

4-1-2016

Moving Forward by Retreat: Devotional Life of Clergy in the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Ron Halvorsen, Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin>



Part of the [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Halvorsen,, Ron Jr., "Moving Forward by Retreat: Devotional Life of Clergy in the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists" (2016). *Doctor of Ministry Projects*. 241.
<https://digitalcommons.fuller.edu/dmin/241>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Theology at Digital Commons @ Fuller. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Ministry Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Fuller. For more information, please contact archives@fuller.edu.

Please **HONOR** the copyright of
these documents by not
retransmitting or making any
additional copies in any form

(Except for private personal use).

We appreciate your respectful
cooperation.

Theological Research Exchange Network
(TREN)

P.O. Box 30183
Portland, Oregon 97294
USA

Website: www.tren.com

E-mail: rwjones@tren.com

Phone# 1-800-334-8736

ATTENTION CATALOGING LIBRARIANS

TREN ID#

Online Computer Library Center (OCLC)

MARC Record #

Digital Object Identification

DOI #

Ministry Focus Paper Approval Sheet

This ministry focus paper entitled

MOVING FORWARD BY RETREAT:
DEVOTIONAL LIFE OF CLERGY IN THE OHIO CONFERENCE
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Written by

RON HALVORSEN, JR.

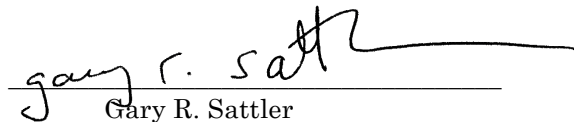
and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:



Gary R. Sattler



Kurt Fredrickson

Date Received: July 19, 2016

MOVING FORWARD BY RETREAT:
DEVOTIONAL LIFE OF CLERGY IN THE OHIO CONFERENCE
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

A DOCTORAL PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

RON HALVORSEN, JR.
APRIL 2016

ABSTRACT

Moving Forward by Retreat: Devotional Life of Clergy in the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Ron Halvorsen, Jr.

Doctor of Ministry

School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary

2016

The purpose of this project is to encourage ministers in the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to experience physical and spiritual rest and rejuvenation in a retreat setting. The motivation for the project is the desire to help ministers with the important aspect of self-care. It is hypothesized that a small group of ministers on spiritual retreat together would experience relaxation, reflection, spiritual, physical and emotional nurturing, and the chance to experience safe Christian community.

An analysis of the context of the state of Ohio and the state of the Church reveal a difficult arena in which to minister. Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Ohio are in genuine need of opportunities to stop, rest, reflect, and experience safe community for the sake of their souls. The greatest tool a minister has is a healthy soul. When a minister is healthy, it benefits the minister, his or her family, and the congregation. The retreat is also designed to help Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Ohio learn more about their Protestant heritage through the life of Martin Luther and the impact of three key aspects in his spiritual life and ministry. The three areas of focus are Scripture, righteousness by faith, and prayer. The pilot retreat affirmed the belief that such experiences can be a powerful tool in nurturing a minister's physical, emotional, and spiritual life.

Content Reader: Gary R. Sattler, ThD, PsyD

Words: 222

To my wife, Buffy, who always encouraged me to pursue the things God placed on my heart—other than Jesus, you are the greatest gift God has ever given to me

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my friend, Cheerie Lou Capman, I would like to thank you for working tirelessly with the editorial formatting of this paper. Cheerie Lou, you are a friend indeed.

To Ronnie Halvorsen, III, you are such an amazing son. Thank you for your willingness to look over sections of this project with your grammatical eye. It is not every son who would take time from such a busy schedule to do this for his dad. I love you and am so very proud of you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ILLUSTRATIONS	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
PART ONE: CONTEXT AND MINISTRY CHALLENGE	
Chapter 1. MINISTRY CONTEXT	9
Chapter 2. THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN OHIO	25
PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS: THE SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE OF MINISTRY	
Chapter 3. WHY SO MANY MINISTRY CASUALTIES?	46
Chapter 4. A THEOLOGY OF CLERGY CARE	68
Chapter 5. A THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL RETREAT	86
PART THREE: STRATEGY: MOVING FORWARD BY SPIRITUAL RETREAT	
Chapter 6. GOALS AND PLANS FOR THE RETREAT	105
Chapter 7. WHERE WE WERE, WHERE WE ARE, AND WHERE WE GO FROM HERE	121
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	133
APPENDICES	140
BIBLIOGRAPHY	158

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

1. Community Research Partners, “Ohio foreign-born persons by country of birth, 1910”	11
2. Community Research Partners, “Ohio population by age and gender, 2008”	13
3. Hannah C. Halbert and Tim Krueger, “Ohio jobs, January 2000 to October 2011 seasonally adjusted, nonfarm”	15
4. Hannah C. Halbert and Tim Krueger, “Projected Change in Jobs by Occupation Category, 2018”	17
5. Clifford Grammich et al., “State Membership Report – Ohio – Religious Traditions, 2010”	26
6. Pew Research Center – Importance of Religion in My Life	27
7. Pew Research Center – Church Attendance	28
8. Pew Research Center – Growth of the Religiously Unaffiliated, 2012	30
9. Pew Research Center – Share of Infrequent Churchgoers, 2012	31
10. Pew Research Center – Neither “Seekers” Nor More Inclined Toward New Age Beliefs Than the General Public, 2012	34
11. Pew Research Center – Frequency of Prayer	36
12. Pew Research Center – Literal Interpretation of the Bible	36
13. Pew Research Center – Interpretation of My Religion	37
14. Pew Research Center – One True Faith	38
15. Monte Sahlin – Ohio Percentage of the Population Attending a Christian Church on Any Given Weekend	40

16. Monte Sahlin – Ohio Counties 1990-2000 Growth or Decline in Percentage of Population at Worship in Christian Churches	41
17. ARDA – Ohio: Seventh-day Adventist Church–Number of Adherents (2000)	42

INTRODUCTION

Having grown up as the son of a minister, and having been a minister for thirty years now, ministry is something I know well. It has been my life, and paradoxically at times, it has felt like it is killing me. Joining Fuller Seminary's cohort on Christian spirituality was brought about by my desire for a deeper walk with God and for my ministry to flow from that deeper experience. It was all I had hoped for and more. The dynamics of the cohort, especially during our times at retreat centers, was profound. It fed me in ways I had not experienced before or since. Somehow, the dynamics of ministers coming together to study, pray, worship, and share met a holy need in my life. It has helped me with my personal devotional life, my walk with God, and it has impacted how I minister to others. With this doctoral project, I seek to provide the opportunity for just such an experience for the ministers of the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (hereafter, Ohio Conference), of which I am the president.

Clergy are burning out at an alarming rate. Others who hang on are dying on the vine. Ministers are in trouble; they are leaving the ministry in droves, and those who are staying in it find themselves worn, weary, and with little hope that things can be better. I have observed this from the position of significant pastorates within my denomination and from leading teams of ministers for many years now. The cold, hard statistics seen in surveys of ministers and ministry in recent years is alarming. There is a growing body of studies and an ever-enlarging bibliography of books and articles on the subject. The message is clear. Something has to change. Ministers need to be ministered to.

In his book, *Replenish*, Pastor Lance Witt reports some startling statistics:

- 1,500 pastors leave the ministry permanently each month in America.
- 80% of pastors and 85% of their spouses feel discouraged in their roles.
- 70% of pastors do not have a close friend, confidant, or mentor.
- Over 50% are so discouraged they would leave the ministry if they could but have no other way of making a living.
- Over 50% of pastors' wives feel that their husband entering ministry was the most destructive thing to ever happen to their families.
- 30% of pastors said they have either been in an ongoing affair or had a one-time sexual encounter with a parishioner.
- 71% of pastors stated they were burned out, and they battle depression beyond fatigue on a weekly if even a daily basis.
- One out of every ten ministers will actually retire as a minister.¹

There are other equally disturbing statistics in other studies of ministers and ministry, some of which are discussed within this doctoral project. It is in the sobering statistics and personal knowledge of clergy casualties that this retreat-based project is undertaken. We can do a better job of caring for our ministers and nurturing their ministries. One way to do that is through offering them spiritual retreat. Spiritual retreat is not the whole answer by any means. However, it is one means that could become a genuine help. This project purports to help Adventist ministers in the state of Ohio to recharge, recalibrate, and reform their lives and ministries by offering a three-day retreat based on the life and selected writings of Martin Luther.

Why a Retreat?

Retreats can be a powerful opportunity and tool in the life of an individual. I discovered this during my studies at Fuller. Being part of the Christian Spirituality cohort, each summer we spent at least one of our weeks of study at a retreat center. The

¹ Lance Witt, *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 18-19. Witt notes that he has compiled these statistics from the Barna Group, Focus on the Family, Fuller Seminary, and the Institute of Church Leadership Development.

experience of a small group of ministers learning, sharing, worshiping, and praying in that setting was one of the most valuable experiences in all my years of education. It offered an opportunity to come apart from the usual schedules, stresses, titles, and job descriptions, and enter into a different rhythm and place. The retreat environment built in time for reflection and contemplation on what was being taught, two things that modern life seldom naturally affords.

I grew up going to church retreat centers and camps. Being the son of a minister, I had the privilege of experiencing them firsthand. Throughout the journey of life they have been different, but they had always been a powerful blessing. As a child the experience of Junior Camp was filled with lots of activities and a focus on Jesus in the great outdoors together with strangers who became friends. Later it was about ministering to young people during the summers at a Christian youth camp in the Colorado Rockies from late spring to late summer, which I did for four summers during my college years. As a counselor and later the boys' director at Glacier View Ranch, I saw firsthand the impact a focused ministry out in nature could have on the faith formation of young people.

As a young adult, I found that retreats were no less powerful for adults in such settings as they were for young people, even if the activity quotient was much lower. There is something innately powerful in taking a group of people away from their normal routine and placing them in the beauty of nature, away from many of the distractions of everyday life. Retreat offers a place and space with less of the bombardment of technology and gadgets and the inherent squeeze they put on us and our time.

Retreats should live up to their name, giving participants the opportunity to break away from the hectic pace so that they can rest, reflect, and replenish. However, after graduation from seminary many years ago, my experience with retreats suddenly changed. I found that the retreats for ministers put on by conference leadership in my denomination are anything but a retreat. They are more of a full-on charge. The time is packed with meetings from morning to night. The agendas for these events include lectures, goal setting, and greater pressure, not less, placed on the minister.

In all my years of ministry, there has usually been at least one pastors' retreat planned per year in the conferences I have served. More often there have been two. However, even if the title on the schedule we are given says "retreat," these experiences have come to be known as "workers' meetings." And unfortunately, that is all they have been. They have been filled with work and a not so subtle message that we pastors do not work enough. We leave these "retreats" weighted down with materials and advice regarding new ministries we could or should add at our churches. Often these initiatives come from higher up the denominational hierarchy. Many ministers have shared with me through the years that they leave these "retreats" feeling like failures and even more exhausted than when they arrive. They confide that the expectations of conference leadership are overwhelming. The sad fact is that there is no real spiritual retreat for most in Adventist ministry. In reality, retreats are often long days of exhausting and even debilitating meetings.

Having experienced so many meaningful retreats, I long for something more for Adventist ministers. Now that I am the president of the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and have an even greater responsibility for my sisters and brothers in ministry,

I want to try something different. This project seeks to put the “retreat” back into retreats for pastors. More than that, it seeks to put the “spiritual” back into spiritual retreats for ministers. We have had such a great Protestant work ethic in Adventist ministry that it may just be killing us.

Resetting Retreat

This doctoral project flows out of the experience of learning as a cohort of pastors in a retreat setting as much as from the many pages of reading and excellent lectures that were part of the journey. The power of this Doctor of Ministry cohort has been in the experience of shared learning, shared lives, and shared devotion to the cause of Jesus Christ, especially when in a spiritual retreat setting. The desired end of this project is to provide an opportunity for small groups of pastors in the Ohio Conference to be refreshed, inspired, and nourished in similar ways to what I experienced at Fuller.

Witt believes that the pastor’s greatest leadership tool is a healthy soul, but that the emphasis for too long has been on techniques and strategies to the neglect of the interior life. He writes,

Most days I love the church. But there are days when the church drives me crazy. After being in local ministry for thirty years, I understand why leaders walk away. I understand why they can be disillusioned and cynical. I understand why those who used to be filled with vision and passion are empty and filled with resentment and regret. I get it.

With the current opportunities and challenges facing us in ministry today, it is no small task to stay emotionally healthy and spiritually replenished. . . . How can churches be healthy when their spiritual leaders are not?²

² Ibid., 11-12.

He concludes, “The outcome is an increasing number of men and women leading our churches who are emotionally empty and spiritually dry.”³

Spiritual retreats offer something different. According to Nancy Ferguson and Kevin Witt, “Periods of rest, renewal, silence and solitude have long been characteristic of faith-based retreats, with very good reason. Today, we live in an era when never-ending motion and activity rank high as signs of cutting edge productivity to be admired. This is true at one level, but a half-truth.”⁴ When it comes to retreats, those with a lot of experience in leading them note that many arrive at retreats exhausted and burdened. Ferguson and Witt explain that they are in need of what Jesus promises: “Many travelers on retreat arrive heavily burdened. Jesus promises rest for their souls (Matthew 11:28-29).”⁵

Why Luther?

When it comes to the choice of Luther’s life and some of his writings as the material for this retreat, the question could be, why Luther? There are several reasons for the choice. As the father of the Protestant Reformation, Adventist ministers would benefit by spending time in retreat with a focus on three of the greatest life-changing aspects of his life: Bible study, grace, and prayer. Another reason for the choice of Luther is that he lived, led, taught and ministered during a time of monumental change within the world. Luther also knew what it was like to minister while suffering great personal loss. He

³ Ibid., 19.

⁴ Nancy Ferguson and Kevin T. Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual: A Complete Guide to Organizing Meaningful Christian Retreats* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2006), 19.

⁵ Ibid.

knew what it was like to lose a child, he experienced poor health while carrying huge responsibilities, and he understood what it was like to lead change amidst great opposition. He had many ups and downs along his journey, even dealing with depression. There is a great deal of knowledge and inspiration to be gained by such an experienced, Christ-centered retreat guide. He lived, spoke, and wrote about things that not only made a difference in his own life, but in the lives of countless others from his time to this day. And in spite of all he was faced with, he finished the course and kept the faith. For all these reasons and more, Luther has been chosen as the guide for this spiritual retreat.

PART ONE

CONTEXT AND MINISTRY CHALLENGE

CHAPTER 1

MINISTRY CONTEXT

Ohio became a state in 1803 when the population exceeded sixty thousand citizens, which was the population threshold for statehood back in the early 1800s.¹ By 1810, the population had already grown to 230,760, with 55 percent of the population being under the age of sixteen. It was a fast growing and young populace. The most valuable manufacturing industry of this mainly agrarian state back in those days was distilled spirits.² In its first census, the oldest group designation was forty-five years old and upward. Community Research Partners (hereafter, CRP), an Ohio-based company that analyzes census data, explains, “From today’s perspective, age forty-five seems too low to designate the oldest age cohort in a census. But in 1810, only 9 percent of Ohio’s free white population was age forty-five or older, compared to the 40 percent under the age of ten.”³ So fast was the state’s growth, that by 1840, Ohio became the third largest state in the nation.

¹ Community Research Partners, “Census 1810-2010: Celebrating 200 Years of the Census in Ohio,” *CRP Data Bite*, No. 5 (March 2010), <http://www.communityresearchpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/Databytes/Census%202010/Data-Byte-Census2010.pdf> (accessed August 1, 2014), 1.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 2.

Ohio's size and strength may be part of the reason the state was such a force for the North during the Civil War. History shows that Ohio contributed key officers and generals to the Union Army. CRP reports, "The Ohio Historical Society estimates that 310,654 Ohioans served in the Northern army at various times. To provide a sense of magnitude, this is over half the number of males age 15-49 in Ohio counted by the 1860 Census (611,458)."⁴ That is a staggering percentage and shares in a numerical way a bit of the impact the Civil War had on Ohio and its residents. Historically, Ohio is proud of having been a vital part of the fight against slavery, including being a major player in the Underground Railroad.⁵ It was during the time of the Civil War through the first decade of the 1900s that Ohio became a magnet for immigrants, when "the number of foreign-born persons in Ohio increased by 82 percent from 1860 to 1910."⁶ As shown in figure 1, Ohio was becoming more ethnically diverse—a cultural melting pot.

⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

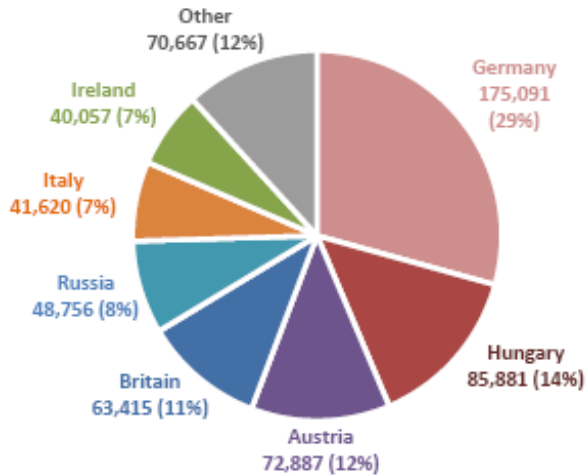


Figure 1. Ohio foreign-born persons by country of birth, 1910

Source: Community Research Partners, “Census 1810-2010,” 4.

The state came to prominence as a financial powerhouse during the Industrial Revolution. Between 1900 and 1910, during a period of rapid industrialization, Ohio’s population transitioned from a rural to an urban majority.⁷ During the first half of the twentieth century, Ohio became one of America’s foremost industrial states. The state matured into an economic giant on the back of the manufacturing jobs.

From 1950-1960, Ohio added 1.8 million to the population, amazing growth by any measure.⁸ During the 1950s, Ohio and the nation as a whole were in the midst of the baby boom. The boom came to a crescendo in 1957, with 4.3 million births that year in the United States.⁹ And boom it did. In 1960, the largest single-age group in Ohio was

⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

two-year olds.¹⁰ That is a staggering statistic. Ohio was a growing and prospering state. Along with many births, Ohio's population also grew by domestic in-migration (Americans moving from other states and territories into Ohio). There was opportunity in Ohio to advance one's life and that of one's family in Ohio. Ohio's census study by CRP shows that yet another source of Ohio's population growth was due to African Americans moving to Ohio from other states, especially the South. Among people who reported their birth state, more than half (50.2 percent) of "nonwhite" Ohioans were born in a state other than Ohio. For whites, this rate was only 24 percent. Because 99 percent of nonwhites in 1960 were African American, the influx of nonwhites into Ohio likely reflected migration from the South.¹¹ It is interesting to find that back in the 1950s and 1960s; people were moving to Ohio from the South. Recently the reverse has been evident; more people tend to move from Ohio to the South.

The 1950s were a boom time for Ohio's economy; in contrast to the Great Depression, it provided greater stability for new families. The availability of manufacturing jobs contributed to further population growth. In 1960, 37 percent of Ohioans' employment was in manufacturing and another 5 percent in construction, compared to a combined 32 percent in 1910. The agricultural percentage of Ohio workers was down to less than 4 percent, compared to 22 percent in 1910.¹² The 1960s may well have been Ohio's financial zenith. When times were good, they were very good. But as manufacturing died out in America, the impact in Ohio was devastating. Between 1960

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹¹ Ibid., 6.

¹² Ibid., 5-6.

and 2008, the percentage of Ohioans working in manufacturing dropped from 37 percent to just 16 percent. The jobs that had once been the onramp to the middle class for many were gone, and with them went a great deal of hope as well.¹³

One of the greatest demographic changes since 1960 is an aging population. CRP reports, “Although Ohio’s population increased by 18 percent from 1960-2008, the senior population (age sixty-five and over) increased by 75 percent. The number of Ohioans age eighty-five and over was more than four times greater in 2008 than in 1960. These trends will continue and likely accelerate as baby boomers move up the population age pyramid.”¹⁴ These trends are not only affecting the state; they are affecting the Church as well in serious ways. Figure 2 displays population figures by age and gender.

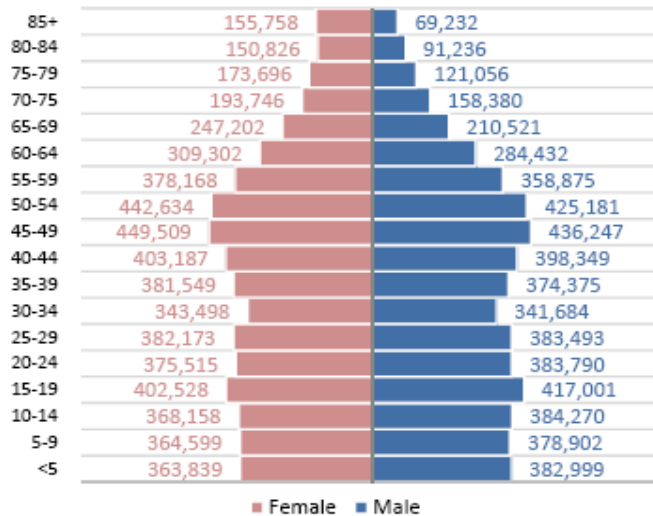


Figure 2. Ohio population by age and gender, 2008

Source: Community Research Partners, “Census 1810-2010,” 7.

¹³ Hannah C. Halbert and Tim Krueger, “Hollowing Out: Jobless, job growth and skills for the future,” *Policy Matters Ohio*, Education and Training (December 8, 2011), <http://www.policymattersohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/FINAL-Hollowing-Out-Dec-2011.pdf> (accessed August 1, 2014), 1-17.

¹⁴ Community Research Partners, “Census 1810-2010,” 7.

If the good old days for Ohio were during the manufacturing boom, the “hollowing out” of Ohio has been taking place during the manufacturing bust. This has only been heightened during these past years of “The Great Recession.” According to their study, “The Hollowing Out,” by Hannah Halbert and Tim Krueger,

Ohio was once known as a place where many people could find good jobs and live in strong communities; a vibrant manufacturing sector created on-ramps to the middle class for countless families. In the middle of the last century, millions left Appalachia and the south for work in Midwestern industrial centers like Dayton, Cleveland, Toledo, Youngstown and other Ohio cities. National Cash Register, GM, and Frigidaire provided opportunities to work. Strong unions helped ensure that many of these workers received a family-sustaining wage for their labor.¹⁵

Ohio’s economy depended on production. There were jobs for workers of all skill levels, and they did well as the economy grew. The incoming economic tide rose, and as a result, the rewards of a growing economy were had by a broad spectrum of individuals and families.¹⁶ Halbert and Krueger lament,

Ohio’s economy is changing. Over the last decade, many of the jobs that brought people to the state and supported families’ climb into the middle class have disappeared. Even though the recession officially ended in the summer of 2009, unemployment remains persistently high. In October 2011 more than 526,000 Ohioans were unemployed. Even with this surplus of labor, many employers reported unfilled job openings and difficulty finding and retaining qualified workers.¹⁷

Those who study the job situation in Ohio see little hope because employment is moving out of state. They point out that statistics show high levels of post-secondary

¹⁵ Halbert and Krueger, “Hollowing Out,” 1.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

level training, but that these individuals end up taking jobs out of the state.¹⁸ When it comes to jobs and unemployment, Ohio is in trouble. This situation did not start with the last recession, but has certainly been intensified by it. Halbert and Krueger explain,

Ohio's economic ills did not begin with the recessions of the past decade but the 2001 and 2007 recessions exacerbated long-term trends. The state has yet to recover from the 2001 recession; we have lost 482,300 jobs since that recession began in March 2001. When the Great Recession began in December 2007, Ohio had 5,421,400 jobs. Ohio experienced twenty-eight months of job loss, and recovery has been painfully slow, with the state adding only 58,000 jobs since the recession officially ended in June 2009.¹⁹

Figure 3 illustrates this drastic loss of employment.

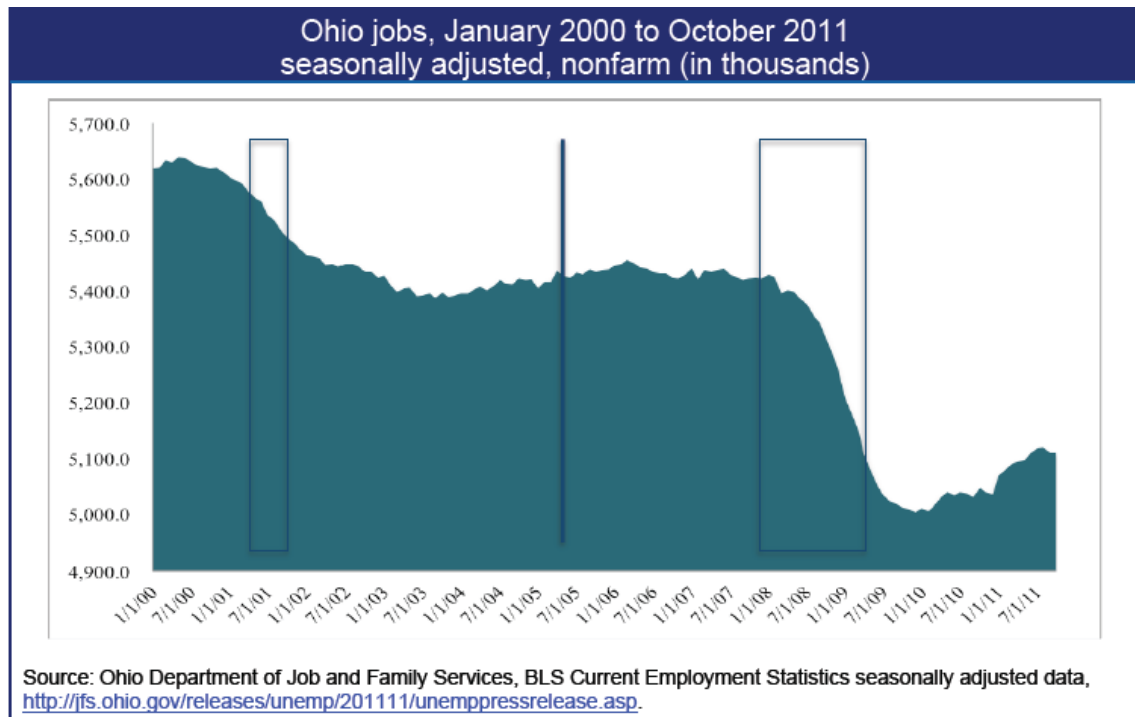


Figure 3. Ohio jobs, January 2000 to October 2011 seasonally adjusted, nonfarm

Source: Halbert and Krueger, "Hollowing Out," 3.

¹⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2-3.

It is important to note that a lot of Ohio's job loss has occurred in areas once considered its strengths and the "on-ramps" to the middle class. These areas include manufacturing, construction, trade, and transport. This erosion of good-paying jobs has torn at the very fabric of what had once been a key source of Ohio's strength and even its identity.²⁰ For this reason, it should come as no surprise that unemployment in Ohio has remained high. In October 2011, the state's unemployment rate stood at 9 percent, an improvement of less than 1 percent since September 2010.²¹ Halbert and Krueger write, "In October 2011, 526,000 Ohioans were unemployed. Yet headlines regularly feature employers decrying a lack of job applicants and out-of-control turnover. This paradox is often laid at the feet of the recently displaced and unemployed. The workers simply lack the skills to compete in today's job market, the story goes. The available data on wages and unemployment, however, do not support this explanation."²²

The Perfect Storm

While Ohio was losing jobs at an alarming rate, there was an abundance of surplus labor. As the demand for workers dropped, so did wages. Halbert and Krueger write, "The wage data echoes the jobs by sector data: Ohio is losing job opportunities that support people working in the middle of the economy. . . . There appears to be a gradual hollowing out of our state economy."²³ Job loss has not only impacted the economy and wages, but it has impacted the very psyche of the state. Ohio is a state in flux, and at

²⁰ Ibid., 4.

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid., 5.

²³ Ibid., 6.

present it is not very comfortable with the painful change of its economic landscape.

Figure 4 presents the projected change in the economy by 2018.

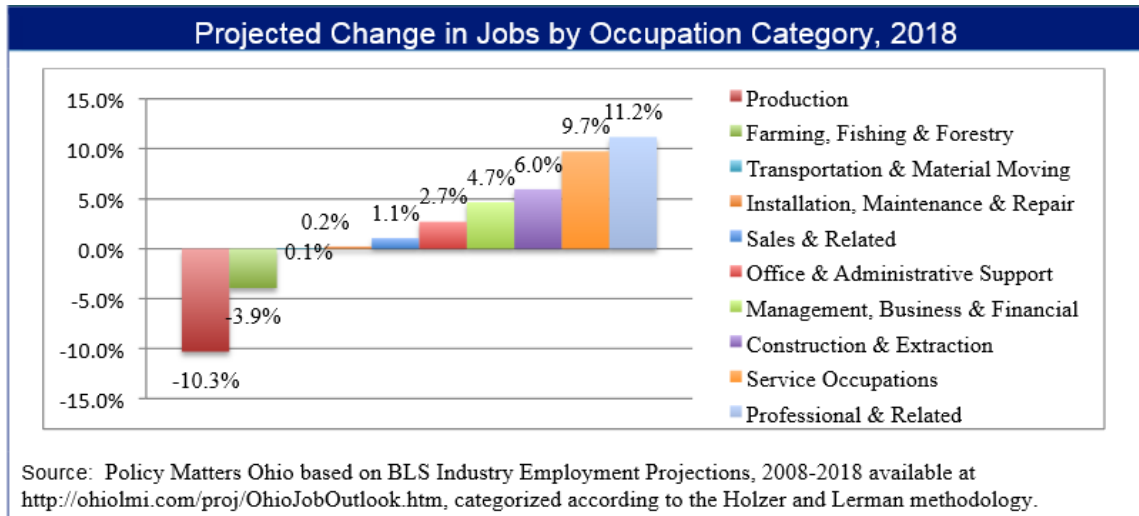


Figure 4. Projected Change in Jobs by Occupation Category, 2018

Source: Halbert and Krueger, "Hollowing Out," 12.

The authors discuss the results of these projections: "Peeling back the broad categories to look at projected changes by major occupation categories, [Figure 4] shows big losses in production, farming, fishing and forestry and very minimal growth in installation, maintenance and repair, and transportation and material moving occupations."²⁴ When one considers all the jobs lost in these areas over the past decades, the challenges for Ohio as a state are great because Ohio's manufacturing sector has been decimated.²⁵ The challenges of ministering in this context are great as well, as all of this has impacted the people in our churches and our mission field.

²⁴ Ibid., 12.

²⁵ Ibid., 15.

In the section entitled, “Conclusion and Recommendations,” Halbert and Krueger write, “The [data in figure 4] suggests that the hollowing out of the Ohio economy, which was exacerbated by the 2001 and 2007 recessions, will continue. Ohio’s biggest losses are projected to occur in production/manufacturing.”²⁶ Production and manufacturing were once Ohio’s greatest economic strengths. The world has changed and Ohio is being left behind. The study concludes with little hope. Halbert and Krueger write, “Ohio has too many people stuck at the bottom of the economic ladder.”²⁷

In another study called the Well-Being Index, conducted by Gallup and Healthways, the researchers go beyond economics, as they consider the very health and psyche of the residents of each state.²⁸ The study is described as follows:

Merging decades of social and clinical research, development experience, health leadership and behavioral economics, Gallup and Healthways collaborated to develop the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index (WBI) – The first and largest survey of its kind aggregating data from one thousand calls a day, three hundred fifty days a year. The Well-Being index is already the largest behavioral economic database ever created and, over the next quarter century, will generate more than nine million individual responses.²⁹

When it comes to well-being, the study reports that Ohio has an overall ranking of forty-seven out of fifty states; only Arkansas, Kentucky, and West Virginia scored lower.³⁰ The study looks at five key components of health and well-being: purpose, social, financial, community, and physical. Purpose is defined in the study as liking what I do each day

²⁶ Ibid., 14.

²⁷ Ibid., 15.

²⁸ Gallup, Inc. and Healthways, Inc., *State of Well-Being Ohio: 2009 City, State and Congressional District Well-Being Report* (Omaha, NE: Gallup-Healthways, 2009), 2.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 3.

and being motivated to achieve goals. Social is defined as having supportive relationships and love in your life. Financial is the managing of economics in your life to reduce stress and increase security. Community is about liking where you live, feeling safe, and having pride in your community. Physical is having good health and energy to get things done daily.³¹

With an overall health and well-being score of forty-seven, this means that ministers in Ohio are serving in an area that actually feels oppressed. People are hurting. There are six categories that incorporate the above categories and are used in the study to determine the final score: life evaluation, emotional health, work environment, physical health, healthy behavior, and basic access.

The first category is “Life Evaluation.” This has to do with how people feel about present life situations and anticipated life situations. This category emphasizes the present, with the anticipated life situation bringing the word “hope” or lack of it to mind. Ohio ranked forty-five out of fifty in this category.³² Ministers working in this depressed environment cannot help but be impacted by working day in and day out in such an environment. Not only are people in Ohio hurting, but many of them are living without hope. The second category is “Emotional Health.” This category is all about a person’s daily feelings and mental state. When it comes to the mental state of its citizens, Ohio ranked forty-six out of fifty.³³

³¹ Ibid., 2.

³² Ibid., 3.

³³ Ibid.

When it comes to “Work Environment,” Ohio did a little better. It scored forty-two out of fifty.³⁴ Of course it has already been established that there is a great deal of unemployment in this state. This particular category gauges the job satisfaction and workplace interaction of those who are employed. Even though this is one of the better scores for Ohio, it still means that only eight other states scored lower in this category. The category of “Physical Health” is where Ohio received its best score of thirty-eight out of fifty.³⁵ Physical health in this study means the ability to live a full life.

The next category is “Healthy Behavior.” This category looks at people’s behavior and whether or not it affects their health positively or negatively. Ohio scored a poor forty-six in this category. This means that Ohioans’ lifestyle habits and their established relationships impact their health in negative rather than positive ways, as compared with other states.³⁶ The final category is called “Basic Access.” Basic access is a category based on thirteen different items that show how Ohio stacks up against the rest of the country when it comes to things such as a resident’s ability to access food, shelter, healthcare, and a safe place to live.³⁷ These are basic life necessities, and when a state scores as low as Ohio does, it is indicative of the overall living environment.

All of these consistently low scores tell of a state with a population that is struggling in multiple ways. Adventist ministers in Ohio are working with this as more than just a mere backdrop, but rather it is a reality that impacts the people they work with

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 2.

and for in profound ways. In their most updated report, Gallup-Healthways found that Ohio has ranked among the worst states for every survey since they began collecting data in 2008.³⁸ Ohio consistently finds itself with states like Arkansas and West Virginia when it comes to quality of life.

As one breaks down the numbers of this massive health and well-being study, there is much that is broken in the state of Ohio. There is an emotional and physical low ebb; life has sucked much of the hope out of a large number of people in the state. Ohio is not what it was back in the 1950s and 1960s. There was great hope and an eye to the future back then. While there may still be an eye to the future, it is at best a wary eye; for the majority of people in Ohio there is not a lot of hope in the present or the future.

Numbers for poverty in Ohio were put together by the Kaiser Family Foundation in a study on Ohio entitled, “State Health Facts.”³⁹ As of May 28, 2010, Ohio had a population of 11,328,500, with 1,959,700 (or 17.3 percent) living below the poverty level. The unemployment rate at that time was 11 percent.⁴⁰ Many of our churches have ministries for those living in poverty, and over the years this has been a growing part of the work of our churches and pastors.

State trends are sobering on many fronts: job loss, poverty, attitude, health, emotional health, behavior, and access to the basic necessities of life for many. It is also a

³⁸ Gallup-Healthways, *State of American Well-Being: 2014 State Well-Being Rankings*, http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/162029/file-2513997715-pdf/Well-Being_Index/2014_Data/Gallup-Healthways_State_of_American_Well-Being_2014_State_Rankings.pdf?t=142432 (accessed February 21, 2014), 2.

³⁹ Kaiser Family Foundation, “State Health Facts, Ohio: Facts At-A-Glance,” May 28, 2010, <http://kff.org/statedata/?state=OH> (accessed August 1, 2014), 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

time and place where many seem jaded toward organized religion. Culture is changing quickly and our churches find it hard to change at all. With the facts in hand, it is hard to find a silver lining when it comes to the state of Ohio. Frankly, it is a challenging context within which to minister. A Barna Group study shows that only 2 percent of Mosaics (aged eighteen to twenty-six at the time of this writing) in Ohio claim to be active in church.⁴¹ The fact is that young adults are leaving churches in droves. And it is not just young adults who do not seem interested in church; the general population seems less interested in organized religion. Culture is changing and Christianity does not hold the place it once did here.

The Challenge for the Church

The challenge of an aging population in the state and church means congregations are struggling. Many of the growing percentage of retirees who make up churches are on lower incomes than during their working years. With few young people, churches are often shrinking with each funeral. In rural areas of the state, there is little hope for growth, as young people grow up and move away for school and/or jobs.

Ministry is a week-in and week-out grind. It may well be that the motivation to minister will not be by things getting easier, but rather a hurting world that needs to be touched by the love of Jesus, even if it does not realize that as its need. However, in order to do that, ministers need to be nurtured. The context of ministry in Ohio is a challenging one. The studies and statistics confirm this fact. Humanly speaking, the future not only does not bode well for Ohio; it does not bode well for an aging church in today's culture.

⁴¹ Barna Group, *Barna Report: States* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, Inc., 2011), 249.

If Adventist pastors are to thrive in the present-day religious and secular climate of Ohio, they are going to have to be spiritually strong. Ministers in this setting need to be ministered to. But who is the minister to ministers? Jesus said that people in his hometown of Nazareth would say to him, “Physician, heal thyself” (Luke 4:23). Similarly, whether or not it is the Church’s intent, often ministers are left to take care of themselves. People who often feel on call twenty-four-seven are susceptible to physical and spiritual burnout. In the context of Ohio, ministers are working with a large population of people who are heavily burdened. Statistics show that these people, children of God, are struggling financially, emotionally, and spiritually. But one cannot give to others what one does not have oneself. If ministers do not take time for the serious job of self-care, they will end up on the wrong side of the statistics of pastoral casualties.

There is a clear and present danger of exhaustion and emotional fatigue for Adventist ministers in the Ohio context. As I make my way around to the almost one hundred churches, seventeen elementary schools, and two Adventist academies, I see the realities of the secular studies shown about the state of Ohio. I find people who want to hope, but have not found a lot of reasons to live here. Ministers are not somehow sheltered from the realities of the state of Ohio. This is where they live and work, and that is all the more reason they live and work in these realities. This context challenges the pastors here; it can endanger not only their physical health, but their spiritual and emotional health as well. Ohio is a big state with big needs, and ministers who live and work within this context have big needs as well.

The idea of providing spiritual retreat for Adventist ministers in Ohio is to help them take profound steps in the spiritual journey of self-care. A retreat of prevention

could be a pound of cure. Realizing the serious context in which they minister, spiritual retreat offers them opportunity to renew and recharge. That way, when they head back out into the context of Ohio, they can do so better prepared and with spiritual vitality. After all, they are not just ministering, they are ministering in Ohio.

CHAPTER 2

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN OHIO

The religious landscape in Ohio is changing, especially when it comes to the Mosaic generation (ages eighteen to twenty-six at the time of this writing). A survey by Barna in 2011 found that only 2 percent of Mosaics in Ohio claim to be active in church.¹ This chapter considers the Christian context in Ohio, noting generational differences in particular. It also specifically considers the state of the Ohio Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Ohio's Christian Context

Between the aging Christian community in Ohio and the loss of the younger generation from the Church, Christianity in Ohio is in trouble. Congregations often struggle with maintaining attendance, much less growing it. There are always exceptions, but the overall picture of Christianity present and future is not a bright one unless something changes drastically.

Ministers in Ohio find themselves in a context that is not favorable for quantitative success. It is becoming harder to run churches, their programs, or schools

¹ Barna Group, *Barna Report: States*, 249.

with a shrinking pool of support. This cannot help but cause strain to a minister’s already stressful life.

In their 2010 survey, the Association of Religious Data Archives found the religious traditions in Ohio to be as follows: 17.3 percent claim Catholicism, 12.9 percent are Evangelical Protestants, 10 percent are Mainline Protestant, 1.8 percent are other, 1.5 percent are Black Protestant, and 0.5 percent are Orthodox. The largest percentage, 56 percent, are “Unclaimed,” according to the survey. Another term for this percentage is “unchurched,” referring to those with no church affiliation.²

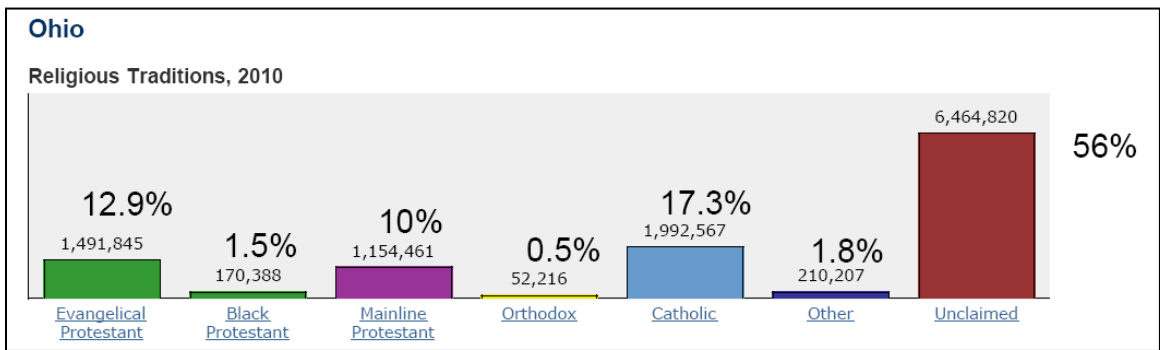


Figure 5. State Membership Report – Ohio – Religious Traditions, 2010

Source: Clifford Grammich, et al., *2010 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study*, Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), Association of Religious Data Archives, www.thearda.com (accessed August 1, 2014), 1.

Pew Research Center, in their study titled the *U. S. Religious Landscape Survey*, found that 72 percent of Ohioans claim absolute faith in God, while another 17 percent are fairly certain.³ Figure 6 illustrates that when it comes to religion in their lives,

² Clifford Grammich, et al., *2010 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study*, Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), Association of Religious Data Archives, www.thearda.com (accessed August 1, 2014), 1.

³ Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *U. S. Religious Landscape Survey* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2008), 159.

according to the same survey, 55 percent say that religion is very important to them, while another 30 percent indicate that it is somewhat important. Regularly attending church members might find this claim surprising, because when it comes to church attendance in Ohio, figure 7 shows that only 36 percent of those claiming to be Christian say they attend church weekly, while only 35 percent claim to attend monthly or less often.⁴

Importance of Religion in My Life

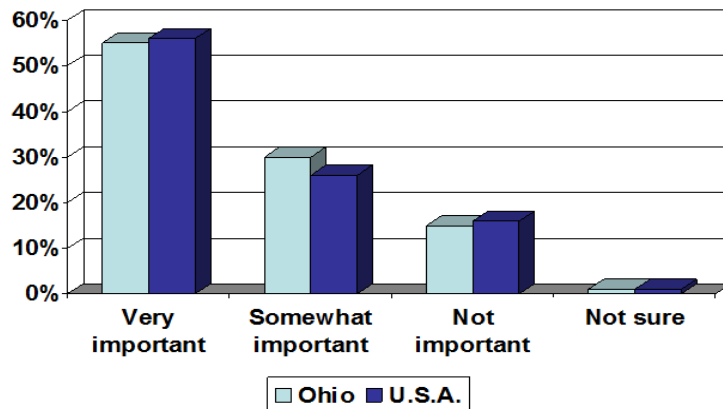


Figure 6. Pew Research Center – Importance of Religion in My Life

Source: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2008), 160.

⁴ Ibid., 160.

Church Attendance

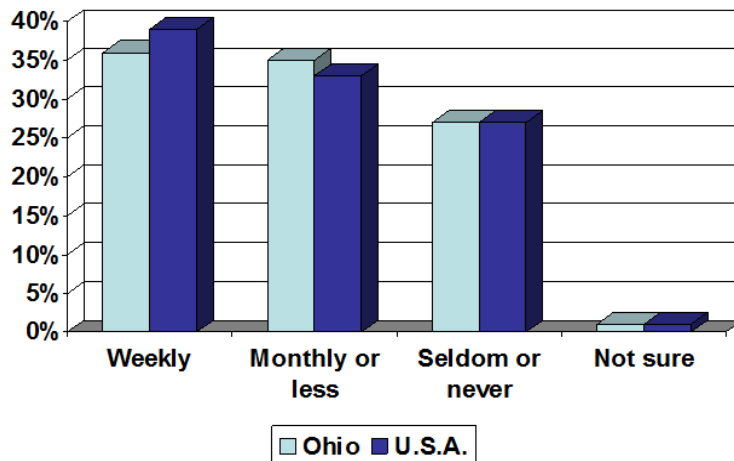


Figure 7. Pew Research Center—Church Attendance

Source: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 161.

A big challenge to ministers and congregations is that more and more people, including believers, do not see the importance or necessity for church attendance. Of even greater concern is how few young adults have any real active church connection. Only 2 percent of those categorized as Mosaics in Ohio even claim a church.⁵ Not only is the state aging, but the younger generation is leaving organized churches in large numbers. The view of young adults and spirituality has shifted, and many ministers are at a loss as to how to try and reclaim the younger generations. The Adventist Church in Ohio is aging even faster than the state. The average age of a baptized member in Ohio is sixty-two.⁶ This is a higher average age than the North American Division of Seventh-

⁵ Barna Group, *Barna Report: States*, 249.

⁶ Monte Sahlin, "Religious Context of the Ohio Conference" (lecture, Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Mt. Vernon, OH, 2009).

day Adventists, which is fifty-six.⁷ Granted, Adventists practice believer's baptism by immersion, and therefore our children are not part of the age count, but by all statistics and traveling to our churches weekly, one generally finds old and declining congregations. There is need for congregations in Ohio to revive if there is to be a brighter future, and this must be accomplished during challenging times.

A Pew Research study that looks at the percentages of “nones,” those who do not identify with any religion, finds that the percentage in this category is growing rapidly. They report that “one-fifth of the U. S. Public and a third of adults under 30 are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling.”⁸ Figure 8 demonstrates the fact that the trend of those who claim no religion is increasing rapidly. Again, this is while two-thirds still say they believe in God. Over one-third claim they are spiritual, but not religious.⁹

⁷ North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, “NAD Report at Year End Meeting,” (lecture, North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, MD, November 2, 2014).

⁸ Pew Research Center, “‘Nones’ on the Rise,” <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/> (accessed February 13, 2015), 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

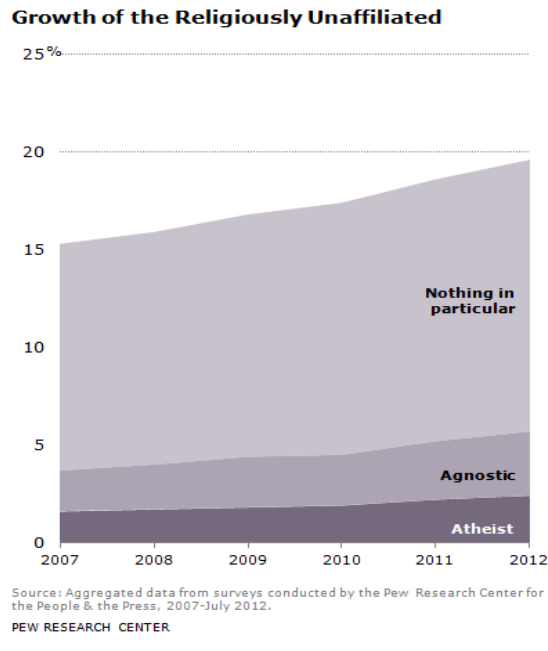


Figure 8. Pew Research Center – Growth of the Religiously Unaffiliated, 2012

Source: Pew Research Center, “‘Nones’ on the Rise,” <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/> (accessed February 13, 2015), 9.

One might see this as a growing mission field right in our own country. However, when it comes to young adults with one-third now claiming to be nones, it is a difficult mission field. The study found that “with few exceptions the unaffiliated say they are not looking for a religion that would be right for them. Overwhelmingly, they think that religious organizations are too concerned with money and power; too focused on rules and too involved in politics.”¹⁰ The Pew Research Center found that people seem to be growing colder toward organized religion. The study notes that there are generational

¹⁰ Ibid., 10.

differences that show a gradual softening commitment among some. By and large, people do not doubt the existence of God, but they seldom attend religious services.¹¹

Here figure 9 displays the share of infrequent churchgoers who describe themselves as unaffiliated, showing how quickly this category is growing.

Share of Infrequent Churchgoers Who Describe Themselves as Unaffiliated Has Been Growing

Among those who attend religious services...

	Seldom/ never		At least yearly	
	2007	2012	2007	2012
<i>% who say they are...</i>	%	%	%	%
Religiously Unaffiliated	38	49	7	8
Affiliated	60	50	92	91
Don't know	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	100	100	100	100
<i>Share of total pop.</i>	27%	29%	71%	70%

Source: Aggregated data from surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2007 and 2012.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 9. Pew Research Center – Share of Infrequent Churchgoers, 2012

Source: Pew Research Center, “‘Nones’ on the Rise,” 11.

In five years, the percentage of the religiously unaffiliated rose from 38 percent to 49 percent. This is confirmed by the percentage of those who claimed to be affiliated, which went down from 60 percent to 50 percent in the same five years. These trends impact churches in real ways and add a great deal of stress on congregations and pastors. The report states,

¹¹ Ibid., 11.

While the ranks of the unaffiliated have grown significantly over the past five years, the Protestant share of the population has shrunk. In 2007, 53% of adults in Pew Research Center surveys described themselves as Protestants. In surveys conducted in the first half of 2012, fewer than half of American adults say they are Protestant (48%). This marks the first time in Pew Research Center surveys that the Protestant share of the population has dipped significantly below 50%.¹²

The significance of these statistics must not be lost. When one considers that the percentages when polling only the younger generations reveal even more nones, it is clear that churches and pastors have a huge challenge on their hands. Since those who claim to be unaffiliated are dissatisfied or disinterested in organized religion, it makes the challenge more difficult. It feels like Christianity is dying a slow death in Ohio, and the decline becomes more dramatic every year. The report continues,

These findings represent a continuation of long-term trends. The General Social Surveys (GSS), conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for roughly four decades, show that the number of religiously unaffiliated adults remained below 10% from the 1970s through the early 1990s. The percentage of unaffiliated respondents began to rise noticeably in the 1990s and stood at 18% in the 2010 GSS.

The Protestant share of the population, by contrast, has been declining since the early 1990s. In the GSS, about six-in-ten adults identified as Protestants in the 1970s and 1980s. By 2000, however, 54% of GSS respondents were Protestant. And in the 2010 GSS, 51% of respondents identified themselves as Protestants.

The Catholic share of the population has been roughly steady over this period, in part because of immigration from Latin America.¹³

Generational Replacement

Not only are churches not gaining many new adherents, but they are losing children and young adults in large numbers. While the older generation of strong supporters are dying off, the younger generation has by and large already been lost. It is a

¹² Ibid., 13.

¹³ Ibid., 14-15.

heartbreaking reality for many of the members and Ohio pastors who minister. The report states,

One important factor behind the growth of the religiously unaffiliated is generational replacement, the gradual supplanting of older generations by newer ones. Among the youngest Millennials (those ages 18-22), who were minors in 2007 and thus not eligible to be interviewed in Pew Research Center surveys conducted that year), fully one-third (34%) are religiously unaffiliated compared with about one-in-ten members of the silent generation (9%) and one-in-twenty members of the World War II –era Greatest Generation (5%). Older Millennials (ages 23-30) also are substantially less likely than prior generations to be religiously affiliated.¹⁴

Not only are young adults less likely to be affiliated than their elders, but the GSS (General Social Surveys) shows that the percentage of Americans who were raised without an affiliation has been rising gradually, from about 3% in the early 1970's to about 8% in the past decade. However, the overwhelming majority of the “nones” were brought up in a religious tradition. The new Pew Research Center/Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly survey finds that about three-quarters of unaffiliated adults were raised with some affiliation (74%).¹⁵

There are differences of opinion regarding whether this change is necessarily negative.

The report states, “Two-thirds of Americans, including 63% of the religiously unaffiliated, say religion as a whole is losing its influence on American life. A large majority of those who think religion’s influence is on the decline see this as a bad thing. But those who describe their religion as ‘nothing in particular’ are less inclined to view religion’s declining influence as a bad thing.”¹⁶ Figure 10 helps one better understand the group categorized as “nones.”

¹⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 23.

% of "nothing in particulars" who are...	U.S. general public	Unaffiliated
	%	%
Looking for religion that is right for them	n/a	10
Not doing this	n/a	88
Don't know	n/a	<u>2</u>
		100
<i>% who believe in...</i>		
Spiritual energy in physical things like mountains, trees, crystals	26	30
Astrology	25	25
Reincarnation	24	25
Yoga as spiritual practice	23	28
<i>% who often...</i>		
Think about meaning and purpose of life	67	53
Feel deep connection w/nature and the earth	58	58
<i>% who say it is very important..</i>		
To belong to community w/shared values and beliefs	49	28
<i>% who have ever...</i>		
Had religious or mystical experience	49	30
Been in touch w/someone who has died	29	31
Seen or been in presence of ghost	18	19
Consulted psychic	15	15

Figure 10. Pew Research Center – Neither “Seekers” Nor More Inclined Toward New Age Beliefs than the General Public, 2012

Source: Pew Research Center, “‘Nones’ on the Rise,” 24.

There are several theories as to why there are a growing number of nones among young adults. The report states, “Several leading scholars contend that young adults, in particular, have turned away from organized religion because they perceive it as deeply

entangled with conservative politics and do not want to have any association with it.”¹⁷

Another theory is that of “secularization.” The report explains,

The rise of the unaffiliated in the U.S. also has helped breathe new life into theories that link economic development with secularization around the globe. Back in the 1960s, when secularization theories first achieved high visibility, they were sometimes accompanied by predictions that religion would wither away in the United States by the 21st Century. The theories propounded by social scientists today tend to more subtle – contending, for example, that societies in which people feel constant threats to their health and well-being are more religious, while religious beliefs and practices tend to be less strong in places where “existential security” is greater. In this view, gradual secularization is to be expected in a generally healthy, wealthy, orderly society.

Surveys conducted by the Pew Forum and the Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project have asked people in many countries about the importance of religion in their lives, how often they pray and whether they think it is necessary to believe in God to be a moral person. Throughout much of the world, there is an association between these measures of religiosity and a country’s national wealth: Publics in countries with a high gross domestic product (per capita) tend to be less religious, while publics in countries with a low GDP tend to be more religious.¹⁸

When it comes to prayer, Ohio does a bit better, with 58 percent of Christians in Ohio saying they pray daily. Another 16 percent say that they pray at least weekly (see figure 11).¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹⁸ Ibid., 31.

¹⁹ Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *U. S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 162.

Frequency of Prayer

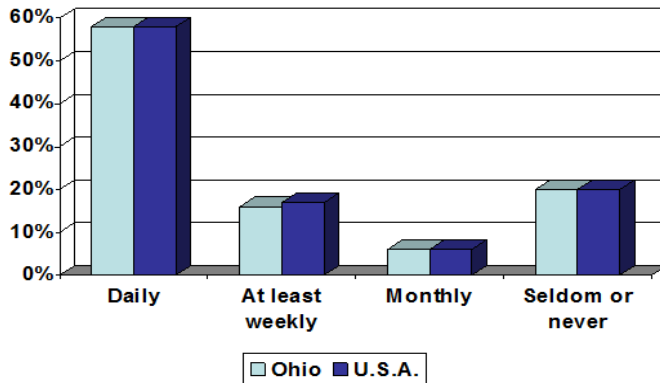


Figure 11. Pew Research Center – Frequency of Prayer

Source: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 162.

Figure 12 shows survey results on the inspiration of the Bible among Ohioans, with 34 percent believing the Bible was given word for word by God. Another 31 percent believe the thought is from God, 26 percent do not believe it was from God, and about 9 percent are not sure.²⁰

Literal Interpretation of the Bible

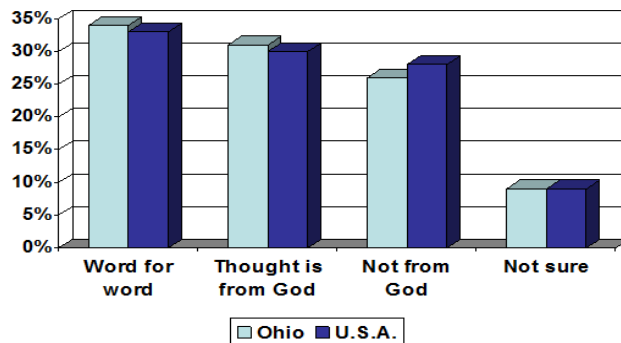


Figure 12. Pew Research Center – Literal Interpretation of the Bible

Source: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 164.

²⁰ Ibid., 164.

Figure 13 compares Ohio and the United States on religious interpretation. It reveals that 24 percent of those surveyed in Ohio believe there is only one way to salvation and heaven, while 73 percent believe there is more than one way.²¹

Interpretation of My Religion

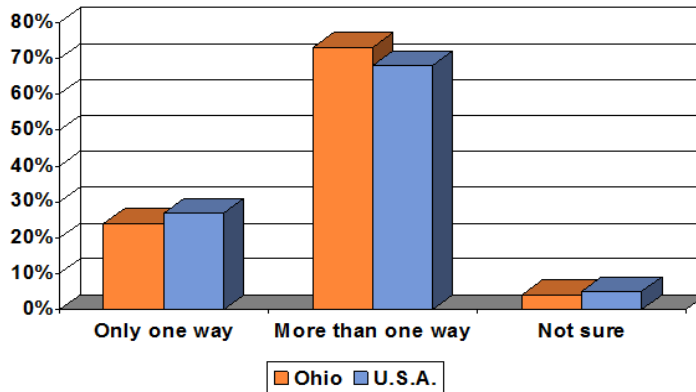


Figure 13. Pew Research Center – Interpretation of My Religion

Source: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 165.

In line with those statistics, Figure 14 indicates that 21 percent believe their religion is the “one true faith,” while 76 percent believe many religions can lead to eternal life.²²

²¹ Ibid., 165.

²² Ibid., 166.

One True Faith

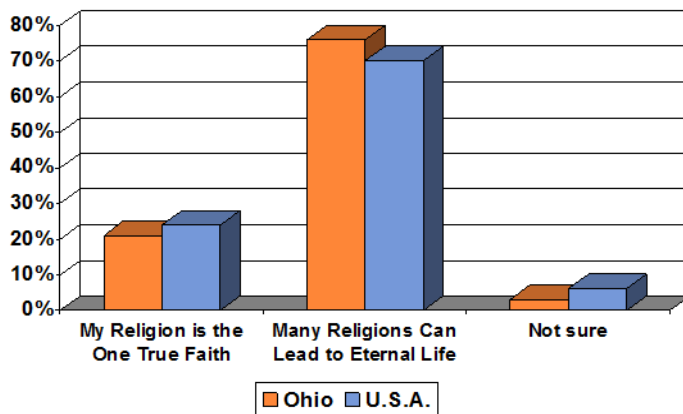


Figure 14. Pew Research Center – One True Faith

Source: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 166.

A Barna Group study in 2011 confirms the claim of the importance of faith to those in Ohio. The study found that 73 percent of the population surveyed “agreed strongly” that faith was important to them. In all, 87 percent of Ohioans identify themselves as Christian: 19 percent are Catholic, while 57 percent are Protestant.²³ It is interesting to note that while 59 percent claim to be “absolutely committed” to Christianity and another 32 percent claim to be “moderately committed,” that the Barna Group found that 72 percent are “casual Christians” (that is, they have not attended a church service in more than six months) and only 19 percent “captive Christians” (that is, they attend church weekly, pray daily, and read the Bible outside of church services).²⁴

In the same study, the Barna Group found that when it came to activity/behavior, 49 percent of Christians in Ohio attended church last week, with a total of 66 percent

²³ Barna Group, *Barna Report: States*, 246.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

attending sometime during the month. When it comes to prayer, 86 percent pray while 45 percent read the Bible. Another 28 percent volunteer at church, and 21 percent attend small groups outside of church time. The aggregate indicators for church activity found that 32 percent of Christians in Ohio attend church, pray, and read the Bible.²⁵

A large majority of people in Ohio believe in God. Of those surveyed, 74 percent say they have an orthodox view of God, while an additional 19 percent have a different view of God, and 2 percent do not believe in God.²⁶ The survey showed that 68 percent believe the Bible has accurate principles, while 27 percent totally disagree. There was a sharp contrast in views as to good works resulting in heaven, with 52 percent totally believing that “good works result in heaven” and 42 percent totally disagreeing. As far as commitment to Jesus Christ, 74 percent claim to have a personal commitment, while 26 percent say they have no personal commitment.²⁷

One of the most concerning statistics for Christianity’s future in Ohio relates to different age groups and their respective commitment. Among “Elders” (sixty-five and above), 36 percent claim to be practicing Christians. Among “Boomers” (forty-six to sixty-four), 41 percent claim to be active. Among “Busters” (twenty-seven to forty-five), only 21 percent claim to be active Christians. The most disconcerting are the “Mosaics” (eighteen to twenty-six), with only 2 percent claiming to be active Christians.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 247.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 249. Note that the age ranges given for each generational category were accurate at the time of publication of this resource in 2011.

In 2005, David T. Olson of the American Church Research Project researched the percentage of the population in Ohio that attended a Christian Church on any given weekend. He found that only 8 percent of Evangelicals, 4 percent of mainline Protestants, and 6 percent of Catholics are in church on weekends, while 82 percent are absent.²⁹ Olson compared church attendance in 1990, 2000, and 2005. Among evangelicals, there was no difference in attendance; mainline Protestant churches saw a 1.0 percent drop; and Catholics saw a decrease from 8.5 percent in 1990 to 6.2 percent in 2005 (see figure 15).

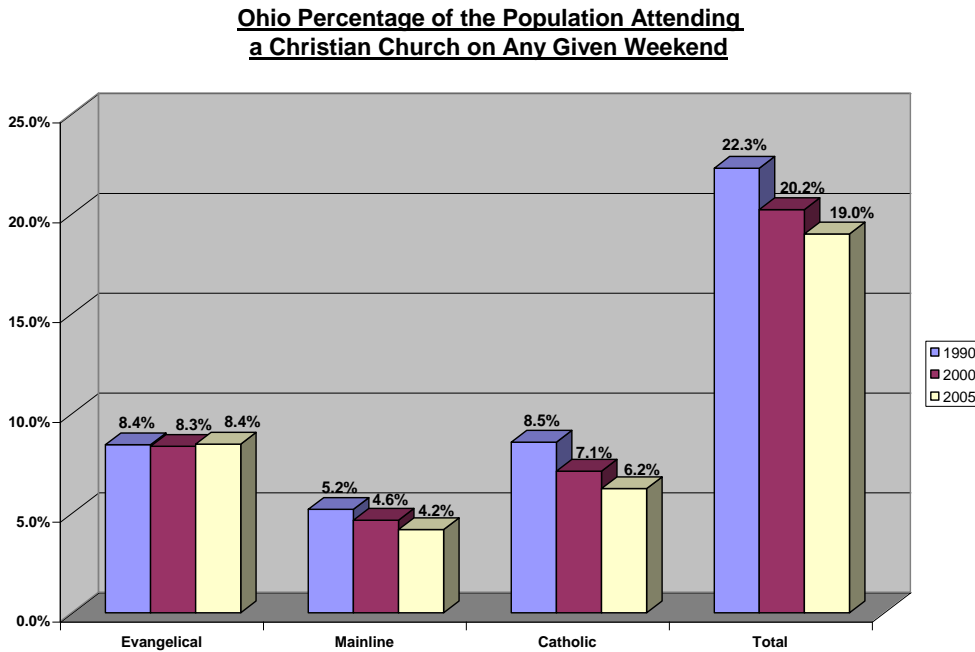


Figure 15. Ohio Percentage of the Population Attending a Christian Church on Any Given Weekend

Source: David T. Olson, “State Report: Ohio, 2009,” *The American Church Research Project*, <http://www.theamericanchurch.org> (accessed July 9, 2016), as cited by Monte Sahlin, “Religious Context of the Ohio Conference,” 16.

²⁹ David T. Olson, “State Report: Ohio, 2009,” *The American Church Research Project*, <http://www.theamericanchurch.org> (accessed July 9, 2016), as cited by Monte Sahlin, “Religious Context of the Ohio Conference,” 16.

An interesting angle for seeing the growth in the number of un-churched Ohioans is by comparing the population per church ratio. In 1990, there were 833 people for every church, and by 2004, the number had climbed to 907 citizens per church.³⁰ The following map (see figure 16) shows the loss or gain in percentage of church attendance by county.

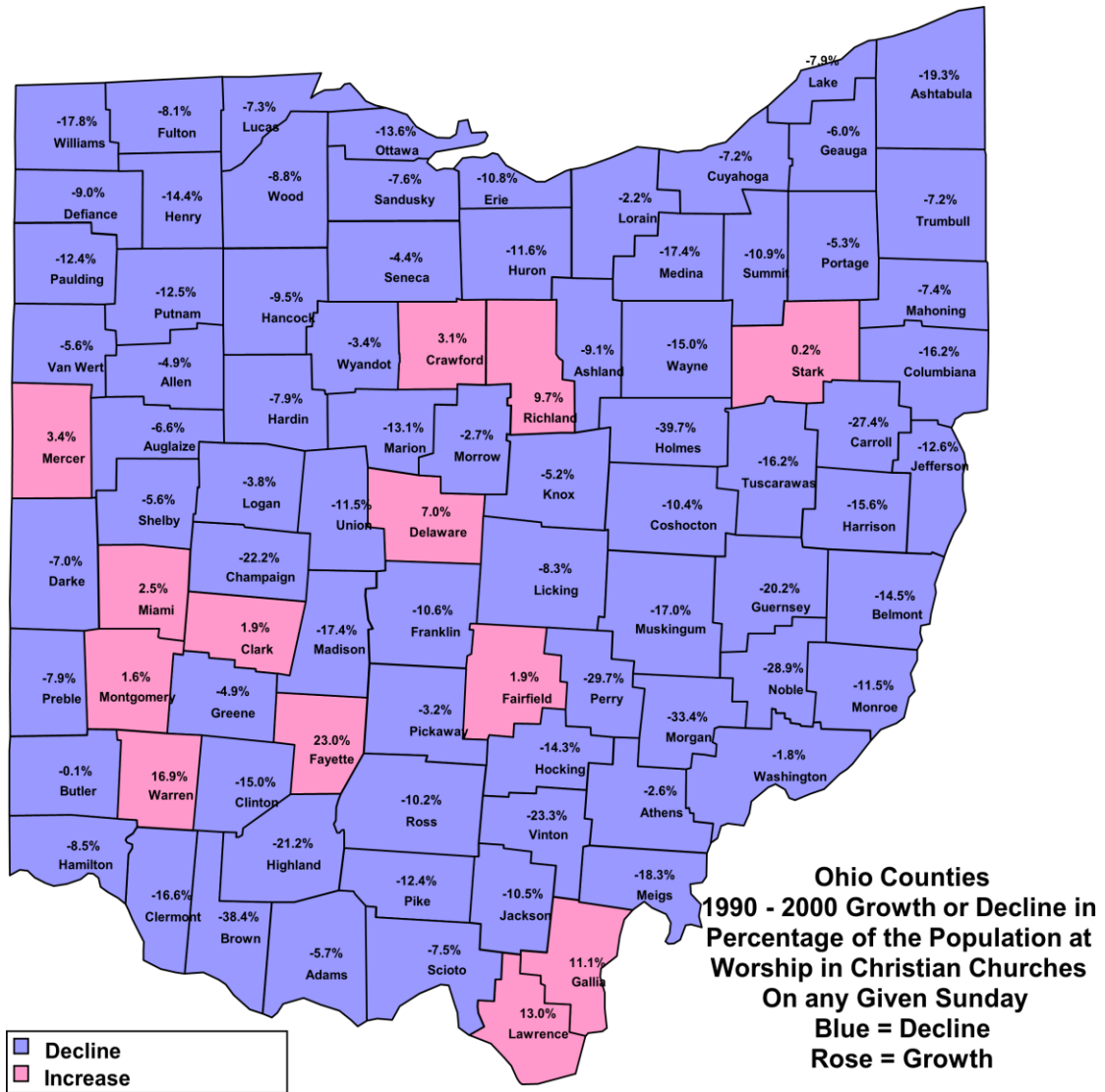


Figure 16. Ohio Counties 1990-2000 Growth or Decline in Percentage of Population at Worship in Christian Churches

Source: Olson, "State Report: Ohio."

³⁰ Monte Sahlin, "Religious Context of the Ohio Conference," 19.

Adventism in Ohio

There is a huge challenge in regards to reaching out to younger generations to be part of church. When it comes to Ohio, the largest segment of the population is un-churched. Church attendance is low and there is a decline in attendees. The fastest growing segment of Ohioans is no religion, and Southern Ohio is one of the most un-churched regions in America.³¹ Figure 17 displays the results of a non-Adventist survey of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ohio given in 2000; the map shows the number of those claiming to be Adventists by county.

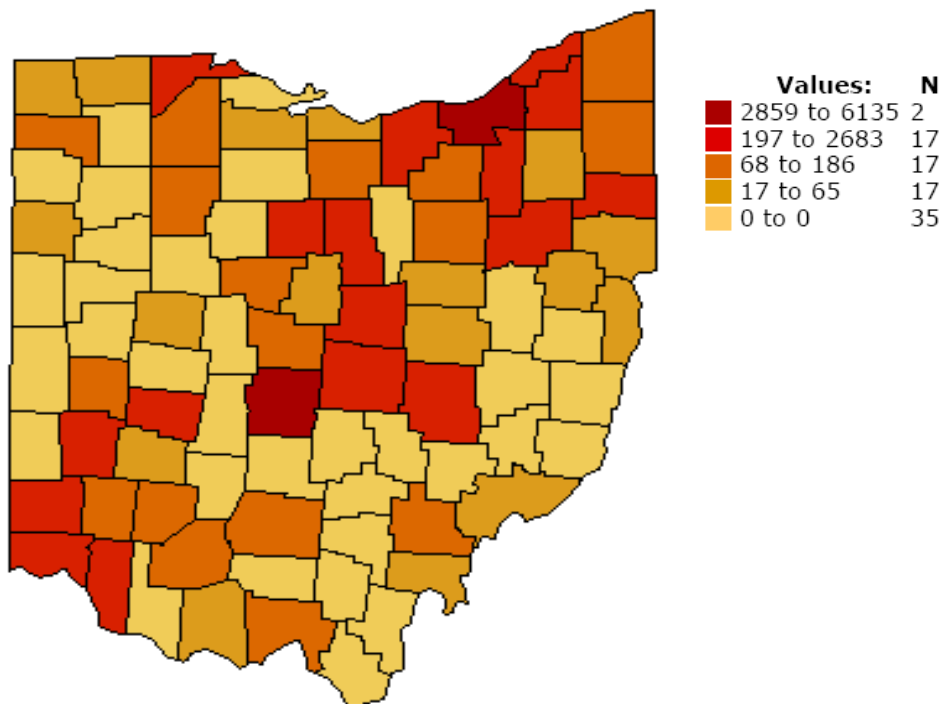


Figure 17. Ohio Counties 1990-2000, Growth or Decline in Percentage of Population at Worship in Christian Churches

Source: Association of Religious Data Archives, "Ohio: Seventh-day Adventist Church—Number of Adherents (2000)," <http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/maps/map.asp?variable=404&state=35&variable2> (accessed August 1, 2014), 1.

³¹ Ibid., 52-53.

Growth data from the religious profile of Adventism in Ohio, according to the Religious Census of 2010, shows 24,655 adherents to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the state of Ohio.³² About half of these are from the Allegheny West Conference. There are 139 local congregations in Ohio according to the eAdventist database, which was the source of the raw data from the Adventist data in the U. S. Religious Census. About forty of these are from the Allegheny West Conference. Seventh-day Adventist Church membership has been losing ground in the major metro areas of Ohio.³³ The following metropolitan areas lost membership: Akron -11% (one new congregation), Canton -42%, Cincinnati -10% (three new congregations), and Cleveland -21%.³⁴

Table 1 provides details on the 2013 church growth analysis for the Ohio Conference. Growing churches are ranked by annual growth rate in three categories: churches over 100 members, churches under 100 members, and immigrant churches.

³² Association of Religious Data Archives, "Ohio: Seventh-day Adventist Church—Number of Adherents (2000)," <http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/maps/map.asp?variable=404&state=35&variable2> (accessed August 1, 2014), 1.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

<i>Churches over 100 members</i>	<i>Churches under 100 members</i>	<i>Immigrant churches</i>
Village Church (Cincinnati suburb) - 9.6% Miamisburg (Dayton suburb) - 9.6% Medina (Cleveland suburb) - 8% Toledo First Church - 5.7% Stillwater (Dayton suburb) - 4.4% Middletown - 4.1% Akron First Church - 2.8% Marion - 2.6% -----NAD growth rate----- Fredericktown - 1.7% Columbus Eastwood - 1.5% Kettering (Dayton suburb) - 1.3% Worthington (Columbus suburb) - 0.9% Centerville (Dayton suburb) - 0.8% Mansfield - 0.3%	Norwalk (Cleveland suburb) - 18% Bowling Green - 11% Brooklyn (Cleveland) - 15% East Liverpool - 9% Harrison (Cincinnati suburb) - 8% Barberton - 7% Sandusky - 7% Findlay - 6% Grove City (Columbus suburb) - 5% Walk of Faith Fellowship (Cleveland) - 4% Bucyrus - 4% Willoughby (Cleveland suburb) - 3% Wooster - 3% Warren - 2% eChurch7 (internet church) - 2% [All above the NAD growth rate.]	Ebenezer Spanish - 12.5% Cleveland First Spanish - 11% Hamilton Spanish - 10.5% Columbus First Hispanic - 10.3% Lorain Spanish - 9.1% Willard Spanish - 4.5% Columbus Ghanaian - 4.2% [All above the NAD growth rate.]
3 churches had no change	9 churches had no change	4 churches no change
8 churches declined	28 churches declined	2 churches declined

Table 1. 2013 Church Growth Analysis for Ohio Conference

Source: Monte Sahlin, “2013 Church Growth Analysis for Ohio Conference.”

The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s most recent in-house membership, as reported to the Ohio Conference Executive Committee on March 1, 2016, was 11,543 members. Of course it should be recognized that Seventh-day Adventists practice believer’s baptism, and thus many of our young people that our dedicated as infants are not baptized until they choose. While they are not noted in the numerical records, they are still very much a part of the church family. In some respects, statistics make the church in Ohio look more vibrant than it actually is. The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ohio is growing mainly from immigrant populations such as Ghanaian, Haitian, and Hispanic groups, with the greatest numerical growth coming from the Hispanic population.

PART TWO

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS:

THE SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE OF MINISTRY

CHAPTER 3

WHY SO MANY MINISTRY CAUSALITIES?

I was recently involved in a teleconference with a group of pastors and healthcare professionals, the goal of which was to plan a gathering for all the Adventist ministers and their spouses in the Ohio Conference. Among those on the line were counselors, chaplains, and a few well known Adventist ministers of some of the largest Seventh-day Adventist churches in America. The motivation for this event comes from a deep desire among those who have been on the front lines of ministry for decades and have seen and experienced the wear and tear of pastoral ministry, both personally and in the lives of colleagues. The discussion was a powerful reminder about the need for events that minister to pastors and their spouses, as well as the need for this final project. In researching the state of ministers and ministry, one would be hard pressed to find a single promising survey outcome when it comes to ministers and the negative impact of ministry in their lives, or that of their families. The landscape of ministry is strewn with physical and emotional burnout, moral falls, divorce, or what some have described as a lifesaving decision to walk away from what they once described as a calling from God. The percentages of ministerial casualties are much higher than one would like to believe.

This project seeks to minister to ministers through a spiritual retreat based on the life and some of the key teachings and spiritual disciplines of Martin Luther. This chapter provides a review of five books which have directed and shaped the project and retreat concept. These include *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul*; by Lance Witt, *Burnout: The Cost of Caring*, by Christina Maslach; *A Simple Way to Pray*, by Martin Luther; *The Retreat Leader's Manual*, by Nancy Ferguson and Kevin Witt; and *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, by Heiko Oberman.

***Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul*, by Lance Witt**

One of the most meaningful books encountered on this journey was written by a veteran minister named Lance Witt. His book; *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul*, is written by a minister for ministers. While he writes to spiritual readers in general, there is no mistaking that this book is primarily directed to pastors. He is not a psychologist or counselor, however it was the most helpful book among its genre as far as reinforcing from a minister's perspective the need for the spiritual nurturing in ministers' lives. *Replenish* is a book that would resonate with anyone who has been in ministry. It is practical, informative, and real. "Real" is an important word on which ministers would do well to ponder: where one really is, how they really got there, and whether there is any real hope. The author is transparent. He has been a senior pastor for much of his thirty-plus years in ministry. Along the way, he was also the executive and teaching pastor with Rick Warren at Saddleback Church, a mega-church in Southern California.

The most meaningful quote from the book may have been, "We have neglected the fact that a pastor's greatest leadership tool is a healthy soul. Our concentration on

skill, technique, and strategy has resulted in deemphasizing the interior life. The outcome is an increasing number of men and women leading our churches who are emotionally empty and spiritually dry.”¹ While this is an important spiritual truth, it is unlikely that ministers have heard it from their conference leadership or been given encouragement and permission to make a greater focus of their self-care. Neither is this something that has been focused on by local church leadership, but it needs to be addressed, and Witt does so in this book. Not only does he clearly state it, he does a great job of backing up his claim.

Some of the greatest evidence of that truth is given in the first chapter entitled, “The Idolatry of Leadership.” The statistics presented in the Introduction of this project bear repeating here:

- 1,500 pastors leave the ministry permanently each month in America.
- 80% of pastors and 85% of their spouses feel discouraged in their roles.
- 70% of pastors do not have a close friend, confidant, or mentor.
- Over 50% of pastors are so discouraged they would leave the ministry if they could but have no other way of making a living.
- Over 50% of pastors’ wives feel that their husband entering ministry was the most destructive thing to ever happen to their families.
- 30% of pastors said they had either been in an ongoing affair or had a one-time sexual encounter with a parishioner.
- 71% of pastors stated they were burned out, and they battle depression beyond fatigue on a weekly and even a daily basis.
- One out of every ten ministers will actually retire as a minister.²

This is just one of many quantitative surveys which speak to the state of the ministry and the pain of ministers and their families. It quickly becomes evident that more needs to be

¹ Witt, *Replenish*, 19.

² *Ibid.*, 18-19.

done to nurture ministers in their spiritual lives and work. As far as this project goes, it speaks eloquently to the need of spiritual retreats along the journey of ministry.

To a seasoned minister reading this book, it quickly becomes apparent that Witt knows the path of ministry well. He writes pastor to pastor, leader to leader, disciple to disciple. It quickly becomes apparent that the content of Witt's book comes from a lifetime of personal experience, and that is what lends power and substance to what he shares. The words in his preface sound almost prophetic; "We will never grow healthy churches with unhealthy leaders."³ Strange as it may sound to speak this way about ministry, Witt is a minister who knows many of the seductions there are in ministry and states them openly and clearly. He covers these temptations, or "toxins," in the first chapters of the book. He presents four sections: (1) De-Toxing Your Soul; (2) Start Here . . . Start Now; (3) Sustaining a Lifetime of Health; and (4) Building Healthy Teams.⁴

At my last church, in which I served as senior pastor, the pastoral team read and discussed this book together, using the questions at the end of each chapter for discussion and reflection. It was a powerful, easy experience. We ended up sharing in ways and at a depth that we never had before. Having led that exercise, it was clear that the book spoke to a group of ministers of varied ages and backgrounds. It was a strong reminder as to how much pastors have in common regardless of their age, gender, or particular ministry focus. *Replenish* is well organized and purposeful. It flows well from chapter to chapter and topic to topic. It is filled with profound insights, helpful reminders, and transparency on the part of the author.

³ Ibid., 12.

⁴ Ibid., 12-13.

Replenish beats with a pastor's heart. The book accomplishes Witt's stated goal: "My greatest desire in writing this book is that it would lead you toward Jesus. May your intimacy with him transcend all of the ministry's clutter and noise and busyness. And may you be reminded that your ministry is not your life. . . . Jesus is."⁵ Not only does Witt clearly address the problem, but he knows the reasons why it is so hard for ministers to find the help they need. He writes,

To further complicate this issue, those of us who serve in ministry leadership aren't very good about sending up the warning flare and letting somebody know when we're in over our heads. Revealing struggles and asking for help can feel risky. So people try to tough it out, cover it up, and keep it in. But eventually ministry and life come unraveled. . . . We may be better leaders than we used to be, but the evidence seems to say we are not better pastors or husbands or Christ followers. . . . Godly leadership is always inside out.⁶

Chapter two is entitled, "Hole In My Soul." The title of the chapter itself felt like a diagnostic question and a painful reminder. This chapter has inspired the idea for the beginning of the retreat. There will be a plastic bucket for each minister and a private time during which they prayerfully reflect on what it is that drains them in ministry. What are the holes in their souls? It will be a visual reminder and a tangible tool for them individually and communally for the group to address during the retreat. Witt, who is a highly successful minister, writes, "It's scary to realize that the path to external success and internal emptiness can be the same road."⁷

Witt writes, "We are kingdom bringers to a dark world. The battle is real. Add to this that we are broken and frail and flawed. We desperately need the life of Jesus

⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁷ Ibid., 25.

flowing through us in order to carry out our kingdom calling.”⁸ Two elements of this statement inform this project. First of all, it sounds a bit like Luther, the person and guide for this spiritual retreat. Like Luther, Witt realizes clearly that spiritual battles are spiritually won or lost, and there are real consequences to losing. Witt has also finds help in Sabbath and in spiritual retreat to face this war, both of which are foundational to this project. He writes, “The last few years I’ve been working more intentionally to create space between the notes. I am learning the rhythm of Sabbath, personal retreat, and quiet reflection.”⁹ It is interesting that even when it comes to Sabbath and spiritual retreat, Witt writes that he has been working more intentionally; perhaps that is what is needed for change, however it shows just how work oriented we can be even when we speak of Sabbath and spiritual retreat.

Witt wants pastors to evaluate their priorities and face reality by owning their own lives. Here is the importance of facing oneself and committing to difficult changes. He also calls on spiritual leaders to take time apart to be alone and determine prayerfully what their values and priorities are. Along with that will come hard but important decisions, and these will require regular maintenance. Spiritual retreat can help afford a pastor this kind of space, quiet time to reflect and to prayerfully ask God for help in making needed changes.¹⁰ Witt states, “Ministry fatigue is not isolated to the suburban American mega-church. Fatigue is a constant theme I hear regardless of the size of town or the size of church. There are many Christian leaders who are living AWOL (A Worn-

⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰ Ibid., 95.

Out Life).”¹¹ My experience resonates with that statement. *Replenish* is a book that really hits the target. It not only points out the tired reality, but it gives practical advice on how to make changes that will make a difference for the long haul.

Burnout: The Cost of Caring, by Christina Maslach

The second book for review is *Burnout: The Cost of Caring* by Christina Maslach.¹² Maslach is considered a pioneer and a leading authority on the subject of burnout. Whereas Witt is a minister speaking to ministers, Maslach is a psychologist and a researcher. The reason for choosing one of her books as a foundational work for this project is that she is a voice from another discipline, psychology, and speaks authoritatively as a counselor on the danger of burnout.

Maslach defines burnout this way: “Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do ‘people work’ of some kind. It is a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings, particularly when they are troubled or having problems.”¹³ Maslach singles out those who work with people as potential burnout victims. Ministers do just such work. Working with people is ministry. There are people who are stressed and in crisis, and ministry is a life of deadlines and long hours. It is the perfect setup for burnout. When reading Maslach’s book, one no longer finds Witt’s statistics on ministers in crisis surprising. There is a trap in the very dynamic of a minister’s work that can lead to burnout. Not only do ministers work with

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹² Christina Maslach, *Burnout: The Cost of Caring* (Los Altos, CA: ISHK, 2003).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

people constantly, they can carry the added burden of the importance of their work.

Pastors view what they do as having eternal implications. Unless that is surrendered to God, it is no surprise that a human will buckle underneath that load. Ministers may end up as others experiencing burnout, “viewing other people through rust-colored glasses.”¹⁴

It is interesting that though Maslach’s book is for the general public, she writes specifically about ministers early in her book, maybe for the very reasons already stated. Of ministers she compassionately writes, “A minister who must be a source of refuge and support for anyone seeking help at any time, and who has no one to turn to when personal problems arise, is at risk for burnout.”¹⁵ The many casualties in ministry are proof of just such danger. It could be that what has been written off as moral failures or other character weaknesses may at times have burnout as an underlying contributor. From her years of research, Maslach explains that “a pattern of emotional overload and subsequent emotional exhaustion is at the heart of the burnout syndrome.”¹⁶ A minister will tell you that the emotional and spiritual labor of ministry is often more tiring than physical labor.

Maslach has been a pioneer on the topic of burnout. She wrote about it in 1976 in the magazine *Human Behavior*. The response by the public to her article was, in her own words, “overwhelming”: she states, “Thousands of letters and telephone calls poured in from all parts of the United States and Canada. People wanted more information about burnout, some asked for help with their specific difficulties, and some expressed relief

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.

that at last this taboo topic had been made public.”¹⁷ Some ministers may wonder if the topic of burnout is still taboo, at least for them. After all, a minister should have a connection with God. Some views of ministry could hold ministers back from seeking help or letting someone know they are concerned with how their life and work is going. Maslach writes, “More often than not, people interpret their experience of burnout as reflecting some basic personality malfunction. The feeling that ‘something is wrong with me, I am too weak or incompetent to handle this job, or I have become a bad person’ is pervasive enough to propel many people into some form of self-condemnation.”¹⁸ Pastors may take this even further, thinking they should be stronger or better able to handle almost anything because they love and serve God. One issue that will be highlighted with and through Luther will be righteousness by faith. The questions that will be raised following the segment of Luther’s life changing discovery of grace will be: Is there grace for ministers too? Is there grace for those who minister grace to others?

When it comes to people beating themselves up over the struggle with burnout, Maslach’s studies reveal that

although personality does play some part in burnout, the bulk of the evidence I have examined is consistent with the view that burnout is best understood (and modified) in terms of situational sources of job-related, interpersonal stress. The phenomenon is so widespread, the people affected by it are so numerous, and their personalities and backgrounds are so varied, that it does not make sense to identify “bad people” as the cause for what is clearly an undesirable outcome.¹⁹

She asks,

¹⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

¹⁹ Ibid., 9.

Why do we tend to have this strong bias toward blaming burnout on ourselves, rather than on features of the work situation? To begin with, much psychological research informs us that many people have a general tendency to overestimate the importance of personal factors, while simultaneously underestimating situational ones (a tendency that psychologists call ‘the fundamental attribution error’).²⁰

Therefore, people suffering from burnout, or those headed that direction, could actually add to their pain and stress by blaming themselves as weak or flawed. And in so doing, they drive themselves even further down the road to burnout.

Maslach, in her research, has found that burnout syndrome comes about by chronic stress from everyday life rather than occasional major crises. It has more to do with the emotional pressure that comes from working closely with people day in and day out.²¹ Her research shows that “dealing with people can be very demanding. It takes a lot of energy to be calm in the midst of crises, to be patient in the face of frustrations, to be understanding and compassionate when surrounded by fear, pain, anger, or shame.”²² Thus, it is easy to see why ministers are highly prone to burnout, for this is the constant environment for most ministers. And Maslach warns that her research shows that if people get too involved at a personal level and become close to those they are helping, they can often take on even greater burden for those they are working with.²³ Ministers usually work in a setting where just such draining relationships are the norm and not the

²⁰ Ibid., 10.

²¹ Ibid., 11.

²² Ibid., 17.

²³ Ibid., 32.

exception. Maslach writes, “Many different job settings that are burnout-prone have one thing in common—overload.”²⁴ It is no wonder that ministers struggle.

This book is more clinical in its approach than Witt’s book. It shares information based on research, and while that does not necessarily make for a riveting read, the strength of this work is the data and descriptions related to burnout and its causes. The author lists preventative measures and illustrates how those in supervisory can take actions that will effect change. Maslach writes, “Burnout among providers can be hastened or alleviated by supervisory actions. . . . Helpers can need help too, but if they are unable to get it from their supervisors, they have lost a potential source of support against the onset of burnout.”²⁵ This book shares clinical research on the topic at hand, and it also suggests strategies for doing something about it. One of the important components is help from supervisors within the system. As a denomination, the Seventh-day Adventists have not been very effective in providing this help.

Even the research on the aspects of personality that contribute to burnout flash warning lights for ministers. Maslach writes, “Persons entering the helping professions often have high needs for approval and heightened expectations of themselves.”²⁶ Ministers are not immune to these needs and expectations. Often these descriptors fit ministers or those studying for ministry. She adds, “If work becomes the primary means by which they enhance their self-concept, these persons may over commit their time and energy. Consequently, they develop few activities, other than work, which produce

²⁴ Ibid., 34.

²⁵ Ibid., 45-46.

²⁶ Ibid., 56.

enjoyment.”²⁷ It is no wonder that so many ministers are in trouble. Having worked with many retired pastors, it is clear that we in ministry fall into this pit of identity crisis without an official position and title.

Along with the personal characteristics that feed burnout, such as high expectations, need for approval, lack of much positive feedback, and poor peer contact, there are personal bedrock issues that affect workers, such as facing up to what really motivates or even drives the individual. Maslach addresses from a psychological and clinical point of view what Witt approached as a pastor, that is, the question of what is underneath it all:

The basic question in this chapter is “who is more at risk for burnout?” What demographic traits characterize these people, and do they have a certain type of personality? This who question is not putting the blame on someone (as was the who posed in chapter one). Rather, it is an attempt to discover just what makes someone more susceptible to burnout and to understand why this should be so.²⁸

People do not come to ministry with a clean slate. They come with an upbringing, beliefs, and even negative motivations, some of which they not even be aware of. In ministry we speak of a call from God, and while God does call people, there can be personal needs that drive them as well. Not all that moves a person to become a minister is altruistic. There are personal needs and possibly weaknesses involved as well. Maslach calls for a reality check when she writes, “Your own sense of who you are, and your evaluation of that unique being, play an important role in your relations with the people around you. To

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 57.

know thyself and like thyself is critical for giving of thyself unto others.”²⁹ This is true for men and women ministers alike, as Maslach’s research demonstrates.³⁰

Among the causes given for burnout in the book, the following are found in ministry:

At first glance, caregiving appears to stem from altruistic and selfless motives, in which others and their well-being take precedence over oneself. In our society these motives are held up as noble ideals and are strongly applauded when they appear. But there are other reasons why people help, although they are considered somewhat selfish. People may be less willing to acknowledge that these motives are operating even when they are, because they seem inappropriate or unacceptable. Indeed, these motives do raise some potential problems, which I shall discuss later. However, ignoring or denying their existence is not a productive approach; these motives are powerful and need to be openly recognized and understood.³¹

If pastors are ministering because it is how they get self-worth, because of guilt, or a way to satisfy needs for intimacy, that could cause trouble. The effects of burnout are serious. There is no way around that. But even those functioning who are only singled around the edges will have their lives and ministries affected by it. Hostility, impatience, fatigue, tension, the inability to relax, insomnia, worry, and anxiety are only some of the ways that burnout impacts one’s life. Maslach warns, “People pay a heavy price for being their brother’s [and sister’s] keeper. The emotional exhaustion and cynicism of burnout are often accompanied by a deterioration in physical and psychological well-being.”³²

While taking care of ministers should be important to those who oversee their work because each person is priceless, it also seems that money and time spent on

²⁹ Ibid., 63.

³⁰ Ibid., 58.

³¹ Ibid., 67.

³² Ibid., 73.

nurturing ministers is money well spent. The deterioration of a minister's physical and emotional health impacts not only the minister and his or her family, which would be enough of a reason, but it also affect the churches and church schools that are served. The later part of the book discusses how to live and work in such a way so that one can avoid burnout. It gives clinical and practical advice such as how to care for oneself and others, emphasizing the need for rest and relaxation. All and all, this is a powerful book, and it has scientifically educated and encouraged this project.

A Simple Way to Pray, by Martin Luther

A Simple Way to Pray by Martin Luther is a book that fits this project's aim to help ministers with their personal prayer lives.³³ It is amazing to think that Luther—the reformer, professor, preacher, translator, and author—would take the time to write such a lengthy personal letter to help his barber know how to pray more meaningfully. This is the minister Martin Luther at his best, and this book is a joy. The book is a personal letter on how to pray. It gives a wealth of insight into Luther's thinking and beliefs on prayer as well. It is as if Luther is a spiritual director.

In this letter, Luther writes, "Dear Master Peter: I will tell you as best I can what I do personally when I pray. May our dear Lord grant you and to everybody to do it better than I! Amen."³⁴ Luther's sense of an intense battle between God and Satan for one's soul is apparent in this little book, as Luther warns of the devil's attempts to obstruct

³³ Martin Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

one's prayer life.³⁵ He also gives practical counsel on not letting the opportunity of prayer slip away.

Luther advises starting with prayer first thing in the morning and again before bed. Otherwise one is likely to have nice ideas about spending time in prayer and find at the end of the day that the day was filled with everything but prayer. He writes that our thoughts often follow this pattern: "Wait a little while. I will pray in an hour; first I must attend to this or that. Such thoughts get you away from prayer into other affairs which so hold your attention and involve you that nothing comes of prayer for that day."³⁶

Ministers have often shared that they can be so busy with congregational work and members' needs that they end up neglecting their own spiritual lives. Luther's personal practice of prayer gives the busy pastor no excuse to having prayer crowded out or set to the side until other time. In the foreword to the book, Marjorie Thompson writes, "Luther once acknowledged that he could not get on without three or four hours of prayer daily. Few of us are possessed of this prodigious energy and commitment, but the authenticity of his prayer life should encourage us to attend to what we may learn from his knowledge and experience in faith."³⁷ She also acknowledges that Luther once wrote, "None can believe how powerful prayer is, and what it is able to effect, but those who have learned it by experience."³⁸

³⁵ Ibid., 18.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Marjorie J. Thompson, "Foreword," in Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 12.

³⁸ Ibid.

It becomes clear while reading this little book that Luther wants Peter the barber to experience this reality as well. He takes him through the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostle's Creed. Along the way, he gives profound commentary, as there are spiritual gems scattered throughout the book. He wrote this letter in 1535, at which point he had been through many trials and tribulations and come through all the stronger in part because of his rich prayer life.³⁹ He firmly believed that the Holy Spirit was at work and speaking as he prayed through Scripture. Luther noted that one should have pen and paper ready because the Spirit can give insight in a moment.

Luther not only tells Peter how to pray, but he shows him by taking him on a prayer journey. He walks him through prayer, and along the way he explains what will help and hinder the prayer life of the individual Christian. He uses illustrations that a barber can relate to, for example, "So, a good and attentive barber keeps his thoughts, attention, and eyes on the razor and hair and does not forget how far he has gotten with his shaving or cutting. If he wants to engage in too much conversation or let his mind wander or look somewhere else he is likely to cut his customer's mouth, nose, or even his throat."⁴⁰ Luther also describes the difference in his prayer life from when he was a monk, stating that thoughtless repetition is not genuine prayer.⁴¹

³⁹ Luther, *A Simple Way to Pray*, 21.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

Luther's weaving a "Garland of Four Strands" in prayer is most applicable to the project at hand.⁴² In brief, the four strands are a simple and simply profound way to pray. The first is seeking instruction from the passage; the second strand is thanksgiving; the third is confession; and the fourth is prayer. This approach helps the one in prayer to be attentive, so that he or she may get a great deal out of the encounter with God, his Word, and prayer. This book will be given to the ministers at the retreat, and during the retreat there will be time to pray the garland of four in groups and privately. By practicing it at the retreat, they can experience it for themselves and take with them a life-changing tool.

***The Retreat Leader's Manual*, by Nancy Ferguson and Kevin Witt**

The Retreat Leader's Manual by Nancy Ferguson and Kevin Witt provides an excellent foundation for preparing the retreat experience. It is intended to cover some theology, the mechanisms of planning, and executing an effective spiritual retreat. Certainly there is no way to be exhaustive on the theology of retreat, yet share within the same book how to do homework and figure details as mundane as budgets, timelines, etc. And yet this book accomplishes a great deal. The authors are seasoned veterans when it comes to conducting retreats, and this helps them guide readers through the process of leading a retreat.

The book is broken down into three sections. The first section begins with the reason for spiritual retreats. It delves into a brief scriptural and theological bedrock for Christian retreat. This is an especially enjoyable section of the book. It gives excellent biblical support not only as to why spiritual retreat is important, but also its effectiveness.

⁴² Ibid., 34.

The second section examines the great opportunity spiritual retreats offer for experiential and relational practices. It provides examples of activities and suggestions for worship, Bible study, and community building. It suggests activities one could try during the retreat and outlines the dynamics to offer participants. The focus is on building relationships between the participants and God as well as among those attending the retreat. The combination of the focus on the personal relationship with God as well as Christian community during a retreat is much appreciated because this project seeks to be both personal and corporate in its approach.

The third and final section provides a step-by-step guide through the planning process. This section focuses on the details of how to hold a spiritual retreat, including everything from finding the right retreat center to budgeting money and time. This is about the organization of and implementation of the plans. It is highly practical and helpful. While I enjoyed the first section the most, this last section offers much guidance in the area of being ready for the retreat. *The Retreat Leaders Manual* would be an excellent book for anyone looking into holding a retreat.

***Luther: Man between God and the Devil*, by Heiko Oberman**

Of all the books read about the life and times of Martin Luther, two stand head and shoulders above the rest: *Here I Stand* by Roland H. Bainton and *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* by Heiko Oberman. Bainton's work is a long-recognized classic. In fact, Oberman dedicates his book to the memory of Bainton. If Heiko Oberman's book is not yet considered a modern classic on Luther, it is only a matter of time until it will be.

There are two prefaces in Oberman's book, both of which explain a great deal about the Luther's thinking, as well as the work of historians who have represented him. The reason for the two prefaces is that one is from the original printing in German, written when Oberman was a professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.⁴³ The preface to the English updated and revised version was written in April of 1989 at the University of Arizona, where Oberman was teaching at the time.⁴⁴ It is interesting to note the difference in the two different prefaces. One can glean much from reading what an author writes about his or her book at two different times and in two different places. Perhaps here is where one finds why Oberman is such a great historian and author. Both prefaces afford more than the niceties of thanks to those who helped, or a quick synopsis of what is to come. In them, Oberman sheds light on how he believes a historian and student must approach the task.

In the preface to his first edition he writes,

Discovering Luther the man demands more than scholarship can ever expect to offer. We must be prepared to leave behind our own view of life and the world: to cross centuries of confessional and intellectual conflict in order to become his contemporary. When the Church was still equated with Heaven, and the Emperor represented the might of the world, a monk named Luther rose up against these powers of Heaven and Earth: he stood alone with only God and his omnipresent adversary, the Devil.⁴⁵

In his preface to the revised English edition, Oberman considers what a good historian and student must do: "The primary task is to become bilingual, gaining control of the languages of the past and of the present—not merely languages frozen in dictionaries, but

⁴³ Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), xx.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, xix.

also those gleaned from the historical record and perceived in contemporary experience. Both kinds are hard to master, yet for very different reasons; distance and proximity provide for equally formidable ‘sound barriers.’”⁴⁶ Oberman warns,

The translation enterprise is as hazardous as it is necessary; nuances are easily lost, especially when once vitally important existential expressions are rendered as antiquated parts of an obsolete “belief system.” In the case of Martin Luther this problem is all the more acute, as his interpreters, intent on mining his riches, have been given to present him as “relevant” and hence “modern.” Thus they have been inclined to bypass or remove medieval “remnants”—first among these, the Devil Himself. . . .

This book has been written with the double assumption that, first, the Reformer can only be understood as a late medieval man for whom Satan is as real as God and mammon; and, second, that the relevancy so sought after is not found by purging the record and hence submitting to post-Enlightenment standards of modernity, but rather by challenging our condescending sense of having outgrown the dark myths of the past.⁴⁷

He writes from Jerusalem in 1982:

It is not the “Catholic,” “Protestant,” or even “modern” Luther we are looking for. We will encounter them as well, but our objective is Martin Luther between God and the Devil. Precisely this “narrow” perspective will in fact, open to us the total vista of the Reformation and the part played in Luther’s time and life; how unexpected was when it became reality; how imperiled it remained after Luther’s death. We will be turning our attention to his personality and its complexities, discovering where he came from and where he was going, where he got in his own way and where he robbed himself of the fruits of his labors.

Getting to know Martin Luther requires more than just following him to the various scenes of the Reformation and more than just compiling theological highlights, though all this is part of our pursuit. The crucial point is to grasp the man in his totality—head *and* heart, in *and* out of tune with the temper of his time.⁴⁸

Oberman moves in, through, and around the life and times of Martin Luther in the way that only a person who has dedicated his life to the study can. It is clear that he has

⁴⁶ Ibid., xv.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., xix.

an amazing grasp of the complexity and intricacy of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. His knowledge and ease with it makes it available to the reader in ways that are unique when compared with other books on Luther. And while the book is filled with a myriad of facts and insights, Oberman helps the reader to see the many puzzle pieces, as well as how they fit together.

One of the strengths of this particular book is that it shows a picture of Luther that seems very likely. It shows both the strengths and weaknesses of Luther as a person by neither eulogizing nor by castigating him. It hides neither the beauty nor the warts, neither the strengths nor the flaws of the man.

It is not a work that sounds like a memorial or public relations promotion for Luther. Neither is it an attempt to undermine the man and reformer. Rather it comes across as a balanced and serious work by an excellent historian who is trying to bring as accurate account of Luther and his times to the reader. Oberman is a gifted communicator. The book flows well. It covers important aspects of Luther and his time, as well as the time leading up to the Protestant Reformation. He focuses on the different philosophical and theological thoughts of Luther's day and where Luther agreed and disagreed. His grasp of Luther and the history surrounding him is so great that he helps the reader see and navigate the many crosscurrents as Luther makes his way through them.

Many aspects of Luther's life are covered, including his birth, childhood, conversion in the thunderstorm on his way back to school, family life, education, career, and death. Oberman's vast knowledge allows readers to feel as if they are being introduced more intimately to Luther. The combination of covering the Reformer's

personal as well as public life is a powerful combination. The result is that by the end of the book, the reader not only knows more about Luther's theology and the reformation, but that he or she knows the man as well. What a gift this book is for students of Luther and the reformation. The title of the book itself is telling. Oberman shares how powerfully Luther felt the devil's attacks and how real he saw the spiritual battle between good and evil in his life as a Christian, reformer, preacher, teacher, and leader. This work could be helpful to the ministers who participate in this spiritual retreat.

CHAPTER 4

A THEOLOGY OF CLERGY CARE

The world of theology is the world in which the minister has been educated, works, and lives. However, of the many great Christian theologies, the theology of spiritual self-care tends to be neglected or completely absent for many ministers. This neglect of self-care could be based in poor theology or a lack of theological reflection. The word *self* connotes too many red flags for ministers who believe they have been called to a *selfless* ministry. Somehow the idea that ministers should not even mention self, let alone nurture the self, is a difficult view to overcome.

In 2016, it may be that self-care is taught extensively and effectively in theological seminaries. This was not the case years ago when ministers worked through their Masters of Divinity programs. Erik Parker, a young minister and a recent seminary graduate, describes how the seminary he attended emphasized self-care in order to better serve others and improve the quality of one's ministerial work.¹ He states, "For so many professional ministers, a well rested, healthy pastor is a pastor failing at ministry. . . . My

¹ Erik Parker, "Why Pastors Suck at Self-Care," *The Millennial Pastor*, Theology and Culture (September 5, 2014), <http://millennialpastor.net/2014/09/05/why-pastors-suck-at-self-care/> (accessed February 1, 2016), 2.

colleagues have told me that there was a day in seminary education when the message to students was that being a pastor meant giving your life to Jesus (or in other words, to your congregation) 24/7. There is no self-care in ministry.”²

It is clear that even young ministers struggle with self-care, even if they were taught its importance in seminary. Parker cites a few reasons why pastors are lousy at self-care: the accepted standard of being incredibly busy, the need to earn their keep, and the perception of a calling to complete self-sacrifice. He describes a difficult standard seen in ministry, which paints picture of burnout, and he shows how society in general, and ministry in particular, encourages a hectic workload. He even explains that ministers often feel the need to earn their keep among their congregation, and this perspective that aims to please everybody leads to deterioration.³ In other words, pastors feel the need to demonstrate their value through overwork in a futile attempt to please everyone at their own expense.⁴ This perspective is not only impossible, but self-destructive.

Even if self-care is being presently addressed, ministers have difficulty putting it into practice. Self-care can be construed as being “self-ish” by many in ministry. The Duke Clergy Health Initiative has found that clergy of all ages find it difficult to care for themselves.⁵ In an article entitled, “Self-care Is Not Self-ish,” research director Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell is quoted as saying, “Clergy recognize the importance of caring for themselves, but doing so takes a back seat to fulfilling their vocational responsibilities,

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁵ Ibid., 2.

which are tantamount to caring for an entire community; they feel they need permission to take time to attend to their health.”⁶ If this concept of vocational responsibility and the feeling of needed congregational permission for clergy to care for themselves exists, then those who direct ministers along with their congregations need to give them that permission. This project is part of that permission for Adventist ministers in Ohio. Not only is it permission granted, it is an invitation and encouragement from the president of the conference. Pastors in administration who lead pastors need to say clearly, “Rest is righteous too. It is a way to serve God and honor God.”⁷

The issue of pastoral burnout and dropout has been well documented in recent decades. Thus, the concept of a theological basis for self-care that can be reflected in the Bible is important. There are also themes or doctrines within our faith tradition that can educate and encourage Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Ohio when it comes to the practice of self-care.

A Biblical Theology of Self-Care

There are relevant verses in Scripture that, while not exhaustive to the subject of self-care, strongly emphasize the importance of it. Mark 6:30-32 states, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.

⁶ Kate Rugani, “Self-care Is Not Self-ish,” *Faith & Leadership*, Health & Well-Being (August 13, 2012), <http://www.faithandleadership.com/self-care-not-self-ish/> (accessed February 1, 2016), 2.

⁷ Nancy Ferguson and Kevin T. Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual: A Complete Guide to Organizing Meaningful Christian Retreats* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2006), 23.

So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.”⁸ The context of this passage reflects the concept of rest and retreat in that the disciples of Jesus have returned from ministry that he himself had called for them to do (see Mark 6:7-8). Later in the chapter, they return and share with Jesus a beautiful report of what had occurred. As soon as they offer him their report, he says that it is time to get away, alone, to a deserted place. This passage sounds like Jesus calling his disciples to a pastor’s retreat and to rest. It sounds like self-care. Not only does it sound like self-care, it sounds like self-care being directed by Jesus himself for those involved in his ministry. The disciples have been busy in ministry, and upon returning from that ministry journey he himself sent them on, Jesus responds by calling them to get away from people, crowds, and even from doing good and important things. He calls them from public ministry to personal ministry, to self-care. He wants them to retreat and rest.

This is an important point. Jesus calls them to set down the important work he has given them in order to rest. It is important that he teach them to lay things aside from time to time and get away from ministry to rest. This is a significant lesson because the disciples are in a world of need, where there will never be enough hours, nor energy enough to meet it. The disciples of Jesus are called to a work that no disciple is capable of completely fulfilling. This is because it is the work of God, and they are but his workers. It is encouraging to observe Jesus calling his closest disciples to cease their active and pressing ministry for a time apart from it. Even in Jesus’ life and ministry, with all that he was capable of accomplishing, he did not heal everyone in the world, nor

⁸ All Scripture quoted is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

even within Israel, he did not preach to everyone in the world, and yet he regularly took the time to be alone. In this passage of Scripture, self-care is the central theme.

Scripture is not silent on the issue of self-care. Weariness was something that Jesus himself experienced and understood. The need for rest was something he saw in his disciples. Contemporary disciples of Jesus, particularly ministers, need to realize that he sees this need in them as well. While the call within this scriptural context is to the original twelve disciples, there is nothing original about their need. Those who follow Jesus and work in ministry understand how serious the need is. The next step is to address the need.

Jesus' words and actions were an example to the first disciples: an example of ceasing their activities, as good and important as they were, to spend time alone in fellowship with him and each other. He modeled what he called them to do throughout his ministry. So when Jesus said to the crowd in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." It is not only possible but highly probable that he was calling his closest disciples in this verse as well. Ministers are familiar with burdens; rest is another story.

In *Replenish*, written for ministers and church leaders, Witt makes an observation and a confession: "Everywhere I go I meet people who want a simpler life, a slower pace, and a schedule with more breathing room. People are exhausted and frazzled. For some reason, in our culture we have swallowed hook, line, and sinker the lie that busyness equals importance. I have not been exempt."⁹ In the Old Testament, there is an account of Moses and his father Jethro. Jethro has watched the pace and weight of Moses's work and

⁹ Witt, *Replenish*, 61.

how dedicated he has been to the work of God, and says to him, “The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself” (Exodus 18:17-18). There is much that could be written about these verses for many reasons, but for the purpose of this project, it is important to note that Moses adhered to his calling from God and performed diligent work. The problem Moses faced was one of overwork, and it could be the death of him and his ministry. Jethro observed the wear and tear that Moses experienced in his life and refused to let him off without a holy warning. Again, as it was with the twelve disciples when Jesus told them to put down ministry and come apart for a while, it is so with Jethro and Moses. The work Moses did was important and spiritual, yet the amount and means by which Moses conducted his work was unhealthy.

Ministers, within the quiet of their own hearts and minds, know this to be true of their actions. The sad fact exists that even while some ministers are aware of this trait, many continue down a self-destructive path rather than the path of healthy self-care. Witt confesses, “For years I intuitively knew my obsessive busyness was violating my soul. Constant activity could prop up the external image I wanted to project, but it couldn’t prop up my soul. In honest and quiet moments, I longed to get off the treadmill and didn’t know how.”¹⁰ It is time for more ministers to begin the path of self-care by confessing that what they do is not good. The inherent lack of self-care seen in ministry needs to be addressed by those who experience it.

Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still and know that I am God.” This would seem to hold spiritual significance for ministers. Ministers cannot share God if they do not know him.

¹⁰ Ibid., 62.

Ministers cannot share God more deeply if they cease to grow deeper in their relationship with him. Witt notes, “To look at most pastors or ministry leaders, you would think the verse said ‘be busy and know that you are productive’ or ‘work hard, and know that your ministry is successful.’ This verse is more about my connection *to* God than my work *for* God.”¹¹ A theology of self-care is important for a number of reasons, but one of the most important is that it is about one’s connection with God. And if one’s connection with God suffers, then one’s spouse and family suffer too. If the person is a minister, the ministry will be diminished. When ministers take care of themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually, it not only blesses them, but it blesses their families, their church members, and others with whom they come in contact. They minister from a deeper place with deeper resources. A healthy minister makes for a healthy ministry, and an unhealthy minister makes for an unhealthy ministry. A minister’s self-care needs to be about the minister first and foremost. And ministers need to realize that not only is it permissible to take care of themselves, but it is God’s will that they do. If a minister has the courage to pursue positive self-care, the blessed minister will be a blessing.

It is a sad fact that ministers, who share good news with others, can have a bad theology when it comes to what God wants from and for them. Parker writes, “Often ministers feel as though working for Jesus means that they are to put their families and themselves second.”¹² Yet another unrealistic goal would be thinking that a minister’s vocation is to care for everyone.¹³ But beneath these ideas could be a weakness that is not

¹¹ Ibid., 62.

¹² Parker, “Why Pastors Suck at Self-Care,” 2.

¹³ Ibid.

recognized, that of a minister trying to prove his or her worth to a congregation.¹⁴ There can be a lot of reasons why ministers do not take care of themselves. The common phrase nowadays that fits is, “It’s complicated.”

Witt observes, “Ministry fatigue is not isolated to the suburban American mega-church. Fatigue is a constant theme I hear regardless of the size of town or the size of church. There are many Christian leaders who are living AWOL (A Worn-Out Life). I talk with a lot of pastors, and I can see it in their eyes, hear it in their voices, and read it in their body language.”¹⁵ When it comes to ministers being AWOL, that is, living a worn-out life, it does not seem to be as much about the setting as it is about the kind of work itself. It is compassion fatigue; it is carrying the weight of the world, or at least their parishioners, on their shoulders (even if that is God’s calling and not theirs). For a host of reasons, many ministers are burning out. They are busy and tired. Witt writes, “But here’s the problem. Busyness will not only distract, it will infect. Your busyness will damage your soul. Over time you will develop a hurried spirit. And even when your body is still, your soul will be racing. Your busy spirit will constantly remind you of everything you need to be doing. At times you’ll feel like your insides are racing.”¹⁶ To most ministers, this is not only a warning, but a relatable description of their experience. Being “infected” with busyness and weariness will also affect their health, ministry, and according to Witt, even their souls.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵ Witt, *Replenish*, 62.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Wayne Muller, in his book *Sabbath*, writes, “Without rest, we respond from a survival mode, where everything we meet assumes a terrifying prominence . . . every encounter, every detail inflates in importance, everything seems more urgent than it really is, and we react with sloppy desperation.”¹⁷ There is a lot riding on healthy self-care, not only for the minister, but the minister’s family, parishioners, and the community he or she serves.

An Adventist Theology of Self-Care: Sabbath

There are significant, denominationally held doctrines that instruct and inform in regards to a theology of Adventist clergy care. There are two in particular that are quite clear theologically from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. Within Seventh-day Adventist theology and faith tradition, there is a strong emphasis on Sabbath rest as well as on physical health.

The role of the Sabbath is an essential part of self-care. In a publication declaring the official doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church titled, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, the authors state,

The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God’s unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another—Fundamental Beliefs, 19.¹⁸

¹⁷ Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), 5.

¹⁸ Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988), 248.

The Sabbath is also a day of rest for Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Ohio. In Mark 2:27-28, Jesus claims, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” If the Sabbath was made for humankind, then ministers were meant to experience the joy of it as well. In this passage in Mark, and its surrounding context, Jesus simultaneously accomplishes two things. First, he is claiming that the Sabbath is good and was made for humankind. It is a gift and he is Lord of it. Second, he is warning against the abuse a legalistic posture brings when it hijacks the Sabbath. Rightly understood and entered into, Sabbath rest offers much that people need, and that pastors in particular need as well. However, Ferguson and Witt point out the bind for the minister: “Sabbath can only begin if we close the factory, turn out the lights, turn off the computer, and withdraw from the concerns of the marketplace.”¹⁹ For the minister, their “factory” may well be church and a weekend filled with enough services to exhaust the healthiest person. It would seem that Seventh-day Adventist ministers spend much of their time and energy trying to help others experience the joy of the Sabbath blessings and miss much of the blessing of rest.

Within the section on the Sabbath in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, it is noted that “God rested because He expects humans to rest; He set an example for human beings to follow (Exodus 20:11)”²⁰ Here is a jewel of possibility emphasizing self-care right in the heart of the denominational book on doctrine. Amazing things would transpire if Seventh-day Adventist ministers practiced the holy gift of Sabbath. There are many

¹⁹ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 27.

²⁰ Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 250.

comments related to the Sabbath in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, a few of which are noted in the section entitled, “The Sabbath at Creation”:

1. *God rested on the Sabbath.* On the seventh day God ‘rested and was refreshed’ (Ex. 31:17), yet He did not rest because he needed it (Isa. 40:28). The verb ‘rested,’ *shabath*, means literally ‘to cease’ from labor or activity (cf. Gen. 8:22). . . . The Sabbath was His finishing touch, ending His work.
2. *God blessed the Sabbath.* God not only made the Sabbath, He blessed it. ‘The blessing on the seventh day implied that it was thereby declared to be a special object of divine favor and a day that would bring blessing to His creatures.
3. *God Sanctified the Sabbath.* To sanctify something means to make it sacred or holy, or to set it apart as holy and for holy use; to consecrate it. . . . He set it apart for the lofty purpose of enriching the divine-human relationship.²¹

Wayne Muller, a Christian not of our faith tradition, writes, “In Exodus 20, God says, ‘Remember,’ as if we would forget. Indeed, the assumption is that we will forget. And history has proven that, given enough time, we will.”²² Many Seventh-day Adventist ministers have forgotten important elements of the Sabbath for their personal lives. Among these elements are the sacredness of rest and being still and knowing that He is God. Muller states, “Sabbath time can be a revolutionary challenge to the violence of overwork, mindless accumulation, and the endless multiplication of desires, responsibilities, and accomplishments. Sabbath is a way of being in time where we remember who we are, remember what we know, and taste the gifts of spirit and eternity.”²³ Elsewhere Muller laments, “How did we get so terribly lost in a world saturated with striving and grasping, yet so bereft of joy and delight? I suggest that it is this: We have forgotten the Sabbath . . . If busyness can become a kind of violence, we do not have to stretch our perception very far to see that Sabbath time—effortless,

²¹ Ibid.

²² Muller, *Sabbath*, 6.

²³ Ibid.

nourishing rest—can invite a healing of this violence.”²⁴ According to Muller, “Sabbath is more than the absence of work; it is not just a day off, when we catch up on television or errands. It is the presence of something that arises when we consecrate a period of time to listen to what is most deeply beautiful, nourishing, or true. It is time consecrated with our attention, our mindfulness, honoring those quiet forces of grace or spirit that sustain and heal us.”²⁵ One of the great benefits to Seventh-day Adventist clergy in the state of Ohio could and should be the blessing of Sabbath rest. There is peace, strength, joy and rest to be found in it. In her book, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, Marva Dawn writes about the Hebrew concept of the Sabbath:

In *The Sabbath* Abraham Heschel talks about spiritual rest in terms of the Hebrew word *Menuha*. That word, usually rendered ‘rest,’ means ‘much more than withdrawal from labor and exertion, more than freedom from toil, strain or activity of any kind.’ Rather than a negative concept, the word connotes ‘something real and intrinsically positive.’ The ancient rabbis believed that ‘it took a special act of creation to bring it into being, that the universe would be incomplete without it.’²⁶

Many Sabbath preaching Seventh-day Adventist ministers are missing out on what they have taught and preached. Ministers who work within a faith tradition that holds such a high view of Sabbath are missing the very blessings to which they invite others.

There are countless blessings that come with Sabbath rest, but a few are obvious ones. The Sabbath harkens back to the creation story in Genesis.²⁷ Sabbath rest is a rhythmic reminder of who we are and who God is. It is a sacred reminder that we are not

²⁴ Ibid., 5.

²⁵ Ibid., 8.

²⁶ Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 58.

²⁷ Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 249.

God, we are his creation. It would be helpful for ministers to remember this as well. We are not God, we are his creation; and in his love, he has given us the sacred gift of rest and he wants us to enter it. Muller writes,

And so we are given a commandment: Remember the Sabbath. Rest is an essential enzyme of life, as necessary as air. Without rest, we cannot sustain the energy needed to have life. We refuse to rest at our peril—and yet in a world where overwork is seen as a professional virtue, many of us feel we can legitimately be stopped only by physical illness or collapse. . . . If we do not allow for a rhythm of rest in our overly busy lives, illness becomes our Sabbath—our pneumonia, our cancer, our heart attack, our accidents create Sabbath for us.²⁸

Muller writes of many people suffering illness who say to him, “Finally . . . at last I can rest.”²⁹ Maybe this is one of the reasons he is so adamant about the Sabbath. He states, “The practice of Sabbath is like the practice of taking refuge.”³⁰ Muller quotes a scholar who is likely Abraham Heschel, who wrote, “It was not Israel that kept the Sabbath, it is said, but the Sabbath kept Israel.”³¹ Seventh-day Adventist ministers would resonate with that thought considering their denominational history. It is time they experience the Sabbath more deeply, allowing that gift of God to help keep them.

Susan Phillips, in her book, *The Cultivated Life*, notes,

We read in Genesis 2:2-3 that God stopped too. ‘By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy’ (NIV). This is the first appearance of the word holy—*qadosh*—in scripture. Like God, we are to stop regularly and rest from our doing, good and necessary though much of it may be.³²

²⁸ Muller, *Sabbath*, 19-20.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Susan S. Phillips, *The Cultivated Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 79.

Mueller similarly writes, “The practice of Shabbat, or Sabbath, is designed specifically to restore us, a gift of time in which we allow the cares and concerns of the marketplace to fall away. We set aside time to delight in being alive, to savor the gifts of creation, and to give thanks for the blessings we may have missed in our necessary preoccupation with our work.”³³ Ministers need periods of rest in order to be restored as well. As in Mark 6, it is not that what the minister does is not good or important. The point is that even if what you do is good and important, not heeding God’s call to stop and rest is not good. Even good and important ministry must be set down and in Scripture; it looks like that should be done weekly. In a biblical theology of self-care, this is understood and embraced. It is soul nourishing and soul saving. Phillips writes, “Sabbath is one form of regular stopping, embedded in religious tradition and spiritual wisdom. Stopping is just about the most countercultural action we can take in a culture that valorizes total work.”³⁴

It is time that Seventh-day Adventist ministers heed their own doctrine of Sabbath and become more countercultural with it. Dawn writes,

The greatest result of Sabbath resting is the opportunity to know the presence of God, no matter what our present circumstances might be. We do not need to rely on our own strength to deal with the tragic. Rather, spiritual rest gives us the freedom to accept the fact that human happiness is fleeting and to trust that there will be enough grace to carry us through all tragedy. We might be experiencing a time of sadness and mourning, but our faith assures us that God is with us in our sorrow to bring us the Joy of his presence.³⁵

In *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, the section on Sabbath ends this way: “The Lord of the Sabbath invites all to follow His example. Those who accept His call experience the

³³ Muller, *Sabbath*, 26.

³⁴ Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 78.

³⁵ Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, 61.

Sabbath as a delight and a spiritual feast—a foretaste of heaven. They discover that ‘the Sabbath is designed by God to prevent spiritual discouragement’ We enter His rest.”³⁶ Within studies cited in this final project, the results show that many ministers are tired, worn, and discouraged. Genuine Sabbath rest is one of the solutions.

Self-care is not selfish. While it meets the needs of the person, the soul nourishment that occurs when one rightly lives it, spills out, and blesses others. Muller notes, “Sabbath is not only for ourselves; rested and refreshed, we more generously serve all those who need our care. The human spirit is naturally generous; the instant we are filled, our first impulse is to be useful, to be kind, to give something away.”³⁷ Ferguson and Witt also write, “It is a day of delight, a sanctuary in time. Within this sanctuary, we make ourselves available to the insights and blessings that arise only in stillness and time.”³⁸ Seventh-day Adventist clergy will speak at length about how important the Sabbath is for them. But as far as their ability to absorb as much out of it as those they serve, that is another story. Muller writes, “I invoke the Sabbath for its proven wisdom over the ages. But I also call on the authority that still clings to its name. While many of us are terribly weary, we have come to associate tremendous guilt and shame with taking time to rest. Sabbath gives us permission; it commands us to stop.”³⁹ It is time for Seventh-day Adventist clergy to recognize the permission and command they have been

³⁶ Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 264.

³⁷ Muller, *Sabbath*, 11.

³⁸ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 26.

³⁹ Muller, *Sabbath*, 8.

given by God to stop and rest. This project aims to invoke holy rest on behalf of Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Ohio.

An Adventist Theology of Self-Care: Health

There are multiple doctrines held by Seventh-day Adventists that speak eloquently of self-care, but the second one discussed here is found in the doctrine of “Christian Behavior” of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*. The doctrine states, “Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, [and] we are to care for them intelligently, along with adequate exercise and rest.”⁴⁰ This is then supported by multiple Scriptures. One of the foundational texts is 1 Corinthians 6:19: “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own.” Mark 6:31 is also quoted as it concerns the importance of rest: “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” The doctrine also declares, “Periods of rest provide much needed quietness for communion with God: ‘Be still, and know that I am God’ (Ps. 46:10). God stressed the need for rest by setting aside the seventh day of the week as a day of rest (Ex. 20:10).”⁴¹ Even within Seventh-day Adventist doctrine, which ministers teach, the importance of rest is emphasized. And yet somehow ministers feel this does not apply them, or at least many live that way.

In his book on longevity, *The Blue Zone Solution: Eating and Living like the World’s Healthiest People*, Dan Buettner devotes an entire chapter to Seventh-day Adventists. In it he focuses on the diet of many Adventists that adds a decade or more to

⁴⁰ Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 282.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

life expectancy.⁴² What may be missing is other factors along with diet that make such a difference, such as the weekly Sabbath and a focus on overall good health, which includes not only diet, but exercise and rest as well. This lifestyle serves many Adventists well. But according to a verbal report to the North American Division Committee in November of 2014, Seventh-day Adventist ministers are not faring as well as their members, even if they hold to the same diet. It is only speculation, however one wonders if lack of Sabbath rest and the type of work ministers do—that is, long hours dealing with serious issues within the church and people’s lives—could be shortening the length of their lives. A new form of martyrdom for ministers just may be overwork and not practicing what they preach as far as Sabbath rest and a balanced life. Maybe the Apostle John would have the same prayer for Adventist ministers in Ohio: “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2).

It is clear that within Seventh-day Adventist doctrine, there is a biblical theology that clearly encourages self-care. The question is not whether there is such doctrine of biblical teaching, but rather, whether ministers will apply it to their own lives and discover freedom and a more abundant life. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Ministers are not excluded from this purpose.

Conclusion

In a study cited earlier in this chapter; “The Duke Clergy Health Initiative,” an initiative by the United Methodist Church, the research offers some hope. The study

⁴² Dan Buettner, *The Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living Like the World’s Healthiest People* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2015), 63-67.

states, “Caught up in the day-to-day demands of ministry, clergy often find it difficult to take time to attend to their health. But in North Carolina, UMC clergy are learning it’s more than OK to care for themselves.”⁴³ This project hopes that with more focus on a healthy theology of self-care, the Seventh-day Adventist clergy in Ohio will learn this too.

⁴³ Rugani, “Self-care Is Not Self-ish,” 1.

CHAPTER 5

A THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL RETREAT

“Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). It is possible that pastoral “success” could put the minister’s soul in danger. Witt quotes Henri Nouwen:

I began to experience a deep inner threat. As I entered into my fifties and was able to realize the unlikelihood of doubling my years, I came face to face with the simple question. “Did becoming older bring me closer to Jesus?” After twenty-five years of priesthood, I found myself praying poorly, living somewhat isolated from other people, and very much preoccupied with burning issues. Everyone was saying I was doing really well, but something inside was telling me that my success was putting my own soul in danger.¹

Witt writes that he experienced similar feelings and circumstances in his own life.

Ministers who have spent any length of time in the field should take inventory with the question Nouwen and Witt confronted.

Muller warns, “In the relentless busyness of modern life, we have lost the rhythm between work and rest. All life requires a rhythm of rest.”² There is scriptural evidence for the benefit of a rhythm of rest presented in Genesis 2. Right at the beginning of the Bible, in the creation account, God created rest and blessed it and called it holy (Genesis

¹ Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 10, as quoted in Witt, *Replenish*, 81.

² Muller, *Sabbath*, 1.

2:2-3). In the contemporary era, this rhythm is all but extinct. There is a refreshing intimacy with God that comes only when the mind is still enough to receive. The choice to take spiritual retreats hits the reset button for an unbalanced life.

At the end of the pilot retreat held as part of this project, after spontaneously asking for feedback, the ministers voted that we do this again in three or four months. One said, “I know that I need this; it helps me find balance.” Another of the pastors spoke up and said, “I need the help this brings and the reminder of the need to take care of myself and my family.” Another noted that “I probably need this every four months or so to keep my life and ministry balanced.” Each of the six ministers shared the difference that three days apart from ministry, resting, and being ministered to had done for them. It was profound. Somehow, one spiritual retreat taught more than a thousand statements of what pastors need to do. They had experienced something and were hungry for more.

Mueller writes, “Our culture invariably supposes that action and accomplishment are better than rest, that doing something—anything—is better than doing nothing.”³ Ferguson and Witt add, “Retreats draw persons to settings and rhythms often unfamiliar for citizens of the frenzy we call modern life. For most people, the constant message in their daily lives is if you are not ‘doing’ or ‘producing’ something, then it is a complete waste of time.”⁴ To a dyed-in-the-wool workaholic, going on retreat may take a step of faith. Frankly, it is countercultural. If the workaholic pastor will take that step of faith, it is possible that spiritual retreats will teach that there is more to life and spiritual leadership than work and being on call. Not only can spiritual retreat teach this, but it can

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader's Manual*, 19.

teach it in ways that merely reading about it in a book or hearing the lament for rest and change will not.

The nature of retreat is experiential. It is not surprising that spiritual retreats apart from the hustle and bustle of life and work allow ministers to hear “the still small voice” of God. That still small voice, which was life-saving for Elijah when he was exhausted and lamenting life, can still be heard. Ferguson and Witt quote Margaret Silf, who writes of retreat in her book, *Going on Retreat*: “A retreat is not a retreat from real life, but rather a retreat toward real life. . . . To make a retreat is not to escape the real world, but to be in touch with aspects of reality that are often covered up by distractions and busyness. . . . Things are the other way around: we are often escaping from reality (what is truly important and life giving) when we are so busy doing.”⁵ Silf believes that we experience deeper reality “when we take time to be still and to listen to the movements of our hearts.”⁶ It is a way for people to come in touch with deeper reality. It is not a form of escape from life, but it is about retreating toward real life.

Phillips notes, “Choosing occasional fallowness in order to listen to God is an action that can prevent debilitating depletion. Many of the people I work with in spiritual direction have regular retreat practices. Once or twice a year they leave their home and work in order to spend time being open to receiving whatever grace might come.”⁷ When one takes the step, possibly even by faith, good things come of it, even saving grace. The psalmist writes, “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.

⁵ Margaret Silf, *Going on Retreat* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002), as quoted in Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 20.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 82.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?” (Psalms 42:1-2) Ferguson and Witt explain, “Retreats serve as an oasis for the soul where people can drink of the ‘living water.’ Retreats are about removing the barriers that keep people from noticing and relating with the ever-present Love, who is with us and for us. The unabashed aim of faith-based retreats is helping persons seek God with their whole heart.”⁸ The hope is that this retreat designed for ministers will be such an oasis for ministers—a place and opportunity for drinking deep the living water that Jesus is, the one who offers rest for the soul (Matthew 11:29)

Ministry, while holy and good, is also draining. Muller writes,

I am reminded of the story of Jesus walking through a crowd of people. A woman, seeking to be healed, reached out to touch the hem of his garment, Jesus asked, *Who touched me?* His disciples said, *People are touching you all the time, what are you talking about?* But Jesus said, *I could feel power go out of me.* Deeply mindful of the flow of his life force, Jesus could feel the expenditure of energy in every encounter.⁹

Ministers are knowledgeable of this scene in the gospels, but may not have considered it a statement on ministering to those in need. Mueller writes, “We do not feel how much energy we spend on each activity, because we imagine we will always have more energy at our disposal. This one little conversation, this one extra phone call, this one quick meeting, what can it cost?”¹⁰ But if the results of the many surveys and studies on ministers and burnout are true, these little activities add up and exhaust. Muller continues, “But it does cost, it drains yet another drop of our life. Then, at the end of days, weeks, months, years, we collapse, we burn out, and cannot see where it happened. It happened

⁸ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 21-22.

⁹ Muller, *Sabbath*, 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

in a thousand unconscious events, tasks, and responsibilities that seemed easy and harmless on the surface but that each, one after the other, used a small portion of our precious life.”¹¹

One of the surprises from Muller is this observation: “I had always assumed that people I loved gave energy to me, and people I disliked took it away from me. Now I see that every act, no matter how pleasant or nourishing, requires effort, consumes oxygen. Every gesture, every thought or touch uses some life.”¹² He continues, “When Moses becomes weary, leading his people through their trials in the desert, God tells him, *My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.* Jesus tells his disciples, *Come to me all who toil and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”¹³ God’s Word is filled with the understanding of his leaders being tired and the need for rest. In Scripture, it is God who so often calls disciples to rest. It is vital to note that he is the one who calling and initiating, and in Genesis 2, he even creates rest. Ministers who ignore the biblical theology of rest and retreat, who feels it may be necessary for others but not for them, do so at their own risk. Mueller writes,

For Moses as for Jesus, rest is a precious ointment, a balm for the heavy heart. Jesus, for whom anything was possible, did not offer “seven secret coping strategies” to get work done faster, or “nine spiritual stress management techniques” to enhance our effectiveness. Instead, he offered the simple practice of rest as a natural, nourishing, and essential companion to our work. *Learn of me,* he invited, *and you will find rest for your souls.*¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 18.

¹³ Ibid., 24.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Mueller writes, “Sometimes he would take the disciples with him—*Come away with me to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while*, he would tell them. He did not wait until they had completed all their tasks; he invited them to rest in the middle of their busyness, when they had no leisure, even to eat. *Come with me*, he said, *Let us go, and rest, and pray.*”¹⁵

Ellen White, a key founder and probably the most looked to spiritual leader in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, wrote a chapter on this very passage in her extensive book on the life of Christ entitled, *The Desire of Ages*. The chapter is called, “Come, Rest Awhile.” After writing of the great successes the disciples had experienced on their ministry journey, she wrote of their great need: “They needed to feed on the Bread of Life. They needed to go to a place of retirement, where they could hold communion with Jesus.”¹⁶ Later in her chapter on this passage, she notes,

Christ’s words of compassion are spoken to His workers today just as surely as they were spoken to His disciples. ‘Come ye yourselves apart . . . and rest awhile,’ He says to those who are worn and weary. It is not wise to be always under the strain of work and excitement, even in ministering to men’s spiritual needs; for in this way personal piety is neglected, and the powers of mind and body are overtaxed. . . . Christ is full of tenderness and compassion for all in His service. He would show His disciples that God does not require sacrifice, but mercy. They had been putting their whole souls into labor for the people, and this was exhausting their physical and mental strength. It was their duty to rest.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), 338.

¹⁷ Ibid., 340 and 338.

It is interesting that one of the founders of our faith tradition goes as far as to say it is a “duty to rest.”¹⁸ It is critical that Seventh-day Adventist ministers embrace this vital aspect of duty: holy and sacred rest.

Ferguson and Witt write, “Retreat experiences, these ‘places apart to be together,’ welcome persons into what long time camp retreat leader, Ted Witt, calls ‘a change of pace, place, and face.’”¹⁹ In the theology of spiritual retreat, the heart of it is leaving tasks behind, setting down even important things for a time, in order to be apart, resting, communing, and praying. According to Scripture, this is not just important but holy and necessary. Ferguson and Witt also write,

Retreat participants leave behind the ordinary of their lives and come away to a place apart for the purpose of encountering God, others, creation. Leaving behind the responsibilities and disruptions of their demanding lives and coming to another place makes possible rest, deeper relationships with others, and the time for reflection on the part of participants. The time and space of retreats spark imagination and creativity. The natural surroundings of retreat facilities are a reminder of the creator God as well as the joy of being God’s creatures.

Removed from the hectic pace of modern life, retreat participants enter into a more relaxed environment. Comfortable clothing, conversation around the dinner table, walks in the woods, coffee shared by the fireplace, and time to watch the sun go down all reflect that atmosphere. Such a relaxed environment is an invitation to enter less formal means of study and discussion, worship and leisure. It opens the door for playfulness and laughter. It leads to a consciousness of God’s presence in community and creation. It places relationships before tasks to be done. Within the safety of Christian community, people are able to share questions, doubts, and joys more freely and honestly. They may even dare doing things in a new way.²⁰

In a study cited earlier, it was noted that many ministers not only feel tired, but many feel lonely and even depressed. Spending time on retreat with other ministers offers an

¹⁸ Ibid., 338.

¹⁹ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 16.

²⁰ Ibid., 47-48.

opportunity for community that they may not feel is possible in their own churches. Retreat offers times of sharing and laughter. It could be that this is medicine that ministers need, as ministers rarely have opportunity or take the time for such experiences.

Ministers need a safe place to share. They need the opportunity to converse with others who are safe, and who understand what it is like to be a minister. Spiritual retreats with ministers offer such a chance. In a safe environment, honesty and deep sharing occur. Ministers identify with the retreat participant who shared with Muller, “I am so tired, she says, I am with people all day and night, but I still feel so lonely. My soul feels dry. . . . It feels so heavy.”²¹ Muller writes, “Sometimes [Jesus] would take the disciples with him—*Come away with me to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while*, he would tell them. He did not wait until they had completed all their work; he invited them to rest in the middle of their busyness, when they had no leisure, even to eat. *Come with me*, he said, *Let us go, and rest, and pray.*”²² Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Ohio should have the opportunity to hear and act on this invitation from Jesus. This project is about giving ministers just such an experience.

Muller also writes, “When we become still and allow our life to rest, we feel a renewal of energy and gradual clarity and perception. The psalmist speaks of this: *He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.*”²³ Ministers often share Psalm 23 at funerals. It is time for ministers to realize that this psalm is for them and their people, and that it should be experienced long before

²¹ Muller, *Sabbath*, 24.

²² *Ibid.*, 25.

²³ *Ibid.*, 26.

death. God does not want us to be exhausted and falling apart. He wants us to come apart with him so our lives do not come apart without him. Witt notes, “Leaders who stay spiritually healthy long term are those who learn this sacred rhythm of advance and retreat.”²⁴

One of the reasons spiritual retreats that include plenty of time for rest can be so helpful to ministers is that “we have become increasingly unfamiliar with true stopping and deep resting. . . . We know about the sleep mode on our computers, the snooze setting on our alarm clocks and the vegging mode of our non-work hours, but we have little familiarity with true stopping.”²⁵ It is time that ministers genuinely believe in the Word of God they quote so often. Solomon wrote, “Better is one hand full of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind” (Ecclesiastes 4:6). Many ministers have both their hands full of toil. The earth is not all that needs times of fallowness; ministers also need time to slow down, be still, and understand that times of fallowness can be faithfulness to God too. Fallowness is a word understood more by farmers and those familiar with agriculture than those from suburbs and cities, with lives and work far from the country. Farmers know the importance of letting the land rest. Some learned this the hard way, by not letting the land rest and leeching the soil of its life-giving minerals and nutrients. When this happens, the harvest is destroyed. There is a spiritual harvest that will be destroyed if ministers ignore the truth of a holy rhythm of work and rest.

Wayne Muller describes his own experience of falling ill when he was working hard and neglecting his own physical health. He writes,

²⁴ Witt, *Replenish*, 76.

²⁵ Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 78.

Through a good friend and doctor who literally threw me into his pickup truck and raced me to the hospital, through the wise and swift administration of good medicine, through numberless prayers and great kindnesses, I was granted the blessing of being healed of my infection. Now, I take more walks, I play with my children, I work mostly with the poor and have stopped seeing patients. I write when I am able, and I pray more. I try to be kind. And without fail, at the close of the day, I stop, say a prayer, and give thanks. The greatest lesson I have learned is about surrender. There are larger forces, strong and wise, at work here. I am willing to be stopped. I owe my life to the simple act of rest.²⁶

In his work with those suffering from cancer, AIDS, and life-threatening illness, Muller has heard time and again the persons suffering say, “At last I can rest.”²⁷ But it should not take a near-death experience for ministers to conclude that they must rest. There has to be a better way. Respecting the gift of the Sabbath and taking time for spiritual retreats could go a long way in helping ministers find holy balance and more fulfilling lives.

The fact is that there were more than weekly Sabbaths in Scripture. There were yearly Sabbaths as well as extra Sabbaths packed into holy celebrations. There were even sabbatical years. The Bible is full of planned rest and times of holy fallowness. It is vital that ministers practice holy rest. Muller explains,

When we do not rest, we lose our way. We miss the compass points that would show us where to go, we bypass the nourishment that would give us succor. We miss the quiet that would give us wisdom. We miss the joy and love born of effortless delight. Poisoned by the hypnotic belief that good things come only through unceasing determination and tireless effort, we can never truly rest. And for want of rest, our lives are in danger.

A “successful” life has become a violent enterprise. We make war on our own bodies, punishing them beyond their limits; war on our children, because we cannot find enough time to be with them when they are hurt and afraid, and need our company; war on our spirit, because we are too preoccupied to listen to the quiet voices that seek to nourish and refresh us; war on our communities, because

²⁶ Muller, *Sabbath*, 23.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

we are fearfully protecting what we have, and do not feel safe enough to be kind and generous.²⁸

If there is truth to this, then it is possible that ministers are not only robbing themselves, but their families, communities, and even God by not taking the time to rest and renew.

Ferguson and Witt write, “Why do God’s people need a retreat? Quite frankly, God’s people need to go on retreat because we’re over the edge most of the time—over-scheduled, overcommitted, overtired, overworked, over worried, over emotional, over budget—over and over again.”²⁹ A spiritual retreat can help break a negative cycle.³⁰ It allows the opportunity of making known through an experiential exercise a way of not only breaking a negative cycle, but opening up new understandings and new possibilities. Witt admits, “For years I intuitively knew my obsessive busyness was violating my soul. Constant activity could prop up the external image I wanted to project, but it couldn’t prop up my soul. In honest and quiet moments, I longed to get off the treadmill and didn’t know how.”³¹ Spiritual retreats for ministers offer an example of how to break the negative cycle. Witt adds, “Everywhere I go I meet people who want a simpler life, a slower pace, and a schedule with more breathing room. People are exhausted and frazzled. For some reason, in our culture we have swallowed hook, line, and sinker the lie

²⁸ Ibid., 1-2.

²⁹ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 5.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Witt, *Replenish*, 62.

that busyness equals importance. I have not been exempt.”³² This project is an attempt to let people off of this dangerous “hook.”

Sometimes it can take outsiders to make observations of realities that insiders are too close to see. Witt reports, “In Africa, when white men began to show up, the Swahili invented a unique, descriptive word: *mazungu*, which means ‘one who spins around.’

There are a lot of *mazungu* ministry leaders in our generation. They are a flurry of activity.”³³ As mentioned in Chapter 4, Witt emphasizes the importance of Psalm 46:10 when he writes,

Busyness will not only distract, it will infect. Your busyness will damage your soul. Over time you will develop a hurried spirit. And even when your body is still, your soul will be racing. Your busy spirit will constantly remind you of everything you need to be doing. At times you’ll feel like your insides are racing. Psalm 46:10 has only eight words and twenty-four letters, but it stands as an indictment to modern ministry: “*BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.*”³⁴

Again, noting probably the most influential person within our denomination’s history,

White writes about the same verse,

When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). Here alone can true rest be found. And this is the effectual preparation of all who labor for God. Amid the hurrying throng, and the strain of life’s intense activities, the soul that is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. The life will breathe out fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men’s hearts.³⁵

She accentuates the importance of “the silence of the soul making distinct the voice of God.” Retreat offers opportunity to silence the soul. Ministers desperately need this “true

³² Ibid., 61.

³³ Ibid., 62.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ White, *The Desire of Ages*, 342.

rest,” this “soul refreshing,” this “atmosphere of light and peace” where life “breathes out fragrance.” This is an invitation to Adventist ministers.

A ministry veteran of many years in high pressure positions, Witt explains that without focus and commitment to self-care and respect for the holy rhythm of work and rest, bad things happen to good ministers and ministries. He observes that leaders must establish a “sacred rhythm of advance and retreat.”³⁶ But it is vital that these retreats be truly that, a retreat. Too often within Adventism, retreats are more like an advance rather than slowing down and being still before God. Rarely are there time margins put in place and a shrinking down of the “program” so there can be a different type of fullness.

Done right, a retreat is a refuge of time and place dedicated to rest and encounter with God away from the usual business of ministry. It must be the setting down of valuable and important ministry in order for vital rest to be given its rightful priority in the life of the Christian minister. A retreat should be an oasis for the soul. Ferguson and Witt write,

Retreats are characterized by leaving behind the regular rush and demands of everyday work and family life to come to a place apart where encounters with God, and others in community, and creation are possible. These encounters put the emphasis on the interconnection and relatedness of all life. Through retreat experiences, participants have the time and space to reflect on scripture, pray, enjoy the company of one another and rejoice in the beauty of God’s creation. The results of these times away is a renewal of faith and commitment to Jesus Christ.³⁷

Muller, who has led many on spiritual retreats, explains, “Most of us do not realize how tired we really are until we go away on vacation or retreat and cannot even keep our eyes

³⁶ Witt, *Replenish*, 76.

³⁷ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 10.

open.”³⁸ Phillips implores, “Stop in the name of love. Stand down from work and usefulness. Attend to the Lord. Desist from distraction. Sabbath keeping helps us stop.”³⁹

Retreats could be set aside much like the Hebrews had extra Sabbaths built into their year. These extra Sabbaths were in place so they had even more time to rest, refresh, and remember God’s leading or special events in their history (See Leviticus 23).

Retreats could be held over the weekend, and Seventh-day Adventist ministers who believe and teach the importance of the Sabbath could actually experience the Sabbath in ways they cannot as the pastor, preacher, worship leader, problem solver, referee, fellowship lunch take-down artist, afternoon seminar leader, and evening vespers coordinator. If the retreats are not held during the weekly Sabbath, they could be taken as a Sabbath time, much like ancient Israel did throughout their calendar year on days other than the weekly Sabbath. The experience of Sabbath, without being the minister on call, will offer Sabbath as a delight and sacred rest for the pastor in ways that weekly Sabbaths cannot.

Spiritual retreats could be an opportunity for ministers of God to experience what Jesus called his twelve disciples to: “Let’s go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile” (Mark 6:31, NLT). He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles did not even have time to eat. And in that time apart with God and fellow disciples, amazing things can happen.

Spiritual retreats provide benefits beyond rest itself. When Witt began taking spiritual retreats, he found help. He testifies,

³⁸ Muller, *Sabbath*, 23-24

³⁹ Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 92.

For me, times of retreat have had two powerful benefits. 1. *Replenishing my soul*. When I'm on retreat, something happens inside me that's hard to explain. 2. *Recalibrating my perspective*. As I ponder and pray, God regularly shifts my outlook by reminding me of what is really important. He regularly convicts me of getting so worked up over things that just aren't that important. On retreat I have removed most of the white noise from my world, and I can be quiet enough to hear God's voice.⁴⁰

Phillips notes, "Things will rise from the depths as we stop. As we stop we will encounter what has been outside our range of vision, beneath consciousness, perhaps intimated only intuitively."⁴¹ Ferguson and Witt write,

Some of the unexpected invitations retreats offer are include: receiving through letting go, moving closer by being still, hearing through silence, advancing by retreat, acting on God's behalf by resting, finding abundance in producing less, embracing yourself by reaching out, listening to the language of nature, leading by being a servant of all, honoring diversity through simplicity, and loving your enemies.⁴²

There is also the possibility for ministers to learn or relearn a holy rhythm to life. Witt quotes Ruth Barton, who writes, "One of the most important rhythms of a leader's life is a constant back and forth motion between when we are engaged in the battle—giving our best energy to take the next hill—and times of retreat when we are not 'on' and we do not have to be any particular way for anyone. Time when we can be in God's presence for our own soul's sake."⁴³ Muller states, "Jesus obeyed a deeper rhythm."⁴⁴ Spiritual retreats planned for ministers can offer them an opportunity to learn of that deeper rhythm.

⁴⁰ Witt, *Replenish*, 76-77.

⁴¹ Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 79.

⁴² Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader's Manual*, 16.

⁴³ Ruth Haley Barton, "A Steady Rhythm: The Not-So-Secret Key to Effective Ministry and Leadership" in *Leadership Journal* (Winter 2007), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2007/11.100.html>, as quoted in Witt, *Replenish*, 75-76.

⁴⁴ Muller, *Sabbath*, 25.

Ferguson and Witt note that during spiritual retreats, “participants enter an alternative cadence of living, while venturing to less familiar surroundings and leaving behind many roles that give them a sense of predictability and comfort.”⁴⁵ Such retreats allow for encounters with God and encounters with others in spiritual community in environments where God’s creation is on full display. These encounters offer rest, refreshment, and the possibility of spiritual healing. Muller writes, “For Moses as for Jesus, rest is a precious ointment, a balm for the heavy heart.”⁴⁶ The notion of a retreat is not a new idea or fad, as Ferguson and Witt explain, “Over the centuries, Christian leaders have discovered avenues that often open people to new encounters with God, with others, and with creation. Christian retreats built on solid biblical and theological foundations can be a true reflection of Christ’s life and teachings.”⁴⁷ Spiritual retreats for ministers is not about ministers learning something new, but rather being reminded of something old and proven, and too often forgotten. The hope is that the experiential learning will endure and help ministers make important life changes.

Retreats offer an opportunity to remove the static and white noise of the soul that comes with life in the twenty-first century. If the minister should choose, it is a chance to leave behind technology. Ministers going on retreat may at first find themselves having difficulty not constantly checking texts, emails, and phone messages. But the hope is that for three days they will not be on call. The hope is to allow them an opportunity to depressurize, to slow down, to “be still and know” that God is God. Retreat will allow

⁴⁵ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 17.

⁴⁶ Muller, *Sabbath*, 24.

⁴⁷ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 17.

ministers to experience community in which they are not the pastor. They will not have to lead. Retreat is a chance to be part of a Christian community where they can let down their guard and not have to be everything to everyone. Retreat offers an atmosphere where they can be real and relaxed; it is a place to be nourished and nurtured.

In the setting of genuine retreat, ministers may find the words of Gandhi to be true: “There is more to life than merely increasing its speed.”⁴⁸ Ferguson and Witt explain, “Retreats provide a period of withdrawal from disruption and unending responsibilities. They allow us to step out of the rut of routine, so we can look upon our lives and the world with God in mind. . . . Retreats might be defined this way: the choice to enter places and times apart from busyness and distraction, in order to develop deeper connections with God and a greater appreciation for life.”⁴⁹ Witt contends, “More than ever, it is imperative for leaders to take time away for thinking and reflection about where we are and where we’re headed.”⁵⁰ In Matthew 11, Jesus calls to people who are tired and burdened. He promises rest—specifically rest for their souls, that is, deep rest. Expert retreat leaders say that people arrive tired and heavily burdened. What is offered them is “rest, renewal, and play . . . [these] are precious pathways we provide, especially for these individuals. If we align ourselves with Christ’s promise, they can access an avenue for Christ to fulfill that promise. Retreats become the occasion to learn how to allow God to nurture our souls.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Mahatma Gandhi, as quoted in Muller, *Sabbath*, 17.

⁴⁹ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 15.

⁵⁰ Witt, *Replenish*, 75.

⁵¹ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 19.

The goal of spiritual retreat for Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Ohio about offering ministers a time apart to rest, reflect, seek, and find. This hope is articulated by Ferguson and Witt this way: “Ultimately, retreats encourage people to return with new perspective and practices to incorporate within their weekly and daily rhythms.”⁵² It is hoped that this project will help ministers return home with new perspective and practices for their lives and ministries. Ferguson and Witt explain, “By their very nature, retreats are temporary, but the way of life is not.”⁵³ It is hoped that the way of retreat will grow into a way of life.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

PART THREE

STRATEGY: MOVING FORWARD BY SPIRITUAL RETREAT

CHAPTER 6

GOALS AND PLANS FOR THE RETREAT

People who work for the benefit of others need to rest. Often, those with caregiving personalities do not practice rest. Muller shares this cautionary experience:

My friend Marilyn is a devoted massage therapist. She is very kind and works very hard. She serves in the poorest sections of San Francisco, offering her services for free to those most in need. In seedy residential hotels, where there are people dying of AIDS or suffering with tuberculosis, she goes from the room of one sick person to another, massaging, rubbing the salve of good care into their isolated dying bodies.

When Marilyn and I talk on the phone, she often sounds exhausted. I invite her to spend a day on the beach. She says she can't. She has too much work, too many people to meet, too many things to do. She is almost weeping, such is her need to rest, but she has no inner permission to stop working, even for an afternoon.

Marilyn cares for others with great conviction. But she does not care for herself with the same conviction. She feels her time at rest will somehow take away from those in need, those whom she truly loves and hopes to serve. She assures me she is all right, and in many ways I know that she is. But if she does not rest, how soon will she burn out, and who will care for those who need her then?¹

There is a real and present danger to those in helping professions. The problem is not that they do not care, but rather that they do. This problem is not isolated to Christian massage

¹ Muller, *Sabbath*, 48-49.

therapists in San Francisco slums. There are ministers who have similar struggles, who cannot grant themselves permission to take the rest they require.

Later in the same chapter, titled “Fear of Rest,” Muller writes, “A life of compassion must include compassion for all beings, including the giver.”² This sort of language did not exist when many Seventh-day Adventist ministers received their pastoral education. While the topic of rest for caregivers exists in current discussion, it remains a problem. Caregivers by nature struggle with self-care. Somehow permission is required. The writer of Ecclesiastes shared ancient and holy wisdom when he wrote, “To everything there is a season. A time for every purpose under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Muller claims, “Just as there is a time for every purpose under heaven, so is there a time for nourishment and joy, especially among those who would serve.”³ The goal of this project is to provide nourishment to body, spirit, and mind through spiritual retreat. It is to be a season—a three-day sabbatical, or a three-day Sabbath of sorts. The primary goal of the retreat is to provide a chance for ministers participating to recharge. Ferguson and Witt write,

Retreat participants leave behind the ordinary of their lives and come away to a place apart for the purpose of encountering God, others, and creation. Leaving behind the responsibilities and disruptions of their demanding lives and coming to another place makes possible rest, deeper relationships with others, and the time for reflection on the part of participants. The time and space of retreats spark imagination and creativity. The natural surroundings of retreat facilities are a reminder of the creator God as well as the joy of being God’s creatures.⁴

² Ibid., 49.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 47-48.

Retreat Focus

In collaboration with Professor Gary Sattler of Fuller Seminary, it has been determined that the retreat content will focus on Scripture, prayer, and righteousness by faith in the life of Martin Luther. The primary goal is to give the participating ministers time to rejuvenate. Another important goal is to offer Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Ohio the opportunity to experience the benefits of spiritual retreats. The model exemplified by the pace and space of the retreat should promote a rhythm of rest that they can continue after the retreat. With a focus on Martin Luther's life, the ministers will leave physically rested, spiritually refreshed, and inspired.

The reason Martin Luther serves as a guide for the journey of the retreat stems from a desire for ministers to learn about the father of the Reformation: his life, Scripture study, righteousness by faith, and prayer, all of which shaped his spiritual life. Along the journey, the ministers will enter into the times of Luther, learning what his world was like. They will contemplate the challenges he faced personally and as a Christian leader. The subject matter of the retreat explores what kept Luther close to God in rapidly changing times, severe trials, loss, and danger.

Luther was chosen not only because of his great contribution to Protestant theology and the Reformation, nor only because he was a great biblical scholar, but primarily because Luther never lost his pastor's heart for people. While he had many important roles, he filled all of them from the depths of his pastor's heart and mind. "Doctor Martin" was also "Pastor Martin" to many. By his life and example, he is an exemplary guide for ministers in changing, uncertain times. It is the goal of this project that those attending the retreat will return from it physically and spiritually refreshed and

inspired by a man who ministered five hundred years ago. By the end of the retreat, ministers will leave with a greater knowledge of Luther and their Protestant roots.

Retreat Setting and Dates

The pilot retreat will be held at Camp Mohaven in late January 2016. This venue is the Ohio Conference's youth camp and retreat center, and it is located just outside of Danville, Ohio. The choice of Camp Mohaven as the location for the retreat are several. It is a beautiful setting with hundreds of acres of hills, woods, and a river in a sparsely populated section of north central Ohio. The setting will help feed pastors' souls by connecting them with the beauty of God's creation. Another reason for the choice is its central location in the state. This is convenient for ministers from all over the state who will not have far to travel to attend the retreat. The choice of Camp Mohaven will ensure low costs since it is a conference-owned camp and retreat center. The location will also help Ohio Conference pastors become better acquainted with their camp as well. Some will be familiar with it, while others will have never before visited it.

A challenge faced in preparation for this retreat was the climate of financial crises in the conference upon my assuming the position to oversee the pastors, teachers, churches, and schools in the conference. Although holding the retreat a year ago was impossible, giving has improved markedly along with a realigning of the budget, and these have improved the conference's financial condition. The conference now has the finances to hold a few of these retreats each year, and funds have been designated for them in the conference's 2016 budget, if this initial group of ministers find the retreat effective.

The setting for the pastor's retreat will be held in two of the lodges on the acreage. Oak Lodge will house the pastors and be the location for meals. It offers a comfortable place for privacy, but is large enough for gathering for meals and an area to relax and visit. Sycamore Lodge will be used as well because it offers a separate location for the pastors to come together as a small group to study, pray, share, and learn from Martin Luther. Sycamore Lodge is a warm setting that feels more comfortable and intimate than Oak Lodge, with a beautiful fireplace and chairs in a semi-circle in front of it. Camp Mohaven offers various activities, such as horseback riding, canoeing, and swimming. However, with the retreat being held at the end of January, those activities will not be a possibility.

There are benefits to a winter retreat, however. Rachel Gilmore, in her book, *Complete Leader's Guide to Christian Retreats*, "Interestingly, winter is often a good time for a retreat. Not only does it provide a much-needed recharging after the holidays, but it is often a slow time for camp and conference centers, depending on geographic location."⁵ It was easy finding dates for the retreat in the heart of winter. And from the responses of the ministers, it seemed to be an easy time for them to break away for a few days. The church calendar after the rush of the holidays is slower and more manageable for pastors to take time for retreat with less pressure. Hopefully the weather allows ministers an opportunity to spend some time outdoors. It is a great place for walks, hikes, or enjoying the views. If, however, the ministers are interested in such retreats held at

⁵ Rachel Gilmore, *Complete Leader's Guide to Christian Retreats* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2009), 5.

different times during the year in the future, the activities mentioned can be a part of the retreat experience.

This year, the conference budgeted funds for ministers' retreats. The good news is that the amount earmarked is such that the retreat will cost the ministers nothing. Costs for food, lodging, and even travel to and from the camp, along with per diem for travel days, will be provided by the Ohio Conference. It will also not take any of the pastor's vacation time or be counted as part of the budget for ministers attending seminars or continuing education courses. The days of retreat will be considered working days. And it will be considered sacred work, as it should be. The reason for spelling this out in such detail is that it will help those who work with the finances and records of vacation time for ministers in the conference office. These are tangible commitments of the conference to minister to its ministers by offering them spiritual retreat.

Retreat Leadership, Target Audience, and Resources

The director/camp ranger is David Robinson. He and his wife Karen look after the camp and are in charge of booking. They are easy to work with, and their knowledge of the camp make easy the job of assigning rooms and optimal places for the specific types of gatherings. In my role as president of the Ohio Conference, I led all of the sessions together and was the primary leader throughout the retreat.

Buffy Halvorsen, my wife, who ministers to pastors' families and spouses and serves as the conference family life minister, will attend to all the cooking for the retreat. She is not only a minister herself and the daughter of a minister, but she is also a licensed

marriage and family counselor. Her presence should add a quality and strength to the retreat that will go beyond her gifts of hospitality and cooking.⁶

For the pilot spiritual retreat, eight ministers from across Ohio will be invited. If some are not able to for any reason, other ministers within the conference will be asked. However, eight will be the maximum number of pastors on this retreat, and this is by design. By limiting the number, the retreat will be a small group experience. The goal is to build an atmosphere that is smaller and more personable, rather than attempting to have a majority of the ministers in the state all come at once. It is also desired that those who come are ministers who truly want to participate. If, at the end of the retreat, the ministers' response is that they believe it is something that would be helpful to other ministers in the conference, then more pastor retreats of this nature will be offered. The invitations to ministers in the conference will be offered by personal phone call. Follow-up information will be communicated by email, text messaging, or phone.

After arrangements have been made with the camp and the time for the retreat approaches, there will be ongoing communication with the camp/retreat center so that all is ready and in place. It is important that the retreat runs as smoothly as possible. The desire is that it be so well organized that the participants do not even notice the details that have gone into preparing the time together. The aim is that they will just enjoy their time. An advantage of holding the retreat at the conference's camp/retreat center is that those of us involved already have a great working relationship. This too will enhance the ministers' experience. As the retreat date approaches, emails and text messages will be

⁶ As a follow-up note, during the pilot retreat in January 2016, some of the ministers sought opportunity to talk with Buffy privately. This was another means of ministering to pastors in ways that they may not usually be afforded.

sent outlining what the minister should bring. The camp/retreat will have all the bedding, towels, and such for each pastor so they will simply need to bring clothes and toiletries.

For the retreat, the conference will buy each minister two books as a gift and for their edification: *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, by Roland H. Bainton, and *A Simple Way to Pray*, by Martin Luther. The first is a classic biography to add to their libraries. The second book will be used for groups and devotional time on the final day of the retreat. Giving these books as gifts allows the pastors to take something tangible back home as a reminder of the retreat, and it gives them access to learning from Luther. The little book, *A Simple Way to Pray*, by Luther, will allow them to practice prayer as Luther taught his barber.

Phillips writes, “In 2009 the *Harvard Business Review* called jobs that require seventy-hour workweeks the new standard for professionals, and *Fortune* magazine announced that the sixty-hour workweek was part time. Even people who work few hours are engulfed by work consciousness.”⁷ The work weeks described in the above magazines would seem to be evidence of the need for retreats. Ferguson and Witt explain, “There is so much static, noise and commotion in the modern milieu. Silence and stillness are like precious jewels, because of their rarity. These pathways can be remarkably powerful modes to getting in touch with the Holy Spirit and what is truly important in life.”⁸ Phillips would consider the weekly schedule for professionals more proof that “a circuslike culture interferes with practices of stopping, and even committed Sabbath keepers find the practice challenging and solitary. Few communal practices of stopping

⁷ Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 92.

⁸ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader's Manual*, 24.

remain, yet occasionally whole societies choose to pause for a season in order to heal, reorder hierarchies and seek communal forgiveness.”⁹ Phillips cites South Africa in the years following apartheid as an example of pausing and seeking communal forgiveness, where the nation instituted what was called “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).”¹⁰ If healing can come by stopping as a society, hearing and being heard in such a difficult climate, there could be healing for other groups that choose to stop, be still, listen, and be heard. There could even be healing for ministers who have their own wounded places. From the soul soil, or fallowness, good things grow.

Sabbath rest helps the hurried and harried. Retreat offers a type of Sabbath—the setting aside work and entering into a different type of time with God and others. Sadly, Seventh-day Adventist ministers rarely experience the Sabbath as their members do. While there will be retreats held that will not fall on the weekly Sabbath, this retreat will be used like ancient Israel’s ceremonial Sabbaths, which were part of Israel’s spiritual calendar. They were added to help during times when Israel was to remember important parts of their journey with God, or the hope that they lived in for the future (see Leviticus 23). Part of the reason for sharing a different experience of Sabbath with these Sabbath-believing ministers is that, as Phillips writes, “Sabbath is a form of regular stopping, embedded in religious tradition and spiritual wisdom. Stopping is just about the most countercultural action we can take in a culture that valorizes total work.”¹¹ It is a

⁹ Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 85.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

reminder that God gave the Sabbath as a gift for many reasons, but one of the most important is that it is needed. Even Seventh-day Adventist ministers need it.

Retreat Goals, Priorities, and Guidelines

A primary goal in planning the schedule for the retreat is to leave plenty of time margins in each day. Instead of packing the schedule from early till late every day as so many retreats do, scheduled free time will be valued highly and prioritized. The reason for this is to allow ministers time to enjoy a different pace and plenty of time for themselves or as a group, according to their desire or felt need. Ferguson and Witt write,

Many travelers on retreat arrive heavily burdened. Jesus promises rest for their souls (Matthew 11:28, 29). Rest, renewal, and play are precious pathways we provide, especially for these individuals. If we align ourselves with Christ's promise, they can access an avenue for Christ to fulfill that promise. Retreats become the occasion to learn how to allow God to nurture our souls. Ultimately, retreats encourage people to return with new perspective and practices to incorporate within their weekly and daily rhythms.¹²

So much in the life of a minister is fast-paced and hurried. The plan is to purposely slow everything and allow a different rhythm for the time rule. Jesus offers an example; as Muller writes, "Jesus obeyed a deeper rhythm."¹³ And the different rhythm by which he lived made a difference in his life, his ministry, and its results. If Jesus lived from a deeper rhythm of life, surely his ministers need to as well. Spiritual retreat is about reverencing God's sacred rhythm of life. At the first gathering during the pilot retreat, which will be a lunch on Monday, January 25, the priorities will be shared with the

¹² Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader's Manual*, 19.

¹³ Muller, *Sabbath*, 25.

participants, in addition to information about the camp facilities and the retreat schedule.

The priorities and guidelines will also be presented as a handout, with the following text:

1. If you are tired, do not feel obligated to show up to the gathering. A nap or skipping a meeting may be more important for you and your needs than attending. Please feel free to take any down time necessary, even from the retreat if that is what you need. The first priority is that you rest.
2. If we as a group decide we want to change or modify the schedule, we can.
3. Yet another high priority is that of confidentiality. It is important that everyone here has a safe place and be a safe person for the rest of the group. All of you as ministers know the importance of confidentiality when someone shares with you. That is the expectation here. Things that are shared here need to stay here.¹⁴

At this point if there are any questions or need for clarification, those issues will be discussed. It is imperative that all willingly agree to keep confidences before taking the next step into the retreat journey. Once the priorities are shared and values of the retreat are agreed upon, the schedule for the retreat will be given (see Appendix A). In addition to times together for discussion and prayer, with a focus on the Luther material, there will be extended times for rest and enjoyment of nature.

Ferguson and Witt assert, “The fullness of life never proceeds from packing it completely with unending goals and tasks. Emptying ourselves and our schedules on a regular basis expands our existence rather than diminishing it. This ebb and flow that alternates accomplishment with harkening our hearts to God is vital to our physical, emotional and spiritual well-being.”¹⁵ The retreat schedule is a general guideline, and there may be times when the group will choose to modify it. The pastors will have a lot of say in the schedule. The schedule was put together with large time margins and

¹⁴ Ron Halvorsen, Jr., “Luther Retreat” (handout given to retreat participants at the first meeting of the retreat, Camp Mohaven, Danville, OH, January 25, 2016).

¹⁵ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 22.

flexibility built into it by allowing the group opportunity to help in making any decisions for change throughout the retreat. It was put together in order to truly allow room for rest, reflection, and conversations with fellow retreatants. Another reason for building free time into the schedule is to allow the ministers an opportunity to experience the difference putting margins into one's day and calendar can make. This retreat may test the pastors' courage, for as Muller explains, "Our willingness to rest depends on what we believe we will find there. At rest, we come face-to-face with the essence of life. If we believe life is fundamentally good, we will seek out rest as a taste of that goodness. If we believe life is fundamentally bad or flawed, we will be reluctant to quiet ourselves, afraid of meeting the darkness that resides in things—or in ourselves."¹⁶ This could be one of the reasons so few stop to rest as they should. Muller also writes,

The antidote to craving is rest; we quench our thirst with Sabbath tranquility. We invite a time in which we can taste what we have been given, take delight in what we already have, and see that it is good. We focus less on our lack, and more on our abundance. As we do, our thirst and hunger for more than we need begins to fall away. In quiet stillness we can identify our genuine needs with more precision, and separate them more easily from our mindless wants and desires. We can feel the difference between happiness—which is often simple and easy, an inner shift toward appreciation and gratefulness for what is before us—and desire, which is often frantic and relentless, cutting the heart with its sharp painful demands. . . . [It is] in the soil of the quick fix is the seed of a new problem because our quiet wisdom is unavailable.¹⁷

Muller also writes,

A reckless schedule of doing, even good can become a form of self-violence when it is missing the sacred rhythm God intended from the very beginning. If we do not disengage, if we stay on the wheel of desire, if we do not stop and pray and sing and walk, the pattern of our addictive craving is free to escalate without limit,

¹⁶ Muller, *Sabbath*, 40.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5 and 4.

until we inadvertently create a life of terrible suffering for ourselves and those we love.¹⁸

In the sanctuary of time and retreat there are opportunities which are afforded. Ferguson and Witt explain that one finds “unexpected invitations,” such as

receiving through letting go, moving closer by being still, hearing through silence, advancing by retreat, acting on God’s behalf by resting, finding abundance in producing less, embracing yourself by reaching out, relationships with others, and the time for reflection on the part of participants. The time and space of retreats spark imagination and creativity. The natural surroundings of retreat facilities are a reminder of the creator God as well as the joy of being God’s creation.¹⁹

These are restorative aspects too often missed or trampled on in the hurry that has become the norm, rather than the exception in life. Experts who have spent years leading retreats argue that “a spiritual retreat can help break a negative cycle.”²⁰ The hope is that the retreat will alleviate ministers who may be in a negative cycle, break that cycle, and return home as different people.

Times in Group Study

During times together as a group, we will focus on the life and times of Martin Luther, along with a general background of what the world of Martin Luther was like and an outline of his life and ministry. A few key events of Luther’s life will be highlighted. These events, along with Luther’s focus on Scripture, righteousness by faith, and prayer, will be woven together, and they will weave the pattern of the retreat. Scripture, righteousness by faith, and prayer will be seen in light of their impact in Luther’s personal life and how they shaped and even helped drive his ministry and the Protestant

¹⁸ Ibid., 126-127.

¹⁹ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 47-48.

²⁰ Ibid., 5.

Reformation. There is wisdom concerning revival and reformation for the individual as well as groups to be found in this study.

In preparation for the retreat, it has been learned that the Ohio Conference took its ministers on a Reformation Tour back in 2013. There will be richer sharing as a group because of this. Those who participated visited many of the key places from the life and ministry of Luther in Germany, and even concluded their tour in Rome. They will have memories and knowledge about the actual places that will be discussed. This can only add to the experience of a retreat based on Martin Luther.

One of the perceived benefits of this retreat is that it is not only a group retreat, but a retreat made up of ministers. This will allow those attending to be participants and not have to assume the role of leader or facilitator. And since it will be a group of ministers, it can allow for a greater opportunity of genuine sharing in a safe environment. The goal is positive spiritual community. One of the benefits of Christian group retreats, as shared in the *Complete Leader's Guide to Christian Retreats*, "is that it strengthens the sense of Christian community. Friendships that are formed on retreat can carry people through the bumpy parts of life when they return home. A well-planned retreat allows opportunities for personal growth, as well as person-to-person growth, in one's faith journey."²¹ Community and friendship is important because, as Witt writes, "For some reason expanded leadership influence often goes hand in hand with increased relational isolation."²²

²¹ Gilmore, *Complete Leader's Guide to Christian Retreats*, 3.

²² Witt, *Replenish*, 52.

Since the beginning of the Church, it is clear that a rich Christian community was God's plan and desire: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). When one considers that one of the great struggles for ministers, according to the surveys referenced in Chapter 1, was that of loneliness, there is clearly a need for healthy Christian community for them. The retreat of ministers gives ministers the chance to enter into such a community.

In his book, *Self-Care*, Ray S. Anderson contends,

Paul found in Christian brothers and sisters what he did not find in the law nor among his earlier self-righteous religious companions, the community of self-care. He himself created such communities and expressed his own need for them openly and unashamedly. . . . The Apostle Paul would tell us, turn to the brother and sister in the body of Christ. His view of the church was that of a community of fellow travelers on the journey of mutual sharing and encouragement. In his letter to the Christians at Thessalonica he spoke with great feeling of his relationship to them. "We were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us." (1 Thes. 2:7-8). . . . Unfortunately, the church in our culture is not often the place where we experience such open and trustful community; at least, not in the official programs and meetings.²³

This is especially true for ministers, who feel they cannot make close friends with church members for a host of reasons. It is difficult for ministers to find Christian community in which they are not the leader, or looked to, or feel more is expected from them. It is hard for ministers to find a safe place of Christian community where they are one of the community and not its leader. There is yet another major reason healing community is central: because life has pain and hurt. Small groups that are safe are healing. Anderson

²³ Ray S. Anderson, *Self-Care: A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010), 238-239.

writes, “It matters little what source of pain. Pain is a feeling and not just an emotion. The self *is* what it feels. The pain of grief over tragic loss is not unlike the pain of abuse or betrayal. The pain of unfulfilled desires and dreams is a wound to the self which feels very much like all other hurts.”²⁴ He also notes the potential for healing in the context of safe small groups: “Where there are small groups meeting, this may be the place to begin. There will be risks. Not every small group is open to personal sharing and willing to make the commitment to honesty and growth of the personal life of its members.”²⁵ This retreat offers ministers this chance.

Conclusion

It is hoped that when the ministers return home from this retreat, they will return home feeling heard, loved, encouraged, refreshed, and rejuvenated. The desire is that they leave the retreat hopeful, joy-filled, and purposeful. When they return home to their families and congregations, the hope is that they will return with holy insights and new practices they may wish to share. The atmosphere that gives the greatest chance for this to be the outcome is God’s blessing and healing touch through time, community, Scripture, and prayer. This particular retreat will benefit from these experiences with a focus on the life of one of his children, Martin Luther.

²⁴ Ibid., 239-240.

²⁵ Ibid., 239.

CHAPTER 7

WHERE WE WERE, WHERE WE ARE, AND WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

In regards to Seventh-day Adventist ministers' self-care, no significant denominational plan or program has been implemented to help clergy. This is not to say that the encouragement of such care has not been found in the past or presently, but frankly, aid has been sporadic and scattered at best. Although discussions arise in reference to the institution of a comprehensive mechanism to help with such care, there is presently no plan in practice.

Some conferences have had, or currently have, ministerial directors, whose role it is provide pastoral care for the ministers in that territory. But not every conference has a ministerial director, and even when they do, these ministerial directors often wear other hats as well, such as coordinating evangelism (church growth) within the conference, serving as a stewardship director (focusing on tithe and offering growth), or some other task related to conference oversight. Sometimes ministerial directors exhort ministers within the conference to focus on the areas of evangelism and giving growth. These topics are not necessarily the most helpful to ministers who are hurting or who feel burnt out. If there are any ministerial directors with no other directive than pastoral care, they

are rare at best. It is much more likely, within the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, that such a single-minded job description is non-existent. This is not a slight or a judgment on those attempting to promote care. It is an acknowledgement that if the idea is that a ministerial director within a conference will solve the issue of helping ministers with self-care, it is unfortunately more fantasy than reality.

There are times when conference leadership learns of a minister struggling and in need of counseling, and they will encourage this course of action. But these situations most often occur after a major crisis has already taken place. It is not preventative in nature. This intervention is usually made when something is threatening to take or has already taken a pastor out of ministry, as in the case of a “moral fall” (a sexual affair).

While this project is but one tool that can be used in helping ministers with their own spiritual lives and self-care, it is preventative in nature and contributes to the maintenance of such care. This is but a beginning, an attempt at the conference level, with other pieces to be added to help the ministers in the Ohio Conference. While it would be better to have a thorough, division-wide approach with financial support, it would take many committees and a lot of money for such a caring structure to be implemented. This project, however, is something that can be done immediately at the local level. It is a beginning step. It is about lighting a candle in the room of self-care, rather than cursing the darkness.

Being relatively new to the Ohio Conference, it would be difficult to speak to how “workers meetings” (that is, ministers meetings) have been run here in the past. The most common approach witnessed these last thirty-five-plus years in many workers meetings is that they usually are between one and three days in length, and they are well named.

These “retreats” are usually packed with meetings that go from morning to night, with little in the way of breaks. The most common topics are evangelism (grow your church), stewardship (grow the giving), and health (take care of your health and recommend the same to church members). After decades of involvement in such meetings, the biggest complaints shared among pastors (although not with conference officials) are as follows: I leave feeling more tired than I was when I arrived. How can I ever do all of this? How do I keep adding all these suggested programs?

Workers meetings certainly are not planned to give generous time margins. They are not about being quiet, slowing down, or being still. It is considered a great luxury to have an afternoon off for “activities” during a three-day meeting. They are most often lecture-based; for most of the hours, ministers are sitting and listening to a talking head. This is descriptive of the experience, not the speaker. Rarely is there time built into the schedule for ministers to just be together, talk life, talk shop, or be heard. Rarer still is time planned into the schedule for ministers to just be still.

The minister’s retreat designed within this project actually plans for just such time. Phillips writes, “Choosing occasional fallowness in order to listen to God is an action that can prevent debilitating depletion.”¹ Muller similarly states, “In the relentless busyness of modern life, we have lost the rhythm between work and rest. All life requires a rhythm of rest. . . . Our culture invariably supposes that action and accomplishment are better than rest, that doing something—anything—is better than doing nothing.”² This

¹ Phillips, *The Cultivated Life*, 82.

² Muller, *Sabbath*, 1.

retreat has purposely been structured to be counter-cultural to Seventh-day Adventist minister's retreats of the past.

Based upon advice given by Fuller Seminary professor, Dr. Gary Sattler, the retreat is to be first and foremost about rest and rejuvenation. This was some of the best advice that could have been given. When, during the orientation of the pilot retreat, it was shared with the pastors that this was the highest priority, it seemed to take the pressure off of the ministers as far as what must be accomplished. Professor Sattler also wanted there to be no stress over having to make things happen. He suggested that there be no fear of silence or pressure to pack the schedule, but to instead give the pastors room to breathe and to be.

His concern was likely twofold. The first reason is that this project would be an uncommon and unfamiliar approach. It would stand in stark contrast to the way retreats or workers meetings have been done within our faith tradition in the past, and that would be purposeful. The second reason is that when push comes to shove and the retreat actually begins, there would likely be doubts and fears that not enough was planned for the ministers to "do." And in that concern, the time margins would be filled in with material to study and activities to do so that it would not be a "waste" of their time. Both these dangers to this project were real and averted. This new kind of process and rhythm of retreat was given opportunity, despite the doubts regarding whether the participating ministers would have a negative response. Looking back, there was a real danger of buckling under those fears.

Results of the Pilot Retreat

What was learned by braving a different approach is that the backdrop of this more leisurely schedule actually facilitated learning and community in powerful ways. The retreat made space in busy calendars and gave ministers an opportunity to actually slow down. It gave them freedom to stop. Noah benShea writes, “It’s the space between the notes that makes the music.”³ The results of the retreat confirmed this. The retreat opened up spaces between notes and beauty appeared. The retreat offered space and quiet. The psalmist puts it this way: “My heart is not proud, O Lord, my eyes are not haughty, I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me” (Psalms 131:1-2). From the responses to the evaluation of the retreat, the ministers experienced some of this.

Ministers need regular opportunities to experience what the psalmist wrote about because often they do have to concern themselves with great matters and things beyond themselves. Witt writes, “Jesus regularly took time to live in the spaces between the notes. He often withdrew from the demands of life to be alone and to be with his Father. He also helped the disciples embrace the idea of rhythm.”⁴ When Jesus’ modern-day disciples go on retreats, it gives holy space that makes for beautiful music. The spaces placed deliberately within the schedule proved this to be so. It was clear that something special was taking place long before the first retreat survey response came back.

³ Noah benShea, *Jacob the Baker: Wisdom for the Heart’s Ascent* (New York: Ballantine, 1998), as quoted in Witt, *Replenish*, 99.

⁴ Witt, *Replenish*, 99.

One of the unintended lessons occurred because only six of the original eight ministers were able to attend the retreat. While there was enough time to find two ministers to replace those who could not make it, the decision was made to leave the number of pastors at six. Looking back, it was a good decision. One of the strengths of the retreat was the intimacy and the sense of rich community that developed. Adding two more people would likely have changed the dynamics of the retreat, especially as far as the sharing that took place. With loneliness in ministry and the difficulty ministers have opening up, feeling safe, or having friends, it seems that the smaller number of ministers at the retreat helped. The ministers experienced a greater degree of safety in this small circle.

During sharing times, everyone had time to speak since the group was small. The group truly ended up journeying together. No one was left behind. Even those who by nature were less talkative found their voice. Not only did they share, but as the retreat progressed, they shared as friends. This ended up being a great blessing. Witt points out, “The truth is those of us in ministry often don’t do the friendship thing very well. One survey among pastors found that 70 percent do not have a close friend, confidant, or mentor. Henri Nouwen wrote, ‘Most Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships.’ What an indictment.”⁵ With this in mind, it probably should not have been surprising how much time the ministers spent together even when nothing was planned. Their sharing continued spontaneously. There was a deep fellowship and sharing. The retreat was clearly meeting a felt need, even if it was a need not expressed until the last day.

⁵ Ibid., 105-106. Witt quotes Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 60.

On the last day of the retreat, one of the pastors said to the group, "I'm so lonely." With the bond that was already in place by that time, the pastor went on sharing the reasons why. It was a sacred moment. The group responded powerfully. Pastors ended up planning how they could continue getting together after the retreat. They even went as far as to set up dates for reconnecting. There were two ministers who were part of an active gathering of Seventh-day Adventist ministers that get together monthly for fun and food. The pastor who shared her loneliness was invited to be a part of that group. Without the retreat, no one would have known what she was going through, and she would have continued her difficult journey of feeling alone without the support of caring friends.

It may have been that the deep sharing that took place on days two and three of the retreat came about so quickly because of a key moment that first evening. Sometime after supper, a number of pastors were visiting together in the lodge they eat and sleep in. One of the pastors came and asked if he could speak with me privately. We went back to his room and the pastor shared that he had had a heart attack at the camp about three years earlier and he did not realize how hard it would be to return to the same location. He asked if he could drive home and spend the night there. He lived only a little over an hour away. I said that would be fine. I also told him that he did not need to rush back the next morning, or if he found that it was too hard to be at the camp at this point, not to worry. Whatever was best for him is what we wanted. He felt sure that he would be fine if he could sleep at home.

After visiting together for a while, I prayed with and for him. It surprised me when he followed me back to the main room where the other pastors were visiting. He said he needed to share something with them and ask their permission for something. He

then told them what he had told me. The group empathized with and affirmed him. They gathered around him and prayed for him. He promised to text when he got home safely. The next morning he was there for our first group gathering of the day. Not only that, he was able to stay for the rest of the retreat even though we let him know that we were fine with him going home. The group had been growing close during the first day, but the experience that first evening drew everyone closer. Not only were these pastors becoming community, but they were becoming a safe community. The rich soil of safe Christian community allowed for the experience that took place at the retreat.

On the second day, a minister shared how he was helping students at a church school with music lessons. He is a gifted musician who loves teaching music, but it was eating up the time he usually spent with his two young sons. Somehow in the midst of a retreat on Luther, he shared with the group his situation and feelings. Veteran ministers shared ideas regarding how to deal with balancing family needs and work. On the last day, this young pastor shared with the group how much he appreciated what had been shared and that he was going to make changes that would allow him some afternoons with his boys. There was a collective wisdom among the group that was helpful. God was using the setting and the circle of pastors there to give support and wise life-changing council. There was a communion with God and each other taking place.

A prediction given by Ferguson and Witt was taking place within the group: “What a difference it makes in our families, our communities, and our planet, when we habitually pause from producing and consuming in order to truly experience the daily

miracles that exist all around us.”⁶ Miracles were coming to life at the retreat. Witt’s words also struck a chord: “Looking back I realize there’s a correlation between my communion *with* God and my courage *for* God.”⁷ The young minister was growing braver. By the third day with God in retreat and Martin Luther as guide, these ministers were growing courageous. They recognized a need for change in their personal lives, in their families’ lives, and in their churches. They began sharing their church situations unguardedly. There was an atmosphere of prayer. Insights were given and plans regarding how to face obstacles were being put in place. Spontaneously ministers began to encircle any pastor sharing challenges and difficulties, praying for each one with the laying on of hands. It was a time of holy community and healing. As Ferguson and Witt state, “Retreats provide a unique environment for faith formation, renewal, experiences of Christian community, and interconnection with creation.”⁸ This was true for that small circle of ministers in Ohio.

Anderson explains that small group meetings are often a place to begin to experience the kind of deep Christian community that nourishes.⁹ He also warns that some small groups may not reach that place, either by either unwillingness to take risks or make the commitment to each other for a safe place of honest sharing.¹⁰ This group reached a surprising level of community and vulnerable sharing. The group experienced

⁶ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 23-24.

⁷ Witt, *Replenish*, 118.

⁸ Ferguson and Witt, *The Retreat Leader’s Manual*, 47.

⁹ Anderson, *Self-Care*, 239.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

the bonus described by Gilmore: “The added bonus of a group retreat, however, is that it strengthens the sense of Christian community. Friendships are formed on retreat that can carry people through the bumpy parts of life when they return home.”¹¹ Anderson writes, “I felt myself in communion with the self of others. It was not the pain that created the bond, but the shared feelings which brought our separate selves into communion.”¹²

Nouwen writes that solitude “is the place where Christ remodels us in his own image and frees us from the victimizing compulsions of the world.”¹³ While it is impossible by observation alone to know all that is going on inside a retreatant, it was clear that the combination of community and time for solitude was a powerful combination. The fruit was an openness and depth of sharing. It was beautiful to see ministers minister to each other on the basis of Christian friendship instead of the usual role of pastor/member. There seemed to be strength and healing in it.

There also seemed to be a growing peace as the retreat commenced. As the days passed, the ministers grew more comfortable with each other and the surroundings. Their experience grew sweeter as well. There was the dynamic of an engaged and focused small group, as well as time alone to reflect and consider what was being covered. Thought-provoking questions came naturally to the group: What does this mean for us? What does this mean to me personally? The ministers on this retreat came from varied backgrounds, cultures, and countries of origin, but they found that they had much in

¹¹ Gilmore, *Complete Leader's Guide to Christian Retreats*, 3.

¹² Anderson, *Self-Care*, 240.

¹³ Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 60, as quoted in Witt, *Replenish*, 139.

common. Observing how close they became as they journeyed together on retreat, the movement from separate selves into communion and community was profound.

The last morning together was a joy. The evening before, we had touched on Luther's little book, *A Simple Way to Pray*, so for worship the group practiced it. A Scripture was shared with the group. They sat in silence and then wrote out their response to Luther's braid of four elements. After everyone had enough time to complete the four-phased journey of prayer as Luther had given to his barber Peter, each one shared. It would be hard to describe the experience adequately. As each pastor shared what he or she gained from the exercise, the passage of Scripture opened up. Many remarkable and different facets of the text were seen through the eyes of each pastor, and the prayers evoked by following such simple steps were remarkable. One pastor mentioned that it would be possible to close sermons using this way of praying, that it would bring the sermon to a profound conclusion and actually make it prayer. With rest and retreat, ministers were becoming creative and excited about possibilities for their ministries.

The last group gathering concerning Luther resulted in a group discussion on things learned and a spontaneous, unanimous vote to hold a second retreat on Luther as a group in the fall. The group of ministers even threw out the idea of holding the same retreat with a larger group ministers within the Ohio Conference after our next retreat. In this setting, the ministerial team could be broken up into small groups, with each of the six pastors helping me by leading a small group of ministers. It is an interesting idea that will need some more prayer and thought. But it did show just how enthusiastic the group was about what they had experienced, and that they wanted others to experience also. While the approach may remain as it was during this first retreat—a small group of

ministers in a more intimate setting—this conversation brought about the idea of mentoring a team of ministers who could in turn multiply the opportunities for ministers’ retreats within the Ohio Conference. There are real possibilities with this concept, and they will need to be fleshed out further.

The retreat ended with one final meal together. There was much laughter and comradery. It was a lighthearted time of socializing with friends. Of the many things the retreat led to, growing friendships between ministers was one of the most rewarding aspects to witness. All the pastors seemed to be informed and inspired by Martin Luther, refreshed by the time spent in Scripture and prayer, sharing within Christian community in ways ministers seldom find possible in their own churches, and experiencing genuine time for rest, relaxation, and reflection.

Evaluation

Before the ministers left the camp/retreat center, I asked if they would fill out an evaluation form to help inform the preparation of future retreats. As well as giving them an evaluation at the retreat, the same evaluation was emailed to them. Appendix B lists the questions asked and the ministers’ responses. In order to protect their privacy, the ministers are numbered one through five so that it will be possible to follow each retreatant’s response to each question. Unfortunately, one of the six pastors was unable to complete the evaluation by the time of this writing. This first retreat has confirmed that ministers can benefit from such retreats. Overall, the evaluations were very positive, revealing a deep need for this type of retreat. The evaluation results also provided insight as to how to improve the retreat in the future.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There is a clear and present danger to ministers regarding the possibility of burnout. Helping professionals are particularly susceptible (see Appendix C for a 2010 NPR interview transcript on the subject of clergy burnout). For decades, there have been warnings from the field of psychology that “people pay a heavy price for being their brother’s [and sister’s] keeper. The emotional exhaustion and cynicism of burnout are often accompanied by deterioration in physical and psychological well-being.”¹ Ministers are caregivers and could quote the biblical passage line and verse that this noted psychologist alludes to. But just because they know the Bible and are called by God to ministry, this does not make them immune to the effects of chronic stress. To ignore the reality of what it means to be a minister is a set-up for disaster. Ministers are not the only ones to be affected if they do not practice biblical and holy self-care. Families, loved ones, and congregations all pay a heavy price also because however lonely and isolated a minister may feel, he or she is really part of a community. Community is about connection, and when tragedy strikes the individual, it impacts all those connected.

Witt pulls no punches when he writes that too often, ministers and church leaders have focused on vision, have highlighted big talk and big ideas, and have neglected the bedrock of the inner life with God. It should not come as a surprise that history is strewn with the wreckage of ministers and ministries lost. The statistics of ministers and ministry fallout are clear: ministers neglect their souls at their own peril. After sharing the eye-opening statistics of the landscape of ministry, Witt writes a line that captures the essence

¹ Maslach, *Burnout*, 73.

of this final project: “We have neglected the fact that a pastor’s greatest leadership tool is a healthy soul.”² He ends with this lament: “Our concentration on skill and technique and strategy has resulted in deemphasizing the interior life. The outcome is an increasing number of men and women leading our churches who are emotionally empty and spiritually dry.”³ Spiritual retreats can be a balm to the emotionally empty, and like water to the spiritually dry.

The goal of this project is not merely that of providing ministers with a few days of escape, as important as that is. The goal is for ministers to experience a different space and place with the rhythm of rest and fellowship. The hope is that they be given time to reflect on their lives and ministries while they commune with God and fellow brothers and sisters in holy ways. The retreat is designed to be as safe as possible so that this might take place. The goal is that in times of silence, Bible reading, and prayer, the ministers would be fed from the deep well of God himself, and that in community they would find understanding, love, and care.

This project also focuses on the fact that Seventh-day Adventist ministers, part of a movement that strongly promotes Sabbath keeping, actually need the Sabbath too. They need it in ways they do not and cannot receive when they are the leaders, speakers, teachers, referees, organizers, cheerleaders, cooks, and bottle washers for fellowship lunch at church. This may be an exaggeration, but for many ministers this description feels like absolute reality. Seventh-day Adventist ministers need the rhythm of rest that

² Witt, *Replenish*, 19.

³ *Ibid.*

God not only intended, but created in the beginning (Genesis 2, Exodus 20). Sabbath was not created only for church members; it was meant to be a gift for ministers also.

While a spiritual retreat may not take place on the actual weekly Sabbath, it can be a much needed one in the rhythm of the minister's life. One thing is certain: life is not getting any less complicated. Smart phones, tablets, laptops, email, social media, greater connectivity, and less connection sum up the age. When all this speed and busyness is multiplied by the lives of a congregation, it contributes to an overwhelming overload. It will take courage and enough quiet and stillness to hear God amidst all the noise, and to see him in a world with enough cultural clutter to hide him from the un-searching view. The pilot retreat allowed for just that.

Christian spiritual retreat is counter-cultural in the best sense. In a world addicted to producing more stuff, having more toys, and wanting more things, it makes no sense. It is counterintuitive to a worldview that prizes producing more stuff. And while it may be that ministers know too much to allow themselves to fall into the trap of materialism or all sorts of worldly "isms," they do not seem to be wise enough to keep from falling into workaholism, or the impossible goal of trying to be all things to all people at all times. Retreat offers something totally other than all of these things. And one of the things that it offers is a lifeline. It is a space and a place that allows God and his children to be together with fewer distractions and with a greater opportunity to reassess, recalibrate, and find a more excellent way, not only to minister but to live.

The beauty of spiritual retreat in a small group context was witnessing how it nourished the ministers physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Three days away from all the work and responsibilities that come with being a minister of a congregation—or in the

case of some of the ministers on this retreat, as many as three congregations—brought much-needed physical rest. In conversations, unsolicited comments were made as to the beauty of nature, and not having to get up early or stay up late because of church matters or needs. Life was unhurried and technology had less opportunity to infringe on rest because of little to no cell phone coverage. This too was a gift. Phones, computers, and tablets were set aside, and with this change, more personal communication began to take place. People were focused on each other, God’s Word, and prayer. Emotional and spiritual healing began to take place through un-orchestrated sharing that began to bubble up from beneath the surface of the polished minister persona. By the second day, it was clear that no one need wear a professional mask of self-protection. This was a safe place with genuinely safe community. The pilot project evidenced the healing power that such an atmosphere provides. Pastors expressed how nice it was to be able to talk to people who understood. They shared how there were so many things they could not talk about with church members and what it meant to them to be able to verbalize what they were going through.

During the retreat, the small group of pastors witnessed miracles of healing, not from leprosy or being physically crippled, but miracles of holy rest, of safe Christian community, of being listened to and affirmed, of being cared for and loved unconditionally—all of which were much-needed miracles. The retreat became holy ground, the soil in which new things could grow. With physical and spiritual rest, there came a spirit of thankfulness. In an atmosphere of spiritual abundance and grace, there came renewed energy and vision. Personal courage came to the surface, even the courage to change.

At the time of this writing, two months have passed since the retreat, and the communications with and from the ministers testify to the fact that the retreat continues to impact their lives. They are already seeking for another opportunity for the same small group to gather again for spiritual retreat. More than one of these participants has suggested that they need this type of offering at least yearly, and that twice a year might be even better. They are finding that they have more to offer their people because of what they experienced on retreat.

The choice of Luther as guide for the spiritual retreat turned out to be a good one. Not only did the ministers learn more about the reformer and the Reformation, but they were inspired by it. Luther's love and study of Scripture and the time he spent in prayer spoke volumes to these busy pastors. They gained courage from Luther's courage. The ministers talked about what it would have been like to have gone through what Luther did in ministry. This seemed to nudge them to take a stand to make personal changes in their lives and ministries, even if these changes were difficult. They were amazed that Luther spent two to three hours in prayer, especially if he had a lot to do. When they discovered Luther's lengthy letter to his long-time barber Peter, they were moved by the pastor's heart of this spiritual legend. Luther seemed to both encourage and inspire them to a ministry grounded in a life commitment that would not allow a busy schedule to hijack the place of the Bible and prayer.

Spiritual battles are spiritually won. There is an adage that often the auto mechanics' cars are in the greatest disrepair. The reason is that they are so busy always keeping other peoples' cars going that they neglect their own. Fortunately for auto mechanics and their customers, if a mechanic's car breaks down, it does not hurt anyone

else, and it is after all just a car. If a minister is so busy in the attempt to keep everyone else's spiritual life running well and neglects his or her own, the results are much more serious. It is not a car that breaks down; it is a minister. And unlike an auto mechanic, if a minister's spiritual life breaks down, it not only affects him or her, but it affects the minister's family, congregation, and often the ability to live out one's calling as a minister. Many times pastors have confided that they are so busy with the work of God that their relationship with God is suffering. When ministers feel they have become too busy with the work of God that they have to neglect their personal Bible study, prayer, and worship, they are truly hurting themselves. The retreat offers a gentle reminder of how beautiful it is when time is taken to be alone with God, to spend unhurried time in the Word and prayer. From all outward signs, the truth that these ministers already knew became renewed with evidence, that when quality time is spent with God, one has more to offer others.

The conclusion drawn from this project is that spiritual retreats for ministers work. However, with this confirmation comes a call to this ministerial supervisor to commit time and resources to see that any and every minister in the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has the opportunity to experience it. It will mean committing the financial resources necessary to seeing to it through, even though budgets are tight, and so many other things call for money and attention. It will require a commitment of time and energy on the part of conference leadership, who themselves have busy schedules and many responsibilities. Such an example from leadership would speak volumes to the ministers of the importance of spiritual self-care that no sermon or book ever could. The success of the pilot retreat demonstrates that while this may be the conclusion of the final

project, it is only the beginning of a new ministry to ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ohio.

APPENDIX A
RETREAT SCHEDULE¹

Monday

1:00 p.m. Lunch
2:00 p.m. Meeting together
3:30 p.m. Intro to Luther
4:00 p.m. Scripture & Reflection
4:15 p.m. Silence
4:45 p.m. Free Time
6:00 p.m. Dinner
8:00 p.m. Snacks & Free time
10:00 p.m. Bed

Tuesday

8:30 a.m. Private Devotions
11:00 a.m. Scripture & Reflection
11:15 a.m. Silence
1:00 p.m. Lunch
2:00 p.m. Free time – Rest – hike
4:30 p.m. A simple way to pray
6:00 p.m. Dinner
7:00 p.m. Scripture & Reflection
7:15 p.m. Silence
8:00 p.m. Snacks
10:00 p.m. Bed

Wednesday

8:30 a.m. Breakfast
9:30 a.m. Private Devotions
11:00 a.m. Scripture & Reflection
11:15 a.m. Silence
1:00 p.m. Lunch
2:00 p.m. Leave for home.

¹ Ron Halvorsen, Jr., “Luther Retreat” (handout given to retreat participants at the first meeting of the retreat, Camp Mohaven, Danville, OH, January 25, 2016).

APPENDIX B

RESPONSES TO THE EVALUATION FOLLOWING THE PILOT RETREAT

Was the retreat helpful?	
Pastor 1	That was one of those retreats that blessed me not just professionally, but on a personal, spiritual level.
Pastor 2	<p>The retreat was very helpful in many different ways (in no particular order).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First of all it was good to have some time to reflect on the life and work of an awesome man of God and reflect on his journey, spiritual struggles, and courage. • Second, it provided a personal time of spiritual reflection, uninterrupted prayer time, and meditation. • Third, it provided time to read about Luther but also the Bible - without interruption or potential interruption. • Fourth - provided time for rest - sleep and personal time to unwind. • Fifth, allowed time to SHOOT! • Sixth, allowed time to get to know other pastors on a more personal level and just chat without shop always being the topic of discussion.
Pastor 3	The retreat was helpful. It was exactly what I needed at the time. The books you had on the table for our reading were helpful as well.
Pastor 4	Yes! The retreat was very helpful in it allowed me time away from the regular routine of life and gave me opportunity to be spiritually fed and blessed.
Pastor 5	It was VERY helpful. I really appreciated the opportunity and the blessings I received on this retreat
Pastor 6	
What were some of the biggest blessings that came from it?	
Pastor 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I was able to recharge spiritually. It might sound strange, but as pastors we are so preoccupied with others' spirituality and other people spiritual needs, that we forget ours. This retreat provided a window of spiritual opportunities. 2. I was able to speak to other colleagues about things that I cannot share with my church members. 3. I was able to see my Conference president as a pastor, not just as an administrator; it established a new level of connections with him.
Pastor 2	See Answer #1

Pastor 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The conversations were very spiritual. I needed to share and unload personal burdens. 2. Private times were also helpful for me to pray, meditate and catch up on reading. 3. Another great blessing was the deeper insights into Luther's prayer life.
Pastor 4	<p>I really enjoyed the sharing time and praying for each other. It is good to hear and know what others are going through, their joys and blessings. You realize you are not so alone. Being prayed for is such treat. It's like getting a boost of energy from friends. 😊 A Pastor prays for others all the time, but rarely do people stop to think that you need a prayer or to be heard.</p>
Pastor 5	<p>Since my open heart surgery almost 3 years ago (this coming May) I vowed to myself that I would slow down my pace from 65 hours/week to 50 hours/week, however fast forwarding almost three years later I caught myself doing the same crazy 'chasing the pigs' routine that I had before. The retreat was a refreshing experience where I was able to tune up my commitment to be fit physically and spiritually and prioritize what is important.</p> <p>The lessons on the prayer style Luther taught to his barber has been a constant in my life since I learned of it at the retreat. The open and frank conversation, you lead us, helped me to analyze and ponder on some of the depth of my own spirituality.¹</p>
Pastor 6	<p>Does Martin Luther's life and teachings aid us in our spiritual walk as ministers in changing times?</p>
Pastor 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It definitely does; M. Luther brought a change to his culture and society when change was so needed. We live in a time when change is needed, but often lack the insights as to how to do it. The life of Martin Luther provides with some very valuable and tired principles for facilitating change. 2. I was impressed by Martin Luther's down to earth spirituality and pastoral interest in the simple people, e.g. his barber! What a spiritual leader and an example to follow!!! 3. I was inspired by the love of Luther for God, His Word and by Luther's dedication to prayer!

¹ This is especially helpful because this minister did not write and return the evaluation until March 11, about a month and a half after the retreat. Clearly, the retreat was still impacting how this minister was living and doing ministry.

Pastor 2	Definitely. I was able to equate much of what we talked about to our churches current need for revival and REFORMATION and saw that it took such a man and will take many others to follow suit. Also, we need to train others in our congregations just as he trained many of his students /friends to be students of Scripture and have a personal experience with God.
Pastor 3	His life yes, very much aids me in my spiritual walk as minister. I was impressed how he took time to pray and strengthen his relationship with God, and also how he was willing to stand firm for the things he believed in. I need to learn to take time for myself and spend more time in prayer and contemplation.
Pastor 4	Yes! Martin Luther's life is a great inspiration of how God works in and through us. We can learn from those that have gone before us in seeing how God led them and directed their lives. He made great contributions to the life of faith.
Pastor 5	Absolutely! Luther was a minister in a changing time and he stood his spiritual grounds against all odds. His life and experience are an example and inspiration to everyone in ministry.
Pastor 6	
What did we do well?	
Pastor 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The relaxed atmosphere was very welcomed 2. The time for sharing and prayer was a blessing and a window into the hearts and minds of my colleagues and friends 3. The food and the "table talks" were reminiscent of Luther's "Table Talks." Great time!
Pastor 2	Food, free time, not real early rise time, not late stop time. Small, cohesive group. I do not think this would work with just a general mix of pastors. Care needs to be given to the mix and I think this was done well.
Pastor 3	Relaxed atmosphere was excellent. The sharing, reading, praying and fellowshiping together was also very well done. I felt comfortable and at ease throughout the entire stay. Location was also a good choice because God speaks to me the best when I am looking at nature and the sky.
Pastor 4	You really fed us well! 😊 Spiritually and Physically! I loved the time of prayer, sharing, reading together and discussing. It was all beneficial. It was just so good to be with other friends and to share together. It was also great to hang out with you and Buffy. Being cared for by "Our" Pastor was a real blessing beyond compare.

Pastor 5	<p>The flexibility of time giving us an opportunity not only to find spiritual rest but physical rest as well. The retreat was very relaxing as should be the purpose of any great retreat.</p> <p>We so much appreciated the meal treats, kindly prepared by Pastor Buffy Halvorsen.</p> <p>The setting of the retreat at Mohaven was great. The casual relaxing conversations without agenda, we had in between the study sessions were a PLUS!</p>
Pastor 6	
What can we do better?	
Pastor 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We should do it more often. 2. Maybe do some fun/silly games in the evening, i.e. some things that would make us laugh together?
Pastor 2	I will have to think harder on this one. Nothing is coming to my mind at this time. Maybe a group walk or small physical work project. Not big, just a means of bonding / refreshing with a physical aspect rather than just cerebral.
Pastor 3	Cannot think of anything that could be improved. Everything was wonderful.
Pastor 4	Food was so good and wonderful! Same great food would be awesome but cut it down to two meals a day. Eat at 10 and 4 and have available some snacks for those that want more. (I think I gained 4 pounds that weekend. I came home and fasted two days.) 😊
Pastor 5	I believe other pastors will definitely benefit from it. Either if you have the same kind of settings you had with us or on a major scale, having as many pastors as they are willing, it will be a blessings for them.
Pastor 6	
Do you want more retreat opportunities like this one?	
Pastor 1	Oh, YES!!!
Pastor 2	Yes!
Pastor 3	Yes, definitely. Every so often I need to take time for something like this. Not only for learning and growth, but also to recharge my batteries.
Pastor 4	Yes! Yes! Yes! I really liked that it was over a Monday to Wednesday. It made it easier to get away and didn't have to worry about potential conflicts as much.
Pastor 5	YES! I would love to have this experience again at least once a year. AND I will be willing to assist and help you on the forefront or in the background if you ever need my help in other retreats you may plan I would be glad to help.
Pastor 6	
Extra Unsolicited Comments	
Pastor 1	Thank you for the blessing you and Buffy are for us! I enjoyed very much both - your company and the topics we discussed!

Pastor 2	Thank you Ron and Buffy for your time and hard work on this project. I was very beneficial for me - just to get away and re-fresh.
Pastor 3	And thank you and Buffy again for the wonderful opportunity. Everything was a blessings. God bless you for your work and friendship.
Pastor 4	Thanks again Ron and Buffy for providing this special time for us. I was truly blessed!
Pastor 5	Thank you again Ron and Buffy for the spiritual retreat you both offered us. Outstanding!
Pastor 6	

APPENDIX C

NPR INTERVIEW ON BURNOUT AMONG CLERGY

“Clergy Members Suffer from Burnout, Poor Health”

NPR: August 3, 2010 1:00 PM ET

Transcript:

TONY COX, host:

This is TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Tony Cox in Washington. Neal Conan is away.

Priests, ministers, rabbis and imams are generally driven by a sense of duty to answer calls for help and to do the best they can to serve others. But recent research shows that in many cases, they rarely find time for themselves and as a result suffer from higher rates of depression, obesity and high blood pressure.

Many clergy members simply burn out. Traditional church support, offerings, volunteers and an active congregation is not what it once was, forcing men and women of the cloth to take on added responsibilities on top of their Sunday service duty.

Many denominations now offer programs to address the issue of clergy burnout, encouraging these worn-down keepers of the faith to take some time off and, to borrow a computer term, refresh.

Pastors, preachers and all members of the clergy, we want to hear from you. What don't we understand about your job? What has changed in the past 10 years? Our number here in Washington is 800-989-8255. Our email address is talk@npr.org. And you can join the conversation at our website. Just go to npr.org, and click on TALK OF THE NATION.

Later this hour, a final sing-along with none other than the late Mitch Miller, but first: burnout among the clergy. Joining us now from our bureau in New York is Paul Vitello. He is the religion reporter for the New York Times, and he wrote an article about this problem in the weekend's paper. Paul, welcome to the program.

Mr. PAUL VITELLO (Religion Reporter, New York Times): Thank you.

COX: You know, from your story, we see that clergy burnout doesn't happen in just one denomination. It seems as if it's a pretty widespread phenomenon.

Mr. VITELLO: Yeah, it seems to be a professional hazard—in the last decade or so. It seems that from mainline Christian denominations like the Methodists and Presbyterians,

to Jewish congregations of all the different denominations of the Jewish faith, and Catholic priests as well, for various and sundry reasons, have been experiencing an increased risk of high blood pressure, obesity and other indicators of shortening lifespan and stress, most of it related to stress.

COX: Let's talk about some of those various and sundry reasons. Is it because of the economy? Is it because of the tension because of the wars? Is it because more people are going to church? Are you able to put a fix on what is causing this right now?

Mr. VITELLO: A short answer is no, because there's so many reasons. Some of them have to do with the economy, I'm sure, but most of the research that's being done right now out of Duke University, for instance, the divinity school there, has been doing research on clergy stress going back about four or five years, which would predate most of what, you know, what effects would be felt from the recession.

And going back as far as 10 years, there's been beginnings of these health indicator problems, which originally came to the attention of the various denominations, mostly the . . . initially the mainline Protestant denominations because of concerns over rising health care costs.

They're mostly . . . most of the denominations are self-insuring groups, and when there is a blip in their health care cost, you know, lines, they feel it intensely because they're very small insurance pools.

So, beginning with the Lutheran Church, and then the Methodists and Presbyterians, began to look more closely at this and study it going back before the recession, also before the electronic communications revolution.

You know, a lot of pastors that I talked to mentioned, you know, how much more accessible they are and how much more vulnerable they are to being called upon...

COX: At any time of the day or night, right?

Mr. VITELLO: Day or night, and...

COX: Absolutely. Let me bring in another voice to the conversation, if you don't mind. Joining us now from a studio at Duke University is Robin Swift. She serves as the director for health programs for the Clergy Health Initiative, which is part of the Duke Divinity School. Welcome, Robin, to the show.

Ms. ROBIN SWIFT (Clergy Health Initiative, Duke University Divinity School): Thank you very much.

COX: The research that you were a part of doing - and we're going to get to a couple of callers in just a moment - I know that it was limited to the Methodist church in North Carolina. But what were you able primarily to determine from your research?

Ms. SWIFT: We've done two different kinds of studies, a qualitative series of focus groups to ask pastors about their health in the context of their lives, and then a broad sort of census, quantitative study we did in 2008 to look at their data compared with data for other North Carolinians.

And you are probably asking about our quantitative findings...

COX: Yes.

Ms. SWIFT: ...where we found that pastors' health was worse off across the board than the populations where they serve. Their rates of obesity were about 10 percent higher.

We looked at other kinds of chronic diseases. High blood pressure rates were about four percent higher, asthma rates also about four percent higher. Their diabetes rates are about three percent higher than other North Carolinians.

We also asked about mental health, looking at depression rates in pastors, which approach about 10 percent, and although there's . . . go ahead.

COX: Let me stop you only because you're giving us a lot of numbers, which is hard to . . . which I wanted, too, because I asked you to do that. But it's a little difficult to digest. So let's try to break it up into pieces, and what we'll do in order to accommodate that is let's duck in an email here and then comment on that and then come back and have you give us some more of those details.

Ms. SWIFT: Great.

COX: This comes from Linda (ph) in Oberlin: I took a five-year leave of absence after my husband died and found that while clergy may handle death well when it happens to those in our care, we do not know how to care . . . we do not know how to take care of each other as clergy.

I wrote a document addressing this issue and am happily surprised that it is being studied in the Kansas West Conference of the United Methodist Church. I think that if there had been a program of care in place, I would not have been gone for five years. I just got back into the ministry in July. This is Reverend Linda from Oberlin, Kansas.

Since we're talking about the Methodist Church, I'll come back to you first, Robin. What's your reaction to that?

Ms. SWIFT: It sounds right on the money. Pastors, because of their calling, put everybody else first and have a difficult time naming their needs for self-care, and they also, like the Marines or emergency room staff, expect a level of high functioning from each other.

So are sort of surprised and often daunted by the need to care for each other. They want to, but they're not entirely sure how, and...

COX: Paul . . . I'm sorry, finish. I apologize. I thought you were finished. Go on.

Ms. SWIFT: They're also very aware of the need to keep professional boundaries with and for each other. So it's hard, when you're stressed out, to know how to invite others into your pain, and others may be waiting for a signal from the person in pain to offer help.

COX: Well, Paul, in your research, do you find that there is an institutional support in place for some of these members of the clergy, something that will allow them to begin to deal with, not only with these . . . what we're just now talking about, their own personal pains, but also with the ability to take some time away and to, as we said in the beginning, refresh?

Mr. VITELLO: Yeah, there's quite a bit, but I should say that it depends on the kind of congregation that you're from. If you're from a well-organized denomination, like we've been talking about Methodists, and you are in a large congregation with perhaps an associate pastor behind you or two, then the opportunity to take vacations and to take sabbaticals is much greater.

The greatest stress that I found in my own research in talking to pastors was among those who were independent Evangelical Christian ministers with small congregations of 50 to 100, and who literally felt the total weight of all their congregants' needs all the time.

COX: You know, it just so happens that we have an Evangelical pastor on the line, joining us right now from Sioux City, Iowa. John (ph), you're on TALK OF THE NATION.

JOHN (Caller): Hello, thank you. And I think this is a great show. I'm an ELCA pastor who is totally burned out and in between calls and/or looking for another way to make a living simply because my congregation has left the denomination over the decisions about a year ago in the ELCA pertaining to homosexuality.

But all of the stresses and strains that you folks have been talking about I can easily relate to.

COX: What do you think that you need, if I may ask you that, John, what is it that you need?

JOHN: Well, I think one of the least talked about issues for clergy is the increasing lack of respect toward clergy from all sides, not just from parishioners and community, but also from the denominational leaders and the hierarchy.

Pastors are theologians. We go through a lot of training, but often are not well-regarded for all of that. And instead of getting to do what we're trained to do, often we're expected to do things for which either we're not qualified or we don't enjoy doing, that really should be done by laity. Especially, I was an open country parish pastor, and boy did I wear a lot of hats sometimes.

COX: Like . . . I'm interested in hearing more. We have to go to a break in just a moment. John, let me ask you to do this. Please hold on, because I think that what your story is goes to the heart of the matter that we're talking about, along with Robin and with Paul. So stick around. Can you? Can you hold on?

JOHN: Sure, I will.

COX: All right, hold on. I'm going to put you on hold, and we'll come back to him in a minute.

Robin, I want you to think about this, and Paul, as well. He talked about a lack of respect, and I don't know whether that was something that you were able to look into in the course of your research and investigation. But I want to talk about that with you both. Paul, can you stick around a little bit longer, as well?

Mr. VITELLO: Sure.

COX: I appreciate that. We are talking about burnout among the clergy. Robin Swift is with the Clergy Health Initiative at the divinity school at Duke University. More of your calls in a moment.

If you are a member of the clergy, what don't we understand about your job? What has changed in the past 10 years? Our number here in Washington, 800-989-8255. The email address, talk@npr.org. I'm Tony Cox. It's TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

(Soundbite of music)

COX: This is TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Tony Cox, in Washington. Our focus today is on burnout among the clergy. Studies show that preachers, imams, rabbis and ministers don't take enough time for themselves, are more likely to suffer from depression and other health problems, and often feel selfish saying no.

Robin Swift works on one of those studies. She is director of health programs at the Clergy Health Initiative at the divinity school at Duke University. We have posted a link to their research at npr.org. Just click on TALK OF THE NATION.

And all members of the clergy, we want to hear from you. What don't we understand about your job, and what has changed in the past 10 years? Our number here in Washington is 800-989-8255. The email address: talk@npr.org. And to join the conversation, go to the website, npr.org, and click on TALK OF THE NATION.

And Paul Vitello is the religion reporter for the New York Times, whose article "Evidence Grows of the Problem of Clergy Burnout" ran on August 1st. He is still with us, as well.

Now, I'm going to go back right now to John, who is an evangelical pastor from Sioux City, Iowa. John, are you there?

JOHN: Yes.

COX: One of the things briefly I'd like to get you to tell our audience . . . you talked about how you wear so many hats, and there are so many things that you have to do. Briefly, please, what is it that you have to do, and what are some of those hats and responsibilities?

JOHN: It varies from congregation to congregation, but for small congregations where the pastor lives in a parsonage, for example, pastors are often expected to open, unlock buildings and then lock them again. It wasn't uncommon for me at times to need to do, in some of my parishes, some of the custodial work. I've, in some congregations, been the de facto secretary for many functions, let's say, of the secretarial duties.

And where small congregations are struggling for volunteers, pastors feel an enormous burden to keep programs going even when the volunteers burn out, and it, you know, so some pastors...

COX: Have more to do. They have a lot more . . . they have to pick up the slack, in other words? Is that right, John?

JOHN: Exactly. Right. Like, I formed my last church's little choir because no one was stepping forward to do that kind of thing.

COX: John, thank you very much for the call. I appreciate your hanging on and sharing that story with us. We have several calls we want to get to. Robin and Paul, don't go anywhere. I'm coming back to you in a second. This is Susan from Boise, Idaho. Susan, you're on TALK OF THE NATION. Suzie? Susan? Okay, we lost Susan. I guess she wasn't able to hang on.

Let's talk really briefly, Paul, about what John described. That's the essence of what your article was about, wasn't it?

Mr. VITELLO: Right. And I think what John described is, as you say, you know, right at the heart of it for the independent . . . he's with the Lutherans, and the mention . . . the problem that he referred to as having broken up his congregation, which is the decision of the Lutheran Church to ordain gay ministers, is typical also of another stress on many pastors in the past 10 years, have been many such social issues, same-sex marriage, the ordination of gay or . . . and women ministers have come into it.

And one of the things that I heard a lot of people talk about in a more abstract way was just the emergence of the megachurch and the pressure that that put on many pastors, at least internally, to grow, you know, to grow their church.

It was never enough to have a small church of 100, you know, if you could imagine one that was 200. And it's a subtle, but relentless pressure that many of them feel, and it's not just abstract. It also is the question of finding those new volunteers, finding new sources of revenue for programs.

COX: Absolutely, and trying to grow. Let me bring Robin back into the conversation. Robin, we haven't talked to you in just a moment. We haven't forgotten about you. But you're the researcher, and in terms of the research and the studies that you have done, how much a part of that is what John described, before we go to our next call?

Ms. SWIFT: I think John's description was really eloquent, and the way our focus group research presented was that people aren't aware of the depth and breadth and intensity of what they ask pastors to do, and they also forget that they treat the end of their workday as the end of their workday, but it's often the beginning of the pastor's workday.

So there's not only all the things that a pastor does during the daytime -making hospital calls, administering the parish, planning a sermon or Sunday school lesson - but there's the phone calls and the meetings that they field at night. There really isn't much rest time.

COX: All right, we have another caller. This is Ron, joining us from Kansas City, Missouri. Ron, welcome to TALK OF THE NATION.

RON (Caller): Hello, hello. One of the things that I wanted to tap into was as a minister of the Gospel, I do appreciate the callers recognizing that ministry is a call, which is absolutely a phenomenal aspect.

I think many people have vocations, but when it comes to ministry, there's a seriousness of the call or the intention of God to have an individual involved, not only their selves, but their whole livelihood into the ministry.

With that said, though, I've been in ministry—active, full-time ministry—for about 10 years, and I came into ministry from a different vocation, from the corporate America vocation.

And one of the things that I have found recently as I've struggled, I feel getting close to burnout because one of the issues that I have is I'm constantly the one that's being tugged at by my parishioners.

I have a staff of elders. I've got deacons. I've got other folks in ministry leadership positions that are able to go out and do what they've been called to do in terms of ministries, but the congregation doesn't see my elder staff, my deacons or other ministry leaders as important or significant.

They must see the pastor. If an elder comes to the hospital and visits, it's okay, but where's my pastor? If the . . . if someone dies, and an elder goes by and prays with the family, that's great. But where's my pastor?

So one of the challenges that I have is trying to respect people's expectations, and then also have a high regard for the call of ministry, because you don't want to be seen as out of touch with your congregation.

COX: That's an interesting call, and thank you very much for it, Ron. And Ron is . . . what he is saying is you cannot be everything and all things to all people.

Let's take another call. This is Don in Rochester, New York. Don, welcome. You're on TALK OF THE NATION.

DON (Caller): Thank you. Thank you.

COX: Your comment, sir?

DON: Well, I think John's description is extremely, extremely good and accurate. Personally, I found . . . I was ordained in the 1970s. So I've been at this a while. And the expectation ranges from everything from preaching sermons to moving furniture, and I think I do more furniture moving than preaching, actually.

COX: Oh, my.

(Soundbite of laughter)

DON: It's normal to expect 50 to 60 hours a week in terms of evening meetings, plus the things that one is asked to do during the day. And it not only involves the clergyperson, it also involves the whole family.

COX: Well, let me ask this before I say goodbye to you, Don, thank you for calling. Do you take vacations every year?

DON: Yes, I do.

COX: All right, so that has helped you?

DON: Oh, it helps. And in 2008, I was able to get my first sabbatical. So it was 38 years between ordination and my first sabbatical, and the only way I was able to get that was through getting a national grant to pay for it. But the congregations I have served have been smaller, and they just have not felt they had the money to be able to afford a sabbatical for clergy.

COX: Well, Don, thank you very much for that, sharing that with us, because I want to read an email that actually goes quite along . . . goes along quite well with what you are just . . . the point that you are just now making.

It comes from Theresa: Yes, my profession is stressful, she writes. As a newly married, pregnant, Episcopal priest, I feel pulled in many directions. I have been ordained and serving St. John's Episcopal Church—a progressive, growing, urban congregation—for six years in St. Louis.

I am the only full-time staff person. Like John, I do all kinds of tasks every week. Our church pension fund offers an eight-day renewal retreat for clergy every three years or so, where we examine our vocational, spiritual, physical and financial health. I am really grateful for this incredible resource. It has helped me to reconnect to God and to my vocation.

My question, Robin: Are we seeing more and more of this, where ecumenical councils and the like are beginning to provide this kind of in-service support for people of the cloth?

Ms. SWIFT: Thankfully, yes. We looked, and there are about 53 programs dedicated to clergy health around the country. Very few have been as generously funded as ours. And we have a really strong evaluation base, so we can take a look at what has actually worked. But I think, as Paul pointed out earlier, the increase in health costs have driven a number of denominations to think about an organized response to improving the health of their pastors. And there are some terrific programs out there.

COX: Let me read an email and then go to a phone call that are both sort of connected, talking more personally about the pastoral experience. This one comes from Sarah Jo (ph). She writes . . . she's in Ohio: My father became a pastor later in life. What most people don't think about is what happens when the clergy has to tell people things that they don't want to hear, when the demands of holding people accountable for their actions elicits absolutely incredible enmity, enmity from former friends. I have watched people outright lie and rip my parents' reputation apart. The stress almost killed my mother, and I don't say that lightly. Sarah, thank you for that.

Let's go to . . . let's see. Let's go to Rochester, Minnesota, where Melanie (ph) is on the line. Melanie, welcome to TALK OF THE NATION.

MELANIE (Caller): Hello. Yes. My dad was a Baptist minister. He was ordained in 1969. He retired in 2000. The stress was too much for him. And the amount of stress put on my sister and my mother and I for being in the spotlight, constantly.

COX: We're listening. I'm sorry. I thought you had more to say. Thank you for that.

MELANIE: Oh, no.

COX: That's okay. We understand. Thank you, Melanie, for that call. Paul, I'll come back to you briefly. In your article that you wrote, well, you talked about the impact . . . being a person of the cloth has on them individually as well as their families. You didn't talk a great deal about the families. Is that an issue too?

Mr. VITELLO: Yes. Well, it certainly is, and it often comes down to a choice that a pastor makes between giving time to his congregation and giving time to his family, which is a very painful choice oftentimes because the congregation, as one of the callers said, is a calling and often comes first.

I had one pastor that I talked to in New York City who told me that he advises all his young minister friends who are men and who are married to grab every possible vacation week or . . . with his family and run with it, because too many . . . he said too many young people whose fathers have been ministers throughout their childhood have turned away from the church in a certain kind of resentment toward the obligations that their fathers were under during the time when they wanted them at home.

So it's a very complicated, you know, story for families and the pastor in the middle, between the congregation and his own children and wife.

Ms. SWIFT: Tony.

COX: Let me just give this little piece of information, then I'll come right to you, Robin.

You're listening to TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

Okay, Robin. What are you going to add to that?

Ms. SWIFT: Just that lots of us are in very stressful jobs, and the difference for pastors is that they're called on to mediate God for people, to make meaning in moments of crisis. And it's a very different calling, job, responsibility than even the intense work of being a physician, being a firefighter, being a parent.

COX: It's interesting that you should say that because I have in my hand a very interesting email. I was going to relate it to you, as a matter of fact. It comes from Nathan in Muncie, Indiana: In my thesis work I studied pastoral burnout and found that the loneliness factor played a big role. Pastors have huge holes in that they cannot just go out

and have . . . it's written, a little difficult to follow. Let's see if we can get it straight. Pastors have huge holes in that they can't just go out and vent to just anyone about their job. Churches need to find a balance of watching out for the needs of their pastors while not overstepping the professional boundaries. Can churches do that, Robin?

Ms. SWIFT: Oh, I think there are lots of ways churches can do that, and we have a few suggestions. One is they can be the first to encourage their pastor to take a vacation. They can consider making non-urgent phone calls during business hours. And instead of finding fault, they can voice support every time they get a chance. They can create healthy food offerings when they gather together, have walking versus sitting meetings, share the workload, and realize that this is a calling for all people of faith, to honor their bodies and their health, and figure out how they can do that.

COX: Interesting that you should say that. Excuse me for interrupting, but we got an email that I was going to share with you. And it says simply: Cut out the free fried chicken, grits and gravy.

(Soundbite of laughter)

COX: And I suppose there is something to that, because you're talking about that right now.

Ms. SWIFT: I think indeed there is. But it's a hard culture to change. And remember that unlike other professionals, pastors are the only ones that get fed at almost every encounter they have with people.

COX: That's an interesting thing. Our time is running short. Let me bring you, Paul, back in to ask you, in terms of the article that you wrote, whether or not what will be needed . . . and I need a pretty concise answer from you . . . is a change in the culture of our clergy, our approach to them and their approaches to themselves.

Mr. VITELLO: Yeah. And I think that change is happening. The way I came to this story in the first place was a couple of pastors that I knew were taking a week at a Trappist monastery in Massachusetts and I thought that would be a fun story to write about, a week of . . . in a silent . . . an order of silent monks—monastery. And in doing . . . in following them through that decision, I came upon all the research that's been going on at places like Duke that pointed to a larger story here. But, yes, I do think a lot of people are now taking very seriously their obligations to their own physical health and to deal with their stress in the ministry.

COX: It's been a very interesting conversation. We could go on and on and on about it. Unfortunately we don't have the time to do that. Let me thank you all for participating. Paul is the regional . . . religion reporter, Paul Vitello, the regional . . . I'm going to get it right, Paul. Paul is the religion reporter for the New York Times, where his article, "Evidence Grows of Problem of Clergy Burnout," it ran on August 1st. There's a link to it

at npr.org, click on TALK OF THE NATION. He joined us from our bureau in New York. Thank you again, Paul.

Mr. VITELLO: Thank you.

COX: Robin Swift serves as a director of health programs for the Clergy Health Initiative, part of the Duke Divinity School. She joined us from a studio at Duke University. Robin, thank you as well.

Ms. SWIFT: Thanks.

COX: And thank you to all the listeners who called in and all of those who sent in emails. A very interesting conversation.

Copyright © 2010 NPR. All rights reserved. Visit our website terms of use and permissions pages at www.npr.org for further information.

NPR transcripts are created on a rush deadline by a contractor for NPR, and accuracy and availability may vary. This text may not be in its final form and may be updated or revised in the future. Please be aware that the authoritative record of NPR's programming is the audio.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Ray S. *Self-Care: A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010.
- Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009.
- Barna Group. *Barna Report: States*. Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2011.
- Barton, Ruth Haley. *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008.
- Brecht, Martin. *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985.
- _____. *Martin Luther: The Preservation of the Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.
- _____. *Martin Luther: Shaping the Reformation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990.
- Buettner, Dan. *The Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living Like the World's Healthiest People*. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2015.
- Cordeiro, Wayne. *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010.
- Dawn, Marva J. *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989.
- Epperly, Bruce Gordon, and Katherine Gould Epperly. *Feed the Fire! Avoiding Clergy Burnout*. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2008.
- Ferguson, Nancy, and Kevin T. Witt. *The Retreat Leader's Manual: A Complete Guide to Organizing Meaningful Christian Retreats*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2006.
- Gallup Poll. *State of Well-Being Ohio: 2009 City, State and Congressional District Well-Being Report*. Omaha, NE: Gallup, Inc. & Healthways, Inc., 2010.

- Gilmore, Rachel. *Complete Leader's Guide to Christian Retreats*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2009.
- Greenblatt, Edy, Michael Allan Kirk, and Erin V. Lehman. *Restore Yourself: The Antidote for Professional Exhaustion*. Los Angeles: Execu-Care Press, 2009.
- Greenfield, Guy. *The Wounded Minister: Healing from and Preventing Personal Attacks*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001.
- Grider, Edgar M. *Can I Make It One More Year? Overcoming the Hazards of Ministry*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1980.
- Grindal, Gracia M. *40-Day Journey with Martin Luther*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Books, 2008.
- Hoffman, Bengt R. *Luther and the Mystics*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976.
- _____. *Theology of the Heart*. Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 1998.
- Krey, Philip, D. W., and Peter D. S. Krey, eds. *Luther's Spirituality*. Translated by Philip D. W. Krey and Peter D. S. Krey. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2007.
- London, H. B., Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman. *Pastors at Greater Risk*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003.
- Luther, Martin. *Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*. Edited by John Nicholas Lenker. Vols. 1-7. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House Company, 2000.
- _____. *First Lectures on the Psalms volume 1*. Vol.10 of *Luther's Works*. Edited by Hinton C. Oswald. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976.
- _____. *First Lectures on the Psalms, Volume 2*. Vol. 11 of *Luther's Works*. Edited by Hinton C. Oswald. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976.
- _____. *The Large Catechism*. Orlando: Biblio Bazaar, 2006.
- _____. *Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4*. Vol. 26 of *Luther's Works*. American ed. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963.
- _____. *Luther's Prayers*. Edited by Herbert F. Brokering. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994.

- _____. *Luther's Small Catechism*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986.
- _____. *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*. Edited by Timothy F. Lull. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005.
- _____. *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John Chapters 6-9*. Vol. 23 of *Luther's Works*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikon. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959.
- _____. *A Simple Way to Pray*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.
- _____. *Table Talk of Martin Luther*. Translated by William Hazlitt, Esq. Orlando: Bridge-Logos, 2004.
- _____. *The Theologica Germanica of Martin Luther*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980.
- _____. *A Treatise on Good Works*. 1520. Reprint, Amazon Digital Services, Inc., 2012. Kindle Edition.
- MacDonald, Gordon. *The Life God Blesses: Weathering the Storms of Life that Threaten the Soul*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997.
- Marius, Richard. *Martin Luther: The Christian between God and Death*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Marty, Martin E. *Martin Luther: A Life*. 2004. Reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Maslach, Christina. *Burnout –The Cost of Caring*. Los Altos, CA: ISHK, 2003.
- McKim, Donald K., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Minirth, Frank, Paul Meier, and Don Hawkins. *How to Beat Burnout*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1986.
- Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1988.
- Muller, Wayne. *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*. New York: Bantam Books, 1999.

- Nichol, Stephen J. *Martin Luther: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002.
- Oberman, Heiko A. *Luther: Man between God and the Devil*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.
- Oswald, Roy M. *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry*. Durham, NC: The Alban Institute, 1991.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Luther's Works Companion Volume. Luther the Expositor: Introduction to the Reformer's Exegetical Writings*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959.
- Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, June 2008.
- Phillips, Susan S. *The Cultivated Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Piper, John. *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2013.
- Prime, Derek J., and Alistair Begg. *On Being a Pastor: Understanding Our Calling and Work*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004.
- Richardson, Ronald W. *Becoming a Healthier Pastor*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005.
- Rudolph, Erwin Paul. *The Martin Luther Treasury*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1974.
- Russell, William R. *Praying for Reform: Martin Luther, Prayer, and the Christian Life*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005.
- Sobolewski, Gregory. *Martin Luther: Roman Catholic Prophet*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001.
- Spitz, Lewis William. *The Protestant Reformation, 1517-1559*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003.
- Steinmetz, David. *Luther in Context*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 2002.

- Stone, Charles. *Five Ministry Killers and How to Defeat Them: Help for Frustrated Pastors*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2010.
- Swenson, Richard. *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004.
- Tappert, Theodore G., ed. *Selected Writings of Martin Luther*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1967.
- Tripp, Paul David. *Dangerous Calling—Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishing, 2012.
- Veith, Gene Edward. *A Place to Stand: The Word of God in the Life of Martin Luther*. Nashville: Cumberland House, 2005.
- White, Ellen G. *The Desire of Ages*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898.
- Wicks, Robert J. *Bounce: Living the Resilient Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- _____. *Riding the Dragon: 10 Lessons for Inner Strength in Challenging Times*. Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2003.
- Willimon, William H. *Clergy and Laity Burnout*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Wilson, Michael Todd, and Brad Hoffmann. *Preventing Ministry Failure: A Shepherd Care Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007.
- Witt, Lance. *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011.

Websites

- Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA). "Ohio: Seventh-day Adventist Church—Number of Adherents (2000)." Quality Data on Religion. <http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/maps/map.asp?variable=404&state=35&variable2> (accessed August 1, 2014).

- Community Research Partners. "Census 1810-2010: Celebrating 200 Years of the Census in Ohio." CRP Data Bite No. 5 – March 2010. <http://www.communityresearchpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/Databytes/Census%202010/Data-Byte-Census2010.pdf> (accessed August 1, 2014).
- Gallup-Healthways, *State of American Well-Being: 2014 State Well-Being Rankings*. http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/162029/file-2513997715-pdf/Well-Being_Index/2014_Data/Gallup-Healthways_State_of_American_Well-Being_2014_State_Rankings.pdf?t=142432 (accessed February 21, 2014).
- Grammich, Clifford et al. *2010 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study*. Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB), Association of Religious Data Archives. www.thearda.com (accessed August 1, 2014).
- Halbert, Hannah C. and Tim Krueger. "Hollowing Out: Jobless, job growth and skills for the future." *Policy Matters Ohio*. Education and Training, December 8, 2011. <http://www.policymattersohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/FINAL-Hollowing-Out-Dec-2011.pdf> (accessed August 1, 2014).
- Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts, *Ohio: Facts At-A-Glance* (May 28, 2010). <http://kff.org/statedata/?state=OH> (accessed August 1, 2014).
- Olson, David T."State Report: Ohio." *The American Church Research Project*. <http://www.theamericanchurch.org>, 2009.
- Parker, Erik. "Why Pastors Suck at Self-Care," *The Millennial Pastor*, Theology and Culture (September 5, 2014). <http://millennialpastor.net/2014/09/05/why-pastors-suck-at-self-care/> (accessed February 1, 2016).
- Pew Research Center. "'Nones' on the Rise." Religion & Public Life – October 9, 2012. <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/> (accessed February 13, 2015).
- Rugani, Kate. "Self-care is not self-ish," *Faith & Leadership*, Health & Well-Being (August 13, 2012). <http://www.faithandleadership.com/self-care-not-self-ish/> (accessed February 1, 2016).