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Healthy Souls and Steady Hands: A Relational Model for Soul Care of Rural, Assemblies of God Pastors

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

PROJECT PORTFOLIO

HEALTHY SOULS AND STEADY HANDS:

A RELATIONAL MODEL FOR SOUL CARE OF RURAL, ASSEMBLIES OF GOD PASTORS



IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

PORTLAND SEMINARY

BY:

NATHANIEL E. RHOADS

PROJECT FACULTY:

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PORTLAND, OREGON

APRIL 2023



CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This certifies that the doctoral Project Portfolio of

Nathaniel E. Rhoads

has been approved by
the Evaluation Committee on March 16, 2023
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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Dedication

For pastors and their families, living and laboring in love for God.

For my family, doing the same with me. You keep me “rooted and grounded in love” (Eph 3:17).

Acknowledgments

This work bears the imprint of many people who have shaped, supported, and strengthened me.

Thank you to the Portland Seminary community: to Dr. Jeffery Savage for your steady guidance and stabilizing presence through the research journey; to Dr. MaryKate Morse, Dr. Ken Van Vliet, and Dr. Kurtley Knight for helping me become the kind of person needful to do this work; to my cohort, the Awesomes, thank you for accepting me and showing me the generosity of Christ in what has been a life-giving expression of the community of the Spirit; and to the Little Savages, I am grateful for your invaluable companionship—if two are stronger than one and a three-ply cord stronger still, what a gift to be knit together with you four.

Thank you to all who participated in various phases of the research, contributing your experiences and insights to shape something useful for the church and those who serve it.

Thank you to the congregation of Word of Light Fellowship in Winnemucca, Nevada, where God birthed this work in me, for supporting me in many meaningful ways in this educational and formational endeavor.

Thank you to all my family for your encouragement and constant support. Special thanks to my wife, Stephanie, for enthusiastically supporting God's calling in my life, including this program. When I doubted myself, you believed in me and never blinked; also to Shane, Seth, and Josiah for cheering me on. I dearly love you all.

Thank you, Lord, for directing me to this program in pursuit of your call and for your sustaining grace and abundant provision through it all. "I write these things so that my joy can be complete" (1 Jn 1:4). Thank you for giving me joy in this work; I offer it now with joy to your glory.

Epigraph

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds." (Luke 6:44-45, The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language)

Table of Contents

Dedication	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Epigraph	v
Table of Contents	vi
Research Method.....	viii
Abstract.....	ix
Introduction	1
Story of the Research Process	1
Discover.....	1
Design	1
Deliver	2
Synthesis of the Learning Experience.....	3
Synopsis of Next Steps	3
Summary of the Journey	4
Doctoral Project	5
Introduction	6
Pastoral Flourishing Cohort.....	7
Cohort Overview	7
Cohort Rhythm	7
Cohort Content	8
Cohort Structure.....	9
Cohort Pre-Assessment.....	10
Cohort Post-Assessment	12
Cohort Curriculum	14
Pastoral Flourishing Retreat.....	68
Retreat Overview.....	68

Retreat Purpose	69
Retreat Rhythm	69
Retreat Design	70
Retreat Schedule	71
Specific Elements	73
Lay Leadership Seminar for Pastoral Flourishing	77
Seminar Overview	77
Seminar Content	78
Seminar Structure	79
Seminar Post-Assessment	80
Seminar Curriculum	81
Assessment	108
Project Launch Plan	111
Doctoral Project Description	112
Audience	112
Development Plan	112
Development Process	113
Appendix A– Milestone 1 The NPO Charter	114
Appendix B– Milestone 2 NPO Topic Expertise Essay	127
Appendix C–Milestone 3 Design Workshop Report	145
Appendix D–Milestone 4 Design Research Report	158
Appendix E–	175
Project Promotional Materials	175
Bibliography	181

Research Method

This Doctoral Project utilized a blended research and design methodology called ‘Collaborative Design for Ministry and Nonprofit Contexts’. In Collaborative Design, practitioners work with stakeholder representatives to address a Need, Problem, or Opportunity (NPO) in their context. Using a combination of bibliographic resources, local knowledge derived from stakeholder Workshops, and an iterative process of continuous adjustment using ‘just enough’ feedback information at each juncture of development, practitioners produce an application-oriented Project that seeks to effect Christ-centered change.

Abstract

The NPO: Pastors and their spouses, of rural, Assemblies of God (AG) churches, need a relational structure for sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry. Pastors expend great energy caring for the welfare of others through acts such as teaching, counseling, and visiting. But who provides care for pastors? How can pastors take care of themselves? If the souls of pastors are dry, disordered, and dismayed, their relationship with God and service to the church suffers. Pastors in rural communities, typically in small congregations, face particular challenges, especially from geographical isolation and expectations of church growth. In the AG, many resources for pastors address external ministry performance, but there is lack of attention to their inner lives. Increasing burnout and pastoral attrition reveals the depth of the need for soul care for pastors to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry.

I am an ordained minister with the AG, serving as a pastor in a rural community and a presbyter in northern Nevada. This project offers a relational model to support rural, AG pastors and their spouses in their own soul care in the midst of ministry. The project contains two main parts represented in the title, with three distinct resources: a cohort, retreat, and seminar. A six-session, remote learning cohort, followed by a weekend, in-person retreat, provides the core of the project to promote the “healthy souls” of pastors. The delivery includes instruction, coupled with discussion and practical exercises, in the context of a community of fellow pastors and spouses, who ideally form a supportive relationship among themselves. A follow-up one-day seminar for leaders in the pastors’ local churches brings these key leaders alongside their pastors to provide “steady hands” that support pastors to make their personal and professional flourishing sustainable long term.

Introduction

Story of the Research Process

DISCOVER

I began the research process with the NPO: "Pastors of small (<100) Assemblies of God churches need sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry." The design workshop proved helpful both in confirming and refining the need. The stakeholders revealed passion surrounding the topic and heartily agreed with the need for pastors to minister out of a healthy soul as well as the lack of soul care resources available to them. The workshop helped identify root causes and shaped the NPO into the following: "Pastors and their spouses of small, rural, Assemblies of God churches need sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry." Two significant modifications in this reworked NPO set up the research to follow. First, the audience broadened to include pastors' spouses. The stakeholders' input highlighted the importance of the pastor's spouse for personal and pastoral health. Second, the audience narrowed from pastors of small churches to specifically *rural* churches. While small churches share commonalities, the group noted significant differences in urban and rural communities. The group saw value in providing specific consideration for soul care of pastors and their spouses in rural settings.

After gathering stakeholder input to understand and shape the NPO, I began academic research to investigate the pertinent issues and gain a fuller picture of the matter. Scripture and Christian history both revealed the primacy of one's life with God and the influence that relationship with God has on ministry. Key voices in Christian ministry and spirituality affirmed the need for God's servants to cultivate a healthy inner life. Noticing various approaches to addressing this need in the literature suggested the complexity to addressing pastoral soul care. There are many factors at work, including emotional, physical, and mental health, and relationship with God and other people. I also observed that, in general, Pentecostalism has not adequately addressed the issue of soul care. While some Pentecostal scholars have begun to speak to it, a paucity of practitioners accentuated the sense of the need in my context. Key questions emerged from the research that pointed me to further work. First, congregational setting presented a question of what soul care for pastors looks like in a small, rural church. Most research did not press into such particulars. Secondly, I recognized a question of the source and means of resources. From where pastors might receive help and in what form became key considerations in the research moving forward.

DESIGN

The second year of the research process began with another workshop, this one focused on stakeholder input into design options to address the NPO. The workshop activities continued to confirm the validity of the NPO and produced three possible project designs to respond to it: 1) a marriage retreat for pastors and their spouses, 2) a cohort training for pastors on the spiritual life and ministry in a rural context, and 3) a training for church boards to help them support pastors

toward health. In interviews with other stakeholders and conversation with my project faculty, I began to see that these three designs had points of connection and held possibility for integration. A framework for addressing pastors' personal and professional flourishing took shape, in which the various designs might fill a need.

I decided to develop two prototypes. The first prototype combined the design concepts of a cohort and retreat into a six-month virtual cohort for pastors and their spouses that included a marriage retreat. The second prototype developed the third design into a one-day seminar for church lay leaders. In testing the prototypes, I suggested to stakeholders that each prototype can stand alone or perhaps the two could be combined into one integrated resource. Their feedback confirmed the viability of both prototypes and an integrated model that addresses two audiences: both pastors and their spouses (with the cohort and retreat) and the lay leaders in their churches (the seminar). In evaluation of feedback and continued conversation with my project faculty, I decided to develop a project combining both prototypes into one resource that has distinct, and potentially detachable, components. I believed this approach would provide pastors and their spouses with a sustainable relational structure for their soul care. Furthermore, I liked the flexibility to utilize elements of the proposed project on their own. For example, the lay leadership seminar could be offered apart from the rest of the project. The retreat could also stand alone, as could the cohort. While the integrated model held promise for the most impact, the design's adaptability was attractive.

DELIVER

In the third year of research, I prepared to create the project by developing six benchmarks. The benchmarks delineated what a successful initial implementation of the project would entail for each component. I developed pre and post assessments as a means to assess the project's effectiveness. I decided to ensure the quality of the project's materials and content through stakeholder feedback during production and through implementation. After setting benchmarks, I started work producing the project. I started by creating the curriculum for the cohort, which I decided to call a "Pastoral Flourishing Cohort." The name came out of stakeholder feedback through the process, especially in year two, that I would need to consider that many pastors may not want to participate if they felt like they had to admit to their own needs or struggles. Framing the cohort as an invitation to flourish tested well and seemed both fitting for the focus and welcoming to the intended users. Since the lay leadership seminar contains overlapping material, I wrote it next. Finally, I developed a plan for the retreat. I reached out for stakeholder feedback after completing drafts of each component of the project. This feedback helped me know that the structure and content of the resources were appropriate. Feedback on the retreat proved especially beneficial, leading me to create a more general retreat for "pastoral flourishing" rather than my initial plan for a marriage-themed retreat.

After completing the project submitted here, I turned attention to the launch plan. I had already communicated general details about the project to my denominational district superintendent and the district director of pastoral care was also aware of the work, having participated in the discovery workshop and feedback during project development. I decided to start the launch plan by seeking

meetings, first with the director of pastoral care and then with the superintendent, to share the status of the project and discuss ideas for use among rural pastors in the district. I plan to suggest a pilot cohort and request funding for participants' expenses, particularly for the retreat. Feedback from the participants in this pilot group will provide guidance for future cohorts and direct possible further collaboration with the district. It may happen that the district does not desire to support a pilot cohort or future cohorts after the initial group. In such case, I will pursue avenues to use the project elsewhere and in other ways, including the use of the retreat and/or seminar as standalone events. Feedback made clear that this project will require adjustments over time, especially during its implementation. Some questions of content, design, and structure cannot be adequately understood until I put the project to use. Thus, I will continue to gather user feedback during the project's usage and from post-assessments by participants.

Synthesis of the Learning Experience

I began the research journey with significant apprehension. The newness of the work and my unfamiliarity with the process presented the initial hurdle to clear. I look back on that first semester with gratitude because my insecurities and concerns led me to depend on God. This posture of divine dependence proved crucial to the work, illuminating the spiritual center of all the pragmatic matters: pastoring requires utter dependence on the Holy Spirit. Healthy ministry starts with (and continues in) acknowledging one's need for God's grace. I see now how God worked in me through the research process, with many steps that stretched and challenged me, to fashion me into the kind of person for this kind of work. On a practical level, I am grateful for the way the challenges in the research method, such as conducting workshops and interviews, developed my capacities and increased my confidence. Portland Seminary intends for the research process itself to be part of the learning that students receive and can apply to other ministry NPOs in the future, and I attest to such confidence that I have learned helpful theoretical and practical research skills that will benefit my future work.

Even as I submit this project, I recognize its incompleteness, not only for the ongoing adjustments to be made upon implementation, as discussed above, but as merely one offering to address a need that remains great. Research pointed in this direction of a cohort, retreat, and seminar as fruitful means of addressing the NPO, but also revealed limitations. In particular, it remains unclear whether pastors will join up with these resources. Feelings of pride, shame, or insecurity about how others will respond, present possible obstacles to participation. While I hope the positive framing of pastoral flourishing offers an accessible invitation, I acknowledge that some who may benefit most from this work may have the most difficult time entering into it. Furthermore, my project presents one way to address the need for pastoral soul care and in a specific context (rural, Pentecostal). Yet pastors in all places and traditions have need for help establishing and maintaining a healthy spirituality in ministry.

Synopsis of Next Steps

While my project is mostly completed, a few steps in production remain. For both the cohort and seminar, I plan to prepare PowerPoint presentations for some of the material for use during

sessions. Visual aids such as this may help participants connect with the content. For the retreat, I will produce a binder that includes various resources which each participant will receive to aid their experience of the retreat and help them in the future. These resources will include details about the retreat and its location, a schedule, spiritual practices, a recommended reading list, and some blank pages for journaling.

As I finish producing the project as described above, I will work on assembling a pilot group for the cohort, which is the first step in this soul care resource. Contacts at our denominational district office may provide help assembling this group, though I also know potential candidates whom I can reach out to directly. Once compiled, I will lead this initial group through the cohort and retreat, after which I will offer the seminar. As mentioned earlier, I will make adjustments along the way. I will ask for participants who complete the program to provide written (and possibly video) testimonials for promotional use in preparation for future cohorts.

Summary of the Journey

I recall the beginning of this research journey at the beginning of the fall 2020 semester. I sat in my church study in front of my laptop for our cohort's orientation. I was anxious and somehow already overwhelmed before it was underway. As I learned about the process of design-thinking and project development, including workshops and interviews, my anxiety level rose. It seemed that everything involved in this process would be new to me. I worked hard to learn new skills. I reached beyond my comfort zones to initiate conversations and facilitate learning that I would never have otherwise done. As I reflect on it all, I smile with gratitude for God's grace that sustained and helped me every step of the way. I am grateful for how the process did not merely help me become more proficient at skills I already had, but taught me entirely new methods and processes, giving me new competencies and greater confidence.

Throughout my education, I have preferred working alone to joining with others. Depending on others never appealed to me. But the seminary's process of collaborative research forced me to depend on others for insight and direction. Seeing how this collaboration produced a positive outcome encourages me to do more of it. I have already applied some of the skills attained through this research process to my work as a pastor, utilizing games and exercises in board meetings and even in corporate worship, sticky notes included. The research journey has helped transform my leadership into a more interactive and interdependent style and I can see positive effects in the church as well as in myself. Part of the seminary's goal in the design of its research process is to provide students with a replicable process they can use in other contexts. I surely believe that I have received such a tool that will prove valuable again and again.

I am pleased with how my project came together and am excited to present it here. Even more, I look forward to its implementation. I deeply desire that it will encourage and strengthen other pastors. I think of the ways that God helped me realize the need for my own soul care and provided avenues for me to learn and grow. I pray that this project will do for others what God has done for me, to "gladden the soul" of God's servants as they offer their lives to God (Ps 86:4).

Doctoral Project

Introduction

This project offers a three-in-one resource to equip rural, Assemblies of God pastors to develop and sustain a healthy soul throughout their life and ministry.¹ The research process confirmed my observation that many pastors struggle to maintain a flourishing life with God amid the demanding challenges and diverse expectations of parish ministry. I offer this model of soul care in the hope that it provides much-needed attention to the inner life of pastors, bringing encouragement, confidence, and hope.

The pastor's soul care finds support in this model from personal learning and practice, and spousal, peer, and lay leader support. Thus, this approach to soul care for pastors is fundamentally relational: built on the pastor's relationship with God, with spouse (if applicable), with a community of colleagues, and with fellow leaders in the local church. Sustaining a healthy spirituality and ministry requires community and accountability. Through cohort-style learning, pastors will build relationships with other pastors as they make the journey of soul care together.

The core of the project is a six-session (one per month) "Pastoral Flourishing Cohort" for pastors and their spouses delivered through videoconferencing. Depending on the geographical makeup of each cohort, if possible, I will plan to hold the first session face-to-face and subsequent sessions virtually. At the conclusion of the cohort, participants attend a two-night retreat to deepen their learning, relationships, and readiness to move forward. The project's final piece brings a one-day seminar to lay leaders in the church of the pastors who have completed the cohort, equipping them to support their pastors toward personal and professional health.

The overall model is flexible and adaptable. Each of the components can stand alone. With some modification to the content, the audience can broaden to include pastors in small churches, rural or urban, or to include pastors outside the Assemblies of God. The remote-learning cohort can be delivered in-person and the in-person seminar can be offered remotely. The ability of the model to adapt to different contexts may enable this work to reach a broader audience in the future.

¹ In reference to the work of soul care and the formation of a healthy soul, I refer to one's inner being. In the context of Christian spirituality, a flourishing life grows from the inside out, from communion with God in the depths of one's being. Dallas Willard describes the soul as "that dimension of the person that interrelates all the other dimensions so that they form one life." See Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 37.

Pastoral Flourishing Cohort

COHORT OVERVIEW

The primarily remote-learning cohort emerged as the “Most Valuable Prototype” to deliver a resource to rural pastors and their spouses regarding their own soul care. The cohort aims to educate participants in perspective and practices of soul care with attention to their pastoral context and with the support of a community of fellow pastors. Monthly sessions lead into “between the sessions” work to keep participants engaged with what they learn and with each other. The focus on “pastoral flourishing” presents the cohort as a positive invitation to thrive, rather than merely survive, in life and ministry.

I have prepared both facilitator and participant guides. Participants will receive the latter by email, or possibly in print, particularly if the first session meets in-person, which I will seek to do if possible. PowerPoint presentations may accompany the presentation of the material during sessions. I will develop these later (see Launch Plan).

See Appendix E for the promotional brochure for the cohort.

COHORT RHYTHM

Monthly Zoom Session

- *Introduction:*
 - Check-in with self: moment of stillness, prayer
 - Check-in with each other: sharing/debriefing
- *Instruction:* Presentation of content
- *Interaction:*
 - Discussion and questions
 - Planned activity to engage the content

Between Sessions

- *Reflection:* Questions provided for personal and couple reflection
- *Action:* Spiritual practice and/or other exercise to engage that gives practical exposure to the content in relation to personal life and ministry
- *Discussion:* Online discussion board to share/process learnings

COHORT CONTENT

Session 1: Understanding the Need and Introducing Soul Care

- burnout/brownout
- common themes
- soul care as overall well-being with attention to the inner life

Session 2: Foundational Perspectives Part 1: Soul Care

- soul care in scripture and church history
- soul care primary themes and focus

Session 3: Foundational Perspectives Part 2: Pastoral Theology and Rural Ministry

- what is a pastor and what does a pastor do? (calling, perspective)
- understanding rural America and rural churches: challenges and opportunities
- the pastor in a rural community

Session 4: Formational Practices Part 1: Spiritual Formation and Personal Wholeness

- abiding (in Christ)
- meditating (on Scripture)
- withdrawing (for solitude)
- resting/playing (Sabbath)
- physical and emotional health

Session 5: Formational Practices Part 2: Relationships

- family
- spiritual friendship
- colleagues
- spiritual direction

Session 6: Putting it Together

- a rule of life
- accountability
- sustainability

COHORT STRUCTURE

A Pastoral Flourishing Cohort (PFC) meets monthly for six months. Participants then attend a two-night retreat. If married, the pastor's spouse is encouraged to participate in all the sessions, including the retreat.

- **Pre-assessment:** Each participant (pastors and spouses separately) completes a self-assessment before the first session that provides a snapshot of their current spiritual, emotional, and relational health.
- **Monthly sessions (on Zoom):** Participants (pastors and spouses) and facilitator gather on Zoom for a 90-minute session. See "Cohort Rhythm" for session format.
- **Between sessions:** Participants connect with God, spouse, and cohort peers in relation to the material from the previous session through recommended readings, practices, and an online discussion forum. See "Cohort Rhythm" for further detail.
- **Retreat:** Two-night retreat for pastors and their spouses (if applicable) with host couple (facilitator and spouse).
- **Post-assessment:** Each participant completes a self-assessment after the cohort's completion which can be used to evaluate growth and plan for continued application. This assessment will include both a survey and an invitation to a one-on-one Zoom session with the facilitator to offer feedback and discuss personalized application of the cohort.
- **Alumni celebration:** One year after the completion of the cohort, its participants will be invited to gather (virtually or physically) to encourage continued connection and celebrate God's work in their lives through sharing their stories.

COHORT PRE-ASSESSMENT

This self-assessment is intended to provide you and your cohort facilitator with an accurate picture of your current spiritual, emotional, and relational health; please respond honestly.

1) Choose the response that best describes your present relationship with God?

- a) Strong and growing
- b) Solid but unspectacular
- c) Good enough
- d) Struggling or stagnant
- e) Damaged and disconnected

Describe why you chose the above response.

2) Which response below best describes your relationship with your spouse?

- a) Strong and growing
- b) Solid but unspectacular
- c) Good enough
- d) Struggling or stagnant
- e) Damaged and disconnected

Describe why you chose the above response.

3) How would you describe your relationship to the ministry (as a pastor or pastor's spouse)?

- a) I love being involved in the ministry!
- b) It's fair enough, but I'd do something else if I/we could
- c) It's a love-hate relationship but generally I'm happy with it
- d) I am really struggling with this
- e) I want out!

Describe why you chose the above response.

4) In what areas of your spiritual life do you feel strong?

5) In what areas of your spiritual life do you sense a need for help?

6) This Pastoral Flourishing Cohort (PFC) addresses the issues of tending to your own soul (your inner being and life with God) and key relationships to have a healthy spirituality and ministry. What do you most hope to gain by participating in this PFC?

COHORT POST-ASSESSMENT

This self-assessment is intended to provide you and your cohort facilitator with an accurate picture of your current spiritual, emotional, and relational health; please respond honestly.

1) Choose the response that best describes your present relationship with God?

- a) Strong and growing
- b) Solid but unspectacular
- c) Good enough
- d) Struggling or stagnant
- e) Damaged and disconnected

Describe why you chose the above response.

2) Which response below best describes your relationship with your spouse?

- a) Strong and growing
- b) Solid but unspectacular
- c) Good enough
- d) Struggling or stagnant
- e) Damaged and disconnected

Describe why you chose the above response.

3) How would you describe your relationship to the ministry (as a pastor or pastor's spouse)?

- a) I love being involved in the ministry!
- b) It's fair enough, but I'd do something else if I/we could
- c) It's a love-hate relationship but generally I'm happy with it
- d) I am really struggling with this
- e) I want out!

Describe why you chose the above response.

4) In what areas of your spiritual life do you feel strong?

5) In what areas of your spiritual life do you sense a need for help?

6) This Pastoral Flourishing Cohort (PFC) addresses the issues of tending to your own soul (life with God) and key relationships to have a healthy spirituality and ministry. What are the benefits you have received through participation in the cohort?

7) What improvements would you suggest for future PFCs?

COHORT CURRICULUM



Session 1: "Understanding the Need & Introducing Soul Care"

Facilitator's Guide

1. Introduction

- a. *Welcome and introductions.*
 - i. Greet and invite participants to introduce themselves and offer a brief word about their personal and ministry context.
 - ii. Check-in exercise: share two words to describe how they feel as they begin this cohort. Brief silence and prayer.
- b. *Explanation of the PFC.* This cohort seeks to support pastors toward personal and professional health by equipping them with principles and practices for sustainable soul care in a supportive community of fellow pastors with spouses.
- c. *Description of structure and rhythm* (see "cohort structure" and "cohort rhythm" handouts).
- d. *Overview of sessions* (see "cohort content" handout).

2. Instruction

Understanding the Need

- a. *The problem:*
 - i. Ministry is hard, with many challenges, yet we often face these alone. The demands are greater than the resources to meet them.

- ii. Burnout (lack of energy) and brownout (Will Willimon, lack of meaning) are common in helping professions, including among pastors. Willimon: "the 'fuel' that supplies the energy to minister as clergy...is a conviction that what we do has meaning...When we no longer find meaning in what we do, even the smallest action drains us. Burnout is the result of a lack of meaning" (*Clergy & Laity Burnout*, pp. 25-26).
- iii. Common issues in pastoral experience (from Mark Brewster, *Life Impact*):
 1. Disconnect between inner life and outward ministry
 2. Need to prove myself: performance, image, control
 3. Busyness: life revolves around doing ministry
 4. Perspectives on success and failure derived from culture not Christ
 5. Lack of affirmation
 6. Feeling not understood: people don't get what it's like to be a pastor
 7. Wounds from people in the church
 8. Disillusionment with calling, ministry, people

(Ask them to review the list and identify which have been the most common themes in their own experience. Give 2 min to discuss as couples and then invite sharing with the group).

b. *The need:*

- i. Key Scripture for the cohort, Luke 6:44-45 (The Message): "*The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds.*" (The Message)
- ii. Pastoral flourishing depends on an inside-out approach to ministry. Jesus invites us to tend to the health of our inner life. Healthy fruit in ministry grows out of a healthy life with God.
- iii. So, the key need amid our ministry struggles and problems is not an external fix but a healthy soul.

- c. *The invitation:* This cohort is an invitation to give time and attention to your life with God, to the sustaining relationships with God, spouse, and some key others. By attending to the health of the tree (soul) we trust God to produce good fruit.

Break: 5 min

Introducing Soul Care

- a. *Definition:* Soul care is not common language in our tradition, but is helpful to speak to the invitation to tend to our life with God. Christian psychologist David Benner defines soul care as “the support and restoration of the well-being of persons in their depth and totality, with particular concern for their inner life” (*Care of Souls*, p. 23).
- b. *Biblical exhortations to soul care for ministry leaders:*
 - i. Psalm 1–“Portrait of a Healthy Soul.” Personal communion with God (being) takes precedence over ministry for God (doing).
 - ii. John 15:1-17–“Abiding and Producing.” Staying connected to Christ is necessary for personal/spiritual health and the fruit of ministry.
 - iii. John 21:15-23–“The Heart of Ministry.” Why do we pastor? Because we love Jesus. Nouwen: “Their leadership must be rooted in the permanent, intimate, relationship with the incarnate Word, Jesus” (*In the Name of Jesus*, p. 31).
- c. This is what our cohort for pastoral flourishing is about: to learn the ways of caring for our own souls in the midst of “the care of souls” for others.

3. Interaction

- a. *Discussion:* What thoughts or questions do you have about the challenges of ministry or the topic of soul care?
- b. *Activity:* One thing we see emerge regarding soul care is the important role of Scripture. A hazard of ministry is that Scripture can be reduced to only a tool in our work and not a resource in our life with God. Scripture is God’s gracious word to us—not just so we can preach it to others—but enter deeper into God’s life. So, we are going to practice spending time with God in Scripture right now for about 15 minutes before we conclude our time. Consider it a gift. This is time for you and the Lord. Time for you to listen to his voice, to receive his healing word. No sermon required afterward. No pressure to respond.

(Lead in a Group Prayerful Reading of Luke 6:44-45 (see end of session 1 guide; structure taken from MaryKate Morse’s chapter “Scripture Prayer” in *A Guidebook to Prayer*).

4. Between the Sessions (review from “Cohort Rhythm” handout)

- a. Three ways to engage before we meet here on Zoom next month:
 - i. *Reflection:* Spend time with the reflection questions (see participant guide) and discuss with spouse.

- ii. *Action* (see participant guide, review instructions)
- iii. *Discussion*: Engage our cohort's Facebook page. There will be some prompts for discussion. Not meant to be an obligation, but an opportunity. Feel free also to share joys and needs.

b. Closing: questions, thanks to all, prayer and blessing.

Online discussion questions:

As pastors, we may feel a tension between caring for the needs of others and tending to our own needs. Reflect on how you experience this tension. What takes priority? How do you feel about that? Are there any new insights and possible changes to consider in light of our first session?

Group Prayerful Reading of Luke 6:44-45

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds."

In this opening prayer, please repeat after me:

Lord, how can we know the way? (repeat)

Jesus answers, "I am the way, the truth and the life." (repeat)

Lord, teach us to see. (repeat)

Close your eyes and listen for a word or phrase that you particularly notice as I read the passage aloud twice. After the second reading remain in silence for a couple minutes paying attention to the word or phrase that grabs your attention.

(read twice, silence)

With your eyes closed, speak out the word or phrase you noticed. Don't worry about others speaking at the same time.

As I read the passage again, listen for what Jesus might be teaching or saying to you. Then in the silence that follows continue listening to him.

(read, silence)

As I read the passage again and in the silence that follows, listen to how you might respond to the teaching.

(read, silence)

Share your reflection and response you might have heard with the group. Don't worry if there's nothing in particular; that's not abnormal.

Close your eyes again and listen while I read the passage a final time. Receive the words and rest in Jesus' truth.

(read, short silence)

Prayer (Lord's Prayer)



Session 1: “Understanding the Need & Introducing Soul Care”

Participant’s Guide

What is the Pastoral Flourishing Cohort (PFC)?

A PFC seeks to support rural pastors toward personal and professional health by equipping them with principles and practices for sustainable soul care in a supportive community of fellow pastors and spouses. The cohort’s rhythm includes six monthly zoom sessions with guidance for peer connection and practical application between sessions. There is also a two-night retreat.

Overview of the Sessions

- Session 1: Understanding the Need and Introducing Soul Care
- Session 2: Foundational Perspectives Part 1: Soul Care
- Session 3: Foundational Perspectives Part 2: Pastoral Theology and Rural Ministry
- Session 4: Formational Practices Part 1: Spiritual Formation and Personal Wholeness
- Session 5: Formational Practices Part 2: Relationships
- Session 6: Putting it Together

Understanding the Need

"The 'fuel' that supplies the energy to minister as clergy...is a conviction that what we do has meaning...When we no longer find meaning in what we do, even the smallest action drains us. Burnout is the result of a lack of meaning" (Will Willimon, *Clergy & Laity Burnout*, pp. 25-26).

Common issues in pastoral experience (Mark Brewster of Life Impact Ministries):

- Disconnect between inner life and outward ministry
- Need to prove myself: performance, image, control
- Busyness: life revolves around doing ministry
- Perspectives on success and failure derived from culture not Christ
- Lack of affirmation
- Feeling not understood: people don't get what it's like to be a pastor
- Wounds from people in the church
- Disillusionment with calling, ministry, people

Key Scripture: Luke 6:44-45 (The Message)

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds."

Jesus presents an inside-out approach to ministry, in which healthy fruit in ministry grows out of a healthy life with God. Thus, the key need amid our ministry struggles and problems is not an external fix but a healthy soul. This cohort is an invitation to give time and attention to the sustaining relationships with God, spouse, and some key others. By attending to the health of the tree (soul) we trust God to produce good fruit.

Introducing Soul Care

Defining soul care: "The support and restoration of the well-being of persons in their depth and totality, with particular concern for their inner life" (David Benner, *Care of Souls*, p. 23).

Biblical exhortations to soul care for ministry leaders:

- Psalm 1—"Portrait of a Healthy Soul." Personal communion with God (being) takes precedence over ministry for God (doing).
- John 15:1-17—"Abiding and Producing." Staying connected to Christ necessary for personal/spiritual health and the fruit of ministry.
- John 21:15-23—"The Heart of Ministry." Why do we pastor? Because we love Jesus. Nouwen: "Their leadership must be rooted in the permanent, intimate, relationship with the incarnate Word, Jesus" (*In the Name of Jesus*, p. 31).

Between Sessions 1 and 2

Reflection

- Review the items you selected in the list of “common issues in pastoral experience.” Continue the conversation about these with your spouse (if applicable) or personal reflection. Use these questions if helpful:
 - Why did you choose these? When and how have you experienced them? Which, if any, are you experiencing right now?
 - How have these experiences affected you? (Consider attitudes, relationships, and practices).
- Was there any particular word you heard from God during the prayerful reading of Luke 6:44-45? What might God be stirring in you? What grace/gift might you ask God for in this regard?
- Choose one of the three passages discussed as biblical exhortations to soul care (Ps 1, Jn 15:1-17, Jn 21:15-23). Spend time with it this month. Read, study, listen. Perhaps do some “prayerful reading” of the passage similar to our in-session experience with Luke 6:44-45. Record your observations, reflections, insights, prayers, etc.
- Consider a biblical and/or personal example of soul care. Who in Scripture and/or in your life demonstrates attention to their life with God that spills over into their ministry to others? What do you admire and appreciate about them?

Action

- “Table Time with Jesus”

Find some time and space for solitude. Bring the list of pastoral issues that you have and/or currently experience. If you are at a table, picture Jesus sitting across from you (he is!). Otherwise, envision yourself in this setting wherever you are. One at a time, take each issue and “place it on the table.” Simply tell the Lord what you’ve experienced and how you’ve felt because of it. While it is on the table, respond however you need in his presence. Then, when you’re ready, push it over the tabletop to Jesus. Let him hold your experience and all that is bound up with it. As you do, say to him, “I give you this burden, Lord, to carry for me.” You may wish to return to this practice for the same issues. Unloading our burdens on the Lord may take more than one trip.

Discussion

- Visit the cohort Facebook page to interact with one another, share praises and petitions, and discuss some issues pertaining to this first session.



Session 2: "Foundational Perspectives Part 1–Soul Care"

Facilitator's Guide

1. Introduction

a. *Greeting*

- i. Welcome everyone, glad back together. Brief silence and prayer.
- ii. Check-in: Invite each participant to share about the passage they chose to spend time between sessions and any way the Lord spoke to them through it (sharing is optional; instruct each to keep their sharing to 1-2 min).

b. *Reminder of purpose of PFC.* This cohort seeks to support pastors toward personal and professional health by equipping them with principles and practices for sustainable soul care in a supportive community of fellow pastors with spouses.

c. *Review key Scripture (Luke 6:44-45):* "The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds."

2. Instruction

Soul Care: Biblical and Historical Overview

a. *Biblical examples of soul care for ministry leaders:*

- i. Israel's priesthood made atonement for themselves before others (Lev 16:6, 11), reveals need to pay attention to own inner life to effectively minister to others.

- ii. Other biblical examples: Ezra (Ezra 7:10) and David (Psalms).
- iii. Jesus: practiced spiritual disciplines to nurture his relationship with the Father and dependence on the Spirit. Ministry flowed out of spirituality. "Before you were called to be a shepherd, you were called to be a lamb" (Diane Langberg, quoted in *Resilient Ministry*, p. 21).
- iv. Discussion: What are some of the spiritual disciplines Jesus practiced? (Answers should include: reading/memorizing Scripture, solitude/silence, corporate worship, prayer, fasting; Les Hardin's *The Spirituality of Jesus*). Follow up: How might Jesus' spiritual discipline be significant for your soul care in ministry?

b. *Historical examples:*

- i. Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter *The Reformed Pastor*, instructions to pastors begins with "the oversight of ourselves," involves guidance for personal spiritual devotion. Then moves to "the oversight of the flock." Refrain: "take heed to yourselves" underscores need for soul care.
- ii. Charles Spurgeon, like Baxter, calls pastors to maintain robust prayers and take regular times of solitary retreat to care for their souls.
- iii. Pentecostalism struggles to embrace soul care in the spiritual life.
 - 1. Spirit baptism should not be seen as the height of growth, but as a means toward deeper connection w/God and ministry in the world.
 - 2. Suffering in ministry is normative; sustaining grace accessed through not only charisms but wider practices of spiritual life.
 - 3. 20th century: therapeutic model alongside the rise of modern psychology. Benner highlights the value to pastors of receiving soul care, especially spiritual direction, just as psychologists are encouraged to receive therapy. Those who help the inner lives of others need help to strengthen their own.
- iv. Key voice: Henri Nouwen
 - 1. Key works: *In the Name of Jesus*, *The Living Reminder*, *The Wounded Healer*.
 - 2. Calls pastors to primacy of walking w/God; ministry flows out of spirituality.
 - 3. Wounded healer model: only tending to God's work in us can we help others do the same.

4. Core practice: contemplative prayer, dwelling in presence of Christ.
- v. Key voice: Eugene Peterson
 1. Key works: *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*, *The Contemplative Pastor*, *The Pastor*, *Working the Angles*.
 2. Warns of the "constant danger of a professional, religious role, that gradually obliterates the life of the soul," when "working for Jesus...crowds out the personal life of *living* for Jesus."
 3. Pastoral soul care through personal devotion and collegial support (his own "Company of Pastors").
- vi. Key voice: William Willimon
 1. Key works: *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life*, *Clergy and Laity Burnout*, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*.
 2. Pastoral vocation high calling, difficult challenges: make vow of stability and accept that ministry of Christ will be cruciform.
 3. Three aids for pastoral soul care: theological perspective (identity, calling), character formation, and spiritual discipline (especially daily prayer and Scripture reading).

Break: 5 min

Soul Care: Primary Themes and Focus

- a. *Inner life* → *outward ministry*: "Soul guides can only lead others to places they themselves regularly inhabit." (Benner, *Care of Souls*, p. 209). A main theme in soul care is the need for Christian leaders to have inner strength rooted in relationship with Christ. Being in the ministry doesn't assume a healthy spiritual life, but it does necessitate it.
- b. *Spiritual disciplines*: Effective soul care requires the supportive structure given by spiritual disciplines. Contemplative practices may be especially helpful for pastors, such as solitude, sabbath, and retreat. An underlying point is that spiritual health isn't automatic, but requires deliberate, ongoing attention and devotion.
- c. *Relationships and emotional health*: The spiritual life exists in connection with our entire personhood, including emotions and relationships. Theoreticians like Benner and practitioners like Peter Scazzero agree that emotional and psychological health is linked to spiritual health (consider the effects that mental and relational stress have on your spirit). Dallas Willard identifies the soul as the all-

encompassing dimension of the self (*Renovation of the Heart*, pp. 37-38). Thus, a holistic approach to caring for our souls is needed, one that accounts for the impact of our relationships and overall well-being.

3. Interaction

- a. *Discussion*: What stands out to you in our session today? A quotation, concept, practice, or question perhaps?
- b. *Activity*: Contemplative practices show promise to be especially restorative and sustaining for pastors, whose lives are quite active in *doing* the Lord's work. Contemplative prayer returns us to rest, to simply *being* with the Lord. (Lead in a group experience of Contemplative Prayer as described in MaryKate Morse's chapter "Contemplative-Rest Prayer" in *A Guidebook to Prayer*).

4. Between the Sessions (review from "Cohort Rhythm" handout)

- a. Three ways to engage before we meet here on Zoom next month:
 - i. *Reflection*: Spend time with the reflection questions (see participant guide) and discuss with spouse.
 - ii. *Action* (see participant guide, review instructions)
 - iii. *Discussion*: Engage our cohort's Facebook page. There will be some prompts for discussion. Not meant to be an obligation, merely an opportunity. Feel free also to share joys and needs.
- b. Closing: questions, thanks to all, prayer and blessing.

Online discussion questions:

As pastors, the tension between the needs of those we serve and our own at times manifests as a struggle to balance action and contemplation, doing and being. Reflect on how you experience this tension. Do you find it challenging to find time for simply being with God, for personal communion and contemplation? When you do take the such time with God amid your busy ministry, how do you feel? Are there any new insights and possible changes to consider in light of this session?



Session 2: "Foundational Perspectives Part 1—Soul Care"

Participant's Guide

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds." (Luke 6:44-45, The Message)

Soul Care: Biblical and Historical Overview

Biblical examples of soul care for ministry leaders:

- Israel's priesthood made atonement for themselves before others (Lev 16:6, 11), reveals need to pay attention to own inner life to effectively minister to others.
- Other biblical examples: Ezra (Ezra 7:10) and David (Psalms).
- Jesus: practiced spiritual disciplines to nurture his relationship with the Father and dependence on the Spirit. Ministry flowed out of spirituality.
- "Before you were called to be a shepherd, you were called to be a lamb" (Diane Langberg, quoted in *Resilient Ministry*, p. 21).

Discussion:

- What are some of the spiritual disciplines Jesus practiced?

- How might Jesus' spiritual discipline be significant for your soul care in ministry?

Historical examples of soul care for ministry leaders:

- Puritan pastor, Richard Baxter *The Reformed Pastor*, instructions to pastors begins with "the oversight of ourselves," involves guidance for personal spiritual devotion. Then moves to "the oversight of the flock." Refrain: "take heed to yourselves" underscores need for soul care.
- Charles Spurgeon (*Letters to My Students*), like Baxter, calls pastors to maintain robust prayers and take regular times of solitary retreat to care for their souls.
- Roadblocks for Pentecostals?
 - Spirit baptism: height of growth or means to deeper fellowship and ministry?
 - Suffering in ministry: sign of weakness or normal experience of serving Christ?
- 20th century: therapeutic model alongside the rise of modern psychology. Benner highlights the value to pastors of receiving soul care, especially spiritual direction, just as psychologists are encouraged to receive therapy. Those who help the inner lives of others need help to strengthen their own.

Key voices:

- Henri Nouwen (key works: *In the Name of Jesus*, *The Living Reminder*, *The Wounded Healer*).
 - Calls pastors to primacy of walking w/God; ministry flows out of spirituality.
 - Wounded healer model: only tending to God's work in us can we help others do the same.
 - Core practice: contemplative prayer, "dwelling in presence" of Christ.

- Eugene Peterson (key works: *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*, *The Contemplative Pastor*, *The Pastor*, *Working the Angles*).
 - Warns of the “constant danger of a professional, religious role, that gradually obliterates the life of the soul,” when “*working for Jesus...crowds out the personal life of living for Jesus.*”
 - Pastoral soul care through personal devotion and collegial support (his own “Company of Pastors”).
- William Willimon (key works: *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life*, *Clergy and Laity Burnout*, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*).
 - Pastoral vocation high calling, difficult challenges: make vow of stability and accept that ministry of Christ will be cruciform.
 - Three aids for pastoral soul care: theological perspective (identity, calling), character formation, and spiritual discipline (especially daily prayer and Scripture reading).

Soul Care: Primary Themes and Focus

Inner life → outward ministry

“Soul guides can only lead others to places they themselves regularly inhabit.” (Benner, *Care of Souls*, p. 209). A main theme in soul care is the need for Christian leaders to have inner strength rooted in relationship with Christ. Being in the ministry doesn’t assume a healthy spiritual life, but it does necessitate it.

Spiritual disciplines

Effective soul care requires the supportive structure given by spiritual disciplines. Contemplative practices may be especially helpful for pastors, such as solitude, sabbath, and retreat. An underlying point is that spiritual health isn't automatic, but requires deliberate, ongoing attention and devotion.

Relationships and emotional health

The spiritual life exists in connection with our entire personhood, including emotions and relationships. Theoreticians like Benner and practitioners like Peter Scazzero agree that emotional and psychological health is linked to spiritual health (consider the effects that mental and relational stress have on your spirit). Dallas Willard identifies the soul as the all-encompassing dimension of the self (*Renovation of the Heart*, pp. 37-38). Thus, a holistic approach to caring for our souls is needed, one that accounts for the impact of our relationships and overall well-being.

Between Sessions 2 and 3

Reflection

- Reflect on Diane Langberg's comment, "Before you were called to be a shepherd, you were called to be a lamb." What does this mean for you?
- Review the works by Nouwen, Peterson, and Willimon. Do any of these especially catch your interest? Consider getting a copy to read.
- Review the three soul care themes.
 - Personally speaking, how are your inner life and outward ministry connected (or disconnected)?
 - What spiritual disciplines are most restorative for you? When do you practice these? What place do the "contemplative disciplines" (solitude, sabbath, retreat) have in your spiritual life? What would you like to be different?
 - How would you describe your emotional health? What relationships (be specific) strengthen and sustain your inner life?
- How did you respond to the contemplative prayer time we shared? How did you feel? Did you experience any resistance? What might this prayer exercise reveal to you about yourself and your relationship with God?
- Consider beginning each workday with a 5-10 minute time of contemplative prayer. As you get more comfortable with this way of prayer, how do you think it might help you approach your daily ministry?

Action (see the next page)

Discussion

- Visit the cohort Facebook page to interact with one another, share praises and petitions, and discuss some issues pertaining to this second session.

“Take heed to yourselves”

Let Richard Baxter’s advice focus your thoughts on the various facets of your life. We can’t effectively minister to others unless we allow the Spirit to minister to us. Sometimes, in the busyness of ministry, we neglect the space necessary to listen to the deepest part of ourselves where the Spirit speaks to our spirit. For this prayer exercise, find a place and time you can uninterrupted and unhurried.

- 1) *Rest*: Spend a couple minutes in silence. “Be still before the Lord, and wait for him” (Ps 37:7a). Let yourself become aware of God’s presence with you.
- 2) *Reflect*: One at a time, reflect on the following facets of your life with honesty and without judgment. Record your reflections in the space provided below. Jenn Giles Kemper suggests these questions to aid your reflection: How are you attending to that part of your life? What movement is happening? What challenges are you facing? (Note: The seven categories and “reflect and reset” model developed by Jenn Giles Kemper with sacredordinarydays.com).
- 3) *Reset*: How might you reset in order to tend to that area of your life? Where do you sense God’s grace inviting you? Record in the space below.
- 4) *Rest*: Conclude with a couple minutes or more in silence. Thank God for speaking to you and pointing the way toward fuller, richer life with God.

Reflect

Reset

Spirit

Body

Mind

Relationships

Home

Work

Resources



Session 3: "Foundational Perspectives Part 2–Pastoral Theology and Rural Ministry"

Facilitator's Guide

1. Introduction

- a. *Greeting*
 - i. Welcome everyone. Brief silence and prayer.
 - ii. Check-in: "God at Work" sharing (brief, 1-2 minute sharing of how God has been at work *in* you since we last met).
- b. *Reminder of purpose of PFC.* This cohort seeks to support pastors toward personal and professional health by equipping them with principles and practices for sustainable soul care in a supportive community of fellow pastors with spouses.
- c. *Review key Scripture (Luke 6:44-45):* "The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds."
- d. *Today's topic:* pastoral ministry. A proper, biblical perspective of our pastoral calling and ministry helps us understand and practice soul care that benefits both our spirituality and ministry. Furthermore, the particularities of a rural context present both unique challenges and opportunities for pastoral soul care.

2. Instruction

Pastoral Theology

- a. *Pastoral identity (what is a pastor?):*
 - i. Will Willimon offers various contemporary images of the pastor in *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (give brief description of each): Media Mogul, Political Negotiator, Therapist, Manager, Resident Activist, Preacher, Servant.
 - ii. The word "pastor" comes from Latin for "shepherd." This is the primary biblical image of the pastor (e.g., 1 Pet 5:1-4).
 - iii. Discussion: Read 1 Pet 5:1-4. How does Peter provide a "pastoral theology?" What stands out to you about pastoral ministry?
- b. *Pastoral ministry (what does a pastor do?):*
 - i. There are many expectations for what a pastor should do. Run the church (whatever that means), fill the seats, take care of the faithful, start a youth center, etc. Confusion about what we do can create stress, fatigue, and frustration.
 - ii. Share my story of struggling with this early in ministry, finding Peterson.
 - iii. Peterson offers 3 "angles" that provide the "shape of pastoral integrity" (integrity to what we are called to be/do): prayer, reading Scripture, and spiritual direction (the lines are preaching, teaching, and administration).
 - iv. What we do isn't directed at appeasing denomination or congregation but to be faithful to God and God's purposes.

Break: 5 min

Rural Ministry

- a. *Understanding rural America and rural churches:*
 - iv. Attitudes of self-reliance, independence, and anti-authority (including government) are common. Suspicious of change and skeptical of authority. Historical influences include the rural crisis of the 1980s, increasing government control of agriculture resulted in "chronic decline" and a "new peasant class" (Jung, et al. in *Rural Ministry*, p. 107).
 - v. Share my own experience new to a rural community and church, encountering these attitudes.

- vi. Rural people/churches tend to strongly value place and community. The place matters and building a sense of community among the people in that place may be especially important in a rural setting.

b. *Opportunities and challenges:*

- i. Challenges: Limited resources, isolated location, losing people. For pastors, all this can add to the feeling of isolation already attendant to the vocation. There may also be a lack of ministerial colleagues in one's denomination in the area. A "closed rural system" can also strain marriage (Krause, *Evaluating the Effect of the Stressors of Rural Ministry Life on the Marriages of Rural Pastors*, p. 80).
- ii. Discussion: Name one of the greatest challenges you face in rural ministry.
- iii. Opportunities: Community and belonging, integration of faith and life, ministry of prayer (Roth, *God's Country*, 98-99), impact on and service to the wider community, interdenominational collaboration. Slower pace and open space may help practice of solitude, soul care.
- iv. Discussion: Name one of the greatest opportunities or gifts in rural ministry for you.
- v. Share my experience with some of the challenges of rural ministry, and my story of how God shifted my focus—not to deny the challenges, but to seek to help others with the same. Also share the way a rural setting does offer a lot that other places may not.

c. *The pastor in a rural community (Rural Ministry pp.201ff):*

- i. Rural pastor as shepherd/companion. Familiar image in rural setting. Rural people appreciate a pastor who walks alongside, listens, shares daily life. Perhaps nothing more important than this: companioning others in all aspects of life.
- ii. Rural pastor as community chaplain. Can be active in community life, make connections, especially over time influence grows.
- iii. Rural pastor as worship leader and preacher. These functions of corporate services are important in the rhythm of life of many rural people.
- iv. Rural pastor as leader. We walk with the people even as we lead them patiently yet boldly in the direction of God's purposes. We must discern these purposes together with the people and lead the changes necessary.

3. Interaction

- a. *Discussion*: What stands out to you in our session today? A quotation, concept, practice, or question perhaps?
- b. *Activity*: Pastoral Charges. We're going to divide into three groups (if not enough people to have at least three different participants in each group, form only two groups and drop the final passage). Each will be in a breakout room and work with an assigned passage which I will send to you. Each of the passages is a charge given to pastoral leaders. Your job for 10 minutes is to read and then discuss how that passage contributes to a theology of pastoring. In other words, what does it tell you about who a pastor is and what a pastor does? I'll put those questions in the chat for you. Have someone in the group willing to summarize your responses for the group. Questions? Passages are: 2 Tim 4:1-5, 1 Pet 5:1-4, and, if enough people, Acts 20:28-35.

4. Between the Sessions (review from "Cohort Rhythm" handout)

- a. Three ways to engage before we meet here on Zoom next month:
 - i. *Reflection*: Spend time with the reflection questions (see participant guide) and discuss with spouse.
 - ii. *Action* (see participant guide, review instructions)
 - iii. *Discussion*: Engage our cohort's Facebook page. There will be some prompts for discussion. Not meant to be an obligation, merely an opportunity. Feel free also to share joys and needs.
- b. Closing: questions, thanks to all, prayer and blessing.

Online discussion questions:

As pastors, we deal with many expectations—from denominational leaders, the congregation, our local community, and ourselves. It may often feel like everyone around us has an idea of what we should be doing...maybe everyone except us! Peterson's understanding of the pastoral vocation is quite simple: there's the work of preaching, teaching, and administering, but the keys are to pray, to stay immersed in Scripture, and to listen to people in the Spirit. What might happen around you if you practically pastored in this way, and let other expectations go unmet? What might happen in you? Discuss your questions and responses, whether of uncertainty, resistance, or embrace.

Share your responses to the "between the sessions" activity: "Blessing Prayer." How was the experience? What did you notice as you walked and prayed? What did you hear the Lord saying to you?—about yourself?—your ministry?—your community?



Session 3: "Foundational Perspectives Part 2—Pastoral Theology and Rural Ministry"

Participant's Guide

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds." (Luke 6:44-45, The Message)

Pastoral Theology

Pastoral identity (what is a pastor?)

Will Willimon offers various contemporary images of the pastor (in *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*):

- Media Mogul
- Political Negotiator,
- Therapist
- Manager
- Resident Activist
- Preacher
- Servant

Discussion:

- Read 1 Pet 5:1-4. How does Peter provide a "pastoral theology?" What stands out to you about pastoral ministry?

Pastoral ministry (what does a pastor do?)

Expectations (from denomination, congregation, culture, self)

Eugene Peterson's "Three Angles" (diagram from Steve Byler at sjbyler.com)



Rural Ministry

Understanding Rural America and Rural Churches

Challenges and Opportunities

Discussion:

- What would you identify as the greatest challenge you face in rural ministry?

- What would you identify as the greatest opportunity/gift in rural ministry for you?

The Pastor in a Rural Community

Between Sessions 3 and 4

Reflection

- Why is the issue of pastoral theology significant? In what ways might a clear, biblical understanding of your pastoral vocation help you in your daily ministry?
- How has pastoring in a rural community shaped your own heart and life? What might God be doing *in* you through the place and the people he has called you?
- This month meditate on 1 Peter 5:1-4. If you wish, expand to the other texts from our in-session activity: 2 Tim 4:1-5 and Acts 20:28-35. Consider how any one or more of these might clarify God's expectations for you as a pastor. Is there another key text for you in this regard? Journal your reflections.
- Read the article "A Pauline Foundation for the Pastoral Vocation" available at <https://naterhoads.wordpress.com/2017/09/11/a-pauline-foundation-for-the-pastoral-vocation/>. (Article written by cohort facilitator, Nathaniel Rhoads). Reflect and journal on what is helpful to your development of a pastoral theology for your ministry context.

Action (see the next page)

Discussion

- Visit the cohort Facebook page to interact with one another, share praises and petitions, and discuss some issues pertaining to this third session.

Blessing Prayer

"Blessing Prayer" comes from *A Guidebook to Prayer* by MaryKate Morse. General instructions and specifics for day three are adapted for this cohort.

This form of prayer offers God's blessing upon others. In this prayer exercise, you will focus such prayers on your local community. As a rural pastor, you are connected to the community in which you live and minister. While that community at times can be a burden and a source of struggle, God has called to this place and people to offer his blessing. Couples may do this prayer exercise together or individually. Either way, discuss it afterwards with each other.

- For three days one week pray a blessing prayer in this manner:
 - Day one: Walk through your immediate community or visualize your neighbors during your prayer time and pray for God's blessing and help. Be as specific as possible.
 - Day two: Walk through a part of your larger community and pray for blessing.
 - Day three: Using a local newspaper, bulletin board, or social media, pray for God's blessing on a concern or event in your community.
- Begin each prayer period with reading aloud Psalm 145:1-10 and end each prayer with the blessing in Numbers 6:24-26.
- Journal on your experience: Did you learn anything about yourself, others or God? What was the most meaningful part of the experience? What are the challenges? How might you continue to pray for your community?



Session 4: “Formational Practices Part 1–Spiritual Formation and Personal Wholeness”

Facilitator’s Guide

1. Introduction

a. *Greeting*

- i. Welcome everyone. Brief silence and prayer.
- ii. Check-in: Two words to describe how you are coming in today.
- iii. Review and summarize online sharing about “Blessing Prayer” experiences.

b. *Reminder of purpose of PFC.* This cohort seeks to support pastors toward personal and professional health by equipping them with principles and practices for sustainable soul care in a supportive community of fellow pastors with spouses.

c. *Review key Scripture (Luke 6:44-45):* “The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It’s who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds.”

d. *Today’s topic:* we are moving on from the foundational “principles” or “perspectives” to the formational “practices” side of soul care in this session and next. Session 4, today, has to do with practices that cultivate personal spiritual formation and wholeness; next month will look at the role of relationships.

2. Instruction

Spiritual Formation

a. *Abiding (Prayer)*

- i. One of our key soul care texts: John 15:1-17 (read vv 1-5).
- ii. First calling isn't to ministry for Christ but fellowship with Christ.
- iii. Pastors' relationship with Christ taken for granted. Assumed. Vital that we don't assume that ministry substitutes for abiding.
- iv. Twofold influence of vine on branches: source of life and fruitfulness. Abiding in Christ core sustaining practice, way of life, needful for ministry, which flows out of relationship.
- v. Practice: Contemplative Prayer (remind that we practiced this in session 2; guidelines provided in participant's guide for this session).

b. *Meditating (Scripture)*

- i. One of our key soul care texts: Psalm 1 (read).
- ii. Meditation on God's word is foundational to a flourishing soul and fruitful ministry. Enables us to be the kind of people who can lead others deeper w/God.
- iii. Peterson describes the need for pastors to be attentive to God in Scripture, immersed in Scripture in our lives with God. It's not just as a means to ministry, but to our own formation in Christ, out of which we serve.
- iv. Pastors spend a lot of time with Scripture in sermon/teaching prep. But before the Bible is a pastoral tool it is a personal place of encounter w/God.
- v. Practice: Prayerful Reading (4 movements)
 - 1. Read (slowly, attentively, listening deeply)
 - 2. Ruminant (what stands out to you? A word/phrase? Listen for what the Spirit is saying to you)
 - 3. Respond (Is there a divine invitation? How might the Spirit lead you to respond to the word?)
 - 4. Rest (Conclude by resting in God's presence and the grace and truth of his word for you)

(Journaling is a great way to capture and return to these times of communion with God in Scripture).

d. *Withdrawing, Resting and Playing (Solitude and Sabbath)*

- i. Some need this more than others, but we all need some times alone with God (see Matt 6:6, 14:23; Mark 6:31).
- ii. As a spiritual practice, solitude is time alone w/God. Restorative practice.
- iii. Peterson calls for a 24-hour weekly sabbath; many others do also. We orient our work in God's work. We ground our souls in rest and trust in God. Provides strength and guidance to our lives and work. That sabbath is ideal time to practice solitude, not necessarily whole day, but part.
- iv. For pastors, sabbath isn't Sunday! Many take Monday, others late week, like Friday. May overlap (sundown to sunset). Do what works for you.
- v. Personal illustration: quarterly retreat days (once a year on Sunday), then became monthly, now also a weekly ½ day of solitude. Often in nature. That time w/God restores my soul, helps everything settle, center on the "one thing necessary" (Lk 10:42).
- vi. Practice: Spiritual Retreat. "A Guide for Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants" great resource for retreat models. Sample in participant's guide. Notice they incorporate recreation. Play is important! If kids/grandkids, great opportunity for play. Do things you enjoy without guilt. It's sabbath!

Break: 5 min

Personal Wholeness

a. *Physical health*

- i. Our physical health does impact our overall well-being.
 1. Soul/Body dualism common, but must be rejected.
 2. Doctrine of creation, incarnation, and resurrection all point to value of the body/physical.
- ii. Diet, exercise, even regular walks.
- iii. Other physical labor or leisure (yardwork, learning/practicing an instrument, quilting/crocheting, etc.).

- iv. Practice: Walking. You could do any number of things. This is just one possible approach. Walking a common metaphor for spiritual life. Ancients walked a lot! Much more than we do today. Walking as a way to sync spirit and mind with body. Walking can be a vehicle for other practices. Take a walk in your neighborhood a few times a week.

b. *Emotional health*

- vii. Emotional well-being deeply connected to spiritual wholeness. Peter Scazzero most notably has explored this connection.
- viii. Why I asked for your “two words” as you entered this space today. That simple practice helps us become aware of our emotions, then can take appropriate action as needed.
- ix. Self-awareness important. Prayer of examen can help. A few minutes before sleep to reflect on the day, become aware of our feelings, responses to events, etc. Can help us better know what we need to care for ourselves.
- x. Practice: Spiritual Direction. This is part of what we do in ministry for others; it is important for us to receive as well. This can take many forms, formal and informal: someone or a small group to talk with, name and process emotions/experiences. We’ll speak more to this in later sessions.

(Share my own experience with a spiritual direction, annual retreat, monthly phone calls).

3. Interaction

- a. *Discussion*: What stands out to you in our session today? A quotation, concept, practice, or question perhaps?
- b. *Activity*: “One Thing.” We covered a lot of ground today on practices for spiritual formation and personal wholeness. A total of 5 practices were discussed. In our final session, we will discuss how various practices can be integrated in our lives. For now, it’s probably a good idea not to try to do everything at once. Take a few minutes (alone or with spouse) to review the five practices (contemplative prayer, prayerful reading of Scripture, spiritual retreat, walking, and spiritual direction). Ask the Spirit to direct you to one of these practices. Where do you sense a stirring or invitation? After a few minutes’ reflection, we will reconvene to share each person’s “one thing” with the group.

4. Between the Sessions (review from "Cohort Rhythm" handout)
 - a. Three ways to engage before we meet here on Zoom next month:
 - i. *Reflection*: Spend time with the reflection questions (see participant guide) and discuss with spouse.
 - ii. *Action* (see participant guide, review instructions)
 - iii. *Discussion*: Engage our cohort's Facebook page. There will be some prompts for discussion. Not meant to be an obligation, merely an opportunity. Feel free also to share joys and needs.
 - b. Closing: questions, thanks to all, prayer and blessing.

Online discussion questions:

As pastors, we deal with the tension between our public and private life. In a rural community, the lines that separate the two can be quite thin. How do you sustain your own life with God (spirituality) when your public "persona" and work have to do with the same (spirituality)? Where do you feel the tension between your private and public selves? What's the most difficult or challenging aspect of this? What's a blessing or gift you've found in navigating this tension?

Share about the implementation of your chosen spiritual practice this month. What did you choose? Why? How has it impacted you? What are you finding out about yourself and your life with God?



Session 4: "Formational Practices Part 1–Spiritual Formation and Personal Wholeness"

Participant's Guide

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds." (Luke 6:44-45, The Message)

Spiritual Formation

Abiding (Prayer)

- Key passage: John 15:1-17
- Key points:
 - Our first calling isn't to ministry for Christ but fellowship with Christ.
 - Don't assume that ministry substitutes for abiding.
 - Twofold influence of the vine on the branches: source of life and fruitfulness.
- Key practice: Contemplative Prayer (see handout in this guide)

Meditating (Scripture)

- Key passage: Psalm 1
- Key points:
 - Meditation on God's word is foundational to a flourishing soul and fruitful ministry, enabling us to be the kind of people who can lead people deeper with God.
 - Pastors spend a lot of time with Scripture in sermon/teaching prep. But before the Bible is a pastoral tool, it is a personal place of encounter with God.
- Practice: Prayerful Reading (4 movements; you may wish to journal your reflections)
 - *Read* (slowly, attentively, listening deeply)
 - *Ruminate* (What word/phrase stands out? Listen for what the Spirit says to you)
 - *Respond* (Is there an invitation? How does the Spirit lead you to respond?)
 - *Rest* (Conclude by resting in God's presence and the grace and truth of his word)

Withdrawing, Resting and Playing (Solitude and Sabbath)

- Key passage: Matt 6:6, 14:23; Mark 6:31
- Key points:
 - As a spiritual practice, solitude is time alone with God.
 - As a spiritual practice, sabbath grounds our souls in rest and trust in God, and provides perspective, strength, and guidance to our lives and work.
 - Pastors need a sabbath too, a full 24-hour block each week to rest/play in God.
- Key practice: Spiritual Retreat
 - Can integrate various practices here that give you space for rest and worship.
 - Play/recreation important too. Do what gives you joy.

Personal Wholeness

Physical Health

- Practice: Walking

Emotional Health

- Practice: Spiritual Direction

Between Sessions 4 and 5

Reflection

- Reread John 15:1-5. How does the imagery of the vine and branches and “abiding” speak to you? What feelings does it evoke? What stirring in your soul do you sense?
- Pastors face the challenge of meeting God in Scripture for personal communion rather than only pastoral ministry. What are the biggest obstacles to dwelling in God’s word for you? Talk to your spouse or a friend about it; tell the Lord about it.
- Do you take a sabbath day? Why or why not? If not, how might such a day each week spent away from all ministry concerns and instead filled with rest, worship, and play influence you?—your family?—your ministry?
- Both our bodies and emotions impact our spiritual health. For which of these—physical or emotional health—do you sense as a greater need right now? With that, consider: is there someone who could help me as a physical trainer or spiritual director?
- Spend time doing a prayerful reading of Mark 12:28-34 (you may do this in daily prayer or perhaps during a time of spiritual retreat).

Action

- Integrate the “one thing” (single practice) from this session into your life during the next month. Consider these factors:
 - *Plan*: Remind yourself why you chose this practice. Consider how, where, and when you will practice it.
 - *Practice*: Engage in the practice as planned.
 - *Ponder*: Reflect on the practice and its effects in your life. What’s working? What’s not? What changes might you consider?

Discussion

- Visit the cohort Facebook page to interact with one another, share praises and petitions, and discuss some issues pertaining to this fourth session.



Session 5: "Formational Practices Part 2—Relationships"

Facilitator's Guide

1. Introduction

- a. *Greeting*
 - i. Welcome everyone. Brief silence and prayer.
 - ii. Opening Devotional Discussion: Read 1 Sam 18:1-4. Reflect silently for a minute on David and Jonathan's relationship. Name one thing that stands out to you about their relationship that you appreciate or desire.
- b. *Reminder of purpose of PFC.* This cohort seeks to support pastors toward personal and professional health by equipping them with principles and practices for sustainable soul care in a supportive community of fellow pastors with spouses.
- c. *Review key Scripture (Luke 6:44-45):* "The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds."
- d. *Today's topic:* We continue to discuss formational practices for soul care in ministry. Last session was about specific spiritual practices; today is about the importance of relationships.

2. Instruction

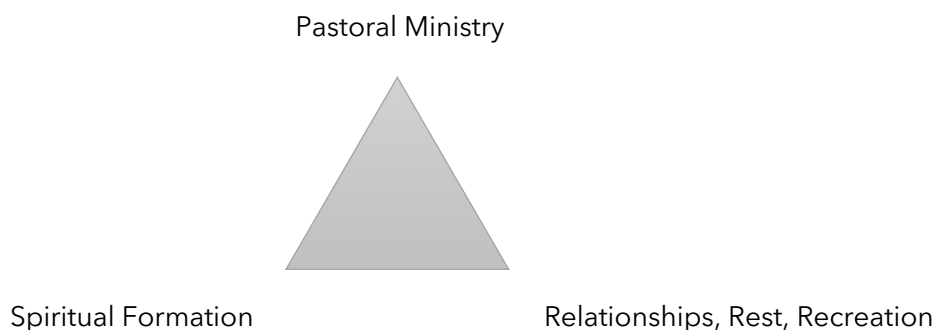
Theological Foundations

- a. *We are made in the image of God, meaning, we are made for relationship with God and other people.*
 - i. Gen 1:26-30, 2:18-20.
 - ii. Adam wasn't alone: he had God and animals and an abundant creation. But still missing something! Relationship with other people.
- b. *While sin marred relationships, God has acted in Christ to restore our fellowship with God and other people.*
 - i. Mark 12:28-31.
 - ii. The "Great Commandment" is a restorative command: loving God and loving neighbor (all other people) as ourselves fulfills the image of God in and through us.
- c. *The church as God's family and Christ's body reveals both spirituality and ministry are relationally designed and driven.*
 - i. Eph 4:1-6, 15-16.
 - ii. Paul frequently uses "brothers and sisters," reveals familial bond in Christ.
 - iii. Ministry is mutual and collaborative. E.g., Jesus and disciples, Paul and companions.

Break: 5 min

Sustaining Relationships

The figure below is adapted from Roy Oswald in *Clergy Self-Care*.



We've noted that our own spiritual formation is the foundation for faithful ministry. Oswald adds to that foundation 1) the key relationships in our lives, particularly family and 2) rest and

recreation. We must take time to nurture both our relationship with God (spiritual formation) and relationships with others.

a. *Family*

- i. Discussion: Do you feel a tension between spending time with spouse and family and the demands that ministry makes on your time? What does it look like when you handle this tension well? Not well?
- ii. Expectations: One of the most difficult parts of pastoral ministry is managing various expectations (as already discussed). Spouses deal with expectations too. Pastors and spouses need to agree together on their own expectations in order to better manage the expectations of others.
- iii. Recognize that family life is Gospel living (Eph 5-6, Col 3). As we lean into family life, we learn more of the spiritual life and can better minister to others. Time with your family doesn't take away from ministry, but supports and speaks into it.
- iv. Practical steps: Consider simple, small ways you can nurture your relationship with spouse and family. (Give my personal examples of "donut days" with boys and "date night" on Wednesdays after Bible study; only examples, need for contextualization).

b. *Friendship*

- i. Discussion: How do you feel about making friends with people in the congregation? Good idea or bad idea?
- ii. Friendships come in various kinds. Spiritual friendship (or "true friendship" in Aelred's words) is "for its own natural worth and for the emotion of the human heart" (Aelred *Spiritual Friendship*).
- iii. Further observations from Aelred about spiritual friendship:
 1. It is "a step toward the love and knowledge of God"
 2. It is not about seeing everything the same, but a shared commitment to Christ.
 3. It takes great care in finding, choosing spiritual friends.
 4. We won't be spiritual friends with all our friends. It may only be a couple at any given time in our lives.
- iv. Pastoral insights:
 1. Recognize your need and the benefit of spiritual friendship.

2. Choose close, spiritual friends carefully.
3. Look for such friends primarily outside the scope of your ministry. "With all affection I embrace many whom I do not admit into the intimacies of friendship." Aelred's advice helps with the pastoral dilemma of making friends in the church.

c. *Colleagues*

- i. Discussion: Do any of you have a friendship with another pastor in your local community that you really value? What is it like? Why so valuable?
- ii. Illustration: my friendships with Gayle and Judy (pastors at UMC).
- iii. Collegial relationships can be a unique source of encouragement, because nobody understands a pastor like another pastor.
 1. They can come from other pastors in your local community, denominational fellowship, or through pastoral conventions/cohorts, etc.
 2. Can be one-on-one or groups (more on this in final session).
- iv. But this too can be a challenge: feelings of competition, disconnect over doctrine and practice, and in a rural community: church hopping, etc.
- v. Don't expect every pastor to "get you." But, if for your efforts to connect with other pastors, there's even one that you click with, it can be a tremendous source of encouragement.

d. *Spiritual direction*

- i. Recall that Benner recommends pastors adopt a common practice among psychotherapists: to receive what you give. Since we give counsel and serve the "care of souls" for others, we need someone designated to help us with the same. This used to be common practice among pastors, but is no longer.
- ii. A spiritual director is someone who "has agreed to pay attention to my spiritual condition with me" (Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles*).
- iii. Peterson speaks to our resistance: "For myself, getting a spiritual director meant overcoming a lifetime bias against anyone who would exercise spiritual authority over me" (p. 116). He also speaks to our pastoral loneliness: "not having anyone appreciate the intensity of spiritual struggles and disciplines. Again, pride: pride isolates" (117).

- iv. Offer his prayer: "Lead me to a spiritual director." Pay attention to whom it could be, and when ready, ask. Of course, there are also many spiritual directors who offer this ministry, some with pastors particularly in mind.
- v. Look for ways you can offer this ministry to others, even informally.

1. Interaction

- a. *Discussion*: What stands out to you in our session today? A quotation, concept, practice, or question perhaps?
- b. *Activity*: "Sharing our stories." You've been part of this pastoral cohort for nearly 6 months, finishing our journey soon. Let's reflect on and discuss the experience of journeying together:
 - i. What has been the biggest challenge for you in this communal setting?
 - ii. What has been the biggest gift/blessing for you through this community of other pastors/spouses?
 - iii. What could be some benefits of continuing such a gathering?
 - iv. What would be the most important focus for such a group going forward?

4. Between the Sessions (review from "Cohort Rhythm" handout)

- a. Three ways to engage before we meet here on Zoom next month:
 - i. *Reflection*: Spend time with the reflection questions (see participant guide) and discuss with spouse.
 - ii. *Action* (see participant guide, review instructions)
 - iii. *Discussion*: Engage our cohort's Facebook page. There will be some prompts for discussion. Not meant to be an obligation, merely an opportunity. Feel free also to share joys and needs.
- b. Closing: questions, thanks to all, prayer and blessing.

Online discussion questions:

Human relationships can be source of great joy and a source of great pain. As pastors, certain relationships will either sustain our souls as we carry out God's call or they will cause stress that makes ministry that much harder. Where have you found your most sustaining relationships? How do you draw strength from these relationships?



Session 5: "Formational Practices Part 2—Relationships"

Participant's Guide

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds." (Luke 6:44-45, The Message)

Theological Foundations

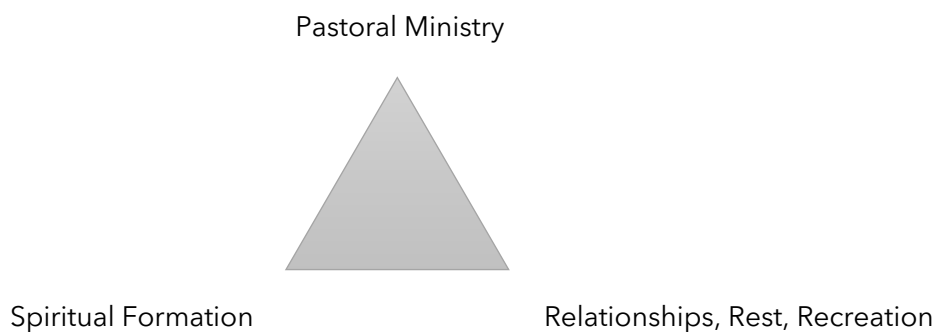
We are made in the image of God, meaning, we are made for relationship with God and other people. (Gen 1:26-30, 2:18-20)

While sin marred relationships, God has acted in Christ to restore our fellowship with God and other people. (Mark 12:28-31)

The church as God's family and Christ's body reveals both spirituality and ministry are relationally designed and driven. (Eph 4:1-6, 15-16)

Sustaining Relationships

The figure below is adapted from Roy Oswald in *Clergy Self-Care*.



Family

Do you feel a tension between spending time with spouse and family and the demands that ministry makes on your time? What does it look like when you handle this tension well? Not well?

Expectations

Relationship of family life & ministry

Practical steps

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Friendship

How do you feel about making friends with people in the congregation? Good idea or bad idea?

Aelred of Rievaulx on "Spiritual Friendship"

- It is "for its own natural worth and for the emotion of the human heart."
- It is "a step toward the love and knowledge of God."
- It is not about seeing everything the same, but a shared commitment to Christ.
- It takes great care in finding and choosing spiritual friends.
- We won't be spiritual friends with all our friends. It may only be a one or two at any given time in our lives.

Pastoral insights from Aelred:

- Recognize your need and the benefits of spiritual friendship.
- Choose close, spiritual friends carefully.
- Look for such friends primarily outside the scope of your ministry. ("With all affection I embrace many whom I do not admit into the intimacies of friendship.")

Colleagues

Do any of you have a friendship with another pastor in your local community that you really value? What is it like? Why so valuable?

- Local community and denominational fellowship
- Individual or group

Opportunities

Challenges

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Spiritual Direction

Eugene Peterson provides a description of giving spiritual direction and getting a spiritual director in *Working the Angles*. He also shares his own story with finding a spiritual director.

A spiritual director is someone who “has agreed to pay attention to my spiritual condition with me.”

Whatever name we may use for it, as pastors, we provide spiritual direction for others, “the care of souls.” As such, we stand in need to receive that which we give.

Between Sessions 5 and 6

Reflection

- Reflect on the greatest hurdle you face in pursuing and cultivating sustaining relationships: hurt, isolation, fear, something else?
- Use the chart below to reflect on the four categories of relationship in relation to your life. Record the current state of each category in your life, what you would like for each (desire), and any action you wish to take to pursue your desire.

	<i>Family</i>	<i>Friendship</i>	<i>Colleagues</i>	<i>Spiritual direction</i>
<i>Current state</i>				
<i>Desire</i>				
<i>Action</i>				

Action

- Review the proposed actions in the chart above. Prayerfully consider one of the relationship categories to take action on this month. Further refine your plan for action using the questions below and take a step this month.
 1. Why do I wish to take this action?
 2. Who does this action involve?
 3. What do I need in order to take this action?
 4. When will I take action?
 5. How will I take action?

Discussion

- Visit the cohort Facebook page to interact with one another, share praises and petitions, and discuss some issues pertaining to this fifth session.



Session 6: "Putting it Together"

Facilitator's Guide

1. Introduction

- a. *Greeting*
 - i. Welcome everyone. Brief silence and prayer.
 - ii. Check-in: Share a way this cohort has impacted your spirituality and/or ministry that you wish to hold onto going forward (2 min per person).
- b. *Reminder of purpose of PFC.* This cohort seeks to support pastors toward personal and professional health by equipping them with principles and practices for sustainable soul care in a supportive community of fellow pastors with spouses.
- c. *Review key Scripture (Luke 6:44-45):* "The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds."
- d. *Today's topic:* Three sections today: 1) we are going to first do a review of what we've encountered during this cohort, then 2) discuss ways to make your soul care in ministry sustainable for the long run, and finally 3) look ahead to some other opportunities for you as part of this PFC.

2. Instruction

Review

a. *The Need for Soul Care*

- i. We established the need for pastors to give attention to their inner life, relationship with God, etc.
- ii. Burnout/brownout, mass exodus from ministry, corruptions of life and ministry—so many problems pastors face and create.
- iii. The dilemma is that we are called to “the care of souls” for others but in the midst of carrying out the call, may neglect ourselves.

b. *Foundational Perspectives*

- i. Soul care is vital to our personal well-being and faithful ministry.
- ii. We need a healthy, biblical understanding of pastoral ministry as “the care of souls” in a congregational setting.
- iii. We need to understand the unique challenges and opportunities to pastoral work in a rural community.

c. *Formational Practices*

- i. We discussed key practices of abiding in Christ, meditating on God’s word, silence/solitude/sabbath.
- ii. Also the importance of key relationships with family, friends, colleagues, and spiritual direction.

Making Soul Care Sustainable

a. *Developing a rule of life*

- i. A rule of life is an integrative framework customized to each individual’s life setting and season (it is always a document in process).
- ii. Derives from St Benedict and his “rule” for monastic communities.
- iii. “Rule” from Greek for “trellis” (Shigematsu, *God in My Everything*). Not a burden or law, but a support system to help you take care of what matters most to you and find stability and growth.

- iv. Shigematsu's definition: "a rhythm of practices that empowers us to live well and grow more like Jesus by helping us experience God in everything."
- v. His book offers great help in understanding and developing a rule, including examples.
- vi. Provide a copy of my rule of life and discuss.
- vii. A rule of life provides you with a personalized guide that can help you.
- viii. Include accountability (see my example; provides segway to next point).
- ix. Questions?

Break: 5 min

b. *Remaining in relationship*

- i. (Possibly they noted in the "check-in" sharing the value of the connection with each other; connect to this if applicable). One of the keys to sustaining your soul care in ministry is remaining connected to people who understand and support you in that desire. We need partners for the journey and keep walking together.
- ii. You have that perhaps here with each other. While this is our last formal session, outside of the retreat, this may be a community you want to continue in some way (give my own example).
- iii. Peterson's "Company of Pastors" met monthly. You may find that companionship with others, but the important thing is to have some kind of ongoing relationship with others in ministry who share the journey of soul care and ministry integrity with you.

Other Resources

a. *Recommended Reading*

- i. I've prepared a curated reading list for the various issues we touched on in this PFC. Some of these were referenced during our sessions; others informed my own preparation but weren't mentioned.
- ii. I encourage you to consider a practice involving reading in your rule of life (e.g., reading a book a month). Do what's feasible. But continued reading on these topics helps support sustainability of soul care.

b. *Pastoral Flourishing Retreat*

- i. Part of this cohort includes a two-night retreat.
- ii. The purpose of this retreat is for those in pastoral ministry (pastors and spouses) to receive space to experience renewal in their relationship with God and each other through rest and reflection.
- iii. See the brochure for details.

c. *Lay Leadership Seminar*

- i. One of the sustainability pieces is the support of the congregation, particularly the leadership. The lay leaders (board, ministry directors, etc.) can help the entire congregation understand the importance of the pastor's spiritual, emotional, and relational health in order to minister faithfully.
- ii. This one-day seminar educates and equips them to support you toward personal and professional health for the good of the church.
- iii. See the flyer for a description of the seminar and logistical details.
- iv. I highly recommend this resource. We can discuss the seminar one-on-one to arrange for it in each of your congregations. Designed to be in-person, but certainly can be done remotely or even with a group of churches together.

3. Interaction

- a. *Discussion*: Final thoughts/questions/comments on "putting it together" and going forward from here? Ask for each individual/couple to share anything on their heart for the group.
- b. *Activity*: Mission, Core Values, and Vital Behaviors
 - i. You've possibly gone through a process in your churches of developing a mission statement and core values. But what about for yourself?
 - ii. Review the handout, discussing mission, core values, and vital behaviors.
 - iii. Encourage this exercise as a first step in developing a rule of life.
 - iv. Questions?
- c. *Closing*: Express appreciation for the opportunity to walk with them, look forward to next steps (retreat, seminar), and offer final prayer and blessing.



Session 6: "Putting it Together"

Participant's Guide

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds." (Luke 6:44-45, The Message)

Review

The Need for Soul Care

Foundational Perspectives

Formational Practices

Making Soul Care Sustainable

Developing a Rule of Life

Ken Shigematsu in *God in My Everything* defines a rule of life as “a rhythm of practices that empowers us to live well and grow more like Jesus by helping us experience God in everything.”

A rule of life is a support system to help you tend to what matters most to you with intentionality.

See example on last page of this guide.

Remaining in Relationship

We need others who understand and support us in our journey of spiritual formation and ministry.

Who will that be for you? This group? Other “Company of Pastors”?

Other Resources

- Reading List
- Pastoral Flourishing Retreat
- Lay Leadership Seminar

Whatever name we may use for it, as pastors, we provide spiritual direction for others, “the care of souls.” As such, we stand in need to receive that which we give.

Pastoral Flourishing Cohort: Recommended Reading

Soul Care

Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul by Lance Witt (Baker Books, 2011)

Soul Keeping: Caring for the Most Important Part of You by John Ortberg (Zondervan, 2014)

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry (Expanded Edition) by Ruth Haley Barton (IVP Books, 2018)

Pastoral Theology and Rural Ministry

Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life by Will Willimon (Abingdon Press, 2000)

God's Country: Faith, Hope, & the Future of the Rural Church by Brad Roth (Herald Press, 2017)

Pastor: The Theology & Practice of Ordained Ministry by Will Willimon (Abingdon Press, 2002)

Rural Ministry: The Shape of the Renewal to Come by Shannon Jung, et al. (Abingdon Press, 1998)

The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction by Eugene Peterson (Eerdmans, 1989)

Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity by Eugene Peterson (Eerdmans, 1987)

Spiritual Formation and Personal Wholeness

A Guidebook to Prayer: 24 Ways to Walk with God by MaryKate Morse (IVP Books, 2013)

A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants by Rueben Job and Norman Shawchuck (Upper Room Books, 1983)

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Updated Edition by Peter Scazzero (Zondervan, 2017)

God in My Everything: How an Ancient Rhythm Helps Busy People Enjoy God by Ken Shigematsu (Zondervan, 2013)

Love Your Bible: Finding Your Way to the Presence of God With a 12th Century Monk by Gary Neal Hansen (Climacus Publishing, 2015)

The Sense of the Call: A Sabbath Way of Life for Those Who Serve God, the Church, and the World by Marva Dawn (Eerdmans, 2006)

Wilderness Time: A Guide for Spiritual Retreats by Emilie Griffin (HarperSanFrancisco, 1997)

Relationships

Spiritual Friendship by Aelred of Rievaulx (Liturgical Press, 2010)

The Pastor's Family: The Challenges of Family Life and Pastoral Responsibilities by Daniel Langford (The Haworth Press, 1998)

Pastoral Flourishing Retreat

RETREAT OVERVIEW

The Pastoral Flourishing Retreat is for pastors and their spouses who have participated in a Pastoral Flourishing Cohort (PFC). The PFC retreat will occur over a weekend after the completion of the PFC. The tentative time frame (tentative depending on the host location) involves a Friday afternoon arrival and a Monday mid-morning departure. Since each PFC may include pastors in a different geographical area than previous cohorts, the location for the retreat will be specific to each cohort. For example, a PFC with pastors in northern Nevada will look to a location accessible to its participants, while a PFC involving pastors in northern California will need a different location. Locations can be explored during the early phases of the cohort, since the retreat is planned to be at the end of the six months of cohort sessions.

Still, there are a few locations that provide feasibility for the pilot PFC retreat.

- "His House," Sierra City, CA.
- "Carmel of Reno," Reno, NV.
- "The Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux," Vina, CA.

Ideally, I would like to use His House for the retreat due to my familiarity with it, having stayed there several times. It offers the kind of privacy, quiet, natural beauty, and peaceful setting conducive to rest, reflection, and renewal—the objectives of the retreat. The enclosed brochure thus presents His House as the retreat location and will be modified as needed.

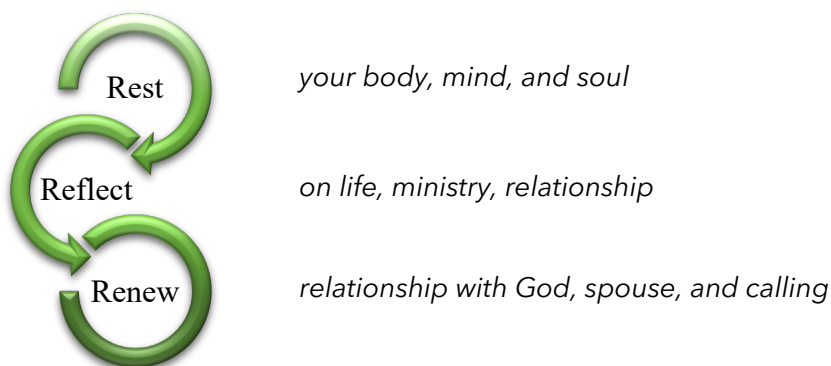
Standing at the end of the PFC, the retreat becomes an opportunity for the various cohort participants to gather face-to-face in celebration of their completion of the cohort and the work God is doing in them. Furthermore, the retreat then offers space for participants to pull together the entire cohort experience in an inviting setting with their peers and deepen connections that they have made with each other virtually throughout the cohort. The retreat acts as a bridge between the cohort experience and its impending application to their daily lives and ministries. While they have applied it along the way, the end presents a challenge of more fully integrating the perspectives and practices into their context and the retreat, positioned as it is, may help to catalyze this transition in a positive way.

A physical retreat further gives the experience of spiritual retreat to some who may not have experienced one previously. The retreat becomes one final practice that participants can apply for their own soul care and formation. As touched on above, a purpose in the retreat is to give space for the participants to build relationships with each other that can last into the future. The cohort's final sessions encourage collegial relationships as a key to sustainability of a healthy soul. The relationship among the members of the cohort has potential to help fill this need.

See Appendix E for the promotional brochure for the retreat.

RETREAT PURPOSE

The retreat is for those in pastoral ministry (pastors and spouses) to receive space to experience renewal in their relationship with God and each other through rest and reflection.



"...Jesus would withdraw to deserted places for prayer." – Luke 5:16 (CEB)

"Come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while." – Mark 6:31 (CEB)

Ministry is hard. When we're in the midst of it, we often don't have the space necessary for self-awareness. Just as Jesus practiced, and invited his disciples to do, we go on retreat in order to reach higher ground where we can slow down and rest and reflect on our lives, become more fully present to God, to ourselves, and to our spouses.

No one quite understands a pastor like another pastor. And a small group of those engaged in pastoral ministry brings a collective wisdom and understanding presence through which the Lord restores our souls. Such space found on retreat enables us to return to daily life and ministry spiritually, relationally, emotionally, and physically renewed.

RETREAT RHYTHM

This is a three-day, two-night retreat. Arrival will be Friday between 3-5 pm; departure will be Monday by 11 am. While the retreat has intentional programming to provide rest, stimulate reflection, and encourage relationships, I have taken care to not over-program. Below is a description of the general rhythm of the retreat.

Mornings

- Group breakfast and question for the day
- One-on-ones with host couple if desired

- Share conversations and activities

Afternoons

- Lunch options include pack & go as a couple or stay and chat with others
- Open space for rest, reflection, and recreation

Evenings

- Group dinner and discussion
- Group recreation or activity
- Evening prayer
- Personal time

The retreat intentionally covers an entire weekend, including Sunday, the key ministry day for pastors. While this requires pastors to arrange for fill-in ministry while away, it enables them to more fully disengage from the demands and stresses of their ministry context. There is no service hanging over them when they return. Instead, they return home at the beginning of the week with a full week ahead to prepare for the following Sunday. Moreover, since the retreat focuses on pastoral flourishing, disconnecting from Sunday ministry challenges pastors and their spouses to release the performance of ministry as they root themselves in the gracious rest of God. Thus, the timing of the retreat contributes to the underlying message of the retreat, namely, that flourishing in ministry depends on resting in God's grace and love, not striving to perform.

RETREAT DESIGN

The Pastoral Flourishing Retreat comes at the end of the Pastoral Flourishing Cohort as a way to increase the cohesion of the group, further build relationships, and have an experience together that strengthens each individual and couple as they conclude the cohort and move onward in life with God and the ministry of Jesus Christ.

The retreat design seeks to serve the purpose of creating space for rest and reflection, promoting renewal. Each day offers ample unprogrammed time so that participants can engage in rest, reflection, and recreation according to their desires and needs.

Each day *balances times together in community and as a couple/alone*.

Community

- Breakfast and dinner
- Evening prayer
- Sunday worship

Couple/Individual

- Lunch (or may be shared w/others)
- Couple conversations
- Afternoons open for time alone or w/spouse as desired

A short *evening prayer* as a community provides a way to gather the day before God and each other utilizing a "prayer of examen."

A casual *worship service* including the Lord's Supper on Sunday morning, at the halfway point of the retreat, provides a centering act and allows participants who regularly experience worship as *leaders* to simply participate as *worshippers*. The service will connect to the question for the day.

At breakfast each day, *the question for the day* is introduced and briefly discussed. Couples will reflect and discuss together through the day.

RETREAT SCHEDULE

Afternoons are left unprogrammed so you can spend the time in a way that best suits your desires and needs. You may want time as a couple or to connect with some others, take a nap, go for a walk, or sit and read. Whatever you do, if possible, take some time to continue the conversation with your spouse on the question of the morning or other topics that may surface.

(See full daily schedule on next page).

Friday

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>
3:00 pm	Arrival, settle in
5:30 pm	Tour of house and grounds
6:00 pm	Dinner + Question 1
7:30 pm	Group game
8:30 pm	Evening prayer
9:00 pm	Free
11:00 pm	Silence begins

Saturday

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>
7:00 am	Silence ends
9:00 am	Breakfast + Question 2
10:00 am - 12:00 pm	One-on-ones with hosts Couple conversations
12:00 pm	Lunch (pack & go or stay)
5:00 pm	Appetizers (optional)
6:00 pm	Dinner
7:30 pm	Pastors group & spouses group time
8:30 pm	Evening prayer
9:00 pm	Free
11:00 pm	Silence begins

Sunday

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>
7:00 am	Silence ends
9:00 am	Breakfast + Question 3
10:00 am	Worship
11:00 am	One-on-ones with hosts Couple conversations
12:00 pm	Lunch (pack & go or stay)
4:00 pm	Leave for Graeagle
4:30 pm	Hangout in Graeagle (shops, Mill Pond)
6:00 pm	Dinner out
8:00 pm	Travel back to His House
8:30 pm	Evening prayer
9:00 pm	Free
11:00 pm	Silence begins

Monday

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>
7:00 am	Silence ends
Morning	Pack up, prep for checkout
9:00 am	Continental breakfast & retreat wrap-up
11:00 am	Check-out

SPECIFIC ELEMENTS

Worship Service

1. Greeting (Titus 1:4)
2. Gathering (from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, presbyterian.org.nz)

If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens,
come to me and I will give you rest.

Take the yoke I give you.

Put it on your shoulders and learn from me.

I am gentle and humble and you will find rest.

This yoke is easy to bear and this burden is light.

Christ calls us to come to worship—
To rest from the things that are troubling us,
to learn what Christ can teach of life,
to realize what we can offer to others,
and so to return into the world to serve.
Let us worship God.

3. Praying (prayer of Alcuin, used in early manuscripts of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, adapted from *Cloud Devotion* by David Robinson)

Dear God, open our hearts and teach us to listen. Nothing is hidden from you. Cleanse the intent of our hearts with the unspeakable gift of your grace, that we may more perfectly love you, more fully live in your presence and more worthily praise you; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

4. Singing (2-3 songs may vary by retreat)
5. Reading: Deut 5:12-15 & Matt 11:28-30
6. Listening (silence)
7. Sharing: Open sharing of thoughts on the passage, including host's prepared reflections
8. Singing (1 song may vary by retreat)
9. Feasting: The Lord's Supper
10. Blessing (Eph 6:23)

Questions for the Day

Question 1 (introduced at Friday dinner): Why did you become a pastor?

This question invites participants to look back to their past, to when they experienced God's call to ministry. Such language of "call to ministry" is common in the Assemblies of God. One of the AG "fundamental truths" (primary doctrinal statement) professes belief in a "divinely called" ministry to lead the church. By encouraging pastors and their spouses to recall the nature of this calling, I hope their sharing will stir desire and transmit meaning as they ponder their current and future ministry. Couples will have conversations ranging from recalling those beginnings (if they were married then) or opening new sharing beyond what has preceded them. Sharing responses to this question should also help the various participants connect with each other and can prepare the way for meaningful conversations later in the retreat.

Question 2 (introduced at Saturday breakfast): What concerns you about your ministry at present and how do you feel about it?

This question opens participants to consider what is happening in their lives and ministry and to surface and engage their own feelings about what concerns them. The question names and brings into the open whatever difficulty, anxiety, stressor, or insecurity they have been living with in the context of a welcoming space of rest and companionship. Couples may find that they have time on the retreat to discuss such issues that they have not given much attention to in the daily grind of life and ministry. They may even learn for the first time of a matter that troubles their spouse and receive space to listen, process, and offer support. This question especially provides a discussion point for the optional one-on-one session each pastor or couple can have with the retreat hosts.

Question 3 (introduced at Sunday breakfast): What is God's invitation to you as you continue to carry out your calling?

The final question seeks to connect the past remembrance of calling and present awareness of concern with a future readiness for cooperation with the Spirit. This question asks participants to listen to what God stirs in them throughout the retreat and give attention to how God's voice calls them into the future. A divine invitation is a word of grace for a future of hope received through union with God's presence and surrender to God's purposes. A divine invitation may be a single word, such as "trust," "wait," or "surrender," tethered to the individual's circumstances and God's calling. It may be something even more specific, such as staying at a church another year before contemplating leaving or cultivating one's marriage through weekly times of praying together, etc. In the context of the retreat, listening for God's invitation happens in conversation and companionship with spouse, other retreatants, and the retreat hosts.

Pastors' and Spouses' Groups

Saturday evening after dinner contains an hour for the retreatants to divide into two groups: one for the pastors and one for their spouses. One facilitator will join each group (the pastor facilitator with the pastor's group). The focus in this session is for retreatants to share their experiences with being a pastor or pastor's spouse. A loose format follows:

Opening Question (3-4 min per person to share): What is something you wish people understood about your experience as a pastor (or pastor's spouse) that they generally do not?

The facilitators will listen for common themes in the responses. If there's something there they desire to explore further, they will follow-up with a related question.

Otherwise, the facilitator will move on to mention that the experience of pastors and their spouses are each unique and we are often not understood (or misunderstood). They will point out any affirmations the group made of people's sharing to the question above to note that it often takes another pastor (or pastor's spouse) to understand one.

In light of this, question 2: Who do you have to talk to about your experience as a pastor (or pastor's spouse)?

The facilitator will affirm responses and guide then speak to the importance of keeping company with other pastors and spouses. Sharing our stories with each other, listening with grace, acceptance, and an ear to the Spirit's work, is a way that we can companion one another in this shared journey.

Evening Prayer: Examen

During each evening prayer (30 minutes) we will have a short Scripture reading that the facilitators choose in discernment of God's work that day, a short silence, and a prayer of examen. The facilitators may conduct the simple examen as a whole group or break into two groups, one for women and one for men. After the examen, the whole group will gather for a blessing and dismissal.

We will teach the examen prayer the first night and use a very simple version of this ancient way of prayer, with each person sharing a response to the following two questions:

- Where did you sense a divine connection today, perhaps experiencing faith, hope, love, or joy?
- Where did you sense a divine disconnect today, perhaps a loss or lack of faith, hope, love, or joy?

Miscellaneous Considerations

Welcome²

When participants arrive on Friday afternoon, the retreat hosts will greet them warmly, expressing gratitude for their attendance and safe arrival. They will show them to their rooms, where retreat binders (personalized with their names) and a few gifts (chocolates, snacks, pens, coloring book, etc.) will be laid out for them. Finally, the hosts will invite the guests to settle into their room and join the hosts and other retreatants for a tour of the house and appetizers before dinner. A personal, warm welcome sets the tone for the retreat by letting each participant know they are valued and accepted into the retreat community.

Meals

I will communicate with participants in preparation for the retreat to learn of any food allergies and preferences. Meals will be prepared by the retreat hosts, but any offer made by participants to assist with preparation or cleanup will be welcomed. The space created around meals, not only the eating but preparation and cleanup, lends itself to conversation and connections among retreatants and with hosts, further aiding the retreat objectives of rest, reflection, and renewal.

Silence

I built silence into the retreat from 11:00 pm to 7:00 am. Silence is a key component of spiritual retreats,³ opening up space for people to be present with themselves and with God. The week is built around conversations and connections and the evening silence presents a helpful counterweight to these other times. While it will not be a strict silence, I will encourage retreatants to practice the silence in full (total silence for the full eight hours), even if unfamiliar and uncomfortable to them, as a way to gather the day past and prepare for the day to come.

Binder

Each participant receives a retreat binder upon arrival, containing a full schedule and resources, including spiritual practices, some readings for reflection, a brief bibliography of recommended reading, and lined paper for note-taking. I will produce the binder later (see Launch Plan).

² Advice on providing a warm and personalized welcome provided by Mark Brewster in a face-to-face conversation with me on July 20, 2022 in Sumas, WA.

³ Rueben Job, *Spiritual Life in the Congregation: A Guide for Retreats* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1997), 28.

Lay Leadership Seminar for Pastoral Flourishing

SEMINAR OVERVIEW

The seminar gives the final piece of the overall project and its purpose is located in the word *sustainability* (from the NPO). How will pastors sustain a healthy soul in the midst of ministry? Relationships are crucial. The retreat helps establish peer relationships to support sustainability. The seminar then turns to other leaders in the pastor's local church as another wing of support. During the design process, the lay leader seminar gained traction with pastors expressing optimism at someone outside the church coming in to teach their leaders about how to support the pastor's personal and professional health.

As a sustainability mechanism, the seminar is offered to pastors who complete the cohort as a resource for the church. Other applications are possible. The seminar can stand alone as a church leadership training. It could attach to another church leadership training, such as my Assemblies of God district's board training seminar. That seminar heavily emphasizes board responsibilities and roles from fiduciary and governance perspectives, but only touches on the board's relationship to the pastor, with one slide titled "Take Care of Your Pastor." This seminar could offer a "part 2" to the existing district seminar's "part 1" to serve churches throughout northern California and Nevada.

The seminar will ideally be conducted on-site at the participating church, using a room with tables and chairs, equipped with a projector and whiteboard and some usable wall space (for flip charts). Alternately, the seminar can be conducted virtually on Zoom or another video conferencing platform. Particularly remote locations may call for this arrangement, though an on-site delivery will be preferred and pursued as much as is feasible.

Arrangements will be made with the pastor to discuss which church leaders should participate in the seminar. Church verbiage varies, but in the Assemblies of God, lay leaders will typically include board members and deacons (sometimes the same group, sometimes different), with the possibility of ministry directors. In most rural churches, the total number of participants eligible for the seminar is unlikely to eclipse ten. The pastor should not be present during the seminar. Since the material concerns how lay leaders relate to the pastor and provide support, the presence of the pastor or spouse may be awkward and inhibit the presentation and/or discussion of concepts.

When the seminar is conducted at the church of a pastor who completes a PFC, the pastor will arrange for the church's lay leaders to attend the seminar. Ideally, this should be scheduled upon the completion of the PFC and a date set within six months. As a one-day seminar (roughly 9:00 am to 4:00 pm with an hour lunch), a Saturday will likely be the best arrangement for most churches. However, the seminar's six hours could be split into two three-hour blocks. In this way, a church could participate on a Friday evening (for example, 6:00-9:00 pm) and Saturday morning (9:00 am-12:00 pm) with a post-seminar lunch. The meal time in either scenario, while not part of the instruction, is important to allow conversation to happen and encourage a hospitable environment.

See Appendix E for the promotional flyer for the seminar.

SEMINAR CONTENT

I have prepared facilitator and participants guides for the seminar. I will distribute hard copies of the later at the time of any seminar. I may produce PowerPoint presentations of some of the material latter (see Launch Plan). This page provides an overview of the four sections in the “Steady Hands” lay leadership seminar for pastoral flourishing:

Introducing the Need

Amid pastoral burnout, moral failure, and turnover, lay leaders have opportunity to support pastors toward sustainable personal and professional health, which in turn strengthens the church. Here we will introduce common pastoral challenges and the need for support.

Understanding the Pastoral Vocation

In order to help pastors maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry, lay leaders need understanding of the pastoral vocation. Here, we will explore what pastors are called to be/do.

Exploring the Role of Lay Leadership

One of the roles of lay leadership is to support “called leaders” toward faithful service. They have opportunity to provide part of the sustainable support pastor’s need. Here we survey biblical texts and church history that provide understanding of the role and work of lay leaders.

Providing Support: A Two-Armed Approach

Lay leaders can help pastors “hands remain steady” by supporting them toward personal wholeness and professional flourishing.

Personal Wholeness (topics include):

- *Spiritual:* Sabbath and rest (weekly sabbath, “days off,” sabbatical policy, etc.)
- *Emotional:* Spiritual direction/counseling
- *Family:* Boundaries (protecting family and personal time)
- *Financial:* Compensation (1 Cor 9, pay, vacation, etc.), stewardship

Professional Flourishing (topics include):

- *Developing competencies* (continuing ed, training)
- *Collaborative charisms* (Acts 6, understanding gifts, sharing the work of ministry)
- *Supportive community* (friendship, outside resources, relationship to authority)

SEMINAR STRUCTURE

A “Steady Hands” Lay Leadership Seminar for Pastoral Flourishing meets on a single day for 7 hours (which includes a one-hour lunch break). Alternately, the seminar can be conducted over two days, for example, three hours on a Friday night and three hours the next (Saturday) morning. The seminar is planned to take place in-person, but can be held virtually if necessary.

There are many other ways to customize and contextualize the seminar, including the start and end times, duration of the lunch break, in-person or remote delivery, and the number of participating churches. I can deliver the seminar to a single church’s leadership or to a group of churches. For example, a group of the pastors who complete the Pastoral Flourishing Cohort may wish to conduct the seminar for their leadership teams at the same time. Or a sectional leadership committee in my denomination may invite all the church leadership teams of churches in their area to a one-day event. Below is a sample structure for a one-day seminar:

- 9:00 am – Welcome and Sections 1-2 (5 min break between sessions)
- 10:45 am – break
- 11:00 am – Section 3
- 12:00 pm – lunch
- 1:00 pm – Section 4, part 1
- 2:15 pm – break
- 2:30 pm – Section 4, part 2
- 3:45 pm – Wrap up
- 4:00 pm – Dismissal

SEMINAR POST-ASSESSMENT

This assessment is designed to help you identify the key learnings you gain from this seminar and to help the seminar designer and facilitators know what is working and what needs work in its content, structure, and delivery. Thank you for your honest, thoughtful responses.

1) As a result of this seminar, I have more clarity and understanding about my role as a lay leader in relation to the pastor. (Place an "X" on the line below to indicate your response).

1 (strongly disagree) 2 (disagree) 3 (neither agree or disagree) 4 (agree) 5 (strongly agree)

Describe why you chose the above response.

2) As a result of this seminar, I have a better understanding of pastoral ministry and challenges pastors face to leading from a healthy soul. (Place an "X" below to indicate your response).

1 (strongly disagree) 2 (disagree) 3 (neither agree or disagree) 4 (agree) 5 (strongly agree)

Describe why you chose the above response.

3) As a result of this seminar, I feel better equipped with perspective and practical ways to support the pastor toward personal and professional flourishing.

1 (strongly disagree) 2 (disagree) 3 (neither agree or disagree) 4 (agree) 5 (strongly agree)

Describe why you chose the above response.

4) What improvements would you suggest for future seminars?

SEMINAR CURRICULUM



Section 1: Introducing the Need

Facilitator's Guide

1. Introduction (20 min)
 - a. Greeting, introduce self.
 - b. Invite people to introduce themselves with 1) personal info, 2) an unknown, quirky, or unusual thing about themselves or something funny that's happened to them, and 3) a character trait of Jesus that means a lot to them. (This "Prayer in Play" exercise comes from MaryKate Morse's *A Guidebook for Prayer*). Write these on a flip chart: #2 on one side, #3 on the other, without names.
 - c. Prayer (with brief silence first)
 - d. Introduce the seminar (and connection to PFC if applicable)
 - e. Key verse: Ex 17:12: *"But Moses' hands grew tired...Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on each side of him so that his hands remained steady until sunset."*
 - f. The purpose of this seminar is to educate, equip, and enlist you as church leaders in the personal well-being and professional development of your pastor. As coworkers in the ministry of the church, you play a key part in helping your pastors stay faithful to Christ, to his call, and to their families and ministry.
 - g. Overview the seminar's content and structure (see handouts).

- h. Make a group agreement: What are important things you need from one another and me in order to make this seminar respectful of everyone's person and time? (Write agreement on a flip-chart, posted on wall).
2. Instruction (30 min)
- a. *The problem*
 - i. Pastoral burnout, moral failure, and attrition are high. What are the factors leading to these?
 - ii. Burnout (lack of energy) and brownout (Will Willimon, lack of meaning) are common in helping professions, including among pastors. Willimon: "the 'fuel' that supplies the energy to minister as clergy...is a conviction that what we do has meaning...When we no longer find meaning in what we do, even the smallest action drains us. Burnout is the result of a lack of meaning" (*Clergy & Laity Burnout*, pp. 25-26).
 - iii. Mark Brewster's (Life Impact) common themes in ministry to pastors:
 - 1. Disconnect between inner life and outward ministry
 - 2. Need to prove myself: performance, image, control
 - 3. Busyness: life revolves around doing ministry
 - 4. Perspectives on success and failure derived from culture not Christ
 - 5. Lack of affirmation
 - 6. Feeling not understood: people don't get what it's like to be a pastor
 - 7. Wounds from people in the church
 - 8. Disillusionment with calling, ministry, people
 - iv. John Sanford's (*Ministry Burnout*) "nine special difficulties" pastors face (briefly discuss):
 - 1. The work is never done
 - 2. Can't always see results
 - 3. The work is repetitive
 - 4. Constant and diverse expectations
 - 5. Working with the same people for a long time
 - 6. Energy drained by working with people in need
 - 7. Many people are egocentric, not really in church for spiritual growth

8. Functioning a great deal on their "persona"
9. Exhausted by failure

b. *The need*

- i. So what do we do? Pastors need attention to their own spiritual and emotional health. A growing church or booming ministry doesn't guarantee a healthy pastor! But a flourishing pastor will do faithful ministry, contributing to a flourishing church.
- ii. Not an external fix, but a healthy soul (see Luke 6:44-45).
- iii. Just as we all need support from others to walk with Christ, so do pastors! It takes relationships—both outside and within the congregation—to direct and support them toward what is good for their spirituality and ministry.

3. Interaction: Group exercise (10 min)

- a. With each other, review Sanford's list of common difficulties pastors face. Identify which one you think would be the most difficult for you. Briefly explain why. (5 min)
- b. After everyone has shared, choose one of them (if one has the most responses, choose that one) and brainstorm some way they could help a pastor dealing with this difficulty. (5 min)

(5 min break)



Section 2: Understanding the Pastoral Vocation

Facilitator's Guide

1. Introduction (10 min)

- a. Review section 1: the problem of pastoral burnout, etc. and the need for pastors to have a healthy inner life in order to sustain a healthy ministry/church.
- b. Now we turn to understanding the pastoral vocation. If you are going to help your pastor, you need to know what a pastor is and what a pastor does. They need someone to keep them faithful to their true vocation.
- c. On a flip-chart, record responses to these questions:
 - i. What is a pastor?
 - ii. What are the 2-3 most important things for a pastor to do?

2. Instruction (20 min)

- a. *Pastoral identity (what is a pastor?):*
 - i. The word "pastor" comes from Latin for "shepherd." This is the primary biblical image of the pastor (e.g., 1 Pet 5:1-4).
 - ii. Read 1 Pet 5:1-4. Notice the way Peter helps establish a pastoral identity:
 1. A pastor watches over the welfare of the church community
 2. A pastor's work flows out of their inner life
 3. A pastor leads by example

- iii. In light of such an understanding, we can see that of first importance for pastors is tending to their own life with God. Your pastor's ministry is only going to be as strong as his/her spirituality.
- iv. This is where sometimes the solution doesn't understand the problem. Often a pastor is struggling in some way and the solution is thought to be in training in externals (strategy, vision casting, ministry expertise, etc.), but what they really need may be training in internals (prayer, identity in Christ, calling, etc.).

b. *Pastoral ministry (what does a pastor do?):*

- i. There are many expectations for what a pastor should do: run the church (whatever that means), fill the seats, take care of the faithful, start a youth center, etc. Confusion about what they do can create stress, fatigue, and frustration.
- ii. (Return to the exercise earlier and note the various responses, especially if there are several different expectations).
- iii. Share my story of struggling with this early in ministry and finding Peterson. I became aware that almost anyone around me had an idea of what I should be doing, except me! I had to find help for that, and the Lord led me to it.
- iv. Peterson offers 3 "angles" that provide the "shape of pastoral integrity" (integrity to what we are called to be/do): prayer, reading Scripture, and spiritual direction (the lines are preaching, teaching, and administration).
- v. This is a rather different vision of pastoral ministry than most have, particularly in our evangelical and Pentecostal contexts. But especially in a rural community, a pastor who takes time to be present to God and present to people is a wonderful gift.
- vi. [If applicable]: Your pastor has completed the Pastoral Flourishing Cohort and encountered this very vision of pastoral ministry with deep roots in Scripture and church history. You now get the task of helping keep them faithful to this vision.
- vii. Share my story of board member who regularly reminded me of God's calling, when I'd get distracted by so many things: "preach the word" (2 Tim 4:2).

4. Interaction: Group exercise (10 min)

- a. Consider the pastoral imperatives of Peter ("shepherd the flock," 1 Pet 5:2) and Paul ("preach the word," 2 Tim 4:2) along with Peterson's "angles": prayer, preaching, and spiritual direction. Brainstorm ways that you could help your pastor stay focused on these essential aspects of ministry. Write on sticky notes and put on flipchart, then categorize and summarize ("Post-Up").

(Record responses on a flipchart).

- b. Review the responses. Encourage them to discuss further among themselves at a later time to make practical arrangements for how they can collectively and individually enact these responses.



Section 3: Exploring the Role of Lay Leadership

Facilitator's Guide

1. Introduction (15 min)

- a. Review section 2: many expectations of a pastor create overload, confusion, and conflict. The PFC helped anchor your pastor in a vision of their vocation rooted in Scripture and tradition that can thrive in their present context. As lay leaders, you have the opportunity to support your pastor in living this pastoral vision.
- b. So now we turn our attention to the role of lay leadership. You've all been appointed or elected to positions of leadership in the church. But what is your job description? More importantly, what is your divine calling in this role?
- c. On a flip-chart, record responses to these questions:
 - i. What is a lay leader?
 - ii. What are the 2-3 most important things you do as a lay leader?

2. Instruction (30 min)

- a. *Pictures of lay leadership* (adopted from Aubrey Malphurs, *Leading Leaders*):
 - i. *Team members*: Ministry is a team effort. Lay leaders and pastors work together to facilitate the administration and mission of the church. (1 Cor 12:12ff).
 - ii. *Servants*: The term "deacon" means "servant." Lay leaders are servants: of God first and foremost, and of the church and its mission.

- iii. *Leaders*: Lay *leaders* are leaders in the church, and in fact, serve as “the leader of leaders” (Aubrey Malphurs in *Leading Leaders*, p. 13). Lay leaders help lead the congregation as well as its pastoral leadership “by clarifying their roles and responsibilities and ensuring their main purpose of equipping people for ministry (Eph 4:11-12)” (Heuser and Shawchuck in *Leading the Congregation*, p. 186).

b. *Functions of lay leadership*: (adapted from Aubrey Malphurs, *Leading Leaders*)

- i. *Prayer* (for church leaders, congregation, ministry, community)
- ii. *Oversight* (spiritual condition, doctrine, direction)
- iii. *Decision-making* (policy governance)
- iv. *Advice* (input, counsel to pastors; e.g., Pastoral Epistles)

- c. *Summary*: Lay leaders work with pastoral leadership to promote and pursue the mission of the church. Part of the lay leadership responsibility is to provide spiritual and practical support and accountability to pastors to strengthen them to carry out their calling.

3. *Interaction*: Group exercise (15 min)

- a. Discuss together as a lay leadership team (question adapted from Heuser and Shawchuck in *Leading the Congregation*, p. 199): Would the pastor, church volunteers, and the entire congregation say they are empowered to fulfill their roles in ministry? What steps can you take to further empower others for ministry?
- b. Spend 10 minutes in discussion, then report your observations and proposed actions.



Section 4: Providing Support—A Two-Armed Approach

Facilitator's Guide

1. Introduction (15 min)
 - a. [As an after-lunch rejuvenating, uplifting exercise, play "You Never Would Have Guessed." (Game adapted from *Rituals for Virtual Meetings* by Ozenc and Fajardo)].
 - b. The final section of today's seminar gets into the heart of the matter, to the reason this seminar is called "steady hands."
 - c. Review the key text, Exod 17:12 (CEB): *"But Moses' hands grew tired...Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on each side of him so that his hands remained steady until sunset."*
 - d. We are going to explore a "two-armed" approach to supporting your pastor: toward 1) personal wholeness and 2) professional flourishing. We'll cover the personal wholeness side first, take a break, and then finish up with the professional flourishing piece. Like Aaron and Hur, you as lay leaders have the opportunity to steady your pastor's hands—both his/her inner world and outer work.
2. Instruction (75 min; roughly 60 before break; 45 after break)
 - a. *Supporting pastors toward personal wholeness:*
 - i. *Spiritual:* Sabbath and rest
 1. A dangerous assumption is often made by congregations and denominational leaders, namely, that pastors obviously have a robust spiritual life with no need for outside help. We need to

remember that pastors are people too and are on a journey of faith just like us all. They too need support, encouragement, and accountability in their journey of faith.

2. There are certain aspects of the spiritual life that you especially as church leaders can help your pastor with.
3. Malphurs recommends a board member or two meet with the pastor monthly to ask about their personal/spiritual life. He writes "The idea here isn't to control him or keep him in check but to care for and minister to his soul" (*Leading Leaders*, p. 70). Anytime you talk with the pastor, you can do what you probably appreciate yourself: ask about the person, not just their function.
4. Sabbath-keeping is especially important. Built into their work, pastors have the temptation of "reversing the rhythms" (Peterson in *Working the Angles*; see longer quote in participant guide). Lay leaders can help hold the pastor accountable to this practice that is vital to their own personal wholeness and spiritual formation.
5. Practically, ask the pastor what day they want to take a sabbath (your pastor has already learned its importance in the PFC). Then, help guard that day for them. Communicate it to the church. Follow-up occasionally with the pastor to ask how their sabbath was, what they did on it, etc. This will help keep them accountable to keep it as well as give opportunity to process it.
6. Days off are also important (note, a sabbath is not a day off!). There should be another day in the week for this purpose, just to enjoy time away from work, with family, run errands, etc.
7. Have a sabbatical policy. The Assemblies of God NCN District has one that you can request and adapt to your context. A sabbatical can be a great way to help your pastor stay spiritually strong and rejuvenated for long-term ministry. Benefits whole church.
8. [Share my sabbatical experience].

ii. *Emotional*: Spiritual direction/counseling

1. The PFC encouraged your pastor to establish a relationship with a spiritual director or mentor to help attend to their inner life. Consider how you can help them to this end. That can be considered part of the pastor's "on-the-job" time; perhaps you can provide financial assistance to make it possible.

2. You too can help by listening to your pastor. Ask how they are. Listen to their concerns, needs, burdens. Just as the pastor does for you, seek to be a pastor to them. You are ministers of the church! We are all ministers, each other's priests (1 Pet 2:9).

iii. *Family: Boundaries (protecting family and personal time)*

1. In those monthly conversations and/or informally, check in with the pastor about their family. Ask how you can protect their family time. Don't overload evenings and weekends with meetings/events.
2. Talk to the pastor's spouse (if applicable) about how s/he is doing, what you and the other church leaders can do to support his/her needs and their marriage.
3. Intentionally express appreciation to the pastor and spouse for their presence and ministry in the church. Celebrate special days: birthday, anniversaries (including at the church), pastor appreciation, etc.

iv. *Financial: Compensation (see 1 Cor 9, 1 Tim 5:18).*

1. Jay Herndon with Assemblies of God NCN District recommends consideration be made for the following:
 - a. Wage
 - b. Housing allowance
 - c. Health insurance
 - d. Retirement
 - e. Vacation
 - f. Education opportunities
 - g. Conference expenses
2. Share my experiences: when board members wouldn't bring up these issues and I had to (or didn't). Then there were members who would bring them up annually and always in a way to make sure the church did what it should to take care of us. They helped with continuing education, travel, etc. While there are things they didn't do, there is plenty they did, and it was meaningful to see them care about us and so care for us. That has a lot to do with why we've been there X years.

15 min break

b. *Supporting pastors toward professional flourishing:*

i. *Developing competencies*

1. Many professional vocations require continuing education (e.g., my wife as a teacher). But no such requirement for AG pastors.
2. While not needing a mandate/requirement, what if lay leaders provided both encouragement and resources for pastors to continue their vocational training?
3. This could be related to ministry, theology, business administration, psychology/counseling, etc. It's a matter of what is on their heart, how God stirs/directs, and of filling in gaps.
 - a. Includes seminars, conferences, courses.
 - b. Virtual delivery / distance-ed offer avenues to mitigate geographical isolation and financial impact.
 - c. Denomination has such events, but also other organizations, institutions, schools.
4. Roadblocks: finances, anti-intellectualism/education.
 - a. Finances: start small. One thing at a time. Consider how even a portion of one event per year could be budgeted. Just because you can't do a lot, doesn't mean you shouldn't do a little.
 - b. Anti-intellectualism/education: The AG has some of this in its DNA, but fortunately there are signs of change. Jesus calls us to love God with all our minds, which includes expanding and sharpening our thinking through study and dialogue.
 - c. Consider the benefits the pastor's continuing education and training will have on their ministry in the church and community!

ii. *Collaborative charisms*

1. Our key verse serves as a parable of the need for support in fulfilling God's call to ministry. The senior leader needs to work in relationship with others. You are such key others!

2. Acts 6:1-7 provides an example: Read and discuss:

- a. What understanding of church ministry does this passage offer?
- b. In what way do the seven people chosen for the work support the apostles in their calling?
- c. What insights and applications might this passage offer to your congregational setting, specifically your lay leadership role in relationship with the pastor?

iii. *Supportive community*

1. The PFC encouraged your pastor to seek a supportive network of relationships to sustain their own spirituality and strengthen their ministry. These relationships include:

- a. Spouse and family (if applicable)
- b. Colleagues
- c. Church leadership team

2. Your role here is two-fold:

- a. Encourage them to participate in relationships that will strengthen them personally and professionally (gatherings with other pastors, district events, etc.). These things enrich their ministry, so even though it may seem to “take them away” from the church, see it as an investment in their ability to grow and serve well in the church.
- b. Spend time with them as a spiritual friend. At meetings and other times, you’ll discuss church business/ministry. But seek times where you can just talk about life, about how they’re doing. Be a friend to their soul. Pray for and with them.

3. Interaction (15-30 min)

- a. Create a pain-gain map (*Gamestorming*; instructions on pp. 190-191).
- b. Play this game in relation to the church’s pastor. Ask the lay leaders to try to “step inside his mind and think and feel” as their pastor does through the first set of questions described in the game. Then seek to invert the pain or even “go beyond” through the next set of questions.



Wrap-Up

Facilitator's Guide

Like Aaron and Hur holding up Moses hands to keep them steady, God has given you the opportunity to support your pastor toward personal wholeness and professional flourishing.

Reflecting on our seminar today, write down your most significant takeaway in the space provided in your guide. (Give a minute or so until everyone is finished. Then invite anyone who would like to share their takeaway. Draw attention to any recurring themes.).

Thank you for your time today and for your generous participation. Please allow me to pray for you before we dismiss. And if you have any questions, you are welcome to stay after and talk with me.

(Optional: Consider inviting the pastor to arrive and invite him/her in for this final prayer. Pray over the lay leadership team and then with them laying hands on their pastor).



"Steady Hands"—A Lay Leadership Seminar for Pastoral Flourishing

Participant's Guide

"But Moses' hands grew tired...Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on each side of him so that his hands remained steady until sunset." – Exodus 17:12 (CEB)

Purpose: This seminar seeks to educate, equip, and enlist you as church leaders to support your pastor toward personal and professional flourishing.

Benefits: When the inner lives of pastors are healthy, there can be increase in pastoral longevity and fruitfulness, as well as congregational stability and development.

Sections:

1. Introducing the Need
2. Understanding the Pastoral Vocation
3. Exploring the Role of Lay Leadership
4. Providing Support: A Two-Armed Approach
 - a. Pt 1: Personal Wholeness
 - b. Pt 2: Professional Flourishing

Structure:

- 9:00 am – Welcome and Sections 1-2
(5 min break between sessions)
- 10:45 am – break
- 11:00 am – Section 3
- 12:00 pm – lunch
- 1:00 pm – Section 4, part 1
- 2:15 pm – break
- 2:30 pm – Section 4, part 2
- 3:45 pm – Wrap up
- 4:00 pm – Dismissal



Section 1: Introducing the Need

The Problem: Pastoral burnout, moral failure, and attrition are high. What are the factors leading to these? Pastor Will Willimon identifies two factors:

Burnout: lack of energy & *Brownout:* lack of meaning

Pastor Mark Brewster identifies common themes that emerge from ministry to pastors:

1. Disconnect between inner life and outward ministry
2. Need to prove myself: performance, image, control
3. Busyness: life revolves around doing ministry
4. Perspectives on success and failure derived from culture not Christ
5. Lack of affirmation
6. Feeling not understood: people don't get what it's like to be a pastor
7. Wounds from people in the church
8. Disillusionment with calling, ministry, people

Researcher John Sanford identifies "nine special difficulties" pastors face:

1. The work is never done
2. Can't always see results
3. The work is repetitive
4. Constant and diverse expectations
5. Working with the same people for a long time
6. Energy drained by working with people in need
7. Many people are egocentric, not really in church for spiritual growth
8. Functioning a great deal on their "persona"
9. Exhausted by failure

The Need: Pastors need attention to their inner lives, not an external fix but a healthy soul.

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds." - Luke 6:44-45 (The Message)

Central to meeting this need is relational support, both from outside and within the congregation.

Group Exercise: Review Sanford's list of common difficulties pastors face. Identify which one you think would be the most difficult for you. Briefly explain why to the group (20-30 seconds each). After everyone has shared, choose one of the difficulties (if one has the most responses, choose that one) and brainstorm some way you could help a pastor dealing with this difficulty.



Section 2: Understanding the Pastoral Vocation

Pastoral Identity: What is a pastor?

"Pastor" comes from Latin for "shepherd." This is a primary biblical image of the pastor.

"Therefore, I have a request for the elders among you. (I ask this as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings, and as one who shares in the glory that is about to be revealed.) I urge the elders: Like shepherds, tend the flock of God among you. Watch over it. Don't shepherd because you must, but do it voluntarily for God. Don't shepherd greedily, but do it eagerly. Don't shepherd by ruling over those entrusted to your care, but become examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive an unfading crown of glory." - 1 Peter 5:1-4, CEB

1. A pastor watches over the welfare of the church community
2. A pastor's work flows out of their inner life
3. A pastor leads by example

A pastor's ministry is only as strong as their spirituality.

Pastoral Ministry: What does a pastor do?

Great (and not so great) Expectations

Eugene Peterson's Model for Pastoral Integrity (diagram from Steve Byler at sjbyler.com)



Group Exercise: Consider the pastoral imperatives of Peter ("shepherd the flock," 1 Pet 5:2) and Paul ("preach the word," 2 Tim 4:2) along with Peterson's "angles" of pastoral work: prayer, preaching, and listening (spiritual direction). Brainstorm ways that you could help your pastor stay focused on these essential aspects of ministry. Write them on sticky notes, one per note. Post up on the flipchart labeled "Pastoral Integrity."



Section 3: Exploring the Role of Lay Leadership

Pictures of Lay Leadership

Team members

Servants ("deacons")

Leaders

Functions of Lay Leadership (adapted from Aubrey Malphurs in *Leading Leaders*)

- *Prayer* (for church leaders, congregation, ministry, community)
- *Oversight* (spiritual condition, doctrine, direction)
- *Decision-making* (policy governance)
- *Advice* (input, counsel to pastors; e.g., pastoral epistles)

Lay leaders work with pastoral leadership to promote and pursue the mission of the church. Within this general purpose, lay leaders assume the responsibility to provide spiritual and practical support and accountability to pastors that they may be strengthened to faithfully carry out their calling.

Group Exercise: Discuss together as a leadership team these questions adapted from Heuser and Shawchuck in *Leading the Congregation*: Would the pastor, church volunteers, and the entire congregation say they are empowered to fulfill their roles in ministry? What steps can you take to further empower others for ministry?

Discuss for 10 minutes, then report your observations and proposed actions.



Section 4: Providing Support—A Two-Armed Approach

"But Moses' hands grew tired...Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on each side of him so that his hands remained steady until sunset." – Exodus 17:12 (CEB)

A "two-armed" approach to supporting your pastor toward:

1) personal wholeness (inner world) and 2) professional flourishing (outer work)

Part 1: Personal Wholeness

Spiritual Health

Common assumption: Pastors obviously have a robust spiritual life and don't need outside help. Wrong! Pastors are people too on a journey of faith like us all.

Aubrey Malphurs recommends a board member or two meet with the pastor monthly to ask about their personal/spiritual life, "to care for and minister to his soul" (*Leading Leaders*, p. 70).

Eugene Peterson observes that pastors face the temptation of "reversing the rhythms":

"Instead of grace/work we make it work/grace...And that, of course, is why so few pastors keep a sabbath: we have reversed the rhythms. How can we quit work for a day when we have reversed the rhythms? How can we quit work for a day when we have been commanded to redeem the time? How can we shut up when we have fire in our mouth? How can we do nothing for a whole day when we have been told on high authority to be urgent in season and out of season, and there is never a season in which the calls for help do not exceed our capacity to meet them? But that is why the sabbath is *commanded* and not *suggested*, for nothing less than a command has the power to intervene in the vicious, accelerating, self-perpetuating cycle of faithless and graceless busyness, the only part of which we are conscious being our good intentions" (*Working the Angles*, p. 50).

How to help your pastor keep a sabbath (note: they have learned its importance in the PFC!)

- Ask the pastor what day they want to take their weekly sabbath
- Communicate it to the church and ask the congregation to respect the pastor's need for sabbath
- Follow-up occasionally with the pastor to ask about their sabbath times

Days off are important too (sabbath isn't a day off!)

Have a sabbatical policy. The Assemblies of God NorCal & Nevada District Council has one you can request and adapt to your context. A sabbatical can be a great way to help your pastor stay spiritually strong and rejuvenated for long-term faithful ministry, benefitting the whole church.

Emotional Health

Emotional health depends on relationship with God and other people.

Practical helps:

- Consider how you can help the pastor keep a spiritual director or mentor to attend to their inner life (help finding someone, financial assistance, etc.)
- Listen to the pastor. Ask how they are. Hear their concerns, needs, burdens. You are ministers of the church, who can minister to your minister! (1 Pet 2:9)

Family

The families of those in pastoral ministry face unique pressures and challenges. Balancing family and ministry and integrating the two present special challenges. The stresses that each place upon the other are among the most commonly reported difficulties pastors face.

- In those monthly informal check-ins, ask about the pastor's family. Ask what they need and how you can better protect their family's boundaries.
- Don't overload evenings and weekends with meetings/events at which the pastor is required.
- Talk to your pastor's spouse (if applicable) about how s/he is doing, what you can do to support his/her needs and relationship with spouse.
- Intentionally express appreciation to the pastor/spouse for their presence and ministry. Special days provide great opportunities for this: birthdays, anniversaries (marriage and ministry), pastor appreciation month, etc.

Financial

Jay Herndon with the AGNCN District recommends consideration be made for the following:

- Wage
- Housing allowance
- Health insurance
- Retirement
- Vacation
- Education opportunities
- Conference expenses

Part 2: Professional Flourishing

Developing Competencies

You can provide encouragement and resources for pastors to continue their vocational training. This can be related to ministry, theology, business administration, psychology/counseling, etc. It includes seminars, conferences, courses, events in the denomination or other organizations, institutions, and schools. Virtual delivery, distance-ed offer avenues to mitigate geographical isolation and financial impact.

Roadblocks: finances & anti-intellectualism/education

Finances: Start small. One thing at a time. Consider how even a portion of one event per year could be budgeted. Just because you can't do a lot doesn't mean you shouldn't do a little.

Anti-intellectualism/education: The AG has some of this in its DNA. Jesus calls us to love God w/our minds, includes expanding/sharpening our thinking through study and dialogue.

Consider the benefits education/training will have on their ministry in church & community!

Collaborative Charisms

"Now in those days, when the disciples were growing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Greek-speaking Jews against the native Hebraic Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the twelve called the whole group of the disciples together and said, 'It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to wait on tables. But carefully select from among you, brothers, seven men who are well-attested, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this necessary task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.' The proposal pleased the entire group, so they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a Gentile convert to Judaism from Antioch. They stood these men before the apostles, who prayed and placed their hands on them. The word of God continued to spread, the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:1-7, NET)

What understanding of church ministry does this passage offer?

In what way do the seven people chosen for the work support the apostles in their calling?

What insights/applications does the passage offer your lay leadership role in relation to the pastor?

Supportive Community

The PFC encouraged your pastor to seek a supportive network of relationships to sustain their spirituality and strengthen their ministry. These relationships include:

- Spouse and family (if applicable)
- Colleagues
- Church leadership team

Your role here is two-fold:

- Encourage the pastor to participate in relationships that will strengthen them personally and professionally (gatherings w/other pastors, etc.)
- Spend time with your pastor as a spiritual friend. Beyond meetings, seek times where you can just talk about life, about how they're doing. Be a friend to their soul. Pray for and with them.

Group Exercise: Create a “pain-gain map” to develop an understanding of your pastor’s challenges, desires, and needs, which can facilitate your work of “two-armed” support.

Seek to step inside your pastor’s mind and think and feel as s/he does through the first set of questions. Then seek to invert the pain or even go beyond through the next set of questions.

We will record responses on a flip-chart, though you can record your own notes below.

Wrap-Up

Like Aaron and Hur holding up Moses hands to keep them steady, God has given you the opportunity to support your pastor toward personal wholeness and professional flourishing.

Assessment

Much of the assessment of the critical success indicators and other benchmarks requires project implementation. However, I will evaluate the benchmarks in light of the presentation of the project and feedback gained in the design process.

Benchmark #1: Three to ten pastors, with spouses if married, join the pilot cohort, and at least two-thirds of participants complete the cohort. I will recruit these pastors from my denominational district, the Northern California and Nevada District Council of the Assemblies of God, through collaboration with the district director of pastoral care, promotion through district communication channels, and personal invitation.

Since I have included one key denominational leader in project development and have continued conversation about my project with other district leaders, I believe I will soon achieve this first benchmark. The engagement of these leaders should help both market the project and recruit participants from within our district. Moreover, inclusion of pastors who fit the project audience provides a potential source of participants to reach the “three to ten” range of the benchmark. It is more difficult to assess the two-thirds completion percentage; however, this number should give a healthy assessment itself of the effectiveness of the cohort as it stands and indicate if substantial changes are warranted.

Benchmark #2: The marriage retreat location will offer each couple their own room, with quality amenities and space for outdoor recreation in a quiet, secluded environment. The quality of the setting will be assessed through participant feedback received through a post-retreat survey, which will also provide them opportunity to offer suggestions for future retreats.

This benchmark requires some modification, since the retreat no longer has a marriage-specific focus. However, the more general audience and content of the retreat does not significantly affect the considerations of location and amenities. Feedback indicates that “His House,” the retreat house owned by our denominational district, should work for the retreat, providing a natural setting and amenities congenial to the retreat purposes of rest, reflection, and renewal. The location in northern California, close to the Nevada border, will be feasible for most participants within the district; however, I am prepared to follow-up on other retreat locations, such as those listed in the project, depending on the geographical makeup of the pilot cohort.

Benchmark #3: At least two-thirds of pastors who finish the cohort will schedule the lay leadership seminar for their church leadership team within three months after finishing the cohort. The seminar ideally is conducted on-site at the local church in a meeting space that provides table space and a projector for PowerPoint presentation. If an in-person meeting is not feasible, arrangements will be made to conduct the seminar remotely.

Creating PowerPoint presentations of certain teaching material remains one of the steps in the project's development, thus I cannot evaluate it. I anticipate the two-thirds benchmark of participants from phase one of the program (the cohort/retreat) to phase two (the seminar) is

reasonable and will provide a good indicator of the cohort's effectiveness. However, this benchmark does not account for the potential use of the lay leadership seminar as a stand-alone resource. The seminar gained significant support throughout the design process, but not necessarily in relationship to the cohort.

Benchmark #4: Comparing self-assessments before and after the cohort shows that pastors who complete it have greater confidence in their ability to 1) flourish in life with God, marriage, and ministry and to 2) enact sustainable soul care in the midst of ministry. Pastors and their spouses each report a greater understanding of the relationship between marriage and ministry and feel equipped to prioritize the care of their relationship with God and each other.

I believe the content of the cohort curriculum moves toward the two goals in this benchmark, which speak to flourishing relationships with God, others, and ministry, and long-term sustainability. I address all of these concepts in the material and build in mechanisms to help achieve them, including peer interaction, concrete practices, and in particular, the physical retreat. However, since the design process shifted the focus of the retreat from marriage-specific to spirituality and ministry more generally, the second half of this benchmark loses some relevance. Still, the cohort addresses marriage within the context of pastoral ministry. Consequently, pastors and their spouses should "feel equipped to prioritize the care of their relationship with God and each other," though the latter relationship may not receive as much direct attention as initially planned.

Benchmark #5: Church lay leaders who complete the seminar will report on a post-seminar survey a better understanding of 1) their role in relation to the pastor, 2) the pastoral ministry and its challenges to personal wholeness and spiritual health, and that they feel better equipped with perspective and practical ways to support the pastor toward personal and professional flourishing.

The seminar curriculum addresses both areas of understanding mentioned in this benchmark. Moreover, the seminar sessions received enthusiastic support during development, suggesting they are on track to meet a real need. Since the sessions include both theoretical instruction and practical exercises, I anticipate that the overall experience will lead participants to "feel better equipped" to support their pastors.

Benchmark #6: Each of the project's three components (pastoral flourishing cohort, marriage retreat, lay leadership seminar) provides quality content, materials, and connection, evidenced by participants' positive engagement, completion, feedback through surveys and personal communication, and written endorsements. Future opportunities to conduct each and all of the components arises from user referral and continued denominational support.

I will assess this quality benchmark during the program's implementation. Even upon completion of the various materials and based on stakeholder feedback, the content of each resource (cohort, retreat, and seminar) addresses a real and significant NPO. I pursued help creating a logo to brand the project that would both capture its essence of pastoral flourishing in rural, remote places, and provide a consistent aesthetic across the various components of the program. I attained feedback on the artwork and requested modifications accordingly. I will perhaps need to monitor the quality

of the relational connection that the program provides most closely during implementation and adjust as necessary in order to ensure this vital aspect of the program.

Project Launch Plan

Doctoral Project Description

The NPO: Pastors and their spouses, of rural, Assemblies of God (AG) churches, need a relational structure for sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry. To address this need, I developed a “Pastoral Flourishing Cohort” to train pastors and their spouses in issues of soul care and pastoral ministry, with attention to the rural setting, in a supportive community of their peers. This six-month cohort meets monthly by videoconference (with the possible exception of the first session, which may be in-person if feasible) and concludes with an in-person weekend retreat. The retreat provides a bridge to help participants prepare for the conclusion of the formal cohort, providing renewal through rest and reflection. Cohort participants may then host a one-day lay leadership seminar for their church leadership teams that will educate and equip them to support their pastors toward personal and professional flourishing.

Audience

The audience includes rural pastors and their spouses (as applicable) of Assemblies of God churches. Initially, I will focus on those who minister within the Northern California and Nevada District of the denomination, in which I serve. I will identify and invite potential participants through direct contact, referral from the district director of pastoral care and other district leaders, and advertisement in district publications and at district events, with the approval of leadership. Potential refinements and expansions to this audience include: other geographical districts, newly credential ministers, new pastors, and/or pastors new to a rural context. Denominational leaders may also refer pastors to these resources when circumstances suggest they may be helpful.

Development Plan

<i>Phase/Milestone</i>	<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>Assessment Metrics</i>
Complete the project August 2023	Prepare retreat binder, including resources for spiritual practices and a short bibliography of recommended readings. Prepare PowerPoint presentations for use during cohort sessions and seminar for certain material.	I will ask my mentor, who conducts spiritual retreats for ministry couples, to review and provide feedback.
Compile pilot cohort (including retreat) August 2023	Technology (Zoom, internet, etc.) and materials (digital and print) ready for use and distribution.	Three to ten pastors, with spouses if married, join the pilot cohort.

<i>Phase/Milestone</i>	<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>Assessment Metrics</i>
Conduct pilot cohort (including retreat) Finish March or April 2024	Efficient and effective use of videoconference meetings, online sharing, and in-person gatherings. Secure retreat location and financial assistance for participants.	At least two-thirds of participants complete the pilot cohort.
Conduct seminar Spring - Summer 2024	Lay leadership teams gather for in-person or remote seminar. Arrange for physical location and/or necessary technology.	At least two-thirds of cohort participants accept my offer to conduct the lay leadership seminar for their church leadership team.
Compile feedback During and after the pilot cohort	User feedback helps improve the program for future use. Testimonials help gain denominational support and more participants.	Participants provide constructive feedback, including testimonials that can be used for marketing.
Coordinate for the future Summer 2024 and following	Meet with other leaders.	Denominational or other institutional leaders support the work and collaborate with me to advance it.
Continue working	Expand leadership base and collaborate with other practitioners to modify, market, and implement the project for new contexts and users.	The project's use continues through further cohorts and grows to impact more pastors, families, and churches.

Development Process

During the cohort, I will pay attention to what works and what does not and make adjustments as it unfolds. At the conclusion of the cohort, I will ask participants to complete a post-assessment evaluation of their experience. Additionally, I will offer a one-on-one Zoom session to give them the opportunity to share feedback and discuss the implementation of the cohort in their context. I will engage a similar process for the retreat and seminar, without the one-on-one session. After the pilot group completes the program, I plan to engage feedback to modify the various components toward the end of improving the program's ability to effectively connect with its audience and contribute to pastoral flourishing.

Appendix A— Milestone 1 The NPO Charter

Personal Research Manifesto

I commit to this research as an unfolding process, in which I will assume the posture of a learner, considering my biases and the voices of other people.

NPO Statement

Pastors and their spouses of small, rural, Assemblies of God churches need sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry.

NPO Scope and Constraints

With this project, I hope to produce a resource for rural pastors in the Assemblies of God that will bring awareness to the importance of a pastor's soul care and lay a foundation for how to address this need. This will enable them to lead from a place of spiritual and emotional health, which in turn will strengthen these churches and God's kingdom. I do not yet know what shape this resource will best take. It might be a retreat for pastors in this setting, a book that addresses them, or something else.

NPO Context

This NPO focuses on local church pastors in rural communities. "Rural" is a broad term and reflects a continuum of communities from very small to towns that might be near 50,000. I intend to focus on those in towns that are small and at least somewhat remote, but I am open to redefinitions in my understanding of the rural setting. I may refine the scope to a geographical area, such as my denominational district (northern California/Nevada), but for now will consider rural in the U.S.A. I will further limit my scope to pastors in the Assemblies of God, but will explore the issue of soul care for pastors in other denominations. I will focus on solo pastors most churches in this context likely do not have a pastoral staff. The NPO context also includes pastors' relationship with spouse and children.

Root Causes

Three root causes emerged from the discovery workshop and interviews: faulty expectations, a sense of failure, and feelings of discouragement. Pastors manage expectations from their churches, denominational leaders, and themselves. For my NPO, expectations regarding ministry, success, and one's spiritual life appear particularly significant. Some of these expectations are shaped by American culture and may go unquestioned. For example, assuming that ministry success is measured in attendance can contribute to feelings of failure and discouragement. A sense of failure relates to this cultural understanding of success that may adversely affect churches, my denomination, and consequently pastors. Discouragement appears common among pastors of small churches, who compare their ministry to those in larger ones. This feeling becomes

exasperated by geographical and relational isolation if there is no one with whom to openly discuss such matters.

Discovery Workshop Stakeholders

The stakeholders in my workshop included a pastoral care director, retired pastor, young pastor, Methodist pastor, retired law enforcement officer, and a retired sociology professor.

One-on-One Interviews

My interviewees included a spiritual director, a pastor and former denominational leader, and an author.

3-5 Key Biblical Texts

1. John 15:1-17: abiding and producing
2. John 21:15-22: loving and serving Jesus
3. Mark 12:28-31: loving God, self, others
4. Luke 5:16, Mark 6:31: spiritual practices
5. Psalms: soul care resources

Academic Resources

I plan to research fields that interface with my NPO including: the spiritual life including disciplines of sabbath and prayer; caregiving professions; denominational approaches to providing care for pastors; theology of ministry and soul care; and rural ministry. The Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care (Biola University), the Clergy Health Initiative (Duke University), the Rural Matters Institute (Wheaton College), Dallas Willard Center for Spiritual Formation (Westmont College), and Renovaré offer pertinent resources. Simon Chan, Richard Foster, Eugene Peterson, Henri Nouwen, Dallas Willard, and William Willimon are key voices in pastoral theology and spiritual formation.

Discovery Workshop Description

My discovery session was held on October 31, 2020, at Crosswinds Assemblies of God in Sparks, Nevada from 10:00am – 3:15pm. Participants included:

- denominational director of pastoral care
- former pastor of a small Assemblies of God church for over 25 years
- young pastor of a small Assemblies of God church for six years

- pastor of a two small United Methodist churches
- retired law enforcement officer and former deacon in a small Assemblies of God church
- retired sociology professor from a Christian college

I presented them with the NPO: Pastors of small (<100) Assemblies of God churches need sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry. The workshop followed the format prescribed in our course paperwork, involving four activities aimed at better understanding and refining the NPO: 1) the NPO definition and audience, 2) understanding the audience through an empathy map, 3) finding the root cause using the "Five Whys" exercise, and 4) discussing the outcome of meeting the NPO.

Since we had reached the planned end time for the workshop, I skipped some of the fourth activity and told the group I would email the three key questions in that section to them for their responses, along with a summary of the workshop. We discussed the outcome in order to finish the discovery statement. I provided lunch and refreshments. At the beginning and end of our session, I thanked them for participating and offered a prayer.

Discovery Statement

Once all participants had arrived, I directed them to the room across the hall where coffee and snacks were available. I mentioned the reason for our gathering, which was a discovery workshop as part of my research project. We took time for introductions and an icebreaker activity, which nicely opened up a playful and friendly atmosphere. I outlined the schedule for the workshop and explained their role as participants and mine as facilitator. I drew attention to the chart displaying the NPO and briefly explained it, and then pointed out the chart with the discovery statement to be completed through the activities. I gave instructions regarding covid-19 safety protocols and prayed. After each activity, we turned to that discovery statement and filled in its components, producing the following statement:

Considering pastors, and their spouses, of small, rural, Assemblies of God churches,

we've discovered a need for sustainable soul care,

which is caused by faulty expectations that lead to feelings of discouragement and failure.

If solved, it would mean spiritually healthy pastors, and their spouses, faithfully serving churches and communities.

When the workshop activities were completed, I thanked everyone for their participation and informed them about the follow-up email they would receive. I closed the workshop in prayer and greeted each participant personally.

Critical Insights from Discovery Workshop

A key insight, which became a modification to the original NPO, was the need to refine the audience to pastors of small churches in *rural communities*, who are more likely removed from supportive resources.

The participants also modified the NPO to include *spouses of pastors*, believing that, if married, the pastor's marriage is vital to his/her spiritual and emotional health.

While the group retained the original audience of pastors, modified to include spouses, there was discussion about changing it to *church leadership*. Churches and denominations likely play a significant role in helping meet this need for pastors.

The workshop described soul care in terms of *spiritual and emotional health*, and revealed that *spiritual disciplines*, particularly sabbath rest, are important to this end. It was also noted that I will need to give attention to further defining what soul care for pastors involves.

One-on-One Interview Discoveries

All interviewees affirmed the reality and significance of the NPO. **A**, a spiritual director, believed this work can impact my denomination, encouraged a focus on emotional health as part of soul care, affirmed the role of the pastor's spouse, and added to consider pastors' theology of ministry. **B**, a pastor and former denominational officer, similarly affirmed the emotional aspect of soul care and the role of spouse and children; agreed with faulty expectations as a root cause but also suggested the spiritual issue of surrender to God as possibly deeper. He differed from others by downplaying the issue of remoteness in light of technological advances. **C**, a pastor/author, highlighted the significance of spouse and children as influences of pastoral health, influences of technology on spiritual and emotional health, and how personality affects soul care. He added the challenge to rural pastors of raising up leaders and limited access to resources for soul care (counselors, specialists, other colleagues, etc.).

Synthesis

In both the workshop and interviews there was definite affirmation of this need for soul care for pastors of small, rural churches in the Assemblies of God. Four common threads emerged from these stakeholders:

- *Defining soul care*: Stakeholders frequently brought attention to the importance of defining soul care, with widespread agreement that it encompasses both spiritual and emotional health. Both facets need attention.
- *Including the pastor's family*: The workshop participants added the pastor's spouse to the NPO audience and each interviewee specifically pointed out the appropriate significance of this relationship in addressing the NPO, with two adding consideration for children.

- *Understanding the rural context:* There was broad recognition that, while there may be much overlap in soul care for pastors across church types, there are specific challenges and needs in a rural setting that need to be researched. Some of these include access to resources, personality, and ambition. As a point of tension, one interviewee did not believe remoteness to be the barrier others did, due to technological advances.
- *Exploring the theology:* Stakeholders pointed to pastors' theology of ministry and the spiritual life as an underlying issue. They particularly pointed to the connections between personal relationship with Christ and pastoral ministry.

Next Steps

Through conducting and reflecting on the workshop and interviews, I have identified the following topics to research as I move forward:

- biblical and theological foundations for the spiritual life and pastoral ministry
- the nature of ministry in rural life with its unique challenges and opportunities for a pastor's soul care
- the impacts of pastoral ministry on marriage and family and how a healthy life with God can positively affect both of these
- the use of spiritual disciplines by pastors
- denominational understandings of and practices for providing soul care for pastors
- theology of ministry especially in the Assemblies of God
- emotional health/care for pastors
- compassion fatigue and satisfaction
- expectations pastors manage and how these affect spiritual and emotional health

Discovery Workshop Documentation

I convened my discovery workshop on October 31, 2020 at Crosswinds Assembly of God in Sparks, NV. I facilitated a group of seven participants in developing a discovery statement through four activities based on the working NPO: "Pastors of small (<100) Assemblies of God churches need sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry."

The first activity identified *the key issue* as soul care (spiritual and emotional health) for *the audience* of pastors and their spouses in small, rural, Assemblies of God churches. The second activity sought to better *understand* this redefined audience by exploring what the audience might

say/think/feel/do differently than they do now. The results revealed the following general observations:

- The audience would *say* they are glad to be a pastor and have confidence to carry out their calling. Their words would express optimism for the future and a transformed perspective about ministry and success.
- The audience would *think* in a fresh way about themselves and their ministry. Their thoughts would be characterized by self-awareness, consideration of others, hope for the future, and positively about ministry.
- The audience would *feel* valued, confident, and rejuvenated. They would feel alive with a new perspective for ministry.
- The audience would *do* their ministry more relationally. They would engage in spiritual practices, such as prayer and sabbath rest, and more intentionally attend to their own life with God. They would do their work as leaders with greater focus, creativity, and energy.

The participants identified these main factors standing in the way of the audience saying/thinking/feeling/doing these things:

- the busyness and demands of ministry, especially the added responsibilities of a solo pastor of a small church (perhaps bi-vocational, operating outside giftings, etc.)
- fatigue of ministry without signs of appreciation or fruitfulness
- discouragement and burnout
- too much focus on “doing” and not enough on “being”

The third activity identified three primary *root causes* of the NPO: discouragement, feeling like a failure, and faulty expectations. The group then identified expectations as the root cause, which leads to the feelings of discouragement and failure.

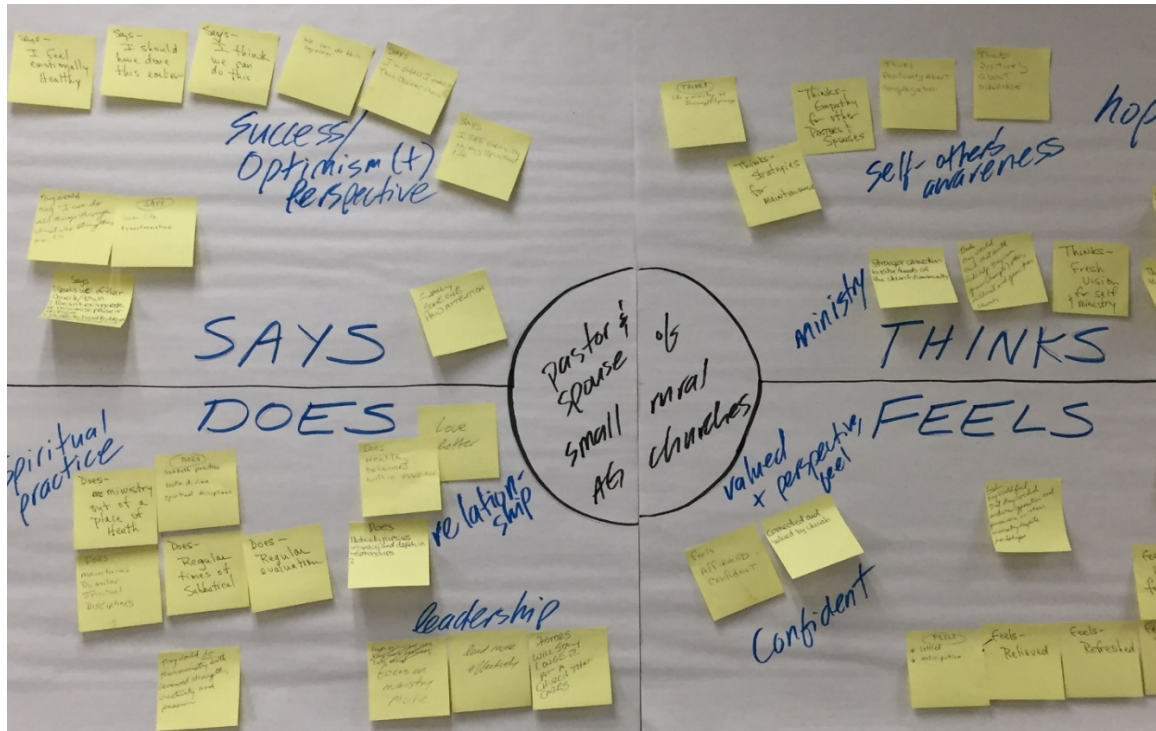
The final activity focused on *identifying the NPO’s outcome* if it were met. The participants articulated the outcome as spiritually healthy pastors (and spouses) faithfully serving churches and communities.

[illegible][illegible]

Activity 2

Why wouldn't they now

<u>Say</u>	<u>think</u>	<u>do</u>	<u>feel</u>
emotional worn lonely unsupported basic needs not met	overstretched too much prep church not support insecure fear falter faith of rejection	"Martha" doing & being busy restless complacency	discouraged burned out attitude victim results? lack of relationship w/ God



One-Page Post-Workshop Message to Stakeholders

Thank you for participating in my discovery workshop! What a great group and lively discussion we had! Your contributions made a big difference and I appreciate it very much. Here's a summary of what we accomplished:

The NPO: "Pastors of small (<100) Assemblies of God churches need sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry."

Through the exercises of the day, we crafted this discovery statement:

Considering pastors, and their spouses, of small, rural, Assemblies of God churches, we've discovered a need for sustainable soul care, which is caused by faulty expectations that lead to feelings of discouragement and failure. If solved, it would mean spiritually healthy pastors, and their spouses, faithfully serving churches and communities.

As I mentioned at the workshop, there are some additional questions I have for you. Your responses will help point me in the right direction going forward in the research journey.

1. *Keep your eyes on the road:* As I continue researching this NPO, what should I be sure to examine?

2. *Look over your shoulder:* As I continue researching this NPO, what are potential blind spots that I best explore?
3. *Watch for downed trees in the road:* As I continue researching this NPO, what are potential pitfalls I best avoid?
4. What other feedback would you like to offer?

If you are able to offer your feedback by November 16th, it would be very helpful and greatly appreciated. Again, my deepest thanks for your time, effort, and thoughtful insights.

One-on-One Interview Documentation

Interviewee A – Spiritual director and former pastor

- Average church is <100, so this is not a minority of pastors but the average pastor. And meets need because most resources for pastors are not geared to the average pastor.
- “Emotional health” strikes a chord. Peter Scazzero, “Emotionally Healthy Spirituality,” connection of spiritual and emotional health is important.
- Also, the pastor’s spouse is absolutely important in addressing this NPO. Lot of different perspectives the pastor’s spouse might have toward the pastor’s work.
- Affirms the challenges to pastors in a rural setting.
- The root causes identified are all important, sees definition of success as particularly crucial. If definition of success is wrong, then so is definition of failure.
- What are the “unique challenges” such pastors in a rural setting face? How aware is the denomination of these challenges?
- What are the resources that these pastors need access to? What are accessible but may not realize? What are not as accessible?
- Pastors need a clear biblical definition of success then stick to it against other expectations.
- Maybe what’s really needed is new belief/theology of ministry. Belief impacts behavior.
- How will pastors come to believe that a healthy soul is most important to their ministry?
- Systemic issues in the denomination, schools/seminary: What are they doing? How open is the AG to address this? Or maybe let the rural churches be treated differently?
- There is a resource those in a rural setting have that others may not: time. Less demands of life (traffic, etc.). Is there a way to leverage this?

Interviewee B – Pastor, author, and former national leader in the Assemblies of God

- 83% AG churches <100 people so this applies to majority of pastors and is important
- The emotional aspect very important here!
- Small church can exasperate insecurities – become too self-protecting or promoting.
- Spiritual health can sneak up on you, so this is something to do preventatively, regularly
- A spiritual life not dependent on ministry position, but this is hard to come by.
- “Abiding in Christ” – what you do flows from who you are, should overlap but not completely. Easy to love leading more than I love Jesus.
- Pastor’s spouse factors into this issue significantly.
- Positive perspective and hope as outcomes/focus is helpful. – no hope for future no power for present. Negative emotions are draining / positive ones energizing.
- Expectations key cause: perceived vs actual; personal expectations most significant.
- Suggests maybe even deeper cause is the spiritual issue of surrender to God. Too often pastors may try harder, etc., but most important is to be continually surrendered. So, disciplines of surrender?
- Remoteness not the issue it was 20 years ago, especially post-covid. Technology has become a relational tool, so this may mitigate against what I call the unique challenges of rural ministry being far from resources.
- Pastor’s family is important. Limited friendship options for kids in a small, rural area, etc.
- Small church pastors need permission to not apply a lot of the leadership principles they hear! Too much emphasis on management, strategy, but these pastors need to let go of the pressure to be/do all of that and focus on being a pastor/shepherd.
- Training in core competencies (preaching, etc.) can help their confidence, etc.
- Personal coach / peer group, part of meeting this need, help them ask the right questions.

Interviewee C – Pastor and author

- Vital issue, grateful to see soul care becoming important, especially for these pastors
- Psychologists required to see one themselves; nothing close for pastors

- Much overlap in soul care for pastors regardless of church size, but enough to warrant specific treatment in small, rural setting.
- Spouse again very important. Also home life, including kids. One of most important but least appreciated influencers of pastor's health. Find a way to create some kind of barrier between home and church.
- Technology plays a role here, can be distracting, overwhelming - too demanding. Influences spiritual/emotional health.
- Rural ministers have greater challenge seeking help when they want it, whereas those in a city have greater access. Distinction between loneliness in rural isolation vs loneliness in a crowd. Can't replicate relationships adequately remotely (zoom, etc.).
- Hard to raise up leaders in rural area, because people move away and they don't come back. Pastors deal with the challenge of finding, training, and keeping leaders in the church. Helps to reframe perspective: this is part of your mission, sending people out.
- Consider not just what can be changed, but what needs reframed in perspective.
- Pastors may look past the church/area they're in, wanting to be elsewhere (bigger church or city).
- Consider personality type. Small town type person or not? If not, that can add stress.

Appendix B– Milestone 2 NPO Topic Expertise Essay

Introduction

Christian tradition regards pastors as overseers of the church, charged with various tasks and requiring many competencies. At the heart of pastoral work is soul care—“care of persons in their totality, with particular attention to their inner lives.”⁴ Pastors expend great energy caring for the welfare of others through acts such as teaching, counseling, and visiting. But who provides care for pastors? How can pastors take care of themselves? If the souls of pastors are dry, disordered, and dismayed, their relationship with God and service to the church suffers. This paper explores the need of soul care for pastors so they can develop a healthy spirituality and maintain faithful ministry. The synthesis and conclusion will reflect on the topic with specific application to pastors in small Assemblies of God (AG) churches.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

Soul Care for Pastors in the Biblical World

Those who offer spiritual care to others stand in need of such care themselves. Jesus teaches that what people do comes out of who they are (Lk 6:43-45). Dallas Willard similarly observes that change to behavior starts with “*who we are* in our thoughts, feelings, dispositions, and choices—in the inner life.”⁵ Thus, the path of spiritual formation travels from the recognition that what God does *in* people’s lives is the foundation for what God does *through* their lives. Jesus’ own practice of withdrawing from ministry for private prayer exemplifies this principle (Lk 5:16). Moreover, he calls his disciples to the same soul care in their service to God, leading them away from ministry demands to rest with him (Mk 6:31). Peter likewise exhorts pastors to “be examples to the flock” (1 Pet 5:3, NRSV). Pastors minister not only through common acts of teaching, administration, worship, and care, but through their spiritual life. Due to the exemplary nature of ministry, authentic pastoring requires a loving fellowship with Christ.

In addition to Jesus, faithful spiritual leaders throughout Scripture show commitment to the care of their life with God. Moses seeks to know God and God’s glory (Ex 33:13, 18). Many of David’s prayers express his desire for God (e.g., Ps 63) and need for inner healing and strength (Pss 42-43, 62). The apostles, seeing demands on their time and energy increase, articulate and pursue a core commitment “to prayer and to serving the word” (Acts 6:4, NRSV). In doing so, they demonstrate the importance of leaders’ spiritual health for effective service to others. The following discussions

⁴ David Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 23.

⁵ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 24, 40.

of the biblical text explore three passages that offer perspective on pastors' soul care and its relationship to ministry.

Textual Discussions

PORTRAIT OF A HEALTHY SOUL: PSALM 1

In the psalms, God's people find a resource to cultivate their life with God. Psalm 1 anchors the psalter, and thus the spiritual life, in delighting in and meditating on God's word.⁶ Verses 1-2 present the picture of "happy," or "blessed," people, a word that describes "the joyful spiritual condition of those who are right with God."⁷ This state requires "disassociation" from what is ungodly (v 1) and "association" with Scripture (v 2).⁸ The phrase "the law of the Lord" (NRSV) can refer broadly to God's revelation in Scripture and all its instruction.⁹

Continual meditation on Scripture increases "delight" in God's word (v 2)¹⁰ and results in the promising vision of "life, productivity, fruitfulness, health" (v 3).¹¹ Indeed, all who find their lives dry need to be "replanted by streams of water" (CEB). Seeing the tree as an image of "a flourishing and fruitful life," Allen Ross also notes that the "water represents the word of God."¹² The psalm's vision of a happy and healthy soul for all God's people bears significance for pastors, not only regarding their ministry to others, but how they tend to their own souls. In particular, it reveals the primacy of personal communion with God and commends the practice of meditation on God's word as foundational to a flourishing soul and fruitful ministry.

⁶ Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 35. Longman notes consensus that Psalm 1 functions as an introduction to the psalter.

⁷ Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011), 1:185.

⁸ Willem A. VanGemenen, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, *Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 79.

⁹ Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Themes: Psalms*. (Waco, TX: Word Incorporated, 1987), 32. Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, 57. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 188. VanGemenen, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms*, 79.

¹⁰ Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 19, *Psalms 1-50*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 60, 62.

¹¹ Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, 57.

¹² Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 190.

ABIDING AND PRODUCING: JOHN 15:1-17

In John 15:1ff, Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine in a way similar to the tree imagery of Psalm 1. The controlling verb in this passage, "*meno*," means to "remain, stay," and likely has the sense of "someone who does not leave a certain realm or sphere."¹³ Jesus invites his disciples to remain in relationship with him, assuring them that he will continue to dwell in them (v 4). The relationship between branches and vine introduces the principle of fruitfulness: "Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing" (v 5, NRSV). Bearing fruit¹⁴ comes only from a continual union with Christ.

The vine imagery is effective in light of the twofold nature of the vine's influence on its branches: their connection to the vine is the source of both the branches' life and fruitfulness.¹⁵ Staying connected to Christ (vv 4-5), his teaching (v 7), and his love (v 9) fills disciples with spiritual vitality and enables them to produce fruit for his kingdom. To those who encounter the temptation to do work for Christ apart from abiding in him, Jesus' teaching warns of the consequences for both spiritual life and ministry. Indeed, just as the tree needs the waters (Ps 1:3) and the branches need the vine (Jn 15:4-5), so servants of Christ benefit from friendship with him (vv 14-15).

THE HEART OF MINISTRY - JOHN 21:15-23

This post-resurrection conversation presents a three-fold cycle of Jesus' question, Peter's response, and Jesus' commission to his disciple. George Beasley-Murray looks beyond the plain similarity between Peter's three-fold denial of Christ and this three-round conversation, remarking that "the unexpected repetitions of the Lord's question to Peter have the effect of searching him to the depths of his being."¹⁶ The same question, "Do you love me?" asked three times, intensifies the question's significance beyond Peter's past failure to the issue of his future ministry. After Peter's affirmative reply to each iteration of the question, Jesus commissions him to "feed/tend my sheep." Through the structure of their conversation, Jesus invites Peter to minister to others out of his love

¹³ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 631.

¹⁴ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 309-310 identifies this fruit as the fruit of the Spirit. Peter Bolt, "What Fruit Does the Vine Bear: Some Pastoral Implications of John 15:1-8," *The Reformed Theological Review* 51, no. 1, (January 1992): 11-19 argues the fruit is the conversion of unbelievers. Gail R. O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9, *Luke, John*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 757 advocates a contextual understanding of fruit-bearing as love for others.

¹⁵ Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, 308; Francis J. Moloney, *Sacra Pagina*, vol. 4, *The Gospel of John*. Rev. Ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 440.

¹⁶ George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 36, *John*. Second Ed. (Nashville, Thomas Nelson: 1999), 405.

for the Lord. This insight grounds pastoral work in love for Christ and becomes a manifestation of that love.¹⁷

Reflecting on the pastoral implications of this passage, Henri Nouwen regards Jesus' question to Peter as the key question of Christian ministry.¹⁸ He elaborates that, while there are many helpful attributes and aptitudes for ministers to possess, "Their leadership must be rooted in the permanent, intimate, relationship with the incarnate Word, Jesus."¹⁹ Indeed, love for Christ is the basis for both personal discipleship and pastoral ministry.²⁰ Just as Peter's affirmation of love prompts Jesus' commission to care for his people, a life grounded in love for Christ enables faithful ministry in his name, even when that ministry leads to suffering, "where you do not wish to go" (v 18, NRSV).

Synthesis of Themes, Values, and Commitments

Both Scripture and Jesus' example testify that life with God forms, empowers, and sustains God's servants in their work. Those called to the ministry of Jesus Christ need ongoing attention to their own spiritual life. A dual understanding of the "word of God" emerges from the above survey of Scripture that both underscores and guides this pastoral need. First, frequent biblical references to "the law," such as in Psalm 1, point to God's written word. God speaks to his people through the words of Scripture. Secondly, the New Testament reveals Jesus as God's living word, the personal communication of God's heart (Jn 1:1, 14). By cultivating their relationship with him, God's people can know and follow Jesus—the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6). Thus, ministers draw strength for service through meditating on God's written word in Scripture and abiding in God's living word in Christ.

Jesus' teaching to his disciples addresses the temptation to prioritize "doing" over "being". This temptation lies in wait for those who do the work of ministry. Pastors who focus on fruit-bearing performance rather than soil-cultivating communion with Christ reverse the order Jesus revealed as necessary to both healthy spirituality and ministry. While fulfilling their call to *do* ministry, pastors need to heed Jesus' call to *be* with him. Jesus himself modeled communion with the Father as integral to both his spirituality and ministry, exhibiting a general rhythm of inward movements of prayer and then outward movements of service (Lk 5:16).

¹⁷ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 406-407 and Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, 405 note the commission's pastoral nature. O'Day, *Luke, John*, 861 adds "these verses position Peter as a model of what it means to live out one's love of Jesus."

¹⁸ Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. (New York, Crossroad: 1989), 24.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁰ O'Day, *Luke, John*, 864.

Jesus' calls to "abide in me" (John 15) and "love me" (John 21) reveal the core commitment to care for one's life with God that strengthens pastors' souls and directs their ministry. Relationship with Christ does not merely serve the work of ministry, but is itself the object of the Christian life (John 17:3, Phil 3:8ff). Spiritual practices, such as prayer and rest, (Mk 6:31) move pastors deeper in communion with Christ and lay the groundwork for faithful service. My ongoing research of soul care for pastors will explore these connections between spirituality and ministry, with attention to the role of spiritual disciplines that shape and sustain their souls in the midst of ministry.

Topic History and Key Voices

A Historical Overview of Soul Care in Ministry

THE BIBLICAL WORLD

The origins of Christian soul care reside in ancient Israel's religious leadership.²¹ Priests tend the spiritual life of the community through teaching, prayer, and worship rituals (Deut 33:9-10). Instructions for offering sacrifices require priests to "make atonement for himself" (Lev 16:6, 11, NRSV) before doing so for others. This sequence demonstrates the need for priests to pay attention to their souls in order to offer helpful ministry to others. Ezra, who shared the roles of priest and scribe, "set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ez 7:10, NRSV). In this way, Ezra provides an example of one in ministry caring for one's soul and others through personal engagement with Scripture. David, Israel's shepherd-king, gives attention to the state of his soul in many of his prayers. At his best, he performed his leadership from this ongoing care for his own spiritual and emotional health through prayer.

Jesus fulfills God's best intentions for Israel's spiritual leaders, establishing by example the pathway of soul care for Christian leaders. Jesus comes as the good shepherd (Jn 10:11) and provides holistic care (Ezek 34:11-16), not only serving people's external needs but inner lives.²² David Benner observes that Jesus' "primary method of soul care was dialogue."²³ He attended to the Spirit's work in people's lives through conversation, storytelling, and more traditional instruction.

Soul care for Jesus is not only something he does for others but also himself. The authors of *Resilient Ministry* quote Diane Langberg, who said to a group of pastors and their spouses, "Before you were called to be a shepherd, you were called to be a lamb."²⁴ Jesus, the ultimate shepherd,

²¹ Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*, 25.

²² *Ibid.*, 25-26.

²³ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁴ Bob Burns, Chapman, Diane, and Guthrie, Donald, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 21.

demonstrates such openness and responsiveness to God's work in his soul before and during his ministry. Significantly, the Spirit leads Jesus into a period of solitude in the wilderness preparatory to his public ministry (Mt 4:1). In addition to returning to times of solitude, disciplines of prayer and obedience anchor his soul in divine fellowship.²⁵ Jesus participates in other common spiritual practices, such as reading and memorizing Scripture and attending regular worship services.²⁶ Through spiritual disciplines, Jesus continually tends to his own spiritual life, and consequently, ministers from a healthy soul.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Pastoral ministry is often described as the "care of souls;" indeed, most attention to soul care through Christian history concerns how clergy care for the souls of others. Yet there is not as much information about the care of these souls who care for others. Benner recognizes practices of soul care in all three historic branches of Christianity, noting the common theme of spiritual guidance toward Christian maturity.²⁷ He further observes Protestantism as the tradition

with the least emphasis on soul care "probably due to Protestants' suspicion of acts that seem to undermine the place of Christ as the only mediator between persons and God."²⁸ However, key individuals, including some of the Reformers as well as Puritans later, affirm and practice the soul care of spiritual devotion and guidance.²⁹

Puritan pastor Richard Baxter's influential work *The Reformed Pastor* begins his instructions to pastors with a chapter titled "The oversight of ourselves." Only after addressing pastors' personal spiritual devotion does he proceed to discuss their ministry to others in "The oversight of the flock." His refrain of admonition to pastors "take heed to yourselves" underscores the vital responsibility of pastors to tend to their spiritual life. Specifically, he commends practices of prayer and meditation, attention to one's way of life, and commitment to ongoing development in both the

²⁵ Mary Jane Gorman, *Tending Body, Heart, Mind, and Soul: Following Jesus in Caring for Ourselves*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 97.

²⁶ Leslie Hardin, *The Spirituality of Jesus: Nine Disciplines Christ Modeled for Us*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2009), 57, 71.

²⁷ Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*, 28-31.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 29, 31.

spiritual life and pastoral work.³⁰ Two centuries later, Charles Spurgeon similarly exhorted pastors to maintain robust prayers and take regular times of solitary retreat to care for their souls.³¹

The Pentecostal tradition seems to struggle to embrace soul care in its framework for the spiritual life. Frank Macchia identifies one obstacle in Pentecostalism's theology of Spirit baptism "as achieved through a revivalist crisis experience that catapults one suddenly into new heights of spiritual accomplishments."³² Thus, Pentecostals may regard Spirit baptism as solely sufficient for spiritual growth. Compounding the problem, Pentecostals rely on a spirituality of power and victorious living that struggles to make sense out of suffering and weakness.³³ They consequently may assume that soul care is not necessary beyond personal devotions (prayer and Bible reading) and speaking in tongues, and may be ill-equipped to handle the sufferings of ministry.

RECENT AND CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES

In the twentieth century, Christian soul care began to embrace a therapeutic model alongside the rise of modern psychology, while different methods developed. On the one hand, Protestants call on all believers to care for one another's spiritual welfare. On the other hand, soul care shifts into a more professional form with the rise of pastoral and Christian counseling.³⁴ Benner observes both losses and gains to this therapeutic emphasis. The insights of psychology provide practitioners of Christian soul care many helpful tools, but he finds a tendency to rely more on psychological than biblical methods, with less significance attached to the provider's soul health.³⁵ Especially significant for this study, Benner highlights the value to pastors of receiving soul care, particularly spiritual direction.³⁶

Both academic and popular works on the topic of Christian soul care are readily available in America, including those that address the spiritual life of the leader. Many such resources deal with clergy burnout and attrition. Perhaps the increasing interest in soul care is partly due to the

³⁰ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*. (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 62-64, 71.

³¹ Charles Spurgeon. Excerpt from *Letters to My Students*. In *Pastor: A Reader for Ordained Ministry*, William Willimon (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 313-321.

³² Frank Macchia, "Spirit Baptism and Spiritual Formation: A Pentecostal Proposal," *The Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 13, no. 1 (2020): 50.

³³ Daniel Castelo and Kimberly Castelo, "Caring for Contemporary Mystics: Pentecostalism and the Mystical Worldview," *The Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 13, no. 1 (2020): 109-110.

³⁴ Benner, *The Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*, 35-39.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.

concerning number of pastors leaving their work. Nouwen and Eugene Peterson express the same concern across Catholic and Protestant traditions, urging ministers return to biblical and historical roots of soul care for themselves. Another mainline Protestant, William Willimon discusses pastoral burnout (or “brownout” as he prefers), offering diagnosis and steps to help avoid and treat it.³⁷ The Alban Institute and the Clergy Health Initiative, both at Duke University, conduct research and provide resources to strengthen and equip pastors.

Recent years and statistics make clear the need pastors have for their own soul care.³⁸ Roger Heuser and Norman Shawchuck sum up the need: “When we neglect to integrate our personal and vocational life with a conscious awareness of God’s involvement, our souls continue to fragment into the hypocrisy of teaching others about their spirituality at the neglect of our own.”³⁹ They further contend that one’s spiritual life is the key source of support for the work of ministry.⁴⁰ Certain key voices in recent history provide a starting point for further studies that seek to address this pastoral need.

Key Voices in Soul Care for Pastors

HENRI NOUWEN

Nouwen, a priest and author, offers spiritually and culturally aware guidance to ministers. Rather than techniques and strategies, his counsel focuses on the minister’s character and spiritual life. In *The Living Reminder*, he explores “connections between ministry and spirituality,” calling pastors to the primacy of walking with God, out of which their work flows.⁴¹ He constructs a pastoral theology from the Great Commandment; pastors can only fulfill their call to lovingly serve others out of love for God—“a prayerful life, a life lived in connection with Christ.”⁴² Nouwen summarizes the relationship between ministry and spirituality: “the spiritual life of the minister, formed and trained

³⁷ The following section on “key voices” will delve into the work of these authors in more detail.

³⁸ For an overview of such statistics see Richard Krejcir, “Statistics on Pastors,” 2007, <http://www.safeharborofsmid.com/pastors/Statistics%20on%20Pastors.pdf>. Krejcir correlates alarming numbers of pastors leaving ministry (1,500 monthly) with lack of personal intimacy with God.

³⁹ Roger Heuser and Norman Shawchuck, *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁴¹ Henri Nouwen, *The Living Reminder: Service and Prayer in the Memory of Jesus Christ*. (New York, HarperOne, 1977), 12, 28-31.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 34.

in the school of prayer, is the core of spiritual leadership."⁴³ His vision for ministry starts with ministers who walk with God in loving communion.

Elsewhere, he observes the lack of such ministers rooted in relationship with God.⁴⁴ His image of the "wounded healer" offers a model of ministry grounded in the leader's own life with God. Only by attending to God's work in themselves can spiritual leaders help others do the same.⁴⁵ Nouwen later explores the temptations of Christ as the common temptations of ministry.⁴⁶ To the temptation to be relevant to one's society and the expectations of others, he yet again calls Christian leaders to be people of God, "to dwell in God's presence, to listen to God's voice, to look at God's beauty."⁴⁷ Ministry flows out of love for Jesus, and thus requires the discipline of contemplative prayer, "dwelling in the presence" of Christ.⁴⁸ Through all his counsel to pastors, Nouwen emphasizes being over doing, cultivating one's inner life with God over learning pragmatic techniques to manage the church.

EUGENE PETERSON

A pastor and author, Peterson, writes extensively to pastors about the nature and practice of their vocation. He often sounds the alarm on the professionalization of pastoral ministry, which occurs when pastors focus more on "running the church" to meet cultural expectations of success than practice the relational attentiveness of "the cure of souls."⁴⁹ According to Peterson, pastors need a biblical understanding of their vocation to stay true not only to their churches but to their calling.⁵⁰ He describes the key ingredients of this calling in one place as prayer, preaching, and spiritual

⁴³ Ibid., 73.

⁴⁴ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*. (New York, Doubleday, 1972), 37.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁶ Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 29-30.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁹ Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 57-61.

⁵⁰ See Eugene Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 11 and *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 1.

direction;⁵¹ in another, he similarly regards core pastoral work as praying, preaching, and listening.⁵²

Just as Peterson summons pastors to a biblical vision of their calling to provide personal, spiritual care to those they serve, he anchors this ministry in their relationship with God. In *The Unnecessary Pastor*, he notes the “constant danger” of “a professional, religious role, that gradually obliterates the life of the soul,” when “working for Jesus...crowds out the personal life of *living* for Jesus.”⁵³ In response to this danger, he calls pastors to stay committed to their discipleship of Christ. He surmises from the way Israel’s prophets took their cue from the Psalms, “The inner action of prayer takes precedence over the outer action of proclamation.”⁵⁴ Peterson’s vision requires that ongoing care for their souls come first for those called to “the cure of souls.”

This soul care happens, in Peterson’s approach, through personal devotion and collegial support. Pastors care for their souls through disciplines of prayer, meditation on Scripture, and sabbath-keeping.⁵⁵ Due to both the unique nature of the work and its demands, Peterson encourages pastors to form support groups by relating his experience with such a group, called the “Company of Pastors.”⁵⁶ This group of pastors would gather to reflect on their calling in the daily outworking of life. Meetings would focus on sharing around Scripture and personal needs of the group members, staying away from theological debate and church comparisons.⁵⁷ Consequently, Peterson’s “Company” could give its members a weekly reminder of their calling and vision for how to enact it, all in a community of mutual support.

WILLIAM WILLIMON

Willimon writes to pastors from his experience as a United Methodist pastor and bishop. He holds pastoral ministry in high regard and to a high standard, as servants of God and the church, acknowledging the difficult nature of the vocation.⁵⁸ In response to the challenges, he calls pastors

⁵¹ Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*, 3-4.

⁵² Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction*, 19-21.

⁵³ Marva Dawn and Eugene Peterson, *The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 13-14.

⁵⁴ Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*, 28.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 46. Peterson spends chapter 3, “Prayer Time,” discussing the pastoral necessity of sabbath.

⁵⁶ Eugene Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir*. (New York: Harper One, 2011), 143-151.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁵⁸ William Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 22-24, 52.

to a commitment of hard work, an embrace of the Benedictine vow of stability, and an acceptance that the ministry of Jesus Christ will be cruciform.⁵⁹ In both *Pastor* and his earlier study *Clergy and Laity Burnout*, Willimon explores the factors that lead to pastoral burnout and attrition and the resources to help them stay the course. Instead of burnout (an energy-deficit), he prefers the term “brownout,” by which he refers to a lack of meaning in ministry that drains motivation and hurts effectiveness.⁶⁰

Willimon’s writings emphasize three aids for pastoral soul care, to help avoid or return from such loss of meaning. First, he addresses the pastoral ministry from a *theological perspective*, helping pastors first grasp the *why* of their vocational struggles before addressing the *how* of a response. He enjoins pastors to remember and reflect on their ordination, to focus on pastoral identity, from which ministry follows.⁶¹ Secondly, he prioritizes *character formation*, believing that ministry competencies develop in those growing in godliness.⁶² Finally, he calls for a *disciplined spiritual life*, especially through daily prayer and Scripture reading.⁶³ Through such personal devotion and self-care, pastors grow in self-awareness and more effective ministry.⁶⁴

PETER SCAZZERO

An influential practitioner of pastoral spirituality, Peter Scazzero accentuates the need for emotional health. In his framework, spiritual formation is inseparable from a personal journey toward emotional health. Thus, his perspective on soul care combines insights from psychology, particularly family systems theory, and Christian spirituality, especially the contemplative tradition.⁶⁵ The path to emotional maturity involves family of origin work aimed at greater differentiation in one’s self-identity.⁶⁶ “Loving union” with Christ is the foundation for ministry, which he explains as

⁵⁹ Ibid., 23-24, 315.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 325-326.

⁶¹ William Willimon, *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 21.

⁶² Ibid., 39-41.

⁶³ Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 327-330.

⁶⁴ William Willimon, *Clergy and Laity Burnout*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 87.

⁶⁵ See Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Updated Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 58; see also chapter 3. For a fuller treatment family systems theory for ministers, see Ronald Richardson, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor’s Own Family*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

"to lovingly allow God to have full access to your life."⁶⁷ Pastors give God this access to their souls through prayer, solitude, sabbath, and other contemplative practices exercised within the framework of a rule of life.⁶⁸ Scazzero places soul care at the center of spiritual leaders' priorities through a perspective illuminated by both theology and psychology.

OTHER INFLUENTIAL VOICES

Many recent studies about the need for pastoral soul care draw on John Sanford's influential work, especially *Ministry Burnout*. He identifies nine factors that lead to burnout and briefly offers practical suggestions to mitigate their influence. Taking responsibility for one's soul care and personal growth is a common theme in his proposals. "The fact is that the ministering person is the only person who can resolve many of his problems."⁶⁹ From this premise, Sanford advises ministers to take action for their own welfare and links a healthy inner life to endurance and effectiveness in ministry.⁷⁰

In *Spirituality for Ministry*, Urban Holmes III writes about the character, challenges, and components of the spiritual life of ministers. Holmes argues for a spirituality for ministry rooted in "the sacramental life" of the church, particularly the Eucharist and baptism.⁷¹ He recommends pastors receive the Eucharist regularly that their work may rest on Christ's "one, sufficient sacrifice."⁷² From this foundation, Holmes encourages pastors to commit to practicing a rule of life involving spiritual disciplines. Furthermore, he recognizes the need for support and encourages ministers to find a "spiritual companion" who can provide accountability and support.⁷³ Attention to personal spirituality is vital for ministers to carry out their work wisely and faithfully.⁷⁴

Ruth Haley Barton draws from the life of Moses to train spiritual leaders in caring for their souls in *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*. She asserts that leaders need to connect their inner life to their leadership for "spiritual leadership emerges from our willingness to stay involved with our

⁶⁷ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 120.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 133-140. See also Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 299-314.

⁶⁹ John Sanford, *Ministry Burnout*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1982), 17-18.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 39-40, 57.

⁷¹ Urban Holmes III, *Spirituality for Ministry*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 125.

⁷² Ibid., 125.

⁷³ Ibid., 188-189.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 158, 161.

own soul.”⁷⁵ Throughout her work, Barton guides ministry leaders to spiritual practices vital to strengthening the soul, particularly solitude as the “primary place where the leader’s soul is strengthened.”⁷⁶ Spiritual leaders need time alone with God for the formation of their spiritual life and leadership. Barton also encourages developing healthy spiritual rhythms, including “between engagement and retreat.”⁷⁷ Rather than address technical competencies and skills for ministry, Barton’s book provides biblical and theological reflection on the spiritual life for those who serve God’s people and invites them to strengthen their souls through classic disciplines contextualized for contemporary ministry.

Special studies, including dissertations, approach the issue of soul care for pastors from various angles. Some explore the problem of burnout and underlying causes and potential remedies. Scott Ream, for example, identifies a matrix of factors that lead to pastoral burnout: spiritual maturity, emotional health, and physical environment.⁷⁸ He calls for “a shared solution” to the problem of burnout through the cooperation of “individual pastors, churches, and district and national leaders.”⁷⁹

H. Fred Meadows engages Adrian van Kaam’s work on formative spirituality as a resource for pastoral soul care.⁸⁰ He critiques an overly functional approach to ministry, in which identity comes from ministry, that results in burnout, relational stress, and can impact physical health.⁸¹ He argues for an approach that balances being with doing, in which ministry performance flows from one’s spiritual life,⁸² aided especially through contemplative spiritual practices.⁸³

⁷⁵ Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*. Second ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 15, 25.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁷⁸ Scott T. Ream, “Pastoral Health and Burnout: Spiritual Maturity, Emotional Health, and Physical Environment” (DMin diss., Alliance Theological Seminary, 2016), 30-36, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁸⁰ H. Fred Meadows, “Restoring the Balance Between Doing and Being: The Functional Pastor and Adrian van Kaam’s Formative Spirituality” (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2011), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 71-72.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 131, 133.

Barbara Gilbert's study focuses on the support systems that enable pastors and their spouses to continue and flourish in ministry.⁸⁴ Through a consideration of common stressors in pastoral work, she highlights the need for managing expectations, cultivating marriage and family life, developing a theology of ministry, and caring for one's overall health. In a similar work, Oswald grounds pastoral health in a theology that one serves God, not people, and points to Jesus' example of self-care that enabled him to stay faithful to the will of God.⁸⁵ Heuser and Shawchuck summon pastors to a spirituality based on Jesus' practice, emphasizing a balance between care for self and ministry to others, and private and community life.⁸⁶

Similarly, the research presented in *Resilient Ministry* identifies pastors' own spiritual life, emotional intelligence, and family relationships among the crucial influencers of pastoral resilience.⁸⁷ Pastors must be able to differentiate their identity in Christ from their work and nurture that relationship.⁸⁸ They summarize, "long-term fruitfulness in ministry comes from the overflow of one's walk with God."⁸⁹ Presenting a relational framework for resilience, the authors point to marriage and family and peer groups as significant aids to pastoral health and longevity in ministry.⁹⁰ Through healthy, supportive relationships, pastors gain strength to continue in ministry through personal hardship and ministry challenges.

Synthesis

Areas of Agreement/Consensus

Scholars and practitioners concur that pastors need a healthy spiritual life for effective and enduring ministry. Benner identifies the bottom line: "Soul guides can only lead others to places they themselves regularly inhabit."⁹¹ Nouwen's image of the "wounded healer" and Baxter's refrain to

⁸⁴ Barbara Gilbert, *Who Ministers to Ministers?: A Study of Support Systems for Clergy and Spouses*. (New York, The Alban Institute: 1987).

⁸⁵ Roy Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding A Balance for Effective Ministry*. (New York, The Alban Institute: 1991), 15-17.

⁸⁶ Heuser and Shawchuck, *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People*, 40-58.

⁸⁷ Bob Burns, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 19-28.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 254-260.

⁹¹ Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*, 209.

"take heed to yourselves" offer formative expressions of this tenet in Catholic and Protestant traditions respectively. The strongest consensus among writers on the subject is this crucial link between pastors' life with God and their ministry to others.

To provide the structure for effective soul care, authors commonly endorse spiritual disciplines, especially contemplative ones such as solitude, sabbath, and retreat. Studies of Jesus' disciplined spiritual life reveal the significance of such practices for those who carry on his ministry. Indeed, the theological perspective that pastoral ministry is the ministry of Jesus Christ equips pastors to embrace the rich spiritual and biblical resources that shape and sustain both their souls and work.

Soul care for pastors involves not only attention to their spirituality, but also emotional health and relationships. While some give specific attention to these issues, there is agreement across key voices supporting a holistic approach to soul care. Studies link psychological and relational stress to pastoral burnout; thus, beneficial soul care will give attention to all aspects of life. This holistic perspective comports with Benner's definition of the soul as "the whole person,"⁹² and Willard's placement of the soul as the all-encompassing dimension of the self.⁹³

Ongoing Tensions, Disagreements, and Pressure Points

Responding to the need for pastoral soul care encounters a few significant tensions due to the nature of pastoral ministry and the soul. While soul care involves spiritual, emotional, mental, relational, and even physical aspects, the role of each and their interrelatedness is debated. Questions emerge, such as, whether pastors should primarily focus on nurturing relationship with God or attend to emotional health. The perspective that pastors suffer more from lack of meaning (brownout) than lack of energy (burnout)⁹⁴ raises another issue: what is the nature of the stress pastors face? Is it too much to do? Is it a lack of meaning or motivation? Is it a disordered spiritual life? Several factors may be at work. Efforts to help pastors with their souls deal with these complex relationships and may require a personalized approach.

Another tension exists between personal responsibility for one's soul care and need for support. Sanford and others maintain that pastors bear the primary responsibility for their own soul care, calling for robust commitment to the spiritual life.⁹⁵ Still, research into the causes of burnout indicates pastors need a strong support system to develop healthy patterns for their personal life and ministry. This need for support raises further challenges. Pastors may know they need help, but not know where to find it. Those in small churches, especially in remote locations, may find it harder to access outside resources. For example, if seeing a therapist or spiritual director is recommended,

⁹² Ibid., 22.

⁹³ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, 37-38.

⁹⁴ Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, 325-326.

⁹⁵ Sanford, *Clergy Burnout*, 17-18.

the nearest one might be hundreds of miles away. While technology can help mitigate these challenges, it may not be able to solve them.

Moreover, practitioners debate the source and nature of the support pastors need. While Peterson and others call for clergy support groups, Holmes prefers a one-on-one relationship with a spiritual companion. Benner highlights the value of professional help from counselors, therapists, and spiritual directors, while some desire informal, relational support. In a positive way, these different opinions represent various options pastors can pursue depending on their personality, need, and context.

Gaps, Missteps, Scholarship Problems and Limitations

Most of the research concerning pastoral soul care comes from mainline Protestant and Catholic traditions; while evangelicalism enters the conversation more, there are few Pentecostal voices. Pentecostalism appears still in the early academic stage of engaging pastoral soul care, with few practitioners. Thus, Pentecostal pastors are less likely to encounter helpful works that exist, particularly if they do not search beyond their tradition. Such pastors need contextualization of existing research and resources for their soul care.

Existing research does not often account for a pastor's congregational setting. Soul care involves certain priorities and activities common across different contexts, but the size and location of a congregation can impact the way pastors access and practice this care. Congregations with less than one hundred weekly worshipers comprise nearly 70% of all AG churches in the U.S.⁹⁶ Since pastors in small churches, especially those in rural communities, lack the supportive resources available to those in large congregations and urban areas, research is needed to address their soul care in ways appropriate to their context.

Some studies touch on the role of denominations in supporting pastors' soul care;⁹⁷ however, this potentially significant factor receives scant attention across the literature. A pastor's relationship to denominational institutions, leaders, and systems impacts pastoral stress and well-being. Managing denominational expectations and accessing their resources challenges pastors, who may feel that the system that should support them pressures or neglects them. This raises another possible gap, namely, material on pastoral soul care primarily addresses pastors. Perhaps another angle on the issue is needed, educating denominational and congregational leadership about the need for soul care and effective responses. In particular, denominations may be best equipped to address another gap: new pastors. Discussions of pastoral burnout primarily address experienced ministers. Training new pastors would help address the need for soul care before it manifests.

⁹⁶ "2019 Full Statistical Report," <https://ag.org/about/statistics>. Available under "Archived Full Reports;" see page 16.

⁹⁷ Gilbert, *Who Ministers to Ministers? A Study of Support Systems for Clergy and Spouses*, 53-56.

While scholars and practitioners make solid recommendations to pastors to care for their souls, there is a logistical gap. Once pastors become aware of their need and actions to take, such as retreats or counseling, there are practical issues. *How* will they make these changes? *When* will they find time? *With whom* can they safely connect for support? *Who* will pay the associated costs? These issues may be more pronounced for pastors in small, especially rural, churches, where pastors commonly earn meager incomes, work outside jobs, and for whom access to resources may be limited by geography. Such practical factors are significant in bridging the gap between awareness and action.

Conclusion

Surely, a healthy pastor is integral to a healthy church. The AG uses this language, yet, as a pastor in the AG, I observe the discussion and provision of soul care only marginally present. Most of our pastoral initiatives pertain to church growth and leadership techniques. A soul care resource for pastors in my context would help address this imbalance; consequently, it may reduce pastoral attrition and strengthen pastors and churches. The resource could introduce principles and practices of soul care to denominational leaders who subsequently could address the need systemically and/or bring these resources to newly credentialed ministers, first-time pastors, or those in small and/or rural churches, laying a foundation for spirituality in ministry. Since many AG pastors and spouses approach ministry as a team, and spouse support impacts pastoral health,⁹⁸ it may be beneficial to address married couples. Further research will explore forms of support and training and ways to bring these alongside pastors to foster the health of their souls, the flourishing of their ministries, and the advancement of the kingdom of God.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 51.

Appendix C—Milestone 3 Design Workshop Report

NPO Statement

Pastors, and their spouses, of small, rural Assemblies of God churches, need sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry.

NPO Scope and Constraints

This project seeks to equip Assemblies of God pastors, with special attention to rural pastors, with perspectives and practices for their own soul care with the outcome of greater flourishing in life with God and ministry. The particular focus on soul care intersects with relational and emotional health, especially marriage and family (if applicable). To foster flourishing for the long-term, supportive, ongoing community will be a component, perhaps through a cohort-based training. The delivery may include in-person and remote sessions according to context. Participants may include new pastors, those new to a rural setting, and current rural/small church pastors.

NPO Context

This NPO focuses on pastors of small churches (typically solo pastors), with attention given to those in rural settings. "Rural" is a broad term, but can especially describe towns that are small and geographically isolated, with limited resources. I plan to keep this project general enough to benefit any pastor, but tailor content to the specific issues facing rural pastors. My work will focus on pastors in the Assemblies of God and seek to work within its organizational structure to deliver this resource. The pastor's family, especially marriage if applicable, is an important component of the pastor's spiritual health, and thus will be part of this project's scope. The intention is to set the pastor's personal and ministerial health in the contexts of marriage and family as well as relationship with other pastors and leaders, including local church and denominational leadership.

Root Causes

Root causes of this NPO include: 1) a faulty definition of success, 2) denominational and congregational pressure, and 3) lack of personal wholeness. A common theme from the workshops and interviews is the need for a redefinition of success in pastoral ministry from an American model (attendance driven) to a biblical one (faithful shepherding). Pastors also deal with many different and difficult expectations. Those from within the Assemblies of God consulted in this study have expressed pressure from both churches and denominational leaders to validate ministry through attendance results. The American-shaped definition of success and these faulty expectations play into each other and contribute to pastoral discouragement. The research thus far has also revealed that pastors' organizational structure may assume they already have a healthy spiritual life and foundation for ministry, emphasizing training in technique and strategy while neglecting spiritual formation and a theology of ministry suited for their context.

Three Big Ideas

- 1) A marriage retreat for pastors and their spouses to strengthen marriage in ministry.
- 2) A cohort training on spiritual life and pastoral ministry with attention to rural context.
- 3) A training for church boards to understand and support pastors towards health.

Definition of 'Done'

Pastors will be equipped to care for their life with God and relationship with spouse, strengthening them for faithful ministry.

Three Concept Pitches

Concept #1: Marriage Retreat

<i>Big Idea</i>	To strengthen marriages of those in pastoral ministry.
<i>Audience</i>	Ministry couples in small (perhaps rural) churches.
<i>NPO</i>	To provide support and training for spiritual and marital health to flourish in life and ministry.
<i>Benefit</i>	Couples will reconnect with each other and receive resources (internal and external) to maintain a healthy spirituality and marriage in the ministry.
<i>Approach</i>	One or a few couples with hosts over a 2-3-day retreat. Participants receive follow-up care through online and print resources and ongoing framework for support.
<i>Risks</i>	A lack of willingness to participate, conflicting expectations between attendees and provider, the wrong leadership/retreat hosts.
<i>Assumptions/hypotheses to test</i>	Sustainable care for relationship with God and spouse will result in increased ministry satisfaction and stability for pastors and their spouses.
<i>Benchmarks of success</i>	Healthy marriages, long-term pastorates, follow-up to see couples' attitude toward marriage and ministry.
<i>Other Approaches</i>	Focus on the pastor's marriage as a key factor in a healthy life and ministry.

Concept #2: Spiritual Life Cohort

<i>Big Idea</i>	To train pastors in addressing own need for soul care in context of rural pastorate
<i>Audience</i>	Pastors of small/rural churches (perhaps first-time pastors)
<i>NPO</i>	Pastor's education, training, and denominational and congregational setting may assume they understand and do what's needed for their spiritual health.
<i>Benefit</i>	Pastors will gain perspectives and practices to cultivate their spiritual life and understand pastoral ministry in rural context, strengthening them against the negative effects of burnout and stress, enabling longevity in ministry.
<i>Approach</i>	A cohort of pastors attend a 1-day workshop about need for sustainable soul care. The cohort meets a few more times (in-person and/or videoconference) for training and community-building.
<i>Risks</i>	Pastors don't want to participate, fear/shame at admitting the need, bi-vocational and unable to give the time necessary to participate.
<i>Assumptions/hypotheses to test</i>	Foundations for cultivating own life with God (healthy spirituality) will enable them to fulfill ministry faithfully and effectively (healthy ministry).
<i>Benchmarks of success</i>	Pastors recommend it to others, feel renewed in their relationship with God and ministry, practice ongoing self-care and relational support.
<i>Other Approaches</i>	Giving attention to pastors' life with God as foundational to their ministry.

Concept #3: Church Board Training

<i>Big Idea</i>	To educate local church leadership (board, deacons, etc.) on the pastoral ministry and how to support their pastors toward spiritual, familial, and pastoral health.
<i>Audience</i>	Local church leadership of small/rural, AG churches.
<i>NPO</i>	Church leadership needs a vision of the pastoral vocation and understanding of how to support their pastor's personal and professional health.
<i>Benefit</i>	Pastors will benefit from the church's understanding and in turn the church will benefit from pastors' needs being met; pastor's family will benefit too.
<i>Approach</i>	Deliver a training to local church leadership on 1) understanding pastoral ministry, 2) relationship between church board/deacons and pastor, 3) how to care for pastor/family.
<i>Risks</i>	Unwillingness to implement or pass on to subsequent church leadership.
<i>Assumptions/hypotheses to test</i>	The local church leadership can help its pastor toward greater spiritual and ministry health.
<i>Benchmarks of success</i>	Improved relationships between pastors and boards, pastors staying longer at their churches, improved attitude toward ministry.
<i>Other Approaches</i>	Identifies and addresses local church leadership as crucial to helping address the need for pastoral health.

Design Workshop Stakeholders

The workshop stakeholders included a young pastor, retired pastor, another retired pastor and spouse, two therapists, and a retired law enforcement officer with pastoral experience.

One-on-One Interviews

My interviewees included a professor, author, and ministry leader; a denominational officer; and a pastor and pastoral retreat leader.

Annotated Bibliography

Brewer, Eddy D. "Burnout among Assemblies of God Clergy with Implications for Support from Church and Denominational Leaders." PhD diss., Dallas Baptist University, 2016. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Brewer adds to the growing research on pastoral burnout by focusing on the Assemblies of God (AG), which has received scant attention in this matter. His survey of twenty-one pastors considered burnout causes and coping strategies before turning attention to ways pastors can strengthen themselves against burnout, as well as how congregational and denominational leadership can support pastors experiencing burnout and help prevent burnout. Brewer's findings include the significance of the pastor's spiritual life and marriage/family. This study pertains to my research, which similarly concerns AG pastors. Moreover, the issues of spiritual life, marital health, and congregational support have emerged as my three design concepts. Thus, Brewer's work can provide both helpful insight and direction for my continuing research.

Jung, Shannon, Pegge Boehm, Deborah Cronin, Gary Farley, C. Dean Freudenberger, Judith Bortner Heffernan, Sandra LaBlanc, Edward L. Queen II, David C. Ruesink. *Rural Ministry: The Shape of the Renewal to Come*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

The authorial team work with the Center for Theology and Land's Rural Ministry Program at Wartburg Theological Seminary and in this volume provide historical, cultural, and religious context for rural church ministry in the United States. They first survey the historical developments of rural ministry from colonial America to the end of the twentieth century. Critical issues emerge from this survey, including the post-WW2 shift toward urban centers, the rural crisis of the 1980's, changes in government policies and control of agriculture. These factors have shaped both the external life (economy, social arrangement), but the internal consciousness (loss of control, mistrust of government) that characterize rural communities. The authors then give a contextualized rural theology emphasizing community, God's active presence, and a sense of place. Finally, they trace pathways for rural pastors and congregations to minister effectively in various contexts of rural America. This book offers helpful context for the rural component of my research.

McMinn, Mark R., R. Allen Lish, Pamala D. Trice, Alicia M. Root, Nicole Gilbert, and Adelene Yap. "Care for Pastors: Learning From Clergy and Their Spouses." *Pastoral Psychology*, 53, no. 6 (July 2005): 563-581, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-005-4821-y>

McMinn et al provide a positive psychology perspective on the challenges of ministry for pastors and their spouses, utilizing data from five studies. While acknowledging the reality of pastoral burnout, they contend that the majority of pastors effectively navigate the demands of their work. They consider the most common stressors facing pastors and their spouses before turning attention to the prevailing ways the same cope with these stressors. Their study divides coping responses in three categories: intrapersonal, family, and community. Their research shows most clergy and their spouses rely on intrapersonal means of coping with stress, marriage is a vital resource, and they could benefit from a broader range of relationships. This article provides a wide lens to understand the challenges pastors face and effective means of coping. In this light, and especially with its attention to the pastor's spouse and marriage, it helps broaden my knowledge base for ongoing research.

Self, Charlie. *Flourishing Churches and Communities: A Pentecostal Primer on Faith, Work, and Economics for Spirit-Empowered Discipleship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2013.

A scholar, educator, and ministry practitioner, Self brings his Pentecostal tradition to bear on a vision for "flourishing churches and communities." He makes the case for the integration of all aspects of life, including work and economics, into Christian faith. The hope is that Christians erase the gap between Sunday worship and weekday work, leading to churches that fulfill God's mission and communities that are better for it. While this work may appear an outlier to my project, it may give important context to considerations of pastoral health. The approach pastors take to the church's ministry, especially in the particularities of their communities, may impact their well-being. Self's ideas, including Pentecostal perspective (and Assemblies of God background) can help rural pastors see their churches, communities, and own work in new ways that lead to fruitful ministries and faithful ministers. Furthermore, this integrative framework may prove applicable in training a church board and leaders. The perspective of daily work as mission equips congregations to better share the work of ministry and avoid burdening pastors.

Appendix

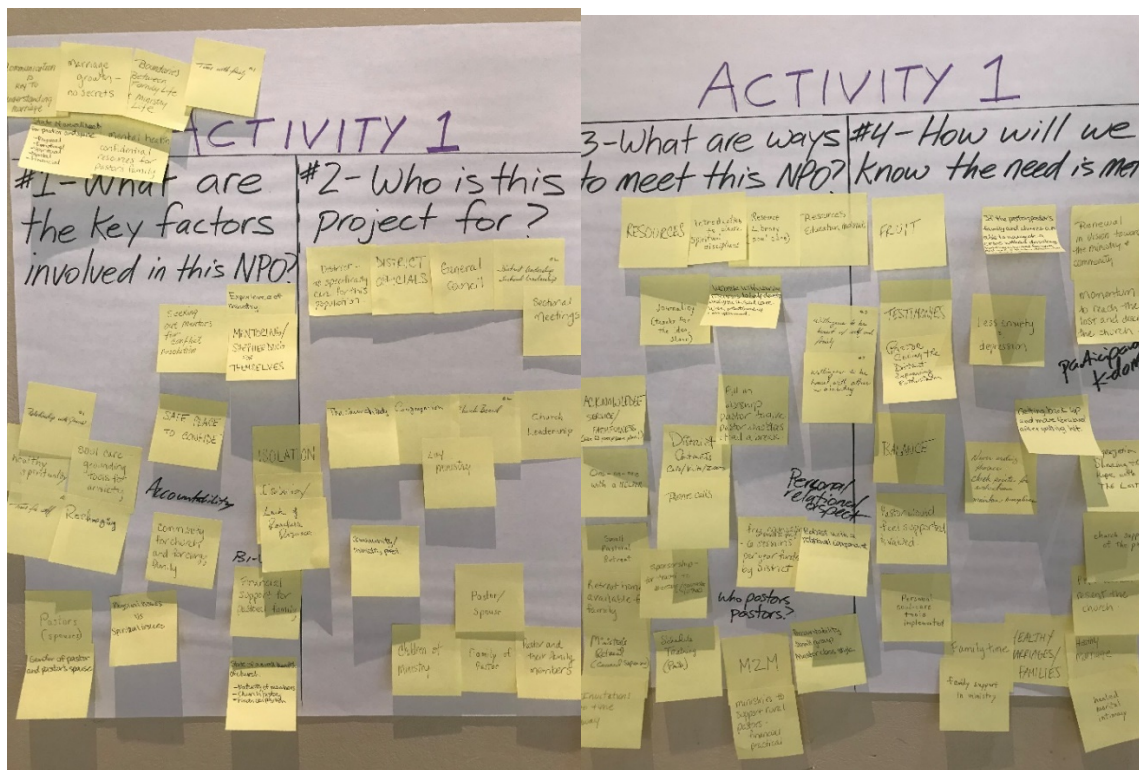
Design Workshop Description

My design workshop was held on October 8, 2021, at Southpointe Christian Center in Sacramento, California from 10:30am – 4:00pm. Participants (seven) included:

- therapist who specializes in counseling ministers
- former pastor (spouse of above) who counsels pastors
- former pastor of a small Assemblies of God church for over 25 years
- young pastor of a small Assemblies of God church, with 7 years' experience
- retired pastor and spouse who served the same Assemblies of God church for 32 years
- retired law enforcement officer with experience in various pastoral roles

All seven participants invited were present for the workshop. After a welcome, introductions, and prayer, I presented them with the NPO: Pastors, and their spouses, of small, rural Assemblies of God churches need sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry. The workshop unfolded in four activities. The opening activity ("Post-up") included four questions to revisit the NPO, with responses posted and sorted in an affinity map. The two exploring activities developed possible concept designs by brainstorming in small groups ("3-12-3 Brainstorm") and identifying and reframing concerns into actionable hopes ("Flip it"). The closing activities gave the stakeholders opportunity to select the most promising designs ("Dot Voting") and then develop the top three using the "Concept Pitch" worksheet provided in our course materials. I provided lunch and refreshments and a couple breaks. In closing, I thanked them for participating and offered a prayer of blessing.

On a scale of 1-5, I assess the workshop as a 4. The physical space was conducive to our work. All the participants showed up and actively contributed. The workshop met the goals of exploring the NPO and developing designs to address it. The overall working environment and social interactions were positive and hopeful. I did not have as much time as I hoped for the concept pitches and would have liked to receive more input on those. Some participants engaged in telling ministry stories and it was challenging to respect them and their stories and seek to stay on track. Overall, I think the workshop went quite well, though I could have managed time better and worked to encourage a greater balance of voices throughout the day.



3-12-3 BRAINSTORM

hope, thank B, priorities

too busy but time off → spiritual

1 to 1 mentor help pastors with demands of life/ministry

seasoned experience help others

Mentoring relationship

red: senior Marshall, red: long connections

paid weekend retreat for couple

counseling competent focus on marriage in ministry

bf up w/ on-line resources, etc.

and provide an ongoing framework

marriage retreat

spirituality accountability

Self awareness

prob: approach ministry as job

discovered spirituality 1

relationships self-aware 2

spiritual life retreat / training

spiritual

new credential - 11/2 prob: assumptions

HOPE

FEAR

FLIP IT
ET/IT

Traction

articulate need

Pastor feels cared for, needs met

pastoral support & emotional health

networking

church board

pastoral care team

district resource

aggregation

educate church on pastor needs

pastor's health care

ask pastor how to help

spiritual health with time, etc.

educate ch.

pastor's health

pastor's health

reciprocal approach

policy

Pastor's health

steps to emot. & spiritual health

with time, etc.

educate ch.

pastor's health

pastor's health

① Marriage Retreat

4 x 1 or small group of couples

ministry couples

small church

need support

compassion resources

reconnected relat.

less fear intimacy

willingness

marriage / satisfy

ministry stability

② Retreat / Spiritual Life Foundations Training

avoid burnout

what approach hybrid in person & online

ongoing community

bivocational

sp. life foundations

faithful ministry

③ Church care plan

educate church leaders on pastoral vocation & needs.

what if not willing?

church → pastor health

church health

pastor stays + attitude

One-Page Post-Workshop Message to Stakeholders

NPO: Pastors, and spouses, of small, rural, AG churches need sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry.

Three concepts:

Marriage Retreat

- *Big Idea:* To strengthen marriages of those in pastoring small churches through compassionate support and varied resources.
- *Means:* One or a few couples with retreat hosts for a 2-3-day retreat, including counseling component. Participants will receive follow-up through online and print resources and ongoing framework for support.
- *Benchmarks of success:* Healthy marriages, long-term pastorates, positive attitude toward marriage and ministry.

Spiritual Life Cohort

- *Big Idea:* To train pastors in foundations for their spiritual life so they gain perspectives and practices to cultivate their spirituality, strengthening them against the negative effects of burnout and stress and enabling ministry longevity.
- *Means:* A cohort will attend a workshop to introduce the need for personal spiritual health. The cohort will meet a few more times (in-person and/or videoconference).
- *Benchmarks of success:* Pastors recommend the training to others, feel renewed in their relationship with God and pastoral ministry.

Church Board Training

- *Big Idea:* Educate church leaders on pastoral ministry and how to support pastors' health.
- *Means:* Deliver a training to church leadership on 1) pastoral ministry, 2) relationship between church board and pastor, 3) how to care for the pastor/family.
- *Benchmarks of success:* Improved relationships between pastors and boards, increased longevity, improved attitude toward ministry.

Your responses to these questions will help as I move forward:

- What should I examine?
- Blind spots to explore?
- Pitfalls to avoid?

- What *must* I research before prototyping?

Thank you for your participation!

One-on-One Interviews Documentation

Interviewee A – Professor, author, and executive ministry leader

- The three concepts can each stand alone, but also overlap and work together.
- Sees the primary idea as providing a picture of the wholeness of the leader, including personal health and professional development. Keep general enough to benefit any church leader, but specific enough that rural context is understood.
- Likes concepts #1 and 2 together as a picture of personal and professional life of the leader, and even #3 as a possible component of the latter.
- See “Discipleship Dynamics” (discipleshipdynamics.com) for framework and outcomes to help sketch a portrait of pastoral health. This can help account for various factors involved in pastoral health, including vocational clarity, economics/work, and relationships; and in professional development, including emotional intelligence, cultivating charisms, and learning competencies.
- The unique contributions my research can provide include 1) an integrated picture of wholeness of the pastor, and 2) understanding the rural dimension of pastoral health.
- Consider how this will be delivered: need enough people in cohort to see progress. Will this be a one-time gathering of 2-3 days? Or a couple one-day meetings with some Zoom meetings later? Consider developing alternative delivery methods so this can be reproduced in other contexts.

Interviewee B – Pastor and pastoral retreat leader

- Likes all of the concepts, feels potential with each one, especially 1 and 2. Maybe #3 plays into one of the others?
- Important emphasis on ministers being with other ministers for mutual support.
- Important emphasis on how any of these resources is ongoing.
- Especially with concept #2, pastors may be afraid or ashamed to admit need for this, so frame positively, e.g., “staying healthy for the long haul,” “pursue wholeness,” see Heb 12:1-3.

- If utilizing counseling, need to be very clear about that. Need to decide if it will be focused or non-focused (set-aside time or more of an offer if people want it).
- Concepts 1 and 2 (marriage and spiritual life) can come together: chance for couples to connect w/other couples.
- On concept 3 (church board training), important to help them see how to care for pastor and family: sabbath time, family time, resources/salary, parsonage, physical health, etc.).
- Concept 3 could be the sustainability piece for whatever path is taken: to involve churches in the care of their pastors as the pastors are working on it themselves.

Interviewee C - National denominational officer

- Denominational research indicates 2,600 rural pastors will "age out" in the next 5-10 years.
- Concept 1 (marriage retreat) is already happening in other ways in denomination, gave one example; believes concept 2 (spiritual life) already happening, but no example given.
- Likes concept #3 most: if the lay people, church leadership, are on board about the pastor's personal health then the pastor has to be too! Could also help improve governance structure of small churches.
- Key issue/problem: the ability and motivation of rural pastors to want one of these resources. How do you encourage this motivation?

Appendix D—Milestone 4 Design Research Report

Prototype Summary and Findings

Prototype #1: Soul Care Cohort for Pastors

Prototype description

This is a concept for a six-month cohort for rural pastors and their spouses, if applicable. Six sessions are conducted remotely (Zoom), with a seventh in-person retreat for married couples. Each Zoom session lasts approximately ninety minutes. The marriage retreat is planned as a weekend (two nights) experience.

NPO statement

Pastors need support toward personal and professional health by equipping with principles and practices for sustainable soul care in a supportive community of fellow pastors.

Research question

Is remote learning an effective way to deliver this cohort to rural pastors?

Do the topics effectively address the needs of rural pastors?

Assessment benchmarks

The majority of participants indicate in a survey that they would join the cohort through primarily remote meetings and resonate with the proposed content.

Participant description

There were nine participants in the prototype presentation, which I conducted on Zoom. Seven are rural Assemblies of God pastors currently serving; one is an AG pastor not currently serving; one is a former pastor now serving with a parachurch organization that works with rural churches. Of the nine participants, there is one female and eight males.

Learning summary

Eight of the nine people completed the survey. 100% agreed that the session topics effectively address the needs of rural pastors. 87.5% agreed that remote learning is an effective way to deliver the cohort. Further responses indicated the difficulty of travelling long distances as the primary reason for preferring remote learning. This accessibility outweighs the concern that remote learning does not offer the same relational benefits of in-person meetings. 87.5% agreed that they prefer an in-person retreat for the marriage session. A 5-point Likert scale (1=not at all likely, 5=ready to sign-up) was used to assess the question, "How likely are you to sign up for this cohort if it were made available to you?" One respondent chose 1; one chose 3; five chose 4; one chose 5. There is overall strong support from this target group for the cohort, the use of remote delivery, and the content as presented.

Most important discovery

Participants responded well to the cohort model and to the overall focus of the project. Remote learning may be an untapped tool in my context with significant potential to deliver content and build community for the purpose of pastoral soul care. One participant noted that the model should include items for those in the cohort to discuss and practice between the monthly sessions, which I think is an important discovery. A concern that applies to both prototypes, but especially to this one, is that pastors may not be willing to express the humility and vulnerability to admit their need for this service. One way to address this concern may be to present the resource as an opportunity to a specific group of pastors, such as pastors new to a rural setting or new district affiliated pastors (an Assemblies of God designation that applies to pastors of small churches).

Prototype #2: Lay Leadership Seminar

Prototype description

This concept is for a one-day seminar addressed to local church lay leaders (boards, deacons, ministry leaders, etc.) to educate and equip them on pastoral ministry and how to support pastors toward personal and professional flourishing.

NPO statement

Lay leaders have an opportunity to support pastors toward personal and professional health, impacting pastoral longevity and fruitfulness and congregational stability and development.

Research question

Does the content of the seminar effectively cover what lay leaders need to know in order to support their pastors' personal and professional health?

Do pastors see value in this training for their churches?

Assessment benchmarks

The majority of participants indicate in a survey that they would sign up their church leadership for this seminar if made available to them. A majority also indicates a desire that the seminar be an "add-on" to the soul care cohort.

Participant description

There were nine participants in the prototype presentation, which I conducted on Zoom. Seven are rural Assemblies of God pastors currently serving; one is an AG pastor not currently serving; one is a former pastor now serving with a parachurch organization that works with rural churches. Of the nine participants, there is one female and eight males.

Learning summary

Eight of the nine people completed the survey. 62.5% agreed that the session topics effectively address the needs of lay leadership. One commented that adding material about healthy communication and conflict resolution would be beneficial. Another recommended addressing the issue of respect among core leaders. A Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used to assess the question, "How likely are you to sign up your church leadership for this seminar if it were made available to you?" One respondent chose 1; one chose 3; two chose 4; four chose 5. There is overall strong support from this target group for the seminar, also indicating a strong preference for it to be in-person (87.5%). When asked if the lay leadership seminar were made available at no cost for their churches if the pastor complete the soul care cohort, 62.5% said they would be more likely to do the soul care cohort, 25% said they were already sufficiently motivated to do the cohort, and 12.5% said that they were not likely to do the cohort and the addition of the seminar did not increase motivation.

Most important discovery

Participants responded well to the lay leadership seminar. One pastor commented that it offers a very helpful approach to supporting pastors and would likely be more effective coming from outside the church (as in this model) than if presented by the church's own pastor. It can be awkward for the pastor to present this material to their own church leaders and possibly more likely that the leaders will receive the training well from someone outside the church. Moreover, if pastors first complete the soul care cohort, the lay leaders may be more accepting of the seminar, knowing that the pastor has an active role in pursuing his/her health.

Background Research Essay on the Emerging Solution

Soul Care

Christian leaders recognize the need for soul care for pastors and others who serve the church. Soul care, attention to the health of one's inner life and integrated self, is vital for flourishing in life and ministry. John Ortberg recalls asking mentor Dallas Willard, "How can I have a private self that is flourishing no matter what my public self is doing?" Willard's reply directs toward this inner and integrated life: "For that...we would have to talk about the care of the soul."⁹⁹ Due to their daily involvement in Christian ministry and the associated expectations and responsibilities, pastors face a heightened challenge to live and lead out of a healthy soul. Put another way, they stand in greater

⁹⁹ John Ortberg, *Soul Keeping: Caring for the Most Important Part of You*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 39.

danger of compartmentalizing inner and outer lives. MaryKate Morse sums up the dilemma tersely: "Ministry is hard," to which she adds

"Pastors and ministry leaders struggle because of the lack of ongoing, meaningful formation of their own inner journeys, the lack of friends who understand their journey, and the lack of emotional and physical rest."¹⁰⁰

In her exploration of this problem, Morse points towards its solution: "Christian leaders need safe environments in which they can unpack their inner worlds and their outward realities."¹⁰¹

In the past year, I have had opportunities to learn and experience the "safe times, safe places, and safe people"¹⁰² for which Morse advocates. My research project touches on this general need for greater formation of pastors' inner lives if they are to stay faithful to God's call. Morse's approach confirms what my research thus far indicates: the way toward sustainable soul care for pastors involves strategic, supportive relationships. Soul care cannot be accomplished in isolation, but requires community. My task is to contextualize soul care into a pastoral context in general, and a rural, Assemblies of God setting in particular.

Rural Ministry

Applying soul care for pastors to the rural setting is a special contribution my research can make. The history and geography of rural America shape pastoral ministry in such places today. Those who pastor rural churches inhabit the story of blessing and struggle that has characterized country life. The rural crisis of the 1980's led to changing policies with greater government control of agriculture. The economy of many rural communities, especially those most agriculturally dependent, fell into "chronic decline" creating a "new peasant class."¹⁰³ In light of this history, rural pastors should not be surprised to encounter strong anti-government sentiments among their people. Rural Americans have not only learned how to rely on themselves, but to rely only on themselves. A sense of powerlessness joins with the spirit of independence due to a loss of control over their land and lives. Symptoms of this feeling of powerlessness include increasing violence, abuse, and rage against authority.¹⁰⁴ Pastors, especially those without roots in rural America, may find this rural ethos challenging. Rural congregations may be especially suspicious of changes and

¹⁰⁰ MaryKate Morse, *Lifelong Leadership: Woven Together through Mentoring Communities*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress), 14.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, see chapter three, 35-48.

¹⁰³ Shannon Jung, Pegge Boehm, Deborah Cronin, Gary Farley, C. Dean Freudenberger, Judith Bortner Heffernan, Sandra LaBlanc, Edward L. Queen II, David C. Ruesink. *Rural Ministry: The Shape of the Renewal to Come*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 107.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

skeptical toward authority. Their values of place and community need affirmation and even incarnation by those called to lead them.

Geography presents another challenge to rural ministry. Rural communities often suffer from lack of social services, economic opportunities, and proximity to resources.¹⁰⁵ These limitations challenge pastoral soul care. Pastors have many others to care for and seemingly never enough personal or professional resources at their disposal. Moreover, where will they find the time and resources for their own self-care? Soul care in this context calls for nuance and creativity. Besides such challenges, rural settings offer pastors opportunities for soul care, including a slower pace and open space to practice solitude. Advances in technology mitigate some of the challenges, providing access to training and community support. Understanding the rural context is significant since one-third of all Assemblies of God congregations in the U.S.A. are in places with a population under 5,000.¹⁰⁶

While the designation “rural” speaks to geographical location, it can also designate social location. Krause notes “‘Rural’ is more cultural and contextual than a size distinction.”¹⁰⁷ Ministry in a rural church and community demands attention to numerous cultural factors that differ from other contexts. Pastors may find themselves unfamiliar and unprepared, requiring significant time and attention. To make a difference in a rural community, pastors may need to stay longer than typical pastoral tenures, since change proceeds at a slower pace.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, a “closed rural system” may bring additional strain to the pastor’s marriage.¹⁰⁹ There are enough significant differences in pastoring a rural church from those in other contexts that warrant specific consideration of the needs of pastors in these places.

Spiritual Life Retreats

My project includes a spiritual life retreat for pastors and their spouses that focuses on the theme of marriage in ministry. For married pastors, relationship with spouse is a key factor in navigating ministry in a healthy way. In a study of Pentecostal pastors and their families in Australia, Potts draws

¹⁰⁵ Greg Scott and Rachel Lovell, “The Rural Pastors Initiative: Addressing Isolation and Burnout in Ministry,” *Pastoral Psychology* 64, no. 1 (February 2015): 72-73.

¹⁰⁶ Danny Davis, “The Lived Experiences of Pastors and Lay Leaders in Turnaround Rural Assembly of God Churches in Missouri: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study” (EdD diss., Concordia University, Portland), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Carl Krause, “Evaluating the Effect of the Stressors of Rural Ministry Life on the Marriages of Rural Pastors” (DMin diss., Denver Seminary), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, 80.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

attention to the importance of family life for pastoral flourishing.¹¹⁰ He charts a path toward flourishing marriage, family, and ministry through “measured aspirations regarding ministry,” “a resolute awareness of the advantages and adversities” related to family life in ministry (155), and “an attentive focus on the family while engaged in ministry.”¹¹¹ These findings lend support to the model of pastoral soul care that includes care for the pastor-spouse relationship.

Spiritual life retreats are a common and effective means of tending to this relationship. What a pastor experiences, his/her spouse experiences with them, thus the connection between marriage and ministry is important to address.¹¹² A retreat provides a significant piece of soul care training; indeed, “Retreats become the occasion to learn how to allow God to nurture our souls.”¹¹³ Reuben Job describes four kinds of spiritual life retreats: dialogical, personally guided, preached, and private.¹¹⁴ The marriage retreat in my soul care cohort would be a personally guided retreat, “done with a small group under the guidance of one spiritual guide”¹¹⁵ with elements of a preached retreat due to times of group instruction and discussion.

My planning for the retreat must consider numerous factors including location, time, participants, theme, and activities such as prayer, silence, engaging Scripture, and sharing with others.¹¹⁶ Ferguson and Witt recommend designing retreats with three “encounters” in mind: with God, other people, and creation.¹¹⁷ This approach may work well for my purpose of bringing together a few pastoral couples to consider their marriage in the midst of ministry. I may shape the schedule to facilitate their encounters with God through Scripture, worship, and prayer. I can invite participants into encounters with each other through whole group sessions in which each may share their stories, as well as share in informal meal times. Encounters with creation in a change of setting from

¹¹⁰ Daryl J. Potts, “The Triple ‘A’ Formula for Flourishing Ministry Families: An Analysis of the Ministry/Family Journey of Credentialed Ministers and Their Spouses within the Australian Christian Churches,” *Pastoral Psychology* 69 (2020): 156-157.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 152, 155-156.

¹¹² This insight comes from a phone conversation with Mark Brewster of Life Impact Ministries (<https://lifeimpact.care>) on April 13, 2022.

¹¹³ Nancy Ferguson and Kevin Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, (Nashville, Discipleship Resources: 2006), 19.

¹¹⁴ Rueben Job, *Spiritual Life in the Congregation: A Guide for Retreats*, (Nashville, Upper Room Books: 1997), 17.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 27-28.

¹¹⁷ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 17.

retreatants' places of ministry can provide refreshment and rest. Some intentional time outside, enjoying nature, may facilitate the purpose of providing and teaching soul care.

Remote Learning and Online Instruction

The rise of remote learning and advances in technology make access to education, training, and group interaction easier for many. While a face-to-face setting may be preferred, it is not always possible. Pastors in rural communities may find travel to conferences, cohorts, and others professional development opportunities especially difficult due to living in a remote place and the financial impact. However, equipped with the necessary hardware and software, videoconference platforms, such as Zoom, offer ways to engage in such activities from a distance. There are limitations to distance education, including the mentioned necessary technology. Some rural pastors may not have access to sufficient internet speed, for example, to videoconference consistently.

In the proposed prototype for my project, I will deliver a training to pastors utilizing Zoom or another video platform. While I have familiarity with using videoconferencing as a student, I have not participated as a teacher. Conducting my prototyping session on Zoom gave me opportunity to experience the medium as a facilitator, as well as to observe how the target audience utilized it. In order to provide skilled instruction and facilitation in this environment, I will need to learn best practices for remote teaching.

Researches recognize the need for teachers to learn new competencies and roles in an online environment. Some researches identify four categories of roles: "pedagogical, social, managerial, and technical;"¹¹⁸ others see three: "cognitive, affective, and managerial."¹¹⁹ Effective online teaching requires attention to pedagogical concerns such as content, delivery, and learning styles, as well as the social task of building community with and among learners.¹²⁰ As I prepare these soul care trainings, I will need to reflect on instructional design, understood as "planning, organizing, and structuring the course components, designing learning tasks, and designing interactive technologies and teaching strategies/models."¹²¹ Many factors influence learning in an online

¹¹⁸ Jared Keengwe and Terry Kidd, "Towards Best Practices in Online Learning and Teaching in Higher Education," *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 6, no. 2, (2010): 536.

¹¹⁹ N. Coppola and T. Callister, *Becoming a virtual professor: Pedagogical roles and asynchronous learning networks*, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 18 (4), 169-189.

¹²⁰ Evrim Baram, Ana-Paula Correia and Ann Thompson, "Transforming online teaching practice: critical analysis of the literature on the roles and competencies of online teachers," *Distance Education* 32, no. 3 (2011): 426.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 427.

setting; I must give care to both the content and how I deliver it, to the participants and their instructional and relational needs, and to the use of the technological mediums.

Lonie and Andrews offer sound practical advice for preparing to facilitate online learning, which provides learners with many benefits while presenting teachers with many challenges.¹²² They encourage teachers to keep online sessions under two hours due to the “increased concentration and mental stress of on-line learning.” Teachers may also consider providing hard copies of material to participants to help them follow along. One of these researchers’ suggestions concurs with input from a participant in my prototyping session, namely, that I should consider providing concrete opportunities for learners to reflect on concepts and implement practices between sessions. An online discussion board has proven to be one effective way of building community and deepening perspective.¹²³

Lay Leadership

Lay leadership in the local church fulfill a vital role in the church’s ministry. These volunteers work with the pastors in various aspects of ministry. The role of lay leaders becomes more pronounced in smaller, including rural, congregations, which are typically staffed by a solo pastor.¹²⁴ In order to serve effectively, lay leaders need training and support. Speaking of one group of lay leaders, church boards, Aubrey Malphurs notes, “though most boards are well intentioned, most have not been trained for their work and most have not thought through or fully understood what they’re doing.”¹²⁵ This need for lay leadership development relates to my research into the need for pastoral soul care.

From where will rural pastors receive help understanding and meeting their need for soul care? Surely it will require that pastors take primary responsibility for their own health.¹²⁶ Still, other people are in significant relationship and strategic position to come alongside pastors in this crucial task. Lay leaders have the opportunity to support pastors toward sustainable personal and professional health, which in turn strengthens the church. Developing and implementing a resource

¹²² Anne-Louise Lonie and Trish Andrews, “Creating a rich learning environment for remote postgraduate learners” *Education in Rural Australia* 19, no. 1 (2009).

¹²³ Theodore Smith, “Fifty-One Competencies for Online Instruction.” *The Journal of Educators Online* 2, no. 2 (2005), 5.

¹²⁴ Davis, “The Lived Experiences of Pastors and Lay Leaders in Turnaround Rural Assembly of God Churches in Missouri” 2019 (Ed.D. Diss., Concordia University, Portland), ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 8.

¹²⁵ Aubrey Malphurs, *Leading Leaders: Empowering Church Boards for Ministry Excellence*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: 2005), 12.

¹²⁶ John Sanford, *Ministry Burnout*, (New York, Paulist Press: 1982), 17-20.

that educate and equips these key leaders to support their pastors in this way provides another avenue of aid that increases the sustainability of pastoral soul care.

Malphurs identifies another problem compounding the lack of training for lay leaders. What training does exist for this group may not adequately, or at all, touch on the topic of supporting pastors' spiritual and overall health. In my own denomination, my district offers a church board training, both in-person and remotely. The training contains eighty-one PowerPoint slides, of which forty-three pertain to governance and policy, thirty-seven to financial management, and one addresses how the board can "take care of the pastor."¹²⁷ While the topic of lay leadership support of pastoral soul care is touched on, it receives scant attention. This is an area of training that needs and deserves greater development for the good of lay leaders, pastors, and congregations.

MVP (Most Viable Prototype)

"Healthy Souls and Steady Hands":

A Relational Approach for Sustainable Soul Care of Rural, Assemblies of God Pastors

My most viable prototype is a model for sustainable soul care that combines the two prototypes. The idea of "healthy souls" from the soul care cohort is strengthened by the "steady hands" from the lay leadership seminar. The pastor's soul care finds support in this model from personal learning and practice, and spousal, peer, and lay leader support. Thus, this approach to soul care for pastors is fundamentally relational: built on the pastor's relationship with God, with spouse (if applicable), with a community of colleagues, and with fellow leaders in the local church. A key word in my NPO statement is "sustainable." Sustaining a healthy spirituality and ministry requires community and accountability. Through cohort-style learning, pastors will build relationships with other pastors as they make the journey of soul care together. Research continually indicates the strong correlation between healthy marriages and healthy ministers, thus I propose to include spouses in the cohort and a specific marriage retreat.

Since the design workshop, when the concept of a lay leadership training emerged, it has gained traction and support. The ability to include local church leaders in the support structure of care for the pastor takes sustainability to the next level. The support gained by having other church leaders aware and active to help the pastor toward personal and professional health may prove to be especially helpful. I plan to make the model flexible by allowing the lay leadership seminar to be a detachable piece. Ideally, pastors who complete the soul care cohort can then host the lay

¹²⁷ Jay Herndon, "Board Training Seminar," developed and delivered through the Northern-California and Nevada District Council of the Assemblies of God, training received in-person and accessed by PowerPoint.

leadership seminar for their local church; however, the lay leadership seminar can stand on its own as a resource for churches.

Appendices

"Ministry from the Inside Out" – A Soul Care Cohort for Rural Pastors

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives. It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds." (Lk 6:44-45, The Message)

This cohort seeks to support pastors toward personal and professional health by equipping them with principles and practices for sustainable soul care in a supportive community of fellow pastors. All sessions on Zoom, except marriage session in-person. If possible, session 1 also in-person. Each session (1-6) scheduled for 1 ½ hours w/a brief break. One session per month for six months.

Session 1: Understanding the Need and Introducing Soul Care

- burnout/brownout
- common themes: disconnect between inner life and outer ministry, need to prove self, busyness, definitions of success/failure, affirmation, wounds.
- soul care as overall well-being with attention to the inner life

Session 2: Foundational Perspectives Part 1: Soul Care

- Soul Care in Scripture and Church History
- Soul Care Primary Themes and Focus

Session 3: Foundational Perspectives Part 2: Pastoral Theology and Rural Ministry

- what is a pastor and what does a pastor do? (calling, perspective)
- understanding rural America and rural churches: challenges and opportunities
- the pastor in a rural community

Session 4: Formative Practices Part 1: Spiritual Formation and Personal Wholeness

- abiding (in Christ)
- meditating (on Scripture)
- withdrawing (for solitude)
- resting/playing (Sabbath)

- physical and emotional health

Session 5: Formative Practices Part 2: Relationships

- family
- spiritual friendship
- spiritual direction/mentoring/coaching
- colleagues

Session 6: Putting it Together

- a rule of life
- accountability
- sustainability

Session 7 (1 day or overnighter or weekend): Marriage Retreat

"Steady Hands"—A Seminar for Lay Leadership to Support Pastoral Flourishing

"But Moses' hands grew tired...Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on each side of him so that his hands remained steady until sunset." (Ex 17:12, CEB)

This seminar seeks to educate and equip lay leaders to support their pastors' personal and professional health, impacting pastoral longevity and fruitfulness and congregational stability and development.

I. Introducing the Need

Amid pastoral burnout, moral failure, and turnover, lay leaders have opportunity to support pastors toward sustainable personal and professional health, which in turn strengthens the church. Here we will introduce common pastoral challenges and the need for support.

II. Understanding the Pastoral Vocation

In order to help pastors maintain a healthy spirituality and ministry, lay leaders need understanding of the pastoral vocation. Here, we will explore what pastors are called to be/do.

III. Exploring the Role of Lay Leadership

One of the roles of lay leadership is to support “called leaders” toward faithful service. They have opportunity to provide part of the sustainable support pastor’s need. Here we survey biblical texts and church history that provide understanding of the role and work of lay leaders.

IV. Providing Support: A Two-Armed Approach

Lay leaders can help pastors “hands remain steady” by supporting them toward personal wholeness and professional flourishing.

Personal Wholeness (topics include):

- *Spiritual:* Sabbath and rest (weekly sabbath, “days off,” sabbatical policy, etc.)
- *Emotional:* Spiritual direction/counseling
- *Family:* Boundaries (protecting family and personal time)
- *Financial:* Compensation (1 Cor 9, pay, vacation, etc.), stewardship

Professional Flourishing (topics include):

- *Developing competencies* (continuing ed, training)
- *Collaborative charisms* (Acts 6, understanding gifts, sharing the work of ministry)
- *Supportive community* (friendship, outside resources, relationship to authority)

This is planned as a one-day, in-person event with local church lay leaders. Alternatively, it can be done remotely or with a group of lay leaders from churches in an area. A rough outline of the seminar is below:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • 9:00 am – Welcome and Sections I-II | • 2:15 pm – break |
| • 10:30 am – break | • 2:30 pm – Section 4, part 2 |
| • 10:45 am – Section III | • 3:45 pm – Wrap up |
| • 12:00 pm – lunch | • 4:00 pm – Dismissal |
| • 1:00 pm – Section 4, part 1 | |

Prototype Survey Questions

Soul Care Cohort for Pastors

1. Do the topics effectively address the needs of rural pastors?
2. If no, what topics would you change or add?
3. Is remote learning (Zoom, etc) an effective way to deliver this cohort for rural pastors? Why or why not?
4. This resource is designed as a 6-month cohort, with one session per month on Zoom lasting approximately 1.5 hrs. Does this schedule seem feasible?
5. When would be the best time for the Zoom sessions? Rank by top choice 1-3:
 - a. Saturdays
 - b. weekdays
 - c. weeknights
 - d. any of these
6. For the marriage session (if applicable), would you be more likely to attend an in-personal retreat or another online session?
7. If in-person, would you prefer a one-day, overnight, or weekend experience?
8. What would be an ideal number of pastors in the cohort?
 - a. Less than 5
 - b. 6-10
 - c. More than 10
9. How likely are you to sign up for this cohort if it were made available to you? (scale of 1-5 from least likely to most likely)
10. If you desire to participate in the cohort, what factors might hinder you from doing so?
11. Any other feedback you wish to add on the soul care cohort?

Lay Leadership Seminar

1. Do you believe the material covers what lay leaders (boards, etc) need to know in order to better support their pastors' personal and professional health?

2. If no, what topics would you change or add?
3. Is an in-person, on-site training an effective way to deliver this seminar to local church leadership?
4. If no, what would be preferred?
5. How likely would you be to sign up your church leadership for this seminar if it were made available to you? (scale of 1-5 from least likely to most likely)
6. If the lay leadership seminar were made available at no cost for your church if you completed the soul care cohort, would you be more likely to sign up for the cohort?
7. Any other feedback you wish to add on the lay leadership seminar?

Prototype Survey Responses

Soul Care Cohort for Pastors

1. 8 yes, 0 no
2. No responses
3. 7 yes, 1 no. Reasons given: time and distance, remote learning has difficulty encouraging live conversations and relationships among small groups, more accessible than traveling and rural pastors may end up having to find lodging, rural pastors tend to have to travel further distances more frequently and have more logistics than urban/suburban pastors thus Zoom would make attending a lot easier, Zoom is good since trying to meet in a location is not always viable, being in a rural setting distance is a major factor.
4. 6 yes, 2 no.
5. Saturdays: 1, weekdays: 2, weeknights: 4, any of these: 1
6. In-person retreat: 7, virtual: 1
7. One-day: 0, overnight: 4, weekend: 3, does not apply to me: 1
8. Less than 5: 4, 6-10: 3, more than 10: 1
9. 1: 1, 2: 0, 3: 1, 5: 5, 5: 1
10. Time working, distance, spread out too much for the commitment, child care, nothing at this time, time commitments, family commitments.

11. I think both models should be incorporated. If pastor and spouse count, then total number of participants should be under 10. Incorporate a number of "practice this" opportunities scheduled in the sessions. Doesn't really apply to us thought would be nice to get away for weekend if free. It's important to know you're not alone. Bring in someone for testimony sharing, a story that can serve as a "hook" for importance of these issues (live or recorded...maybe multiple at various points, or for various aspects). How will you get pastors to admit their need for something like this?

Lay Leadership Seminar

1. 5 yes, 3 no.
2. It's a start, maybe consider adding a session on healthy communication and conflict resolution for pastor and lay leaders, yes and no: the pastor needs to know how respect is given or should be given by your core group because it will be contagious to others in ministry...it is sometimes accepted better when coming from someone else than the pastor him/herself.
3. 7 yes, 1 no.
4. Not really sure.
5. 1: 1, 2: 0, 3: 1, 4: 2, 5: 4
6. 5 yes, 2 sufficiently motivated already, 1 not likely to do the cohort and the seminar doesn't add motivation.
7. Some leadership individuals could give public push-back feeling threatened with new ideas or past lack of pastoral support. We don't have enough people to make it viable only 7-9 congregants who need to learn to walk with the Lord first. I think the soul care cohort should empower the pastor who does not know how to communicate with lay leadership their soul care needs...A majority of the responsibility for soul care is on the pastor and they must be able to lead and teach their leaders what they need...I don't know how effective this cohort would be if the pastor is unable and unwilling to be honest with their lay leadership or if the lay leadership does not see the importance of soul care. The church today does not know about what lay leadership is all about, we have dropped the ball and I have been trying to bridge that gap.

Appendix E— Project Promotional Materials

What's Unique?

INTERNALS NOT EXTERNALS

"The health of the apple tells the health of the tree. You must begin with your own life-giving lives... Your true being brims over into true words and deeds." Lk 6:44-45 (MSG)

Most cohorts, conferences, and resources for pastors address the externals and mechanics of ministry—strategies for church growth, community outreach, increasing volunteers, etc.

But the Pastoral Flourishing Cohort is different. The focus is on the pastor's inner life. We speak to matters of the soul, learning to tend to the deep places in us where God is at work. Because no matter what's happening external to you in ministry, you can flourish in life and ministry.

HERE NOT THERE

Do most pastoral resources today seem like they're for pastors of large, urban churches? – or to make your church bigger and better?

But what about where you are? The small place ordinary people and God has called you pastor. These matter to God. You matter to God right where you are.. The Pastoral Flourishing Cohort isn't about helping you get your church to a "there" others think you should be, but helping you right "here" where you live and serve through a process that respects your rural context.

This and the next page contain the promotional brochure for the cohort. Facilitator photo goes in this spot.

COHORT FACILITATOR

Nathaniel Rhoads

Nate and his wife Stephanie have been married 16 years and have three sons. They live in Winnemucca, NV, a rural community where Nate has pastored Word of Light Fellowship (AG) since 2008. Nate is a graduate of Bethany College, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and Portland Seminary of George Fox University.

Shortly after arriving in Winnemucca, Nate realized that pastoring in a rural context was unlike anything he'd been prepared for. The uniqueness of the place and its people and the realities of small-town life and ministry generated new expectations and new priorities—all through much stumbling and learning along the way. His desire is to accompany other pastors into the care of their own souls so they can flourish in life with God and the ministry of Jesus Christ.

[DATES]



MINISTRY FROM THE INSIDE-OUT

FOR RURAL PASTORS & SPOUSES

Cohort Format

A COHORT THAT COMES TO YOU

Remote learning for remote communities!

The six-session cohort is delivered remotely on Zoom, allowing participation by those like you in rural, often remote, communities. You can participate from home or your church study with an internet connection and free Zoom software.

EACH SESSION involves a threefold structure:

An **introductory** time of prayer and sharing connects the participants with one another and provides focus for the session

An **instructional** time of teaching and some discussion presents the key perspectives and practices for the session

An **interactive** time draws the session to a close by engaging in discussion and a concrete practice that relates to the session themes.

BETWEEN THE SESSIONS participants are invited into a similar threefold process:

Reflection questions are provided to take the topics deeper into your context

Action through a spiritual practice or other exercise is provided to give practical exposure to the content in the midst of real life and ministry

Discussion with fellow participants to share and process learnings is encouraged through an online discussion board

Cohort Plan

A RETREAT FOR PASTORAL FLOURISHING

The six-session cohort begins by acknowledging and seeking to understand the need for attention to pastors' inner lives and then proceeds to outline **foundational perspectives** and offer **formational practices** to construct sustainable soul care to maintain a healthy life with God and ministry. The final session presents helpful tools to integrate the perspectives and practices into a coherent whole that can be sustained in the midst of daily life and ministry for the long haul.

Session	Topic
1	Understanding the Need & Introducing Soul Care
2	Foundational Perspectives Part 1: Soul Care
3	Foundational Perspectives Part 2: Pastoral Theology & Rural Ministry
4	Formational Practices Part 1: Spiritual Formation & Personal Wholeness
5	Formational Practices Part 2: Relationships
6	Putting it Together

Big Picture

3 PARTS, 1 PURPOSE

The entire experience has been designed to provide you with both internal renewal and a structure of external relational support so that a healthy soul in ministry is sustainable. Three pieces contribute to this one purpose of pastoral health:

THE COHORT

- Six 90-minute Zoom sessions held monthly over six months for pastors and spouses (as applicable).
- Each session involves instruction, discussion, and spiritual practice.
- Resources are provided for reflection, action, and group discussion between sessions as each participant desires.

THE RETREAT

- After the six cohort sessions, a 2-night in-person retreat is offered for pastors and spouses (as applicable).
- See the retreat brochure for more info.

THE SEMINAR

- A one-day seminar for your church's lay leaders (advisory committee, board, key ministry leaders, etc.) is offered to pastors who complete the cohort.
- The seminar educates and equips these leaders in your church to support their pastors (you!) toward personal wholeness and professional flourishing.
- The seminar is designed to be one-day, on-site, but adaptations are possible.

Why a Retreat?

A RETREAT FOR PASTORAL FLOURISHING

“Come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while.” – Mk 6:31

Ministry is hard. When we’re in the midst of it, we often don’t have the space necessary for self-awareness. Just as Jesus practiced, and invited his disciples to do, we go on retreat in order to reach higher ground where we can slow down and rest and reflect on our lives, become more fully present to God, to ourselves, and to our spouse. Such space found on retreat enables us to return to daily life and ministry spiritually, relationally, emotionally, and physically renewed.

About the Retreat

To facilitate the purposes of rest, reflection, and renewal, the time is divided between unstructured time alone (or with spouse) and with others.

Rather than lecture, we facilitate discussion centered around key questions that invite conversation about life and ministry.

On each of the full days (Sat & Sun), afternoons are yours to enjoy however you choose.

We incorporate spiritual practices into the retreat to help you rest and reflect deeply and that we hope you may find helpful for future practice.

This and the next page contain the promotional brochure for the cohort. Facilitator photo goes in this spot.

RETREAT HOSTS

Nathaniel & Stephanie Rhoads

Nate and Stephanie have been married 16 years and have three sons. They live in Winnemucca, NV, a rural community where Nate has pastored Word of Light Fellowship (AG) since 2008. Stephanie has a graduate degree in teaching and has taught in public schools, homeschooling, and the church. Both are graduates of Bethany University in Scotts Valley, CA, where they met. Nate also graduated from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and (forthcoming) George Fox University. They desire to give to other ministry couples what they have graciously received: an understanding and caring presence to listen and encourage.

[DATES]



REST – REFLECT - RENEW

A RETREAT FOR PASTORS & SPOUSES



Location

102 WILD PLUM RD, SIERRA CITY, CA

Nestled in the sierras, tucked away below the main road, is “His House,” a 3,500 square foot home owned and operated by the Assemblies of God Northern California & Nevada District for minister’s retreats.

The deck has seating and there are spots outside to sit and relax or walk and explore. The nearby Wild Plum Campground has trail and river access.

Each couple or individual receives their own room with bathroom and has access to common areas.

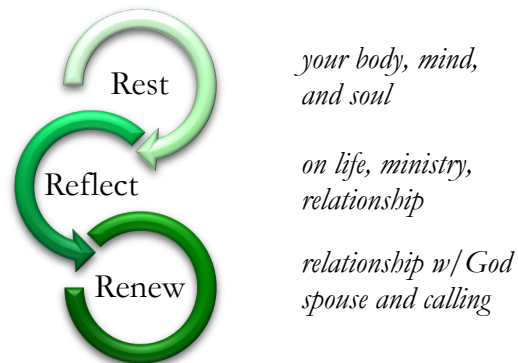


Purpose

REST – REFLECT – RENEW

A RETREAT FOR PASTORAL FLOURISHING

This retreat is for those in pastoral ministry (pastors and their spouses) to receive space to experience renewal in their relationship with God and each other through rest and reflection.



No one quite understands a pastor like another pastor. And a small group of those engaged in pastoral ministry brings a collective wisdom and understanding presence through which the Lord restores our souls.

All who attend will receive a short pre-assessment to complete which will help the retreat hosts prepare for your visit and prepare your own hearts for what the Spirit wants to do in you. Retreatants will also receive a binder upon arrival with a full schedule and helpful resources.

Daily Rhythm

ARRIVE FRIDAY PM, DEPART MONDAY AM

The retreat has intentional programming to provide rest, stimulate reflection, and encourage relationships, we have been careful to not over-program. Below is a description of the general rhythm you’ll experience on the retreat.

MORNINGS

- 9:00 am: Group breakfast and question for the day
- One-on-ones with host couple if desired
- Share conversations and activities

AFTERNOONS

- Lunch options include pack & go as a couple or stay and chat with others
- Open space for rest, reflection, and recreation with spouse

EVENINGS

- 6:00 pm: Group dinner and discussion
- Group recreation or activity
- Evening prayer
- Personal time

"Steady Hands"



"When the hands of Moses became heavy, they took a stone and put it under him, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side and one on the other, and so his hands were steady until the sun went down." (Exod 17:12 NET)

Join us for this one-day seminar to learn more about your role as lay leaders in the local church. The focus will be specifically on how you can support your pastor toward personal and professional flourishing for the good of the whole church and the kingdom of God.

[Event Date] [Event Time]

Event details here (address, anything to bring, etc.)



SEMINAR FACILITATOR: NATHANIEL RHOADS

[Address, City, ST ZIP Code]

[Telephone] | [Email Address] | [Web Address]

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