuring, easily arising out of favouritism, runs completely against all that Benedict stands for – a community of people focused on Christ who live together in obedience, stability and continual conversion. Like one bad apple in the barrel, murmuring affects the whole organization, quickly disrupting the balance and leading to often lasting imbalance.

Fourth, the leader must be a good teacher, able to be flexible and appropriate in their teaching style (is there an echo of conversatio here?) as appropriate to the occasion and people. Not all the deans saw their ministry as being one which included teaching – except through preaching. While in my South African experience a cathedral was nearly always a place where junior clergy were trained (in my own case I served a second curacy in a cathedral), that is not generally the case in New Zealand (with one or two exceptions). This strikes me as slightly odd as all the deans, without exception, spoke of being attracted to cathedrals because of the exciting possibilities offered by expectations of good liturgy, high standard of preaching, outreach to the community, and so forth. This should make a cathedral a marvelous place for training of clergy and lay people for ministry in the widest sense of that word.

124 Patrick Barry et al, Wisdom from the Monastery, 25.
125 Dean 5, interview by author, tape-recording, 19 January 2010.
Before moving to the position of dean of Wellington Cathedral I had identified that one of the key features of my ministry as dean would be education. While this may have a lot to do with my personal preference, personality and interests, I do believe that the dean should be teaching, and more than just through preaching. Dean 5 spoke about his vision for the cathedral to open up an education centre and that one of the lay canons had been approached about taking this on.\textsuperscript{126} John Inge writes about the opportunities afforded to English cathedrals for education by the National Curriculum’s religious education syllabi\textsuperscript{127} and urges cathedrals to become more imaginative in their approach. While a number of schools do visit our New Zealand cathedrals, often as part of a ‘city’ experience by country schools, we do not seem to have moved much beyond seeing the cathedral as an interesting place to visit – as opposed to the offering of intentional programmes of life-changing education.

Fifth, there can be no tolerance of wrong-doing, which should be dealt with as soon as it is noticed. Benedict, coming from an age vastly different to our own, saw no harm in suggesting that “those who are defiant and resistant in the pride of their disobedience will need to be corrected by corporal punishment.”\textsuperscript{128} Most priests are trained to be pastors, caring for people, so conflict resolution often comes with some difficulty. The use of clear job descriptions, such as mentioned by Justin Lewis-Anthony, for all staff (including volunteers) will go a long way to defusing the anxiety of the dean who has to discipline a staff member.\textsuperscript{129} Leadership includes the idea of setting clear guidelines of expectations, so a person knows when the mark has been overstepped. But it does not come easily. Bishop Penny Jamieson writes, “I have found the call to hold in tension both the pastoral and juridical responsibilities of my office to be one of the hardest aspects of being a bishop.”\textsuperscript{130}

Conflict between musician and clergy is something of a cliché, but enough of the deans raised the topic for it to be taken seriously. In one case a music director intentionally undermined the dean by going to the local press before taking up the

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} John Inge, “Cathedrals, outreach and education”, 32.
\textsuperscript{128} RB 2:5.
\textsuperscript{129} Justin Anthony-Lewis, If You Meet George Herbert on the Road, Kill Him. In Chapter 11 he examines the case for job descriptions for clergy, and in Chapter 14 delves into the tricky issue of conflict resolution.
\textsuperscript{130} Penny Jamieson, Living at the Edge. 66.
issue with the dean. On one occasion I needed to deal quickly with some unacceptable behaviour on the part of some choir members shortly before an overseas tour. Benedict’s no tolerance of wrong-doing policy proved extremely useful as I, together with the church wardens and director of music, called in the offending individual. Chapter 23 of the Rule suggests that the person doing the wrong-doing is first spoken to privately by those in authority over him/her; if there is no improvement the matter should become public – which leads to excommunication. Excommunication in this sense is more like the old-fashioned idea of being ‘sent to Coventry’ – no one is to have any dealings with the wrong-doer, who also loses his place in the ordo.

Of course, today deans have to be very aware of the proper and safe procedures to be followed in matters of conduct, whether personal or professional. Only one dean made passing reference during the interviews to a public scandal involving behaviour by a member of staff – though all of those interviewed know something about the particular issue. At the time I was a canon of the cathedral concerned and spent many hours being briefed by lawyers and listening carefully to the case being put.

The thinking behind the three Benedictine vows may be of help here if we see the listening process relating to obedience; clearly expressed values and boundaries providing stability; and always the opportunity for repentance and a change in lifestyle having its springboard in conversatio. Two very contemporary examples of this listening process in conflict resolution appeared at the time of writing. The first was a report in Anglican Taonga of the appointment and role of a commissioner to resolve issues at St John’s Theological College in Auckland. The second is a carefully worded letter from the Archbishop of Cape Town explaining to the Province of Southern Africa the process being followed in a fraud case involving a bishop and diocese.134

131 Dean 9, interview by author, tape-recording, 11 January 2010.
132 Ibid.
The sixth point is that the abbot should be aware of his position as a leader within the monastery. This means that more is required of him than of the others, both in terms of setting an example and of understanding the individuals in his care. Dean 5 was quite articulate about the exercise of leadership in the New Zealand Anglican Church context being counter-cultural. “The culture in Australia and New Zealand says that if you are in those sorts of roles [leadership] you have to try and be as ordinary as everyone else,” and then went on to talk of the necessity of a dean being able to “step into the leadership role and be comfortable with it.” An interesting aside is that all of the deans serving at the time of the interviewing process had either come from or been ordained outside of New Zealand or had had extensive work and study experience overseas – perhaps giving them a slightly different perspective on leadership models. Benedict of course, was talking about the abbot exercising leadership within the monastery. We have already seen the difficulty in defining quite what the “monastery” community means in a modern cathedral.

There is another side to leadership in that most, but not all, of the deans understood themselves to have a leadership role in the wider community (generally in the city). So Deans 2, 3 and 4 were quite clear that they were leaders within their civic communities, and regularly meet with civic and business leaders, or make comments in the local media. Dean 2 said that, as a priest, he intentionally broke the model of a “typical clergyman” by seeing faith as “connecting with the gutsy earthiness of people’s lives” whereas the “church tended to be separate from the reality of people’s lives.” While it is true that Benedict saw the monastery, and therefore the abbot, as separated from the wider community, Benedict did this precisely because of the potential for distractions from the real focus of the monk – seeking the kingdom of God.

Is it true that the monastery (or Cathedral) is separated from people’s lives? In 1977 (long before the days of email and instant internet news) I had an eye-opening

135 Dean 5, interview by author, tape-recording, 19 January 2010.
136 At some other stage it could be interesting to pursue the line on leadership taken by psychologists Renier Greeff and Trevor King in their book Medicine Man Chief (Auckland: 2002.) in the context of cathedrals and the Rule. The basic thesis is that the medicine man has knowledge and does not need the tribe (community) while the chief needs the tribe (community) and the medicine man’s knowledge.
137 Dean 2, interview by author, tape-recording, 21 December 2009.
experience when visiting the nuns of the contemplative Society of the Precious Blood in Masite, Lesotho. Twenty-four hours a day, a handful of nuns kept vigil before the altar in their chapel. Yet they were more up to date about a court case involving a civil rights activist than I, having just come from the town where the case was being heard! In my own cathedral there is a constant trickle of people coming to pray and light a candle as they bring “the gutsy earthiness” of their lives before God. The experience of the Benedictine monasteries in the Middle Ages was that they became the centre of people’s lives – the places of learning, healing, news distribution and so on – precisely because they were there. There is, I believe, something about being what Edwin Friedman calls “a non-anxious presence” which allows others to deal with the issues facing them, rather than always wanting to give advice, be involved, be listened to, be standing on the proverbial soap-box.

Dean 8 spoke candidly about his own life and realization, after a relatively short time as dean, that he was “becoming institutionalized – beginning to lose who I thought I was.” For him, the honourable thing to do was to resign, which he did, and then grieved over the decision for three years. He readily admits that his life had lost balance, and that “I’d lost the ability to make sane and sensible decisions.” When I pressed Dean 8 further on this decision, it turned out he had been anything but a non-anxious presence, actively involved in a huge range of activities long before he became dean. In retrospect he admitted to going into the position of dean already burned out.

Seventh, at all times the abbot should hold in mind the purpose of why he and the other monks are there, viz. “the salvation of the souls” – and not allow himself to be distracted by peripheral issues. True to his roots Benedict has a biblical quote to re-enforce this point; “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” I interpret this to be the dean holding the vision for the cathedral and its community.

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139 Dean 8, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.
140 RB 2:7.
141 Matt 6:33.
What is a cathedral about? Why does it exist? I asked each of the deans whether they had been given a brief by their bishop on taking office. Most were given little except in the case of two deans in smaller centres where they were specifically briefed to move the cathedral from being a large parish church, to a cathedral with a parish. Yet each of the deans interviewed was able to come up with a very clear vision statement of what they were trying to do, and understood as their role, as dean.

The clearest was probably Dean 4 who, at his interview with bishop and nominators, was able to articulate clearly a three point vision statement which encompassed the cathedral community as parish, the role within the diocese and the engagement with the city and wider community. Dean 8 quoted Archbishop Rowan Williams “about creating God-space – most of our life is taken up by sheer distraction,” and went on to say that “you get the impression that everything is in place for the glory of God and that’s what a cathedral should be … they are places that symbolize a point of the transcendence of God.” Dean 6 articulated his vision for a new dean as someone who was “well-established in the faith, pro-active in leadership with clear but flexible goals, and a perception of self as a leader among leaders, able to recognize and use the profile of being dean.” In my own case, after identifying the three constituencies of parish, diocese and city/nation I articulated my vision for the cathedral as being a “sacred space of worship, hospitality and education”. This vision has been adopted by both Cathedral and Diocese in recent years.

Finally, the eighth point. With a view to the final judgment, the abbot must be able to give an account of all they have done; they must be like good stewards. While none of the deans interviewed actually touched on this sort of topic, in fact the annual general meeting, the synod of the diocese and the annual deans’ conference all provide opportunities for the dean to “give an account of all that they have done”. In my own diocese there is a requirement that every five years a review is done, both of the parish (cathedral) and the vicar (dean). I found these two reviews, both done in 2009, both challenging and a little threatening, and also extremely affirming and energizing.

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142 Dean 4, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.
143 Dean 8, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.
144 Ibid.
145 Dean 6, interview by author, tape-recording, 14 January 2010.
Reading through the Rule one realizes just what an important role the abbot has to play, with a host of different things to keep in mind. His responsibilities range from ensuring adequate bedding for the monks,\textsuperscript{146} entertaining and eating with guests,\textsuperscript{147} listening carefully to complaints from his own monks and criticism from visitors,\textsuperscript{148} to chairing meetings of the whole community when important decisions are to be made.\textsuperscript{149} In fact, the whole organization of the monastery, from the time-table for the daily offices to decisions about who stands where in chapel, from which books will be read during Lent to the delegation of work to the prior, cellarer and deans,\textsuperscript{150} is ultimately upon the shoulders of the abbot. This is made clear in the opening words of Chapter 47: “The superior is personally responsible for making sure that the time for the work of God … is clearly made known to all.”\textsuperscript{151}

Quite as important as Chapter 2 of the Rule is Chapter 64 which deals with the election of an abbot. The third paragraph of this chapter reads as a litany of ideals and qualities to be looked for in an abbot. They include stewardship, knowing that the office is about service not power, being well-grounded in God’s Laws, being chaste, sober and compassionate, always letting mercy triumph over judgment, hating vice while loving the brethren, acting with prudence in discipline aware that the one disciplined is like a bruised reed. Perhaps the most powerful statement of all is that the abbot “should seek to be loved more than they are feared.”\textsuperscript{152}

No wonder then that one dean suggested a new dean needed to become a juggler!\textsuperscript{153} Yet it is precisely because of the multitudinous demands on the dean as leader that a sense of balance and perspective needs somehow to be achieved. If Benedict is not the answer, he does at least go some way to suggesting some of the answers.

\textsuperscript{146} RB 55:3.
\textsuperscript{147} RB56:1.
\textsuperscript{148} RB 3:1 and 61:1.
\textsuperscript{149} RB 3:1. In Chapter 3 there is a sentence about the youngest being invited to speak first “because it often happens that the Lord makes the best course clear to one of the youngest”. One can’t help wondering how different synods and AGMs might be if this were generally acted on.
\textsuperscript{150} “deans” in RB is used of those appointed to have responsibility for ten monks, not a cathedral.
\textsuperscript{151} RB 47:1.
\textsuperscript{152} RB 64:3. I have not tried to acknowledge individually all the quotes in this paragraph. They all appear in paragraph 3 of Chapter 64.
\textsuperscript{153} Dean 3, interview by author, tape-recording, 24 January 2010.
5: Rhythm in Life

Introduction
We have seen something of the balance provided by the three Benedictine vows of obedience, stability and continual conversion. We have explored some ideas relating to balance and ministry, noticed that there are a number of different models of cathedral workings (each of which has its own balance and rhythm) and we have examined at some depth two particular areas where deans sometimes struggle to find balance, viz. hospitality and leadership. As one looks more carefully at the Rule another balance comes into view – a carefully balanced rhythm of life between prayer, study and work; the technical words used in the Rule are opus dei, lectio divina and manual work. These three undergird the vows of obedience, stability and continual conversion.

Bearing in mind that none of the deans interviewed are monks or nuns, or live in the sort of community that Benedict envisaged, is it possible that Benedict’s rhythm for daily life, making time to feed the soul, mind and body, could offer an authentic model for a dean today? In the course of the interviews conducted I deliberately asked each of the deans how they sustained their busy ministries. My expectation in probing in this area was that there would be conversation about the sort of things that Benedict deemed necessary to create a balanced rhythm of daily life – the sort of thing often referred to as a Rule of Life.

On reviewing the interviews specifically looking at this area of sustainability in ministry in a Benedictine model my initial impression was that not many of the deans had anything resembling the balance envisaged by Benedict. Far too much of the life and work of a dean seems to be reactive – reacting to the myriad of demands made in running a cathedral. This lack of balance is obvious in a comment by Dean 3: “I really want to take stock, what’s do-able and what’s not with the resources we’ve got, and where we should be putting our energies.” Even more stark was Dean 1 who, in

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response to my question, “Do you have a daily routine?” replied, “We don’t actually.”

William Countryman, exploring the reasons for burnout in US clergy, suggests one reason may be the perception that a professional (whether a doctor, lawyer or priest) “means being constantly driven and overcommitted.” It is this overcommitted omni-competent model of priesthood, derived (if we are to believe Justin Lewis-Anthony) from George Herbert, that necessitates having some sort of balance, a Rule of Life. Cistercian monk Korneel Vermeiren points out that St Benedict wrote his Rule at least partly to counter the monks who engaged in extreme acts of prayer and fasting. In contrasting Benedict with Abba Isidore (who had no limits) Vermeiren writes

Benedict is famous precisely because he does have ‘measure’. It is not only a matter of the measure of wine the monks may drink or the amount of bread he receives each day, nor just a matter of the measure of sleep and work, but he also has a measure in relation to prayer and time for prayer.

As we look further at the interviews it is worth bearing in mind the tension that clergy may be so driven to be ‘professional’ (not unlike Abbot Isidore and his monk colleagues in the Egyptian deserts of the 5th and 6th centuries), that in their very driven-ness some of the fundamentals which sustain and energize a priest (dean) may be pushed aside. What Benedict offers is a balance in life, where there is space for all aspects of life: in his view, prayer, study and manual work.

Feeding the soul

"Obedience, as expressed in a Rule of Life, … embraces questions of … what we do with our spirits – our prayer life.”

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155 Dean 1, interview by author, tape-recording, 8 March 2010.
157 Justin Lewis-Anthony, If you Meet George Herbert on the Road, Kill Him!
Whereas all four of the retired deans interviewed spoke definitely about the importance of daily prayer (mostly Morning Prayer, daily Eucharist and, in their cathedrals, the joy of choral Evensong) in their lives, only three of the five active deans said this was an important part of their spiritual lives. Three of the five, all ordained less than twenty years ago, said that they had not developed a pattern of daily prayer during their time of priestly formation – two of them specifically mentioning that there had been no compulsion for them to attend daily worship while at theological college. These two both later discovered the value, for them, of a pattern of daily prayer, while serving curacies after ordination.

When we turn to look at what the Rule says about prayer, opus dei, we should keep in mind the Prologue where Benedict sees prayer as the “first step”\(^{160}\) in the way to return to Christ. The Rule of Benedict, chapters 8 – 20, details the mechanics of the opus dei, the work of God, offering eight periods of prayer per day around which the time-table of the monastery was shaped. A large amount of the content of each service was given over to the recitation of the Psalms, covering the entire psalter in a week. Nothing is to get in the way of this daily round of prayer.\(^{161}\) Michael Sadgrove, dean of Durham, says, “When people ask me what I regard as the most important activity of the Cathedral, I unhesitatingly reply: its daily prayer. This is what we are for.”\(^{162}\)

When Archbishop Cranmer produced the first English prayer book he reduced the number of daily services to two – morning and evening prayer. The Psalms still featured strongly, arranged to be said on a monthly cycle. Since the time of Cranmer Anglican clergy have been required to say both morning and evening prayer daily. In the current Anglican prayer book in New Zealand, while not quite as strongly worded, the expectation still stands. “Clergy in particular are expected to follow a personal spiritual discipline and to provide opportunities for other people to join in daily worship where possible.”\(^{163}\)

Martin Luther is alleged to have said that he had so much to do that he could not get by without three hours of a prayer a day. When he was Archbishop of Cape Town

\(^{160}\) RB Prologue, 2.
\(^{161}\) RB 43:1.
\(^{163}\) *A New Zealand Prayer Book He Karakia Mihanare o Aotearoa*. (Auckland: Collins, 1989), 54.
Desmond Tutu was well known for wearing out his chaplains, expecting them to accompany him on an early morning jog, before spending time in mediation and Eucharist – all before breakfast.\(^{164}\)

Dean 3 had not been to a residential college and spoke of the difficulty of maintaining any regular form or discipline of prayer saying, “I’ve attempted to get that (regular pattern of prayer) into my life at times, and I’ve eventually come to the conclusion that that pattern simply does not suit my personality – which could be a cop-out, but I’ve stopped beating myself up about that.”\(^{165}\) This is in stark contrast to all of the retired deans, and the other two active deans interviewed (and I would add myself here too), all of whom had learned the value of a rhythm of daily prayer while at theological college. “We got all that at college … every morning in chapel, four times a day … a monastic model.”\(^{166}\) This dean, when asked what advice might be given to a new dean, said as the first response, “Have well established roots in the faith … a personal spirituality … so that there is a central focus for the worship of dean and staff.”\(^{167}\)

We ought not despair, nor give away the idea of developing a pattern of regular daily prayer. Lathrop, in discussing the value of using the Lord’s Prayer as a focus for all prayer, especially in the life of a pastor, suggests that praying it is an ongoing process of preparation to lead public worship such as the Eucharist – part of “the lifelong catechumenate”\(^{168}\) both of the pastor and the congregation. This idea of prayer being catechumenal, life-shaping and life-changing, is certainly in tune with Benedict, and may just give Dean 3 reason and vision to find a pattern of prayer that works and feeds. It may be that a person who has not had the benefit of a residential formation is actually more open to finding and using a pattern more suited to today’s life-style.

Prayer, however, is more than simply following a pattern, more even than preparing oneself to lead worship. Prayer is about a life given to God, formed and shaped by the

\(^{164}\) This anecdote came to me from colleagues who had the (un)fortunate position of being chaplains to the archbishop.

\(^{165}\) Dean 3, interview by author, tape-recording, 24 January 2010.

\(^{166}\) Dean 6, interview by author, tape-recording, 14 January 2010.

\(^{167}\) In the Rule Benedict says that “prayer should be free from all other pre-occupations” (RB 21: 1) and again, “nothing should be accounted more important than the work of God” (RB 43: 1).

knowledge that it is God’s grace at work in one’s life, not one’s own strength (always the danger of someone who keeps to a rigid timetable of prayer). I believe this is what Christopher Cocksworth and Rosalind Brown are alluding to in their book, Being a Priest Today, when they tell of a student who approached Jürgen Moltmann to ask how she could make the Christian faith relevant to inner city people. “Finally he turned to her, looked at her with a piercing stare and said, ‘You must divest yourself.’”¹⁶⁹ In this short sentence, Moltmann points to the dependence on God that is the real reason for prayer and that is so essential to a sustainable ministry.

Another interesting trend among the present deans was that three of them, all with a good number of years to go before retirement possibilities, spoke of the importance of the liturgical life of the cathedral for them personally. All three also said how difficult it would be to go back into ‘normal’ parish life, having been in a cathedral context. “The other thing is good liturgy and good music well done; I realize there is no way I could ever go back to ordinary parish worship.”¹⁷⁰ Dean 4, while talking about his experience as a parish priest, during which he had increasing contact with a cathedral, said that “this [parish life] would get a bit tedious actually … I’m not sure I want to just keeping moving from parish to parish and have done forty years in various parishes.”¹⁷¹

One has to ask then, what makes the difference between the “tediousness” mentioned above, and the life-giving, life-sustaining, prayer and worship envisaged by Benedict? Joan Chittister makes some useful comments in this regard when she writes: “Benedictine spirituality is more intent on developing thinking people than it is on developing pious people. It is one thing to pray prayers; it is another thing to be prayerful.”¹⁷² Michael Casey offers food for thought when he talks of being impressed by a nutritionist who advocated a varied diet for the health of people. In applying this idea to prayer Casey says, “Our prayer draws what it needs from the variety of our daily experiences…. The experience of many monks and nuns is that their awareness of the closeness of God occurs as often outside formal prayer as inside it: at work, in

¹⁷⁰ Dean 5, interview by author, tape-recording, 19 January 2010.
¹⁷¹ Dean 4, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.
¹⁷² Joan Chittister, Wisdom distilled from the Daily, 101.
caring for others, in admiring the scenery, even in sleep.”  

Perhaps it is Benedict himself who offers the best advice in reminding us that “God is present everywhere – present to the good and to the evil as well …. That will lead us to make sure that, when we sing in choir, there is complete harmony between the thoughts in our mind and the meaning of the words we sing.”

Dean 2 spoke of the importance of contemplation, of using the Jesus prayer, “it lives with me most days,” and of having regular, usually annual, periods of retreat. This dean has, over many years, had contact with members of various monastic communities, and clearly treasures the riches to be found in this tradition. Only one other dean mentioned monasticism in the interview process, in referring to a Benedictine retreat centre as an occasional option.

I find myself wondering how much the church environment we live in affects our spirituality. Despite the explicit rubric in *A New Zealand Anglican Prayer Book*, few of the deans had prior experience of the sort of pattern of daily worship all New Zealand cathedrals seek to maintain. There are few opportunities in New Zealand for exposure to vibrant monastic communities (in stark contrast to my own South African experience and that of Dean 2 in England). Does the fact that the Anglican Church in New Zealand tends to be more evangelical in its churchmanship than, say South Africa, make a difference to the way we say our prayers? In June 2010 I had a conversation with a canon of Ely Cathedral who spoke of his surprise, and now joy, in discovering the value of a pattern of daily worship at the cathedral, so different from his own evangelical roots.

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173 Michael Casey, *Strangers to the City*, 163.
174 RB 19:1.
175 Dean 2, interview by author, tape-recording, 21 December 2009. Benedict would probably point to the practice of *lectio divina*, where slow thoughtful reading and mulling over a passage of scripture or some spiritual work was encouraged.
176 Dean A3, interview by author, tape-recording, 24 January 2010.
177 A quick search on the internet (18 August 2010) reveals that all but one of New Zealand’s cathedrals offer at least one service everyday, with the newest cathedral, Taranaki, offering an ambitious three services daily. The exception is Nelson which, at the time of the search, was without a dean.
Feeding the mind

“Obedience, as expressed in a Rule of Life, … embraces questions of what we do with … our minds – what we read, our engagement with culture.”178

What about study and reading, the feeding of the mind? Of those interviewed, one dean was actively engaged in academic study, and another spoke several times about the books and authors that have an impact on his ministry. But again, it was the retired deans who appear to be doing the reading. Dean 7, who spent years in study before being ordained at the age of 37, said that while he had not gone further in formal theological studies he “loves reading theology … it’s not a task … I take notes, underline…”179 And again, “whatever book I am reading … most effectively feed myself by having a conversation with whichever author I am working with.” The pattern mentioned by this dean suggests what Benedict had in mind in lectio divina, what Cocksworth and Brown call being “marinated in the word.”180 In underlining the importance of reading and studying scripture they suggest

> We may need to learn that failure (in this or anything else) is not terminal with God. Nevertheless, if a pattern of sustained engagement with God’s word, through prayerful, systematic and deep exposure to scripture, is not in place then it will be difficult for us to become people in whom ‘the word of Christ dwells richly’ (1 Corinthians 3: 1 – 2).181

Dean 8 also talked of reading widely in theology and spirituality. When asked about advice for a new dean, Dean 8 suggested that they

> read well, read as deeply as you can – don’t just read what you’re comfortable with – read things that disturb you, and I don’t mean horror stories – if you’re not comfortable with science, get into it, understand it, do your best, seek to understand why, without judging different points of view so that the cathedral can present the faith in a way that is truly negotiable …182

This advice would, I think, resonate with several deans who are passionate about communicating the Gospel to people outside of the church through the “specials”, talks, pub evenings, debates and the many other opportunities to engage society in conversation about God that deans look for. Cocksworth and Brown encourage

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181 Ibid., 88.
182 Dean 8, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.
listening to the world which “involves us in learning to know and to articulate the voice of our hearers so that they can hear themselves in the conversation … knowing that world through living close to the ground our people tread on in the parish.”\textsuperscript{183} In his discussion on the importance of preaching Lathrop clearly has in mind deep and prolonged study and meditation on the scriptures before preaching so that “the community may come again to faith, a faith then exercised (and further fed) in prayer for the needy, in the simple thanksgiving supper and in mission.”\textsuperscript{184} The two go hand in hand: both listening to the people in the world around us, and listening to the word of God as found in the Bible.

Yet few of the active deans specifically mentioned anything about regularly reading or studying in preparation for sermon writing or teaching and discussion in a wider sense. Overall it appears there is little pattern of any real depth to the way the deans read, study and take time to reflect. This lack of time for reflection was strongly expressed by Dean 4 who put it this way, “You used the word ‘relentless’, not in a horrible way. Seldom do I have the time to think, ‘now what will I do this afternoon?’ There’s always something demanding your attention.”\textsuperscript{185} Countryman writes of the surprise a nineteenth century Protestant preacher would express on seeing how little time his modern counterparts spend in sermon preparation, and then adds “modern preachers are caught up in managerial and marketing roles.”\textsuperscript{186} In talking about how they sustain their ministry none of the deans mentioned a regular time (a day a week, or even a month) set aside for study, thinking and reflection. In Benedictine terms, are they being obedient - listening - to God through scripture and the writings of others? If, as expressed by most of the deans, there is an important role for a dean relating to, offering advice and critiquing, the wider society, where and how does a dean keep refreshed and up to date mentally?

Nor are deans in New Zealand the only ones who are in danger of starving their minds. John Pritchard asks three questions of applicants for priestly positions, finding most have little to say to the third: “How do you feed yourself theologically?”\textsuperscript{187} He

\textsuperscript{183} Cocksworth and Brown, \textit{Being a Priest Today}, 93.
\textsuperscript{184} Lathrop, \textit{The Pastor}, 45.
\textsuperscript{185} Dean 4, interview by author, tape-recording, 20 January 2010.
\textsuperscript{186} Countryman, \textit{Living on the Borders of the Holy}, 122.
\textsuperscript{187} John Pritchard, \textit{The Life and Word of a Priest}, 49.
goes on to say that “at a time when some priests are anxious about their ministry … they are the trained, ‘professional’ theologians of the congregation.”

It is salutary to note some comments of Michael Casey in relation to the importance of continual reading and study. He says that over the past fifty years there has been a resurgence in interest in *lectio divina* in monastic circles and then continues

The point is that it is almost impossible to envisage perseverance in lifelong commitment without the regular dedication of periods of time to the reading of the Scriptures and other texts that feed our faith. Indissolubly associated with this reading are reflection and obedient application, prayer and contemplation.¹⁸⁸

Benedict is very clear in his own mind that the journey with Christ, undergirded by prayer and study, is not an easy one. In the very first paragraph of the Rule the word “perseverance” is introduced; ¹⁸⁹ it is a concept that will keep on appearing. In the final chapter Benedict urges the monk to “be faithful with Christ’s help to this small Rule which is only a beginning.”¹⁹⁰

**Feeding the body**

“Obedience, as expressed in a Rule of Life, recognizes that we are the temple of the living God (2 Corinthians 6: 16) and embraces questions of what we do with our bodies – exercise, rest, diet.”¹⁹¹

What of the feeding of the body – that part of the rhythm of life which Benedict ascribes to manual work? I am well aware that this is not what Benedict had in mind. In talking of manual work Benedict was coming from a very different context where, in his day, manual work was done by slaves or servants. In prescribing work for the monk Benedict was giving honour and worth to manual work; we might even see it as honouring God’s creation – the field of work. Nonetheless, it came as a great release for me to realise that, at least in Benedictine terms, doing housework or gardening or

¹⁸⁸ Michael Casey, *Strangers to the City*, 49.
¹⁸⁹ RB 1:1.
¹⁹⁰ RB 73:2.
vacuuming the cathedral carpet could be just as much part of one’s spiritual life as saying prayers. In the overall sense of seeking balance, and with our modern life-style in mind, physical care of one’s body seems to fit comfortably into Benedict’s concept of manual work.

How do deans look after themselves physically?

Bishop John Pritchard writes that a priest is “someone who has been dazzled by the beauty of God and longs to reveal that beauty in the world.”192 That’s not a bad description for a dean to hold onto – we all talk about having the ‘best’ job in the church! “Sustainability is related to passion. Do we believe in what we are doing? … Balance for me is ‘Wow! I am enjoying what I am doing. This is challenging.’”193

Describing himself as a workaholic, Dean 2 poured scorn on the idea of working only forty hours per week. To sustain this passion he goes regularly to the gym and swimming pool, spends time with friends outside church circles, and gets away to a “bach” in the mountains from time to time with his wife.

Dean 4 confessed to being bad at taking time off and described himself as a “doing person, rather than a being person – I’m not good at sitting back and meditating … I sustain myself in making sure I am involved in other things.”194 One of the outside activities he is involved in means he is regularly in contact with people to whom his being a priest means little. Others talked about the importance of spending time with spouse, family and friends – both for the down time and the contact with people other than work. Dean 5 was quite specific in saying that when he is in the cathedral he is there for other people, not himself. For him it is getting into the garden, on to a weaving loom, or being creative in some other way, that restores balance in his physical and emotional life.

Given the small sample, and the fact that to be a dean means one has to be a reasonably together person, it is nonetheless sobering for me to reflect on deans I have known. Heart attack, cancer, tuberculosis, mental stress, marriage break-down,

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194 Dean 2, interview by author, tape-recording, 21 December 2009.
alcohol addiction and sexual misadventure are all fairly dramatic symptoms of imbalance I have come across – and that’s only what is in the public domain. Only one of the deans interviewed spoke specifically of the imbalance of life as a dean; but there were hints from others, and certainly an awareness of the need to care for oneself.

One dean commented on time being dictated by the demands of family life, which leads me to wonder a) how the modern way of life, where both spouses are working, affects having a Rule of Life and b) whether a thorough understanding of the concept of balance (such as espoused by Benedict) might actually be a relief to people. This was certainly true for me – when I discovered Benedict in 1988 I was tearing myself up feeling guilty about taking time off work to spend with the family, or mowing lawns. It was a wonderful relief to learn that someone actually advocated doing those things as part of finding a whole life which would be of use to God and people.

Pulling things together
Many people have written about the importance of keeping healthy - soul, mind and body - in a ministry context. My overall impression from the interviews is that, as deans, we struggle to keep on an even keel, well aware that life is pressured. An interesting comment offered by Robin Greenwood on the overall fulfillment of a priest, which I take to mean one who is balanced in a Benedictine sense, is that “clergy who feel fulfilled have learnt to live with ambivalence … within the paradoxes and tensions of church life.”195 Esther de Waal’s second book on Benedictine spirituality is entitled Living with Contradiction. Her thesis in this book is that Benedict understands the contradictions, the tensions, the imbalances, of life, and that the Rule sets out to bring balance – even in the ambivalence, tension and contradiction.196

As we are particularly interested in the Rule of Benedict and balance it seems fitting to end this discussion on the rhythm of life with two quotes from modern day practitioners of the Rule.

195 Robin Greenwood, Parish Priest, 36.
In a chapter entitled “Holy Leisure” Joan Chittister writes about the need to take time for oneself, to care for oneself.

Everywhere we look, in other words, there is the call to come apart and rest awhile that has been part of the community soul for years. These are busy people, these sisters of mine. They work with the poor and console the dying and feed the hungry and witness to peace and care for the elderly and teach the underprivileged and study and serve and welcome and give warmth everywhere they are, day after day after day. But they are never too busy, it seems, to realize that life is not only lived in doing.197

Rosalind Brown, canon at Durham Cathedral where the teaching and spirituality of St Benedict is offered in a very intentional way, offers these insight in her notes from a talk delivered to weekend retreatants,

Obedience can be expressed through a Rule of Life, a Regular for keeping us in the right direction, so long as we remember that a Rule is something we do ‘as a rule’ and is not an unbreachable set of regulations that carry harsh penalties for transgression…. Obedience, as expressed in a Rule of Life, recognizes that we are the temple of the living God (2 Corinthians 6: 16) and embraces questions of what we do with our bodies – exercise, rest, diet; with our minds – what we read, our engagement with culture; what we do with our spirits – our prayer life, spiritual reading, joy and experience of beauty.198

198 Rosalind Brown, “The Spirituality of ministry that will sustain us”, 8.
6: Conclusion

The thesis of this work was that “The Benedictine concept of balance offers a way for a dean to survive and thrive in an Anglican cathedral today.” Interviews suggest that deans face a variety of challenges which could be mitigated by the Benedictine concept of balance.

The Benedictine vows of obedience, stability and continual conversion (explored in Chapter 2), provide a framework of dynamic tension, allowing balance for a dean’s management of different constituencies. Faithful obedience to the will of God as found in the Gospel leads the dean and cathedral community to being open to the needs of the world and constantly to work for change in the world, even while drawing on ancient forms of worship and the scriptures written in quite different settings.

In Chapter 3 we looked at several writers and their expression of balance in Christian ministry. In each case we noticed how when one or other idea seemed in danger of pushing out the others, the pendulum swings back and balance is restored. We noted that in each of the four historic cathedral models explored there is an attempt to find the balance that enables a cathedral to function in all of its competing constituencies. This shows that however it is defined, balance is an essential component of a dean’s ministry.

In order to explore what balance might involve in a New Zealand cathedral context, we focused (in Chapter 4) on two particular areas of cathedral life, viz. hospitality and leadership. With the guidance offered by the Rule in mind, we discovered that hospitality, understood in a Benedictine sense, means keeping a careful balance between the needs of the cathedral community and the wants of the guest (usually in the form of a “special” service). The deans interviewed were not of a common mind on the matter of hospitality, and there are different practices within the cathedrals of New Zealand. Even so, there is agreement that “specials” and the impact on
cathedrals is an issue of tension and concern which shows a possible area of imbalance.

Turning to leadership in the Rule, as expressed in the life of the abbot, we discovered eight principles against which to test our own leadership skill set. There appears to be a lack of training offered to deans on how to manage staff and/or manage resolve conflict, which was shown to lead to a potential lack of balance in the life of a dean. Better training in these areas could lead to faster conflict resolution and more efficient staff and time management.

Chapter 5, where we considered the rhythm of life offered in the Rule, highlighted the danger of an imbalanced and reactive ministry, where a dean is driven by what is happening, rather than by careful planning and execution. The Benedictine rhythm of life offers a structure of balance which gives order to the day. It emerged that there was a contrast between formation training offered in the past, when a rhythm of life was expected and taught, and that of more recent times. I am not sure that the discipline and rhythm of the daily offices as a means of regular prayer has been replaced by anything as helpful.

In addition on-going and in-depth study and reflection on scripture and theology appears to be sporadic at best. If deans are to be leaders, teachers and opinion formers (as most agree they should be) the Benedictine model offers a framework for disciplined study and reflection. I suggest these are areas for those involved in providing ministry formation to take seriously.

In the area of manual labour, interpreted for the sake of this exercise, as care for one’s body and overall health, there appears to be a greater awareness of the need to care for one’s physical well-being than in previous times. While this awareness is healthy and to be encouraged, without prayer and study it leads to imbalance.

Does the Benedictine concept of balance offer a way for a dean to survive and thrive in an Anglican cathedral today?
It is no surprise to find that cathedrals are busy places and deans struggle to maintain balance in their ministry. The Rule of Benedict offers a concept of balance which allows a dean to prioritize the many calls on his/her ministry in order not only to survive but also to thrive.

The concept of balance, underpinning the Rule, offers a number of tools useful to a dean in an Anglican cathedral in New Zealand today.

- **Dynamic framework:** The underlying concepts of obedience, stability and continual conversion provide a framework of dynamic tension, encouraging balance in a dean’s management of different constituencies. The literature shows how these vows enable a dean’s ministry to remain fresh through creative listening to God and God’s people, both now and in the past.

- **Rhythm of life:** Finding time for personal prayer and study has emerged as an area of imbalance in the life of deans. Benedict addresses this through adopting a rhythm of life based on prayer, study and work. Literature shows how contemporary practitioners of the Rule have adapted these ancient ideas to form a dynamic and relevant spirituality for today.

- **Model of leadership:** The busyness of a cathedral easily leads a dean to become reactive. Few deans have had specialist training and experience in conflict resolution, articulating vision, and staff management. While not the only one, Benedict’s model of leadership highlights the importance of inclusive listening, keeping focused on fundamental principals and having the courage to be flexible when needed.

- **Hospitality:** Deans all recognize the need for hospitality and the difficulty of balancing the needs of the guest with those of the cathedral. The Rule offers helpful guidelines to enable a dean to balance the competing constituencies.

- **Being human:** One of the struggles of a dean is to juggle all the competing demands made on them. Benedict encourages faithfulness to God while recognizing the limitations of the individual. A dean following the Rule will find there is time to worship God, lead the cathedral and still care for him/herself as a whole person.
The Benedictine concept of balance offers a way for a dean to survive and thrive in an Anglican cathedral today.
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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Research Task and Method
The research is inductive and qualitative. Drawing on my understanding of the Rule of Benedict I attempted to posit a framework of topics to engage with the research data.

This was done by drawing on the Theological Reflection (TR) methods used in the programme Education for Ministry (EfM) and one of the courses done as part of the requirements for the M Min degree from Otago University, viz. MINX 403 (Theological Reflection). TR involves holding conversations between different sources, seeing where the confluences and dissonances are, and drawing out learnings and new reflections.

The three primary sources for this conversation were
i. the Rule of Benedict
ii. interviews and conversations with deans in New Zealand and elsewhere in the world, and my own personal experience both of Wellington Cathedral and other cathedrals
iii. selected literature on topics related to the Rule of Benedict, and ministry and leadership in general

Data Collection
Data Collection was done by individual semi-structured interviews, with prompts, of present and past Anglican Deans in New Zealand conducted over a three month period from December 2009 to March 2010.

In all, I conducted nine interviews covering all but one (Wellington) of the cathedrals in New Zealand - Auckland, Waikato, Waiapu, Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin.
(In March 2010 St Mary’s New Plymouth was elevated to cathedral status and a dean appointed.) Five of these were deans at the time, and four are former deans. Although no formal interviews were conducted I have also, in recent years, been in regular conversation with the deans of Cape Town, Toronto and Hong Kong.

Note that to keep the anonymity of the interviewee, and contrary to established custom, places of interview have not been included in the interview reference.
Appendix 2: Information Sheet for Participants

Research Essay for the Master of Ministry degree offered by the University of Otago
Student: Frank Nelson

November 2009

Seeking Balance through Benedictine Spirituality in the ministry of a
Dean in an Anglican Cathedral in New Zealand

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?
This research project is being undertaken in order to fulfil the requirements for the Master of Ministry degree offered by the University of Otago. The aim is to interview current Deans of Anglican Cathedrals in New Zealand, some former Deans and other priests associated with Cathedral ministry to discover more about the unique ministry of a Dean and what, if any, ‘tools’ are used in order to sustain such a ministry.

What Type of Participants are being sought?
Those presently serving as Deans of an Anglican Cathedral in New Zealand, former Deans and priests who either are or have had experience of Cathedral ministry.

What will Participants be Asked to Do?
Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to be interviewed by me, the researcher, in your own context (or mutually agreeable venue). I will ask you to talk about your life and work as Dean/priest, using prompt questions to explore further issues that you raise in the course of conversation. Topics of particular interest will include your understanding of the role of Dean as a leader in today’s church; particular constituencies that you work with; how you sustain your ministry in the long term.

I would expect to spend up to two hours with you in the interview. Place, date and time will be arranged to suit you, the interviewee.

While I would not expect there to be any harm or discomfort to you in the course of the interview please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?
You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?
The interview will be audio-taped.

This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in
which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

The information collected will be used by me for a research essay to fulfil the requirements of the Master of Ministry degree. Data obtained will be used by me as I explore the Benedictine concept of Balance as one potential model of sustaining ministry for a Dean to use.

Apart from myself the following people will have access to the raw data:-
Supervisors: Dr Ken Booth, Dr Raymond Pelly
Transcribers: Christine Nelson, Gillian Nelson

The research is being funded by me. There will be no commercial use of data.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish. The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed. Reasonable precautions will be taken to protect and destroy data gathered by email. However, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed. Caution is advised in the electronic transmission of sensitive material.

What if Participants have any Questions?
If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-
Frank Nelson or Ken Booth
Wellington Cathedral of St Paul Phone: 352 4229
Tel 04 472 0286 knblbooth@xtra.co.nz
dean@wellingtoncathedral.org.nz
Appendix 3: Consent form for Participants

MINX 591: Master of Ministry Research Essay by Frank Nelson

“Seeking Balance through Benedictine Spirituality in the ministry of a Dean in an Anglican Cathedral in New Zealand”

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:
1. my participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;

3. the data audio-tapes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed;

4. this project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.

5. there is no remuneration for taking part in this research; there is no external funding for the project; there will be no commercial use of the data.

6. The results of the project may be published and available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

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(Signature of participant)

(Date)
Appendix 4: Outline for Interviews

Name: Cathedral
How long in position: 
What background experience: 
  Education:  
  Parish/church:  
  Other:  
Specific training for this role: 
  • Tell me about being a Dean in your Cathedral,
  • Tell me about your concept of what a cathedral does…, main areas of your
    ministry…
  • Tell me about the styles/models of leadership that influence you?
  • Tell me something about the place of worship, hospitality, education in your
    place…
  • How do you make decisions about what you do, where you put energy, money
    …
  • What do you enjoy about the role of dean?
  • Tell me more about …. constituents, who are they … what demands/pressures
    …
  • Tell me about any incidents where you have been
    challenged/threatened/stretched – especially in relation to the way the
    Cathedral is used by different people
  • Tell me about looking after yourself, keeping ‘fresh’, your own spirituality, on
    going study/reading …
  • Tell me where you spend most time, greatest demands …
  • Tell me more about … civic/diocesan/parish services/music…
  • Can you identify areas of tension, contradiction …?
  • I am interested in the way we find ‘balance’ in our lives as Deans. Do you
    have any thoughts, ideas, mechanisms…
  • What keeps you going?
  • Any other areas of your life as Dean you would like to talk about
  • What would you say to a new Dean?
Appendix 5: Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the many people who have helped me in this project.

My colleagues and mentors; deans and former deans in New Zealand who agreed to be interviewed (and in some cases must have got bored as we discussed hospitality and “specials” at deans’ conferences), deans I worked with and under in South Africa, New Zealand and Hong Kong.

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St Benedict – whose Rule has challenged and encouraged me in obedience, stability and continual conversion.