



Duke Clergy
Health Initiative

SUMMARY REPORT

2014 Statewide Survey of
United Methodist Clergy
in North Carolina

Understanding the Current
State of Health Among
United Methodist Clergy
in North Carolina



Picture a pastor you know well. He or she is standing at the pulpit, delivering the Word of God to the people of God. It's a familiar scene.

Have you ever stopped to consider why that pastor is there?

If you asked, the pastor would most likely say something like, "I was called by God to serve the Church."

Called by God. Serve the Church.

The call to ministry is both an amazing and challenging responsibility, one that many clergy consider sacred. Research has shown that people who engage in such a vocation are likely to:

- invest an extraordinary amount of time and energy in their work;
- feel spiritual emotions around their work; and
- experience any perceived failures at work as devastating.

That perspective introduces a tension: many clergy feel the need to "give their all" to their sacred work, and that pressure often conflicts with the knowledge that they should also take time to care for their physical, mental and spiritual health.

As you read this report, we hope you will keep this tension in mind. It is more than one of work-life balance, although it is that, too. Rather, it is a striving to live life as God intended, to the best of one's prayerful ability, and in a way that maximizes the well-being of all while holding sacred the task of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Please also note that this report is not meant to be comprehensive, nor is it a final review of United Methodist clergy health in North Carolina - it is merely a snapshot. Thanks to the generosity of the clergy who have shared their time and perspectives over the years, we have more data than we could ever include in a single report. Our goal is to continue to share this information with you over the coming years as we work together to understand and improve the well-being of clergy in North Carolina and beyond.



About the Survey



Pastors work within a complex web of relationships – peer, family, congregation, and denomination among them – with sometimes conflicting demands that have repercussions on pastors’ vocation and health.

In an effort to better understand and describe the multiple demands and rewards of clergy life, we designed a longitudinal survey – the most extensive survey of clergy health ever conducted. First launched in 2008, and conducted every two years since, this survey has provided incredibly rich information to help us – and you – understand the lives and health of United Methodist clergy.

The survey asks clergy about many different aspects of their work and lives. We included numerous measures of well-being, as well as questions that provide information on the church context in which a pastor serves, and even on a pastor’s thoughts. Some questions are drawn from measures that have been used and validated with different groups of individuals across the United States and internationally. Using these outside measures helps us compare clergy to individuals in other occupations and settings, which bolsters our understanding of clergy health. Due to the uniqueness of the denomination, we also worked with experts to create several questions tailored specifically to the experiences of United Methodist clergy.

Who should read this report?

Well, in our opinion, everyone! But we believe this information will be especially helpful for United Methodist clergy, denominational leaders, members of staff/pastor-parish relations committees, and other laity who care about the health of their pastors. The insights should also be instructive for medical practitioners and members of other denominations.

Demographics

Participation rates, education, and appointment status	4
Gender, age, race, marriage, and children	5
Years in ministry, roles, and charges	6

Life in Ministry

Work time expectations and Sabbath-keeping	7
Pastor duties and tasks, role overload, and burnout	8-9
Itinerancy and new appointments	10
Gifts and challenges of churches	11
Church characteristics and relationships with clergy, congregations, and SPRCs	12-13

Health & Well-being

Depression, anxiety, mental health, and flourishing	14-15
Quality of life and financial stress	16
Spiritual well-being	17
Physical health: Risk factors and disease rates	18-19
Health behaviors: Sleep and exercise	20



Survey Participants

In order to best understand changes in clergy mindset and health over time, we have maintained a stance of inclusivity when extending invitations to participate in the survey. We chose to invite all eligible clergy instead of surveying a representative sample of the eligible population. Those invited to participate in the 2008 survey also were invited to participate in each subsequent wave, even if they had retired or left ministry. With each successive survey, we added clergy who had entered the ministry since the previous wave was conducted. The number of clergy invited to participate in 2014 (2,380) was the largest yet.

The table on the right shows the levels of participation over time. The response rates have remained exceptionally high. This not only lends credence to the results, but also suggests that clergy have a longing to share their stories and to be understood in ways that they, perhaps, have not been in the past.

	Invited	Participated	Response rate
Panel 2008	1,820	1,726	94.8%
Panel 2010	2,008	1,749	87.1%
Panel 2012	2,186	1,777	81.3%
Panel 2014	2,380	1,788	75.0%

This report primarily highlights findings from the fourth wave of our survey, conducted in the fall of 2014. Clergy from both conferences responded, with 58.2% of participants coming from the Western North Carolina Conference (WNCC), and 41.8% coming from the North Carolina Conference (NCC). All 16 districts across these two conferences were represented.

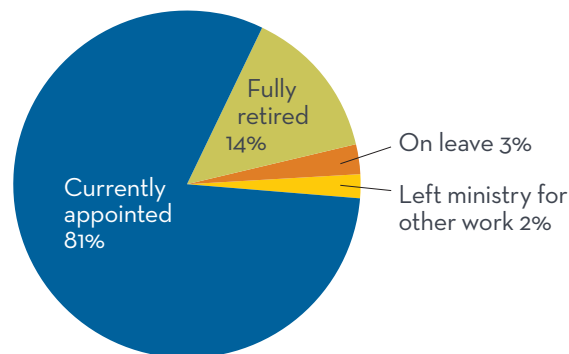
Basic Demographics

Overall, 70% of clergy who took the survey are male, and 90% are white. Of the 10% who represent other races, 6% are African American. Nearly 60% hold a bachelor's or master's degree in divinity, and another 11.7% hold a doctoral level degree. Nearly 16% have completed or are enrolled in Course of Study.

The tables on the following page explore the breakdown of certain demographic characteristics by appointment status. The vast majority of respondents are currently appointed to a church. Another 14% are retired and not serving a church. The rest are on leave or no longer in ministry, and are combined as "Other" in the tables due to their small numbers.



Appointment status



While not reflected in the chart to the right, it is interesting to note that the ratio of males to females is more balanced among younger generations of clergy. Women represent less than 12% of clergy ages 65 and up; however, they make up 37% of the respondents under age 35.

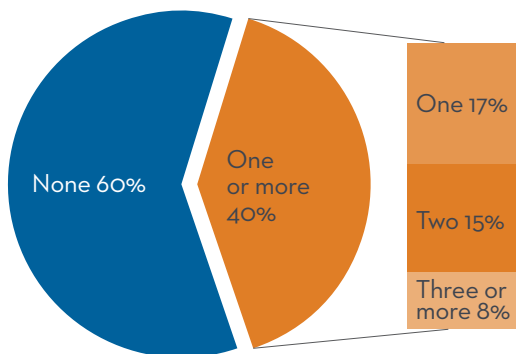
Marriage and Children

When we ask clergy about their current marital status, a vast majority report having a significant other, but there are differences by gender. Almost 94% of currently appointed male pastors are married, compared to 71% of currently appointed female pastors. Across all groups, more females than males are divorced/separated or widowed.

While all groups report having children, the pie chart below focuses on currently appointed pastors with children, 40% of whom have at least one child living at home.

Number of children living at home

(Currently appointed pastors only)



Appointment status	Currently appointed N = 1,453	Retired N = 242	Other N = 93
Gender			
Male	68.9%	76.5%	61.3%
Female	31.1%	23.5%	38.7%
Age			
20 - 34 years	9.2%	- -	8.6%
35 - 44 years	13.6%	- -	16.1%
45 - 54 years	24.9%	- -	19.4%
55 - 64 years	38.6%	16.1%	41.9%
65 - 74 years	12.4%	62.0%	10.8%
75+ years	1.3%	21.9%	3.2%
Race			
White	89.6%	91.7%	82.8%
African American	5.5%	6.2%	7.5%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1.5%	0.4%	2.2%
Asian American/ Pacific Islander	0.8%	- -	3.2%
Multi-racial/other	2.6%	1.7%	4.3%

Marital status	Currently appointed		Retired		Other	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Currently married	93.8%	71.2%	94.0%	58.9%	79.0%	63.9%
Never married	2.4%	10.4%	2.2%	7.1%	7.0%	5.6%
Divorced/separated	3.0%	14.6%	1.6%	16.1%	12.3%	22.2%
Widowed	0.8%	3.8%	2.2%	17.9%	1.8%	8.3%

Whether you are married or not, it is important to cultivate friendships that provide emotional support - people who are willing to listen, with or without offering advice. While a spouse can sometimes fulfill this role, having at least one other person who is not as intimately affected by the same issues as you can be extremely beneficial to your mental health.

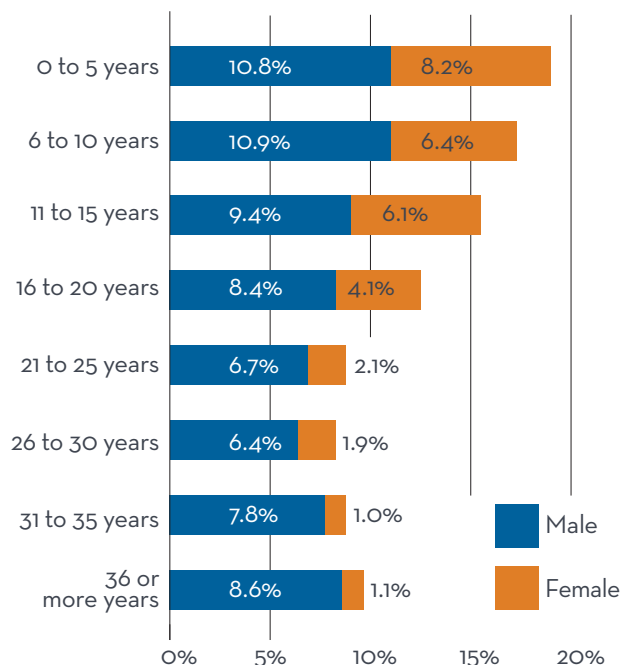
Currently Appointed Clergy

Whereas the preceding figures included data from a variety of appointment statuses, the remainder of the report focuses almost exclusively on currently appointed clergy - those actively serving a congregation or extension ministry. We plan to feature other groups of pastors, including retired clergy, in future reports.

Years in Ministry

Approximately 51% of currently serving clergy have been in ministry for 15 years or fewer. The highest levels of female representation exist in these early-to mid-career bands. As years in ministry increase, the proportion of female clergy decreases.

Years in ministry with gender proportions

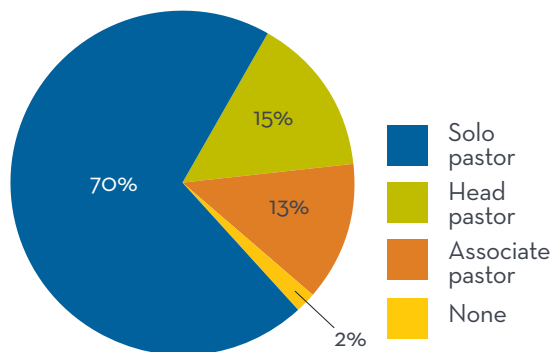


Currently appointed clergy	% of total N=1,453
Conference	
NCC	42.6%
WNCC	57.4%
Ordination status	
Elder	61.6%
Local pastor	31.9%
Deacon	4.5%
Other	2.1%
Ministry type	
Pastoral charge	90.8%
Extension	9.2%
Charge	
Single-point	76.1%
Multi-point	23.9%
Current appointment	
First appointment	20.9%
Second or subsequent appointment	79.1%

Roles and Charges

A little over 60% of the currently appointed clergy participating in our survey are ordained elders, and approximately one-third are local pastors. Over 90% are serving in a pastoral charge. Of these, 70% work as solo pastors for their churches. Three out of four respondents are serving in a single-point charge, meaning they serve as pastor of a single congregation; the balance serve as a pastor to a group of nearby congregations, known as a multi-point charge. About 20% of pastors are serving in their first appointment.

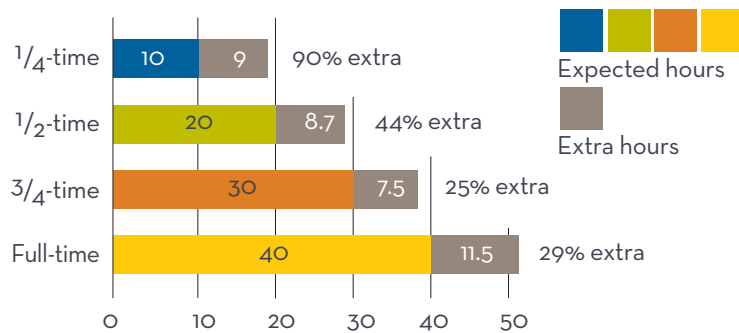
Current role



Work Time Expectations

What is life like for clergy? The answer varies from day to day and is dependent on many factors. Some clergy work part-time in ministry, but most serve full-time appointments. And while clergy serving in pastoral ministry are most visible to their congregants on Sundays, we know they often work more hours than their paid effort. Indeed, pastors whose appointment is quarter-time report working almost double their expected hours each week! They also are less likely than other clergy to take a day off each week.

Hours worked per week

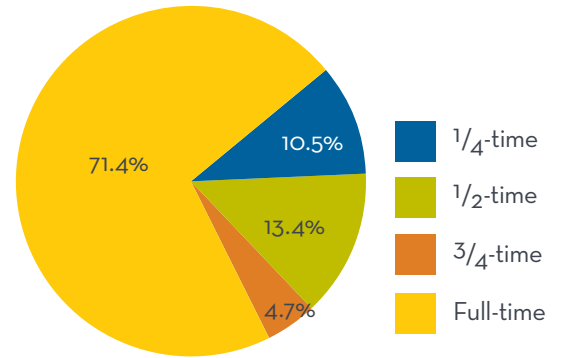


Sabbath-keeping

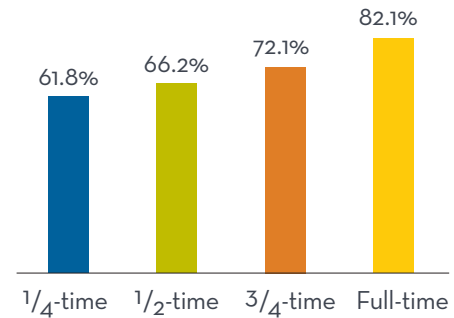
Observing a day of holy rest finds its roots in the Creation story told in Genesis. But our increasingly busy lives—especially those of clergy, who fulfill multiple roles within the church—can make regular observance of Sabbath feel like a significant challenge.

Despite such challenges, 9 in 10 currently appointed pastors report that they have intentionally observed Sabbath at some point in the past year. When asked about recent Sabbath observance, it seems that quarter-time and half-time pastors are less likely to keep an intentional Sabbath in the past four weeks than those in three-quarter-time and full-time positions.

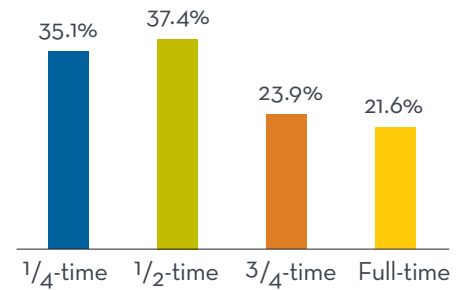
Percentage of clergy by appointment type



Percentage of clergy taking a regular day off each week



Percentage clergy not taking ANY Sabbath in past 4 weeks



Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Exodus 20: 8-11

Supporting the practice of Sabbath

To regularly practice Sabbath, one must protect time for that purpose. If you're a congregant, ask your pastor when he or she takes Sabbath. Then, as a church, commit to honoring that time by not making conflicting requests or demands of your pastor on that day.

Pastor Duties and Tasks

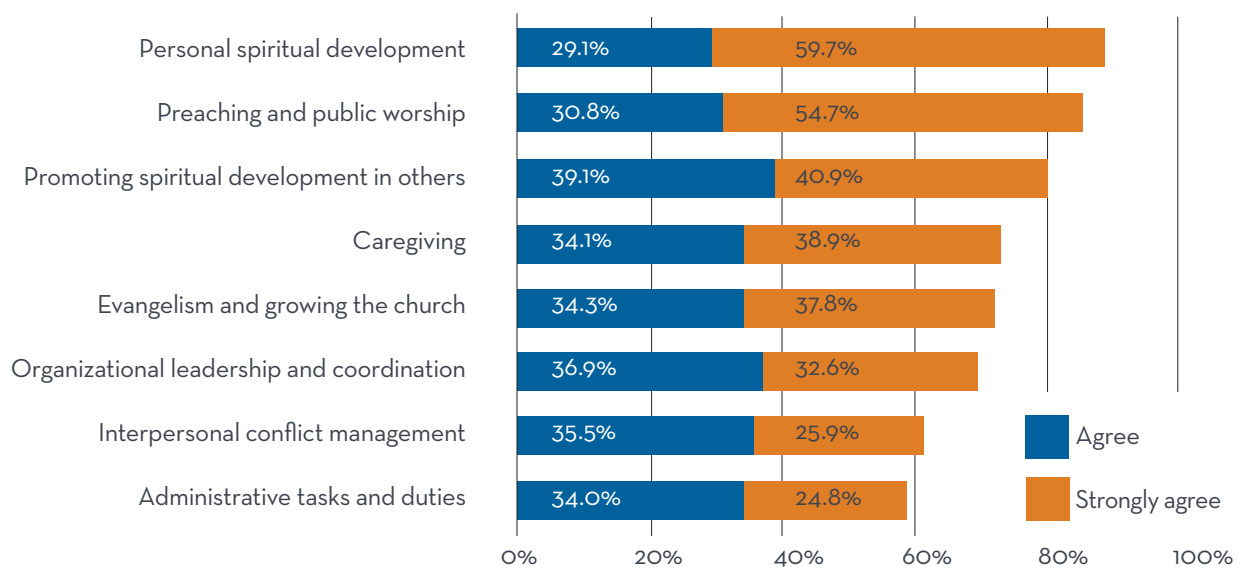
Clergy report that it takes many years of experience to feel they have mastered the work of being a pastor because the role involves so many different ministry activities. How do pastors fill their days? Again, the answer depends on the type of appointment and even the size of the churches and communities in which they serve. But as a whole, we know that most pastors spend at least some time on the eight tasks listed in the chart below.

In the 2014 survey, we asked pastors to rate each task in relation to their confidence in doing it, their autonomy in doing it, the personal meaning they

derive from it, and the extent to which they feel like their authentic selves while doing it. Pastors give overwhelmingly positive ratings to all the tasks related to their work.

The chart below shows the percentage of pastors who either agree or strongly agree that these tasks are personally meaningful to them. Clergy report finding the strongest personal meaning in the areas of personal spiritual development and preaching and leading public worship. Fewer pastors derive personal meaning from the areas of organizational leadership, conflict management, and administration.

How much do you agree with this statement: This task is personally meaningful to me...?



Helping clergy with role overload

If you're clergy...

Reflecting on these tasks may provide insight into the activities that make you feel most authentic and fulfilled. Preserving time for these tasks will likely increase your positive mental health. While you might identify areas in which you are less confident and pursue professional development, also consider asking yourself in which areas you want to be particularly masterful and pursue experiences there.

If you're a congregant...

Remember that clergy do not need to do all the work in a church: being the body of Christ means we all come together and contribute our skills. As a congregation, can you agree on the types of work you would like your pastor to prioritize and which tasks congregants will take on as you live out your church vision together? What skills do you as a layperson have to offer?

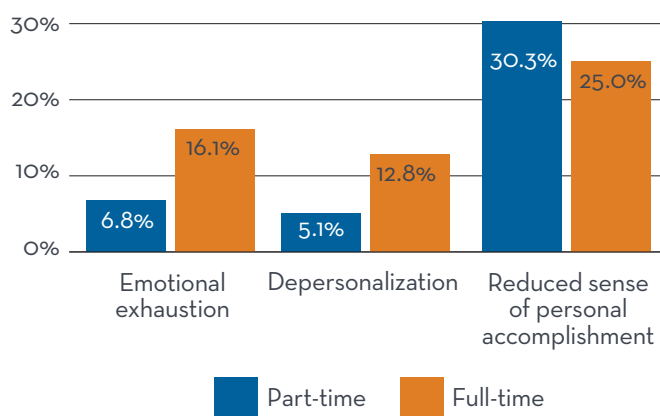
What is Burnout?

Though parish ministry can be fulfilling, it also can be demanding. Clergy often move between varying leadership roles, face large demands on their time, and interact with individuals in situations that can be highly emotional. Because of these daily challenges, pastors may suffer from burnout.

Clergy Burnout Levels

When the Clergy Health Initiative first began conducting research, we held focus groups during which clergy named the various roles they play and expressed how hard it can be to tend to complex interpersonal relationships while advancing a vision. Because of this, we expected our survey to indicate high levels of clergy burnout. Much to our surprise and delight, clergy show burnout rates similar to (and sometimes better than) other helping occupations. One explanation might be that while the work is indeed taxing, clergy generally are coping well with the challenges, and possibly persist with optimism because their call to ministry is deeply meaningful to them.

High burnout rates among part-time and full-time clergy



There are three elements to burnout

Emotional exhaustion

Feeling strained as your emotional resources become depleted.

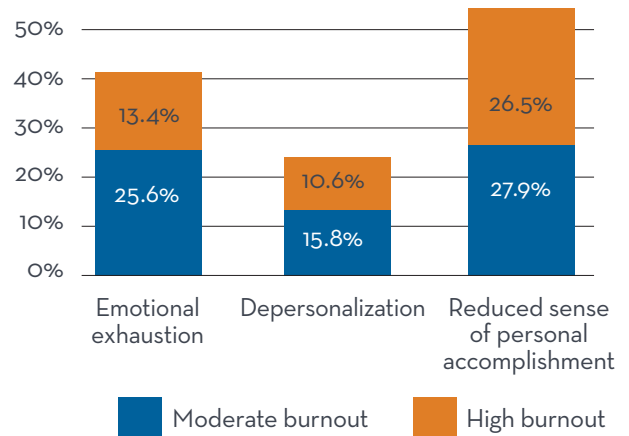
Depersonalization

Becoming detached from and cynical toward the people you serve.

Reduced sense of personal accomplishment

Having doubts about the value of your work. This third element can be confusing since it is considered on a reverse scale from the first two elements. Whereas burnout is characterized by **high** emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, it is **low or reduced** personal accomplishment that indicates a problem.

Burnout rates among currently appointed clergy

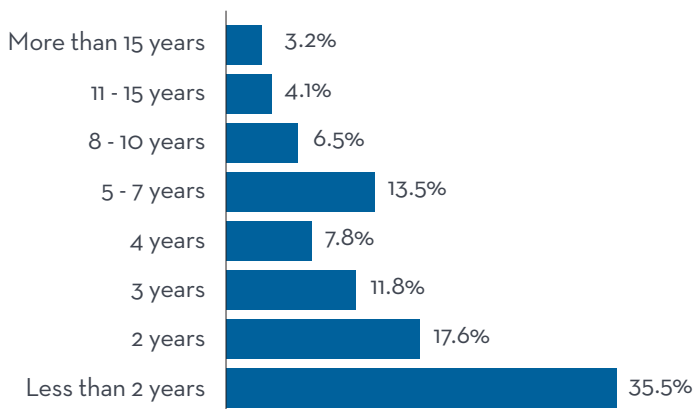


Pastors who work full-time experience greater emotional exhaustion and feelings of depersonalization or cynicism than those with part-time appointments. In contrast, pastors who work part-time in ministry report slightly higher levels of burnout in the form of reduced personal accomplishment than those working full-time. Earlier in this report, we highlighted data that show part-time pastors work a greater proportion of overtime hours in comparison to full-time pastors. Perhaps, despite the fact that it's known that they work fewer hours, part-time pastors feel they don't have enough time to meet the expectations for their roles.

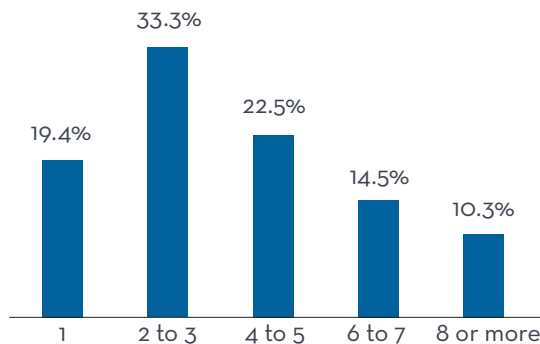
Itinerancy and New Appointments

A willingness to be appointed to serve new churches and communities is an integral part of ministry in the United Methodist Church, and most clergy are reappointed periodically. Though a few respondents reported serving as many as 18 appointments during their tenure, 43% have served 4 to 9 appointments during their careers in ministry. The average pastor has relocated three times.

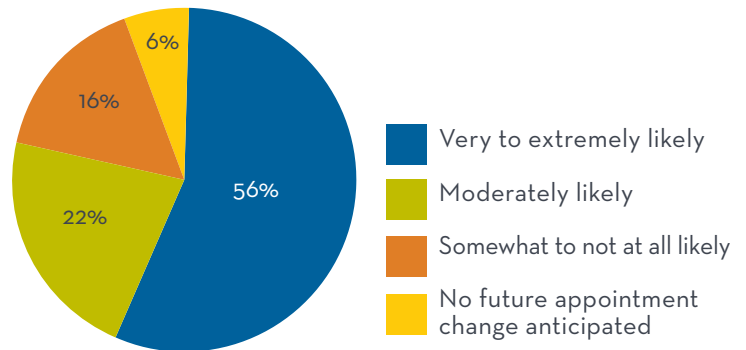
Time in current appointment



Number of appointments served by currently appointed clergy



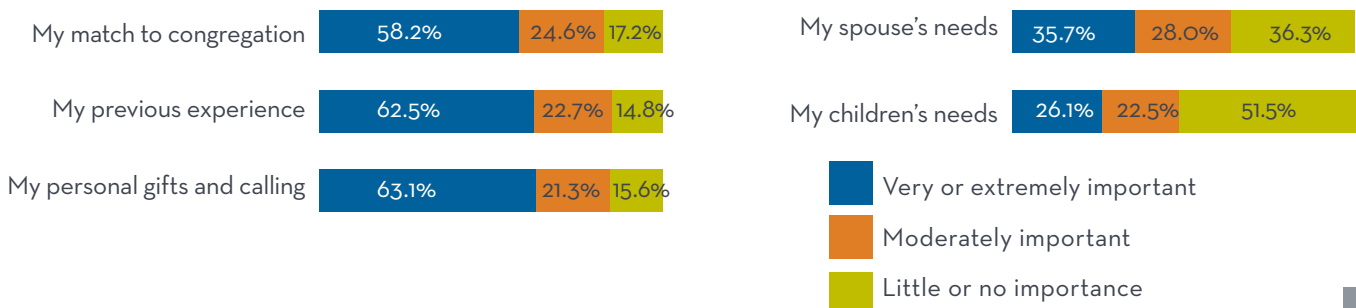
Clergy perception: Likelihood of appointment change in 1-2 years



Seventeen percent of currently appointed clergy report having changed appointments in the past year. However, a much higher 50% of clergy report feeling like their chances of being moved in the next 1-2 years is “very” or “extremely likely.” This perception suggests that a move is in the back of the minds of most clergy. Roughly 35% of clergy have been serving their current appointment for less than two years, whereas only about 7% have been serving their current appointment for 11 years or more.

Because the bishops and district superintendents must weigh multiple factors when making appointment decisions, the process can be both complicated and stressful. Through the survey, clergy shared their opinions on the degree to which certain considerations are taken into account. Overall, clergy feel that their particular gifts and calling to ministry, previous experience, and match with the congregation are highly important considerations. Clergy perceive consideration of family needs – location, spouse’s employment and children’s schooling – to be of lesser importance during appointment-making.

Clergy perception: Degree to which factors are considered during appointment-making

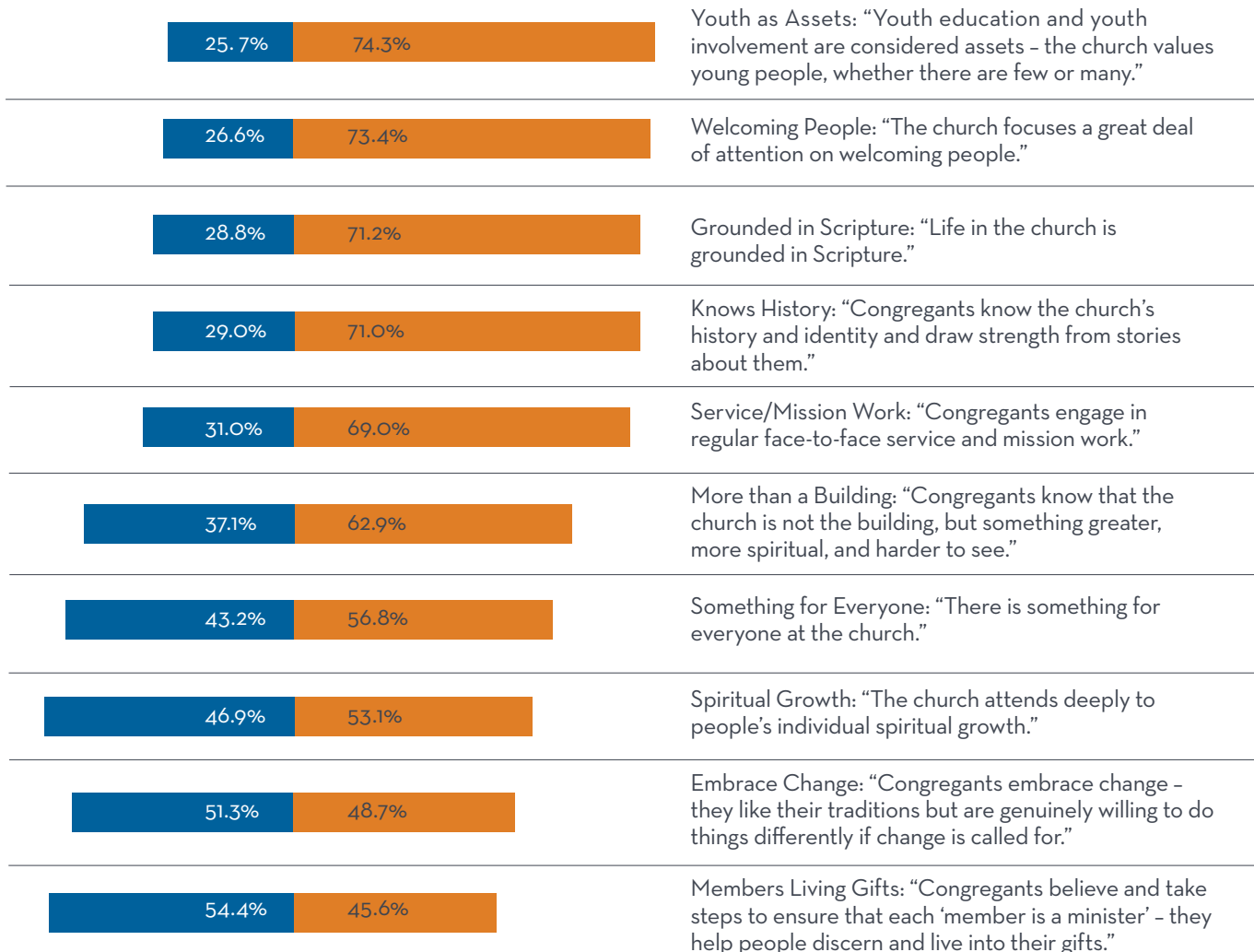


Gifts and Challenges of Churches

As a result of serving in an itinerant system, United Methodist clergy are able to experience the character of many different churches during their tenure in pastoral ministry. This process gives them a unique perspective on the varying strengths that congregations and communities possess. Researcher Sally Leiderman of CAPD has created a set of questions to help congregations reflect on ways in which rural churches might thrive. We included modified versions of some of these questions on the 2014 Clergy Health Initiative survey and asked clergy

to indicate whether each area is a gift or challenge for the churches they serve. A majority of clergy rate their congregations as being gifted in areas such as seeing youth as assets and welcoming people to the church. Conversely, clergy see their congregations as being more challenged when it comes to embracing change and enabling members to live out their gifts in and around the church and community. Read through the list of items below. How would you rate your church family in these areas?

Challenge Gift
Clergy perception: Gifts and challenges of current congregation

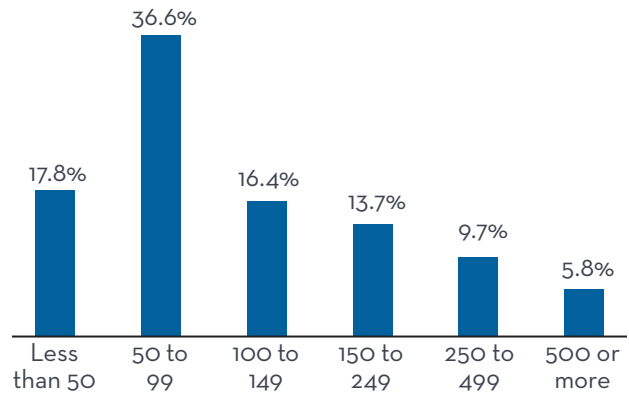


For the original set of Thriving Rural Church Indicators, please see the Thriving Rural Communities Initiative Summative Evaluation Report, prepared by Sally Leiderman and Stephanie Leiderman, CAPD, for The Duke Endowment, May 2014 (<http://bit.ly/TCRI-Report>). The indicators may be found in Appendix 4, Early Indications of Thriving Churches, questions 16-19.

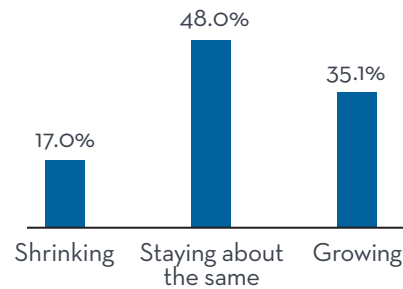
Church and Local Community Characteristics

Data from the 2014 survey gave us insight into the characteristics of North Carolina's United Methodist churches. Sixty percent of respondents serve congregations that are eligible for grants from The Duke Endowment because these churches are in areas designated as rural. The average pastor in North Carolina serves a church with a membership of about 250 members and weekly attendance of just under 95 congregants. Pastors report that, on average, their churches hold two worship services a week; only 10% of churches hold three or more services each week. Three-quarters of clergy report serving in an aging congregation. One-third see the communities around their churches as growing in size, while almost half see the population levels as stable.

Average weekly worship attendance



Church located in area whose population is...



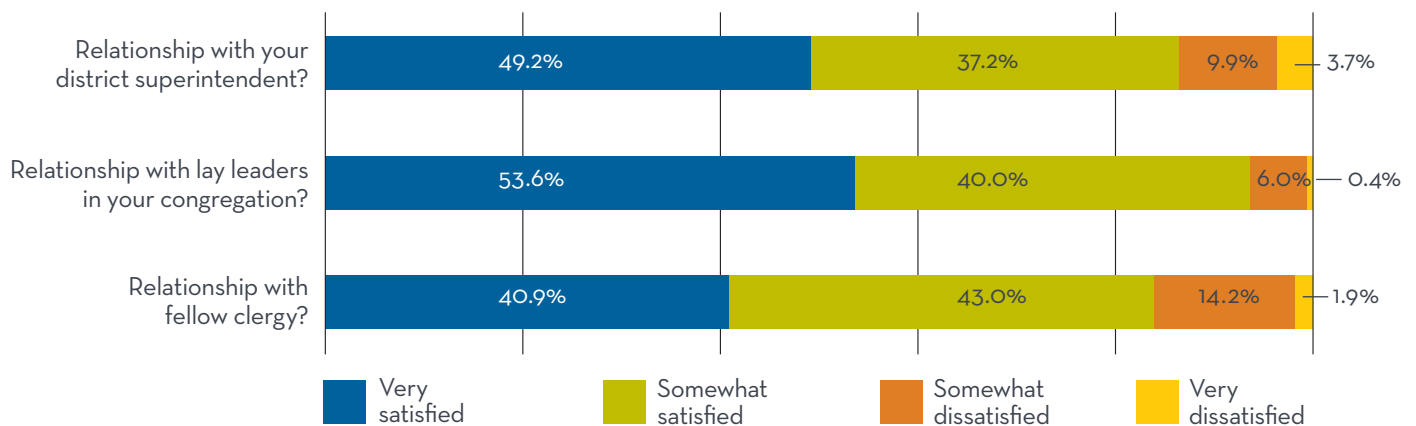
Importance of Conference and Ministerial Social Support

Several factors influence and impact those serving in parish ministry, including the pastor's relationships with his or her ministry peers and conference leadership, as well as the supports and demands given and placed by congregations. In positive settings, these factors can combine to bolster clergy's confidence and satisfaction in living out their calling.

When these factors shift to more negative contexts, clergy are more likely to doubt their call and to experience increases in depression and anxiety.

United Methodist clergy in North Carolina report that their relationships with fellow clergy, lay leaders, and district leadership are generally supportive.

Currently appointed clergy: At present, what is your level of satisfaction with your...



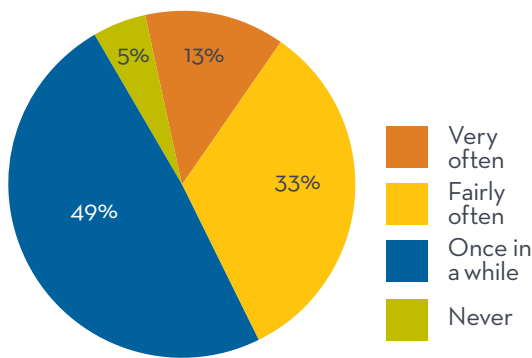
Impact of Congregations and SPRCs

Congregations play a vital role in promoting the well-being of pastors. Clergy who feel supported by their congregations report increased levels of personal accomplishment and ministerial satisfaction and have higher scores on quality of life measures.

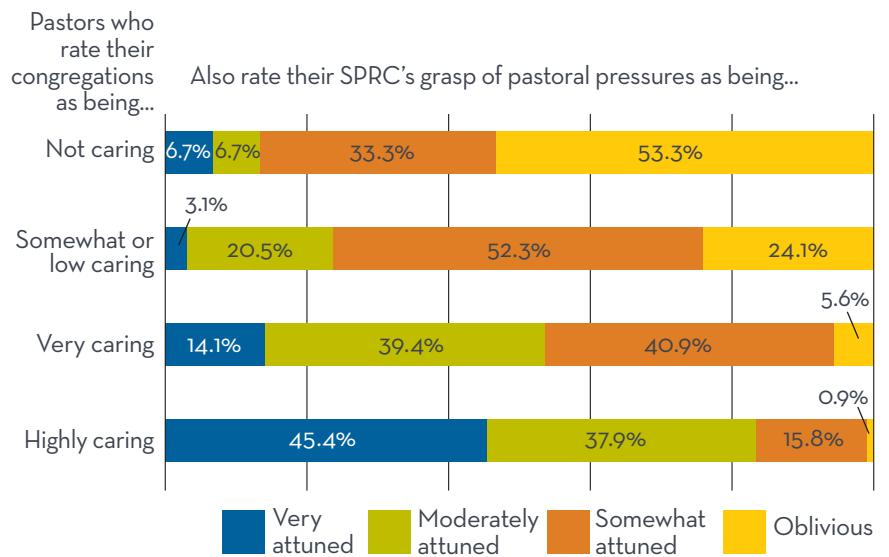
Roughly 46% of the clergy report experiencing stress “very” or “fairly often” due to challenges within their

congregations in the past year. Almost 26% say their congregations have often made too many demands of them in the past year. Despite these reports, more than 82% of clergy see their congregations as being “very” or “highly caring.” Clergy’s ratings of their congregations also relate strongly to how attuned they feel their staff/pastor-parish relations committees (SPRCs) are to the pressures of being a pastor.

Frequency of stress pastors experienced in the past year due to congregational challenges



Clergy relationship with congregation and SPRC



Building trust and understanding

We developed the Pastor & Parish curriculum to ground SPRCs and their pastors in shared ministry. We encourage everyone to consider it. Program materials include:

Video Series (DVD) – Beautifully filmed segments feature theologically-framed commentary by the Rev. Ed Moore, an educator, United Methodist pastor, and former district superintendent. Each session also includes perspectives from United Methodist clergy and SPRC members, offering rich insights into how the ideas presented in the series take shape in the local church.

Participant Workbook – Serving as a companion piece to the DVD, the workbook includes questions designed to elicit individual reflection and candid discussion. Using this resource as a guide, your committee members will explore ways of increasing their effectiveness and furthering the work of the church.

Facilitator Guide – This step-by-step manual prepares your SPRC Chair or another member of your congregation to lead your committee through the program, offering tips for fostering effective discussions. When your SPRC completes Pastor & Parish, you will have formed important bonds, discovered new language for working with one another, and created a covenant to guide your work as a ministry of the church.



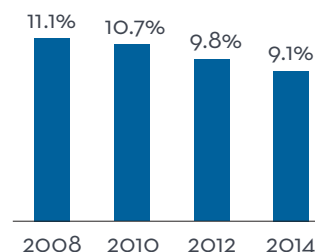
Mental Illness: Depression and Anxiety

Since 2008, we have asked clergy about the depression and anxiety symptoms they have experienced in the past two weeks. Depression is marked by feelings of sadness and lack of interest, whereas anxiety is characterized by feelings of doubt and worry. Separate studies have asked a representative sample of Americans the same depression questions, so we are able to draw comparisons.

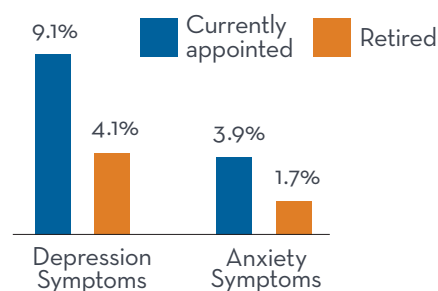
In 2008, the responses given by currently appointed clergy indicated that their rates of probable depression were three percentage points (or 58%) higher than that of the average American. Subsequent surveys have shown declines in probable clergy depression: rates in 2014 were 9.1%, as you can see from the top graph. Retired clergy were less likely than currently appointed clergy to experience probable depression (4.1%, lower graph).

We found anxiety rates to be less than 4% among currently appointed clergy and less than 2% among retired clergy. There are no comparable nationwide studies measuring anxiety levels.

Moderate to severe depression symptoms among currently appointed clergy



2014 depression and anxiety rates among currently appointed and retired clergy



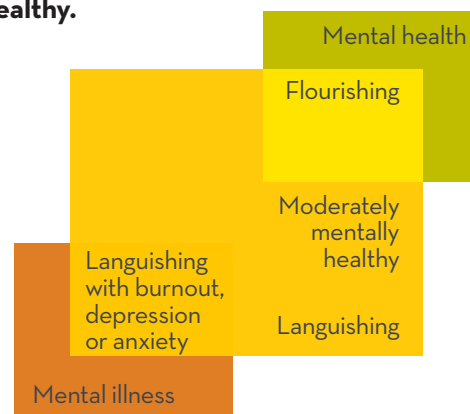
Shifting the Conversation from Mental Illness to Mental Health and Flourishing

People often use the term “mental health” to refer to emotional problems such as depression and anxiety. But mental health and mental illness are actually separate concepts. This is because experiencing the positive emotions indicative of mental health is different from feeling anxious or depressed, and it is actually possible to experience both over the course of a few days.

When you experience positive mental health, it comes as two kinds of happiness:

- 1. Daily mood**, made up of the emotions you experience throughout the day.
- 2. Living a meaningful life**, made up of many components like knowing your purpose in life, working toward cherished goals, and making a difference.

It is possible to experience mental illness (for example, anxiety) and one or both kinds of happiness simultaneously. **Flourishing** occurs when you experience both kinds of happiness and low (or no) mental illness. A person who has low levels of positive mental health is considered to be **languishing**, even if he or she is not experiencing mental illness. Those who fall in the middle are considered **moderately mentally healthy**.

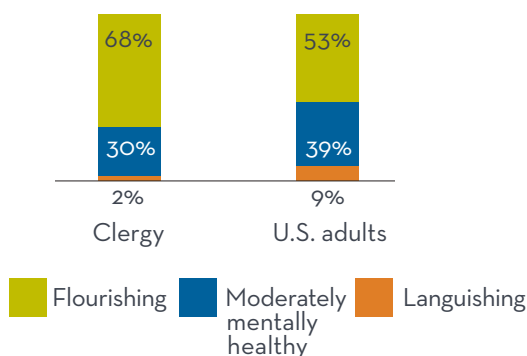


Flourishing

The 2014 survey asked clergy to answer questions that assess the extent to which they experience the two kinds of happiness. We compared their responses to those from a large representative sample of adults in the United States who answered the same questions through a study conducted by the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention. As you can see in this figure, over two-thirds of the currently appointed clergy are flourishing. We believe this is because clergy are particularly strong in the second kind of happiness: meaningfulness and purpose.

Positive mental health rates among currently appointed clergy and U.S. adults



Why is flourishing important?

Research shows that when people are flourishing, they:

- Are half as likely to experience a new case of depression in the next year
- Experience fewer hospital visits and new physical illnesses
- Show more creativity
- Generate more solutions to problems

Improving the emotional well-being of clergy

The roles and actions of many people within the church have a bearing on clergy health.

Clergy can...

- **Cultivate friendships that provide emotional support.** Clergy often have access to instrumental support (someone bringing them a casserole). It's often harder to find emotional support, in which a pastor can talk about difficult emotions and receive active listening, with or without advice; however, seeking out these friendships can make a big difference.

Congregants can...

- **Express their caring for their pastor as a person.** Ask your pastor about his or her family, vacation, or health—anything that shows that you care about them as an individual, not just as a spiritual leader.
- **Try to make their pastor's life a little more predictable.** There are true emergencies that need a pastor's immediate attention, and your pastor will want to be there for you. There may be times, though, when the situation can wait. Find out what day your pastor takes off and try to avoid calling on that day or during dinner hours.

Denominational officials can...

- **Address church climates that are consistently negative toward pastors.** Churches are comprised of people, and even well-intentioned people can interact in such a way as to create an environment that is hostile to pastors. Excessive demands and criticism are very strongly related to depression, anxiety, and burnout among pastors.

Quality of Life

The concept of “quality of life” refers to a person’s level of satisfaction with a variety of areas of his or her life, such as:

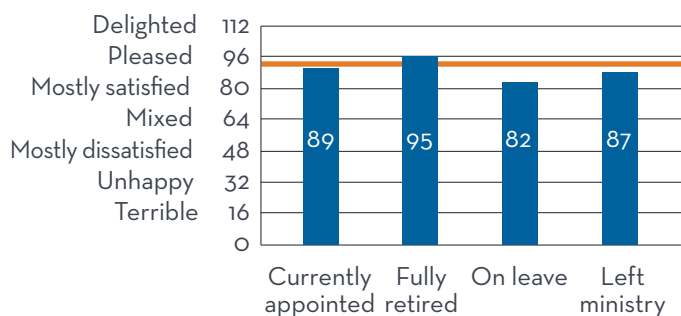
1. Material and physical well-being
2. Relationships
3. Social, community, and civic activities
4. Personal accomplishment and development
5. Recreation

In this survey, clergy rated their level of satisfaction with each of these areas using a 7-point scale that ranges from “terrible” (score =1) to “delighted” (score=7). A minimum score is 16; the highest is 112, reflecting a “delighted” rating across

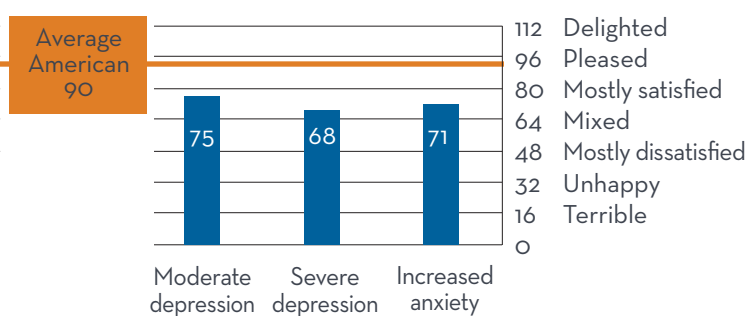
each of the 16 questions. Researchers who created this questionnaire have found that the average healthy American adult scores a 90.

The charts below depict how the average scores of clergy vary by appointment status. Clearly retirement has a positive effect on quality of life! Conversely, anxiety and depression take a toll: pastors experiencing these conditions have significantly lower scores. Later sections of the report draw additional connections between quality of life and other aspects of health, such as physical health.

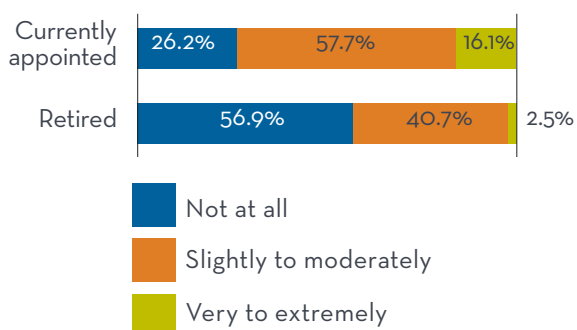
Average quality of life scores by appointment status



Average quality of life scores among clergy with depression or anxiety



Financial stress levels among currently appointed and retired clergy



Financial stress

When we asked clergy to rate their current level of financial stress on a five-point scale ranging from feeling “not at all stressed” to “extremely stressed,” we found striking differences between currently appointed and retired clergy. More than half of retired clergy report that they have no financial stress, and less than 3% report experiencing the highest levels of financial stress. By comparison, only about a quarter of currently appointed clergy report no financial stress, and more than 16% experience financial stress at “very” to “extreme” levels.

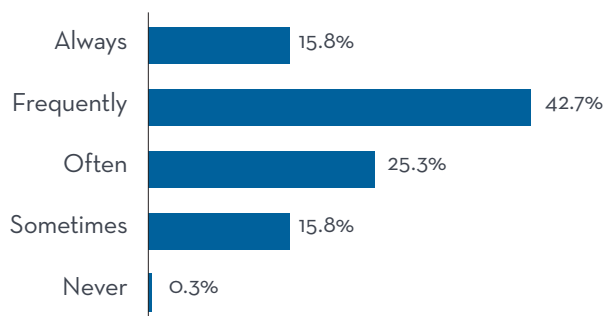
Spiritual Well-being

As leaders of the church, clergy are expected to guide the spiritual development of their parishioners and serve as role models within the communities they serve.

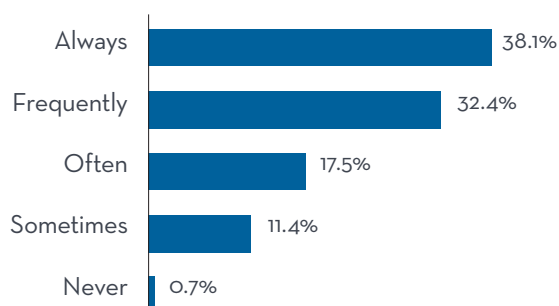
In the survey, we asked pastors several questions about their spiritual habits and experiences in ministry. Almost 60% report that during the prior six months, they frequently or always felt the presence and power of God in daily life. An even

greater percentage – 70% of clergy – report that during the same six months, they frequently or always felt they had a vital relationship with God. By contrast, less than 1% reported that they had never felt the presence of God or had not felt a vital relationship with Him during this time. We have found that feeling the presence and power of God in daily life and in ministry relates strongly to positive mental health.

In the past 6 months, how often have you experienced the presence and power of God in daily life?



In the past 6 months, how often have you felt that you had a vital relationship with God?

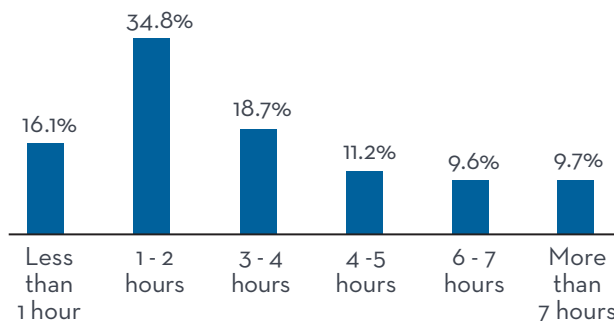


Prayer and Bible Study

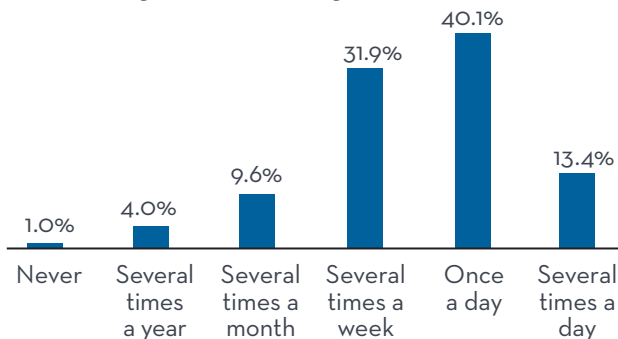
From leading worship services to sitting at bedsides, it's no surprise that clergy might spend a considerable amount of their working lives leading prayer. But what about prayer time outside the formal duties of ministry? Roughly one-third of pastors report spending 1-2 hours of their personal time in prayer each week, and nearly 10% of pastors spend more than 7 hours a week in prayer outside of work!

Engaging with Scripture is also a vital part of clergy work. Our survey found that, even outside of work duties, more than 50% of pastors devote time to Bible study at least once a day, if not several times a day.

Weekly time spent in prayer outside of work



Weekly Bible study outside of work



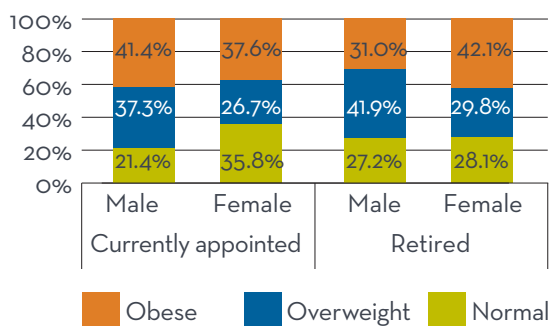
Physical Health

One of the core concerns of the Clergy Health Initiative’s holistic wellness program, Spirited Life, was to assess and reduce the incidence of **metabolic syndrome**. Metabolic syndrome is a collection of risk factors that, if present together, put a person at higher risk for developing heart disease, having a stroke or heart attack, and/or developing diabetes. While we don’t evaluate metabolic syndrome risk specifically in the statewide survey, we do ask clergy if they’ve ever been diagnosed with related risk factors. In this section, we’ll share rates for some of the risk factors that contribute to more serious health outcomes like heart attack and stroke.

Risk factors for metabolic syndrome

- Central obesity (excess fat around abdomen)
- Problems regulating glucose (blood sugar)
- Cholesterol problems:
 - Low levels of good cholesterol
 - High levels of bad cholesterol and/or triglycerides
- Elevated blood pressure

BMI rates by gender among currently appointed and retired clergy



Body Mass Index

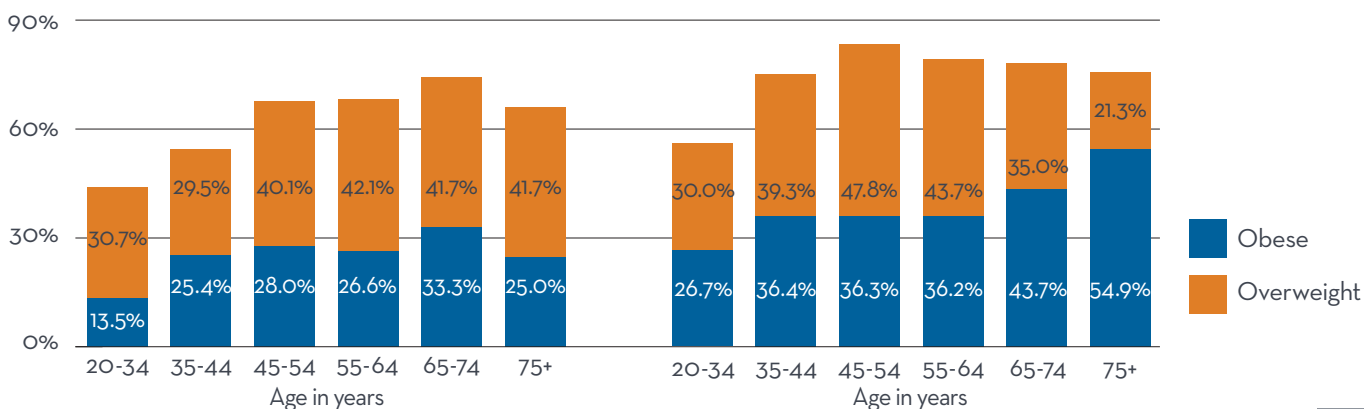
Body Mass Index (BMI) is an estimate of a person’s body fat based on their height and weight. The higher a person’s BMI, the greater the risk for diseases like heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, gallstones, breathing problems, and certain cancers. BMI is strongly correlated with measures of central obesity.

Among currently serving clergy, 64% of women are overweight or obese, whereas almost 80% of men qualify for one of these categories. In retirement, though, the risk by gender reverses: 42% of retired female clergy qualify as obese, as opposed to only 31% of retired male clergy.

For the most part, rates of overweight and obesity increase with age, but there are differences between the two genders, as shown in the charts below.

BMI rates by age among female clergy

BMI rates by age among male clergy



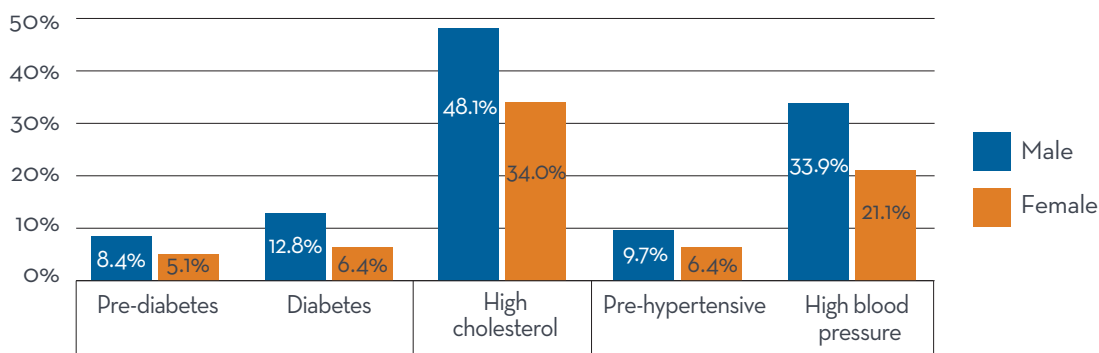
Metabolic Risk Factors

In addition to overweight and obesity rates, we are concerned about other metabolic risk factors, as depicted in the chart below. Among currently appointed clergy, more than 6% of women and nearly 13% of men report a current **diabetes** diagnosis. An additional 5-8% of each gender are at heightened risk for developing diabetes. Uncontrolled diabetes leads to complications in the heart, blood vessels, kidneys, nerves, eyes, and even the gums and teeth.

A second risk factor is **high cholesterol**, a measure of the lipids, or fat, in your blood. A certain level of cholesterol is necessary to maintain bodily functions. But when levels of bad cholesterol are high, fatty deposits build up along the blood vessel walls, narrowing or blocking the vessels. Among currently appointed clergy, nearly 50% of men and more than one-third of women have a current diagnosis of high cholesterol.

A person with high cholesterol is more likely to develop **high blood pressure**, a third risk factor for metabolic syndrome. The term “blood pressure” refers to the amount of force, or pressure, needed to move blood through a person’s veins and arteries. When artery walls are damaged or narrowed, the heart must work harder to pump blood through the body. This strain on the heart can lead to heart attacks, coronary heart disease, and stroke, among other serious complications. Among currently appointed clergy, roughly one-third of males and one-fifth of females report a current diagnosis of high blood pressure. Another 10% of men and more than 6% of women qualify as pre-hypertensive, which means that their blood pressure is elevated. They are more likely to be diagnosed with high blood pressure in the future.

Metabolic risk factors among currently appointed clergy



Heart disease, heart attack, and stroke

Condition or diagnosis	Male N=999	Female N=450
Coronary heart disease	7.6%	2.2%
Heart attack	5.5%	1.3%
Stroke	1.8%	0.7%

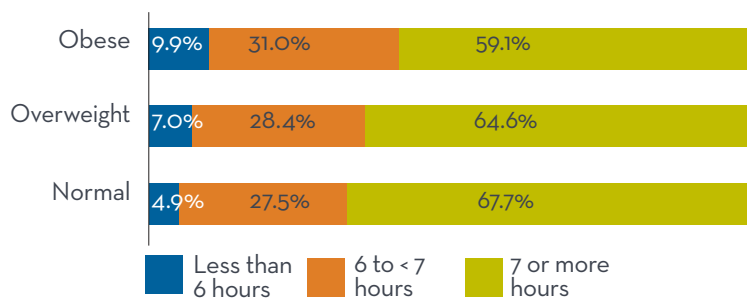
The presence of several metabolic risk factors in one person contributes to the likelihood of being diagnosed with heart disease or of suffering a heart attack or stroke. We see these serious conditions in males more often than females. Of significant concern, 7.6% of currently appointed male clergy have heart disease, and 5.5% have already suffered a heart attack.

Sleep

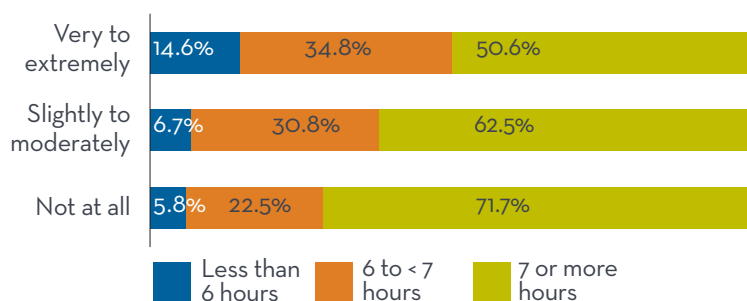
The National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults sleep for 7-9 hours per night, and clergy in our survey average 7 hours. Adequate sleep is an important factor in maintaining a healthy weight, lowering rates of stress and depression, and improving how the brain functions.

Indeed, nearly 68% of pastors with normal body weight log the recommended 7+ hours nightly, compared to only 59% of obese clergy. Obese clergy are also twice as likely as clergy of normal weight to sleep fewer than 6 hours nightly (9.9% vs. 4.9%). Stress may also influence sleep: only half of the clergy experiencing high financial stress sleep the recommended 7+ hours nightly, as compared to 70% of those with no financial stress.

Average nightly sleep by BMI categories



Average nightly sleep by levels of financial stress



Exercise

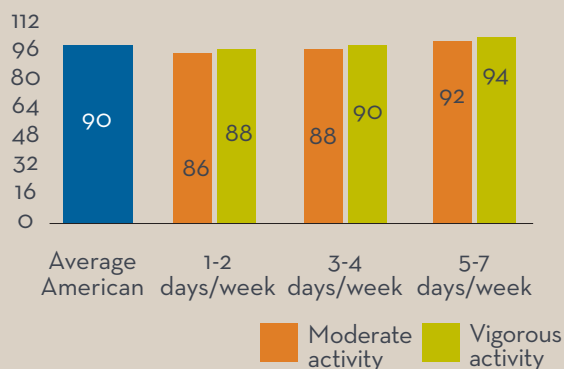
The recommended amount of physical activity for adults is at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise (brisk walking, housework, yoga) or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise (running, biking, aerobics) per week, combined with muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week.

Our survey asked clergy whether they engaged in moderate or vigorous activity outside of work in a typical week. Results were fairly consistent across gender lines: 89% of male clergy and 85% of females exercise at moderate levels for 10 minutes or more at least 3 or more days a week. In addition, 68% of both genders engage in a minimum of 10 minutes of vigorous activity at least three times weekly.

Quality of life and exercise

You may recall the quality of life scale from the section on mental health and that pastors were asked to rate their life satisfaction across several areas. Average healthy Americans have a score of 90 on this scale, indicating that they feel “mostly satisfied” to “pleased” with their quality of life. When we look at exercise habits, we see that only those pastors who exercise moderately at least 5-7 days a week and/or vigorously at least 3-4 days a week score as high or higher than the average American.

Quality of life scores by level of exercise



CONCLUSION

The data provided by pastors in this study of clergy well-being indicate that while many pastors struggle with physical health, most enjoy a vital relationship with God. Though the state of their mental well-being is mixed, the majority of clergy are doing well despite numerous stressors stemming from complex and emotionally laden work. In addition to the suggestions sprinkled throughout the report, we have observed that:

- Clergy must be proactive in staying healthy, and they must serve as the primary stewards of their time and energy. They must decide for themselves which activities—including creative and pleasurable pastimes—they need in order to maintain their well-being and then request support in protecting time for these pursuits.
- The sacred nature of clergy work makes it hard for clergy to set aside time for themselves. Clergy seek to play their part in God's will and are therefore always at risk of overextending themselves.
- Pastors cannot spread the Good News effectively when their bodies and souls are wounded. Lay and denominational leaders can and should support clergy in maintaining holistic health. The results will come back to congregations ten-fold in the form of creative, inspired leadership.

About the Clergy Health Initiative

In 2007, The Duke Endowment funded Duke Divinity School to assess and improve the health of United Methodist clergy in North Carolina. Since that time, the Clergy Health Initiative has:

- Fielded surveys of all United Methodist clergy in North Carolina in 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014. A final statewide survey will occur in 2016.
- Conducted focus groups on holistic health with diverse groups of pastors and clergy supervisors, as well as interviews with pastors on stress and flourishing.
- Collected survey and health screening data at five to nine time points from the more than 1,100 clergy participating in Spirited Life, a randomized controlled trial testing a two-year holistic health intervention.

The resulting data have yielded a rich and nuanced understanding of clergy health that far exceeds that of any such study previously conducted. We are profoundly grateful for the countless hours the clergy have shared with us and for the opportunity to hear and share their stories.





Duke Clergy Health Initiative • 312 Blackwell Street, Suite 101 • Durham, NC 27701
919.613.5350 • www.clergyhealthinitiative.org

Made possible with the generous support of:

The Duke Endowment

The Divinity School at Duke University

The North Carolina and Western North Carolina
Conferences of the United Methodist Church