

Lancaster Theological Seminary

“Come Away By Yourself and Rest Awhile: Retreat as A Model Of Self-Care for United
Methodist Clergy”

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by

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Come Away By Yourself and Rest Awhile: Retreat as A Model Of Self-Care for United Methodist Clergy”

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Abstract

This project seeks to demonstrate the critical need for improved self-care for clergy. Using Biblical texts, as well as current books, literature in journals, and first hand experiences, the project presents examples of clergy whose self-care process is in crises, as well as models of clergy who engage in proper self-care. I then propose the spiritual discipline of retreat as a pathway to improving, and in fact revitalizing areas of deficit for clergy. The retreat is built upon my initial research, and other research about creating and leading effective retreats. It is also designed using specific responses to a survey given to twenty five United Methodist Clergy in the Baltimore Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church. In that survey, clergy identified their previous retreat experiences, and also their desired elements in a retreat they might want to attend. The end result of this project is the demonstrated need for improved self-care, and a four day retreat designed to offer healing and a beginning step for those clergy who desire to improve their self-care.

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Introduction: Why Does Self-Care Matter?

Clergy are not good at taking care of themselves. This lack of care has a direct impact on our individual lives as people, and also on our ministry contexts. I speak both from personal experience and from observing my colleagues. Based on my conversations with fellow clergy, it appears that many if not most of them are struggling in the area of self-care, if not ignoring it all together. This produced a wide range of personal and ministry issues for said clergy. Mostly it causes them to struggle in personal relationships, within their own hearts, and within their ministry contexts. I have also noticed that there is some hesitation (at least in the United Methodist Church) about engaging in spiritual practices. In many ways, clergy are hesitant because they feel that the practices are not “Methodist” or “Protestant” enough, and in fact are much too “Roman Catholic” for them. These views might make them hesitant to see the value of spiritual practices as a tool for self-care. Self-Care is an area that demands attention, discussion, and the production of resources that can help clergy improve their self-care, and therefore their ministry overall.

Roy Oswald writes “It is very difficult for us to be agents of good news when we are either stressed or burned out. We may say all the right things from the pulpit, but communicate the opposite. A stressed out pastor like Susan Miller may think she is responding to people in a loving way, but her non-verbals will give away stress in her body every time. When a burned-out pastor like Al Tollefson makes a hospital call, he may say the right words and pray the right kind of prayer, but still communicate that he would rather be somewhere else. It’s a double message, and the nonverbal message usually predominates.”¹ When clergy self-care is neglected, these

¹ Roy Oswald, *Finding A Balance for Effective Ministry*, (Alban Institute 1991) 1.

non-verbal issues become a problem because we are so tired and so burned out, and so conflicted about our ministries that even when we don't say it, our outward appearance says it for us.

We cannot engage in fruitful ministry, and we cannot live God centered lives if we remain detached from God as a matter of course. Engagement with the spiritual practice of taking retreat will help clergy return to their spiritual roots, and in the process teach them some practical methods for making the time to be away for a while a part their daily routines, thus improving self-care and overall effectiveness in ministry.

Developing and offering a time away, a four day retreat will give clergy who are serious about their own self-care an opportunity to engage their desire for improvement head-on. Much like the story of the sick man by the pool in the Gospel of John, this will allow clergy to answer the question "Do you want to be made well?" and then allow them to take an active part in doing just that, becoming well.

In what follows, I will begin by will examining Biblical texts, as well as current books and literature in journals that discusses both the history and current state of self- care among United Methodist Clergy. I will present both examples where self-care should be improved, and examples where self-care is bring modeled effectively. I will also examine current literature that emphasizes the spiritual practice of retreat, and methods of designing retreats for clergy.

Finally, I will create and distribute a survey asking United Methodist clergy to identify how a retreat experience can address deficits in their own self-care. The written project will consist of the initial examination of issues in clergy self-care, both examples where self-care should be improved, and examples where self-care is being modeled effectively. The written project will also present background about the spiritual benefits of taking a retreat. From there I

will analyze the survey results, concentrating on overall themes, and the specific essential retreat elements as identified by the clergy who participate in the survey. I will then build connections between the research conducted and the end result, which will be a retreat, designed to engage United Methodist clergy in the practice of taking a retreat, as well as being designed to help them address specific deficits in their own self-care.

This project will demonstrate that by engaging with the long standing practice of taking time away, clergy can improve weakened areas of self-care, in order to flourish in their ministry settings. Clergy, like their colleagues in other helping professions are not good at being “not busy”.

When I attend clergy gatherings of any kind, there always seems to be competition going on for who happens to be the busiest. It is as if being the most busy, so much so that one never stops to pause, to pray, or to listen to God is the desired goal. Clergy compare calendars, and speak about how many funerals they have to conduct in the course of the week. Not to mention all of the meetings, and the worship preparation, and the sermon planning. Again, it seems to be that the busier someone is, the better pastor they must be. We clergy define ourselves, our ministries and our success by the frantic pace of our lives. We should of course, be doing exactly the opposite. We should be slowing down, and becoming more deliberate about how we spend our time. One pastor writes “What if instead of boasting of dysfunctional professional habits, pastors shared practices of health and wholeness in ministry? What if ministerial commitment was understood as balancing excellence in ministry with commitment to family, relationships, study, and self-care?”²

² Epperly, Bruce. *A Center In The Cyclone: 21st Century Clergy Self-Care*. (Lanham: Maryland, 2014), 28.

I believe, and current literature shows that clergy lose their “true selves” when self-care is neglected. I spend a lot of time in conversation with my colleagues who seem to be strangers to self-care. In fact, it is a word we often repeat when we gather together, but at the same time once it is uttered, we simply ignore it. The result is that we can become a bunch of tired, over-worked, frustrated, and burned out clergy. The feelings and thoughts and intentions we had when we began to serve the church are quickly lost to feelings of exhaustion and wonder at who we really are, and why we’re doing this thing called ministry in the first place. In order to compensate for our negative feelings, clergy tend to put on this image of a “false self” which can only be carried on so far before it becomes an issue for our ministry. In order to find our way back to our true selves, it becomes clear that clergy need to re-connect with God. Jacqueline Lewis writes “To have an authentic relationship with God, I need to spend time with God, the source of my strength. God loves me just as I am, and holds me accountable to be who God intends me to be.”³ If clergy believe that God holds them accountable for who God wants them to be, then it seems that taking time away, and re-engagement with God would help clergy move toward becoming closer to their true selves.

Current literature also demonstrates that as clergy work toward “being healed” there is much work to do in and around engaging the spiritual practice of taking time away from ministry. Debora Jackson writes “Jesus said, come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. This is the invitation and opportunity to retreat. We are invited to come---come apart, come away, come from our labors to

³ Jacqueline Lewis, “Good-Enough Self-Care,” *Congregations*, May-June 2001, 21.

be with the Lord.”⁴ As clergy work toward being healed from negative self-care practices, this invitation to retreat becomes critical to re-connecting with God, and listening for the work of the Spirit.

I have a personal stake and connection with the topic and importance of clergy self-care. January of 2013, I was quickly approaching my final semester of seminary. I was teaching high school English half time, serving a quarter time church half- time, and also going to seminary full time. Along with these tasks, I was a husband, and the father of three teens. Needless to say I had a full calendar, and I was ever so happy to tell people how busy I was.

Diving home from seminary one Saturday afternoon my heart began to race, and I could not catch my breath. I was able to pull over to the side of the highway and my wife called an ambulance. After a very stressful ride to the hospital, the doctors could find nothing wrong with me, and they diagnosed me as having had an anxiety attack. I went home and went to bed, and got up for church the following morning. When I got into the car to drive I was unable to. I immediately found myself paralyzed from fear, and unable to catch my breath again, just as it had happened in the car the previous day. My wife drove the rest of the way to church, but when I got there I found that I was unable to do the most basic of things, like stand up and lead worship, pray, or preach. As I stated before, I was one semester away from graduating from seminary, working two jobs, and raising a family. Nothing could really be removed from my schedule to make my life any more palatable. I connected with a local counselor who diagnosed me with anxiety and with a slight case of depression. I immediately consulted with my local church leadership and explained to them my current situation. I scaled back some of my

⁴ Jackson, Debora. *Spiritual Practices for Effective Leadership*. Valley Forge PA, 64.

responsibility at church, with their support. I was still unable to drive, and had six weeks of seminary to complete. A local neighbor and one of my parishioners drove me to class twice a week for three weeks, until I was able to drive again. My lay leader drove me to hospital visits and to other places where I was needed, only in an emergency, and he covered all other responsibilities where I could not. I had very much lost my “true-self” as I had created and lived into a life that did not honor boundaries, time management, physical care, or the need for retreat. I recovered over the course of about six months, but do not doubt for just one moment that this was God’s way to slowing me down, and also directing me toward this work with clergy.

Chapter 1: Biblical, Theological and Spiritual Foundations in Self-Care

Scripture, both Old and New Testament texts show clergy how to engage in the discipline of rest, and taking time away. In fact, Jesus is our model for doing precisely that. Psalm 127 reads “It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved.”⁵ The psalmist writes about how clergy might see the value in sleep. In fact he/she writes about how much neglecting sleep is done in vain because God provides sleep for us for a very good reason.

Donald Odom writes “In Mark 4: 35-39 we find Jesus sleeping on the boat during a storm that terrified his disciples to the point that they feared death. His ability to sleep or rest during the storm is something that we should aspire to.”⁶

In Mark’s Gospel we see Jesus on the day of Transfiguration. Chapter 9:2 says “Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.”⁷ Here is one other example of Jesus going somewhere set apart from the routines and schedules of everyday life, in order to connect more fully with God.

Jesus desires for clergy to reach out and engage resources that are right in front of them to make them whole again. Returning to Scripture we find Jesus and his encounter with the man by the pool in the Gospel of Mark. It is fascinating to me that the first words from the mouth of Jesus are “Do you want to be made well.” It seems to me that Jesus expects some sort of engagement on the part of the man, in other words Jesus wants him to participate in his own

⁵ New Revised Standard Version, 747

⁶ Donald Odom, “The Importance of Self-Care for Ministry Leaders”, The Living Pulpit, July 2012, 36.

⁷ New Revised Standard Version, 1220.

healing. Epperly writes “Jesus...refuses to let the man define himself by his excuse and limitations. Jesus imagines him standing up and healthy once again, and agent in his own personal transformation. He challenges him to become an actor in his own life, choosing moment by moment, beginning right now to shape his own destiny. God’s grace, embodied in Jesus’ relentless quest for wholeness, inspires our agency and freedom to change our lives.”⁸ Clergy have the freedom to change their practices of self-care, and therefore their lives. The practice of taking time away, and engaging in retreat can be a tool for doing just that.

Along with these scriptural examples, I would like to suggest that there are solid reasons to believe that there is a strong spiritual foundation if pastors are to be successful at managing their self-care throughout their ministries.

Epperly writes “Most new pastors struggle to maintain healthy and consistent spiritual disciplines. Yet, it is clear the ability of the pastor, as the community’s spiritual leader to nurture vital spirituality in his or her congregation is intimately connected to an interest in and experience of God’s movements in his or her own professional and personal life. Further, spiritually committed pastors are more likely to possess greater resources that can be tapped to address the spiritual yearnings of their congregants through preaching, spiritual direction and group leadership.”⁹

Later in his text, Epperly writes about Karen. Karen is a “Mennonite pastor in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. She wakes up each morning with a pervasive sense of joy that persists even in the midst of congregational struggle. For Karen, like the apostle Paul, joy is not an accident but the result of a disciplined spirit. At least three mornings a week Karen spends half an hour practicing

⁸ Epperly, Bruce. *A Center In The Cyclone: 21st Century Clergy Self-Care*. (Lanham: Maryland, 2014), 30.

⁹ Bruce Epperly, *Starting with Spirit* (Herndon Virginia: Alban Institute, 2011).

lectio divina as she sits prayerfully in the presence of God. Karen recognizes that no spiritual leader can flourish in isolation. She regularly meets with a spiritual director, who keeps her focused on God's presence in her ministry. Karen's ability to claim her pastoral authority as a woman in a denomination that has often stood in the way of women's ordination has grown as a result of meeting with a spiritual director. It has been essential for me to have someone name in my life what the church needs."¹⁰

Following my own experience at failing at self-care, mentioned earlier in this text I began a really consistent routine that involves many of the things that Karen demonstrates in her story above. I meet monthly with my own spiritual director to talk about the challenges I face as a pastor, and to sit together as I listen deeply for how God is speaking into my ministry as clergy, as well as my role as husband, father, teacher, and friend. I also meet each month with a Spiritual Direction Peer group, as I am a trained spiritual director myself, and meet with these folks to make sure the direction I provide, both in sessions with directees, and as a pastor are consistent with my training. One other place I have built in community is in my Lectionary Group. We are a group of around twelve pastors who get together to talk about our upcoming preaching, but also to encourage one another and support one another, all while also keeping each other accountable within the context of our individual ministries.

For me, the issue of self-care, and our responsibility to maintain it falls both in the example of Jesus Christ himself, and in the examples he gave us in scripture. Beyond this, there is a strong spiritual sense of responsibility that I believe falls upon our shoulders as clergy. It is our responsibility to maintain these networks of support, and it is also our responsibility to

¹⁰ Bruce Epperly, *Starting with Spirit* (Herndon Virginia: Alban Institute, 2011).

engage in these spiritual practices each day within the context of what supports our individual ministries.

Chapter 2: Significant Issues in Clergy Self-Care

Time Management

One of the initial texts that I read that focuses on issues in self-care is *Clergy Self Care: Finding A Balance for Effective Ministry*. Roy Oswald wrote this text in 1991 when he was a consultant with the Alban Institute, and while it is slightly dated, his writing is both powerful and timely for clergy today. One particular chapter that stood out is about time management. It is no secret that one of the biggest issues in self-care for clergy is managing time. This chapter begins with some critical statements about time management in the life of clergy. Oswald writes "It is very difficult for us to be agents of good news when we are either stressed out or burned out. We may say all of the right things from the pulpit, but communicate the opposite."¹¹ Oswald goes on to speak about how quickly clergy can suffer burn out if they do not look carefully at how they spend their time. He speaks in detail about setting priorities, and making decisions based on what is most healthy for the clergy in question, even when it appears that making these decisions makes the clergy “appear” to be focused on themselves and not the congregation. Oswald also does something obvious, and yet profound when he points to Jesus as the clear example of how to manage time commitments in ministry. He writes about how in Luke 9:10 Jesus takes the disciples to get away from the crowds, and then again in Luke 5:15 the scripture tells us that even though many people were following Jesus and the disciples in order to get healed, Jesus made space in his schedule and he withdrew to the wilderness to pray.

¹¹ Oswald, Roy, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding A Balance For Effective Ministry* (Alban, 1991), 3

Fr. David Songy continues both of these themes: the need for healthy time management, and Jesus as model how to manage time when he writes “Jesus Christ himself set a standard for self-care that a priest endeavoring to follow his lead should consider. Taking sufficient time to rest and pray is essential for us to minister to others.”¹² This article is interesting, as it comes from a Roman Catholic priest’s point of view, and it does a good job at pointing out that self-care is not simply a United Methodist or Protestant clergy issue, but one that cuts across denominations. Fr. Songy also goes on in this text to speak about how the disciples were aware that Jesus made time in his busy schedule for quiet time. He then makes a point that our own practices of self-care should be made known to both the people we work with, and the people we serve. In other words, our congregations should be well aware of the times that we are carving into our schedules that are meant simply to care for ourselves.

Bruce Epperly’s text *A Center in The Cyclone: 21st Century Clergy Self-Care* has proven to be a critical text for my study of self-care. It addresses all three areas of my project: time management, healthy boundaries, and physical care. In his chapter about time management Epperly begins by saying “A knock on my door can turn any day upside down and a phone call can turn a week of anticipated and leisurely study into a maelstrom of funeral planning and grief counseling.” We cannot manage time, but we can be intentional about how we spend the time in our lives.”¹³ This is just one of many comments written in order to point out the unpredictable nature of a clergyperson’s daily schedule. It is precisely this unpredictable nature that should

¹² Songy, Father David. “Following Jesus to Healthier Ministry.” *Priest* 72, no. 12 (December 2016): 10–23.

¹³ Epperly, Bruce. *A Center In The Cyclone: 21st Century Clergy Self-Care*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014. 88.

encourage clergy to work diligently to form good time management skills, and to put them to use as soon as practicably possible. A key issues in time management as a tool for clergy well-being is the concept of clergy being able to say when they have had “enough”. Epperly says "My commitment to friendships and time to myself help me reduce the stress and hurry of ministry and give me a sense of 'enough' when it comes to balancing the demands of family and ministry."¹⁴ It is clear that clergy time is split into so many different directions. It is critical that clergy figure out priorities for time well spent, and for time that should be spent differently, all the while placing their own self-care at the center of each of these important decisions. Epperly is also very deliberate to point out that self-care is directly related to the care of our families, whatever form that family might take, and that the connection between the two is inseparable.

One final central piece about self-care and time management is from Donald Odom. Odom quotes Psalm 127 in his article *The Importance of Self-Care for Ministry Leaders*. He writes Psalm 127 says “It is vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved.”¹⁵ Odom is clear in his article that simple things, like getting enough sleep, contribute to a clergyperson’s ability to manage time. He suggests in this quote that God has designed sleep for his creation, and if that is the case, clergy should be a model of getting enough sleep, as part of successfully navigating the demands of their schedules. Odom goes on, as do my other sources to point to Jesus as example when he writes "In Mark 4: 35-39 we find Jesus sleeping on the boat during a storm that terrified his disciples to the point

¹⁴ Epperly, *In The Cyclone*, 93.

¹⁵ Odom, Donald. “The Importance of Self-Care for Ministry Leaders.” *The Living Pulpit*, July 2, 2012, 34–36

that they feared death. His ability to sleep or rest during the storm is something that we should aspire to."¹⁶

Physical Care

A second significant issue in clergy self-care involves attention to physical care. Epperly devotes an entire chapter of his text to physical self-care. He begins the chapter with this thought: "You are the temple of God's Spirit. Your body reveals divine wisdom in its intricacy and aim toward wholeness...indeed God's realm is as near as your immune, circulatory, and cardiovascular systems. The nearness of God's realm challenges us to forsake unhealthy and personal and professional habits, repent the harm they have caused ourselves and others and embark on new pathways of personal and professional healing. We need to explore the ways our lifestyle harms ourselves and others as a prelude to personal and professional transformation."¹⁷ From this point, Epperly goes on to illustrate the need for physical self-care by using a case-study about a man named Samuel. Samuel's story speaks very closely to my own struggles with physical care, and so I find it worth mentioning. Samuel speaks about his own need for transformation when he talks about holding his first born child. "I looked like an old man, and I was just over forty. I wanted to be around to raise my son, but at the rate I was going, I might not make it to his tenth birthday, and that might be a stretch. I decided then and there that I needed to change my life. It was a matter of life and death for me and love for my boy."¹⁸ Samuel's story is one that could be told by any number of clergy, including myself. Healthy eating, and getting

¹⁶ Odom, *The Importance of Self-Care*, 36.

¹⁷ Epperly, *In The Cyclone*, 63.

¹⁸ Epperly, *In The Cyclone*, 64.

enough exercise is a common issue among clergy, and one that needs to be addressed by a combination of physical and spiritual care practices.

In an article entitled *Thriving in Ministry: Exploring the Support Systems and Self-Care Practices of Experienced Pastors*, the authors also wrote about the need for care of clergy bodies. They said that ten of the participants mentioned consistent exercise as an important practice in which they engaged daily. Maurice noted the advantage of living close to a mountain and spoke about hitting the trail every day for an hour, even in the rain to gain refreshment and also to keep in shape. Another pastor named Sheila spoke about training for a 500 mile hike. She said that because of her daily workouts she felt the best she has felt in a long time, and that she plans to continue training even after the hike.¹⁹

Beyond exercise, there are of course other areas of physical care for clergy. Epperly writes about “sacramental eating”. He first speaks of how difficult it is for clergy to eat healthily because of always being in the presence of unhealthy food. One priest in Epperly’s text says “Being a priest is a lot like being a cop on the beat. Wherever I go, there are sweet rolls and donuts. I suppose I could eat three donuts and six cups of coffee each morning if I didn’t watch out.”²⁰ This is so real of course. For myself, this part of the text speaks very loudly, as it reflects a struggle I have personally. How do we, as clergy, refuse the food that is being offered to us, that has often been prepared just for us? It makes eating healthily a challenge for sure. Epperly does however sum it up nicely when he says “Like all other dietary issues, this is a matter of

¹⁹ Bledsoe, T Scott, and Kimberly A Setterlund. “Thriving In Ministry: Exploring The Support Systems and Self-Care Practices of Experienced Pastors.” *Family and Community Ministries (Online)* 28 (2015): 57.

²⁰ Epperly, *In The Cyclone*, 68

intentionality and self-awareness. It involves choosing certain behaviors, observing when and where you eat and drink, noting how you feel, and making connections between diet, lifestyle, and justice issues.”²¹ This section and this statement in particular speaks clearly to this issue of self-care, as care of the body involves many facets, but in the end each one of those facets involves making a choice, and managing our behaviors. This is perhaps, why it is such a challenge.

Healthy Boundaries

Both time management and physical care require attention to boundary setting. Miller and McLemore write “Helping professionals, chaplains, teachers, and pastoral counselors are often supported by structures and processes that shield them from over the line demands. Time, money, and specialized responsibilities create clearer, more defined boundaries. The fifty-minute counseling appointment, the class period, designated hours of work, shared or designated on-call responsibilities, fees for services, and specialization all function to limit client demands and serve to clarify the helping role. Congregational pastors find it almost impossible to maintain those same boundaries.”²² Overall this article does a solid job of stating things that may sound obvious to pastors, but are often overlooked. Clergy are challenged to establish boundaries simply by the nature of our work. Because so much flexibility is built in to our work days, it becomes, as Miller states, all but impossible to put any kind of boundaries on our time, or our daily hours.

²¹ Epperly, *In The Cyclone*, 69

²² Miller-McLemore, Mark. “Revaluing ‘self-Care’ as a Practice of Ministry.” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 10, no. 1 (2011): 118.

Another area which impacts placing boundaries on the lives of clergy is congregational expectations. While these expectations vary from place to place, they often form the basis for the inability of clergy to place safe boundaries around their work. Miller writes “Like it or not, pastors are screens on which people project their expectations of us and the life of discipleship. We can’t simply refuse, reject, or deny their expectations without consequence. The usual consequence is surprise and truncated relationships. If we wish to be a pastor of a community of people, there are very few reasons to set inflexible boundaries. We will disappoint expectations enough in the normal course of affairs.”²³

In her book *Staying In Bounds: Straight Talk On Boundaries for Effective Ministry*, Eileen Schmitz begins by offering a series of case studies about clergy boundaries that go awry.

Most of the stories give examples of where the clergy person is completely unaware of the problems until it seems to be way too late. Schmitz writes “Boundaries exist in the interpersonal realm as well, but interpersonal boundaries are not straightforward. In the interpersonal realm, we don’t have the benefit of physical senses to detect the boundaries. Personal boundaries relate to our sphere of influence or interactions, not where our skin ends and the fresh air begins.”²⁴ This text is a wonderful resource that contains both personal stories, and the theory that proves that boundary setting is not only difficult, but sometimes impossible to see and to manage. In a later chapter of the text, Schmitz states “Unfortunately, healthy boundaries are not always obvious. Identifying the best boundary for a particular situation may require experimentation. The most appropriate boundary will depend on my resources, personality, and

²³ Miller-McLemore, Mark. “Revaluing” 124.

²⁴ Schmitz, Eileen. *Staying in Bounds : Straight Talk on Boundaries for Effective Ministry*. Vol. 1st ed. St. Louis, Mo: Chalice Press, 2010. 25.

health; the personality and health of the other person in the relationship; and the immediate circumstances.”²⁵ Setting of boundaries for clergy centers around areas such as protecting family time, setting clear expectations about phone calls and when they should occur, ways in which clergy interact/meet with people in order to protect both parties, and a myriad of other areas as well. At this point in my study, the important thing is to acknowledge, and the texts agree, that setting boundaries is one of the most challenging things a clergy person is in need of doing. Setting boundaries includes creating times set apart for rest and reflection.

A Glimpse at Successful Self-Care

Bruce Epperly writes in his book, Starting with Spirit about two pastors who practice solid boundary setting and self-care. “Bonnie sees boundaries as a spiritual issue, requiring the utmost intentionality on the part of both the pastor and her or his congregation. She notes, “When I came to this congregation, I told them that I needed two silent retreats each year and would like the budget to include monthly visits with both a counselor and a spiritual director.” These have been essential, Bonnie affirms, to ensuring both the quality of her spiritual life and her congregational leadership. In her meetings with her counselor Bonnie focuses on issues going on in the church and the quality of her responses to them. Her counselor helps her discern how she is relating to her congregation or how best to respond to a problem situation. She also consults with her counselor and spiritual director when issues at church touch her own pain and vulnerability. This helps her “get out of the way” so she can be a good pastor.

Allen, a Presbyterian pastor in suburban Baltimore, follows this approach to boundary setting. Allen writes “I work hard and constantly seek to improve myself in ministry, but I need

²⁵ Schmitz, Eileen Staying in Bounds, 36.

to remember that ultimately God is sovereign in my life, and in the church. God always finds a way, even when I can't. Because God is sovereign, I need to be faithful in my calling, but I don't need to do everything. When I'm tempted to see myself as indispensable, God reminds me that God's in charge and I'm God's servant. This sets me free, and also to rest.²⁶

The Need for Retreat

Helen Cahill writes, "Even those who regularly make efforts to pay attention to the Spirit need extended periods of time for a deeper listening. Retreat, a pause along the road of life, provides this opportunity." Cahill continues by identifying her definition of retreat. She writes, "It is a time and place of quiet and solitude to focus on our relationships with self, others, the earth, and God. While problem solving and personal growth and development may be benefits of retreat, the actual focus of retreat is our relationship with God."²⁷ Interestingly enough, clergy often speak of seasons in their lives where they feel anything but connected to God. Colleagues share stories with me about walking through months, and perhaps even years where they have not taken the time to re-connect with God in any way or form. Good friends speak of the deep desire to take some time away from their current ministries, even for a few days, so that they might find a place of quiet and solitude, and then be able to re-focus, and re-charge those parts of their minds and souls that have been depleted for so long. It is in fact "time apart" that is the critical need. Clergy, who are supposed to be models of spiritual practice and holy listening must engage in these practices themselves. Cahill writes "But the purpose of time apart, whether on a

²⁶ Bruce Epperly, *Starting with Spirit* (Herndon Virginia: Alban Institute, 2011).

²⁷ Cahill, Helen, *Need Some Alone Time?*, U.S. Catholic, August 2007m 24-25

daily basis or on an extended retreat, is to help us to be aware of and respond to the stirrings of the Spirit that take place as we encounter life.”²⁸

Diane Chandler speaks further about the need for rest and retreat as a way to improve self-care in clergy. She begins by writing “Spiritual dryness is experienced as spiritual lethargy, a lack of vibrant spiritual encounter with God and an absence of spiritual resources.”²⁹ Chandler goes on to argue that rest taking practices, such as retreat “renew depleted spiritual, emotional, and physical reserves, and may serve to prevent or reduce burnout.”³⁰ This is the primary goal of this project: to examine ways in which clergy can improve their self-care, and restore their souls, through participating in a retreat experience, and learning ways to engage those periods of spiritual dryness.

Bruce and Katherine Epperly speak of the value of retreat when they write “When we do not take adequate time for rest and contemplation, for simply replenishment by whatever means work best for us, we become distracted, impatient, weary, and stale. This is one of the messages of the narrative of Mary and Martha. Jesus’ response to Martha is not motivated by her focus on preparing the meal rather than entering into conversation, but her attitude toward the task at hand...Martha needs to take time for laughter and conversation, theological reflection and relaxation.”³¹ So often clergy find themselves playing the role of Martha in this Gospel story.

²⁸ Cahill, *Need Some Time*, 26

²⁹ Chandler, Diane. “Pastoral Burnout and the Impact of Personal Spiritual Renewal, Rest-Taking, and Support System Practices.” *Pastoral Psychology* 58, no. 3 (June 2009): 273–87.

³⁰ Chandler, *Pastoral Burnout*, 276

³¹ Epperly, Bruce and Katherine. *Feed The Fire: Avoiding Clergy Burnout*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008.

They feel like they need to prepare, and plan, and work with no end in sight. Instead, clergy are called to be more like Mary; to sit at the feet of Jesus in order to listen to what is going on deep inside their souls, and in their relationship with the Holy.

Retreat Concepts/Basic Retreat Construction

While I have some professional background in camp and retreat ministries, and while designing a retreat is not new to me, I did want to complete some research into best retreat practices and best ways to provide engaging and relevant experiences for the clergy who will eventually experience the retreat.

Debora Jackson writes “Jesus was trying to show us a different way of being---a way not frenzied or frenetic but a way that is gentle and unhurried. This is what we learn if we accept his invitation. Jesus’ way and model of ministry was one in which he ebbed and flowed---from ministry to solitary communion with God---so while he gave of himself, he was never far from his source and supply. That connection made ministry possible. In emptying himself, Jesus was restored to continue to give to others. This is what Jesus is teaching us.”³² This quote demonstrates how Jesus shows the need for retreat, the need to not constantly be in ministry all of the time, but instead to go away from it all. Jackson’s text goes on to explain what church leaders say about their own retreat experiences, and it also answers the question about why clergy need retreats in the first place. She says “Time apart gives us a renewed sense of perspective, providing courage and resolve to move on in the face of things that create apprehension. Retreat helps us recognize that staring at and struggling with an issue is an

³² Jackson, Debora. *Spiritual Practices for Effective Leadership: 7 Rs of Sanctuary for Pastors*. Judson Press, 2015. 64.

exercise in diminishing returns. We do not become more productive when we wrestle with a situation without reprieve.”³³ Thus in this text, the case for taking retreat time is made. It makes sense that clergy need to come away from it all, and engage with God through spiritual practices in order to become better at self-care, in the areas of time management, physical care, and setting boundaries, as well as all other issues of care that arise in the life of ministry.

Nancy Ferguson and Kevin Witt write “Christian retreats have a special focus that goes beyond personal growth or typical vacation getaways. All church retreats have a spiritual dimension that recognizes the Spirit of God---the Holy Spirit. Retreats provide a period of withdrawal from disruption and unending responsibilities. They allow us to step out of routine; so we can look upon our lives and the world with God in mind.”³⁴ I have included this as a foundational idea for the building of the retreat. It is critical that the retreat serve as a “stepping out” of routines, so that clergy can experience a greater sense of clarity, as they listen for the voice of the Spirit. Therefore moments of reflection and silence follow any and all informational aspects of the retreat, to allow for processing of information and time for clergy to make connections with their lives and ministries.

Jane Vennard writes “When designing your own retreat, be creative and open to the movement of the Spirit. If your retreat design comes only from your mind and your will and the desire to “get it right”, it can become rigid, even if it appears to be spacious and fluid. As you create the structure that allows retreatants to place themselves before God, watch for balance

³³ Jackson, Debora. *Spiritual Practices* p. 68

³⁴ Ferguson, Nancy, and Kevin Witt. *The Retreat Leader’s Manual: A Complete Guide to Organizing Meaningful Christian Retreats*. Nashville TN: Discipleship Resources, 2006.

between silence and speech, between solitude and community. Remember that the monastic way includes worship, prayer, study, work, and leisure.”³⁵

This is where the results of my survey are most critical. I have examined carefully the previous retreat experiences of the clergy who participate, both the good, the bad, and the marginal. I worked to build a retreat that has the right balance; both determined by the results of the survey, my own previous retreat participant and leader experiences, as well as the information in the texts that I have studied.

Is Self-Care Even The Real Issue?

There is a fascinating discussion in an article written by Amy Frykholm from *Christian Century*. Her analysis was recently completed in April of 2018. Frykholm suggests that there is a bit of alarmism in regard to clergy self-care that may not be as warranted as we might think, or perhaps it is not as warranted as we have led ourselves to believe. The Clergy Health Initiative was created to work with United Methodist clergy, and the findings from the study contradict the doom and gloom that is often presented to the public and to clergy circles about how horrible clergy take care of themselves. Frykholm writes “This portrait of ministry is so striking and has circulated so widely that it has come to shape many people’s sense of the state of clergy...the CHI has investigated depression in clergy and found that about 9 to 11 percent of clergy deal with depression. That figure is about 4 percentage point higher than the general population, but nowhere near the level of distress Krejcir’s figures suggest.”³⁶ While this makes me pause for a

³⁵ Vennard, Jane E. *Be Still: Designing and Leading Contemplative Retreats*. [Bethesda, Md.]: Alban Institute, 2000.

³⁶ Frykholm, Amy. “Your pastor isn’t as unhealthy as you might think”. *Christian Century* (April 2018) 38.

moment, it became clear to me that the purpose of this article is not to minimize the fact that clergy need to take care of themselves, but to point out that the statistics may not be as high, and also to show that the reasons for clergy burnout lie in greater amounts outside of what the clergy can control.

For example, Matt Bloom writes, “The reason that pastors may become less adaptable is sometimes because their well-being is diminished, sometimes it is because their identity is rigid, and sometimes it is because they are in a context that simply will not allow them to change...Bloom continues, “Being a pastor is much more difficult than it used to be. I think the ecosystem is not as conducive to flourishing: the demands are higher, the support systems are not as strong. As churches have seen their membership rolls drop, they have responded in ways that have sometimes been very detrimental to the well-being of clergy.”³⁷

I believe that this conversation adds to the one in progress. This article/study broadens the term self-care quite a bit, and again, instead of being alarmist, it suggests that there is more to clergy health than simply how clergy take care of themselves. The authors suggest that environment plays a key part in how healthy clergy are, and how they are able to maintain that health over time. Again Bloom “wonders if the underlying issue is how pastors relate to their context...sometimes the environment is constraining in a way that is not authentic to who you are, to your core values and beliefs, and to your sense of call.”³⁸ After reflecting on this article, I felt led to add a question about how context has contributed to their current health: emotionally, physically, and spiritually. I have built some material into the retreat focused on working with/creating healthy environments/contexts in their ministry settings.

³⁷ Frykholm, Amy, Christian Century, 39.

³⁸ Frykholm, Amy, Christian Century 39.

Chapter 3: Survey Results

Survey Questions

1. Tell me about your current self-care practices.
2. How does your ministry setting/context contribute to your current health: spiritual, physical and emotional?
3. How do you set healthy boundaries?
4. How do you care for yourself physically?
5. How do you manage your time?
6. Describe your personal experience taking retreats.
7. If a retreat was going to be designed just for you, what topics would you like to see covered? Why?

Implementation/Logistics

Twenty five surveys were distributed to random United Methodist Clergy of the Baltimore Washington Annual Conference. All of the participants are colleagues with whom I have a professional and/or personal connection. All surveys were returned in a manila envelope with no identifying characteristics, as outlined in my Human Subject application. No links between the participants and their responses are possible, and therefore will not be reflected in this project.

Seventeen of the twenty five surveys distributed were returned to me for qualitative/ thematic identification, which involved taking each of the seven questions and reading for both common themes and also for ideas that may stand alone and yet still require attention.

This chapter will reflect that qualitative/thematic analysis, and is serves as the building block for the structure and content of the retreat that was constructed to serve as a tool for improved self-care practices for these participating clergy and all other clergy in the conference.

The format for the remainder of this chapter will consist of each question identified in bold print at the top of each page, and a thematic discussion of the responses provided below each question.

Question 1: Tell me about your self-care practices.

Each participant began their response with a phrase that resembles “it is very important to engage in self-care practices”, thus indicating an awareness that this topic is one worth their attention. The majority of responses spoke of the fact that it is challenging to be consistent with self-care, and that often times this results in doing simple things like taking a nap. There was a common theme that there is very little energy left to be creative about care.

Taking a weekly Sabbath appeared in every answer to this question, as did making sure to find time for family and friends. Some indicated that they are currently successful at doing those things, and others spoke of the need to improve in these areas.

Most of the participants commented that in order to engage in productive self-care, there is a necessity for time away from their ministry setting. Some spoke of lengthy retreats, while others simply spoke of time away as being their daily hour walking the dog.

Regular connections/meetings with colleagues was part of many comments. Again, most indicated that they had some way of doing so already in their schedules, while some said that geography limited these opportunities.

Finding time for physical exercise came up in most responses. These answers ranged from walking the dog, to running ten miles each week, with every variation in between. Most also stated that even though they were engaged in some sort of physical exercise, that it most likely was not enough, and they hoped to improve in this area.

Working to maintain a healthy diet is something that each participant indicated was a struggle, ranging from a real health problem, to being simply an annoyance. Nonetheless, the need to eat healthy foods is seen as a way to maintain self-care.

Question 2: How does your ministry setting/context contribute to your current health: spiritual, physical, emotional?

There seemed to be two sides presented in the surveys. On one side clergy are serving congregations that are completely supportive of their ministry, resulting in clergy who are healthy in all of these areas. On the other side, there are ministry contexts that are toxic, which caused one clergyperson to write “I would say my ministry context has a uniformly negative effect on my health.”

Many of the participants indicated that their Staff Parish Relations committees specifically set goals to help clergy maintain health in these areas. These same ministry settings were described using words such as: cooperative, supportive, loving, and encouraging.

Teamwork was another term used in survey responses to this question. In those responses, it seems that in ministry contexts where teamwork is encouraged and promoted, the health of the clergyperson was significantly better than for those in situations that seemed antagonistic.

Strained relationships with church members seemed to be an indicator of unhealthy ministry contexts, which in turn proved to be unhealthy for the clergy involved. There was an interconnected relationship clearly shown between strained relationships and a minister’s health in all three areas: spiritual, physical, and emotional.

Each and every response to this question proved to illustrate that ministry contexts have a direct and powerful influence over the quality of self-care for that particular clergyperson. It was also abundantly clear that ministry context is not something that a pastor can control. They instead have to adjust, and care for themselves accordingly.

Question 3: How do you set healthy boundaries?

A common theme around each response to this question was the fact that each clergyperson sets these boundaries at the beginning of their appointments in particular ministry settings. Most said that they identify their boundaries in areas such as family, time off, finances, Sabbath, and office hours, so that there is little confusion as their time with a parish progresses.

Many responses indicated a need to stop and focus here, saying that setting boundaries is challenging, and that they mostly just respond to the needs of ministry as they arise, and that each day and week is different. These responses indicated a desire to change this, as it is a deficit in personal care for sure.

Social media boundaries came up in many of the responses. Many clergy indicated that they maintain separate email and Facebook pages for church and their personal life. A concern was expressed in five of the surveys indicated that social media is a hard boundary to set and maintain. A few people said that they steer clear of social media all together, with the exception of using email for communication.

Revisiting boundaries within ministry contexts was a common theme. As time passes, boundaries change, therefore adjustments are needed along the journey. Failing to adjust and change can be the precursor for misunderstandings on the part of congregations, and can also become obstacles for clergy in maintain their own self-care.

Many of the clergy spoke of using the help of other people to set boundaries; such as their administrative assistants and family members. Setting these “screens” seems to be helpful in maintaining privacy, quiet times, and time off from work.

4. How do you care for yourself physically?

The majority of the responses to this question focused on the fact that most people know that physical care is important, but it is one of the most overlooked elements of self-care, in particular by clergy.

About half of the participants indicated that they do attend regular doctor's appointments, and have yearly physicals. The other half said that they often overlook regular health care, due to the pace of their individual schedules and the fact that it is difficult to get an appointment to fit in with the demands of the work.

Almost all of the participants said that they do not get enough sleep. Causes for this centered on there not being "enough hours in a day" to do the work that is asked of them. It seems that the challenge lies in time management, which will be addressed by a later question. Most of the participants recognize that lack of sleep is not a good thing, and there is a strong desire to improve in this area.

Walking seems to be the exercise of choice among the clergy that completed the surveys. Most of them indicated that they do walk some, but not enough. There were two runners in the group, but they too indicated that it is hard to fit in the exercise.

Comments for this question had many repetitive themes, such as: "it is hard to eat healthily when my time is so crunched, and food is everywhere!" and "refusing food when offered could be misconstrued as rude, and so I never refuse, even when I should" and "when can I possibly find the time to exercise and eat well, when I am running from place to place".

Overall, this question had the least amount of attention and detail, when compared to other questions, and in some cases it was left blank.

Question 5: How do you manage your time?

About half of the responses dealt with long range time planning. Many wrote about planning church meetings a year in advance, so that all of those who need to attend would have time to plan. Others wrote about setting their vacations and retreat times also a year in advance, so that the church was prepared to go on in their absence.

There were many references to setting weekly office hours, setting a regular routine and trying to stay with it as much as possible.

Many participants wrote about using tools, such as their computers and phones to physically manage their time, and remind them of where they are supposed to be at a particular time.

Only two responses from all seventeen indicated limiting work time, to be sure and be present for themselves and their families. Some said that they would only work an eight hour day when possible, with the exception of emergencies of course.

Many responses indicated the need to do work in this area. Some were honest and indicated that sometimes the schedule of a clergyperson is not able to be managed, or restricted, such as in the case of emergencies, deaths, etc.

One person reflected on the idea that one of the appealing things about being a clergyperson is that no day is the same. While this person indicated that this makes the job interesting, they also were honest and reflected that this characteristic of their schedule can also be a source of stress for them, and for their friends and family.

Question #6: Describe your personal experiences taking retreats.

There seemed to be some confusion about the concept of retreat. About one third of the responses talked about a time when they went away somewhere quiet so that they could plan their sermon schedules for the year. Others spoke of planning retreats with their leadership teams etc.

Only two of the responses indicated that they had ever spent time in silence on their retreats. And the most time indicated was twenty four hours.

Three participants indicated that their time away on retreat helped them to stay spiritually connected.

Three participants indicated that because of their introversion, silence is something that they would like more of in their retreat experiences. This will come into play in question 7 also.

One participant wrote about how exhausting their retreat experiences have been, based on the fact that the retreat schedule was as jammed packed as their work schedule at home. This person said that they came home more tired than when they left.

All seventeen responses indicated that they were not always completely pleased with the retreat experience, whether it be with one element that didn't sit well, or whether they found the whole experience to be the opposite of what it was described to be.

Overall, this question lacked details in the responses, indicating that the retreat experience is not something that is as known, or routine for the clergy in my response pool, which lends itself to my assertion that a well-planned retreat will be a welcomed resource for some, and brand new to many others.

Question #7: If a retreat was going to be designed for you, what topics would you like to see covered? Why? Various responses listed below.

I would like to see music used as a spiritual practice, and learn ways to do that.

Contemplative prayer, because it's valuable and misunderstood.

Long periods of silent meditation

Working with partners/groups to process

Time set aside for listening and quiet

Information about spirituality of different traditions

Use of different learning styles

Simple ways of using spiritual practices

Conversation, and time to be social

Time for sleep

Time for physical exercise

Time spent in nature/outside if possible

Time to journal/reflect on the information that we will gather

Analysis of Survey Process

As stated earlier, twenty five surveys were handed out, and seventeen came back completed. To begin with, I found that the responses overall were honest, thorough and written in a way that indicated that the participating clergy wanted to be helpful, and also wanted to contribute to a project that would be fruitful once completed.

It was clear to me that the questions about physical care and time management caused some participants to hold back, and in some cases to leave the questions blank, which indicated perhaps that they struggle in these areas and didn't know quite how to show it.

Question # 2, which asked about the impact of their ministry context proved to be in line with the research I conducted, meaning that context has a huge impact on how one goes about self-care, and in some cases can sabotage it all together.

Questions #6 and #7 were answered very specifically, naming past retreat experience if any, and also naming the things that would be helpful should they attend the retreat I will design. These questions will prove most useful as I create the format and each individual talk that I will create for the retreat program.

Chapter 4: The Retreat Experience

Leader Notes and Teaching Hints

Note: Each retreat element is indicated in bold, with teaching notes to follow. The list is in the order of the master schedule.

THURSDAY

Retreat team arrival: Team should take time to get settled in their respective rooms, and then gather before participants arrive for prayer and focus. The retreat leader should break the ice by asking an opening question such as “What do you hope to teach someone this weekend? Or “What do you hope to learn while you facilitate this weekend?” Responses should be shared aloud, and the retreat leader should lead a group prayer, prior to clergy arrival.

Participant Arrival: Check in table should be set up in front of gathering area with name tags for each person. Room assignments should also be at this table. Each person checking in should receive a tag and room number. Time should be allowed for participants to go and find their rooms, and then come back to gathering space for some free conversation.

Large Group Session 1/Why a Retreat?: This session should be set up on a round, with a candle on a table in the middle of the large circle. The candle should be lit before beginning the talk. Presenter will always open with a prayer, and then move into sharing information contained in the retreat outline/notes for this particular talk. Clergy should be encouraged to ask questions as they arise during the presentation, and then time for questions should be allowed at the end. The final part of each presentation session is focused on the dyad questions, which should be distributed to listeners just prior to completion. A prayer, by the presenter should be offered at the end.

Evening Prayer and Worship: This prayer time should be the same in structure and set up each morning and evening. Again, this will take place in the main circle with the candle lit in the center, reminding us that the focus is on Christ, and prayerfully gathering and focusing our attention to the center of the circle. Responses in regular print should be read by the prayer leader. Responses in bold should be read by the large group. Many of the prayer experiences have moments of silence. These will get more comfortable with repetition, and so the leader should encourage the positive value of silence each time the group prays together.

Fellowship: Clergy are free to snack and talk with each other. This is important time, especially on the first night, so the retreat leader should encourage folks to stick around for a bit. Board games, cards, and puzzles, as well as coloring pages and journals should be set up around the room so that introverts can still be together and yet engaged in something that helps them focus. These activities should remain out for the entire retreat experience.

FRIDAY Planning Notes for Retreat Leaders

Breakfast: Encourage clergy to spend time at breakfast, and to eat something even if it's small in nature. It will be important for them to stay fed and hydrated through the weekend. Hunger and thirst could distract from the experience. Plus, this is another opportunity to share stories with clergy colleagues and to provide an environment of support. Menus will vary according to the site where the retreat is held. Leader should provide a grace before each meal.

Morning Prayer and Worship: Again, in the main circle with texts provided in clergy retreat binders. Encourage signing and participation in each worship experience, and remember to repeat the information about silence each time.

Break: This fifteen minute break is primarily used for a quick stretch, to grab a cup of coffee etc.

Large Group Session 2/Boundaries: This session should be set up on a round, with a candle on a table in the middle of the large circle. The candle should be lit before beginning the talk. Presenter will always open with a prayer, and then move into sharing information contained in the retreat outline/notes for this particular talk. Clergy should be encouraged to ask questions as they arise during the presentation, and then time for questions should be allowed at the end. The final part of each presentation session is focused on the dyad questions, which should be distributed to listeners just prior to completion. A prayer, by the presenter should be offered at the end.

Spiritual Tools Workshop/Lectio Divina: These sessions are less informative and more practical in nature. Begin by seeing if there is anyone in the group that has had experience with this practice, and allow them to share both good and bad stories. Share the background provided in the notes. Practice it as a whole group, as indicated, but also stress that this is usually done as an individual practice. Close by answering any questions.

Break: See notes above. This is for a quick stretch.

Lunch: Talk about the value of sitting with folks that they do not know. Encourage them to do so. Use this time to meet and greet with people that they have not met yet, or with whom they would like to continue a conversation from last night.

Large Group Session 3/Physical Care: This session should be set up on a round, with a candle on a table in the middle of the large circle. The candle should be lit before beginning the talk. Presenter will always open with a prayer, and then move into sharing information contained in the retreat outline/notes for this particular talk. Clergy should be encouraged to ask questions as they arise during the presentation, and then time for questions should be allowed at the end. The final part of each presentation session is focused on the dyad questions, which should be distributed to listeners just prior to completion. A prayer, by the presenter should be offered at the end. Provide a moment at the end for clergy to connect with someone who they might like to share their hour of physical activity.

Physical Activity Period: This is the time to take a walk, swim if it's possible, and hike the trails, or simply walk around inside if the weather won't permit outside activities. Clergy can do this alone, or with a partner, or vary this from day to day. Remind participants that they should only do activities that they are comfortable with and those things that their own bodies will allow.

Spiritual Tools Workshop/Silence: See notes in the retreat plan. Share those notes, and be sure to practice small amounts of silence during the workshop. Be sure to stress that not all experiences of silence will be the same for all participants. Share past experiences if the time allows. Allow for both positive and negative experiences. Assure folks that we will work on silence in small amounts, and that there is nothing to be nervous about.

Silent Hour/Quiet Prayer: Encourage clergy to find their own space: room, outside, corner of dining hall...whichever works best for them. Encourage them also to refrain from communicating with anyone during this time (unless an emergency) Review suitable ways to greet someone during a time of silence. Encourage them to jot down how they felt during this time to share at a later time, and to record differences through the days.

Dinner: Talk about the value of sitting with folks that they do not know. Encourage them to do so. Use this time to meet and greet with people that they have not met yet, or with whom they would like to continue a conversation from last night.

Physical Activity Period/Evening Walk: This is the time to take a walk, swim if it's possible, and hike the trails, or simply walk around inside if the weather won't permit outside activities. Clergy can do this alone, or with a partner, or vary this from day to day. Remind participants that they should only do activities that they are comfortable with and those things that their own bodies will allow.

Spiritual Tools Workshop/The Examen: Follow notes from planning guide. Practice as a whole group. Again, allow for those with experience to share those experiences, both positive and negative. Remind clergy that they will be practice this tonight before bed, as a solitary practice.

Evening Prayer and Worship: Follow bulletin in guide. This prayer time should be the same in structure and set up each morning and evening. Again, this will take place in the main circle with the candle lit in the center, reminding us that the focus on on Christ, and prayerfully gathering and focusing our attention to the center of the circle. Responses in regular print should be read by the prayer leader. Responses in bold should be read by the large group. Many of the prayer experiences have moments of silence. These will get more comfortable with repetition, and so the leader should encourage the positive value of silence each time the group prayers together.

Fellowship: Clergy are free to snack and talk with each other. This is important time, so the retreat leader should encourage folks to stick round for a bit. Board games, cards, and puzzles, as well as coloring pages and journals should be set up around the room so that introverts can still be together and yet engaged in something that helps them focus. These activities should remain out for the entire retreat experience.

SATURDAY

Silent Breakfast: Remind clergy that during this meal there is no conversation. Review good practices for asking someone to “pass the salt” without speaking. Encourage participants by telling them that this may be really, really hard for some, and super easy for others. Remind them to be patient with themselves either way, but to please be respectful of the silence of their peers.

Morning Prayer and Worship: Follow bulletin in guide. This prayer time should be the same in structure and set up each morning and evening. Again, this will take place in the main circle with the candle lit in the center, reminding us that the focus is on Christ, and prayerfully gathering and focusing our attention to the center of the circle. Responses in regular print should be read by the prayer leader. Responses in bold should be read by the large group. Many of the prayer experiences have moments of silence. These will get more comfortable with repetition, and so the leader should encourage the positive value of silence each time the group prays together.

Break: See notes above. This is for a quick stretch.

Large Group Session 4/ Time Management: This session should be set up on a round, with a candle on a table in the middle of the large circle. The candle should be lit before beginning the talk. Presenter will always open with a prayer, and then move into sharing information contained in the retreat outline/notes for this particular talk. Clergy should be encouraged to ask questions as they arise during the presentation, and then time for questions should be allowed at the end. The final part of each presentation session is focused on the dyad questions, which should be distributed to listeners just prior to completion. A prayer, by the presenter should be offered at the end. Provide a moment at the end for clergy to connect with someone who they might like to share their hour of physical activity.

Physical Activity Period: This is the time to take a walk, swim if it’s possible, and hike the trails, or simply walk around inside if the weather won’t permit outside activities. Clergy can do this alone, or with a partner, or vary this from day to day. Remind participants that they should only do activities that they are comfortable with and those things that their own bodies will allow.

Journal/Reflection Time: Clergy should use this time to write about three things: how is their silence experience, how is their physical activity going? Where do they see God in all of this? These responses will not be shared unless they choose to.

Lunch: Talk about the value of sitting with folks that they do not know. Encourage them to do so. Use this time to meet and greet with people that they have not met yet, or with whom they would like to continue a conversation from last night.

Spiritual Tools Workshop/Our Calling and our Work: Invite participants to share a small part of their own call story. Share info from notes in guide. Answer any questions that might arise.

Silent Break: This is thirty minutes of silence, taken in whatever form the clergy would like. They can walk, or sit in a quiet corner, or visit the chapel. No talking should happen during this time.

Large Group Session 5/ Ministry Context: This session should be set up on a round, with a candle on a table in the middle of the large circle. The candle should be lit before beginning the talk. Presenter will always open with a prayer, and then move into sharing information contained in the retreat outline/notes for this particular talk. Clergy should be encouraged to ask questions as they arise during the presentation, and then time for questions should be allowed at the end. The final part of each presentation session is focused on the dyad questions, which should be distributed to listeners just prior to completion. A prayer, by the presenter should be offered at the end.

Spiritual Tools Workshop/Mindful Eating: Ask if there is anyone who has practiced this prayer experience? Share responses. Give information from guide, and remind them that will be asked to practice this mindful eating at dinner, which immediately follows, and will also be a silent meal.

Dinner: Practice silence and also mindful eating.

Evening Prayer and Worship: See notes above.

Fellowship: Clergy are free to snack and talk with each other. This is important time, so the retreat leader should encourage folks to stick round for a bit. Board games, cards, and puzzles, as well as coloring pages and journals should be set up around the room so that introverts can still be together and yet engaged in something that helps them focus. These activities should remain out for the entire retreat experience.

SUNDAY

Breakfast: Encourage clergy to spend time at breakfast, and to eat something even if it's small in nature. It will be important for them to stay fed and hydrated through the weekend. Hunger and thirst could distract from the experience. Plus, this is another opportunity to share stories with clergy colleagues and to provide an environment of support. Menus will vary according to the site where the retreat is held. Leader should provide a grace before each meal.

Spiritual Tools Workshop/Spiritual Direction and Self-Care: As with other practices, ask who has had experience with Spiritual Direction. Allow time for sharing those experiences. Use info from guide to provide information about this practice. Talk about how the set up for direction will go immediately following this workshop.

Silent Prayer/Opportunity for Direction: Clergy can sign up for 50 minutes of direction using the schedule provided and depending on the staffing of the retreat in regard to the number of directors. Others who do not wish to try direction should spend time in silent prayer, journaling and processing the weekend experience.

Lunch: See notes above. Is there someone with whom you have not shared a meal? This is your last chance! Push your comfort level and chat with someone you have not met yet.

Closing Worship: See bulletin in leader guide.

Evaluations and Departure: Give evaluations in one sitting, and stress the importance of the evaluation process for future planning of quality retreats for clergy.

Chapter 4: Retreat Schedule and Planning Resources

Thursday

5:00 p.m. Retreat team arrives to set up and pray together

6:00 p.m. Participants arrive, check into rooms and settle in

7:00 p.m. **Opening Session: Why a retreat?**

8:00 p.m. Ice-Breakers/Getting to know our colleagues

9:00 p.m. Evening Prayer and Worship

9:30 p.m. Fellowship

Friday

8:00 a.m. Breakfast

9:00 a.m. Morning Prayer and Worship

9:30 a.m. Break

9:45 a.m. **Session Two: Boundaries**

10:45 a.m. Spiritual Tools Workshop: *Lectio Divina*

11:45 a.m. Break

12:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 p.m. **Session Three: Physical Care**

2:00 p.m. Afternoon Walk, physical activity, personal care

3:00 p.m. Spiritual Tools Workshop: *Silence*

4:00 p.m. Silent Hour/Quiet Prayer

5:00 p.m. Dinner

6:00 p.m. Evening Walk, physical activity, personal care

7:00 p.m. Spiritual Tools Workshop: The Examen

8:00 p.m. Evening Prayer and Worship

8:30 p.m. Fellowship

Saturday

8:00 a.m. Silent Breakfast

9:00 a.m. Morning Prayer and Worship

9:30 a.m. Break

9:45 a.m. **Session Four: Time Management**

10:45 a.m. Morning Walk, physical activity, personal care

11:45 a.m. Journal/Reflection Time

12:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 p.m. Spiritual Tools Workshop: The Spirituality of our calling/our vocation/our work

2:00 p.m. Silent Break/Journal and Reflect

2:30 p.m. **Session Five: Ministry Context**

3:30 p.m. Afternoon Walk, physical activity, personal care

4:30 p.m. Spiritual Tools Workshop: Mindful Eating

5:00 p.m. Dinner

6:00 p.m. Evening Prayer and Worship

7:00 p.m. Fellowship

Sunday

8:00 a.m. Silent Breakfast

9:00 a.m. Spiritual Tools Workshop: Spiritual Direction and Self-Care

10:00 a.m. Time of Silent Prayer and Opportunities for Spiritual Direction Session

12:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 p.m. Closing Prayer/Worship/Holy Communion

2:00 p.m. Evaluations, Departure

Large Group Session #1

Why Retreat?

The practice of taking a retreat has a lengthy history, many forms and traditions. It is also rooted in biblical stories. Let's begin our time by hearing a sampling of bible texts that talk about the practice of taking retreat.

Exodus 33:7, 11

Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, far away from camp. He called it the meeting tent. Everyone who wanted advice from the Lord would go out to the meeting tent outside the camp. In this way the Lord used to speak to Moses face-to-face, like two people talking to each other. Then Moses would come back to camp. But his young assistant Joshua, Nun's son, wouldn't leave the tent.

Notice that the tent was not only pitched outside the camp, but it was far away from camp. When Moses wanted advice from God he would go to this tent, far away from camp. When Moses was there, it was if he and God were speaking face to face, like two people talking to each other. And what about that kid Joshua? I wonder if he liked it so much more in the tent, than he did back at camp. And so he stayed.

1 Kings 19: 11-13

The Lord said, Go out and stand at the mountain before the Lord. The Lord is passing by. A very strong wind tore through the mountain and broke apart the stones before the Lord. But the Lord wasn't in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake. But the Lord wasn't in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire. But the Lord wasn't in the fire. After the fire, there was a sound. Thin. Quiet. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his coat. He went out and stood at the cave's entrance. A voice came to him and said, why are you here Elijah?

Notice the Lord said "go and stand at the mountain before the Lord". Elijah was asked to change location, to move away, to go somewhere different. When he was there all of these powerful, loud, enormous things happened...and because Elijah had gone away, moved away, taken on a new physical location, he was able to here God speak in the stillness, and in the quiet.

And then there is Jesus of course, our true model for moving away from it all and taking time in silence and solitude.

Mark 1:35

Early in the morning, well before sunrise, Jesus rose and went to a deserted place where he could be alone in prayer.

Matthew 14:22-23

Right then, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead to the other side of the lake while he dismissed the crowds. When he had sent them away, he went up onto a mountain by himself to pray. Evening came and he was alone.

Jesus makes the disciples go away. Jesus makes the crowds go away. And then he climbs to the top of the mountain to be alone with God, and to pray. Evening came and he was alone. There is something powerful and significant about Jesus choosing to be alone.

Luke 5:16

But Jesus would withdraw to deserted places for prayer.

Notice the language. Withdrawal implies a conscious choice to move to a different spot, to get away from one's current location, to seek new surroundings. And notice that it says to go to deserted places. Places that are deserted are often unfamiliar, but more importantly they are places where the person will not be bothered, distracted, or tempted to listen to competing voices.

And so scripture tells us that the practice of retreat happened. It shows us that it is not a new idea, that it is not something that strange or out of the ordinary, that in fact Moses and Elijah did it, and of course Jesus did it as well.

What does scripture tell us about the human condition that makes us yearn for retreat? Why do we need it?

Psalms 42

Just like a deer that craves streams of water, my whole being craves you, God.

My whole being thirsts for God, for the living God.

When will I come and see God's face?

We have an inner yearning to sit or stand in God's presence. Like a thirsty deer looking for water, craving it in fact, we crave God. We thirst for God, and experiences of the living God. We seek (whether we know it or not) to see God's face. And it is when we pull away from our regular surroundings that God's face becomes clearest. I truly believe that.

Psalms 62

Only in God do I find rest; my salvation comes from him.

Only in God is my rock and my salvation---my stronghold---I won't be shaken anymore.

Only in God do we find rest...and when we find that rest, we are not as easily shaken. When we meet God face to face on retreat, it helps us stand strong when we return. Finding rest in God often requires us to find a place that will allow us to rest, in order to hear God most clearly.

Psalms 131:2

No, but I have calmed and quieted myself

Like a weaned child on its mother; I am like the weaned child that is within me.

Only when we pull away and sit with God do we feel this comfort, like a weaned child. We are quieted.

So what about our vocation causes us to need retreat? Why do clergy in particular need to spend time getting away from it all?

Christian retreat facilitator Rachel Gilmore says “Quite frankly, God’s people need to go on retreat because we’re over the edge most of the time---overscheduled, overcommitted, overtired, overworked, over-worried, overemotional, over budget---over and over and over again. A retreat helps break that pattern of routinely going over the edge. It inserts a time-out, a Sabbath rest, in the middle of our fast-paced, sensory overloaded, modern lives.”³⁹

Believe it or not, all of those words that start with over...they have everything to do with us as clergy not being aware of how we are caring for ourselves. We are some of the most over_____ people in the world. And this, in my opinion is because we have let go of self-care. In the pursuit of caring for the spiritual, practical, emotional, physical, needs of others, we have in the process forgotten ourselves.

We are craving those streams of water, but haven’t stopped by the stream in such a long time.

We need to calm and quiet ourselves, but have forgotten how.

We desperately need to rest in God’s loving presence, but can’t slow down enough to do it.

Emilie Griffin writes “A retreat is simply a matter of going into a separate place to seek Christian growth in a disciplined way. Retreat offers us the grace to be ourselves in God’s presence without self-consciousness, without masquerade...you should make a retreat because your heart demands it.”⁴⁰

And so I believe we are here together to work on self-care, because we need to experience God’s grace in God’s presence. We need to leave behind our self-consciousness, and we need to be here hiding behind nothing, and being ourselves.

We are here because our hearts demand it.

And so let us spend some time talking about why we are here. Why I am here, why you are here, why the person sitting to left and right are here...

³⁹ Gilmore, Rachel. *The Complete Leader’s Guide to Christian Retreats*. Valley Forge PA: Judson Press, 2009.

Dyad Discussion #1

Why Retreat?

Directions: Take ten minutes in private to write/reflect on the following questions. Share your responses with your partner. Share by having one person speak about all of their answers completely, and then move on to the second person. Remember to be attentive listeners.

1. What is your best self-care practice? How does it benefit you and your ministry?
2. In what area do you struggle the most with self-care? How does it hinder your life or a part of your ministry?
3. Why are you here?

Ice-Breakers

Interviews

Please pair up with one person in the room who you do not know. Find a place in the room where you can speak together without others hearing your responses. Answer the following three questions: What is your strangest talent? Which biblical character are you most like? Why? What is the compliment that you receive most? Listen carefully to the answers from your partner and be prepared to introduce them to the group and share the responses to these questions.

Blessings Seat Swap

This game is a way to reflect on God's blessings while getting to know each other. Have the participants sit in chairs in a circle. There should be one fewer chair than the number of people present. The person who does not have a chair stands in the middle of the circle to start the game. This person will say, "I am blessed because...", and the person will fill in the blank. Anyone in the circle who feels she shares the same blessing must get up and move to a different seat. For instance, the person in the middle might say, "I am blessed because I have kids." Then all of the people with kids would have to get up and move to a different seat. The person in the middle will rush to find a seat as well. Whoever is left without a seat must move to the middle and go next. Encourage players to think of unusual, specific blessings that might even be humorous, such as being blessed with the ability to juggle or being blessed with five or more siblings.

Jigsaw Puzzle

This game helps emphasize Bible verses and allows time for meeting new people. Purchase some simple three-to-four-piece children's jigsaw puzzles, and spray paint them a solid, light color. Use a different color for each puzzle. Assemble the puzzles, then write a Bible verse on each one using a dark permanent marker. Dismantle the pieces and place the pieces for each puzzle into a separate bag. Randomly distribute one puzzle piece to each person. Instruct the participants to find the other people who have the same color piece they have. Tell the people with like-colored pieces to assemble their puzzle and share something about themselves as they add their own pieces to the puzzle. Once all the groups have finished, talk about how God made each person unique, yet each individual fits into the larger Christian body as a whole.

**icebreakers found at oureverydaylife.com

Thursday Evening Prayer

***all morning and evening prayer formats are taken from Daily Prayer For All Seasons, Church Publishing, New York.*

Opening: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. **You call us by name and we are yours.**

Prayer: O God of all the prophets, you knew us and chose us before you formed us in the womb. Fill us with faith that speaks your word, hope that does not disappoint, and love that bears all things for your sake, until that day, when we shall know you fully, even as we are known by you. **Amen.**

Praise

Lord, you now have set your servant free, to go in peace as you have promised; for these eyes of mine have seen the Savior whom you have prepared for all the world to see; a Light to enlighten the nations, and the glory of your people Israel.

Scripture

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved;^[a] with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” ⁸ And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

Meditation

With certitude Simeon opened ancient arms to ancient light. Decades before the cross, the tomb and the new life, he knew new life. What depth of faith he drew on, turning illumined towards the deep night. (Denise Levertov)

How will we let go of fear and draw on our faith as Simeon did?

Prayer

Son of God, in the light of faith, we offer our prayers.

May we follow closely your lead.

For all who face darkness with fear this night,

Redeem our fears with hope and confidence.

For all the places in this world that yearn for new life.

Grant the light of your saving grace.

For all the joys and concerns of our hearts. (End with the Lord's Prayer)

Friday Morning Prayer

Opening

Arise, shine, for your light has come.

And the glory of the Lord has dawned upon you.

Scripture

God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.
(Genesis 1:3)

Meditation

How will I invited God’s live to shine through me today?

Prayer

Brightest and best of the stars of the morning, Dawn on our darkness and lend us your aid; Star of the east, the horizon adorning, Guide where the infant Redeemer is laid.

Silent Prayer (5 minutes)

Going Out

Arise, shine, for your light has come

And the Glory of the Lord has dawned upon you.

Large Group Session #2

Boundaries

Introductory Illustration: One particular clergy colleague decided to call upon his Pastor Parish Relations Committee for help in setting boundaries, for you see, he was beginning to feel overwhelmed by his daily tasks as a pastor. The conversation went something like this...

He writes, “After I made my presentation I paused to await the reactions of the committee members. Four people spoke up right away and their comments nearly overwhelmed me. The first person to speak was the lay leader of the congregation. She said to me “Well, Larry, if you can’t do the job, you’re still young enough to get a job in counseling.” She knew that I had a degree in counseling.

Then the lay member to annual conference spoke up and asked me “Well, pastor, what did you expect when you came into ministry?” The third lady responded “I know pastors who do more than you do.” She was suggesting that others worked more than sixty hours per week.

Finally, an older man spoke up and said, “I raised cattle for thirty years and I never took a day off!”⁴¹

This same clergy colleague wrote the following statement after his meeting with the committee: The issue is boundaries, and if one does not have them when first hired or appointed as a pastor, it can be very difficult to reestablish them once they have been violated. That includes the use of our time and space and sometimes even the use of our spouse’s time. Of course there are some of us like me, who make it difficult to set limits for ourselves because we are workaholics. We will find all kinds of excuses to go to the office “For just a few minutes” even on our days off.

⁴¹ Easum, Bill. The Desperate Pastor.com, Dec 27, 2018

There are many kinds of boundaries that clergy need to put in place, and as this colleague suggests, the earlier we put them in place, the easier it will be for us to actually live by them with the least amount of flack coming back from our congregations.

Theological Boundaries: sometimes we feel called to compromise our beliefs when it comes to who we will perform weddings, for, who we will baptize, who we will conduct funerals for etc. For each of these theological/pastoral areas we should have clearly established boundaries.

Ethical Boundaries: we should have clear ideas about how the church should conduct business, how money should be raised, how issues concerning morality and values should be dealt with, and how all other ethical issues should be decided.

Personal Boundaries: this includes what our private space consists of, in particular this should refer to our homes/parsonages if we live on church property.

Family Boundaries: this is often overlooked. We must be extremely intentional when drawing boundaries around our families. Privacy guidelines should be established early in our ministry. In particular we should establish what is fair game in regard to our spouse and our children.

Spiritual Boundaries: Personal daily prayer time should be clearly blocked out and placed on our schedules. Monthly and yearly retreat times should be placed on the church schedule at the beginning of each year, so that the congregation knows that we will be getting away to spiritually refresh ourselves as part of our routine of self-care.

Economic Boundaries: We are often talked into making economic sacrifices: salary, benefits, and vacation time etc...supposedly for the good of the church. We should always be paid equitably and the church should take good “financial care” of us.

Professional Boundaries: We are bound by particular denominational boundaries, which should be clearly articulated, reviewed with our congregations at the beginning of our appointments.

Where do we meet with individuals for counseling? What are our “safe-sanctuary” regulations in regard to clergy relationships?

Questions to consider when setting overall boundaries for our ministries...

Is there someone else who could do a better job of completing the task I am working on right now?

Am I trying to be too many things to too many people?

When was the last time I spent quality time with my spouse and children?

Am I involved in an equipping ministry so that others in the church body are given the opportunity to exercise their gifts?

How is my walk with God?

Is my life a total outflow?

When was the last time I took a vacation? A weekend off? A retreat? A sabbatical?

Am I making time to have regular exercise?

Am I learning how to say no?

Am I expecting to see my pastoral goals reached too soon?

Dyad Discussion #2

Take ten minutes of quiet time to reflect and write answers to the following questions. Share your responses with you partner. Take time to listen attentively as each of you speaks. Offer no solutions, but simply listen to your partners' story. Acknowledge the importance of each other's stories.

1. What are some examples of boundaries that I set in the following areas: ethical, professional, spiritual, and theological?
2. When was the last time you spend quality time with your family/partner/children? What did you do? What was significant about this time spent with family?
3. Describe a typical day off.
4. How is your walk with God?
5. Describe a typical quiet time/prayer time.

Spiritual Tools Workshop: Lectio Divina

Choose a text of the Scriptures that you wish to pray. Many Christians use in their daily lectio divina one of the readings from the Eucharistic liturgy for the day; others prefer to slowly work through a particular book of the Bible. It makes no difference which text is chosen, as long as one has no set goal of "covering" a certain amount of text. The amount of text covered is in God's hands, not yours.

Place yourself in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become silent. Some Christians focus for a few moments on their breathing; others have a beloved "prayer word" or "prayer phrase" they gently recite.. For some, the practice known as "[centering prayer](#)" makes a good, brief introduction to lectio divina. Use whatever method is best for you and allow yourself to enjoy silence for a few moments.

Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow says, "I am for you today." Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In lectio divina, God is teaching us to listen to him, to seek him in silence. He does not reach out and grab us; rather, he gently invites us ever more deeply into his presence.

Take the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Do not be afraid of distractions. Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during lectio divina, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

Speak to God. Whether you use words, ideas, or images--or all three--is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. And give to him what you have discovered during your experience of meditation. Experience God by using the word or phrase he has given you as a means of blessing and of transforming the ideas and memories that your reflection on his word has awakened. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

Rest in God's embrace. And when he invites you to return to your contemplation of his word or to your inner dialogue with him, do so. Learn to use words when words are helpful, and to let go of words when they no longer are necessary. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity.

Sometimes in lectio divina, you may return several times to the printed text, either to savor the literary context of the word or phrase that God has given or to seek a new word or phrase to ponder. At other times, only a single word or phrase will fill the whole time set aside for lectio divina. It is not necessary to assess anxiously the quality of your lectio divina, as if you were "performing" or seeking some goal. Lectio divina has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

Read more at <https://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/catholic/2000/08/how-to-practice-lectio-divina.aspx#7CjdmfiBGxu8QrFF.99>

Lectio Divina as a Group Exercise

In the churches of the Third World, where books are rare, a form of corporate lectio divina is becoming common, in which a text from the Scriptures is meditated on by Christians praying together in a group.

This form of lectio divina works best in a group of between four and eight people. A group leader coordinates the process and facilitates sharing. The same text from the Scriptures is read out three times, followed each time by a period of silence and an opportunity for each member of the group to share the fruit of her or his lectio.

The first reading is for the purpose of hearing a word or passage that touches the heart. When the word or phrase is found, the group's members take it in, gently recite it, and reflect on it during the silence that follows. After the silence, each person shares which word or phrase has touched his or her heart.

The second reading (by a member of the opposite sex from the first reader) is for the purpose of "hearing" or "seeing" Christ in the text. Each ponders the word that has touched the heart and asks where the word or phrase touches his or her life that day. Then, after the silence, each member of the group shares what he or she has "heard" or "seen."

The third and final reading is for the purpose of experiencing Christ "calling us forth" into doing or being. Members ask themselves what Christ in the text is calling them to do or to become today or this week. After the silence, each shares for the last time, and the exercise concludes with each person praying for the person on the right of him or her.

Those who regularly practice this method of praying and sharing the Scriptures find it to be an excellent way of developing trust within a group. It also is an excellent way of consecrating projects and hopes to Christ before more-formal group meetings.

Read more at <https://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/catholic/2000/08/how-to-practice-lectio-divina.aspx#7CjdmfiBGxu8QrFF.99>

Large Group Session #3

Physical Care

Opening Illustration

“At the end of fifty minutes, I finally have leave the exercise bike and go to the rowing machine. My energy is building. I notice how pleased I am with my decision to go the workout route this evening. While vigorously exercising, I am processing the day and finding myself getting excited about some things I plan to do with the group in the morning. After twenty minutes on the rowing machine and another fifteen minutes lifting weights, I finally do get to the pool and the sauna. By this time I am feeling exhilarated and grateful. What a wonderful body God has given me! It has been the means to the experience of grace more often than anything else I can think of. I recall a line from the movie *Chariots of Fire*. The missionary youth is responding to the girlfriend who is trying to get him to give up the Olympics and go straight to seminary. “God has made me fast. When I run, I feel God’s pleasure.” I begin to feel God’s pleasure as I work my body to physical exhaustion. I am surprised by how much extra my body still has to give.”⁴²

Can anyone relate? This is a beautiful description of God’s grace offered through the discipline of vigorous exercise. But I am wondering how many of us can describe a similar experience, and then I wonder with what kind of regularity we have experienced this. You see, physical exercise is a gift from God, that goes hand in hand with our body which is a creation of God...but we very often fall short in this area of self-care.

Let’s take a moment to engage with a visualization exercise to connect with our thoughts and feelings about physical care.

⁴² Roy Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding A Balance for Effective Ministry* (The Alban Insitute, 1991).

“Take a minute now and close your eyes. Add some deep breathing. See if you can visualize within you a healthier person. Try to enter into how it would feel being that healthier you. Try to imagine how you would feel. Picture yourself walking down your street. Note the surprise you see in other people’s faces as they meet this new you. Hear yourself talking to them, answering the questions about how you were able to accomplish this change in yourself, be it physical, emotional, or spiritual. Get a sense of your level of self-esteem.

Also get in touch with the increased energy you would have available to you. Do not let your sense of failure with other attempts to become healthier sidetrack this visualization. Simply stay with sounds, feelings, and images that occur to you as you become the healthier person who waits inside of you.”⁴³ We all know how good it feels when we have the sense that we have accomplished something in the area of caring for ourselves. Because we are God’s creation, and because we are in a central, very visible leadership position in our churches, we should strive to make progress in this area. I have found that because this is an area of struggle for myself that my own congregations are pleased when I share in their struggles and work at becoming more fit right along with them as well. It is difficult to say the least, and I have not mastered a routine that works for me yet, but it is something that I strive for daily, all the while acknowledging that it is very hard thing to do, especially in ministry when we are surrounded by food at every gathering, and our schedules easily encourage us to eat fast food in the car as we drive to our next commitment. I encourage you to think of one way that you can improve your fitness level. Many experts simply say to “move more, and eat less”. This is something we can all try together, and it is also an area where we can hold one another accountable.

⁴³ Oswald, 147-148

Another area of physical care is centered on consumption. It is not a secret that clergy in particular are often over-fed and mal-nourished. As I stated earlier, we are faced with food at every meeting, every function, and at every funeral. There is a perception that if we turn away food offered at these gatherings, or god forbid when we are visiting in someone's home, that we are received as rude or inhospitable. There is some truth to this, but not as much as we have been told. The idea of "living to eat" verses "eating to live" is something we should think carefully about as we continue to reflect on the fact that we are God's living creation and care of that creation is our responsibility.

We need to train out palates to eat healthier, and to eat less. "Poor eating patterns compound the difficulties related to excessive stress and burnout. When our bodies are assaulted by bettering rams of emotional turmoil all day, and then we assault them with even more caffeine, sugar, salt, fat, alcohol, and refined flour, it's like a one-two punch. We could alleviate much of the stress and burnout in our lives simply by eating regular, balanced meals at appropriate times during the day."⁴⁴

Move more. Eat less. Eat better. Often experts will say just to do more of these things than you did yesterday and your health will improve. I will build some activities into the remainder of our time to help us move more, eat less, and eat better, and we will have some time to reflect on how we feel at the conclusion of the retreat. Pray for one another as we work on this area of self-care.

⁴⁴ Oswald, 152

Dyad Discussion #3

Take ten minutes of quiet time to reflect and write answers to the following questions. Share your responses with you partner. Take time to listen attentively as each of you speaks. Offer no solutions, but simply listen to your partners' story. Acknowledge the importance of each other's stories.

1. How do you attend to your physical care?
2. Are you satisfied with this area of your life?
3. What could you do differently to improve this area?
4. “What a wonderful body God has given me! It has been the means to the experience of grace more often than anything else I can think of.” Respond/React to this quote. Do you agree? Disagree? How does this statement make you feel?

Spiritual Tools Workshop: Silence

Article Written by: Ruth Haley Barton from the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, 2010

Here's how you can use silence and solitude to grow closer to God:

Pay attention to what's stirring in your soul. Notice the feelings of desperation and desire that you experience at various times. Instead of trying to suppress or run from those feelings, let them motivate you pursue time with God in silence and solitude.

Incorporate silence and solitude into your life regularly. Choose a regular time and place to get away from life as usual and spend at least 10 minutes in silence and solitude as often as you can. Ask God to help you express your need for Him through a simple prayer, and choose a physical position that will enable you to stay alert yet worshipful.

Overcome resistance. Don't let anything distract you from devoting yourself regularly to times of seeking God in silence and solitude. Entrust each of your current concerns specifically to God in prayer so you can be free to be fully present with Him during solitude and silence. If you're anxious or afraid when you think about spending time in solitude and silence, admit it to God and ask Him to comfort you.

Seek rest for your body, mind, and soul. Pray for the wisdom you need to recognize when you've become dangerously tired – exhausted by life's demands, to the point where you can't hear God's voice speaking to you. Accept God's invitation to rest in His presence during solitude and silence. Rather than showing up tired for your special meetings with God, give your body the rest it needs by getting enough sleep and exercise, eating well, and drinking water regularly. While you're spending time in solitude and silence, take deep breaths and let the peace of God's presence fill your body. Let go of concerns that your mind is trying to hold onto during solitude and silence by opening yourself up to the revelation that comes from beyond your mind – from God Himself, who can speak to you about things that your mind can't figure out, but your spirit can hear. Ask God to help you quiet your mind and listen to Him with your spirit, trusting that He will respond to your prayer by speaking to you. If grief is weighing on your soul, confess it to God. When your soul feels grateful for God's love, express that gratitude to God.

Let emptiness lead you to God's fulfillment. Don't try to deny or avoid the emptiness you feel inside sometimes. Instead, recognize that emptiness can be good when it motivates you to turn to God to seek fulfillment during your times of solitude and silence. So feel the pain of your emptiness as it carves out space in your soul for you to receive more of God's presence.

Face yourself as you really are, and let God help you. Rather than hiding from God, denying who you are, or trying to control what others think of you, allow the truth of who you are to surface during solitude and silence – and face the reality of the person you see, flaws and all. Then remember that God loves you deeply and unconditionally, and ask Him to meet you right where you are and help you grow more into the person He wants you to become. Use whatever painful new knowledge you've gained about yourself to repent from sin and grow closer to God, with the confidence that He will help you every step of the way. Keep in mind that God is *for* you, *with* you, and *in* you when you open yourself up to His powerful presence. So give yourself completely to God, who loves you just as you are but also loves you too much to let you stay as you are.

Receive God's guidance. The more time you spend with God in solitude and silence, the more you'll learn how to recognize God's voice when He speaks to you. Pray for the guidance you need to make wise decisions, and be alert for the [Holy Spirit](#) witnessing to your spirit about what is true. Remember that the Holy Spirit will reveal truth to you only as you're able to bear it, so trust God's timing.

Let the love that you experience in solitude and silence pour out into other people's lives. Each time that you return to life in community with other people after spending time in solitude and silence, draw upon the love that God has given you to love others in the ways He wants you to express love – from speaking kind and encouraging words, to serving them when they need help with something. Take what God has given you during your meetings with Him in solitude and silence and use it to bless others when you're with them.

Activity: Practice sitting in silence and active listening for ten minutes

Group Process: How was it? Discuss the various experiences.

Spiritual Tools Workshop: The Examen

Notes From: www.ignatianspirituality.com

A great way to pray is to look for God's presence in your life. More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Daily Examen. The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us. Try this version of St. Ignatius's prayer.

1. Become aware of God's presence. Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

2. Review the day with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

3. Pay attention to your emotions. One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings?

God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way.

4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope. St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask forgiveness for your sins. Ask for his protection and help. Ask for his wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, and it is adorned with gifts from God. End the Daily Examen with the Our Father.

Friday Evening Prayer

Opening

Darkness is not dark to you;

The night is as bright as the day.

Scripture

O tarry, and await God's pleasure; be strong, and let your heart take comfort. Wait patiently for God. (Psalm 27)

Meditation

How does God's faithfulness sustain me? How do I remain faithful?

Silent Prayer/Reflection

Prayer

Guide us waking, O God, and guard us sleeping, that, awake, we may with Christ, and, asleep, we may rest in peace. Amen.

Saturday Morning Prayer

Opening

Let all who desire wisdom

Walk in love.

Prayer

Holy Lord, giver of all wisdom: Set for us this day the banquet of your words; invite us to feast on the genius and beauty all around us. Then, turn us in humility toward the poor, the oppressed and the weak; we ask this in the name of Jesus, who is Wisdom forever and ever. Amen.

Scripture

¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for^[a] those who make peace. (James 3:17-18)

Meditation

Focus on Wisdom and do not be distracted. Watch the patterns of creation and you will awaken to grace and tranquility.

Prayers

O God, in peace, you have prepared our path for today.
Help us to trace it in peace.

If we speak,

Remove lies from our lips.

If we are hungry, Rid us of complain, If we have plenty, flatten the pride in us.

Large Group Session 4

Time Management

Alex MacKenzie, in a ten year study of time utilization, found a significant relationship between how managers use their time and their level of stress. He identified seven danger signals of stress.

1. The belief that we are indispensable.
2. No time for important tasks. Crisis consistently robs us of time for top priorities.
3. Attempting too much. We constantly underestimate the time and effort it will take to complete tasks. An inability to say “no” is part of this. We think we can do it all.
4. Constant unrelenting pressure. We always feel we’re behind and won’t be able to get on top of our job.
5. Habitual long hours.
6. Guilt about leaving work early.
7. Taking worry home with us. We are physically at home, but our minds are back on the job. Preoccupying worries of the day take precedence over family and personal activities.

I’d like to begin by focusing on number one. There is something about pastoral work that imprints the idea on our minds that we have to be everywhere and be everything in order for the life of the church to continue. This could not be more false, but it is ingrained in us nonetheless. And so we set up schedules for ourselves that are unreasonable from the start.

In another study, done by McNally, clergy were asked to record how they divided their 168 hours in one week. Seventeen clergy responded, and the results were as follows.

Ministry 56

Personal Life 41

Rest at Night 56

Unaccounted for Time 15

Total 168/100%

The study was broken down further and asked the clergy to divide their 56 hours of pastoral work, and how they would prefer to spend that time.

	Preferred	Actual
Preacher	1	2
Pastor	2	3
Theologian	3	4
Marketer	4	6

Administrator	5	1
Traveler	6	5

Take a moment now to judge for yourself. Are you spending the amount of time you want on personal time, family time, professional time? What is your ideal division between these three? How does it differ from the actual? What do you want to change?

Do some calculations for yourself in these areas and spend a moment reflecting quietly. What are the essential tasks in your professional life that need to be completed each week? List them in order of priority. If emergencies or personal crises arise and you have time to do only one thing on your list, which one do you choose?⁴⁵

What are ways that you waste time? We are all guilty of it on a daily basis. The McNally study listed the top five time wasters as the following.

Interruptions (telephone calls, email, drop-in visitors, and distractions)

Tasks left unfinished (jumping from one thing to another)

Routine tasks involving too much trivia

Attempts to do too much at once (unrealistic time estimates)

Personal disorganization (cluttered desk, office)

In the midst of our technologically complex world, I have found one way to make sure that I accomplish the things that need to be done in the span of a day. I make a list, and cross each item off as I do it. It sounds silly, and simple, and not technological at all. And it isn't. There is much satisfaction to be gained in the physical act of crossing a line through each item as it is completed.

Setting a plan, and setting goals is another way to gain as much control over time as we can. Take some time each morning, or perhaps the night before to plan out the things that need to be completed the next day.

Can we share with the group some ways that we manage our time effectively? We can also share some ways that we struggle if that is helpful.

Large group sharing.

Another part of time management includes walking away from all of this time and task stuff all together. Part of our schedule must include rest, relaxation, and time to engage with the Holy. This goes back to the idea that we have to remember that we do not need to be present for everything. We need to schedule time to be away from it all.

⁴⁵ Oswald, 168

Wayne Muller in his book *Sabbath*, writes “The busier we are, the more important we seem to ourselves and, we imagine, to others. To be unavailable to our friends and family, to be unable to find time or the sunset (or even to know that the sun has set at all), to whiz through our obligations without time for a single meaningful breath, this has become the model of a successful life.”

Muller goes on to say “One of the astonishing attributes of Sabbath time is its unflinching uselessness. Nothing will get done, not a single item will be checked off any list. Nothing of significance will be accomplished, no goal realized. It is thoroughly without measurable value.”⁴⁶

And so this is why time management is so tricky. At one end it calls us to organize, and to prioritize and to cross things off of lists. These things will make us efficient. At the other end it calls us to give it all up so that we can do something that is not measurable in value at all. This is complicated stuff. Time management is at one complicated and also so simple, but it is something that is critical and essential to our ministries and to all of our relationships, both personal and professional. Be patient with yourself as you work on this area of your ministry.

⁴⁶ Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight In Our Busy Lives* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999).

Dyad Discussion #4

Take ten minutes of quiet time to reflect and write answers to the following questions. Share your responses with you partner. Take time to listen attentively as each of you speaks. Offer no solutions, but simply listen to your partners' story. Acknowledge the importance of each other's stories.

1. Construct a "typical" week in the space below. How do you spend each day?
2. What areas of time management present you with the most challenge?
3. Are you content with the way you spend your time?
4. How are you intentional about getting the "to-do" list done each day? What method do you use?
5. How is your Sabbath time?

Spiritual Tools Workshop

Spirituality and Work

—from *A Monastery of the Heart* by Joan Chittister (BlueBridge)

Why work?

For the Benedictine spirit,

work is not simply work.

Whatever kind of work it is—

professional or technical,

physical or intellectual,

financial or social—

it is to be **good** work,

work that makes the world

a better, more just, more fair,

and more humane place.

for everyone.

The truth is that work has a spiritual function.

Good work is meant to build into us

a respect for the order and beauty

that the cultivation of the spiritual life

demands.

Good work is a human being's

contribution to the development

of humankind

and the fulfillment of the universe.

It is about the bringing
of the reign of God on earth.
It is about
completing the work of God
in the upbuilding of the world.
Good work is our gift to the future.
It is what we leave behind—
our persistence, our precision,
our commitment,
our fidelity to the smallest and meanest of tasks—
that will change the mind
of generations to come
about our sacred obligation
to bear our share of
the holy-making enterprise that is work.
Then we shall truly be
authentic witnesses to the fact
that a life lived in the scriptures
shapes a universal heart
and rallies the global soul.

Share info from this article

Gregory F. A. Pierce, spirituality@work, 10 ways to balance your life on-the-job,

If there is a spirituality of work, it must be disciplined, and if we can discover and practice the disciplines, then our work will indeed be spiritual. Disciplines are practiced regularly over a long period and can be refreshed, adjusted or replaced from time to time.

Ten disciplines are,

1. Surround yourself with “sacred objects.” A sacred object can be anything from a piece of traditional religious art to a photo of family and friends, or to a secular item that carries for us a very deep and spiritual meaning.
2. Make a positive out of a negative. The negative is that we all make mistakes in in our work. The positive is that we can find God in the midst of them. We live with our imperfections. We accept that we are not perfect. Imperfection is a condition of growth. Learn to live with the imperfection of others in the workplace. Try to understand where their imperfections or mistakes come from (stress, exploitation on the job, or inattentiveness, etc.).
3. Our best work, for the most part, will be imperfect. Yet, if our work is to be worthy of feeding our spiritual lives and incarnating God in the world, it must be of the best quality of which we are capable.
4. Offering thanks and congratulations to others (colleagues and competitors) and self is a specific discipline within the spirituality of work. If done on a regular basis, it can put both the giver and recipient in touch with the divine. Giving thanks and congratulations makes the workplace the way God would have it. Giving thanks includes a just compensation for all. It includes thanking God.
5. Build support and community in the workplace. Build relationships and be supportive of others. Offer welcome to others in the workplace and to customers. Be loyal. Loyalty in the workplace is backing people up rather than reveling in their difficulties. Backbiting and gossiping erodes loyalty. Be compassionate to those experiencing personal difficulties or traumas. Introduce some fun and joy into the workaday world. The workplace is not a place for

“evangelism” (to convert others). The disciplines discussed here are a witness to your faith. Feel free to speak about your faith beyond the work place if asked what helps you act the way you do or if asked directly about your faith.

6. Deal with others as you would have them deal with you. In doing so, honesty is good; you offer your best customer service; you are generous in negotiation; you respect your competition; and you pay a just wage and you expect to be paid a just wage.

7. Build into your workday (and into your life in general) ways of reminding yourself of what is enough and strategies for sticking to your decisions: What is enough money, enough time, enough effort and success (or failure), and enough spirituality (your spiritual disciplines or practices are enough and never enough). Ask: When will enough be enough?

8. Balance work, personal, family, church and community responsibilities. Feel okay about saying yes or no. When you say yes, you must be able to follow through on your promises. Institutionalize your commitments by noting them in your datebook or calendar and doing them at the time noted, such as, a regular spiritual practice or date with your spouse, etc. Be flexible. Build in quality time. Some quantity time can be quality time, like hanging out with friends, shooting hoops, or attending meetings and committees.

9. To the best of your ability, make the system work. Christians call this “social justice.” Individually and collectively, aim your actions towards transforming social institutions and structures to achieve the common good. This can be done from the “inside” or from the “outside.” Organizing is the most effective way of achieving social justice goals. Break problems down into manageable issues. Celebrate and build on small victories. God works through us to make the world a better place.

10. Engage in ongoing personal and professional development. This means sharpening your personal spiritual practices (prayer, meditation, communing with nature, art as spiritual practice, etc.) and the spirituality of work disciplines listed here. Engage in ongoing professional development. Maintain good physical and mental health. Engage in ongoing, lifelong education. Interact with colleagues in faith sharing groups, book groups, breakfast or lunch meetings, etc., to discuss the meaning of your work. Private or group spiritual practices helps many people to go into the workplace better equipped to discover God there. If we are going to be the most spiritual

workers we can be, then we will follow every path that improves our awareness of the presence of God in our work.

God is present in our workplaces... As Pierre Teilhard de Chardin put it in Hymn of the Universe, “[God] is, in a sense, at the point of my pen, my pick, my paintbrush, my needle – and my heart and my thought. It is by carrying to completion the stroke, the line, the stitch I am working on that I shall lay hold on the ultimate end towards which my will at its deepest levels tends.”

The author of this book, of which this paper is a summary, states in conclusion, “...if we cannot develop a functioning spirituality of work, then both our work and our spirituality are impoverished.”

Large Group Session #5

Ministry Context

Take a moment before we begin to reflect on this question: How is supportive of your self-care is your specific ministry context? Part of our examination of self-care is deeply rooted in our current ministry setting. There are two parts to this. How much self-care is required based upon our current experiences, and also how well does our context take care of us? Both questions are critical, and based on research have a large impact on our abilities to accomplish other areas of care (time management, boundaries, physical care) and others.

Matt Bloom writes, “The reason that pastors may become less adaptable is sometimes because their well-being is diminished, sometimes it is because their identity is rigid, and sometimes it is because they are in a context that simply will not allow them to change...Bloom continues, “Being a pastor is much more difficult than it used to be. I think the ecosystem is not as conducive to flourishing: the demands are higher, the support systems are not as strong. As churches have seen their membership rolls drop, they have responded in ways that have sometimes been very detrimental to the well-being of clergy.”⁴⁷

I believe that this conversation adds to the one in progress. This article/study broadens the term self-care quite a bit, and again, instead of being alarmist, it suggests that there is more to clergy health than simply how clergy take care of themselves. The authors suggest that environment plays a key part in how healthy clergy are, and how they are able to maintain that health over time. Again Bloom “wonders if the underlying issue is how pastors relate to their

⁴⁷ Frykholm, Amy, Christian Century, 39.

context...sometimes the environment is constraining in a way that is not authentic to who you are, to your core values and beliefs, and to your sense of call.”⁴⁸

Consider some comments made in a recent study that focuses on United Methodist clergy. The study says: “Another factor contributing to a health crisis among clergy is the problem of agency. Self-determination is impeded on several levels. On a spiritual level, clergy have placed—or at least tried to place—the direction for their lives in the hands of God. *For United Methodist clergy, this act extends to giving the denomination a great deal of say over where and in what congregations they will serve.* Clergy’s daily schedules are often set by life’s demands and not by any ordinary schedule. Decisions about what and how much to eat or when to exercise often seem outside a minister’s control. Choosing when in the day to exercise and when during the year to go on vacation are not simple decisions. They often involve negotiations with staff, family and congregation. Each decision to eat well or to take time to exercise can feel like a decision to compromise one’s vocational commitments.”⁴⁹

It is interesting to note how our appointment system, and our agreement to follow it has a powerful impact on our health. When I took my first full time appointment, I was going into a church that had lost their previous two pastors to burn-out. In fact both of the pastors not only left the church, but left the ministry all together. My district superintendent asked me no less than three times if I thought that I could handle it. There was so much folklore around the congregation, and the ministry setting could have been and probably should have been very toxic when I arrived. I went into the new assignment with the plan to simply listen,

⁴⁸ Frykholm, Amy, Christian Century 39.

⁴⁹ Frykholm, Amy, Christian Century, 37.

and listen some more to how the congregation felt about their position in our denomination and the work of the previous pastors. It was imperative for me to come along side of the ministry placement, my new context with an attitude of service and love, and with the desire to meet them wherever they were. I knew from the beginning that this would be critical to my own self-care in the new appointment, as well as it would be critical for the health of the congregation. I am able to say that after six years of serving this church, they have been nothing but supportive and encouraging of me and my family, and I have returned that same attitude and behavior. This particular ministry context has worked out, and has boosted my ability to care for myself in the areas that we have been discussing.

Let's revisit the question from the beginning of this workshop. What is your current ministry setting? Do you feel supported by your current congregation/setting as your work to care for yourself and for your ministry?

Dyad Discussion #5

Take ten minutes of quiet time to reflect and write answers to the following questions. Share your responses with you partner. Take time to listen attentively as each of you speaks. Offer no solutions, but simply listen to your partners' story. Acknowledge the importance of each other's stories.

1. What is the story of how you came into your current ministry setting/appointment?
2. Do you feel supported by the people that you serve? How so?
3. What are some ways you work to make sure that you are able to care for yourself in this current ministry setting?
4. What specific ways do the people in your current setting encourage your self-care?

Spiritual Tools Workshop

Mindful Eating (from the Shalem Spiritual Guidance Program Materials)

Steps for Mindful Eating

First, look at what you are about to eat. What is it? How does it look? Where does it come from? How do you feel about putting this food into your body right now?

Take a moment to appreciate the path this food may have taken to come to nourish you. Where was it grown? How did the sun, water and other elements help form this food?

Feel the food in your mouth. Chew slowly and focus your energy on the food's taste and texture. You might chew longer than you normally do to fully experience the process of chewing and tasting.

Note any impulse you have to rush through this mouthful so that you can get to the next. Let such impulses remind you that you already have food in your mouth, so you needn't go to the next bite to have a complete experience of eating. Stay in the present moment with this mouthful, rather than rushing on to the next one.

Before swallowing, be aware of the intention to swallow. Then feel the actual process of swallowing so that you become more conscious of this action as well.

Approach each mouthful in the same way. Bring awareness to how much you are eating, how fast, how your body feels during after the meal, and whether you are eating in reaction to various events in your life and to the feelings, especially anxiety, that may result from them.

Saturday Evening Prayer

Opening

The Lord almighty grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end. Amen.

Prayer

God our desire, whose coming we look for, but whose arrival is unexpected: Here in the darkness make us urgent to greet you, and open yourself to our longing that we may be known by you through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:7-8

Blessed are those who trust in the LORD,
whose trust is the LORD.

⁸They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

Meditation

Fish cannot drown in water, birds cannot sink in air, gold cannot perish in the refiner's fire. This has God given to all creatures: to foster and seek their own nature. (Mechthild of Magdeburg)

What has God given us today to help is be more fully ourselves?

Prayer: Holy One, you planted us by living water, that we might be rooted in righteousness. You call us to be holy as you are holy. Assured of your love, help us cast aside all fear, so that we may love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.

Spiritual Tools Workshop

Spiritual Direction

"Spiritual direction explores a deeper relationship with the spiritual aspect of being human. Simply put, spiritual direction is helping people tell their sacred stories every day.

Spiritual direction has emerged in many contexts using language specific to particular cultural and spiritual traditions. Describing spiritual direction requires putting words to a process of fostering a transcendent experience that lies beyond all names and yet the experience longs to be articulated and made concrete in everyday living. It is easier to describe what spiritual direction does than what spiritual direction is. Our role is not to define spiritual direction, but to describe the experience.

Spiritual direction helps us learn how to live in peace, with compassion, promoting justice, as humble servants of that which lies beyond all names."

Liz Budd Ellmann, MDiv, former Executive Director, Spiritual Directors International

Spiritual direction, an ancient ministry of the church, is a relationship in which one person assists another, or others, in attending to God's presence and call. Spiritual direction has been, and remains, particularly strong within Roman Catholic and Orthodox religious orders, and over the past twenty years Anglican and Protestant traditions have begun to recover it more fully. There is also growing interest in spiritual direction among other faith traditions, such as Judaism and Buddhism.

Throughout Christian history, spiritual direction has traditionally been practiced by ordained clergy alone. In recent years, however, this practice has widened to embrace the spiritual gifts of non-ordained persons as well. Today, spiritual direction is regarded as a ministry open to all, not an order or office reserved for the few."

Presbyterian Church, USA

Spiritual direction is not counseling.

Spiritual direction is not therapy.

Spiritual direction is not financial advice.

Like psychotherapy, it is often offered as a one-to-one or group experience in private sessions with spiritual mentors who have most likely completed extensive formation for the ministry and service of spiritual direction.

It is up to you to choose a spiritual director who has the training, formation and experience that suits your needs. Spiritual direction includes your deity or higher power as a third partner in the process.

While it may be appropriate at times to discuss personal and relational struggles in the context of spiritual direction, a spiritual director is not a psychotherapist, nor does the spiritual director provide such services. Similarly, you may discuss financial issues in spiritual direction, but a spiritual director does not offer financial advice and any decisions and actions you may take in that regard are done without advice or recommendation, and are purely your responsibility.

"Spiritual direction is a time-honored term for a conversation, ordinarily between two persons, in which one person consults another, more spiritually experienced person about the ways in which God may be touching her or his life, directly or indirectly. In our postmodern age, many people dislike the term 'spiritual direction' because it sounds like one person giving directions, or orders, to another. They prefer 'spiritual companionship,' 'tending the holy,' or some other nomenclature. What we call it doesn't make any real difference. The reality remains conversations about life in the light of faith. There was much to talk about, to sort out in the light of faith in those days when confusion in the Church became a daily reality.

Although spiritual direction has had a burst of new life, it is really quite ancient. Across both the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures, we find people seeking spiritual counsel. The Queen of Sheba sought out the wisdom of Solomon. Jesus gave us examples in his conversations with Nicodemus, with the woman at the well, in the ongoing formation of Peter and the other disciples. In the early church, people flocked to hermits in the desert for spiritual counsel. Across the centuries we find striking examples in some Irish monks, in some German Benedictine nuns,

in Charles de Foucault, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Francis de Sales, and others. Today, spiritual directors come from many traditions ..."

Marian Cowan, CSJ

Closing Worship/Holy Communion

Prayers and liturgies from Holy Thursday Service in The Abingdon Worship Annual 2017

Holy Thursday Theme

Opening Prayer (in unison)

Gather is in your love, O God, as Jesus gathered his disciples: washing their feet, and sharing his very self in the Seder meal. Gather us in your love, Eternal Spirit, as we gather in Jesus' name: washing one another's feet and sharing Christ's gift of self in the Lord's Supper.

Scripture Reading

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ got up from the table,^[a] took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet,^[b] but is entirely clean. And you^[c] are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹² After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, servants^[d] are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Foot Washing

Seated in a circle, with a candle burning at the center table, we turn to the person on our right, kneel at their feet and wash them in the bowl, by first pouring water over their feet with a pitcher, and then drying them with a towel. Each person does this in sequence until all feet have been washed.

Group Sermon

What was it like to wash someone else's feet? What was it like to have your feet washed? (Share around circle)

Holy Communion

Moment of Reflection

My experience on retreat this weekend...

A few moments to journal, and then share responses around circle.

Closing Song

Benediction

Blessed by God, we are called to live.

They will know we are Christians by our love.

Healed by Christ, we are called to love.

They will know we are Christians by our love.

Sustained by the Spirit, we are called to serve.

They will know we are Christians by our love.

Chapter 5: Project Significance/Follow Up

This project has been created in response to the growing need for clergy to take better care of themselves. It sounds like a simple task, but in fact there are multiple complicated layers that exist in the lives of clergy that prevent them from doing just that. The United Methodist Church has begun to be proactive in this area of clergy care, but many conferences have not really been assertive in addressing the issue, which often results in clergy frustration and ultimately burnout. The research I completed, both through scholarly journals and the surveys of my clergy colleagues in the Baltimore Washington Annual Conference pointed to three areas of specific need when it comes to clergy self-care: time management, setting boundaries, and physical care. Each of these areas is one of need for clergy overall. The last piece of the puzzle enters on each clergyperson and their own ministry context. The idea of ministry context is huge when it comes to the ability of clergy to maintain these other areas of self-care.

As a response to the critical need for self-care, this resource development project centered on the creation of a retreat experience designed for clergy to come away and reflect on their own self-care, and indeed to engage in practices that they can take home with them to continue their spiritual journeys. Through this retreat experience, clergy are able to get away from their current settings and gather with colleagues in a retreat center that allows them to experience God's creation as they go about doing the work of bettering their own ministries.

The title of the project reflects its purpose: Come Away By Yourself and Rest Awhile: Retreat as Model of Self-Care for United Methodist Clergy. The scriptural foundation for the project comes from the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 6, Verses 30-34, and 45-46. It reads as follows:

⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴ As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. ⁴⁵ Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

Jesus is the model for self-care. This is simply one passage of many that shows how Jesus cared for himself in the midst of his own challenging ministry. The Gospel writer uses the phrase “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while” Jesus and his disciples, much like clergy of today could not find time even to eat in the midst of their over-crowded schedules. Jesus models the self-care practice of retreat by encouraging them to get away alone. He tells them to do this, based on the passage because he had “compassion” for them. In a fairly direct action, Jesus “made” the disciples go off to one side to get away, and then modeled the practice by once again going off the mountain to pray.

Bruce Epperly writes “The more gifted you are, the greater demand on your time and energy. Effective pastors are immersed in relationships and constantly interacting with the culture and the community around them. But, to stay fresh and vital in ministry, and to remain connected to the wellsprings of divine energy, we need to say no to some things and yes to others. Despite the fact that the needs were great, Jesus does something counterintuitive: he takes his disciples on retreat. Jesus recognizes the spiritual centeredness is essential to healthy ministry

and that regardless of their commitment and good intentions, his disciples are running on empty.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Bruce Epperly, *A Center In The Cyclone: 21st Century Clergy Self-Care* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014). 186.

Chapter 6: Next Steps

Epperly writes “Healthy ministry involves the interplay of contemplation and action, listening to your life and letting your life speak. As a child I heard stories about people of little consequence in the world’s eyes who did great things in God’s eyes. David and Goliath, Mary the mother of Jesus, the boy with the five loaves and two fish. They inspired me to believe that I could make a difference, and they still remind me that small acts of faith performed over a lifetime can transform the world. In my Sunday school class we often sang the Gospel spiritual “This Little Light of Mine.” It gave me hope that, small as I was, I could do something important for God...Our task as spiritual leaders is to let our light shine out in sharing good news through transforming hearts, communities, and social systems. But as another song I learned in childhood asserts, we need oil to keep our lamps burning brightly. We find the energy we need for the long haul through practices of self-care and spiritual formation.”⁵¹

In the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church, I am surrounded by gifted and talented clergy. But as Epperly states, we too are people of little consequence under normal circumstances who have been called to do something big for God. And this work, as Bruce states requires us to have energy, a great deal of energy in fact. We gain this energy practices of “self-care and spiritual formation”. Retreats are one form of this spiritual formation.

Once the project has been presented and approved in final form, my first step will be to share the retreat resource with a colleague who directs the Center for Clergy Excellence. It is my intention to offer the retreat to those who might interested in beginning to take charge of their

⁵¹ Bruce Epperly, *A Center In The Cyclone: 21st Century Clergy Self-Care* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014). 168.

self-care. I will use a similar, if not identical survey, which asks some of the original survey questions. They are repeated below.

Survey Questions

1. Tell me about your current self-care practices.
2. How does your ministry setting/context contribute to your current health: spiritual, physical and emotional?
3. How do you set healthy boundaries?
4. How do you care for yourself physically?
5. How do you manage your time?
6. Describe your personal experience taking retreats.
7. If a retreat was going to be designed just for you, what topics would you like to see covered? Why?

I will analyze themes for each group of clergy that choose to attend the retreat, and adjust the content of the retreat accordingly. The core of the retreat will stay the same, but I can address issues raised in questions 2, 6, and 7 and make adjustments particular to the individual group in attendance. Those topics/format issues are easy to change with each retreat offered.

I will plan to utilize our two conference retreat centers. One is located in the mountains near West Virginia, and one on the Chesapeake Bay. My goal would be to offer one at each site each year, to reach clergy in both areas.

It is my intention to form a small retreat team to facilitate with me. There are others in my conference who are passionate about addressing this issue of self-care, who have already expressed interest in the topic, and in this ministry of offering retreats.

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