In 2008, 2010, and 2012, the Duke Clergy Health Initiative conducted surveys of all active North Carolina United Methodist clergy to assess their mental, physical and spiritual health.

The questions on the survey can be subdivided into six areas that overlap in significant ways. They also can be paired with a variety of demographic data (gender, age, education) and church-related information, such as appointment type, church size, or length of time in ministry, to provide a compelling view into the state of pastors’ well-being.

The findings from these surveys have been shared with other denominations and featured in numerous news stories and outlets including the New York Times, NPR, and the Christian Century. The data also fueled the development of our wellness program for clergy, Spirited Life.

Going forward, we believe these findings, along with data from surveys in 2014 and 2016, will provide important insights that can guide conference leaders, clergy, and others with an interest in clergy health in the development of effective programs and services.

### Area of Health

#### Vocational Health
- Supports and demands of ministry
- Congregational mission, identity and morale
- Relationships with ministry peers
- Appointment process
- Burnout and vocational doubt

#### Emotional Health
- Joy and contentment
- Depression and anxiety
- Mental health treatment and functioning
- Quality of life

#### Physical Health
- Health diagnoses and treatment
- Health-related behaviors
- Physical health functioning

#### Social Health
- Relationship satisfaction
- Social support and isolation
- Professional support

#### Financial Health
- Income, debt
- Satisfaction with standard of living
- Financial stress

#### Spiritual Health
- Personal religious practices
- Spiritual well-being
- Sabbath-keeping

### Inside the Data

During the years we’ve conducted the Clergy Health Initiative Survey, pastors’ overall satisfaction with their current health has improved. In 2008, 63% of pastors reported being satisfied overall; by 2012, that figure had climbed to 70%.
Inside the Data

Based on our research, there are several factors that, when present, contribute mightily to a pastor’s ability to achieve the deep life satisfaction that comes with positive mental health.

- Feeling supported by the congregation as a person, not just as a pastor
- Feeling that the congregation is open-minded and willing to adapt to achieve its mission and purpose
- Feeling the presence of God in daily life and ministry

Building Support: SPRCs and Congregations

The majority of the programming that the Duke Clergy Health Initiative has created has been geared toward improving the health of pastors as individuals. Spirited Life, in particular, offered pastors tools and insights we believe to be important in helping them become as skilled in the care of themselves as they are in the care of their congregations.

However, we’ve never lost sight of the fact that clergy work within a complex web of relationships that have a bearing on their vocation and health. In fact, findings from the longitudinal survey show that the expectations and demands set by congregations can have a particularly strong effect on pastors, both positive and negative.

It’s with this in mind that we created Pastor & Parish™, a learning resource for staff-parish relations committees.

Combining videos, workbook content, guided discussion and complementary readings, this six-session series approaches the committee’s work from a theological perspective, underscoring its importance as a ministry of the church. It offers an opportunity for committee members to form important bonds, discover new language for working with one another, and create a covenant to guide their work in support of the pastor and the growth of the church.

All United Methodist congregations can take part in Pastor & Parish. Whether the committee is functioning well, is newly formed, or is in need of care and development, the program’s message can have a positive impact.

To learn more or order the curriculum, visit www.pastorandparish.com

“How attuned is your staff/pastor-parish relations committee to pressures you face as a pastor?”

- Very Attuned: 10%
- Moderately Attuned: 25%
- Somewhat Attuned: 32%
- Oblivious: 33%

2012 CHI survey data

“I think that it really helped them to understand their role better. They’ve been a lot better support for me. They understand more about the demands of ministry; they also understand more that it’s not just doing HR work. Instead, they put it in a theological framework, which really changed the way they approach things.”

– United Methodist pastor, one year after his committee piloted the Pastor & Parish program

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