Wespath

Clergy Health Factors – What Matters Most

13 Factors that Influence Clergy Health

The Church Systems Task Force research identified 13 factors that are highly correlated with clergy health, differentiating those who are healthy from those who are unhealthy. The 13 factors identify sources of stress, challenges to maintaining physical health, obstacles to emotional health, impacts upon social health, the importance of spiritual health and the influence of finances. Individuals who are able to manage and address these factors tend to be healthier. Healthy churches and congregations foster healthy clergy and church leaders—and vice versa. These factors are relevant for church leaders — clergy and laity alike. *The Wesleyan way inextricably links the health of the Church with the health of its clergy. The leadership of healthy clergy is essential for vital local churches and vibrant mission in the world.*

The 13 clergy health factors are:

- **Job satisfaction**—appointments may not be good match for gifts and graces; isolation from congregation, disappointment with ministry; desire for option to exit ordained ministry with positive impact on self and church
- **Relationship with congregation**—feeling judged rather than supported; disconnect between the congregation and one's own expectations about the role of pastor or church leader; limiting relationships with congregation members to avoid improprieties; avoiding health care for fear that parishioners might find out and judge
- **Work/life balance**—complexity balancing multiple roles; guilt when taking time to exercise; avoiding health care due to time demands; struggling to achieve overall work/life balance
- **Living authentically**—unable to be one's "authentic self"; struggling to live according to deeply-held personal values and beliefs
- **Personal centeredness**—lack of control over one's life; ruminating about the past; difficulty experiencing the presence of God "at work"
- **Marital and family satisfaction**—low marital satisfaction among clergy and church leaders; low appointment satisfaction among spouses and/or children
- **Stressors of the appointment process**—stressors caused by appointment process; reluctance to talk to DS because of power he or she holds over appointments; resentful about receiving lower pay than laypeople in similar professions
- **Eating habits in the work setting**—struggling to maintain a healthy diet during church functions; cultural significance of food at social gatherings and home visits
- **Personal finances**—high debt; low income; few assets; little to no personal savings
- **Existential burdens of ministry**—carrying the weight of others' emotional and spiritual burdens; overwhelmed by others' needs and the importance of ministerial issues; expected to solve unsolvable mysteries
- **Appointment changes and relocation**—frequent appointment changes and long-distance moves; social and emotional disruption of relocation
- **Education and preparation for ministry**—insufficiently prepared by seminary for non-spiritual responsibilities of ministry; lacking skills and training necessary to excel in certain pastoral duties
- **Outside interests and social life**—a lack of hobbies, outside interests and/or participation in group activities for personal renewal; few friends or people to share personal issues; detached from community

Church Systems Task Force

Thirteen Clergy Health Factors Aligned with UMC Career Aspect

		Thirteen Factors That Influence Clergy Health												
	UMC System/ Career Aspect	Job Satisfaction	Relationship with Congregation	Work/Life Balance	Living Authentically	Personal Centeredness	Marital/Family Satisfaction	Stressors of the Appointment Process	Eating Habits	Personal Finances	Existential Burdens of Ministry	Appointment Changes/ Relocation	Education/Preparation for Ministry	Outside Interests and Social Life
Itineracy/Appointment	Itineracy/Appointment System	■	■		■	■	■	■		■		■		
	Compensation/Reward System	■	■				■			■		■		
Supervisory Systems	Performance Improvement Process	■	■	■				■						
	Mentoring System	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■
	Supervisory Practices	■	■	■	■	■					■			
Entering and Exiting Ministry	Selection, Continuous Evaluation and Improvement Process	■		■	■	■			■		■		■	
	Education and Training System	■	■	■	■				■	■			■	
	Exit/Retirement System	■	■			■		■		■				
Guidelines for Healthy Work/Life Balance	Staff/Parish and Pastor/Parish Relations System	■	■	■	■		■		■					
	Clergy Competencies and Responsibilities	■		■	■	■	■		■		■			■
	Parsonage/Housing System	■	■				■	■		■		■		

Colors are associated with the four petition provisions on the left. A colored box in a column indicates strong association between the UMC system/career aspect and the clergy health factor in the top row.

These factors may also be alligned across the five dimensions of health.

Thirteen Key Factors for Healthy Church Leaders

Dimensions of Health	Stressors of the Appointment Process	Appointment Changes/ Relocation	Work/Life Balance	Job Satisfaction	Education/Preparation for Ministry	Marital/Family Satisfaction	Eating Habits	Relationship with Congregation	Existential Burdens of Ministry	Living Authentically	Personal Centeredness	Outside Interests and Social Life	Personal Finances
	Thirteen Factors That Influence Clergy Health												
Physical													
Emotional													
Spiritual													
Social													
Financial													

Colors are associated with the five dimensions of health on the left. A colored box in a column indicates a link between the dimension of health and the clergy health factor in the top row.