

EFFECTIVE THERAPY FOR CLERGY REPORTING OF BURNOUT

by

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### **Abstract**

The primary aim of this thesis is to identify the effective tools with which to work with clergy members reporting burnout and/or vocational dissatisfaction. This document will educate clinical counsellors of the roles, responsibilities, and stressors unique to those in the pastorate; and identify key areas that clinical counsellors could address when their client is a clergy member. Empirically supported hypotheses as to why clergy members are reluctant to reach out and ask for help are articulated. Making sense of this reluctance has potential to help therapists create a therapeutic atmosphere that would be appealing, restorative, and empowering. Strategies for building resiliencies to counter the impact and challenges of the pastoral vocation are suggested.

*Keywords:* burnout, clergy, pastor, vocational satisfaction, resiliency, spirituality

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated in memory of

Doreen Kwee

who embodied courage and resiliency to her very last breath.

She had a profound effect on others and the influence she made on my life

will now be paid forward in my work and interaction with others.

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## EFFECTIVE THERAPY FOR CLERGY BURNOUT

### **Introduction**

What are effective therapeutic strategies when counselling clergy reporting of burnout and vocational dissatisfaction? This thesis is built on retrievable data that this particular subgroup, the Protestant clergy, has unique vocational demands that contribute to burnout. In order to derive at essential therapeutic considerations, one must first understand the work context, challenges, and impact of the clergy experience. A response must also be given as to how burnout might present for the clergy. Successively, considerations on effective clinical interventions for a clergy reporting of burnout and vocational dissatisfaction will be discussed. But first, here is a tragic account of one clergy's struggle that substantiates that there is a real and immediate problem with many serving in the clerical vocation and that it warrants attention.

### **There's a Problem and it Warrants Attention**

On November 10, 2013, Rev. Teddy Parker, 42, of Macon, GA, died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in the driveway of his home while his 800-member church and his family awaited for him to show up to preach on Sunday morning. Russell Rowland, a member of the church, described his pastor to The Christian Post (CP) as a "very caring, upbeat guy that cared for people, especially with the kids. He was a good man" who inspired him and showed no signs of trouble financially or otherwise. Parker's long-time friend Dr. E. Dewey Smith, Jr., senior pastor at The House of Hope Atlanta in Decatur, GA, told CP that:

Parker was suffering through some emotional issues that he had been dealing with. [He was] in treatment, but he just couldn't step away from ministry. He needed to take a break from ministry and the way our culture is, the culture forbids that. How much do you share? How much grace do people allow? (Blair, 2013b, para. 5)

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In a recent sermon entitled “Facing Your Storm with Confidence,” Parker bared his struggles with his faith walk. He confessed:

There are times in my life when I’m going through some stuff where I can’t feel God there. I try to pray but I don’t feel like God is hearing me. I try to serve but I don’t feel like God is using me. And there are times in your life when God purposely withdraws from you, he doesn’t withdraw for the sake of leaving you but he withdraws so you can grow and mature. (Blair, 2013a, para. 15)

Little did Parker’s congregants know the extent of their pastor’s state of gloom and loneliness as he shared those words.

Parker’s state of despondency is a familiar tune that resonates with many others serving in the clerical vocation. Whereas Parker’s issues may have included a crisis of faith, there is presumptive evidence that the nature of his work was a source of significant distress. American writer and researcher, Thom Rainer, revealed that “pastors are burning out every day. Many are leaving the ministry as a result. It is a real and immediate problem with many pastors and many churches” (Rainer, para. 3). Rainer’s conclusion reflects the survey results compiled by George Barna, The Fuller Institute and Pastoral Care, Inc. Some of these statistics are included below to reinforce the urgency and necessity for continuing scholarly research into this area.

- 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families.
- 90% of pastors said that ministry was completely different than what they thought it would be like before they entered the ministry.
- 70% of pastors constantly fight depression.
- 70% say they have a lower self-image now than when they first started.
- 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.

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- 66% of church members expect a pastor and family to live at a higher moral standard than themselves. This often results in pastors and their family members living as if under constant surveillance.
- 50% of pastors feel so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living. (Pastoral Care Inc., 2014)

The sobering statistics above reveal that many in the pastoral vocation experience an incredible amount of work-related stressors and pressures. The compounding effects of those experiences seem to be causing increasing rates of burnout amongst clergy members.

### **The Scholarly Context**

Those who have chosen the vocation of clergy life have, more often than not, recognized that they have signed onto a career in which part of the job description includes intrusions into their personal lives. Working within the Christian ministry has been identified as a stressful process (Miner, 2007). Literature review conducted by Hendron, Irving, and Taylor (2012) indicate that “clergy across religious orientations and geographical locations report poor work-related psychological health” (p. 221). Clergy burnout is recognized as an increasingly prevalent problem (Lewis, Turton, & Francis, 2007) with its roots emerging from within both spiritual and secular domains (Charlton, Rolph, Francis, Rolph, & Robbins, 2009). Clergy are often first responders to crises experienced by people and families in their parish and communities (Doehring, 2013). For these people, the clergy person is “the therapist on call” (Meek et al., 2003, p. 339). In addition to these pastoral emergencies are the:

Exacting weekly tasks of preparing sermons, planning and leading worship, and providing administrative, organizational, and educational leadership. Clergy are expected

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to be competent in a diverse range of skills and knowledge sets: as preachers, linguists, educators, administrators, and pastoral caregivers. (Doehring, 2013, p. 623)

Increasing their risk for work-related stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue, is that clergy usually have received limited training in mental health counselling, particularly in the areas of effective treatment for individuals and families experiencing crisis and/or trauma (Jacobson, Rothschild, Mirz, & Shapiro, 2013; Payne, 2009). The compounding exposure to vicarious trauma and/or secondary traumatization can have a detrimental effect on clergy's emotional well-being and functioning (Figley, 2002; Hendron et al., 2012). Therefore, it would be fair to deduce that clergy are in a highly demanding helping profession.

Given these stressors, many clergy experience high job satisfaction alongside emotional exhaustion (Doehring, 2013; Hileman, 2008; Meek et al., 2003). "Clergy find their work fulfilling and feel that they are making a difference in the lives of others and the world. The intrinsic value of their work renews them" (Doehring, 2013, p. 624). Thus, a critical discernment to be made is not simply whether the pastoral vocation is good or bad but, rather, "*when, how, and why* the pastoral vocation take on constructive or destructive forms" (Doehring, 2013, p. 624). If counsellors are to work effectively with clergy who are reporting of burnout, it will first be important to understand the unique needs and challenges of the pastoral vocation, the stressors these challenges place on the family dynamics, and the intrinsic rewards that clergy experience. "Moving beyond a pathology focus to understanding and promoting healthy functioning" can help prepare future clergy to cope with burnout and vocational stress by tapping into their existing strengths and resiliencies (Meek et al., 2003, p. 340).

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### **Logic and Progression of this Thesis**

This nature of this thesis is a literature review and it is organized into five chapters. The remainder of this chapter will be divided into four sections. In the next section, a description of the thesis' intent, as a literature review, will be delineated. Brief descriptions of classic references and seminal studies that made unique contributions to this thesis will be given. This will be followed by a section on the parameters of this literature review, with strengths and limitations of this methodology being noted. Special words and terminologies, used in this thesis, will be defined. The first chapter will wrap up with comments on the significance of this thesis and the social change it hopes to implement.

The logical questions that make up chapter two include the following: who are we dealing with? Why would clergy report of burnout? What is it about the clergy's vocational world that can help us understand burnout? The content of chapter two is divided into six sections with each addressing a particular challenge facing clergy: (a) boundary ambiguity, (b) "living in a fishbowl" experience, (c) fairness, (d) lack of adequate support, (e) lack of control, and (f) job-person incongruity. Challenges of the pastorate, both on the clergy and on the clergy's family, will be delineated in order to provide clinical counsellors an understanding of the unique world of this particular subgroup.

Chapter three considers the questions: what are the impacts from the therapeutic concerns and how does burnout present for clergy? Building upon the findings from chapter two, chapter three now looks at the results from the challenging world within which the clergy works and lives. The content of chapter three is divided into six sections with each section expounding upon particular stressors experienced by clergy and how the stressors might present. Results of

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challenges addressed include: burnout, familial disruption, isolation and loneliness, shame, compassion fatigue, and spiritual struggles and vocational dissatisfaction.

With a better understanding of the unique world of the clergy and the exhausting vocational demands upon this subgroup, which can contribute to high burnout rates and vocational dissatisfaction, the question now asked is, “How can the therapist help?” Chapter four responds to that question. Rather than coming from a focus on limitations and impairment, chapter four is framed in the language of strength. The crux of chapter four, then, is resiliency building. It suggests that tapping into the clergy’s inner resiliencies and strengths are one of the best starting points in building therapeutic rapport and in the aiding of the clergy to moving forward from their state of burnout and vocational dissatisfaction. In addition, the content of chapter four, in a stylistic intent, is written as a direct response to each of the challenges addressed in chapter three. Each of the six sections will offer strategies for building resiliency in the problem areas delineated in the previous chapter: (a) building resiliency against burnout with revitalized engagement with one’s work domain; (b) countering familial disruption by building resiliencies at the home front; (c) building resiliency against isolation and loneliness by building supports; (d) building shame resiliency by cultivating self-compassion; (e) building resiliency to experience compassion satisfaction; and (f) building resiliency for vocational satisfaction.

The final chapter of this thesis acknowledges that there is no perfect, catch-all thesis or research article. In addition to a summary of the thesis content, this chapter will address the limitations of this thesis and propose areas for future research. By revealing areas of limitations in one’s own work, the hope is to strengthen the overall argument made and advocacy suggested by the thesis.

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### **The Intent of this Thesis as a Literature Review**

The intent for this literature review is to combine peer-reviewed scholarly articles, as well as some tertiary sources. Tertiary resources are utilized to help “get a feel” for the topic. However, in order to substantiate the research question for a professional audience, quantitative studies are included among the primary sources reviewed. One classic reference in this area is the study conducted by Virginia (1998) amongst Roman Catholic clergy, specifically in the areas of burnout and depression. In this particular study, Virginia notes the absence of empirical research with this population with regards to psychological issues. His study, although in its “infant” stage of quantitative results, was seemingly ground-breaking. It addressed the subculture of Roman Catholic priests and concentrated primarily on burnout and depression. In 2005, a more specific quantitative study would be released by Knox, Virginia, Thull, and Lombardo. This work would examine the vocational demands experienced by Roman Catholic secular priests and examine how depression and select factors contribute to vocational satisfaction. Serving as another empirical research, this work has been referenced by many peer-reviewed articles in the area of clergy and burnout. Articles by Selye (1950, 1965) contribute as additional sources of classic reference. Selye’s work on stress and the general adaptation syndrome is an invaluable and timeless contribution to medical theory. In particular, how the body responds to stress, the protective values of stress, and identifying at which point stress becomes detrimental to one’s body are essential contributions to a thesis on burnout.

A seminal work that anchors the scholarly context of this thesis is an article written by Maslach and Leiter (2008). In the process of reviewing literature for this thesis, it became quite clear that Maslach is a forerunner and major contributor to studies on burnout and health. Maslach and Leiter’s (2008) article explores six domains of the workplace environment that

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serve as organizational risk factors to job burnout. These six domains – workload, control, reward, community, fairness, values, and job-person incongruity – was adapted for this thesis to loosely serve as the framework for understanding the job context of clergy.

Seminal works that contribute to a unique perspective of the impact of clergy work context and that offered influential counselling implications for this population include works by Brown (2010, 2012), Reynolds (2011), and Meek et al. (2003). Brown's decades of study into shame and shame resiliency offer insights transferable to understanding the impact of the clergy's way of life; in particular, that of living under constant scrutiny by congregation members, their reporting of lack of support, and the pressure of having to fulfill a high workload of endless expectations with proficiency, adequacy, and perfection. Reynolds' articles, though writing for an audience of mental health professionals that work primarily with the marginalized, offers a unique insight into the topic of burnout. Reynolds suggests that it is not just an overwhelming work load that causes individuals to burnout. Her stance of burnout is ethics oriented; or, utilizing Maslach and Leiter's (2008) terminology, pronation towards burnout increases when there is conflict in values. More specifically, people tend to "burnout" when their personal ethics and professional ethics are in constant conflict and there is no safe enough venue where they can give voice to this tension. Many clergy report that, within the first couple of years of being in ministry, pastoral work is not what they had envisioned when they first entered the vocation. Reynolds' articles offer insightful questions with which counsellors can utilize when working with clergy reporting of burnout. Meek et al.'s (2003) qualitative study offers valuable insights for clergy who is seeking to build resiliency for their ministerial life. Written from a perspective of strength, this study captures what some clergy are doing to

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implement balance and interpersonal connection for their lives. It offers clinicians an understanding of both the work challenges and rewards that clergy experience.

To ensure that this literature review is more than just a collection of summaries, primary and secondary sources are utilized as means to define the research question and to support proposed arguments (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008). Due to the nature of a literature review, the scope of this thesis did not include its own quantitative or qualitative aspect. Therefore, references are made to scholarly articles that have conducted such research and from which empirical data might be drawn to support the thesis' claims.

### **The Parameters: Strengths and Limitations**

The choice to write a manuscript-style thesis was decided upon due to the scope and limitations of this project size. Initially, the plan was to conduct an exploratory sequential mixed-methods study. Such an approach would include qualitative interviews that reflect actual experience of clergy, while also providing a quantitative aspect of research that contributes data collection and analysis that offer scientific credibility and replicability. But such an endeavor was conjectured to be beyond the scope for this thesis. Furthermore, it was delineated that an important first step was to explore what studies have already been conducted and what literature exists for this particular topic of interest.

Literature review, as aforementioned, is more than just a summary of articles. It is the purpose of this literature review to substantiate scientific credibility by providing relevant information, written by expert scholars, which support the research question. The intent is to synthesize the results in a coherent and persuasive way. Referring to primary sources will help solidify credibility, as the readership being targeted is that of professional clinicians. Due to the limitations of quantitative research specific to Protestant clergy, studies conducted with Roman

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Catholic secular clergy were reviewed and data integrated. Roman Catholic secular clergy, though differing in their theological perspective from Protestant clergy, report of similar workplace environment and workplace distress as the latter. These include reports of: (a) being situated within a community to serve a specific parish; (b) boundary ambiguities with work and non-work life; (c) lack of adequate support and isolation; (d) experiencing vocational dissatisfaction; (e) work overload; and (f) the stressors of ministry taking a toll on their physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Because this thesis is more concerned with promoting strengths and resiliencies to propel clergy towards thriving in their vocations and not at all concerned with settling theological debates between religious groups and denominations, data from quantitative and qualitative studies with Roman Catholic secular clergy are utilized.

The strengths of this methodology include the following: (a) more focus and containment of topic for a Masters' level thesis expectation; (b) no human subjects utilized; (c) credibility is lent to one's research by pooling professional research already conducted; and (d) safeguards the author from writing through the lens of personal bias. Limitations of this methodology include: (a) resorting the thesis to a summary of research, as opposed to a critical analysis of relevant information; (b) being biased in looking for only material that supports the research question; (c) the lack of quantitative research specific to Protestant clergy; and (d) the loss of qualitative interviews that could have given "real world experience" and credibility to the thesis.

### **Special Word Uses in this Thesis**

Special word usages in this thesis that might require some clarification include: (a) clergy, pastor, minister, and clergy-client; (b) vocation; and (c) resiliency building. The terms "clergy", "pastor", and "priest" are used interchangeably throughout this thesis. They do not denote any particular denomination but are utilized for variety sake. In chapter four, the terms

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“clergy-client” and “pastor-client” are utilized to identify the clergy or pastor that is reporting of burnout and that has come into one’s office for counselling.

The word vocation is “based on the Latin word *vocatio*, which means summons or calling” (Dawson, as cited in Zickar, Balzar, Aziz, & Wryobeck, 2008, p. 2906). Homan described vocation as “an integration of work, personal identity, and life goals” (as cited in Zickar et al., 2008, p. 2906). Many, if not all, clergy treat their work roles as a vocation instead of a job. As chapter two will delineate at its outset, the sense of being called into the ministry frames the pastor’s identity and way of life. This is a deep connection with work that is often surpassed by other jobs or occupations. Effective counselling with clergy reporting of burnout must understand this “vocational calling” and this deep connection that often meld the work, personal identity, and life goals of clergy.

In chapter four, the terms “building resiliency” or “resiliency building” is utilized in lieu of “self-care practices”. These terms were utilized intentionally. When the term “self-care” is utilized, one might think of activities such as getting a massage, taking time off from work, or soaking in a bubble bath. This thesis sought to move beyond the scope of self-care towards implementing active “resiliency-care” strategies that would develop the mental resiliency and toughness of clergy as spiritual first responders. For example, if one was to consider compassion as a muscle that can be stretched and grown with use, then it might also be deduced that it can be weakened and torn with overuse. Resiliency building strategies seek to work the compassion muscle so that the individual can become honed and more effective in their care for others. Like many mental health professionals, clergy often sacrifices their own needs and places others’ needs ahead of their own. However, research has also indicated that “clergy are more receptive to education on interventions when the focus is the safety of their parishioners” (Jacobson et al.,

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2013). If participating in an activity will help the clergy be more effective in their work with others, it might be safe to deduce that there may be more willingness to engage in the strategy; hence the use of the term “resiliency building”. The second intention for utilizing the term “resiliency building,” as opposed to self-care, is that the former may hold more appeal for a male audience. Based on Barna Research Group poll, “almost all clergypersons in the United States are married (94%) and male (93%)” (as cited in Hileman, 2008, p. 120). Whereas self-care practices might have gender stereotypes of taking bubble baths or be deduced to practices of lounging in front of Netflix for hours, resiliency building seems to take on a more proactive approach to strengthening ones’ inner strengths and skills. The language of resiliency seems to connote strength, toughness, and endurance. Its purpose is others-driven without others’ pressure to engage. By utilizing the terminology building resiliency, this thesis hopes to appeal to a larger scope of professionals, many who are often wired to be others-driven and self-sacrificial. It also invites considerations on how to make “self-care practices” more intentional and purposeful.

### **The Significance and Hope of this Thesis**

Research specific to the subgroup of clergy and burnout are limited, which makes for the necessity of contributing to it. This thesis will utilize what data is available and the author’s experience during almost twenty years of life serving as clergy in an ethnic-Canadian church setting and as chaplain in an overseas international school setting, to reveal some of the challenges unique to clergy and clergy families today. Like many in the world of first responders, the tendency for clergy is to put others first and delay seeking out help for oneself. The intent for this thesis is that it might give professional counsellors a window into the occupational stressors that clergy experience, the familial stressors invariably experienced by

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their partner and children, and the therapeutic tools with which to work with this particular demographic. Mindfulness and spirituality seem to be the current buzz word in many fields and therapy offices; but what do you do when the person that comes into your office is “expected” to be a professional in the world of spirituality and is currently struggling, in spite of or because of it? The social change this thesis hopes to implement is to substitute the concept of self-care with the practice of building resiliencies. For clergy, whose vocational calling integrates work, personal identity, and life goals, it would seem resiliency building would be a more appealing strategy to integrate into their daily life, as its purpose – though nurturing to one’s self – is to help one become more effective in providing care to others.

As mentioned throughout this first chapter, if counsellors are to work effectively with clergy, it will first be important to understand something of the unique challenges and needs that face Protestant clergy and their family unit. It is to this discussion we now turn.

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### **Challenges of the Clergy Vocation**

For clergy, one's time is devoured like a shoal of piranhas during a feeding frenzy, as tasks greedily pile on top of each other to vie for the pastor's attention. Consider the following statistics:

- 90% of pastors report to working between 55 to 75 hours per week.
- 50% feel unable to meet the demands of the job (Pastoral Care, Inc., 2014).
- Congregation members expect to be able to phone their pastor at all hours and for any reason. (Lumis, as cited in Hileman, 2008, p. 128)

Working long hours and having little time for reprieve and rest are the soft grounds upon which the seeds of burnout thrive. In order to provide best care for a clergy reporting of burnout, clinical counsellors must have some understanding of the unique world represented by this particular subgroup. The content of chapter two serves as a window into that clerical world. Challenges of the pastorate will be discussed and organized through six sections: (a) boundary ambiguity between work and non-work life; (b) living a life under constant scrutiny, otherwise known as the "fishbowl" experience; (c) problems with fairness at the workplace, specifically as it pertains to financial compensation and restricted choices; (d) lack of adequate support; (e) lack of control and feelings of powerlessness; and (f) job-person incongruity. Maslach and Leiter's (2008) seminal work on the six domains of the workplace environment that serve as organizational risk factors to job burnout will loosely serve as the framework for evaluating the job context of clergy. Only with a better understanding of the clergy's vocational world and workplace environment can we then proceed to appreciate the impacts of the therapeutic concerns.

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### **Boundary Ambiguity**

Hileman (2008) aptly posits that when a man or woman enters the pastoral vocation, he or she often does so with a conviction that he or she is called by God. From this frame of reference, the pastorate and all its varying roles and responsibilities is viewed more than just a job, but a life calling. The clerical vocation can be described “as an identity, a way of life, and a matter of faith for both the pastor and spouse” (Hileman, 2008, p. 130). The pastoral role is, therefore, difficult to leave at the door. This results in the frequent blurring of boundaries between home and church in the pastor’s home, as well as contributes to an excessive workload (Carlton et al., 2009; Hileman, 2008; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Wells, Probst, McKeown, Mitchem, & Whiejong, 2012).

It is usual for pastors to work unusual work hours. “The long and non-standard work hours require pastors to work evenings and weekends. This unusual work schedule often competes with family time and obligations” (Wells et al., 2012, p. 216). Stressors experienced from work-home boundary ambiguity are compounded by the fact that lay people expect their pastor to be available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Lumis (2004) conducted a comprehensive study of church members across seven denominations. Results indicate that:

Congregation members want clergy who have an open-door policy and who are not averse to rolling up their sleeves and pitching in at church suppers and other events; and they expect to be able to phone their pastor at all hours and for any reason. (as cited in Hileman, 2008, p. 128)

This finding reinforces the earlier findings of Morris and Blanton (1994) which assert that one of the greatest problems in ministry, for pastors and their spouses, are the high levels of intrusion experienced due to boundary ambiguity between work and non-work life domains.

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The term boundary ambiguity was first originated by Pauline Boss:

Which describes the stressors inherent in situations of ambiguous loss, such as that experienced by families of prisoners of war. It speaks to the uncertain status of the missing family member and resulting difficulty of the family to redraw the boundaries of family membership or to bring psychological closure. (Wells et al., 2012, p. 217)

Because of the congregation's expectations to have access to their pastor at all hours and for any reason, and because of the high levels of intrusion experienced by ministers and their family now acknowledged by researchers, the term has been applied to the concept of boundary ambiguity of the clerical family (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Wells et al., 2012).

Morris & Blanton (1994) posit that:

For some clergy families, it may seem that unpredictable time demands within the family of God (i.e. congregation) require leaving their need for family time unmet. Such a situation creates conditions of significant loneliness and isolation among the spouses and children of clergy families. (pp. 189-190)

When clergy reports of ambiguity to one's work hours, compounded by the expectation to be "on the job" 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, it is not surprising that there would be concerns regarding excessive workload. Charlton et al. (2009) reveal that "the most frequent cited triggers of stress, noted by two-thirds of the ministers [in the study], concerned the amount of work and the number of roles encountered in their day-to-day experience" (p. 142). A quantitative research conducted by Virginia (1998) reveal that ministry for the secular priest showed the highest level of anxiety and depression rating between the three groups of Roman Catholic priests. Secular Roman clergy share some similar vocational traits to Protestant clergy. For example, secular ministry places the parish priests on call at all hours of the day and night.

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“Daily life tends to be one of flux, not the fixed routine, and at times can approach the chaotic”

(Virginia, 1998, p. 62). McMillan advocate that:

In addition to the 43 to 60 hours per week they spend preparing and coordinating worship, writing sermons, doing pastoral care, administrative duties, fund-raising, attending continuing education, events and denominational meetings, and other core tasks of ministry, pastors are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. (as cited in Hileman, 2008, p. 128)

Maslach and Leiter’s (2008) seminal research in the area of burnout advocate that:

Increased workload has a consistent relationship with burnout, especially with the exhaustion dimension. Both qualitative and quantitative work overload contribute to exhaustion by depleting the capacity of people to meet the demands of the job. The critical point occurs when people are unable to recover from work demands. (p. 500)

The understanding is that acute fatigue resulting from work demand need not lead to burnout if people have an opportunity and “space” to recover. That said, literature reviewed reveal that there are often misperceptions about what the clergy do all week, which may lead to criticism of the pastor.

Church members may complain about limited office hours because they do not understand that the majority of pastoral care is done outside the church office, in homes, hospitals, and nursing homes. Church members may resist the idea of a day off or time away for renewal, or refuse to raise the pastor’s salary because of the perception that the pastor only works on Sunday. (McMillan, as cited in Hileman, 2008, p. 128)

In the next section, problem of boundary ambiguity is extended to a discussion of lack of privacy and unrealistic expectations, otherwise known as “the fishbowl life”.

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### **Living in a Fishbowl**

The consensus from literature reviewed note that many clergy have characterized their private domestic life as a “glass house” or “goldfish bowl” existence (Ellison, Roalson, Guillory, Flannelly, & Marcum, 2010; Hileman, 2008; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Zickar et al., 2008). Morris and Blanton (1994) cite the findings of Friedman’s research which note that “many congregations maintain higher standards (e.g. parenting and marital skills) for their pastor’s personal family than their own, pushing the clergy family into roles that are difficult to fulfill” (p. 194). This intrusion of standards often makes it difficult for clergy to remove themselves from the display window in order to permit relaxation and the freedom to show an authentic self, complete with failings and imperfections. Zickar et al. (2008), in their quantitative study with Roman Catholic priests, similarly found the delineation between work life and non-work life less distinct for this vocational population. “Many priests who participated in this project lamented that they were never able to ‘remove their collars’ (i.e., step outside of their role as priest). For example, a priest may see a parishioner in the grocery store while shopping; the parishioner might still act deferential, even though the priest may wish to engage in light banter” (p. 2906). This finding reinforces a substantial body of work which has found that boundary-related intrusions associated with “life in the fishbowl” as a chronic stressor on clergy mental health and family well-being (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Lee, 1999; McMinn et al., 2005).

Hileman (2008) expounds upon the stressors of living a life on display by describing that though many individuals:

May have heard about ‘life in the fishbowl’ and understand that the pastor’s family feels a certain amount of scrutiny by their congregation and by society in general, it is doubtful that most lay people (those outside the clergy) understand the full impact of this scrutiny.

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Many jobs require relocation of a family, but no other profession dictates not only the town in which the family must live, but also the neighborhood, the house, the bed in which they sleep (in the case of furnished parsonages), where the family worships, and with whom they socialize. The congregation has access to the clergy family day and night and many feel a proprietary interest in their comings and goings. Some members may notice (and make sure the family knows they notice) when the lights are on or off, whose car is in the carport, and where the family shops for groceries. (p. 122)

Such scrutiny (or, even just the perception of being under such scrutiny) can reinforce boundary ambiguity and make it difficult for a pastor to leave work at work and to fully relax.

As stated earlier in this chapter, men and women who enter the pastoral vocation often do so with a conviction that they are called by God. A life of holiness, compassion and self-sacrifice, forgiveness, servanthood, and unconditional love are concepts that are familiar to people in ministry. When the role model for one's work is Jesus, the "Son of God," it is not surprising that many clergy and clergy spouses hold themselves to impossibly high standards (Hileman, 2008). Bible characters are upheld as examples of ordinary folks turned extraordinary when under complete surrender for God's use. Church founders and legendary missionaries (e.g. Martin Luther, John Welsey, John Calvin, Hudson Taylor, Fanny Crosby, Mother Teresa, etc.) all made prodigious personal sacrifices for the cause of Christ; and they are postured as exemplar ministers throughout a pastor's seminary training. Modern day pillars of faith often comprise of the pastors of mega-churches and/or who have books on the *New York Times* best seller list. As Hileman (2008) notes:

These pastors and their phenomenally growing congregations are held up as unrealistic role models for pastors of congregations who are resistant to change, and leads to

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overwork in an attempt to ‘push the elephant uphill.’ Clergy spouses often become overinvolved in an attempt to help their spouse accomplish the Herculean task, adding to the problem of diffuse boundaries and overextension. (p. 129)

### **Fairness in the Workplace**

Maslach and Leiter (2008) observe that:

If people were experiencing problems with fairness in the workplace (such as favoritism, unjustified inequalities, or cheating), their early warning patterns were likely to develop into burnout over time. Once people begin to feel hostile and angry about job inequities, and lack faith in organizational process to right any wrongs, this may set in motion an increasing cascade of negative reactions to the job. (p. 508)

Though literature reviewed did not make direct references to “problems with fairness”, undertones of inequities seem to be present in two distinctive areas for clergy and their families: financial compensation and restricted choices.

Faiwell revealed that:

A majority of pastors (63%) have at least a Master’s degree (M. Div), and 87% are in full-time paid positions. The median value of full-time pastoral compensation packages, defined as salary, housing allowance, travel allowance, and all other benefits, is \$38,214.

In contrast, the median household income for people in the U. S. holding a master’s degree is \$77, 935. (as cited in Hileman, 2008, p. 121)

This financial disparity does not seem to have improved over the course of ten years. PayScale Human Capital website documents that in Canada, in 2015, the median value of a pastor holding a Master’s degree and working full-time is \$47,195 CAD. In contrast, the median income for people in Canada, in 2015, holding a master’s degree is \$90,000 CAD (Payscale Human Capital,

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2015). In a comprehensive study of denominational executives and lay members of seven denominations, Adair Lummis identifies that “congregations want a pastor’s family which exemplifies the spiritual ideal of a nuclear family with wife and children, but they do not provide an adequate salary for the pastor to care for the family” (as cited in Hileman, 2008, p. 133). Being unfairly compensated for level of education and amount of hours worked can often result in feelings of resentment. Maslach and Leiter (2008) state that “perceptions of equity or inequity are based on people’s determination of the balance between their inputs (i.e., time, effort, and expertise) and outputs (i.e., rewards and recognition)” (p. 500). This potential perception of inequity is complicated by the feeling among many clergy that “they should not be concerned with monetary gain since their calling is to serve God and not to become wealthy” (Hileman, 2008, p. 129). That said, research on procedural justice has revealed that “people are more concerned with the fairness of the process than with the favorableness of the outcome” (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 500).

Choices often open to congregation members, such as what church or youth group to attend or the option to take long holiday weekends, are perceived as not available to the clergy family. Older preacher’s kids may be asked to join the worship band, read scripture during Sunday service, pray in public, baby-sit, or help with set-up for a church event (Hileman, 2008). To not be involved or to decline participation may be construed by congregation members as spiritual rebelliousness and draw question to the parenting competency of the clergy family. Though some preachers’ kids may welcome the opportunity to be involved in their parent’s ministry, others may feel overburdened and resent the restriction of choice.

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### **Lack of Adequate Support**

Even though the pastoral vocation is a people-saturated profession, the experience of loneliness and isolation were commonly voiced as triggers for personal experience of stress throughout literature reviewed (Charlton et al., 2009; Ellison et al., 2010; Hileman, 2008; Hill, Darling, & Raimondi, 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1998; Virginia, 1998; Zickar, 2008). Lack of support is a significant and common stressor faced by this population and the deficiencies in this area has adverse impact on job satisfaction, family and marital well-being, and life satisfaction. Study conducted by Hill et al. (2003) found that both clergy and clergy spouses struggle with isolation issues. In particular, clergy participants report feeling detached from the rest of the community, contributing to a sense of loneliness and vulnerability. Many clergy in their study assert that they did not have close friends with whom they could confide and seek support from in times of need. This finding reinforced the results of Devogel's study of morale among United Methodist ministers in Minnesota which indicate that "70% of clergy did not have anyone they consider a close friend," due in large to feelings of distrust and competitiveness (as cited in Hileman, 2008, p. 123).

Zickar et al. (2008) reveal another blockade which makes it difficult for clergy members to establish social support. Their findings suggest that:

There are often informal barriers between priests and other potential sources of support (e.g., parishioners, lay staff) with whom they have frequent contact. The psychological distance between the religious staff and the laity, because of socially prescribed roles, may make it difficult for priests to obtain needed social support from these sources. (p. 2908)

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Once again, assumptions and expectations of others are contributing stressors; this time, to social support.

If support from congregation members is a slim option, then could clergy members not seek support from other clergy persons? Literatures reviewed indicate that limited opportunities, location, and time, are difficulties associated with this option. Zickar et al.'s (2008) study reveals that "most priests have limited opportunities to interact on a regular and personal basis with their bishop or the vicar of priests because of their location and their parish responsibilities" (p. 2908). If a pastor is expected to be on call 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, then this may suggest difficulty in his or her ability, let alone justifying the need, to leaving the fishbowl to socialize with other clergy members. Virginia (1998) explains:

Since the secular priest will most likely be living alone, and will have a wide variety of duties, he may feel that it is not possible for him to be away from his parish assignment, and that when he does have a day off he may wish to spend it with his own family and friends, as opposed to spending time with other clergy. (p. 63)

Lack of adequate social support was also indicated in Charlton et al.'s (2009) study with ministers reporting difficulty "in forming close friendships and rewarding personal relationships within the geographical locations in which they are employed in their professional capacity" (p. 135). Participants in the study report to feeling alone and isolated. Interestingly, subjects indicate difficulty in building friendship networks, especially when they did not have children.

With regards to supervisory support, Virginia (1998) reveals that secular Roman Catholic priests "may go for prolonged periods of time, ranging from months to even years, without ever meeting with, or speaking to his bishop" (p. 63). This lack in supervisory support is indicative of pastors who are pastoring in independent and/or non-denominational churches. Though

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supervisory support may have been required while a pastor was completing his or her seminary studies, it is not a requirement for many church pastoral staff. As ministry workload intensifies and as one's work and non-work life boundaries become more ambiguous, it is unfortunate that seeking supervisory support often falls to the wayside. The pastoral vocation comes with many inherent challenges and, more often than not, these challenges are faced without the support and guidance of a well-established social network of trusted people.

### **Lack of Control and Feelings of Powerlessness**

Hileman (2008) reveals that feelings of powerlessness were a source of distress for clergy families, as many “know that they are only a congregational vote away from moving” (p. 125). Having a sense of personal control in the workplace and an “active participation in organizational decision-making has been consistently found to be associated with higher levels of efficacy and lower levels of exhaustion” (Maslach & Letier, 2008, p. 500). A major control problem is present when a pastor's position is contingent upon the good graces of the congregation and job security is consistently on the line. This lack of control experienced by many clergy results in increased levels of exhaustion and decreased levels of job satisfaction. To remain on this trajectory, burnout seems inevitable.

One of the most distressing emotional dissonance experienced by clergy and clergy families are the “double binds” in which they are placed by the expectations of the congregation and of themselves (Hileman, 2008). The term double bind was first described by Bateson and it refers to a situation in a relationship where an individual (or group) receives two or more conflicting messages, and one message negates the other. Hileman (2008) aptly recognizes double binds as circumstances where “response is necessary and escape is not feasible” (p. 132). She goes on to provide examples of how congregations often put pastors in double binds:

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- The congregation tells the pastor they want the church to grow, then members become angry when the pastor challenges them to change or to reach out to others;
- The pastors' spouse and children are expected to be involved in the life of the church, but when they become invested in the church, they are criticized for being *too* involved;
- A new pastor is told that the church needs a good administrator, but when he [or she] attempts to oversee the church finances, the treasurer becomes enraged and insulted and begins working to have the pastor fired;
- Churches want a pastor who can negotiate time limits and who has a healthy boundary between work and home, yet they also want a pastor who is available 24 hours a day with an open-door policy. (pp. 132-133)

Whether stated directly or indirectly and whether conveyed by tone of voice or body language, double binds cause those caught in them to feel trapped and helpless. Leiter believes lack of control within one's workplace (i.e. the church and congregants) decreases clergy's energy, level of engagement with work, and job satisfaction (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

### **Job-Person Incongruity**

Research on job burnout has seen a consistent risk factor of "the problematic relationship between the person and the environment, often described in terms of imbalance or misalignment or misfit" (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 501). Maslach & Leiter (2008) proposes that "the greater the perceived incongruity, or mismatch, between the person and the job, the greater the likelihood of burnout" (p. 501). For clergy, this job-person incongruity may be experienced in the form of lack of adequate skills to meet job demands or a mismatch of one's values with job goals, ideals, and expectations.

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Darling, Hill, and McWey (2004) conducted a literature review of studies stretching back three decades. Research revealed “that millions of Americans with personal problems seek help of clergy first or early in their stressful situations and most often those who seek pastoral counsel present problems predominantly related to marriage and family issues” (p. 262). Early research by Privette, Quackenbos, and Bundrick showed that “church attendees report that they are seven times more likely to seek the assistance of clergy for their marriage and family problems than the assistance of a non-religious mental health specialist” (as cited in Darling, Hill, & McWey, 2004, p. 262).

Given the fact that a large portion of a clergy’s job is dedicated to counselling, Payne (2009) reveals that “only one-fourth of the pastors surveyed had pastoral counselling training” (p. 361). Jacobson et al. (2013) concur with clergy’s limited training in mental health counselling, especially in the areas pertaining to crisis and/or trauma counselling. Morgan et al. found that:

Clergy reported feeling more competent to counsel individuals and families regarding issues of grief, death and dying, anxiety, and marital problems, and they reported feeling less competent to provide counselling for severe mental illness, depression, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, and suicide. (as cited in Jacobson et al., 2013, p. 455)

Sense of competence is significantly related to personal accomplishment and has a direct effect on ministry satisfaction (Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010). If the clergy appraises him- or herself as having the skills and training necessary to perform his or her role, consistent and competent engagement with all aspects of work is promoted, providing a stable source of satisfaction (Miner et al., 2010). This seems to mirror what Maslach and Leiter (2008) have described as imbalance or misalignment or misfit between the person and his or her work

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environment. Such incongruity indicates that the person is currently experiencing difficulties in the workplace and may be unable to handle the job successfully. Maslach and Leiter (2008)

elaborate:

When the demands of the job exceed the capacity of the individual to cope effectively, or the person's efforts are not reciprocated with equitable rewards, this level of incongruity can be the additional 'tipping point' that propels him or her into a full-blown case of burnout. (pp. 501-502)

For clergy, job-person incongruity may also reveal itself in the form of mismatched values, ideals, and expectations. Maslach and Leiter (2008) identify "values" as another critical aspect of workplace domain, separate from job-person incongruity. Due to the unique aspect of "being called by God" associated with the pastoral vocation, this thesis places the domain of values under the umbrella of job-person incongruity. When a pastor struggles with her or his calling, it tends to have a direct effect on her or his identity as a pastor and, as an individual. If left unresolved, job satisfaction may decrease. Maslach and Leiter (2008) describe the area of values as:

The cognitive-emotional power of job goals and expectations. Values are the ideals and motivations that originally attracted people to their jobs, and thus they are the motivating connection between the worker and the workplace, which goes beyond the utilitarian exchange of time for money or advancement. (p. 501)

Similarly for clergy, values are the ideals – spiritual, theological, and ethical – that first attracted them to the ministry. Many clergy and clergy families will state that what keeps them in the ministry are the experiences of intrinsic rewards.

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Like job-person incongruity, mismatch of values may be “temporary, rather than fixed, and may shift over time” (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 501). When a pastor reports of values conflict at the church, it indicates that the pastor’s spiritual ethics and practice may be in conflict with the parish’s expectations and ideals of what a pastor should be and/or should not be doing. For example, the congregation may expect the pastor to lead more worship services and set high standards for preaching competency; the pastor, on the other hand, may feel his or her area of competency and skills set to be in the area of counselling and, therefore, desire to do more visitations and counselling. Maslach & Leiter (2008) explain that “when there is a values conflict on the job, and thus a gap between individual and organizational values, workers will find themselves making a trade-off between work they want to do and work they have to do” (p. 501). Unfortunately, for the pastor, his or her job security is often at the good graces of the congregation. Mismatch of values and job expectations will tend to have grave implications. If the pastor cannot bring his or her personal expectations and theological-spiritual practice in line with the church’s, then the other option is often to resign from the existing church and find another church that is a “better fit.” Maslach & Leiter (2008) reveal that “recent research has found that a conflict in values is related to all three dimensions of burnout and a structural model of burnout suggests that values may play a key role in predicting levels of burnout and engagement” (p. 501).

### **Concluding Remarks**

The workplace environment of clergy presents many risk factors to job burnout. The relentless ambiguity between work and non-work life contributes to work overload and overextension. Living one’s life under constant scrutiny, even if it was only perceived, reinforces boundary ambiguity and makes it difficult for the clergy to leave work at work and to

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fully relax. Experiencing problems of fairness in the workplace can have a snowball effect that develops into burnout over time. Feelings of powerlessness and constantly being caught in distressing double binds result in higher levels of exhaustion and lower levels of job efficacy. The pastoral vocation comes with many inherent challenges and, at times, questions of job-person congruity may surface. For clergy, these challenges are faced without the support and guidance of a well-established social network of trusted people.

Equipped with a better understanding of the clergy's vocational world and workplace environment, we now proceed to explore the results and impact of these challenges.

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### **Results and Impact of Challenges**

The pastoral vocation today is like a mass grave of unidentified bodies. Consider the following statistics in the year 2013:

- Over 1,700 pastors left the ministry due to burnout, conflict, or moral failure.
- Over 1,300 pastors were terminated by the local church each month, many without cause.
- Many denominations report an “empty pulpit crisis”; they cannot find ministers willing to fill positions (Pastoral Care Inc., 2014).

The description of the clerical vocation presented in chapter two and the disheartening statistics noted above support the notion that the workplace environment of clergy is riddled with an incredible amount of work-related stressors and pressures. The intent of chapter three is to respond to the research questions: what are the impacts from the challenges facing clergy and how does burnout present for clergy? Results from the challenges include the following: (a) burnout, (b) familial disruption, (c) isolation and loneliness, (d) shame, (e) compassion fatigue, and (f) spiritual struggles and vocational dissatisfaction.

### **Burnout**

Burnout is recognized as a critical health issue for human service professionals and, “as providers of human services, Christian ministers are subject to work-related stresses typical of other human service professions and occupations” (Miner, Dowson, & Sterland, 2010, p. 168). In particular, minister stress can result from work overload, boundary ambiguities, excessive bureaucracy (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Wells et al., 2012), conflicts between personal and congregational needs (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Hileman, 2008), feelings of disillusionment and despair (Jacobson et al., 2013) high congregational and personal expectations (Hileman, 2008; Miner, 2007), and conflicted personal relationships (Hileman, 2008). Feelings of isolation and

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lack of social support are also related to job dissatisfaction and burnout (Staley, McMinn, Gathercoal, & Free, 2013; Virginia, 1998). Kaldor and Bullpitt's study indicate that "one quarter of clergy experienced burnout as an extreme or significant issue, whilst half were potential candidates for burnout" (as cited in Miner et al., 2010, p. 168). The Alban Institute's survey of 1,000 pastors indicates that "half considered leaving their positions within the three months prior to completing the survey" (Jacobson et al., 2013, p. 457).

Burnout is typically characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). "Research has established that burnout is a stress phenomenon that shows the expected pattern of health correlates, such as headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, muscle tension, hypertension, cold/flu episodes, and sleep disturbances" (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 499). Espeland (2006) elaborates on this list by including: "insomnia, fatigue that does not go away with sleep, dizziness or light-headedness, migraines, backaches, nausea, allergies or difficulty breathing, and skin problems" (p. 180). In addition to impaired physical health, Miner, Dowson, and Sterland's (2010) literature review on burnout found that "consequences of burnout include reduced job satisfaction/performance and higher turnover intentions, and declining professional commitment" (p. 167). As job performance, productivity, and commitment decreases, the quality of work declines. Espeland (2006) lists "symptoms of decreased performance [to] include boredom, lack of accomplishment, sense of helplessness to change situation, absenteeism and lateness to work, ineffectiveness, and perceiving work as a burden or chore" (p. 180).

Problems relating to others may result from chronic exhaustion and cynical detachment. As Espeland (2006) observes, "this makes communicating with family, friends, and coworkers difficult. Symptoms include outbursts, hostility, paranoia, depersonalization and detachment,

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withdrawing, losing compassion and empathy for [congregants], coworkers, family, and friends; and difficulty with team projects” (p. 180). Miner, Dowson, and Sterland (2010) concurs with this list of symptoms and add “reduced self-esteem and poorer overall life satisfaction” (p. 167). Because the line between work and non-work life tend to be ambiguous, almost non-existent, for clergy, when a pastor loses a sense of purpose for his or her work, that toxicity often spreads into his or her purpose in life. This snowball effect will compound into loss of ideals, feelings of emptiness, lack of joy, loss of self-worth, and hopelessness. Shame will, inevitably, become the door master that prevents many clergy from admitting and seeking help. The challenge of shame will be addressed later in this chapter.

It is important, at this time, to discern that stress and burnout are not synonymous. The correlation between stress with burnout and, consequently, with impaired physical health and mental distress can be better appreciated by the seminal work of Hans Selye on the stress syndrome. Selye (1965) postulates that “all living beings are constantly under stress, and anything – pleasant or unpleasant – that speeds up the intensity of life causes a temporary increase in stress, the wear and tear exerted upon the body” (p. 97). He goes on to advocate that stress is not always detrimental to the body. Onset of stress sends the physiology of one’s body into an “adaptation” mode, releasing the adrenocorticotrophic hormone, corticoids, cortisone, and other pro-inflammatory mineralo-corticoids; the secretion of such hormones help raise the body’s resistances to the harmful effects of stress. Therefore, “when suitably handled, stress can not only produce but also prevent disease” (Selye, 1965, p. 99). In an earlier article, Seyle (1950) describes the body’s general adaptation syndrome to stress:

There is a temporary exhaustion or fatigue which ensues after less prolonged exposure to stress. From this condition recovery occurs most readily as a result of rest. Stress

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reactions are optimally effective during short emergencies; perhaps largely because most of the ‘stress hormones’ are well tolerated only during short periods and tend to cause severe complications if they act upon the body persistently over a long time. (p. 1390)

From Seyle’s research, what seems to be essential is that ample time is available for one’s body to recover from the wear and tear of stress. The body is equipped to cope with stress and to naturally recover from stress. The potential for burnout is increased when there is little time to recover from the strains of workload and emotional distress.

A different approach to addressing work stress and burnout is provided by Reynolds (2011), who sharing from personal experience, advocates:

The problem of burnout is not in our heads or in our hearts, but in the real world where there is a lack of justice. The people I work alongside don’t burn me out and they don’t hurt me, they transform me, challenge me, and inspire me. What harms me are the injustices and indignities suffered by clients and my frustrating inability to personally change the unjust structures of society they struggle with and live in. (p. 28)

Reynolds (2009) coins the term “spiritual pain,” describing it as tension experienced when health care providers are forced to work in ways that go against their ethics. For clergy, this “spiritual pain is the discrepancy between what feels respectful, humane, generative, and contexts which call on [the pastor] to violate the very beliefs and ethics” that brought [him or her, initially, to the clerical vocation] (Reynolds, 2009, p. 31). When personal work ethics are chronically violated, spiritual questions and divine struggles are birthed, inadequacies of job-person incongruity are accentuated, job dissatisfaction is experienced, and disengagement with work is increased.

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Demands imposed by congregants and denominational board members can contribute to work overload and, as stated above, lead pastors to violate their personal ethics. Seamands and Seamands report that:

Many clergy feel ‘owned’ by the congregation. Such feelings call upon the clergy person to respond to every real or perceived need arising within the congregation fostering a relational pattern of overfunctioning within the clergy person and dependency within the congregation. (as cited in Morris & Blanton, 1998, p. 38)

Epseland (2006) concurs with this pattern of overfunctioning with the clergy person and elaborates on its consequences by advocating that “high expectations lead people to work too hard and take on too much, [and this leads] to exhaustion and eventual cynicism when the high effort does not yield the expected results” (p. 180). A senior pastor in Meek et al.’s (2003) study states:

It’s not the things in ministry that kill you, it’s the things you don’t get done...every night you leave you know that there’s another twelve people you should call, another three books you should read, another eight people that you need to visit in the hospital. (p. 342)

Reynolds (2011) aptly describes this experience of work with the imagery of “shovelling water”. For a pastor-client reporting of burnout, she or he has probably been “working hard; and working harder isn’t working” for her or him any longer (Reynold, 2011, p. 31).

### **Familial Disruption**

Boundary ambiguities between work and family domains create stress for clergy families. Most clergy do not enjoy 40-hour work weeks, typical holidays, and vacations (Hileman, 2008). Lee and Iverson-Gilbert’s (2003) literature review indicate that pastoral stress affects the quality of family life; clergy and their partners stated that “pastoring had been difficult on their families,

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and this was one important reason reported by clergy for leaving the ministry” (p. 249). Morris and Blanton (1998) indicate that:

Denominations, like secular employees, foster a highly competitive system with the emphasis on success. Young clergy are often encouraged to climb the ecclesiastical ladder while ministerial success models are constantly paraded before them. As a result, many clergy develop a workaholic pattern, seeking to mimic or duplicate previously recognized successes. (p. 38)

Ambiguity with one’s work hours can often accentuate the stress of an excessive workload, especially if there is little opportunity for reprieve. The unpredictable presence of the pastor-family member, due to the on-call nature associated with the vocation, impacts a pastor’s sense of competence in family functioning (Morris & Blanton, 1998).

Minuchin suggested that:

Healthy family functioning can only occur when family boundaries are unambiguous or clear enough for subsystem members to carry out their functions without undue interference. This intrusiveness may include physical and/or psychological intrusion that may hinder the clergy family’s ability to manage and regulate itself or create feelings of being taken advantage of as an individual or family. (as cited in Morris & Blanton, 1998, p. 38)

There is often an expectation placed upon the pastoral family to attend church events, women’s and men’s groups, potlucks, birthday parties, anniversaries, and weddings of people to whom the clergy family has no or limited relation. Hileman (2008) elaborates:

For church members, these are social outlets. When the clergy family attend these events, however, it is as representatives of the church and they are, in essence, at work.

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In contrast, the clergy's own family events are frequently interrupted and cancelled by demands of the ministry. (p. 121)

Vacations and long weekend holidays are often postponed due to expectations of the pastor to stay behind and lead extra services. Hileman (2008) references a personal communication in which:

A pastor of three small churches reports that his board refused to combine Christmas Day services, and insisted in having them in all three churches. Several members of the board, however, would not be in attendance since they had family obligations. (p. 129)

If a pastor and his or her family members do not navigate through the experiences of inequities and unfairness brought about by ministry and congregational expectations, resentments can birth and quickly mature into snowballs of anger and hostility. As aforementioned, this “sets in motion an increasing cascade of reactions to the job and the early warning patterns will likely develop into burnout over time” (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 507).

The stressors of living a life under constant scrutiny often place distressing pressures of maintaining a perfect model of marriage for the clergy and his or her partner. Morris and Blanton (2008) explain that:

Marriages pressured by this high standard are often perceived by the partners in a socially desirable manner (e.g. through rose-colored glasses), making them unable to realistically appraise the genuine quality of their marriage. As a result, some clergy and/or their spouses do not admit to recognize the warning signs of dysfunctional relationship patterns until severe deterioration have occurred. (p. 190)

Morris and Blanton (2008) found that the most difficult problems for a minister to handle seem to be those involving his or her own marriage, stating that “there seems to be a tension between

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the covenants of marriage and the ministry” (p. 190). It might be safe to speculate that as undercurrents of tension is experienced in the marriage, intimacy is compromised between the partners.

### **Isolation and Loneliness**

Hill et al.’s (2003) study indicates that both clergy and clergy family members struggle with loneliness and isolation issues. Hileman (2008) explains that most clergy spouses feel isolation by virtue of the fact that they live great distances from their families. This loneliness is then, perhaps, compounded by the reluctance of clergy families to make friends within their congregation, out of fear that “confidences told by the pastor’s family can quickly become the latest church gossip and lead to dismissal” (p. 121). Consequently, to be the sole confidant to whom a spouse could confide may place considerable pressure on the individual and cause strain on the health of a marriage (Hill et al., 2003). Ron Wachs, an ordained pastor and pastoral counsellor, says that clergy wives are the angriest people he sees:

They cannot talk to members of the congregation or others in the community because what they say may get back to the congregation. They cannot talk to denominational officials because they fear it will affect their spouse’s chances for advancement. Pastor’s spouses may also not feel free to communicate their feelings to the pastor. They may be reluctant to burden an already overburdened pastor, and the pastor may be reluctant to acknowledge the spouse’s dissatisfaction. (as cited in Hileman, 2008, pp. 124-125)

These undercurrents of resentment and the inability to find a safe place to articulate feelings of dissatisfaction contribute to clergy spouse’s sense of isolation and loneliness. Consequently, it makes sense to suggest that this would have a detrimental effect and grave implications on marital and/or parenting well-being.

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Additional distress associated with intrusiveness may be caused by “perceived threats from congregational ‘watch-dogs’ interested in guaranteeing that their clergy family members serve as exemplary models of family life” (Morris & Blanton, 1994, p. 193). Members of clergy family struggle with isolation and the lack of social support, often due to informal barriers of socially prescribed roles. Hileman (2008) captures this in her citation of a personal communication with an adult recounting an experience in high school. “Other kids would stop talking and telling jokes when I came in the room. I would hear ‘Shhhhh, she’s the preacher’s daughter!’ It can be very isolating” (p. 124). This account serves as an example of how individuals in the congregation and/or society would often respond differently in the presence of a clergy or a clergy family member, making it difficult for an authentic and genuine connection with others. Morris and Blanton (1994) explain that “the feeling of loneliness and isolation experienced by some clergy families is the outcome of an ecclesiastical structure that elevate clergy and their families to a celebrity-like status, making the formation of intimate relationships (e.g. friendship, mentoring relationships) difficult” (p. 193). As aforementioned, this lack of social support may be due in part to the reluctance, either self-imposed or others-imposed, on the part of the clergy and their spouses to call upon others for help in dealing with stress. Early research by Curran discussed the inability of stressed families to admit that they needed help and support; findings concluded that, “culturally, we [North Americans] came to believe that a good family was one that could handle its own problems” (as cited in Morris & Blanton, 1994, p. 193). With the high standards and expectations perceived by clergy, it is likely that the impact of such attitudes is compounded for clergy families than other families.

Research on the social context of burnout has demonstrated “that burnout is less likely to occur within a positive and supportive workplace environment. Regardless of its specific form,

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social support has been found to be associated with greater engagement” (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 500), whereas a lack of social support is linked to increased disengagement and pronation towards burnout. Literatures reviewed were in agreement in reporting clergy’s lack of social support as a major source of distress. Virginia (1998) identified that “the lack of social support and sense of isolation, for secular clergy, were key elements associated with their experience of both burnout and depression” (p. 49). Staley, McMinn, Gathercoal, and Free (2013) state that “in a profession that requires nearly constant contact with people, it is a distressing paradox that clergy frequently feel disconnected and alone” (p. 843). For many, there is a lack in friendship networks and supervisory support; and, depending on geographic location, lack of family support. Without the support and nurturance of a well-established social network of trusted people, “it is not surprising that clergy often find themselves exhausted, depleted, and languishing in the throes of burnout” (Staley et al., 2013, p. 846).

### **Shame**

In addition to external demands placed upon the clergy by denominational leaders and congregation members, self-imposed demands can create even more pressure. Pastors can be their own worst enemies. Clergy who place high expectations on themselves – whether idealistic or unrealistic – may be setting themselves up for burnout. Morris and Blanton’s (1998) study found that “a majority of clergy have unrealistically high expectations for themselves. Unhealthy, self-imposed demands or expectations can contribute to a humorless and perfectionistic lifestyle making one unable to adjust to situational and/or normative stressors” (p. 38).

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Regardless of the pastor's attributes, many congregation members relate to their pastor as though they were a parent figure, as evidenced in some traditions referring to the pastor as "Father." Grosch and Olsen (2000) warn that:

Over time, with such reference, the pastor gradually may become convinced that they really are extraordinary, an occupational hazard that follows from persistent admiration and idealization. This could result in carelessness, even recklessness in judgments about interpersonal relationships. Feelings of superiority and arrogance, though contrary to religious teachings, may lead to unprofessional or unethical conduct. Idealizations can be so flattering that the minister may work in certain ways to increase the idealization, which colludes with any underlying feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. (p. 622)

The constant striving to meet such high expectations and perfectionistic lifestyle is not only exhausting and a recipe towards burnout, but it prevents clergy from connecting with others in authentic and vulnerable ways.

Brown (2010) advocates that "where perfectionism exists, shame is always lurking" (p. 55). She goes on to describe perfectionism as:

The belief that if we live perfect, look perfect, and act perfect, we can minimize or avoid the pain of blame, judgment, and shame. It's a shield.... Perfectionism is, at its core, about trying to earn approval and acceptance. Most perfectionists were raised being praised for achievement and performance... Somewhere along the way, we adopt this dangerous and debilitating belief system: I am what I accomplish and how well I accomplish it. *Please. Perform. Perfect.* Perfectionism is other-focused – *What will they think?* (p. 56)

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This is endemic of the pastoral lifestyle: the pressure of living life under constant scrutiny, the expectation of being available 24-7 (Hileman, 2008), and the expectation to meet congregational demands with calmness, infallibility, and perfection (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Moreover, as aforementioned in chapter two, a pastors' job security is often contingent on the good graces of the congregation; more often than not, a pastor is one congregational vote away from losing his or her job placement (Hileman, 2008). Such stressor can certainly pull a pastor into perfectionistic tendencies to please and perform, in order to avoid blame, judgment, and shame.

Brown (2012) states that "shame breeds fear" (p. 188) and it "derives its power from being unspeakable" (p. 67). In their work with clergy, Grosch and Olsen (2000) state that they were:

Struck with the reluctance, based on shame, of many clergy to seek support, including psychotherapy. To admit having lost the inner meaning of their own message would be a confession of failure to live up to the principles for which they stand. It would mean exposing their failure to practice what they preach. (p. 626)

Many clergy lack adequate social support and supervisory guidance to navigate through their spiritual questions, divine struggles, job insecurities, and boundary ambiguities that come with the job. Maintaining the poise and infallibility of a pastoral identity often means locking away their authentic selves behind the prison bars of shame.

Often, clergy are aware that this is not the way that they were meant to live and there is a desire to connect with others. Unfortunately, guilt and shame serve as smoke screens to that desire. Past experiences of social rejection, disconnections, and isolation, compounds the experience of shame all the more. Brown (2012) explains that:

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The importance of social acceptance and connection is reinforced by our brain chemistry, and the pain that results from social rejection and disconnection is real pain. In a 2011 study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health and by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, researchers found that, as far as the brain is concerned physical pain and intense experiences of social rejection hurt in the same way. ...Emotions can hurt and cause pain. And just as we often struggle to define physical pain, describing emotional pain is difficult. Shame is particularly hard because it hates having words wrapped around it. It hates being spoken. (p. 71)

### **Compassion Fatigue**

As mentioned in chapter two, counselling forms an integral aspect of the ministerial role. Mannon and Crawford report that “42% of individuals with problems use a member of the clergy as the number one point of help” (as cited in Hendron, Irving, & Taylor, 2012, p. 224). Meek et al. (2003) concur by identifying that “historically clergy were the equivalent of our modern day health professional in that they were the ‘professional’ from whom spiritual and emotional guidance were sought” (p. 339). For many individuals and communities, clergy remain a frontline mental health resource and the first source of help in times of crisis (Darling et al, 2004; Hendron et al., 2012; Jacobson et al., 2013; Meek et al., 2003). Hendron et al. (2012) posit that “if clergy are being accessed as both counsellors and mental health workers then logic dictates that they may be susceptible to similar negative impacts normally seen within these professions” (p. 226). Due to their likelihood of bearing witness to human suffering and other critical incidents through the parishioners they serve, clergy are at increased risk for work-related stress and negative outcomes from trauma work, such as compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatization.

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Compassion fatigue has been conceptualized by Figley as being “the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other – the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person” (as cited in Figley, 2002, p. 1435). The terms vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue have often been used interchangeably to describe a specific type of secondary stress experience and outcome. “Although there are some parallels to burnout, including symptoms such as exhaustion, feeling overwhelmed, isolated and disconnected, vicarious trauma is much more pervasive, impacting all facets of life, including the body, mind, character, and belief systems” (Best Start Resource Centre, 2012). Gubi and Jacobs (2009) add that if the pastor is counselling an individual who has experienced spiritual abuse, that this “can have a traumatizing impact and lead to much questioning of [the pastor’s] own beliefs and practices” (p. 192). Thus, vicarious trauma permeates into a person’s worldview and cognitive frame of reference; the way the pastor relates to his or her world is altered. Similarly to burnout, “vicarious trauma develops over a period of time, after many sessions of listening to painful experiences with an empathic listener” (Best Start Resource Centre, 2012). Hendron et al. (2012) add that “the very empathic engagement, which is necessary for therapeutic progress, is what increases one’s vulnerability to experiencing the harmful effects of their client’s material” (p. 223). Pastors experiencing vicarious trauma may report of feelings of sadness and sorrow for their congregants, feelings of powerlessness, anger and frustration, lowered levels of trust, and feeling wary around their church and in the world, generally (Gubi and Jacobs, 2009).

Figley (2002) asserts that “the very act of being compassionate and empathic extracts a cost under most circumstances. ...The meaning of compassion is to bear suffering” (p. 1434). There is a direct result of listening to or being involved with another’s emotionally disturbing

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material. Whereas vicarious trauma is a response to an accumulation of exposure to the pain of others, secondary trauma is immediate and can happen suddenly, in one session (Best Start Resource Centre, 2012). For clergy who are reporting of secondary traumatization, compassion fatigue symptoms include “avoidance, re-experience and hyper-arousal similar in presentation to those of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” (Canfield, as cited in Hendron et al., 2012, p. 223). The individual may experience “disturbing images, upsetting emotions, use avoidance technique, experience alterations in their cognitions and an inability to function normally” (Figley, as cited in Hendron et al., 2012, pp. 223-224). For the pastors-counsellors in Gubi and Jacobs’ (2009) study, participants spoke of distressing emotions such as:

Grief, sadness, depression, anxiety, horror, rage, and shame. Numbing or avoidance of working with clients’ traumatic material as well as somatic complaints such as sleep difficulties, headaches, and gastrointestinal distress, feeling less safe in the world, and having feelings of isolation and alienation are also reported. (p. 202)

Darling, Hill, and McWey (2004) summarizes the protracting effect that secondary trauma can have:

Trauma, which challenges one’s control, can result in psychological and physical distress, as well as impairment of family relationships, interpersonal difficulties, and negative attitudes toward work, life, and other people. Compassion fatigue can affect not only care-givers, but also their family members and closest friends who provide a system of support. (p. 263)

Hendron et al. (2012) conducted a vast literature review and found that clergy have been reported to respond to a wide range of incidents, some of which include: working with survivors of terrorists’ attacks, working with survivors following natural disasters, caring for sexual abuse

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victims, working with survivors of human created atrocities such as war, and counselling individuals experiencing intimate partner violence. In a mixed mode study, researchers examined the experiences of working with trauma amongst American pastors during their normal everyday job demands and found “clergy here reported dealing with a diverse range of problems including illness, bereavement, psychiatric problems, eating disorders, addictions, sexuality, abortion and financial difficulties” (Holaday, Lackey, Boucher, and Glidewell (2001p. 60). These findings indicate that clergy play an important role in their respective communities as counsellors and mental health workers. Hendron et al. (2012) explain that:

For many individuals their methods of making meaning and extracting positivity from trauma is viewed as a spiritual process, even though this spirituality may not be tied to either faith or even conscious thought. ...Indeed our psychological well-being appears to be dependent in some way on how we interpret life events. (p. 225)

In their work with parishioners’ trauma and crisis moments, clergy need to be aware of the “potential negative effects of their counselling work on themselves” (Jacobson et al., 2013, p. 457), all of which can be compounded by work overload, boundary ambiguity, and lack of formal education in psychosocial interventions.

### **Spiritual Struggles and Vocational Dissatisfaction**

Just as doctors can catch the latest flu bug and hairdressers can experience a bad hair day, pastors can experience spiritual struggles. In another study, results indicate that pastors “experienced strained relationships with God just as often as their counterparts in other church roles, and these divine struggles significantly contributed to psychological distress” (Pargament et al., as cited in Ellison et al., 2010, p. 290). Literatures reviewed seem to indicate that when a pastor experiences distress of a spiritual nature, it often affects her or his entire well-being (i.e.

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personal life and work domain). Divine struggles or troubled relationship with God are associated with elevated rates of anxiety (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005), increased disengagement at the workplace, and depression and suicidality (Ellison et al., 2010). According to Guthrie and Stickley (2008), clergy make “no clear distinction between spiritual and mental distress” (p. 395). To better appreciate this connectedness, attachment theory is considered.

With references to attachment theories, Hill & Pargament (2003) liken God to an attachment figure and explain that:

As children look to their parents for protection, people can look to God as a safe haven, a being who offers caring and protection in times of stress. Attachment theory suggests that people who experience a secure connection with God should also experience greater comfort in stressful situations and greater strength and confidence in everyday life.

Lower levels of physiological stress and lower levels of loneliness are other logical consequences of a secure tie with God. (p. 67)

With this in mind, it is no wonder why clergy who are experiencing spiritual struggles, tend to do so quietly and in isolation. When one’s daily work is about promoting spiritual growth and a deep connectedness with God, some pastors may feel shame – either self-imposed or imposed by congregation members – for having spiritual struggles. In other words, if a pastor discloses that she or he is experiencing loneliness or experiencing a lot of stress or cannot sleep at nights due to worries and/or anxieties, his or her depth of relationship with God is often called into question; in addition, the pastor’s competency for the job invariably is also called into question.

Literature reviewed delineated between three types of spiritual struggles: (a) interpersonal struggle, (b) intrapsychic struggle or chronic religious doubting, and (c) divine struggle or troubled relationship with God (Ellison et al., 2010; Hill & Pargament, 2003). A clergy

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reporting of interpersonal struggles would comment on conflicts or unpleasant encounters with congregation members, other church leaders, family members, spouse, and/or members of other religious groups. Conflicts “may pertain to theological or doctrinal differences, disputes over clergy leadership or the administration of church affairs, or political issues such as war or homosexuality” (Ellison et al., 2010, p. 290). Interpersonal struggles may or may not be saturated with religious content.

Clergy reporting of intrapsychic struggles struggle with internalized tension between “the virtues they espouse, their feelings, and their actual behavior” (Hill & Pargament, 2003, p. 69). Intrapsychic struggle may also take the form of chronic religious doubting (Ellison et al., 2010). “Though some have argued that a degree of doubt is essential for the maturation of religious faith, chronic, unresolved doubts can be profoundly disconcerting for religious adherents” (Ellison et al., 2010, p. 290). Clergy who are experiencing chronic religious doubts or have unresolved skepticism of their vocational calling may be reluctant to express them, heightening their sense of isolation and struggle. Ellison et al. (2010) reviewed several studies which show that when spiritual struggles are rooted with such intensity of shame, it is associated with “elevated levels of psychological distress and psychiatric symptoms, and inversely associated with life satisfaction and other indicators of well-being” (p. 290).

Not all struggles, questioning, and/or skepticism leads to abandonment of faith or of one’s calling. The search for answers to ethical dilemmas could lead to the maturation of faith and, consequently, reconfirm a clergy’s sense of vocational calling and increase job satisfaction. Meek et al. (2003) found that a close connection with God was a major element in clergy’s ability to cope with stress. Therefore, when a clergy’s relationship with God is “troubled” (e.g. feelings of anger towards God, experiencing divine abandonment) and left to struggle in a

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constant state of limbo, there can be a detrimental effect on clergy's personal well-being and vocational satisfaction. Many clergy have limited access to supervision and social support, compounding all the more the sense of isolation and loneliness. Seemingly, it would benefit clergy to have a pastor to turn to when he or she is in need of spiritual guidance and with whom they can discuss existential issues without feeling judgment or condemnation.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Burnout appears to be a widespread problem for clergy. Work overload, boundary ambiguities, lack of control and feelings of powerlessness can contribute to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. The stressors of living a life under constant scrutiny often place distressing pressures of maintaining a perfect model of marriage for the clergy and his or her partner. Feelings of isolation and lack of support are found to be key elements associated with clergy's experience of both burnout and depression. In their work with parishioners, clergy need to be aware of the potential negative effects of their counselling work on themselves, all of which can be compounded by work overload, boundary ambiguity, and lack of formal education in psychosocial interventions. Clergy who place too high of expectations on themselves – whether idealistic or unrealistic – may be setting themselves up for burnout. The constant striving to meet such high expectations and perfectionistic lifestyle is not only exhausting, but it is also the breeding ground for shame to take root. Perhaps one of the most difficult admissions for clergy is that of divine struggles with God. Exposition of such existential loss is often equated with a failure to live up to the principles for which they stand. Shame works to keep the clergy silent and, in doing so, compounds the sense of isolation and loneliness.

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With results of challenges now delineated, our discussion turns toward how the counsellor might be of effective help for a clergy reporting of burnout and/or vocational dissatisfaction. What are the counselling implications when working with this subgroup? It is to that discussion we now turn.

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**Resiliency Building**

A study examining clergy for the United Church of Canada revealed that clergy scored higher on depression (78<sup>th</sup> percentile) and stressful symptoms (88<sup>th</sup> percentile) than the general population. Paradoxically, clergy in this study also reported to high level of job satisfaction and personal commitment – 80% were “satisfied with their pastoral charge” (United Church of Canada – Warren Shepell Research Group, as cited in Doolittle, 2010, p. 89). Clergy in Meek et al.’s (2003) studies – “32% in Study 1, and 46% in Study 2 – were able to create balance and maintain strong, but flexible boundaries in their lives” (p. 342). A stance of curiosity asks what are the “80%” doing to foster vocational satisfaction with their pastoral charge? What can we learn from the “32%” and “46%” in their ability to create balanced boundaries?

The intent of chapter four is to delineate effective counselling strategies for working with clergy reporting of burnout and/or vocational dissatisfaction. The terms “resiliency building” or “building resiliency” are used interchangeably and they evoke the idea of fostering the ability to overcome adversity. Brown (2010) describes tales of resilience as narratives threaded with “protective factors – the things we do, have, and practice that give us the bounce” (p. 63). Why is it that some clergy can bounce back from the challenges of the pastoral vocation better than others? How is it that some clergy can cope with vocational distress and secondary traumatization in a way that allows them to move forward in their lives, and why others appear more affected and stuck? Due to the scope of this thesis, the content of this chapter will address strategies of resiliency building with broad sweeping strokes. Framed with language of strength, six strategic areas of resiliency building will be addressed, each a direct response to an impact of the clergy vocation discussed in chapter three: (a) building resiliencies against job burnout with revitalized engagement; (b) building resiliencies at the home front; (c) building resiliencies

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against isolation and loneliness by building supports; (d) building shame resiliency by cultivating self-compassion; (e) building resiliencies against compassion fatigue by fostering grounds for compassion satisfaction; and (f) building resiliencies for vocational satisfaction.

### **Building Resiliency with Revitalized Engagement**

If left unidentified and unaddressed, burnout can insidiously spread like a cancer to other parts of a clergy's life. Many pastors feel stuck and ashamed of their state of burnout. Stepping forward and asking for help, therefore, is a courageous act. Counsellors working with clergy who are reporting of burnout and, in particular, reporting of high workplace distress might consider the following resiliency building strategies: (a) helping the pastor change his or her thought processes and viewpoints about the people and things that may have contributed to the burnout state; (b) accentuating personal power and agency; (c) helping the pastor set realistic goals and prioritizing work; and (d) investigating the pastor's relationship with spiritual pain.

One resiliency strategy might begin with helping the pastor to change his or her thought processes and viewpoints about the people and things that may have contributed to his or her burnout state. This does not necessarily mean that the pastor must understand his or her past circumstances in order to move forward. One cannot change one's past; but one can affect change for the future. Encouraging the pastor-client to look forward will be the start of changing thought processes. Our pastor-client may not be able to change situations in her or his parish or church, but she or he will always have control over her or his thinking. Espeland (2006) suggests an example of thought-changing process that involves positive affirmations and defines affirmation as:

A positive thought, in the form of a short phrase or saying, [which] has meaning. During a stressful time at work [the pastor] may begin the day by thinking, 'I cannot handle

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this....There is no use.’ These thoughts can be replaced with: ‘I can handle this, I have been through worse situations than this’. (p. 181)

Martin defines personal power as “the ability to control one’s actions and personal and professional life” (as cited in Epseland, 2006, p. 180). Maslach and Leiter (2008) have found that an empowering work environment was associated with lower burnout levels. The presence of higher levels of control, autonomy, and fairness led to higher job satisfaction. Resiliency building in the areas of personal power and agency is often a challenge for a pastor whose job security is often contingent on the good graces of his or her congregation. The counsellor can be helpful by accentuating the pastor’s existing strengths and resiliencies, in addition to helping him or her re-focus on aspects of the job that they do have autonomy and agency over to change. Lee and Iverson-Gilbert (2003) suggests that it is important to investigate how a pastor interprets his or her pressured demands and expectations and advocate that “instead of trying to help pastors by merely reducing the occurrence of external stressors, we should pay more attention to the meanings that pastors give to their experiences” (p. 255). For pastors who are experiencing burnout due to job-person incongruity, mental health professionals can aid in this process by educating pastors about the vast resources available to them.

Another resiliency building strategy is to learn how to set achievable goals and to prioritize work. In the process of setting achievable goals, it may be wise to begin by helping the pastor discern between perceived and real workload expectations, as well as differentiating between expectations that are others-imposed and those that are self-imposed. Keeping a stance of curiosity, the counsellor might inquire about the context of the pastor-client’s parish, as one congregation can be dramatically different from another. Many pastors often feel “stuck” by the expectations and workload imposed upon them by denominational leaders, the church board, and

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congregation members. They are, more often than not, reminded of what they did not do or what they “could do more of”. Highlighting the strengths of the pastor-client can be a revitalizing experience. Accentuating on what the pastor-client does have control over and how they have “survived” in the ministry, thus far, can provide a sense of hope and a tapping into the resiliencies that exists within them. With a context to work within, helping the pastor-client set achievable goals means devising goals that are specific, measurable, attractive, realistic, and time-sensitive. With better discernment of what are real expectations, as opposed to perceived expectations, prioritizing work can take effect. Prioritizing work is critical for clergy, since the work is endless and one is at the constant beck-and-call of congregation members. If the pastor-client is striving to meet every work demand and congregants’ expectation with flawless performance, this perfectionistic tendency can actually compromise job performance: trivial details are dwelled upon and too much time is devoted to projects, which slows productivity (Espeland, 2006). With achievable goals and a prioritizing of workload, the pastor-client may be able to experience a more manageable work environment and, in so doing, a revitalized engagement with his or her vocational calling.

Addressing the area of spiritual pain may seem like a challenge for mental health professionals who have religious or faith backgrounds that differs from their pastor-client. It bears mentioning that if your pastor-client has sought you out and is comfortable working with you, there may be intentional reasons as to why she or he is going with someone from a different faith background. For the pastor-client, Meek et al. (2003) explains that:

There is often great fear of negative reprisal. Will it be perceived as weakness or professional incompetence? Will it be a sign to others that God is not enough? Pastors

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are especially concerned about who will have access to the information, making confidentiality an issue of paramount importance. (p. 345)

Safety, therapeutic alliance, unconditional regard, and confidentiality are gifts for pastors.

Mental health professionals can stand in this gap and serve as “pastors” to a hurting pastor by listening, letting them know that they are not alone, and to offer hope. Taking a stance of curiosity, counsellors can investigate the relationship with violations of personal ethics by helping pastors “engage in realistic appraisals of their situations and respond in proactive ways, re-connect with their original vision, and tell their stories” (Meek et al., 2003, p. 345). Reynolds (2011) offers questions that the clinician might engage to investigate spiritual pain. The original wording is slightly altered below to fit for a pastor-client.

- What ethic or way of being that you respect about your pastoral work have you transgressed? Why is this ethic important to you? How did you act to transgress it?
- Why is this spiritual pain present in this moment, in work with this person, and in this context?
- Given you’ve acted in ways that aren’t in line with what you most respect in your work, what would the absence of this spiritual pain mean?
- How will you invite accountability to the congregant, board, and/or denominational leader for your actions, and begin to repair this relationship? How can we shoulder you up in this accountability work? (Reynolds, 2011, p. 31).

It is immensely comforting for pastors to be able to disclose their struggles and be heard rather than judged. The opportunity to re-tell their stories of how they were called into the ministry can re-ignite sparks of hope. Validation of both external and internal strengths and resources can be

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a revitalizing experience and help the pastor-client to re-engage with his or her vocational setting.

### **Building Resiliencies at the Home Front**

When working with the pastor-client to build resiliencies with family life, strategies might include: (a) aiding the pastor-client to being more intentional in creating balance and establishing boundaries in his or her life; (b) working with the pastor-client to communicate these boundaries to his or her denominational leaders and/or parishioners; (c) counselling the pastor with her or his partner together; and/or (d) working with the pastoral family unit together. Depending on what has motivated the pastor-client to seek counselling, dual relationship may be of ethical consideration with items (c) and (d), especially as therapeutic work continues. Therefore, it may be best practice to clarify these options to the pastor-client when the appointment is first made or, upon assessment, after the intake interview. Marriage and family life are, more often than not, deeply affected by the pastoral vocation.

A key strategy in aiding the pastor-client in building resiliencies at the home-front is intentionality in creating balance and establishing strong, but flexible, boundaries in their lives. The results of Meek et al.'s (2003) research support this implication. They found that clergy with healthy marriages and family life are the ones that recognize that though they have:

Signed onto a career in which part of the job description includes intrusions into their personal lives, they still guard their right to have a life outside of their vocation by prioritizing their lives, crafting time away from their pastoral duties, and refusing to be pressured into workaholism. (Meek et al., 2003, p. 342)

The clergy in Meek et al.'s (2003) study had varying ways of implementing balance. These include: (a) taking vacation and implementing down time; (b) making it a personal

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practice of never bringing work home; (c) being as vigilant as one can to protect one's time from the unavoidable 'duties' of ministry; and (d) set marriage and family life as one's top priorities and make no apologies for it. No one else can protect the pastor's time and family life more effectively than the pastor him- or herself.

Being intentional in creating balance and establishing boundaries is an essential strategy in building resiliencies at the home-front. However, it may be wise practice for the clergy-client to communicate these boundaries to one's denominational leaders and parishioners as another strategy in building resiliency. Counsellors can work with clergy to strategize ways on how to best communicate their concerns and needs to their denominational board and/or parishioners. Motivational speaker, author, and life coach, Tony Gaskins, once stated, "You teach people how to treat you by what you allow, what you stop, and what you reinforce" (Gaskins, 2013).

Espeland (2006) concurs by advocating the practice of assertiveness and explains that:

Assertiveness is a positive and constructive way of relating to others that respects their needs, wants, and rights, as well as our own needs, wants, and rights. Practicing assertiveness means not resorting to threats or manipulation when relating to others, and not allowing ourselves to be threatened, abused, or manipulated. (p. 181)

Upon communicating the boundaries to denominational leaders and/or parishioners, it may also be suggested that only with consistent follow through will boundaries be reinforced.

Inconsistencies will communicate mixed messages to congregation members. Therefore, counsellors may want to work with the clergy-client to tap into inner resiliencies to help clergy hold to their newly set boundaries, especially when it is greeted with initial resistances.

Due to the high amount of intrusions the pastoral vocation has into the clergy's personal life, marriage and family life are, more often than not, deeply affected. Therefore, another

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strategy for building resiliency at the home front would be to consider counselling work with the clergy and his or her partner together. Themes that this thesis has mentioned that might be important for counsellors to be aware of include areas pertaining but not limited to: intimacy, finances, boundary ambiguity, social support, and sense of isolation. Maintaining a stance of curiosity and allowing the couple to tell their story may reveal their presenting symptoms, with the exception of intimacy issues. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, “couples will generally feel anxious and may be highly defensive about discussing sex with a stranger” (Sperry, Carlson, & Peluso, 2006, p. 326). The clergy couple is not immune to this anxiety. Building resiliency, as a couple, requires tapping into open and honest communication about needs and wants, which could very well include a discussion of sexual intimacy and interactions. Sperry, Carlson, and Peluso (2006) advocate that:

It is imperative that therapists become facile in their discussions of sex... Ultimately, the therapist should demonstrate (1) an attitude of openness and understanding to the couple as they discuss sexual issues, (2) the ability to elicit information in a way that is constructive, and (3) an understanding of the proper role that a healthy sex life plays in a couple's level of functioning. (p. 326)

Additional ways that clergy couples have found helpful in building resiliency for their marriage include engaging in:

Spiritual activities together (e.g. praying together, praying for one another, and reading the Bible together), providing balance by providing a life outside of work, being an emotional support to one another, and allowing their spouse to ‘speak the truth about work when it needed to be spoken’. (Meek et al., 2006, p. 343)

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Building resiliency at the home front might include counselling work with the clergy family unit. Due to the limitations of this thesis, counselling implications for the clergy family will be addressed in a general sense. Lee and Iverson-Gilbert (2003) suggest that, when working with clergy family members, it may be valuable to explore how the family perceives itself. They explain that:

This is a matter of how well each individual accepts his or her identity as a member of a ministry family, with the accompanying social role expectations. Do family members have a shared conception of what it means to be a minister's family? Pastors must be willing to recognize that not all family members share the call to ministry equally; left unrecognized, this may lead to resentment within the family itself. (p. 255)

Building resiliency as a clergy family is strengthened with open and honest communication. As members disclose how intrusions, lack of choices, expectations, and/or living in the fishbowl experience is affecting them, only then can the family unit work together to effectively implement positive change for the future.

### **Building Resiliencies against Isolation and Loneliness by Building Supports**

Although feelings of distrust and competitiveness, fear of condemnation, and past experiences of relational hurts are key contributors to a pastor and/or a pastor spouse's reluctance for not investing in friendships within the congregation, it might also be suggested that not all clergy and clergy spouses harbor such feelings. Some clergy have figured out a way to not let competitiveness and condemnation stand in the way of connection; and there are clergy and clergy spouses that have healed from previous broken relationships and are ready to invest in new friendships. An essential component of building resiliency for the pastoral vocation is to enlarge one's circle of nurturing support and connections. Strategies for doing so might include:

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(a) cultivate relationships based on common interests; (b) decrease isolation and enhance overall supportiveness by engaging in mentoring; (c) develop a positive relationship with one's pastoral team and volunteer staff; and (d) consider joining a pastoral support group.

Several clergy in Staley et al.'s (2013) study report that "finding interests and activities they have in common with others is a way to cultivate close relationships" (p. 852). These clergy seem to have resolved to disavow any shaming accusations of "playing favorites" to be a hurdle in their connection with congregation members. One pastor in the study stated that:

There is one man that I go snowmobiling with. It is our thing and we expect to play in the snow. There is a group that enjoy camping and fishing once a summer but the snowmobile man is not in this group. (Staley et al., 2006, p. 852)

Engaging in activities of similar interests seems to be an effective way of building connections and developing friendships. Furthermore, it also helps to set healthy boundaries around those relationships.

Another strategy to building resiliency in social support is to engage in mentoring. For this particular section, mentoring others will be addressed; the importance of *being* mentored will be discussed in a later section pertaining to building resiliency for vocational satisfaction. At first glance, mentoring others may seem like additional work. But for certain clergy, especially those who have an inclination towards developing one-on-one connections and leadership development, mentoring others can be a therapeutic and life-giving activity. Mentoring relationships, for these clergy members, is an activity of resiliency building. It can prevent exhaustion, rejuvenate one's engagement with work, reduce the tendency to isolate, and instill a sense of legacy for one's vocational calling. Even Jesus had an elite entourage of disciples whom he purposely chose to invest more of his time and self. These disciples were hand-picked for

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their potential and teachability; and they became Jesus' immediate sphere of partners in ministry and were mentored by Jesus for purposes of leadership and character development.

Another strategy of building resiliency against isolation is to develop positive relationship with one's pastoral team and volunteer staff. There are countless ways of fostering such positive relationships and the counsellor that maintains a curious stance of listening empathically to the pastor-client will engage with the client's wisdom and sense of agency. Generally speaking, what often contributes to a healthy work environment is positive communication and interaction. For example, gossip and backbiting are damaging to any relationship and, in the context of a work-team environment, is exhausting and destructive. Espeland (2006) explains that "people tend to equate the message with the messenger, so if we are describing someone else's negative attributes, the listener unconsciously connects the negatives to us. ...Gossip and backbiting lead to negative thinking about others and ourselves" (p. 181). Therefore, rather than allow the use words to tear down each other, pastors can encourage the use of words to build up fellow team members and, in so doing, create a supportive and positive work environment. Reynolds (2011) advocates for "giving-it-back" practices, explaining that "re-connecting with other workers, and catching them up on the differences they have made in the lives of the people we work alongside, is not just a nice thing to do: it is an ethical obligation" (p. 37). Positive relationship is fostered with one's team members and volunteer staff as members comes to know that the work that they are doing is being witnessed, that they are valued, and that they are a catalyst of positive change in another's life.

For some pastor-client, their context does not offer a pastoral team or the opportunity for peer support. Building resiliency for the pastor-client in this context might mean reaching out

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and organizing such a group on his or her own. This intentionality could come in several forms and may be contingent on geography. Connecting with other clergy could be face-to-face meetings or via email or phone or skype. This can be as small as a group of three colleagues who meet once a month or once a week to debrief, pray, and offer support to one another. The counsellor can work with the pastor-client to look into potential resources in his or her area. Social media is also an effective resource to inquire about the availability of pastoral support groups. Meek et al.'s (2003) research showed that clergy's "enthusiasm, vision, and ability to cope tend to wane with isolation. ... With their overwhelming responsibilities, clergy need to feel that they are not alone, that they are part of a bigger partnership with those who will stand by them" (p. 343).

### **Building Shame Resiliency by Cultivating Self-Compassion**

A major impact of the "fishbowl" existence is living under the constant scrutiny that acceptance is contingent upon one's performance. "Possessing a low self-concept could be a source of stress for ministers who feel they must constantly prove their worth, with the result of placing unrealistic demands on themselves" (Hatcher & Underwood, as cited in McMinn et al., 2005, p. 564). For clergy, there is a constant pull towards being, living, and looking absolutely perfect. Even the motto to "be like Jesus" can be misinterpreted as licence for perfectionistic tendencies. Freedom for the clergy's authentic self from Shame Penitentiary is unlocked by the key of self-compassion. Building resiliency through self-compassion has three elements: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness (Brown, 2010; Neff, 2003).

Neff (2003) defines self-kindness as "extending kindness and understanding to oneself rather than harsh judgment and self-criticism" (p. 89). Brown (2010) expounds on this definition by describing self-kindness as "being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer,

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fail, or feel inadequate, rather than ignoring our pain or flagellating ourselves with self-criticism” (p. 59-60). Self-critical statements can damage the pastor’s self-esteem and affect his or her life choices. Self-critical thoughts are like cousins of cynicism, both of whom work as fuel to burnout. Counsellors working with pastors who are highly self-critical may want to explore ways with the client to silence their inner critic and to replace self-critical statements with supportive or neutral thoughts. Looking for exceptions may be another starting point in tapping into existing resiliencies. Patterns to self-critical thoughts can change with persistent attention and effort.

Common humanity recognizes “one’s experiences as part of the larger human experience rather than seeing them as separating and isolating” (Neff, 2003, p. 89). Building resiliency in this area is done by sharing one’s story with “safe enough” others who will respond with empathy and understanding (Brown, 2012; Reynolds, 2009). Shame cannot survive in such contexts. The therapeutic relationship between pastor-client and counsellor is, in many ways, rehearsal for real life. In the therapeutic office, the pastor-client learns to be gentle with her- or himself in the midst of shame and, as a result, builds resiliency to reach out, connect with others, and experience empathy (Brown, 2012). Because “shame is a social concept – it happens between people – it also heals best between people” (Brown, 2012, p. 75).

Mindfulness, in the context of shame resiliency, requires that we “hold one’s painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them” and, as a result, get caught up and swept away by negativity (Neff, 2003, p. 89). As Brown (2010) aptly states, “feelings are neither suppressed nor exaggerated” (p. 60). For one’s pastor-client that is seeking to build resiliency in this area, implications may include skills to regulate emotions, as well as exploring strategies on how to move forward from disappointments. Utilizing the pastor-

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client's inner resources of spiritual practices to regulate emotions can add a new dimension to their spirituality. Brown (2012) advocates that:

If we want to be able to move through the difficult disappointments, the hurt feelings, and the heartbreaks that are inevitable in a fully lived life, we can't equate defeat with being unworthy of love, belonging, and joy. If we do, we'll never show up and try again.

Shame hangs out in the parking lot of the arena, waiting for us to come out defeated and determined to never take risks. (p. 67)

Psychoeducation with one's pastor-client on how to "fail forward" will not only help to reframe negative outcomes as learning opportunities, but it will reignite her or his courageous spirit within with the spark of grace.

Self-compassion is the kryptonite that counters shame. Building shame resiliency is critical for pastors who live and work within a context of scrutiny, high expectations, and whose self-worth and acceptance is often contingent on their quality of performance.

### **Building Resiliencies against Compassion Fatigue by Fostering Grounds for Compassion Satisfaction**

Compassion fatigue has many symptoms and often parallel to the symptoms of the traumatized clients with whom caregivers are working. Burnout, or cumulative stress, is the state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by a depletion of ability to cope with one's environment resultant from our responses to the ongoing demands and stress of daily life (Maslach, 2001). High levels of cumulative stress negatively affects resiliency and, therefore, makes individuals more susceptible to compassion fatigue. Individuals who work with trauma survivors and marginalized peoples, in particular, are most susceptible to compassion fatigue. However:

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Despite their risk for burnout and compassion fatigue, clergy report generally satisfied with their vocations. This seemingly contradictory experience of being at increased risk for compassion fatigue and burnout coupled with satisfaction with one's job is not unique to clergy; in fact, researchers have identified positive outcomes among counsellors who work in the trauma field and with individuals, families, and communities in crisis.

(Jacobson et al., 2013, p. 457)

Stamm referred to the positive outcomes as compassion satisfaction or the "pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well" (as cited in Jacobson et al., 2013, p. 457). To reduce risk of burnout and compassion fatigue and, conversely, to increase potential for compassion satisfaction, resiliency building in this area might include: (a) consistent practice of self-reflection and continuing self-assessment for risk; (b) increase awareness about compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatization; (c) optimize physical health; (d) redeem play and humor into one's life; and (e) connect with meaningful people, places, and/or activities.

Jacobson et al. (2013) report researchers' suggestions to support religious leaders in maintaining or regaining work and non-work life balance through "consistent practice of self-reflection and continued self-assessment for risk compassion fatigue" (p. 462). This strategy of resiliency building might also include helping the pastor-client to assess his or her trauma inputs. How much input of trauma does the pastor-client experience in a typical day? It is important to acknowledge the amount of trauma information that one unconsciously absorb during the course of a day (Mathieu, 2007). Building resiliency for effective compassion work includes recognizing the importance of having a trauma filter to protect oneself from extraneous material, so that when one is face-to-face with a client, unconditional regard is more probable.

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Psychoeducation in the areas of compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, secondary traumatization, and burnout can heighten one's competency in recognizing the signs, symptoms, and strategies to address the problem. Pastors who are experiencing compassion fatigue can experience a normalization of their experiences and be affirmed towards renewal and healing. Though many clergy spend a bulk of their day counselling others, many have not had formal training in mental health issues. As a result, these clergy are unaware of how to safeguard themselves from the trauma stories of others. Working with clergy to create these safeguards can be an important first step, especially for clergy who work with survivors of trauma, individuals in addictions and substance misuse recovery, and marginalized peoples.

Although writing for an audience of health care practitioners, Sherman's (2004) suggestions for burnout prevention has transferable implications for clergy who desires to build resiliency for compassion satisfaction, positing that emotional health can be bolstered by developing a calm mind and focusing on peaceful thoughts. Espeland (2006) suggests meditation, listening to quiet music, letting go of resentment, interacting with optimistic people, and recognizing positive emotions each day. Connecting with people and not isolating is critical to fostering resiliency in compassion work. In working with one's pastor-client, it is also suggested that the counsellor extend meaningful connections to include places and/or activities. What are activities, outside the vocational domain, that the pastor-client finds meaningful and nourishing to his or her soul? What places have meaning and brings a sense of solitude and/or joy to his or her spirit? Building resiliency for compassion satisfaction includes acknowledging the importance of rebalancing one's workload in order to integrate meaningful connections with people, places, and activities. Ensuring one's own mind, heart, and soul is nurtured on a

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consistent basis can help strengthen the muscle of compassion from being strained, weakened, and torn from overuse.

Optimal physical health can play a key role in preventing burnout and in transforming compassion fatigue into compassion satisfaction (Mathieu, 2007). This includes eating well, exercising, engaging in restful and relaxing activities (Espeland, 2006), and ensuring that our bodies are getting adequate sleep (Shigematsu, 2013). The latter may be difficult, especially if one's pastor-client has experienced secondary traumatization. Nightmares, flashbacks, and intrusive thoughts are intrusive to rest and sleep. It may be important to inquire into the pastor-client's sleeping and eating patterns during initial assessments. Whenever the topic of exercise comes up, nearly everyone agrees that it is a good thing to implement into one's life; but most people find it hard to sustain a workout routine. Pastors reporting of burnout and compassion fatigue already feel over-extended in their schedules and demands. Yet, for many pastors, what they "need" to do (i.e. integrate regular exercise) is the very thing they lack the time and energy to want to do. Shigematsu (2011), pastor of a local church in Vancouver, BC, suggests that "part of the way to integrate a sustainable exercise rhythm is to stay with something long enough – typically four to six weeks – that it has a chance of becoming an enjoyable habit" (p. 133). He goes on to share a story of how Dr. Bruce Hindmarsh, a professor of spiritual theology at Regent College, while pursuing his doctoral degree, began jogging to help deal with his depression. Hindmarsh reflected:

For the first four weeks it was really hard, but then in weeks five and six, it began to give back to me. ...If we bear the cross, the cross will bear us. If we give ourselves to exercise, after four to six weeks, exercise will start giving back to us. (as cited in Shigematsu, 2011, p. 134)

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Shigematsu (2011) advises that “if after a couple of months or so you detest your workout, then try a different kind of activity” (p. 134). Optimal health builds resiliency for compassion satisfaction; exercise, eating more healthily, and ensuring adequate sleep can help clear the mind and spirit in ways that propels the pastor-client to re-engage with and be more present for others.

A final suggestion for building resiliency for compassion satisfaction and burnout is to encourage one’s pastor-client to tap into the healing power of humor and to reintegrate play into his or her one’s life. Espeland (2006) advocates that “humor is a great antidote to burnout... [and] will save our sanity, our health, and our perspective” (p. 181). Without compromising professionalism, clergy who can find humor in stressful situations can develop a fresh perspective on the situation and prevent burnout. Amidst the trauma stories that clergy bear witness to, maintaining one’s sense of humor and ability to laugh, builds resiliency against cynicism, despair, and compassion fatigue. Essentially, humor and laughter advocates that it is possible to experience peace even while chaos ensues around; and that while there are cracks and brokenness in people’s lives as a result of interpersonal violence and harm done to them, the light of hope seeps through those cracks.

Closely connected with humor and laughter is the concept of play. Shigematsu (2011) defines play as “doing something for its own sake” (p. 140) and that, in play, “there is no ulterior agenda” (p. 143). He goes on to explain that “one of the benefits of play is that it lifts us out of our self-absorption” (p. 145). Jesuit priests Barry and Connolly state that:

If you have ever been so absorbed in watching a game, reading a book, or listening to music, that you have been surprised at how much time has passed, or how cold or hot you are ... then you know the power of paying attention to something, and you have a personal example of a contemplative attitude. (as cited in Shigematsu, 2011, p. 145)

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Building resiliency for compassion satisfaction can start by encouraging one's pastor-client to re-engage with activities that they really love: stroll through one's favorite park, listen to beautiful music, spend time with people that make one laugh, try the sport that one has always wanted to try, etc. Whether it is exercise, laughter, or play, when an individual does something exciting and enjoyable, they will experience a boost in endorphins and dopamine levels, nature's painkillers and mood elevators. Boost in "endorphins lower blood pressure, reduce levels of stress hormones, and boost immune system functions" (Espeland, 2006, p. 181).

### **Building Resiliencies for Vocational Satisfaction**

The clergy in Meek et al.'s study (2003) reported that "in the face of stress and extreme difficulty, [they found] strength and purpose through releasing personal control and trying to work under God's empowering guidance" (p. 343-344). Therefore, helping the pastor-client to reconnect with their original mission, vision, and call into the ministry can help propel the individual forward from a state of vocational dissatisfaction and burnout. Strategies for building resiliency for vocational satisfaction might include: (a) reconnecting with their original vision; (b) engaging in spiritual activities; (c) developing a plan for professional growth and development; (d) developing a criteria of knowing when the parish one is serving at is no longer the right fit or has become "toxic" and explore what it might take to leave; and (e) seeking supervision and mentoring.

A key strategy to renewing a pastor's vocational satisfaction is for the counsellor to reconnect the pastor-client with her or his original vision. Inviting the clergy to tell their narratives of their "calling" allows them to go back to the beginning. The counsellor builds therapeutic rapport by "engaging with them in their progression through the joys and struggles of being a pastor" (Meek et al., 2003, p. 345). Reconnecting with their original vision and giving

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permission for the pastor to tell of their struggles is immensely validating; and validation can be a source of empowerment (Meek et al., 2003). McMillan has suggested that:

Clergy need assistance in clarifying their call, reflecting on their experiences, sorting out what is happening to them professionally and personally, developing healthy habits of ministry and self-care, learning where to get resources they need, and developing healthy peer relationships. (as cited in Charlton et al., 2009, p. 135)

For clergy reporting of burnout, “reliance on the power and presence of God to fulfill their responsibilities” (Meek et al., 2003) and/or, “joining God in seeking resolution and moving forward” (Gubi & Jacobs, 2009, p. 196) are themes that will, more often than not, surface at some point in counselling work. The absence of such reliance might signal the undercurrents of spiritual questions and divine struggles. Maintaining a stance of curiosity will foster safety and allow the pastor-client to reveal deeper struggles of the existential nature. Doolittle (2010) refers to a study by Rodgeron and Piedmont (1998) among 252 American Baptist ministers who found that:

Clergy who took an approach of ‘collaboration’ with God (i.e. the problem solving process is held jointly with God) or ‘deferring to God’ (i.e. the problem is deferred completely to God) had a strong correlation against emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and positive impact with personal accomplishment. (p. 89)

In the pastor-client’s telling of her or his narratives, strengths, resiliencies, and resources are often revealed. Acknowledging the capabilities of the pastor-client to survive so long in the environment that she or he has been in can breathe hope for changes and a positive future.

In addition to helping clergy to reconnect with their original mission, vision, and call into the ministry, encouraging clergy to engage in spiritual activities (e.g. prayer, retreat/solitude,

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studying Scripture, journaling, and/or fasting) helps strengthen resiliency for vocational satisfaction. Engagement in spiritual activities can also help to decrease levels of emotional exhaustion and burnout. Lewis, Turton, and Francis (2007) posits the usefulness of prayer by indicating research that showed how “a positive attitude toward prayer was associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion, lower levels of depersonalization, and higher levels of personal accomplishment” (p. 5). The subjects in Gubi and Jacobs’ (2009) study report to utilizing prayer, prayer partners, time and space to ground themselves after working with clients. One subject stated, “I have a prayer partner who I can talk about my feelings and what’s going on for me, not client work but how the work is impacting me” (Gubi & Jacobs, 2009, p. 199). Clergy in Charlton et al.’s (2009) study report of giving “regard to prayer, reflection, and spiritual practices in attempt to keep healthy” (p. 145). Engaging in spiritual activities comes in different forms. For some, it may entail taking spontaneous breaks from routine to cultivate awareness of the presence of God. For others, it might involve keeping a structured and disciplined pattern of prayer, meditation, or extended times of solitude. Regardless of their form, engaging in spiritual activities has been found to be an effective strategy for building resiliency for clergy’s vocational satisfaction.

As aforementioned, clergy often receive limited training in mental health counselling and research supports the notion that clergy would benefit from increased education and training in crisis and/or trauma counselling. Engaging in regular professional development can improve clergy members’ sense of competency and accomplishment, reducing the likelihood of burnout (Doolittle, 2007), and would be in the best interest of parishioners. “Trauma survivors, for example, would benefit because they are vulnerable to further disturbance if interactions following the trauma are harmful, and clergy are no exception to causing potential harm by

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addressing the survivors inappropriately” (Jacobson et al., 2013, p. 463). Increasing clergy’s sense of competency can revitalize his or her engagement at the workplace and safeguard against burnout by reinforcing job-person congruity; essentially, professional development can bring enrichment to clergy’s vocational satisfaction.

Unfortunately, it bears mentioning that there are some congregations where toxic personalities abound. Pastors who serve in such contexts are confronted with tension, resistance, and dysfunctional forms of communication at all levels – board, staff, volunteers, congregation members – despite the clergy’s efforts to counter otherwise. In such a scenario, the clergy may be feeling “stuck” or obligated to stay with the parish. Once again, a stance of curiosity will reveal the bigger picture of the narrative. What would be curious to inquire might include (but not limited to) the following:

- What is keeping you faithful to serving this parish/congregation?
- How are you safeguarding your mind and emotions while serving in this church?

If one’s pastor-client has expressed toying with the idea of “calling it quits” or “leaving the church”, one might want to explore:

- You mentioned “leaving the church”. Can you clarify what you mean by that?
- You held on for this long, how did you do it?
- You mentioned that you’re thinking of “calling it quits”. How do you know when it is time to leave or exit this church? What are the criteria which will indicate that this is no longer a “safe place” or the “right fit” for you to serve?
- What does the church need to do in order for you to have a change of heart and stay?
- What are currently doing (or, What might you need to do) in order to be prepared to leave?

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In the rare scenario where the church is highly dysfunctional, the only way for the pastor to safeguard his or her vocational calling and to protect his or her family from the toxic relationships, might be to exit the context and to find a new church within which to serve. Remaining long term in such a volatile setting, especially without adequate support and supervision, can stifle the life out of one's vocational calling, birth resentments, and traumatize clergy and clergy family members. Doolittle (2010) warns that:

Ministers who served a traumatic church *in the past* were 10.5 times as likely to have high emotional exhaustion, even though they are no longer serving that congregation. The residual toxic effect of a past traumatic church negatively impacts their present vocation. (p. 90)

For counsellors working with clergy in this regard, utilizing the above suggested questions can help identify a traumatic church experience early, provide direction and courage for next steps, as well as have an impact in the ongoing emotional health of clergy.

Perhaps the most effective strategy for building resiliency for vocational satisfaction is working with one's pastor-client to explore possibilities of supervisory support and/or mentoring. Results from seminal research by Knox, Virginia, and Lombardo (2002) reveal that:

The more vocationally satisfied [Roman Catholic secular priests] feel, and the more support from both peers and superiors they experience, the less they report psychological distress. Thus, not only is their contentment with their vocation, or calling, as a priest highly salient to these participants' mental health, but so is their sense of having support from those who share that calling, from those who understand the unique challenges of that very calling. (p. 355)

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Clergy in Meek et al.'s (2003) study identify the "importance of friendships with others outside their family and emphasized the importance of mentoring and accountability" (p. 343). Data from a quantitative study conducted by Zickar et al. (2008) show that "virtually all sources of social support were significantly and positively correlated with job attitudes" (p. 2912). "The greater number of supportive relationships of a minister – both within and outside of the congregation – correlated with greater well-being, life satisfaction, optimism, and lower sense of burnout" (Doolittle, 2010, p. 90). Building resiliency for vocational satisfaction can be an empowering experience when done in the presence of like-minded individuals. It counters the North American value of independence and "going at it alone". The pastoral ministry can be an isolating experience, in and of itself. Pastors need and desire support; ministries thrive when they have that support. Pastors need a hand (or hands) to "pull them off the ground when they get kicked down in the arena" (Brown, 2012, p. 53). Counsellors, supervisors, mentors, and/or close-knit friends can provide that nurturance and guidance that would help keep a pastor in the ministry for the long term.

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### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

#### **Summary**

The workplace environment of clergy presents many risk factors for job burnout. One of the greatest problems in ministry, for pastors and their partners, are the high levels of intrusion experienced due to boundary ambiguity between work and non-work life domains. Research indicates that congregation members want clergy who have an open-door policy and expect their pastor to be available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, many parishioners hold their pastor's family to a higher moral code and standard, placing the pastor's family members with the tremendous pressure of living life under constant scrutiny. Unrealistic expectations and lack of privacy intensifies boundary-related intrusions. Working long hours and having little time for reprieve and rest are the soft grounds upon which the seeds of burnout thrive.

Undertones of inequities that exist within the clergy's work environment include the areas of financial compensation and restricted choices. Being unfairly compensated for level of education and amount of hours worked can often result in feelings of resentment. In addition, choices that are often open to congregation members are perceived as not available to the clergy family, such as what church to attend or the option to take long holiday weekends. Such experiences of unfairness in the workplace can have a snowball effect that develops into burnout over time.

Even though the pastoral vocation is a people-oriented profession, the experience of loneliness and isolation is a significant and common stressor faced by this population. The deficiencies of adequate support have adverse impact on job satisfaction, family and marital well-being, and life satisfaction. The perceptions of socially prescribed roles often serve as barriers between the clergy and potential sources of support. Limited opportunities, the secluded

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location of one's parish, and lack of time are additional difficulties often associated with establishing support with other clergy folks. The pastoral vocation comes with many inherent challenges and, at times, questions of job-person congruity may surface. Research on job burnout has seen a consistent risk factor when an individual perceives an imbalance or misfit with their job. Job-person incongruity may be experienced in the form of lack of adequate skills to meet job demands or a mismatch of one's values with job goals, ideals, and expectations. Unfortunately, many of these challenges are faced, more often than not, without the support and guidance of well-established social network of trusted people. Feelings of powerlessness and constantly being caught in distressing "double binds" result in higher levels of exhaustion, lower levels of job efficacy, and decreased levels of job satisfaction. A major control problem is present when a pastor's position is contingent on the good graces of the congregation and job security is constantly on the line. To remain on this trajectory, burnout seems inevitable.

Job burnout is a significant issue for Christian ministers. Burnout is typically characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). The clerical vocation is riddled with an incredible amount of work-related stressors and pressures. Potential for burnout is increased when there is little time to recover from the strains of workload and emotional distress. Additionally, when a clergy's work ethics are chronically violated, spiritual questions and divine struggles are birthed, inadequacies of job-person incongruity are accentuated, job dissatisfaction is experienced, and disengagement with work is increased. Burnout often results in impairment to physical health, as well as decrease in the individual's job performance, productivity, commitment, and quality of work. If left unidentified and unaddressed, burnout can insidiously spread like a cancer to other parts of a

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clergy's life. When working with a clergy-client reporting of burnout, resiliency building strategies catered towards revitalizing engagement with one's workplace might include:

- Helping the pastor change his or her thought processes and viewpoints about the people and things that may have contributed to the burnout state;
- Accentuating personal power by helping the pastor to identify and call forward his or her existing strengths and resiliencies;
- Accentuating agency by helping him or her re-focus on aspects of the job that he or she does have autonomy and power over to change;
- Helping the pastor discern between perceived and real workload expectations, as well as differentiating between expectations that are others-imposed and those that are self-imposed;
- Helping the pastor set realistic goals and prioritizing work;
- Investigate the pastor's relationships with personal-spiritual work ethics that may have been violated.

A counsellor that holds a curious stance for the pastor-client to disclose her or his struggles is offering the client the gifts of validation and unconditional regard. This can be immensely comforting and healing. The opportunity to re-tell stories of how she or he was called into the ministry can re-ignite hope. Validation of both external and internal strengths and resources can be a revitalizing experience and help one's pastor-client to re-engage with her or his vocational setting.

Boundary ambiguities and the stressors of living a life under constant scrutiny often place distressing pressures of maintaining a perfect model of marriage for the clergy and his or her partner. The intrusiveness of excessive workload into family boundaries has both physical and

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psychological ramifications. Undercurrents of tension experienced in the marriage can often affect intimacy between the partners. When working with the pastor-client to build resiliencies with family life, strategies might include:

- Aiding the pastor-client to be more intentional in creating balance with work and non-work life by prioritizing times for reprieve and refusing to be pressured into work overload;
- Collaborating with the pastor-client with skills on how to communicate these strong, but flexible, boundaries to his or her denominational leaders and parishioners;
- Counselling work with the clergy-client and his or her partner together and addressing the potential areas of intimacy, finances, boundary ambiguity, social support, and sense of isolation;
- Counselling work with the clergy family unit and the exploration of how each family member perceives itself, accepts her or his identity as a member of a ministry family, and negotiates the social role expectations that is often thrust upon them.

Boundary intrusions, lack of choices and feelings of powerlessness, living life under constant scrutiny, and the compromise of intimacy often give birth to resentments and anger. Building resiliencies at the home front is strengthened with open and honest communication. Only then can the family unit work together to effectively implement positive change for the future.

Feelings of isolation and lack of support are found to be key elements associated with clergy's experience of both burnout and depression. Isolation may be due to the fact that some clergy and/or clergy family members live great distances from their families. Loneliness may be compounded by the informal barriers of socially prescribed roles and the fear of confidences told being broken, leading to the pastor's dismissal. Many congregation members elevate the clergy

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and their family members to a celebrity-like status, an action that makes it difficult for authentic and genuine connection. When working with a pastor-client in building resiliencies against isolation and loneliness, the essential component is enlarging one's circle of nurturing support and connections. Strategies might include:

- Collaborating ways of building connections and friendship with others by engaging in activities of similar interests;
- Exploring, with the pastor-client, possibilities of engaging in mentorship with select individuals for the purposes of leadership development and/or life coaching;
- Exploring the pastor-client's work environment and collaborating ways to foster positive communication and interaction amongst the pastoral team and volunteer staff;
- Exploring the possibilities of connecting with other clergy members in her or his area and utilizing social media to inquire about the availability of pastoral support groups.

Without the support and nurturance of a well-established social network of trusted people, clergy's enthusiasm and vocational satisfaction depletes. Exhaustion and isolation, like a ball and chain, keeps the clergy restrained to the doorstep of burnout.

In addition to external demands placed upon the clergy by denominational leaders and congregation members, self-imposed demands can create even more pressure. Clergy who place high expectations on themselves – whether idealistic or unrealistic – may be setting themselves up for burnout. The constant striving to meet such high expectations is not only exhausting and a recipe towards burnout, but it prevents clergy from connecting with others in authentic and vulnerable ways. The stressors and pressures of the pastoral vocation can pull a pastor into perfectionistic tendencies to being, living, and looking absolutely perfect, in order to avoid blame, judgment, and shame. Maintaining the poise and infallibility of a pastoral identity often

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means locking away authentic selves behind the prison bars of shame. Building shame resiliency would include work in the area of cultivating self-compassion. Adapting the research of Brown (2010) and Neff (2003), strategies for cultivating self-compassion might include:

- Exploring ways with the client to silence the inner critic and to replace self-critical statements with supportive or neutral thoughts;
- Looking for exceptions as a starting point in tapping into existing resiliencies;
- Fostering unconditional regard and therapeutic rapport so that the therapeutic office is a safe enough environment for the pastor-client to share his or her story and to connect with another person in a genuine and vulnerable way;
- Equipping the pastor-client with skills to regulate emotions, as well as exploring strategies on how to move forward from disappointments in healthier ways.

Self-compassion is the kryptonite that abates the grips of shame. Building shame resiliency is essential for pastors who live and work within a context of scrutiny, high expectations, and whose self-worth and acceptance is often contingent on their quality of performance.

Counselling forms an integral aspect of the ministerial role; for many individuals, clergy is the first source of help in times of crisis. Due to their likelihood of bearing witness to human suffering and other critical incidents through the congregations they serve, clergy are at increased risk for work-related stress and negative outcomes from trauma work, such as compassion fatigue, vicarious traumatization, and secondary traumatization. The effects of compassion fatigue parallels symptoms of burnout (i.e. exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of accomplishment). However, symptoms of compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma is much more ubiquitous, in that it seeps into and impacts all facets of life, including the body, mind, person's worldview, and cognitive frame of reference. Although susceptible to compassion

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fatigue, clergy report generally satisfied with their vocations. This sense of positive outcomes is referred to as compassion satisfaction. To reduce risk of burnout and compassion fatigue and, conversely, to increase potential for compassion satisfaction, resiliency building in this area might include:

- Consistent practice of self-reflection and ongoing self-assessment for risk of compassion fatigue;
- Helping the pastor-client assess the amount of trauma inputs experienced throughout his or her typical day;
- Normalizing the experiences of compassion fatigue and providing psychoeducation to recognize the signs and symptoms associated with vicarious trauma and secondary trauma;
- Collaborating ways to bolster a calm mind, connect with people and not isolating, and engage in activities that the pastor-client finds meaningful and nourishing to her or his soul;
- Collaborating on ways to optimize physical health;
- Encouraging the pastor-client to tap into the healing power of humor, laughter, and to reintegrate play into his or her life.

Amidst stories of trauma that clergy bear witness to, building resiliencies to foster compassion satisfaction will help provide clergy with meaning in their counselling work with others, as well as safeguard her or his longevity in the pastoral vocation.

Many clergy lack adequate social support and supervisory guidance to navigate through spiritual questions, divine struggles, job insecurities, and boundary ambiguities that come with the job. When a pastor experiences distress of a spiritual nature, it often affects her or his entire

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well-being (i.e. personal life and work domain). Divine struggles with God are, perhaps, one of the most difficult admissions for clergy. Admission of such existential struggles is often equated with failure to live up to the principles for which they stand. Not all struggles, questioning, and/or skepticism leads to the total abandonment of faith or one's calling. In fact, the search for answers to ethical dilemmas could lead to the maturation of faith and, consequently, a reconfirmation of the clergy's sense of vocational calling. Strategies for building resiliency for vocational satisfaction might include:

- Reconnecting the clergy-client with her or his original mission, vision, and call into the ministry by inviting the client to re-tell their narratives of their "calling" and to reflect on their experiences;
- Assessing the presence of (or lack of) reliance on God to problem solve the challenges faced in ministry;
- Collaborating ways to engage in spiritual activities that would be helpful for the client;
- Engaging in regular professional development in crisis and/or trauma counselling to improve clergy member's sense of competency and reinforce job-person congruity;
- Helping the clergy-client assess the toxicity of their parish context and, more importantly, be able to evaluate when it might be necessary to exit the context and to find a new church within which to serve;
- Exploring the possibilities of supervisory support and/or being mentored.

Pastors need and desire support. Ministries thrive when they have that support. Counsellors, supervisors, mentors, and trusted friends can provide that nurturance and guidance that would help keep a pastor in the ministry for the long term.

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### **Limitations**

This thesis approached the role of clergy within the church in a generalized way. Little mention was given to different denominations and how this affects the role of clergy at the systemic level. Church polity is conducted differently within each denomination; churches that are non-denominational or independent would have their own governing standards and practices. Though there are general similarities from one congregation to the next, differences exist that may have unique systemic contributions towards the clergy's burnout and vocational dissatisfaction. In addition, the size of a congregation, demographics of the congregants, and location of parish will give shape to the role and responsibilities of the clergy that works with that particular church. Aside from overworking and sense of isolation, this thesis did not delve into further discussion of how each of these entities (i.e. size, demographics, and location) might have additional contributing factors to a clergy's burnout and sense of vocational dissatisfaction.

“Congregations have been compared to family systems, and like all family systems, some are dysfunctional, some are healthy, and most fall somewhere in between” (Hileman, 2008, p. 121). This thesis, while understanding the congregation as a “family” system, did not address the systemic issues of triangulation and enmeshment with regards to relationship with congregational members and how these pressures contribute to vocational dissatisfaction, interpersonal isolation, and/or burnout. For example, Grosch and Olsen's (2000) study adapted Bowen's family system theory to understanding some of the similar personality traits of clergy (i.e. idealists, perfectionists, and compulsives) that frequently contributes to burnout. Though it would have been a fascinating inclusion, the parameters of this thesis did not permit for a discussion on church family systemic understanding of burnout to be done with justice.

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Just as there are family systemic contributions to understanding shame and the need for approval, there are also gender differences towards how shame is understood and experienced (Brown, 2012). Developing on this theme would have opened up dialogue, perhaps, on how male and female clergy experiences their role, responsibilities, and expectations in the clerical vocation. Are there gender expectations with regards to clergy roles? How do these gender expectations contribute to vocational pressures when an individual does not “meet” or fit the gender expectations? For example, does a congregation expect their male clergy to be vocal and an eloquent speaker? Does the congregation expect a female clergy to be more “nurturing” and motherly because she is female? The limitations of this thesis did not discuss the possibilities of job-gender-incongruity and the contributions of these systemic pressures on the individual’s vocational dissatisfaction and burnout. A further limitation of this thesis is the absent discussion on how burnout and resiliency building might be experienced differently between genders.

No assessment tools were suggested for clinicians in their work with clergy who have come to them reporting of burnout and vocation dissatisfaction. In the process of reviewing literature, resources indicate that assessment tools exist for many of the impact and challenges discussed in chapter three. In particular, tools exist for the assessment of burnout, shame, compassion fatigue, and vocational dissatisfaction. There were also tools that assessed for level of one’s spirituality and/or level of spiritual engagement. Literatures reviewed indicate, in passing, that some of the questionnaires and tools were available online and can be readily downloaded. However, the limitations of this paper did not include research into what these tools specifically assessed for, let alone their level of scientific validity and reliability.

In considering strategies for building resiliency against the impact and challenges of ministry, spiritually-focused approaches were few in suggestion. Strategies such as prayer,

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taking spiritual retreats, attending workshops, are the “usual” go-to responses for clergy who are experiencing work overload and vocational dissatisfaction. This thesis sought to present strategies beyond the usual responses and is, in no way, advocating that spiritual practices are not helpful for a clergy experiencing burnout. Maintaining a stance of curiosity in inquiring about the clergy-client’s spiritual journey and practices may help the clinician to discern whether the suggestion of spiritual practices would be beneficial or detrimental. For example, it would be beneficial if it helps the individual get back to the root of their vocational identity and calling. Conversely, it might be detrimental if they already feel “stuck” in their spiritual practices and shamed for their spiritual struggles. Although this thesis was limited in its discussion of spiritual strategies for building resiliency, spirituality is an essential dimension to be included in any work with clergy.

### **Future research**

Future research into this area might include conducting a mixed method study on the effectiveness of the resiliency strategies mentioned in this thesis. As a start, consideration might begin with a small group of participants who have been screened for burnout and vocational dissatisfaction. Assessment, ideally, would be conducted at the baseline level, followed by an assessment at the midway point and at study’s conclusion. A 12-week study seems like a sensible time-frame to see if there were effective changes. However, it bears mentioning that if a clergy is already reporting of burnout, a commitment to a 12-week study may be another double bind, making participants either scarce or viable to premature drop out. A quantitative study can provide for scientific reliability and validity, making contribution to much needed scholarship in this particular area. A qualitative component to the study can provide meaningful conversations

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with interview content that helps reshape resiliency building strategies and/or to contribute to the pool of resiliency strategies.

Additional research might compare and contrast how certain demographics within the clergy community face the challenges of ministry. For example, a subgroup within the clergy community might be clergy folks who are not married. Although, statistically, there are fewer clergy who are single, it may be insightful to examine how this particular subgroup copes with challenges of ministry. What strategies of resiliency building do unmarried clergy utilize to cope with work overload, lack of support, and vocational dissatisfaction? How are these similar or different from clergy who are married with family? Another subgroup for study consideration might be female clergy. Again, statistically, there are fewer clergy who are female. Yet, a study with this subgroup might help discern what similarities and differences exist in the way female clergy copes with the challenges and impact of ministry from their male counterpart. Are there unique strengths and strategies of resiliencies that we can learn from this subgroup? Quantitative studies can provide for scientific validity and anonymity and, with the latter, a more honest response from clergy under study. Qualitative studies can provide for insight that a survey response may not necessarily capture. It would also provide an empowering opportunity for subgroups that are usually overlooked by the majority voice to be heard.

With regards to the impact of spiritual struggles, future research may consider examining the correlation between spiritual practices and burnout. More specifically, which preceded the other? Was it lack of spiritual practices that led a pastor towards his or her burnout and vocational dissatisfaction? Or, was it the experiences of burnout and/or vocational dissatisfaction that led the pastor to his or her slow retreat from spiritual practices? Is there a quantifiable way to capture the correlative relationship between spiritual practices and burnout?

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For clergy who have maneuvered out of burnout and/or vocational dissatisfaction, what spiritual practices, if any, did they utilize? What suggestions would these clergy give to clinicians in working with clergy-client who are reporting of spiritual struggles?

It is also curious to wonder what ethnic differences exist in understanding burnout. It is possible that, with some ethnicities, work is valued to such a high degree that being overworked and overscheduled deems an individual with importance and status. A pastor who “overworks” may even be applauded as “spiritual”. With such ethnicities, burnout and vocational dissatisfaction may result in under reporting. It would be insightful to work with clinicians of those ethnicities to glean understanding of ethnic philosophies and systemic practices that are “accepted” as the norm within ethnic-oriented parishes. With the added contributions of cultural values, beliefs, and practices, it would seem that pastors of ethnic churches might have additional tools of strengths and resiliencies for coping with ministry stressors and challenges. A qualitative study might garner some strategies of resiliency building transferable to other clergy.

This thesis noted that, for some clergy, geographical isolation is a pervasive problem. Future research might delve into additional resiliency strategies specific to pastors who are geographically isolated from supports by location of their parish. Additionally, if supports are already difficult to come by for these clergy members, then it bears questioning how feasible counselling might be made available for them. Study may be directed specifically to churches in isolated counties and/or parishes where a pastor serves on his or her own, with no other supportive pastoral staff members.

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