

CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT OF SUSTAINING CLERGY HEALTH

This is an exercise for a session to use in reflecting on the support of their clergy.

When we consider both the challenges to and the way to sustain our health, we need to consider physical health, emotional health, a healthy family, healthy finances, spiritual health, and vocational health. A pastor who experiences health in all of these areas is much better prepared to offer a vital ministry to the congregation. Look at the description of these six areas below, and, reflecting on the complexity of ministry, consider how the constant stress of ministry can affect one's health in any of these areas. What you are being asked to do is both reflect on the areas of stress in the life of pastors and how the congregation can act to lessen the toxic effect in any of these areas.

SIX ASPECTS OF CLERGY HEALTH

Physical health: The human body requires adequate food, sleep, exercise, and variation in activities. Identify two aspects of ministry to this congregation, which, while necessary, can affect a pastor's physical health:

- 1.
- 2.

Identify one way that the congregation can support the pastor in attending to his or her physical health:

- 1.

Emotional Health: High emotional moments, both positive and negative, can drain one's energy. Particularly demanding in the ministry are times of conflict, disappointment, empathizing with others who are experiencing personal traumas, feeling inadequate to meet another person's needs, etc.

Thinking of this congregation, identify at least two types of experiences that a pastor might find particularly emotionally draining.

- 1.
- 2.

Suggest one way that the congregation might be helpful in supporting the pastor's emotional health.

- 1.

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Family: The health of any family is challenged by many factors in our culture. Considering the demands of the ministry, identify at least two particular ways that a pastor's family might experience negative emotions.

- 1.
- 2.

What is a specific action that congregations might take that would be supportive of the pastor's family and their relationships.

- 1.

Finances: Many families find that financial issues can create extreme stress. Name at least two ways that financial issues can affect a pastor and the pastor's family negatively.

- 1.
- 2.

Suggest at least one way that a congregation can ease that stress.

- 1.

Spiritual: A pastor is called to be the spiritual leader of a congregation. Sometimes when a pastor is so busy attending to the spiritual needs of others, s/he can neglect to take time to replenish his or her spiritual reserves. Name two ways the congregation can encourage and support the pastor in staying spiritually strong.

- 1.
- 2.

Vocation: While the call of God is an important factor in choosing to accept a congregation's invitation to become their pastor, it does not cease with the acceptance of the call. God calls both pastors and congregations to respond in a variety of ways to ministry as a church. As the pastor and the congregation share in ministry together, what are at least two ways that they can consciously pause and listen for God's guidance.

- 1.
- 2.