

Resolution

Subject: Taskforce to Study the Need for Self-care for Pastors
From: Leadership Development & Wellness and Care Committees

WHEREAS, the requirements and demands upon pastors in the modern church have astronomically increased; and

WHEREAS, the challenges of the pandemic have added new and unprecedented demands requiring pastors to develop new skill sets; and

WHEREAS, there are numerous staggering statistics* regarding the mental, physical, and spiritual burdens on pastors; and

WHEREAS, the Southern Province desires for pastors to flourish and thrive in their calling; and

WHEREAS, the statistics below do not account for the impact of the pandemic and current information that is beginning to come out confirms the continuation of those trends; and

WHEREAS, individual pastors and their congregations are currently accountable for continuing education, vacation and sabbatical opportunities; and

WHEREAS our pastors have committed to the continual care for our congregations, and our congregations have committed to the care of pastors; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Commission on Ministry study and recommend a mandatory and comprehensive plan for pastors' and certified church educators' self-care, including continuing education, spiritual direction, counseling, clergy coaching, vacation, and periodic sabbaticals; and

RESOLVED, that the task force report findings and recommendations to the 2026 synod for approval and implementation.

*<https://www.soulshpherd.org/pastors-under-stress/>

- 75% of pastors report being “extremely stressed” or “highly stressed” (1)
- 90% work between 55 to 75 hours per week (2)
- 90% feel fatigued and worn out every week (1)
- 70% say they're grossly underpaid (2)
- 40% report a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month (1)
- 78% were forced to resign from their church (63% at least twice), most commonly because of church conflict (1)

- 80% will not be in ministry ten years later and only a fraction make it a lifelong career (1). On average, seminary trained pastors last only five years in church ministry (2)
- 100% of 1,050 Reformed and Evangelical pastors had a colleague who had left the ministry because of burnout, church conflict, or moral failure (2)
- 91% have experienced some form of burnout in ministry and 18% say they are “fried to a crisp right now” (7)
- 70% of pastors say they have a lower self-esteem now than when they entered ministry (1)
- 70% constantly fight depression (2)
- 50% feel so discouraged that they would leave their ministry if they could, but can’t find another job (2)
- 80% believe their pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families and 33% said it was an outright hazard (1)
- 80% of ministry spouses feel left out and unappreciated in their church (2)
- 77% feel they do not have a good marriage (2)
- 41% display anger problems in marriage (reported by the spouse) (3)
- 38% are divorced or divorcing (1)
- 50% admit to using pornography and 37% report inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church (1)
- 65% feel their family is in a glass house (2)
- 53% of pastors do not feel that seminary or Bible college prepared them adequately (2)
- 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend (1)
- 50% do not meet regularly with an accountability person or group (6)
- 72% only study the Bible when preparing for sermons or lessons (1)
- 21% spend less than 15 minutes a day in prayer — the average is 39 minutes per day (4)
- 16% are “very satisfied” with their prayer life, 47% are “somewhat satisfied”, and 37% are either “somewhat dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” (spending more time in quiet prayer or listening to God versus making requests was correlated with higher satisfaction) (4)
- 44% of pastors do not take a regular day off (5)
- 31% do not exercise at all, while 37% exercise at least three or four days a week as recommended (6)
- 90% say they have not received adequate training to meet the demands of ministry (2)
- 85% have never taken a Sabbatical (6)

Sources cited within the article

(1) David Ross and Rick Blackmon’s “Soul Care for Servants” workshop reported the results of their Fuller Institute of Church Growth research study in 1991 and other surveys in 2005 and 2006. (2) Francis A Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development research studies in 1998 and 2006. (3) Leadership Magazine’s research for their article on “Marriage Problems Pastors Face,” Fall 1992 issue. (4) Grey Matter Research, 2005 scientific study of pastors from every city in America. (5) *Pastors at Greater Risk* by H.B. London and Neil B. Wiseman, Regal

Books, 2003. (6) Focus on the Family 2009 survey of 2,000 pastors. (7) *Leadership Journal* poll of readers, 2013.

2021 study from Barna Group: <https://www.barna.com/research/pastors-well-being/>

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