



The Newsletter of the
Diocese of the East
EMC
servitium per sacrificium



DOE TRACTS

MARCH, 2023

DATES TO REMEMBER



March 17 - Episcopate visit to Ohio

March 24-31 - Passion Week



FROM THE BISHOP'S CORNER

Episcopal Missionary Church
Clericus – July 10-14, 2024
St. Luke's Anglican Church, Blue Ridge, GA

This year's clericus' theme we pray will be very practical and impactful to our spiritual and ministry well-being. Our theme will be "Pastoral Self-Care." We have scheduled some outstanding speakers with extensive experience in this area of spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being within clergy.

Besides our sessions, we will have Morning Prayer and the celebration of Holy Communion each morning and evening. We are also incorporating some downtime and fun relaxing activities to enhance fellowship and connectivity.

This year's theme came about as the result of reviewing a research study that is about to be published on pastoral burnout, stress, and departure from ministry.

As you already know, stress, burnout and mental fatigue are becoming more intense among clergy, according to studies conducted over the past decade. This trend is leading even some of the most devout ministers to leave ministry. And while no one knows the exact percentage of ministers who experience depression, one Baylor University professor suggested, "*The likelihood is that one out of every four ministers are depressed.*"

It is tremendously tough for those who care for the souls of others to take care of themselves. But proactive self-care is essential for ministers who hope to serve effectively and with longevity. Self-care includes developing and maintaining

healthy practices that promote and preserve good physical, spiritual and mental well-being.

While these three areas of wellness are intertwined and inseparable, in my own life and the experience of many of my colleagues, I recognize that more attention has been given to physical and spiritual health. Mental health is often neglected, often resulting in the diminishment of all three, as it includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

Every human being experience highs and lows in mental health. Although some forms of mental illness are serious and require the ongoing care of a therapist, general variations in mental health may be related to circumstances or body chemistry and may be pre-emptively avoided or proactively addressed by practicing good mental hygiene.

A common misconception is that pastors or persons with strong religious faith are exempt from mental distress. The Apostle Paul is noted for his courageous ministry but even he confessed, “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28).

The pastoral calling and task requires remarkable investment in the lives of others. So, a pastor who neglects mental hygiene can gradually slip into a state of melancholy or emotional chaos and then compound the dilemma by ignoring the symptoms for fear of stigmatizing his or her ministry.

In review of this pending research, I can identify at least five areas that commonly place stress on a pastor’s mental and emotional health:

1. Unrealistic expectations

These expectations can be real or perceived, and they can be generated by vocal congregants or be self-imposed by a minister with a “messiah complex.”

Most congregations have ambivalent expectations that fluctuate between market-driven goals (for example, attendance, budgets, awards) and mission-driven goals (for example, participation, stewardship, life transformation). The wider the gap between these two categories, the more intense the stress on the minister.

2. Perpetual preparation

The task of perpetual preparation can be a mentally exhausting chore. Many professional public speakers have four or five well-rehearsed speeches that they give over and over to different groups.

Professors and teachers have lectures and lesson plans that are updated and revised from semester to semester, but they usually follow a core curriculum.

A preaching pastor is unique in that he or she is generally expected to prepare and deliver 40 to 50 different Sunday sermons per year to virtually the same group of people, in addition to providing devotionals, Bible studies and speeches for community events.

3. Diverse emotional encounters

A minister deals with grief, grace, and everything in between on a daily basis. Perhaps more than any other vocation, a pastor regularly moves in and out of situations with polarizing and intense emotions, such as birth and death, marriage and divorce, perversion and conversion, and conflict and resolution.

If a pastor is not careful, the residual emotions from these encounters will linger and intermingle, creating either emotional apathy or spiritual neuropathy.

4. Dealing with problem people or clergy

Not to be confused with people with problems, problem people are unusually high-maintenance individuals who consume an exorbitant amount of a pastor's time with an unnecessary complaint or unconstructive criticism.

5. The weight of confidentiality

Because the pastoral role is not only prophetic but also priestly, a pastor is entrusted with a lot of confidential information that is locked away into a pastor's mental storage. The volume of this information can become a heavy emotional weight if it remains in a pastor's mental inbox and is not appropriately archived.

Considering these and other areas of pastoral stress, to preserve good health and promote longevity in ministry, how can a pastor practice good mental and emotional hygiene.

It is our desire that we will deal with these issues honestly and transparently in a healthy nutrient environment at our clericus in July.

Please come and join us for a most valuable time together.

"Ministry is best done from healing than from woundedness."

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD YHWH is my strength and my song; HE also is become my salvation." Isaiah 12:2

יְהוָה עֲבָד, 'ebed Adonai

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THE ORDINATION OF NOAH GOSS

TO THE DIACONATE





Clericus 2024

When: July 8-10, 2024

Where: St. Luke's Anglican Church
Blue Ridge, Ga.

Theme: Clergy Care

Guest Speakers: Dr. Bill Baker
Rev. Francine Schmitt

Registration form attached.

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