



A Ministry Strategy to Pastors and their Families
"Best Practice Perspectives"

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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this project was to provide a summary of research insights related to the development of strategies for ministering to clergy and their families. It is hoped that the outcomes of this project will assist denominational, lay and clergy leaders in reviewing current church and pastoral practices and in formulating ministry directions that contribute to both the health and development of clergy families, as well as to the local church body and wider community.

This research endeavour was undertaken by W. Morrison & Associates in collaboration with the Atlantic Baptist Convention, and spanned a period of ten months. The project was comprised of three specific research phases including: completion of a focused literature review; administration of key informant interviews with denominational staff, church lay leaders and clergy; and development of best practice statements. The initial data gathering for this project began in September 2004 and concluded in June 2005. Upon fulfilment of these phases, the final report document was prepared and forwarded to the Executive Minister at the Atlantic Baptist Convention for review.

This document is organized in sequence with the completed research phases. The first section provides a succinct review of relevant research evidence related to areas of pastoral occupational stress, essential health support strategies, as well as approaches for promoting resiliency. The second section highlights the major perspectives of lay and clergy leaders regarding recommended processes for supporting the health and well-being of pastors and their families. The final section presents a series of best practice statements reflecting the convergence of insights gleaned from previous research studies and practice-based evidence reported by the key informants who participated in this initiative.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this aspect of the initiative was to complete a concise review of literature related to best practices for supporting the health and well-being of pastors and their families. The resulting research also provided a basis from which to structure areas of inquiry for the key informant interviews.

2.2 Method

The literature review was drawn from respected sources of research evidence including scientific investigations and recent reviews from recognized journals. The scope of this search was limited to relevant documents published between 1994 and the present and involved searches of research databases related to health, education, religious studies and the social sciences.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 AREAS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS FACED BY CLERGY AND THEIR FAMILIES

This section provides an overview of the findings of recent investigations that have focused on the identification of key areas of occupational stress related to pastoral ministry. In instances where researchers have provided comments or made recommendations regarding their outcomes, these have also been summarized and presented in the applicable subsections. The following research is organized under the following headings: *Types of Occupational Stressors, Home and Work Boundary-related Stress, Congregational Demands and Interactions, Crisis Situations and Time Pressures, Preferred Ministry Activities vs. Role Demands/Expectations, Relocation Stress, and Features of Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion.*

Types of Occupational Stressors

Forward (2000) completed in-depth interviews regarding stress in the ministry with 29 pastors from 18 different protestant denominations in a common urban centre. In this study, respondents highlighted seven areas of heightened stress in their respective pastoral experiences. These included conflict in interpersonal relationships, unrelenting task demands, management responsibilities and administration, pastoral role expectations by church members, and financial pressures.

In a similar investigation, Rowatt (2001) examined the perceived stress of 80 clergy (65 males and 25 females) and their spouses (28 participants). The most frequently mentioned stressors reported by both men and women in ministry were related to specific vocational concerns including: unrealistic time expectations, conflict with church leaders, and low financial compensation. Approximately one-third also noted areas of stress relating to high behavioural expectations from lay persons and high levels of criticism from church members. In this investigation fewer than one-third of the spouses of clergy participants completed the survey. Although the response rate for spouses was lower, the areas of identified stress did converge with those endorsed by clergy. As a result of his study, Rowatt (2001) made a series of recommendations for clergy and church leaders under four key headings: Expectations, Compensation, Social Support, and Mobility.

Expectations: Job descriptions and work-related time demands should be clarified at the outset of pastors' contract with the church. Such deliberations involve addressing a range of questions; such as, "Is the agreement clear and realistic?", "Are priorities identified?", "Are lines of responsibility and authority adequately outlined?", "Are evaluation processes clarified?"

Compensation: Salary packages and benefits should be adequate to release clergy from basic financial worries.

Social Support: Sources of support may include friendships, opportunities for clergy families from different churches to socialize, and mentorship relationships with senior denominational pastors. Church members may take an active role in providing support by including clergy families in community events, providing regular positive feedback or affirmation, and offering specific resources to support clergy family vacations and their participation in organized leisure activities.

Mobility: Preventive measures that may reduce the need for a pastoral move may include early recognition and resolution of areas of pastoral/church concern and development of church care ministries that address pastoral family needs. When transition is required, it is important that all family members have sufficient time to process such changes, having the opportunity to formulate plans for relocation, meet with friends, and deal with the loss associated with the move. During times of transition, providing compensation, continued health-care benefits and counselling support may be helpful in reducing the stress associated with transitions and adaptation to a new church, school and community setting.

Occupational Stressors Reported by Clergy Women

Frame and Shenan (2004), in their qualitative study of 190 female pastors, investigated major areas of stress and challenge related to the experience of this clergy cohort. Respondents highlighted a range of key stressors, including the lack of acceptance among laity regarding females in ministry, the struggle to meet ongoing professional, personal and family needs, and the challenge of finding time to nurture their spiritual lives. In terms of specific coping strategies, many respondents affirmed the importance of well-established social networks both within and beyond the church, in buffering the effects of occupational stress.

Occupational Stressors and Relationship/Life Satisfaction

In their study, Blanton and Morris (1999) investigated the relationship of a range of occupational stressors (relocations, financial concerns, insufficient family time, privacy issues, lack of social support) to the role and life satisfaction of 272 clergy husbands and their wives from across six denominations. The outcomes of their analyses indicated that the various work-related stressors were consistently inversely related to marital, parental and life satisfaction. In particular, intrusion on family life was viewed as an important factor affecting marital and parental satisfaction for both husbands and wives. Similarly, lack of social support was identified as a critical factor impacting life satisfaction for both clergy husbands and their spouses. For wives, time demands were identified as an important consideration related to both parental and life satisfaction

Home and Work Boundary-Related Stress

Types of Boundary Issues

Hill, Darling and Raimondi (2003) conducted a series of focus groups with clergy and clergy wives to investigate potential stressors related to home-work boundaries. The outcomes of their study revealed six types of boundary related issues that may contribute to stress in the clergy family. These included:

- *Time*- a wide range of task demands and being “on-call” 24/7
- *Change*- moves that require family members to adapt and form new relationships
- *Congregational Fit*- conflicts, competing congregational interest
- *Space*- living in a parsonage may limit the personal space and privacy of family members
- *Isolation*- being constantly available to others with minimal consideration given to forming close friendships
- *Intrusions*- “living in a glass house”, interruptions of family time, expectations of others regarding parenting and other family dynamics

In this study, participant clergy also mentioned a range of coping strategies that they employed, including: prioritizing schedules, debriefing within a confidential mentorship relationship, having opportunities for periodic sabbaticals, taking time to develop friendships in the community, and using e-mail/telephone answering machines to protect meal times or special activities with family members.

Home and Work Boundaries in Rural Areas

Mellow (2002) interviewed 20 female and 20 male clergy from rural areas regarding their professional demands and stressors. One of the ongoing challenges identified by this cohort was the dilemma of defining work and family time. Respondents noted that within the community they are often engaged in “significant conversations” about work when they are in informal settings or out completing family-related routines. Although some noted that their occupation provided them with flexibility, they also reported that unexpected work

demands and “erratic schedules” did not always support a regular time with the family. Many respondents asserted the importance of establishing limits on professional demands and preserving time for family. In addition, clergy described how family members (spouses and children) play an important role in helping them monitor the impact of their professional demands by providing feedback regarding existing home and work schedules/routines.

Congregational Demands and Interactions

Lee and Iverson-Gilbert (2003) investigated a range of variables related to pastoral ministry, including professional demands, personal resources/supports and attitudes towards ministry. The overall outcomes suggested that greater congregational demands were associated with reported lower levels of clergy well-being and higher identification with features of burnout. In this research effort, personal criticism from others and presumptive expectations from congregational members were also positively associated with pastoral burnout, but negatively associated with pastors’ reported well-being and life satisfaction. In contrast, satisfaction with congregational support was the strongest predictor of positive ministry attitudes among pastors. From their research, they asserted that pastoral staff should make intentional efforts to address criticism in constructive ways when others confront them. Seminaries or continuing education programs for pastors could also consider this an area for potential training or in-service. They also emphasized that congregations must take an active role in communicating support and encouragement to pastors.

In a randomized American national study examining the perceptions of Presbyterian clergy, lay leaders, and church members, pastors reported experiencing more negative interactions (defined as too critical or too demanding) compared to other respondents. In the same sample, clergy also reported receiving less support than did lay church leaders and only slightly more than did individual church members (Krause, Ellison & Wulff, 1998).

Crisis Situations and Time Pressures

Dewe’s (1996) study investigating sources of stress among 468 protestant ministers indicated that the most frequently reported occupational stress for this cohort involved addressing crisis-type situations and the time pressures resulting from such events. With respect to coping behaviours, the most frequently reported strategies included use of spiritual resources and social support.

Another investigation considered an in-depth case study analysis of work and time demands of five evangelical protestant clergy. In this study, results indicated that daily work activities were consistently rapid in pace, with minimal opportunities available for devoting time to more focused and sustained tasks. Pastoral practice was typically characterized by “ brevity, fragmentation and variety.” Observational data suggested that pastors’ priority focus was directed toward “live action”, developing strategies to deal with emerging crisis situations and organizational concerns, and ongoing gathering and dissemination of information through a multiplicity of telephone contacts and unscheduled meetings. Pastoral participants also acknowledged the need to take additional steps to safe-guard their schedules from becoming increasingly overwhelming to the point of impacting their emotional or physical health. The authors of this study also raised specific concerns regarding the absence of

specific time for reflective activities essential for enhancing professional practice and the lack of balance observed between administrative and ministry responsibilities (Kuhne & Donaldson, 1995).

Preferred Ministry Activities vs. Role Demands/Expectations

In his research, Rowatt (2001) noted that highest satisfaction among both female and male clergy was associated with work activities involving preaching, leading worship, teaching, and assisting others to grow in their faith. In various contexts, these work role preferences may be given less time, whereas other duties such as administrative tasks may occupy a substantial amount of a clergy's time. Consequently, pastors in such situations may grapple with the strain of meeting both organizational demands and their sense of personal calling "to be doing ministry."

Kay (2000) conducted a study to investigate the role preference of 930 Pentecostal clergy and their perceptions regarding congregational expectations of pastoral work roles. The outcomes of this research indicated that participants demonstrated priority role preference for work activities involving functions; such as, preaching, being a person of prayer, pastoring, and teaching. In contrast, other roles related to functions; such as, administrator, social worker and fund raiser received lower priority ratings. With respect to perceived expectations of others, clergy participants rated congregational expectations as higher in 17 out of 20 rated church functions.

In a national survey of over 600 pastors, participants reported that they spend approximately 14 hours each week involved in church-related administrative activities. A review of specific time logs, however, suggested that many spend almost 25 hours involved in completing such tasks. In the same study, pastors reported spending approximately six hours per week in prayer and personal devotions, whereas a review of time logs suggested only four and half-hours per week. Three-quarters of participants indicated a desire to increase their time in daily prayer (Rowell, 1998).

According to Kay (2000), ministerial preparation should include training that addresses the wide range of role demands that exist within church settings. He also asserted that lay training for church members in areas related to administrative functions may also be of benefit in supporting pastors' work. Consistent with these recommendations, Palmer (1998) asserted that pastors should ideally be "facilitators" within the body of believers rather than, "omni-competent clergy persons" who must address all the needs and expected tasks within their work role.

Relocation Stress

Frame and Shehan (1994) investigated the perceptions of 137 male clergy and their wives regarding relocation stress and coping. In this study, clergy wives reported significantly lower levels of psychological well-being than did their spouses and significantly more "negative pile-up" of demands. Qualitative data indicated that in many instances, clergy wives reported having primary responsibility for the packing and moving tasks and for facilitating children's adjustment to a new school and home. Other areas of potential stress

for spouses included disruption of employment and of established friendship networks. The authors of this study provided a series of key suggestions regarding relocation in ministry:

- Accommodate children's/ school and spouses' employment schedules in the timing of moves.
- Assist with moving expenses and with packing and unpacking tasks.
- Offer accessible personal/family counselling opportunities with mental health professionals who have similar spiritual values.
- Provide employment counselling and placement services for spouses.
- Identify church families that have children of comparable ages to those of the clergy family. Provide support through such relationships in the transition to school and the community.
- Form a welcoming committee to provide meals during the first few day of the pastor's family residency in the community.

Frame (1998) investigated the differences in reported well-being between clergy couples who had recently relocated and those who had been in the same church appointments for four years or longer. Results indicated no significant differences among non-relocated and relocated pastors. In contrast, clergy spouses reported significantly lower levels of well-being than did clergy on the majority of variables related to family relocation. Qualitative analysis of respondents' comments indicated that "dealing with grief and loss" was a critical area for assistance during periods of transition and relocation. Frame contended that counselling services should be made accessible to families both during and following relocation. She also asserted that counsellors should be "sensitive to" and "respectful of" the spiritual beliefs of the family.

Features of Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion

Francis, Kaldor, Shevlin, and Lewis (2004), in their investigation of emotional exhaustion among clergy, found that there were no significant differences among senior male and female ministers. In contrast, younger clergy demonstrated more susceptibility to emotional exhaustion than did older clergy. The investigators contended that this latter finding might be in part a result of the fact that younger clergy who experience emotional exhaustion may exit the ministry early, leaving a higher proportion of ministers who are less vulnerable to burnout in the older cohort. In another study, conducted by Stanton-Rich and Iso-Ahola (1998), pastors' age, longevity and continuity of ministry in a given area were found to be inversely associated with emotional exhaustion and features of burnout.

2.3.2 PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

In addressing areas of occupational stress, various investigators have focused on the availability and delivery of church and denomination level support services. Such service options include both prevention and intervention-oriented supports designed for clergy and their families. The following provides a summary of the findings for this area and is organized according to three subsections: *Assessing Availability and Relevance of*

Denominational Support, Structuring Support Services, and Addressing Challenges and Avenues for Support.

Assessing Availability and Relevance of Denominational Support

Various writers have highlighted the growing concern of denominational leaders and congregational members regarding the health and well-being of pastors and their families. In this regard, there has been an increased awareness of the range of demands and stressors faced by clergy, as well as the lack of accessible services designed to provide support to them during times of need or crisis (Dart, 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1995).

Morris and Blanton (1994) investigated denominational perceptions of clergy stress and available sources of support. In this study, they examined responses from 28 American denominations. The domains of stress that were identified in terms of greatest concern included management of finances to meet living daily obligations, acceptance of salary levels for established positions, and finding adequate time to spend with children and spouses. With respect to support, the majority of denominations reported providing financial services related to pension, retirement, health and life insurance, as well as career development services such as continuing education or study leaves. In contrast, fewer than half indicated that they provided financial management services that would assist clergy families in managing and planning both immediate (e.g. monthly bills) and future expenditures (e.g. child future education). Over three-quarters of the denominations surveyed also provided some type of referral services for psychological counselling; however, fewer than half reported that they assisted with the provision of direct therapeutic support. In addition, only three of the denominations surveyed indicated that they had confidential crisis counselling telehealth services, and only one reported providing assistance to clergy children during times of transition.

In a subsequent study, Morris and Blanton (1995) investigated the availability and importance of denominational support services as perceived by clergy and their spouses. The sample included 272 participants across six American protestant denominations. The outcomes of their study indicated that the five most important services available to clergy and their families included pension programs, opportunities for academic advancement, health insurance, and personal/marital enrichment seminars. In contrast, the five services identified as important but least available entailed support for clergy child services, spouse employment services, research involving clergy families, a crisis helpline, and employment services for pastors leaving the ministry as a result of a forced termination. In addition, clergy wives in this study reported significantly higher levels of importance for supports related to provision of referral services, counselling, child adjustment programs, insurance, and family retreat/vacation centres.

Structuring Support Services

According to Morris and Blanton (1994, 1995) and Blanton and Morris (1999), the results of their research reflected the need for denominational services to focus on the development of programs and supports that consider the needs of all family members. Based on their

research, they asserted the importance of facilitating clergy and their family members' access to both prevention (e.g. enrichment seminars to address marital, parental stress or life-span issues) and intervention-type services (counselling/therapy). In conjunction with these support programs, strategies for addressing intrusiveness on family life, excessive time demands, and lack of social support could also be included. Such strategies might include assertiveness training, work-family role differentiation and management, and techniques for building friendships or support networks. They also asserted that congregational leaders might benefit from information sessions that would enhance their awareness of specific ways in which they could support clergy family members in both their professional and family roles.

In the delivery of denominational services, Von Stroh and Mines (1995) underscored the importance of comprehensive Employee Assistance Programs and Peer Assisted approaches that provide proactive support for pastors. These models often include screening services, referral, case management and follow-up. When applied, such services have the benefit of supporting individuals in their current work and family contexts without the need to relocate or significantly disrupt the daily activities of the clergy family.

As a result of budget constraints, some denominations may have difficulty in providing the full range of health and family-oriented services essential to support clergy families. In such instances, denominations could consider networking together to form alliances in the administration and delivery of health-related services. Ideally, the expansion of such support resources for clergy families contributes to the development of "stronger, more stress-resilient families"(Blanton & Morris, 1999; Morris & Blanton 1994, 1995).

Addressing Challenges and Avenues for Support

In times of crisis or need, some clergy and their family members may avoid seeking support as a result of a fear of retribution from others. In such instances, individuals perceive that disclosing areas of personal concern may be regarded as "a failure" or a "lack of competence" by congregational or denominational leaders (Morris & Blanton, 1995). In many instances, the role of senior denominational leaders, is not only to provide support to pastors, but also to make recommendations regarding future church placements. This places denominational officials in potential conflict and poses challenges to providing support to pastors and responding to requests from church congregations for essential information (Dart, 2003). In response to this area of concern, some writers have suggested proactively linking clergy families to one another and providing them with opportunities to share concerns. Such interactions may have various benefits, including confidentiality, the development of friendships and support networks, and the option of receiving feedback or consultation from peers (Morris & Blanton, 1995). Blanton and Morris (1999), in their investigation of work-related stressors and reported physical/emotional health, identified social support as a strong predictor of personal well-being for both clergy and their spouses. According to these investigators, clergy family members should be encouraged to establish and maintain supportive relationships, especially with other pastors and their families.

2.3.3 PROMOTION OF RESILIENCY AND WELLNESS

The final literature review section highlights findings emphasizing the importance of resiliency and wellness strategies in enhancing the health and well-being of clergy and their families. In this elaboration of results, specific focus is placed on proactive actions that maintain healthy home-work boundaries, strengthen family and work relationships, and increase self-awareness, and that emphasize personal and spiritual development. The following provides a summary of the findings of this research area presented in five subsections entitled: *Focusing on Health and Wellness*, *Ensuring Proactive Pastoral Training Opportunities*, *Enhancing Personal Awareness of Preferences and Gifts*, *Encouraging Positive Parent-Child Interactions*, *Engaging in Leisure Activities*, *Fostering the Spiritual Health and Vitality of Clergy*.

Focusing on Health and Wellness

The majority of current health literature regarding pastoral ministry has focused on understanding the stressors and challenges faced by clergy; however, the positive aspects that have contributed to well-being and health in ministry in many instances have not been addressed (Meek et al., 2003). Some theorists have emphasized the importance of moving beyond pathology to “understanding” and “promoting” healthy functioning. Such insights are particularly relevant for service providers or health care providers who work with pastors on issues related to health or wellness (Meek).

In a study investigating the proactive health behaviours of over 400 hundred pastors (Meek et al., 2003) reported key lessons learned related to maintaining personal resiliency. Outcomes from participant interviews asserted the importance of pastors “intentionality”:

- Creating balance in daily responsibilities/schedules through setting priorities; maintaining strong, but flexible boundaries between family and vocational activities, and resisting a “work-only” approach to living.
- Fostering and building positive reciprocal relationships. Such attachments include strong spousal interactions, friendships and mentorship relationships.
- Engaging in spiritual activities; such as, retreat/solitude, reading scripture, journaling, fasting, and prayer. Respondents stressed the importance of renewing their strength and purpose through releasing their “control” and allowing God to empower them through His promises and guidance.
- Taking time to be personally aware of God’s “powerful” grace and forgiveness. Such self-awareness was described as having a realistic understanding of their limitations/weaknesses regardless of the expectations of others, and recognizing God’s mercy at work in them.

Overall, the outcomes of this study affirm the importance of being intentional about maintaining personal resiliency through balanced living, fostering positive interpersonal relationships, and staying connected with God. In discussion of their results, Meek et al. (2003) asserted that proactive efforts are critical to avoid the need for restoration of clergy.

Ensuring Proactive Pastoral Training Opportunities

Seminary training and ongoing professional development activities should include education and skill-building sessions that act as potential “stress preventers” for clergy as they enter and continue in ministry. Various beneficial training themes might include, but should not be limited to: managing time, applying effective interpersonal/conflict management skills, enhancing marriage/ parent-child interactions, identifying signs of distress, establishing supportive/ mentorship relationships, and obtaining needed assistance during difficult times. Ideally, such educational components should assist pastors in self-assessment, and in identification of areas for continued growth (Meek et al., 2003; Palmer, 1998).

In some instances, wellness-focused professional development activities may need to be supplemented by supportive care and counselling, especially following difficult circumstances, changes or loss. In such situations, pastors, as well as clergy family members, should be provided with the opportunity to clarify the impact of past events on present functioning and to use such insights to assist in their personal restoration and development. Mental health professionals or counsellors who meet proactively with pastors and their families should be sensitive to the unique challenges facing them and the importance of their faith in addressing areas of concern (Meek et al., 2003, Palmer, 1998).

In addition, Lee (1995) also asserted that seminary training and ongoing continuing education should include instructional sessions on professional ethics and the importance of recognizing professional competencies and limitations. In light of the wide range of congregational concerns and needs, including those that require services or interventions that extend beyond pastoral areas of expertise, such training is critical for ensuring continued integrity and responsible caring in all professional and personal relationships.

Enhancing Personal Awareness of Preferences and Gifts

In conjunction with specific training on personal health and wellness, some theorists and researchers have asserted the importance of enhancing clergy’s understanding of their natural preferences, strengths, and gifts, and how God has equipped them for ministry. The use of personality profiling through application of various standardized instruments has provided a means for investigating potential similarities and differences in people. The outcomes of such processes serve to heighten an individual’s understanding of some of the dynamics that underlie personal expression and interactions with others, as well as the way difficult situations may be perceived and worked through. Theoretical models such as Jungian personality types or Keirsey temperament styles have been widely used to assist clergy in understanding and applying insight from their personal preferences (Francis & Rodger, 1996; Velandar, 2002).

According to Oswald and Kroeger (1998), the value of such working theories is that they can be easily understood and applied in the ministry context. They asserted that effective application of such concepts requires a thorough understanding of the overall type concepts, an openness to exploring and enhancing understanding of personal strengths and liabilities, and the use of theory in developing meaningful ways to interact and assist others in their

spiritual journey. Velandar (2002) also asserted that clergys' insight into their personality preferences, including areas of strength as well as vulnerability, is critical for recognizing potential pitfalls in ministry. Similarly, their understanding of the diversity that exists within their own congregations may also be a crucial consideration in the development and maintenance of working relationships.

Recent research on clergy personality preferences has resulted in elaboration of detailed descriptions of specific personality constellations applied to the role of pastor, covering such themes as pastoral functions, religious leadership, prayer, and individual differences in ministry. Although such models have been recognized as potentially useful, they are limited to the theoretical constructs being measured. In this regard, they do not reflect an exhaustive examination of an individual's personality, areas of strength, or calling (Palmer, 1998; Oswald & Kroeger, 1998).

Encouraging Positive Parent-Child Interactions

In 2001 Strange and Sheppard explored the past experiences of 23 university students who were from clergy families. The majority of their cohort reported perceiving that as children their behaviours had been closely observed by the church community, and that they had been expected to be more "knowledgeable" about spiritual matters than their peers. Some reported feeling pressured by their family to act in specific ways for the benefit of the church. Many also indicated wanting to defend their parents when they felt their parents had been treated unfairly by others. In spite of such challenges, the majority also asserted that their experience of being raised in a clergy family had been very positive overall.

Consistent with the previous study, Anderson reported (1998) in her investigation of 487 pastors' children (aged 25 and older), that the majority of respondents indicated they had enjoyed their experience of being a "PK" (pastor's kid). The responses of clergy children also suggested that their current religious commitment had been strengthened by parental relationships which had involved time together, ensured boundaries between church and home, encouraged them to be themselves, valued their contribution, and provided opportunity for choices.

Engaging in Leisure Activities

A study investigating the attitudes of 438 clergy reported that expression of leisure behaviours and attitude were inversely related to key variables associated with burnout, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished work accomplishment. In addition, a greater degree of self-determination was positively associated with lower depersonalization and higher levels of personal accomplishment. The outcomes of this study provide support for the notion that "engagement in satisfying leisure activities" may have specific benefits for reducing or preventing burnout. In this regard, activities that have intrinsic value or that are self-directed may be of particular importance (Stanton-Rich & Iso-Ahola, 1998).

Fostering the Spiritual Health/Vitality of Clergy

Recent empirical studies of diverse groups dealing with major life stressors indicate that religious coping methods have significant implications for promoting the health and well-being of people (Pargament, 1997, Csiernik 2002). Pargament, Tarakehshwar, Ellison and Wulff (2001) in their investigation of religious coping among clergy, lay leaders, and church members, found that positive religious coping was associated with higher levels of positive affect across all three groups. In this study, positive religious coping was expressed as emphasizing the importance of a personal relationship with God, belief in a greater meaning in life and having a sense of spiritual connectedness with others. Among these participants, clergy reported overall higher levels of stress; however, they also indicated greater use of positive religious coping attitudes.

In a recent study, Meisenhelder and Chandler (2001) investigated the relationship of frequency of prayer to a range of physical and mental health variables, using a randomized national study of over 1400 Presbyterian pastors. For this sample, time periods spent in prayer were skewed towards a high frequency. Although there was limited variability in both prayer and health outcomes, higher frequency of prayer was associated significantly with self-perceptions of vitality, general health, and mental health. These relationships were also evident when the analysis was controlled for both age and gender. The investigators of this study proposed that prayer provides the psychological resource of a relationship with God and the physiological benefits associated with the “anti-stress response” of meditation (Meisenhelder & Chandler).

In addressing the spiritual life of clergy, developing accessible sources of spiritual support within the context of pastoral ministry is a critical consideration. Such resources provided encouragement, feedback and consultation on spiritual matters, a place to conceive and develop ideas, as well as an “outlet” for sharing personal challenges, hopes and accomplishments. Developing such support networks requires cultivating friendships, making a commitment to meet regularly with pastoral colleagues from the same region and seeking out opportunities to receive consultation from a mentor on areas related to personal spiritual growth (Hustard, 1996).

Yancey (2001) underscored the importance of supporting the spiritual health of pastors. From his perspective, church leaders and members might easily become preoccupied with concerns related to the job description, career competencies, or management skills of pastors. As a result, the most critical qualification of pastors may be “neglected” or not fostered within the pastoral role. He asserted that clergy should be encouraged to take at least one day a week as “time of silence for reflection, meditation and personal study.” He challenged denominational leaders, clergy and church members to consider how effective our churches might be if the pastor’s spiritual health - not the pastor’s efficiency – was the primary priority.

3.0 Key Informant Interviews

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research effort was to investigate the perspectives of key informants who have had direct working experiences related to pastoral ministry and to elicit their feedback regarding specific processes for supporting the health and well-being of clergy and their families.

3.2 Method

A list of potential respondents was identified in consultation with members of the Project Steering Committee. Initial contact was made with key experts to review the research project and their potential participation in this aspect of the initiative. Upon obtaining their consent, individual interview times were arranged and interviews were conducted by telephone. Participants included ordained pastors from the Atlantic Baptist Convention (n=12), senior regional and denominational clergy leaders (n=11) and lay leaders who have held key ministry positions within their respective churches and denomination (n=12). Approximately 68% of participants held graduate training or degrees in theology/Christian education with an average reported work experience of 23 years in full-time ministry or lay leadership positions within the church or denomination. With respect to gender, 11 respondents were female and 24 were male.

A semi-structured interview was undertaken with a range of open-ended and more focused questions intended to provide essential information related to the development and implementation of health strategies for pastors and their families. Individual interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. The data gleaned from the key informant interviews were recorded to produce 35 individual written interview protocols. These were then subsequently merged to provide a unified data set. Content analysis was employed to identify potential theme categories arising from the collected data. With respect to the analysis, theme categories identified for inclusion in the written results were supported by data emerging from at least eight participants.

3.3 Results

The following sections provide a summary of the findings for each area of inquiry. The summary findings for this research effort are organized under the following major headings:

- Areas of Occupational Stress
- Concerns Associated with Transition Times
- Impact of Long-term Significant Stress
- Essential Support Strategies
- Addressing Occupational Expectations

- Managing Interpersonal Conflict
- Training in Self-Care Strategies
- Pastoral Retreat and Reflection
- Key Roles in Health Promotion

3.3.1 AREAS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Participants were asked initially to describe the most frequent work stressors faced by clergy in their daily ministry. A wide range of potential areas of stress relating to role definition, task expectations, congregational/church interactions and perceived support were identified. More specifically, these stressors included:

- Challenges associated with balancing home, church, and personal priorities
- Multiple, and in some instances, “unrealistic” congregational demands
- Time pressures and the expectation of being always “on-call”
- Strained interactions and conflicts within congregational relationships
- Lack of structure and clarity in pastoral job descriptions
- Inadequate financial compensation and carry-over debt from educational studies
- Lack of sufficient personal support/encouragement
- Complex counselling demands or crisis situations that extend beyond areas of professional expertise

Participants were also asked to describe stressors that might potentially affect specific clergy groups. Fifteen respondents noted that female pastors still face challenges of being “accepted” and “respected” in their leadership roles within the Baptist Church. Some respondents indicated that, in various instances, both lay leaders and male clergy have communicated lack of affirmation for female roles in ministry. In addition, both male and female clergy with families were recognized as having the additional responsibility of balancing both home and church demands, and ensuring time for relationships with spouses and children. Other noted concerns, especially for clergy with families in rural areas, included financial stressors associated with meeting basic living needs. For single female and male pastors, isolation and loneliness, as well as addressing congregational expectations, were identified as sources of potential stress.

The majority of participants indicated that many of the occupational stressors identified for pastors were conceivably similar to those experienced by other helping professionals. In contrast, some respondents highlighted potential aspects of the pastoral role that were unique and that had specific implications associated to level of stress and clergy well-being. These included challenges related to establishing clear boundaries between work and family activities, expected competencies in a wide range of administrative and leadership tasks, and in some cases having 24-hour availability without clear sources for accessing additional support.

3.3.2 CONCERNS ASSOCIATED WITH TRANSITION TIMES

In describing areas of particular stress for clergy and their family members, relocation and adjustment to new routines were underscored. More specifically, concerns associated with transition periods included:

New environments and routines- Relocation involves changes for all family members in daily routines in a wide range of contexts including home, school, employment setting, church, neighbourhood and community.

Re-establishment of friendships and support networks- Moving to a new pastoral position often requires, not only leaving familiar and well-established friendships, but also adjusting to new social settings. For children, this involves being accepted in new peer groups in the school and community situations. For many spouses, relocation requires not only developing new friendship networks, but also finding new employment contacts.

Grief and Uncertainty- During times of transition, pastoral family members often experience a range of emotions including the loss of leaving close relationships and valued activities, as well as the anxiety of moving to a new community and facing new expectations and challenges without close proximity to familiar resources and support.

Finances- Relocation brings additional financial demands, including those involved with selling and purchasing a new home, as well as moving costs.

3.3.3 IMPACT OF LONG-TERM SIGNIFICANT STRESS

Respondents indicated that when intense stress associated with the work context is felt within the family, spouses and children may experience feelings of anger with the church and act in defence of the pastor. In other instances, family members may feel guilty for taking time away from clergy and interfering with the demands/expectations of the ministry. Other participants reported that clergy family members in such situations may feel alone and disempowered to affect positive change in their respective situations, as well as disillusioned with relationships within the church. When significant occupational stress is left unattended over extended periods, family interactions may also become strained and further negatively impact the quality of life in both home and church contexts. Ultimately, feelings of depression and anger, coupled with lack of personal or system resources to address areas of concern, may result in compromised emotional and physical health of pastors and their families. Potential “burnout” of clergy and their families may also culminate in a decision to discontinue a particular ministry or to leave the pastorate altogether.

3.3.4 ESSENTIAL SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Participants were also asked to describe the types of support services that should be available to pastors in addressing areas of stress and in proactively supporting their continued health

and well-being. Respondents provided the following list of support mechanisms, including denominational, church-level, and peer-based approaches for assistance:

Employee Assistance Counselling Services- Such supports should be accessible and provide immediate assistance through telephone-based services or in-person contacts. Counselling services should be available to all family members and include assistance with career guidance, financial planning, and individual and family-oriented difficulties or concerns. A few participants reported that some pastors may not be aware of the existence or potential helpfulness of these services.

Spouse and “Pastors’ Kids” Retreats- In addressing family-oriented support, respondents underscored the importance of providing opportunities for pastors and their family members to meet with other clergy families. Several highlighted past successful workshops, conferences and retreats that involved gatherings of clergy couples, spouses and “pastors’ kids” at denominational and regional retreats. Such events may provide opportunities for clergy family members to, not only provide support to one-another, but also to share areas of common concern and approaches for promoting and maintaining healthy relationships.

Health Benefits- The provision of a wide range of health benefits was viewed as critical for supporting the health of pastors and their families. These services should address a broad range of health-related areas and promote wellness through prevention-oriented health programs.

Mentorship Opportunities- The importance of having senior or area pastors provide consultation, discipleship and guidance for pastors, especially for those entering ministries, was underscored. Other mentorship possibilities included development of pastoral peer networks or establishment of support relationships with lay church leaders.

Information Resources- Written material and guidelines related to transitions, new job positions, clergy network systems, financial planning, and strategies for accessing needed support could be provided to clergy in orientation material or through web-based resources. In addition, written relocation information packages could be developed for pastors and their families prior to their moves. Such support material could include information on key community services (e.g. schools and hospitals), program activities for children and youth, as well as contact names and numbers of congregational members who are available to provide assistance if requested (e.g. welcoming committee).

Self-Care Training- The importance of providing clergy with training programs and continuing education on personal wellness strategies was also asserted. Various methods of training delivery were identified, including workshops, local support networks, retreats and weekend ministry event/conferences, and continuing education conferences. Various respondents highlighted that self-care strategies should also be outlined in denominational material and be reviewed through orientation programs with new pastors or those making transitions within different types of church and mission ministries.

Friendship Support- Establishment of friendships both within and beyond the church was also identified as an important need of pastoral family members, especially for spouses. Participating in leisure activities and physical recreation was identified as a key aspect of fellowship and relationship development with others.

Clergy Care Committees- Intentional efforts by church leadership and congregational members to care for pastors and their family members were also suggested. Various strategies included organizing a formal pastor-family care committee, ensuring that pastoral family members are included in community events, and forming ministry teams to address areas of service.

Confidential Services- In the delivery of support services, the importance of confidentiality was emphasized. In this regard, various participants indicated that sharing concerns openly could conceivably jeopardize future placement decisions and opportunities within the ministry.

Over two-thirds of respondents indicated a need for elaboration or development of services related to restoration of pastors following required termination of ministry placements or difficult family/ ministry transitions. The importance of the area/ regional minister's role in providing encouragement, spiritual guidance and personal support within such processes was highlighted. In addition, various respondents indicated the need to educate church members regarding the stressors faced by clergy families, realistic expectations regarding ministry involvement, the personal and financial costs associated with relocation, and strategies for care-giving to pastors' family members.

3.3.5 ADDRESSING OCCUPATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Participants were also asked to describe the expectations that lay leaders and congregational members have for pastors. Many respondents asserted that pastors are often expected to be involved in and lead a wide range of activities. Such activities may include administrative tasks, visitation, fundraising responsibilities, committee memberships, teaching, crisis management, worship and study leadership, service and event organization, preaching, discipling, evangelizing and counselling. In addition, they may be expected to be experts in church growth, effective in working with all age groups, and a leader in the community. From the perspective of several respondents, multiple expectations from many people may be perceived by some pastors as the need "to be all things to all people". In contrast, preaching and teaching were endorsed most frequently by participants as the activities that pastors perceived to be most closely associated with their calling.

Many respondents emphasized the importance of open and frequent discussions between church leadership and pastors regarding specific employment expectations and roles. In this regard, having a mutual understanding of expected pastoral work roles and routines was emphasized. Several suggestions were identified as relevant to addressing the role expectations of pastors, including:

Providing Clear Job Descriptions- Prior to accepting a call, pastors should have a clear understanding of the pastoral position including expectations, standards, routines and responsibilities. There should also be opportunity for pastors to clarify areas of concern and to identify areas of leadership support.

Forming Ministry Teams- Many participants asserted the importance of lay leaders working “alongside” pastors in the ministry of the church. In this regard, tasks are shared, administrative concerns are addressed, communication and interactions are increased, and there is mutual accountability for serving others.

Assessing Plans and Progress- Regular review and feedback for both pastors and church leaders were emphasized. In such deliberations, identified areas of challenge and growth should contribute to the development of constructive plans/actions and to continued enhancement of relationships.

Affirming and Communicating Appreciation- Intentional acts and words of appreciation from church members contribute to hope and encouragement for both pastors and their family members.

Monitoring Stress and Providing Support- Several participants indicated that pastors and church leaders should be vigilant and transparent in monitoring the demands of ministry and the health of those involved in ministry. Such monitoring was described as taking the initiative to inquire “How is it going?” and to make provision for additional support and nurturing for pastors, their families and others during difficult times or stressful periods.

Ensuring Healthy Boundaries between Pastoral Work and Home Life- Family time, weekly days off, and holidays should not be omitted as a result of work expectations/routines. The implementation of healthy boundaries was viewed as critical for ensuring the development of a healthy church ministry. Communication and mutual understanding regarding home and work routines/times among clergy, family members and church leaders were identified as important for supporting such efforts.

Approximately two-thirds of participants reported that church leaders and congregational members are *not* aware of the challenges and stressors faced by pastors and their families. Other respondents indicated that church members have a general, but not an adequate understanding of the demands associated with ministry. In addressing concerns related to work expectations or roles, several participants asserted the importance of church leaders’ eliciting and listening to clergy’s perspectives on key ministry issues, and providing church members with educational sessions that would heighten their understanding of the pastor’s role and of potential strategies for fostering healthy relationships in the ministry context.

3.3.6 MANAGING INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

Participants were also asked to describe their experiences related to the management of conflict within church ministry settings. In most instances, conflict within the church

involved actions taken by church lay leaders (deacons) and, in some cases, participation of area or regional ministers. The majority of respondents reported previous direct experience with conflict situations within the church context. Approximately half of the participants shared that conflict situations were often left unresolved and that many churches did not have specific processes in place to encourage effective communication, negotiation, and consensus-building. Various respondents also identified suggestions for encouraging constructive dialogue and problem solving in dealing with areas of interpersonal concern:

Address Areas of Concern at an Early Stage- Clergy and church leaders should take time to engage in open and constructive dialogue about areas of concern and commit, not only to identifying concerns, but also to formulating actions that contribute to enhanced relationships and unity in the church.

Carry Out Regular Reviews/Ministry Team Retreats- Ministry teams including pastoral staff and lay leaders should devote time to regular reviews in which prayer and reflection provide the bases for collaboration and development of constructive actions.

Ensure Clarity of Roles- In undertaking ministry activities, clarify the roles and responsibilities of all individuals involved. Pastors and church leaders should consult often with ministry team members regarding the progress of their activities and any concerns that may need to be addressed.

Encourage Personal Preventive Actions- When clergy or lay leaders become aware of personal and family issues that may compromise their potential to minister effectively, they should be encouraged to take responsibility in addressing such areas of concern. Confidential channels for accessing individual counselling and support should be made available to both pastors and lay leaders.

3.3.7 TRAINING IN SELF-CARE STRATEGIES

Many participants indicated the need to extend efforts to include self-care strategies as key aspects of ministerial training. Others suggested that personal health strategies should be discussed during supervised field placements and offered as continuing education for pastors already in ministry. Content within such training programs might include:

- Maintaining healthy boundaries between work and home
- Knowing the signs of “burnout” and preventing it
- Fostering/nurturing family relationships
- Implementing effective parenting strategies
- Effectively managing conflict
- Working with diverse personalities
- Learning useful stress management strategies
- Developing a personal growth/wellness plan

Other areas for training included increasing self-awareness regarding personal preferences, as well as work and relationship styles. Such training would be potentially useful for gaining insight into how individuals perceive particular situations, experience stress, and make decisions. Various participants noted the benefits of workshops or courses with peers, whereas others mentioned the advantages of individual assessment or exploration of personal styles with a counsellor or coach.

With respect to self-care training, mentorship from senior and regional clergy was highlighted as essential for facilitating the application of preventive and wellness-focused strategies among pastors. In this regard, the willingness of mentors to “model openness” about health-related issues and personal challenges, as well as strengths, was emphasized. It was also asserted that senior clergy should model consistency in their own devotional and prayer life, and in a spirit of humility be able to offer practical spiritual assistance to younger pastors.

Training in self-care was also identified as beneficial for clergy family members, including both spouses and children. In addition to areas of training previously mentioned, other content might include working through transitions, managing finances, encouraging healthy eating and activity, and fostering spiritual formation. In the delivery of such educational sessions, many participants indicated the potential benefits of having family members meet together with other clergy families at events focused on couples, spouses, and youth.

3.3.8 PASTORAL RETREAT AND REFLECTION

All respondents underscored the importance of clergy taking regularly scheduled time for personal devotion, Bible reading, prayer and reflection. Some also asserted the advantages of having opportunities at varied points in the year to have a more extended retreat time apart from regular ministry activities. Regardless of personal type or style, individual time with God was viewed as imperative for “gaining perspective”, and refocusing on the “sense of call” and “commitment” to ministry.

Many respondents indicated the need for church leaders to support the allotment of personal retreat time in the daily work schedule and job description of pastors. Some respondents also mentioned the importance of identifying specific locations for potential day or several day retreats and the advantages of using existing resources to address these needs.

3.3.9 KEY ROLES IN HEALTH PROMOTION

Supporting the health and well-being of pastors and their families was recognized as the mutual responsibility of clergy, their families, denominational leaders and church members. Respondents indicated that lay leaders and church members play a key role in assisting the pastor in maintaining a balanced lifestyle by directly participating in ministry and administrative activities, ensuring the development of reasonable pastoral expectations, monitoring the demands of ministry, respecting clergy family times, and providing ongoing

encouragement to family members. Open dialogue early on between pastors and church leaders to jointly address areas of occupational concerns in constructive ways was recognized as essential for supporting the health of both the clergy family and the ministry of the church.

Several respondents also stressed the importance of clergy being “in tune” with their spouses and children, taking time to listen and respond to their concerns. Such feedback was viewed as critical for proactively addressing key issues related to maintaining a balanced and healthy lifestyle. Other participants asserted the need for family members not only to understand the clergy’s role in the pastorate, but also to have the opportunity to develop and use their own gifts within the life of the church and ministry.

From the perspectives of respondents, the role of denominational leaders in health promotion was dual-fold. The first involves the organization and delivery of direct services related to fostering the health and well-being of pastors and their families through a range of key services, including but not limited to health benefit programs, EAP services, and ministry supports provided through regional ministers and denominational staff. Other respondents emphasized the importance of denominational leaders being active in educating both clergy and church leaders regarding key practices that contribute, not only to the health of clergy families, but also to the health and effectiveness of the ministry of the church.

4.0 Best Practice Statements

The definition of best practice as it relates to program delivery in the health field has been approached with varying degrees of rigour.

Within health care, the application of the idea of “best practice” has ranged from simply publishing particular practices under the rubric of “best”, ... to engaging in a systematic identification of what would constitute “best” within a particular health issue or practice area, ... to a rigorous research-based investigation to identify evidence associated with particular practices (Varcoe, 1998, p.4).

The identified best practice statements reflect the convergence of major insights gleaned from the research with those elicited from key informant interviews. For the purposes of this project, “best practices” are emergent guidelines. As research continues, these statements will need to be revised and modified to reflect new and additional insights.

This section of the document outlines “best practice” statements in seven categories:

1. Denominational Support Services
2. Occupational-Related Implications
3. Proactive Responses
4. Support During Transitions
5. Balanced and Healthy Lifestyle
6. Pastoral Training and Professional Development
7. Sources of Social Support

4.1 Denominational Support Services

4.1.1 PROVIDE CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

In the delivery of support or counselling services, ensuring confidentiality is a critical consideration. In this regard, various participants indicated that sharing concerns openly could conceivably negatively impact future placement decisions and opportunities within the ministry.

4.1.2 ENSURE AVAILABILITY OF FAMILY-FOCUSED HEALTH PROGRAMS

Denominational health programs should be family-focused and provide access to both prevention (e.g. enrichment seminars to address marital, parental stress or life-span issues) and intervention-type services (e.g. counselling/crisis support).

4.1.3 ENSURE ACCESS TO EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE COUNSELLING SERVICES

Employee assistance counselling services should be accessible and provide immediate support through telephone-based services or in-person contacts. Counselling services should be available to all family members and include assistance with career guidance, financial planning, and individual and family-oriented difficulties or concerns. When applied, such services have the benefit of supporting individuals in their current work and family contexts without the need to relocate or significantly disrupt daily living activities.

4.1.4 ENCOURAGE HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS TO BE SENSITIVE TO SPIRITUAL ISSUES/RESOURCES

Counsellors and other health care providers who work with clergy family members should be sensitive to the spiritual values held by clergy and family members, and the potential use of spiritual resources in addressing areas of concern and coping.

4.1.5 PARTNER WITH OTHER DENOMINATIONS TO PROMOTE CLERGY HEALTH

As a result of budget constraints, some denominations may have difficulty in providing the full range of health and family-oriented services essential to support clergy families. In such instances, denominations may consider networking together to form alliances in the administration and delivery of health-related services.

4.1.6 EDUCATE CHURCH LEADERS AND CLERGY

Denominational personnel should be active in educating both clergy and church leaders regarding key practices that contribute, not only to the health of clergy families, but also to the health and effectiveness of the ministry of the church.

4.2 Occupational-Related Implications

4.2.1 PROVIDE CLEAR JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Job descriptions/expectations and work-related time demands should be clarified at the outset of a pastor's contract with the church. Such deliberations involve addressing a range of questions; such as, "Is the agreement clear and realistic?", "Are priorities identified?", "Are lines of responsibility and authority outlined adequately?", "Are evaluation processes clarified?"

4.2.2 ENSURE ADEQUATE FINANCIAL COMPENSATION

Compensation packages and benefits should be adequate to release clergy from basic financial worries. Some clergy are faced with additional financial constraints arising from carry-over debt from educational studies and the costs associated with relocating to new a pastoral position.

4.2.3 PROVIDE ASSISTANCE WITH ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS

In some contexts, administrative tasks may occupy a substantial amount of a clergy's time. Consequently, pastors may grapple with the strain of meeting both organizational demands and their sense of personal calling "to be doing ministry". Lay training for church members in areas related to administrative functions may be beneficial for facilitating pastors' time and attention to other key ministry areas within the church and community.

4.2.4 ENCOURAGE TEAM APPROACHES TO MINISTRY

Lay leadership and church members play a key role in assisting the pastor in maintaining a balanced lifestyle, by directly participating in ministry and administrative activities, ensuring the development of reasonable pastoral expectations, monitoring the demands of ministry, respecting clergy family times and providing ongoing encouragement to family members.

4.2.5 CARRY OUT REGULAR REVIEWS / MINISTRY TEAM RETREATS

Ministry teams including pastoral staff and lay leaders should devote time to regular reviews in which prayer and reflection provide the basis for collaboration and development of constructive actions.

4.2.6 PURSUE PASTORAL RETREAT AND REFLECTION

Clergy should take regularly scheduled time for personal devotion, Bible reading, prayer and reflection. Regardless of personal type or style, individual time with God was regarded as imperative for "gaining perceptiveness", "having an awareness of God's powerful grace and forgiveness" and refocusing on the "sense of call" and "commitment" to ministry.

4.3 Proactive Responses

4.3.1 EDUCATE CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERS

Efforts should be undertaken to heighten church members' awareness of the stressors faced by clergy families. In addition, congregational leaders may benefit from information sessions that enhance their awareness of specific ways in which they can support clergy family members in both their professional and family roles.

4.3.2 MONITOR MINISTRY DEMANDS

Pastors and church leaders should be vigilant and transparent in monitoring the demands of ministry and the health of those involved in ministry. Such monitoring was described as taking the initiative to inquire- “How is it going?” and to make provision for additional support and nurturing for pastors, their families and others during difficult times or stressful periods.

4.3.3 ADDRESS AREAS OF CONCERN AT AN EARLY STAGE

Open and constructive dialogue early on between pastors and church in addressing areas of occupational concerns is essential for supporting the health of both the clergy family and the ministry of the church. Development of specific processes that encourage effective communication, negotiation and consensus-building for ministry teams may be of particular importance.

4.3.4 PROVIDE WRITTEN REMINDERS OF SELF-CARE STRATEGIES

Self-care strategies should also be outlined in denominational material and be reviewed through orientation programs with new pastors or those making transitions within different types of church and mission ministries. In addition, guidelines related to transitions, new job positions, clergy network systems, financial planning and strategies for accessing needed support should be provided to clergy in written orientation material or through web-based resources.

4.3.5 ENCOURAGE PERSONAL PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

When clergy or lay leaders become aware of personal and family issues that may compromise their potential to minister effectively, they should be encouraged to take responsibility in addressing such areas of concern. Confidential channels for accessing individual counselling and support should be made available to both pastors and lay leaders.

4.4 Support During Transitions

4.4.1 PROVIDE CONTINUED SUPPORT

During times of transition, providing compensation, continued health-care benefits and counselling support may be helpful in reducing the stress associated with transitions and adaptation to a new church, school and community setting.

4.4.2 ACCOMMODATE FAMILY SCHEDULES AND COMMITMENTS

In planning relocation or transition times, efforts should be made to accommodate children's school and spouses' employment schedules.

4.4.3 ENSURE WELCOMING SUPPORT

At the point of relocation, support from the church community may be of particular importance. The formation of a welcoming committee may provide assistance by organizing meals during the first few days of the pastor's family residency in the community. In addition, linking clergy family members in recreational activities with other church families that have children of comparable ages may assist in the development of friendships.

4.4.4 PROVIDE WRITTEN RELOCATION RESOURCE INFORMATION

Written relocation information packages should be developed for pastors and their families prior to their moves. Such support material could include information on key community services (e.g. schools, hospitals), program activities for children and youth, as well as contact names and numbers of congregational members who are available to provide assistance if requested (e.g. welcoming committee).

4.5 Balanced and Healthy Lifestyle

4.5.1 ELICIT FAMILY FEEDBACK REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEMANDS

Clergy should be "in tune" with their spouses and children, taking time to listen and respond to their concerns. Such feedback is critical for proactively addressing key issues related to maintaining a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

4.5.2 ESTABLISH REASONABLE WORK PRIORITIES AND LIMITS

Clergy should make intentional efforts to create balance in daily responsibilities/schedules through setting priorities, maintaining healthy boundaries between family and vocational activities, and resisting "a work-only" approach to living.

4.5.3 ENSURE HEALTHY BOUNDARIES BETWEEN PASTORAL WORK AND HOME LIFE

Family time, weekly days off, and holidays should not be omitted as a result of work expectations/responsibilities. Communication and mutual understanding regarding home and work routines/times among clergy, family members and church leaders are critical for supporting such efforts.

4.5.4 ENGAGE IN SATISFYING LEISURE ACTIVITY

Engagement in satisfying leisure activities may have specific benefits for reducing or preventing emotional exhaustion. In this regard, activities that have intrinsic value or that are self-directed may be of particular importance.

4.6 Pastoral Training and Professional Development

4.6.1 INCORPORATE SELF-CARE STRATEGIES IN PASTORAL TRAINING

Self-care strategies should be included as key aspects of ministerial training, emphasized during supervised field placements, and offered as continuing education for pastors already in ministry. Various methods of training delivery might include workshops, local support networks, retreats and weekend ministry events/conferences.

4.6.2 ADDRESS RELEVANT THEMES IN SELF-CARE TRAINING INITIATIVES

Training in self-care strategies should include content related to: maintaining healthy boundaries between work and home activities, knowing the signs of “burnout” and preventing it, enhancing marriage relationships, implementing effective parenting strategies, managing conflict effectively, working with diverse personalities, addressing criticism constructively, learning useful stress management strategies, and developing a personal growth/wellness plan.

4.6.3 INCREASE CLERGY AWARENESS REGARDING PERSONAL PREFERENCES

Increasing clergy self-awareness regarding personal/work style preferences may be beneficial for enhancing their understanding of the diversity of personalities that exists within their own congregations and church settings. Such awareness may be an important consideration in the development and maintenance of positive working relationships with others.

4.6.4 INVITE PARTICIPATION IN CLERGY MENTORSHIP INITIATIVES

Senior or regional pastors are in a unique position to provide consultation, discipleship and guidance for pastors, especially for those entering ministries. Such mentorship is critical for supporting the positive health and personal development of clergy. Other possibilities include creation of pastoral-peer networks or establishment of support relationships with lay church leaders.

4.6.5 INSTRUCT CLERGY IN PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

Seminary training and ongoing continuing education should include instructional sessions on professional ethics and on the importance of recognizing professional competencies and limitations. In light of the wide range of congregational concerns and needs, including those that require services or interventions that extend beyond pastoral areas of expertise, such training is critical for ensuring continued integrity and responsible caring in all professional and personal relationships.

4.7 Sources of Social Support

4.7.1 EXTEND SOCIAL SUPPORT/FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

Social support has been identified as a strong predictor of personal well-being for both clergy and their spouses. Sources of support may include friendships, as well as opportunities for clergy families from different churches to socialize.

4.7.2 FORMALIZE CLERGY CARE COMMITTEES

Intentional efforts by church leadership and congregational members to care for pastors and their family members should also be undertaken. Various strategies might include organizing a formal pastor-family care committee, ensuring that pastoral family members are included in community events, and forming ministry teams to address areas of service.

4.7.3 AFFIRM AND COMMUNICATE APPRECIATION

Congregational members should make specific efforts to affirm and communicate appreciation to clergy family members through both acts of kindness and words of appreciation.

4.7.4 ORGANIZE SPOUSE, COUPLE AND “PASTORS’ KIDS” RETREATS

Implementation of spouse, couple and “pastors’ kids” retreats may be important sources of encouragement for clergy families. Such events provide opportunities for clergy family members, not only to lend support to one-another, but also to share areas of common concern and approaches for promoting and maintaining healthy relationships.

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