

Toolbox Items

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Presbytery Pastoral Care Network,

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The letters and numbers to left of the index page refer to a series of thumbnail sketches describing the activity described in the ToolBox. If you want to introduce the ToolBox and its content to a COM or other group, you can divide the group into several groups, provide each with a different set of thumbnail sketches, and have them pick out those that they believe would be most effective in their presbytery. Then, they can share their choices with the whole group and build a strategy based on those activities.

These thumbnail sketches can be acquired by emailing the editor, steve@smccutchan.com.

We also invite questions and suggestions for additions to the ToolBox.

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Introduction

Who Educates the Congregation?

One of the difficulties in helping congregations do a better job of caring for their pastors is that there is no one to raise the issue. If the pastor raises the issue, it feels like s/he wants to be pampered or is whining. It feels as if the pastor is being self-serving when the Gospel s/he proclaims emphasizes that Jesus and his disciples came to serve rather than be served. We forget that the gospels make clear that there were those who focused their energies on caring for Jesus.

Most congregations are not averse to treating their staff well. They just don't think about it. Unconsciously the congregation assumes the pastor will take care of himself or herself, and if they get broken, the congregation will simply find a replacement.

Most congregations recognize that the pain and discomfort of saying goodbye to one pastor, going through the process of finding another one, and then adjusting to that new pastor is an exhausting process. When you suggest to them that treating a pastor well may make for longer pastorates, they usually nod their heads in agreement. However, who initiates that conversation?

Recognizing the demands of the pastorate and the resulting stress and strain on the pastor and staff, the PPCN offers this ToolBox of strategies to assist presbyteries, congregations, and pastors and educators bring a healthier perspective to the work of ministry.

The PPCN suggests that the place for that conversation to begin is when the Committee on Ministry is educating the Pastoral Nominating Committee. As the committee moves to calling a pastor, the COM should guide the committee in designing a good plan for pastoral care. Actually, having a good plan can help make the call even more attractive.

Using the following grid, look at the areas that are part of your plan in caring for pastors and educators. Thinking of each of the four entities on the left column of the grid, make use of ideas from the ToolBox and your own creativity to identify specific actions that each might take to build support in these six areas as defined below.

Responsible Entity	Physical	Emotional	Family	Financial	Spiritual	Vocational
Presbytery						
Presbytery Staff						
Congregation						
Pastor						

Physical and Emotional Health:

It is vital for ministry that members of the church staff and specialized ministers maintain themselves physically and emotionally. Doing so testifies to the way in which all members can care for the gift of life God has given each of us

Family Health:

We expect that the families of our pastors/educators will be models of health and faith for the rest of the congregation. Those very expectations often put stress on the family. In addition, the schedule and demands of ministry increase the stress on the pastor's or educator's family.

Financial Health

When congregations struggle with budgets and clergy are reluctant to advocate for their own salary, the financial stress increases on a clergy family. Judicatories can assist in helping pastors and congregations arrive at a just and fair compensation that maintains the health of the pastoral relationship.

Spiritual Health

Spiritual leaders are called to be the mediators of God's spirit breathed into the congregation. If a person only breathes out, s/he soon runs out of breath. If clergy/educators are to avoid becoming cynical or even angry at the disappointments of ministry and avoid the dangers of egotism that comes from public praise, it is important that they develop a discipline for attending to their own spiritual life.

Vocational Health

Clergy/educators enter the ministry with a great deal of idealism. They believe that God is calling them to express their love of God in a way that serves others and can make a difference in the world around them.

The demands of ministry can require compromises and create tensions that distance them from the enthusiasm of their original call. When they find themselves involved in labor that either distorts or is contradictory to their call, the result can be cynicism, anger, defeat, or despair. If they lose touch with the *why* of their call, they can forget the value of continuing to struggle with the challenges of ministry.

The PPCN invites you to make use of this collection of strategies and design new ones of your own to support the ministry of our churches. When you discover a new activity that is effective, we encourage you to share it with the church by going to www.pastoralcarenetwork.org.

Approaches to Self-Care for the Pastor/Educator

Physical:

Caring for our Bodies P-1

The recent report on the increased obesity of clergy in our nation reminds us that we need to be intentional about the care of our bodies. It is not unusual in our culture to respond to stress by eating or drinking in an unhealthy manner. As pastors and educators (P/E), we need to take seriously that this is a spiritual issue. As Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 6:19, “Do you not know that your body is a temple (or sanctuary) of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?”

By virtue of our call, we are not our own. We have been set aside by God for a special purpose. As part of our responding to that call, we need to pay attention to our physical well being. Yet, like all human beings, we are also subject to the stresses of our culture. Therefore, we need to be intentional about caring for our physical selves.

As a beginning, we need to give ourselves permission to take time for physical exercise. We need to see the time required to do this as part of being obedient to our call. If taking time for physical exercise is not already a habit, we need to build in support for altering our already filled schedule.

First, take a piece of paper and make a quick list of the variety of ways that one can engage in physical exercise. As individuals there are such things as walking, running, swimming, weight lifting, etc. Once you have your list, look at it and see what is most attractive to you. What is a modest way that you can begin with one form of exercise that is already attractive to you?

Second, look at some of the ways people get exercise in connection with other people. Some play sports, attend exercise classes, find a partner to walk with, run with, etc. Who do you know who might enjoy partnering with you to begin a better exercise program? Having someone else who expects you to participate helps build support for changing your habits. Some people have found the benefit of an early morning or evening walking program.

A next, rather scary step would be to explore the spiritual dimensions of taking care of your physical body, preaching or teaching a course on it, and sharing with your congregation your desire to improve your body and inviting them to do the same. There is nothing like public commitment to strengthen your resolve.

The Board of Pensions offers an array of resources to assist in leading a healthier lifestyle.

The key to better health and well-being is to lead a healthier lifestyle no matter where you are in the spectrum. The Board provides options to help you and covered family members. Learn more about each of the following programs at our website at www.pensions.org

Physical Care of Self in Ministry P-2

There is lots of evidence that clergy do not take care of themselves physically. Clergy are engaged in a stressful profession and neglecting their bodies makes them very vulnerable.

Everyone knows that in the abstract, but it is easy to neglect care of one's body in practice. The most obvious areas of care for one's body are diet and physical exercise.

A first step towards improvement is becoming conscious of your reality. Take a piece of paper and describe how you are currently paying attention to your diet and getting your exercise. Are you pleased with the result? While you are at it, describe a first step in improving your behavior.

There is always the temptation of *small indulgences*. *I've been working hard, doing so much good, I deserve that candy bar or extra order of French fries. I've been so busy meeting the demands of my congregation that I have just been too tired to go exercise.* On your paper, list a couple of small indulgences that you have given in to during the past month.

Not all indulgences are bad but they can easily get out of hand. Becoming conscious of them is a first step to keeping a balance in your life.

Don't set yourself up for failure by comparing what you do now with some ideal that is impossible to achieve. Think about one small step you can take and let that be a beginning.

The Rising Weight of Clergy P-3

Presbyterians Today reported in their March 2009 issue a startling study of the changing weight of pastors. In the past 17 years, the average weight of pastors has increased eleven pounds, from 181 pounds in 1991 to 192 pounds in 2008. The share of pastors who are obese has doubled from 14 percent to 27 percent in that time period. This increase, according to their study, occurred for both male and female pastors, and younger and older pastors. This is not the type of equality that we are seeking.

There is evidence that this tendency towards obesity affects people's mental health. Is it possible that it also affects their spiritual health and their capacity to engage in effective ministry?

One must recognize that there is a built in prejudice against heavy people. There is no physical description of Jesus in the Scriptures. The images we have are developed out of our imagination. Still, have you ever seen an image of a fat Jesus or even a heavy set Jesus? This, of course, is in contrast to the Asian image of a fat Buddha.

There is good reason to examine our prejudice regarding weight, but we also need to recognize the health costs, both mentally and physically, to inappropriate weight. And we should ask what this increase in weight among our clergy is saying about how they handle the stress and challenges of ministry.

On the positive side, the same report found that 21 percent of Presbyterian clergy are in formal weight-loss programs and 39 percent belong to fitness centers. The Board of Pensions has a helpful weight loss program that is available to participating members. You can access it at Weight Management Program: 866-640-2772

The full survey may be found at www.pcusa.org/research.

The Board of Pensions partners with ActiveHealth Management to provide you with resources to improve diet and nutrition on the ActiveHealth web site provide health and wellness information; to get started login go to MyActiveHealth.com/pcusa or call ActiveHealth at 866-794-3127.

Exercise plays a huge part by improving your health and boosting your sense of well-being. Incorporate exercise into your weekly schedule at least five days a week. ActiveHealth provides a host of resources to help you get started; to get started logon at MyActiveHealth.com/pcusa or call ActiveHealth at 866-794-3127.

Preventative Health Care P-4

Studies show that good preventive care reduces healthcare costs, improves medical outcomes, and even saves lives. That's why there's no office copay for annual well visits for Benefits Plan members to network primary care physicians and gynecologists. You, your spouse, and your covered dependents, if applicable, will not be charged office copays for covered preventive care visits, so that when you see network doctors for annual preventive care and get approved tests and screenings, it won't cost you anything. Be sure to give your doctor an up-to-date preventive schedule, which shows the screenings, tests, and immunizations that are covered for your age group. This schedule is available on our website at www.pensions.org call the Board of Pensions to request the preventive schedule (800.773-7752)

Manage Your Health Condition P-5

Get help from ActiveHealth Management for many chronic diseases or conditions. Through their health management program, Informed Care Management, you'll be assigned a nurse who will work with you over the phone as your health coach. Your nurse coach can help you make smart choices about treating and controlling your health issues. By working with a nurse, you may be able to delay the onset of complications — or even avoid them altogether. Keep in mind that you don't have to be sick to call the 24-Hour Nurse Line, a hotline provided through ActiveHealth Management. You can speak with an experienced, registered nurse at any time about your health concerns. Under your medical coverage, you do not pay office visit copay for your annual wellness exam with either a primary care provider or a gynecologist for any age appropriate tests and screening as listed on the Preventive Care sheet, available on the Board of Pensions website at www.pensions.org; or for more information, contact ActiveHealth call 866-794-3127.

If you have an ongoing medical condition, you can get help managing it from a program provided through your medical benefit. Offered by ActiveHealth Management, Informed Care Management (formerly "disease management") can help you to better manage your health and work with your doctors to improve your care. The program will be offered at no cost to you if you have any of the medical conditions listed below, and it's your choice whether to participate. The program pairs you with a nurse who will serve as your personal health coach, providing one-on-one telephone support. He or she will work with you — and your family, as appropriate — on all of your medical conditions.

Your nurse will:

- answer your questions
- send you specific information about your health concerns
- review warning signs to watch for
- advise you on topics to discuss with your doctor

When you work with a nurse through the Informed Care Management Program, he or she typically will schedule calls with you about four times a year. These calls are not a substitute for a visit to the doctor;

rather, they are intended to help you work more effectively with your doctor and avoid future complications. Conditions included as part of this program are:

- heart and blood vessel conditions
- diabetes
- lung conditions
- stomach and intestine conditions
- kidney conditions
- Cancer
- bone and joint conditions
- neurologic conditions
- cystic fibrosis
- HIV
- sickle cell anemia

Programs also are available for children and teens with the following conditions:

- asthma
- diabetes
- cystic fibrosis
- high blood pressure
- sickle cell anemia
- weight management/obesity

Your medical benefits include a confidential Case Management Program, provided by ActiveHealth. This program helps you when you have frequent or prolonged hospital admissions, require ongoing healthcare services in your home, or need ongoing care in outpatient settings. Case Management helps members get the best available treatment when underlying health conditions may be complex or challenging to address.

The program can assist you by:

- helping you understand the resources available to you
- coordinating and helping arrange medical services for you
- providing education and support for you and your family

A nurse will work with you and your physician to facilitate approval for medically necessary services under the provisions of the Medical Plan. Your nurse will also help evaluate treatment needs and options under the direction of your attending physician. Contact ActiveHealth Management: 866-794.3127

Tobacco Quitline P-6

Quitting smoking or the use of tobacco products is no easy task, but it's especially difficult to do on one's own. Many tobacco "quitters" credit the help of counselors and nicotine replacement therapy for their success. If you use tobacco products, your medical coverage provides a benefit, the Mayo Clinic Tobacco Quitline Smoking Cessation Program, which can help you, too. The Quitline provides information and support for tobacco-free living at no cost to you. If you enroll in Mayo's Smoking Cessation Program and work with a Quitline counselor, you can receive certain over-the-counter nicotine replacement products *free of charge* from the Mayo Clinic pharmacy. Certain prescription smoking cessation medications, which your counselor will help coordinate, are also covered (subject to normal Benefits Plan provisions). Contact Mayo Clinic at 888-642-5566. Costs

24 Hour Nurse Line P-7

ActiveHealth Management: 866-642-5566

- Access 24/7 experienced registered nurses who are supported by physicians as needed.
- Seek advice about health symptoms you may be experiencing or a diagnosis you have received.
- Get help to make decisions about health, including recommending when you should go directly to the emergency room.
- Ask about treatments suggested by your physician.
- Learn ways to improve your healthy lifestyle.

Telephone Coaching Program P-8 *Employee Assistance Program (EAP)*

Administered by CIGNA Behavioral Health (CBH), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential way to get help coping with life's challenges. Call any time to talk about stress, relationships, family issues, emotional health concerns, career concerns, and substance abuse issues.

Talk to someone about it

Your in-person EAP counseling benefit covers six free face-to-face sessions per identified issue with a network counselor. If you need additional help, use your behavioral health benefits to receive mental health or substance abuse treatment. This benefit is available to both you and your covered dependents.

Online and telephonic resources and provider-finders can help you improve your emotional well-being.

Get help with finances

In today's economy, finances are another likely source of stress, yet saving for the future is more important than ever. That's why qualified financial counseling, by phone and at no cost to you, is available through the Enhanced Financial Services of the Employee Assistance Program. Get help from trained experts in tax issues, budgeting, credit, debt consolidation, and estate planning, among other topics. Contact CBH to learn more.

Get help with legal issues

Through the EAP, you also have access to a no-cost, 30-minute consultation with an attorney, who can be retained for additional services at a discounted rate. The free consultation may be by phone or in person. For more information about your EAP benefit, visit Pensions.org

Stress Management (ActiveHealth Management)

- Dedicated wellness coach.
- Individual telephone coaching.
- Convenient evening and weekend coaching hours.
- Workbook and toolkit.
- Support available 24/7.
- Work online at your pace for up to six months.
- Have six private online discussions/support sessions.
- Access personalized online assessments, tools, workbook, trackers, guides and links.
- Telephone program: 866-794-3127; or login at: www.cignabehavioral.com (Employer ID: pcusa)

Emotional

The Rollercoaster Ministry E-1

Ministry places you on an emotional rollercoaster. At one moment you are preparing a sermon. Then someone interrupts you with a personal problem for which they seek counsel. On the same day, you may face a complaint about some trivial event, prepare for the baptism of an infant, plan for a youth retreat, and engage in an ecumenical response to some community event. Then you open the mail and read of some member's complaint about something you have done or failed to do.

There are highs, lows, boredom, and continual demands. Is it any wonder that you feel emotionally drained at the end of a week? When you engage in this week after week, it takes its toll. The better a pastor you are, the heavier the toll.

Consider some practices that can provide you relief from emotional stress. It is important to identify a variety of strategies that fit into various time slots. It may be that you only have a few minutes and just need to learn how to breathe. Another time, in between hospital calls, you may need to avail yourself of fifteen minutes in the hospital chapel. There are times you need to give yourself permission to read a good book or take a walk. Sometimes knowing that you have a regularly scheduled appointment with a spiritual guide may get you through the day.

Checking One's Emotional Blood Pressure E-2

Anyone who thinks about it recognizes that church professions place pastors and educators (P/E) under a lot of emotional stress. The problem is that we, including pastors and educators, don't think about it very much.

Stress comes in many forms. It can certainly come from crisis in our lives or in our churches. It can also come from good experiences, successes, and opportunities. More often than we realize, it comes from the little pressures and irritations that are a regular part of our day and continually gnaw at our nerves. Nerve endings that are rubbed raw take longer to heal than what can be accomplished by a good night's sleep or even an occasional extra day off.

It is important that we develop strategies by which we take care of ourselves emotionally. A key strategy is finding a way to name and own the emotional responses generated by our daily experiences. A simple way of taking your emotional blood pressure is to get a small notepad that you can carry around with you. At least for a couple of weeks, make it a practice of keeping record of how you are feeling at a variety of moments in your day. Don't over analyze it. Simply record it and if possible what was the incident that generated that feeling. Be sure to record both positive and negative, strong and mild responses.

After a couple of weeks, go back and graph your flow of feelings. On the vertical side of the graph put numbers to represent intensity and along the horizontal line list the hours of the day at least from the time you get up till the time you go to bed. Using two colors of pens, graph both your good feelings and your negative feelings.

Now look at the graph and see what occurs to you. It may be helpful to do this with a friend and let them also reflect on what it looks like. The first thing you are looking for is reoccurring patterns. Are their particular times of day or types of incidents that repeatedly stimulate similar responses?

Now take those patterns to God in prayer. Ask what God would like you to do with respect to what you have identified. Whether it is a negative or a positive response that is stimulated, each holds possibilities for redemptive actions. You might want to ask whether there are any biblical images that are prompted by specific types of response. Feel free to play with possibilities. It may be helpful to write about your responses. Sometimes that can surface new possibilities.

Signs of Compassion Fatigue E-3

Dr. George Morelli in an article in the Lawrence Schmidt Center newsletter identified some of the signs of compassion fatigue that can occur for clergy.

1. Becoming preoccupied with those you are helping.
2. Not finding satisfaction with one's ministry.
3. Experiencing a loss of energy.
4. Finding difficulty separating ones own feelings and spiritual life from the problems being dealt with.
5. Increased irritability in everyday matters.
- 6 Concluding that one's priestly activities are not worthwhile.

From a spiritual perspective, a key factor may be the inability to separate ones spiritual life from either the problems in another person's life or the public measures of success in our society. Once we become over identified with the tasks we are performing, then those problems, rather than God, are directing our lives.

Compassion fatigue is more than physical exhaustion. It is an emotional draining and a loss of connection with the source of our call. To draw upon the work of Viktor Frankle, when we lose touch with the "why," then our soul begins to dry up. If you look at either the major biblical figures or the lives of many of the saints of the faith, there was an inner strength that enabled them to keep going despite suffering, failure, and defeat. They were able to hold on to the source that gave their life meaning and their work satisfaction. That is what we need to discover how to do.

A pastor experiences a cacophony of emotions ranging from ecstasy to utter despair from the various people s/he encounters. We are taught to empathize with those who come to us. When you continually absorb ecstasy, despair, anger, joy, and cynical doubt day after day, you can easily become numb to your own feelings. Yet, if you develop that medical distance recommended to doctors, it is easy to slip into going through the motions of being a pastor and lose the passion of your call.

We need to recognize the symptoms of compassion fatigue and learn counter measures that can help us restore our emotional balance. As Jesus instructed his disciples, so we must at times pull away and give ourselves the opportunity to rest. It is important that each identify what are those activities and experiences that are rejuvenating for them. You need to know what you can do if you only have an hour and what you can do with a day or a week. For some people it is a hobby, for others it is reading a good book or going fishing or playing a sport.

The hobbies and mini-retreats can provide you a needed respite, but you also need to find ways to stay connected with the source that transcends the immediate and gives you hope when all else seems overwhelming. Moses' capacity to sustain himself over the 40 years did not come from his skill as an organizer. It came from knowing that even if he could not enter the Promised Land, his efforts in getting there were not in vain. So it needs to be for you.

Sabbaths and Sanctuaries E-4

Henri Nouwen once described the sanctuary as a valuable place because it was useless. You don't earn money, plan business strategies, produce products, etc in a sanctuary. When you enter a sanctuary you leave the world behind and focus on your relationships with God and neighbor.

In a sense, a sanctuary of a church might be considered a physical Sabbath. The Sabbath commandment prohibited all those useful and productive activities that we are always engaged in and redirected our focus on God and neighbor. Jesus' summary of the commandments as love of God and neighbor has this same emphasis.

In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, there is a section in which Jesus cautions us against the draining power of anxiety. "Do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What will we wear?'" (6:31).

The nature of ministry is filled with stress and a good measure of anxiety. For our own emotional health, we need to develop strategies in which we interrupt that stress by entering a sanctuary, whether physical or psychological, and refocus ourselves. Even brief Sabbaths of 10 to 20 minutes, practiced on a regular basis can have both a calming and rejuvenating effect on us.

Try a simple experiment. If you have either a watch or an electronic calendar that has an alarm built in, set it for 10:30 and 3:30 every day for a month. When the alarm goes off, enter a brief Sabbath time in which you offer thanks to God for your life and God's call in your life. If you are with someone when the alarm goes off, simply zone out for a minute for an interior prayer, or if that is impossible, make a note to do that at the first opportunity. If you are not with someone or can excuse yourself, perhaps for a bathroom break, enter the stall and spend 5 minutes alone with God. The objective is not measured in length of time but the regularity of interrupting your day twice to enter a sanctuary that helps you stay in touch with that which is important.

There are many ways that we can care for our emotional health. It can be as simple as making sure that you interrupt the intensity of your work with occasional experiences of fun. That is why a hobby can be so important. For some people keeping a journal can be a way of caring for their emotional life. Exercise can care not only for the body but the emotions as well.

Taking time to engage in the pleasure of relationships can also help our emotional state. God's statement in Genesis 2:18 that it is not good for a man to be alone speaks to a major truth that transcends though certainly includes the issue of sexuality. Good relationships are critical for our emotional health.

Stop and make a list of the ways that you interrupt the intensity of your life through some type of Sabbath experience. Add to the list other ways that you might try.

Plan Something Special E-5

One strategy for taking care of yourself is to occasionally plan something special that interrupts the pattern of your life.

What might you plan that would interrupt your routine and allow you to have a refreshing experience. It might be pure fun but even if it involves a lot of work, it allows you to step back from the normal pattern of your days and that can have inspiring effects. In some ways, that too can be a Sabbath experience.

Even the planning and the anticipation of the event will be beneficial. That too moves your mind in a different direction. One pastor planned a sabbatical that brought together two unlikely passions. He was an avid chef as well as very interested in acting to bring about peace in the world. His sabbatical combined learning to cook unique dishes from several countries that were challenged by violence, visiting those countries, and then preparing banquets of peace for groups when he returned during which he educated them to the issues involved. He particularly focused on the Middle East. Just to hear him talk about his plans before he left revealed the renewed energy that he was experiencing.

Keep looking for ways to care for yourself and to assist churches and presbyteries or judicatories to care for pastors and educators.

Anger and Emotional Health E-6

Ephesians 4:26-27 “Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil” advises Scripture. When you are taking care of your emotional health, this is important advice.

Anger is a natural part of our psyche and repressing it can cause serious damage. As Scripture advises, the healthiest response is to deal with your anger when it occurs. However, sometimes it is not strategically valuable to confront someone who has evoked your anger. Yet, for your emotional health, you need to learn to deal with your anger in a way that does not harm you.

The first step is to nurture the ability to name your feeling of anger. We are all too capable of denying that we feel anger and letting it simmer below our consciousness. To honestly confess, at least to yourself, that you are feeling angry is an important step towards being in control of your feelings.

A second step is to recognize that you have chosen to be angry in response to some condition or action. That is not always a wrong choice but it is a choice. Viktor Frankl, in *Man’s Search for Meaning*, suggests that the last and most important freedom is the freedom to choose how we will respond. No one can take that away from us. We can choose to be angry at someone, to pity them, to laugh at them, or to ignore them. They can’t control that. Only we can. Therefore, when we admit that we are angry, we can also choose to make a different response.

That is not always easy and often anger seems to be such a spontaneous response that we are not aware that we have made that choice. Therefore, the third step is to reflect on the situation that has evoked anger in us and consider whether we would like to make a different response. In doing so, we are less controlled by another person and more in control of our self.

The steps you take when you feel anger are important factors in maintaining the health of your ministry.

Boundaries and Human Touch E-7

One of the great quandaries that has evolved in ministry is how to set boundaries in interpersonal relationships. This ranges everywhere from whether a pastor should date anyone in the congregation to where hugs and touching are appropriate and where they are not. While there is no perfect answer, it is important for a pastor to have reflected ahead of time on where they want to draw the lines in a variety of situations. Many clergy get themselves into trouble because they have not reflected on the issue ahead of time.

Particularly as we develop more technological means of communication, there is an increasing sense of loneliness among humans. Thirty some years ago one author coined the phrase “High Tech, High Touch” to suggest that the hunger for human touch grows with our advance in technology. It is clear from many studies that humans need to be touched. The problem is that as our hunger for touch grows, the danger of inappropriate touch also increases.

This can become a very complex issue at times of crisis. Many people who experience crisis turn to pastors for counsel. Crisis often bring the sense of isolation and touching can help to reestablish the sense of community. At such times people can need the strength conveyed by a hug or some other form of human touching. However, whether because of the hunger of the counselee or the unacknowledged hunger of the pastor, hugging and holding each other can lead to inappropriate results.

One small internal rule might be what might be called the *public rule*. Would the type of touching you are engaged in be something that you would be willing to do in public where others were watching? It is not uncommon for there to be a lot of hugging and touching done in public at a time of crisis. If you can view your behavior in that light, there is a better chance that it might be appropriate.

The Ministry of Receiving E-8

Matthew 26:6-13 speaks of Jesus enjoying the hospitality of Simon the leper, whom presumably he had healed of his leprosy. The first aspect we should notice is Jesus willingness to receive Simon’s gratitude in his home. But then comes the story of a woman pouring an alabaster jar of costly ointment on his head while he was sitting at table. The disciples got upset that she was wasting this costly ointment but Jesus response is instructive. “Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me.”

It is important to learn how to receive support in your ministry. There are far too many clergy and educators who misunderstand the witness that they can make by being willing to receive support and appreciation from others in ministry. How often have you found yourself stammering or even dismissing a compliment given to you.

“You did a fantastic job in guiding the congregation through that difficult congregational meeting, pastor.”

“Oh, it wasn’t that big a deal.”

Think how dismissing the person’s compliment also diminishes the person offering it.

Maybe a better response would be, “Thanks. I’m glad to get your response. Knowing how I come across to others is really important to me.” Now you have not only received the compliment graciously but also honored the one who gave it.

It needs to be recognized that there is an important form of ministry that takes place when you ask others to help you. This is more than a pastor asking someone to serve on a committee. That can also be important but it is different from asking someone to personally help a pastor.. “This meeting is very important but I didn’t get much sleep last night, could you possibly drive me to the meeting?”

Sometimes in asking for help, you help the person you ask reflect on their own life as well. “I know that you have a demanding job as well. Could you help me understand how you balance your time with family and keep up with your professional responsibilities?”

Many people in our congregations have gifts that would help us and would feel good about sharing them if they were asked. Maybe a way to gain perspective is to recall the feeling of satisfaction that you received when you were able to help someone with a problem that s/he had. Often having the right word or action to help someone in a difficult moment results in a pastor feeling gratitude afterwards that God had called the pastor to that moment. Not only did it help that person but it helped give value to the pastor’s life as well. So if that is so good for us, why are we reluctant to offer that same feeling of satisfaction to another person?

Supporting Other Clergy E-9

Pick out a clergy, maybe in your neighborhood, not necessarily in your denomination, and invite him or her out to lunch.

It sounds so simple, doesn’t it? Yet how often do we get so caught up in the demands of the ministry that we neglect to “love our neighbor” who happens to be another clergy person. If you deliberately choose someone you don’t know very well and issue the invitation, you will discover both personal pleasure and a deep appreciation from the one you invite. You will benefit from choosing some diversity in your lunch choice. If you work in a community with a rabbi or imam, you might consider that as a possibility. You might also consider someone who appears to be different theologically or from some other perspective.

You are building a relationship that may well be beneficial in future ministry. The future of most moderate to small churches is going to be in building coalitions with other similar churches for common ministry in the community. That happens best when you have built a relationship before the specific ministry is planned.

Self-Care During Disaster Recovery E-10

(“A” = Acute/Initial stages of disaster; “R” = Long-term Recovery)

1. **A** -- Pace yourself. You will be running on adrenalin.
 - a) Take frequent breaks. Even Jesus got away from the crowd. Find a quiet place to rest and pray.
 - b) Exercise frequently – take 5-20-minute walks.
 - c) Drink lots of water.
 - d) Take multiple vitamins (Vitamin C and B complex).
 - e) Don’t forget to eat. (Avoid lots of junk food).

- f) Minimize your intake of caffeine and alcohol.
 - g) If you are on any vital medications, don't forget to take them!
2. **A** – As a leader/supervisor, you will need to “tap out” people on the relief lines and insist that they take breaks and do some of the above self-care items. **Don't argue** when someone taps **you** on the shoulder and reminds **you** to take time for yourself, whether you think you need it or not! (The perception of time “Stops” during a disaster. Go by the clock.)
 3. **A – Do** not try to perform a task that is beyond your competency/skill range. This is especially important when dealing with those who are showing symptoms of severe trauma. Refer to mental health professionals. You will have enough to do just to maintain the spiritual care of your congregation.
 4. **A** – Find someone to “debrief” with at the end of each day.
 5. **A&R** – Schedule 2 hours of “wind down” time before bed and get 8 hours of sleep. Remember, you are in it for the long-haul.
 6. **A&R** – Go see a “no brainer” movie once every two weeks. The break from reality will be good for you as will anything that can bring appropriate humor and laughter in the midst of the losses.
 7. **A&R** – Don't hesitate to “call for back-up.” There will be plenty of churches and organizations willing to help out in any way they can.
 8. **A&R** – If you are heavily invested in recovery efforts, have someone preach for you every other week. Working on a sermon and coordinating disaster relief efforts can lead to becoming overwhelmed.
 9. **A&R** – Remember “the priesthood of all believers.” Put your people to work assisting with worship services and other church maintenance activities. Don't feel as though you have to do it all – delegate!
 10. **R** – Do not neglect your family! Your family needs you. If you neglect them, you may have a domestic disaster on the home front long after the recovery period is over.
 11. **R** – As in a military deployment, role reversals occur within the home. Bills need to be paid, children need transportation, and home repairs are ongoing. Continue an ongoing conversation with your spouse concerning household responsibilities, problems, and issues. Don't turn your spouse into a single parent and be sure to acknowledge your spouse's contribution to the effort of disaster relief.
 12. **A&R** – Tend to your own spiritual need on an ongoing and daily basis.

Combating Isolation E-11

To help church professionals combat the debilitating problem of isolation, a committee on ministry could suggest strategies to employ such as the following:

1. Don't burn your former bridges. Keep close phone and/or Internet contact with best friends or close family members.

2. Seek new friendships in social and community settings that fall outside of the boundaries of your local congregation. You will not develop outside of church friendships without actively placing yourself in social situations where friendships may develop.
3. Form cordial and friendly relationships with church members but be judicious about divulging too much personal information. Other church members get jealous of the clergy and spouse's "in church" relationships. Also, many a clergy family has felt betrayed by a *close friend* when church conflicts surface.
4. Seek other clergy (clergy spouses) for support and fellowship.
5. Make it a priority to have some personal, outside of church interests, hobbies, sports, or goals. Pursue your passions!
6. Therapy is good for the soul. Don't neglect your emotional self, especially if you are in pain.
7. Become part of a clergy (or clergy spouse) support group, lectionary study group, spiritual formation group, book club, etc.
8. If single, date outside of your church's membership.
9. If married or in a relationship with a significant other, have a set weekly "date" night.
10. Take all of your vacation time and study leave and make sure it's away from your local community.
11. Your calendar is your friend. Schedule your recreation as you would your church committees. Take your weekly days off. On those days, "Thou shalt do no church work!" (Eleventh Commandment)
12. If married, make a list of future goals and activities that you would like to experience together (e.g. hiking in the Andes, skydiving, kayaking the Amazon, picnicking in a secluded meadow, bird watching, gardening, etc.).
13. Seek out someone to be your pastor and/or spiritual director.

What other creative suggestions can you add? Share these strategies with other pastors and spouses. Be willing to contact your presbytery committee on ministry if problems arise.

God's Fondness for Rascals E-12

At points of frustration in our ministry, Psalm 47 can be a helpful devotion reminding us that God uses the church and clergy with all of their frailties and limitations. Listen to the psalm as part of your devotional reflections:

"He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves."

It is curious that the psalmist refers to Jacob, his old name, rather than Israel, the name God gave him when he blessed him at the Jabbok. (Genesis 32:24-32) Up until that moment, while Jacob showed flashes of faith, the dominant feature of his personality was that of a conniver, or as his name suggested, a striver who was quite willing to trick and take advantage of others in order to better himself. Yet, like David at a later date, God seems to have a fondness for rascals.

Perhaps it is a sign of God's patient work at redemption. The psalmist celebrates the anticipated future of God's triumph. "Clap your hands, all you people; shout to God with loud songs of joy . . . He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet." The fact that this psalm is read as we celebrate the ascension recognizes that God's triumph over evil does not come in a manner that most people expect. His victory is bought a brought about by a slain lamb (Revelation 5:9) who chose to rule as a servant.

The rascals of the world, including churches that act like rascals, are not beyond hope. Jacob became Israel, one who wrestled with God and man and prevailed. (Genesis 32:28) A unique feature of Scripture is that it refuses to white-wash the leading figures of Scripture. We frequently do not understand how God's purposes can be accomplished in a world that is so resistant by a church that frequently is more interested in survival rather than faithfulness. Yet that same church hears the Scriptures, sings the songs, and prays the prayers through which God can work redemptive miracles.

"God is king over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted." Can we, as pastors and members, trust the message of God to Paul that God's grace is made perfect in our weakness?

Such thinking doesn't make us comfortable with the condition of the church but it does give us hope that maybe God did know what God was doing when the church was established. It also can help us cope with our own limitations. As a devotional exercise, review the ways that God has made use of some of your limitations in a redeeming way.

Financial

[A Financially Healthy Conversation](#) FIN-1

Finances are never easy to discuss and the assumption that pastors should be able to live on minimal salaries without complaint increases the stress. It is helpful to take some preemptive steps in laying a foundation for a healthy discussion of these subjects.

The challenge is to discover how a pastor and spouse can have a healthy discussion about finances. Conversations with spouses about finances are frequently filled with lots of emotional baggage. That suggests where to begin. We need to recognize that money becomes a symbol for a lot of emotionally laden history and discussing finances is never a completely rationale process.

A first step is for each person to write a financial biography that they share and discuss with each other. The biography includes what the financial picture looked like for his or her family of origin and how that made each feel as a child. If there were arguments between parents, how did each perceive what was going on? Were there particular subjects that frequently caused arguments, such as gift buying, vacations, alcohol expense, etc. All of this is meant to help each understand some of the buttons that, when pushed, trigger responses that seem to be more powerful than the immediate subject would normally indicate.

The next step is to name some of those buttons so that when the couple is having a conversation, each can mutually recognize what is not helpful. The couple should then agree that neither will use these buttons as a weapon in a discussion. They also should agree how each should respond when a

button has been inadvertently pushed. For example, it is not helpful to say, “You are being irrational because your father couldn’t deal with that subject either.”

A third step is to write what the couple considers a healthy financial biography for their family. Remember that the key themes are emotions and relationships. How does each want to emotionally feel when certain subjects come up? How do they want their children to feel about finances? How do they want their faith to be expressed in terms of their response to financial challenges?

Financial Health and Emotions FIN-2

This is an exercise done, either by yourself or with your spouse to become conscious of the spending patterns that you engage in. Go purchase a small, inexpensive pocket calendar. Tear out the week’s page and place it in your wallet or purse. Then for that week, every time you spend any money on even the smallest thing, mark down when and what it was. What you are doing is building a financial diary of your small expenditures. Keep this record for at least a month.

Now review your financial diary. Are there times of the day or week that you are more likely to spend some money. You are building an awareness of where the “pocket change” goes. Small expenditures are not wrong, but becoming aware of where and how can enable you to begin to make choices. You might also be surprised at how some spending is affected by the time of day or week.

If you and your spouse both agreed to keep such a diary, and then compare them, you could learn a lot about your family spending habits. Fair warning, agree ahead of time that this is not a time for accusations but simply building awareness. Agree ahead of time that when you review the month, each of you can only comment on your own spending patterns.

Next, either review your month, or better yet start a new month of keeping a financial diary. Only this time, note the feelings that accompany each expenditure. Remember this is a private diary so you can be completely honest with the process. Are you more likely to buy that expensive cup of coffee in the morning because you need a lift to start the day? Is there a tendency to buy a candy bar near the end of the week because you are growing weary of the grind? Do you tend to reward yourself with a little treat when you have just endured a hard interchange or even when you have accomplished a significant task? Somebody coined the phrase “small indulgences” to explain some of our decisions. I’ve finished this really challenging project. I “deserve” to treat myself to a pair of shoes, a hot fudge sundae, a movie, etc. None of the above is wrong in itself but it can easily become a pattern that causes a problem. By keeping the emotional-financial diary, you are able to evaluate your own emotional response to how you are spending your money.

When we began, we knew that our calling required a certain amount of sacrifice, but in the process, especially if it also causes marital strain, it is hard not to feel a little sorry for ourselves. This is where we need to not only become conscious of our feelings but also bring them into conversation with our sense of call. Begin by composing a stream of conscious essays writing for about 20 uncensored minutes on how you feel about your salary, the stresses that it causes in your life, and the feelings that arise when you compare what you are receiving versus other professions with considerably less demands. The more honest you are when you write this, the better it will be for you. No one else has to see it.

Next, write for 20 minutes or so on your sense of call and the often unfair challenges that you know you have to confront in pursuing this call. Assume for the purpose of your essay, that God is truly

asking you to make this sacrifice. Where is God in all of this? Don't dwell on the "poor me" aspect but rather the "nobleness" of the cause toward which you are working.

If we feel like a victim, we are trapped by negative feelings. If, on the other hand, we are convicted that we are making sacrifices for a greater cause, then there is honorable purpose to what we are doing.

Family

Making Space for Family Fun FAM-1

Whether you are a family of two adults, or you have children, or even if you are single and relate to a family from a distance, it is important that you pay attention to fun as a healthy medicine for your relationships. While spontaneous fun is a wonderful experience of grace, most of us need to be intentional about making space for experiences of fun.

A healthy exercise for any family configuration would be to set aside some time to brainstorm together a variety of fun experiences in which you might participate. Be creative even in this brainstorming experience. Depending on your family, you might want to order a pizza, or pop some popcorn, or go to an ice cream parlor and order some sundaes as the setting for your family idea generating experience. (For health reasons, you might not want to do all three of these at the same time.) If you are single and are trying to relate to family members from a distance, you might even want to try a series of email exchanges.

You can set up your own boundaries, it is suggested that you try to come up with a variety of ideas, many of which cost very little. Some ideas should only take a short period of time but others might be vacation ideas or one day adventures. As you identify them, you might want to put them into categories. Some categories might be: Those that can be done at the last minute and those that take a lot of planning. Those that are free and those we need to save for. Those that are top priority and those that might be fun but are low on the list.

Especially if you are dealing with teenagers or adults, the calendar is the next step. It is easy for the creativity and excitement of the brainstorming to fall into the background if you don't identify at least a couple of dates that you can set aside to begin to experience the fun.

If you have children, it would probably be fun for them to be given an important role in pulling off the experience. For example, if you are planning a game night with the family, what if the children were the ones that got to organize the games and plan the evening. If you are going to a movie, they get to choose the movie.

Because you are part of a family that is affected by emergencies in the congregation, all need to understand from the beginning that sometimes plans need to be changed. However, if you have them on the calendar, it is understood that if plans change, they should be changed to another specific date.

The important thing is for your family to become conscious about the types of experiences that they would enjoy doing together as a family. Stepping outside the seriousness of our lives and sharing in laughter and pleasure can be a good glue for family bonds.

Intentional Couple Fun Time FAM-2

Many pastors, because their work draws out their other-directed and serious side, forget how to play. It is an important trait to develop and it is a good witness to your congregation at the same time.

Couples, whether they have children or not, need to be intentional about finding couple time. Especially when your life is very demanding and the children need a lot of attention, it is easy to neglect the time for your own relationship. Sometimes we can even hide behind our busyness and avoid dealing with issue that if faced immediately can be easily resolved. In addition, even if everything is going along well, couples need to have some fun and some private time together on a regular basis.

Some couples have a regularly scheduled “date night.” Some get season tickets to a theater, sports event, or concert series. If you know it is on your calendar and you have paid for it, there is a better chance that you will set aside the time.

Sharing a meal away from family and obligations can be an important time to focus on each other. Of course nice restaurants can be special but picnics or grabbing a Subway sandwich can be an inexpensive way and often just as fun. You could add to the spice of the event by deciding that at different times one of you would plan the evening for the other and make it a surprise.

Recognize that there are members of your congregation who would take great pleasure in providing you a free evening to yourselves by offering to baby sit for your family. Sometimes by being reluctant to ask for such help, you are denying someone else the pleasure derived from helping you. Remember how often you have felt satisfaction in being able to offer help to another person.

Finally, there is real value in taking some time to brainstorm a variety of fun experiences that you would like to do as a couple. Broaden your vision by choosing a wide variety of ideas. You might be surprised at some secret desire that your spouse has or an idea that you had not recognized until you started talking. Make sure that the list includes activities that might only take a couple of hours as well as daylong events. It should also include things that can be done at the last minute with little preparation as well as those that take planning. Sometimes there can be joy in the planning and anticipation.

Family Gratitude FAM-3

As a pastor, consider some of the many ways that members of your family support you in your ministry. Some suggestions to trigger your own memory. Far more frequently than most members of your congregation, your spouse and your children are present in worship and many of the other activities of the church. They are frequently your chief support group when you need emotional nurture. They are often worker-bees when you need an extra pair of hands. They are often the ones that make the sacrifice when you are called away to attend a member of the congregation. They can be hurt when they hear someone criticizing you. They feel the pressure from the fish-bowl reality of your life.

You could add many more in your specific situation. Now here is your assignment. Think about a specific way that one of your family members has been helpful or supportive of you. Write that person, an individual member of your own family, a personal note of thanks.

If you would do that occasionally and, depending on which member you choose, provide a small appropriate gift, you would be surprised what that would do for the whole family.

Family Thanksgiving FAM-4

When asked, it is fairly easy to come up with a list of ways in which being a pastor and a pastor's family adds stress to the family. It is important to acknowledge this reality and develop ways to handle such stress. However, one needs to avoid developing a victim mentality and having a pity party.

One way to do that is to occasionally recognize the positive side of this equation. The design of such a discussion will differ depending on the ages of your family members.

If you have small children, you may want to make this conversation into a game. Play pastor's family spin the bottle. Place a bottle in the middle of the family gathered in a circle. Spin the bottle and see who it points to. That person must tell the rest one of the good things about being in a pastor's family. Then spin again and repeat the process. Each good answer gets a point and the first person to get 5 points gets to sit there while the other members prepare and serve him or her a special dessert.

If your children are late middle-school and above, the thanksgiving discussion may take on a different design. There would be positive power in simply having a discussion about what each sees as a positive part of being in a pastor's family. Let the pastor keep silent and simply listen. When they have completed their thoughts, the pastor then develops a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the blessings they have received as a family.

If your family is open to a more creative design, you might want to have some discussion on what your family is thankful for and then invite each member to create a simple poem expressing their thanksgiving for the family. Depending on the nature of the family, you may want to suggest a particular form for the poem such as haiku, or some other type of poetry that is easy to follow. However, if a person is so inclined towards free verse or other forms, then they should develop their own poem.

Each poem could be the basis for family grace during the rest of the week.

Extending Family Thanksgiving FAM-5

Clergy families can offer special support and thanksgiving to other clergy families. Have some discussion within your family about another clergy family of which you are familiar. You might list some of the good things you think that pastor is doing and some of the stresses that s/he is under.

Then as a family, compose a letter to the family of the pastor. Celebrate with them some of the good things that are happening in his or her ministry. Share with them your awareness of some of the pressures that good ministry places on the pastor's family. If appropriate, even name some of the particular pressures of which you are aware. Acknowledge some pressures that only another pastor's family can understand.

Conclude the letter by offering thanks for the whole family and their support of the ministry. Also thank them for sharing with your family in the continuing challenge of bearing good news to the community.

Don't ask for anything in return. Simply let it be an expression of thanks from your family to theirs. Be prepared for a shocked response from them because how often does one clergy family ever

express thanks to another. It is, however, a good idea and both families may feel blessed by the experience.

Family Fun During Advent FAM-6

One of the prices we pay in our profession is that our family can feel neglected during such high stress times as Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter. It is important to carve out some special time for the family. Of course it depends on the age of your children or if there are only you and your spouse in the home. Regardless of the circumstances, an evening should be set aside for the gift of laughter.

First, there is the meal to be considered. The meal should be constructed in such a way that every member of the family can participate in its preparation. It might be a good time to have some recorded music playing. Small children like to decorate cookies or make candy; older children can help with such items as making pizza or preparing a salad. Especially this meal should have a dessert that helps make it special. Maybe someone can even prepare that as a surprise. Be creative and imaginative in what you do.

Next, there should be some fun activities. It is time to be silly and even to make fun of some of the stressful features and people of the church. With proper caution that the family must keep what happens during the evening as a private family conversation, there are some ways that can allow the whole family to respond to the stresses they have experienced.

One possibility would be to have a game of charades in which one or more family members might act out some characteristics of a church member and the others have to guess who it is. Or they could recall an event during the church year and see if others could guess it. If this is done with good humor and confidentiality, it might be a good stress reducer.

Another possibility would be to have the family describe how they would construct a perfect Christmas season that emphasized the joy of the event. What would they leave out and what would they add. Like our birthday, Jesus' birthdays should be joyous celebrations. How might you increase the pure fun of celebrating Christmas?

A third possibility would be to take two or three Christmas hymns and have different members create silly verses that talk about the church and ministry or their family. Then sing them as a family.

After the laughter and the fun, it might be good to conclude with a family prayer that both recognizes God's gift of laughter and expresses gratitude for the anticipated birth of the Christ that liberates us from the weight of sin and allows us to laugh even at ourselves.

Creating Fun Out of Sacrifice FAM-7

One of the unavoidable demands of ministry is the time that is required when a pastor is engaged in conducting either a funeral or a wedding. The funeral comes at totally unexpected times and while the wedding is scheduled, it still means that the pastor is often engaged in both a Friday rehearsal and a major portion of Saturday. Both require silent sacrifices by members of the pastor's family. If it doesn't interrupt planned time together, it crowds the schedule so that other time to complete normal activities must be made. In either case, such events cut into family time.

A pastor might alter the family's perception of such events as something they can look forward to with anticipation. What if the family knew that when the "honorarium" for the pastor's efforts was

offered, it would be put in a special “family fund” to pay for a fun family experience? Then, even though they needed to make a sacrifice, they could look forward to being able to have a future fun experience.

Depending on the frequency of such honorariums, and if it seemed too self-indulgent to always spend it on the family, the family can agree that a certain percentage of the fund will be contributed to a good cause that the whole family chooses. The family gathering to make such decisions can have its own benefit.

Either or both such decisions can have a healthy effect on what often can become a negative experience for the family.

Family Health and the Pastor FAM-8

Being the family of a pastor creates a complex dynamic. Sometimes the spouse and even the children can recognize that they too are part of God’s call, but in most cases it is the pastor that experiences the call to serve God in the ministry. The family, by virtue of their relationship to the pastor, are drafted.

One of the dynamics of being part of a pastor’s family is that you do not have the same freedom that other members of a church have. How you react to the pressures of ministry on the pastor, whether in rebellion, compassion, or enthusiasm, it affects the pastor and his or her ministry. That is beyond anyone’s choice. It just is.

However, how the family chooses to respond and how the pastor recognizes and can work with those pressures can make a lot of difference in the health of the family. One Catholic author suggested that the family is our domestic church. This description reminds us that a family is one of the more visible ways in which our faith is embodied. How we handle the time pressures of the pastorate, the hopes and disappointments of ministry, and the tensions between the affirmations and the needs for forgiveness can say a lot about our understanding of the Gospel. We are not always in control of the events that occur within our family or our church but we do make choices of how we will respond to those events.

A healthy conversation might take place at least annually within a pastor’s family discussing the meaning of the call. (See family conversations for additional resources.) In the Reformed faith there is the belief that not only clergy but all believers have a call from God. It would be healthy for the family of a pastor to discuss not only the pastor’s call but also the call of each member of the family in that current year.

It might begin by each member speaking of one of the positive parts of being part of the pastor’s family and one of the tensions created by being in that position. Then building on the positive affirmations, let each person explore how they feel God is calling him or her to respond to the pressures and tensions that are named. Finally, create a covenant within the family on how each is going to support each other in responding to the needs of their family for the following year.

Don’t expect it to be easy but do expect it to be fruitful as you journey together as a family in the unique context of being part of the pastor’s family.

Parenting for Pastors FAM-9

It is not unusual for parents to “fear the judgment of others” in their parenting techniques – especially when their children “misbehave.” This anxiety can be magnified when a whole congregation is watching. We know that the pastor and family are often the focus of some strong opinions from the congregation. Parenting issues are no exception. If the pastor and spouse feel confident in their methods of effective discipline, then they will be better able to parent without undue concern or anxiety.

Parenting is a challenging task. Children don’t come with directions stamped on them – so parents may struggle with how to parent effectively. Parents often look back at how they were raised as either a positive or negative example of how they want to parent their own children. This historical information is not usually enough to understand the complex task of effective parenting. If parents understand and demonstrate effective parenting techniques, mutual respect and cooperation will result. The goal of discipline is self-discipline: to guide children to be responsible and cooperative.

Resources:

Systematic Training for Effective Parenting by Dinkmeyer and McKay

The New Approach to Discipline by Dreikurs and Grey

Children: The Challenge by Dreikurs and Stolz

A Family Conversation that Includes the Children FAM-10

Below are 27 questions that you should place on individual 3 x 5 cards and shuffle them so that there is no predetermined order. Place the deck within reach of all the family members. Using four die, the person who begins throws the die and counts down to that number in the deck. This is their question to answer. Once finished, the card is placed in the middle of the deck and the next person throws the die and answers the question. After every full round, the deck is cut or shuffled so that new cards can be chosen. Each person should be free to answer as they desire. If the children are smaller, some of the questions may need to be explained. Before the game begins, agree on the length of time that you will continue.

Suggested questions are:

Questions for couples with children

1. Describe a time this past year when you were glad that you were part of this family.
2. What is a pressure you feel because the minister of the church is (you) or a member of this family?
3. Share something that happened at the church this past year that made you proud to be part of the church.
4. Describe something that either did or would make you angry if it happened at the church.
5. Identify either a person or a situation at the church for which you think the family should pray.
6. Was there a time this past year when the congregation needed the pastor and some family experience needed to be changed? How did you feel?
7. Whether you are the pastor or a family member, name four things that are good about being a pastor.
8. Name four things that make being a pastor difficult.
9. What are a couple of things that you think the church expects of the pastor’s spouse or children?
10. If you were to pray for one thing to change in your family, what would it be?

11. What are some fun things that you like to do with the family?
12. Name something new and fun that you would like to do with your family.
13. Describe a time when school activities and ministry created a scheduling problem. How did it make you feel?
14. What is a question about the Christian faith or the Bible that you think would be interesting for the family to spend time discussing?
15. How does it make you feel when a family member chooses not to attend a church function where the pastor has to participate?
16. How balanced are we in responding to children's homework, health needs, and activities.
17. How would you feel about our family having a faith discussion time together each week?
18. How would you describe the different attitudes in your family towards the church?
19. How do you feel about how the family decides about vacation time?
20. If you needed to talk to someone outside the family about a crisis, who would it be?
21. What lifestyle changes would you suggest that would help your family be healthier?
22. How does the lack of a two or three day weekend affect our family?
23. Given the pressures of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter on a pastor's family, what changes might make it more enjoyable?
24. What would you like to talk about as a family regarding how we spend the family money?
25. When you think about how the family jobs are divided up, what changes would you suggest?
26. How would you describe what it is like being a child (teenager, spouse) in a pastor's family?
27. If you would not get caught, what type of prank would you like to pull off at the church?

(Tip: Type questions on large address labels and paste them on 3 x 5 cards).

Clergy Boundaries FAM-11

It is important to have a discussion with your family about the issue of boundaries between family and the work of a pastor.

Look at the issue of time spent with the family and our responsiveness to the needs of our congregation. Some pastors have never learned to draw any boundaries that protect their time with family and their family learns quickly that all family plans are tentative. At the same time, some pastors are so good at drawing these boundaries that the congregation learns that they can only have emergencies during scheduled work hours. In both cases the assumption of one party or the other is that they are second rate.

As a first step, try to put in twenty-five words what you understand your call to be. What is God calling you to be and do and how is that exercised in the congregation that you serve?

Second, try to define for yourself some simple boundaries for you and your family.

Third, share what you have done with your family and ask them to honestly give their response. Sometimes the demands of your calling are going to interfere with hopes and plans of your family. How does your family want you to respond when those occasions occur? What you are working on is a covenant within your family with respect to your response to God.

Fourth, ask them to share what their understanding is of their call by God in connection with your profession as pastor. They were not called to be a pastor but God does have a call for them in connection with your call.

A Family of One FAM-12

It is easy to assume that if you are a single person all the talk about family leaves you out. While it is different, it is important for single pastors and educators to pay attention to the family in his or her life. Families are one of the ways that we attend to our need of relationships. As the Scripture said, “It is not good for humans to be alone.”

Sometimes we can address part of that need by having a pet. Sometimes we address our family needs by paying attention to our extended family. At times, a single person has a family member in their household. Whether that is a parent, or a child, it can demand a lot of time from the single pastor or educator. Too often, a congregation can make assumptions about the freedom of a single pastor or educator that adds additional pressure. It is both important for the single pastor or educator and educational for the congregation for each to be clear about his or her own family needs.

Not having a spouse at home or a child that needs attention makes it all the more important that the pastor and educator be intentional about guarding some space for non-professional activities. Single people should deliberately seek out opportunities for fun experiences with others. Planning a fun experience with a relative, parent or sibling, can be rewarding. Time for nurturing friendship outside the church, including dating time, are an important part of being healthy.

The Single Pastor Evaluation Game FAM-13

The single pastor or educator can invite another colleague or two or three to share in this conversational game. It should be friends that you can trust and who are also part of the experience of working in the church. However, you might find that the conversation is enriched if there is more than one denomination represented. The basic rules are these:

Below are 33 questions that you should place on individual 3 x 5 cards and shuffle them so that there is no predetermined order. Place the deck among you. Using two die, the person who begins throws the die and counts down to that number in the deck. This is his or her question to answer. Once finished, the card is placed in the middle of the deck and the next person throws the die and answers the question. After four or five times, the deck is cut or shuffled so that new cards can be chosen. Each person should be free to answer as they desire. Before the game begins, agree on the length of time that you will continue. (“Type questions on large address labels and paste them on 3 x 5 cards)

1. How comfortable am I with my singleness?
2. How do I think my singleness affects my relationship to my ministry?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of singleness on my ministry?
4. How do I feel about dating someone in my congregation?
5. What guidelines should I follow if I date someone in the congregation?
6. How does my being a pastor affect the type of dating activity that is appropriate or possible?
7. To meet someone outside the congregation, where would I go and what activities would I choose?
8. How does being single and male (female) affect the direction of ministry?
9. How does being single and female (male) affect my relationship with the congregation?
10. How does being single hinder or facilitate my ability to claim time for myself?
11. Who do I go to when I need to process issues in my life and ministry?
12. Who do I look to as my caregiver when I am ill?
13. How do I get my normal affection needs met?

14. How do I insure that I maintain a healthy diet?
15. What lifestyle changes would I like to make?
16. How do I address times of loneliness?
17. What are the challenges of holiday times for a single pastor in church leadership?
18. What percent of my income do I think should I pledge to the church?
19. What percentage of my charitable giving should go to causes outside the congregation?
20. Have I prepared for emergencies with signed power of attorney, medical powers of attorney, etc.?
21. How do I develop and nurture friendships with couples in the church?
22. What are the dynamics of being especially close to a particular family in the congregation?
23. What is one experience that I have had as a single pastor that now makes me laugh?
24. Where do I go for spiritual nourishment?
25. Where do I see God present in my life as I consider the future?
26. How do I feel about my financial planning towards retirement?
27. Are my salary and benefits fairly determined?
28. Is there a Bible study or spiritual practice that I would like to share with someone and if so, who?
29. Am I currently considering any career changes? If so, what steps do I need to take now?
30. Are there areas where my parents need help and how can I offer it?
31. How supportive do I think the congregation is of me as a pastor?
32. How do I feel about the judicatory's support of my pastorate?
33. In time of crisis, who would I look to for pastoral support?

It is likely that the conversation will raise topics that will need to be discussed further, but this provides you the basis of a conversation with trusted colleagues about your experience in the

Ministerial Couple Without Children FAM-14

Below are 35 questions that you should place on individual 3 x 5 cards and shuffle them so that there is no predetermined order. Place the deck between the two of you. Using four dice, the person who begins throws the dice and counts down to that number in the deck. This is his or her question to answer. Once finished, the card is placed in the middle of the deck and the next person throws the dice and answers the question. After four or five times, the deck is cut or shuffled so that new cards can be chosen. Each person should be free to answer as they desire. Before the game begins, agree on the length of time that you will continue. (Type questions on large address labels & paste on cards.)

1. What is one unexpected pressure of the ministry on our relationship?
2. How does the lack of two and three day weekends affect our relationship with our extended family? How should we respond?
3. How do you perceive our parents' attitude towards the ministry?
4. How well do you think each of us does in finding personal time for ourselves?
5. How well do you think we do in finding couple time apart from others?
6. What are the couple time activities that you most enjoy?
7. What are the couple time activities that you least enjoy?
8. What is a new activity that you think your spouse would enjoy?
9. How are you doing with your own spiritual journey?
10. How do you feel about our financial planning towards retirement?
11. What type of Bible study or spiritual practice would you like to share with your spouse?
12. How do we decide whose career takes precedence in determining a move? How does that feel?

13. How do you think we are doing in handling our finances?
14. How adequately and fairly does the church acts in determining the pastor's salary and benefits?
15. Do you think the way the congregation is informed and/or acts on the pastor's salary and benefits is appropriate?
16. What do you think are the congregation's expectations of the pastor's spouse?
17. Are you comfortable with the way the congregation relates to the pastor's spouse?
18. What do you think the pastor expects of the pastor's spouse?
19. If we think we are overscheduled, what is one activity each of us would drop?
20. If we had a totally unscheduled day, what is one way you would like us to spend it?
21. How do you think we are doing in sharing basic household tasks?
22. Where do you feel guilty about your support of your spouse?
23. How do you feel about how we are responding to the needs of our parents?
24. What good health practice do you think we should consider doing?
25. How supportive do you think the congregation is of the pastor?
26. Does the congregation support the pastor's involvement in service outside the congregation?
27. How do you feel about the judicatory's support of the pastor?
28. Do I think the judicatory expects too much of the pastor?
29. In time of crisis, who would you call upon for pastoral support?
30. What is something new you would like us to explore for a vacation?
31. What is one recreational activity that you would like us to do?
32. What is one hobby you could do that would be an escape from the normal stresses of life?
33. How can we ease the stress of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter on the minister's family?
34. If we had children in the future, who do you think should be the guardian of our children, if we should be killed in an accident?
- 35 How would you describe what you think God expects of you as a partner in this marriage?

Feel free to add additional questions. It is quite likely that you will want to stop before all the questions have been addressed. Some of them will arise the next time you play the game.

Adult Couple Experiencing the Empty Nest FAM-15

Below are 29 questions that you should place on individual 3 x 5 cards and shuffle them so that there is no predetermined order. Place the deck between the two of you. Using four dice, the person who begins throws the dice and counts down to that number in the deck. This is their question to answer. Once finished, the card is placed in the middle of the deck and the next person throws the dice and answers the question. After four or five times, the deck is cut or shuffled so that new cards can be chosen. Each person should be free to answer as they desire. Before the game begins, agree on the length of time that you will continue. (Type questions on large address labels and paste on cards)

1. How has the empty nest affected our relationship?
2. How has the empty nest affected our relationship with the congregation?
3. How do you feel we are relating to our adult children?
4. What is one area of our relationship that we have neglected because of our focus on our children?
5. What do you think we should discuss in preparation for retirement?
6. From our present perspective, how do you think our future retirement will affect our lives?
7. What is one concern and one hope you have in retirement?
8. How do you think we are addressing our health concerns as we grow older?

9. Where do you think we should live in our retirement?
10. What is one financial concern you have about retirement?
11. How do you feel we should adjust our charitable giving?
12. How do you anticipate each of us spending our time in retirement?
13. How are the demands of ministry affecting our relationship with our grandchildren?
14. How do you expect each of our children to balance time with us and time with their spouse's family?
15. How do you feel about our adult children's religious journey?
16. How have your spiritual needs changed?
17. What is a question you now would like to ask about the ministry?
18. How would you feel if one of our children asked to move back home?
19. If one of our children moved back home, what do you think we should expect of him or her with respect to rent, household responsibilities, etc.?
20. How do we honestly discuss holiday expectations with our adult children?
21. How should our family's exchange of gifts change at this stage of our life?
22. What changes do you think should be made to our wills at this time?
23. Do you think we have signed appropriate powers of attorney, Powers of medical attorney, etc.?
24. Without children at home, what is one activity that you would like to participate in?
25. How does the lack of two- and three-day weekends affect our relationship?
26. How do you think we are doing in sharing basic household tasks?
27. How do you feel about how we are responding to the needs of our parents?
28. In times of crisis, who would you turn to for pastoral support?
29. What is a good health practice that you think we should consider?

You may add additional questions to the deck and play it several times to address the various questions. Remember that there is no order to the questions. They are chosen at random according to the throw of the dice.

Clergy Family Impact FAM-16

All professions have their impact on the families of the person in that profession. You can easily name both positive and negative impacts on your family due to your being a clergy. Whether your family is your spouse or includes children or parents, it is important to recognize and name the various ways that those other members are affected by your profession.

One of the healthier activities that you could take would be to have that conversation with the members of your family. Make a game out of it.

Get in a circle with a bottle in the middle. Someone spins the bottle and sees where it points when it comes to a rest. That person must describe one negative and one positive effect of being in a clergy family. It's important that both are identified so that you don't just get into a negative conversation. If you really want to make it interesting, spin the bottle twice. The first person chosen must describe a way in which they think the ministry is negative and a way it is positive in the life of the second person indicated by the bottle spin.

After you have played the game for a half-hour or more, change the rules. Now the person chosen has to describe how the family could work together to lessen a negative impact or to enhance a positive impact.

Develop prizes for the best responses and negative consequences for the least good response. Maybe they have to make a person's bed or clean up the dishes. Or perhaps the person with the best response can sit there while someone else prepares for them a drink or some ice cream. The main idea is to have some fun while both recognizing how the ministry has affected members of the family and how the family can support each other in coping with the pressures.

Have fun.

Spiritual

Focus on Loving God SP-1

Using the Great Commandment as a perspective on clergy self-care, focus on Loving God as a form of self care. We hear the commandment that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength but then we focus on loving of neighbor or self as a means of loving God. What it would mean to focus on loving God?

The first step is being willing to set aside even a small amount of time to focus completely on God. Think about spending 20 minutes of uninterrupted time contemplating God in a loving way. Actually, it is not so easy to do. First, try it and note your own experience. Then you might want to learn more about what some others have learned about such a focus. Consider reading Thomas Merton and the practice of Centering Prayer.

While prayer is a central way that we might focus on loving God, another might be receiving God's gift of Scripture as a means of loving God. If you give a gift to someone you love, seeing them appreciate and make use of that gift brings you pleasure. Especially if you notice that in using that gift, they are directing their attention on you in a loving way. Might it be the same for God who has provided us the gift of Scripture?

Take short periods of time in the beginning. Determine to take a half-hour break in which you will explore how Scripture can speak to you about the attributes of God. Use a concordance to identify some adjectives that praise God. Gather up several of them and then spend some time exploring the nature of God through these adjectives. That might come in the form of a word study or it might be in the form of contemplation around one or two of these adjectives. Whatever your approach, the purpose is to focus your attention on the wonder of God.

The time limit of one-half hour might even serve the advantage of intriguing you so that you want to set aside another half-hour at another time to continue the experience. Discipline yourself to avoid thinking of how useful your work might be for a sermon, a class, etc. This is time to place yourself purely in the presence of God in a loving way.

However you go about it, keep some notes on how it makes you feel. If one aspect of the Sabbath is to step outside of the normal pace of life to nurture relationships, this is a way to begin with a short Sabbath experience of loving God.

Let the Psalms Teach You SP-2

Dietrick Bonhoeffer spoke of the psalms as a school for prayer. It is interesting to take seriously that possibility in learning how to spend time loving God.

For one of the times that you choose to spend loving God, choose one of the psalms of praise and let it shape your thoughts and words of love for God.

For example, begin with one of the most familiar psalms, Psalm 23. It is so familiar that it is difficult to experience it fresh. Yet it is a very good path to follow as an experience of loving God.

Take the psalm and replace the pronouns with your name. Then slowly pray the psalm, without text if possible, stopping regularly to reflect on how each part evokes feelings about God.

Next you might want to replace the words that are meant to speak of God with the second person pronoun. For example, "You are my shepherd, I shall not want." Again pause repeatedly to note your feelings about God.

What you are doing is to allow the psalm to frame your loving contemplation of God. You could also use other psalms of praise in the same manner. Make it very personal as if you are in direct communication with God.

When you are through, note how the experience makes you feel.

Scripture as God's Window SP-3

It is important to open ourselves to the opportunity to be addressed by God in Scripture. So often we are engaged in Bible Study and reading for the sake of worship, sermon preparation, or group work that we forget this is God's gift through which God desires to communicate with us.

As with prayer, you need to find a place for listening to Scripture that won't be disturbed. AND you need to approach the Scripture in faith that God desires to speak with you through this word. There are numerous ways to approach this and you should not be afraid to experiment until you find one that works for you. Also recognize that what works sometimes may need to be changed from time to time to approach you from a fresh perspective.

A couple of suggestions of approaches. First, since you have experienced God's sense of call in your life, you might want to begin by exploring those passages that describe God's call to one of the biblical figures. Having read one of those passages, take some time in meditative reflection, placing yourself in the scene and allowing God to surface in your mind any thoughts that God desires.

If you are someone who finds that writing tends to push your thoughts forward, you may want to write in a stream of conscience fashion your response to one of the passages. It is important to not censor your writing in the process. You are not trying to compose an essay on the call. You are simply writing without stopping for 10 minutes or so. Then go back and read what you have written and see what that evokes in you.

Another approach is to pay attention as you are reading to see what word, words, or phrases seem to jump out at you. You don't have to understand why, simply note what seems to jump out at you. Then set the Bible aside and let those words become an image that you will examine from all sides in a meditative fashion.

Don't always expect some amazing insight each time. Don't throw away what seems irrelevant. Save it and see what God does with it later.

Whatever practice you engage in, always take a few minutes at the beginning and the end to simply pray that you will be open to whatever God wishes to say or plant in your soul for later recognition.

Language of Loving God SP-4

The language of heaven reflected in the Book of Revelation is the language of music. The angels sing around the throne. In some ways, we have always known this as it has shaped our worship. It is generally accepted that the psalms were originally sung prayers. Most worship utilizes the gift of music in its liturgy.

Music has the particular quality of engaging body, mind, emotion, and spirit in ways that few other actions do. If someone begins to sing words of praise, they are offering love of God with all their “heart, soul, mind, and strength.”

Of course this is easier for someone who is naturally a good singer, but if God is the audience, perhaps we can trust that the Spirit intercedes with tone corrective power to transform our offerings.

One could pull off in an area where you are not heard by others and engage in singing your love for God. As a beginning, you might choose Great Is Thy Faithfulness or How Great Thou Art. Don’t worry about your skills, but try singing them out lustfully and note your own experience of offering this as love to God. Depending on your musical tastes, you can then try one of the settings for the psalms or a variety of other hymns, songs, etc.

Try creating your own tunes for some of the Psalms and see how that worked. You might experiment with Psalm 8 and then you could move on to other psalms of praise. If the psalms are our school of prayer and music is one of the languages of heaven, then perhaps pouring your soul out in this fashion can be a way to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

The Silent Meal SP-5

One practice that can strengthen your own spiritual life is the silent meal. This is frequently practiced in monasteries. There is a freedom in not being expected to speak and interact with others. It offers you an opportunity to draw within yourself.

This can be practiced even at a fast food restaurant. Order an inexpensive meal, choose a table, and enter into a time of silence in the midst of the cacophony of the world around you. As you sit down at the table, before you unwrap your meal, begin your prayer time.

Begin with prayers for all those who had some part in preparing the meal before you, taking that as far back in the food process as possible. There was someone who has raised the animal or planted and cared for the vegetables that you are about to eat. Someone has harvested them, transported them, processed them, cooked them, etc. You might also pray for those who prepared the paper, designed the package, and manufactured the cup in which your meal was contained. What this does is to take you outside the immediacy of your work world and put you in prayer for many parts of the world that you rarely think about.

After about ten minutes of prayer, begin to slowly unwrap your simple meal and occasionally take a bite or sip of my drink as you continue your prayers. As much as possible, pray with your eyes closed and your mind totally focused. You might pray for people or situations in your ministry, or pray for colleagues that you know are having a difficult time.

Because we are products of this time-stressed world, you should choose the amount of time you will engage in this prayer, least one-half hour of prayer from the time that you sit down at the table. You will discover that it is a wonderful time to recenter yourself in the midst of a task-filled day.

A Culture of Caring SP 6

John Bright in his **History of Israel** made the comment that one of the beliefs that helped the Jews survive exile, rather than being absorbed into the foreign cultures in which they were planted, was their belief in the Sabbath. Once every seven days, the Jews took time out to remember who and whose they were. In doing so, they also recognized the necessity of rhythm in life. In neglecting the Sabbath in our fast paced world, we ignore a practice that can protect our humanity and our faithfulness.

The pastor who ignores the need to find Sabbath moments in his rhythm of life contributes to the dehumanization of his or her time stressed congregation. A balance of genuine self-care with a high commitment to the pastoral call to serve can actually become a testimony to the faith. What better way to witness to the truth of the faith than to demonstrate in one's own life a way to navigate the stresses of society and maintain good relationships with both God and neighbor.

There is a reluctance to talk about how the congregation cares for the pastor because it sounds so self-serving. However, what the pastor can do is raise the question of how we all care for each other, which includes the church staff, as an important aspect of living out the faith. Sermons and seminars can raise the awareness of the importance of this aspect of community.

You can also explore the various ways you recognize and affirm the work of both other staff members and Elders, Deacons, choir members, etc. It isn't only breaks in work schedule but also affirmation of the meaning of one's efforts that can nurture our humanity. What you are seeking to do is create a culture of caring within the congregation that extends to every member and employee.

Another aspect of self-care is helping the congregation become mature in their understanding of the ministry of the congregation. Strive to break the culture of dependency that congregations often have on their pastor. The more that a pastor's ministry is focused on "equipping the saints" for ministry both within and outside the congregation, the more ministry is a shared opportunity. Programs like the Stephen's Ministry, where members are trained in pastoral care of each other is an example of this.

Rather than make this one more burden in an already overstressed profession, take it one step at a time. Think of the demands of your profession and identify one task that could be done by others. Then begin to explore how people might be invited to share in that ministry.

Fifteen Minute Sabbaths SP-7

One of the powerful impacts of the Sabbath is that it interrupts the flow of whatever drives you in life and offers you the opportunity to gain perspective. You take some time out of your busy world to worship and renew your connection with God and what God expects of you. Or perhaps you just enjoy what it feels like to be a loved child of God. You interrupt your focus on work to spend time in relationships and you recognize their importance to you. You pause for a time from being productive and pay attention to your body and mind's need to rest and drink in the spirit.

In addition to taking a full day as a Sabbath, there are benefits to interrupting the pace of your life for even fifteen minutes. Consider the impact of twice a day pausing to commune with God, your neighbor or loved one, or even just to breathe and gain perspective on your life. The root word for Sabbath in Hebrew carries the sense of pausing to breathe. Was that what God was doing in Genesis when, after creating for six days, he ceased work? Was God stepping back to review God's work?

Fifteen minute Sabbaths can be experienced when your car arrives at a destination, before you get out and attend to whatever project awaits you. It can be experienced when you excuse yourself and enter a stall in a bathroom. It can be experienced while you eat alone at a restaurant. For those who are blessed with an office with a door to close, that is also a possibility. Consider taking a week in which you would try such fifteen minute Sabbaths twice a day.

Sabbath For Your Neighbor SP-8

In the explanation of the Sabbath Commandment, one aspect that is often overlooked is the instruction that a person is to make the Sabbath rest a part of the lives of all those under your influence or power.

“But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you.”

If the Sabbath commandment is a critical undergirding of our emphasis on self-care, it becomes clear that there is a link between caring for self and caring for all other forms of life. Eventually Israel would extend this to the land as well.

When you are feeling dispirited in your personal life, a good Sabbath move is to discover a way to respond to other people, animals, or land. We are an intricate web and we are uplifted when we are able to uplift someone else.

For clergy this is tricky because much of our profession involves reaching out to others. Our Sabbath act in this regard should begin with a very simple act that does not require a long time commitment. A simple act of reaching out to a vagrant in a generous way, mowing an ill neighbor's lawn, or being extra kind to your pet may be a good beginning.

Sabbath Partnership SP-9

Sometimes the researching and beginning writing of sermons can seem to be a lonely task. Consider an experiment in exploring the foundational message of Scripture and generating those new ideas in a different and hopefully fun way. Try a Sabbath Partnership that it builds on the meaning of Sabbath in taking a break from productivity and breathing in the possibility of our relationships. (Though, admittedly, this does have a productive edge to it.)

The idea is choose a clergy colleague, either from your denomination or a different one, who shares the responsibility for preaching as you do. Invite him or her to go on a one day or even better an overnight retreat with you. Prior to going, you will agree on a series of Sundays in the future. It might be a season, like Lent, Advent, Pentecost, etc. or just a series of dates in Ordinary Time. If you are lectionary preachers, the Scripture selections are easy. If not, you will need to agree on a series of Scriptures for that Sunday. A possibility is a Lectio Continuo practice of choosing a particular book

of the Bible that you will preach through. Each of you takes at least a one volume commentary or a CD commentary that you could use on your lap tops.

The first stage of your retreat would be to discuss some of the issues, theological, ethical, and pragmatic that face your respective congregations. If you ride together to your place of retreat, this can happen on your trip to the spot. Let it be free flowing and not tied to sermons or Sundays at first.

Next, see if you can agree on a series of touch-points that would be helpful to address for your respective congregations. Then, each of you take some time to skim the Scriptures that you have chosen, looking for possible connections between your themes and the Scriptures. Let this be a meditative time in which you act on the belief that God wishes to speak through the Scriptures to you and to your congregation. Again, don't tie it to a particular Sunday or try to build a sermon, but simply allow God to speak to you through these Scriptures. Make note of any ideas that occur. After an agreed upon time, maybe an hour or even two, come back together and begin to talk about what has emerged.

Now pull out your calendars and begin to explore the possibility of matching themes to sermons on particular Sundays. Have some fun suggesting sermon titles, both silly ones and serious ones, as you go along.

Take a break and do something fun together. When you return, choose some sermon ideas that excite you and begin to brainstorm together possible ideas, illustrations, and theological themes for the sermon. This might be a good time to check the commentaries for exegetical help.

Don't try to develop finished projects. Once you have worked on one sermon idea for awhile, move on to another. Take good breaks and enjoy the development of the partnership.

It may even be fun to agree to share the finished results with each other following the Sunday that they are preached.

Forgiving God SP-10

We talk a lot about forgiveness in the church. Usually we focus those comments on our need to forgive someone who has offended us. Most pastors have seen how damaging the unwillingness to offer forgiveness can be to the one who has been offended. If the person bearing the anger could offer forgiveness, everyone would experience some healing.

How often do we feel anger at God for the conditions of our ministry? How often does that anger hurt us rather than God? Theologically, we know that God is fully capable of receiving our anger but we frequently are reluctant to express it, or even acknowledge it to ourselves. The result is a sense of distance from God,

There can be a healing effect of practicing the art of forgiveness with respect to your relationship with God. At first glance, it seems like almost heresy to consider forgiving God. However, we need to remember that to forgive someone is an act of letting go of our anger, disappointment, mistrust, etc. on the basis of our own perceptions. It does not necessarily mean that the person has sinned against us. Sometimes it is only by offering our forgiveness to someone that we are free to explore what actually happened to rupture our relationship.

Try as an experiment the following:

Think back on the past year of your life and jot down a list of those experiences that have been frustrating, incidents where people have angered, betrayed, diminished, or disappointed you. This exercise alone can have some curative value.

Next, with the list before you, risk living out an aspect of your faith that you have undoubtedly preached — that God is sovereign. What might it mean that while God may not have deliberately set up those experiences, God was not absent from them. Taking a particularly difficult circumstance from your list, ponder what redemptive possibilities might exist in that experience. If we were to “forgive” God for leading us into this temptation, how might we come to a point where we might allow it to contribute to a larger wholeness in our life?

This is not an easy thing to do. It may require lots of prayer and reflection to come to a point where we can praise God for a particularly difficult experience. That experience might seem all encompassing, like a congregation that does not seem to respond in any positive manner to your ministry or a powerful family in the church who seems to do nothing but complain. However, if we believe that God can make even the cross into a redemptive possibility, is it not possible that God can allow the power of the resurrection to be transformative in your circumstance as well?

It might be that you will need to begin with a smaller disappointment or irritation and then work up to some of the more difficult ones. After you have worked with an incident for awhile, it might be helpful to invite a friend or spiritual advisor to listen to your reflections and help you explore their meaning for your faith journey.

Forgiving God — Forgiving Self SP-11

One of the trickier aspects of this whole issue of forgiveness is learning how to forgive yourself.

Among many clergy, there is often a nagging sense of personal guilt. That can often be covered up by a sense of anger. Anger is often what is called a secondary emotion. That is, anger can be a shield to protect us from other emotions that make us feel more vulnerable. You can test that out by reflecting on something that caused you to get angry. Look behind that anger and see if you cannot identify a more personal feeling.

I might get angry at my child for not obeying some clear direction that I have given. Behind the feeling of anger may be the frustration of feeling ignored by my child. Or I may feel frightened that if she doesn't listen, she might get hurt. Or I may be feeling like a failure as a father. It is easier to get angry, which distances me from another person, than to acknowledge such other feelings.

Now think of the pastorate and those experiences that make you respond in anger. How often does the feeling of anger arise to cover some feelings of guilt? Someone may criticize you for your lack of visitation of the older members of the congregation. You get angry. The anger may cover up a feeling of being unappreciated for the many other things that you are doing or it may even be a sense of guilt that you are not visiting some members as you would like to. There may be good reasons why your visitation ministry is not at a better level, but you still feel guilty.

Now the question is, can you acknowledge the feelings of guilt and forgive yourself for not living up to your own expectations of what it means to be a good pastor. I often find that a pastor's expectations of what it means to be a good pastor are even higher than most of the congregation. If you can forgive yourself, then you can move on to examining those feelings and evaluating whether your own expectations are unrealistic and need to be altered.

Being a Mentor SP-12

There is a positive benefits from contributing to another person's well being. It is not only more blessed to give than receive, it also feels good as well.

If you are looking for an activity than can contribute to your own spiritual health, consider the possibility of being a mentor to someone else. It is an affirming experience to find positive ways to draw upon your experience to benefit a colleague in the ministry.

There are several possible ways that this can become a reality. If there is a seminary near you, they are frequently looking for experienced clergy who will share their experiences with seminary students.

Some presbyteries already have, but you could also be part of initiating a program where clergy who are coming into the presbytery are assigned a mentor for the first year or so. This is particularly helpful for young pastors who are beginning their ministry. Even for experienced clergy, it is helpful to relate to someone who already knows the territory.

A third less formal way is to deliberately seek out some new clergy in the community and simply invite them to lunch. At the lunch, you can share some of your experiences during your time in the community and make yourself available for any future questions the person might have.

Being alert to the rumor mill among clergy, you are often aware when a particular clergy is under a lot of pressure. You might be surprised at the welcome you would receive if you made a call and invited that clergy out to lunch. At the lunch, you can be very upfront and tell him or her that you have heard that they have been under a lot of pressure. Offer to listen without judgment to him or her. The uniqueness that you can bring to such a situation is that you are familiar with the nature of ministry and some of the complexity of relating to a congregation. This is particularly powerful if the person is from another denomination because then there isn't even the concern about career competition.

Try it. You will discover your own blessings from such an experience.

Vocational

Resisting the Call V-1

Resistance or arguing with God over the call is biblically authentic. Moses (Exodus 4:1-18) and Jeremiah (1:4-10) are prominent examples. In addition, while not so obvious, one could even see the story of Jesus' temptation as a version of resistance. It was certainly a refining of the call in a manner that defied common wisdom. Authentic ministry involves a lot of stress and not a small measure of suffering so a measure of resistance is entirely appropriate.

Consider what you are cooperating with when you accept God's call. You are opening yourself to being touched by the infinite. It is an audacious claim to suggest that you are being addressed and shaped by a power outside of the confines of time. You are drawn towards the future by a voice from

beyond time. If you take that seriously, there is no way that that shouldn't make you nervous, if not terrified.

There is a sense that your call is not a onetime event but is a continuing experience. In many ways, God's call is a heightened sensitivity to God's guiding presence in the journey of your life. It fills your life with a greater purpose because the purpose of your life is not restricted to what you are getting out of your life. You are part of a greater story.

It includes having a sense of direction in your life. Your life is going somewhere. There is an intentionality to it and in the case of a believer, that intentionality includes God's purpose in your life. Building on Paul's experience of being forbidden by the Spirit to speak in Asia and Bithynia and receiving a vision that directed him to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10); it becomes clear that our calls can change from time to time. It is also clear that even though we seek to be faithful to the call, it is not always clear to us the direction that it will take. This is why it is so important to develop practices that keep us in touch with God's evolving call in our lives.

It is important for clergy and educators to pay attention to their call as they try to discern the church they will serve. You can't always determine the shape of your call by the normal visible signs of opportunity and success. It is nice to have everyone like you and to be successful in what you do, but sometimes God can call you to an experience that is frustrating and even appears to be a failure.

Taking the Pulse V-2

Here is an exercise by which you can take the pulse of your ministry. It is not something that you do continuously but occasionally it may have value.

Take some time to sit quietly and calm yourself. When you have quieted yourself, take a pad of paper and begin to list some of the positive things that have happened in your ministry from the beginning until now. Now, make the faith assumption that God has been part of that ministry. Look for patterns in what you can affirm as positive incidents in your career history. Where have you sensed God's presence? Write some of those possibilities down so that you can see them and reflect on them.

Now note some of the more difficult moments in your ministry. If God "works for good with those who love him and are called according to his purpose," look for redemptive results that have occurred because God was with you during those difficult times. None of this is to say that God caused such negative experiences for a purpose. It is simply to say that God can work redemptively even in the difficult moments. What have you learned, how have you grown, what are redeemable possibilities as a result of such experiences?

Write some of those down and combine them with that which you have gleaned from the positive moments. What does this suggest about your future directions? Write out some possibilities. Put them aside and then return to them at least a week later and see how that speaks to your future. Share them with a friend and get their reaction as well. Allow God to speak to you through the Bible, prayer, community, and time.

The Why of a Call V-3

One of the great mysteries is why God calls who God calls. Can anyone explain why God called Abram and Sarai? We aren't told that they were more pious, faithful, or intelligent than others. Surely there were other good people in Haran. (Genesis 12:1).

Or take the disciples that Jesus called. We are given no reason why they responded when Jesus called, and we are not told why Jesus chose them rather than some others. The Bible is pretty blunt in pointing out that both Abram and Sarai and the disciples had ethical lapses, didn't always make good decisions, and at times thought more about their own benefits than that of others.

What is it that causes some to experience a sense of God's call in their lives and other perfectly good people to not feel that inner stirring? Moreover, when it comes to clergy, Christian educators, or missionaries, why did they experience that call. Why did you?

It is pretty clear that sensing God's call in our life is not a sign of moral superiority. In fact the Bible suggests that God has a penchant for calling ethically questionable rascals on a rather frequent basis. Think of Jacob, Moses, some of the judges, David, several of the disciples, and Paul. There are lots of reasons we might not have chosen such people, but God did.

If you have that strong sense that God is calling you, it is not a reason for pride. It may be a good reason to be scared. It is certainly a reason for awe and humility. Why does God call those whom God has called? Write out a response based on your own experience.

Refusing to Freeze the first experience of Call V4

Rarely are calls so pure that they are perfectly understood. We are speaking of the Eternal communicating to the finite. As that communication takes place, it must be formatted in a manner that the one receiving the call can understand. There is value in moving beyond that first experience of call without violating the underlying truth of God connecting with you.

When you think of the story of Israel, their sense of the presence of God was often couched in a framework that would need to be reformulated several times in their journey. The authenticity of the call was real but it was important not to be frozen in their original understanding. They believed that God had called them to be a special people. When they were defeated as a nation and sent into exile, it would have been easy to conclude that their original call was false. It was the prophets who guided them in reexamining what it meant to be the People of God. This reexamination eventually revealed a broader understanding of God's presence that included not just their nation but God's intention for the whole world.

There is power in reflecting on the different forms that your understanding of your call has taken. How has your life experience reshaped your understanding of that call? Sometimes, like for Israel, that will occur because of a traumatic experience of failure. It is not the truth of God that is at stake in such an experience but rather whether you are now prepared for a deeper understanding of God's role in your life. What may seem like a serious defeat can be the bubbling yeast that will give rise to a profound experience of the redeeming presence of God in your life.

Addiction and Burnout V-5

How often have you heard a pastor speak of being near burnout when what they really mean is that they are near exhaustion? There is a big difference between exhaustion and burnout. Many pastors overextend themselves and experience exhaustion. They need to learn to manage their time better and get some extra rest, but they have not lost their enthusiasm for ministry. Burnout occurs when you have lost a sense of fulfillment in what you do. Getting some extra sleep or going on a vacation will not resolve that problem.

To paraphrase Viktor Frankl, in *Man's Search for Meaning*, "Give a man a why and he can endure almost any how but take away the why and almost any how is too much." That is a profound truth when it is applied to our conduct of ministry. If you absolutely knew that God called you to engage in an apparently boring activity and that by doing so, you would contribute to God's purpose in creation, (That is the why), would you not engage in it willingly. Burnout is because you lose contact with the source of why in ministry. You become consumed by activity that seems both tedious and meaningless.

You won't burnout if you are convinced that you are engaged in responding to God's call. The critical question for today's clergy is how they stay connected with the source of their call. When you lose that connection, then you will worship some other golden calf that promises you life.

Think about what the disciplines are that enable you to stay in contact with the source of your call. Addiction, in the broadest sense, is choosing the wrong golden calf. It is never able to fulfill its promise and continues to demand more and more from you until it sucks you dry.

Being Distanced from our Call V-6

At some point in your life, you sense God's call in your life. It can be a dawning awareness or a specific experience that transforms your life. To be called by God is to have your life transformed from simply living to living on behalf of a purpose that is bigger than yourself. From a faith perspective it is an awareness that God has set a purpose for your life.

As a pastor in a church, you will experience a number of competing pressures that can easily distance you from the source of that call. Some of the cultural pressures are the desire to please, to survive financially, to achieve success, to be respected, etc. The truth is that none of these desires are wrong in themselves but they can dominate your life in a manner that distances you from the one who called you.

Take a piece of paper and briefly describe your original sense of call. Note how it felt to be called by God. Then reflect on how the pressures of ministry have distanced you from that feeling. What do you need to do to strengthen that sense of call?

In attending to your own spirit, you might find it helpful to occasionally seek out a friend who would agree to enter into a spiritual conversation. It would be healthy for you to have a discussion about the way that you feel compromised in the exercise of your ministry. If you spend some time reflecting on the temptation story in the gospels, you will realize that Jesus also experienced temptations to compromise his ministry. The challenge is not to avoid experiencing such temptations but to consciously discover what enables you to stay in touch with the one who called you.

The first step is to think about who among your colleagues, not necessarily of your denomination, might be responsive to an invitation to share in a period of regular spiritual conversations. The first step would be for each of you to agree to share your personal story of your sense of call.

The second step, perhaps at your next gathering, would be to continue by talking about ways in which your call has changed over the years and how that makes you feel.

A third conversation might focus on the pressures, compromises, and temptations that have affected your ability to respond to God's call in your life. Recall that immediately following Jesus' experience of God's call at his baptism, the gospels recorded that he had to face the temptations of that call. This might take more than one conversation. How does meeting the expectations of ministry distort what you believe God has called you to do? How do the financial pressures on your life, family demands, desire to be seen successful, etc. threaten to distort your response?

This might be followed by sharing the ways that you have personally found to resist the temptations inherent in your call. Explore together what other practices might help. If the conversation has reached a level of honesty, some prayers of confession and assurance of forgiveness might be part of your conversation.

Vocation and Sabbath V-7

One of the challenges of ministry is not to become so consumed with the immediate demands of our work that we lose touch with the one who has called us to ministry. Staying in touch with our vocation and the one who called us to it, can help us cope with times of weariness, disappointment, and even creeping cynicism. There are a number of ways that we can intentionally work to stay in touch with the one who called us. Here is one suggestion.

We all have to close our office as we are about to leave for the day. Some are very tidy and leave a clean desk and some just group things into piles. In either case, there are some normal routines by which we leave our office for the day. You are encouraged to build into that routine an additional ten minutes. At the end of your day, take ten minutes to write about where you feel God present (or absent) in your work. Don't try to make it profound, literary, or even complete. You only have ten minutes so you may not even complete a thought. Give yourself permission to not need to finish anything. Just write for ten minutes.

The focus of the writing is to bring to awareness God's involvement in what is taking place in your life at this time. Sometimes it will be where God is in this day's activities, sometimes in your anticipation of the coming days, or even where God has been for you lately. If God has not felt present, write about that as well. You may even occasionally want to write about your sense of call at this time in your life. What you are doing is intentionally reflecting on the fact that ministry is more than a job. If God has placed you in this situation, however joyous or depressing, stressful or fulfilling, what would God say to you at this moment?

For some people it is helpful to actually address your writing to God but for others that might seem too much like a game. Whatever works, allow yourself to have these ten minutes to record your thoughts.

You will have to decide whether this works best on a small notebook set aside for this purpose or a special file on your computer. There are also journal programs that you can place on your computer that have other possibilities than just the specific idea that I am suggesting.

Occasionally you will find it of great value to go back and read what you have been recording over time. Our journeys are never smooth but it helps at times to realize how connected even the most ordinary of days are to our vocation.

The Scrawled Notes V-8

If you want to combat acedia at any phase of your life a good beginning step would be the practice of the scrawled note. It works like this.

First you find a small notebook that will fit in your shirt pocket or purse. Put your name and phone number on the outside and mark it private. Then you begin to take advantage of those many little slivers of waiting time that often drive our time obsessed society nuts. These are those moments at a stop light, outside a patient's room while the nurses are completing their activities, while a computer is booting up in the office, or waiting for your lunch appointment to show up at the restaurant.

Whenever you find one of these "waiting times," pull out your notebook and pen. (Of course for you techno freaks, you can always use your Blackberry or iPad.) Begin by writing very brief comments about how you are feeling. These can be either negative or positive, and they should be focused on descriptive phrases with feelings included. This is not an essay, but simply random thoughts. "I'm not sure this is all worth it." "I don't have the energy to fight one more budget battle." "I can't wait until next June when all of this is over." "If I have to perform one more wedding with a couple that could care less about the church, I'm going to throw up.etc. But also positive thoughts. "I'm looking forward to next week at the conference." "My wife was really pleased with the flowers I ordered." "Monday I'm going to spend the whole day working in the yard."

After you have done that for a time, you will find some good material for re-framing your future. It's amazing how those quick, almost spontaneous, moments of reflection can open you up to your inner-self. The challenge is to write those notes in an uncensored form. Whatever you are thinking and feeling are valuable to record.

Now, when you have a small block of time, begin to reread some of what you have written, looking for some discernible patterns. What are the common threads to the circumstances or thoughts that lead to your feeling either negative or positive. The negative feelings are equally as valuable as the positive ones.

Regardless of whether you are feeling full of doubt or belief, engage in an "If there were" exercise. If there were a God and that God was trying to speak to you personally through your experiences, what might God be trying to say? Recall what spiritual teachers have noted in the past, that periods of disbelief or overwhelming doubt can well be the fertile ground for positive growth in faith. The challenge is not to banish disbelief but allow it to be an integrated part of our spiritual journey. So you are "playing with the What If possibilities" in any part of what you have written.

Also, don't be too serious about this reflection at the moment. Have some fun playing with the possibilities. Examine some bizarre or zany things that God could be saying to you as well as some serious, challenging ones. However, as you do so, keep alert for signals that might prove to be valuable for the future. Don't look for conclusions. Just keep record of some of your thoughts.

One Year Before Retirement V-9

Almost anyone who has retired and has the health to be active will tell you that one of the great myths of retirement is the myth of time. Most pastors do spend 50 to 70 hours a week and every weekend working. As they near retirement, they begin to dream of being released from the demands of their profession and having those 50-70 hours each week to do as they choose. Especially in that last year, they are so busy finishing up that that enticing freedom just sits out there waiting to be claimed. THAT IS A MYTH. If you are not intentional about how you will use your time in that first year, it will use you.

Because your time has been so shaped by the demands of the profession, the siren song is to have the freedom to not think about what you will do ahead of time. It sounds so sweet to just take each day at a time and not be worried about what will come next. There may have been a number of house projects that have been put off that you think you can now attend to. Perhaps there are those unread books on your bookshelf that you dream of just sitting on your back-porch and reading.

The thought of having to schedule such activities is the very antithesis of what you hope retirement is about. However, precisely because you are no longer in a structured environment, you need to be even more intentional about how you will use your time. Especially in that first year, until you grow more accustomed to your new state, it is important that you be intentional about your activities. There will be many others who will be only too glad to plan your time for you. The problem is that many of those activities and requests are good things that you really are interested in. Very quickly you will discover that all that free time you dreamed of doesn't exist. It isn't that you have to plan important things. It may be that you will plan to read a trashy novel or take three naps a week, or sit and write poetry, but you do need to be intentional.

The following exercise is designed to help you protect your freedom. As you plan for this first year of retirement. It will seem awkward and restrictive at first, but later you will be grateful.

Take a calendar and mark with a red star your first day of retirement. In that first week of retirement, what would you like to do as part of restoring your body to a state of well rested healthiness? If you want to engage in some physical activities, begin identifying the time each day that you will focus on that. If there is some cleaning out of your files, schedule which hours and what days of the week you will focus on that. If you would like to go to a movie during the day, take a day off to go fishing, visit a grandchild, etc., put that down on specific days of the calendar. These plans will be interrupted by other events as you go along, but if they are on your calendar, you can both use them as a reason for not responding to some other request or you can consciously move them to another day if they get interrupted. You are encouraged to do exactly that for the first several weeks. When the two hours you were going to clean files gets interrupted, find another day that it can be assigned before you give it up.

Does that feel too programmed when you thought retirement was going to allow you freedom? OK, then plan a day in which you have absolutely nothing scheduled and wander around in completely unplanned freedom. Think of your "retirement calendar" not as you *slave driver* but as your *freedom protector*. Schedule as much unplanned times of freedom as you desire but mark that space on your calendar before it disappears.

Try this for at least 6 months. Near the end of that time, make an appointment with yourself to evaluate whether this is working for you and you want to continue planning your freedom or not.

Freedom can easily be lost if it is not protected.

Congregational Care of Pastor/Educator

Physical

Congregational Support of Health of Staff C-P-1

It is appropriate for the session to be concerned about the physical health of the pastors and educators (P/E) on the staff of their church. It should be clear that a congregation can benefit from supporting their staff to maintain their physical health. Many corporations are learning this lesson and our Board of Pensions is making this a major focus of some of their efforts.

The first thing that a congregation could do is to become familiar with the programs offered by the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at www.pensions.org in their wellness program. Here is an example of the value of the connectional church.

The second thing would be to express support for the P/E in maintaining their physical health and make sure they are aware of these resources.

A third thing that a congregation can do is to support their staff in taking time to make physical exercise a part of their regular routine. One congregation had a member that offered use of his weight machines for the pastor's use. Several congregations have tried to help provide membership at a Y or sports club. In some cases the health insurance will even help with the cost of such a membership.

Since people are often reluctant to intrude on a person's personal physical life, an entry point might be to invite the pastor and educator to lead the whole congregation in the spiritual dimensions of physical health. According to Paul (1 Corinthians 19) this is a spiritual issue for the whole Body of Christ.

Having the Health Conversation C-P-2

How does a congregation support the physical health of their pastor? Let's say that you recognize that your pastor is gaining too much weight, how do you raise the question of your concern without feeling as if you are invading his or her personal space? Later in the week I will share with you some of the statistics developed by a massive study of Methodist clergy in North Carolina, but the disturbing results suggest that clergy have a higher percentage of health problems than the average population. I want to suggest one approach that any congregation could take that would engage the pastor in that conversation but also the entire leadership of the church.

Recognizing that the elders or deacons of a congregation are also part of the spiritual leadership of the congregation, I would suggest that one begins by having the health conversation with the whole board. On the agenda set aside some time to reflect on the health challenges facing the leadership of the congregation. Ask all the individuals to simply talk about the general challenges facing members in general within their congregation. You make a list as they are identified. For example, people are overweight, some don't exercise enough, they don't get enough sleep, they drink too much, etc. The conversation alone raises the consciousness of the subject.

Next, engage in a brief reflection on the faith issues that speak to our care of our physical bodies. Explore the connection between our religious journey and our health journey. What is it in our faith that speaks to our care of our bodies. Develop a brief confession with respect to the connection between physical health and faithfulness.

Then pass out some blank 4 X 6 cards. Tell all the members that you are going to have a time of silent prayer in which each is asked to reflect on and identify an action that they think if they did it regularly would contribute to their personal health. At the end of the prayer time, they are to write down on both halves of the card the action they identified but without placing their names on the cards. They then tear the card in half, keeping one half and turning the other in.

The cards will be compiled into a list to be shared at the next meeting. At that next meeting, each member is asked to place the number from the list that identifies their action on the card and then using a scale of 1 – 10 with 10 representing complete success, rating how they have done this past month in taking the action that would contribute to their health.

Each month, at their regular meeting for a year, the same procedure is followed and a graph of success in each area is recorded. After each time of sharing, there is a time of prayer in which the person rededicates him or herself to practicing their designated action for the year. The church staff as well as the leadership are included in this communal effort to address the physical health of our journey of faith.

Emotional

Humor and Staff Bonding C-E-1

A simple strategy to nurture a staff's relationships. The pastor asks each member to tell a story about something that happened to them in the ministry that, at least in retrospect, they thought was funny.

The pastor begins by telling a couple of his or her own. It is likely that as one tells a story, it will trigger the memory of another story in someone else's life.

It is likely that each of you will learn a little more about each other in the process. Multi-staff churches can often get into either protection or competition in their relationships. Some soft humor can remind us of our humanity and of the value of our relationships.

Congregational Roast C-E-2

Plenty of studies have demonstrated that laughter is good for our health both physically and emotionally.

Plan an evening congregational dinner. Announce well in advance that the idea would be to "roast" the congregation, the preacher, educator, musician, church board, choir, youth group, etc. Anyone can contribute but it will be good to specifically identify some of the well known humorists in the congregation to prepare some material. You might also ask certain groups, such as the youth group, to prepare a roast. Their perspective could be very enlightening.

The purpose is to invite laughter to nurture the soul of the congregation and the individuals within it. Have a night in which we make fun of ourselves. You might even introduce a "Guess who" moment in which someone would act out some exaggerated characteristics of someone in the congregation and let the audience guess who they are portraying.

Of course one needs to build in some protections against the misuse of humor that can hurt but imagine the possibility of humor that can heal. Sometimes we can get too serious in the church and lose sight of the genuine fun of being together in community. Who can come up with the best funny line about the pastor, the session, and the congregation as a whole? It would be a fun evening to see the results.

Congregational Attention to Emotions C-E-3

In what way can a congregation be supportive of the emotional health of their staff? Here is an approach that an official board can take that will allow them to be attentive to their staff's emotional health. The example is for a pastor but it can be applied to any staff member.

The exercise is simple. At least once a quarter ask the pastor to reflect on two to three satisfying movements in the congregation and/or in his or her pastorate. Then ask him or her to also identify at least one area that troubles them. This is not a time for debate but simply of listening to the satisfactions and concerns of your spiritual leader.

Once the concern and satisfactions have been shared, the session might expand the discussion in the following manner. Without debating whether the described experience looks the same from someone else's perspective, explore what effect it might have on the life of the church if either the positive or negative movement would increase at least ten fold. What you are doing is exaggerating the trend before it has happened in order to look at its implications.

What you are doing for the pastor is allowing him or her to share the beginnings of movements within the congregation that affect him or her emotional satisfaction within their ministry. If this

happened quarterly, the church would have a sense of the pulse of the leadership of their church and maybe be able to address both the positive and negative before they became too large to handle.

Financial

Sessions and Clergy Financial Health C-FIN-1

One of the realities for most Presbyterian clergy is that their salary is a matter of public knowledge. Any change in their compensation must be voted on by the congregation and is subject to all sorts of debate and interpretation. There are certain myths that also seem to float around most congregations that considerably inflate members' perceptions of what the pastor's true salary is.

For example, they have heard that a certain amount of the pastor's salary is tax free. That is true as long as it is a fair rental value of where they live but many people assume that that amounts to a lot more than it does. They also assume that many clergy receive honorariums that amount to tax free dollars as well. While it depends on the clergy's honesty, just as it does on tips for a waitress, it is not true that what they receive is tax free. Most members do not think about the amount that a pastor pledges back to the church or if they do think about it, they assume it is about the same percentage as everyone else. There is also the unspoken myth that a truly faithful pastor shouldn't make a lot of money.

All of this makes the pastor defensive about their income even while they are struggling to meet their bills. It also makes them feel greedy if they push for a higher raise. A session can help by being clearer about some of the aspects of a clergy salary. For example, study leave allowance is not additional salary but reimbursement for expected professional expenses. Honorariums, while taxable, rarely amount to very much over a year and many clergy use them in their ministry rather than keep them for themselves. While a session should not make public a pastor's church pledge, they can get some figures from the national church as to the average percentage that pastors pledge and share that with the congregation. It might even cause some members to think about their own pledge.

Finally, it might be a good idea for someone to go to www.bankrate.com and get some cost of living statistics together with some average expenses in their area and try to form up an average budget to see just how the salary offered can be compared to normal expenses of living. To have a discussion about that in a session meeting might bring some reality to the financial decisions with respect to salaries.

Managing your finances is an important, but sometimes overlooked part of self improvement. After proper spiritual reflection, a solid foundation in personal finance strategy can see you through significant life changes, like retirement, and difficult times. The Board of Pensions offers a number of financial and retirement planning resources including educational seminars designed to educate and enhance your financial skills during your transition into retirement. The educational seminars include:

- Getting into Shape...Fiscally (Financial Planning)
- Grow into Tomorrow...Today (Retirement Planning)

- Post-Retirement
- Render unto Caesar: Clergy Tax and Terms of Call

For more information contact: Board of Pensions, Member Education: 800-773-7752 ext. 7223; or to view the schedule for the Educational Seminars login on to www.pensions.org.

Family

Pressures on Pastor's Families C-FAM-1

Care of pastors requires that sessions, committees on ministry, and judicatories be attentive to the dynamics of sacrifice and service inherent in being a pastor. Pastors are Christians, but their experience of church is quite different from that of the typical church member. Laypeople may take the following considerations for granted, but these are things that pastors and their family members often give up for the sake of their congregations:

- Choosing which church to attend.
- Joining a church school class or having a small group experience.
- Sitting beside their spouses and children during worship and being able to comfort each other or celebrate together like normal families.
- Friendships with congregants that are not influenced by professional responsibilities.
- Being able to take the phone off the hook at night (or even being able to put the children to bed).
- Higher salaries commensurate with their skills.
- Taking a long weekend.
- Planning a vacation without worrying about whether a church member will become ill or die.

Some of these simple things are inherent in pastoring, others are the result of pastors setting poor boundaries or sessions not taking the time to inquire about a pastor and his/her family's needs.

Together, the loss of several of these things can take a toll on a pastor and his/her family.

Acknowledging that pastors, and often their families, make these kinds of sacrifices out of their commitment to the greater good of the church can help sustain pastors and their families. But what else can be done?

The following possibilities are starting points for governing bodies, initial attempts to address complicated dynamics that are hard to address at the formal level. But,

Wouldn't it be great if....

- The terms of call included boundaries for pastors and their families such as how late or how early congregants could call the pastor for normal matters; the understanding that a pastor should not come back from a vacation for a funeral; and a commitment to avoid church business on a particular night or nights (which is something everyone might enjoy).
- Pastors and congregations felt more comfortable if the pastor left the chancel area during, for example a choral anthem, in order to be with her/his family for part of the service.

- Congregations transformed the annual review of the pastor's compensation into an annual recovenanting service that lifted up the pastor and his/her family and the sacrifices they are making.

Congregational Family Support C-FAM-2

Congregations want to assume that the pastor's family is just a normal part of the membership. Actually, most pastors families would also like to think that could be possible. The problem is that there are some areas of church life that work against their being average members.

When a pastor has a family member who is sick on Sunday morning, there is little question which adult will stay home to care for the children. When the pastor's wife or children act in unusual ways, perhaps just because they had a bad day, their behavior is not separated from how people view the pastor's ministry. When someone criticizes the pastor for something s/he has done, both spouse and children experience the pain. The list could go on. They might like to be treated like ordinary members, but often that is not possible.

The health of a pastor's family can be supported by some simple acts of the official church board. Most pastors' families understand that unique sacrifices are sometimes asked of the pastor. Yet if a pastor's day off or vacation is interrupted by a church emergency, it might help if the members of the family received a note thanking them for this extra effort.

A birthday card from the church board to individual family members, including the children, that not only recognized the birthday but thanked the person for supporting the pastor might be well received.

A couple of church officials might once a year invite the whole family out to lunch, ask them if there are particular pressures of the ministry that they would like to share, and thanking the whole family for what they contribute to the church.

Trying hard not to treat family members as appendages of the pastor but as individuals with their own interests and gifts is important.

Being understanding and supportive when the family is having problems in their own relationships can help remove some of the pressure.

Being willing to support some counseling where appropriate is also helpful.

The Health of a Pastor's Family C-FAM-3

It is common wisdom that people work better and are more productive when their family is healthy both physically and dynamically. Pastor's families face the common stresses of most families but also have some stresses that are unique to being part of a pastor's family. While everyone wants their family to act in acceptable ways, few professions have as many people watching and critiquing their family members on a regular basis as does a pastor. A common image is that the pastor's family lives in a fish bowl.

Members of the family are quick to pick up on criticism of the pastor and feel both defensive and personally hurt by such attacks. When one hears such criticism, it is natural to want to respond but as members of the pastoral family they are not as free to express themselves as other members. Most experienced pastors recognize how bluntly cruel some people can be in criticizing the pastor and then to expect that neither the pastor or members of the family will respond in an equally aggressive

manner. The pastor and family are expected to turn the other cheek but many members do not assume a similar expectation of themselves.

One simple act that congregations can take in support of the pastor's family is to occasionally seek out members of the family and express appreciation for not only the pastor's efforts but some of the sacrifices that the family members have to make as well. It can mean a lot for a child or spouse to receive a personal note that acknowledged the sacrifice that the whole family made in a given situation.

If there has been a particularly stressful period of time in the life of the church, consider what it might mean for the governing board to say to the pastor, we want you to have Sabbath day on us. Imagine the reaction of a pastor's family with young children if they were offered a night at the movies with hot fudge sundaes to follow. It is particularly important to pay special attention to the pressures on a pastor's spouse. S/he is the one who has to juggle all the schedules, absorb the criticism, and provide emotional support for the pastor when no one else can. What might be a creative way to express appreciation to him or her?

Medical Policy for Churches C-FAM 4

Congregations should develop a policy with respect to staff members in case they should incur a serious illness or disability.

A sample policy for your guidance is provided:

It is the policy of our church to be faithful to our staff as they are faithful to us. If an accident or illness should occur that necessitates a staff person being absent for an extended period of time for recovery, we will negotiate with him/her for a leave with pay. It is important at this point to be familiar with Board of Pension's Benefits Plan, especially health care and disability (long-term disability) which begins on the 91 day, if approved. It would be wise for the congregation to develop a **short-term disability policy** which would cover the first 90 days. If the condition fits within the category of disability, we will assist in accessing the disability support from the Board of Pensions and seek to compensate him/her for the difference between what the Board of Pensions provides and his/her regular salary. This time of absence will not be considered part of his/her education leave or vacation. If it is cost prohibitive for us to cover the person's areas of responsibility during this time, we will seek assistance from presbytery. The intent of this policy is to support our staff in recovery and restore the person to active ministry.

When a member of our church staff becomes pregnant, within the restrictions of our financial capability, it is our desire to provide for that person an appropriate pregnancy leave while continuing her pay and benefits. Normally such a leave would be about two months, but after that time, we also recognize that there will need to be flexibility with working schedules to allow for doctor's appointments, etc.

In both of the above cases, we are assuming that both the staff person and the church officers are trying to arrive at an agreement that is best for the church and the staff member. Because we are Christians and know that our decisions in such areas are a testimony to the faith we proclaim, we seek to demonstrate love of neighbor while being sensitive to the needs of both the church and the staff member. If it becomes difficult for us to arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement, we will invite a member of the committee on ministry or other appropriate person to assist us in arriving at an agreement that reflects our faith as members of the Body of Christ.

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:26)

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A Congregation/Pastor Sabbatical C-FAM-5

It is important to build into a pastor's sabbatical experience a positive way in which the congregation can also feel they are experiencing something special during those several months. A goal would be that when the pastor/educator returned from sabbatical both s/he and the congregation could reflect on the benefits of their experience during that time. Here is one example of how that could be done.

What if prior to the pastor's departure, there had been some reflection in sermons or education classes on the meaning of the Sabbath in our contemporary age and especially its benefits for the health of our families.

Next, as part of the church's experience during the pastor's absence, the church would agree to enter into a Family Sabbath Experience. The idea would be for the church to declare one particular night to be a family-Sabbath night for members of the church. On that night, the church would hold no meetings and each church family would strive to reserve that night to focus on family relationships.

Each week the church would suggest a possible focus for the family for that evening. While there are many possibilities, here are ten suggestions that families in the church could act on.

1. A family game night -- age appropriate and even adult couples without children should choose a game to play together.
2. Attend a movie together and top it off with a visit to an ice cream parlor following the movie.
3. A night of "family adventure dreaming." Dream and plan ahead possible family adventures that could happen in the future.
4. An "Appreciative Interview" evening in which the family would speak of what they particularly appreciate about each individual.
5. The family would choose a volunteer service project that they would engage in together.
6. The best joke night. Each member was to seek out the best jokes they could find and share them with each other.
7. Another game night with the family.
8. A music sing-along evening for the family. If no one played an instrument, recorded music could be used.
9. A grab bag choice night in which the family could choose a special focus for the evening.

10. A letter writing night in which the family would compose a letter to the returning pastor to be received at the end of the sabbatical.

In addition, the congregation would plan four congregational family nights such as:

1. A game competition night using a variety of games that matched various age levels.
2. A comedy night in which people would share their best jokes and maybe even some fun roasting about the church.
3. A music night -- perhaps with an invited musician that could guide everyone in fun music.
4. Receiving the pastor back home night in which all could share about their sabbatical experience.

Single Pastors and Families C-FAM-6

The single pastor/educator and the single pastor/educator with children have unique challenges that need to be recognized.

Single pastors or educators with children are especially challenged by their responsibility for their children. For most married church staff, if a child got sick on a Sunday morning, the spouse can stay with the child as the pastor/educator responds to his or her responsibilities. Who does that when the pastor/educator is single? Does the church have a contingency plan if on Sunday morning the child wakes up sick and the worship service is approaching? Does the church recognize the increased expense of childcare given all the night meetings that a pastor/educator is expected to attend? What happens when a school event in which a child is involved conflicts with a church meeting? Has that been talked about ahead of time with the pastor/educator?

Single pastors and educators without children also face some special challenges. They do have a family but often the schedule of church events denies them the freedom to attend such family times as Christmas or Easter gathering? Staying in touch with one's family when they live elsewhere can become expensive. Does the church recognize its importance? Is there some understanding that events involving special friends that constitute the pastor's support group can take precedence over some church events? Do people assume that because the pastor is single, s/he should be available for all events at the church? That is hard enough for the married pastor to negotiate but even more difficult for the single pastor.

Paying attention to the unique pressures put on pastor's families in all their forms can contribute to the health and effectiveness of a pastor.

Church Covenant on Boundaries C-FAM-7

Most churches do not choose to be harmful to the pastor's family life. As a body they would probably agree that s/he needs to work to protect some family time. It is not the church that calls during meal time or expects the pastor to miss a child's school event because there is a church event that conflicts. Rather, it is individuals within the church, who only see their request as a single request and not part of a pattern. Part of the Session's task is to help educate the congregation on a normal pattern of requests.

Yet pastors are in a double bind. On the one hand, we want to value our family with uninterrupted attention that nurtures family bonds. On the other hand, we don't want the congregation to conclude

that they shouldn't bother the pastor with their concerns because s/he is too busy. It would be helpful to have an open conversation with the ruling board about how to establish these boundaries.

Part of the session's educational task is to convey some understandings with the entire congregation. They can convey to the congregation not only what days the pastor/educator takes off but what are the types of exceptions that both s/he and the session think are appropriate. They might also suggest that they have encouraged the pastor not to answer the telephone during meal times and to leave a message that can be returned later. Similar understandings should be made public with respect to vacations and educational events. When it is shared by the session, it does not appear that the pastor is doing it on his or her own.

To have such a conversation with the entire congregation can be good educational event for the members about how to protect family time in all our families.

Session Guide for Professionals in Crisis C-FAM-8

(for session clerks and moderators of personnel committees)

When a member of the church's professional staff experiences a crisis, the church experiences a crisis. The church's response can be delayed or inadequate and can further exacerbate the matter for all concerned. We are referring to any type of crisis that might happen to anyone else.

Churches are best equipped to deal with illness or with the death of the church professional or a family member because we experience those regularly and without shame in the life of the church family.

Other problems such as:

Financial problems

Family problems (separation, divorce, children in trouble)

Reduction in mental powers and

Mental illness (clergy are particularly prone to depression)

are painful for most people to name, and church professionals are often more hesitant than laypeople to discuss these because they are expected to be "above all that." More difficult still are issues of sexual malfeasance.

Prevention is better than a cure, but when troubles arise, the session, through its personnel committee, should have both a plan for ministering to the staff person and a plan for maintaining the church's stability and carrying on the church's ministry.

The following guidelines for church sessions and congregations may be helpful:

Call the presbytery and ask for the staff member responsible for ministry and congregational support and inform that person of the situation. S/he will be able to help determine if there are any *Book of Order* questions that need to be addressed. S/he will also be able to assist in locating a supply pastor or interim pastor if the church's pastor will not be able to fulfill the pastoral office for a time. The care and support of the church professionals subcommittee often has a crisis advisory team that can be employed as needed.

If there are legal issues, the session and/or church professional may need to consult with an attorney. The presbytery executive or staff member will be able to assist you in finding legal counsel.

Issues of sexual misconduct will be referred to the committee on ministry's sexual misconduct subcommittee. Such issues will be investigated with discretion and handled with dispatch. The Board of Pensions provides a 24-hour nurse consultation service (866-794-3127) and financial, legal, and mental health referral services through an Employee Assistance Program (866-640-2772). These are available to any enrolled participant in the Board of Pensions' Benefits Plan.

Please provide the same kind of compassionate response to your staff member and family as you would to any member of the congregation. This includes acknowledging the difficulty, asking directly how the church can be helpful, assisting with the needs at home (food, transportation, child care, etc.), and giving pastoral care directly or asking a trusted colleague of the church professional to do so.

Spiritual

Spiritual Care of Our Leaders C-SP-1

Official boards of churches can become so focused on the mundane that they neglect to take time for the spiritual side of the clergy and themselves as servant leaders. Their meetings begin with a devotional and/or a prayer and close with prayer but those activities too easily become routine and fail to tap the spiritual power available.

Imagine a session directing their attention to the spiritual life of the board members and their clergy. It might be healthy to focus on a few at a time. What if a session identified one or two of its members and/or the clergy and educators and provided time for the rest to pray aloud for that person and their faith journey? At the next meeting they could name a couple more.

Another spiritual discipline might be allowing the Scripture to be the framework for attending to the spiritual side of the church. Again, you could either focus on the whole board, including the clergy and staff, or just several of them at a time. Begin with an easily singable gospel tune. Then take some time for quiet meditation during which members are asked to pay attention to what Bible story or verse came to mind as they reflected on the persons identified. It is not important that one understand why certain Scriptures come to mind, only pay attention to what comes into their minds. Allow the group to help draw out the aspects of that Scripture that might apply.

Depending on how many are focused upon, the time needed would vary but at least one-half hour could be given to reflecting on nurturing the spiritual lives of our clergy, church staff, elders, and deacons.

In addition, ask the clergy, staff, elders, and deacons, to respond to such questions as "How do you see God present in your life lately? What are some concerns you have in your spiritual journey that we can lift up in prayer?" If they are willing, it would also be powerful to have some laying on of hands for the prayer offered on their behalf.

Revisiting Underused Gifts C-SP-2

Do not neglect to recognize the healing power of underused gifts. These are gifts that you once used and had lately neglected or ones that because of forks in their journey of life had been left behind. Congregations also have gifts that once were lifted up but in the passing of time have been neglected.

Invite members of the session to make two lists. On one list let each person personally reflect on unused gifts in their own life. On the second list, identify unused gifts of the congregation. It is important to do this without thinking that it will produce more work. Assume that you had some more free time and resources, what are some of the gifts that might be valuable to nurture.

First, making use of the list of personal gifts, in small groups think creatively how such gifts might contribute to the individual's life even if they only were used in small ways. Sometimes you can develop tasks at work or home that draw upon those gifts. At other times, they are like a hobby that interrupts the otherwise demanding life. Even contemplating how such gifts might be developed and used in a new way will give a lift to a person's spirit.

Next, using the list identified as congregational gifts, compile a composite list for all to see. Then brainstorm how they might be creatively utilized in the life of the congregation. Consider the impact on the spiritual life of the congregation in using such gifts.

Too often we find ourselves being ground down by the constant demands of our life and fail to open ourselves to our creative side. As we develop and use our gifts, we discover an affirmation of our life. God gave us our gifts for a purpose. Drawing upon them can nurture and heal us from the wounds of our life.

You are more than you have dreamed of, so dream a little and discover some new sides of yourself.

Focus on Self Revisiting Underused Gifts C-SP-3

Some types of self-indulgence can be an appropriate way of loving the self that God loves. Here is an experiment that a session or board of a congregation could offer their staff.

First, ask them to describe what they would do if they were given \$10 that could only be spent to pamper or indulge themselves. It isn't a lot of money but there are things that can be done. They could go to a movie and maybe even buy a small popcorn. They could go buy a large hot-fudge sundae or a couple of paperback books. Perhaps they could buy one paper back and go sit in a Starbucks for an hour and just read.

The only restriction is that it has to be something purely for the self. It can't be given away or shared with someone else. I know ministers or educators are inclined towards wanting to include someone else but this time they should just focus on the self.

The session then gives them the \$10 and ask them to go do it. At the next board meeting they are to share the experience. Ask them to not only share what they did but how it made them feel.

Or here is another possibility. Ask the staff to plan a day for fun together. You could take them to a fun arcade, give them a bunch of quarters, and tell them to go play the games and come back and share the experience. Or take them to a pottery place where they learn how to cast a pot and let them create and paint their own creation and bring it to the session. Or take them to a book store like Barnes and Noble. Ask each of them to go to a section that they normally would not visit, spend a half-hour learning something in that area, and then come back and share with the group. If you really

wanted to be generous, tell them they had an hour to pick out any books they wanted up to a total of \$50 and report back to the session what they had chosen and why.

The whole idea is to give them an experience of pleasure as an act of appreciation of their work. It's easier to work on the normal relational problems and issues that arise if you have built some bonds among each other previously.

Listening to Eternity C-SP-4

Staying in touch with the source of our call is not a case of dialing into eternity. It is, however, a case of engaging in the practices that make us sensitive to eternity's addressing us.

The danger for clergy is that the very practices that are provided for us to listen to God are also the practices that we use professionally on behalf of others. Because we are frequently asked to pray for others or pray in a worship service, it is easy to forget that we also need to take time to pray as a petitioner who seeks to hear God address him or her personally. Religious professionals need to ask themselves how often they have set aside time solely for the purpose of listening to God speak to them about their lives.

How does one prepare to listen to God? First, you need to deliberately set aside time in a safe place where you don't have to be conscious of anything around you. You may have a place in your church or at home where you won't be disturbed. The problem is that those are the two places where you not only may be disturbed but also the places you are most likely to notice things that need to be done.

Consider a couple of alternate possibilities. One is to find a neighboring church that wouldn't mind you making use of their chapel or sanctuary. Or, as you are making hospital calls, carve out some time to make use of their chapel.

It may take some practice and even some counsel from a spiritual advisor, but learn how to pray in a manner that opens you to the spirit of God. This may be a centering type of prayer or it may be a meditative form of journaling or some other form. The focus is on presenting yourself before God without expectation. Trust that God may want to speak to you deep within your spirit and only later will you realize that you have been addressed.

Trust that prayer is God's gift to you and engage in it outside of your professional responsibilities. Do it regularly enough that it becomes a habit.

Congregational Nurture of Pastor's Spirit C-SP-5

While we often assume that a pastor will attend to the spiritual nurture of the congregation, it is not often that a congregation considers how they can nurture the pastor in his or her spiritual journey.

A first step might be for the session or governing board to have the conversation. The conversation begins by simply verbally recognizing that the pastor's spiritual life is critical to the health of the congregation. It is an unfortunate reality that many pastors neglect their own spiritual life because there are so many other obvious demands that need to be met. Since the Hebrew word for spirit can also be translated breath, think of what happens if a person has the responsibility to breathe out continually and never takes the opportunity to breathe in.

It is important to ask the pastor to share with the session what s/he does to attend to personal spirituality. Also ask "What are some of the realities of your life that interfere with paying attention

to your spiritual health.” Then ask “What types of steps can we and members of the congregation take that will provide you more opportunity to pay attention to the spirit.”

One congregation identified a day each month that the pastor leaves the church and goes on a mini-retreat focused on his own spiritual needs. They even found a convenient home that was available for him one day each month. Another idea might be to share with the congregation that a certain hour each week has been specifically set aside for the pastor to be in prayer and personal Bible study. Identifying that hour for the congregation both helps protect that hour and it makes the congregation aware of the importance of the pastor’s spiritual life.

It would be interesting if the congregation knew that once a quarter they were going to be asked to give feedback to the pastor on the best sermon for that quarter and the most inspiring moment in the liturgy. For both the pastor and the congregation this would raise their awareness of what is happening for them in worship.

It is uplifting to know that you are touching people’s spirits. How about inviting people in the congregation to write a note about a particular way they have been touched by the pastor’s ministry and the effect it has had on their spiritual journey.

It is also important to regularly invite the congregation to pray for the pastor.

Theological Discussion on Employment C-SP-6

How should a church behaves when leaders fail to meet the congregation’s expectations? Conflict is not an easy experience in or out of the church but perhaps our own theology can give us some guidance in how to proceed.

First, a reality check. We have this illusion that for a church to be faithful everybody must be nice and there would be no conflict. That does not fit with either our current experience of church life or the church reflected in the Bible and history. Read 1 Corinthians as one example of the early church’s experience of conflict. So the first stage of our discussion would be to recognize the reality of conflict within the church.

The second stage would be to explore the meaning of the fact that the church began with the experience of denial (Peter) abandonment (all disciples) and betrayal (Judas.) Reflect together on what it means that this was the experience in which the church began. Reflect on how Jesus responded to those circumstances and what that means for our current church. How might the session and pastor learn from Jesus on how to respond in such circumstances? You might note that Jesus acted to restore all but Judas to the church.

Next, consider how the church covenants together to “speak the truth in love” about their differing expectations and how to respond to them. What does it mean to speak in that way and how can that be built into the relationship between the Session and those that are employed by the church? What is the role of the pastor in that situation? Where is mutual prayer an appropriate part of that discussion? How do we recognize our mutual failings and the steps to improve? How do we recognize when the relationship must be ended? Can that be a mutual decision?

Redemptive Possibilities in Betrayal C-SP-7

When a clergy person or a prominent church leader engages in activity that betrays the trust of the congregation, it can have a cancerous effect on the whole congregation. This is especially true when the offence is in the area of sexuality or finances. These two areas of betrayal seem to leave especially deep wounds in the community of faith.

All communities are built on bonds of trust. When that trust is betrayed, it is especially difficult to rebuild that trust. We know it with couples who have experienced infidelity but it is even more complex in larger communities. Add to that the fact that a church is centered on faith and obedience to God, and it is even more difficult.

The first step in healing is to name the betrayal and its effect on the larger membership. At such a time, it is important that the community avoid any appearance of secrecy because that is the fuel for the type of gossip that can further exacerbate the wounds. There needs to be the opportunity for members to confess to their own pain as a result of the experience.

Having identified and acknowledged the painful effect of the betrayal, it may be helpful to be reminded as a Christian community that the church began with the experience of betrayal. There are a couple of issues that can be explored at this point:

1. What prevented the early church from being destroyed by Judas' betrayal, Peter's denial, and the disciples all running away? Number two, w
2. What was Jesus' response to the experience of betrayal and what does that suggest for us who claim Jesus as our Lord and Savior. The point here is not to cover over painful wounds with a series of pious words but to explore the redemptive power of Christ in the Body of Christ.
3. Identify redemptive possibilities that could emerge from their own experience of pain. What we learn in Christ is that no experience of betrayal, denial, or abandonment is so powerful that it can prevent the redemptive power of Christ. To experience the resurrection of Christ in the midst of the wounded Body of Christ is to deepen the healing power of Christ in our midst.

Listening to God's Spirit in a Congregation C-SP-8

There are some theological assumptions undergirding this idea. First that the church is the Body of Christ. That means that the church is more than a human organization even though clearly it is also a human organization. There is something of the spirit involved in what is happening in a church. Second, based both on the Gospels and the letters of Paul, the assumption is that the spirit is at work especially when the church is struggling with real issues in its life. In fact, God can use the challenges of a church as a context for speaking to it and guiding it in its faith journey. The spirit doesn't just speak when things are going smoothly or when people are at their faithful best but precisely when those things are not true. Third, pastors can be most alive when they are responding to the call of God as a spiritual leader of a church. So one of the ways that the session can strengthen your pastor's ministry is to consciously enter that process with him or her.

Step one: Ask the church leaders to identify the five most pressing issues facing the church at this time. These can be organizational issues, problems with upset members, failure to attract new

members, financial problems, lack of commitment, etc. The point is that most leaders are fairly aware of some of the major challenges facing a church but often they don't name them clearly.

Step two: Since this is the Body of Christ, and the current members, leaders, and pastors are the ones that God has invited to participate in this journey together, what is God trying to say to this church as it faces these issues. Other churches will have other issues and the message will be different but what is God trying to say in this particular church. This is not a problem solving discussion. Rather, the pastor and leaders are trying to identify the faith questions that are evident in a community of people facing these specific issues. As you look at each issue separately, try to identify the faith question that is present. In some cases there may be more than one but try to identify the central one.

Step 3: Take one question at a time. Allow for a time of meditative prayer and ask each member to consider what biblical story or liturgical event in the worship of the church comes to mind when they are reflecting on this faith question. It is not important that the person understand the connection but simply identify what comes to mind.

Step 4: Now allow the whole group to play with some of the biblical stories or liturgical acts identified and seek out possible connections.

Step 5: Even if you don't know how to respond, try to identify what God might be trying to say to the congregation in this circumstance.

The same steps would be repeated with the other issues. You might benefit from having some time intervene between step 2 and 3 and ask everyone to keep the issue and biblical stories in their prayers during the intervening time.

Vocational

Celebrating Anniversaries C-VOC-1

It is good for a congregation to find out the anniversary of both the pastor's ordination and the anniversary of his or her receiving the call to the particular congregation. Recognition is a powerful motivator.

One congregation chose to celebrate the pastor's fifteenth anniversary with them in a special way. Since they knew that their pastor had been very involved with a missionary effort in Haiti, they had decided to take up a special offering. Then when they had a special celebration of his fifteenth anniversary with them, they announced that they were sending this gift to the mission in his honor.

This is a wonderful way for the congregation to both affirm a pastor's ministry and honor an outreach effort in which s/he has become deeply involved. Other congregations might want to choose a local mission or cause. The fact that the congregation recognizes the anniversary is the first affirmation of ministry. The fact that they recognize and honor the pastor's commitment to an effort beyond the congregation is the second affirmation. The fact that they are willing to contribute beyond their regular giving is a third affirmation. Fourth, because it is a gift beyond the person, it leaves little room for someone to criticize the next time that the pastor's salary is discussed.

Nurturing Creative Leadership C-VOC-2

There has been a lot of talk about the need for creative leadership in the church. Recognizing that in the Reformed Church, leadership is shared among elders, deacons, and clergy, there is a need to expand our nurture of that leadership. One of the barriers to creative leadership is the power of negative responses. Often new ideas are not fully formed when they come into our heads. When we share them in their unformed state, and people point out the problems with the idea, we quickly learn not to be too radical in our next proposal.

There are a couple of rules in responding to creative ideas that need to be followed. The first rule is that when you respond, you are asked to first share two strengths or positives about the idea. The second rule is that when you do share a weakness or problem with the new idea, it is shared as a corporate challenge. For example, "I like this and this about your idea, but how do WE solve this problem that I think is a concern." The person who proposed the idea, often in its newly formed state, doesn't have to have all the answers but joins with a community to strengthen the idea proposed.

Now let's apply that to the nurture of church leadership. First let's think of ministry outside the immediate church community. The leadership identifies several areas of ministry that seemed to be supported by the Gospel's mandate but are not part of the current outreach of the congregation. Next, the leadership enters into a time of prayer seeking to identify one of those areas for deeper reflection. While the group still has not determined what they will do with respect to the area, they seek to come to some consensus about one area for the current discussion, knowing that others can come later.

Then, both the clergy and the lay leaders are asked to take at least one-half an hour each day for a week to pray asking what God might be saying to them about possible directions of ministry in that area. When they reconvene, in almost Quaker fashion, any who wishes shares what has formed in their thinking. After all have shared, using the rules above, they begin to focus down on how they might seek to respond to God's call in this area.

Positive Evaluation C-VOC-3

In training congregations to be more effective in caring for their ministerial staff, one aspect would be to help the session to develop a positive evaluation process.

Such a process needs to be aware of two aspects. First, it needs to be approached as an evaluation of the whole ministry of the church rather than that of an individual employee. Responsibility and accountability should be addressed not only for the pastor, DCE, or musician but also for the session, deacons, members, etc. In any given area of church life, almost all of the above mentioned people can contribute or detract from the success of ministry. To identify an area, for example worship, and to reflect on what each position can do to strengthen ministry in that area can be a positive conversation.

Second, there is an approach to such an evaluation that can generate creativity. It begins by recognizing how easily a negative comment can shut down a person's ability to hear. So, the positives need to outnumber the negatives, and the responsibility for the negatives needs to be spread out as a group responsibility.

For example, if the concern was that the church is not growing in membership, the conversation would begin by noting what the various entities are doing that makes the church attractive to visitors. Then the conversation would consider the weaker areas and what each entity could do that might

attract more people into membership. This is far superior to focusing on what someone is not doing that is preventing the church from growing. It recognizes the corporate nature of the church.

Another area of exploration and evaluation would be to use the mission study that is often recommended when a congregation is searching for a pastor and adapt it to enable the pastor and the congregation to evaluate where they are headed and changes that might be valuable on significant anniversaries of the church. To focus on anniversaries of the church avoids the implication that the real focus is on the pastor's effectiveness and maintains the perspective of the whole ministry in which the pastor and the congregation together are engaged.

Enlarging the Conversation C-VOC-4

A good place to begin in caring for the pastor is to enlarge the conversation. It is good Reformed theology to say that by our baptism we are all ministers. When you discuss how to care for pastors and educators in a church, you are having a conversation about the care of those who minister in God's name. A healthy place to begin this conversation is with the church officers. It could be at a retreat or just an evening training session.

Begin by helping them recognize that ministry happens beyond official activities of the church. Ask each to identify forms of ministry in which they engage in all aspects of their living.

Invite them to brainstorm the various stresses caused by their engagement in ministry. After you have developed a list of possible stresses in ministry, guide them in exploring how such stresses affect the outcome of their ministry. What you are doing is identifying the link between ministry and stress.

It is OK to recognize that there are different stresses that clergy and educators face than that which elders and deacons face. Still, it is important to affirm that all are engaged in ministry and that stress can have a negative effect on that ministry. The list of stressors should include both internal and external stresses.

Next, remind the officers that Jesus demonstrated an awareness of the stress of ministry and would invite his disciples to take time to rest in the midst of their ministry. (Mark 6:31)

With that as a foundation, it is now appropriate to begin to strategize both the healthy and unhealthy ways that we address our stresses. Next, you will want to explore how to nurture the healthy ways to relieve stress. Identify as many ways as you can about how the church can balance the total ministry and address the stresses in people's lives.

You may want to identify how clergy and staff can help church officers with their stress and how the church officers can help the clergy and staff with theirs. This is the beginning of a continuing conversation on how to live a healthy Christian life.

Congregational Celebration of the Call C-VOC-5

Begin by making a list of those in the ordained ministry who have been part of your congregation as children, youth, or even in a previous career. Also identify former pastors who have now moved on to other churches or have retired.

Next, look at your church year and identify some Sundays where a guest preacher might be appropriate. If you have lots of names, you might want to spread this out over more than a year.

Since pastor's schedules are often crowded, pick one name and clear a date with that person before moving on to the next date. When you make the invitation, remind them of their connection with the congregation. Tell them that you wish to celebrate their call to ministry by inviting them to preach at your church. Ask them to include some reflections on their experience of their call as they speak to the congregation.

If you are willing to have a congregational meal or special Sunday School class on that same weekend, you might want them to explore the meaning of call more thoroughly at a congregational gathering. For those who were former pastors, you might want to ask them to reflect on how God worked in his/her life during the time at the congregation and since then.

What you are doing over a series of experiences, is involving the whole congregation in exploring the meaning of God's call and how the congregation has been part of hearing God's call in several lives. Since Reformed faith holds that not only ordained pastors but all lay people are called by God through their baptism, you might want to have some other experiences throughout the year exploring the meaning of baptism and call in other professions.

How Well Do You Know? C-VOC 6

Below are a list of tasks that the pastor or educator performs regularly. First as individuals and then as a group, estimate the number of hours your group thinks is required for each task.

TELEPHONE, E-MAIL, CORRESPONDENCE	_____
ADMINISTRATION	_____
SUPERVISION OF STAFF AND/OR VOLUNTEERS	_____
COMMITTEE MEETINGS DURING THE DAY	_____
COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD AT NIGHT	_____
WORSHIP PLANNING AND CONDUCTING	_____
SERMON PREPARATION AND PREACHING	_____
PRIVATE PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICE	_____
CHURCH SCHOOL PLANNING	_____
TEACHER/OFFICER TRAINING	_____
HOSPITAL OR CRISIS VISITING	_____
HOME VISITING	_____
TEACHING	_____
COUNSELING	_____
SPECIAL EVENTS (weddings, funerals, seasonal events, etc.)	_____
YOUTH MINISTRY	_____
CHILDREN'S MINISTRY	_____
SERVICE AND MISSION WORK	_____

COMMUNITY WORK WITH OTHER CHURCHES	_____
EVANGELISM AND WITNESS	_____
DENOMINATIONAL WORK	_____
TOTAL HOURS	_____

The Congregation and the Pastor's Vocation C-VOC-7

We speak of the pastor receiving a call to the ministry but often assume that is a onetime event. While Paul had the dramatic Damascus Road event in his life, he also speaks of other times throughout his ministry when he sensed where God was calling him. Pastors also sense special aspects of their call beyond that of being a pastor to a congregation. A congregation would be wise to honor a pastor's vocational journey. Many of those goals can be pursued in the congregation and not require leaving the congregation to follow one's vocational development.

Begin by asking the pastor about his or her vocational goals in the near future. Having verbalized the goals in the pastor's life, it would then be important to creatively reflect on how the church could both honor and support those goals.

A pastor can also be asked what are some of the gifts that s/he has that need to be further developed. One pastor who loved to write music found that the demands of being a pastor had caused that to be put aside. When the session worked with him in integrating that gift with other aspects of ministry, he was able to develop further.

In addition, pastors need to be asked about the passions that they have felt the necessity to compromise in the exercise of their ministry. One friend has a passion for mission in a particular part of Mexico. When the congregation recognized that as a legitimate part of their call to him, he was able to feel supported in responding to that aspect of God's call in his life.

The point is that many of those particular gifts and passions that a pastor has can be creatively integrated into the overall ministry of the congregation to the enrichment of the congregation. However, if the conversation about such possibilities is never raised, both the pastor and the congregation are the losers. Too often that results in the pastor seeking another call hoping to develop neglected gifts. If God is the one who calls and the pastor and the congregation is responding to God's call, then those passions and gifts may well be the creative edge of a congregation and pastor being obedient to God. Responding to this larger sense of call results in a further maturity of our faith.

Since Presbyterians believe that everyone has a calling from God, another approach to this would be to expand the conversation and ask all of the board to reflect on their vocational goals and passions in life.

Congregational Support of Vocation C-VOC-8

John Wesley is quoted as saying, "The world is my parish." Most of us, when we sense a call by God, do not understand that call to be confined to one particular church or even to just the activities of a congregation. Some follow that call in non-parish ministry but even those who pursue the ministry in a parish setting see their ministry as extending beyond the immediate congregation. Sometimes that will unfold in a commitment to a particular cause or participation in a community

ministry. Sometimes it will result in participation in a denominational effort that is larger than what happens in the congregation.

When done with a proper balance, these trans-congregational efforts often enrich the life of the congregation as well. Often the congregation recognizes but rarely voices their support of such efforts on behalf of the clergy. One of the ways to support a pastor's sense of call would be to identify such activities as part of the pastor's call. One congregation wrote into the terms of call an expectation that the pastor would be engaged in leading the congregation into greater commitment to mission beyond the congregation.

A first step is to have an open conversation with the pastor about his or her passions for ministry that extend beyond the local church. Having identified some of those areas of interest, a second step would be to explore with the pastor how those efforts might enrich the congregation's ministry. A third step would be to communicate to the congregation both the pastor's interest and the vision of how this strengthens the congregation's ministry.

See the Litany celebrating the extra work of ministry, Psalm 111).

Judicatory Care of Pastor/Educator

PHYSICAL

Physical Health and the Presbytery PR-P-1

While it is obvious that the physical health of the pastors and educators in our judicatory benefits the whole church, we often do not bring a focus to this aspect of ministry. A simple act that most presbyteries could do would be to have a presbytery nurse at a meeting to take blood pressures and perhaps other easily administered health evaluations.

Visit the Board of Pensions website to learn about wellness resources; make these resources to the presbytery meeting. Invite a representative from the Board of Pension to offer a seminar on the various wellness programs during the presbytery's leadership event or mission fair; sponsor a Health and Wellness Clinic during the presbytery meeting.

If such programs were spread out over several meetings, it would also create a cultural awareness of the importance of physical health that could benefit the whole presbytery. This might lead to other discussions and other programs that would assist in maintaining a healthy church. To paraphrase Paul, "If one suffers, all suffer together." (I Corinthians 12:26)

Health Care For Pastors PR-P-2

The statistics on the health of pastors is growing increasingly disturbing. There are some actions that a Presbytery or even a community of churches could take to address that problem. A major action would be to help arrange a health fair strictly for pastors in a contiguous community. You might do this in sections of a presbytery but you also could make a positive witness to the community if executives from the various denominations in an area coordinated such an activity.

The first step would be to approach a local hospital and talk with them about providing health personnel for such an event. At the event you would be offering to check blood pressure, sugar in the blood, cholesterol count, weight, etc. They may even have portable sonogram machines or other machines to check other health issues.

In addition you would want health personnel to provide tables with literature and advice on signs to look for with respect to heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, etc. An additional advantage for the pastor is that s/he would be better informed about what to do if a member of the congregation showed such symptoms. There could also be a demonstration of mouth to mouth resuscitation, use of a defibrillator, etc.

If you are near an educational medical center, they probably have a division that would be glad to work with you on designing such an event. You might even get someone to include some brief seminars on healthy cooking, home exercise programs, stress reduction programs, etc. It would be

worth checking with the local branch of a large health insurance industry like Blue Cross to see if they would help sponsor such an event.

If you did it ecumenically, you could have sufficient numbers to not have anyone drive too far. Plus you probably could get some good media coverage for a positive cooperative event among the churches.

Because it is focused on pastors and professional church staff, it would be good to have some elements built into the design that address the unique aspects of working in a church and the resultant pressures of such a profession.

Emotional

Laughter at Presbytery PR-E-1

A brief experience at Presbytery to help people transcend ideological divides and form a sense of community. Have the people in the meeting cluster in small groups right in the meeting place of not more than four or five participants. Spend about 15-20 minutes recalling some of the funny experiences that each have experienced in the church. Then pick out one to share with the entire group. This way everyone would get a chance to share but without taking an enormous amount of time, the whole group could experience some of the classic stories.

A Treasure Chest of Fun PR-E-2

One of the sad truths of many of our lives is that we don't do a very good job of playing. The focus of so much of our energy is in helping others and we often only indulge in acts of pure personal pleasure with a slight tinge of guilt.

As a way of raising awareness of the need for fun times that interrupt the pressures of ministry, as a presbytery invite people to contribute to a treasure chest of fun. You can begin this over the internet but it also should be lifted up when the body meets together. The idea would be to begin building a list of pleasurable activities from which any person can draw.

Ask people to suggest pleasurable activities that they have discovered in their own lives that others might enjoy as well. Have several categories. One that an individual can do, another list for families with young children, another for couples, or families with teenagers, etc. Each list needs to include things that cost nothing or very little as well as others that may cost more. Identify activities that one can do in a short time as well as those that take several days.

Make a compilation of the suggestions accessible on the presbytery web page or some other convenient place. Each time the presbytery meets, highlight some of the best suggestions and invite people to contribute more before the next meeting.

Judicatory Surprise PR-E-3

Increasingly the month of October is noted as Clergy Appreciation Month. A judicatory leader can invite officials of several judicatories to offer a banquet of appreciation for the clergy in a local community.

Each of the judicatories can contact the lay leaders of as many congregations as possible and ask them if they are willing to do two things in appreciation of the work of their pastor(s). First, are they willing to find \$100 to pay for the pastor and spouse to attend the banquet. Second, are they willing to compose a letter describing their appreciation of the pastor's work in their church.

The \$100 pays for two people's dinner at an attractive site. Of course this can be done in a less expensive manner at a church or conference center but the idea is to allow the atmosphere of the site to contribute to the festive occasion. The letters are all placed in a box and several drawings take place at various times during the banquet. The winners are offered a free night at a bed and breakfast. The other letters of appreciation are sent to the pastors in affirmation of their ministry.

The program is designed to include joyous music, some comedy that allows us to laugh at some of the stressful aspects of ministry, and an inspiring speaker that lifts up the nobleness of the call in which they are engaged. A creative person can be invited to prepare new words celebrating ministry to a very familiar tune that can be sung throughout the evening as an anthem of appreciation.

The ecumenical aspect of the evening emphasizes the oneness of the Body of Christ. The local media can be invited to cover the event and therefore emphasize the appreciation of the community for the work of ministry.

In addition to the banquet idea described, there are other possibilities to consider. If the community has a local university or college, how about organizing a block of seats to a game and having a tail-gate party or reception before the game. Some universities have booster clubs with lounges that might be convinced to provide some space for the event. The university or college might offer a discount, particularly to an early season game. They probably would also publically welcome the group during the game which increases the visibility of what you are doing. If it is a small community with one or two high schools, the same idea might work at a high school game.

Another idea might be to contact a local theater group and organize a reception before the event or, depending on the event, maybe have a discussion following the event. The purpose is to create community among the clergy and have them experience appreciation for their work.

Get creative. You will enjoy the results

A Lunch of Humor PR-E-4

Presbyteries have been through some very difficult times in recent years. The debate over sexuality is the most visible issue that has divided us one from the other, but there are many other pressures as well.

We know that Jesus said one of our most effective witnesses to the world is to demonstrate how we love each other in a manner reflective of how Jesus has loved us. A paraphrase of Jesus words is that the world will know that we are Jesus' disciples if we love one another. If that is the criteria, how is it going within your presbytery?

Laughter and humor can be an effective antidote to some of the relational poison that has been affecting us.

A simple suggestion that any presbytery leader or member of presbytery can take is to have a lunch of humor. Invite several clergy to have lunch together. Make sure that there is theological diversity among the group. It would probably be possible to ask some cooks in a specific congregation to prepare the meal. It is a gracious act that most congregations can accomplish if the group is of reasonable size.

The agenda, which should be announced ahead of time, is that each participant should bring their best religious joke or story and a humorous story that they have experienced in their own ministry. The leader should have a set of his or her own stories, but the objective is to get as many as possible to contribute.

Food and laughter can be healing contributors to any community. If a presbytery is able to arrange several of these lunches across the presbytery, it can build better relationships that will help when the more difficult issues also need to be discussed.

COM Pastoral Care During Disasters PR-E-5

Committees on ministry have a special responsibility towards pastors and their families during times of disaster. Out of their sense of pastoral duty and care, pastors resist assistance and relief and often will not take a break. Some steps to consider are:

1. Organize retired pastors and ministers-at-large who are not in the designated disaster area to partner with particular pastors whose churches are recovering from a disaster. This person can be assigned to relieve the pastor from some of his/her responsibilities (preach on some Sundays, assist in pastoral care, or administer congregational and community relief efforts).
2. In areas prone to possible disasters (hurricanes, floods, wildfires), COMs can assist in arranging/assigning churches within a disaster prone area to partner churches located in geographically safe areas. These churches can be responsible for the care and shelter of their partner congregation should there be the need for an evacuation.
3. Encourage congregations to know the special needs and disabilities of their members and urge them to develop an emergency-call tree that can be activated if needed. Particular elders or deacons can be assigned a special-needs member to look out for.
4. Have a disaster relief fund available to assist the immediate needs of pastors where churches have been destroyed and income has been cut off.
5. Plan a mandatory two- or three-day retreat three to four weeks into a long-term disaster for pastors (and spouses). Request that PDA come in to lead workshops on disaster self-care. Be sure to include an ample amount of R&R in the retreat.

6. Request ahead of time from members of presbytery free use of vacation homes so that pastors and their families can have a low-cost weekend away from disaster-related responsibilities.

Resources:

www.pcusa.org/pda	Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
http://www.redcross.org/	The American Red Cross
http://www.fema.gov/	The Federal Emergency Management Administration
http://www.icisf.org/	The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation
www.churchworldservice.org	Church World Service
www.greencross.org	Green Cross Academy of Traumatology

Clergy Heartbreak PR-E-6

Clergy heartbreak occurs when a pastor no longer has high expectations for his/her church. Living in the tension of the already/not yet of God's reign, clergy long for their churches to be vigorous witnesses to the good news of the gospel. God blesses us with power for the task and peace in our hearts. Life abundant is available. Yet a particular church may seem so far from what a pastor is hoping for. And, sadly, after years of trying to lead a congregation, a pastor may come to believe that her/his church will never be able to move forward, never live into its mission, never be a "real" church.

Clergy heartbreak sets in. In contrast to clergy burnout (where the pastor is likely to leave the ministry altogether), the pastor still preaches, still visits, and still administers, but there is little fire left. Lower expectations have settled in, lower expectations for the church and lower expectations for his or her own ministry. If the pastor does not think that much will happen, what is the church likely to think? How is a church likely to respond?

Frustration, per se, is not a sign of clergy heartbreak. The key sign is lowered expectations and a pastor's conviction that a given church is incapable of improving.

A congregation has a right to a pastor whose "heart is in it," a pastor who will challenge them to expect more from God and to attempt more for God. A pastor and congregation may continue to "function," but a congregation is called to thrive.

The committee on ministry needs to be prepared to discern with the pastor whether or not he or she can reasonably expect to be renewed for this kind of leadership in this particular setting. If the answer is that renewal is possible, here are some strategies that the pastor and the committee on ministry can develop with the session:

- Conduct a "leading causes of life" review of the church (concentrating on current strengths, not problems).
- Provide focused leadership training with outside instructors to provide a fresh voice.
- Lead a mutual ministry review (perhaps as part of a triennial visit) that looks at how the entire church, not just the paid staff, is doing in ministry.

- Consider if pastoral over-functioning and congregational under-functioning has been one of the dynamics. The COM may need to encourage the pastor to step back and even step away from some things in order to promote congregational development.
- Determine if a sabbatical for the pastor can become an occasion for the church to do some of its own work in identifying and assessing its mission.

What if a pastor cannot reasonably be expected to be renewed in this setting? The pastor may need encouragement (even permission) to seek a new call. The committee on ministry is in a position to help the pastor see that he or she is not “abandoning” the congregation but rather acting faithfully. Indeed, part of the current dynamic may be that the pastor is no longer a good fit for what this community needs. It is helpful to remember that the church is not the pastor’s church, but Christ’s.

RESOURCES

Gary Gunderson and Larry Pray, *Leading Causes of Life*, Abingdon, 2009.

COM Combating Isolation PR-E-7

These are a variety of suggestions on how the committee on ministry can assist the clergy and educators in combating the debilitating issue of isolation in the ministry.

1. Make use of and promote Board of Pensions and denominational resources for clergy wellness.
2. Make available clergy and educator support groups and clergy spouse support groups.
3. Contract with local resources to provide confidential therapy services for clergy, educators, and their families.
4. Encourage “Facebook” or other online support/interest groups.
5. Write boundary expectations into calls and covenants for clergy and educators whereby the congregation agrees that their spending time with spouse and family is expected, days off are protected, and participation in the activities and leadership within the local community is encouraged.
6. Either in the church’s call or the presbytery’s budget have funds available for clergy/educators recreational activities or hobbies.
7. Form a pastoral care team and/or have a designated pastor-to-pastors and chaplain for spouse of clergy or educator.
8. Be creative in sponsoring clergy and educator retreats and outings (cruises, fishing contests, golf matches, tickets to concerts and civic events, tours or trips).
9. Arrange for corporate contract membership fees for the YMCA, YWCA, or a health club within the bounds of presbytery.
10. Sponsor health fairs and wellness contests for clergy/educators and their families.
11. Form a mentor-colleague program with means for accountability to make sure contacts are being made. (Don’t forget retired pastors and ministers serving in a setting other than the local congregation.)

12. Develop a “First Call” program for new clergy retention and wellness.
13. Sponsor annual clergy, clergy/spouse, and educators retreats.
14. Consider sponsoring quarterly district luncheons.
15. Acknowledge clergy/educators’ anniversaries, birthdays, ordination dates, etc.
16. Sponsor continuing educational workshops and courses for clergy/educators that have nothing to do with congregational ministry (beginner’s golf or tennis lessons, foreign language series, “how to” water ski, fish, snow ski, bowl, sail, or bird watch – use your imagination!)
17. Make sure spiritual resources are available and their use encouraged by clergy/educators and their spouses.
18. Sponsor movie/theatre/concert groups.

Connecting Clergy Community PR-E-8

A presbytery or other governing body can make use of technology to build up the Body of Christ.

First, identify some of the challenges that are facing the church in our time. At least in the beginning, don’t choose the politically controversial issues but more basic ones like new member development, creative financing, environmental issues in building use, or supporting of weak churches during a time of transition.

Second, share this list over the internet with the pastors of your presbytery. Ask for volunteers to think about these issues on a deeper level.

Three, form groups of three to five clergy around one of these issues and ask for their commitment to spend at least one to two hours a week for eight weeks researching and sharing around the issue.

Hook them up through something like Facebook and ask them to commit to a given hour each week that they would exchange their thinking about the issue. Independent of that hour, they would also commit at least an hour to reading, researching with respect to the issue. Ask them to think both theologically and practically with respect to the issue.

Near the end of the time, encourage them to share a coordinated version of their consensus about the issue through some form of webinar throughout the entire presbytery.

Then begin again with a new subject. Draw upon the gifts of the clergy and build community in the process.

Financial

Money Anxiety Disorder PR-FIN-1

The presbytery, in concert with the Board of Pensions, can hold a financial workshop for clergy and educators on the financial stress caused by the current financial climate.

Think of the multiple advantages of doing so. First, it demonstrates some clear concern for church leaders in a time of stress. Second, it allows church leaders to share with each other in seeking how to respond to this economic crisis. Third, it introduces them to an excellent resource in the Board of Pensions. Fourth, it can reduce the money anxiety that many feel by strategizing together on ways to cope. .

Many pastors feel caught in a bind between their concern for the financial situation of their church and their own personal and family needs. Naming this issue can also be useful at such a conference.

Helpful material can be shared for helping congregations also discuss their own “Money Anxiety.” Sometimes crisis like these are important opportunities for understanding the gospel at a deeper level.

Presbyteries and Financial Literacy PR-FIN-2

Financial literacy for our clergy is an important yet often neglected subject. The majority of clergy do not receive a generous salary and most of them also are not skilled in managing what they do receive. Lack financial literacy in a marriage is a formula for tension.

The Presbytery can make a major contribution to the health of their pastors by offering some financial literacy seminars. Good resources are available from the Board of Pensions. There are some unique aspects to pastoral finances that need to be part of such seminars. This could be combined with some lay people in the presbytery with gifts in financial management to design such seminars. An additional benefit from finding those talents among some of the lay people of the Presbytery is that those very people will also gain a new appreciation for the larger church and may make other valuable contributions as well.

The Board of Pensions offers a number of financial and retirement planning resources including educational seminars designed to educate and enhance your financial skills and ease you into retirement. The educational seminars include:

- Getting into Shape...Fiscally (Financial Planning)
- Grow into Tomorrow...Today (Retirement Planning)
- Post-Retirement
- Render unto Caesar: Clergy Tax and Terms of Call

For more information contact: Board of Pensions, Member Education: 800-773-7752 ext. 7223. To view the schedule for Educational Seminar, visit www.pensions.org

The several parts to such seminars can be addressed over time. First would be some basic budget techniques and financial management suggestions. Included in that would be a thorough exploration of what can be done with “pre-tax” dollars that will benefit the clergy while not costing the church any additional money.

Second, there can be a session on wise investment, explaining the various options and their risks and possibilities. Included in that can be the whole field of ethical investment and the various types of

funds that focus on that. Most clergy have never lived in an atmosphere where they learned about how to invest and what are wise and foolish moves to make.

Third, there can be a thorough session on wills and such issues as insurance and long time care. Someone could provide a form that people fill out that provides the basic information for completing a will and then have a follow up where they can meet with some willing lawyers to complete the process.

In all these areas, the spouse should also be invited.

Determining Fair Compensation PR-FIN-3

Every presbytery has the responsibility to ensure that their pastors' terms of call include adequate financial compensation, along with meeting the requirements of federal and state tax laws. Normally, a committee on ministry will recommend a minimum compensation requirement for full-time calls and communicate that to congregations.

Advocating for fair and adequate compensation for pastors serving small membership congregations is especially difficult. A presbytery could set aside some agenda time at a presbytery meeting, or a specially arranged meeting of congregations of similar size, to honestly discuss these difficulties, recognizing both the challenge for the pastor and the church. Part of the design could include preparing a typical budget of expenses for a modest family in their community, including rent, utilities, food, transportation, etc. to demonstrate what a clergy family needs as reasonable income. Whatever the format, presbyteries need to take an active role in educating and guiding all congregations about compensation issues. This is a critical way that the presbytery can support the pastors.

When addressing compensation issues, presbyteries need to have resources in mind to suggest to sessions and congregations about conducting honest and constructive annual reviews of terms of call (several of these resources are available through the Presbytery Pastoral Care Network Web site: www.pastoralcarenetwork.org).

Other good resources to help presbyteries address the complexity of pastor compensation issues include:

- A section in the *COM Advisory Handbook* that is available through the Vocation Office of the GAC, <http://www.pcusa.org/ministers/finances.htm>.
- A series of articles on clergy salaries in the 2002 Sept/Oct issue of *Congregations: Learning, Leading, Changing* published by The Alban Institute, <http://www.alban.org/conversearch.aspx>.
- Comparative statistics on ministers' compensation compiled in 2008 by the Board of Pensions, www.pensions.org.
- Information on compensation is at <http://www.pcusa.org/clc/statistics/compensation.htm>.
- The Web site for comparing cost of living across the country is at bankrate.com.
- Local and regional government data on cost-of-living for adequate housing in the communities where ministers serve and the annual inflationary factors that should be

considered when determining compensation for ministers. A helpful website is: http://web.pensions.org/Publications/pensions/Home/Forms%20%26%20Publications/Booklets%20%26%20Brochures/ClergyEffectiveSalaries_2009.pdf.

Supporting Clergy Salary PR-FIN-4

In some form or another a congregation, when they call a pastor, promises to “pay him (her) fairly and provide for his (her) welfare as he (she) works among us; ...” (From PC (USA) Directory of Worship). I doubt if any congregation would say that their desire is to underpay their pastor so that s/he cannot sustain their family and needs to monthly worry about how they are going to pay their bills. When, however, budget realities hit, the challenge of salary negotiation becomes a reality.

While some pastors are good at advocating for their own salaries, most are not. First, they don't want to appear greedy, and second, most are very aware of the budget restraints of their congregation. Judicatories can and often do play a helpful role in advocating for livable salaries for the clergy. Presbyterians often establish a minimum salary for the clergy in their area each year. Many small congregations often resent the imposition of such a minimum, but at least it deflects the resentment from the particular clergy to the higher judicatory.

There is another role that the presbytery can play that might be healthy. What if churches of a similar size were invited to send a couple of representatives to come together and look at the issue of clergy salaries together? At such a meeting, a couple of things can be introduced. First, an acknowledgment of the challenge of equitable salaries in difficult economic times. Second a recognition of the challenge for clergy to support their family and the effect of inadequate income on the practice of their ministry.

To facilitate the discussion, Presbytery can create a blank budget itemizing the normal categories that any family would need to spend money on. Pass out copies and have the group work out a realistic budget for a family in their congregation. This helps create a realistic foundation for what is necessary to live within their community.

Then ask those present to guess at what the average income would be for members of their congregation. If the clergy of the invited congregations are willing, it would be interesting to gather information on what percentage of their income they pledge back to the church. If you can get that information and average it for the group, then you can say that the average pledge of your clergy is ?%. Take that percent and apply it to the average income that was estimated for their congregation. This is likely to be an eye opener for the group.

All of this is intended to broaden the discussion on salaries and encourage realistic discussion based on common understandings. It is difficult for an individual clergy to have this discussion but it can be helpful for a judicatory to provide such an opportunity.

Pastoral Care Guide for Presbytery Financial Assistance PR-FIN-5

Presbyteries, whether large or small, often struggle to find ways to provide pastoral care to their ministers and educators when a financial emergency occurs. Even when legitimate needs arise, it is difficult for a presbytery to provide financial assistance to their church professionals:

- The primary responsibility for the financial well-being of church professionals is lodged with the congregation and the financial terms of call that the congregations agreed to support.
- Ministers/educators are often reluctant to ask their presbytery for assistance, especially when it comes to financial problems where accountability issues might come into play.
- Presbytery budgets rarely allow for funds to be set aside to assist ministers with unforeseen financial needs.
- Presbyteries often rely on the Board of Pensions to cover the medical expenses that members may encounter and/or seek special grants from the Board of Pensions when unusual financial circumstances or needs occur.
- There is uneasiness within the structures of a presbytery in making judgments with regard to the legitimacy of a church professional's financial need and the responsibility of the presbytery to help.

Presbyteries cannot escape the fact that church staffs are low-paid servants of the church and that the presbytery is charged with the pastoral care and support of them.

Issues do arise when a church professional has a personal, family, or vocational crisis that cannot be addressed without some financial assistance from the larger church community that a presbytery represents. In these cases, effective pastoral care depends on a presbytery having the ability to provide financial assistance.

Aside from budgeting each year a prescribed amount for financial assistance for ministers, some presbyteries have developed a "Pastoral Care Crisis Fund" to insure that they can help their ministers when emergencies arise. The COM decides the parameters for the disbursement of funds. This pastoral care crisis fund is usually managed by the committee on ministry, a designated presbytery staff person, or a pastoral care team that communicates that such a fund exists to help in crisis situations.

This fund is often supported by a portion of the offerings that are collected at ordination and installation worship services held within the life of the presbytery. In this way congregations learn over time that they are collectively responsible for and contribute to the well-being of all the members of presbytery, especially when a crisis might occur. Depending on the amount of funding that is collected for this pastoral care crisis fund over time, the designated managers of the fund are able to proactively express care and assistance for those who get caught in a crippling financial situation.

A Pastor's Finances in Small Church PR-FIN-6

Back after WWII, when there was a freeze on salaries, companies had to get creative in how they were going to attract and retain top level employees. This was the beginning of creating and employment package that included health care, pensions, etc. In some ways denominations have followed suit in creating pension programs, health care insurance, etc. In addition, many, like Presbyterians, have included terms of call that include four-weeks' vacation, and two-weeks study leave. Some now include the possibility of sabbaticals and pregnancy leave as well as setting a minimum standard for salaries in each presbytery.

Individual churches need to get creative in designing their own financial packages. There can be an advantage in working with the pastor in offering some “pretax” benefits. For example, a church can offer the opportunity to purchase some life insurance, designate a book allowance, and provide an expense account from which the pastor can draw for reimbursement out of pretax dollars. It doesn’t cost the church any more but simply breaks up the financial package in a way that benefits the pastor with respect to taxes.

It is not uncommon for there to be some grumbling and sniping at pastoral salaries by individual members of the congregation. It might be helpful for the church leadership to educate the congregation by providing some comparative figures with respect to other comparable professions. What is the average pay level for professions that require a master’s degree and two foreign languages? What is a chief executive paid that manages a multiple volunteer staff, has skills in counseling, provides a professional presentation each week, and is the chief financial officer at the same time?

An educational experience can be offered at a church night supper where each table is asked to develop a livable budget for their community taking into account the cost of groceries, mortgage, transportation, education, etc. Those leading the group might have done some research for accurate ranges in some of the more difficult areas. After each table has filled in figures for a blank budget provided them, the totals are shared and an average moderate living scale is developed. This might help people be aware of the financial stress that is being dealt with by their church staff. Sometimes higher salaries are not available but at least there could be some significant appreciation for the challenge that is facing the pastor and family. It might help some congregations understand why the spouse has to have an additional job to help make ends meet.

Family

Presbytery Support for Pastoral Families PR-FAM-1

Here is an outline for a retreat that presbyteries can offer for the clergy families of their presbytery. Choose a post-Easter date and ask for the support of the congregations to have pulpit supply if the design is for a full weekend retreat. Retired pastors of the presbytery can be asked to offer to supply for free in case of economically challenged churches.

If the presbytery is small, try this in concert with another presbytery. Draw on the gifts of some of the skilled educators and counselors to design the actual program for the retreat.

Offer the retreat for pastors and their families. Child care for infants and programs for young children can be offered so that the older members of the family have some freedom to enjoy the experience.

The designers should prepare programs for elementary children and youth that enable them to explore the dimensions, both positive and negative, of being a part of a pastoral family. Some simulation games can be designed to open such a conversation. It is important to bring out some of the positive aspects as well as provide ways to help them explore the pressures of such a situation.

Spouses of the pastors might have some time with each other to share their experiences apart from the pastors. Again, you want to explore both the positive and the negative. Begin by asking them to

go around a circle sharing their particular situation and then have one share a positive experience and then the next one share some of the pressure that they have felt. Go around the circle at least twice so that everyone has a chance to share both aspects of being part of a pastor's family.

In the pastors group, explore some of the pressures they know their family experience and some of the guilt that they feel for putting their family through such an experience.

A collection of some of those experiences, without names, can be shared with a combined session of pastors and the spouses. Based on that, the group can explore some of the ways they have managed to handle such pressures.

Caring for the Pastor's Spouse PR-FAM-2

A pastor once lamented, "My wife was the only person in the congregation without a pastor." He recognized the unique qualities of both pastor-congregant and husband-wife relationships, and he, a solo pastor, understood that he could not be his wife's pastor. Even in multi-staff churches, dynamics between the ministers may preclude a spouse from having a pastor in the church. Further, because both men and women now are pastors and because many spouses are working, the older supportive forms of clergy wives' groups have generally not survived, often leaving clergy spouses isolated.

Yet they need care, too. Spouses report that they have unique challenges in the congregation. Sometimes they are viewed as extensions of the pastor, or congregants treat them as the pastor's secretary. This can get even worse when, for example, a spouse is part of a church school class that has members who are in tension with the pastor. Some regret having to live a model marriage or having to present a model family life when what they often want is to be normal, to have a normal family, to be recognized as a normal member of the congregation. Sometimes when the pastor is always away from the home, they have neither pastor nor spouse. Ultimately, they are often the uncredited partners who handle family needs evenings, weekends, and holidays, thereby making the pastors' public ministries possible. The stress put on marriages by the demands of ordained ministry threatens both marriages and the church.

How can sessions and committees on ministry support the pastor's spouse? Every situation is unique, but here are some general principles and possibilities:

- **Stress the responsibility of the pastor to his or her family:** Pastors are often tempted to put the church first for a number of reasons: sense of call, ego needs, a demanding congregation. Pastors may need a governing body to help set appropriate boundaries that will make it possible for the pastor's spouse to have a spouse.
- **Triennial visits need to inquire about the pastor's family:** COM visitors need to ask the session, not just the pastor, about how the clergy spouse is doing. Heightening session awareness may be a helpful first step. A session member can be a liaison with the spouse, if that is appropriate.
- **Presbytery point person:** Some presbyteries have a designated person as the clergy spouse care coordinator or minister.
- **Educating congregations:** Pastors' spouses have a right to be normal Christians. They should be treated as other members of the congregation, not held up as role models (or lightning rods).

- **Who will be the spouse's pastor?** The spouse may need to develop a relationship with someone outside the denomination, as s/he might not feel comfortable with someone from within the denominational system. Spouses lose many normal rights as clergy spouses, and they should be encouraged to feel free to develop their own forms of discipleship and spirituality even if this is not connected to the clergyperson's own church.

Resources:

http://www.pbygrandcanyon.org/ministries/clergy_spouse_support.html for one presbytery's example.

<http://www.janerubietta.com/clergy.html> for Pastor's Wives Ten Most Wanted (A Wish List).

Presbytery Care for Pastor's Family PR-FAM-3

Presbytery needs to strategize about how to offer support to a pastor's family. Not only the pastor's spouse but also the pressures on the children in the family. There are a number of little things that can be done that would be supportive.

First, there are few contexts in which members of the family can talk to others that would understand. To occasionally bring small groups of family members together can let them know that they are not alone in what they are feeling. This could be done on a Saturday morning breakfast or lunch, or one of those Monday holidays where the youth or children are free from school and a special event can be planned for them. Some age sensitive games can be designed that will invite people to explore what they are experiencing. It also is time when the work of their parents can be publicly acknowledged.

Second, a well crafted letter can be sent to a youth recognizing some of the sacrifices they experience because their mother or father is a pastor and thanking them for their support. It is important for any person to realize that they are part of something larger than themselves and it would be affirming for a child or youth to see that they too are part of a larger ministry.

A third idea is this. A Presbytery can identify some retired pastors and some specialized ministry pastors who would be willing a couple of times a year to offer their services free to conduct worship for a church that would provide a Sunday Sabbath for their pastor apart from vacation or study leave. Especially if this is offered on a weekend where there was a Monday holiday, this would be a real treat.

Presbytery PK Retreat PR-FAM-4

Being part of a minister's family is different from being in other families. Not only are you in a 24 hour fish bowl, but people act differently towards you when they know your father or mother is a pastor. A presbytery can make a healthy contribution towards family health by holding a retreat for the teenagers of pastors. It could be a one day retreat or a weekend retreat but it would be designed to allow them to explore both their positive and negative feelings among others in a similar situation.

Consider a possible agenda for such an event. First, you begin with food as people arrive. Then you welcome them and briefly explain that we will spend time exploring the various advantages and disadvantages of being a PK. You might then ask people to speak out a single word or short phrase that describes what it is like being a PK.

Then move to a values clarification exercise. Have a long strip down the middle of the room with numbers 1-5 reaching out each way from the center of the strip. Tell the group to place themselves along the strip in the following manner. If they can share 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 advantages to being part of a pastor's family, place themselves on a number to the right of center, and if they can share 1-5 disadvantages, put themselves on the number to the left of center. Once placed, have them share alternating between advantages and disadvantages.

Next, have them separate themselves into one of four corners of the room. One corner for people whose father has always been a full time pastor. Second corner, their mother is the pastor. third corner their parent is a second-career pastor. Fourth corner, their parent is a part time pastor. (You might find other categories.) Let each group talk among themselves about how their situation is different from the other groups. Come up with 3 – 5 differences that will then be shared.

Remix the groups into small groups of 4-6 people each. Give them skits to develop illustrating various realities of being in a pastor's family. You can make up several different skits such as how a family handles the pastor having to interrupt a vacation, how they respond to hearing about criticism of pastor's work, how some other teens respond to hearing that they are part of a pastor's family, etc. After each skit is acted out, there is time for discussion.

After a number of active exercises, you could then move to a more reflective aspect of the retreat. There is often value in having people write for ten minutes without interruption on a specific topic.

For ten minutes write on the topic, how has been being a member of a pastor's family affected my friendships?

For ten minutes, write about what you would like to tell God about how it feels to be a member of a pastor's family.

For ten minutes, write about what you admire about the pastor and his or her work in the church.

For ten minutes, write about how growing up in a pastor's family has affected what you want to do in your life.

For ten minutes, write on this subject. If you could send an anonymous message to the congregation about how they treat the pastor, what would you want to say?

Pick out two or three of these, and after each ten minute writing session, have the people share what they have written. If there is a large group, you might have to do that in small groups with a facilitator.

You might also do an anonymous advice session. Have people write out a question about how to handle a certain situation and then let the whole group develop a group answer.

The mixture of active exercises and more reflective activities can provide a balance for the retreat. Recognize that this may be one of the first times that some of these youth have had a chance to share their feelings about being part of a minister's family. You need to have some leaders present who are prepared to assist in a supportive way those who might become emotional in sharing. Be careful not to have any of the leaders become defensive about what is being said. It needs to be clear from the beginning that nothing that individuals say at the meeting will be shared with others. If the group agrees, there might be some value in sharing general statements that cannot be traced back to an individual.

Post-Christmas Celebration PR-FAM-5

A presbytery can consider having their own post-Christmas celebration for their clergy and families. The week following Christmas might be an opportunity for an evening of fun and caring that can express appreciation for the hard work that has just been concluded.

If the presbytery is small enough that people know each other, it might be an opportunity for some “roasting” of fellow clergy. Someone might prepare a fun poem about the work of clergy. Remember the “pumpkin carols” that someone composed building on Charlie Browns celebration of the coming of the great pumpkin. Find some of the musically inclined people and have them compose some new words to the carol tunes that are still ringing in our ears. Make it fun. O Come, all ye clergy, tired and exhausted, O come ye O come ye to laugh once more. etc.

Create some bizarrely humorous job descriptions for fictitious employment openings and have people suggest who among them might be the perfect candidate. Have people bring gag gifts and as a person opens a gift, they must describe why this is the perfect gift to support them in their ministry. Read the description of a fictitious but familiar type of member and ask who would like to trade for another member of their own church.

Encourage people to submit the best joke that they have heard and share them during the evening. If someone is good at comedy, have them compose a monologue on humorous insights on the ministry.

The goal is to have a fun evening in which people can interact, enjoy each other, and know that they and their ministry is appreciated. Have fun, get creative, and experience the joy of sharing with each other.

Recognizing the Pressures PR-FAM-6

One of the ways that a presbytery or governing body can help families of clergy is by helping them realize that they are not alone in coping with the pressures of being part of a clergy family. The committee on ministry or other appropriate committee could create a simple survey on the pressures of clergy family life to gather information. The composite survey could be shared with the presbytery and the local congregations to raise awareness of the pressures experienced.

The survey focuses on pressure on spouses and ask such questions as these. In the past 6 months, how often have you had a family meal interrupted because of a congregational emergency? Has the pastor’s responsibilities resulted in you having to attend school events and/or parent-teacher meetings by yourself? Have family celebrations of birthdays, etc. been altered because of congregational events? Have you felt as if you were treated differently than other members of the congregation when it came to serving on committees, the Session, etc? How clear are you on what the congregation expects from a pastor’s spouse? Do you feel that you and your spouse differ on the expectations of a clergy spouse? How has the lack of a two day weekend and occasional three day weekend affected your relations with your extended family? How often have you been affected by hearing negative comments about the church and the clergy? Provide a sentence or so describing what it feels like to live in the fishbowl within the congregation. What is one thing that could be altered that you think would make the pressures more manageable.

Another survey can develop questions for the children and youth of a clergy family. In all cases, it would be important to assure them that the surveys are anonymous and how the information will be

used. Even though the pressures will continue to exist, the awareness that others recognize what you are experiencing can have a beneficial result.

Spirituality

Presbytery Support of Spirituality PR-SP-1

As part of Presbytery's support of our pastor's spiritual journey, we can build on Scripture's declaration that each of us are graced with different gifts of the Spirit that are to be used for the upbuilding of the Body of Christ? (See 1 Corinthians 14:1ff) There is value in trying to discern the different spiritual gifts that exist among our clergy in any given presbytery?

Begin by simply asking each of the clergy to consider the spiritual gifts that they see among the other clergy. Let them speak publicly of particular gifts that they have seen in other colleagues. The conversation might take place at a retreat, with individuals placed in a "hot seat" so that others can focus on them. Publicly affirming the gifts of colleagues also nurtures their spirituality by recognizing how the Spirit has gifted them.

While it is not as personal, one could also take advantage of the internet to invite clergy to identify the gifts they see in different colleagues. Over time you could highlight each of the clergy and affirm their gifts.

Someone should keep a running list of the gifts affirmed in each individual. Then, having recognized some of the particular gifts that exist in our part of the body, the body can then strategize to enable those mentioned to exercise their gifts on behalf of the larger body.

Presbytery Nurture of Clergy Spiritual Life PR-SP-2

Too often our institutions, be they a church or a presbytery, assume the spiritual life of the clergy is left to the clergy. Yet, considering that the faith of our clergy is one of the critical factors affecting the health of our faith community, more attention should be given to the pastor's faith.

A first step might be to recognize the pressures and challenges to one's faith that affect our clergy. Draw together one or two focus groups of clergy and ask them to brainstorm with you what they think might be the 10 biggest challenges to our faith that the practice of ministry can create. This may take more than one meeting. It is probably best not to ask them to come with a list but to come and think together. No answers are asked for here. Only to identify some of the biggest challenges that they see present in the ministry.

Next, share that list with all the clergy in the presbytery, perhaps electronically, and ask them to prioritize the list according to what they perceive about ministry and its pressures. At this point, they are asked to speak in general and not about their personal situation. (This may help them enter the conversation without the need to feel defensive.) Correlate the responses and share the consensus with the entire body of clergy.

The third step is to ask different clergy from around the presbytery to pick no more than two of the areas identified about which s/he is willing to explore further. Having picked an area s/he is asked to do the following. First, to identify what s/he thinks is the theological or faith issue that underlies the

challenge. Second, to identify some Scriptures that may be helpful in addressing the issue. Third, to identify some practices that s/he thinks would be helpful.

A fourth step would be to convene in small groups clergy that have worked on a given issue and share their work. Out of the discussion, they are to personalize what they have found most helpful and offer to share that with the presbytery as a whole. That might be a written report but it also might be a called meeting of presbytery. (It could be at a regular meeting of presbytery but then it would have to be done an issue or so at a time.)

The intent is to recognize the pressures of the ministry, invite some deep discussion about these pressures from a spiritual perspective, and to share the results of that work with their colleagues.

A Caffeine Happy Hour PR-SP-3

Because of the demands on a clergy's time, many clergy find themselves spending less and less time having meaningful conversations with other clergy about their own faith journeys. This is especially true when it comes to conversations that might reach across theological differences, serving churches of different sizes, gender differences, ethnic differences, etc. Presbytery officials might strengthen the bonds within the presbytery by offering to plan the possibility of such conversations.

Look at the geography of your presbytery and pick out some coffee shops that are within no more than a half-hour drive from several of your churches. Invite the clergy of those churches to join you in a caffeine-happy-hour on a Thursday afternoon at 4 p.m. Thursday is near the end of the week without being so close that the pressure has built up too much. It is a good opportunity to take a short break in the afternoon.

In your invitation, preferably by phone in the beginning, you would set the agenda for the conversation. You might begin by inviting them to come having reflected on one joy in the church and one concern with which they are personally struggling. In both cases, the joy and the concern can be either one applying to their local church, the presbytery, or the church as a whole. The invitation is not to seek a solution but just a sharing of our joys and concerns. If the experience is a success, you can expand the areas of exploration.

At least for the first time, make clear that the price of the coffee and bagel is being paid for either by the presbytery or a private donor who cares about the church. It would not cost too much and that you can easily find a lay person in our churches who would gladly provide a hundred dollars to provide for such an experience.

A Presbytery Scripture Passage PR-SP-4

If you were going to offer up a Scripture for your presbytery, what Scripture comes to mind?

What about trying this? Fifteen minutes before the lunch break at a presbytery meeting, allow those present to bunch together in informal groups and discuss what Scriptures come to mind that might serve as an inspiration for the presbytery. Then, encourage people to share their scriptures with others they happen to sit with at lunch.

Once reconvened, have 5 minutes of silent prayer in which people listen to God as they keep their mind on Scripture for the presbytery. Following the time of prayer, invite six people randomly selected from different sections of the room to share a possible Scripture for the presbytery's benefit.

Then encourage people to carry the experience back to their churches and see what Scripture each Session would choose for this part of their Christian journey.

If churches also did this and it was repeated at least once a year, it might make us all conscious of the voice of Scripture through our deliberations.

Offering a Grace Prize at Presbytery PR-SP-5

Offer this brief experience at a Presbytery meeting to recognize who we are as servants of the Lord.

Depending on the size of the Presbytery meeting, this might take 20 to 30 minutes. The leader would say that s/he wants to lead the group in an experience of grace. S/he then asks people to stand up and tell an affirmative story about someone else's ministry who is present in the room. You might need to say that this will continue for 15 minutes and the stories should be brief and to the point.

Following the story telling, say that they are going to determine the winner of a grace prize. First step, using applause as your meter, ask the group to choose from which section of the room the best story came. Divide the room into quarters and proceed.

Next, taking the winning quarter, have those who told stories to stand up and by a quick show of hands, determine the best story told.

Now here comes the grace part. Remind them that if the prize went to the person who told the best story, it would not be grace but a reward for work performed, so count four people down and three people back in the audience and offer them a prize such as a \$10 Starbucks card.

All of this is meant to be fun and celebratory. People hear about good ministry being performed, people hear about themselves being affirmed, and an unexpected person receives the prize. It is that type of experience that can lift our spirits.

Helping Congregations Discuss Boundaries PR-SP-6

Judicatories can be helpful by having already thought through a course of action to take when a particular congregation has experienced some inappropriate behavior. Particularly when the offending person is a clergy, but also when it is a strong member of a congregation, scandalous behavior can leave a deep wound in the sense of trust in a congregation. There is real healing if a member of the judicatory who has a clear perspective on some of the steps that need to be taken can offer guidance.

The judicatory also can make a beneficial contribution to both clergy and congregations by engaging them in a discussion of appropriate boundaries independent of any specific incidents.

Gather a series of recent news stories about problems that have occurred for religious communities in the area of appropriate boundaries. Next, set up a values clarification exercise so that clergy and church boards can discuss how to educate the whole congregation of the importance of protecting the youth. By broadening the issue to include all clergy, volunteers, officers, etc., both now and in the future, you are removing any sense of accusation

Remind the group that they are constructing helpful guidelines that could be used by all churches. In the process, they are educating people as to the appropriate actions that can be taken when there is suspicion of inappropriate behavior.

Clergy and Youth boundaries PR-SP-7

One of the sadder realities of the change in ministry is the necessity of reviewing our boundaries with respect to youth. Youth may be even more in need of the comfort of human touch than adults are. However, it is also true that they are more vulnerable. You can see the hunger of teenagers expressed in the ease with which they give and receive hugs and engage in other forms of touching.

The *public rule* is one step in establishing boundaries. Don't act towards a teenager in a way that you would not be comfortable being seen doing in public. However, with teenagers, it is even more important that you be careful that they not misinterpret any gesture on the part of a clergy. The inclination towards hero worship can lead to some unintended consequences. It is normally recommended now that adult youth leaders not go off alone with a youth. The sad part of that is that there are times that a young person desperately needs to talk privately to an adult. With a little planning, that can still be done within full view of others but still keeping the conversation private.

Unfortunately, even if our clergy are totally trustworthy, our youth are increasingly confronted by potential predators in our society. A clergy, by speaking of the issues surrounding interpersonal relationships with youth may help educate them as to what is appropriate and what is not. Helping young people understand that for their own protection certain situations are not appropriate not only conveys your concern for them but also helps them become aware of what might be inappropriate with other adults.

Securing the services of someone familiar with how to manage appropriate boundaries with adults might be an important program for youth groups. However, if you were going to have such a program, it would be important to work with the invited leader to design the program in a way that would effectively speak to the youth.

Spiritual Direction PR-SP-8

Spiritual direction is an ancient tradition. Its purpose is to nurture a growing relationship with God through dialogue and practices that open persons to greater awareness of the leading, healing, and transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

With a spiritual companion's support, men and women take greater responsibility for growing in faith, engaging in spiritual practices, and finding deeper connections at all levels of their relationships in daily life. Spiritual directors, or companions as they are often called, are trained and experienced in listening deeply to the desires of human hearts. They are a resource for persons who are restless and want to live fuller lives.

Spiritual direction is not directing another to act or pray in any one particular way. It is not a substitute for psychotherapy or pastoral counseling, though there are occasional overlaps. Spiritual companionship follows ethical guidelines with appropriate boundaries and confidentiality. A fee is normally charged, but it is a modest one and is negotiable. Usually, spiritual direction takes place in a once a month meeting. The question posed by Mary Oliver in her poem "The Summer's Day" serves as a guide for this ministry of care: "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

Some suggestions for the presbytery committee on ministry:

1. Post on the presbytery Web site a list of spiritual directors in the presbytery and their contact information. Local seminaries, religious orders, pastoral care and counseling offices, etc. may have spiritual directors.
2. Make reference to Spiritual Directors International, www.sdiworld.org for resources and directors.
3. Search “spiritual formation” and “spiritual direction” on the Presbyterian Church (USA) Web site, pcusa.org for resources.
4. Provide presbytery staff members with a list of spiritual directors within the presbytery for referral.
5. Encourage your presbytery and local congregations to set aside funds to assist pastors and educators with the cost of spiritual directors.
6. Organize a panel discussion on the ministry of spiritual direction and spiritual practices to be held at a presbytery meeting or a presbytery continuing education event.
7. Plan a retreat for clergy/educators where a spiritual director(s) would work one on one or in small groups with those attending.

Vocational

The Uniqueness of Call in a Church PR-V-1

As Israel was constantly learning, being set apart by God was less a reason for pride than of humble awe. It isn't that God took a special people and rewarded them for their greatness. In fact Scripture is very clear that God took a “no-people” and made them into “God's people.” (1 Peter 2:10) It is a humbling, not a prideful thing to recall that we are God's people.

Pause in the normal work of a presbytery meeting and ask people to spontaneously respond with a word or phrase to the question, “What makes a church different from other organizations in our society?” Collect 10 or 15 responses. Then change the question to “What is a special calling of elders in our churches?” Again, having recorded 10 to 15 responses of words or phrases, change the question again to, “What is unique about the call of clergy, CLPs and educators in our churches?”

The liturgist then takes the three lists and combines them into a litany of thanksgiving for our call as the Body of Christ. The lead in to each list might be something like, “Lord, we offer our praise and thanks that you have offered us the privilege of being a church. We hear our call to be: (list what you have heard about what makes the church different.) Then continue (perhaps with a different speaker) with “By your Spirit you have chosen elders to serve your church. We thank you for elders who are called to (read the list collected.) From out of the mystery of time, Lord, you have called as clergy and educators among us. They are called to (then offer the list.) Conclude with a singing the doxology.

Like Israel before us, it is important to remind ourselves that God has called us out as a light to the nations.

Presbytery First Call Pastor Program PR-V-2

(based on program of Greater Atlanta Presbytery)

Three Components of Program

1. **Personal Support:** In the first year, “first call” pastors will participate with a group of other “first call” colleagues under the direction of a professional, clinically-licensed group facilitator. These groups will provide opportunities for:
 - A “safe place” for discussing concerns, frustrations, victories, fears and insights.
 - A diminished sense of isolation.
 - A way to promote self-care.
 - A way to encourage personal, emotional, and spiritual growth.
 - A place to exchange ideas, garner support, and build relationships.
2. **Professional Support:** All “first call” pastors will participate in a two-year program of quarterly, overnight retreats (noon, day 1—noon, day 2) centering around each participant’s “case study” related to the specific topic assigned. (The first retreat will focus on each participant’s prepared spiritual autobiography.) At each retreat, a resource person in that area will also provide content about the topic. Possible themes include:
 - Spiritual autobiography.
 - Leadership style assessment, systems approach to congregations.
 - Nurturing disciplines of body, mind, and spirit.
 - Preaching.
 - Administration, staff relations, stewardship, personnel.
 - Conflict awareness.
 - Case studies.
 - Putting it all together – evaluation, networking, what next?
3. **Support from Mentors:** An assigned mentor for two years will:
 - Encourage professional behavior.
 - Offer friendship and encouragement.
 - Listen to personal problems.
 - Help the pastor to “know the ropes.”
 - Offer wise counsel.
 - Pray with and for the pastor.
 - Attend quarterly retreats.
 - Model a high level of competence.

Congregational Support

When a congregation extends a call to a “first call” pastor, the terms of the call will include the pastor’s participation in the “First Call” program. A member of the congregation, possibly the chair of the pastor nominating committee that recommended extending the call, will serve as a liaison between the congregation and the “first call” pastor during his/her participation in the program.

The congregation will be requested by the presbytery committee on ministry to include \$360 (12 meetings at \$30) in the call for the personal support component of the program. The congregation will also be requested to designate \$360 of the pastor’s continuing education fund to pay room and board for the quarterly overnight retreats each year for the two-year duration of the program.

Sharing Your Call PR-V-3

There is value in a presbytery engaging pastors and educators in discussing their sense of call. It is a different dynamic if that is done in a private conversation, a shared conversation with colleagues, or in a public conversation. Each has their value, both for the one sharing and the one hearing. Here is a pattern for that conversation among colleagues together with the General Presbyter or other presbytery staff.

The General Presbyter selects three or four pastors to have lunch with him or her. The topic of conversation, it is made clear, is looking at the pressures that affect an understanding of our call. The group is deliberately chosen to reflect at least some theological diversity and each participant is serving a different church. All participants are asked to set aside two hours for the lunch.

The General Presbyter explains that s/he wants to have an informal but intentional conversation with them about their experience of God’s call and how it is experienced in their particular setting. S/he begins by reading the baptism and temptation story from Matthew 3:13-4:11. This combination lays out both Jesus’ experience of call and the temptations that he confronted in living out that call.

With that as a background, begin with each one sharing their experience of call, starting with the General Presbyter. Having heard these stories of call, then invite them to explore some of the pressures and or temptations that they experience that compromises that call. Again, to establish a climate of honesty, it would be good for the General Presbyter to begin that conversation. Depending on the trust level in the group, they could either share their personal struggles or share the pressures they see in general. The latter invites a more general exploration of the subject which may be better in such a short period of time.

The third part of the conversation is to share what resources each has discovered that helps strengthen them as they continue to respond to their call and resist the temptations to distort their response as well as accept forgiveness when they feel they have failed in some way. Conclude with shared prayer so that each might lift up concern for the others as they join in responding to God’s invitation in their lives.

The Call of Clergy, Educators, and Musicians PR-V-4

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35) It is striking how often members of a multiple staff team in a church have difficulty sharing their ministry in a manner that embodies this instruction of Jesus. Whether it is a clergy, an educator, or a church musician, most have experienced some sense of call that has led them into their

profession. While it is good Presbyterian theology to acknowledge that all humans have a call from God, it is certainly true of those who work professionally for a church.

Clergy don't have enough opportunity to explore the changing nature of their call and it is a rare occasion when an educator or musician is asked about their call. Presbytery can arrange for someone outside of the church staff to guide the staff in sharing and hearing about God's call in the lives of each member of the staff. It is healthy to have some of those conversations take place with a blend of clergy, educators, and musicians from other churches. Again, the new mix changes the dynamics and can lift up refreshing perspectives. A variety of such conversations across the presbytery or ecumenically could help build a sense of shared community among the churches.

Within the context of Christian ministry, we are called to be part of the one Body of Christ. Far too often we find ourselves living in silos of ministry cut off from similar efforts by our colleagues. Picture the impact on the world if they could witness the full demonstration of our loving one another as Jesus commanded us.

A Gift of Grace PR-V-5

Mission Presbytery in Texas has developed an intriguing way to demonstrate appreciation for the work of the pastor. Twice a year they write a letter to the clerk of Session and ask them to consider entering their pastor's name into a drawing that they will have at the next presbytery meeting.

For the official board of the church to participate, they must first write a letter articulating what they appreciate about their pastor's ministry. They are told that that letter will be put in a box along with other letters received and there will be a drawing of one of the letters at the next meeting.

The pastor whose name is drawn is offered a free weekend with their spouse at any place in the state all expenses paid. The second thing the board needs to agree upon is that if their pastor's name is drawn, they will give him a free weekend off. This is not part of vacation or study leave.

Of course the drawing builds excitement at the meeting and it becomes a concrete way that the Presbytery can affirm their ministry. In addition, after the drawing, the Presbytery also sends the other letters back to the pastors so that they can see the positive things that their board is thinking about their ministry.

Presbytery's Support of Vocation PR-V-6

Most pastors understand their call to ministry as extending beyond just the activities of their local congregation. In a parallel fashion to having responded to an inner-sense that moved them to enter the ministry, so they develop an interest in some particular aspect of their call that extends beyond their particular congregation. It may be an ecumenical or even inter-faith ministry in the community, a national issue about which they feel passionate, or an activity in their denomination's work.

In support of the vocation of pastors, what if the presbytery occasionally lifted up and celebrated these many trans-congregational ministries of their pastors?

A first step in support would be simply to have conversations with the pastors about a particular area of ministry in which they feel most passionate. Even the opportunity to name that for someone else and share what they are doing in that area would feel good.

A second step would be to provide a venue by which that area of ministry might be celebrated. That might begin by collectively celebrating the many areas of ministry in which people are engaged. You might say at a public gathering, “In our conversations we have learned that the clergy of our denomination, in addition to their work in their congregations, are engaged in the following areas of ministry.” And then have the body participate in a litany that named and thanked God for having called pastors to participate in these areas of ministry. If the numbers were not too great, it would be good to name the pastors even as you identified the areas. For example, “John Smith, Ellen Jones, etc have devoted their gifts in a ministry to feed the hungry.” To which the body would respond, “We thank God for their efforts on behalf of the least of these, our brothers and sisters.” Then proceed to the next area of ministry to be identified. If it was a large presbytery, you might want to break the recognition down into geographical areas and celebrate one area at each meeting. (See the adaption of Psalm 111 Litany of Celebration)

A third step would be to invite a group of clergy with a similar focus to develop a short presentation to the body about their work. Simply drawing them together to talk about their similar efforts would have its own value. The public presentation might stimulate others who might be interested in that area as well.

All of this would be a presbytery’s way of nurturing the larger sense of call among their clergy.

[A Litany Celebrating the Extra Work of Ministers](#) PR-V-7

Psalm 111

Adapted in Celebration of Clergy Ministries

(Leader) “Praise the Lord! (We) will give thanks to the Lord with (our) whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.

(People) We recognize John, Ellen, Byron, and Beth who have felt the call to develop *their gift of teaching that extends beyond their local congregation and blesses the* community around them

(Leader) “Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.”

(People) We celebrate the creative ministries of Joan, Philip, Floyd, Bob, and Ellen who have advocated for justice in ways that have prodded our conscience and moved us to a deeper understanding of the justice of God.

(Leader) “Full of honor and majesty is God’s work, and God’s righteousness endures forever.”

(People) We lift up Susan’s work in creating a grief support group and Beth’s work with the shelter for foster children. We honor Arthur’s work with Hospice and Florence and Henry’s ministry on behalf of returned veterans.

(Leader) “God has gained renown by God’s wonderful deeds; the Lord is gracious and merciful.”

(People) Today we praise the call that has extended the ministries of Brenda, Russ, Carlton, and Rick on behalf of feeding ministries in their communities.

(Leader) (God) provides food for those who fear him; God is ever mindful of God’s covenant.”

(People) We commend the ministries of Evan, Carol, and Earnest who have worked to strengthen the bonds of their communities and bring people together across diverse boundaries.

(Leader) “God has shown his people the power of God’s works, in giving them the heritage of the nations. The works of God’s hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. They are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness.”

(People) We recognize with appreciation the work of Phyllis, Brendan, Mike, and Errol for their efforts in the area of evangelism. They have increased our awareness and skill in the spreading of God’s word.

(Leader) Each of those named and so many who are yet to be named have responded to the call of God in special ways that have strengthened the ministry of this presbytery. We give thanks to God for the working of your Spirit in their lives and in ours.

(People) “(God) sent redemption to God’s people; God has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is God’s name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever.”

This is written for a Presbytery meeting but it could easily be adapted to a local congregation who wanted to celebrate the diverse ministries of their many members. Obviously, the fictional ministries of the people mentioned in the litany along with their particular ministries needs to be replaced with the real efforts that have been identified.

Creative Triennial Visits PR-V-8

The *Book of Order* mandates that the COM arrange for a triennial visit to each congregation in the presbytery. The value of these triennial visits is enhanced if there have been prior positive exchanges between the churches and the presbytery COM. Consider possible ideas to build partnerships between congregations and the Committee on Ministry.

In the age of computers, the COM could gather a series of “touchstones” with respect to pastors and DCEs, such as ordination dates, anniversaries, birthdates, etc. and send a reminder to the congregations with respect to their staff. COM could gather touchstones in congregational life and occasionally send the congregation a congratulatory message with respect to anniversaries, significant mission involvement, gifts shared with presbytery, etc. The gathering of such data is one of those defined tasks that the right volunteer(s), not necessarily a member of the COM, would do with pleasure.

The COM could emphasize the connectionalism of the Body of Christ by designing a joint visit with two congregations where each could hear what the other is doing in ministry. Every three years a new set of congregation-to-congregation visits could be designed. One variation would be a mini-mission fair to involve several small congregations, guided by a COM visitor, to celebrate the potential of all the congregations. You are looking for opportunities for the congregation to feel good about their work as well as to see the potential for being a stronger part of the larger church

Whether during the visit, in a video, or through other communication, the resources that are available through the COM to assist in various areas should be identified.

It will be helpful for the COM representative to make note of particularly creative ministries that might be shared with the whole presbytery. (See the section on presbytery appreciation.)

In preparation for these visits, the COM needs to brainstorm the potential signs to look for that could signal a potential “hot spot” that might need to be addressed at a later date such as:

- The lack of ease with which the pastor and the session seem to communicate.
- The negative impression that elders might have of presbytery.
- Areas of ministry that they are reluctant to discuss.

While the triennial visit is normally not the time to engage in serious problem solving, it should be made clear that the COM is available to do that if it is desired.

No visit or communication should be made without identifying the people and addresses by which the congregation can contact the COM and presbytery staff when they do have concerns.

God's Call in Retirement PR-V-9

Not all retired pastors are interested in responding to a new call within their ministry, but some would find satisfaction in a new form of ministry. The presbytery might want to meet with retired pastors to build a community of ministry in a variety of areas. A gathering might want to explore some of the following possibilities:

- Visiting pastors when there is illness in their families.
- Participating in a prayer group of retired pastors who would offer regular prayer on behalf of local churches and the larger church.
- Providing occasional services at retirement homes.
- Serving as a mentor to a younger pastor.
- Covering for a pastor in times of emergency.
- Making some pastoral visits on behalf of presbytery to some local congregations.
- Providing sabbatical support for a small church pastor.
- Teaching a class for a limited period at a church or retirement home in a particular subject of their choice.
- Assisting in conflict management on behalf of presbytery at a local church.
- Being an adjunct liaison with a candidate for ministry in seminary.
- Serving on a committee of the larger church.
- Providing spiritual support to one or more clergy in presbytery.
- Assisting certified lay pastors to reflect on their experience.
- Other creative ideas that emerge from the pastors.

The meeting might begin with a prayerful exploration of the meaning of ministry in retirement. The above list could provide a second stage of exploration as together the clergy seek to respond to God's call in new circumstances.

Part of the exploration should include questions such as:

- Would you be interested in an occasional meeting of retired pastors to explore the meaning of vocation for retired Presbyterian ministers?

- Are there ways that presbytery can support you in responding to the call that you currently feel?

Relationships With Former Congregation PR-V-10

(adapted from policy of Salem Presbytery)

When a pastor leaves a congregation, it is advisable to keep contacts with the former congregation to a minimum, especially in the first year. Under no circumstances should a former pastor participate in any way with the function of the pastor nominating committee.

I. When the pastor moves to another community:

- a. During the first year, it is advisable to refrain from all pastoral contact. However, until a new pastor is called, it is permissible to accept the invitation of the moderator or the clerk of session in the absence of the moderator to officiate/participate in weddings, funerals, and the sacraments.
- b. Services planned prior to the announcement of departure may proceed with the concurrence of the session.
- c. After the installation of the new pastor, the former pastor may be invited by the new pastor to assist in funerals, weddings, and the sacraments. Before accepting an invitation, a former pastor is advised to seek the counsel of another pastor or of presbytery staff.
- d. The former pastor shall remain sensitive to the possible tensions that can arise from his/her presence in the former parish. S/he should make every effort to be supportive of his/her successor. S/he should encourage persons who might contact him/her with concerns about his/her successor to address them to the new pastor or the session or the committee on ministry.

II. When the pastor remains in the same community:

The constant presence can be an unhealthy reminder of a pastoral relationship that no longer exists. Therefore special guidelines need to be followed:

- a. If there are options for church membership and participation in another congregation, it is strongly recommended that the former pastor and his/her family become active in the work and worship of another congregation.
- b. If there are not other options for church membership and participation, especially during the first few months after the new pastor and family arrives, clergy and family are encouraged to seek alternate worship opportunities.
- c. A former pastor should refrain from pastoral functions and not accept any position of leadership in his/her former church including teaching; nor should the pastor attend meetings of the session, deacons, or any committees unless invited by the session and the moderator of session. Except under extraordinary circumstances, such invitations should not be extended or accepted.
- d. An invitation to officiate or perform pastoral functions in a former church is an opportunity to demonstrate support and loyalty to a successor. Former pastors should offer to assist rather than officiate when asked.

- e. Before accepting any invitations, a former pastor is advised to seek the counsel of another pastor or of presbytery staff.
- f. A former pastor should avoid formal or informal participation in or comment on the work of the pastor nominating committee.

Presbytery Sabbatical Policy PR-V-11

It is presbytery's responsibility to interpret the need for sabbaticals.

There are some unique features to being a pastor. First, the pastorate often involves a roller-coaster of emotional experiences throughout any given week. They move from the privilege of celebrating the birth of a child to visiting a grieving set of parents because their child has been involved in a traffic accident or talking to someone who has just been laid off from his or her job. Then the pastor must create a weekly worship experience including a well-researched sermon, teach a class to adults, or organize a teenage retreat. In addition, he or she may also be involved in budget planning, editing a newsletter, and monitoring a dozen committees run by volunteers who often look to the pastor for leadership. In the midst of such activities, the pastor must try to be responsive to a variety of sometimes conflicting voices within the congregation. All of these sometime support and sometime are in conflict with what the pastor senses as God's call in his or her life.

Most pastors feel privileged to be involved in the variety of challenges of the ministry but regularly experience a range of emotional experiences from exaltation to devastation with a fair amount of tedium and at times teeth-grinding patience that is required of the ministry. Unlike many very demanding professions, the pastor does not get the normal two-day and occasional three-day weekend that is common in our society. In addition to adding stress to the family's life, it also takes a strong emotional toll on the personal well-being of the pastor.

Churches benefit from spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthy pastors. Often sabbaticals enable pastors to remain in a congregation for a longer period of time. Congregations often discover new leadership and a sense of collegiality in the ministry during the pastor's sabbatical.

Presbytery can offer a seminar for clergy and other church professionals that would include:

- Exploring the value of sabbaticals.
- Reviewing different models of sabbaticals.
- Interviewing those who have experienced sabbaticals.
- Creating an interpretive plan for educating the congregation.
- Examining necessary planning stages in preparation for a sabbatical.
- Creating a check list for the congregation in preparing for a sabbatical.
- Identifying resources, financial and human:

Lilly Foundation clergyrenewal@yahoo.com or 317-916-7302

Louisville Institute (www.louisville-institute.org/Grants/programs/sgpldetail.aspx - 31k

Board of Pensions: www.pensions.org and look for Sabbath Sabbatical Support Grants

Other forms of presbytery support can include:

- A qualified list of retired pastors that could provide coverage for a church during a sabbatical.
- A list of people and congregations with positive sabbatical experiences in all sizes of churches.
- Financial and personnel resources to assist small congregations in offering sabbaticals.

Resources

- The Vocation Agency has some excellent resources on sabbatical leave: <http://www.pcusa.org/ministers/ministrydevelopment/sabbatical.htm>
- Richard Bullock and Richard J. Brueshoff, *Clergy Renewal: the Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning*, Alban Institute.
- Donald R. Hands and Wayne Fehr, *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self and Others*, Alban Institute, 1994.
- Sample sabbatical policies are available to assist congregations. (www.pastoralcarenetwork.org).

Resources for Pastors and Congregations with Veterans

The Congregation's Relationship to Returned Veterans VET -1

A website, www.hand2handcontact.org offers 10 things you should know about returning veterans. You can go to their website for the complete list but are the top three.

First, returned veterans are exhausted when they get home—physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually exhausted. They often do not have the energy or focus to talk for long periods of time. It will take some time for them to adjust, so follow their lead;

Second, there is nothing black-and-white about what has happened to them. Almost always, there are good things that come from a deployment experience. Likewise, there are some pretty difficult things that they face once they are back home. Do not make any assumptions about their experiences;

Third and perhaps most importantly, they are not the same people they were before they deployed. Do not assume that is a bad thing. The Service Member may come home more confident, with better problem-solving skills. He may return with a deeper sense of gratitude for the comforts that he used to take for granted or she may have found a greater sense of purpose and direction than she ever had before. Yes, there may be many unseen wounds of the soul and spirit, but there are tremendous resources to help heal those wounds, both for the Service Member and the Service Member's family, and an ever growing number of people who truly care and want to help.

There is not some quick program that will make things all right, but congregations and clergy can work at providing a welcoming presence, with an open heart and an open mind but also

providing space for the returned veterans to find their place. We live in an impatient society who doesn't mind making an effort to help people in need as long as it can be done quickly and then we move on to our own agendas. Perhaps we need to explore again the meaning of sanctuary and explore how we might offer that for ourselves as well as others.

Symptoms of PTS For Clergy and Session Awareness VET-2

Kathy Platoni, a Clinical Psychologist who has worked in this field has identified some signs to look for that might indicate difficulty for a soldier transitioning back into society.

1. Vivid flashbacks and recurrences of images from the war that are painful, intrusive repetitive, and undesired
2. Nightmares that are disturbing in nature, often with associated sleep disturbances (i.e.; insomnia, nighttime awakenings)
3. Social isolation, alienation, and withdrawal
4. Remaining detached or emotionally distant from others, even in their presence
5. Difficulty or inability to experience or express emotions appropriately (for instance, crying when sad or grieving)
6. Remaining on "high alert" status (hypervigilance) and scanning the surrounding environment continuously
7. Obvious startle responses to loud noises, being approached or touched by others
8. Excessive boredom with the commonplace and ordinary aspects of life on the home front, thrill-seeking and looking for the "adrenalin rush", while posing unnecessary risks to self and family members
9. Finding little worth, meaning, or purpose to life on the home front and longing to be back in the war zone to find it
10. Preoccupation with bitter and angry feelings directed towards a society or government for maltreatment, exploitation, and failure to keep promises, as has been the case with veterans of previous wars
11. Feeling confused, angry, or cynical in regard to one's fate in life; pessimism and hopelessness about one's future and any possibility of altering what lies ahead.

Congregations who seek to be welcoming need to avoid acting as if they are hovering over a returned soldier waiting for signs of abnormality but being aware of possible behaviors that might indicate the returned soldier is having problems may be helpful. Almost as important as anything is to convey to such soldiers that although you could not possibly understand what they have been through, you are available and a supportive presence. There are some key theological elements of our faith that provide needed resources in such a situation

The first is the meaning of sanctuary. Next is an understanding of Sabbath. Third is a deeper understanding of liturgy, particularly as it centers on confession, forgiveness, and healing. Sometimes it is at such challenging moments that we renew our awareness of the power of our own faith.

In the meantime, keep this web site on your saved list, www.careforthetroops.org. It is a good source for excellent resources.

Sanctuary and the Returned Soldier VET-3

We have some significant resources in our faith that can assist us in being supportive to returned soldiers. As you consider how to respond, particularly to people who have been traumatized by their experiences, you will deepen your own appreciation of your faith.

First is the concept of sanctuary. Historically sanctuary is a place or setting to which you can withdraw and feel safe to rest and be restored. As Israel set up their society in their Promised Land, they established cities of refuge to which people could flee. (Numbers 35:9-34) Originally, this dealt with the problem of “blood revenge” but the concept of sanctuary has taken on many forms throughout history. As Numbers mentioned, it can be a place to which the alien within your land can flee. This aspect was developed by a number of churches with respect to Hispanic immigrants within our borders. Inherent in the concept of sanctuary is a place where one can withdraw from the threatening aspects of the world and connect with the healing presence of God.

Consider how churches might expand the concept of sanctuary to provide a safe place that a veteran might retire to when they are feeling overwhelmed by either their emotions or the behavior of those around them. Our denominations could draw upon the resources available to them to prepare appropriate scriptures, recorded music, and strong symbols that could be placed in an “unlocked” sanctuary. It might also help to invite other members of our congregations to visit the sanctuary from time to time to enter into prayer on behalf of the veteran.

The plan would be for all returned soldiers to know that at any hour of the day or night, they could go there for refuge. Available to them would be resources that might help them focus on the strengths inherent in their faith. Even when they were not there, they would know that others are praying for them.

The Sabbath as a Time to Breathe VET-4

As we think about ministry to veterans, remember some aspects of the concept of Sabbath. It is important to move beyond associating Sabbath with simply a time to go to church. When you read the story about creation in Genesis 1, you will note that the only non-animate part of creation that God blesses is that of the Sabbath. (Genesis 2:3) The word “to bless” carries with it the meaning of the power to impregnate. We retain some of that meaning when we refer to a birth as a blessed event. The implication for the meaning of the Sabbath is that the practice of Sabbath has the power to create new life. The rhythm of sabbath suggests that we need to interrupt our productivity on a regular basis to catch our breath and in doing so we can generate new life.

The impact of the trauma in some soldier’s lives is tearing life apart. The image supplied in the Genesis 1:2 is that of a formless void in which chaos reigns supreme. Life can’t exist in chaos. So God speaks a word and begins to bring order out of chaos, light out of darkness. When life begins to fall apart and the enemies of chaos seem to surround us, we need a Sabbath

experience to enable us to step back from the chaos and listen for a word from God that can bring renewed order to our lives.

The chaos of life is less threatening if we establish a regular rhythm that causes us to step outside of our efforts to accomplish things in life on a regular basis. You will recall that when Jesus was asked how to summarize the law, he focused on the critical nature of relationships — loving God and loving neighbor as our self. While the Puritans in this country focused on the aspect of ceasing work for their understanding of the Sabbath, the Europeans emphasized that it was a time to focus on relationships. Consider the power of stopping on a regular basis to focus on reconnecting with God and neighbor. When chaos is powerful, that may have to happen for a few minutes several times a day.

Providing some specific guidelines for how to practice Sabbath even in small time slots during a day or week might provide some structure that could nurture a person when their life begins to fall apart. Making them aware that they could use the sanctuary as a way to make use of the symbols of faith could assist in this.

Healing Liturgies for Trauma Victims VET-5

We need to re-explore the power of liturgies in our lives. Consider the basic structure of worship as it is expressed in Isaiah 6. Full worship consists of becoming aware of the presence of God, experiencing that in our own unworthiness, God takes the initiative to cleanse us and make us worthy, being instructed in purpose of God's call in our lives, and given the opportunity to respond to that which is much larger than ourselves. In essence, our liturgy reminds us that we are not alone, that even when we feel unworthy, God makes us worthy, and that we have a call to serve something much larger than ourselves.

When you check the symptoms that traumatize some returning veterans, you will note that they can easily be overcome with guilt, feelings of isolation, and a sense of purposelessness in life. Many churches have a liturgy that is variously called a Service of Wholeness or a Healing Service. In those services we are invited to bring our concerns, brokenness, and despair to God in the context of a praying community. We are reminded by our liturgy that God is present and more powerful than that which threatens us. The service often includes having elders or deacons lay their hands on individuals and/or anointing them with oil in order to convey the power of Christ's healing touch.

This can be a powerful service for returned veterans. In an immediate and personal way they can be reminded that they are not alone, that there is one who hears the depth of their pain, can cleanse them of their guilt, and has a purpose for them that incorporates but far exceeds their past experiences of war. In addition there is a congregation that seeks to give expression of that healing love by their presence and prayers. It might even be strengthened if a number of congregations came together to offer such a service on behalf of the larger community.