

DISSERTATION

PASTORAL SELF-CARE: MAINTAINING A BALANCE TO SERVE OTHERS:  
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF CHURCH-BASED  
CLERGY

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## ABSTRACT

### PASTORAL SELF-CARE: MAINTAINING A BALANCE TO SERVE OTHERS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF CHURCH-BASED CLERGY

Clergy in a church-based setting are under tremendous demands as they try to serve many people in multiple roles. Often they are called upon to be counselors, preachers, business CEOs, mediators, organizational psychologists, and to function as a moral compass for others. They are expected to perform these duties with superhuman perfection which takes a toll on the individuals and their families. At some time in their career, a majority of clergy experience burnout to some degree (Melander and Eppley, 2002) and must have a plan to keep balanced.

This research study examined the phenomena of clergy burnout and resiliency through the methodology of a qualitative narrative inquiry. Interviews were conducted with ministers working in mid-sized churches to discover the challenges they experienced and the strategies they utilized to maintain themselves for a life-long career. The clergy's insights and techniques were organized through a thematic analysis that lends to the use of the PIES model (physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual needs) to categorically group their ideas. Additionally, there were recommendations for how congregations and denominations can support their clergy for a lifetime of service. The

interviewees also had many theories of what leads to burnout and even pastoral disasters that are included in this study.

With purposeful planning and good boundaries, a minister can develop a lifestyle that remains balanced and prevents burnout. Without such a plan, it is difficult to participate long-term in this demanding profession and remain effective. Worse yet, some clergy continue their work long after burnout and either become ineffective or turn to behaviors that are destructive to themselves or others. The potential for damage is great as is the potential for effective and meaningful spiritual leadership when balance is maintained.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In my career as a marriage and family therapist, I have had the privilege of working with a number of ministers and pastors who have either become overwhelmed, depressed, or burned-out or have participated in behaviors that have crossed the lines of professionalism. The profession of clergy is a demanding one that constantly tests the spiritual leader's sense of balance and of boundaries. Yet, this work has such an important influence to many participants in our society and must be carried out in a balanced way to avoid hurting people. There is an expression in the helping fields of "do only good and avoid harm" that applies here. There are certain professions in our culture that are empowered and trusted to guide the mental, emotional, and spiritual health of individuals. Some people give this charge to psychotherapists, teachers, and doctors. Others rely on spiritual leaders such as pastors, ministers, medicine men, rabbis, clerics, monks, and others (Frame, 2003). Yet, as I reviewed the literature, there appears to be minimal empirical literature (especially qualitative research such as narrative inquiry) on the dynamics of a minister's life as well as the strategies of maintaining oneself in the profession. Most doctoral dissertations I reviewed have focused on quantitative methods such as surveys or are about specific program development ideas (Chandler, 2005; Estruth, 2000; Giorgiuv, 2002; Jones, 2002; Lundgren, 2006; Rogers, 2001; Scott, 2004; Warren, 2006; Williams, 2002). There are also many anecdotal articles published with

sound ideas and good suggestions for clergy. It is encouraging to note that recently there have been more books appearing on this subject with both theoretical and practical ideas.

In my work as a marriage and family therapist, I constantly work with the emotional growth of adults, adolescents, and children that come into my office. As I have interacted with clients over the last 25 years, I have often contemplated how people learn about emotions. I have developed personal and professional assumptions about this process from these years of experience and training. As children, we usually learn from our parents who typically are passing on the intergenerational traditions around emotional health (Framo, 1981). These traditions usually include rules or procedures on dealing with emotions. In some families, there is considerable talk, touch, and support on the emotional side of life. Other families teach that these subjects are taboo and individuals aren't supported to feel, communicate, or trust emotions (Bradshaw, 1988). Sometimes, the tradition is to express emotions through the indirect style of violence or neglect (Sonkin and Durphy, 1985). Some children experience so little support that attachment issues can evolve which certainly teaches them not to trust their world. Families that value children's needs, teach emotive expression skills, and offer developmentally appropriate support create an environment of emotional health. Children need to experience this unconditional acceptance to continue their developmental growth most effectively (Norton and Norton, 1997).

One important question that arises is where else do we learn about emotional health? Sometimes, there are other people in our lives that offer the connection and compassion that we need. This other person could be a friend, a neighbor, a friend's parent, a coach, or a volunteer. There are also a few professions that teach us about

caring and connecting. There is an opportunity to learn from teachers, day care workers, and professors when that relationship is one of connection on the human level. We can learn and experience emotional safety and growth with skilled and appropriate psychotherapists. Additionally, we can learn about the “heart” experience through clergy. Many people draw comfort and inspiration from their spiritual leaders and their faith perspective (Frame, 2003).

In order to be effective teachers of the emotional experience, all of the above professions need to take care of their own hearts and emotional balances. We have seen too many headlines about people in trusted positions exhibiting behaviors that are counterproductive to the teaching that is entrusted to them. A recent example of such headlines involved Ted Haggard, the head pastor of the largest mega-church in Colorado, who got in trouble for methamphetamines and a gay prostitution relationship. Part of his betrayal to the people in his congregation was that he was actively preaching against these very behaviors. In recent times, the area of pastoral sexual abuse has highlighted the need for emotional balance. Books and professional articles are coming out that analyze this particular problem (Friberg and Laaser, 1999) (Rodgers, 2001). In the field of psychotherapy, therapists go through extensive training in ethics and the need to take care of their own personal issues (Haber, 1996). Sometimes this can be accomplished in the clinical supervision process (Rice, 1986) and sometimes through personal therapy work. Teachers are often offered workshops on burnout prevention as well as therapy through their EAP or health insurance. Clergy are encouraged to engage in personal prayer, yet may feel isolated and may not have other outlets for taking care of these emotional or

heart needs. Spiritual leaders are often focused on service or doing (actions) and less on spiritual well-being (Melander and Eppley, 2002).

### Statement of the Problem

The area I am researching has to do with clergy and where they turn for support, emotional modeling, mental health needs and the healing of their heart or emotional issues. There are several reasons for this direction in my studies. As I have done therapy with clergy from several denominations, I get the sense that this can be an isolating profession. This sense of isolation is also noted in a study on burnout and the clergy (Holaday, Lackey, Boucher, and Glidewell, 2001). If a member of the clergy has a problem, often they can't turn to their congregation, their board of elders, or the friends they have in the church. There is the danger that their position may be seen as compromised and may even endanger their employment. People have many expectations of clergy and expect them to be near perfect. Ministers may also be investing in the persona of the profession and placing considerable effort into what they think they should be (Francis, Loudon, Robbins, Rutledge, 2000). However, clergy, just as anyone else, will have an array of problems including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, marital problems, sexual problems, addictions, and affairs. (Knox, Virginia, and Lombardo, 2002). In many church denominations, there is not a way for clergy to get ongoing support in a very complicated profession. Yet, they remain leaders in how our culture deals with emotions, heart issues, and experiences.

For people involved with leadership in religious institutions, the maintenance of emotional health and balance for their spiritual leadership is an important consideration.

This leads me to a research focus asking where clergy turn for support in these emotional/heart issues and how can this understanding be used to develop structures to further support this profession. If we can understand what is needed and develop further support systems for clergy, hopefully this will help develop a base of support for congregation members to also take care of emotional needs. Another consideration to address concerns the training and screening needed by prospective clergy to lead in the support of the broader culture's emotional health? Also, what kind of supervision or consultation would be useful for the clergy profession?

My hope is to understand the challenges and the resources that clergy experience in order to consider programs and policy changes that would serve them better. By serving clergy better, my hope would be that their congregations would also be inspired to grow further with the heart side of faith and with their emotional development. I have a belief that it is very important to develop healthy emotional functioning for all of us. This allows us to participate in relationships to a more effective degree and enriches life for us. I also have a personal opinion that our current society does not place enough emphasis on the emotional well-being for individuals or families. I recognize that our society has many sub-cultures, some of which pay much more attention to this area of well-being. Hopefully, this research will help us with further understanding of how we support emotional well-being in our society through our spiritual leadership. I am also hoping that a model for clergy support will emerge that includes many systemic layers of involvement. These layers could include the individual efforts, support for and of the leader's family, what the congregations can offer, and what the denomination can offer (including resources for post-disclosure of boundary violations). Ferguson (2007)

suggests that there needs to be a change in congregational expectations around clergy roles, time management, and self-care. Warren (2006) also suggests that issues around low payment for services and the transitions of moving should be addressed. This multi-layered systemic approach may offer the best hope for a balanced life for our spiritual leaders.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this narrative study is to understand and describe the experiences that clergy have as they wrestle with maintaining balance in their lives while serving their congregations. At this point in the dissertation, I am calling this pastoral resiliency or self-care balance which consists of the strategies, supports, and resources that clergy utilize to remain balanced in their professional and personal lives. It also consists of the strategies, supports, and resources that are utilized when a clergyperson crosses the professional lines and participates in a pastoral disaster or experiences burnout.

### Preliminary Research Questions

I will begin with some preliminary research questions- all subject to change as the qualitative research evolves. Some of my initial questions are as follows:

1. What are some of the strategies or recommendations the interviewees would give for a spiritual leader who desires a more balanced lifestyle?
2. What are some of the strategies or recommendations the interviewees would give for a church structure that wants to overtly support a balanced lifestyle for their spiritual leaders?

3. What are contributing factors when clergy experience burnout, imbalance, or a pastoral disaster in their professional or personal lives?

4. What are some of the stories and experiences around this issue from my interviewees? What are some of the challenges that they encounter in striving for burnout prevention? Also, what are ways they build resiliency?

5. Have they experienced, either firsthand or secondarily, any “pastoral disasters?” What were their reactions and emotions to these experiences? What did they learn from these experiences?

6. If they had experienced any pastoral disasters, what were they about, what were some of the factors, what was the path of recovery, and how would they be prevented?

7. How does the interviewee’s denomination handle self-care training and /or imbalance situations? What support or resources are available and what is the organizational perspective on this issue? Again, I would seek out stories and experiences about denominational involvements, not just policy.

### Researcher’s Perspective and Conceptual Framework

In any qualitative research, the perspective and conceptual framework of the researcher is an important consideration. The researcher’s context will influence the viewpoint or lens through which the thematic coding is completed and constructed (Boyatzis, 1998). Ouellette (2003, p. 17) captured this sense well when she says:

You paint what you see of the other person, from that particular place at which you are standing, at the particular time that you are painting. Yes, if you move ever so slightly to the right or left, or wait just a bit of time while the light changes in the room, the reality of that model will change.



The information collected in narrative analysis is always through the context of the collector/interviewer and the thematic coding is always influenced by the experiences and lenses of the coder.

As I consider integrating epistemological theory with substantive theory, I realize that I have a number of choices. I am very clear on what fits for me regarding substantive theory. My theoretical development has taken many turns over the years. In my undergraduate work, I actually began in physics. I quickly realized that that level of quantitative analysis was not my inclination. So, I switched to psychology and felt more comfortable studying this major. I have always had a curiosity about many aspects of our human existence. I also completed a religion major to understand how various cultures approach spirituality. I then was drawn to social work for its value in applying understandings of human existence and completed the social work degree. I began my clinical work with adolescents in 1979 and obtained my master's degree in Human Development and Family Studies where I was exposed to systems theory (Becvar and Becvar, 1982). The more I worked with adolescents and their families, the more systems theory made sense to me. It was the one theory that tied all my studies together and serves as a foundation for my world view now.

I think of systems theory as having many levels that interact. One traditional level is that the members of a family are interconnected through relationships. What happens to one member impacts every other member (Becvar and Becvar, 2000). Other levels of interconnected systems are on continuum from the atomic and cellular levels, through the individual and relational human levels, to the community levels and on to a world or universal level.

My work for the last several decades has been as a psychotherapist (marriage and family therapist). When I meet with an eleven-year-old boy, I try to consider influences all along this systemic continuum (depending on the therapeutic goals). I look for clues on the biochemical, medical, and neurological levels. I try to understand what the story of this individual is like through his perspective. I ask about family dynamics, rules, circumstances, and perspectives. I try to understand the cultural influences that exist such as ethnicity, socio-economics, gender expectations, educational expectations, perspectives on mental and emotional health, etc. I also consider what messages our media culture is giving this boy- especially music and television. I may consider local, state, or national policies on the presenting issues depending on what is appropriate. I am interested in what spiritual influences and resources may be at play. All of these levels need to be considered if I am going to understand the eleven- year-old boy's world and what his goals may be in coming to my office. These considerations allow a freedom and a depth within systems theory that holds up well in the therapy office and beyond.

Systems theory is a core part of how I view the world. As I co-create the meaning of the information from my interviews, I am aware that this data will be influenced by this foundation of systemic thinking on my part.

Now we come to the question of what epistemological approach will best meet the needs of this study. There can be many approaches to research including a number of quantitative designs (Gliner and Morgan, 2000) (Francis, Robins, Loudon, and Haley, 2001). However, I have to ask myself a number of questions as to my preference. My worldview is that there is rarely if ever just one answer or one right perspective. The world is multidimensional in nature. My training and experience as a therapist and having

been raised in the liberal arts tradition of education has exposed me to a world rich with narrative and critical thinking experiences. I think quantitative theories or positivism can be useful but they are limiting for exploring the richness of my present research questions. As I talk with different clergy in my research, it will be important to capture their experiences and stories through a narrative approach. At this point, I am hoping to find out what has worked and what hasn't for individuals in this profession. I am also open to where this research takes me, knowing the research questions I begin with may not be the ones at the end. I am also interested in what structures need to be changed and what supports need to be in place for clergy to be increasingly effective leaders and teachers of emotional health for our culture (knowing full well that this is only part of the puzzle of societal emotional health). This line of thinking brings me to consider the qualitative research methodologies including narrative inquiry and ethnography (Creswell, 1998). For the sake of this study, I have settled on the methodology of narrative inquiry since much of the experiences I want to include will be conveyed best through interviews rather than just observations. The use of ethnography in the church environments would make for an interesting study for another time.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The resources for supporting and encouraging balance in clergy have been expanding over the past few decades. Yet, burnout is considered a very common occupational hazard that has many dimensions and impacts people on different systemic levels. In my review of the literature, there were a number of relevant clusters that emerged. These included the general literature on burnout as well as literature pertaining specifically to clergy. Other clusters of literature center around personality and co-dependency, marriage and family consequences, the wholeness wheel, resiliency theory, leadership including special problems for clergy leadership, systemic perspectives, denominational support, and other strategies. In this chapter, I will organize the literature around these topics.

One study from a conference cited in Clergy Burnout (Lehr, 2006) said that 80% of clergy believe that ministry has negative effects on their families, 75% have had a crisis due to the stress of the work, and 90% said they were not trained enough to cope with the demands of ministry. There are a number of perspectives on what causes this burnout and, therefore, what may give clues for building resiliency for those men and women who remain in the ministry. There are individual considerations such as lifestyle choices (Oswald, 1991) (Melander & Eppeley, 1989) as well as evaluating a person's motivation for engaging in this line of work (Richardson, 2005). The issue of appropriate

personal boundary development has also been given attention in the literature (Bleiberg & Skufca, 2005). Organizational considerations are extremely important for any plan of resiliency. In one survey (Dart, 2003), 70% of clergy that chose to leave the ministry did not have satisfactory relationships with their lay leaders at their churches. There are times when the person assigned to support the minister is also the person with the power to fire the minister. Additionally, many pastors would not share problems and concerns with their denominational leadership out of fear for their future opportunities (Jones, 2002). There can be a sense of isolation that many clergy can experience (Holaday, Lackey, Boucher, and Glidewell, 2001). The net result is a situation where many pastors do not feel support from their denomination nor their own church leadership.

There are several layers of dysfunction which can emerge from the failure to attend to these considerations. On one level, clergy professionals can burn out and either abandon the profession or attempt to minister from this platform of depression, being overwhelmed, or being cynical. Another layer is where the clergy acts out in ways that are harmful to others or themselves such as marital affairs (Spring, 1997), sexual compulsions (Delmonico, 2001) (Carnes, 1989), sexual misconduct (Friberg & Laaser 1998), theft (Phan, 2007), addictions (Twerski, 1997), suicide or other destructive actions. In a survey from the late 1980s (The Editors, 1988), twelve percent of responding clergy answered yes to the question of “Have you ever had sexual intercourse with someone other than your spouse since you’ve been in local-church ministry?” There is also a level of clergy misconduct that is brought on by unresolved issues of their own past such as child sexual abuse (Lew, 1988) (Hagans & Case, 1988), or family of origin dysfunctions (Richardson, 2005).

## Burnout

There are many professional articles and books written in the area of burnout. One of the early pioneers in this research was Freudenberg (1974) who was a psychiatrist and observed the phenomena through his clinical observations rather than from an academic base. He considered burnout to exist when highly dedicated workers became disillusioned with their work. Generally, people are vulnerable if their work is of deep commitment that draws large expectations from within and without. The second factor of vulnerability is when the hopes, dreams, or implied goals do not work out and the person's commitment and dedication are dashed. There are various symptoms that appear including exhaustion, fatigue, depression, decreased effectiveness, negative attitudes, cynicism, absenteeism, irritability and problems with concentration (Maslack & Schaufeli, 1993). One study completed in the Netherlands had 11% of the clergy respondents say they suffer from emotional exhaustion (Evers & Tomic, 2003). Roy Oswald has conducted seminars on clergy self-care for over 25 years and he estimates that 20% of clergy are severely burned-out and 50% more are bordering on burnout (Melander and Eppley, 2002). Rigger (1985) considers the signs and symptoms of burnout to include the physical, emotional, environmental, and organizational realms. Wells (2002) reported that 76% of clergy are overweight or obese while 40% are depressed or worn out some or most of the time. Of particular interest was a study completed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American (ELCA) by Dr. Gwen Halaas (2002). In this report, she found that Lutheran pastors had a self-reported depression rate of 17% compared to the national rate of 9.5% (and 10% of the pastors

were on antidepressant medications). This is an alarming difference where clergy exhibited 79% higher depression rates than the general population. All these considerations give clues to the preventative plans that pastors, congregations, and denominations will want to include in creating a purposeful plan of support for the demanding work of ministry.

There has been specific attention to the vulnerability of burnout for people engaged in the helping profession. Grosch and Olson (1992) refer to the inner and outer pressures on those in the helping professions. They view burnout through a system model consisting of work system pressures, family of origin issues, professional organization responsibility, co-workers, personal life, client pressures, and present family pressures. They also identify various symptoms of burnout in the categories of physiological (lack of energy, irritability, back pain, change in sleep patterns), behavioral (withdrawal, lack of passion, rigidity), psychological (negativity, depression, lack of optimism), spiritual (feeling alone, loss of passion, loss of faith), and clinical (boredom, blaming, overmedicating, day dreaming). The overall theme of the *Family Therapy Networker* in Sept., 1992, was on “I was a Family Therapist and lived to tell about it.” One article titled “Ten Tried and True Methods to Achieve Therapist Burnout” (Belson, 1992) was written with a cynical twist suggesting ways to burnout if that were your goal. Belson included suggestions such as working many hours including holidays and Saturdays, isolating yourself, basing self-esteem on case outcomes, taking mostly hard cases and thinking deeply about them outside the therapy office, limiting yourself to one vacation per year and taking lots of professional reading with you when you do go on vacation,

reading and training only in the same old specialty, not spending any money on yourself, and expecting that you can fix every situation.

### Burnout and Clergy

There is some literature specific to the helping profession of clergy that adds further insight to the dilemmas faced in the church. One theory around clergy and burnout is that clergy are often subject to three factors (Olsen & Grosch, 1991). The first factor according to these authors is that some clergy go into the ministry with a personality style that requires people to admire them. This may go back to unmet developmental needs from childhood. The other two factors are the needs and pressures of the church community and the needs of the clergy's family. If a spiritual leader is needing admiration, that leader may do whatever it takes to appear wonderful and heroic. They may work 80 hours per week, try to be all things to all people, and to have the personal expectation to appear God-like. Some clergy may themselves believe in the persona of the profession and exert considerable effort into what they think they should be (Francis, Loudon, Robbins, Rutledge, 2000). Often, this conflicts with the person's personal needs as well as the needs of his or her family. They are expected to be available whenever needed and to sacrifice personal time for those of the congregation. They are expected to be on a pedestal of sorts, as are their family members. The pedestal effect is explained by Blackbird and Wright (1985) as when lay people are guarded in their interactions with pastors due to the perception of superior power. This can prevent pastors and their families from having some of the close friendships that they need in daily life. Another consideration is that clergy, just as anyone else, will have an array of



mental health problems including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, marital problems, sexual problems, alcoholism, and others (Knox, Virginia, & Lombardo, 2002). Yet they may feel they cannot get any help for these problems.

People enter into the clergy for many reasons. Many enter to serve a calling by God and to be helpful to others. There are some who enter hoping that the ministry will stop their ongoing sexual misconduct. Friberg and Laaser (1998) call this “Ordination as a shame reduction strategy.” There are clergy that enter into this profession because it was expected of them by their families. This can lead to a sabotage of their career, since it was “ordination by a parent.” Some become clergy due to the narcissistic perspective of obtaining a position where they can get their needs met at the expense of others (Francis & Baldo, 1998). They obtain a power position where they teach, interpret and enforce the sacred rules from God. They become beyond question and often have congregations that won’t question or communicate concerns. Fortunately, it seems that most clergy enter into the profession to serve, to lead, and to be positive for their congregation.

### Personality and Co-Dependency

There are times when the personality of being a helping person (especially clergy) becomes an important factor (Maslach, 1982). There can be challenges when the helper has a low self-esteem and allows an “external locus of control” by acquiescing and deferring to others in relationships. The failure to know, exert, or adhere to one’s personal limits through boundary-setting can be a symptom of external acceptance (Katherine, 1991). It is estimated by some that 75% of the stress for clergy is due to

boundary confusion with work (Cranston, 2000). Many times, clergy are given expectations that cause boundaries to become unclear or permeable when these boundaries need to be created with a sense of health and balance. Boundaries are needed in a number of areas to be an effective caregiver including physical limits, emotional limits, problem-solving limits, sexual limits, task limits, limits on time commitments, and limits on the roles we agree to play. Another factor is the need to be liked by others and to receive approval from others (Maslack, 1982). In the classic book, *Codependent No More*, Melody Beattie (1987) refers to the process of attending to others needs while ignoring our own. In this effort, a person is trying to gain acceptance, approval, and validation. However, this is conditional love which always has a cost and will never give true love or acceptance. Co-dependents take on other people's responsibilities, anticipate other people's needs, over commit themselves, and deny their own feelings and needs. They usually do this out of fear and guilt. They often have various symptoms of depression and anxiety. They look for people to help, yet don't see their own needs. In the study of church congregations, there is a type of church size called "the pastor-centered" category. This size is considered churches whose average attendance is between 50-150 attendees per week. Being "pastor-centered" means that the pastor knows everyone and is expected to take care of virtually everything in that church even if there is a cost to the pastor's self or their family. Co-dependency is expected and even institutionalized with the name of the church category (Lehr, 2006). For a minister whose self-esteem is dependent on the opinion of others and whose self-esteem is low, the above expectation is a formula for burnout and disaster. This minister could work 80 hours per week, could be involved with every person's situations, could get squeezed from all

sides, and have conflicted parishioners be angry for his lack of solving all their problems. Additionally, there would not be time for the minister's own needs nor those of his family.

In the Christian tradition, a person is offered unconditional love through grace and divine sacrifice. It is not earned, yet some clergy function in this world of conditional love. They are hoping they can earn the love and respect so desperately needed for their low self-esteem. The pastor who is seeking the benefits of people-pleasing will find that he or she actually will get little appreciation and will end up being resentful and resented. This resentment is fuel for many addictive and dysfunctional behaviors including entitlement, especially when coupled with pastoral narcissism (Morgenthaler, 2006). Pastoral narcissism is when a clergy person sees themselves as above the rules and norms of their community or society and they are owed and entitled to special treatment or a secret life outside of the persona. Steinke (1989) adds that this person creates the persona or false self to hide his vulnerability and fearfulness. A recent example of pastoral narcissism came to light recently in Colorado Springs when the head pastor of the largest mega-church in Colorado got in trouble for methamphetamines and a gay prostitution relationship. It is interesting to note how strongly Ted Haggard preached against gay relationships from his Evangelical pulpit, yet it appears that he had his secret life that he considered above the accountability of his church and the Evangelical movement he led nationally (MacDonald, 2006). Thoburn and Blaswick (1994) considered factors that show risk for pastors to exhibit narcissism through infidelity. These include having feelings of mistrust, feelings of rejection, feelings of shame, marital maladjustment, having attraction and arousal towards others in their church community, and the use of

pornography. They suggest that church organizations must create environments where clergy can deal with these factors before they yield to infidelity.

### Marriage and Family Consequences

There are considerable consequences for family relationships when a person's balance is not given adequate attention. In family systems theory, all persons in a family are interconnected with each other (Becvar and Becvar, 1982). One may think of a family as if it were a mobile in a child's room, with each piece balanced together. If one part of the mobile moves in some way, the entire mobile must rebalance and realign. What happens to one person in the system impacts every other person in that mobile or family system (Becvar and Becvar, 2000). Charles Figley suggests that we consider stress and burnout from a family systems perspective where there is an additive effect of family's stressors (Figley, 1998). As stressors mount in the family, there will be reactions and breakdowns with internal family relationships as well as for the individuals. Figley talks of these as compassion stress and compassion fatigue in the family system. In the case of the family of a clergyperson, there can be profound consequences from stress and burnout for marriages, parent-child relationships, and the family system as a whole. There are at least five stressors that uniquely impact clergy families (Blanton, 1992). These include expected career mobility, financial issues, challenges to family boundaries, a lack of social support, and the excess of time demands and job expectations. In the occupation of clergy, a series of moves (or calls) is a normal part of career development. Each time a family moves, there are many adjustments that each member experiences. Financially, clergy are traditionally underpaid and this causes stress for many clergy families. Family

boundaries often get challenged through parishioners' expectations of perfection (living in a fishbowl). The boundaries can also be compromised by time demands for the clergy and their family members, people demanding inclusion due to the perceived prestige of the clergy position, as well as possible triangulation that can occur with external relationships. Often, clergy experience little social support outside of the church body and this can cause extra importance on the family unit itself (Friedman, 1985). Clergy couples experience significantly more loneliness and a diminished quality of life compared to non-clergy couples (Warner & Carter, 1984). Clergy marriages often have the added pressure of needing to hold the persona of perfection and therefore often deny problems or dysfunctions until they explode (Mace & Mace, 1980). Clergy families can suffer due to the great amount of time expected on the job for the clergy. According to Jenkins (2002), 74% of clergy felt that there were just too many demands for their time and that they had experienced at least one significant crisis from this stress. There may not be enough time for family events or for marital enrichment. Congregational emergencies may take one or both parents away from the activities needed for family connectedness. Children may be viewed differently as the pastor's child. In some clergy families, there is a lack of differentiation between the parents and the children. A child's behaviors may be seen as a reflection on the ministerial parents rather than a reflection of the child's experience (Blanton, 1992).

When the individual clergy gets out of balance or on the path to burnout, the ramifications for families is also great. There may be little emotional support left to give to the family. There also may emerge marital dissatisfaction and a sense of disconnectedness. Warner and Carter (1984) found a diminished quality of marriages and

high levels of loneliness for clergy marriages compared to the general population. The family may have to deal with depression, anxiety, alcohol abuse, sexual infidelity or other dysfunctional coping by the clergy. Any of these dysfunctional coping techniques may have serious consequences for the family. Using the model of a child's mobile again, if the piece representing the pastor is moving on the path to burnout, all the other parts must also move in their efforts to rebalance the family system. This can throw the entire family system into chaos, enabling behaviors, or isolation. The research of Morris and Blanton (1994) strongly recommends that clergy be given resources and training in a wide area of life skills including communication, boundary setting, time management, assertiveness training, conflict resolution, work/family role differentiation, stress management, marital enrichment, life-span issues, and many others.

### The Wholeness Wheel

The report from the InterLutheran Coordinating Committee (1997) included a model of balance they called the "Wholeness Wheel." This model (illustration 1) considers health and wellness to consist of six major areas needing to be balanced. These areas include physical well-being, emotional well-being, social/interpersonal well-being, vocational well-being, financial well-being, and intellectual well-being. At the center is baptism as a member of the Christian faith. Surrounding the wheel with six spokes is spiritual well-being. Out of this circle extend professional responsibilities, playfulness and humor, marriage and family, and other commitments/hobbies/responsibilities. The Wholeness Wheel shows the interconnectedness of our major need areas and how a

Illustration 1: The Wholeness Wheel



balance between them can work well. When any part is out of balance, the whole wheel does not work as well since each part affects all the rest. This model reminds me of models from other cultures such as the Native American medicine wheel and the Buddhist wheel of life.

## The Four Quadrants

In the 1980s, I was fortunate enough to experience Elisabeth Kubler-Ross speak in Fort Collins, Colorado. Her lecture made an impression on me with a model of human needs that she called the “Four Quadrants.” Kubler-Ross (1995) elaborated on this model by identifying the quadrants as being physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual/intuitive and connects their development with experiencing unconditional love, especially when very young. Kubler-Ross thought that the emotional quadrant develops between ages one and six and this sets the tone for our basic attitudes for life. She connected the beginning of intellectual development around age six when children, hopefully, begin loving to learn. The spiritual/intuitive quadrant develops in adolescence.

Over the years of using this model in my psychotherapy practice, I added the social sphere to complete the PIESS (physical, intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual) model. I note that the social is part of the wholeness wheel above. The PIESS model has influenced how I organize human needs including those pertaining to this research.

## Resiliency Theory

Theories on resiliency offer us a different way of looking at the care of persons in the helping professions and specifically at clergy. While much of the literature on resiliency is written about children, some of the concepts seem transferable to adults working in certain professions. Frazier and Richman (2001) discuss resiliency as having three aspects. First, there is a sense of overcoming the odds and having success even when there are many counter forces at work. Secondly is the aspect that a person is able to be successful under pressures that could undermine their success. Thirdly, that a



person is able to recover from negative events. Overall, there is a sense of risk that can increase the probability of a negative outcome. There also needs to be protective factors (which can include burn-out prevention strategies as it relates to this paper) that allow the individual to successfully overcome the risk (Richman & Fraser, 2001). Wolin and Wolin (1994) offer great hope in the field of resiliency in their presentation of the Challenge Model rather than the Damage Model. In their work relating to children, they refer to the damage that happens when children are exposed to dysfunctions in their development. In the Damage Model, children with troubled families or traumas will often develop childhood pathologies which lead to adolescent pathologies as well as adult pathologies. The Challenge Model offers remedies to each of these three layers of pathologies so the child can actually end up a very strong and competent adult through seven areas of resiliency. These seven areas include: insight, independence, relationships, initiative, humor, creativity, and morality. While we are not directly dealing with child and adolescent development in our study of clergy, the concept of overcoming adversity and coming out stronger does apply. For those clergy whose burnout comes from family of origin issues, Wolin and Wolin's Challenge Model directly offers a way to successful adult functioning and successful clergy work.

### Leadership

The concept of leadership has been around for centuries. Many would say that there is a leadership style based on the teachings and applications of Moses, Christ, Buddha and other spiritual figures. In the case of a church, we are considering leadership for a volunteer non-profit organization. There are numerous ideas about how leadership is

to be carried out. There is the style of Machiavelli where there is great concern for the maintenance of power, authority, and order. This must be preserved even if the leader needs to strategically and purposefully deceive his or her followers in order to keep this consistency (Bass, 1990). A very different approach was presented by Lao-tzu who embraced the values of selflessness and being non-directive as foundations of leadership. Rather than trying to control followers, there was an attitude of service and trust in the wisdom of the followers that prevailed (Wren, 1995). Lao-Tzu's works contain many observations or lessons on leadership such as not intervening unnecessarily, allowing a group to run itself, remain unbiased, do not force your own needs, and that true self-interest teaches selflessness (Lao-Tzu, 1995).

There is a servant/leadership model that emerged in the 1970s with an essay by Robert Greenleaf entitled, "The Servant as Leader." Greenleaf thought there were better alternatives to organizational leadership than the authoritarian model with the power centering at the top of a hierarchy. Instead, all participants are seen as having valuable vantage points and as having needs for growth that should be supported by the organization. The role of the leader was seen by Greenleaf as serving all the participants while serving the organization (Speers, 1998). Greenleaf (1995) wrote that leaders emerge because they were trusted as servants by those choosing to be led. This leadership philosophy displays genuine respect for the process of participant learners and it is through this learning that changes in the organization will actually emerge.

Another model is that of the charismatic leader where one person is able to create change through his or her own activities as well because of perceived personal attributes. These leaders must have three components to carry out their work (Nadler & Tushman,

1990). First, they must have a vision. I think of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. giving his “I Have a Dream” speech as a great example of the sharing of a vision that generated excitement and energy. He set high expectations and was also energizing (the second component). The third part is that they help followers to act by enabling. This may happen through listening, by extending support, and by sharing confidence that the follower’s actions will be effective in carrying out the vision. There certainly are drawbacks to this model that focuses so much on one individual including the fallibility of that individual. This model is especially vulnerable to damage if a pastoral disaster happens with the charismatic leader. This is exemplified by the collapse of the television evangelical ministry of Jim Bakker.

There is a model of organizational leadership published by the Alban Institute based on the size of the church (Mann, 2001). According to Mann, there are four main church sizes based on average weekly attendance. The family-sized church is a small one with up to 50 persons attending. This one usually has an unofficial matriarch or patriarch and everyone knows each other’s business. The pastor is usually part-time and often is not the foundational authority. This size offers a very intimate setting where the whole group is connected and doesn’t just rely on the clergy for their ministries. The second size is that of a pastoral-sized church with 50-150 members. The pastor usually has a very direct relationship with each participant and there is a small leadership team. There is a strong tie with each member and there are many expectations of personal and detailed involvement. The minister is expected to personally respond to each person’s life and there is great focus on the care of the pastor. The third size is a program-sized church with 151-400 members. The name is derived by the variety of programs offered and the

pastoral care is maintained by a number of people including lay ministers. There is a staff (usually no more than three paid staff members) to carry out the work of the church. With the program-sized organization, there are lots of activities and programs and very few paid staff to carry them out. They rely on volunteer leaders and must pay attention to volunteer management. The fourth size is the corporate size with 400-1000 attendees. This church will have a variety of staff and there is less connection to the minister and the individuals. Often, the personalization of the community is done through small groups getting together and sharing support. Any personal ministry is generally done by the clergy only in emergencies. Leadership is carried out by layers of boards and committees. There are further categories identified by Carl George (Mann, 2001) and these include super-church (1,000-3,000), mega-church (3,000-10,000), and meta-church (10,000 plus per week). These larger sizes are structured much like the corporate size only with further layers and task delineation. The dangers for clergy are when they take on more than is appropriate for the size model or they don't understand the changing roles through periods of transition.

In a church setting, there seems to be certain traits that emerge as useful for effective leadership. The basic concepts in the servant-leadership model set up a power expectation where the leaders have a responsibility to serve the needs of the followers through various means. These concepts are altered in a church organization since the leader serves not just the congregation, but more importantly serves God. The addition of this spiritual purposefulness does give additional dimensions to the servant leadership position. In order to serve both the members as well as God, there has to be a belief in the tenants of Christianity with a Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). There has to be an

acknowledgment that leadership endeavors are based on values including a humble stance acknowledging that the pastor is never the totality of leadership. It is said that the leadership is for the glory of God, not the glory of anyone in leadership (or any one person). If leadership is formulated for the glory of the pastor, we may be dealing with opportunistic leaders, greedy leaders, or jealous leaders that will meet short-term success at best (Woods, 2001). There needs to be a vision laid out by the pastor based on the spiritual values of the church. Leadership can be carried out with the confidence that the clergy can have from faith in the strength of God. Therefore, fearful leadership is seen as ineffective in that it will take care of the needs of a few vocal or powerful members only (Woods, 2001).

McIntosh (2000) has identified a number of different roles that clergy may play in their spiritual organization. This person may take on the role of tribal chief where followers look for decisions, directions, and care through personal relationships. Another role is that of medicine man where the pastor gives healing medicine through sermons, prayers, officiating, giving spiritual blessings, and personal modeling. The pastor may also take on the role of the CEO where they organize, plan, and structure how the organization will be administered. The ideal pastor would be sensitive to all three roles and would work to develop teams in the congregation to accomplish these three areas.

### Special Problems for Clergy Leadership

There are many complications for clergy regarding leadership. One of them is the expectations that both they and their congregations may have for the position. Congregations may see the pastor as the person who is to be always available, to lead

flawlessly, to always have the divine answers, and to always be patient with everyone. This infers leadership of perfection which is not attainable. While a congregation may only see the clergy being highly visible one or two hours per week, the average full-time clergy puts in over 50. One quarter of full-time clergy puts in over 63 hours per week (McMillan, 2002). The Alban Institute, a research and resource institute focusing on pastoral and church organizational issues considers anything over 50 hours per week to be dangerous (Cranston, 1996).

Another problem for clergy leadership is the difference between contractual verses covenantal ministry. Contractual means that the occupation is a job and a contract needs to be set up to define the work, set the expectation overtly, establish the benefits, establish time limits such as vacation or sabbatical leave, and define the boundaries of the work. Covenantal ministry means that there is a relationship being established where a person is given a “call” which is a sacred experience. The covenant implies that a sacred relationship is being established which is sacramental, pastoral, and educational (Cranston, 1996). A covenantal relationship is more dynamic than a contract and has challenges regarding the limits and boundaries. The best of church systems understand that both are needed. The pastor needs to have the job spelled out while also realizing there is a spiritual calling and a relational commitment interwoven.

In the church hiring procedure, the pastor is generally “called,” yet the process is much like a recruiting and interviewing process with a spiritual sense to it. Often decisions are made with the help of prayer and spiritual reflection. Once a person is called, both the organization and the clergy co-create the style of leadership that will be embraced. Different pastors will have different expectations of their role as will different

denominations or individual churches. I recall a pastor once told me that he regarded his work as the CEO of the church. He acknowledged his weakness in the area of counseling. His style of leadership was somewhat hierarchical in nature and often his decision-making did not include good communications which would have led to better collaboration.

There will always be dual relationships so clergy can never “de-role” with their members (Cranston, 1996). Dual relationships partially come from the multiplicity of roles and can get further complicated when boundary issues become murky or permeable. It is not only the pastor that has dual roles. By nature of the system, each member of the pastor’s family has dual roles as do any of the church leaders. For the pastor, he or she may provide counseling to a person, then be on committee with that person, then give communion, and then ask that person for church donations or even report to that person who serves as an elder. There can be many power dynamics that change with each interaction. In the midst of this, perhaps there is a theological difference of opinion that must be worked through. It takes a great awareness of leadership roles to carry all this out (Cranston, 2000).

Another special problem for clergy is that they are expected to act as a holy reflection of God at all times. In organizational leadership, there are times when a leader may need to be confrontational and the pastor is expected to do this with grace and dignity always. If a pastor displays anger, frustration, or other less flattering attributes, this can affect the ministry for years, since pastoral relationships last often for years or decades. When one considers the research indicating that many pastors are depressed or burned-out, there can be further relational difficulties or disillusionments. Clergy must

realize that they are providing leadership to a volunteer non-profit organization and anyone can leave at anytime. Some clergy can become overly controlling. This can be displayed either with micromanagement (McIntosh, 2000) or in not tolerating other opinions using the concept that they alone hold the authority of God.

One more special consideration for clergy is that they often are the primary mental health counselors for tens of millions of Americans (Weaver, et al, 2002). Parishioners may seek out the counsel of a pastor before going to a licensed mental health professional or a medical doctor for a variety of reasons. Pastors get to deal with problems ranging from relationship issues and adjustment disorders all the way to the most severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bi-polar. While most pastors get some training in pastoral counseling, not all will be equipped with the depth of mental health counseling skills that the more severe parishioners will require. This work creates both stress and time demands on the already busy schedule of pastors.

### A Systemic Perspective on Leadership

Another challenge for leadership is that the whole system takes on a personality of its own. There are some systems that are functioning well and others that get stuck in their own dysfunctions beyond the leadership. There are also parts of a system that can get stuck and rigid and inflexible for change. In systems theory, all the parts affect each other and the whole system must be considered in any changes. Earlier in this review, this researcher considered organizational changes that were needed as a church size changed. The challenge of change brings forth a tension between flexibility and rigidity. An effective clergy person has to respect both parts of this continuum and exhibit patience as



change plays out. There are times when the clergy needs to advocate for tradition and other times when something new needs to be embraced. If the clergy leader embraces one side only, he or she will often become part of the conflict itself and can polarize a whole congregational system. McLaren (2000) suggests there are times to trade a church's traditions for the overall Christian Tradition which includes doctrines, history, moral codes, and other elements of the "Big Picture." This is taking a wide systemic perspective.

There is also a tendency for organizations to stay in a static state called homeostasis where people develop patterns of interaction and tend to remain in those patterns (Parson & Leas, 1993). It is important for all the church leaders to realize that change is one thing they can count on. Many things can bring about change including a pastoral disaster, staff moving to other jobs, a new building, new vocal members, economics, politics, programming, or a significant change in congregation size. Part of leadership is in understanding the clergy's role in the change process and taking action purposefully with the whole system in mind.

Another aspect of a systemic perspective is considering who is responsible for having the pastor and staff in a good place of personal balance. Certainly a starting point is with the efforts of the clergy person including managing time, keeping boundaries, taking vacation time, exercise, nutrition, spiritual growth, friendships outside of the church and continuing education. The clergy person's family is another point where efforts need to occur to have family time, marital time, parenting experiences, and family traditions. Within the church, there can be formal and informal policies protecting the clergy and staff. Some churches have a person designated for pastoral relations whose job

is to help support the pastoral balance from the organizational perspective. The management board of a church such as a board of elders also can develop ways to support the clergy leadership such as developing detailed job descriptions, having policies on how emergencies will be handled, developing a culture of safety for communications, offering an adequate compensation package, and supporting personal needs of the clergy. Additionally, there can be an ongoing effort to educate the whole congregation on the expectations for the clergy position as well as what the boundaries will be to protect the clergy. Additionally, there can be policies identified to protect the clergy from toxic relationships. Melander and Eppley (1989) define toxic relationships as those where people are destructive to themselves or others. This can include many behaviors such as manipulation, criticism, negativity, threatening, or not respecting boundaries. One dynamic that can arise out of toxic relationships or permeable boundaries is that of triangulation. Richardson (2005) noted many opportunities for triangulation as different congregation members try to enlist the pastor to their side, either in personal issues or in church policy issues. Triangulation renders the pastor ineffective and creates anxiety for all including the pastor

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### Denominational Support

The final level of systemic support can also come from the denomination through policies and trainings. Any denomination can and must take on the mission of helping support the spiritual leaders they employ. Some denominations are very local, some national, and some worldwide. The very existence of the denomination depends upon the local leaders carrying out their ministries effectively. Some present-day denominations

are currently being financially threatened with lawsuits for clergy (employees) who have committed serious offenses especially around sexual abuse. Denominations need to develop further screenings around who gets into their seminaries. Seminaries can offer extensive training in the management of personal balance from a systems perspective. It is certainly important for seminaries to teach theology and religion constructs. They also need to emphasize the personal ethics and the personal effectiveness of ministry for clergy to be effective and to “do no harm” to themselves and others. National organizations can offer and support ongoing continuing education, perhaps even require a set amount of ethics and personal management training per year for clergy to maintain their pastoral credentials.

There are many denominations that have developed an ethical policy to which each pastor commits. An example of this is the policy available through the Evangelical Covenant Church developed for its ministers and staff (The Covenant Ministeriam, 2002). This eleven-page document, which I have found to be the most detailed, outlines many boundary limits and the theological foundations for those boundaries. Within the ethics are boundaries pertaining to ministerial relationships, training relationships, and professional responsibilities. It also mentions that this ethics committee is responsible for reviewing cases of ethical violations, (including what I have called pastoral disasters), on a case-by-case basis and determine what disciplines and supports are needed. The Lutheran Church/ Missouri Synod (2003) suggested guidelines through their personal manual prototype which also outlines the need for boundaries and guidance from the denominational level. The United Church of Christ (2002) also outlines its expectations

and boundaries through their Manual of Ministry. In their manual, the needs of family time, personal time, and spiritual renewal are incorporated.

A related and important place of support for clergy development pertains to the manner seminaries handle the issues involved with pastoral resiliency (Meek, et al, 2003). At the seminary level, there can be openness for considering the various issues and possibilities outlined in this literature review. A perspective of normalizing the challenges would go a long way for new pastors to include a focus on self-care in their ministry. At this early training level, there can be a proactive stance of addressing issues such as boundaries needed for personal relationships, dealing with complex interpersonal situations, stress management, time management, management of sexualized feelings, and co-dependency.

### Additional Strategies

Many of the resources in this literature review gave ideas and strategies on what can help a clergy person do well with their balance. Lundgren (2006) has developed a model of self-care that incorporates six major areas. The first is physical and includes sleep, relaxation, taking time off, recreation, exercise, and nutrition. The second area includes spiritual aspects such as “The theological support for self-care, love for Christ, a certain hope, faith in Christ, faithfulness, and facing a fallen world and a fierce enemy” (Lundgren, 2006, p.212). The third area of self-care includes having close friendships and developing mutual accountability. The fourth area includes the emotional aspects of self-care. The author includes having ways to handle emotions, having an awareness of where emotions originate, using stress management, having detached concern, having joy and

laughter, and being aware of the negative emotions. The fifth area includes love, forgiveness, and right thinking. The final area of self-care includes healthy boundaries, time management, clear roles, smart goals, and being purpose-driven. While Chandler (2005) suggests that very little research has been done on the personal practices of pastoral self-care, her work focused on spiritual renewal, rest-taking, and maintaining an active support system.

Scott (2004) also supplies us with suggestions from his dissertation. He adds the ideas of having a private place to detach from the ministry and having a Sabbath rest for the minister. Scott also provides considerable Biblical support for clergy to practice self-care. Giorgiov (2002) offers concepts of mutual accountability as very important for self-care in her quantitative study of burnout among Hungarian Baptist pastors. Estruth (2000), whose dissertation was an applied research project, proposed an idea to lessen the load of the pastor by training members of the congregation to help with some of the pastoral counseling demands. This would lower the time demands for the pastor as well as help increase the involvement of members seeking to serve each other.

## Conclusion

The work of clergy is a very complex and demanding profession. It is a commitment to care for others on many levels. To be effective, the clergy person must also care for themselves. This is not done as selfishness but rather as a model of self-care. There is a continuum between selfishness and co-dependency with the healthy balance showing in the middle as self-care. When the clergy is too far towards selfish, there are many problems that arise including a focus away from the spiritual foundation of the very

faith they are professing. The tendency for clergy and other helping professions is to err on the side of co-dependency. With co-dependency, their leader may neglect individual or family needs and sacrifice for the congregation's members or for the organization itself. This co-dependent model leads to great problems including burnout, depression, and disillusionment. While the servant-leadership model gives us a good foundation for clergy, there has to be a modifier of self-preservation for the leader to be effective over the long term.

Systemically, there are many opportunities to support this self-care model while serving the church, the congregation, and God. An effective spiritual leader will take care of their spirituality as well as their physical, social, intellectual, and emotional needs. There are models of organizational leadership that also support this balance and provide a healthy environment for change and diversity. There are spiritual models that support taking care of one's body as a temple. It is important to view the health of the clergy as a systemic issue and not just for the individual clergy to support. The rewards for attending to this issue can include a healthy clergy, a healthy and happy staff, and a dynamic functioning organization. The dangers of not attending to these issues can include burnout and pastoral disasters that can impact entire congregation.

For clergy, there are risks around time management, stress management, and financial management. There are boundary risks including those pertaining to sexual boundaries that capture the newspaper headlines with great frequency. There are health risks with obesity, anxiety and depression. There are also family risks for marriages and parenting. Resiliency theory shifts our thinking from a model of preventing damage through a series of strategies to a model of hope and strength development. This author

views this shift as a continuum ranging from the unhealthy and ineffective position of burnout to a joyful, healthy and effective position of resilience in the profession. The literature identifies numerous dangers as well as many strategies. Much of the literature is written as anecdotal advice coupled with quantitative research using surveys and questionnaires. There seemed to be a void in understanding this topic from a qualitative research perspective. In all the literature reviewed, I only found one dissertation that considered an academically rigorous qualitative research approach. In Jones (2002), there was a dissertation that used a qualitative case study approach relating Wesleyan Theology with pastoral burnout. The focus of Jones's findings was on the modeling of John Wesley as a person as well as an analysis of his theology as it pertains to modern ministry. While this does contribute to the understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century pastoral burnout, my research will focus on modern practical applications and policies as well as systemic considerations. In this dissertation, I used a narrative inquiry approach which will be discussed in the next chapter of this proposal.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

My focus of inquiry was on the experiences and stories that were shared by those men and women who devote their lives to formal spiritual leadership. I focused on Christian faith leadership. A wider study would be to gather experiences from many other spiritual traditions. I anticipated that we would see many similarities as well as have a greater richness to the themes collected.

The focus I took was to find out much more about the challenges associated with being in a spiritual leadership position as an ordained clergy in the Christian faith. I was interested in the themes that emerged around maintaining balance as well as the stories and strategies to combat this facet of the profession. I was also interested in any theories that came forth from those I interviewed. I have done pilot studies for this project with my research classes using narrative inquiry as well as ethnographic inquiry. Based on the ethnographic pilot, I was interested in understanding systemic considerations addressed such as leadership structures in the organization or the relationship between the clergy and the congregation. Based on my narrative pilot, I was also interested in the problematic experiences when self-care imbalance becomes a challenge. These can result in the extreme of pastoral disasters which is defined as when a pastoral relationship blows



up due to some kind of high drama event. I was interested in what we can learn about preventing such disasters and how to navigate through them.

### A Narrative Classification System

In the book, *Narrative Research* (Lieblich, Tubal-Mashiach, & Zibler, 1998), the authors offer a classification system pertaining to narrative inquiry. They have identified two dimensions that intersect in the processing of narrative inquiry. The one dimension is that of holistic versus categorical as a continuum. With a holistic approach, the researcher takes the totality of a person's life story and views segments in the context of the whole. With the categorical approach, the researcher will look for coding through categories as portrayed in words or sections of the text. My research project was considering a phenomenon shared by the group of people called clergy or pastors and therefore would fall on the categorical end of the continuum. I looked for themes and coding that appeared over the course of a number of interviews with multiple pastors.

The second dimension in their model considers content versus form. Some narrative analysis research projects consider the linguistic form of the text or transcript. In the focus on form, important variables may include the choice of words, the sequencing of what is presented, and the complexity of the form. The extreme of this continuum is primarily interested in how the information was presented. The content approach focuses intensely on the actual information obtained in the narrative. It is more concerned with the meaning of the information, the traits conveyed in the narrative, and the explicit information given by the story teller. My research is content-oriented in that I was looking for information, insights, wisdom, and commonalities given by the persons

being interviewed. While I have an appreciation for the specific usage of words, sequencing, and flow of a narrative, I did not have much focus on the linguistics in this study unless they gave additional clarification on the content thematic analysis.

Overall, my study was considered a categorical-content type of narrative analysis. I thought there would also be value in approaching my topic in a holistic perspective but that might be the work of a case-study dissertation. I also thought there would be value in considering a form focus study in appreciating the words used and the feeling of the stories presented. I used some of this continuum hoping to have participants share emotive reflections to the life stories in my interviews. Overall, my research was more of a content analysis approach where the categories were defined as they evolved in the coding and thematic analysis. Even within the categorical-content perspective, there are different levels. Feldman (Feldman, Bruner, Kalmar & Renderer, 1993) suggests a technique using the very narrow category of specific words and word frequency counts. Schulman, Castellon, and Seligman (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zibler, 1998, p.17) have suggested a broader categorization using units that help explain events and use more of a thematic coding. There are other authors that look at much broader categories that span across wide dimensions of human existence. For this study, I used the middle level where I looked at themes and concepts that helped explain the experiences of clergy. Again, the use of specific words could have interest and could end up as part of our analysis although I was more focused on the thematic analysis. As is appropriate for qualitative research, the use of much broader and global categories would also be of interest. However, these global categories are not the focus of this study.

## Method

The research in this dissertation is in the tradition of narrative inquiry. I conducted a series of narrative interviews with up to twelve ordained ministers inquiring on the topics of life balance, burnout prevention, pastoral disasters, coping techniques and strategies, and organizational support. I was interested in the concepts of what works and what doesn't work, which is from the solution-oriented brief family therapy model (Weiner-Davis, 1992). I was also interested in the experiences and stories that are connected with the strategies. A central concept in narrative inquiry is hearing the experiences and getting a sense of what is behind the strategies or ideas (Clandine and Connelly, 2000). Strategies and ideas often emerge from an analysis of the sharing of experiences, in this case by those clergy being interviewed. Since any interview is co-created, I recorded my own experience of the interviews. This occurred just after the interview and during the transcription phase as I noted my reactions and thoughts. I was mindful during the interviews that the pathway of the interview was also co-created as I balanced my conceptions of what I wanted to cover with what was being offered. A research method that seemed effective in my narrative pilot project was to schedule two interviews per person. This allowed me to complete the transcription of the first interview and to reflect on the experience. I anticipated that other lines of inquiry would emerge as I participated in this reflection. I planned to share the transcriptions with the participants so they could clarify ideas and experiences and so they had the option to keep parts of the interview confidential. I hoped that this increased the sense of participation for the interviewee and honored any needs for privacy with their experiences.

## Sampling

In this study, I planned to use a purposeful sampling technique. The group studied was clergy that are actively participating in leadership in a church organization. This was restricted to the Northern Colorado area for the practicality of conducting in-depth interviews with the participants. I used the data collection methodology of interviewing and obtained transcripts of verbal inquiries from the participants. I tape recorded the interviews for transcription and had the participants sign a permission form so they have informed consent regarding the taping. I also gathered data from one time period of the interviewee's lives rather than researching how their narratives themes evolve over an extended time period. My single point in time approach was slightly modified with obtaining two interviews, hopefully within two weeks of each other. This modification was to allow for reflection time, for initial open coding analysis, and for greater worthiness from the data.

I obtained interviewees by sending out a letter to clergy in the Fort Collins/Loveland, Colorado area and having interviewees self-select their involvement. I asked for several criteria for participation. I wanted the clergy to have at least five years professional experience so I could focus on a more seasoned perspective. The participants had to be ordained in the Christian tradition. Also, the participants needed to be currently serving in a church with at least 50-150 members which would bring a fulltime commitment to the clergy profession. I either obtained names of clergy from the Fort Collins Council of Churches, from a listing with the State of Colorado, through a listing of churches in the phone book, or a similar method that allows for self-selection. I note that none of the participants had been previous clients in my psychotherapy practice.

## Data Analysis

My analysis consisted of utilizing a coding scheme and identifying themes to capture ideas and observe any generalities. I used an initial coding which emerged as I reviewed the interviews. I then went back to these codes and saw what second level codes or categories would emerge. These themes or codes were about reactions, emotions, techniques, experiences, my reactions, or other themes that emerged.

The literature regarding data analysis considers three levels of coding. Neuman (2007) suggests the use of open coding for the first pass through the data. In the case of this proposal, I used open coding as I reviewed the narrative transcripts of my interviews. I noted the themes that were presented and assigned initial codes and labels accordingly. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest three techniques of doing open coding. The first is a line-by-line analysis, often with writing categories and subcategories in the margins of the transcripts. The second is by deciphering the major idea of each sentence or paragraph. The third is by reviewing the document as a whole and ask what is presented or what is different from previous interviews. I used all three levels of open coding methodology in this dissertation research.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) present a good conceptualization of axial coding. While open coding identifies many themes and ideas, axial coding begins the organizing of this data. Axial coding is looking for the relationships between open codes and often is centered on the concepts of where, how, when, who, and why. Axial coding gives dimensions and depth to the structure of the emerging concepts of the narrative research. The goal of the axial coding is to give us an emerging understanding of our central

research statement. We are looking for the patterns or repeated ideas coming from the series of interviews. Typically, axial coding is thought of as the second pass through the data. Axial coding was used in my second review or pass of the transcripts and helped shape further interviews.

The third level of coding is selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This is the level of analysis where a central theory emerges. A researcher is ready for this level when theoretical saturation occurs and interviews cease to yield further themes or categorical relationships. During this process, the categories of axial coding will yield a central category that is related to all the rest. It will need to be broad and general enough to relate to a wide variety of other categories in the study. It also needs to be a category that comes up frequently in the narrative interviews and will be recognizable to participants.

One reason I chose narrative analysis is the emergent nature of the research. I had some ideas of what I might expect based on training, clinical experience, and literature. However, I clearly understood that the clergy I interviewed were the experts in their personal experiences. They were also the experts in the profession of being a spiritual leader. My initial research ideas and expectations might have been contrary to their experiences and I had to maintain my openness to this. I was reminded in the literature that it is impossible to know at the beginning what I would actually find from this study (Josselson and Leiblich , 2003).

## Sample Questions for Interviewees

As presented in chapter one, I had a specific research purpose statement I pursued. The purpose of this narrative study was to understand and describe the experiences that clergy have as they wrestle with maintaining balance in their lives while serving their congregations. At this point in the dissertation, I called this pastoral resiliency which consisted of the strategies, supports, and resources that clergy utilize to remain balanced and to prevent burnout in their profession. It also consisted of the strategies, supports, and resources that are utilized when a clergyperson crosses the professional lines and participates in a pastoral disaster. My initial research questions are as follows:

1. What are some of the strategies or recommendations the interviewees would give for a spiritual leader who desires a more balanced lifestyle?
2. What are some of the strategies or recommendations the interviewees would give for a church structure that wants to overtly support a balanced lifestyle for their spiritual leaders?
3. What are contributing factors when clergy experience burnout, imbalance, or a pastoral disaster in their professional or personal lives?
4. What are some of the stories and experiences around this issue from my interviewees? What are some of the challenges that they encounter in striving for burnout prevention? Also, what are ways they build resiliency?
5. Have they experienced, either firsthand or secondarily, any “pastoral disasters?” What were their reactions and emotions to these experiences? What did they learn from these experiences?

6. If so, what were they about, what were some of the factors, what was the path of recovery, and how would they be prevented?

7. How does the interviewee's denomination handle self-care training and /or imbalance situations? What support or resources are available and what is the organizational perspective on this issue?

Again, I sought out stories and experiences about denominational involvements, not just policy.

As always in narrative research, the questions evolved during the interview and during the reflective phase after the interview. New questions and areas of inquiry emerged. With these research questions, I strove to encourage stories and an understanding of what it may have been like. Narrative inquiry is about the stories and experiences, not just the intellectualization of situations. Out of these stories I expected would come a deeper and richer understanding of what it is like to deal with these issues. In my analysis, I looked for the deeper themes that emerged from the experiences as well as the themes that come from the intellectualization. I also realized that my initial research questions would change as is the emergent nature of narrative inquiry. I understood that my initial research questions influenced my own approach and participation in the interviews, since every interview is co-created.

### Limitations

As with any study, there were a variety of limitations that I anticipated encountering. One limit was that I got the perspectives of a few clergy and my study could have further depth and richness by gathering more stories from many other



perspectives. Other perspectives could include spiritual leaders from other traditions, the viewpoints of congregational members, the ideas from denominational leaders, the perspective of clergy's family members, and the viewpoints of seminary faculty on these issues. A related limitation is that Northern Colorado is fairly narrow with ethnic diversity. I hoped that the self-selected clergy would include Caucasian and Hispanic clergy. Ideally, future studies would also draw from other ethnic traditions including Black, Asian, Native American, and many others that may not be represented in this study.

Another limit was the type of information people were willing to share with me. I had only a short while to build trust with each interviewee and there may have been sensitive and valuable information they chose not to share. It was my task to ensure the safety and confidentiality that provided the richest set of data in interviews. Another limitation was that I was an outsider. While I am in a caregiver role professionally and have an academic degree in religion, I am not an ordained clergyperson. This influenced how I understood and reacted to the interviews and how I was perceived by those interviewees. While I didn't see my outsider reactions as a limitation, it was part of the co-created nature of my study as it would have been for any narrative research project.

### Narrative Inquiry and Trustworthiness

The origins of my research come from my clinical experiences as a psychotherapist as well as from informal conversations with clergy. In my clinical practice, I have worked with a variety of clergy coming in with varied motivations. There have been some that have come with concerns of depression, anxiety, relationship

problems, stress concerns, or dealing with major transitions. There have been others that have been required to obtain counseling as a result of what I call pastoral disasters. This term refers to a high-drama event or series of events that causes major concerns for a spiritual community such as a church or denomination and has included affairs, the use of pornography including child pornography, and past sexual inappropriateness. There are additional types of high-drama events revealed such as sexual abuse in the church, drug use including methamphetamines, alcoholism, financial theft in the church, and spiritual abuse.

As I considered leadership in our culture regarding emotional and spiritual development and health, I recognized that many people turn to people in certain professions for guidance. These professions include teachers, school counselors, psychotherapists, clergy, and a few others. All are in a position of trust and all these professionals model the very things for which they give guidance. Yet all these professions are subject to various pitfalls that can be harmful to both those giving counsel as well as to those receiving. The management of burnout and the support of resilience and self-care balance are paramount in being able to give good counsel on an ongoing basis. It is important for counselors to have continuous self-evaluation and awareness of their motivations for participation in the helping professions. It is also important that anyone choosing this work has the commitment for taking care of the psychological and spiritual issues that block their effectiveness and even can cause harm to others at times.

I was drawn to the methodology of narrative inquiry for many reasons. In my work as a psychotherapist, I work with clients' narratives in every session. For adults, it

is usually in the words and stories they share. With couples and families, it often is with the addition of the interactions presented in the therapy room. With young children, it is often in the experiences they share through their play and art. All of these people also share their worlds through their interactions utilizing words, body language, and voice tone. My clinical sense is that the depth of people's stories and perceptions gives richness to the work of psychotherapy that quantitative testing procedures alone might not achieve. I approach a clinical session with hypotheses and anticipations, knowing that all my ideas may be irrelevant depending upon the narrative shared by the client. The client's report and perceptions guide the work of psychotherapy. Therapeutic inquiries and directions within the session are co-created between the therapist and the client. This sense of co-creation through the narrative allows therapy to be effective and I believe will also allow my research work to be greatly enhanced.

A central concept in narrative inquiry is hearing the experiences and getting a sense of what is behind the ideas that are shared (Clandine and Connelly, 2000). Thematic ideas emerge from the analysis of the verbalized experiences, in this case by those clergy being interviewed. While I may have started out with some research questions, my work was more meaningful as I embraced the collaborative model or co-creation offered in narrative research. While I have examined the literature and have participated in the psychotherapy of the clergy experience, I am not an expert in being a clergy especially across a variety of settings, denominations, and circumstances. The evolving nature of the narrative methodology allows and expects flexibility in the research. The data collection of narrative inquiry also evolves and requires adjusting as it moves along its path. Ultimately, the data will lead to a stopping point, knowing the

research pathway will continue after that particular stop. Narrative inquiry is an evolving process, knowing that one needs to land and conclude the segment periodically so the thematic analysis can be shared.

### Trustworthiness

The concept of trustworthiness in narrative qualitative research is addressing the issue of how to increase or evaluate the goodness of a study. Trustworthiness is meant to provide a means of understanding what composes a better study from a lesser one (Riessman, 1993). In quantitative research, we consider validity and reliability factors to delineate the quality of the research (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). However, these concepts do not translate into qualitative research since we are not analyzing numbers and looking at p scores or power. Instead, we are trying to evaluate if the experiences and conclusions of narrative inquiry are accurately reflecting the intentions of the story-tellers and can these themes be utilized on a more global basis. Narrative inquiry has a very different epistemological perspective from quantitative methods.

Josselson and Lieblich (2003) remind the researcher to address authenticity, credibility and trustworthiness in an effort to check the goodness of their research. Riessman (1993) suggests we consider persuasiveness and plausibility, correspondence, pragmatic use and coherence. Flagler (2004) outlines four areas that address the concept of trustworthiness in a narrative research project. She considers the components of trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability or reliability, and confirmability or objectivity. Miles and Huberman (1994) have organized their considerations for worthiness into five overlapping categories: objectivity/confirmability,

reliability/dependability/audit ability, internal validity/credibility/authenticity, external validity/transferability/fittingness, utilization/application, and action orientation. It is interesting to note that they needed multiple descriptors to describe each of their five areas. This reflects how complex and at times vague the sense of trustworthiness is portrayed. Like qualitative research itself, the concept of trustworthiness is not clear cut or highly measurable. It is an intuitive concept and has no set formula. Overall, it is something to strive for, knowing there is not one perfect way to achieve worthiness.

It seems that different authors use similar considerations to increase the sense of trustworthiness for a narrative research study. Coherence, dependability, or reliability all are trying to address the goal of understanding the interviewee as completely as possible. We can think of this portion as quality control. Boyatzis (1998, p.144) considers dependability, which he calls reliability, as “the consistency of observation, labeling or interpretation.” He suggests that this be addressed through the methodology of thematic analysis incorporating inter-rater reliability or the use of multiple judges. Flegler (2004) also includes the use of dense description, triangulation (the use of different data sources or of different data collection techniques), code/recode procedures and having an audit trail. A researcher can also use member checking so the actual narrator can modify or confirm that their points have been understood. Riessman (1995) adds that the coherence criteria can include the three levels of global, local and thematic coherence to increase the sense of thickness for the study. When there is cohesion between all three, this adds to the sense of trustworthiness of the research. In my research, I addressed this through having my research inquiries clear and consistent with the research design. I tried to conduct the interviews with a sense of parallelism between the participants (setting, times, format,

and others). I also used a limited form of peer review with my coding and my interpretations (with either another therapist who is knowledgeable in clergy matters or a local clergy giving feedback). This depended upon the availability of such a person.

Another overlapping area of trustworthiness is that of transferability or pragmatic use. A study is considered more trustworthy if it can be used for further study by the researcher or by others. Riessman (1995) suggests the applied techniques of making primary data available to others, being transparent on what the research actually did, and describing how we went about making interpretations. She also adds detailing how we made the transitions between the various facets of our research experiences. Flagler (2004) suggests providing dense description. In my research methodology, I obtained dense data through the raw data transcriptions. This was particularly dense data with the use of two interviews per participant conducted generally within a day or two. This method seemed to be effective in a narrative pilot project I conducted for ED 708 and allows for more depth to evolve for both the participant and myself. I interviewed six clergy which gave an element of triangulation. Since any interview is co-created, I recorded my own experience and reactions to the interviews which helped with reflecting, being transparent for other researchers, and with developing directions for second interviews. I considered using a contact summary form as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). The recording of my own experience also added an element of triangulation to the research.

A third area supporting trustworthiness is that of credibility, plausibility, and authenticity. The bottom line for the reader of the research is whether the process and interpretations seem possible, reasonable and convincing. There are methods of

increasing this by triangulation, peer examination, and member checking. If peers find it plausible and the participants find the research an accurate representation of their experiences, then the reader has more reason to find trustworthiness in the work. If the experiences and interpretations are supported by multiple sources or collection methods, that also gives the reader a sense of goodness in the research. In my project, I supported this part of trustworthiness through obtaining as rich and meaningful descriptors as possible including asking about the emotions behind the participants stories and in asking for actual stories behind concepts they offered (after all, this is narrative research). There were triangulation efforts as addressed above. I used member checking to see if the conclusions were accurate according to the participants. This was done by giving preliminary results to those interviewed and asking for feedback on the reality base of the results.

A fourth area is that of objectivity, confirmability or correspondence. The goal of this area of goodness is to acknowledge and to minimize researcher biases and to conduct the study with neutrality. Every researcher has both conscious and unconscious biases. The more these can be taken into account, the better the study. To address this area, I kept detailed records of each step of the study, including my internal steps. These were detailed enough to support an audit trail. One reason for my design to have two interviews per participant was to give myself time to reflect on my biases as well as the interview directions that emerged. This technique is called reflexivity and is recommended by numerous authors (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Cresswell, 1994). I also retained the data from this study (I will have to consider the ethics and confidentiality of allowing availability to other researchers).

Another area addressed by Miles and Huberman (1994) is that of application or action-oriented. I think of this as the “so what?” question where the reader gets to see trustworthiness through the lens of relevance to the real world. Research can be transferable to other researchers and be done well but might not be of much use to anyone. In my research, there was considerable strength here since the topic evolved out of the therapeutic real-life needs of clergy. I arrived at a set of conclusions and interpretations of the data that can be accessible to clergy, congregations, and denominations through publications, workshops, therapy, therapist trainings and policy advocacy. The hope is that the information will be very action-oriented post-doctorate.

### Conclusion

The consideration of trustworthiness or goodness is essential in the design of narrative research. Without considering trustworthiness, the research could easily end up useless. While there are many ideas concerning integration of methods and considerations, there seems to be some consensus for areas that need to be addressed. In this proposal, I specifically considered the form of narrative analysis classified as categorical-content where I looked at the content of interviews and used thematic coding techniques to categorize their responses and draw generalizations. There are many specific research design details that I outlined above with the goal of increasing trustworthiness. Hopefully, this gives my work further credibility so that my post-doctoral work can unfold with greater usefulness as I look to apply this research to benefit the dedicated persons who commit themselves to spiritual leadership. My hope is



that many people will directly and indirectly benefit from the knowledge and systemic considerations that this research reveals.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

#### Introduction

In this research project, I have chosen to use a narrative inquiry approach due to the nature of the subject matter and my research questions. Since I am not a clergy person, I wanted to be able to open the research to unanticipated perspectives and considerations. Certainly a qualitative approach supports this approach. I also wanted to allow for considerable depth and richness of the data offered by the participants, and a narrative inquiry approach seemed best suited for this. I am very interested in the content offered and approached this research looking for information, insights, wisdom, and strategies given by the participants. Since my research is considering a phenomenon shared by the group of people called clergy, it would be considered on the categorical end of the holistic/categorical continuum. I am using a series of thematic analysis procedures to understand meaning in the interviews. I have first looked at themes from each of the interviews and have compiled a listing of each participant's themes. The next step will be for me to report on the major themes presented by each individual interviewee before moving to a cross-case thematic analysis with axial coding. Finally, I will present a summary of the themes in the project to seek out any overriding themes of the research.

## Organization of the Within Case Themes

As with any qualitative study, there needs to be a way to organize and make sense out of the themes presented by the participants. In this study, there are three main influences on this organization. The literature review considered several models of human needs. The Wellness Wheel presented by the InterLutheran Coordination Committee on Ministerial Health and Wellness (1997) suggested an interconnecting wheel with six categories. These categories included Physical Well-being, Emotional Well-being, Social/Interpersonal Well-being, Intellectual Well-being, Vocational Well-being, and Financial Well-being. Their model had all six of these categories surrounded by Spiritual Well-being. Together they present a comprehensive model of balance for human existence. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1995) also presented a model called the Four Quadrants. Her model included the four categories of physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual/intuitive. In my clinical practice, I have used a form of these models where I added the social/interpersonal well-being category to the four categories of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, creating the PIESS model.

The research questions compelled the use of a thematic organizing system for the internal needs of pastors. The research questions also were aimed at the external influences on pastors and embraced the systemic perspective on human needs which considers the interconnections we have with the world around us. The external influences that became apparent by the raw data of the participants included the congregational influence, the denominational influence, and the identification of any specific burnout factors identified in the interviews. As I completed my first round of identifying themes

presented by the participants from the raw data, it became obvious that using a combination of the above considerations was the way to organize the data.

Therefore, I have organized the presentation of the data in several parts. The first part is presenting the thematic considerations for each of the categories of the PIESS model in the with-in case analysis. The PIESS model consists of physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual. I like the additional word used by Kubler-Ross of spiritual/intuitive which clarifies the experiential component of the spiritual realm so it is not an intellectual endeavor. The second part will be identifying themes presented in the areas of burnout factors, congregational influence, and denominational influence.

#### Summary of Actual Methodology Utilized

The actual interview process incorporated most of the concepts presented in my initial methods chapter of this dissertation. The actual project unfolded much as planned except that the interviews were conducted over a longer period of time due to scheduling and time considerations.

I compiled a list of 123 clergy serving in the Northern Colorado area drawing from as many denominations as were available. I included any and all clergy that could be identified to have as broad a sampling as possible. This list was primarily developed from the phone book since I couldn't locate any master lists of clergy in Northern Colorado. Each clergy was sent an initial invitational letter (appendix D) asking them to participate in the study which allowed the important process of self-selection to happen. In order to add to trustworthiness, I called the responding clergy strictly according to the order their responses came in. I had some response within a day or two of the mailing and

some weeks later. Some clergy did not meet the criteria since they had retired or were no longer actively serving in the ministry. In total, I had 21 responses including 20 who met the criteria for inclusion and were willing to participate. Two female and 19 male pastors returned the initial response cards. They represented ten denominations including Baptist (2), Episcopal (1), Christ Fellowship (1), non-denominational (5), United Methodist (1), Seventh Day Adventist (1), Covenant (1), Presbyterian (2), Lutheran (5), and Christian Reformed (1). There were nine invitations returned as undeliverable. The interviewees were picked based on the order their response cards were received. The actual number of interviewees was determined later in the research process and was based on when the data reached a saturation point. This ended up including six participants. When I made the initial phone call to the clergy respondent, I explained the study as well as the two-interview time commitment and then made an initial appointment.

At the onset of the initial appointment, I went over the Informed Consent Form (Appendix B) and obtained signatures on this form and the permission to audiotape form. I then conducted an initial interview of about 60 minutes which was then transcribed by a professional transcriber. The completed transcription was then delivered to the participant to be sure it represented their thoughts in the way they wanted and to give them a chance to edit their interviews. Between interviews, I went through the transcription and did a preliminary thematic analysis to develop further lines of inquiry as well as to record some of my own thoughts and reactions. At the second interview, I began with asking if the transcript represented them and if they wanted to change anything. I also asked them if there were any areas they wanted to expand before I asked my expanded questions. After the second interview, I again had the transcription delivered to the participant for any

changes. I also gave each participant the handout called “Additional information for clergy participating in the interviews for the dissertation titled ‘Pastoral Self-Care,’” as was requested by Colorado State University Human Research Committee. I repeated this process for each of the six participants.

With each participant, I set up the interviews in their offices at their church so it would be most convenient and that they would be in the context of their church environment. The interviews were conducted with closed doors which protected the confidential nature of this research process. All six participants used in this analysis completed two interviews, generally within a two-three week time span.

The very first participant’s interview was not recorded successfully as I discovered the advantages of the digital recording technology over the old method of making tapes. Unfortunately, I was not able to recreate this interview so I was not able to use his data. The next twelve interviews (six sets of two interviews) went very smoothly using a digital recorder. This also made the work of the transcriber much easier and quite accurate as she was able to use the computer program called Sony Digital Voice Editor Three. I had no further technology set-backs.

The final results were also sent to the six final participants to be sure the results seem plausible and credible. This is a form of member-checking and I asked them if they have any comments or reactions to this research project.

### Interview Results

There were six interview participants in this project. We settled on six participants as the data reached a saturation point. By saturation, we mean that little additional

information seemed to be coming forth and we had confidence that the data that was presented told the story of church-based clergy. Each participant had two interviews. The presentation of the interviews and the themes that emerged will be presented in a way that safeguards the confidentiality of the participants. In this presentation, certain identifying information may be changed such as names, gender, locations, denominations, ages, marital status, and other data that has the potential of compromising confidentiality. The data analysis will focus on the stories and themes presented by the participants in response to the emerging set of interview questions. Each participant's interview results will be organized by giving a short introduction followed by an analysis of their interview themes organized by our research questions.

### Participant One

Ruth has been an ordained minister in a moderate denomination for several decades and had many ideas on keeping balanced in a demanding profession. Being a female pastor also has its own set of challenges and advantages. She was excited to meet with me and share her ideas and experiences pertaining to this research. She shared that she never intended to become a pastor when she was young. Even in high school, she was shy and did not envision herself getting up in front of many people on a regular basis. The ministry seemed to open up for her as she paid attention to a spiritual calling. As she listened to this more, doors began to open in this direction and they kept opening as she was lead into this work. Now, she sees herself as a very effective pastor and keeps getting the energy and support to continue this work:

It's been my feeling that it truly is the Spirit that has gifted me and carried me in those times when I have felt like I don't have the ability to do this job. I don't

have the wisdom to figure it out and I do not have the tenacity to figure it out, and yet, somehow, how do I keep doing this. It is that experience that is something more than me that helps me to do that.

The process of professional development has been a challenging process for Ruth. During this time, she was initially married, had a number of children, dealt with a failing marriage while being a pastor, and then was a single person. Each of these chapters presented many challenges, stressors, and adjustments as she grew into the self-aware person who is now very consciously working with her own balances and boundaries. She certainly cites the support of her adult children and her former therapist in another state as great supports.

### Personal Balance

Ruth shared many stressors and challenges that she has seen for herself and/or for others in the ministry that need to be considered and strategized. She also had many ideas on how she keeps her balance and resiliency with her ongoing career. In the physical realm, Ruth advocates many deliberate activities. She recommends physical exercise every day and gets up early in the morning to enjoy this. It is a form of personal time, physical conditioning, and stress management. It is important to eat well and pay attention to nutrition. Ruth reflected that many of her colleagues are out of shape, overweight, and physically unhealthy. She also tries to be deliberate with her sleep patterns and to get enough sleep. Since the church does give her adequate benefits, she goes to the dentist, gets physical check-ups, and takes advantage of wellness programs offered since clergy tend to have a lot of medical problems. She also purposely schedules



“me time” which is especially important since she is more of an internal processor and is renewed by this time. She likes to take hikes and get outdoors as part of her “me time.”

Ruth also tends to her intellectual well-being and includes intellectual stimulation as well as intellectual attitudes and knowledge towards her work and her life. She likes to participate in professional development endeavors and shared a training model now offered to new clergy. In this training model, new clergy are in a group for the first three years of their first call. In this group, they are encouraged to share their ideas and learn from each other’s mistakes rather than having to discover their development in isolation. She gets intellectual stimulation as she studies Biblical texts and other resources in her sermon preparation. There are many hours each week devoted to this spiritual/intellectual preparation. Ruth is also very aware of the concept of boundaries and how the guidance that boundary setting gives for pastoral effectiveness. This will be addressed in more depth later in this paper.

Emotionally, Ruth is very aware of how important it is to be in touch with her emotions and the support she needs here. She talked of one challenge of being a single person was that she did not have a partner at home to share the emotional side of this work and to get the support that this could offer. She does get support and love from her adult sons and greatly values these relationships. She sees the support of a good psychotherapist as a great place to process the various emotions and issues that will arise since it is a confidential and separate relationship from the church setting. Ruth shared that she used to suffer from acute anxiety and she was very proactive in participating in a plan to take care of this. She was sick and couldn’t sleep or eat. Her physician told her:

This isn’t the flu. You have anxiety,’ which startled me and I had to do some major mental health and got on medication and had quite a period of time where I

was on medication to kind of get that back in balance. But that, really, for me was a wake-up call in that I pushed and pushed and pushed and the anxiety...I was out of control.

For Ruth, this was a very important experience and realization that she could not ignore her own self-care needs and be super-pastor as well as super-mom. She took advantage of this lesson and became strong in using many skills and ideas to be in an effective internal balancing process. She has embraced the idea that it is her responsibility to take care of herself and to be very in touch with managing her emotional balance with a strong preventative emphasis.

Ruth had many insights on the importance of managing her social needs. She is keenly aware that she needs quiet time as well as genuine caring relationships. She purposely has friendships outside of the church where she does not have to be the pastor. She keeps well connected with her adult sons and is very open to their love for her. She also focused on the importance of boundaries which really permeates into all five realms of human needs (physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual). She sets boundaries and keeps her home as her sanctuary. She does not have work meetings at home and resists taking work to her home.

I need time to myself. I can tell and so I have over the years made my home my sanctuary and when I just quite frankly have had enough, my home is my safe haven. And I am very content. I can just be at home for a day and putz around and read and whatever. But I recognize within myself that I can't keep doing the people thing and so I have no problem just going home and zoning out. I do set the boundary that home is for me. I rarely work at home...And so when I go home, I'm home.

Ruth is aware of being assertive with saying no to many invitations so her time isn't completely taken up by her work. This includes being able to say no to members inviting her to family celebrations, congregational members asking for deep social friendships, or

extra committee meetings. She is very aware of the concept of dual or multiple relationships with congregational members. Ruth also tries to be aware of what others have as expectations for her as their pastor and what she realistically can actually be as a pastor.

Ruth's spiritual life is a very essential part of her balance. Some of reasons she is able to stay in an effective ministry is that she does not try to control what others should do for their spiritual pathway. She embraces a theology called "process theology." She believes that faith embraces a process of growth as a way of life. There needs to be openness, not controlling and rigid rules. Faith is an invitation to a relationship that works well when there is an openness to sense God's presence and to grow and struggle with what it is all about. There must be room for questions and questioning for further understanding. Deep questioning allows for a deep relationship. "It's not about control. I don't control them (other people). I don't control God. And I don't believe God is about control so that is what helps me. So, I'm okay with not being in control because I don't think God is about control."

Ruth does many things for her own spiritual renewal. She has been part of a support group of other like-minded pastors that can be spiritually supportive. She has used her own therapy as a safe place to grow with her own spiritual questioning and understandings. She spends many hours studying and trying to experience spiritual texts especially with sermon preparation. She also described how preaching is a spiritual experience for her:

When I preach, I preach to me as well as the congregation so I hear the word of God. And the same thing with communion. I get filled up...if I did not have worship every Sunday, I couldn't do it. I mean I just couldn't do it. The worship helps me...I experience the Spirit and the connection of God through people. And

so, even though I'm there caring for people and there's a part of that which is me giving to them, I have also experienced so much...an awesome experience.

Ruth approaches her spirituality experientially as well as intellectually, emotionally, and socially. It is this experiential spirituality that seems to give her great strength and perspective. When she feels called by the Spirit, this carries her when she doesn't feel she has the wisdom, energy or resources to do the job. She notices that doors keep opening up for her.

### Congregational Support

Ruth had a few thoughts on the support of a congregation and how they can help with the balance of a pastor. Having a congregation that looks to support the pastor rather than pick at the pastor is important. Positive feedback on what people appreciate about her work is very encouraging. It helps for the church to provide a livable wage since so many in church work are underpaid. It also helps to have good benefits, vacation time that is expected to be taken, and continuing education opportunities (and financial support for continuing education). One possibility would be to have a pastoral care committee. If there is one, it needs to be trained in how to provide pastoral care and must be supportive. The members of such a committee must be chosen carefully and need to have strong leadership with a sense of purpose for the committee. It should be clear if the committee is in a consulting role or if it has formal authority. There must be a boundary of confidentiality and safety or it won't work. There also needs to be a boundary so anonymous comments without accountability will not be part of the process. This committee should meet monthly with the pastor to be effective and not just during crisis times.

The other way in which a congregation can help its pastor is to examine its expectations of the position and the boundaries needed for the pastor to remain healthy and effective. The pastor cannot be all things to all people at all times. There is a theology of grace that also needs to be applied to the pastor by both the congregation and the pastor. There will be mistakes and insensitivities that will be a part of any relationship and these must be understood and expected.

### Burnout and Disasters

Ruth had considerable ideas on the question of what contributes to burnout. It can start as early as seminary and the person's motivations for pursuing the ministry. There are some who apply in an effort to find a place to heal their wounds. This can be a danger since "by reaching out to care for other people, sometimes we don't have to look at our own stuff." This can actually be an effort to avoid the wounds by putting our efforts into helping others. Eventually this will come back at us. "We do have to be self-aware because so much stuff comes at us that if we don't know our own baggage and triggers, we are just all over the place." There needs to be an awareness of our red flags and what we are going to do about them. There may be a church member who gets us very angry or another we become attracted to. Stress, burnout, and disconnecting can build when these feelings are ignored and not unpacked.

Ruth also cautioned against operating from the stance of what we are SUPPOSED to believe in. To some, the Word has been so powerful and has made such a difference in their lives that they want to share this experience. For others, it is about what we are supposed to do or what we are supposed to represent as a pastor. Some clergy work

through a façade and this can be an attempt to hide brokenness or problems. This also creates a disconnect that eventually will be destructive and extremely stressful. Other factors in burnout could be that some clergy seek out the power of authority and love having people look up to them. It is an ego-boost and is flattering in that you become important in people's lives. Some clergy think they become indispensable and create a dependency on the pastor rather than a mutual ministry based on a relationship with God.

There are certainly many challenges that cannot be ignored. There are time pressures in that the ministry is not just an 8-5 job. There are expectation pressures both from others and from ourselves. Clergy at times deal with very intense situations and need a place and support to put these experiences into perspective. Without good support, it is easy to burn out or worse. In most church situations once a person is ordained, there is not a good system of checks and balances. It is often a lonely position where a person can hide from accountability unless it is purposefully built in. In many churches, there are politics, griping, and petty perspectives which can get to a pastor if not put into perspective. Burnout can also come from ignoring various clues that you are becoming out of balance. Some examples of these clues include getting sick a lot, anxiety, sleep disturbance, eating disturbance, having flu-like symptoms without the flu, physically shaking, thoughts of needing to go on leave or quit the ministry, depression, having marital problems, and being extra sensitive emotionally. Burnout can also come from an expectation of perfection and never making mistakes.

Pastoral disasters can evolve from extreme burnout or when pastors bring their own baggage into their congregations and act issues out. A pastor needs to have a safe place to explore feelings and thoughts about many things. One disaster set-up that Ruth

has seen in colleagues has been when a pastor is very lonely and an attractive member appears open for a relationship or sexuality. We need to be honest about our sexuality and clearly know the boundaries. If we are lonely or wounded sexually, this cannot be acted out with a church member. A lack of boundaries can be disastrous especially if there is not safe place to explore these issues before they turn into actions. One area that can be disastrous is financial. Ruth does not allow her signature on any church accounts and does not know any financial computer passwords as a way of having a clear boundary. A pastor must be aware that they are considered public figures and members put them on a pedestal with expectations. It is tempting to be super pastor and super parent and one will pay the price for it. The pathway to prevention and recovery has been addressed extensively earlier in this interview.

### Denominational Support

Ruth does not see much support offered by the denomination nor does she have any expectation of support. Her sense of the denominational hierarchy is:

They have their hands full; they are understaffed and whatever. But my experience has been, just kind of go along, don't create waves. And if you do create waves, you're giving us a headache... I feel like I better keep it together or else if I do need to move, he's (the denominational district leader) not going to recommend me for something. It's part of the bind and it's not a good place to be in the church.

She also talked of another pastor whose church decided to ask for a resignation and the denomination provided no support or even mediation. This other pastor was "just left hanging." The district leader is clearly not her pastor so she reaches elsewhere for this spiritual support. Over her career this spiritual support has included having a spiritual

director who is someone outside the congregation who can function as a pastor for the pastor. This would be a person who provides a safe place and has knowledge for entertaining “the God questions.” The denomination does supply a code of ethics called “Visions and Expectation” which helps define the expected boundaries and ethics.

As a female pastor, there are certainly extra challenges with working in a patriarchal organization and dealing with male privilege. Women pastors are treated differently in regard to how people respect their leadership and authority. There are some former members who left because they could not see themselves having a female pastor. As Ruth points out, even God is talked of in male terms only and this is clearly supported by the denomination.

### Summary

Overall, Ruth was very open and insightful in sharing her experiences as a pastor which I, as a researcher, greatly appreciated. One main theme that emerged was being aware of oneself and one’s needs in order to stay balanced. It becomes dangerous to ignore emotions, perceptions, physical needs, and spiritual needs. It is very important to understand boundaries and how to have safe places to share the human experiences of this work. Any pastor will have many needs both within and outside of the church setting and it is a set-up to not plan for these needs. A pastor cannot allow isolation and loneliness to take over but must find ways to connect with others and with God on a personal and experiential level. Friends and family are important as is physical health. Professional collegial support is important with like-minded pastors who also want a safe professional relationship. Anyone considering the ministry must take care of their own issues and



brokenness, and therapy can be an essential part of this. An effective pastor must have ways and time for their own spiritual nurturing and be genuine about this part of their life. Spirituality is experiential and not just a list of should, an intellectual exercise, or a façade to show to the world.

### Participant Two

Peter has been in the ministry for over 30 years and sees himself in the last quarter of his career. A few years ago, he hit the point where he just felt very tired and not at all fresh. While this was not complete burnout, he recognized that he had to do things differently and began searching out resources and planning his own revival. He noticed he had friends dropping out of the ministry and knew he was not the only one experiencing this fatigue. Unlike our first participant, Peter decided fairly early that he would be a pastor. He had been brought up in the church and his father was a serious activist pastor. Peter shared his story in the late 1960s to early 1970s when he and his wife were considering the various options open to them at that time. They talked of either walking back into their faith or walking away from it. They chose to embrace it and to learn and experience what was at the core of faith. They didn't like their churches but had no problem with God. This commitment out of choice was very important to Peter and how he would approach the ministry. He did not want to do it the same way as his father so he made sure he incorporated a play ethic along with the work ethic. This gave him the freedom to have fun and be open to things that balanced him. He also felt open to evolving his role as a pastor in his own experiential way instead of the foundations of what was simply expected. His father had been very active in civil rights issues and Peter

embraced the concept of social change and questioning for growth. Having gone through his own tired period and being a researcher, Peter had many ideas on the research questions in this study.

### Personal Balance

Our first research question was about strategies to help maintain balance. Peter talked of a cycle he experiences throughout the week as a pastor. There are many tasks and meetings that go on throughout the week that culminate with services Sunday morning. Physically, he recognizes that he feels a bit drained come Sunday afternoon so he plans a decompression period of at least 24 hours. During this time, he gets away from the ministry and engages in relaxing, reading, shopping, mowing and other non-work activities.

It takes about 24 hours from about one o'clock on Sundays until about one o'clock on Mondays and if I try to force that which I've done many times in the past, it leads to some confused feelings like some guilt that I don't feel better about what I'm doing. And I finally realized the reason you don't feel good about it is that you are tired and your body is fighting to prepare you for the demands of Tuesday. So, honor that, don't try to do it too soon.

Peter recognizes that it is hard for him to have the discipline to work out or just rest so he sets this time-off boundary. He talked of his play ethic and how important it is for him to ride his motorcycle and play as part of his restoration. It is important to have strong boundaries about work, rest, and play.

Peter is a very strong academic achiever with multiple graduate degrees so an important part of his recharging is in the intellectual area. He reads a great amount including topics pertaining to sustainability in the ministry and self-awareness. He goes to conferences such as the National Pastor's Conference and draws from the work of the

Alban Institute including their conference for mid-sized churches. He was raised with what he considers good theology and can draw on unconditional love and letting go of mistakes which he calls grace. “God is all powerful-so relax about things.” He extends the concept of grace to himself where mistakes and imperfections in his life are expected and he does not have to pretend to be perfect or be problem-free. He also takes the theological stance that people are responsible for their own spiritual development and their own decisions. The role of the pastor is to be a shepherd and serve, not to be a controller. He tries to invite people to spiritual growth and experiences, not demand it. Guilt does not work-that is part of controlling. The pastor is a guide, a motivator, a host, and a source of knowledge. With this theological stance, Peter tries to spiritually influence people and does not take on the stress and responsibility of each individual’s development. There is free choice he tries to honor and inspire.

Emotionally, Peter has learned to open up and share his emotional life with others more. When asked what he has learned over the years, he replied, “I needed to be a little more vulnerable.” By becoming more vulnerable or transparent, he found that others were more vulnerable and honest in their ideas and suggestions to him. Being outgoing, Peter found by sharing with others more (within certain boundaries), he was able to grow with his own emotional well-being as well as able to get more meaningful support from others.

Peter likes talking with people and sharing ideas so it is not surprising that he had social strategies on his resilience. He has friends who are pastors in his denomination who pastor pastors and he turns to them for ideas. Peter has a relationship with one and can contemplate the hard questions freely with this person. He has been part of several

support groups of pastors also. One structure is a “Peer Learning Group” where they get together and study different areas such as preaching or accountability. In his denomination, the costs for this program are covered by a grant. Another support group he has is an international one where they meet for three days at a time three times a year and have a mini-retreat. He says he has to go beyond the niceness of things are going OK and get into deeper discussions and contemplations with this group. Peter also gets together with other clergy groups and found out he was a very normal pastor with all the stressors, doubts, and concerns that others also have. Realizing this normalcy, he feels he can be much more transparent with others and share in the complex experience of the ministry. Peter also values his family support and feels like his wife can be his best critic. Through her honesty, he has realized that “not everybody sees the world the way I do.” Peter has also grown in his knowledge of human development and tries to be aware of non-anxious presence, self-differentiation, transference, counter-transference, enmeshment, and triangulation.

Peter has taken on a philosophy of learning and questioning as a path for spiritual renewal. He spends lots of time reading, going to conferences, and trying to learn throughout his whole career. One example of this is the process and time Peter puts into sermon preparation. He spends hours reading and reflecting. He will make pages and pages of notes. He strives to understand and experience the chosen text and see what comes forth to him.

The text is deeply embedded in my soul long before I even share it with an audience. ... The process of researching and reflecting is spiritually enriching to me. ... When I preach, I not only preach to them but preach to me. In the very same moment that I’m preaching I am under my own preaching.

Peter experiences spirituality both during his hours of preparation and during the preaching itself and this is part of spiritual renewal. A core question for Peter during his preparation process is “What is God saying in this text and what it would mean for us to really understand what He's trying to say and apply it in the world we actually live?” As with others, he sees himself as responsible for his spiritual development and considers it very important that he continue reading, pondering, asking spiritual questions, and opening his heart to experiencing his spirituality.

### Congregational Support

There are a number of suggestions and applications that Peter has around the role and support of his congregation for his well-being. One experience that Peter was particularly excited about was the development process and the support for Peter and his wife to go on sabbatical. The congregation had a policy of offering a sabbatical to the pastor every so many years but there never seemed a good Time to take it. When Peter decided to ask for the time, he was initially turned down and was asked to develop a plan that would meet the goal of renewal, not just time off. The church leaders wanted goals, objectives, and plans so it would be a very purposeful experience. He met with a pre-sabbatical planning committee and they began planning for the whole church community, not just Peter. After considerable planning and research, they had a plan for this 20-week break. The first part was a motorcycle trip slowly going to the Florida Keys. Since they were going through the Deep South, Peter decided to study civil rights (an area his father was deeply committed to) and the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Part of their motorcycle trip was going to the famous places and experiencing the locations as well as

the studies of Dr. King. Once in Florida, he rested for a week and then drove to Michigan for a week-long conference. A bit later, he did a two-week wilderness expedition through the National Outdoor Leadership School in Wyoming and learned about horses. His fourth part was a three-week imaginative reading program for creative preaching. He took time off between each of these adventures and rested without an agenda. In the meantime, the pre-planning committee had also set up plans to sustain the church for those 20 weeks and to make it sabbatical of sorts for the congregation. Peter felt that purposeful planning was essential for the long-term success of this sabbatical.

Another idea Peter had on congregational support was a new way of completing his review that was adopted. A traditional review has the board of the church in charge and it primarily gives feedback to the pastor, typically on where improvement needs exist. Instead, they used a review from the Alban Institute called “Getting a Fix on Your Ministry” that took six months to complete and was run by the pastor. There was a committee from the congregation who agreed to confidentiality and the pastor was to lay out his responsibilities and effectiveness measures. Much of it was from Peter’s perspective of what he thought his challenges and growth areas were. The rules to the committee members were that they could not be mean, only truthful. It was an invitation to an open dialogue with vulnerability and the goal was to support and encourage growth for the pastor.

Other things that can help from the congregation include an understanding governing board, limiting the expectations on the pastor, formally setting up a support system with rules to help it actually work, and setting overt goals for the congregation.

There is so much emphasis on church growth and having the most contemporary innovations that all put pressure on the pastor and the mission of spiritual support.

### Burnout and Disasters

There are many factors in clergy burnout according to Peter. A big one is expectations by the congregants and by the pastor. The expectation of perfection or that you can be all things to all people at all times is a killer. Nobody can maintain that and the theology of Christianity does not support this approach. Some pastors feel personally responsible for everyone's spiritual development and this is an impossible task. This leads to over-working and neglecting the balance one needs in other parts of their lives. Another stressor is that there are lots of changes in our culture, including church culture. Traditional music and services need to be replaced with contemporary. There is stress speaking to the same group of people each week and trying to keep it fresh and exciting. People want their expectations to be met or they move on to the next church. While there still is a core that stays, there is less loyalty to the church body. Some people ask only what is in it for me in deciding their level of commitment. Transitions are stressful and it is hard not to take them personally. Are the tasks of the church on the pastor or are they on the church community? If they are on the pastor, then we have another burnout situation.

Peter had a few theories on why disasters happen with clergy. Often there are real pitfalls in the thinking of the pastor. One such thinking error concerns scriptures. "God, if we're in the scriptures, if we are doing our job to the best of our understanding of what we are supposed to do, how could we not be getting it right?" The error according to

Peter is that pastors don't get it right and cannot have the illusion of being perfect.

Humility and vulnerability are our human trademarks and to ignore this is a set-up. If we believe we must be getting it right, there is no room for the variety of human perspectives we are to serve. It also implies that any other way must be the wrong way to spirituality. It also implies that the correct pastor is above everyone else (and above question or transparency). Without transparency and accountability, many disastrous things can happen.

For some pastors, there is the expectation that they must be completely "Christ-like" to be effective and to be a good person. This expectation is unworkable, unrealistic, and unsustainable. For some pastors, the only way out of this extreme pressure is to blow it- to have an affair, to get drunk, to do drugs, to make such a mess out of it that they are no longer allowed to be a pastor.

It's suicide. It's the ultimate coping mechanism. For a pastor, suicide is an affair or embezzlement or (getting) caught with a prostitute or something like that. You don't get back in after those sorts of things. I think we do them to get out of the job.

There are internal and external stressors that contribute to disasters, according to Peter. It is an internal stress when we put ourselves in a different camp than the rest of the human race. This can be when we think we are right no matter what. Another internal stress can come from family of origin issues. One pastor was told by his father that he would never amount to a hill of beans. So, he became a pastor to prove he was at least a hill of beans. Some pastors enter into the ministry to prove their worth which is another set-up. External stressors can include the expectations that each member has on what they want their pastor to be and how their relationship should be constructed. If a pastor tries to meet all these expectations without boundaries, we have another set-up for disaster. A



pastor has to learn how to take care of the stressors in a very complex and demanding profession. Without this focus, it is easy to get to burnout or even disasters.

### Denominational Support

Peter does turn to his denomination for some forms of support. An important spiritual question is where the pastor goes for pastoring. In his denomination, there are people who do the work of pastoring the pastor. These are not administrators of the denomination nor are they in formal organizational hierarchy positions (which minimize the dual relationship conflicts). This is a confidential relationship as is the relationship between a member and the pastor and is one where questioning and vulnerability are welcomed.

Peter's denomination also supports active programming to help pastors. A few years ago, they received a grant from the Lilly foundation for \$2,000,000 to support pastors in the Peer Learning Groups program. About 75 % of the pastors in his denomination took advantage of these one-year grants which were devoted to helping clergy stay fresh in the ministry through learning and accountability. There are other denominations that do not support such efforts and have not sought out grants for this work. There is another program sanctioned and supported by the denomination called the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Program. This effort is recognized as an important part of the denomination's responsibilities.

This denomination seems open to new ideas and considerations. A few years ago, they accepted women as pastors after much debate. This is a move that Peter is happy about although he recognizes that the expectations of a pastor are still quite male-

oriented. Even today, there is still the adherence to the traits of historical male domination of the profession among many members as well as some male pastors. It is a hard job being a female pastor in a male-dominated organization.

### Summary

Peter was excited to share his many experiences and ideas on the profession of ministry and was very candid in our interviews. He knows that he cannot sustain his energy alone and must find places and people where he can be vulnerable and open. There must be various boundaries and limits to his work as well as a time not to work. He has many ideas on how organizations can support their clergy and says he comes from a systemic organizational orientation. It is a key not to confuse the leadership of a minister with having to be perfect or to be able to meet all people's needs. It is important for him to take the time to just ride off into the sunset so he can return refreshed.

### Participant Three

Paul has been a pastor in church settings for over three decades and has experienced both the ups and downs of the ministry. He has been married for a long time and relies on his wife for support and clarity. At one point, his marriage was in danger due to the stresses of his intense church commitment and they changed things so the relationship was protected. Paul sees his work as a piece of a much larger and longer plan. "My place (is) in this on-going story that God's writing." His present church is a medium-sized church that is very committed with being a part of the community and

helping social causes. He was excited to share the ideas and strategies that have helped him stay in the ministry and to remain positive and energetic about his profession.

### Personal Balance

Paul acknowledges that it is important for him to take care of himself physically. He does like some physical activities such as working in the yard. He says it is very important to take some days off and to take vacations and go on retreats. The physical breaks from the church and the work help keep him balanced. He does work 50-60 hours a week and knows this is more than would be ideal. He also tries to watch his weight and get exercise, knowing full well that many of his colleagues are overweight and out of shape. One place where Paul gauges his energy is in the physical realm. “If I’m starting to gain weight or if I’m starting to get impatient with the congregation because they just don’t get it, and they’re a bunch of jerks, then I know what the problem is. It’s not the congregation. It’s a little clue.”

Paul subscribes to the concept of integrating care of the mind/body/spirit. Through this stance, he considers health in the ministry as taking care of all three areas. The mind needs to be nurtured, which Paul does through reading, attending retreats, and going to workshops. “Reading is a head thing as well as a heart thing.” He particularly has been inspired by the writings of Frederick Beakner, Walt Wangren, Jr., Walt Brueggeman, Fred Craddock, and Barbara Brown Taylor. “Those (authors) have been really important to me to have these folks out there that I can turn to and read. As if I were in a conversation they were nurturing and teaching me.” Paul loves the world of ideas and finds it recharging to learn more around spirituality and the world we live in.

He also gets excited to be in the developmental phase of church projects. His present church is currently involved with a community project that will be of great service. It is a very ambitious project that requires coordination with many entities in the community and this energizes Paul.

Paul has learned that it is essential to be real with your needs and emotions. As a pastor, a person will experience many situations and people. Quite a variety of emotions will be generated from the work and he needs to have a place to process these emotions. His wife is particularly skilled in this area and helps keep Paul real and transparent. Paul has also used the services of a therapist and does not hesitate in recommending this to parishioners. The therapist he used had a very holistic and systemic viewpoint and utilized everything from exercise to creativity, spirituality, and more traditional psychotherapy. They looked at the concept of an addiction to ministry where a person gets their highs and lows from the church organization and from work itself. “I can’t imagine a pastor going out and pastoring without dealing with their own crap. We all got it and I think there’s a lot of damage done in the church.” He likes to balance humor and laughter with the seriousness of his work. He thinks many pastors take themselves too seriously and approach the ministry as a great burden. This does not work emotionally or spiritually. Paul described one retreat he tries to participate in annually held at a Benedictine monastery. At this retreat, there are five days of silence where he gets to read, meditate, and be quiet. The Benedictine monastery is very good at hospitality and prayer and this recharges Paul on a number of levels. They are set up for his wife to participate also, which helped the marriage experience.

When asked about strategies in the social realm, Paul focused on his relationships within the family as being of primary importance. His wife is a crucial person for him to be interacting with - for fun, for accountability, for spirituality, and for a sense of sanctuary. He has learned that this relationship and the quiet privacy of his home are essential. They don't have meetings at home nor do they host church parties there. It is a place for quiet time and for the family. Paul acknowledges that he does not have very many friends and feels he may be missing something here. However, he believes that a lot of friendships would put a greater burden on the family time so he is not particularly looking to develop friendships. He does have a sense of boundaries that keeps home his safe place while keeping church his work place.

Paul utilizes many approaches to enrich his spiritual life and considers this a key part of personal balance in the ministry. He has a spiritual framework that is not centered on him. His work is just a small part of the ongoing story of God. The work is not about Paul's glory. He needs to trust in God and does not try to control the largest big picture- it is not Paul's big plan. Paul also does not try to convince others about the Christian faith. He considers the best he can do is to live it out among others. These philosophies allow Paul to do his work the best he can and not stress or try to control the spiritual outcome of other people.

Paul also has practices that keep him in touch with his own sense of spirituality. On a daily basis, he participates in prayer and tries to be open to what is presented through this experience. He also talked of what goes into sermon preparation which is a very spiritual experience for Paul. He uses prayer, reads, and tries to bring some order out of the chaos of life. Paul likes to take the time to let his preparation sink in and see what

emerges- what God comes up with. Paul also is an advocate of retreats and described several he has attended. He talked of one put on by the Catholic Church and started in Spain. It is called Criseo and is a four-day retreat. During those four days, you have fifteen lectures on different spiritual subjects. However, it is not designed to be just an academic course but a spiritual experience for renewal. “The humor and support, people come and feed you meals and it’s just a real experience of the presence of Christ. It’s a marvelous thing....The Catholic Church has nurtured my spirituality in a lot of ways.” Another experience has been the five days of silence at a retreat at a Benedictine monastery in Snowmass, Colorado described earlier. Paul also has gone to the annual Festival of Homiletics where many of the modern top pastors and writers gather for renewal and inspiration.

One more resource where Paul gets spiritual renewal is through the use of a spiritual director who functions like a pastor to the pastor. In Paul’s case, his director is located in another state and they usually meet via phone. Typically they meet for about a half an hour every six weeks, sometimes an hour and discuss spiritual concerns and challenges.

### Congregational Support

One perspective Paul shared on the role of the congregation was that it must be a team effort. Some churches put the work of leadership fully on the pastor and this is a mistake for a number of reasons. In relationships, there is a dual responsibility for leadership and the work of the relationship which must be shared. “We’re each supposed to take 60% of the load and it’s amazing how well it works out when we do.” It is

important to recognize and support the limits of the pastor so that person doesn't burn out. At Paul's church, the use of committees has helped this and has also focused the efforts of the congregational member's involvement. There is a welcoming committee whose job is to provide an initial reaching out to new participants. There is an elected Board of Elders who considers the overall functioning of the church. This pastor makes sure he is checking in with at least one or two of the Elders on a regular basis to honor those elected and to maintain the systemic connection. The Elders provide accountability for the pastor and the church. There is another team that helps plan for sabbaticals which takes up to a year of planning to accomplish successfully. There are also teams for personal matters, for community projects, and other activities. Additionally, there are informal teams such as one that provides support and nurturing to the pastor. This is done on a more informal basis rather than a pastoral care committee. One basic tenet of a healthy congregation is that the planning and the work of the ministries are spread out among many members and not just on the pastor.

One way to set up a healthy relationship is to be very clear during the initial call process what the expectations and resources are for the person being called to the church. This would include the compensation package, the sabbatical policy, the procedure for resigning (60 days notice), retreat time offered, retirement considerations, and a detailed expectation of services requested. It would also include the church's organizational philosophy and how the congregation interacts systemically. The sabbatical policy at this church is that sabbatical will be offered every five years for three months. It is to be designed as R & R as well as a time for self-reflection. It is also expected that the pastor

will bring something back to the church to utilize, something tangible that will enhance the ministry in some fashion.

One strategy used at this church is the process of reviews. They do a formal personal review by the personnel team for the pastor which covers about six-to-seven categories. It is important that the pastor has input in this review process and that it is approached as a dialogue rather than just handed to the pastor. This dialogue concerns where both the congregation and the pastor want to focus and how there will be accountability for this focus. Another review that ideally is completed every three-to-five years includes the whole church community. This review considers the effectiveness of the pastor as well as the congregation. Yet another review suggested by the Alban Institute should happen every seven years to reset the mission of the church.

The Alban Institute has good resources to help congregations. There are a lot of folks working with what they are describing as the life-cycle of a congregation. A lot of those organizations are recommending that every seven years, at least, a congregation ought to be re-visiting its mission and its sense of vision from God. And that you'll get up to the five or six or seven years and that there are just easy kinds of signs to identify that the congregation isn't ready to shift gears and do some new things. Or revisit what their initial vision was that they'll start on this slow downward decline. And that affects everything from programming and administration to how pastors and congregations are dealing with each other.

Paul feels that review helps keep the whole church system including the pastor fresher, energized, and more focused on creating a good healthy community. He even suggests that there are times to bring in outside consultants to solve problems or to increase clarity for the church mission. These consultants would be professionals that complete their work on a fee-for-service basis. He recognizes that most churches are hesitant to bring in outsiders both for financial reasons and that "the family can take care of its business."



## Burnout and Disasters

Paul had many thoughts on what causes the demise of pastors. He came across the concept of being addicted to the ministry in his therapy work. For a pastor, this is when the person gets their highs and lows from their work and the external validation that can come from the ministry. When a pastor gets praise for a sermon or for a pastoral counseling success, there can be a sense of how good and important they must be. Conversely, when a criticism or disappointment gets expressed to the pastor, the external validation can have a negative impact on the pastor. There is the sense that the pastor and his/her efforts are the important work that makes or breaks everything. On the one hand, admiration can feel great. On the other hand, negative feedback can be destructive to the pastor's self-esteem. With this drive for acceptance and admiration, the pastor can easily work under the delusion that more hours worked equals more admiration and put in 60 hours or more per week. The success of the congregation is personalized and not seen as an organizational task. This can easily lead to burnout, disillusionment, or other disasters. Paul points out that a pastor can become addicted to the organization as illustrated in the book *The Addictive Organization* (Schaeff, 1988).

Another set-up for disasters is when the pastor has no safe place to process his or her feelings, thoughts, and doubts. Pastors must have a confidential place where they can examine what truly makes them happy and see how this pertains to their work and ministry. There is a danger if this is not examined every nine to twelve months by pastors in an effort to keep personal meaningfulness as a part of their ministry. Paul has concerns with some fundamentalist churches where the rule seems to be don't share your concerns. "Having been raised in what I would call a fundamentalist background where you just

had to deal with it and you shut up and went on, in which case we just know that that's a formula for disaster. It doesn't work in the long haul." It becomes shameful and an abomination to share struggles with anyone and to show the human side of the pastor. This leads to a sense of being alone and that the work of a pastor is a burden that has been placed upon them to put up with. "I would hate to be doing ministry out of that place."

Another problem area is when a pastor believes that they are the center of the church and that participants are to almost worship the pastor rather than God. This also lends to the rule of not questioning things and always put on the face of perfection. Paul believes it is vital to remember that humility is essential and that the church and the pastor are a small part of the ongoing story of God throughout time. If the pastor is the center of the church, then all sorts of things can happen to serve or almost worship the pastor which can lead to many types of disasters.

### Denominational Support

As has been the case with other interviewees, Paul sees little support from the denominational level. It is difficult for the regional minister to stay in touch with up to 45 different churches in the area and to offer meaningful help other than to put out fires. The churches that are doing well will not get much attention or support, especially on a personal level. The denomination does offer training on topics such as sexuality training and personal boundary training. There is not the same hiring hierarchy as some denominations since this denomination is very congregationally oriented in structure. Possibly, the denomination could help support the use of outside consultants either through financial support of the process or contacts. Being very congregationally

oriented, Paul thinks a church might be reluctant to invite in consultants or the regional minister.

One area where the denomination has been useful has been in the utilization of grants, especially from the Lilly Foundation. One grant provides new church pastors with a coach to help in the early years especially with new church development. This has changed the survival rate of new churches from 50% to 80% and appears to be very useful in pastor development. This model is based on a coach providing a safe place to talk as well as somebody who will be an advocate for the pastor.

That model is based on kind of a triangle of accountability: the congregation, the region, and the pastor. And the coach becomes a triangle of accountability at a new church start. And the coach, I love the model of the coach, because he or she is willing to take the pastor's back. So, the relationship that's primary there is the coach to the pastor and the coach asks specific questions that he or she is asking every month of the pastor around their spiritual life, around what their goals are for the next month, how they were effective in the past month. So, and I've done that coaching piece for two pastors now. It has been very, very helpful to them. This grant also provides funds and training for the coaches.

Another grant through the denomination supports small group meetings for new pastors in the first five years of their work with the goals of longevity in the profession and developing effective practices in both personal and ministerial areas. They meet twice a year at a church that is exhibiting best practices of a healthy congregation for about a week. The first day is a re-gathering and re-acquainting. The second day is a day of silence. The rest of the time is meeting with that host church and each other with the goals of nurturing each other and learning good practices.

## Summary

Paul seemed to emphasize the importance of relationships for a pastor to survive. He relies on his family for a safe place to process things and to get feedback, especially his marriage. He obviously trusts his wife and her perspective on a deep level. He also considered the structure and the boundaries of his congregation as being of great importance. Having been exposed to systemic thinking, he views the health of the congregation as a shared responsibility and looks to partner with various committees and individuals to maintain the congregation. Paul considers time away on retreats or on vacations as another part of his balance. He is aware that he has a tendency to work many hours and tries to set personal boundaries so he has a home life as a sanctuary. He also is a reader who continues to learn about more aspects of being a pastor and of spirituality which nurtures his intellectual side. Several dangers he points out for pastors include becoming reliant on the church's success as a measure of personal worth and when pastors are shut off from having a safe place to process their questions and concerns.

## Participant Four

Jeremiah has been in the ministry for 20 years and is the head pastor for a moderately large church. He was also the founding pastor many years ago and has seen church development go through many stages. Each stage has called for him to redefine the role of the pastor, the resources available, and how he can thrive in his position. Jeremiah was very open in our interviews and shared some of the concerns and struggles he has dealt with over the years. He also had many ideas and strategies for the care of a minister and the support of a healthy church congregation.

Jeremiah described the experience of being a pastor is like being the “town pump.” This was actually a concept he was given at his ordination twenty years ago. The pulls on the pastor’s time and heart will come from many directions. At one moment, there will be the administrative leadership demands. At the next moment, you are trying help in a hospital visit where a long-term friend is dying. Then you may be called upon to help with a marriage falling apart, a member’s criticism, and on to sermon preparation. After that may come fundraising planning and what programming would be useful for the youth of the church. The job opportunities and the demands are never-ending and you can feel like the pump is always flowing out. It can be exhausting and inspiring at the same time.

The sheer enormity of all of that gets to be like you’re the town pump...you realize you aren’t the answer; you aren’t the savior, you aren’t the co-savior or co-redeemer. You can’t solve everyone’s problems and you can’t repair every relationship and on some level you aren’t going to be able to be the super pastor that you would love to be, caring for every need for every individual.

The idea of trying to live a balanced life with healthy boundaries is an ongoing challenge for anyone in the ministry and they must develop ways to be a pastor in balance to be effective.

### Personal Balance

Jeremiah acknowledged that the physical needs of a pastor can be a challenge. He says that exercise helps as does having an organized time management system. He tries to spend no more than two evenings a week with church-related activities which is quite difficult during the holidays. He also has an assistant who screens appointment needs and sets boundaries to not transgress on his schedule. Jeremiah realizes that it will be harmful

on his family if he does not do a good job of time management. The other physical challenge is with money. Pastors are generally low paid and can be vulnerable to credit card debt. This is especially true in rural setting where they are paid even less.

There are several ways where Jeremiah gets intellectually nurtured. It helps to read a non-theology book for variation. He also reads and studies topics and passages every week which keeps him very active intellectually. This is a part of sermon preparation and keeping up on current events that may be relevant in his message. Part of the job of a pastor is to consider a sermon topic, often a Bible passage, and to research the topic. Beyond the researching, Jeremiah takes the time to have the topic sink in.

When I have preached, 90 % of the time that I've lived inside the text a little bit and tried to just hear it just speaking to me and to my heart and to my being to where I'm at in my life and all of the things I struggle with in life as well. So, what that looks like in a practical sense is I spend time each day on that same text. ...I didn't just sit down and construct a sermon, I lived inside this text.

In the emotional realm, Jeremiah is aware that the work of a pastor can really take a toll on a person. From the beginning, he was aware that he had to manage what he called the "town pump." Awareness helps as does utilizing strategies such as setting boundaries with time and with other people's demands. Also, having perspective on the limits of what he can actually impact is important. Jeremiah knows that he cannot be the answer to everyone, especially with a church that has thousands of members. At times, he needs to recharge. He tries to step back and take a break for self-awareness and self-assessment. This is a bit easier since his church has two pastors and so you have coverage when you need time off. He uses his social connections, especially family, to help rebalance his emotional needs.

It is difficult when people have certain expectations of him that he can't take care of. Jeremiah wants to be helpful to other people and has his own guilt to attend to when this cannot occur. It is also hard when people try to triangulate him, especially when he wants to help both members. This can appear when a couple makes an appointment and both want his support for their positions. It is difficult when people want him to stand up for them, even when he may disagree about the issue or if it is right for him to stand up. Jeremiah talked of a recent controversy that was highlighted in the local newspaper and a member wanted him to take a public stand on issues that had nothing to do with the church or the pastor. While Jeremiah wanted to extend compassion, it made no sense to represent a public stance representing the church in the paper so Jeremiah drew a boundary and declined. A challenge is how to set the needed boundaries without the guilt of not helping all at all times.

Jeremiah is a friendly caring man who relies on his social connections for support. He thrives with time to reconnect with his young children and when he spends time with his wife. Life can be difficult for the family of a pastor. Jeremiah says his wife has a love/hate relationship to the church. She values her spirituality and loves the type of church that has developed but hates the amount of time and energy Jeremiah must extend with the church, especially with his tendency to be very passionate about faith. There are many times when the job of pastor sneaks up unexpectedly. Once they were at their neighborhood swimming pool in their bathing suits and flop flops ready to dive into the water when several members greeted the pastor with their pastoral needs. This was a dilemma for Jeremiah to set boundaries and have the time with his family or use some of his off time being the pastor. Over time, he has gotten better at setting limits and politely

saying no to opportunities. Jeremiah gets invited to many social gatherings such as 80<sup>th</sup> birthday parties or 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary events. He will usually not attend and sends cards instead.

The church has grown to the point where there are a number of staff members. They have developed a team approach to the responsibilities of the church which certainly helps. There is a second pastor to take on parts of the pastoral duties. He has a trusted secretary who helps set boundaries and keeps his work organized. There are other staff members that run with parts of the work and this provides a level of social support for Jeremiah. He also has an accountability partner with whom he meets twice per month with the goal of being partners in their personal spiritual journey.

Yet another area of social support for Jeremiah has been some of his experiences with pastor groups and professional friends. He has a small number of pastors he knows he can call when he needs the kind of support that only another pastor would understand. He has also been in some pastor support groups. There was one in his community that moderately worked until there was a great split between the conservative and more liberal members of the group. There is another support network now that is very affirming and does rally around each other for encouragement and support.

Spiritual renewal is very important for Jeremiah and certainly helps keep a focus on what is really important and what is the purpose of all his work. We reflected earlier on the process of sermon preparation and how this spiritually renews Jeremiah weekly. Jeremiah regularly “returns to the Living Water” and experiences renewal through this spiritual experience. He has spiritual time when preparing as well as when delivering sermons. He is also an advocate of retreats and talked of one through a program called



the Pastoral Leadership Institute. During the most recent retreat, they offered many spiritual supports as well as opportunity to talk with therapists and financial counselors. Another effort is called Grace Place which is a week-long experience organized by a medical doctor. At this retreat there is an emphasis on the spiritual renewal as well as support for diets, physical exercise, spiritual habits, and finances.

### Congregational Support

Jeremiah placed a great deal of emphasis on the culture of the congregation. There are congregations that are very divisive and negative and those that are affirming and positive. In his church, there is a foundation of support and optimism for members, staff, and the pastors. The church setting is seen as a place of joy and acceptance where all participants need to be supported and encouraged in life struggles. This does not mean anything goes but it does mean there will be an atmosphere of support and affirmations on many levels. With this in mind, there is a deacon assigned to each full-time staff member to give encouragement, prayer, recognize important days, and provide a form of care for each staff member. The Board of Directors of this church is also very encouraging. An example of this is how they have supported the planning of an upcoming three-month sabbatical for Jeremiah. While many churches in this denomination have a sabbatical policy, few pastors utilize this. The Board of Directors has planned this so it will be a sabbatical for the congregation also where they will have a change of pace with a collection of other pastors and activities in this three-month period. They encouraged Jeremiah to apply for a grant through an organization called the Louisville Institute in Kentucky. Part of this grant is to bring in guest pastors to bring in a

fresh perspective. Jeremiah was also familiar with the grants of the Lilly Foundation but applied elsewhere.

One thing encouraged in Jeremiah's congregation and staff is open communications. In an attempt to discourage triangulation, "we kind of have this running rule about so if you come to me with an issue about this person, the first thing I'm going to ask you is have you talked to that person...the issue can be better resolved because you're actually talking to the source of the issue rather than talking about them." Another communication rule is that you can't just make general statements of problems such as "people are saying (fill in the blank)." Instead, they put accountability into it. They want to actually talk to the person or persons who have a concern with the goal of building a bridge rather than a divide. This is modeled after a book they use in staff training titled *Building Bridges Not Walls* (Roseau, 2003). This model seems to help eliminate destructive gossiping. Without these communication rules, it is easy for a pastor to get eaten alive with indirect gossip and criticism without accountability. Part of the culture is also to talk directly with the disgruntled to find out their concerns and continue building bridges.

The work of developing and supporting the congregation is seen as a team effort with new ideas welcomed for consideration. The pastor is not seen as the main link to God and therefore would need to be revered as God-like. He is not considered invincible and untouchable. Rather, he is a trained leader with experience and education trying to inspire and encourage the congregation to develop in healthy relationships. This perspective and the affirming nature of Jeremiah's staff and congregation are very important for his balance and leadership.

## Burnout and Disasters

The profession of ministry is a paradox of helping people feel connected and the common feelings of disconnect that many in the ministry experience. There are so many demands and multiple relationships that need to be managed with grace and dignity. Many pastors need to be guarded and this can lead to a lot of loneliness. They are lonely because “this image of I can’t let you into my life other than superficially because you might use that against me.” There is also a great amount of stress and expectation that internally accumulates. The pastor is usually on call always and is to always be acting like a pastor. The human side that will have many feelings and opinions is often buried and may not be shared with hardly anyone. When you combine this with a negative congregational culture that expects perfection, it is very difficult for a pastor to stay balanced. When a pastor puts himself on a pedestal, this is dangerous. When you can’t express your fears and short-comings, this is also dangerous. The stress can leak out in many destructive directions. Often, denominations do not have a program for renewal or redemption and a pastor can find himself out of a job for many reasons.

In Jeremiah’s denomination, the hierarchy of the church is called in when a disaster hits. A pastor will be removed from office if they are theologically way off-base or if they are caught in malfeasance such as stealing from the church or participating in an immoral behavior. It is interesting to note that there is a measurable increase in the rental of hotel pornography during a pastor’s conference according to one of Jeremiah’s friends who is in that industry.

Jeremiah cited several recommendations for staying out of burnout and disasters:

Be real. Don't put yourself on a pedestal. You're called to a wonderful profession of being God's spokesman and caring for people's souls but be real with people. I think also have real relationships in your life, somewhere that are not superficial where you're able to be yourself and express your fears and your short-comings and your worries. And for me, just because it works for me, take time off. Recharge your batteries. Refocus. I am a much better pastor when I do that.

In general, pastors need to take care of themselves and not just operate behind the façade of the ministry. A pastor needs friends and family who really know who he is and accept his normal human doubts and concerns.

### Denominational Support

Generally, Jeremiah does not draw much support from his denomination. His denomination is what is called congregationally based where the local church has most of the power to manage the local affairs unless something gets outrageous. He sees the hierarchy as a political organization where the district president and others get elected. The theory is that the district president would be a pastor to pastors but this does not happen in reality. There are very few, if any, pastors that would turn to the district president for this support. Even the district conventions do not seem to be affirming or uplifting. Presently, the ultra-right wing of the church is in control of these events and they are actually discouraging. It seems like people are marking their political turf rather than trying to support the experience or the spirituality of the pastors and congregations.

There are some positive supports that the denomination includes. They have a good health insurance plan that includes benefits for psychotherapy. They officially do encourage sabbatical experiences and even have a page on their website on how to plan a

sabbatical. They also do allow a pastor to take a leave of the active ministry when they are feeling burned out and need an extended break. They also support some programming aimed at leadership. There is a Commission on Ministerial Health and Wellness that attempts to address pastoral needs on the national level, although it is a bit unwieldy to do much on a national level. One of the best programs supported is the Pastoral Leadership Institute, although it is run by an organization outside of the denomination. This program allows a group of pastors to visit a well-run church for a week and receive training in leadership. A common question raised is “How do you deal with the alligators?”

One more place where the denomination has influence is in the seminary. It used to be much easier to go to seminary and take all the requirements and get passed through. Now, each candidate must go through extensive psychological testing and go through an interview process before graduation. At the end of seminary now, they vote on each candidate as to their fitness to serve in the ministry. It is now possible to go through all the requirements and coursework and not be given a final endorsement.

### Summary

This pastor is deeply committed to the positive and affirming nature of his faith and considers this an essential feature of resiliency. He lives the process of spirituality and of his own humanity as he seeks healthy ways to be part of the ministry. He is very aware of his own needs as well as the needs of the organization to remain a healthy place for spiritual growth. He seems to understand the systemic connection between all the internal and external influences of his work and strives to keep them in good working order. Jeremiah seeks out human connections where he can be real with his doubts,

worries, dilemmas, and joys. His model of ministry is actually used as a training ground for other pastors through the Pastoral Leadership Institute. Like other pastors, he struggles with the balance between his family, the church demands, and his own health. However, he is very clear as to the purposefulness of his work and of the church organization that has grown around his ministry. Most importantly, he realizes that the organization is not about admiring him and would continue even if he were not present. His contribution is simply a small piece of the 2000-year-old story of Christianity.

#### Participant Five

Our next pastor has also been in the ministry over twenty years. He is head of a church that is independent in structure that was started as a seed church - a new church in his community. It is not an extension of a particular denomination so the accountability and the support must come from within the congregation. Mark's style is to bring in many stories and lessons straight from the Bible so he referenced many passages throughout his interview. His church has gone through a very difficult time in the near past that resulted in a volunteer being arrested so Mark has been through unusual stress in his leadership and the need for personal support. This experience has shaped some of the policies and personal philosophies for survival in this ministry.

Mark shared several theological perspectives that shed light on why he has chosen this profession and how to survive it. "If the ministry of being a pastor were measured strictly on the human plane based on what gratification one might get from doing the job they do, most pastors probably wouldn't stick around....The call of God is higher and more important than my personal feelings about what I'm doing every day." He sees

himself as a conduit or channel to draw people closer to the lessons and wisdom of God and it is their choice to follow these lessons. He is not there to carry others spiritually, just to provide a direction towards their spirituality. It is not his job to fix other people's problems, although he can be a support and a coach for them. With this stance, he does not take on the personal responsibility of each congregant in their relationship to their spirituality. He tries to encourage it but knows ultimately he cannot make it happen for others.

### Personal Balance

Mark acknowledged that he needs to attend to his physical needs citing the example of getting enough sleep. He also considers the use of time as very important to manage. He knows he will spend considerable time with church work including unexpected and unplanned demands such as conducting a funeral. He tries to balance this by the concept of a time bank. He will put in extra time and will also take afternoons off to attend a child's soccer game and will take vacations. Since they have multiple staff at this church, he is able to arrange time to vacation with his family and values these breaks.

Intellectually, Mark is in a constant state of learning and considers this part of how he stays fresh. He likes continuing education and classes both as a participant and as a teacher. Out of his enjoyment of continuing education, he has received a number of graduate degrees. He considers this a form of intellectual renewal and uses this to rejuvenate his ministry. Mark says he also watches for what he can learn from one ministry experience to the next and considers this part of his education. As part of his

sermon preparation and his enrichment, he reads many books and spends the time to consider how they relate to his work and his spirituality.

This pastor did not mention any themes relating to his emotional renewal. I believe he ties emotional renewal in with spiritual renewal and the social supports he shares with the rest of his staff.

Mark considers it essential to constantly connect with other people both within the church and outside of it. Part of this is purposely communicating, listening to others and being personal with people. “Without connection, you have no energy. If you’ve got any energy, you’ve been feeding yourself. The energy can’t transfer. How can you get that out of you and into someone else, well, you have to have a connection for it.” While he believes that transparency is important, there has to be some boundaries and reasonable principles applied. It is essential to treat people around you well rather than stray out of integrity. Mark believes that theatrical apologies are never a good substitute for not connecting and understanding people well in the first place. If you start with personal accountability for relationships, you generally will do well with social connections.

On a personal level, Mark needs to have relationships where there is the trust and confidentiality to share his doubts and struggles. He has accountability with like-minded friends that are in the ministry. Before he takes any major steps, he bounces ideas off some of these friends to be sure his thinking is sound and thought through. Mark has some friends that act as accountability partners to be sure he is staying on target with his thoughts and actions. He also makes sure he has friends outside of his congregation that are there as just friends.



Mark values the relationships he has with his staff. He views them as spiritual partners that will share support and fellowship. As a staff, they often spent time together in prayer. They also share experiences and different perspectives in the course of carrying out the church work. Having trusted staff at the church allows him to take breaks and go on vacations with his family.

Mark also talked of how his family provides support for his work. He takes the time to do things with his children and wife. He likes to hunt, fish, and golf with them as well as be a supporting parent with his children's sporting events. Time is always a difficult thing to manage, making sure that the family gets their share. "I need to maintain balance that I'm not here all the time and with other people, so my wife is not... a widow. Or a single parent. I don't want her to feel that way and it isn't wise." Mark asks his wife for advice and help and believes that having a right relationship with her is part of the grand scheme needed.

Mark has one overall suggestion regarding his spiritual needs- pay attention to your own spiritual renewal. This comes from spending time in prayer, reading The Word, speaking with God, and allowing God's message to sink into your thoughts and heart. He talked about having a spiritual experience while preaching. While there may be hours put into the preparation along with several pages of notes, the actual preaching is spontaneous, extemporaneous and spirit-led. He needs to be pure in heart and open to the spiritual experience for the sermon to flow through him. He sees the sermon as God working through him, not Mark giving a speech. This is part of his spiritual renewal. Mark also participates in retreats and finds them a refreshing change of pace.

## Congregational Support

Certainly, Mark appreciated the financial arrangement that is provided by the congregation that allows him to support his family. They also do special things for the pastor and his family such as pastor recognition day in October, financial gifts that allow vacations, and extra presents for his children at Christmas. The policy of the congregation also allows time for him to go to conferences and trainings, some of which he is the presenter.

There is a positive culture in Mark's church where he can receive encouragement and constructive criticism. Seldom is criticism presented in a mean or vengeful way which helps Mark listen and receive suggestions. Usually, it is in the spirit of what would help the church. This is especially true with the relationships among the staff of the church.

The leadership of this church is widespread in that there is a large team carrying out the mission of the church, not just the pastor. There is a team spirit rather than a top down management hierarchy. Mark sees himself at the bottom carrying lots of responsibility and weight but not having to control everything. With a widespread model, there is value and ownership for each person accepting roles of leadership and the church becomes owned by everyone. The term "servant leadership" resonated with Mark in that his job is to support others in the organization. This helps prevent Mark from burning out in his leadership role.

## Burnout and Disasters

There are four or five themes that emerged for Mark regarding the problem of burnout and pastoral disasters. The first of these is when the pastor has a hidden life of some sort. There is a warning sign if the pastor hides transparency and accountability from all others and operates with a hidden life. That hidden life could include things of a sexual nature or outside relationships. A hidden part compromises integrity and without integrity, you have nothing to offer. Another red flag is when the minister will not ever admit when he is wrong. Part of integrity is taking responsibility for when you err, being transparent with your human mistakes, and making amends when appropriate. This hidden life does not have to be manifested in actions to be problematic. We can have a hidden life in our internal thoughts that still compromises our integrity before it comes out in words or actions. An example of this would be internal sexual thoughts about a member. The very thoughts change the relationship and will impact the interactions.

There are times when these hidden thoughts do come out in words and actions. Mark's church went through an extremely stressful and trying time when it was discovered that a youth volunteer had been inappropriately touching some teenagers. This volunteer was prosecuted and church policies were changed quickly. The hidden thoughts of the church volunteer became actions which ended his volunteering (and appropriately ended many other things for the young man). The hidden life of this person became actions and did harm to many people directly and indirectly. Mark's church now does CBI background checks for any volunteers and does not place people in these positions until they have been with the church for at least one year. This was one of the most stressful and trying experiences that this pastor had to go through.

A second theme is that of personal gratification. We are in a culture where personal gratification is embraced and can be a trap for pastors. A pastor can get a sense of “personal well-being from being appreciated and liked, respected, at some levels may be adored. One of the pitfalls is to want to expand that kingdom.” If a pastor gets their sense of purposefulness from these external validations, he may say or do things for this purpose and could compromise his spiritual work. If a pastor feels he or she should be adored and is entitled to this type of gratification, this can greatly distract from the real work of a relationship to God. On some level, the pastor is encouraging his members to worship the pastor and it can become all about the pastor. This is a set-up for all sorts of problems and entitlements. It could lead to a pastor using his authority so he looks good and feels important and not for the good of the church. When a pastor does this, it takes away from others and people remember this, sometimes even leaving the church. Mark says that the church cannot be built on the pastor-it must be built on faith and spirituality. When the pastor’s needs are around receiving affirmations, it takes away the focus on spiritual formation and God. The pastor’s relationship to the mission of his work and of his faith becomes broken since it has shifted from serving others and God to self-serving. This is a set up for personal gratification and disasters.

A pastor must take responsibility for his own balance and spiritual focus. Mark says that when we do not face our own issues, we can easily get in trouble. He recommends that a pastor be open to obtaining counseling at times to sort through these issues as they come forth. He encourages pastors to use their issues to learn, grow, and then teach from the growth. A dangerous attitude is to adopt a victim or blaming mentality. It can be disastrous to excuse bad behaviors by saying others treated you

wrong and you were just responding (and have no responsibility). Equally, it can be disastrous to just settle with being a victim and not looking at your part in events. There is always a need for personal responsibility and accountability as it relates to the ideas of faith.

According to Mark, there are obvious dangers to be aware of and to develop safety policies around. One area Mark mentioned is in the use of the office computer. At his church, the computer screens are purposely facing so that others can see what is on that screen. Also, their computer technician has permission to look at whatever anyone has done and that every key stroke is recorded. This not only provides accountability, but also reassurance that the pastor or staff cannot be wrongly accused of inappropriate Internet use. For some pastors, the Internet is a great danger to themselves and to their work.

Another danger Mark highlighted is in counseling women. If a female insists that he talk privately with her, he sees this as a red flag. They have trained female counselors in their church and he refers women to them. Also, they have doors with windows so there is visual transparency in the physical structure of the church. Pastors need to be careful about lust and not even thinking of females in the congregation in this manner. Obviously, sexuality and sexual acting out would be a pastoral disaster.

Pastors are held to higher standards and, as the messenger, need to lead a life-style accordingly. There is a Biblical image that the pastor represents. It is a mistake to only present the theoretical standpoint of theology without living the life-style. A pastor should embrace leadership with this idea and yet not seem himself as above challenges and issues or this also can lead to disasters. At times, the pastor can feel a disconnect

between this higher standard image and life desires or impulses. Part of the challenge for having a long-term career is to have safe people and places to process these disconnects.

### Denominational Support

Since Mark's church is an independent church, there really is not a hierarchal structure that brings in organizational standards or policies for how they must conduct business. This church hires based on what the congregation needs and does not participate in a calling process. Mark views the policy process of his church as they are all accountable to each other and to God. They go through experiences together and draw upon each other to develop policy and to make decisions accordingly.

### Summary

Mark is very Biblically oriented in his theology and considers strong reliance to the Biblical word as essential for a long and effective career as a pastor. He is well versed in stories, metaphors, and lessons from the Bible and encourages others to rely on these for answers. The commitments and covenants he develops with other people are very important to Mark, allowing him to participate in the time-consuming and energy-consuming work of a pastor. He expects accountability and transparency for himself and for others in his life - not to be perfect but to be truthful in the joys and struggles of life. Having gone through the betrayal of a very inappropriate volunteer, he is very aware of the dangers that can happen with self-gratification. The support of staff and family are essential for Mark to have had a long career in the ministry.

Mark's role in the church is to support others in their quest for spiritual formation and spiritual renewal. His style of leadership is of support, not control and he gets a lot of support in return. With this leadership style, Mark is not responsible for every detail of what happens and what each congregant does with their church experiences. It is a team and a collaboration which in turn inspires and supports Mark.

#### Participant Six

Bob has been in the ministry for over 20 years and had many ideas on what creates dangers for pastors and what supports are helpful in having a long career as a spiritual leader. He shared a few philosophies that help guide him through the various ups and downs of his work. One theme of these philosophies is to recognize your humanness and limits and just do your best. One aspect of this is that there will be many times when you make mistakes or have attitudes that get in the way of your work. Pastors are no different than other people who are sitting in the pew on Sunday morning. Pastors are not elite or above the fray of life. There will be hardships and confusions on how to apply leadership and how to effectively minister to others. A pastor is not in control of the congregation nor over individuals and must not exercise controlling behaviors. The way Bob explained letting go of control was to "trust in Christ" and trust in the power of faith in God. We are not in charge of the master plan. There will be frustrations and emotions that are real and need to be expressed with a circle of people that are trustworthy and of good counsel. It is vital to pay attention to your spiritual relationship in a humbling stance for this career to be long lasting and satisfying.

## Personal Balance

Bob had many suggestions on attending to the physical part of the balance plan. It is important to exercise, eat healthy, and don't eat out often-especially fast food restaurants. Weight gain is common for pastors and is a warning that things are out of balance. Related to weight and health is the suggestion to limit or eliminate alcohol in your diet. He also tries to get adequate and restful sleep and to visit his medical doctor for regular check-ups and consultations. At times, medications such as anti-depressants can be very helpful and so a pastor needs to be open to using this resource if appropriate. Bob also considers it vital to monitor and manage both stress and time. One of the big stressors for pastors is the time demands of their work. He suggests limiting evening meetings to no more than two per week and to have people call to set up appointments so the time can be managed well. He also tries to safeguard some time off every week.

Intellectually, Bob recommends keeping up on reading, especially books that are devotional in nature. He likes to go to conferences and retreats, hoping that new perspective and ideas will be presented. Bob also likes to learn through experiences. He described a type of learning in which the monastics would participate where they would listen to a psalm or idea at a gathering with their abbot and then go meditate on it in solitude.

Bob has had to deal with a lot of things emotionally in his years in the ministry. There was an experience during a three-year missionary experience in another country where the local politics were incredibly intense. There were power struggles between factions trying to control the church which put the missionaries in the middle of things. It got so bad that the Bible school got shut down and his family was threatened. These were



emotional times for Bob and his family. The principle tools that Bob used for coping were to let go of control and turn the whole situation over to God and to rely on his family and other the missionaries for support. These tools he continues to use to prevent getting overwhelmed and burnt out. He also encourages pastors to use the services of a counselor/therapist for support and perspective in a confidential setting. Other resources suggested by Bob that remind pastors to let go of control are Alcoholics Anonymous and Celebrating Recovery. Bob believes that pastors can't always go at it alone and the use of outside professional resources should be encouraged.

In the social realm, Bob emphasized the importance of having trusted friends that a pastor can turn to and share his struggles and frustrations. This network of friends needs to be like-minded individuals who understand the boundaries of personal sharing and safety that allows truthfulness and transparency. It should be people that are in a relatively healthy and balanced place in their own lives and can provide the grounding we all need at times. It would not make sense to share marital problems with friends that are completing a divorce or spiritual dilemmas with a non-spiritual person. This pastor has had mixed results with turning to other pastors for this support. Some can work out well and others seem more interested in how their church is growing-almost a competition where you show how everything is good.

Another aspect of the social realm is supporting and receiving family support. A common danger for pastors is that the family can get neglected so it is imperative that the pastor be aware of what is stressing in the family system and be part of the family balance. In his family, his wife expressed how hard it is to be a pastor's wife and explained one of the dilemmas with this quote: "Do you know how hard it is to have your

husband as your pastor?” A pastor needs to take care of his primary partner as well as his children. While it is natural to turn to your marriage for support, it is also important to set boundaries on how much you share with your partner and not overwhelm them with your stresses and concerns. This pastor again supports marital therapy to help sort through these conflicts and multiplicity of relationships. It is wise not to let the church role define what your family should be and do and to allow the individualism that each person needs to grow. Bob also has used the model of holding family meetings to coordinate and communicate various situations and issues.

Bob also advocates the use of support groups of other pastors. These can only be effective when there is the safety to let down facades and be open. He has had experiences where this has happened within his denomination and other times when he has gone outside of his denomination. What matters is if it is trustworthy, confidential, and it gets to a level of real emotions and concerns. It will not be effective if it is just a reporting in of the accomplishment of each person’s church and a competitive façade.

The final realm of spiritual needs and strategies has been an intense experience for Bob in his many years and cultural setting of ministry. He benefits from some of the practices that other pastors have cited such as spending time in prayer on a regular basis, participating in experiential retreats, and taking the time to study scriptures and contemplate their meaning. He also supports having others including a congregation pray for the pastor. This lets the pastor know they are on the same team and encourages his renewal.

Bob has had many stressful experiences in his ministry and feels his spirituality grows the most when he is suffering. There are times when he feels he has no choice but

to turn to God and have faith in the outcome of the stresses. He cited an example of a church where members were actually yelling at each other in church meetings. The chaos was strong and he had to let go of the stress. With his missionary experience, the politics were so volatile, he had to let go of control and have faith it would work out. He presented a concept called spiritual warfare that goes on in his life. He describes it as an experience when evil tries to attack and tries to take over. It can attack him, the church, or attack people that he loves like his family. He says that when spiritual warfare presents itself, people experience dark dreams, visions, and a sense of cold. Chaos can happen in many forms including health issues, conflict, political problems, and others. This has happened both in his missionary experiences as well as in the more traditional church setting. When this happens, it is time to respond directly with baptism, prayer, anointing with oil, and using the Scriptures to denounce the demonic presence. While not many pastors talk of this, it can be profound as to the strength of spirituality needed to survive a long career.

### Congregational Support

There are a number of things relating to a congregation that help or hurt a pastor as he carries out his role. Some of the things that hurt include when members are critical in a non-loving manner. He gave an example of a man who came out after a sermon and tried to teach the pastor how to give a sermon differently. Bob had put in considerable hours preparing and contemplating the topic of the sermon and the man was critical of the way the sermon was delivered. It was hard for Bob not to take it personally since it seemed that the man was always looking for anything imperfect about the sermon.

Sometimes people say the most insensitive things that don't help or build anything. It would be so helpful if members would pause and think about how they share ideas and to do so in a supportive style.

The congregation does things that help the pastor's energy and spirit. When he gets verbal support, even if it has suggestions, this helps. When members respect his boundaries and his effort to set boundaries, this also helps. Bob has a pastoral caretaker who serves as a go to person where safety and accountability has been built. This person has the sanction to go to the pastor and ask if they are overworking or if they need something. Sometimes, it is just going to lunch and providing an ear. Other times, it may be going to the congregation or their representatives and letting them know of something needed. This caretaker has to be a relationship build on support and trust. Another thing that is valued is when the congregation prayer for the pastor and gives open support in this manner.

Bob also believes that strong leadership on the part of the pastor helps a congregation from going in too many directions and splitting. He shared that the congregation he presently serves was splintered when he arrived. People were vocal about their differences to the point of where voter meetings would end up in yelling matches. People were passionate but at odds with each other. There was a resource that the board of the church brought in called Biblical Peace-Makers who were outside consultants hired to bring peace to the church. At the end, some people left and the rest were able to resolve their differences and move on as a community.

## Burnout and Disasters

Bob certainly had many ideas on what contributes to burnout and to pastoral disasters. One theme that emerged was that some pastors feel the need to close off, to withdraw, and to not share what is going on inside.

There's such a "Wizard of Oz" kind of persona. You know, we're behind the curtain and people want to see the grand and glorious wizard. And really what we are is just that little guy like everyone else who's trying to make it....I wonder if sometimes we do think we're the wizard.

This persona serves to separate and isolate the pastor from the members and even their own emotions and needs. It can create a stage where they are trying to do people pleasing and seem near perfect and powerful, even though this is impossible literally and theologically. Sometimes it can cause problems in families and marriages, especially if the family is also seeing the wizard side of the pastor. For some, the ministry ends up being "a graveyard" for families when members have just had enough of it. After a while, it can go so isolating that the work of the ministry is seen as just another job. Sometimes this façade is covering up a sense of inferiority or incompetency and a fear of being discovered as not adequate in various ways. One attempt of keeping the façade is to make great efforts at people-pleasing and not staying true to the mission of the church or to what the pastor really needs to thrive. The denial of frustrations, joys, struggles, and fatigue can all contribute to burnout or to other behaviors that are destructive.

For some pastors, there is a need to be in control. The irony is that this very concept runs counter to the theology of Christianity where only God is in control. If the pastor is THE authority and in control, then the only way is the pastor's way and there is very little room for tolerance or even other people's opinions. The pastor can then be blinded by the narrowness of only his viewpoint and members may not dare

communicate their thoughts, doubts, concerns, and suggestions. It could lead to the narcissistic stance of entitlement which can lead to all sorts of problems. Pastor Bob considers this stance as an addiction since it feeds itself and creates further isolation and delusions of what Christian faith and leadership is about.

Another cause of burnout is that some pastors see themselves as elite. Somehow, being a pastor makes you more holy, more intelligent, and a different type of person. This illusion also leads to create separation from most everyone which leads to the above disconnections. Some pastors even take this stance with their spouse or children and this can only lead to family problems. There will be some members that believe this elitism and may worship the pastor or may want to get in with this elite power. This arrangement does get misused and can cause grave problems.

One other area that Pastor Bob considers problematic is when the pastor is not clear about his boundaries and gets caught in triangulations. There are power struggles in the church which was very evident in the earlier reference to Bob's international missionary experiences. At one point, he was advised by the missionary administration to support one side. Later, the other side got voted into power and he was advised to support this other side. Being caught in the middle of this local power struggle was very stressful and, at times, even had physical dangers. A constant engaging in triangulation is another way to burnout.

### Denominational Support

Bob did not see much being done by his denomination to help pastors or to give them meaningful support. They do supply health insurance which includes psychotherapy

and he appreciates this resource. However, there is not much support of the pastor's needs offered. He sees it as too corporate and out of touch with the actual work. The regional headquarters even feels corporate with everyone wearing suits and being concerned about numbers. When he goes to meetings, so much of them have an emphasis on success stories as defined by the growth in numbers. National goals seem to relate to increasing numbers and not increasing the quality of the spiritual experience or emphasizing the health of pastors. There is almost a competition at meetings for who has grown the most and seems ego-based, not spiritual-based. At some conferences, they bring in the big experts who tell you what to do to build your church to a megachurch level. The truth is that most pastors will never be ministers in such large churches and that is not even their goal. Bob feels very little if any meaningful support from his own denomination. The metaphor he handed me says "there is not competition between lighthouses, and there shouldn't be between God's family members."

### Summary

An overriding theme that Bob shared was the dangers that can happen when a pastor disconnects or isolates himself. This can happen socially, spiritually, or emotionally. Socially, it comes when a pastor does not have a safe place to share the truth of his experiences. There must be a friend, a spouse, or a confidant to process the many perplexities of the ministry. Spiritually, this can happen when a pastor does not spend the time or effort reconnecting with God. This can be in meditation, reading, sermon preparation, retreats, and even giving pastoral care. Without this connection, it is easy to spin off into unhealthy places such as having control issues or thinking the whole church

effort is about the pastor. Some pastors want admiration, power, and the illusion that they are great. However, this has nothing to do with the spiritual mission of the ministry and can be a huge problem. Emotionally, some pastors turn off their emotions and become two dimensional in their hearts. Without being in touch with your own emotions, this can lead to depression, burnout, a meaningless career, and other dangers.

It is a challenge to keep all these area in balance. That's where you have to let others in and be vulnerable. You have to have relationships where you are safe to process, safe to have feelings, and safe to have spiritual doubts and wonderings. This takes a deliberate effort to keep building and to keep trusting but is essential for have a long career in the ministry.

### Cross-Case Thematic Analysis

As I proceeded with the initial open coding of the interviews and wrote on the axial coding of each individual interview, a structure emerged for the organizing of my narrative inquiry data. This structure is similar to a model of human needs that was addressed in the literature review called The Wholeness Wheel and considers five main areas including physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. I have called this the five areas of personal balance. This, in combination with several of my original research questions, gives us a good way to understand the vast amount of information and experiences shared by the interviewees during the course of this research.

There were several research questions that stood out in their relevance to the purpose of this study. These questions pertain to the impact of the congregation on the



pastor's experience, the factors and circumstances that cause burnout and other destructive behaviors, and any possible denominational support for the pastor.

### Analysis Utilizing the PIESS Model

The first area for cross-case analysis of themes is that of physical needs. Many of the interviewees cited the need for exercise, good nutrition, deliberate weight management, and maintaining restful sleep cycles. They also repeatedly mentioned the importance of using time well including taking enough time off of work. One person called this setting a time-off boundary while another had firm guidelines such as working no more than two evening per week. There was repeated mention of purposely taking personal time for recreation or reflection. Another interviewee called this using a time bank where you put in extra time and you deliberately take off this extra time to keep it relatively balanced. The need for taking vacations or going to retreats was repeatedly mentioned.

Several of the pastors cited the importance of using the benefit of health insurance to get regular consultations with their doctor and dentist to stay on top of health needs including the use of medications when appropriate. Many also cited the productive use of psychotherapy and developing a plan for stress management.

One pastor emphasized the usefulness of being aware of your weekly physical cycle and planning recharging periods within this cycle. For example, preparing and delivering the sermons requires considerable energy and focus so he will purposely take the next 24 hours away from his church work. He also talking of having a play ethic, especially during this time period, which helps with this rejuvenation.

Overall, it helps to be in touch with your physical needs and be proactive in keeping a healthy body. It is also essential to set boundaries and be purposeful with how you use your time. Other suggestions in the physical area were to keep alcohol to a minimum and to manage your money well so it doesn't become a stressor. One pastor commented on the mind/body/spirit connections and felt it was essential to keep physically healthy as a part of maintaining spiritual health.

The second area of intellectual needs was addressed in different ways by different interviewees. There were several pastors who excelled in the intellectual area with advanced degrees and maintaining involvement with teaching and training other pastors. Overall, every interviewee was involved with expanding their understandings of their faith with reading, researching sermon topics, and going to conferences. Sermons are individually developed by these pastors and require time for the intellectual research component. Again, one pastor shared the mind/body/spirit connection with preparing an effective sermon. A component of keeping fresh is to spend the time reading both spiritual texts as well as non-theology books for recreation.

Another component of intellectual stimulation is to participate in continuing education activities. These can include going to conferences and workshops such as the National Pastor's Conference or the training provided by the Alban Institute. A different approach is setting aside time for retreats which tend to have a strong experiential component. There are numerous retreat locations available in the Rocky Mountain region including Snowmass and New Mexico. Many are run by Catholic monks and nuns but are open to all denominations and offer intellectual stimulation, reflection, and recharging as part of the experience.

For some of the pastors, there is a component of teaching that is part of intellectual nurturing. One talked of a training model for new clergy where they meet in a group for the first three years to share ideas and mistakes. Another talked of a peer learning group of pastors where the purpose was to study and share ideas on various topics. A third pastor is a regular presenter at trainings and conferences for clergy. One minister was very involved with a Pastoral Leadership Institute which helps train experienced clergy with further leadership skills. All of the pastors are involved with teaching in different ways at their churches. Some are more experiential in their styles while others are more oriented to concepts and analyses.

The third area of this model for balance pertains to the maintenance of emotional balance. The key to emotion balance is to find a place where you can be in touch with your emotions, and people with whom you can be vulnerable and transparent with the various emotions you will experience as a pastor and as a human. It is important to take inventory often on what the pastor is experiencing emotionally and be proactive in addressing the needs that emerge. The role of a pastor often separates the internal emotional world from the world of ministry. The profession of ministry requires considerable giving and taking care of the needs of others who may or may not be aware that the pastor has needs and feelings also. As one pastor put it, don't try to be a super-pastor and don't try to go at it alone emotionally. There will be times when you will have reactions of frustration, anger, overwhelmed, lonesomeness, and many other feelings. By developing safe relationships to share these feelings, a pastor has the chance to process them and not have the feelings come out in destructive ways or burnout.

It is not unusual for past hurts or family of origin issues to present themselves during pastor service. As one interviewee put it “deal with your own crap” so it doesn’t play out negatively on others. Another referred to the addiction of ministry where a pastor can get caught by the need to be needed and has trouble setting limits and boundaries around the work. Some of the participants of this study have used the confidential setting of psychotherapy and all six participants saw value in this work and refer people to therapists.

In this section on emotional balance, there was great emphasis on developing social connections where the pastor has a safe and confidential setting to share and process emotions. For some, this place is in their marriage or primary committed relationship. For others, it extends to their children, especially as the children get older and can provide further emotional support. The need for outside friendships repeatedly was mentioned. There needs to be some people who are confidential friends where the pastor can share the many challenges involved with the profession as well as the internal conflicts that are bound to emerge. It is essential to allow others to support and care for the person who has chosen this profession and there is danger with keeping emotions bottled up.

One facet of maintaining emotional health is in how the pastor sets boundaries. It would be very easy to get caught in triangulation situations and be caught in the middle of things. An example of this was given where a member was in a very public problem and wanted the pastor to write a public letter of support. It did not have anything to do with the church or spirituality and the pastor declined to represent the church in this issue. Sometimes, triangulation can occur when a couple is fighting or divorcing and both turn

to the pastor for validation. These are awkward situations and it is very helpful for the pastor to be clear of the dangers and to have a safe place to talk the situation through.

One more part of emotional health in knowing the limits of what you can actually do in your role of a pastor. A pastor cannot fully take care of hundreds of members (or even one member) with their various spiritual, social, and emotional needs. As some point, a pastor has to let go of control and turn the outcome over to God or to the people involved. Each individual person is responsible for their spiritual, emotional, and social relationships and a pastor cannot be under the illusion that they control these for other people. The pastor can be a guide and a support but is not in charge of other people's lives or outcomes.

The fourth area of balance is that of social needs. Different pastors have different social needs so the first step is being aware of what the social needs really are. There would be a difference between pastors who are very extroverted verses ones that are more internally oriented. For one pastor who is more of an introvert, it is important that there be quiet and alone time as well as time for friends. This introverted pastor sets a boundary that there will be no meetings at home so it remains a place for alone time when needed. For another interviewee who is more of an extrovert, the social time often can be a time of recharging. It is critical for each person to be in touch with this balance and make social commitments accordingly.

The family seems to be a primary place for social connections, as it should be. It is important for clergy to remain open and connected to the love provided by their family and to take the time to be in relationship with their children and/or partner. It is all too common for a pastor's family not to get their share of attention and connection. If a

pastor has a partner, it is important that it be of a quality where they can ask for advice, help, and support. Often, one's partner can be the best critic especially when done with honesty and love.

Friendships can come in several forms. While you can form friendships within the church, there will always be a part of that friendship where you are the pastor. There will always be some dual relationship inherent in this friendship. Many of the participants in this study shared the need for friendships outside of the church where they don't take on the role of ministry. It is a different relationship when the friendship is outside of the church the pastor leads. Perhaps it is a childhood friend that knew them when they were sharing the imperfect side of growing up. More importantly, have friendships that are affirming, safe, trusted, and forgiving. They suggest that you pick friendships with people that are themselves relatively balanced in life and are like-minded with you. Sometimes these friends are the people to share ideas and reactions before taking action on situations. Other times, these are the friends who hold you to mutual accountability with communications pertaining to your actions, thoughts, and words.

Another part of a pastor's social needs has to do with the relationship developed with their staff (if they are in a church with a staff) and their congregation leaders. Hopefully, there is a team approach to leadership in the church with people committed to being spiritual partners looking out for the good of the organization. There needs to be open and supportive communications in both the joys and the problems that the leadership addresses. There needs to be mutual respect and a sense of fellowship in the workplace. Again, the trust to allow for transparency and constructive honesty certainly

helps. It is also important to give staff respect by not micro-managing everything that goes on in the church.

The other focus on social needs that was shared has to do with the limits and boundaries needed in this area. It is important to be aware of other's expectations of the pastor and make conscious decisions around what you will do with these expectations. A pastor cannot please all the members of the congregation and there will always be people who want a closer personal relationship with the pastor for a variety of reasons. Again, it is important to be aware of triangulations that can compromise the ministry or the health of the pastor. There are times to say no or to set a boundary and not participate in something. One pastor also added the awareness that is needed for self-differentiation, to manage transference and counter-transference, and to watch for enmeshment.

The final area for social needs has to do with relationships with other pastors. Sometimes the only people who can understand your emotions and considerations will be another pastor who has also been through many experiences and dilemmas. Having friendships with like-minded pastors can be an enormous social support in an often lonely profession. For some pastors, it is an informal friendship with fellow pastors. For other pastors, having a support group where you can share ideas, experiences, doubts, and have accountability is of great support and fulfills some of the social needs.

There is one more area of needs that was discussed by all the pastors. This is the area of personal spiritual needs. All the participants shared various stances that guide them as they strive to understand their relationship to their theology, their role as pastors, and their own spirituality. A repeated theme was the importance of letting go of control and responsibility of other people's spiritual pathways. The role of a pastor is to share

experiences and reflections and to encourage spiritual growth, not to convince or control the growth of others. Several pastors reflected that God is in charge, not them, so it would be pointless to try to control others. One participant shared the concept of process theology which considers spirituality as an ongoing growth process, not a cognitive set of rules and regulations (or shoulds). It is essential to trust this process and experience where it takes each person in their spiritual development (another way of saying trust in God). As individuals, each pastor is only a small part of the ongoing story of Christian faith and of intergenerational spiritual development so trust in the long story line of the ages instead of just an individual's own narrow knowledge. When the individual pastor allows themselves to be part of the ongoing story of spirituality, it helps him/her to focus on what is really important.

Another theme was that spirituality grows through questioning, reflecting, clarifying, and experiencing the presence of Holy Spirit and being open to what presents itself when in a spiritual frame of mind. There was a strong experiential component shared by all the pastors when it comes to spiritual renewal and its part of personal balance. Therefore, it is essential to pay attention to your own spiritual needs, especially if you are going to be a spiritual leader.

The participants of this study had many ideas on ways to encourage this growth and balance in the spiritual area. They all talked of spending time in prayer and meditation and allowing the experience to soak in. All the ministers encouraged spending time with the texts and scriptures containing the Word of God to help guide and inspire their prayer and meditation. They also shared their experiences with retreats as a time away from the stressors of running a church and working with hundreds of people.



Retreats come in many forms and designs and can range in purpose from recharging to deep contemplation and growth. They can range from ones run by the church members at a summer camp for a night to those run by monks and nuns at monasteries where participants stay for a week or much more. A retreat tends to be most effective when pastors allow the experience side to emerge and when they take the time to experience God, not just learn new ideas.

They also talked of how spiritual support groups can be useful if it is done with like-minded pastors. It tends to work less effectively if you mix a group of conservative members with a group of progressive pastors since the theology can be so different. One pastor thought that personal therapy when woven with spiritual questioning had been quite useful. Other shared the idea joining with an outside spiritual director who can support and encourage the spiritual questioning and reflection that is necessary for spiritual growth in a safe and affirming environment.

An area that also came up repeatedly was the process of sermon preparation. The process often begins with an idea or a scripture. Then it is time to research the scripture, read on it, get ideas off the internet and find out what is said about it. After that, it is time to experience the text and see what actually soaks in. One pastor talked of having the text become embedded in his soul first and see where it grows. Another talked of researching the scripture and then letting it just sit with him, often for weeks, and experiencing it before shaping the actual sermon. The actual sermon delivery is also very importance for the renewal of the pastor. One pastor shared “I’ve been blessed with the ability to worship as I lead worship... When I preach, I preach to me as well as the congregation so I hear the word of God. I get filled up.” Another considered the following “When I

preach, I not only preach to them (the congregation) but preaching to me. In the very same moment that I'm preaching, I am under my own preaching... Therefore, I sit under it with the congregation even though it was my voice bringing it." The very act of preaching is a source of spiritual renewal for most all of the interviewees and this helps keep them in balance. There is a general consensus that God speaks through them and that they can be renewed through the experience and they need to pay attention to the experience as well as to the message itself.

### Congregational Support

One of the research questions included the systemic influence of the congregation on the life and balance of the pastor. The interviewees had many ideas on what helps and what doesn't in regard to what a congregation can offer to their religious leader. An overriding theme that emerged repeatedly was that the work of a church cannot ride on one person but must be a team effort split between the pastor, the church leadership, and the whole body of the congregation. When the primary responsibility of the church is placed on the minister, it can be overwhelming to that person and sets up that person for criticism and blame. This is a sure formula for the pastor to burn out and become isolated. There needs to be a systemic understanding that everyone plays a part in the development and execution of the church experience. One pastor talked of a church in another town that chews up clergy on a regular basis and has developed a negative culture of blame and isolation for anyone stepping into that position. This can never work and does not support the spiritual experience for any of the people involved with this church. When the

relationship between the pastor and the congregation is one of non-loving criticalness, divisiveness, and negativity, this only creates separateness and isolation for all.

There are tangible supports that a congregation can provide to the pastor that helps support that person's work. One basic support is a livable wage with benefits. The clergy are traditionally paid poorly which creates problems. Benefits such as health care and vacation time are vital to being able to maintain a long term balance in this work. A church can also provide time and resources for conferences, trainings, and other continuing education. Several participants in this study cited the importance of defining employment details as much as possible at the initial interview stage of hiring. This policy statement can include items such as compensation, sabbatical policy, procedures for resigning, retreat time offered, retirement considerations, details of services expected, the church's organization philosophy, review procedures, mechanisms for two way feedback, and considerable dialogue on the expectations and limits for this position.

One thing that helps is when the congregation carries out a theology of grace towards the pastor. The pastor is to give the best service possible but cannot be seen as invincible and untouchable. All pastors will be imperfect in carrying out their work. The pastor needs to be seen as a trained leader with a job of inspiring and encouraging spiritual experiences and spiritual growth. In light of this imperfection, it helps to have a means of sharing concerns in a constructive manner and to minimize sniping or complaining. One pastor has a communication philosophy of asking people to approach anyone they have concerns for first before involving the pastor. If the pastor does get involved, vague generalities are not accepted which builds in accountability for accurate communications. Both of these communication techniques help prevent the pastor from

becoming triangulated in the middle of another person's conflicts. It is also expected that concerns will be shared in a constructive loving fashion with the goal focused on resolution and understanding. A congregation member is asked to be constructive and caring in their communications with anyone including the pastor.

Some congregations set up a pastoral care committee or a single person pastoral caretaker which can be helpful under certain circumstances. The role of these persons would be to hear and support the needs of the pastor. At times, they are a sounding board or a place for the pastor to vent a bit. At other times, they can be advocates for the pastor with activities such as reminding the pastor to take time off or going to the governing board with a suggestion. A caretaker can only be effective if the relationship is safe and confidential in nature. Special care needs to be taken with the selection and training of anyone assigned to this position on the limits and the confidentiality required for this position to truly work. This cannot be done by a person with authority over the pastor or the dual relationship would block effectiveness.

Another area where the congregation is involved is with the job performance review process. It is traditional that the governing board gives feedback to the pastor on areas for improvement and, when done in a caring and supportive manner, can be useful feedback and accountability for the pastor. One interviewee shared a different review process where the pastor evaluates their own challenges, growth areas, and accomplishments. A process for this is outlined in the book, *Getting a Fix on Your Ministry* (Oswald, 1993). This process allows for in-depth self-evaluation for a pastor as well as identifies supports needed to embrace the challenges identified. It is designed to be supportive and to encourage open dialogue in the evaluation process.

One more area where the congregation and the church leadership can offer support is in the encouragement of taking sabbatical within the church's policies and in developing a design for the sabbatical that will serve both the congregation and the pastor. Many pastors do not feel encouraged to take this renewal time or worry how the church will get along without them. When it is built in expectation that the sabbatical policy will be used, it then can be developed with great meaningfulness for all. Generally, there are goals and expectations for both the pastor and the church. For one church, it was designed to expose the members to a variety of preachers with the idea that this would enhance their church experience and decrease dependence on the head pastor for spiritual inspiration. For another church, it caused them to examine their internal resources and they learned more about their strengths and options. For the pastors, it is not just a time for rest. It is often designed as a time for spiritual renewal, for play, for studying something, for a renewal of their family relationships, as well as for rest. Often, a church wants the pastor to bring something back from months away such as a publication or a project. When the sabbatical is supported and thoughtfully designed, perhaps every five-seven years, it is usually of great value to both the pastor and the congregation.

Overall, the congregation has considerable impact on the life and personal balance of the pastor. The things that tend to work are developing a positive and supportive culture of shared responsibility based on the goal of enhancing everyone's lives. It is very helpful when boundaries are established and expectations are solidified. The attitude of a community team goes a long way to creating a healthy positive culture for both the pastor and the church participants.

## Denominational Support

The overriding theme that came from this research question is that very few, if any, pastors turn to their denomination for support especially for personal support. This is a glaring problem when we consider the systemic influences and resources that could be available to the pastor. Only one of the interviews even had any expectations of support from the structures outside of their own churches and this was primarily in the denomination's procurement of grants for programs that could offer support and training. There are various structures in denominations that affect the support that could be offered. These range from denominations that are quite hierarchal in nature to churches that are totally independent in nature and do not really have any denomination. One pastor commented that a colleague had to be removed from the ministry and was simply "left hanging" after dismissal. While the health insurance is appreciated by those pastors whose insurance is arranged by the denomination, there is very little support beyond this benefit. A number of the pastors expressed concern that church leadership is still very male oriented and this makes it especially hard for female leaders to go to the denomination for any understanding. Even for those denominations that accept female pastors, they must deal with the traditions of male dominance that exists in most denominations. Some of the denominations offered a code of ethics, although this was not true of all the churches. One pastor commented that even the denominational conventions were discouraging and seemed to be controlled by the right wing politics of that denomination.

There were a few denominations that offered some support, although often indirectly through grants and temporary programs. The Lilly Foundation seems to be

seen as one of the few national resources trying to address the support and health of pastors and several of their grant programs were cited as quite meaningful. Another useful program was presented where new church pastors are teamed up with a coach (who is an experienced pastor with coach training). Another supported small group meeting for new pastors in the first five years of their profession.

Denominations need to address their policies and resources for when a pastor crashes. Often, they are simply on their own and are given little direction or encouragement. The concept of redemption needs to be addressed with programs, policies, and financial resources. There are pastors that burn out that can be renewed with specific supports and can return to effective ministry. The support for this needs to come from the denominational level.

There seemed to be very little support by denominations on the question of who pastors the pastor. Several interviewees commented that the District President or Bishop was theoretically to provide this service, but it never happens in reality. Generally, it is up to the individual pastors to develop this spiritual support and accountability on their own. There was very little expectation for support from denominations and no optimism that this would change anytime soon.

### Burnout and Disasters

There were many ideas and theories on what contributes to burnout and other dangers that some clergy experience. Certainly, most clergy feel some burnout at different points in their careers. It can be an extremely stressful profession at times and very rewarding at other times. A pastor deals with very deep parts of the human

experience and must be prepared for this. Preparation means having support plans as well as reconciling their own personal issues and triggers. This can include working through family of origin issues as well as having a deliberate stress management plan.

One danger shared by almost all the pastors in this study is that of allowing oneself to become disconnected to others and to try to operate through a façade. In this disconnected state, a pastor may deny any feelings or concerns and certainly not share them with anyone. This façade can manifest itself when a pastor is operating from beliefs based on what is supposed to be believed. This supposition can come from a church body, a theological stance not true to the pastor, or from personal expectations of what should be said and done. Another cause of disconnection can be when there are events or inner problems that a pastor is trying to protect and keeps all vulnerability away so these are not discovered by others. Whatever the causation, the result is isolation and a sense of being alone. There will be a flat affect in the work of ministry and a lack of connecting to others. It is easy to then fall into depression or anxiety and exhibit compensation behaviors and a further need for the façade. It is a very dangerous cycle that generally leads to ineffectiveness or disasters. By living through a façade, there is a lack of accountability since the pastor is not sharing the very things where he needs to have accountability and support. There is no safe place to talk, feel, or express doubts and concerns and seems like a horrible space from which to operate.

It is very important that everyone is as clear as possible about the expectations of the pastor. There can be many different ideas of what a pastor should be doing from members. Some members expect the pastor to be almost perfect in every work and action. If there is a need such as a follow-up call that is not made, some church members will see



that as a pastoral failure. Sometimes, a pastor is expected to be a great counselor, a terrific business CEO, an inspirational speech giver, and have amazing foresight for every situation. Obviously, this is not reality. It becomes an additional problem when the pastor has these expectations of himself as well. There are some pastors who feel personally responsible for each person's spirituality as well as the need to "get it right" every time no matter what the challenge. Being a spiritual leader, some pastors see themselves as above others or just plain different than other people. There can be a sense that the church's success is wholly on the shoulders of the pastor and therefore the pastor becomes incredibly important. Some can take this to the extreme of seeing themselves on a pedestal which can lead to congregants worshiping the pastor (not the spirituality that the church is supposed to support). This can lead to a temptation for personal gratification such as a need to be adored or to take advantage of the office. All of these perspectives lead to an isolation, a disconnection, and possibly a lack of accountability or approachability and can easily lead to either burnout or disasters. When a congregation is worshiping a pastor, some pastors can see themselves as above accountability and perhaps the normal rules don't apply to them. In extreme situations, there can be a narcissism that expects to control and rule the church. The expectations of both the congregation and of the pastor need to be developed as a team effort where the pastor is not seen as an unapproachable power.

A related topic that can lead to burnout or disaster is when a pastor has low self-esteem and looks to others for their sense of self-worth. This can play out in many ways. One way was called having an addiction to the ministry where the highs and lows are derived from the work and the feedback connected with the work. There is an external

validation that is very temporary and can change with a change in the wind. A burnout set-up would be to think that the more hours worked was correlated with an increase in admiration and positive external validity. Therefore, if a pastor self-sacrifices and works 70 hours a week, the person will feel greater self-esteem until they can't do it anymore. Then there is a crash in self-esteem as well as all the other parts of that pastor's balance wheel. This false sense of people-pleasing can't work since it is impossible to please all the external forces. If the pastor also has unclear boundaries, it can lead to triangulation and further ineffectiveness, stress, and burnout.

Still another area that can lead to disasters is when a pastor goes into the ministry to heal their own wounds or to care for family of origin issues. One interviewee described how he began the ministry to counter his father's statement of how he would "never amount to a hill of beans." Since the father was a pastor, becoming one had to count as a hill of beans or better. Luckily, this pastor has done work on this family of origin issue and appears quite effective now. There are some ministers that have very difficult childhood experience and they must take care of these wounds or the trigger reactions will emerge as inappropriate moments. When a pastor functions from a façade or a base of controlling others, they may be using this to avoid issues that are too uncomfortable to approach, and they become unapproachable. At times, a pastor will have a hidden life as we read about earlier with Ted Haggard and his secret behaviors. This is another recipe for disasters.

It is essential for a healthy pastor to watch for signs of stress and take care of the stressors and the disconnections that get in the way of inspiring spiritual growth. This can be as simple as exercising and eating right or developing a safe place to talk and share the

normal human reactions to an intense job. Sometimes, it requires consulting with a physician, a therapist, or a spiritual director. When a pastor shuts this down and denies the humanity that has to exist, this will lead to problems that can affect many people. Sometimes, it leads to outright disasters that can wound and disillusion many people and this must be avoided. There are times when a pastor needs to temporarily or permanently leave the profession. One interviewee talked of how some pastors get deep into a disaster so they have to leave the profession and as a way to escape the extreme pressure. Certain behaviors are a ticket out such as having an affair, alcoholism, drug use, embezzlement, or most any felonies.

### Summary

This study examined hundreds of pages of interviews in order to understand the challenges, the experiences, and the wisdom that were shared by the six pastors who candidly spoke on what is needed to survive and thrive in this profession. I was struck by how much they each cared about this topic and how they were willing to be vulnerable with me in the two-part interview process. A model to organize their ideas, themes and suggestions came from the literature review, the first analysis of the raw data, and from my own clinical experience. This model is the PIESS model (physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual) which coupled with the considerations of the congregation, denomination and of pastoral disaster theories seems to encapsulate a lifestyle for success in the ministry. When a pastor is vigilant about staying in balance in all these areas and develops a supportive congregation, there is great hope at having this a life-long meaningful profession. When there is brokenness and the PIESS model is not

put in balance, including the internal brokenness considered in the last part of this chapter, and then many problems emerge including very disastrous problems that can injure many people. It is a very wonderful profession and can be one of the most meaningful ways one can contribute to a community. Or it can be a nightmare of stress, challenges, and lead to a pathway of brokenness for many people. Anyone deciding to take on the challenges of becoming a pastor needs to recognize both possibilities and to do everything possible to take care of their issues and to embrace the need to be vulnerable, transparent, and open to the experiences that will be presented to them along the way.

## CHAPTER 5

This research project examined the supports and lifestyles of clergy focusing on what makes for a successful balance that prevents burnout and other disruptive behaviors. In this narrative inquiry, six pastors were twice interviewed around this topic and a thematic analysis was conducted. Based on the literature, the initial data themes, and my own clinical experience, a model emerged for organizing the data into a meaningful format. This model which focuses on individual needs is the PIESS model and consists of human needs in five areas. These five areas include physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual. The external considerations and influences also analyzed included congregational support, denominational support, and the interviewee's theories of what causes pastoral disasters. Out of this thematic analysis emerges many suggestions and supports for pastors who want to purposefully focus on a healthy balance in life so they can remain effective in their profession.

Overall, the interviewees were very experienced pastors who were very well-established in their congregations. All six were working full time in their churches, experiencing the stressors and demands that are commonly found in this work. From an analysis of their interviews, a list of healthy practices emerged as well as suggestions of how their congregations and denominations could support their work. They also presented a body of knowledge about what can cause extreme burnout and resulting disasters.

## Research Findings

The research findings presented many considerations in the physical needs area of the PIESS model. Our participants shared the wisdom of getting exercise, having good nutrition, being careful with weight management, and safeguarding restful sleep cycles. They also were aware of managing time well with such a demanding profession. This included setting limits on the amount of time devoted to work including the number of evenings worked per week. This also included taking enough time off for both recreation and reflection. This time off should be done on an ongoing weekly basis as well as taking vacations or going to retreats. Physical health also needs to be monitored through using health insurance benefits to have regular check-ups with doctors and dentists and to use recommended medications.

Physically, it is very helpful to be aware of your individual physical cycles and to plan recharging and stress management times during the week. One pastor cited the need for a play ethic to go along with a strong work ethic.

Other suggestions in the physical area included managing money well, keeping alcohol to a minimum, and setting boundaries as a form of stress management. The concept of mind/ body/spirit connections was mentioned to say that the various areas of the PIESS model are interconnected.

The interviewees had a variety of ideas for attending to the intellectual part of the PIESS model. A person attends to intellectual needs by participating in the world of ideas and wondering. Some pastors pursued this by obtaining advanced degrees while others were involved in teaching and training. All the interviewees were intellectually stimulated with the work of sermon preparation and expanding their faith through

reading. Each of the pastors spends hours each week preparing and shaping the sermons they are going to deliver at their weekly services and this requires research time through both secular and non-secular readings.

Most all of the participants participate in various types of continuing education. For some, it is going to professional conferences and workshops. For others, it is engaging in spiritual retreats that offer intellectual stimulation as well as time for spiritual reflection and recharging. One way to participate in continuing education is to teach which can be done as part of a conference, an academic program, or a type of mentoring program.

The area of the PIESS model pertaining to emotional health can be a challenging one for pastors. One of the challenges is the expectations others have for the role of the pastor and that the clergy may have for themselves. The work requires giving to others who may not even be aware that the pastor also has needs and feelings about things. Often, this work can be lonely and isolating. If a minister is seeking outside approval or is a people pleaser, it is that much more difficult to be aware of their emotions and to attend to them. It is vital for a pastor to find a place where it is safe to explore the various emotions that will emerge in this work and to have at least one person with whom the pastor can be transparent, vulnerable, and accountable. An effective pastor will be one who touches the heart of others and, in turn, will be touched by others. A pastor experiences both births and deaths and often is included in the deepest, darkest feelings of congregation members. This will impact the pastor and requires a safe place for the pastor to debrief and to have emotions.

On another level, it would be expected that past hurts or family of origin issues would present themselves in the course of being a pastor. Some people go into the ministry to help themselves heal or to gain forgiveness for something. Just in everyday interactions, there is bound to be a church member who reminds the pastor of their father, mother, brother, sister, an inappropriate neighbor, an insensitive classmate from junior high school, a racist teacher, a critical sports coach, an alcoholic friend, a molester, an old boyfriend or girlfriend, or other characters from the past. I appreciated how one pastor put it with “deal with your own crap” so it doesn’t play out negatively in the present.

Another part of emotional health is an acceptance of the limits of the responsibilities of the pastor. Hopefully, a pastor will inspire and influence many people towards a deeper and more meaningful existence. No pastor can fully take care of the needs of any member of the congregation even though this is sometimes the expectation. There must be personal boundaries in many places to be effective as a clergy and to not get caught in the drama of many other people’s lives.

The social area of the PIESS model was addressed in different ways by different pastors. Naturally, there will be quite a difference in needs for pastors who are very extroverted verses the more introverted. The concept of having people with whom you can intimately connect is accepted by all the interviewees. For some, there is a focus on family. If a pastor is in a committed primary relationship, this relationship needs to be nurtured since there will be many extra demands on the relationship from stressors and from expectations. If the pastor is a parent, the time for parent-child growth and connecting also must be safeguarded. This is for the benefit of both the adult and the



child. A pastor also needs to have friendships that are affirming, trusted, and forgiving. These friendships should include ones outside of the church where the pastor can just be a person and a friend.

A different area of social needs pertains to staff relationships within the work setting. It is important to develop a level of friendship and trust with your staff to minimize stress and triangulations and to share the mission of the work in an encouraging environment where people are committed to being spiritual partners on the job. One of the big stressors for a pastor is when there is discord and tension among the church workers and this includes the main volunteer staff of the church.

An essential area of friendship is having at least one person to share the various experiences, emotions, and confusions that a pastor is bound to encounter. This could be a long term friend that is safe, confidential, affirming, forgiving, and accepting. It could also be a fellow pastor where the relationship has grown over time, a spiritual director, a therapist, a spouse, or another person who can honor the vulnerability needed. The success of this friendship is measured by the quality of sharing permitted, not by the role of the friend.

The last area of the PIESS model is that of personal spiritual needs. It became clear by the interviews that this is not just the intellectual absorption of sacred reading or an analytical analysis of the Biblical literature. Rather, the spiritual (or spiritual/ intuitive as Kubler-Ross puts it) is when a person experiences the sacred. There are many ways and examples of this but the renewal comes from when a pastor gets to “drink from the living waters” as one participant explained. Some of the ways to get at this are prayer, meditation, retreats, spending time with the texts and scriptures, sermon preparation, and

the act of presenting a sermon. Sermon preparation was of interest to this researcher since that is something I have not done. Several pastors shared the experience of sermon preparation as researching the topic and then letting it soak in and see what it says, how it grows, and what the pastor experiences with the topic. There is a letting go part of this process that allows the Holy Spirit to work with experiencing the research and readings. This experience generally does contribute to spiritual renewal for the minister.

This completes the presenting of findings for the five areas of the PIES model and leads us to the next area of findings. As mentioned before, there were three other theme areas suggested by the research questions, the literature, and my clinical experience. These are considerations for congregations, denominational considerations, and a presentation of ideas around clergy burnout and disasters.

The structure and support of a congregation can have a profound influence on the health and balance of their pastor. There are churches that are known for grinding through pastor after pastor and others that support a healthy long-term career. There are churches that have impossible expectations for the ministry and then jump into a cycle of criticism and blame when the expectations are not met. These churches usually expect the pastor to carry the whole load and may undermine any efforts at healthy systemic functioning. This is especially dangerous for a pastor who is trying to do people-pleasing and is destined to fail. The recovery from this type of experience can take a long time and has driven more than one pastor out of the ministry. When the relationship between the pastor and the congregation is one of non-loving criticalness, it poisons the spiritual experience for all involved and defeats the very purpose of the church structure.

Instead, there are many things a congregation can provide that helps all the members including the leadership. One basic tenant is that the work and responsibility of the church must be shared by the minister, the church staff, the church leadership (such as the Board of Elders, the Board of Directors, or Deacons), and all the members. While each of these branches has different roles and responsibilities, there needs to be a common commitment to creating an environment that supports the spiritual and community experience for all. A culture needs to be created that allows for constructive questioning aimed at resolution and understanding rather than criticism or blame. It needs to be filled with grace, an understanding that no one person has all the answers, and that better answers emerge through healthy, supportive, and respectful communications. Some of this can be set up during the initial interview process with prospective ministers and other staff members so a person gets hired who will buy into this value system. Other supports for this culture could come through policy statements and an accountability process to be sure the church is maintaining this attitude. A periodic scheduled review of a church's mission and policies can also help maintain this healthy culture of respect and growth.

There are many benefits and supports that a congregation can extend to a pastor. Some of these can be outlined in an initial contract format including a livable wage, health benefits, a sabbatical policy which is encouraged to be utilized, vacation time and an expectation that it will be used each year, performance review procedures that support the growth of the pastor, retreat time offered, a training and retreat budget, and an outline of the church's philosophies and goals. There can also be a person or committee that is set up to watch out and advocate for the needs of the pastor and the pastor's family.

The next area is that of denominational support. Based on the themes presented by our research participants, this is an area that is gravely underdeveloped. There are very few pastors that turn to their denominational organizations for support, especially in time of need. This is partially due to the lack of programs and partially due to the lack of confidential settings within the denominational organization. For many pastors, the denomination can determine if you can continue your profession or if you will ever get another call. They are not going to turn to the church hierarchy when their future could be determined by what they disclosed even if they are trying to get help with a struggle. There are certainly stories of a pastor needing to be put on leave and being left without any support. I do know from my consultation work that there are some denominations that actually do give great support in a confidential setting for struggling pastors although this was not expressed by these interviewees. This is done through partnerships with private clinics and programs that are partially funded through grants. There were additional concerns for those denominations that have female pastors since most all denominations have been male-dominated forever. There is a sense in the literature that some female pastors will get backlash for “going against the tide of male traditionalism” (Weaver, et al, 2002). The concerns were around the understanding or acceptance of a female’s perspective or even the discounting of a female pastor’s needs.

There were a few ideas referenced by the interviewees as useful from a denominational source. One important offering is a code of ethics developed by some denominations. There are some ethical codes that are broad and some that are very detailed. Another area of support comes from those denominations that have encouraged grants to provide pastoral support. An outstanding source of grants has been the Lilly

Foundation which has given grants for clergy support and renewal to many denominations. Another great source of information and training that many denominations have used has been the Alban Institute. Overall, there were very low expectations that a pastor would be able to access much support from their denomination.

The final area of research findings from this study is on what contributes to burnout and some of the disasters that clergy occasionally experience. Generally, most clergy have some degree of burnout at some point in their career. It is not unusual since this is a very demanding profession dealing with some of the deepest parts of human existence. Even with a great plan for burnout prevention, there are times when a planned break is very renewing. It is a profession that will test a person and requires ongoing reflection and support.

A theme of danger that is commonly recognized is when a pastor gets disconnected from other people or their own emotions and tries to operate through a façade. This can develop from a gradual burnout or from the person feeling the need to hide depression or anxiety states. Sometimes there are events or internal problems that a pastor feels the need to protect and scrambles to keep everyone away out of fear of being discovered. There is no safe outlet for the vulnerability this pastor is feeling and the person becomes isolated and alone. The deeper this gets, the more dangerous it becomes. At some point, there is a lack of accountability and honesty, even to the person experiencing this. Coping or compensation behaviors often arise and can lead to many disastrous outcomes where other people also can get hurt. This is one cycle of a pastoral disaster. It is essential that pastors find someplace to be vulnerable and to share their emotions or even deep hurts. It is also essential that a pastor examine their motivation for

choosing this profession and to take care of any old issues that could be part of this decision.

Another problem area happens when a pastor has low self-esteem and looks to the outside world for a sense of value or self-worth. This external validation can distract a minister from the primary purpose of their spiritual leadership and shift it to a quest for self-esteem. This could lead to working 60-70 hours weeks in an effort to do enough good and be externally recognized for these hours as part of their quest. This pace is not sustainable and generally will lead to a crash, undermining the quest for self-esteem further. When a pastor experiences such a crash, many disruptive things can happen including disillusionment of church members, hurts to individuals if they were involved with the crash, or additions as a grasping for balance. One pastor called the quest for self-worth an addiction to the highs and lows of ministry where any external validation is temporary and the pastor needs another fix of validation after a short while.

Another disaster formula is when a pastor goes into the ministry to heal their own wounds or due to family of origin issues. There are some that choose this profession because it was expected or they were the fourth generation of pastors and that is how they get validation from their families of origin. Others may enter the ministry to prove they are as respected as the profession. Still others have deep hurts or shames and want to be cleansed by the persona of being Holy. These motivations to become a pastor often can lead to many problematic behaviors including affairs, alcoholism, embezzlement, controlling others, being self-righteous, and other destructive behaviors that tend to hurt other people who want to trust the motives and wisdom of a pastor.

In summary, there are strategies, lifestyles, philosophies, and motivations that can greatly help a pastor to stay balanced and have a long and meaningful career. There are also many paths to destruction that need to be avoided. If a pastor periodically conducts a self-assessment and an honest assessment with a trusted person, there is much that can be done to tweak the many variables that lead to burnout. This takes the courage to honestly look at all the areas in this research and expect that the pastor will often need to adjust parts of the plan. If there appears to be areas of brokenness, the best thing is to approach it with vulnerability and a focus to improve that area. Pastors are only human and there cannot be any expectation of attaining self-perfection. While there certainly are supports that can be offered by a congregation, a family member, or a denomination, it is up to the pastor to take on this perspective of ongoing self-reflection in an effort to be balanced and to best serve the ministry.

#### Research Findings Compared to the Literature Review

The literature review of this dissertation covered many areas and suggested that there were significant challenges and strategies for the profession of the ministry. There were studies that cited problems such as being overweight, having affairs, losing interest in the work, depression, anxiety, and many other examples of not taking care of balance for ministers. Other research considered the impact of stress on individual pastors and their families as well as causes of burnout for the ministry including co-dependency. Other parts of the literature review compiled many strategies to help ministers including self-care, having close friendships, developing mutual accountability, handling emotions, stress management, time management, exercise, and attending to spiritual needs.

The narrative inquiry research of this study expected to find confirmation of many of the challenges and strategies of the literature review. This did occur time and time again. The suggestions of taking care of oneself physically were confirmed as common sense would expect. The need for a good social network also was confirmed as was the concept of taking care of one's spiritual life. The literature suggested taking care of the emotional realm which was repeated in depth in our interviews. The advantage of this qualitative research methodology was that more depth could emerge in both of these areas. In this study, I was told many first-hand stories of the pathway to find a balanced career including some of the struggles that drove home the importance of actually practicing the strategies of balance. All of the interviewed pastors shared stories of events that had been hard and made them realize the necessity of friendships, health, family relationships, emotional vulnerability, and the need to turn things over to God. These categories were more than a to-do list for healthy living and the relevancy came out through the depth of the interview process that rarely was conveyed in the literature review.

One area where the depth of qualitative research was especially helpful was in understanding the spiritual part of the Wheel of Balance. The interviewed pastors made it clear that spirituality was a great deal more than knowing and reviewing books and Bible passages. Through their stories, it was apparent that the experience of spirituality was the essential component, the spirituality that comes from every breath we take, the drinking from the waters of God. The renewal of this is not going to happen from an intellectual stance. Rather, it comes from taking the time to listen and be silent with the Holy Spirit and to let this soak into one's heart and soul. It may be experience at a retreat or during a



prayer or meditation on the pastor's office. It can be experienced during the delivery of a sermon when the pastor is also inspired and renewed by the message. There are examples of this in other world religions also including Buddhist meditations, and Native American ceremonies and quests. In the Christian world, the Holy Spirit is an essential part of the Trinity and the experiencing of the Holy Spirit is an essential part of the balance that our interviewed pastors shared.

The Wholeness Wheel as well as the work of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross suggested a model of human needs to organize the various areas that must be addressed to have a long and productive career in the ministry. I used these thematic organizing tools to evaluate the hundreds of pages of data that were generated through the interview process. Through the guidance of the literature review coupled with my clinical experience and the themes of the participants, the PIESS model emerged as the way to organize many of the themes.

### Implications of This Research

There are many implications that arise from this research. For the individual pastor, this research presents many pathways to having a healthy and full career in the ministry. It is essential to be very purposeful in developing a lifestyle plan that addresses the many need areas suggested by the PIESS model. While it seems like there are many areas to attend, the cost of not attending to them is far greater and can lead to professional disaster. There are many commonly accepted practices that have been suggested time and time again. These include exercise, eating a nutritious balanced diet, getting enough sleep, having regular doctor and dental check-ups, having fun time, having friendships, and attending to one's spiritual life. Some of the other practices suggested are having a

place where you can have regular emotional check-ups, keeping fresh with ideas and questioning for a deeper depth of understanding, maintaining a good marriage that is healthy for both parties, developing a play ethic besides the work ethic, and regularly engaging in spiritual renewal experiences. It is also essential that the pastor take care of those hidden areas of life that can poison the spirit of leadership that is required in this profession. If there is a co-dependency, an addiction including a work addiction, a deep personal wound such as being a victim of child abuse or other issues, take care of them for the sake of yourself, your family, your ministry, and the many people that are entrusting you with their hearts and souls. It is possible to take care of these barriers to spiritual leadership if the minister so chooses. If a pastor decided not to take care of these issues, it could be time to reexamine if this is the right profession for that pastor.

The individual pastor also needs to periodically take stock on their own expectations and not try to take over other people's task of spiritual formation and life problem solving. The profession is to serve as a counselor and as a teacher to inspire and guide others in their spiritual relationship.

There are implications for congregations in this research also. An organization has a responsibility to provide structure and expectations to its leadership, some of which is to be co-developed. Certainly, it helps for a congregation to provide a living wage for the work that is done. If a congregation cannot afford a full-time pastor, then the expectations and boundaries for a part-time pastor need to be clarified. It is unfair to provide a part-time salary for full-time work. Providing various benefits also helps support the work of a pastor. These can include health insurance, dental insurance, vacation time with the overt

expectation that it will be used, sick time, retirement, funds for continuing education and retreats, and supply funds for books and other educational resources.

Additionally, a congregation needs to support a culture of grace and encouragement for the pastor as well as for the membership. A culture of criticism and blaming directed towards a pastor will only create a negative environment for all which can poison the spiritual mission of the church. There must be shared responsibility for the development of the church, shared by members, leadership, staff, and the minister. This church community approach is partially so the minister doesn't burn out but is also a solid form of volunteer management that encourages ownership of the organizational culture by all. An affirming congregation can offer a pastoral care person or committee to help the pastor. There must be safeguards of confidentiality built into any such committee. The purpose and procedures of this committee needs to be co-developed by the pastor and the church so it can actually function as supportive.

There were other strategies suggested by the research participants including the development of a performance review process. The Alban Institute has a publication which suggests a form of self-review for the pastor as well as any administrative reviews performed by the church leadership. There should be a solid sabbatical policy in place for the pastor and it should take into account service beyond the present church. The congregation can encourage their pastor to actually take the sabbatical as a renewal time for both the minister and the congregation. Most sabbaticals have the pastor bring back something that will benefit the membership as well as the pastor (and the pastor's family). Many pastors don't take sabbaticals since they never see a good time in the life

of the church for their absence and they may see themselves as always essential for the church to keep alive.

There are important implications for denominations in this research. There was very little inclination on the part of the interviewees to ever turn to their denomination for support in these areas. Some denominations have designated people that are to be the pastor for the pastors but this is seldom used according to this research. In some cases, the designated person is to support 100 ministers in 100 locations and it is not possible for that person to even get to know them all well, much less develop a trusting relationship. In other cases, the very person designated for this is also the person in charge of any future job offerings which creates a difficult conflict of interest.

There are a number of supports that denominations could develop in support of their pastors. From the literature review, we learn that there are efforts by the Covenant denomination that could be of value to many others. The Covenant policy document on ethical principals could serve as a model of professional expectations and support and greatly expand the code of ethics currently in place with other denominations. I suspect that there are other programs and policies that are in existence with individual denominations that could help the profession across denominational borders.

Another area that a denomination could encourage would be the use of research and program development grants to enhance the support and the knowledge of the needs of pastors for balance and burnout prevention. This could take the form of training and workshops for pastors, both at conferences and on-line. Perhaps this could even be a continuing education requirement for certification renewal with financial support from either the denomination or from grants. While most denominations are tight on money

during these stressed economic times, it might be less expensive to support this training than go to the expense associated with burnout, clergy replacement, or even lawsuits from extreme situations. One other implication for denominations would be to continue the refinement of screening for seminary applicants as well as the self-care/burnout prevention training that can begin in seminary. When a young seminarian is trained in this from the beginning, it is much easier to sustain a productive life-long career. It would also be helpful for seminaries to have more procedures and screening in their role as gatekeepers into the profession on ministry. This could be in the admission process as well as the ongoing personal development of the seminarians. An idea shared by one of the interviewees was that a seminary committee had to attest and sign off on the personal development of graduating seminarians before they could actually graduate and become a pastor.

### Implications for Further Research

There are many areas ripe for further research in the area of pastoral support and the prevention of disasters. I will list a number of my ideas:

1. Conduct a wider study that allows for more diversity of perspectives. This study was limited due to the homogenous nature of clergy in Northern Colorado who volunteered for this study. It would be of value to have many other perspectives on this issue including more ethnic diversity, cultural diversity, participants from different areas of the United States or the world, and more female participants. It would enrich our knowledge to understand in more depth the challenges for traditionally marginalized groups such as

female pastors, gay pastors, or single pastors (unmarried or not in a committed relationship).

2. Another study would consider the viewpoints and lifestyles of other spiritual leaders from religious traditions other than Christianity to see if a wider body of knowledge could be developed that would benefit all spiritual leaders.
3. It would be of value to conduct a narrative inquiry research model with spouses and family members of clergy to more fully understand the impact and needs of the family unit with such a demanding profession.
4. Another research area would be to conduct a meta-analysis of the policies, programs, and supports across many denominations so the knowledge of best practices could be shared in support of clergy health and effectiveness. This could include their codes of ethics, policies of handling pastors experiencing burnout, programmatic supports, and other practical projects that are currently being implemented.
5. A useful research project would be to find out how various seminaries screen potential pastors and if they have criteria as to the areas of personal development required before graduating.

### Personal Reflections

This has been an enlightening project for me. I certainly have a much greater appreciation for all the work and the dilemmas that go into the work of a pastor. I initially was interested in this project due to the parallels I perceived between my work as a psychotherapist and the work of a pastor. I was also interested due to the clinical work I

have done over the years with pastors and church workers. There are a number of things that particularly struck me as I reviewed the interviews. I am very appreciative of the trust offered to me by the participants through their stories and concerns. I am also very respectful of the energy, sensitivity, and thoughtfulness that must exist to be an effective pastor. Often, relationships with members are over many years or even decades and a deep sense of caring, connection, and friendship can develop as shared by all the pastors in this study. It certainly takes a special dedication, a calling, to perform the work with compassion, grace, and an unconditional love that is exemplified in Christianity by Jesus Christ.

One of the areas of discovery for me was the depth that the sphere of spiritual needs encompassed. It became clear to me that it was way beyond understanding the scriptures or developing intellectually constructs of theology. This sphere is an experiential one that at times defies intellectual analysis. I am touched by what one pastor shared with taking the time to “drink from the living waters” of God and to experience the sense of the intuitive, the Holy Spirit side of the Trinity.

I am also much more aware of the daily struggles that can occur in the ongoing work of ministry. To be effective, it has to be heart-felt. To maintain this, a pastor has to embrace the concepts of self-care and of having a safe and trustworthy relationship to process the ongoing experiences. To have an effective minister, a congregation must create a culture of support, encouragement, wonderment, and respect. I am also aware of the development that denominations have ahead of them if they see their role as supporting their pastors on a deep level.

From here, it is time to share the results of this work and perhaps develop further assessment tools and workshops to help pastors realize their areas of strength and the areas of challenge as they continue trying to stay balanced in their ministry.



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## APPENDIX A

### Permission to Audiotape Interview.

I give John Morse permission to audiotape my interviews connected to the Ph.D.  
dissertation on Pastoral Resiliency.

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Participant

date

## APPENDIX B

### Informed Consent Form

#### Pastoral Self-Care: Maintaining a Balance to Serve Others: A Narrative Inquiry into the World of Spiritual Leaders.

**Principal Investigator:**

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970-491-7153

**Co-Principal Investigator:**

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Thank you for considering participation in the research project on pastoral self-care and resiliency. You are being invited to participate in this study because we think you may be part of a select group of clergy that meet three criteria. These criteria are that you are an ordained minister or pastor in the Christian tradition, you have at least five years of ordained experience, and you are actively serving a church of at least 100 members.

**Researchers:** John B. Morse, LMFT is conducting this research in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Philosophy degree from the School of Education from Colorado State University. Dr. Jim Banning who is on faculty at Colorado State University is the Principal Investigator. There is no outside funding for this project.

**The Purpose of this Research:** The purpose of the narrative study is to understand and describe the experiences that clergy have as they wrestle with maintaining balance in their lives while serving their congregations. At this point in the dissertation, I am calling this pastoral resiliency which consists of the strategies, supports, and resources that clergy utilize to remain balance and to prevent burnout in their profession. It also consists of the strategies, supports, and resources that are utilized when a clergyperson crosses the professional lines and participates in a pastoral disaster. This research will consider the topic from a systemic point of view and is interested in individual, church leadership, congregational, and denominational resources and perspectives pertaining to clergy resiliency.

**Procedures-where, what, how long, when:** There will be two interviews requested from you. Each interview will take about an hour of your time. After each interview, there will be a transcript created of the interview. You will be given both transcripts and are encouraged to review them and submit whatever changes you feel are needed to clarify your ideas and experiences. You may also have parts deleted if you

have changed your mind on sharing a particular idea or experience. I will be analyzing the content of the interviews with a coding analysis of each interviewee's information and will later do a second level of coding to combine all the ideas and experiences. I plan

Page 1 of 2. Participant's initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

to write a report with preliminary results and to give each participant a copy of this report. I would then encourage you to give me any reactions or ideas on this complied research report in an effort to increase accuracy of this research. Your final reactions and ideas would be considered in the final dissertation manuscript.

There are no known specific reasons for a participant not to take part in this study.

**Possible Risks to You:** There are no known risks for participation in this study. If you were to find that a line of questions is too personal, just let me know that you would prefer not to answer it. If you were to decide at any point in this study to withdraw from the narrative inquiry, all personal information would be destroyed. If you have any concerns created by this study, I would be willing to talk personally with you. I am also willing to provide a list of referrals to area therapists if that were useful to you.

**Benefits to You:** There are no known direct benefits to you from participating in this research. Your experiences and insights will help expand the body of knowledge on how pastors can maintain resiliency while serving other people in their church. You may find it useful to review the findings of this dissertation and may use suggestions to enrich your own pastoral experience. Many people find it beneficial to share their experiences and lessons learned, knowing that it may help others in similar situations.

**Voluntary participation:** Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty of loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Costs to participant:** There are no costs to you to participate, nor will any payment be made to you.

**Who will see the information that I give-confidentiality:** The detailed information you share during your interviews will be treated as confidential information in order to protect your privacy. Your name will not be used in any publications including the final dissertation. Only this researcher will have access to personal information which will be stored and locked. There are no releases allowing anyone else to have access to your personal information. I may be using the services of a professional editor or transcriber who would be bound by the same levels of confidentiality. : This study is being conducted as a part of a doctoral dissertation. As such, it will be referenced in library data bases and would also be available to others through inter-library loan and dissertation publishing avenues. There is also the possibility that this research would be used in future published articles, published books, or training workshops.

**Can my taking part end early?** You would be taken out of this study if both interviews were not completed or if you request to be taken out of this study.

Page 2 of 3 Participant's initials. \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Compensation:** There is no direct compensation to you for taking part in this study.

**University Liability for Injuries:** The Colorado governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

**What if I have questions?** Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about this study, you can contact John Morse at 493-8006 or Dr. Jim Banning at 491-7153. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

I have read the above policies and willingly consent to participating in this study. I understand that participation is completely voluntarily. If I would like, I can receive a copy of the final findings of this study.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person providing information to participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Research Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

Page 3 of 3. Participant's Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

Additional Information for clergy participating in the interviews for the dissertation titled  
Pastoral Self-Care.

I wanted to offer additional resources for the participant in this research study using narrative interviews. There are a number of good books and web sites if you would like additional information or ideas. The following are some of the best that were reviewed for our literature review. I especially recommend those with an asterisk.

Ethics Committee & Board of the Ordered Ministry, The Covenant Ministerium (2002). *Ethical Principles for Covenant Ministers*. Retrieved on Nov. 23, 2007 from <http://www.covchurch.org/uploads/2X/k8/2Xk88IjAViGSGIj6dcWzzA/ethical-princ.pdf>

Grosch, W. N. and Olsen, D. C. (1994). *When Helping Starts to Hurt*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

InterLutheran Coordinating Committee on Ministerial Health and Wellness (1997). *Wholeness Wheel*. Retrieved on 12/2/06 from <http://lcma.org/graphics/assets/media/CMGS/wheel%20alone-1.pdf>.

Lehr, F. (2006). *Clergy Burnout*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

\*Melander, R. and Eppley, H. (2002) *The Spiritual Leader's Guide to Self-Care*. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute.

\*Oswald, R. (1991). *Clergy Self-Care*. Washington D.C.: The Alban Institute Publication.

Parsons, G. & Leas, S. B. (1993). *Understanding Your Congregation As A System*. Bethesda, Md.: The Alban Institute Publication.

Richardson, R. W. (2005). *Becoming a Healthier Pastor*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

If you have any concerns created by this study, I would be willing to talk personally with you. I am also willing to provide a list of referrals to area therapists if that were useful to you. Again, thank you for your generous help with this research project.

Principal Investigator:

Co-Principal Investigator:

Dr. Jim Banning  
1051 Education, Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523  
970-491-7153

John B. Morse, MS, LMFT  
1302 South Shields, Suite A2-2  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80521  
970-493-8006 x105

## APPENDIX D

### Sample Initial Invitation Letter



Colorado State University  
School of Education  
1588 Campus Delivery  
Fort Collins, Co. 80523-1588  
May 27, 2009

Pastor Jimmy John  
Golden Valley Baptist Church  
1302 S. Shields St.  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80521

Dear Pastor John,

In today's world, the work that you do as a pastor is very complex. Although it is greatly rewarding, it can also be stressful and extremely time-consuming. You must have a good plan in order to survive a career in the ministry without experiencing burnout, family difficulties, difficult temptations, pastoral disasters, or worse. The support and care of an ordained minister can come from many sources: self-strategies, congregational support, family support, denominational policies, and in teaching learned at seminary.

I am a doctoral student at Colorado State University and the topic of pastoral resiliency is the focus of my Ph.D. dissertation. I have also had a psychotherapy practice in Fort Collins since 1986. In my psychotherapy practice, I have worked with many clergy and church staff on how to maintain their resiliency throughout their careers. In the course of this clinical work, I have read many books and articles on this subject and have heard many stories of the challenges for church workers. As I examined the available literature, I found that there have been studies and some books which address pastoral resiliency.

However, I also found that there has never been a study taking a narrative inquiry approach to this important area. There have been studies that have used surveys or questionnaires but never one that analyzes the themes and strategies presented in an open-ended interview process. As part of my Ph.D. dissertation, I am planning to use this unique approach. I am hoping that this format will allow for more consideration and strategies to be uncovered and eventually shared with many clergy.

I will be interviewing a small number of active clergy in Northern Colorado who may have ideas on the challenge of maintaining their balance and resiliency over the course of their careers. These interviews will be kept confidential but it is my hope that the ideas gleaned will benefit many others in their spiritual calling.

I am looking for a select few clergy who would be willing to be interviewed for this project. If you have had at least five years of pastoral experience, are ordained, and are actively leading a congregation of one hundred or more, I would invite you to call me at 970-493-006 X105 or return the enclosed card for more information. By participating in this study, you will help shed light in this important area that could benefit many other clergy as the combined results get shared. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

John B. Morse, MS, LMFT, RPT/S  
Doctoral Candidate  
970-493-8006 X105

Jim Banning, Ph.D.  
Colorado State University  
970-491-7153