

Thriving in Ministry in 2021

Trisha Welstad, Institute for Pastoral & Congregational Thriving, NW Leadership Center

Trends around pastors today

- Pastoral work has changed
- Congregations have changed
- Job satisfaction – pre-Covid still strong generally- has changed.
 - But when dig a little deeper find frustration, under-funded retirements, educational debt, inequities

3 Primary issues for pastors:

- Professional and personal isolation
- Weak support structures (board, leadership, policies, mentors)
- Need for discernment on how to engage ministry well with so much change

Pastors who flourish find themselves

- In communities of competent practice
- Having access to exemplars, wise guides

Portland Seminary Institute for Pastoral and Congregational Thriving:

- Our Thriving institute is interested in facilitating
- A SAFE space for connecting with God, ourselves, and one another.
- Sustainable professional and personal friendships
- A community of wise-guides / peer mentors

We facilitate a space for discernment and discovery – to think deeply, rest, play, pray and commune. For spiritual direction, reflection, a breakaway from their norms. This is with people from a variety of denominations, racial and ethnic backgrounds and an equal number of male and female clergy.

What we have learned:

- Pastors need time away (even if brief) to get a clear understanding of the calling/context
- It is extremely beneficial for pastors to be in safe space with others pastors (not competitive, which often means they don't know one another) to process their ministry experience
- Pastors sense of identity often gets wrapped in their role/title
- Sharing their ministry experience gives them a more clear picture of who they are
- Processing their trauma helps them heal.
- That the wellbeing of our team determines how well we can support our pastors. This is also true for our pastors toward their congregations...

How you take care of yourself is how you take care of everyone else.

Practice: Identity/Story

Pastors need to write a really clear life narrative – enfold into that narrative who we are as a pastor within our narrative – not as the focal point.

Our Identity is stored in our brains as a life story – *not a bunch of facts* in our head but a story, research shows that this begins in our adolescence and we write our story every day of our lives, becoming a living autobiography we are living and adapting and writing every day.

Our identity emerges out of the stories we tell ourselves.

Who am I? Who am I in the world?

Who am I as a pastor? Who am I as a pastor in the world?

Narrative – write your own story (10 Minutes)

Think of your life as a whole, the significant points that impacted/changed your direction.

- Focus in three primary areas: Early / Mid-life / Current
- You can journal or outline your story
- Ask yourself: How did each of these events shape who I am today?
- Feel free to turn off your camera to write.

Come back together: (15 Minutes)

Now take time to share your experience with one another in triads

- Respond to the questions:
 - Who am I? Who am I in the world?
 - Who am I as a pastor? Who am I as a pastor in the world?
- 5 minutes each
- Only share what you feel comfortable with
- Watch the clock: Do not over share
- Mute yourself while others are sharing
- Transition at 5 minutes to the next person
- You may acknowledge and empathize with one another once finished but do not insert yourself in another person's story.

Feedback (5min)

Consider to yourself- maybe even write down the first word that comes to mind when I ask the following questions:

- What was your experience of one another?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What did you learn about your colleagues?

Takeaway:

Consider one way you could follow up from this experience to deepen your sense of meaning in your work/life.

Perhaps you could:

Practice this with your team

Reconnect with one of the people you just met

Find a soul friend/Spiritual director/coach toward a next step in your thriving

TAKEAWAY

Some of the essentials for fostering wellbeing:

- **Small steps:** atomic habits - 5min meditation while drink coffee, mapping our days (good/bad), walking, breathe prayers, finding a soul friend, reframing everytime we say a particular word/phrase: "should"
- **Step back:** regular times for rest/reflection: PUT IN YOUR CALENDAR and tell your boss/board -- move out of auto-pilot mode and into further awareness
- **Step Together:** Nurture an ecosystem (community) of wellbeing
- **Model and Teach your team to do the same.**

Consider ways to implement self-care/rest/play that are not punitive.

May grace precede your actions "I am going to take care of me so I can care for others."

Resource List:

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Directors of Color: sdcnetwork.org

Soul Formation: soulformation.org

Coaching

The Leadership Center: nwleadershipcenter.com

Kristy Hinds Coaching: kristyhinds.com

Thriving

Faith and Leadership: faithandleadership.com

Work Well: workwellresearch.org

Work Well App: workwellresearch.org/research-projects/improve-your-wellbeing

The Seattle School Resilient Leaders Project:

theseattleschool.edu/about/innovation-collaboration/resilient-leaders-project/resources-research