

Ministry in the Face of Calamity: Realities and Resources

Dr. Beverly K. Yahnke
DOXOLOGY Executive Director
for Christian Care and Counsel

Pastors will examine the very real impact of ministry's personal/professional demands and challenges throughout these COVID-19 months. The presentation will provide helpful background information, inviting pastors to make some determinations about their current well-being. The conversation will also invite strategic thinking about pastors' responses to stress and fatigue, offering preemptive and palliative tools to enhance resilience. The conference will provide perspectives that pastors can use with confidence personally, as well provide as insights and encouragements that they can share with those for whom they provide care.

A Look at the Landscape

- I. The last months have plunged us into uncharted and turbulent waters
 - A. In the midst of a pandemic we change in ways we don't have time to examine
 - B. These have become days of tumult, rich with anxiety and uncertainty
 - C. Mental health metrics documented acute increases in COVID-linked depression and anxiety
 - D. Most pastors adopted a "surge capacity" mentality just to survive
 - E. Pastors have been separated from their people and from their traditional habits of ministry

- II. Weary pastors and anxious congregations are returning to the sanctuary
 - A. Disagreements are emerging regarding what level of response is required to threat of COVID-19
 - B. The whole church family has not yet returned for worship
 - C. How do you choose to respond to decision fatigue?
 - D. There will likely be a division of opinion on countless matters
 - E. Churches with schools bear special responsibility

- III. Temptations emerge that rarely lead us to healthy, satisfying outcomes.
 - A. This may not be the best time to examine your value by looking at your brother
 - B. Criticisms from others can move us to anger, resentment or discouragement
 - C. Feeling guilty about desiring validation and approval
 - D. Feeling less than
 - E. New idols always emerge to meet our needs

- IV. Everyone is struggling with vulnerabilities
 - A. Some pastors have come to believe that they are to be untouched by all that is happening
 - B. Increased activity on hotlines, help lines and counseling services confirm great need
 - C. Personal remedies are not always wise or healthy

- V. COVID's particularly devastating impact on individuals, families and communities
 - A. Metrics of mental illness are telling
 - B. We've witnessed/experienced a stunning array of losses
 - C. Comforting others with the same comfort God gives us

- VI. COVID-19 only exacerbates existing realities in pastors' lives

*Level of Satisfaction in Last Ministry Position (p. 239) **

In the final years of your last local church ministry position, what was your level of satisfaction with the following? (Percent responding "very satisfied")

	UMC	PCUSA	ELCA	LCMS	A/G
Housing or living arrangements	50	62	54	57	54
Your ministry position	38	33	30	37	38
Your overall effectiveness as a pastoral leader in congregation	39	43	33	28	26
Relationships with other clergy	28	37	38	23	34
Relationships with lay leaders in your congregation	33	40	30	23	34
Your family life	29	30	30	27	42
Your salary and benefits	27	27	29	26	19
Your spiritual life	24	23	24	23	36
Support from your denominational officials	10	20	23	19	24
Social life with persons outside of the church	14	17	19	15	22
Ease in maintaining separation between church duties and your need for private/ family time	11	14	13	8	6

Do you agree or disagree with these statements? (Percent responding, “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree” to each of the statements.)

I felt the demands of laity were unrealistic	54	58	58	51	43
I felt I could not speak openly and honestly with denominational officials	63	41	47	40	58
(If married) I was troubled by marital problems.	30	30	32	33	21

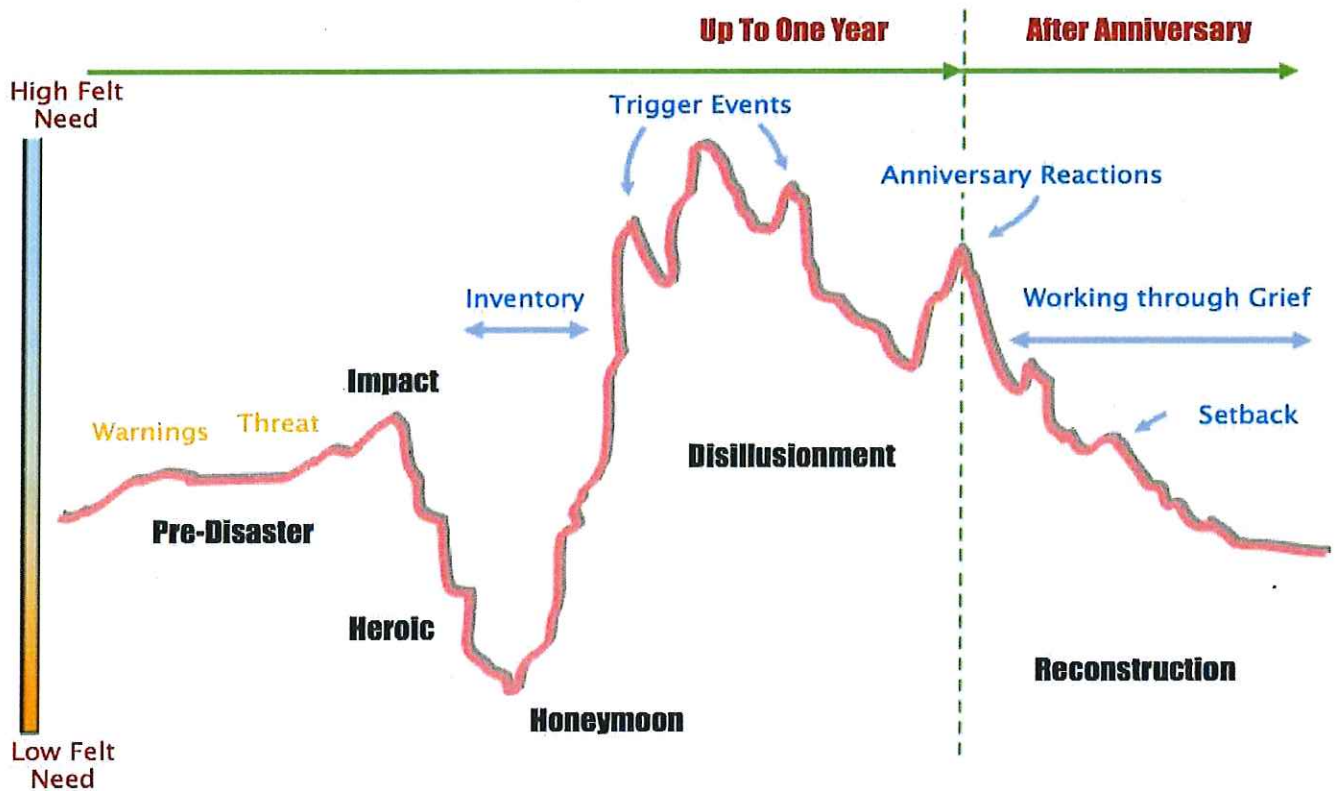
***From:** Hoge, D.R. and Wenger, J.E. (2005) *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company

VIII. Big picture perspective on the pandemic: What’s Next?

- A. Media accounts and political campaigns sustain dissonance, disapproval, disbelief
- B. Fears of resurgence are just beneath the surface
- C. Science seems to have competing opinions and recommendations
- D. Survivors of the virus continue to require ongoing care
- E. Those who moved through the pandemic are “survivors” as well

IX. We’ve learned a great deal from the field of traumatology: There are very predictable phases to disorder/trauma/calamity

- A. Pre-disaster days
 - 1. Warning
 - 2. Threat
- B. Impact
- C. Heroic Phase
- D. Honeymoon Phase
- E. Disillusionment Phase
- F. Reconstruction



Panic	Rescue	Optimism	Real Limits	Hope
Confusion	Hi Activity	Group Bonds	Discouragement	Rebuild
Disbelief	Risk Assmt		Exhaustion	Grieve
			Negative Coping	New Normal

The Cost of Caring Very Much About What You Do

- I. "The church does not see the anger and angst of its clergy." Lloyd Rediger
 - A. The church does not endorse the concept of "burn-out" for pastors.
 - B. A pattern of insidious personal decrements in functioning is real.
 - C. Workers' survival strategies can be unhealthy for self, congregation and school.
 - D. Many pastors live in a culture of criticism.
- II. The Semantics of Meltdown
 - A. Secondary Victimization/Vicarious Traumatization
 - B. Emotional Contagion
 - C. Burnout: Burnout is a process that becomes progressively worse. It includes these stages:

1. Compulsion to prove
2. Intensity
3. Subtle deprivations
4. Dismissal of needs
5. Distortion of values
6. Heightened denial
7. Disengagement
8. Observable behavior changes
9. Depersonalization
10. Emptiness
11. Depression

D. Which of the stages seems to best describe how you are doing? What would your spouse say?

III. Effects of Compassion Fatigue (Figley's Model)

- A. Cognitive
- B. Emotional
- C. Behavioral
- D. Spiritual
- E. Relationships

- F. Somatic
 - G. Work performance
 - H. Silencing response
- IV. The Work Environment's Contribution to Burnout Patterns
- A. Gradual exposure to increasing job strains
 - B. Community negligence about matters of encouragement
 - C. Absence of fundamental assessments and feedback
 - D. Erosion of idealism
- V. Common Responses to Compassion Fatigue
- A. Withdrawal
 - B. Helplessness
 - C. Internalizing
 - D. Emotional outbursts
 - E. Over-controlling
 - F. Type A behavior
- VI. Personal appraisal and Biblical realities: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (I Tim 4:16)

Pastoral Resilience in Difficult Days

- I. Resilience is one's ability to adapt to stressors of all sorts, to be able to rebound after suffering through adversity, setbacks and a wide array of stressful circumstances
- A. Resilience is not the ability to avoid or pre-empt distressing situations.
 - B. Resilience is a trait rooted in thoughts, choices and behaviors.
 - C. Anyone who chooses to can acquire strategies to enhance their resilience.
- II. Common characteristics of resilient people include a number of important features
- A. Persistence in the presence of a "can do" attitude
 - B. Motivation to accomplish meaningful goals that are satisfying
 - C. Ability to consider change and explore novelty is helpful
 - D. The Christian embraces hope in response to all difficulties

- E. Honest appraisal of oneself regarding one's strengths and weaknesses
 - F. Establishing and unapologetically defending boundaries
 - G. Regard time as a precious commodity and use it well
 - H. Reasonable expectations of others
 - I. Reasonable problem-solving skills
 - J. Good interpersonal skills: Interacting effectively with others
 - K. Becoming mindful of *what* you are feeling and *why* you are feeling that way
- III. The building blocks of stress: Threats to resilience
- A. Being an achieve-o-matic (Type A personality)
 - B. Negative self-talk
 - C. Catastrophizing
 - D. Perfectionism
 - E. Avoidance or withdrawal
 - F. Marriage and family
- IV. Realities regarding the human body
- A. Nutrition, exercise, sleep and rest remain the essential energy ingredients.
 - B. We neglect prospects for change when we are chained to our habits.
 - C. Current research points to value of ongoing breaks throughout the day.
- V. The emotional landscape requires attention
- A. Mindfulness is essential to creating and sustaining emotional energy
 - B. We must choose to interpret and respond to facts in healthy ways.
 - C. Emotional Intelligence is a competency that merits your time and inquiry*
 - 1. Self-awareness
 - 2. Self-management
 - 3. Social awareness
 - 4. Relationship management
- VI. "As a man thinks...." The amazing power of cognition
- A. Information processing is life critical and mission critical
 - B. Very often our habits regarding our work have been unexamined.
 - C. STOP multi-tasking.
 - D. See it, act on it, be done with it.
 - E. Get off the train

F. Externalize all kinds of content whenever possible.

VII. When is it useful to invite assistance?

Preamble: See the book written by Rev. Todd Peperkorn, *I Trust When Dark My Road: A Lutheran View of Depression*. (2009). Book available for download online from LCMS:

<https://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=726&docid=721>

- A. Safety issues have emerged
- B. Signs of depression or anxiety recur and are impairing functioning.
- C. When you've reached the limits of your ability to remedy the circumstances
- D. You need to acquire some new and more effective strategies
- E. When functioning interpersonally is becoming particularly difficult
- F. If you have a history of struggling with addictive behaviors
- G. When you'd like an evaluation to determine what would be helpful
- H. The family is struggling or having chronic and disruptive dynamics

VIII. What kind of care is available?

- A. Psychiatrists (M.D.)
- B. Psychologists (Ph.D., Psy.D)
- C. Masters degreed therapist (M.S.W, M.A., M.S.)
- D. Counselors (e.g., CADC or AODA)
- E. Life Coach
- F. Mentor Couple
- G. Provider with a D.Min. degree

IX. What theoretical or faith "orientation" should the chosen provider have?

*TalentSmart is an organization that provides online EQ testing and provides extensive reporting as well as video training opportunities.

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