

CLERGY APPRECIATION



THE D.A. AND ELIZABETH TURNER MINISTRY RESOURCE CENTER
AT THE PASTORAL INSTITUTE

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MINISTRY
RESOURCE
CENTER

OF THE PASTORAL INSTITUTE

A SAMARITAN CENTER

Third Edition

CLERGY APPRECIATION

Dear Church Member:

The Turner Ministry Resource Center of the Pastoral Institute seeks to support ministers and their families and we want to offer congregational support for their leaders. This Clergy Appreciation Manual was developed several years ago and has had a wide distribution. The primary aim is to encourage lay leaders as they work with paid staff.

The stresses of ministry are great. In an effort to better understand the demands on clergy and clergy families, the Turner Ministry Resource Center, in conjunction with a research team from Florida State University completed a two-year project in 2000 focusing on clergy and clergy families. From this and other research, we have identified major clergy stressors and some ways congregations and laypersons can help address these issues.

Some of the research indicates that within a decade 40 percent of clergy will move to another line of work. And for every four seminarians entering school only one is seeking to be a senior pastor. Perhaps with greater awareness of one another's needs, these trends can be reversed. Little has been written on how the congregation can best support and nurture their pastor. This document is designed to address these issues.

As we work together for God's kingdom, our hope in distributing this resource is that we can encourage and support a new excitement regarding the partnership between clergy and laity.

SHALOM,



John B. Adams, Co-Director
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BURN-OUT

For many clergy, intentional, authentic ministry has been replaced by a frenetic busyness that often lacks depth and clarity.

In the effort to meet the many demands of parish ministry, pastors are neglecting their own spiritual lives and paying the price with burn-out, fatigue, and depression.

In a survey, the majority of clergy reported that they work between 55 and 75 hours a week, with many stating that they work “crazy hours.” Fifty percent of clergy say that they can’t meet the demands of the parish.

Another study revealed that two in three clergy succumb to burn-out. Most burn-out candidates tend to be either co-dependent with a strong need to win approval from others or self-sacrificing loners, unable or unwilling to take enough time for adequate rest. Signs of burn-out or depression include: physical or emotional symptoms such as irritability, cynicism, decrease in productivity, social withdrawal, insomnia, loss of appetite or overeating, mood swings, fatigue or difficulty concentrating.

To help your minister avoid developing burn-out or depression, here are a few things you can do:

- Encourage your minister to take one day off each week.
- Encourage your minister to take a spiritual retreat.
- Set aside monies in the budget each year for continuing education workshops and seminars. Continuing education through a seminary or local organization that brings in speakers of particular interest to clergy can help generate new ideas and stimulate the imagination.
- Encourage your minister to attend a local clergy support group or lectionary study group to express both his or her joys and frustrations in a safe environment.
- Encourage your minister to make time each day to care for his or her body, which, as Paul said, “is not simply a shackle to be sloughed off at death but the temple of the Spirit of God.”
- Suggest to your minister that he or she schedule a sabbatical, especially if he or she has served the congregation for five to seven years. Sabbaticals can involve spending more time with family and friends, reading, writing, or pursuing hobbies and other interests that he or she hasn’t had time for recently.

There is too much to do and not enough time to do it.

– Anonymous



FAMILY

American families are under siege and clergy families are no exception. The stressors on the clergy family are truly unique. Clergy and clergy families who will minister most effectively in the stressful twenty-first century will be the ones who develop a balance in their lives, their ministry, and their relationship with God. The congregation is essential in helping clergy families keep their priorities in order.

Consider:

Clergy families are constantly dealing with the demands and expectations from their congregations and communities. The congregation and clergy family needs to recognize the ABC's of clergy family care too.



Awareness

The clergy family members, as well as members of the congregations, must develop their awareness of the clergy family's spiritual, emotional, and relational needs.

Congregational members can be aware that the same family crises their minister responds to is also the same family crises experienced at times by clergy families.

Family time is essential for all families and clergy families are no exception.

Congregations that have an awareness of the clergy family's need to take time away from the church family to be with their own family are nurturing congregations.

Balance

The clergy family must maintain a balance between work, rest, and play. At times, the demands of the ministry makes the idea of balance seem impossible to clergy families.

Congregations must encourage and plan for their clergy families to have adequate time for recreation on a weekly, monthly, and annual basis.

Ensure that adequate time be scheduled for vacation and time away for the clergy family. All families need time away together for recreation and re-creation, and the caring congregation will help the clergy family find this balance.

Connection

Isolation and loneliness are familiar feelings to many clergy and their spouses. Where do ministers find personal and couple friends when most of their time is dedicated to ministering to members of the congregations?

Friendship and the support of friends and family provide part of the connectedness to life as God created it.

Clergy must be intentional in searching out other clergy with whom they can find support and nurture.

Congregations can recognize the importance of this connection by providing resources necessary for your minister and/or spouse to participate in a clergy support or spouse support groups. Recognizing the importance of connection for the clergy families is one way of continuing to care for them as a congregation.

Remember:

The rewards of being a clergy family are immense. God uses clergy and their families to touch numerous lives in a special manner.

The congregations committed to strengthening their clergy and their clergy families are the congregations that follow God's leadership in becoming God's people.

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FINANCES

Financial strain in a clergy family is like a sailboat making its way across the water while dragging its anchor on the bottom! The minister's energy and vitality are compromised but on the surface everything looks fine. Below the surface, there is tremendous strain.

Like many Americans, clergy are reticent to talk about their personal finances. Though it may seem as if your pastor is doing just fine financially, he or she may be struggling to make ends meet.

Consider that:

1. Many ministers accrue between \$30,000 - \$100,000 in debt during college and graduate school.
2. Like lawyers and doctors, ministers are professionals and must go to graduate school in order to fulfill the requirements of their governing denominational bodies. Unlike doctors or lawyers, most ministers will not receive a starting salary that will allow them to quickly lower their educational debt to a manageable level. A survey, reported in the *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, suggests that clergy are ranked in the top ten percent in terms of education, but only 325th out of 432 occupations in terms of salaries received. (Winter 2000 edition).
3. Children are often born during the early years of a pastor's career, when payments on educational debt are still high. Rearing young children can be quite expensive, especially when there are unforeseen medical expenses.



To alleviate your pastor's anxiety over his or her personal finances, it may help to:

Ask your pastor to be honest with you about his or her unique financial situation. Consider the following questions:

Is your minister trying to pay down educational debt?

Is your minister currently dealing with unusually large, out-of-the-ordinary expenses or bills?

Does your minister have children? If so, are any of them applying to colleges and universities?

Put yourself in your pastor's shoes.
Could you live on your minister's salary?

Would you be able to offer your children the kind of opportunities you want for them with your minister's monthly paycheck?

Would you be satisfied with your minister's health coverage or pension plan?

Without home ownership, would you be satisfied with no opportunity to accrue equity?

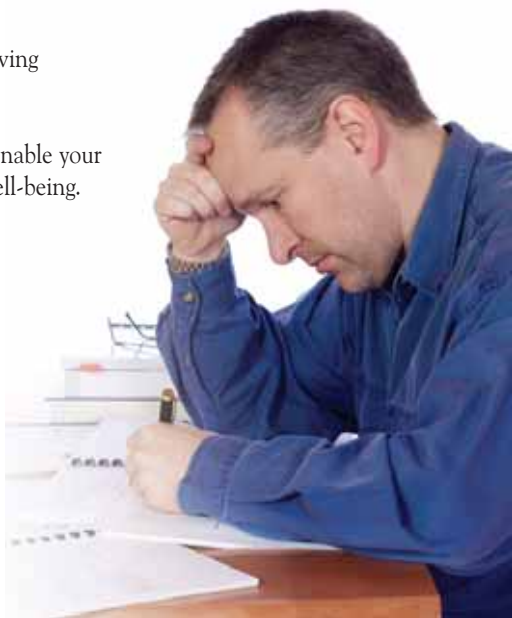
Remember:

Your pastor's family shops at the same grocery stores and department stores that you do. Periodically, they too will spend \$400 when they need a new timing belt and water pump on their vehicle.

Even if your church makes provision for housing, cost of living increases affect your pastor's family, too.

Make every effort to provide salary and benefits that will enable your clergy family to feel your commitment to their financial well-being.

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LONELINESS - ISOLATION

Research shows that male and female clergy experience isolation. Many feel isolated due to a fear of self-disclosure and because they have a difficult time developing intimate relationships with others.

Reasons For This Difficulty

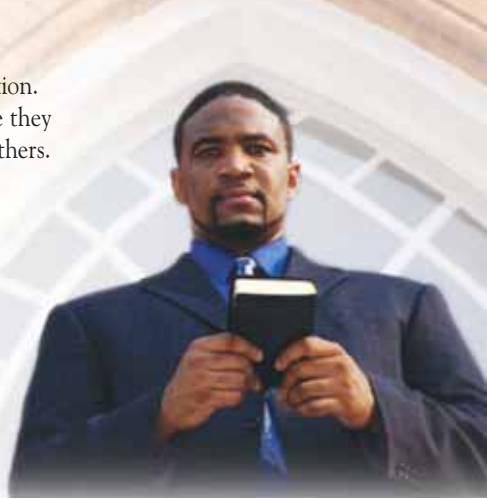
The demands of the parish are great and many male clergy attempt to fulfill performance standards and believe they have to present themselves without problems. As a general rule, males tend to contain feelings and are hesitant to confide problems.

In most denominations, clergywomen are still the minority and therefore struggle for acceptance and equality both in their congregations and among their male peers.

Male and female clergy often find themselves isolated when congregation members hold them up as “moral and spiritual beacons” of the community. Clergy in rural areas are especially prone to loneliness and isolation since their nearest colleague may be an hour’s drive away.

In order to help your minister develop healthy, supportive relationships with others, you may want to:

1. Encourage your minister to become part of a support group or sermon-preparation group where confidentiality is assured and ideas are freely exchanged.
2. Encourage your pastor to take time off and spend it with friends or family members.
3. Allow your pastor, if married, enough time with his or her spouse to maintain and cultivate their relationship.
4. Encourage your minister to remain active in the local association, conference, or district so that he or she can stay in touch with colleagues, denominational leaders, and current societal and ecclesiastical trends.



MARRIAGE

The congregation and the community expect clergy marriages to be ideal. Many laypersons cannot accept that clergy couples often struggle in their marital relationships. Clergy marriages are often judged by a higher set of standards than the rest of society.

Consider for example that:

According to *Christianity Today*, between 1970 and 1990 the number of clergy divorces in the United States increased by 65%. This will not surprise most clergy couples, but it does perhaps surprise the laity.



The stressors and conflicts clergy couples experience are similar to the difficulties couples in society face. However, these stressors can be intensified by expectations clergy couples have of themselves and the expectations their congregations and communities have for them.

In a survey conducted among clergy couples by David and Vera Mace, 85% of the pastors and 59% of clergy spouses listed the number one disadvantage of being a clergy couple was that their marriage was expected to be a model of perfection.

Congregations can support their pastor and spouse in their marriage when they:

Remember that marriage takes time and energy. Clergy couples need time to nurture their relationship. They need to renew their spirits, energy, and love whether they have been married two years or 20.

Recognize that time is needed weekly, monthly, and yearly to nurture a marital relationship. Marriage requires intentionality on a regular basis by both partners.

Remember their pastors are married to their spouses, not the congregation.

Congregational Actions

Provide time and resources for your clergy couples to “get away.” Volunteer to keep their children and loan them a beach cottage or mountain cabin for a few days. They will be exceptionally grateful that their congregation recognizes their need to nurture the marital relationship.

Encourage your clergy couple to participate in a marriage enrichment event or attend a pastor’s school as a couple-without the children. Provide childcare for them and an educational budget to cover the experience and the expense.

Respect the couple-time of your clergy and his/her spouse and whenever possible minimize interruptions during dinner, dates, or their night out.

Growing clergy marriages requires intentionality on the part of everyone – the clergy couple and the congregation.



MOBILITY/TRANSITION

Clergy today are on the move. Whether traveling to visit a member in a hospital across town or moving to a different church across the country, mobility characterizes the lives of clergy.

Our study indicates that the issue of mobility is a stressor for clergy in two areas:

- 1.) excessive travel, expense, and separation from family for clergy who live in isolated areas or who serve in the military and
- 2.) adjustment to school for the children and, in some cases, seeking new employment for the spouse



These transitions are extremely stressful and painful when a forced termination is involved. The loss of control over their lives and having “someone else decide when we stay and when we move” have long-term, negative consequences on clergy and their families and create a sense of loss.

Clergy families grieve over the people, places, and the life experiences they leave behind. Their feelings about moving are no different than a layperson would have when experiencing such a change, particularly if the change is instigated by someone else.

Your congregation can support your pastor with regard to mobility and transition issues in these ways:

- Plan for a long-term pastorate by clarifying expectations of pastor and lay persons when a new pastor arrives.
- Provide an adequate compensation package for your pastor, including paying moving expenses and all church-related travel expected of the pastor.
- Plan a welcoming event – picnic, reception, special commissioning service, etc.

Clergy families grieve over the people, places, and the life experiences they leave behind.

- Assign guides for each member of the clergy family to introduce them to neighbors and to the church and community.
- Provide contact persons and information for spouse's employment and/or schools and activities for children.
- Be sensitive to your new pastor's need to grieve while you attend to your own grief over your former pastor's transition.
- Work every day to establish and maintain trust and increased understanding between your pastor and the congregation.

Plan a welcoming event – picnic, reception, special commissioning service, etc.



PARSONAGE

Most congregations today take some responsibility for providing housing for their clergy. Laypersons take pride in providing the church's house for the clergy family to live in while they serve the congregation. They want and expect the parsonage to remain a showpiece and to reflect very little wear and tear. Since the parsonage belongs to the church, members often feel free to appear at, and sometimes to enter, the parsonage whenever the need arises.

Clergy and their families view the parsonage as their home and need for it to be a safe haven. They want to make it theirs but are aware that they do not own it. The family is torn between relaxing and enjoying life in the parsonage and living under constant scrutiny and fear that something will get broken or ruined.

Some churches are obsessive in wanting their clergy to live in a church-owned museum that is too good for human habitation. Some clergy and their families are abusive, if not destructive, to the church property in which they live. Happily, both these extremes are the exception, not the rule.

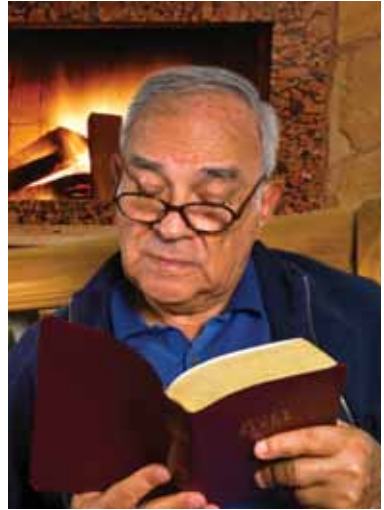
In our survey of clergy and their families, parsonage living emerged as one of the 12 major stressors. Within this category, respondents list five areas of concern: location, money, intrusions, quality of housing and expectations. The biggest stressors are living too close to the church and the lack of privacy the parsonage provides. Other things that clergy and their spouses did not like about the parsonage include: "living in a fish bowl," outdated decorations/furnishings, small living quarters, poor maintenance, and living in a house that was not their own.

When providing for clergy housing needs, congregations can:

Provide, if possible, a housing allowance for your clergy family.

Affirm that a church-owned parsonage is the clergy family's home and assure that only members of the clergy family have keys to the parsonage.

Maintain a parsonage you would be proud to occupy.



Clergy and their families view the parsonage as their home and need for it to be a safe haven. They want to make it theirs but are aware that they do not own it.

RENEWING THE SOUL

I am so involved in the multiple tasks of ministry, I have little time for my own prayer life. And when I do pray, I feel resentment because life is so cluttered I cannot reach that place of stillness.

Anonymous

Undoubtedly, pastors are affected by the many requirements of their role. They are expected, either by themselves or others, to be an orator, marriage counselor, social director, administrative supervisor of staff, political commentator, officiator at baptisms, weddings and funerals, crisis-intervener, and fundraiser. A survey of ministers reveals that the average clergy person works between 55 and 75 hours a week. Since their schedules are filled with meetings and appointments, often in an effort to maintain a successful church, they have time neither for solitude nor leisure before God, to ponder scripture, or be unhurried with another person.

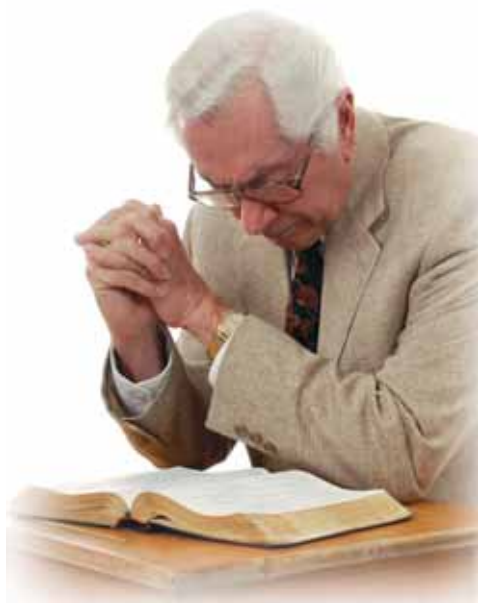
Yet, the research project conducted by the Turner Ministry Resource Center of the Pastoral Institute and The College of Human Sciences of Florida State University reveals that "...those clergy who had greater spiritual well being and had a sense of meaning in their lives, had a higher quality of life...spiritual resources helped alleviate psychological and physiological stress and enhanced one's sense of coherence."

A pastor's spiritual life creates a focus for personal and congregational renewal.

- Strong inner resources enable pastors to resist unhealthy busyness.
- Spiritual experiences promote a pastor's self-esteem.
- Spiritual exercises enable pastors to withstand "negative criticism."
- Spiritual seasoning allows pastors to address church conflict with greater objectivity.

Congregations can support their pastors in their spiritual development when they:

Encourage their pastor to seek spiritual direction, mentoring, and personal therapy with a pastoral counselor.



As a spiritual leader of the congregation, your pastor needs time to develop his/her own spiritual resources.

Recognize the pastor's need for regular spiritual retreats, workshops, or other opportunities that support the contemplative life.

Support your pastor's efforts to eat healthy foods and to exercise.

Avoid talking about the pastor negatively to other congregational members.

Promote grace-filled exchanges between themselves and the pastor and fellow congregants.

It is important to remember that a pastor and his or her spouse form a special relationship filled with spiritual possibilities for growth. Promoting the spiritual well being of the clergy couple is vital. Those same opportunities afforded the pastor will also enrich the life of the spouse.

Promote grace-filled exchanges between themselves and the pastor and fellow congregants.



APPENDIX

The D. A. & Elizabeth Turner Ministry Resource Center of the Pastoral Institute, Inc., is dedicated to supporting clergy, their families, and congregations by providing a wide array of clinical, educational, and consultative programs.

Clergy Care Program – a comprehensive counseling, consultation, and support program for clergy and their families.

Clergy in Kairos-Crisis Program – is a week of intensive counseling, spiritual direction, and professional consultation in a tranquil and relaxing retreat setting where emotional, relational, and spiritual health can be restored.

Clergy HelpLine (1-800-649-6446) – is available for ministers to call for brief consultation, crisis management, emotional support, referral, and resources.

Congregational Assistance Program – a ministry providing counseling services, life enrichment education, and professional development opportunities for members of congregations through a contractual relationship with the Pastoral Institute.

Ministry Assistance Program – a joint ministry between a denominational body and the Pastoral Institute that provides counseling services and clergy crisis intervention for ministers and their families.

Vocational counseling – provided to ministers who need career assessment at critical points along their career path.

Clergy Assessment Program – a full range of testing services required by most denominations, as well as clinical evaluation designed to determine a candidate's fitness for ministry.

Clergy Coaching – is a 10-month spiritual formation residency for pastors and other religious professionals based on Christian contemplation, theology, and practice.

Publications —

The Bridge - A monthly online publication addressing those issues most pressing for today's clergy, while highlighting the programs and upcoming events of the Turner Ministry Resource Center.

The Pastoral Forum – A journal published by the Pastoral Institute and dedicated to the advancement of the pastoral counseling movement. *The Pastoral Forum* explores the meaningful relationship between God and people and cultivates an ongoing dialogue between theology and psychology, faith and clinical practice.

Beside Still Waters – Edited by Stephen Muse – Turner Ministry Resource Center Training Director.



A S A M A R I T A N C E N T E R

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For information, visit our website: www.pilink.org

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