

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

HOW MIGHT NAZARENE DISTRICTS HOLISTICALLY ADDRESS THE
EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF ITS CLERGY SURROUNDING
BURNOUT?

A THESIS IN THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY PRESENTED TO THE
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CULTURES

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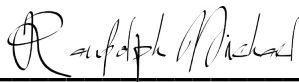
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We, the undersigned, determined that this dissertation has met the academic requirements and standards of Nazarene Theological Seminary for the Doctor of Ministry program.



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Abstract

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HOW MIGHT NAZARENE DISTRICTS HOLISTICALLY ADDRESS THE EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF IT'S CLERGY SURROUNDING BURNOUT?

Because of the many roles and demands placed upon clergy, burnout is not uncommon in ministry. Often these symptoms manifest through depression, anxiety, stress, relational conflicts, marital challenges, addictions and more. These experiences are detrimental to the clergy member, their families, the congregation, and the church at large. These challenges lead us to ask how the church can foster resiliency and well-being among their clergy who are confronted with emotional and mental health challenges. The first portion of this project is a survey regarding ways to understand the foregoing concerns.

With a better understanding of the problems facing clergy, the question then is how might districts within the Church of the Nazarene constructively respond? Possible solutions and recommendations for more effective support of pastors are considered in the final portion of this dissertation. Various prevention and intervention efforts and approaches are surveyed for the purpose of promoting positive mental health among clergy. These recommendations are the beginning steps of providing on-going support for those who minister.

Table of Contents

Burnout

<i>Introduction- Burnout</i>	1
<i>Clergy Burnout</i>	3
<i>Risk Factors for Clergy Burnout</i>	7
<i>Positive Factors for Clergy Burnout</i>	12
<i>Defining Well-Being</i>	14
<i>Spiritual Well-Being</i>	15
<i>Contributing Positive Factors of Spiritual Well-Being</i>	20
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	22

Research and Literature Review

<i>Introduction-Anxiety</i>	25
<i>Safety Over Adventure</i>	30
<i>Blaming Others</i>	30
<i>Additional Stressors</i>	32
<i>Introduction- Depression</i>	45
<i>Symptoms and Diagnosis</i>	48
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	61

Wesleyan Theology and Pastoral Mental Health

<i>Introduction</i>	62
<i>Wesleyan Theology – Holiness</i>	63
<i>Wesleyan Theology – Stewardship</i>	64
<i>Wesleyan Theology – Progressive Sanctification</i>	67
<i>Wesleyan Theology – Means of Grace</i>	68
<i>Wesleyan Theology – Quadrilateral</i>	69
<i>Wesleyan Theology and Wellness</i>	75
<i>Wesleyan Theology and Identity</i>	78
<i>Theological Threats</i>	79
<i>Threats from Our Polity</i>	80
<i>Equality</i>	81
<i>Multi-Tasking</i>	82
<i>Pastor as CEO</i>	82
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	83

Integrative Approach to Nazarene Districts	
<i>Introduction</i>	85
<i>District Model</i>	91
<i>Phase I- Preventative</i>	94
<i>Phase II- Preventative</i>	106
<i>Phase III</i>	111
<i>Therapeutic Approaches for Anxiety</i>	113
<i>Additional Therapeutic Approaches for Anxiety</i>	116
<i>Therapeutic Approaches for Depression</i>	120
<i>Additional Therapeutic Approaches for Depression</i>	125
<i>Approaches for Burnout Prevention</i>	126
<i>Chapter Summary</i>	134
 Recommendations for Nazarene Pastors, Districts, and our Denomination	
<i>Overview and Submission</i>	135
 Bibliography	141

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Chapter #1
Burnout

“The truth is we’re all a little bit broken. We must learn to love the broken pieces of ourselves—be gentle and empathetic with ourselves, and others.”

—Karen Salmansohn

Burnout

This dissertation aims to better understand the causes of clergy burnout, the factors that contribute to negative feelings surrounding a pastor’s emotional health, and how clergy with symptoms of burnout can move in the direction of emotional, relational, mental, and spiritual health. It is important to have clarity when defining terms like “burnout” and “well-being”. Burnout is understood as “a psychological condition resulting from chronic work-related stress and has three central factors: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment.”¹ Symptoms can range from feelings of depression, anxiety, mood swings, exhaustion, purposeless etc. Burnout can be a precursor to clinical depression and is often career-related, with symptoms being reduced and even eliminated once there is a shift from a current job.²

I will identify the causes of clergy burnout and how the Church of the Nazarene districts can implement and foster some integrative approaches that foster overall health for their clergy. I will also identify factors that impact clergy’s ability to address challenges associated with burnout. Some questions to consider: What are the precursors that lead to burnout? Do

¹ Maureen H. Miner, “Burnout In The First Year of Ministry: Personality and Belief Style As Important Predictors,” *Mental Health, Religion, & Culture* 10 no.1 (January 2007): 17-29.

² Miner “Burnout In The First Year of Ministry,” 17-29.

personality traits, characteristics, and/or personal experiences move the needle? Are there techniques that can be taught that will make a difference? In addition, I will identify techniques that would increase the clergy's capacity to attain positive well-being, reinforcing the need for districts to take proactive steps towards health and wholeness for the clergy. Lastly, we will examine how congregations, districts, and the larger Nazarene denomination can help foster and support their clergy that are facing these challenges.

As we discuss mental health in the life of clergy, we must begin to look at some of the contributing factors that influence our well-being and prevent us from feelings of wholeness emotionally, physically, relationally, spiritually, and mentally. These concerns are not unique to pastors within the church setting. Mental health challenges can be seen throughout the congregational life and the system in which it operates. It is also important to understand the distinction between mental illness and mental health. In general terms, mental illness is referring to negative conditions such as emotional and mental challenges leading to clinical diagnosis. In this dissertation, we will examine two of the most prominent mental health diagnoses surrounding burnout: anxiety and depression. We will identify both clinical and non-clinical symptoms of each, which can impact a pastor's emotional, relational, and spiritual life. In contrast, mental health is often referring to positive conditions such as satisfaction, enjoyment, empathy, and caring/service toward others.³ It is often through these expressions of positive mental health that we find strength and encouragement to fulfill our calling as pastors, leaders, mentors, and followers of Christ.

Clergy Burnout

³ Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell et al., "The Glory of God is a Human Being Fully Alive: Predicators of Positive Versus Negative Mental Health Among Clergy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54 no.4 (2015): 702-721.

Clergy, like the general population, often find themselves dealing with anxiety, depression, mental instability, self-medicating, and various addictions. Many of these symptoms are a result of the larger issue of burnout, however it should be pointed out that burnout can be both a cause and the result of certain circumstances. As will be shown in chapter 2, anxiety and depression appear to be the most prevalent symptoms resulting from burnout. We find that when these burnout symptoms occur there is a high tendency to self-medicate and respond in unhealthy ways to these challenges, leading potentially to various addictive behaviors. Burnout does not require that anxiety or depression occurs, however in many cases research indicates that one or more of the symptoms do tend to occur. These issues not only negatively impact clergy themselves but also their families, congregations, and the church at large.

Pressure from within the Church:

Our churches can be fertile soil for pastors feeling depressed and/or anxious. The pressure to grow a congregation into a mega church, or step aside and close the doors, is a frequent concern for ministers. Our church culture tends to produce those who are designed to thrive in sales and marketing rather than spiritual leadership. Archibald Hart, former Dean of the graduate school of psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary spent his career studying pastoral health and was one of the first to write about ministry health and burnout back in the 60's and 70's. Professor Hart spoke of the tendency of ministers to lose their identity and fail to accept their limitations as they strive to fit a persona. "Pastors don't get into difficulties because they forget they are pastors, that is not the issue. The issue is that we forget that we are persons."⁴ In other words, as pastors we can focus on personality rather than personhood. This pressure to fit into what it means to be an "ideal" pastor is compounded by the fact that it takes 5-7 years to

⁴ Scott Daniels, hosts, "Flourishing In Ministry" New Creation Conversations (podcast), August 17th 2021, accessed August 21st 2021, <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

fully embrace one's identity as a minister of the gospel. This same timeframe applies to many in the helping profession and is a part of the developmental process of stepping into the role of what it means to be a pastor.⁵

Pressure from within the Pastoral Profession:

According to the recent Barna research (2017) which looked at over 14,000 pastors, 1 in 5 clergy struggle with an addiction, 50% of clergy deal with depression at some point in their ministry, and 45.5% say that they have experienced depression or burnout to the point that they have needed to take a break from the ministry.⁶ This is an increase from a study that was conducted by Duke University (2003) with 2500 religious leaders where 10% of clergy said they were depressed part of, or all the time, and 40% reported being depressed some of the time.⁷ The Flourishing Ministry Project also led by Dr. Matt Bloom, which in many respects established much of the groundbreaking research in the area of pastoral burnout, reinforced the trend that burnout among clergy is on the rise. These findings show that "Burnout is a dangerous situation because it leads to depression, anxiety, nervous breakdowns, divorce, and even suicide."⁸ They also highlight that most of those pastors reporting symptoms of burnout were unaware of the symptoms they were experiencing. This lack of awareness can quickly take a minister from tiredness to utter exhaustion, one stressful event at a time. These stressful events can often be dismissed or ignored as simply situational or limited to a particular event. Pastors are also susceptible to vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue. Like other helping professions, the "cost

⁵ Daniels, "Flourishing In Ministry" <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

⁶ Barna, *The State of Pastors*, (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishing, 2017), 47.

⁷ Matt Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry: How To Cultivate Clergy Well-being* (New York: An Alban Institute Book, 2019), 18.

⁸ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 18.

of caring” can create emotional and physical fatigue from reliving stories and events that have created trauma in the life of parishioners. The challenge for pastors comes when they are unable to take time to recharge after being emotionally or mentally depleted. They are called to meet people where they are in their lives and walk with them through the various challenges that arise. While it is an honor to be allowed into these sacred places, it can come at a cost to a pastor who has empathy and compassion for those they serve.

While these factors might contribute and be a result of a one-time event, the challenge arises when we begin to deplete our well-being reserve and create narratives that foster a mindset focused on negative experiences rather than positive ones.⁹ These additional challenges for ministers make them unable to perform at their best, leading to “despair”, “detachment”, and sometimes “cynicism”.¹⁰ Many of these pastors have served in their capacity for less than 7 years and are at high risk of burnout. This research reiterates the need for early intervention.¹¹ Symptoms associated with burnout or signs that burnout is on the horizon include: difficulty falling sleep or staying asleep, lack of restful sleep, not being able to experience pleasure in things that typically brought pleasure, feeling down, anxiety over things that would typically not create anxious feelings, feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, changes in mood, eating and sleeping.¹²

Research performed by Chris Adams (2007) found that clergy were at higher risk of professional burnout compared to the general population, but the research also indicated their

⁹ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 102.

¹⁰ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 18.

¹¹ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 18.

¹² Daniels, “Flourishing In Ministry,” <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

levels of burnout were surpassed by police and other medical personnel levels.¹³ One of the factors leading to burnout is when pastors experience or perceive they are having more bad days than good days. When clergy begin to see a negative narrative of their life experiences, their ability to make healthy decisions decreases and difficulties dealing with challenging situations increases. This also leads to diminished coping skills and a pastor's ability to hold an objective perspective, thus leading to burnout.¹⁴

To add to their previous research, the Duke Clergy Health Initiative recently did a comprehensive exam of the overall physical and emotional health of pastors over a decade and they found two key insights. First, clergy have a higher rate and are at greater risk for high blood pressure, high blood sugar, high cholesterol, and clinical obesity. Second, they found that the rate of clinical depression is equal to or greater than the general population. This is believed to be a direct correlation to the constant levels of stress that come from being expected to perform and possess expertise in a wide range of disciplines. It is not enough to be a skilled theologian and communicator, but also counselor, financial advisor, funeral director, wedding coordinator, groundskeeper, master electrician and plumber. The Duke Health Initiative referenced the Effort Reward Imbalance Theory which explains that if high demands and high efforts are coupled with low pay-out or low reward (such as low pay or minimal acknowledgment) and high stress, clergy are at significantly higher chances of burnout.¹⁵

Risk Factors for Clergy Burnout

¹³ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, "Introduction"

¹⁴ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 5.

¹⁵ Daniels, "Flourishing In Ministry," <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

The negative factors contributing to clergy burnout include: personal character traits, personal behaviors, and external factors. The *Mental Health, Religion, & Culture Journal* (2007) pulled together research that looked at six different studies which indicated that there were high levels of burnout among clergy regardless of their denominational or religious affiliation. The studies were conducted throughout the world to provide a macro-level overview that stretched beyond culture, ethnic origins, economics, and religious affiliation. Self-blaming, disengagement, venting, distraction, and denial all contributed to a greater likelihood of burnout in the pastorate.¹⁶ According to Maureen H. Miner, from the School of Psychology in Western Sydney Australia, nearly 50% of clergy in Australia leave ministry due to burnout and stress prior to retirement.¹⁷ According to research conducted by Lee and Iverson-Gilbert (2003), congregations that are highly demanding result in clergy experiencing diminished feelings of well-being, reduced satisfaction in their life, and increased incidents of clergy burnout.¹⁸ Many clergy preach about grace for those in their congregations but often do not feel the same level of grace extended to them. On the other hand, those clergy who feel loved and cared for by their congregations report better emotional health and positive well-being.¹⁹

Edwin H. Friedman, an ordained rabbi and family therapist is seen as being pivotal in bringing together the world of family systems theory to the life of the church and its leaders. In his groundbreaking work “Generation To Generation” Friedman highlighted the emotional

¹⁶ Benjamin R. Doolittle, “Burnout and Coping Among Parish-Based Clergy,” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 10, no.1 (January 2007): 31-38.

¹⁷ Miner, “Burnout In The First Year of Ministry,” 17- 29.

¹⁸ Proeschold-Bell, “The Glory of God is a Human Being Fully Alive,” 702-721.

¹⁹ Proeschold-Bell, “The Glory of God is a Human Being Fully Alive,” 702-721.

processes that take place not only within a congregation, but also in the life of the pastor.²⁰ This work led Friedman to examine the characteristics within the church and how that relationship increased the likelihood of burnout among pastors. Friedman found one of the ways in which ministers struggle to establish boundaries, thus taking on the anxiety of their congregation, is through the lack of differentiation. Differentiation is the ability of a minister to have empathy and understanding of the anxiety and unhealthiness within a congregation without internalizing ownership of the congregation's condition. In Friedman's collaboration with Bowen Family Systems Theory (1985), Friedman identified these five characteristics.²¹

1. "Degree of isolation between the congregation and other congregations in its own faith community or in its local community."
2. "Degree of distance between the lay leadership and the general membership."
3. "Extent to which the lay leadership allows the congregation to preempt its entire emotional life." (no other friends or social networks).
4. "Degree to which the lay leadership has the intense interdependence relationships with one another beyond their congregational functioning, such as being related through blood, marriage, or business."
5. "Inability of the lay leadership, particularly the "president" or the senior warden, to take well-defined positions, independent of the complainers."²²

²⁰ Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation To Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press), 1985.

²¹ Angella Son. "Anxiety as a Main Cause of Church Conflicts Based on Bowen Family Systems Theory," *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, vol 73(1) (2019) 9-18.

²² Son, "Anxiety as a Main Cause of Church Conflicts Based on Bowen Family Systems Theory," 9-18.

Clergy within denominational structures may be simultaneously trying to incorporate past traditions, maintaining relevancy among the societal and cultural shifts, and preparing for the unexpected as they focus on the importance of adaptability rather than technical solutions to the changing landscape.²³ The task of bridging all three areas can be a daunting task which requires developing new mental models from that of the past. In addition, challenges also arise for ministers when they compartmentalize their lives in such a way that it creates incongruence between who they are and how they desire others to view them. This can also be seen in over-spiritualizing the role and responsibilities of a pastor. When this occurs, we experience a tendency to minimize the other aspects of who we are as focus is only given to those areas which are seen as “spiritual”. If pastors are not careful, this compartmentalization can become toxic, creating environments of denial and avoidance rather than holistic well-being.²⁴

Personal Characteristics:

The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II; Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996) found that clergy who displayed neurotic tendencies had moderately higher chances of experiencing burnout, but this was more likely to be counterbalanced if the clergy member was an extrovert.²⁵ This followed a previous study conducted with American Baptist clergy linking lower burnout to clergy who displayed more extraversion tendencies (Rodgers & Piedmont, 1998). These findings do not explicitly determine that introversion and neuroticism are an automatic recipe for burnout, but it seems they may make clergy with those tendencies more susceptible to burnout. What does appear relevant through these studies is that clergy who display neurotic tendencies are most likely not receiving the validation that they need on a regular basis. This lack of

²³26 Miner, “Burnout In The First Year of Ministry,” 1-8.

²⁴ Daniels, “Flourishing In Ministry,” <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

²⁵ Miner, “Burnout In The First Year of Ministry,” 1-8.

validation can cause insecurities and isolation leading to loneliness, depression, and ultimately, burnout. Lack of humility can also establish patterns leading to burnout. Being closed to difficult questions and feedback from others is a recipe for being emotionally cut-off from the support of one's congregation, district, and denomination. Unwillingness to allow others to see one's struggles equals a higher likelihood that a pastor will not reach out when they find themselves struggling with symptoms of burnout.

Personal Behaviors:

In church and ministry life, it is not uncommon to focus on the symptoms at hand rather than the underlying issues. When this occurs, it becomes easy to deflect, vent, disengage, and create a distraction or ignore the challenges at hand. These techniques, while at times can minimize the challenge for a pastor; the long-term ramifications can create bouts of depression and anxiety that lead to burnout. It is vital that our clergy are not distracted by the proverbial bright shiny object rather than focusing on the root of the problem when confronted with these challenges. Similar to a physician addressing a medical condition, a doctor must make sure that the symptom relief does not prevent the underlying issue from being addressed or the symptoms will continue and eventually spread to affect additional areas. While it is not wrong to desire symptom relief, it cannot override the cost of addressing the underlying cause. When it comes to burnout in the life of a pastor, we must make sure that we are not simply desiring the quick fix in place of true emotional, physical, relational, spiritual, or mental healing.

External Factors:

In the U.S., individuals suffering from psychological distress are more likely to go to a member of the clergy before they go to a doctor or counselor.²⁶ This can create enormous amounts of emotional, spiritual, physical, and relational strain for pastors. Ministers are identified as first responders when it comes to the mental health epidemic that is plaguing our society with over 45 million Americans suffering from mental health illness.²⁷ Rarely do we see circumstances in our society where people will turn to the church first, but we are seeing this when it comes to mental health challenges that either directly or indirectly impact the majority of those sitting in our pews. Within a single day a minister can find himself/herself performing any of the following: a funeral, baby dedication/baptism, wedding ceremony, home visits, serving as a spiritual leader, preacher, teacher, administrator, counselor, educator, and an expert in anything between.²⁸ In addition, life stressors such as finances, feelings of isolation, lack of support and validation, minimal self-care, physical and emotional depletion, and unclear objectives and expectations all negatively impact clergy's ability to engage in long-term healthy practices of well-being.²⁹ The rollercoaster of emotions that are experienced often require compartmentalization, which does not necessarily lend itself to integrative wholeness.

Positive Factors for Clergy Burnout

²⁶ Matthew S. Stanford, "Mental Health and the Church", Lecture, American Association of Christian Counselors, Nashville, (October 12th 2019).

²⁷ Stanford, "Mental Health and the Church", (October 12, 2019).

²⁸ Carlyle F. Stewart III, C. F. "Why Do Clergy Experience Burnout?," *Quarterly Review Editorial Board*, 23, no. 1 (2003): 78.

²⁹ Proeschold-Bell, "The Glory of God is a Human Being Fully Alive," 702-721.

The positive factors preventing clergy burnout include internal factors, external factors, and personal behaviors.

Internal Factors:

Going back to the 1970's we find researchers such as Maslach & Leiter indicating that it was not uncommon for there to be signs of burnout among those who were directly caring for the needs of others. There was also a greater likelihood of burnout when those within the caring profession did not have a clear purpose or "calling". In a study conducted by (Crossley, 2002) they found ministers, specifically chaplains, had one of the highest levels of enjoyment when it came to their profession and job satisfaction. This supports the assertion that a clear purpose and "calling" is crucial to offset the trends of high burnout for many in the helping profession.³⁰ Having a strong sense of purpose and "calling" is a source of strength and encouragement for clergy and will be important during times when symptoms of burnout are evident. To provide support and counteract some of the negative self-talk that ministers can experience, it is helpful for clergy and other district and denominational leadership to come alongside ministers during these times. From an initial observation, the disconnect between the high level of burnout of helping professionals and the high level of job satisfaction of the clergy indicates the key to preventing collapse could be recognizing and embracing their "calling" to something greater than themselves, and acknowledging their own limitations.

External Factors:

³⁰ Christopher Allen Lewis et al., "Clergy Work-Related Psychological Health, Stress, and Burnout: An Introduction to This Special Issue of Mental Health, Religion and Culture," *Mental Health, Religion, & Culture* 10 no.1 (January 2007): 1-8.

Studies (Bricker & Fleischer, 1993) show that the routine of a minister often provides flexibility and creativity, which tend to offset some symptoms of burnout. What is particularly interesting about this study is that often those areas which clergy identify as causing chronic stress are also the same things that allow flexibility and creativity (shown to reduce burnout and provide positive well-being). For example, stress on behalf of clergy can come from feeling that they are required to wear multiple hats at the same time or feeling that they never have an opportunity to not be “the pastor” and be viewed as having everything together. However, these structural limitations also provide significant flexibility for clergy to create their own schedules as they balance the various demands of family life. Flexibility greatly impacts our ability to cope with life’s unexpected circumstances. Having structure and the ability to set healthy boundaries can not only create health in the life of the pastor but also create empowerment of one’s own time and schedule. An important concept to understand when discussing the topic of flexibility in the life of a pastor who is experiencing symptoms of burnout, is whether the individual can reframe their current situation toward a movement to create positive change or whether their inflexibility prevents them from making the change needed.

Personal Behaviors:

In several of the studies examining burnout and well-being, they looked at how age impacts those that identify with symptoms of burnout. There appears to be a clear distinction in that seasoned clergy tend to report less symptoms associated with burnout than their younger counterparts. The research pointed to the possibility that while this might be a result of younger clergy simply adjusting to their new profession, a common denominator is acquiring and utilizing coping skills are developed overtime. Years of ministry experience develops a larger capacity and establishes coping skills that enable ministers to practice everyday happiness, self-

integrity, and resiliency and provides opportunities to thrive within their ministry context. These opportunities to flourish are only possible through connections/relationships that build upon measures that focus on pastoral health and well-being, enabling pastors to lead and function in healthy ways during times of crisis and conflict.³¹

The Duke Clergy Health Initiative identified that pastors who viewed their role as partnering/partnership with God, rather than feeling that they were responsible for God's work, had greater chances of flourishing within the context of their ministry.³² This shift in thinking is not only significant and true to our Wesleyan Theology, as we believe that the Holy Spirit is already active when we show up, but also has physical and physiological ramifications for us as humans. The research reminds us of our own theology that teaches us to not think too much of ourselves nor too little of who we are in Christ. This extends to how we identify ourselves in the role of pastor and how we address issues of transference and countertransference within our congregations and ministry contexts. This research helps us evaluate how we view our success and challenges in ministry.

Defining Well-Being

We must begin with a basic understanding that our well-being is spiritual, emotional, mental, physical, and relational. Over the last 25-30 years we have seen greater emphasis being placed on integrating religious practices into psychological models. Psychologists are gaining greater awareness when it comes to implementing coping strategies that build upon individual, couple, family, and religious community relationships as a way to bring about health and well-being. There is a desire to collaborate with religious leaders in light of research showing greater

³¹ Daniels, "Flourishing In Ministry," <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

³² Daniels, "Flourishing In Ministry," <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

recovery and health with those who possess a spiritual belief system. As competent clinicians, it is ethically imperative that psychologist and the mental health community increase their awareness of the clients that they serve. Finally, this information is presented in order that the Nazarene church in general, and specifically districts, might recognize that caring for their clergy is most effective if done through a holistic approach.

Spiritual Well-being

Spiritual well-being has been described as “a relationship with God that includes a vibrant sense of life purpose and meaning.”³³ Some common attributes that contribute to positive mental health/well-being include self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, personal growth, life purpose, control of one’s needs, and autonomy.³⁴ In essence, our well-being is looking at ourselves through a holistic perspective of health which includes our spirituality, our interactions with others, and our emotional and mental functioning.³⁵

Historically, the church and the field of psychology have often found themselves at opposite ends of the spectrum. However, within the last several decades we have seen this divide shrink as research has shown that when spirituality is integrated into psychological approaches the outcomes are significantly more favorable.³⁶ Additionally, well-being equals greater emotional stability, which is often seen in greater intellectual humility, greater curiosity,

³³ Craig Ellison, “Spiritual well-being,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 11, no 4 (1983): 330-338.

³⁴ Proeschold- Bell, “The Glory of God is a Human Being Fully Alive,” 702-721.

³⁵ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, Introduction xii.

³⁶ Mark McMinn R, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling*, Revised, & Updated edition (2012; Tyndale House Publishers).

religious exploration, positive attitudes, greater willingness to forgive, and religious tolerance and diversity.³⁷

According to researchers such as Matt Bloom (2017) there appears to be multiple areas that contribute to clergy living a life of spiritual well-being: Everyday Happiness, Self-Integrity, Resiliency, and Thriving. For well-being to be maintained and enjoyed to its fullness these four areas need to be present and engaged simultaneously.³⁸ It is helpful to view these four contributing factors to well-being as building blocks. It is through a holistic view of these four areas that pastors have the ability to identify and tailor approaches and adjustments if they find that one or more of these areas are out of balance.

Everyday Happiness:

The first area of spiritual well-being, everyday happiness, is viewed as a combination of looking at the experiences we have and the meaning that we assign to those experiences. A central component of this evaluation is the assessing process by which we make these evaluations and distinguish our happiness for a day compared to overall happiness. According to this research, happiness allows us to recover faster from illness, injury, or issues with our immune system, and we make healthier decisions, have more creativity and mental flexibility, and are more responsive to challenges.³⁹

Self-Integrity:

When used as a building block, the second area of self-integrity allows us to identify strengths and weaknesses. It is in this quadrant that we tap into those standards and values that

³⁷ Peter J. Jankowski et al., "Humility, Relational Spirituality, and Well-being among Religious Leaders," *Journal of Religion and Health*, vol 52 no.3 (2018): 132-152.

³⁸ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 2.

³⁹ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 8.

we often hold as morals or guidelines in our life for many of our decisions. Our self-integrity allows us to be honest and foster an authentic view of ourselves. Self-integrity requires us to reflect and obtain self-awareness of our own beliefs, attitudes, and actions as well as gauge our emotional, mental, relational, physical, and spiritual well-being, holistically. If there are deficits in one or more areas a pastor can utilize their resiliency and self-integrity to make these needed changes without creating experiences which can lead to shame, negative self-talk, and symptoms of burnout of depression and anxiety. If a minister desires to practice and model authenticity than they will have an internal motivation toward self-reflection, an openness toward feedback, and an awareness to learn from past experiences. We are able to free ourselves from the fear of criticism, disappointment, and rejection through the guidance of self-integrity. When we reframe our challenges as ministers, we seek to better understand areas of growth not only in our personal lives, but also in the ministries we lead. This process allows opportunity to develop a holistic approach to build upon the happiness, resiliency, and thriving in spiritual well-being, and increase the awareness and ability to reduce symptoms of burnout. For clergy this can be important especially when viewing the relationship between burnout and well-being. If the goal for clergy and congregations is to build positive mental health in their leaders, then developing these tools and equipping environments that enable this type of learning and self-integrity can certainly be a healthy shift.

Resilience:

Resilience is the third area and refers to the ability to adapt and make decisions in order to fulfill our desires and accomplish our objectives. Resilience is the opposite of burnout or low well-being and is often associated with those who can overcome obstacles and come back from challenging situations in their lives.⁴⁰ It enables pastors to adapt to their changing environments

⁴⁰ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 18.

and equips them to address crisis situations effectively. Additionally, resilience boosts their capacity for growth and personal development. For resiliency to be achieved there must be self-awareness, self-control, and self-reflection. This trait is the bedrock for building capacity, which requires increase of knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience.⁴¹

A pastor having resiliency and/or capacity in one ministry context does not necessarily translate into a minister having the capacity and resiliency in another.⁴² In short, for reduced symptoms of burnout and increased well-being to occur, a pastor must possess the emotional intelligence required for self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-control. Resiliency provides greater capacity to navigate and engage a current ministry context and allows ministers to feel that they are able to have more good days than bad. This leads to moving a minister along the continuum from burnout to well-being and holistic health to include the body, mind, and soul. To begin building resiliency among pastors in the pastorate, we should encourage practicing relaxation, detachment, hobbies, adequate sleep, and activities that provide a daily boost to one's day, providing enjoyment and perspective for a positive experience.⁴³

For the life of clergy, obstacles are the rule rather than the exception. The ability to adapt, perform during crisis situations, manage impulses, make healthy decisions, and continue to move toward objectives is essential in developing and maintaining positive well-being. These coping skills are what allow individuals to maintain balance and be aware of their own surroundings and how they are responding internally. If there is one thing we as clergy have learned through the recent COVID-19 pandemic, it is the need for resiliency. The pandemic has taught us the need to

⁴¹ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 19.

⁴² Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 19.

⁴³ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 106.

adapt and replace our typical mindset with a skillset focused on responding to challenges in real time. Pastors who have made this shift in their mental model have not only seen growth in their own life, but have also modeled the need for resilience in their congregations.

Thriving:

Thriving is the fourth area for fostering spiritual well-being in clergy. Thriving is exhibited through language and feelings, and provides a purpose in beliefs and who we are as individuals. Similar to the work by Crossley (2002), which was highlighted earlier, there is a high correlation between developing and maintaining spiritual well-being and positive factors to reducing burnout when it comes to a minister's "calling".⁴⁴ The distinction between ministers and other caring professions, as it relates to burnout, is that clergy have a "call" or meaning for why and what they are doing. There is a motivation that is internal that compels clergy to a greater calling than just simply a profession. It is not uncommon to hear pastors say that if they felt they could do anything else that they would, but the "calling" on their life would not allow them.⁴⁵ As humans we desire to thrive and find meaning, regardless of our profession.

Part of a pastor's ability to thrive requires the opportunity for connection. Clergy need connection and relationship in their lives as they navigate the various challenges that arise. The significance of a minister having positive relationships builds upon earlier work by Ryff (1989) which stresses the importance of these relationships for an integrative approach to spiritual health. Characteristics of positive interactions with others leading to well-being include: caring for others, empathy, emotional connection, respect, and compassion, to name just a few. It is

⁴⁴ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 48.

⁴⁵ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 48.

imperative for clergy to feel that their social support can withstand the ebb and flow of their work through the good and difficult times.

Contributing Positive Factors of Spiritual Well-Being

We find a correlation between the positive factors that reduce symptoms of burnout and those areas that contribute to spiritual well-being. Building upon the strengths of a pastor and their ability to develop self-acceptance, positive relationships, personal growth, life purpose, control of one's needs along with autonomy, enables a minister to see themselves separate from their external circumstances and obtain internal happiness, self-integrity, resiliency, and thriving. We embrace our Wesleyan tradition of holiness by focusing on holistic healing of our minds, body, and spirit, adopting a mindset of integration and wholeness. It is through these areas of well-being that ministers can experience reduced symptoms of burnout.

Emotional Intelligence/ Self-Awareness:

In recent years there has been a significant shift from focusing on intellectual intelligence (I.Q.) to emotional intelligence (E.Q.) and contextual intelligence to see how these can create environments that allow ministers to live aware of their emotional and missional context. Greater awareness of these factors provide clergy the ability to identify the correlational relationship that is key in maintaining well-being. Greater E.Q also enables pastors to examine, through proactive measures, the importance of cultivating self-awareness and the ability to self-regulate their emotions during stressful challenging situations. Many congregants do not fully understand the complexity that comes with being a pastor and the need to constantly be monitoring one's emotions and relationships. In the research conducted by Dr. Matt Bloom and the Flourishing Ministry Project they found that self-regulation, self-awareness, and self-control are key competencies required to prevent burnout and promote flourishing in the pastorate.⁴⁶ There are

⁴⁶ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 20.

also assessments for personality and giftings that have gained notoriety such as StrengthsFinder, APEST, and Enneagram which are designed to help better understand ourselves. Churches and organizations have begun to incorporate these types of tools to better understand how to maintain and gain greater positive mental health and reduce some of the challenges that can easily lead to burnout.

Pastoral/ General Humility:

Research finds that for well-being to be at its most effective state “religious exploration and/or general humility may interact with religion-specific intellectual humility to predict well-being.”⁴⁷ Using the building blocks of the research presented in 2013 in the *Journal of Religion and Health*, general humility is believed to impact self-regulation, which in turn allows greater differentiation of self and lower levels of depression/anxiety and stress. Greater well-being is a result of reduced narcissism, spiritual grandiosity, and emotional and mental health symptoms.⁴⁸ According to Proeschold-Bell (2014;2015) feeling a closeness to God reduces the chance of burnout which builds greater satisfaction within a ministry assignment and is a greater determiner of well-being. They also found that clergy who were able to establish increased differentiation of self and security in their relationship to God (attachment) were able to also find more security and safety in their social support.⁴⁹ Finding the importance of well-being suggests that clergy who are able to understand their own limitations, value the contributions of others, and are open to differing opinions were able to find themselves free to question and search for

⁴⁷ Jankowski, “Humility, Relational Spirituality, and Well-being among Religious Leaders,” 132-152.

⁴⁸ Jankowski, “Humility, Relational Spirituality, and Well-being among Religious Leaders,” 132-152.

⁴⁹ Jankowski, “Humility, Relational Spirituality, and Well-being among Religious Leaders,” 132-152.

answers which translated into “greater well-being”.⁵⁰ As mentioned previously in regards to Emotional Intelligence, self-awareness enables a pastor to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and recognize the areas of ministry that they can excel in and which areas require complimentary skills from another individual. The idea of living into God’s unique calling upon one’s life and finding a good fit between a pastor and a particular ministry context (congregational size, geographic region, leadership style, life cycle) is crucial to flourish and create well-being in ministry.⁵¹ The greater our ability as ministry leaders to recognize and become aware of blind spots, the greater chance as pastors to find the unique fit God has designed for each pastor.

Chapter Summary

As we examine the relationship between well-being and burnout, research indicates integrating a holistic approach through the means of numerous resources would prove to be the most beneficial in creating long-lasting change. However, this should not be left with only the minister but includes the congregational family, the denomination, and the religious system. In fact, congregants can play a significant role in maintaining the health of their pastors. Examples include: respecting boundaries, limiting external stress as a result of conflicts, and encouraging vacations and time-off. Appreciation and greater understanding can all contribute towards creating environments that foster spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being.⁵²

We examined both the positive and negative aspects of internal factors, external factors, and personal behaviors which impact and influence the mental and emotional status of clergy. We have identified certain characteristics and traits that can influence a minister’s mindfulness

⁵⁰ Jankowski, “Humility, Relational Spirituality, and Well-being among Religious Leaders,” 132-152.

⁵¹ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 2.

⁵² Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell, “A Holistic Approach To Wellness,” *Health & Well-Being Research* (2009).

and their tendencies toward well-being and signs of burnout. We have seen contributing factors, unique to clergy, impacting one's ability to address and self-correct when symptoms begin to appear. In addition to identifying challenges through the lens of techniques and integrative approaches, the desire would be for members of the clergy to begin or continue the process of healing from symptoms of burnout toward holistic well-being. This can be set into motion through the support of faith-based communities and the resources that are unique to our faith. As a faith-based community, we hold to the belief that our hope transcends circumstances, that therapeutic communities allow us to identify purpose and recover, and as the church, (which is the body of believers) we exemplify what it means to be a burden-bearing community.

This is increasingly useful as congregations, church boards, and denominations look at ways to increase longevity in the pastorate roles and foster positive well-being among their clergy. This approach enables those in leadership to look at how personality and character traits influence a minister's view of the world, and ultimately assists in how information is processed and distributed. Research would indicate that providing clergy with the tools prior to experiencing negative mental health symptoms would not only be the most effective, but would enable coping strategies to be used during times of stress, feeling overwhelmed, and emotional instability. It is also believed through this research that these strategies might curve the trajectory and prevent or reduce burnout among members of the clergy.

In the following chapter 2, we will look at some of the most common symptoms associated with burnout: anxiety and depression. Chapter 3 will focus on our Wesleyan theology heritage and examine the attributes that enable districts to assist in supporting clergy, and those areas that can be more challenging as a result of our polity. Chapter 4 will focus on a holistic, integrated model that pulls together therapeutic approaches, assessments, along with

recommendations for pastors, congregants, and Nazarene districts. This model is designed to serve as a proactive tool in the process of identifying, supporting, and implementing tangible steps to better equip clergy when it comes to their emotional, mental, relational, and spiritual lives. These approaches will not only come alongside to help increase well-being and reduce symptoms associated with burnout. Through proactive measures, districts can become a resource for pastors and congregations as they model what it means to foster a congregation that desires to experience holistic health within the local congregation. Chapter 5 will provide concluding thoughts on the dissertation, and recommendations for how the church and Nazarene districts can foster and encourage pastoral health not only for the minister's immediate family, but the congregation, the district family, and the Nazarene denomination.

Chapter #2 **Anxiety & Depression**

“Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength.”

Anxiety

According to the DSM-V *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, anxiety is described as an “anticipation of future threats.” As ministers, there is no shortage of things to fear, maybe that is why “fear not” is one of the most frequent commands in scripture. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7). The Apostle Paul had plenty to fear; in fact, those “anticipated fears” were well warranted. However, we see here that the author of Philippians not only acknowledged worry, fear, and anxiety as a part of life, but provided us with some direction on how to deal with those fears: “In every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

This section of the dissertation paper will focus on the influence of anxiety on clergy burnout and ways in which therapeutic and spiritual models might assist in reducing the symptoms associated with anxiety. Contributing factors that increase anxiety in pastoral ministry include: family of origin (FOO), isolation, sabotage, triangulation, finances, lack of resources, and work/life balance. Bowen Family Systems Therapy (BFST) will be used to view anxiety and how therapeutic intervention and techniques would lead to reduced anxiety, lower reported burnout, and increased pastoral well-being.

The 5 most common anxiety disorders include: Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorders, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Phobia Disorders, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. There is a wide spectrum when it comes to anxiety disorders, ranging from feelings of anxiousness to clinical anxiety. There is also a distinction between acute anxiety, which is a

limited period of time compared to chronic anxiety which is an on-going feeling of anxiety.⁵³ Galindo and Mills highlight the distinction between acute and chronic in this way, “Long-term pastors come to understand that congregations by nature are chronically anxious systems”,⁵⁴ in comparison to acute anxiety which is only anxious on occasion. Galindo and Mills go on to explain that chronically anxious systems are established when a person or group is made responsible for the actions of others. This is easy to see when we think of the various sub-systems within a congregation that form this type of functioning (i.e. church leadership for pastoral staff, ministry leaders for volunteers and programs, and staff for congregant participation.)⁵⁵ It’s not just congregational systems that exhibit chronic anxiety, pastors join churches as spiritual leaders with their own set of anxieties and past experiences that impact their ability to provide a less anxious presence for their congregations.

The topic of anxiety is the focus of this chapter and has become the most common mental disorder in the United States--impacting over 40 million adults (18% of the population) annually. We see this increase also impacting ministers and church leaders at alarming rates. Factors contributing to anxiety include life stressors, genetics, personality, and brain chemistry. While treatment for anxiety is available, the majority of those who experience symptoms (2/3) never seek treatment.⁵⁶ Roughly half of those who are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder are also

⁵³ American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: Fifth Edition*, Text Revision, (Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 2020).

⁵⁴ Israel Galindo et al., “Long-tenured Ministry and Systems Theory.” *Review and Expositor*. vol 113 (3) (2016) 341-358.

⁵⁵ Galindo and Mills, “Long-tenured Ministry and Systems Theory,” 341-358.

⁵⁶ “Anxiety and Depression Association of America,” Understanding Depression, Google, last modified October 16, 2020, <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/depression>.

diagnosed with depression, making it challenging at times for individuals to navigate the complexity of co-occurring disorders.

As the general population has seen an increase in anxiety, so has the number of clergy who battle anxiety symptoms. As we model what it takes to be a non-anxious presence we are reminded that many congregations are simply looking for a spiritual leader who is just slightly less anxious than themselves. As stated by Edwin Friedman in his classic text *A Failure of Nerve* “A non-anxious presence does not mean that we do not experience anxiety but rather we are able to own our own anxiety and not allow it to spill over onto others.”⁵⁷

Anxiety often serves as a warning sign that something is getting in the way of emotional, mental and physical health. It is crucial for ministers and those providing spiritual and emotional direction to know that the anxiety they experience, and the anxiety experienced in our churches is only a symptom of the root cause. Anxiety often manifests because of lack of self-awareness to one’s physical, emotional, and mental condition. As ministers become more self-aware they are able to more clearly identify their internal and external triggers and in-turn consciously respond in healthy ways to the pressure. In contrast, pastors who are less self-aware can experience anxiety manifesting into self-destructive behaviors. Some of these anxiety provoking responses result from the pressure to perform, physical/mental/emotional exhaustion, the pressure to act or behave like someone they are not (imposture syndrome), pressure to have all the answers, and the tendency to take-on the emotional/ mental/ and relational baggage of our congregants. The resulting effects can include unhealthy eating, insomnia, physical issues, depression, burn out, lack of social support, drugs, alcohol, gambling, pornography, over-

⁵⁷ Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York , NY: Church Publishing, 2017), 65.

functioning, and over-responsibility.⁵⁸ As ministers of the gospel we are called not to simply bring hope and assist in the alleviation of the immediate needs, but to create opportunities for lasting transformation. Pastors also need to be aware that the gospel of self-reliance leads to anxiety as it puts pressure on us to have all the answers. Our “false” self establishes a persona that perpetuates the idea that we must have all the answers, which results in Imposture Syndrome—a feeling that one is simply “putting on an act” and is not really good enough. This distortion not only creates a false narrative of our identity, but also an environment where our identity is based on our ability to perform, rather than finding it in Christ. One way we confuse our image of ourselves in Christ is by blurring our role between being a child of God and being an employee of God. This of course, translates into many pastors feeling anxious about being “true” to who they are in Christ.

As ministers we often find ourselves in positions where we are given immediate influence and authority. This pressure to have the correct answers or to provide direction can often lead to stress and anxiety.⁵⁹ Norm Thiesen, PhD, professor of counseling at Western Seminary states it this way, “Pastors tend to personalize what’s not personal. As a pastor, you aren’t necessarily the cause; you’re also not necessarily the cure.”⁶⁰ Pastors can be anxiety sponges or dumping grounds as they absorb the anxiety of their congregations. Believing that

⁵⁸ Steven Cuss, *Managing Leadership Anxiety: Yours and Theirs* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2019), audio book chapter 3.

⁵⁹ Cuss, *Managing Leadership Anxiety*, audio book chapter 3.

⁶⁰ Amy Simpson, “Working in the Soil of Depletion,” accessed June 3rd 2021, www.ChristianityToday.com.

relieving their congregants of their anxiety, ministers tend to over-function or take on the worries of their churches to become the issue of the anxiety.⁶¹

Anxiety can be internal, relational, and present in one or more individuals within a system. The objective of completely freeing ourselves from anxiety is unrealistic, but it is realistic to seek to manage anxiety. Managing anxiety effectively allows us to be present with others and not to allow our own emotional state to override what God is calling us to do. Unacknowledged and untreated anxiety blocks effective leadership because too much energy is given to the anxiety rather than the needs at hand, and anxious leaders are unable to prevent their emotions from spilling over onto those they lead.

Some internal signs of anxiety that can block us from trusting God include difficulty recovering from a mistake, the inability to hear criticism of our leadership or pastoral ministry, not taking responsibility, inability to provide forgiveness, and being defensive when receiving feedback. Today we see anxiety influencing not only pastors, but also congregations. Failure of nerve is allowing the anxiety of the group to determine through pressure that it is better to return to the status quo, by forfeiting the mission and returning to a place of bondage.⁶² In Edwin Friedman's classic work "*A Failure of Nerve*" he speaks of two indicators which are present in chronically anxious churches.

Safety over Adventure

⁶¹ Ronald W. Richardson, "Bowen Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life," *Review and Expositor*, vol.102 (Summer 2005): 379-402.

⁶² Tod Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed In The Crucible of Change* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2020), audio book chapter 1.

Safety can be positive unless it prevents us from making decisions and/or creates a pattern of developing overly anxious leaders. We see this in our society as a whole, there are individuals who are so accustomed to being anxious that they will make themselves anxious if they realize that their lives are absent of it. This type of emotional reaction and chronic anxiety prevents many pastors from experiencing the freedom they have in Christ, and limits innovation and resiliency when it comes to embracing diverse mental models. Indicators such as these which reinforce fear, lead to anxiety and a lack of security in a pastor's ability to lead a congregation that is crippled by anxiety. We live in an anxious society making it especially important to display a non-anxious presence in the church. This is particularly important since the church often has tension between tradition and progress.⁶³ This impacts our church leadership because we have leaders who have been programmed to play it safe. We punish those who take risks, and our desire to minimize anxiety and uncertainty translates into leadership unable to determine vision because of fear that they will fail.

Blaming Others

This keeps congregations stuck in chronic patterns of anxiety rather than developing new coping strategies for confronting their own difficulties. Rather than excepting the role they play in contributing to these patterns, chronically anxious churches will find anyone or anything to blame for their failure. "We are not growing because...our finances are declining as a result of those people leaving...If only we had that preacher, youth minister, worship leader things would be different..." The emotional or relational stakes within a church directly correlate to the levels of increased anxiety.

⁶³ Jack Shitama, *Anxious Church, Anxious People: How to Lead Change in an Age of Anxiety* (Earleville, Maryland: Charis Inc, 2018), audio book chapter 1.

This congregational anxiety often is transferred onto the pastor and is evident if you have ever found yourself in conversation with a table of pastors or sitting across from a minister and their spouse in a counseling session. It would not surprise you then that, like the general population, anxiety is often named as one of the leading causes of burnout. We are reminded of the debilitating effects that chronic anxiety can have on clergy and their ministries. Burnout has less to do with workload and more to do with internal and external leadership anxiety.⁶⁴ There is anxiety for pastors about their future and the future of their children. There is anxiety over the political climate and how to speak into a society that appears more polarized than ever. There is anxiety accompanying the economic uncertainty for the church and the members experiencing unemployment. College debt has forced many clergy members into bi-vocational careers and even some to leave ministry all together. There are the financial struggles that many families experience, including ministers. In fact, with clergy making considerably less than those with similar educational backgrounds there is often great pressure and stress placed upon a minister's family system. Like any family system, there are the challenges that accompany any family navigating the various stages of life. Pastors often find themselves balancing the challenges associated with raising toddlers, adolescents, adjusting to the blending of families, and raising adult children while also caring for aging parents.

Additional Stressors

However, there are additional stressors that lead to anxiety that a congregation rarely sees or fully comprehends. These include such things as the anxiety with raising money for building

⁶⁴ Cuss, *Managing Leadership Anxiety*, audio book chapter 2.

projects, staff, and other ministries within the church. They include feelings of isolation, sabotage, enmeshment, and triangulation. There is the resulting anxiety from comparing ourselves with others socially, professionally, and personally. Additionally, these feelings can often be exacerbated when we feel ill prepared, ill equipped, and under-resourced. There is also the anxiety that comes with feelings of irrelevance and questions as to whether they are making a difference in a society. Feelings such as these make it increasingly challenging for ministers to regain momentum and feel that they have a solid footing as to how best to step into the next chapter of ministry.

Over the last two years, we have witnessed the need for ministers to navigate the constantly changing landscape. This has caused many to throw aside their technical training for more adaptive innovation, to abandon the approaches that served them previously and rethink their ministry models. Churches have been forced to change locations, go virtual, limit attendance and/or close their doors. While we are unable to blame the pandemic for all of the church's woes, we do see the pandemic exposing the challenges that may have already existed. COVID has also stressed systems to a breaking point, causing recalibration and realignment to determine our missional effectiveness. Yet, with all of these anxiety-provoking challenges we are reminded that our calling is a picture of God using unconventional people to do His unconventional work. This calling into ministerial leadership reminds us of God's unrelenting call on our vocation. Pastoral leadership requires that we walk with those who are experiencing anxiety due to change while disappointing them at a level they can handle.⁶⁵ It is not so much the change alone that people struggle with, but the loss and anxiety that is associated with that change.

⁶⁵ Ronald Heifetz, Marty Linsky, "Leadership On The Line," *Harvard Business Review Press; Revised edition*, (2017).

Family of Origin:

Our Family of Origin impacts significantly how we will function and operate within our family and congregational systems when chronic anxiety occurs. Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST) calls *multi-generational transmission* a process by which we can watch how chronic anxiety is passed onto future generations whether that be in our biological or our congregational families. This family system theory asserts that by examining at least two previous generations, one is able to predict how an individual or organization will operate in the future if steps are not taken to reduce repeated responses to anxiety.⁶⁶ It is through our Family of Origin that we learn how to cope and address challenging times in our lives and help direct and guide our decision-making process. It is through this lens that we learn and understand how the ability to cope with life stressors can strengthen or hinder the effectiveness of a minister when chronic anxiety is present. The blending of a pastor's family of origin and a congregation's patterns of behaviors around stress and uncertainty can create enormous anxiety upon the system. However, if this is done through the techniques of the Bowen Family Systems Theory, we can achieve reduced anxiety and greater well-being. These techniques will be outlined in chapter 4 under "Therapeutic Approach to Anxiety." Just as when a couple comes together in a relationship, they bring with them all the challenges and strengths of their families of origin, so must pastors and congregations learn to relate in a way that reinforces greater communication, understanding, empathy, and realistic expectations. Greater understanding of our experiences allows us to better appreciate the value that the other brings to the relationship. As ministers being called to various congregations, it is important to realize that we are being inserted into a congregational narrative of a church family. Sometimes this is by the choice of the church body but sometimes this

⁶⁶ Son, "Anxiety as a Main Cause of Church Conflicts Based on Bowen Family Systems Theory," 9-18.

decision is made without their consultation. Regardless, this intrusion into the system requires finesse and understanding on behalf of the pastor and the church, so it is crucial to understand how multigenerational transmission process happens in congregations. This process often presents itself as sabotage and triangulation through the underlying emotions of anxiety.⁶⁷

Isolation:

“Brokenness and destructive behaviors are often the results of isolation from a caring community.”⁶⁸ Bonhoeffer reminds us, “Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation.”⁶⁹ “In the loneliness of city life, Wesleyan-Holiness communities invite people into accountable relationships where they can be rescued from the dangerous waters of isolation and brought into the healing flow of grace. The Church fulfills its mission when it is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints.”⁷⁰

Throughout the research, feelings of loneliness and isolation are a common contributing factor when it comes to anxiety. According to the Fuller Institute of Church Growth, 70% of pastors claim that they do not have someone that they would consider a close friend. Focus on the Family organization conducted a survey in which 1 of 4 pastors indicated that they did not have a trusted friend in ministry. Isolation is a common theme for many in ministry as they navigate the complexity of roles, responsibilities, and fear of letting others in. Additionally, there

⁶⁷ Galindo and Mills, “Long-tenured Ministry and Systems Theory,” 341-358.

⁶⁸ David A. Busic, *The City: Urban Churches in the Wesleyan-Holiness Tradition* (Kansas City MO: The Foundry Publishing 2020), 90.

⁶⁹ Busic, *The City*, 90.

⁷⁰ Busic, *The City*, 90.

is a tendency for churches to fill their holiday schedules with events and activities. While these make sense and provide joy for the congregation and their families, it is often forgotten that these additional responsibilities make it an even greater challenge for pastors who do not serve in churches close to their family to get away and be with their own extended families.⁷¹

Sabotage:

A contributing factor to burnout and specifically pastoral anxiety is the lack of awareness of sabotage that occurs as a natural component of pastoral ministry. Sabotage is often a result when pastors work through their own anxiety toward self-differentiation (the ability to not be controlled by another's emotions and remain true to one's values and beliefs) in order to create change in the church. Being able to identify and predict sabotage greatly increases the chances that a minister will thrive and create lasting change. It is important not to assume that change in and of itself results in success. Edwin Friedman states in *A Failure of Nerve*, "It is after having first brought about change and then subsequently endured the resultant sabotage that the leader can feel truly successful."⁷² Friedman would tell audiences that if you are a leader you should expect sabotage. What is important for a minister to understand is that sabotage has less to do with the leader, and more to do with a natural desire to resist change and maintain the congregational equilibrium. When congregations default to security and self-preservation pastors experience higher levels of sabotage as a systemic part of ministerial leadership.⁷³ If pastors are able to understand and reframe sabotage as something that is not personal but part of leadership change, the minister will have a greater ability to stay differentiated and not be derailed in the

⁷¹ Christopher D. Schmitz, *Why Your Pastor Left* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), audio book chapter 3.

⁷² Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 261.

⁷³ Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, audio book chapter 1.

process of change.⁷⁴ The more differentiated a pastor is the greater amount of sabotage they will experience. To effectively lead change, we need to be prepared for sabotage and the anxiety that comes with it.

The desire to reduce anxiety and minimize the impacts of sabotage comes when we, as leaders and congregations, can stop jumping from one crisis to another. Instead, proactive responses out of emotional health enable us to develop immunity to the toxicity that comes with emotional reactivity. This is done through a leader's self-differentiation, and the ability to name and identify unhealthy emotions and behaviors. It is crucial to keep in mind that the acts of sabotage are things done when the anxiety in people's lives creates fear that they will lose what they view as positive in the world, rather than that they are simply being difficult people trying to prevent good things from happening.⁷⁵ _

Triangulation:

Pastors often find themselves a part of multiple triangles concurrently throughout the church system. When two people are each insufficiently differentiated, then it is likely that triangulation will occur. We often see this within families when couples triangulate their children into the parental relationship. In triangulation there are two individuals or groups who have anxiety that reaches a certain point causing a third party to be pulled in to relieve the discomfort. The third person or event can be an addiction, relationship, or issue. Additionally, the parties are focused on maintaining homeostasis and are resistant to change. And often in a triangulated relationship there is high likelihood that discomfort and anxiety will be projected onto the individual or party that appears to be the most stable or in control.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Shitama, *Anxious Church, Anxious People*, audio book chapter 7.

⁷⁵ Bolsinger, *Tempered Resilience*, audio book chapter 1.

⁷⁶ Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 226.

The key to unlocking a triangle is to give back ownership of the relationship to the two parties and the responsibility for their own issues and how they contribute to a conflict. As self-differentiated individuals we take responsibility for our own challenges but not that of others. As pastors, it is critical that we understand the influence and impact that emotional triangles can have on our lives and the life of the church. This requires self-awareness and the ability to recognize how triangles influence motivation, alliances, gridlock, mission and vision, to name a few.⁷⁷

Triangles and the church - There are triangles within the church system and those triangles connect families and the church. We understand that the church is made up of families who have their own set of sub-groups, creating layers of triangulation. Part of a minister's work is unlocking the emotional triangles and to resist the temptation to be pulled into these triangulated relationships. Ministers can easily find themselves being sucked into conflicts that occurred prior to arriving on the scene. Triangles frequently make a leader feel like they need to over-function and perform to perceived expectations. Examples of triangulation include: church members/district leadership/pastor, pastor/church board/congregation, pastor/finance chairman/worship leader, current pastor/former pastor/staff person, or pastor/pastor's family/work.

Negative Influences - Acute anxiety creates instability in two individuals that brings the desire to pull in another party, often causing a reduction in the anxiety. In congregations, multiple triangles are used to disperse anxiety across congregational systems, this often takes on the form of gossip, sabotage, or complaints to those in leadership. Triangles can be used to create conflict and division that lead to distorted thinking, lack of direction, enmeshment, fear and

⁷⁷ Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 226.

anxiety of making a mistake or offending another, internally-focused toxic relationships, stalemates, and ultimately block any progression forward.

Positive Influences - Triangles can be used to build alliances to promote positive change within a congregation, and also serve in a healthy manner if used to mobilize missional effectiveness. When a pastor is able to see through the complexity of relationships and understand the significance of emotional triangulation, a leader can better learn about their congregations and the things which motivate them to further the gospel and reach the unchurched. Properly understanding the underlying dynamics can give a leader clarity and empathy for the challenges that a congregation has experienced and how to bring about hope and healing. Having a proper understanding of emotional triangles allows pastors the ability to interpret these interactions less personal and see them as a part of the larger system at work. This will ultimately lead to a leader's ability to be better differentiated and lead their congregation effectively.

Financial Struggles:

Financial struggles are often at the top of the list of anxiety-provoking feelings as reported by pastors. We see in the story of Nehemiah that he returns to Jerusalem and discovers temple worship is non-existent because the ministers were not being paid and had to find other means of support (Nehemiah 13:10-11). Nehemiah confronts the officials for allowing the house of the Lord to be abandoned because the ministers, unable to receive support, had to go back to the trades and fields to support themselves. It is not uncommon for pastors to leave full-time ministry for bi-vocational status or leave ministry all together.

Personal Finances - Similar to the general population, financial issues impact and prevent ministers from giving their best. Pastors are not exempt from financial obligations and

anxieties in raising a family and the burdens of student loans, mortgages, and car payments. There are numerous scriptural references such as, 1 Timothy 5:17-18 and 1 Corinthians 9:14, that direct the church to care for ministers, to not allow financial struggles to become a hindrance, and to pay an appropriate wage. Of course, justification for reducing a pastor's salary include things like: our pastor can be a "tent maker" allowing them to engage the community and reflect the life of Paul, the pastor is single and without children, their spouse works, this will help our pastor have greater empathy and humility for those with financial struggles, our pastor has flexibility and only has to "really" work a couple days of the week, we provide our pastor with housing, the call of God is destined to be challenging, and the list goes on from there. These statements reflect the mindset that many congregations hold which places the financial sacrifice solely on the pastor.

If we were to take a biblical examination of church ownership, we would see that the "church" is to share the burden and claim ownership and responsibility. Often congregations blur the lines between accepting God's call and a call of poverty.⁷⁸ If we take the concept of the entire church being responsible, then any reduction in income should be shared equally. This is not to say that finance committees are not required to balance budgets and for most congregations, staff is a significant portion of expenses. This requires a shifting in mindset that "everyone" takes part on the sacrifice during times of financial difficulties.

As a denomination we believe that all members in a congregation have ownership and responsibility to the church and one another. And so, we not only rejoice in the blessings but also participate in the burdens. It is not uncommon to read headlines of high-profile ministers who make large amounts of money. However, these individuals are typically also best selling authors,

⁷⁸ Schmitz, *Why Your Pastor Left*, audio book chapter 7.

TV personalities, and leaders of mega churches with congregations of 2,000+ members. The vast majority of people attending church on Sunday mornings are in small rural churches, and in 2010 the average pastor barely made more than the national census guideline for poverty. According to the 2010 Census, “The average pastor with less than a thousand attendees received an average income salary package, including housing, of \$31,234.”⁷⁹ Yet, on average a pastor has the education and skills set of a high school administrator. Pastors are often expected to be the only one who sacrifices when financial struggles occur in the church, which creates not only anxiety for the minister and their family but reduces longevity in the pastorate.

The findings of Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler (2017) on pastoral finances indicated that lead pastors are particularly susceptible to burnout due to stress over finances.⁸⁰ Research conducted by Lilly Endowment starting in 2015 showed that 1/3 of pastors across denominations indicated that financial struggles were a significant contributor to their deficit in well-being. Not having sufficient funds to pay bills and address unexpected financial challenges such as illness, repairs, and living expenses puts pastors at great risk. Those financial challenges, such as educational costs, low salaries, credit card debt, reduced cost of living adjustments, lack of health insurance and unclear pay structures have all contributed to pastors forgoing their social security contributions and creating even greater financial concerns when pastors reach a retirement age.⁸¹

These financial challenges create a double-bind where pastors blame themselves for not being in better financial shape, yet they operate within a structure that prevents them from having

⁷⁹ Schmitz, *Why Your Pastor Left*, audio book chapter 7.

⁸⁰ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 109.

⁸¹ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 11.

direct control over their salaries and/or make seeking wage increases extremely challenging. The majority of pastors do not have adequate retirement savings or funds for an unexpected emergency. On average, pastors make \$10k less than the average social worker or schoolteacher, and female or pastors of color make 20-30% less than their white male counterparts.⁸² According to research conducted by Jo Ann Deasy (2017) from the Association of Theological Schools found that 54% of seminary graduates leave school with a minimum of \$37,000 in debt, which is more than most pastors receive as a starting salary.⁸³

Raising Funds - One of the many hats pastors must wear is that of raising money for missions, outreach, and facilities. Very few pastors, when sensing the call of God on their life, think that their responsibilities will include raising funds for salaries, building projects, community engagement, operating costs, denominational obligations, retirements, and unexpected emergencies. This often requires pastors to spend their personal capital reminding, arm twisting, and prodding congregations to remain faithful through their giving.

Work/Life Balance:

It is vital that balance be establish between ministry and family life in order to reduce stress on the minister and their family. There is often tension between the demands placed on a minister and the responsibilities of the family. Oftentimes the demands on a minister can directly influence their family and create anxiety and strain within the relationships. Some of these anxieties appear through unmet expectations and roles, loss of identity for pastor's spouses, identity crisis, and the assumption that pastors should be available 24/7. Pastors and their families may be volunteered for things without their consent, or pastors may commit their time or the time of their families without permission creating additional strain on the family system.

⁸² Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 114.

⁸³ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 109.

Leadership Journal (1992) showed that 94% of ministers feel pressure to have the “ideal” family, while 77% of pastor’s spouses felt the pressure to be an “ideal” role model for the Christian family.

The Fuller Institute of Church Growth took a survey of ministers and found that 90% work more than 46 hours a week, 80% believed that pastoral ministry impacted their families in a negative way, 33% believed that ministry was a hazard to their family, 75% reported a serious stress-related event during their ministry, 50% felt they could not meet the expectations of their job, 90% were inadequately prepared for the demands of their position, and 70% reported lower self-esteem than when they began.^{84 85}

Under Resourced:

In the U.S., individuals suffering from psychological distress are more likely to go to a member of the clergy before they go to a doctor or counselor.⁸⁶ This can create enormous amounts of anxiety and strain for pastors emotionally, spiritually, physically, and relationally. Ministers are said to be the first responders when it comes to the mental health epidemic that is plaguing our society with over 45 million Americans suffering from mental health illness.⁸⁷ Rarely do we see circumstances in our society where people will turn to the church first, but we are seeing this when it comes to mental health challenges that directly or indirectly impact the majority of those sitting in pews. Within a single day, a minister can perform any of the following: a funeral, baby dedication/baptism, wedding ceremony, home visits, preacher,

⁸⁴ Schmitz, *Why Your Pastor Left*, audio book chapter 4.
⁸⁵

“Standing Stones Shepherding Shepherds,” Leaving Ministry, Google, Last modified Aug 28th 2020, <https://www.standingstoneministry.org/top-2-causes-for-pastors-leaving-ministry-and-more-statistics>.

⁸⁶ Matthew Stanford S., “Mental Health and the Church,” Lecture from the American Association of Christian Counselors (Nashville, October 12, 2019).

⁸⁷ Stanford, “Mental Health and the Church,” (Nashville, October 12, 2019).

teacher, administrator, fundraiser, counselor, educator, social worker, vision caster, event coordinator, student, researcher, friend secret keeper, mediator, and an expert in anything in-between.⁸⁸ These expectations cultivate anxiety that can lead to other health concerns for a minister and challenges within their own relationships.

The anxiety from wearing multiple hats reiterates the lack of training that many ministers feel they have received since completing formal education through seminaries or an institute of higher education. Ministers have experienced the progression of change, fueled by technology, shifting demographics, and cultural influences. These challenges require that ministers not default to their training, which often occurs during anxious time, but adapt to the changing surroundings and rethink how they are to engage in missional effectiveness. Poling and Miller write in *Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry* that our theological education needs to equip us with a framework that allows us to move the rich traditions and rituals within the congregational body into our society as a way for connection, community, and transformation.⁸⁹ In essence, it is the ability to move beyond the technical training many of us have received through more traditional forms of educational institutions, toward adaptive models that pull not only from intellectual and emotional intelligence, but the addition of contextual intelligence.⁹⁰ This can be done when we do not allow our anxiety to default us to traditional models of

⁸⁸ Stewart III, C. F. "Why do clergy experience burnout?," *Quarterly Review Editorial Board*, 23 no. 1 (2003): 78

⁸⁹ James N. Poling and Donald E. Miller, *Foundations for a Practical Theology of Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1985), 44-46.

⁹⁰ Linda Cannell. *Theological Education Matters: Leadership Education for the Church* (Newburgh, IN: EDCOT Press, 2006), 276.

ministry but are able to differentiate ourselves from the anxiety we are experiencing and adapt to new ways of leading.

When you say you are depressed, all I can see is pure resilience. As a human being, you are permitted to feel inside out and “messed up.” Depression does not mean you are defective. It simply means you are human.

– David Mitchell

Depression

According to the CDC (2020) depression became the second largest criteria for disability only behind heart disease. Other research has indicated that depression has become the #1 disability in developing nations.⁹¹ Mental illnesses currently impact over 40 million Americans annually, contributing to the second highest death rate (by suicide) of youth and young adults ages 10-33 years of age in the United States. Leonard Sweet in his 2019 book *Rings of Fire* states that “Suicide is an epidemic! All the signs are pointing to it becoming a plague if preventive actions are not taken. Part of those actions need to be theological and come from the church which needs to see suicide not as a moral failing but a conclusive cry of human pain and isolation and loss of identity.”⁹² Sixty percent of counties in the United States do not have a psychiatrist, which is increasingly concerning when the average delay between the onset of symptoms and first treatment is 11 years.

Early onset for depression most frequently occurs in late adolescents or early twenties with twenty percent of individuals experiencing ongoing symptoms more than a year following

⁹¹ Leonard Sweet, *Rings of Fire: Walking in Faith through a Volcanic Future* (Colorado Springs, CO: Tyndale House Publishing Inc., 2019), audio book chapter 10.

⁹² Sweet, *Rings of Fire*, audio book chapter 10.

initial symptoms.⁹³ Forty-Four percent of college students report experiencing some sort of depression during their college years and anti-depressants have become the most widely prescribed medication in the United States.⁹⁴ The majority of those within the US with severe mental health issues never receive any type of treatment.⁹⁵ Some of the devastating effects of depression include suicide, decreased energy and sex drive, inability to sleep through the night, decreased concentration, withdrawal from family and friends, poor eating habits, and a decreased desire to live. Recent research indicates about one fourth of the population, 70 million people, will report meeting the criteria for major depression at some point during their life. Clinical depression impacts 17 million people every year. Over the last two decades we have seen the number of individuals reporting depression increase 10 times.⁹⁶

This section of chapter 2 will focus on the influence of depression on clergy burnout and look at ways in which therapeutic models might assist in reducing depression. Some contributing factors include co-occurring disorders, bi-polar disorder, substance abuse, personality disorders, and other mental illnesses. Additionally, we find the lack of social support, physical and emotional connection, relational and contextual intelligence, integration and wholeness, all contribute to an overall loss of a relevant identity and feelings of isolation. Bowen Family Systems Therapy (BFST) will be used to identify how therapeutic intervention and techniques could lead to reduced symptoms of depression, lower reported burnout, and increased pastoral

⁹³ Oxford American Psychiatry Library (OAPL), (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015).

⁹⁴ Sweet, *Rings of Fire*, audio book chapter 10.

⁹⁵ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "Depression," Google, Last modified November 13th, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov>.

⁹⁶ Stephen S. Ilardi, *The Depression Cure* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2010), audio book chapter 1.

well-being. Understanding these dynamics reduces stress by reducing the pastor's personal sense of shame from feeling completely responsible for solving a problem that is not their fault, nor his/her responsibility as a pastor. Stress can certainly increase anxiety and depression, finding coping strategies for alleviating stress is helpful in reducing depressive symptoms. Shame and blame also make it difficult for pastors to live productive lives and overcome anxiety and depression. We will also examine the importance of integration and wholeness into one's life and the importance of including medication, sleep, exercise, nutrition, prayer, solitude, meditation, corporate gatherings, scripture readings, and support groups to achieve a healthy, thriving well-being.

One might conclude that Americans should be the happiest people on the planet since, for the first time in history, the infant mortality rate is at an all-time low, life expectancy continues to increase, and Americans enjoy more material comforts than any time in the history of the country. However, what we actually find is that depression is reported as significantly lower levels in developing nations than in the West, and there is a noticeable uptick in reports of depression in those cultures that are becoming more westernized. It is important to point out that this is not simply an American epidemic but rather something we are seeing throughout industrialized countries such as Great Britain, Australia, Germany, South Korea, etc. Cross-Cultural studies show a direct correlation between more advanced cultures and reports of depression.⁹⁷ Sadly, ministers are not immune from these statistics or the effects of depression.

We have come a long way from the spiritual physician and puritan, Richard Baxter's 21 steps of advice to depressed and anxious Christians. In Richard Baxter's work we see the initial attempts to provide a holistic integration of spirituality, psychology, and theology. While not

⁹⁷ Iardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio book chapter 1.

necessarily surprising for us today, contrary to what Christians of his time believed, Richard Baxter asserted that depression was not necessarily a spiritual issue but a complicated multifaceted struggle with an imbalance of chemistry, reason, and mood.⁹⁸

Symptoms and Diagnosis:

The DSM V, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders lays out nine core symptom criteria for depression: depressed mood (dysphoric), loss of pleasure of all or nearly all activities (anhedonia), increased or decreased appetite or weight, insomnia or increased amounts of sleep, slowing of physical movement or agitation, intense fatigue, guilt or worthlessness, inability to make decisions, or thoughts of death or suicidality. Criteria requires that at least 5 of these symptoms be present every day, most of the day, for two weeks or more.⁹⁹

Depression can be a debilitating disease that cuts beyond social boundaries. While research has not identified the number of clergy experiencing clinical depression versus those ministers with depressed feelings, it is important to make the distinction to understand the various treatment approaches available and their effectiveness. Feeling depressed is someone feeling down, blue, sad, and limited in scope, time and functioning ability. Clinical depression is a mental health issue that can be debilitating and steals the joy, hope, and peace of an individual while also limiting their ability to function in healthy ways. Due to the ambiguity in the public arena as to what it means to be depressed, there are often assumptions and self-diagnosis which can have devastating impacts upon one's perceptions, self-awareness, and ability to function in life-giving ways. Individuals suffering from depression often report feelings of unending

⁹⁸ Michael S. Lundy, and James L. Packer, *Depression, Anxiety, and the Christian Life: Practical Wisdom from Richard Baxter* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Publishing, 2018), audio book chapter 1

⁹⁹ American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-IV-TR: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Washington, DC, 2013), 345-428.

sadness, inability to appreciate life, sluggishness, and at times a loss of desire to live. Individuals suffering from depression can also experience symptoms of physical pain.¹⁰⁰

Understanding depression requires acknowledging that this disorder impacts the entire individual and their ability to love and care for themselves. The key to addressing depression most effectively is to initiate treatment in the early stages,¹⁰¹ and to include both medical and psychological interventions to create positive change in functioning. The sub-types of depression include: Major Depressive Disorder (16.2% adolescents in the United States had at least 1 major depressive episode within the last year), Persistent Depressive Disorder (a chronic low-level depression, which can display symptoms as a single short-term episode or an extended episode), Bi-polar Disorder (affects 2.8 of the population and is viewed as severe), Seasonal Depression Disorder (impacts 5% of the population. Women are 4 out of 5 with this disease), and Post-Partum Disorder (80% of new mothers experience this disease, symptoms include mood swings and usually last a week or two).¹⁰²

Risk Factors:

Stressful situations, anxiety, relationship issues, genetics, trauma, PTSD and other types of abuse, lack of social support, medication, recreational drugs, digestive disorders, food allergies, nutrition and hormonal imbalance, financial struggles, grief and loss, physical pain, gender (women get depressed at roughly twice the rate of men), lifestyle (those who engage in

¹⁰⁰ Ilardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio book chapter 1.

¹⁰¹ Alicia J. Parker, *Healing Stress, Anxiety, and Depression: Liber your Mind from Negative Thoughts, overcome your Fears, Take Control of your Life and Find the Joy of Living Once and for All Without the use of Drugs* (Independently published, 2019), audio book chapter 9.

¹⁰² Parker, *Healing Stress, Anxiety, and Depression*, audio book chapter 9.

exercise in their routines reduce depression vulnerability) and previous depression episodes are all risk factors for depression.¹⁰³

Co-Occurring Disorders - Refers to at least two medical conditions happening concurrently. It is not uncommon for depression to occur while the individual is also experiencing other medical issues. During diagnosis, it can be challenging to identify if depression is a symptom or the primary illness to be treated. Another challenge is that there can be similar symptoms associated with various disorders. Some conditions with similar symptoms to depression include anxiety, substance abuse, and impulse control disorder. In research presented by the Oxford American Psychiatry Library in 2015, those suffering from major psychiatric illness such as Schizophrenia, Panic Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, PTSD, Alcohol and Drug disorder, and Personality Disorder have a 2-5 times greater chance of also experiencing clinical depression simultaneously.¹⁰⁴

Bipolar Disorder - Defined by episodes of mania. In some cases, 90% of those who suffer from bipolar also suffer from clinical depression.

Anxiety Disorder - Those who suffer from anxiety also have a high likelihood of experiencing symptoms associated with depression concurrently. In fact, the majority of those suffering from depression also struggle with anxiety and these similarities make it difficult to make a distinction between symptoms. Other sub-types of anxiety which have strong correlation with depression include social phobias, obsessive-compulsive and panic disorders, and PTSD.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Parker, *Healing Stress, Anxiety, and Depression*, audio book chapter 9.

¹⁰⁴ Oxford American Psychiatry Library (OAPL), (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁰⁵ Oxford American Psychiatry Library (OAPL), (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015).

Substance Use Disorders - Substance abuse and dependency has strong correlations to depression. One of the challenges that many do not understand is that while alcohol or drug use might initially present as an “upper” the reality is that substance use produces the opposite effect. Substance use not only contributes to stronger depressive symptoms but can activate other mental health illnesses such as Bipolar Disorder and Schizophrenia. When those suffering from depression self-medicate through substance use, we find a significantly higher likelihood of suicide. Those who engage in alcohol or drug use regularly report a four times greater likelihood than the general population.¹⁰⁶

Personality Disorders - Roughly 40% of those who are diagnosed with a personality disorder also suffer from clinical depression.¹⁰⁷

Neurological and Medical Illness - There is a strong correlation between those who suffer from neurological and medical conditions and those who experience symptoms of clinical depression. Individuals who have suffered neurological conditions such as strokes, migraines, dementia, and epilepsy are two to five times more likely to experience depression. Similarly, those who experienced medical conditions such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and autoimmune disorders report depression two to four times that of the general population. These stats suggest that the challenges we experience emotionally, physically, and mentally are intertwined and that the most effective approach to treating depression would include a holistic approach. This research also reveals that not only can depression be a cause of neurological and

¹⁰⁶ Oxford American Psychiatry Library (OAPL), (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015).

¹⁰⁷ Oxford American Psychiatry Library (OAPL), (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015).

medical conditions, but that depression can place individuals at higher risk of experiencing these symptoms.¹⁰⁸

Isolation/Lack of Social Support/ Lack of Physical and Emotional Connection:

The correlation between isolation and depression is a cyclical pattern as depression is both caused by isolation and leads to isolation. As Americans, our workspaces, friendships, interactions with others, and spiritual lives are becoming more individualistic. As a culture, we see a shift away from in person interactions and participation in organizations such as rotary clubs and other socially interactive community groups. As we spend an increasing amount of time engaged in activities alone such as commuting, working, eating, and shopping, our society reinforces social isolation, which has only been compounded through the pandemic. We are often unaware of what is occurring around us as we stare at smart phones, listen to music or podcasts, scroll social media, and generally disengage from the world around us. It is unfortunate that these things which tend to be the next gadgets, or cool toys, serve to only reinforce isolation from others. One of the tragedies of depression is that it causes us to withdraw even further from the people around us.¹⁰⁹

The latest research indicates that nearly 25% of Americans do not have any type of intimate social connections at all, and half of all Americans lack a friend that they can depend on, resulting in isolation which is a major risk factor for depression. And then as depression persists, we find a tendency toward more isolation. A few ways to reduce isolation and maintain connection with others includes educating those around us, asking for help when we feel we are moving toward unhealthy behaviors, avoiding negativity from others and in our own self-talk,

¹⁰⁸ Oxford American Psychiatry Library (OAPL), (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015).

¹⁰⁹ Ilardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio book chapter 4.

avoid excessive reassurance seeking, choose activities that are upbeat, and identify unhealthy relationships and create space for healthy supportive interactions.¹¹⁰

Our lifestyles are demonstrating our value of things over people, work over family and money over intimate connection. We move across the country and leave family and friends for careers, we buy homes that are double the square footage from a generation ago, and we have been deceived into believing that social media has created a greater connection. In reality, it has reduced our social connection with those we can count on.¹¹¹ Lack of physical and/or emotional connection can also result in depression. Congregations can forget that their pastors may have moved many miles from their own extended family to pastor their church. While churches tend to emphasize family-centered rituals and traditions at the holidays, this can be difficult for ministers and their immediate family who may have left family behind. Often the call on a minister's life and their family requires their openness to leave what is familiar for the unfamiliar. These acts of obedience do influence the pastors' family, as they must adjust to a new home, friends, relationships, jobs, schools, and sense of familiarity. Not only must the minister and family adjust to the new environment, they may also be grieving the loss of what they had previously built. This is when connection becomes a struggle to maintain as the fear and hurt of previous losses can create a desire to pull back to prevent further pain and loss. If these feelings are not appropriately managed, it can result in depression not only for the minister but also for their spouse and children.

Tied to the feeling of emotional disconnection is the many roles that are often part of being a minister. These roles of proclaimer of the gospel, counselor, funeral director, community

¹¹⁰ Ilardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio book chapter 4.

¹¹¹ Ilardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio book chapter 4.

organizer, spiritual director, boss, employee, parent, spouse, child, sibling, visionary, fundraiser, chairman of the board, etc. become additional barriers to a minister letting down their guard and feeling comfortable sharing themselves without fear of how it might impact one of the other roles. This can often make a leader feel alone, isolated, and depressed and create a narrative that they will never measure up to the expectations. Depression also finds ways of using failures and comparison to lead to an additional layer of worthlessness and isolation, creating a larger chasm of physical and emotional disconnection.

One of the significant causes of depression for ministers is the feeling of isolation and physical or emotional disconnection. Even when there is not physical separation, pastors can find themselves in either rigid or chaotic relationships where they lack the ability to be their authentic selves and often feel emotionally cut-off from their support system. This can be devastating for the emotional health of a pastor and their family. How can we expect ministers to model emotional and mental health if they are unable to live it out in their personal lives?

Similarly, when a relationship between generations (within a congregation) becomes too toxic it can result in physical and/or emotional distancing from those within the family (church) system. Emotional cut-off can sever relationships to the point where family members within a generation are absent of any relationship.¹¹² This type of relational break can also take place between members within congregations, and ministers may find themselves addressing the results of this from previous generations of the church family. It is common to see this type of emotional break during church splits and congregations that display high reactivity. For pastors the important thing is to understand their role within the dynamics of the congregational system.

¹¹²“Robert R. Creech,” Bowen Family Systems Theory, Google, Last modified March 12th 2021, <https://www.familyandcommunityministries.org>.

Without identifying these pre-existing conditions, a minister can often internalize these dynamics to be about them and feel that they are responsible either for the cause or for the solution.

Lack of Integration and Wholeness:

As a culture, we are challenged by conditions of exhaustion, loneliness, and despair. An example of this is outlined by social researcher Brene Brown who tells us that we have worked so hard to gain acceptance from others that we have created systems that are filled with fear, anxiety, and a lack of self-esteem. As a form of immediate gratification, we traded our ultimate desire for wholeness for our need to be accepted. We have forgotten how to accept ourselves and the unique giftings we possess and attempted to trade who we are for the image we think others desire.

Risk Factors Unique to the Pastorate:

Pastors are particularly susceptible to burnout and seeking others acceptance through means that are harmful to themselves, their families, and their churches. As pastors, we often burn the candle at both ends exhausting ourselves, our families, and those who love us. It is also this over-excursion that takes us away from reaching ultimate well-being and wholeness. Many pastors experience the unwanted voice that is telling us that we are not good enough. We hear things such as, “your ministries are not effective enough” or “you have too many flaws to really be used” and the anxiousness of being discovered for who we think we truly are results in withdrawing from anyone who might actually be close enough to discover our “true” self. The concern was so great that in 1997, nearly 25 years ago the Southern Baptist Convention founded a “Wounded Warrior Foundation” which began addressing the topic of mental health issues specifically depression among their clergy.¹¹³

¹¹³ Sweet, *Rings of Fire*, audio book chapter 18.

Shame feeds the constant voice that reiterates our underlying fears that we are not good enough. Shame causes us to hide from who we truly are and results in us not living a balanced self, rather a fragmented life. To drown out these voices, we are left with no other option than to work harder, work longer, prepare more, produce more, invent and implement more. Over-activity tends to provide short-term relief from these unwanted voices, but we can find ourselves in what therapist call a double-bind or a no-win situation. Regardless of our performance and the accolades we receive, we are never satisfied and never feel like we quite measure up to expectations. We are always seeing the ways that we can improve and do more. Our negative feelings move from our unmet external expectations to internal negative self-talk, to perfectionism, then shame, and ultimately burnout and utter exhaustion. This shame causes us to conceal ourselves, preventing us from living in our God given security as His children and heirs of the King.

Lack of Emotional/Relational/Contextual Intelligence:

A minister's lack of emotional, relational, and contextual awareness is one of the greatest contributors to their inability to function in healthy ways and slip into bouts of depression. While universities, seminaries, and other academia have trained ministers to exegete a passage or lead a congregation in worship, they have limited education on the relational dynamics and the significance that context plays into the life of a congregation. Many ministers walk into their first staff or board meetings with little awareness of the dynamics of the system and are unprepared for the challenges that they are about to face. They may spend hours planning for what they intend to communicate on a Sunday morning, but spend minimal time planning how they intend to navigate the challenges and opportunities that may await them in a board meeting. The lack of strategizing for the need to create new patterns and reshape established routines leaves the

outcome to the roll of the dice. This lack of social awareness of their role within the system creates opportunities for dissent, division, and distraction.

Additionally, lack of emotional intelligence (EQ) prevents pastors from understanding how their role as ministers can be both a resource and hurdle simultaneously. Introspection of how they are perceived and how they contribute to an environment is key to prepare ministers for how others respond and engage in relationships. Lack of this emotional awareness directly influences how clergy create, operate, and understand the given relationship with others. Unaware ministers often wonder why they have tendencies to respond in certain ways and what is causing a particular interaction--leaving them scratching their heads and feeling blindsided. These experiences reiterate the importance of the health of our emotional, relational, and contextual intelligence that helps ministers to navigate their environment and more effectively operate and function as a leader.

Pastors must be able to understand the significant connection between overall mental and emotional health and contextual intelligence. Lack of mental and emotional health prevents them from discovering and maintaining their contextual intelligence. And poor contextual intelligence prevents them from understanding how to engage with a congregation's culture most effectively. Contextual intelligence is important to a pastor because this is what helps the pastor better understand their congregation's perspective.

Emotional, relational, and contextual intelligence are not just personality traits or spiritual gifts—something outside our control, but rather they are areas that can be developed and improved. Rather than statements such as “that’s just who I am” or “I really can’t do anything about it”, we can embrace the opportunities for personal, professional, and spiritual growth.

The Loss of a Relevant Identity:

La fatigue d’être soi: depression is the fatigue of being yourself. “Fatigue becomes too much, when we can’t find the energy to keep going into the water, creating and curating our self, we feel stuck. We feel sucked back by the current, passed over. Everything else is moving so fast, changing and adapting every minute, and we just don’t have it in us”.¹¹⁴ While it is authenticity that allows pastors to live into their God-given talents and gifts, it is depression that prevents ministers from experiencing their authentic self, robbing clergy of experiencing this freedom and modeling a life of health and wellness through Christ. As clergy experience a shift in culture, they witness firsthand their relevancy diminishing. What was once an esteemed profession is now viewed just as another profession. What was predictable is no longer, and how they were once viewed as pillars in the community is a thing of the past. They realize that they have answers to questions that nobody is asking, and what they offer today does not feel like what the community desires. This all brings about emotions that directly influence the self-perception of uselessness by many pastors and eventually bouts of depression. For many ministers experiencing depression, the result is, inability to make decisions and address effective change. This results in a vicious cycle of feeling as if one’s relevancy is being diminished which leads to depression, yet feeling too depressed to engage and make effective change in the ministry. Additionally, when a pastor attempts to be both relevant and authentic it soon becomes apparent that being both is not possible. In our attempts to increase productivity and relevancy, we find that we are not being congruent with who God has called us to be, nor keeping up with what society expects of us. Pastors are often left feeling that they are in a no-win situation

¹¹⁴ Andrew Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age, Keeping Sacred Time Against the Speed of Modern Life*, Ministry in a Secular Age, volume three (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2021), 9.

between needing to be all things to all people and simultaneously feeling that they are in their own personal identity crisis.¹¹⁵

Loss of relevant identity and the inability to keep pace with the changing culture contributes to depression, and leads to burnout. The majority of pastors will never feel as if they have sufficient money, staff, facilities, or congregational support to keep up with the pastor and church on the other side of town. There is a deep-seated insecurity that as hard as they try, they may never lead the church or be the pastor that people talk about at the grocery store or local restaurant. No matter how much a pastor might prepare, pray, and seek support, there is a fear that their congregation is stuck in neutral, and they are unsure of how long they can continue to fight a headwind that seems to be getting stronger by the week. As stated by Andrew Root, “we have a nagging awareness that we’re running faster to stay in the same place.”¹¹⁶ Regardless of the size of a congregation, the experience and gifting of a pastor and their previous accomplishments, pastors are confronted with the reality that resources will always lag what is cutting edge. We will never be able to outpace the market’s “trend setters” which will ultimately take us further from our desire to represent authentic leadership.¹¹⁷

In Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor’s *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, we see a paradigm shift from a secular 1 worldview to a secular 3 worldview. Secular 1 society sees God working through all things, and this world did not see a divide between church and state. It is during this historical time that the church kept time and dictated events to the culture. The question pastors and church leaders must ask is how do we operate in a culture where the church

¹¹⁵ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 9.

¹¹⁶ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 36.

¹¹⁷ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 36.

is no longer viewed as the keeper of time? The secular 2 world experienced a loss of engagement in religious institutions. This is where we experience the church becoming less significant in people's lives with fewer and fewer individuals attending weekly worship services. It is through this progression that we initially experience a loss of people, followed by a loss of purpose, meaning, and a self-identity.¹¹⁸ In this lost of identity, many clergy find it challenging to see themselves separate from their profession. When the profession of a pastor is diminished many ministers find themselves depressed about the trajectory of their professional and personal influence. During the secular 2 time period pastors and their congregations tended to focus on not being left behind. This created additional anxiety and depression as clergy were reminded that they are unable to stay cutting edge or maintain relevancy. According to Andrew Root, we currently find ourselves in a secular 3 world where there is an absence of belief and a contest of all beliefs. The challenge pastors experience in a secular 3 culture is that more and more people inside and outside of a congregation feel alienated and irrelevant. This places additional pressure on the pastor to "fix" or address these feelings which are not a result of the lack of effort on behalf of the church, but from the culture overall. We have seen the shift from clergy being central to the make-up of a community to religious organizations taking a backseat to travel sports, and extra-curricular activities. This shift has influenced not only the voice of the church within a community but muted the voice of clergy.¹¹⁹

Chapter Summary

¹¹⁸ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 36.

¹¹⁹ Root, *The Congregation in a Secular Age*, 36.

This chapter looked specifically at anxiety and depression which are the two most common symptoms associated with burnout, along with a therapeutic model (BFST) to address these challenges. Contributing factors associated with anxiety included: family of origin (FOO), isolation, sabotage, triangulation, finances, lack of resources, and work/life balance. Contributing factors for depression included: co-occurring disorders, bi-polar disorder, substance abuse, personality disorders, neurological and medical illness, lack of social support, Isolation/Lack of Social Support/Lack of Physical and Emotional Connection, lack of emotional/relational/contextual intelligence, lack of integration and wholeness, and the loss of a relevant identity. Bowen Family Systems Therapy (BFST) is a therapeutic approach which can be used to reduce anxiety and depression, lower reported burnout and increase pastoral well-being.

Chapter #3
Wesleyan Theology and Pastoral Mental Health

“The first miracle after the baptism of the Holy Ghost was wroughtly upon a beggar. It means that the first service of a Holy Ghost-baptised church is to the poor; that its ministry is to those who are lowest down; that its gifts are for those who need them the most. As the Spirit was upon Jesus to preach the gospel to the poor, so His Spirit is upon His servants for the same purpose.”

- Phineas F. Bresee

Because of the many roles and demands placed upon clergy, burnout is not uncommon in ministry. Oftentimes these symptoms manifest through depression, anxiety, stress, inter- and intrapersonal conflicts, marital challenges, and addictions, to name just a few. These experiences have not only been detrimental to the clergy member but also to their families, the congregation, and the church at large. In Wesleyan circles we have focused on the need for holiness and consecration of our lives to God, but the narrative of our lives and the stories we tell ourselves about who we are and how God views us at times can feel very incongruent with what we preach and teach. We encourage others to address challenges in their lives holistically (mind, body, spirit) but acknowledge that stewardship of our own bodies does not always align with what we profess to believe. These challenges lead us to ask, how is the church fostering resiliency and well-being among their clergy who are confronted with emotional and mental health challenges? How are churches uniquely positioned to support their pastors? This chapter will focus on these two questions and examine how Wesleyan theology can positively impact clergy well-being.

This research project is focused on helping clergy recognize symptoms associated with burnout and hopefully create approaches that foster well-being. It is also significant for the information presented to show integration between our theology within our local context, and our

theology of ordination, which is foundational to Nazarene clergy. This project will focus on establishing a health and wellness program for districts within the Nazarene denomination in order to foster and enable clergy to thrive and flourish in their local ministry context. The objective is to look at ways in which districts can address issues of well-being and wholeness while reinforcing their commitment to the health and wellness of their clergy. In the following pages we will examine: the theology of ordination and stewardship, progressive sanctification and theology within a local context from a Wesleyan perspective, and theological threats as they pertain to the concept of holistic well-being. The objective of this chapter is to show that holistic well-being requires an approach that pulls together our values, beliefs, cultures, traditions, and connection.

Wesleyan Theology - Holiness

Bresee's original vision for the church was two-fold, "to proclaim holiness throughout the land and to minister to and among the poor."¹²⁰ Our denominational founding principles linked holiness with caring for those in need. For Wesley, we are called to minister to those in need, and it is the grace of God at work in us, producing "holy tempers". While we rely on our foundational theology of holiness, we must be aware that "holiness is not primarily about our experiences, or our activities, it is not even primarily about us at all."¹²¹ Holiness is about God and His characteristics of "love, purity, mercy, and justice."¹²²

As Wesleyans we believed that we are "called out", "set apart", and filled with the Holy Spirit. This is very crucial to our denominational heritage as we are NOT simply saved and set

¹²⁰ Ronald Benefiel, "Our Wesleyan Tradition: Wesleyan Faith and Practice and the PLNU Mission" (Models of Christian Leadership and Community Transformation, Los Angeles, California June 25th 2021).

¹²¹ Benefiel, "Our Wesleyan Tradition," Received June 25th 2021.

¹²² Benefiel, "Our Wesleyan Tradition," Received June 25th 2021).

apart, but rather “sent back out”. It is through our proper understanding of history that we realign with our heritage and begin focusing on “sending out”. Our objective as a Wesleyan people is to focus on Christian discipleship, which requires the participation of others to grow spiritually. It is “living it out together” that requires a community. Our holiness is defined and re-defined through tangible actions. We have focused so much in recent years on grace as a knee-jerk reaction to some of our fundamental brothers and sisters that we have left out the “actions” aspect of our holiness. It is important that we recalibrate to our denominational foundations that holiness and living out a sanctified life is not “all God” or “all me”, but rather God plus me. This requires us to drastically rethink what it means to participate in kingdom living. “From the various streams of holiness teaching and practice, perfect love and human suffering were inextricable linked together. Holiness was both the motivation for compassion and the remedy for human misery.”¹²³ In other words, holiness compels us to engage in active holiness through caring for our clergy sisters and brothers struggling with burnout by providing tangible support and resources.

Wesleyan Theology - Stewardship

In many evangelical settings we have reduced the concept of stewardship to a single spiritual discipline of tithing. While tithing is an important aspect of our spiritual growth, focusing on one aspect of stewardship over another not only leads to an imbalance but also neglects the holistic approach that was intended. As with any spiritual discipline, if taken out of context, it can create a burdensome feeling of guilt, legalism, and obligation. However, if we also understand that God is blessing us through our obedience, these self-disciplines can lead to spiritual and personal growth and increased connection with God and others.

¹²³ Busic, *The City*, 75.

In the Church of the Nazarene, our theology of ordination highlights that ministerial leadership confirms God’s call to be “stewards” of the gospel and of the Church of Jesus Christ. *“While affirming the scriptural tenets of the universal priesthood and ministry of all believers, ordination reflects the biblical belief that God calls and gifts certain men and women for ministerial leadership in the church. Ordination is the authenticating, authorizing act of the church, which recognizes and confirms God’s call to ministerial leadership as stewards and proclaimers of the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ. Consequently, ordination bears witness to the church universal and the world at large that this candidate evidences an exemplary life of holiness, possesses gifts and graces for public ministry, and has a thirst for knowledge, especially for the word of God, and has the capacity to communicate sound doctrine.”*¹²⁴

The act of stewardship certainly requires that we care and govern the church in a way that exemplifies Christ, but there is also the stewardship of our own lives which includes a holistic view of well-being. In examining the act of authorizing and authenticating clergy within the Church of the Nazarene and the larger Wesleyan theological perspective, there must be an acknowledgment and ownership of the responsibility of stewarding our own bodies. We see the theme of stewardship being highlighted in scripture with passages signifying that our bodies are to be cared for and represent the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Romans 12:1-2, and Matthew 6:22-23). This is vitally important as we look holistically at our spiritual lives for the purpose of this chapter.

In caring for ourselves we must also carry this act of stewardship to others. In essence, stewardship is more than a professional vocation but a “calling” which compels us to minister to

¹²⁴ Church of The Nazarene, *Manual 2017-2021* (Kansas City, Missouri. Nazarene Publishing House 2017).

others who are with us along the journey. We need go no further than hearing the words of Jesus who provides us with the two greatest commandments, to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:36-39). This commandment not only focuses on the need to care about our neighbor but that our love for God and others comes through a holistic love which requires that our entire self be active in this process (heart, soul, and mind). This is more than a simple act of empathy, rather this is a call to bear the burdens of one another and care for those God has placed among us. With that said, we must not forget that this “calling” is extended to our fellow clergy brothers and sisters in ministry. This ties directly to the overarching theme for this research topic. It is not simply an acknowledgement of the challenges our fellow clergy are faced with, but a call to action. Some of those contributing factors as discussed in chapters one and two include: isolation, feelings of stress, burnout, depression, anxiety, addiction, conflict, and marital discourse. If our objective is to provide well-being and resiliency among our brothers and sisters in ministry, then a paradigm shift needs to occur. As mentioned in the Wright text, we can no longer view God’s mission as simply an act of a local congregation, nor can our ministry be structured as a solitary activity.¹²⁵ Rather we must think broader and more inclusively as we look at ways to collaborate with those congregations and clergy that serve within and throughout our districts, denomination, and the church at large.¹⁴⁰ If we truly are interested in creating environments where clergy are able to flourish and thrive then we must answer the question “Am I my brother’s keeper?” with a resounding YES! If we are to partake in the mission of God, then our participation is not a choice but an obligation of partaking in the life of Christ. This decision

¹²⁵ Christopher, J.H. Wright, *The Mission Of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2010), 223.

is not an action we decide to take, but a part of the DNA of who we are if we believe that God's essence is missional.

Wesleyan Theology - Progressive Sanctification

When we reflect upon the body of Christ as being one, bringing together our unique and diverse backgrounds, we are compelled to find meaning and hope in order that all would flourish and gain greater well-being and wholeness. When we broaden our understanding of well-being beyond a specific event or situation, we are able to incorporate faith, hope, and healing, not as a one-time event but rather a part of the larger holistic approach to spiritual growth and transformation. When we examine the topic of theological well-being we are left with the questions of what are we trying to find, and what is our true objective? As stated by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, our purpose as Christians should be less focused on whether we like or dislike our current circumstances but rather does our situation bring us closer to God? Our well-being is a byproduct of a consistent desire to grow closer to Christ, which requires us to look beyond our current circumstances. Our theology allows us to create meaning and purpose to enable people to accept and move beyond their current situations and establish greater well-being in their lives. As people with hope, we use what Jungian theory calls "soul making" which is to use our current situation to better help us grow spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically for greater well-being and health. This means that we are not to hide or minimize our mental illnesses or emotional challenges but rather integrate those circumstances into a theology of transformation and hope.

Progressive sanctification is a term that embraces the idea of holistic well-being.¹²⁶ It is this idea that we are continuing to grow in our likeness of Christ through a continual refining

¹²⁶ Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City 2015), 25, 33.

process. It is a developmental process that requires a decision from our entire being. Our body, mind, and soul are active participants in this process. Our desire for wholeness and holistic well-being brings us, as Wesleyans, to live out a life of holiness. This means that holiness and wholeness must include not only belief but practice and application for fullness to occur.¹²⁷ As Wesleyans we believe that our sanctification and holiness is refined through relationships and the community that we have been placed within. “We believe that if we are sanctified holy, fully obedient to God, we could not only be forgiven of our sins, but that God could do a cleaning and purifying work in our sinful nature. We believe that God could change us, severing the very root of sin in our lives so that we could be freed from the necessity to sin against God.”¹²⁸

Wesleyan Theology - Means of Grace

The means of grace are practices which God uses to refine us to make us holy. These practices “means of grace” are foundational to the spiritual disciples within the Wesleyan tradition. It is through these practices that originated the word “Methodist” due to the methods and processes for growing and maturing spiritually. It is through the acts of these practices that Wesleyans believe God reveals Himself in the process of holiness. It is also the emphasis in these “means of grace” practices that reiterates that we are unable to become holy through our own efforts.¹²⁹ “People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We slouch toward prayerlessness and delude

¹²⁷ Don Thorson, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 2005), 243- 253.

¹²⁸ Benefiel, “Our Wesleyan Tradition,” Received June 25th 2021).

¹²⁹ Benefiel, “Our Wesleyan Tradition,” Received June 25th 2021).

ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.”¹³⁰

A three-fold understanding of “means of grace” can be divided into 3 categories;

1. Sacraments: Communion and Baptism

2. Acts of Mercy: The extending of God’s love to those who are struggling spiritually, physically, and in monetary needs. Such examples include caring for the widows, orphans, strangers, hungry, and imprisoned (Zach 7:10, Matt 25:31-46).

3. Acts of Piety: Spiritual Formation/Disciplines (prayer, bible reading, devotional reading, fasting) These are the acts that believers engage in together that cultivate spiritual growth and lives toward holiness. Some of these means of grace include small groups for weekly support meetings.

Wesleyan Theology - Quadrilateral

One of the best ways to understand what it means to have a holistic approach to our faith in the Wesleyan tradition is to examine the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. It should be clearly understood that any integrative approach begins with a clear understanding that scripture is the primary source used in things related to God, and all things pertaining to our salvation. With that said, what makes Wesley’s Quadrilateral so helpful is that it provides space for context. It brings together not just scripture to paint the picture of God’s love, but pulls in our traditions, experiences, and the ability to incorporate reason or critical analysis.¹³¹ It’s the combination of these which allow those of the Wesleyan tradition to not only focus on a correct understanding of what we believe but also to make sure that those beliefs translate into proper action and living. In

¹³⁰ “D.A. Carson,” For the Love of God, A daily companion for Discovering the Riches of God’s Word, Google, Last modified January 23rd 2021, https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/12715225.D_A_Carson.

¹³¹ Thorson, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology*, 243-253.

other words, we cannot simply impose a “group think” to our values and beliefs but rather it requires an approach that includes our individual emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual selves.

The Quadrilateral allows us to incorporate, as a part of our faith tradition, those values which we hold tightly to through our reason, experiences, and scripture, resulting in a focus on not just ourselves but concern and responsibility for our communities and society. It is through this approach that we are able to reflect and practice, through reason and examination, our traditional tenets through the prism of scripture and our context. This also leads us to show concerns for groups who are marginalized, those in poverty, those struggling with disease, racism, and those not having a voice in our culture. It is also this integrative approach that allows us to understand how theologies that focus on marginalization, culture, sexuality, gender, and economics influence how we see God and His mission for our lives.¹³² This holistic lens enables us to look beyond our individual experiences to a collective experience that includes our churches, society, and institutions. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral approach also allows for us to find a balance between examining scripture through different worldviews and implementing Christian practices through the various theological perspectives. Additionally, through implementation of this Quadrilateral we can embrace the entire person rather than a compartmentalization of one’s life. We move toward holistic healing and holiness through our traditions, reason, and experiences, which allows scripture to come alive and integrate in our relationships with others and with God.

When examining some of the tenets of the Wesleyan tradition it is important that we not lose the significance of Wesley’s perspective when it comes to well-being and wellness and its

¹³² Thorson, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology*, 243-253.

association with what we would currently refer to as greater mental and emotional health. This is notably recognized with the importance that Wesley places on “bands”, which today in our cultural settings we would refer to as small groups. These small communities, which Wesley viewed as the vehicle for pastoral care, allowed individuals an opportunity to move beyond the larger experience into sub-systems that provided growth personally and interpersonally.¹³³ These “bands” also provided an opportunity to grow deeper in their commitment and discipleship. The bands were designed for weekly gatherings and rigorous accountability, where they would share all sins committed as well as temptations. The small groups “bands” were organized by geography, and open regardless of age, gender, marital status, and income. These small groups were designed not only to keep each other accountable, but also to come alongside one another in the pursuit of holiness through the act of loving one’s neighbor. Additionally, these “bands” small groups allowed opportunities for personal transformation through spiritual disciplines, creating hearts and minds focused on holiness.¹³⁴ Wesley’s true desire was for those individuals to engage in care groups in order to grow spiritually, and that greater growth would occur with soul friends that were made along the way.

In addition to these “bands” there were two additional groups that were larger in number but served similar purposes of providing spiritual growth, connection, and accountability. Wesley referred to these as level one, level two, and level three. Level 1 consisted of a larger gathering between 50-100 people called the Methodist Society. They would meet similarly to a local congregation. These gatherings were not intended to replace the typical worship service but an additional opportunity to gather and grow as a community. The primary reason for this type of

¹³³ Albert C Outler, “Pastoral Care In The Wesleyan Spirit,” *Perkins Journal*, (1971): 4-11.

¹³⁴ Benefiel, “Our Wesleyan Tradition,” Received June 25th 2021.

gathering was to encourage, pray and work through their salvation within relationships. Level 2, was called the “class meeting”. This level was a cognitive behavioral model focused specifically on discipleship and spiritual formation. Level 3, was referred to as the “band” which we have already discussed, and typically consisted of 5-10 people. They tended to be intimate gatherings where individuals shared their struggles, temptations, motives, and also focused on accountability.¹³⁵

We see this holistic approach as a result of Wesley’s use of his position as a pastor to his people to care for their needs but also acknowledging that it takes community to fulfill the needs of support, encouragement, and accountability. It was Wesley’s desire that pastoral care for the people of God take place in a network of believers to fully embrace the comprehensive needs within his flock. As much as Wesley believed in the act of the community of believers, he also believed that this required emotional growth which could only be completely accomplished with others walking the journey alongside each other. Wesley is quoted as saying, “converts without nurture are like stillborn babies.”¹³⁶

A term often used by Wesley in his teaching was that of “Christian Perfection”. In our current culture this term has become increasingly challenging to explain to younger generations. This term has also created sub-groups within our denomination which have felt that their entire sanctification required perfectionism which translated into individuals believing that they were unable or beyond sinning. In the context of Wesley, his use of the term was utilized in relation to an on-going process where the individual continued to strive toward the objective of growth which was not immediate but progressive in nature. It was the emphasis that, while this capacity

¹³⁵ Busic, *The City*, 67.

¹³⁶ Outler, “Pastoral Care In The Wesleyan Spirit,” 4-11.

was not automatic, it could be obtained in this life through dedication and holistic growth.¹³⁷ The idea behind Wesley's term was to remind others that they had not yet arrived or completed their journey but rather encourage them to an on-going spiritual growth process.

Sanctification is another term commonly used in Wesleyan circles and is a part of our Nazarene Articles of Faith. The tie between our understanding of sanctification and overall emotional and mental health is the understanding that sanctification is more than a spiritual act but a decision to look beyond one's own self and to focus on the life of others. That our concern for others is witnessed through our "faith being worked out through love."¹³⁸ It is statements such as these that have led many who have studied Wesley to believe that while the exact language may not have been used, he was concerned about a holistic approach when it came to peoples' lives.

Two passages which reinforce our theological desire to live out the mission of God through our values and belief system as a denomination is found in 2 Corinthians 1 and Philippians 4. In 2 Corinthians, Paul speaks of finding comfort in our affliction. During times of struggle and severe challenges we can speak into the lives of those who need support, encouragement, and an ease in their suffering. Through this passage the church can empathize and provide comfort by displaying and offering the gift of the Holy Spirit in unique and personal ways during times of trouble. This is a picture of the church doing what it has been called to do as we comfort one another. We are instructed to be aware of those who find themselves in positions of need and struggling whether that be physically, emotionally, relationally, spiritually, or mentally.

¹³⁷ Outler, "Pastoral Care In The Wesleyan Spirit," 4-11.

¹³⁸ Theodore Runyon, "Wesleyan Roots of Pastoral Care and Counseling," *Quarterly Review*, vol 25, no 4 (Winter 2005): 353-365.

Philippians 4 reminds us of the importance of being peacefully centered and learning to be content in our circumstances. The Apostle Paul, like many ministers, could find numerous reasons for anxiety and concern over his circumstances. As ministers, we might not find ourselves sitting in a prison cell unaware of our future, but for many today our ministries present numerous situations which make the future uncertain. There are many reasons for us to become anxious and worried, leading to complications in various aspects of our life including psychological, emotional, and physical challenges. The goal is to take Paul's words to heart "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God."¹³⁹ It is the giving over of our concerns which creates a supernatural antidote to our anxiety. It is the incomprehensible peace during times of stress, fear, and worry, that allows us to transcend our circumstances and find comfort in the unknown.

Wesleyan Theology and Wellness

God has often used those who were on the sidelines or marginalized in society to show His power, goodness, and love. Jesus in Luke 7:21-23 says, "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor."¹⁴⁰ Often these groups of people were not socially connected, nor did they bring influence or power, but that is exactly how our denomination began. Our denominational foundation originated from a calling to assist those who were struggling and in need of support spiritually, emotionally, physically, mentally, and relationally. There have been times as a denomination when we have forgotten where we have come from and our purpose in

¹³⁹ Philippians 4:6 (*The Care and Counsel Bible, NKJV*).

¹⁴⁰ Luke 7:21-23 (*New International Version*).

God's mission. We needed to re-calibrate our ministry mindset and regain clarity to our call as individuals and as the church. This recognition brings us back to some of the core components of Wesley's teaching. As those who identify with Wesleyan theology, we would be served well to remember that in the journals of Wesley there is a deliberate emphasis placed on visiting the sick, poor, and those in prison.¹⁴¹ As stated by Donald Dayton, the poor and outcast were drawn to Wesley because he did not blame them for their poverty. In fact, Dayton continues by pointing to the various sermons by Wesley who directed his disdain toward the wealthy for their lack of empathy and the danger of riches.¹⁴² Wesley also spoke out against those who lived lavishly but ignored the poor, which included oppression of the poor, marginalized, and the inequality for the outcast¹⁴³. Wesley did not believe that caring for those in need was limited to the rich and/or socially connected person ministering to the poor, marginalized, or disenfranchised. He believed that even those in need would partake in the ministering and serving others who were struggling. This also helped to eliminate the "us serving them" mentality, and rather emphasized that this was done through community. This process developed Christian character and maturity through tangible expression of compassion and love.¹⁴⁴

Wesley further clarifies the unconditional nature of God's love through his visiting of the sick, "By the sick it does not mean only those that keep in their beds, or that are sick in the strictest sense. Rather I would include all such as are in a state of affliction, whether of mind or

¹⁴¹ Donald W. Dayton, "Presidential Address: The Wesleyan Option for The Poor," *Lecture on Liberation Theology*, (Nazarene Theological Seminary July 2020): 7-22.

¹⁴² Dayton, "Presidential Address," (Nazarene Theological Seminary July 2020).

¹⁴³ Michael Tapper, "Social Sin and Needed Corporate Reform In The Wesleyan Tradition," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 43, no.2 (Fall 2013): 193-209.

¹⁴⁴ Benefiel, "Our Wesleyan Tradition," Received June 25th 2021.

body: and that whether they are good or bad, whether they fear God or not.”¹⁴⁵ This includes those suffering not just from physical conditions but emotional, mental, spiritual, and relational challenges. Wesley tied the love for others to the love for God. Wesley believed that serving the poor was not simply an act of the church having compassion for those in need but rather, ministering to those struggling as a “means of grace” to the church.¹⁴⁶ “For the people of God, caring for those in need was not out of pity, sympathy, or even high ideals, it is an indication of who they are in Christ.”¹⁴⁷ “Rather than moving away from the sin, pain, and suffering of the world, the character of holiness in people inclines them to move right into the midst of such a world.”¹⁴⁸

As Nazarenes, we understand that our creation as a denomination began with a heart for the marginalized, and this recognition brings us back to some of the core components of Wesley’s teaching. In relationship to the topic of this project and the importance of emotional and mental health in clergy it would seem fitting to discuss the importance of congruency, and the understanding that our values must also match our actions. Wesley couched his comments in terms of Christian values, but his point is the same. For Wesley, he believed that we should exhibit self-control, sensitivity to others, compassion for the less fortunate, prevent wastefulness, and not be a glutton when it comes to one’s appearance and consumption. Concern for the less fortunate instills these core values and beliefs about others and ourselves. However, we are reminded by Wesley that if our only objective is to self-impose our own sense of dignity on

¹⁴⁵ Benefiel, “Our Wesleyan Tradition,” Received June 25th 2021.

¹⁴⁶ Busic, *The City*, 65.

¹⁴⁷ Benefiel, “Our Wesleyan Tradition,” Received June 25th 2021.

¹⁴⁸ Ronald Benefiel, “Christian Holiness and the Wesleyan Mission of Mercy,” (Models of Christian Leadership and Community Transformation, Los Angeles, California June 25th 2021).

others and leave out what he would consider foundational to their “true worth’ which is only found in Christ, then we are simply justifying our actions to fit our set of values and beliefs.¹⁴⁹

The application for us today is the fact that for many who identify as Christians, and specifically Wesleyans, we have not always modeled our lives after our founding principles creating a disconnect between our actions and the beliefs that we claim to hold. If our true desire is to live out the words of Jesus and hold to the underpinning of our Wesleyan theology, then it will require many to re-evaluate their lives and how they see themselves living out their missional values and beliefs.

A holistic perspective requires us to incorporate spirituality by examining our understanding of God (theology) through the lens of our cultural context. It is helpful to remember that all theology is contextual, and God is presented to us through our contextual setting. This provides a more accurate understanding of who God is as we work to view theology from the perspective of the marginalized, outcast, and the poor. In fact, our view of theology and understanding of well-being influences our ability to look beyond ourselves to a broader view of how we interact and care for others. It is the scope of this understanding that dictates not only our identified theological underpinnings but our ability to implement practices into our missional context.

Wesleyan Theology and Identity

It is important to know that calling a pastor into a life of congruency is not about adding another layer of responsibility or another task to be completed; rather this is calling a minister of the gospel into a life of freedom from the constraints that they and society have placed upon anyone who identifies themselves as a pastor. It is bringing clergy back to a place, as mentioned in the first chapter, where they embrace their personhood over a persona. It is the willingness to

¹⁴⁹ Outler, “Pastoral Care In The Wesleyan Spirit,” 4-11.

look beyond professional competencies for security and validation and embrace their imagine in Christ and God's calling of vocational ministry in their lives. Personal missional effectiveness is accomplished by the acceptance of one's personal value being not in what they do but who they are. Through this process there is a recalibration of bringing the inauthentic self into alignment with our true identity in Christ. This realization then translates into not overworking to receive validation or accolades, but a confidence that can only come through the embracing of one's calling. This shift reduces stress and increases the likelihood that symptoms of burnout will also be reduced or diminished.

In Wesleyan and other protestant denominations, we see that it appears to be challenging for clergy to practice the act of embracing their identify and be their authentic selves. There are many contributing factors that influence this absence, but the church overall has failed to come alongside and foster this step in spiritual awareness and growth. David Brenner in his book *Presence and Encounter* points out that the vast majority of clergy have been trained and focused on "doing" rather than "being". Benner argues that it is this mindset that often leads to the mental, emotional, and physical breakdown in many ministers. This lack of presence negatively influences our ability to focus on our well-being and rather directs much of our attention to our perceived inadequacies leading to self-doubt, depression, and anxiety. These are just a few of the influences that take us away from living out our ministerial calling.¹⁵⁰ These influences often force ministers away from living their authentic selves and into a persona which neither reflects God or His image within us.

Theological Threats

¹⁵⁰¹⁶⁵ David G. Benner, *Presence and Encounter: The Sacramental Possibilities of Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, Baker Publishing Group, 2014), 6.

It would seem fitting when discussing our theology of ordination and the care which is required for those clergy who are actively engaging in God's mission, that we acknowledge that there are many expectations of ministers which negatively impact the wellness of clergy. There is pressure that goes along with a rapidly changing culture and society. There is the constant tension between remaining relevant and not allowing social shifts to dictate mission. There is also the pressure of attendance, church size and church growth movements that often cause clergy to experience feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, frustration, and burnout. Movements such as these, while serving a purpose for the current time, have not always translated into long-term spiritual growth, often leaving longing for community and connection. There is also the stress of feeling that many ministers and their families live in a fishbowl and to be their authentic self would diminish or prevent them from carrying out their current ministerial roles. This inability to live congruently has translated to some coping in unhealthy ways that are destructive for themselves, their family, their congregations, and their communities.

Our denomination has, at times, forgotten that we are co-laborers with God in His mission, rather than seeing our missional responsibilities through a collaborative approach. This has contributed to some clergy leaving ministry with shame and/or guilt that they have not worked hard enough or that they are abandoning their calling when they have sensed God moving them into new environments that historically our denominational structure did not recognize. This happens in times when our denominational system has protected our traditional institution over a focus on innovation and a missional mindset. We have placed significant emphasis on Initial and Entire Sanctification and left out Progressive Sanctification. This has prevented us from living into our continual effort to look at well-being as a long-term continuum and rather focus on a "one-and-done" salvation approach. This mindset leads many to view their

salvation more from a Calvinist perspective and reduced the significance of the continual work of the Holy Spirit, who is active in the refining process of our lives. This takes nothing away from what we would call a “pure heart”, but it does allow space for our “mature character” to develop over time as we grow spiritually through the holistic means of grace.

Threats from our Polity

While there are numerous advantages to the theological underpinnings of our Nazarene denomination and the polity by which we adhere to, we must also acknowledge areas in which seeking or advocating for one’s mental and emotional health can be challenging. When taking the implementation model outlined in chapter 4, along with the useful techniques, and integrating them with the denominational structure in which we operate, we find some of the challenges Nazarene pastors experience in contrast to other denominations includes the following:

Equality

Unlike some of our brother and sister denominations, in the Nazarene church you can have two similar ministers with roughly the same skillset who can experience vastly different trajectories to their ministry and very different pay for their ministry roles. This can be challenging since the ability of a minister to make a living wage is dependent on the location, congregational planning, or decision by a local church board. If a congregation was previously unable to save for the future or found themselves in a declining area of both worshipers and funds, it would not be uncommon for a minister to have great stress and anxiety over finances and the future of their congregation. In contrast, another pastor in the next town who was called to a congregation that was able to invest resources, was generous, and experiences growth and success very likely would not have the same stressors placed upon them. This is not a result of one pastor being more gifted than another but more likely a result of external factors and

congregational shifts as a result of demographics, income, leadership, and community engagement.

In contrast the Methodist denomination requires a more significant percentage of tithes (roughly 30%) from local congregations be sent to their districts but the districts distribute those funds, not on what is sent from a particular congregation, but an overall living wage spread out among all pastors. Whether you have a church of 50 or 500 you are paid the same. Districts within the Methodist denomination distribute funds to pastors so that there is equality across the board. The Methodist denominational structure is a top-down approach compared to the bottom-up governing structure of the Church of the Nazarene where every congregation is their own distinct system. When there are significant discrepancies in wages, we have no equality with our pastors. With such inequality, only a small percentage of pastors can work for a living wage without finding supplemental income sources.

Many pastors who serve in smaller congregations (100 or less) are often unable to receive a salary that adequately enables them to provide for their families. This directly increases stress, anxiety, depression, and the chance of burnout among clergy. When pastors are struggling financially, there is a tendency to stop preaching on tithing and stewardship. As ministers find themselves pulling back from preaching the scripture in its entirety we also find an imbalance of spiritual growth, discipleship, and biblical understanding.

Multi-Tasking

As mentioned previously, there are advantages in our polity for ministers having the authority to be directly involved in the decision making of multiple aspects of the church. However, this freedom also comes with the stress of feeling that a pastor must be an expert on an array of topics. This structure also assumes that local pastors are gifted not only in preaching,

teaching, leading, and facilitating, but implementing, strategic planning, vision casting, and loving their congregations simultaneously. It is through this lens of “being all things to all people” that not only creates fear and anxiety within the clergy but results in isolation and pulling back from fellowship with others along a similar journey.

Pastor as CEO

Within the local congregation, the lead pastor is the CEO. This means that a pastor not only serves as the spiritual leader but also the chairman of the board and the governing bodies within the church. This role as CEO can make it challenging for even the most experienced minister to advocate for themselves without it appearing self-seeking, self-promoting, or come across as disgruntle. The reality is that often board members do not think of a minister’s well-being when it comes to their finances. The polity of the church makes it difficult for a pastor to be an advocate for themselves. As the chairman of the board, it is difficult to ask for a pay increase, time off, or needing assistance in finding time for self-care and other support. If we require that our ministerial leadership display authentic, honest reflection and engagement, we as congregations, districts, and a denomination need to make every effort to advocate on behalf of our clergy. This requires stepping into collaborative partnerships when these difficult conversations need to take place on behalf of those pastors leading local congregations.

Chapter Summary

We have examined the Church of the Nazarene’s theology of ordination and stewardship, progressive sanctification, and theological threats from a Wesleyan perspective as they impact the concept of holistic well-being. Ideally, viewing our Wesleyan theology through these various aspects of our values, beliefs, and traditions will provide opportunities to view our doctrine in new and integrative ways. This integration shows self-care and wellness as not simply being a

new concept of the 21st century, but rather a part of God's plan for our lives as highlighted throughout scripture to our current day. If we believe that God is preparing us for the personal and ministerial challenges and opportunities that we will face in the future, then we can rest assured that His desire for us is also to live into His fullness of abundant hope and peace. A holistic approach requires that we provide opportunities for symptom relief and for changes to be enacted to reduce stress and increase health. Additionally, as discussed earlier in this chapter this requires that we re-evaluate how we view the pay structure for Nazarene pastors. While our polity does not permit a district to enforce such mandates, it does allow Nazarene districts the opportunity to encourage and highlight the importance of providing reasonable wages to their ministers.

As Wesleyans we embrace a theology that uses our emotions, intellect, and reason, which makes this concept of integrating our minds, body, and spirit a crucial part as we focus on finding support for clergy. This will also enable the church to equip ministers with self-care techniques to navigate their emotional, physical, mental, and relational lives. This holistic approach will not only create well-being for clergy and their families, but also their congregations, their communities, and their spheres of influence.

Chapter 4

An Integrative Approach for Nazarene Districts to Implement at the Local Level

As a faith-based community we hold to the belief that our hope transcends circumstances; that therapeutic communities allow us to identify purpose and recover, and as the church (body of believers) we exemplify what it means to be a burden-bearing community. This is increasingly useful as congregations, church boards, and denominations look at ways to increase longevity in the pastorate roles and foster positive well-being among their clergy. This type of proactive approach enables those in leadership to look at how personality and character traits influence a minister's view of the world and how they process and distribute information. To promote positive mental health, research indicates it is most effective to provide clergy with tools prior to them experiencing negative mental health symptoms.

The intent of this chapter is not to place a new set of requirements on districts that can become burdensome or create another unmanageable requirement. Instead, this chapter on implementation is designed to equip and provide tangible solutions to district leadership throughout the Nazarene denomination that can be utilized to reduce burnout within ministers. A

likely byproduct of this type of strategic approach could also increase pastoral recruiting and retention, and model to the denominational community that pastoral well-being is not just something that sounds important but is our responsibility as a community of believers who desire to live out our core value of holiness. While these recommendations certainly provide relief for ministers experiencing burnout, the desire is that these recommendations would be implemented as a proactive measure to prevent symptoms associated with burnout and create opportunities to establish well-being and wholeness in the life of pastors and their districts. This chapter should be viewed as the beginning steps of establishing a health and wellness approach for a district, rather than a comprehensive prescription.

In addition to becoming a resource in creating pastoral wholeness, these recommendations are most effective when being implemented through a district that can pull from resources beyond that of a local congregation. We also must acknowledge the need and role of the district to advocate on behalf of a pastor. It is unhelpful for district/denominational leadership to talk about the importance of caring for the welfare of clergy but not follow those statements with repeated reminders to congregations who will need to participate in the process for lasting change to occur. Additionally, ministers should not be requested to take proactive steps in creating healthier patterns and behaviors in their personal and professional well-being while being required to advocate to a church board or congregation on their own behalf. This is where a district can step into the conversation and provide a unique perspective and value to the congregations and the ministers that they serve.

All districts do not have the same capability to develop resources and obtain services on behalf of ministers, so we will identify a plethora of methods and opportunities to create change. One of the benefits of incorporating a model such as outlined here, is that it does not require all

these recommendations be implemented for change to occur. It is critical to understand that any approach or technique alone will not produce the same effectiveness as a collaborative approach that strives to pull together the resources of a district, congregation, community, and a minister's own context. That being said, it is recommended that a district does not feel confined to a particular approach, for the model implementation is not designed to be prescriptive but rather adaptive to incorporate therapeutic interventions, support groups, spiritual disciplines, cognitive behavioral modification, medication etc. This type of district engagement is not about checking all the boxes but finding the techniques that prove to be the most effective at creating lasting change for a district and their ministers within their ministry context.

Like those who viewed Wesley's methods and called his followers Methodist due to their practices, so we integrate methods and implementation models for the final chapter. We replicate the importance of methods and practices as "Means of Grace" for those who are struggling emotionally, mentally, relationally, physically, and spiritually as they grow toward greater integrative wholeness. What Wesley's "means of grace" shows us is that Wesley was experiential in his belief that our salvation is worked out through relationships and the practices that focus on our collective accountability as a community of believers.¹⁵¹ As ministers focus on spiritual formation not just for their congregation but also for themselves, we encourage ministers to practice the three different models utilized by Wesley for spiritual growth as outlined in chapter 3. The three different models include, Level 1 called the "Methodist Society", typically 50-100 participants, Level 2 called "Class Meetings" which focused on discipleship and spiritual formation, and Level 3 called "Bands" which were comprised of 5-10 individuals and utilized for accountability._

¹⁵¹ Busic, *The City*, 65.

Districts can play a major role however in providing opportunities for clergy to gather for support, and accountability, to counter-act many of the feelings associated with isolation, depression, and anxiety. Fostering well-being within districts creates a desire not to simply avoid or prevent the ramifications associated with burnout but to create environments that promote and help pastors flourish. Even during a global pandemic, racial unrest, polarization in our politics, and congregations being forced to adapt to the increasingly swift changes in culture, through research, we are seeing ways in which pastors can flourish and excel.¹⁵²

Districts have the opportunity to support ministers who are on the frontlines of many of the challenges our society and culture are facing. From poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, racial tension, mental health issues, family conflicts, financial struggles, hopelessness, spiritual depravation, etc, the demands of pastors far surpass realistic expectations. As districts we can assist our ministerial leaders unpacking the challenges and difficulties they face, ministry objectives and desired goals, and provide encouragement and compassion through an outside perspective. Through authentic care for pastors, districts can provide emotional, mental, spiritual, and relational support. By coming alongside colleagues we can utilize some of the approaches outlined in this chapter to implement holistic techniques to address some of the unique challenges and responsibilities of their role. Districts can create opportunities for growth in safe environments and help provide perspective outside the purview of a local setting.¹⁵³ The desire of any district should be to provide support that enables pastors to grow spiritually, relationally, mentally, personally, and professionally. This will increase a pastor's capacity, and strengthen self-confidence, self-awareness, and ultimately increase their overall well-being.

¹⁵² Daniels, "Flourishing In Ministry," <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

¹⁵³ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 96.

Districts can help pastors strengthen their identity by not simply focusing on the persona of what it means to be a minister of the gospel but to care for the personhood of a pastor.

Districts and denominations can also assist in creating environments of well-being by facilitating positive ministry assignments that are a good fit through the credentialing process. This includes districts establishing procedures that eliminate those barriers often reported by candidates of color or who are female. Some of these reported barriers include hostility, power struggles, power differentiation, and inequality when it comes to professional roles, pay structure, and acknowledgment of pastoral calling.¹⁵⁴ For Nazarene districts and those in leadership positions within the denomination, research consistently highlights that those in leadership roles that are concerned for the well-being of a ministers over their performance are the most effective and healthy type of leader.¹⁵⁵ Creating a clear yet flexible credentialing process that builds legitimacy and identity for the role of a new pastor significantly improves building well-being for those young ministers who are more susceptible than those who have been in the profession for more than a decade.¹⁵⁶

We find that a pastor's well-being is tied directly to their identity and whether they are serving in ministry contexts that are a good fit; this requires self-reflection, self-awareness, and self-control. These core components of resiliency allow pastors to recognize and pay attention to what is happening inside and outside of themselves. It is through self-awareness and self-reflection that emotional intelligence is developed and increased.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 114.

¹⁵⁵ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 91.

¹⁵⁶ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 114.

¹⁵⁷ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 19.

As pastors, we are fully aware that we influence and are influenced by others, and that our well-being can have tremendous influence upon those around us, positively or negatively. It is also true that for those of us who identify as Christians, Wesleyans', and specifically Nazarenes, we acknowledge and embrace that our objective to reach well-being and flourish in ministry is so much greater than our individual needs and context. This is where we can see Nazarene districts having a direct impact. Much of the work of a district is designed in its structure of being reactive in response and engagement. Thinking through the importance of what is required for pastors to flourishing in their ministries and personal life we must embrace the concept as outlined in Bloom's research.¹⁵⁸ Moving forward, Nazarene Districts will need to become increasingly proactive and preemptive in their engagement with clergy. District leadership will need to create opportunities for pastors to develop "spiritual wellspring"¹⁵⁹ as reserves for when those challenging times of depletion occur. If pastors operate at a deficit in their well-being, or lack margin for the unexpected, then we should not be surprised when resiliency and the ability to flourish is diminished.

Well-being is also tied to a pastor's ability to possess the right set of core competencies: knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience.¹⁶⁰ Simply possessing core competencies in these four areas is not sufficient, these competencies must align with the gifting of a pastor. If we witness pastors serving in roles that do not allow their skillset to be highlighted, or a role that requires a focus on an area where pastors do not have leadership capacity, there are increased chances of symptoms of burnout occurring. Dr. Deshon identified sixty-four competencies required to perform the task of pastor in most congregations. The challenge that many pastors

¹⁵⁸ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 19.

¹⁵⁹ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 19.

¹⁶⁰ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 9.

have in relation to burnout is that they believe that they not only need to possess all sixty-four competencies, but that they must excel at each one.¹⁶¹ Districts can help in this process by aligning ministers in contexts that enable competencies to be highlighted and provide realistic expectations of core competencies for a pastor. One of the ways by which districts can provide early intervention is through spiritual, professional, and personal assessments and evaluations. This will enable a minister to better fulfill who they are and how they have been created.

District Model

This chapter emphasizes the importance of working with a collective approach to include community and denominational resources to better equip and prepare clergy. This can be done to alleviate symptoms associated with burnout and provide proactive measures before symptoms occur. In the current environment, many churches and religious organizations struggle to have enough resources to meet all their needs; these demands for resources are no different at the district level. Working with other districts and/or alongside educational institutions could prove to be an incredible tool for building comradery and reinforcing that we can provide and bless others more as we partner together. We are seeing these types of partnerships occurring across denominational, religious, and community lines as a way to increase support for the greater cause. Finding resources for clergy is no different. As districts become increasingly aware and focused on assisting in the cultivation of pastoral well-being, there will inevitably be a cross-pollination of ideas, resources, and innovative opportunities to help clergy within a district, region, and even throughout the Nazarene denomination of North America and possibly beyond.

The model outlined here was developed to implement on Nazarene districts within North America; there are three phases to be implemented based upon the needs of clergy individually. The goal is that these recommendations could be tailored more specifically to regions and ideally

¹⁶¹ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 9.

to individual districts. While these practices could be beneficial cross-culturally, we do not presume that what might work for pastors in North America would work for ministers in Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, etc. It is important to be culturally aware of the context in which ministry occurs, as you will see outlined in this chapter on recommendations. It would be impossible to create a standard approach for the 31,049 congregations, 18,641 ordained elders, 828 ordained deacons, 10,715 licensed ministers, 70 plus districts and 164 world areas that the Church of the Nazarene resides.¹⁶² Add to these numbers the complexity within the Nazarene denomination of ministers serving in a variety of roles such as full-time/part-time paid staff, volunteer staff, those who are in the course of study, retired ministers serving as pulpit supply and interim assignments, local licensed, district licensed, ordained elders, and ordained deacons. Ministry assignments range from traditional parish ministry to chaplaincy for hospice and military personnel, missionary, evangelist, educator, and student.

This dissertation broadens the definition of ministerial leadership to include more than just the lead pastor. If we embrace a strategic approach to developing new leaders within our congregations, districts, and denominations for future generations then we must also rethink the structural definition of clergy. As a denomination, we must acknowledge the reality that in many of our districts the focus has been primarily on the one who stands behind the pulpit on Sunday mornings. While we would not attempt to diminish or reduce the importance of supporting those who wear the title of Lead Pastor, we must also acknowledge the significance of those who wear the title of pastor and serve in crucial areas of spiritual discipleship to our children, adolescents, senior adults, community, or to those who have been marginalized and/or victimized in our society. As a district model that is focused on “all” clergy we must be aware of those who serve

¹⁶² Church of the Nazarene Statistical Report, “Statistics,” accessed May 12, 2021, <https://nazarene.org/our-impact/statistics>.

in our most crucial support roles within our district. This requires districts to reevaluate the voices they hear and determine if the correct leaders are sitting at the decision making table. It is recommended that any implementation of the following phases be done with the intention to make these resources available to all clergy in the district regardless of their title or role code.

The following strategies and phases are designed to empower districts and local congregation to see the importance and value of the emotional and mental health of their spiritual leaders. These phases of a district implementation model are intended as a proactive measure to prevent symptoms and risk factors of emotional and/or mental challenges from occurring. In the case where these symptoms have occurred, this approach should be used to alleviate or reduce symptoms associated with burnout and create a new trajectory of cultivating well-being and wholeness. The following resources should also be incorporated through a lens of adaptability rather than a set of strict rules. While we see a distinct benefit for all of the following suggestions it is understandable that we cannot have a one-size fits all approach to ministerial leadership in the 21st century. One thing that has become abundantly clear in recent years is the need to rethink our implementation of mental models and leadership approach.

Many in pastoral roles have found their formative learning years to be primarily focused on the need to gather and obtain information without embracing the importance of contextual intelligence. This has caused many in ministry to feel that their training was insufficient for addressing the challenges congregations are facing in the 21st century. This implementation model should not be viewed as a quick fix where districts can simply check enough of the boxes to transform the DNA of a district or specific congregation. Instead, wholeness and well-being require the long view, understanding that creating a culture of holistic health is done through intentionality and perseverance. Through perseverance and the willingness to engage in new

adaptive ways toward pastoral care, clergy are able to embrace living lives of wholeness absent of symptoms of burnout. Districts should feel empowered to utilize their contextual awareness of their districts to implement the steps that would translate into greater well-being and positive mental and emotional health for their clergy. Phases I and II are intended to be measures that can be developed and utilized as proactive measures. However, Phase III will often be in response to those in ministerial leadership who experience symptoms of burnout, which includes anxiety and depression.

Phase I (Preventative)

The steps in Phase 1 should be implemented as proactive measures to the life and health of a minister and their family.

In-take/Out-take interview:

Develop an interview process for all ministers transferring onto a district and those transferring off of a district. These interviews should include spouses and children, if possible. The interviews would be designed to identify those areas and experiences that have been helpful to a minister and their families in the past and what are expectations moving forward. This could be created as a typical part of the onboarding process for a district. These would be beneficial to have completed not just with lead pastors but also for all staff assignments. Exit interviews would also be recommended as a way to review and receive feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of a district more clearly. This would provide opportunity to examine how a district could continually improve their support for pastors as well as opportunities to make corrections along the process of a pastor's tenure. It would also provide opportunity for ministers and their families to provide insight into the "wins" and "losses" that they experienced and how a district could intervene at key points in the minister's life and the life of their ministry. Districts

providing confidential interviews and assessments could better learn how they contribute positively or negatively toward feelings of anxiety and depression. These interviews should not be intended to circumvent or replace any onboarding or offboarding processes of a local congregation. The district will need to be clear that this engagement with local ministers is not intended to function like a Human Resources department. Rather, it is an opportunity for current ministers to help those who will follow and to help the Nazarene denomination become more clearly aware of how they can assist and care for their clergy.

These interviews should not reflect or reinforce any hierarchal structure, so District Superintendents should not be the ones conducting the interviews. It is important for this process to model for local congregations the importance of having open dialogue between districts and their minister. Additionally, it reinforces that caring for the health of clergy is not something that can or should be left to only a local congregation or district, but is a collaborative endeavor to see our churches and leaders succeed and thrive. By modeling this type of internal reflection and awareness of our own system we can create policies and procedures for local congregations to ensure that they are also receiving the most accurate feedback from those who are serving in pastoral roles. Making sure that all licensed ministers engage in this process allows for empathy and concern for the opinions and reflections that ministers have to offer regardless of their role.

Assessments:

As a district looks to future generations to carry on the mantle of positive well-being, we must also pull from the experience and wisdom of those who have gone before us. Additionally, we can rely upon those who are skilled in the field of personality and behavioral assessments that utilize science and research to help ministers and their staff carry out their calling and giftings more effectively. One of the ways in which a district can do this is by incorporating assessment

tools into the ministerial development of clergy. These tools not only assist the pastor in better understanding themselves but also those they serve, and effectively show the district's value of pastors as they invest in their personal and professional development. Additionally, these assessments will provide districts with the ability to set benchmarks and gauge their effectiveness as they train and support clergy over time. When possible, these assessments should be conducted by a trained clinician or certified test administrator as they conduct, process, and find meaning from the results. Some of the most commonly used assessments for clergy include StrengthsFinder, EQ, Myers Briggs, Enneagram, and APEST.

Annual Retreats and Resource Training

Pastor and Spouse Retreats:

It is crucial that along with the various roles and responsibilities that spouses must carry that there be opportunities for ministers who are married to have opportunities where they can get away and spend time together to reset. As reflected in Revelations 3:2 “Wake up, and strengthen what remains.”¹⁶³ This includes strengthening marriages and families so that they can be healthy in the midst of struggles and challenges that impact pastors, spouses and the entire family. These retreats are an opportunity for not only the district to encourage attendance of these events but also local congregational leadership. One of the ways to encourage this partnership between the local leadership and district to support their pastors and their spouses is for district leadership to write a letter to all church boards requesting that they cover any cost associated with the retreat to lessen the burden on a minister and their own finances. It's one thing for a congregation to say that they care about their pastor's relational health with their spouse, and it's another to make those opportunities possible. Developing a mindset on the part of leadership within the local body reinforces the concern for their spiritual leaders, and also is a

¹⁶³ Revelation 3:2 (*New International Version*).

tangible act to show love and compassion. Many clergy find that when they are most in need of time to foster their relationship with their spouse they are unable to get away because of finances, lack of childcare options, and/or church responsibilities. Pastoral renewals and times of pastor appreciation are a prime opportunity for the district to stress the importance of these types of events and when possible, encourage that congregations help support these opportunities.

Area Pastors Meeting:

Similarly, to a congregation or family, a district can become disconnected from their ministers if opportunities are not available to foster those relationships. Districts should constantly be examining their practices to see if they serve and contribute to the overall wholeness of a minister and their family. One of the ways in which this can be done is through making sure that a minister does not feel that they are alone on their journey. As discussed in this project, isolation can contribute to anxiety, depression, and overall feelings of burnout. Providing opportunities to gather and learn from one another is crucial for ministers to flourish emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and professionally. Area Pastors Meetings allow a district to evaluate how ministers and churches are doing, as well as create opportunities for feedback and discussion within the group of ministers that gather. These meetings are easily incorporated into the rhythm of a minister's life by the district and allow for districts to model investment in a pastor's ministry, as well as establish these gatherings as crucial to the DNA of a district. These gatherings give districts' the opportunity to support clergy through some of the various other responsibilities they must address, such as administrative tasks and requirements placed by the denomination. For example, using a portion of these gatherings to focus on topics of financial stewardship, insurance, reporting, state and federal requirements, and denominational change

updates reduces the stress and anxiety that comes with these requirements and enables a sense of solidarity knowing that we are all dealing with similar situations and are on the journey together.

If a district observes that there are unique but shared needs among ministers during these times they could create regional groups of clergy with the district who could collaborate and encourage one another between gatherings. These area meetings also provide regularly scheduled opportunities for clergy to hear the vision and direction of a district and how God is uniquely working through local congregations to provide an overall narrative and story of the district. It is the coming together of every local church that creates the overall narrative of the church. The “district” does not process an identity separate from the churches that it represents; when a minister or church speaks of the district, they speak of themselves and their role as an active member of the district family.

Cohorts for lead pastors, staff, by church size, bi-vocational, and minority-led congregations:

One of the ways in which districts can make an impact on the life of a minister is through providing resources that are unique and personal to the context of that minister, such as gathering with others who have commonalities in their ministries (i.e. size, demographics, culture, and geographic location). Lead pastors that oversee ministries that employ multiple staff may have very different challenges than a congregation that is led by 1 minister or a minister that is bi-vocational. The size of a congregation and the number of staff truly influences the dynamics and structures that are in place and the roles by which lead pastors see themselves: boss, supervisor, evaluator, etc. For those congregations led by one minister they will experience very different challenges and feelings of stress and anxiety than someone who is overseeing multiple staff, locations, and ministries. It is important that perceptions and generalizations do not dictate the needs of these various groups. While there are opportunities for all ministers on a district to

come together, it is important to incorporate contextual awareness as a vital component in providing the most helpful support and resource to clergy.

Lead Pastor Cohort:

There are numerous stressors and anxiety provoking situations for ministers leading congregations in the 21st century. As loving as a congregation may be, many congregants will not fully grasp the challenging situations that clergy face on a daily basis. One way to increase well-being and positive mental and emotional health for clergy is providing opportunities for pastors to share with colleagues who are walking through similar situations. These opportunities create zero budgetary cost for districts and lead pastors can counteract feelings of isolation and loneliness with comradery, encouragement, and awareness that they are not alone. These gatherings also allow engagement with district leadership and collaborative partnerships across the district. These conversations, with topics ranging from leading staff to emotional pressures of leading a congregation in the current culture, allow places for authentic struggles to be shared. In these situations, districts would be well served to remove barriers that reinforce denominational structure and topics that highlight the need for anyone to be the “expert”.

C-Church Cohort:

This cohort is comprised of ministers who are serving congregations with 100 or less regular attendees. While there may be some assumptions about the issues that smaller congregations experience, these perceptions need to be reflected through the individual experience of a congregation and not transmitted through generalizations and outside perceptions. The life of a smaller congregation is powerful and meaningful not only to the community for which it serves but current and future leaders that are being raised for the upcoming generation. Each pastor of a small congregation needs to be aware that their church is

an importance cell to the overall church system; smaller congregations represent the vast majority of churches in North America. As we have a clearer understanding of the challenges that these smaller congregations of 100 congregants or less face, we will have a more accurate pulse of what is occurring in the life of the church overall. Coming alongside clergy navigating the tumultuous waters of culture, society, and heritage will not only provide increased support for local clergy members but also enable districts within the Nazarene denomination to recalibrate and gauge missional effectiveness.

Staff Pastor Cohort:

Many staff pastors report that they feel invisible to their district, this is a great travesty as many of our upcoming leaders for our districts and denomination will come from these ranks. Many of these individuals are shifting their view of their current role from less of a journey to the ultimate designation of lead pastor, to embracing their giftings and graces for the ministry with which they are being entrusted. These gatherings are perfect for districts to empower and breathe life into staff pastors as they embrace their “calling” and where God has placed them. If districts can nurture these relationships and reinforce the importance of faithfulness and spiritual maturity over titles and positions, there will be fruit and growth from new leaders across districts. While there are certainly congregations that are centered on the lead pastor to enact church programming and vision, this approach does not appear to be the most resilient or sustainable, nor does it appear to be in the best interest of the pastor or the congregation when we think about emotional and mental health. The objective of the minister should be to create an environment that is not dependent upon the spiritual leader; it is neither realistic nor healthy to think that the pastor can be all things to all people. If congregations desire to resemble the body

of Christ, then it is scripturally sound to prepare the church to withstand the change of leadership that will come in time.

Bi-vocational Pastor Cohort:

As ministerial leadership in the 21st century adapts to the changing dynamics of our society, so does the way we look at clergy and their ability to maintain full-time employment in a congregation. Whether a minister sees themselves as bi-vocational or not, the changing landscape in pastoral ministry requires more and more ministers to work a secular job in addition to their responsibilities as a member of the clergy. There have always been bi-vocational ministers since the time of the original 12 disciples, and many in today's culture are being required to make that decision. However, this is not really optional, but rather necessary for ministers and their families to survive financially. Complicating the emotions surrounding full-time ministry, bi-vocational pastors experience an additional level of anxiety and pressure with added responsibilities and less time with family and friends. It would be wise for districts to monitor the ongoing self-care and family support of their bi-vocational ministers. It would also be helpful to create roundtables for bi-vocational pastors to discuss their unique challenges and opportunities. These discussions could include myths and perceptions of ministry objectives and demands of bi-vocational ministers vs non-bi-vocational pastors.

Multiracial Pastor Cohort:

Bringing together clergy from ethnically diverse congregations can be helpful to address unique ministry challenges and opportunities associated with vision, mission, outreach, and congregational life. However, there should be mindfulness and a careful navigation of the assumptions we make consciously and unconsciously regarding language, food, traditions,

worship, congregational life, social and cultural preferences, and the importance placed on a wide range of issues from religious traditions to family and congregational values. In addition, we should consider the importance of understanding the different aspects of stress experienced by congregations who are comprised of significant numbers of immigrant and/or undocumented congregants, as well as the blending together of 1st and 2nd generation American congregants worshiping together. Also, like any other congregation, there are challenges associated with preferences in styles of worship, language, and traditional practices.

Specific to each district are the congregations and the ministers who lead those congregations. For those districts who are blessed with diversity in ministerial leadership it would be imperative that there not be a grouping or singling out of one race or ethnicity but efforts to blend and create environments that reflect the diversity of the district. While there are reasons to create pastors' groups Haitian, Latino, Asian, African, etc, it is vital to ensure that ethnic specific groups not be seen as "other" but rather as part of the district family. These diverse groups are key to identifying needs and concerns to the district that may not be apparent to those of us who make up the majority people group.

Pastor's Kids Retreat:

If we include the entire family when we look at the holistic health of a minister, we can see a great need to minister to the families and specifically the children of clergy. Stress at home can create unhealthy behaviors and challenges in the church, and stress at church can have negative influences on the home. One of the most effective ways to show support and encourage positive well-being is by caring for a pastor's loved ones. Annual retreats are proven to reduce symptoms associated with burnout and are a great opportunity to use those within the district who were raised in the home of a minister, as mentors and facilitators of the retreat. Some of the

adults may also be pastors or married to a pastor themselves. Through these collaborative efforts, we can show true compassion and empathy, and ensure the church does not constantly take the best of parents and give the kids the leftovers. Rather, the district is a body of believers that are as concerned about the pastor's child as they are congregants seeking a safe place to discover their faith.

Mentorship and connection with new ministerial leaders:

Regardless of the age, experience, or current ministry assignment, there is a need for mentorship to be given and received, and for connections to be nurtured. One consistency of effective ministry is the ability of a leader to be a life-long learner, and this can occur while nurturing emotional health through shared experiences. It is not realistic to think that mentorship and connection is something that a district can force, but it is something that a district can facilitate through larger connections beyond the local church. This is one of the opportunities identified in Phase I where districts can step in and support ministers within their ministry context. When ministers transfer onto any district they will bring with them their expectations and assumptions from previous ministry assignments, as well as positive and negative views of district leadership based on their past experience. Therefore, it should be stressed that mentorship and/or accountability relationships should be organic in nature and easily accessible without feeling forced or coerced. To facilitate these opportunities, district leadership can develop leaders within the district serving in various roles who are gifted at identifying and reaching out to new and developing clergy on the district.

Dr. Matt Bloom has done extensive research on the topic of pastoral mentorship and has found that identifying as a pastor is part of a spiritual formation process, which requires practicing the skills of pastoral ministry for a period. Dr. Bloom has found that this acceptance of

identity as pastor typically takes 5-10 years for a positive pastoral identity to form. Pulling together a positive sense of a true self along with a calling that has so much ambiguity takes time and mentorship. Seeking help when it's needed, utilizing resources that are available, and mentorship are all steps to developing a positive identity and pastoral well-being.¹⁶⁴ The study also indicated that those in the pastorate who were able to foster well-being and flourish also had relationship with other clergy outside their own context. Not only were these relationships found to be a place where authentic relationships could occur but helped break the feelings of isolation that many pastors face. In addition, Dr. Bloom found that increased well-being resulted in having relationships outside their local congregation that allowed the pastor to be “real” and not be viewed only as someone’s pastor. The ability to create wellness is based upon authenticity and congruency between our public and private persona.¹⁶⁵

Developing Connectors

It is important to have clergy who have a pulse on what is taking place in the district with colleagues, as well as knowledge of the concerns and challenges that clergy are facing. Whether a district is comprised of 30 churches or 120 churches, the challenges that ministers face are often similar or the same. Regardless of your role within the ministry context, there are times when clergy and their families will not feel comfortable sharing their concerns or challenges with district leadership. Similar to the various hats worn by pastors, district superintendents wear multiple hats, which can create barriers to pastors feeling comfortable approaching them with personal challenges. Having connectors within a district can help engage and resource ministers prior to issues becoming overwhelming or insurmountable. These connectors also know the history of the district and can help connect clergy facing challenges. Providing opportunities for

¹⁶⁴ Daniels, “Flourishing In Ministry,” <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

¹⁶⁵ Daniels, “Flourishing In Ministry,” <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

active engagement helps enable purposeful connection and relatability. While these types of connections can occur organically, often those who are in the most need find it particularly challenging to reach out. This approach results in helping those ministers who are less likely to take the initiative to reach out.

Creating a contextual roadmap:

Districts are not only able to help a congregation through a pastoral transition, but they can assist in developing a roadmap for a new pastor as they learn a congregation and establish themselves as participants in the life of the congregation and its community. This is done in part by pastors being willing to integrate themselves within the congregation to become a part of the story of the church. The life of a congregation is not limited to a particular individual but is a culmination of the collective voice sharing the transforming power of Christ. Through this contextual roadmap ministers, ministry teams, and leadership boards can learn about themselves, who they desire to become, and the congregations they serve.

Course of Study/Continued Education:

Continuing Education could be done within a district or in collaboration with another district or region. The goal is to provide individuals seeking ordination through the Church of the Nazarene a means for quality, reasonably priced courses that provide flexibility and language specific instruction. Understandably, all districts will not have the ability to provide direct course of study classes for those preparing for ministerial leadership. However, with the increase of clergy who are entering ministry as a second or third career, providing avenues to meet their educational requirements while serving in a local congregation or workplace is essential. This requires districts thinking beyond the traditional educational structures of higher education. While Nazarene universities and seminaries are a crucial part of our educational process, and we

encourage those who are able to experience the benefit of this type of formation, these structures are unable to meet all clergy's current needs. Some of the reasons all districts cannot fulfill this include location, cost, flexibility, family, and ministers who will need education that is adaptive to their changing landscape of ministry. Districts can help share some of these challenges and burdens by developing ministerial courses within the district and throughout their region that are robust and meet the educational requirements set by the denomination. Districts can partner with other districts to ensure that approved instructors have expertise in a particular area and at the same time build lasting relationships through mentorship and accountability. One of the advantages of today's climate is that districts are becoming increasingly proficient with their use of technology. This proficiency is making some of the recommendations for collaborative partnerships across regions possible and creating more options and flexibility for ministers, especially those who are bi-vocational.

Phase II. (Preventative)

Receive quarterly pulpit supply:

Quarterly respite (4 weeks a year) provides ministers, particularly those who serve in smaller congregations and/or without pastoral staff, a chance for pulpit rotation as a time to retreat, rest, reset, and address the various other demands of their ministry. This recommendation is helpful for the minister of a particular congregation and is a wonderful opportunity to train and develop other pastors (often those who have district or local licenses from larger congregation on the district) in preaching and teaching. It is challenging for pastors of smaller congregations to provide opportunity for their congregations to hear from other voices due to limited resources. And staff pastors of larger congregations do not always find many opportunities to gain preaching experience on a regular basis. This can also provide an opportunity to staff pastors

who are elders within the denomination to preach and minister in new environments that they might be less exposed to on a regular basis. Additionally, this approach conveys the district's care for the seasoned leader, and is an intentional investment in future ministers as they learn to communicate and exegete in a more unfamiliar context.

For districts that have a limited number of individuals for pulpit supply the wisdom and support of retired elders within the district is a great resource. This is so valuable as many retirees would cherish continuing to minister periodically, as well as the benefit of receiving additional funds for those who may be living on a fixed income. By districts reframing their mission as “family” they can address the mental and emotional health of isolated ministers and create partnerships among congregations as they think through missional and kingdom effectiveness. These concepts could be discussed at Area Pastors Meetings as a way to create buy-in and motivation from all clergy. Strategically, this approach will not only pay-off with ministers of smaller congregations but larger churches that are invested in supporting their colleagues, building up future leaders, and becoming a model to their local congregations of the need to come alongside and care for others as a collective voice of the church.

Cross-cultural exposure to preaching, and community engagement:

As we work to foster the health of ministers, we must be mindful that one of the reasons clergy experience anxiety and depression is because many have to create a roadmap to ministry as they go. It is true that effective ministry is not done with a standard approach, but there are specific common skills and life experiences that can assist in navigating some of the challenges of ministry. The world, and specifically North America, is changing at warp speed and that has a direct impact on the way that we engage our communities and those who walk through the doors of the church. It should no longer be assumed that living in rural or urban America translates into

the stereotypes of ministry that many have been exposed to through their formational ministry training or education.

It would serve districts well to expose their clergy and those working through the ordination process to environments outside their typical setting. We can no longer rely on a simplistic perception of where congregants stand politically, economically, culturally, sexually, spiritually, or developmentally. The simple divides between small vs. large congregations, urban vs. rural, rich vs. poor, black vs. white, saved vs. unsaved, heterosexual vs. homosexual are not so distinct as the rules for engaging and exegeting our communities to go deeper than our snap judgments or our preconceived notions. These situations create enormous stress and concern for those standing in the pulpits of our churches each Sunday and lead to anxiety and stress that can translate into feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy. It is the beginning of burnout and the contributing factors that lead many of our clergy to leave the ministry all together.

Through exposure to numerous other ministry contexts and collaborative efforts with ministry leaders throughout the district, pastors can begin to see their own settings with “fresh eyes”. Providing opportunities for pastors to experience a different context through preaching, partnerships, and community engagement will help them bring down their own anxiety about the changing cultural landscape. Districts can have a direct impact by creating learning opportunities surrounding multi-cultural experiences, as well as exposing leaders to many of the geographic changes occurring with ex-urban pockets of congregations throughout the country. These changes in many of our Nazarene congregations can be embraced as pastors become increasingly aware of their own emotions surrounding these changes. As we step into what it means for districts and local congregations to model kingdom living, we can counteract anxiety and trepidation with calmness and assurance.

Mental Health Counseling Services:

As with any counseling service, confidentiality is required for a client (pastor) to feel free to address the challenges that they or their families may be experiencing. It is important to understand that counseling services should be available for ministers who are in the midst of struggles, but providing these services to clergy is most helpful when done through proactive measures. Similar to vehicle maintenance, preventative and regular maintenance is not only less expensive, but prevents larger, more destructive issues from occurring in the future. Districts that provide opportunities for their clergy and family to seek outside mental health services without requiring their local church insurance or district approval will create safety and security for ministers and their families. This can be accomplished with districts creating a retainer with a cap of 6-8 sessions where local counselors and therapists throughout the district are resourced. These therapist and counselors must be clinically licensed and have received special training or certifications in key areas such as addictions (drug abuse, food, sex, pornography, alcohol), self-medicating, extra-marital affairs (emotional and/or physical), marriages, parenting, blended families, mental and emotional issues, career planning, financial stressors, conflict management etc. It is critical that pastors and their families have direct access to contact these mental health professionals personally. This means that all billing and information would be confidential without the awareness of specifics by district superintendents or district staff. It would be helpful for districts to have an individual that can assist with this process. This individual would not need to be trained in counseling; they are simply there to assist in the process of finding various referrals and community resources. It might also be that a trusted individual from the district

could serve as a short-term crisis contact for anyone seeking services until counseling sessions are obtained.

Sabbaticals:

Districts should initiate discussions with local congregations, leadership boards, and during times of pastoral transition, of ministers taking sabbaticals. These conversations can be reiterated during times of pastoral gatherings and district assemblies where we highlight the importance of clergy finding opportunities to discern and focus on spiritual formation rather than the day-to-day duties of pastoral ministry. The length and accountability of what is expected for times of sabbaticals can be a shared decision between church boards and the minister, while districts can reiterate the need of sabbaticals for their ministers. Since a congregation can only be as healthy as its leader, it is reasonable that congregational leadership would expect and help facilitate sabbaticals designed to encourage rest and strengthening a pastor's emotional, mental, relational, spiritual, and physical well-being.

Financial Education:

In addition to the numerous hats that a minister must wear, many congregants and even the denomination expect good stewardship of church and personal finances. These expectations and assumptions can set clergy up for resentment and frustration if they are asked to model and preach about skills that they may not possess. Additionally, it can be a challenge for clergy who may be struggling as a result of poor financial management of the church prior and/or during their own time. This topic certainly is multi-faceted and districts cannot be expected to solve these challenges. However, districts can create opportunities to help clergy navigate these rough waters. By utilizing experts in the financial field along with systems created through the Nazarene denomination, districts can create conversations and education to help pastors in their

current financial situations and in planning for the future. It is understandably challenging for many clergy who have given of their own time and resources to find themselves anxious and depressed about their personal and church finances. Financial management is a huge contributor to pastoral burnout and if not addressed at a district and local level will prove to be an emotional cancer to clergy.

Home Ownership:

Home ownership often elicits images of the American dream, creating a better life, and financial and emotional security, and this certainly contributes to overall mental and emotional health. Historically, many clergy lived in parsonage homes next to the church. This allowed young families and those coming back to North America from the mission field an opportunity to get settled prior to taking on additional debt, and afforded ministers the opportunity to accept ministry roles that paid minimally. The downside for ministers living in parsonages long-term was two-fold: it created challenges when it came to setting boundaries and separation between church and family life, and it left many retiring ministers without homes or equity. Therefore, when possible, districts are encouraged to create a special fund for ministers on the district. Upon moving onto a district, or finding themselves in places where they can purchase a home, ministers are able to apply for a 0% interest down payment loan. District Advisory Boards (DAB) should implement a process that establishes loan amounts and duration for borrowers, and the district will provide the down payment loans. An example might be that these loans would be paid back at a rate of \$250 a quarter over ten years. This is simply another tangible way for districts to show their concern and love for pastors and their families.

Phase III.

Crisis Counseling:

While districts should strongly consider providing counseling services as a preventative measure for clergy's well-being and positive mental health, there should also be opportunities for ministers to receive crisis counseling services. As indicated, mental health services can take weeks and even months to attain. Having a therapist or services available to provide crisis interventions is key to preventing challenging situations from becoming more critical. Districts are encouraged to reach out to local congregations to see if any licensed mental health professionals are a part of their congregations. It would not be recommended for a congregant to provide counseling services to their own pastor or family. However, church members are often willing to see a minister or family from another congregation, especially during crisis situations. This provides an immediate resource when these situations arise and builds connection with the larger district through the shared desire to encourage and provide support to those in need.

Clinical Treatment:

In addition to having counseling services available for clergy and their families it is important that follow-up services also be available for those needing higher levels of care. Having treatment plans in place for those who are self-medicating with substances or addictive behaviors, or have family members dealing with clinical issues that require in-patient services, provides tangible relief and reiterates the value that districts place on their ministers. Most districts cannot provide these services at "fee for service" costs. But, having an advocate that assists in pulling together resources and walking a pastor and their family through the process will be key. This creates family systems that are supportive and encouraging, not only for the individual family but the larger district family.

Confidential Ministry Accountability Partnership:

We all benefit from accountability, yet most agree that accountability needs to be initiated by the one needing to be held accountable. This is an approach that will need to be addressed individually and with sensitivity. With that said, there certainly are opportunities for the district to emphasize the importance of having accountability and modeling this type of discipline. Ideally, districts would look at some of the most significant challenges that pastors have struggled with in recent years and identify those ministers within the district who could provide sage advice. This might be done over coffee, a Zoom call, email, or periodic in-person meetings. What is important here is not the approach but that ministers find support, encouragement, and strength from meeting with trusted individuals and have the opportunity to engage in relationships that foster health and wellness.

Therapeutic Approach for Anxiety

Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST) is an invaluable resource for clergy to help identify and reduce patterns of anxiety for themselves and their congregations. Some of the key aspects of this theory include chronic/acute anxiety, family emotional cutoff, family emotional and projection process, sibling position, societal emotional process, fusion, multi-generational emotional process, self-differentiation, and emotional triangles. Similar to scripture, BFST can be applied to us both individually and collectively as an organization or congregation. This theory assists in creating not just insight into patterns of behaviors but provides tools and a roadmap to create lasting change. We also know that pastors who report chronic anxiety do not keep that in isolation, but rather those emotions spill over onto those they serve. Regardless of the cause, establishing movement toward greater self-differentiation will not only increase self-awareness but understanding of how one's anxiety directly influences others.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ "Robert R. Creech," Bowen Family Systems Theory, Google, last modified March 12th 2021, <https://www.familyandcommunityministries.org>.

What makes BFST so compatible with ministerial leaders is that it provides support when it comes to navigating the anxiety that our culture is experiencing in social change. Like clinicians who must be mindful to regulate their own behaviors, ministers must also be aware of how they interpret and express internal and external anxiety (transference and countertransference) within the life of their family and the church. BFST provides ministers the opportunity to view their approach to the challenges they face through an integrative lens when it comes to areas of sabotage, triangulation, enmeshment, finances, and isolation. The awareness of anxious influences from within and without a system is critical for ministers to understand and be mindful of as they experience transference from the congregational structure. Those who incorporate BFST into their pastoral ministries, and integrate the following techniques to address conflicts in a healthy way, provide lasting change for the congregation that is applicable and concrete.¹⁶⁷

Rather than viewing anxiety-induced conflicts as an opportunity for change, many churches default to unhealthy patterns of avoidance, and minimalization rather than addressing the challenges through proven strategies that create atmospheres of trust to grow a community of believers.¹⁶⁸ BFST addresses the topic of anxiety by looking for resolution through communicating techniques beyond the immediate challenge or conflict. Rather than the primary focus being on the “identified problem” or “identified person” at hand, the objective of BFST is to create systems where healthier patterns and system differentiation can occur in the future.

Self-Differentiation:

¹⁶⁷ “Robert R. Creech,” Bowen Family Systems Theory, Google, last modified March 12th 2021, <https://www.familyandcommunityministries.org>.

¹⁶⁸ Son, “Anxiety as a Main Cause of Church Conflicts Based on Bowen Family Systems Theory,” 9-18.

Self-differentiation is a term created through the family systems work of Murray Bowen. Self-differentiation is the ability to not be controlled by another's emotions and remain true to one's values and beliefs. Self-differentiation requires that responsibility and ownership is taken when it comes to our own goals and values, even while there are surrounding pressures. Self-differentiation helps us in our response to others as to not allow anxiety to guide our actions through blaming others. Rather, in modeling self-differentiation we are able to honor others and their opinions and values without impacting our decisions and actions.

As pastors we are called to care for others without over-functioning. It is caring for others without being defined by them that will enable us to reduce anxiety over not having all the answers. A "non-anxious presence" means that we are connected emotionally with others without it overriding our own sense of self. In contrast, an "anxious presence" is someone who cares so much that they are unable to see themselves separate from others or the situation at hand. At times these individuals will take on characteristics of enmeshment and over-function.

BFST asserts that we all operate on the continuum of self-differentiation. We cannot be completely differentiated; rather it is the process we work towards in knowing our self-identity. Self-differentiation is the key to leadership in any family, or organization. Edwin Friedman believed that if a leader takes primary responsibility for his/her own actions connected to the organization, there is a high likelihood that the organization will follow. The significance of self-differentiation for pastors is that it is about controlling their own response and view of the situation, rather than a technique to control others. The goal for pastors who are self-differentiated is to maintain relational connection while having empathy and understanding. Pastoral leadership that does not maintain relational connection is not self-differentiated, it's just

disconnected. Our congregations look to leaders who are non-anxious during times of great stress.

Low Differentiated:

These individuals or organizations are led by an emotional reaction. Their cognitive functioning is controlled by emotion, which limits their ability to interact with others and their ability to act or not react. These individuals or organizations tend to respond to anxiety with stress and other dysfunctional patterns, find it more challenging to be adaptable, and usually rely heavily on the emotional state of others.¹⁶⁹ They often find themselves conforming to outward pressures and expectations of others. Clergy who are low differentiated are often unable to provide clear vision and direction to their congregations. It is not uncommon that individuals or organizations which are classified as low-differentiated experience chronic anxiety symptoms.

High Differentiated: (Solid Self)

In contrast, these individuals or organizations are able to hold to their beliefs, values, and convictions regardless of outward pressure by others. They are able to exhibit intellectual functioning, are more flexible and adaptive in response to the emotions around them, and function within a core set of principles that help direct their processes.¹⁷⁰ In addition, they accept responsibility for their actions and decisions. While no one is able to completely differentiate themselves, the desire is that increased emotional, mental, and spiritual health will allow greater growth on the continuum toward higher differentiation.

Additional Therapeutic Methods for Anxiety

¹⁶⁹ Leander S. Harding, "The Atonement and Family Therapy," *The Anglican Theological Review* 67, no. 1 (1985): 46-57.

¹⁷⁰ Harding, "The Atonement and Family Therapy," 46-57.

In addition to BFST there are multidisciplinary methods which have been found to be effective in addressing anxiety and overall burnout for ministers as they balance work, life, and family. Anxiety disorders are most frequently treated through psychotherapy, medication, or an integrative combination of the two. It is important to note that psychotherapy is most helpful when it is tailored to the specific anxiety and the desired outcome. Three of the most well-known and researched approaches are Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Exposure Therapy, and support groups.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

CBT focuses on the behaviors and processing that takes place when individuals experience anxiety, and their reactions to those fears. The objective of CBT is to identify, confront, and minimize or eliminate those thoughts that create anxiety.¹⁷¹

Exposure Therapy

Exposure Therapy is also incorporated into psychotherapy and has been heavily used with chronic anxiety and those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This method is designed to combat the anxiety and fear through direct exposure to the anxiety they are experiencing and trying to avoid. Depending on the anxiety, imagery is often used as a first step.¹⁷² For example, a pastor having anxiety over confrontation with church leadership or people in the church would be asked to “role play” prior and then be encouraged to address those fears head-on. If appropriate, a therapist would have the pastor provide a “best” and “worst” case scenario and attend the interaction with the pastor. The idea behind this approach is that things

¹⁷¹ “National Institute of Mental Health,” Anxiety, Google, last modified June 25th 2021, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>.

¹⁷² “National Institute of Mental Health,” Anxiety, Google, last modified June 25th 2021, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>.

are rarely as bad as imagined, and enlightening the pastor that anxiety over future confrontations and catastrophized thinking may be distorted. Exposure therapy is also very effective for social anxiety and phobias.

Support Groups: (12-step psychotherapy groups)

Any given week, 15 million individuals will attend 1 of over half a million support group meetings taking place.¹⁷³ These are often encouraged as an additional support for those attending individual therapy and/or using medication because they are highly effective. Groups provide a confidential, supportive, and encouraging environment where anxiety and depression can be processed, confronted, and action plans developed. These groups also provide opportunities to address additional co-occurring mental and emotional health challenges.

Medication:

Medication is a critical component in treating anxiety and should be coupled with therapy. The most common prescriptions for clinical anxiety are anti-anxiety medications, antidepressants, and beta-blockers. Anti-anxiety medications are designed to relieve more generalized anxiety such as panic attacks, fear, and worry. Often these medications are referred to as benzodiazepines and are initially prescribed by physicians as a first step. Antidepressants, while primarily used for depression, have been used to alter chemical brain imbalance for anxiety. Often Family of Origin history is helpful to identify the most helpful medication. Like other types of medications, consideration should first be through consultation with a physician as unmonitored use can create increased anxiety, significant withdrawals, and side effects.¹⁷⁴ Beta-blockers were initially created for high blood pressure but have been found to be helpful in

¹⁷³ Sweet, *Rings of Fire*, audio book chapter 10.

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“National Institute of Mental Health,” Anxiety, Google, last modified June 25th 2021, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>.

addressing acute anxiety symptoms. Often used for short-term results, physical reactions to anxiety such as shaking, increased heart rate, and trembling can be reduced.¹⁷⁵

Some common coping strategies include prayer, self-empathy, educational development and training on self-awareness and emotional intelligence, and increased self-differentiation.¹⁷⁶ A technique to reduce anxiety includes the ability to normalize our emotions, “I am not alone. I am not crazy!” Identifying how anxiety manifests physiologically can help ministers have greater awareness of their bodies and reinforce the importance of healthy eating, exercise, and rest. All three areas are shown to be in deficit for many clergy. A congregation can also help their pastor reduce stress and anxiety by encouraging them to share and talk about their call to ministry. The call to ministry is part of an individual’s identity that can often be lost in the pressures and responsibilities of pastoral ministry. Additionally, the day-to-day tasks of pastoring can often be outside the gifting of a minister, which can cause them to feel worn down and depleted. Helping to remind pastors of their call can be reinvigorating and life-giving.

We must work to reduce anxiety so we can let go of the person that we believe others think we should be and demonstrate the profound freedom of the gospel for others. We often remember God’s grace and deliverance in the past, but forget the power of God in the present, which brings anxiety and fear (spiritual amnesia). At times, we allow the power of anxiety and fear to outweigh the power of God in our lives. Paul, in the book of Philippians, stresses the importance of having peace in the midst of the storm, even prior to God providing

¹⁷⁵ “National Institute of Mental Health,” Anxiety, Google, last modified June 25th 2021, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>.

¹⁷⁶ Scott Dunbar et al., “Calling, Caring, and Connecting: Burnout in Christian Ministry,” *Mental Health, Religion, & Culture* 23 no. 2 (2020):173-186.

resolution. Our anxiety and identity are directly related to each other because we tend to feel anxiety so deeply it becomes a part of who we are and how we see ourselves.¹⁷⁷

To reduce anxiety and overall burnout in the life of pastors and ultimately in the life of our congregations, we should embrace both therapeutic and spiritual approaches that provide an integrative roadmap to assist in creating greater well-being. Incorporating Bowen Family Systems Theory, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Exposure Therapy with support groups and medication, we are able to reduce anxiety in the life of a minister and positively impact their family and the life of the church. We see an even greater outcome when an integrative approach includes spirituality by blending therapeutic intervention with prayer, self-empathy, educational development, self-awareness, emotional intelligence training, and increased self-differentiation. The information provided here demonstrates to church leaders, congregations, districts, and denominations the negative impacts that anxiety can have on the emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual life of their pastor. If we want to foster healthier environments for the pastor and church, we need to create opportunities for dialogue and support between pastor and congregation. Additionally, it is key that pastors grow in self-awareness of their own anxiety and lack of self-differentiation, and how it contributes to the higher likelihood of their own burnout.

Therapeutic Approach for Depression

Bowen Family Systems Theory:

BFST is significant in its work with clergy and congregations as it provided the first systems approach that integrated theology and psychology into applicable approaches for churches to understand the inter-dynamics of how they operated. Factors which make this

¹⁷⁷ Josh Weidemann, *The End of Anxiety: The Biblical Prescription for Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Panic* (Washington D.C.: Salem Books 2020), audio book chapter 1.

therapeutic approach so applicable to the work that ministers engage in include its accessibility, understandability, and compatibility with biblical and theological perspectives. BFST allows ministers to focus on themselves rather than the circumstances they are unable to control. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to reflect upon the challenges pastors face through a holistic lens without having to be an expert in inter-congregational dynamics or practical solutions to conflict, isolation, fear, loss and more.¹⁷⁸ Some of the key aspects of this theory include family emotional cutoff, family emotional and projection process, sibling position, societal emotional process, and multi-generational emotional process. We also know that pastors who report depression do not experience these feelings in isolation, but rather those emotions tend to spill over onto those they serve. Regardless of the cause, establishing movement toward greater self-differentiation will not only increase self-awareness but understanding of how one's symptoms of depression directly influence others.¹⁷⁹

BFST provides ministers the opportunity to view their approach to the challenges they face through an integrative lens when it comes to areas of emotional projection, emotional cut-off, societal process, multi-generational emotional process, fusion, and sibling positions. It is through addressing these areas of congregational life that pastors can lead thriving, flourishing, resilient churches ready to embrace their missional purpose. BFST addresses the topic of depression by giving depressed people new tools for coping with challenges more effectively. We live in a culture that seeks to avoid suffering; we resist the idea of growing pains at all costs. Yet it is through our struggles and suffering that we develop the skills to thrive and flourish

¹⁷⁸ "Robert R. Creech," Bowen Family Systems Theory, Google, last modified March 12th 2021, <https://www.familyandcommunityministries.org>.

¹⁷⁹ "Robert R. Creech," Bowen Family Systems Theory, Google, last modified March 12th 2021, <https://www.familyandcommunityministries.org>.

while becoming resilient.¹⁸⁰ It is our ability to walk through struggles with clinical depression that provides us the ability to develop resiliency to withstand the challenges we face in ministry and our personal lives.

Family Projection Process:

Having greater awareness of reactions and responses with others can assist pastors in developing their emotional, relational, and contextual understanding, thus reducing the likelihood of ongoing depressive symptoms. This approach through BFST allows clergy the opportunity to have greater understanding of not only their actions but the behaviors of others through the lens of their family of origin. Similar to parents and caregivers, ministers can easily serve in similar roles when it comes to individuals' spiritual lives. If clergy are unaware of their own spiritual journey and roles within a congregation, they can easily project their own desires, dreams, hurts and hang-ups on their spiritual family. Clergy can use their authority and power to manipulate their own emotions and mental health challenges onto the congregants, leading to co-dependency and spiritual abuse.¹⁸¹ For many clergy suffering from depression, their emotional state can feel much like an emotional rollercoaster for their congregants. Their emotional and mental instability can complicate a minister's effectiveness and cloud the picture of spirituality for their church. Allowing pastors, the ability to not only recognize but also internally process their emotions and connectiveness with their congregation can be beneficial to the overall health of the pastor.

Societal Process:

¹⁸⁰ Harding, "The Atonement and Family Therapy," 46-57.

¹⁸¹ "Robert R. Creech," Bowen Family Systems Theory, Google, last modified March 12th 2021, <https://www.familyandcommunityministries.org>.

Bowen Family Systems recognized that the interactions that took place within the family system also appeared within congregations and the society at large. Bowen believed that there was a cycle in which society regressed in their ability to deal with emotional reactivity in healthy ways, which could lead to symptoms of depression. Bowen anticipated that societal values through moral and ethical standards would deteriorate, and spill over into violence, lack of leadership, and core convictions and values. Many in ministerial leadership can attest to the shift in culture and society's expectations for the church. Not surprising, we have seen this deterioration also occur within the clergy as conviction, leadership, and moral and ethical standards have eroded.¹⁸² As clergy, we are not only confronted with the realization that societal regression has and is occurring, but that the church and the ministry profession are viewed less favorable as a result of this erosion. This brings added pressure and stress upon those who have answered God's call to ministry.

Multi-Generational Transmission Process:

Bowen believed that educating an individual on their family of origin could bring growth in areas of differentiation and emotional maturity. Also, through a greater awareness of previous generations we gain meaning and understanding of our own beliefs and values. This transmission and understanding of the emotional process makes us a conduit of change for emotional and mental health of future generations. To address depression, it is vital to understand the mental health challenges of previous generations and how they processed and adapted to those challenges. The transmission process is not limited to individuals but extends to congregations and organizations; so, for pastors navigating the complexity of systems within their churches,

¹⁸² "Robert R. Creech," Bowen Family Systems Theory, Google, last modified March 12th 2021, <https://www.familyandcommunityministries.org>.

BFST provides clarity and direction for not only the spiritual leaders but also congregations.¹⁸³ If ministers are willing to utilize this resource for their personal lives they will discover that creating greater meaning and understanding in areas such as depression will not only help educate them on patterns, beliefs and judgments about their own mental health, but those projected upon them through their family of origin. Once ministers are able to identify how they arrived at certain positions, they will be able to gain clarity and direction moving forward.

Sibling Positions:

Bowen took much of his theory regarding siblings and gender roles from Walter Toman. Bowen believed that the way we viewed and interacted with those of the same and opposite sex was directly tied to the relationships that we had with our siblings. Bowen also believed that this played into how we viewed and interpreted power and authority, which is a constant place within the role of a minister. This complexity of roles can create feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression. Bowen broke down sibling positions into ten categories along age and gender (oldest/youngest) (brother/sister) lines.¹⁸⁴ In addition, this explains the roles that ministers fill, and how they perceive and communicate needs and desires. When we are able to examine our family of origin, we can more clearly see how family dynamics spill over into our ministry and result in unmet expectations and feelings of depression. Additionally, through our examination of our sibling relationships we become increasingly aware of the transference we attribute to others and the countertransference we prescribe to other values, actions, and beliefs.

¹⁸³ “Robert R. Creech,” Bowen Family Systems Theory, Google, last modified March 12th 2021, <https://www.familyandcommunityministries.org>.

¹⁸⁴ “Robert R. Creech,” Bowen Family Systems Theory, Google, last modified March 12th 2021, <https://www.familyandcommunityministries.org>.

Additional Therapeutic Approaches for Depression

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: (CBT)

CBT focuses on the emotions, actions, and resulting behaviors and processes that occur when individuals experience depression. Understanding our reactions to depression will translate into helping develop and incorporate social skills that can be implemented and practiced for best outcomes. The objective of CBT is to identify, confront, and minimize or eliminate those thoughts that create feelings of depression.¹⁸⁵

Medication:

Medication is a critical component in treating depression and should be coupled with therapy. The most common prescriptions for clinical depression are antidepressants. While antidepressants are primarily used for depression, they have been used to alter chemical brain imbalance for other symptoms associated with anxiety. At times, individuals will need to try multiple medications to find the one that is most effective with the least side effects. Similar to the recommendations for anxiety, medication changes should only occur through the monitoring of a physician to prevent mood swings, significant withdraws, and side effects.¹⁸⁶

Over 150 million anti-depressant prescriptions are written every year in the United States, a 400% increase since 1990.¹⁸⁷ At times antidepressants can make significant improvements in the life of someone who is depressed, but less than half of those who take an anti-depressant actually report it being helpful in and of itself. Many patients decide that the medication side

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“National Institute of Mental Health,” Anxiety, Google, last modified June 25th 2021, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>.

¹⁸⁶ “National Institute of Mental Health,” Anxiety, Google, last modified June 25th 2021, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>.

¹⁸⁷ Ilardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio books chapter 1.

effects, such as lack of sex drive and weight gain, are not worthwhile. While we have seen the acceleration of anti-depressant use increase over the last decade, we have not seen the rate of depression decline, but rather increase.¹⁸⁸ This has led many to reach beyond a one size fits all approach and look toward holistic approaches that use medication as one component of health and wellness. Rather than simply addressing the symptoms, an integrative approach addresses the underlying issues of the depression.

Holistic therapeutic lifestyle modification interventions to prevent or decrease symptoms of depression can include such spiritual solutions as solitude/silence, meditation/prayer, gratitude, corporate worship, and scripture reading. It is during these times that ministers often find God speaking, reassuring, and revealing His direction for their lives. Additionally, engaging in spiritual disciplines fosters creativity, vision, and perspective with greater clarity. Psychotherapy, medication, nutrition, physical activity, sleep, increased social activity, reduced social media, increased sunlight exposure, and developing social support relationships can also be implemented as an integrative approach.¹⁸⁹ It is important to remember that these spiritual and therapeutic interventions can be used during times of depression but also as proactive measures to prevent symptoms from occurring.

Approaches for Burnout Prevention

Embracing the concept of Integration:

In addition to BFST, the integration of other tools is useful for addressing anxiety and depression among clergy. This project focuses on the system in which an individual lives to determine how in the midst of challenges one can find wholeness and well-being as a way to

¹⁸⁸ Ilardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio books chapter 1.

¹⁸⁹ Parker, *Healing Stress, Anxiety, and Depression*, audio book chapter 12 & 13.

prevent or reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Researcher Daniel Siegal, who is focused on wholeness and well-being, believes that all symptoms listed in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) can be attributed to the lack of integration.¹⁹⁰ Chuck DeGroat refers to these depression symptoms in the DSM as complications of living a fragmented self. We compartmentalized our lives to fit our circumstances rather than living a congruent life as authentic beings in touch with all parts of ourselves.¹⁹¹ Siegal argues that integration is the underlying concept for the “absence of illness and positive well-being.” Integration is “living in complexity that allows us to be free and live in the well-being of harmony and flexibility”.¹⁹²

Integration allows for each part of one’s being (mind, body, spirit) to tap into the healthiest parts to provide a holistic ensemble of the best of an individual. It is unhealthy for an individual to acknowledge only certain aspects of who they are, or become so focused on one part that they are unable to experience integration. Additionally, it is unhealthy for an individual to not have parameters or boundaries and allow every emotion, thought, behavior to dictate their decision-making process. Similarly, when congregations rely solely on one individual (the pastor), we create rigid systems that do not reflect the “whole” of a body of believers and this places enormous stress upon leaders to out-perform their God-given abilities. It also reinforces an individualistic mindset that moves us further away from a collective integrative approach for ministry and mental health.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Daniel J. Siegal, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* (New York, NY: The Random House Publishing, 2010), audio book chapter 1.

¹⁹¹ Chuck DeGroat, *Wholeheartedness: Busyness, Exhaustion, and Healing the Divided Self* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), 27.

¹⁹² Siegal, *Mindsight*, audio book chapter 1.

¹⁹³ Siegal, *Mindsight*, audio book chapter 1.

Positive psychology has included characteristics of joyful people: gratitude, compassion, curiosity, and open-mindedness as strengths that foster positive mental health. Daniel Siegal, in his book “Mindsight” highlights eight domains of integration that lead to greater health and wholeness.

1. *Integration of Consciousness*: This helps us to develop change to reduce anxiety and depression by regulating our mood and self-awareness for a more stable mind.
2. *Horizontal Integration*: Reduces left and right brain from functioning separately and preventing one side from override the other. It is integration that allows flexibility in our thinking and provides us the ability to understand ourselves and our story.
3. *Vertical Integration*: This type of integration can be impaired by trauma and prevent us from being aware of all our parts.
4. *Memory Integration*: Examines how our memory processes and creates meaning of how we view the world. It taps into our memories and perceptions that we may have blocked out or do not allow in our conscious awareness.
5. *Narrative Integration*: We make sense and meaning of our lives through the stories we create and tell ourselves. The best predictor for the attachment between us and our children is the ability for parents to make meaning of their own stories. This domain examines our family of origin issues and how attachment can move toward positive relationships and emotional and mental health.
6. *State Integration*: Is the layered aspect of our life which integrates past denial and acknowledges our needs to face our multiple selves.
7. *Interpersonal Integration*: Previous experiences influence our current relationships. Without losing ourselves, we can address the dysfunctional relationships to establish compassion, empathy and love for others.
8. *Temperal Integration*: Provides us the ability to live with peace even when faced with uncertainty. This can liberate all aspects of our well-being and bring about a healthy and congruent life.

In recent research and literature, we are seeing the emphasis shift from self-esteem to self-compassion, a more holistic view of humans overall. Similar to our Wesleyan tradition, it is the “middle way” between rigidity and chaos that we seek to model for mental and emotional health. Integration is the key to well-being not just for us individually but collectively as congregations, communities, and Christ-followers.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Siegal, *Mindsight*, audio book chapter 10.

Solitude/Silence:

Solitude and Silence provides opportunity to detach from the external and internal noises we are inundated with daily. Whether it be negative self-talk or public criticism, being able to find silence and solitude allows us to retreat, regroup, and find our emotional, spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being. Utilizing the spiritual discipline of solitude allows ministers the opportunity to diminish the outside noise so that they can more clearly hear and meditate on guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Meditation/Prayer/Mindfulness Techniques:

Daniel Siegel speaks of the “body scan” where one meditates to become more fully aware of their body. This requires practice of the ability to be able to be present in the moment and aware of how depression might be impacting other aspects of our health. If a pastor is presenting physical health issues such as heart complications, breathing changes, etc. it is wise to first consult a physician while also examining how emotional health symptoms might be improved by means of meditation and contemplative prayer.¹⁹⁵ If our desire is to explore ways to integrate our time of meditation and mindfulness into wholeness it might be helpful to think of our lives as a river of integration. Mindfulness teaches us to more clearly distinguish between rigidity or chaos vs. harmony and flexibility. When our minds depart from harmony and flexibility our minds are inclined toward rigidity and chaos.¹⁹⁶

Gratitude:

Many clergy often find themselves being the sounding board of the needs and desires of their congregations, and gratitude can easily become minimized in the life of the spiritual leader

¹⁹⁵ Siegal, *Mindsight*, audio book chapter 12.

¹⁹⁶ Siegal, *Mindsight*, audio book chapter 1.

and the congregation as a whole. The spiritual discipline of gratitude allows the chance to refocus and reframe our situations where we can shift our focus from what God has not done for us, to what God has done. We can acknowledge that regardless of our circumstances, God is still in control and actively working in the life of a pastor and his ministry. It is through the act of gratitude that we can experience an overflow of generosity, a desire for confession, and celebration. It is also this sense of gratitude that compels us to serve others through acts of service, empathy, and compassion.

Corporate Gathering:

There is great need in our spiritual journey to gather corporately. Depending on the worship community, this gathering might include worship through songs of praise, scripture readings, testimonials, intercessory prayer, and even the Sunday afternoon potluck. This gathering of believers reminds us that our desire to be more Christ-like requires the involvement of others. For Wesleyans, we use terms such as entire and progressive sanctification, Christian holiness, and repentance. This includes our sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. All these things remind us that our spiritual walks require us to acknowledge and embrace the collective mindset that we are our brother's keeper.

For those in ministerial leadership, gatherings where they are not necessarily identified as "the pastor" can be challenging but crucial to address some of the feelings associated with depression. While pastors tend to gather as a part of their professional responsibilities, this does not equate to building community or authentic relationships as they strive for wholeness. It is important that opportunities are provided for pastors to gather with those who are in similar professional circumstances as they journey through the various challenges associated with their profession.

While the recent pandemic has not allowed this to be accomplished as easily as we are accustomed to, it has spurred opportunities for ingenuity and adaptability for pastors to gather with colleagues in ministry. The pandemic has reminded ministers of the importance of a strong professional support system to encourage, pray with, and provide a listening ear during challenging times. It has reiterated for many ministers that being together as a body of believers is imperative to our Christian faith. It has been a reminder that our spiritual walks and our desire for holiness requires others to join us on our spiritual journeys.

Scripture:

As Wesleyans we believe that the word of God is inspired and is active in our lives and that scripture holds all things we need to know for salvation. We believe that scripture is one way through which the Holy Spirit speaks and guides. We believe that scripture not only is crucial for our personal spiritual growth in our current context, but to all who seek to grow in their relationship with Christ. Scripture is key to any holistic approach as it grounds and reinforces how we see ourself in Christ. It is the working of the Holy Spirit that uses scripture as a tool to better equip our mental, emotional, and spiritual health. This does not equate scripture as being the end-all for every anxiety or depressive symptom a pastor might experience, however it does provide a solid foundation to build upon when incorporating additional therapeutic approaches.

Sleep:

Dreams occur within our sleep cycles, which integrate our memory and emotion. Our ability to get adequate sleep and be emotionally and mentally healthy are directly linked together. Nearly 80% of depressed individuals experience some sort of sleep deprivation/insomnia prior to the on-set of depression, and 4 out of 5 people experience some sort of sleep disturbance. Depression can affect not only the quantity of sleep, but the quality of

sleep that one receives. Most adults need eight hours of sleep with the average person getting just over six and a half hours a night. Many of us are sleep deprived, but we will make room for it in our lives when sleep truly becomes a priority.¹⁹⁷

Healthy habits of sleep to help prevent symptoms of burnout:

1. Use the bed only for sleeping. Avoid going to bed prior to feeling tired, avoid sleeping in any other place besides the bed.
2. Go to bed and wake up at the same time daily and avoid napping. Resist the urge to sleep in or make excuses for staying up late.
3. Avoid bright light/turn off lights at bedtime. Reduce lights of any kind: screens, night lights, bathroom lights, etc.
4. Avoid caffeine and other stimulants.
5. Avoid alcohol at night. It may help you initially fall asleep but will cause frequent sleep disturbances throughout the night.
6. Turn down your thermostat at night. Reduced temperature can help one sleep.
7. Avoid taking your problems to bed with you. Re-direct your thoughts to favorite scenes, visualize a favorite vacation spot, or practice muscle relaxation.

Exercise:

Over 100 studies have shown a direct correlation between exercise and reduced burnout.¹⁹⁸ In the most recent finding from the Duke Clergy Health Initiative, the average pastor exercises 1 time a month.¹⁹⁹ Doctors have been telling us for years that we need to get more exercise for physical health but what many have overlooked is that exercise has been shown to change our brain chemistry, and therefore can make a significant contribution to reducing and/or eliminating depression. Incorporating exercise as a regular routine is key; when we are caught up in meaningful activity, we tend to have longer lasting routines when it comes to physical activity.

¹⁹⁷ Ihardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio book chapter 9.

¹⁹⁸ Ihardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio book chapter 4.

¹⁹⁹ Daniels, "Flourishing In Ministry," <https://newcreationconversations.buzzsprout.com>.

²⁰⁰ Our physical health is also important to our spiritual health as we strive to live a life that is balanced as well as being a good steward of the physical body God has given us. Many pastors find the act of physical activity (ranging from walking and hiking to sports and working-out) to be a spiritual discipline that is crucial to their overall mental and emotional health.

Suggested workout routines for reducing burnout include:

1. Make it aerobic. This causes your heart rate to stay elevated for an extended period of time.
2. Choose an activity you can engage in for at least 35 minutes a day such as walking, jogging, or swimming.
3. Determine the time commitment (frequency/length) for your schedule.
4. Work out with someone that provides encouragement, support and social interactions.
5. Make it purposeful.
6. Create a schedule. Establish habits which are harder to break and make it enjoyable and flexible.
7. Be accountable. Initiate activity with someone who encourages and challenges you, and that you can provide the same support in return. ²⁰¹

Nutrition:

When it comes to the topic of burnout and the symptoms of anxiety and depression many Americans tend to rely heavily on medication and psychotherapy. While these approaches are certainly helpful, they do not fully embrace a holistic approach which includes nutrition. Our consumption of food has a direct influence on our physical, emotional, and mental health. Digestive challenges can significantly complicate detection, treatment, and recovery when it comes to mental health issues. Incorporating dietary changes can work together along with medication and therapy to reduce symptoms and create positive mental wellness.

Summary

²⁰⁰ Ilardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio book chapter 10.

²⁰¹ Ilardi, *The Depression Cure*, audio book chapter 10.

In summary, it is important as disciples of Christ to accept that the circumstances that contribute to symptoms associated with burnout are unique and personal. For ministers who suffer from mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and overall burnout it is crucial that there is a healthy theological understanding in our approach to dealing with these struggles. As Wesleyans we do not equate one's mental health challenges to their spiritual maturity. We acknowledge that positive self-care and spiritual disciplines along with practical approaches can help reduce or eliminate anxious and depressive symptoms. We believe that God uses technological advancements through medicine, treatments, and experiences to better equip us to experience the full grace and love of God. We embrace the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, which incorporates scripture, tradition, reason, and Christian experiences to live into the fullness of Christ as we strive for physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental wellness. We acknowledge that there is not a one-size fits all approach when it comes to treating mental health challenges but believe that the approaches provided can increase the ability for ministers to address the struggles of burnout with dignity and compassion for themselves and others.

Chapter 5

Recommendations for Nazarene pastors, districts, and denomination

It is beneficial for those in leadership and governing positions who oversee the well-being of clergy to help normalize mental health challenges--they are not a rarity, but rather a normal component of ministry. These challenges require support and grace along with education and tangible opportunities for clergy to express and process the challenges that will arise. It requires local churches, districts, denominations, and governing bodies to voice their concern or support, and provide emotional and financial resources to identify and utilize referral providers. Leadership must provide opportunities for clergy to build a support system of their peers in order to develop honest and authentic relationships. The objective of well-being is not simply to prevent mental illness or burnout but rather to provide opportunities for clergy to flourish and thrive in their churches, ministry, and communities. Our objective should be to provide clergy every opportunity to grow and foster positive mental health. If we believe that our congregations can only be as healthy as their leaders, then it should be the desire of every district to see their clergy have access to resources that facilitate well-being and wholeness in their health.

As a denomination it would be ineffective to create sweeping programs for districts to implement without fully understanding the context in which every district, congregation, and local ministry exists. The conceptual framework of this dissertation was to identify any resources available for districts as they strive to understand the needs and strengths of their district clergy more clearly. It was also the desire that by identifying and addressing issues surrounding pastoral burnout along with the symptoms associated, that district leadership would feel more comfortable engaging in these conversations and solutions for some of the challenges negatively impacting clergy. We should not assume that districts have the resources or the capability to fully

understand the needs of every local congregation, but districts must be willing to listen and engage to discern the needs within the district they serve. Contextual understanding is crucial for districts as they move into collaboration with local congregations toward implementation. Whether we are discussing the objectives of a local a congregation, district, or the Nazarene denomination, our goal is the same here. We desire to create opportunities for ministers to achieve wholeness that results from a minister obtaining wellness and achieving positive emotional, spiritual, physical, relational, and mental health.

In this research project we have examined burnout and the risk factors for pastors, which can be different than the general population. We have seen how some of the most significant contributors to burnout come through the suffering of anxiety and depression. We have discussed how these symptoms not only impact the minister and their immediate family, but the congregation and the district within a faith-based community. Further exploration of our religious heritage in chapter 3 provided the theological underpinnings of our Wesleyan Theology and how those religious beliefs help provide clarity and strength to those struggling from mental and emotional concerns. We also looked at ways in which our beliefs directly compel and influence what it means to care for our brothers and sisters in ministry and live lives that reflect health and wholeness. In addition, we have discussed ways in which districts can take the lead in engaging in meaningful change through a variety of phases to help determine the most appropriate approach and resource for a minister and/or their family. We also looked specifically at Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST) and the systematic approach to integration and wholeness through various therapeutic approaches when it came to symptoms associated with anxiety and depression.

As we have discovered through this research, pastoral burnout is a real and concerning challenge for many ministerial leaders. This requires awareness by districts and the Nazarene denomination to seek resources to equip pastors more effectively for the emotional and mental challenges that often arise during their ministry. District leadership can be viewed as distant and out of touch with what is happening in the local church. Regardless of the accuracy of these perceptions by clergy, districts can greatly challenge those beliefs and perceptions by engaging in tangible ways with authentic concern for those they serve. If a district is focused on meeting the needs of its ministerial leaders, congregations will see the importance of caring for their pastors through modeling by the district. A district can offer a pastor hope and supports that transcends their current circumstances. Districts can also reinforce and encourage pastors to view themselves and their work holistically to include body, mind, and spirit.

There has been significant resources tailored toward learning how to better equip pastor during times of suffering. While these are crucial aspects to supporting clergy and reducing symptoms associated with burnout, it is also important to develop a holistic approach to providing opportunities for pastors to obtain well-being. By districts strategically engaging in the effort to achieve well-being, a bi-product will be a reduction in depression and anxiety. By embracing a holistic view of well-being, we find consistency in four areas according to research: “Daily Living, Resilience, Authenticity, and Thriving”.²⁰² We are also able to create opportunities for pastors within a district to thrive when these four dimensions are embraced. When one dimension of well-being is increased, other areas will also increase. The opposite is also true, negative symptoms increase when flourishing is not being achieved. Interconnectedness of these dimensions reminds us that our lives are not as compartmentalized

²⁰² Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 3.

as we may want to believe. For well-being to be achieved we must embrace our identity and all aspects of ourselves.²⁰³

Accessibility and reachability as discussed previously in chapter 4 are crucial to providing immediate support to ministers within a district. Often those seeking emotional and mental health services in our communities find themselves waiting weeks or even months for an initial appointment, screening, or an assessment. It is our desire that any Nazarene pastor would feel comfortable either picking up the phone or emailing their district leadership to obtain immediate support. The Church of the Nazarene has a DNA that reinforces what it means to be a part of a therapeutic community and the responsibility, through our Theology of Ordination, to care for our colleagues in ministry. Our Wesleyan heritage guides and informs our beliefs, and our desire for holiness is accomplished in and through community.

As districts, our objective is to be a referral source, and a burden-bearing community that provides healing and fosters resiliency. These communities are comprised of pastors, across North America, called to model what it means to walk alongside our colleagues and partners in ministry. Through embracing what it means to be our “brother’s/sister’s” keeper we reframe how we view our responsibility for those who are struggling and afflicted. Through the struggles we experience what it means to participate in compassionate love for another who can do nothing for us in return. It is the hope that these bands of clergy, alongside the support of districts, will engage in proactive measures to prevent burnout and the symptoms associated with negative well-being.

We have also discussed the significance of integrating a holistic approach to our well-being as a way to develop greater wholeness, leading to holiness, and ultimately authentic transformation. The author of Hebrews shares that we are made “whole” or “perfect” through our

²⁰³ Bloom, *Flourishing In Ministry*, 3.

trials. We see in scripture that Jesus himself struggled and was tempted. In Luke, it states that the Devil left him until another opportune time--could it be that the “opportune” time was another “vulnerable” time? Like the topics addressed in this dissertation, Jesus was frequently being stressed, tempted, and tried in hopes that he would stumble, yet he was without sin. We see in the life of Jesus and through his closest friends that resiliency is built through trials.

With the tools recommended in chapter 4, it is believed that pastors can develop a mental model to build resiliency through trials. It is through the trials that we find ourselves either crushed or empowered. It would be an inaccurate interpretation of scripture to believe that a life in Christ equates to an elimination of trials or temptations. Rather, His sacrifice mitigates suffering and provides hope despite our struggles, allowing us to endure and experience peace in a world that is broken and needing redemption. In Acts 6 we see how the trials of Stephen catapulted the spreading of the gospel. It is very likely that the struggles and trials that ministers experience will ultimately be used to encourage and strengthen those who are suffering. This does not mean pastors will necessarily feel thankful for the trials they endure, but it hopefully will provide a reminder of the peace that we can experience during the storm.

While the story of Stephen reminds us that Christ’s power is active and engaging regardless of the struggles we experience, so is the reminder found through the life of Barnabas. As district leaders think of how best to model and foster opportunities to support, encourage, and walk alongside clergy navigating these challenging times, we should remember the example and life of Barnabas. He reminds the Church that we can build one another up through faithful acts of encouragement, especially during times of struggles. We see in scripture that the relationship and gifts that Barnabas possessed were not only crucial for John Mark and Paul, but also for the trajectory of the early church. Through the faithful actions of Barnabas and his relationship with

John Mark and Paul we see the gospel being spread and disciples being encouraged to continue to persevere. It was Barnabas that vouched for Paul to the other Christians after his conversion, and for John Mark after he had abandoned Paul and Barnabas on their journey to Antioch. It is difficult to imagine what might have happened to Paul and John Mark if it were not for the encouragement of Barnabas. Similarly, pastors need a Barnabas, and districts are most effectively suited to serve in this capacity. If districts can view their mission to their ministers through the lens of what it means to be a Barnabas, we can begin to take the long view of what it means to equip ministers with the tools to live a life of integration and wholeness. Districts possessing the ability to step back from the current situation and take a broader view of a minister's ministry will provide greater insight into the unique ways that a pastor will feel valued and supported.

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