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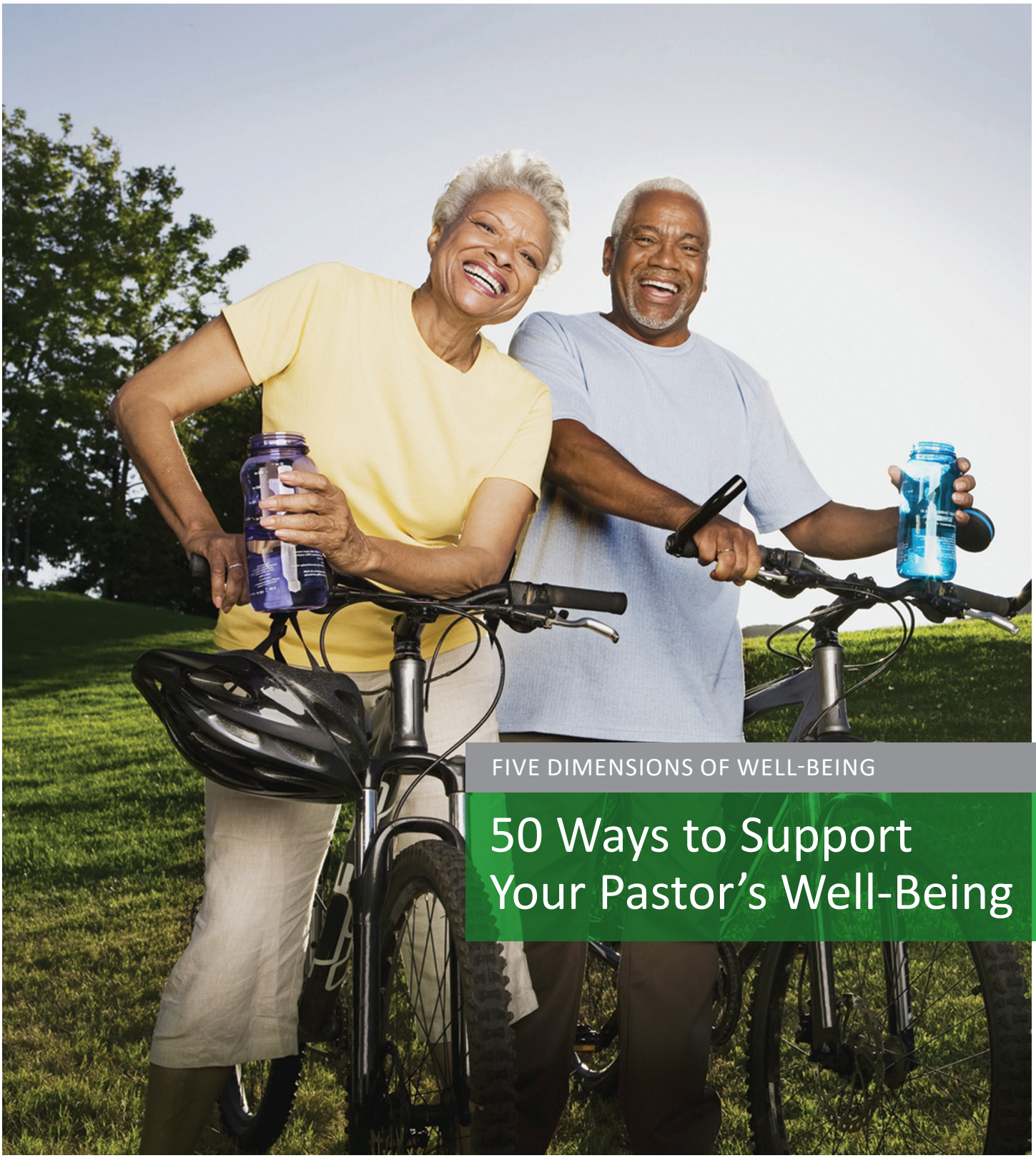


FIVE DIMENSIONS OF WELL-BEING

50 Ways to Support Your Pastor's Well-Being

Good health is a foundation for effective pastoral leadership.

Of the 13 factors identified by the Church Systems Task Force (see link below) that have a direct impact on clergy health, at least seven may be influenced by the congregation and the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee (P/SPRC), including:

- Job satisfaction
- Relationship with congregation
- Work/life balance
- Living authentically
- Marital and family satisfaction
- Eating habits at work
- Appointment changes/relocation

Thirteen Factors that Influence Clergy Health and the Five Dimensions of Well-Being

wespath.org/benefits/thirteen-factors/

This brochure is intended to provide 50 ways to support your pastor's well-being. Read on for valuable resources and tips.

The following "50 Ways" are suggestions the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee and the congregation can use to support their pastor's health and well-being in all its dimensions—physical, emotional, spiritual, social and financial—and thereby also support the mission and ministry of the congregation.

These suggestions are not a "prescription" that will apply to every pastor or congregation. Use them as a starting point to create an environment where your pastor's leadership gifts can thrive to best serve your congregation.

Recommended Use

This tool is designed to be used **in conjunction with the pastor evaluation process already in use by the P/SPRC** to facilitate a constructive dialogue regarding how the P/SPRC and congregation can best support their pastor's health and well-being. The following recommended discussion format should be facilitated by the P/SPRC chair or other P/SPRC member, rather than the pastor.

Suggested Discussion Format

- Read the preceding introduction.
- Read through the 10 ways listed under the Physical Dimension section.
- Discuss which of these are relevant to your setting, allowing the pastor to share which would be most helpful to him/her or to offer other suggestions.
- Read the 10 ways listed under the Emotional Dimension section, then discuss again focusing on what the pastor shares as most helpful.
- Continue through all of the dimensions in a similar manner.
- Allow the pastor and the P/SPRC members to summarize what was most helpful to them in the discussion and how to implement suggested ways of support.

Additional Resources

Resources about health and well-being as well as information specific to clergy health can be found at Wespath's website at:
wespath.org/health-well-being

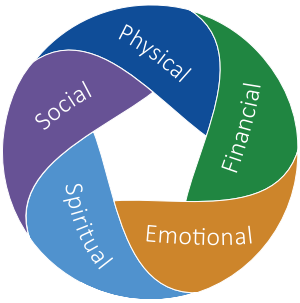
Congregations having a change in pastoral leadership—*"50 Ways to Welcome a New Pastor"* from the Lewis Center for Pastoral Leadership, available at:
www.churchleadership.com/50-ways/50-ways-to-welcome-a-new-pastor/

Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love—two-page resource of scripture-based guidelines for dealing with conflict in healthy, Christian ways from the Peace and Justice Support Network of the Mennonite Church USA, available at:
www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/agreeing-and-disagreeing-in-love/

50 Ways to Support Your Pastor Across Five Dimensions of Well-Being

Physical Dimension

1. Allow the pastor to choose which areas to focus on when improving his/her health and well-being, rather than making recommendations.
2. Consider fruits and vegetables, or other healthy foods as a welcome/appreciation gift instead of baked goods.
3. Encourage the pastor to be physically active and participate in recreational activities appropriate to his/her abilities.
4. Encourage the pastor to care for his/her physical health by resting when overworked and not working when ill.
5. Allow the pastor sufficient time for recovery from illness, injury or surgery.
6. Ensure healthy food choices are available at potlucks and other church events.
7. Don't insist the pastor "try everything" at food-related events or push him/her to eat unhealthy foods.
8. Work to correct any parsonage, office or other physical environment problems in a timely manner with input from the pastor.
9. Allow the pastor to take time off for doctor's appointments, preventive screenings, etc.
10. Respect the pastor's privacy regarding personal health issues.



Five Dimensions of Well-Being

Emotional Dimension

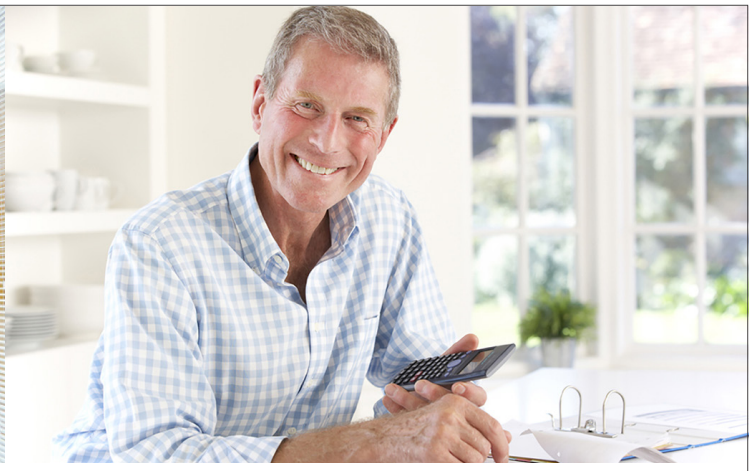
11. Encourage the pastor to schedule two days off each week—a personal day in addition to a Sabbath day. Respect your pastor's day off, contacting him/her only for "*true* emergencies." Discuss in advance what constitutes a "*true* emergency."
12. Expect and encourage the pastor to take his/her full allotment of vacation time each year and to not return from vacation to perform funerals, etc. whenever possible. Help the pastor arrange for pastoral care coverage while he/she is on vacation.
13. Recognize that the role of a pastor requires a great deal of emotional energy (e.g., dealing with deaths, conflicts in the church, and multiple demands from members, the district superintendent and others). Be sensitive to more demanding times of the church year and arrange for additional support from lay members.
14. Respect the pastor's responsibility to keep many issues and information confidential (i.e., details of member illnesses, certain financial information, etc.)
15. Encourage the pastor to have a coach or counselor outside the church with whom to discuss and process church and personal issues.
16. Respect the privacy of the pastor and his/her family at home and in the community.
17. Observe Pastor Appreciation Month in October each year, expressing appreciation to the pastor(s) and staff.
18. Discuss any conflicts or disagreements first with the pastor directly and confidentially, giving him/her the benefit of the doubt and seeking reconciliation. Encourage others to do the same.
19. Support the pastor in setting congregational expectations for his/her time, talents and priorities.
20. Work with the pastor to identify which church programs and activities truly require the pastor's presence and which might be equally guided by lay leadership; manage congregational expectations accordingly.

Spiritual Dimension

21. Recognize that Sunday is a work day for the pastor. Encourage him/her to observe a Sabbath day, other than Sunday.
22. Allow time for the pastor to take regular spiritual retreats.
23. Encourage the pastor to include prayer/reflection as a part of daily work-time, letting others know calls/e-mails will not be answered during this time except for emergencies.
24. Recognize that the pastor is also a Christian on a spiritual journey and will not have "all the answers."
25. Pray for the pastor and his/her spouse/family and let him/her know that you are doing so.
26. Assume the pastor is a committed Christian and discuss theological differences in a respectful manner, recognizing that Christians can come to somewhat different understandings depending on their background, life situation, and God's unique work in each person's life.
27. Encourage the pastor to take a renewal time (several weeks for renewal and/or study) every few years, particularly before or after very demanding times, such as a building campaign, relocation, or other major church endeavor. ¶350 *The Book of Discipline*
28. Encourage the pastor to meet periodically with a trained spiritual director.
29. Share with the pastor how his/her ministry has strengthened your own relationship with Christ.
30. Support the pastor in practicing spiritual disciplines in a way that fits who they are and his/her personal relationship with Christ.

Social Dimension

31. Encourage the pastor to socialize with others outside the church "family" with whom he/she can "step outside" the pastoral role for a period of time.
32. Understand that "social" events with church members (although fun for everyone) are not always truly social events for the pastor who can be pulled into the pastoral role at any time.
33. Respect the pastor's time set aside to spend with his/her spouse, family, friends, etc.
34. Support the pastor in "getting out-of-town" regularly, particularly when serving in a small town, in order to engage in activities outside the church's direct mission field.
35. Encourage the pastor's participation in a clergy accountability/support group and allow him/her time during the work week to participate.
36. Invite the pastor and his/her spouse/family to civic and community functions where he/she can meet others in the community.
37. Welcome the pastor's spouse and family as a part of the congregation and community without unrealistic expectations or demands, such as expecting the pastor's children to always be perfectly-behaved or expecting the spouse to be an "unpaid staff member."
38. Encourage the pastor to engage in hobbies and enjoyable recreational activities outside the church setting.
39. Avoid scheduling church meetings or activities requiring the pastor's presence more than two nights a week.
40. If your pastor is single, do not try to "set him/her up" with a member of the congregation or a member's relatives, etc. Respect his/her privacy in dating relationships.



Financial Dimension

41. Compensate the pastor fairly according to his/her experience, education and effectiveness.
42. Provide all paychecks and reimbursements to the pastor on-time. Never ask the pastor to wait for his/her paycheck or reimbursement because church funds are low.
43. Ensure that all pension, insurance and any other benefit payments are made when due. Delayed payments may result in loss of earnings or put important benefits at risk of cancellation.
44. Recognize that most pastors coming out of seminary have significant student loan debt that must be repaid; many continue to have significant debt later in their career as well.
45. Understand that the pastor's spouse may also work to support the family financially in order to reach long-term goals, such as sending children to college, retirement, etc.
46. Budget adequate funds to cover the costs of the pastor's continuing education, as required by *The Book of Discipline*.
47. Ensure adequate funds are budgeted to cover the costs of the pastor's attendance at their annual conference meeting each year, also required by *The Book of Discipline*.
48. Be aware of the unique tax laws that apply to United Methodist clergy, working with the pastor to structure his/her compensation package in a way that best fits his/her family and life situation.
49. Be sure the pastor is aware of ways to make personal contributions toward his/her retirement and to utilize the financial planning resources available at no charge through Wespath Benefits and Investments.
50. Confirm your congregation supports the Ministerial Education Fund apportionment and other conference-level funds supporting clergy education and scholarships.

Wespath provides the information in this publication as an educational service, illustrating practices that may have a positive impact on well-being. Wespath shares this general information with the annual conferences, local churches, plan participants, and clergy and workers of The United Methodist Church. It should not be construed as, does not constitute, and should not be relied upon as legal advice nor medical, counseling, accounting, tax, or other professional advice or services on any specific matter.

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