


# Bless This Mess +002 'A Tired but Hopeful Clergy'

Episode +002 Description

In this episode of *Bless This Mess*, Ben and Bekah answer a question from a clergy member who is finding it difficult to bring change to a church where old ways are deeply rooted. They dive into the challenges of leading transformation, exploring how much of ourselves we can reveal while in leadership and the importance of *"love your neighbour as yourself"* looking after our own needs while caring for others.

They discuss the psychology of change, including the fears it brings, how to honour the past without being trapped by it, and practical approaches to navigating resistance in a congregation. Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs, they unpack why church growth can put immense pressure on leaders and communities alike, and offer insight into balancing self-care with the call to lead. Whether you're facing change in your church, workplace, or personal life, Ben and Bekah provide honest, thoughtful guidance on moving forward while staying grounded.

**Warning: This episode contains themes around mental health. If you find any of the content difficult or triggering, please consider reaching out for support. You can contact Samaritans on 116 123 (free, 24/7), call NHS 111 and press 2 for the urgent mental health helpline in England, or in an emergency call 999. Clergy may also wish to contact Clergy Support Trust or their diocesan wellbeing team.**

Episode +002 'A Tired But Hopeful Clergy'

Dear Bless This Mess,

I am a minister who loves my calling, yet lately it feels as though the calling is loving me back a little less.I serve a church that has been faithful for generations. The stories on the walls, the routines of worship, even the way the tea is made after services are steeped in memory and meaning. I honour that, but I have also been entrusted with leading this community into a future that looks different from its past, and that is where the ache begins.

Any small change feels like a battle. New ideas are met with folded arms and phrases like "we tried that once" or "that's not how we do things here". When I speak of mission, inclusion, and adapting to reach people who never cross our threshold, I can feel the room tighten. Smiles stay polite, but resistance bubbles beneath the surface.I try to listen carefully. I find myself replaying meetings late at night, wondering whether I am being too pushy or not brave enough. I carry the unspoken disappointment of those who wish I would keep things as they are, alongside my own fear that standing still is a slow kind of dying.

What troubles me most is how thin my own reserves have become. I preach hope while feeling weary. I encourage patience while running short on it myself. My prayer life has become more functional than nourishing, and rest feels like an indulgence I haven't earned. I know I am meant to shepherd others, but I am unsure who is shepherding me.

So my questions are: how do I bring change and new life while leading a community that resists change? How do I care for myself and remain tenderhearted rather than a brittle husk, faithful without becoming exhausted, and courageous without burning out entirely?

I want to love these people well and to survive these challenges with my soul intact.

Yours, A tired but hopeful Clergy

Show Notes

- Ben took time off and the world still survived! Feel free to write to Ben to find out his terrible film suggestions.

- Egg Timers- Can you boil an egg for 20 minutes? Time keeping in therapy.

- We read the question from a 'tired but hopeful Clergy'

- Acknowledge what a brave and vulnerable letter it is and how the clergy can self reflect.

- How vulnerable should a community leader be? How much of yourself should you show?

- Change Resistance and control. How we stay safe by controlling things around us.

- What does good care of Clergy look like?

- Recent church statistics proves Clergy burnout prevalent https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2025/5-december/news/uk/clergy-feel-isolated-and-lonely-latest-living-ministry-study-concludes

- Put on your own oxygen mask first

- 'Love your neighbour as yourself' Matthew 22 vs 39

- Are we loving ourselves in order to love others?

- Maslow Hierarchy Of Needs https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html

- Idea of Rest - in a world that encourages the opposite

- How do we 'model' our own behaviour?

- Church growth and the pressure the institute puts on clergy.

- Can we think about growth in a different way? Can we begin with what we around have.

- Boundaries; responsible for congregation not the congregational comfort

- Edward Freidman: Failure of Nerve https://www.amazon.com/Failure-Nerve-Leadership-Age-Quick/dp/159627042X

- What is emphatic leadership?

- How do we come into situations?

- Sankofa- going back to fetch something, especially when you've left it behind https://www.stockton.edu/sankofa/about.html#:~:text=Sankofa

- Fall and Redemption, how to reach back to the past.

- Ben reflects on what he felt about his response.

***Bless This Mess*** *is a Clergy Support Trust podcast, produced in association with Meraki Creative Therapies. Audio production was by La Barca Sound, and it was recorded by Nick Sowden on location at All Saints Church, Tilford. The podcast was produced by Bekah Nelson and Nick Sowden, with content developed by Meraki Creative Therapies and Catherine Good. It was hosted by Bekah Nelson and Ben Cahill-Nicholls, with intro scripts written by Louise Stanley. Our podcast is free of advertisements, so if you find value in these episodes please consider becoming a supporter.*

*Our podcast is free of advertisements so if you find value in these episodes, please consider becoming a supporter.*

*Questions + Comments*

Bless this Mess can not exist in isolation. If you have a question for our podcast please click this link or contact us via email: **

If you'd like to comment on the podcast you can do so via our social media platforms: **