

**Interfaith Doctor of Ministry**  
**For Clinical Education in Pastoral Ministry Program**

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**AN EXPLORATION OF BURNOUT AMONGST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CLERGY**  
**EXAMINING THE IDEOLOGY AND AMEILIORATION FROM BOTH**  
**CLINICAL AND SPIRITUAL PERPECTIVES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **AN EXPLORATION OF BURNOUT AMONGST SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CLERGY EXAMINING THE IDEOLOGY AND AMELIORATION FROM BOTH A CLINICAL AND SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES**

#### **A TWELVE-SESSION BURNOUT GROUP**

#### **ADDRESSING THE IDEOLOGY AND AMELIORATION FROM BOTH A THEOLOGICAL AND CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE**

This is a psycho-spiritual twelve-session program, developed specifically to benefit Seventh-day Adventists clergy. However, the research and information shared in this project can be applied to any religious/faith groups. This project is also designed to provide a structure for burnout group that focuses on the ideology and amelioration of burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventists clergy. Clinical and theological principles of faith and work were applied as the construct of this demonstration project.

The suffering of burnout is examined from both the clergy's relationship and responsibility to his/her parishioners, as well as the relationship and responsibility to the clergy's supervisors and other upper management leaders of the organization that the clergy works for. The twelve-session group was designed for all the participants to share their views on any aspects of their ministerial work that they have experienced burnout. For the twelve sessions I served as the facilitator of the group. I shared the structure of the group with all twelve participants, but was not an active member of the group sharing my views about what the other participants shared in the group. I also did not share my own experiences with the suffering of burnout with the group at any time. This demonstration project can be adapted to address the needs of various types of burnout amongst other professions as well.

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## Table of Content

Chapter 1	Page
Introduction.....	1
Historical Background.....	5
Historical Background and Suffering.....	8
Factors Contributing to Burnout.....	10-20
Clergy serving in Multiple Role to Congregants.....	11
Clergy overseeing multiple “Non-Pastoral” Projects.....	12
Clergy Dealing with Congregational Conflicts.....	13
Clergy Dealing with Conflicts and Politics.....	14
Clergy Providing Pastoral Ministry in Multiple-Congregations.....	15
Clergy Dealing with Multiple Expectations and Demands.....	16
Clergy Dealing with Transference Issues.....	17
Clergy Having to Address Wider Needs & Issues of the Community.....	18
Clergy Balancing Pastoral Responsibility with Family Obligation.....	20
Common Causes of Burnout.....	21-24
Role Conflict.....	21
Personal Struggles with Establish Boundary.....	22a
Conflict Between Vision and Reality.....	22b
Public/Private Boundaries.....	22c
Financial Pressures.....	23a
Living in a Different Time Zone.....	23b
Delicacies of Leadership.....	23c
Physical Health, Stress and Depression.....	24a
An Ambiguous Role in a Changing Society.....	24b

The Significance of this Project to Ministry in a Wider Context.....	25
----------------------------------------------------------------------	----

## **Chapter 2**

Relevant Literature Review that Guides & Inform this Project.....	26-61
-------------------------------------------------------------------	-------

### **Theological Principles:**

The Individual's Faith in God for Endurance through Difficulties.....	26
The Clergy's Understanding of God to Provide Peace during Difficult Times.....	28
God's Power to Provide Balance for the Clergy in all his/her Responsibilities.....	30
God's Power to Heal and the Clergy's Understanding of His Power.....	31
The Clergy's Understanding of God's Forgiveness.....	34
The Clergy's Expectation of God.....	35
God's Power to appropriately deal with the Inner Critics & the Clergy's Understanding of the Same.....	36

### **Clinical Factors:**

Depression.....	39
Anxiety.....	42
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).....	43
Feelings of Abandonment and Neglect.....	45
Insomnia.....	47
The Effects of Relocation.....	48
Cultural, Ethnic and Nationality Differences.....	50
Gender.....	51
Age.....	54
Family of Origin.....	56
Personality Type.....	58
Secondary Trauma and its Effect on Clergy.....	59

### **Chapter 3**

Methodology.....	62-66
Overview and Research.....	62
Recruitment of Potential Candidates.....	63
Informed Consent Form.....	64a
Confidentiality.....	64b
Location, Date and Time.....	65

### **Chapter 4: Analysis of the Tools**

Demographics of the Group.....	67
--------------------------------	----

### **Chapter 5: Results and Discussion**

Group Trends.....	70
Responses to Survey Questions & Reactions During Group Sessions.....	76
Analysis of Factors That Contribute to Burnout.....	78-82
Implications of the Theological Principles.....	83-85

### **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

Group Dynamics.....	86
Group Concerns.....	88

### **Chapter 7: Personal Reflection**

Reflection on the Group Process.....	91
Reflection on My Journey in the Doctor of Ministry Program.....	93

<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>98</b>
--------------------------	-----------

<b>Appendix A.....</b>	<b>101-102</b>
------------------------	----------------

    Consent to Participate in Group

<b>Appendix B.....</b>	<b>103</b>
------------------------	------------

    Operational Terms

<b>Appendix C</b> .....	104
Participants Assessment Form	
<b>Appendix D</b> .....	105
Material and Activities	
<b>Appendix E</b> .....	10
Participants' Profile	
<b>Appendix F</b> .....	146
Sessions Results	



## INTRODUCTION

The vocation of clergy life can be a challenging and demanding experience. While this vocation is often one that is admired by those sitting in the pews and affirmed at the door with accolades after a soul-stirring sermon, the life of a clergy is not defined by his/her oratorical skills in the pulpit, but rather by the demands outside the pulpit. The expectation to present an effective sermon each week may not be the greatest challenge for the clergy who is disciplined and a good Bible/Torah scholar; it is the myriad of other expectations to address the social, mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs that may cause the life of the clergy to become hazardous.

The life of the clergy may appear to be everything else than it really is: stress-free, well-structured, well-managed, well-organized, peaceful, joyous and relaxing. I can remember vividly as a young boy growing up on the Island of Jamaica, West Indies, in the late seventies and early eighties, attending church weekly with my parents and siblings. The church we attended was approximately two miles from our home. Most of the residents living in our community at the time were Seventh-day Adventist Christians. As a result, on Saturday mornings most of the residents would be seen on their way to the local church in our community, or traveling to visit another church in one of the neighboring communities. Attending church on the weekends was special. It was a great time of fellowship and sharing spiritually and socially. People spent much time sharing stories about their experiences each week. People shared and ate much food together. People enjoyed worshipping God and interacting with each other. To be absent from church was a tremendous loss; everyone seemed to avoid, as best as they could, being absent from church at any time.

While being at church was always a special event each week, it was noticeable that most weeks there was one person missing from all the usual celebrations, festivities and fellowship: our pastor. Our church was one of four that he was pastoring at the time and he came by to worship with us usually once per month, but on occasions once every two months. There were also many times when he came by to worship with us that he was not able to spend the entire day with us because of other obligations he had at his other churches which were 20-25 miles away. There were times I recall when our pastor reported that he attended two and sometimes three of the four congregations he was pastoring the same day. We admired him for being able to work so hard all year round. As a church we learned to function effectively with or without our pastor. I used to wonder what it was like having the responsibilities to serve four congregations at the same time. I don't ever remember our pastor complaining about having too much to do, or saying that he was tired or in need of a vacation; he seemed to just do his job with ease. Since we did not have our pastor worshipping with us very often, we appreciated his presence with us whenever he was able to be with us. We empathized with him, but thought it was just the nature of his job to work all year round because we saw him so infrequently. He seemed very happy and energetic when we saw him.

Unfortunately one year our beloved pastor and hero of our church began having marital issues and became sick. His wife reported that she felt neglected and abandoned by her husband who was gone from home almost all the time. The response from the local leadership of our church was tremendous hostility towards our pastor's wife. She was accused of being selfish, unreasonable and un-spiritual for not being supportive of her husband's job as a pastor to four congregations that needed him so much. Soon his wife stopped attending church with him and a

year later she filed for divorce. Many of the congregants from all four churches expressed utter disappointment in her, and accused her of not being ‘called’ to be a pastor’s wife.

Soon after our pastor’s unfortunate divorce he became sick. After several hospitalizations that forced him to be absent from church for the first time in his twenty-year career as a pastor, he was diagnosed with stress and anxiety. His illness became progressively worse and he was forced to retire from the ministry. He became angry and bitter against the church organization for giving so much of his time and effort to the cause of God and the church for twenty years because of the implied expectations from his employers that he had to neglect all other responsibilities he had and make his job as a pastor his first priority.

This experience remained fresh in my mind for over thirty years to date. While I had no desire or intention of becoming a pastor thirty years ago, it is an experience that made a tremendous impact on me about the dangers of burnout on professional ‘helpers’ who often place the needs of others way above their personal needs and obligations. I have learned over the years that suffering of burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventist clergy is silently increasing and that it is of utmost importance to have effective intervention tools to address this often time’s overlooked great suffering.

I have met many Seventh-day Adventist clergy who are currently suffering from burnout, depression and loneliness. These suffering clergy are veterans as well as new clergy. Many reported that they suffer in silence because they felt that there is an expectation of them to do more with limited resources to prove their creativity and effectiveness as a pastor. They reported also, that there is also a great expectation from the congregants they pastor for them to be ‘super’

pastors. By ‘super’ pastors they meant being able to do all things very well for all congregants at all times.

In this demonstration project I will be organizing the work into five chapters. The first chapter will be an examination of the suffering of burnout and the development of some hypothetical questions that could help forge the path for interventions to resolve this need so common amongst clergy. In this chapter, I will also present definitions and explanations of key terms, as well as the major themes that will guide this project framework with specific references to the particular needs of the clergy. In chapter two, I will focus on the Theological and Clinical principles inherent in this need of suffering that I am addressing, and discuss relevant literature that clarify and support these principles. In chapter three, I will be discussing the actual activities I will engage in when the group of twelve Seventh-day Adventist clergy meets for twelve consecutive weeks, for one hour and a half hours session each time. I will be sharing in this project the methods I will be using for assessing outcomes. In chapter four, I will examine the results and analysis of the group process. Finally, chapter five will be devoted to discussion. Issues that I will be addressing in this chapter include the implications of the results, both anticipated and unanticipated development, the contribution of my project to clarifying and expanding the theological and clinical principles discussed in chapter two to the wider Seventh-day Adventist and non-Seventh-day Adventist religious communities.

## Chapter One:

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Seventh-day Adventist church derives its name from two of its core doctrinal beliefs. These are the beliefs that Saturday (the seventh day of the week) is the required Biblical day of worship, hence the first part of the name “Seventh-day” and “Adventist” referring to the second coming/advent of Jesus’ return to earth. The Seventh-day Adventist church is a world-wide organization that is growing rapidly. McDonald (2011), describes the rapid growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America this way:

Rest on the Sabbath. Heed Old Testament dietary codes. And be ready for Jesus to come at any moment. If these practices sound quaint or antiquated, think again. They’re the hallmarks of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the fastest-growing Christian denomination in North America. Newly release data show Seventh-day Adventism growing by 2.5% in North America, a rapid clip for this part of the world, where Southern Baptists and mainline denominations, as well as other church groups are declining. Adventists are even growing 75% faster than Mormons (1.4%), who prioritize numeric growth (pg. 1).

McDonald continues to describe the growth of the church in North America as the slowest rate in comparison to other parts of the world where the rate is as high as 7.5%. In 2013, the estimated membership is said to be near 18 million. In East and central Africa, “on any given day, 3052 people join the church. Every hour 127 people are baptized. Every minute, two individuals are baptized, and we praised God for that,” he quoted G.T. Ng secretary of the Adventist world church. However, the rapid growth of parishioners creates a great demand for a large number of highly skilled clergy; that unfortunately even though available, are not hired by the church organization to meet the demand. The rationale often given for not hiring more clergy is lack of financial resources; that sometimes is questionable. I believe it’s sometimes questionable because of the annual income versus the number of employees. This I believe could be another issue of poor financial stewardship.

Jemison (1955) provides a historical background to the rise of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the early 1800's. The Seventh-day Adventist church began informally in 1831 out of a movement known today as the "Millerites." This name "Millerites" came from a Baptist convert by the name of William Miller who was asked to preach on the subject of the second coming of Jesus in a Baptist church one Sunday morning. Although Miller was not a trained preacher at the time, he preached hundreds of sermons thereafter about the second advent of Jesus Christ. Miller and his followers believed based on their understanding of Daniel 8:14 that Jesus' Second Advent would occur in 1843 or 1844. During the year 1844, many of the followers and supporters of Miller promoted the date of October 22, 1844 as the date of the Second Advent of Jesus, also called by Miller "The Blessed Hope." They connected this date of the cleansing of the sanctuary (Daniel 8:14) to the Jewish Day of Atonement believed to be October 22, 1844.

When the second advent of Jesus did not occur as they thought would be the case on October 22, 1844, many of Miller's supporters left the movement in bitter disappointment. Some felt that the date was wrong; others felt that the event was wrong. But all were disappointed, embarrassed and confused. The date of October 22, 1844 was later known as the "Great Disappointment." After the "Great Disappointment," a small group of believers who thought that it was the *event* that was wrong and not the date began studying earnestly about the second advent of Jesus. This small group of believers later formed in 1860 what is officially known today as the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Seventh-day Adventist clergy are men and women who have matriculated through a Seventh-day Adventist college or university. After the completion of their seminary studies, they seek employment from one of the entry level organization for employment known as a local conference (i.e. the parent organization over a group of churches in a specific geographic

location). These employment opportunities are in limited supply. In 2001, when I completed my seminary studies, the local regional conference in New York State did not hire any new pastoral employees that year and for the next two years, citing financial constraints in its inability to hire anyone. McChesney (2014) reported that there was a significant increase in membership from 8.8 million people in 1995 to 18.1 million people in 2014. The number of administrative positions grew from 459 to 602.” He referenced Robert E. Lemon, treasurer of the world Seventh-day Adventist church who believes that hiring more pastors and front-line employees is the direction that the church should be going in, and not just adding to administrative levels.

However, those who are not fortunate enough to obtain employment are discouraged from starting their own churches and self-govern them, even though there is a great need for more professionally skilled clergy to meet the demands of the growing parishioners. While self-employment (starting one’s own church independently of the organized work) is strongly discouraged, and employment is not done via an individual church but the local conference only, a limited number of pastors are hired each year to perform the work. To start your own church after being professionally trained by the same institutions as those who are fortunate to be hired by the organization is looked upon as illegitimate and an “off-shoot” church that should not be trusted.

The North American Division of the world-wide Seventh-day Adventist church (which is comprised of Bermuda, Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, French possession of Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Guam, Johnston Island, Marshall Islands, Midway Islands, Northern Mariana, Paulu and the United States of America) has a membership of 1,206,885. This membership is a part of the total population of 357,556,000 people living in the same regions in

the year 2015. Serving this membership and overall population is approximately three hundred and fifty pastors (Seventh-day Adventist Year Book, 2015 p 171).

The Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (the local parent organization that I work for) has a membership 56,489 in 203 churches. However, the number of pastors employed to provide pastoral leadership to these 203 churches are only 118. This means that at least 85 of the 203 churches share a pastor with another congregation.

### **Historical Background of the Suffering**

The “Great Disappointment” of 1844 shook the foundation of the small group of believers. People, who had sold all their possessions and waited patiently for the second advent of Jesus, only to be devastated by the non-arrival of Jesus, left the group, never to return to it. The group went through a great time of loss and bereavement as a result. Those who were committed to being a part of the group mourned the loss of their fellow believers for several months. The group struggled to maintain cohesion during this time of bereavement and tremendous loss.

In “Mourning and Melancholia”, Freud (1917, pg. 243) described mourning as “...the reaction to the loss of a loved one, or the loss of some abstraction that has taken place.” Freud views the process of mourning as the need to renounce ties to the lost love object (known as decathexis), which he says occurs when the mourner recalls and reviews the memories of the lost person. According to Freud, when the process of mourning is completed the ego becomes free and uninhibited again (p 245). When mourners are unable to find resolution in dealing with the loss, it leads to melancholia or depression. The disruption of the attachment that these early



believers experienced would be described by Bowlby (1988) as something that they may have experienced first as infants that later affected them as adults in dealing with separation or detachment from others. Schemer, (2010) says that both Bowlby and Freud believed that the self, attachment and mourning are interrelated (p38).

After the “Great Disappointment” of 1844, the remaining group of believers were careful not to make any more predictions of the second advent of Jesus, but instead made a commitment to become ardent Bible students. While this new approach was admirable, the new believers were also very skeptical about who had the right to speak on behalf of the church. Although William Miller was still a part of the movement until December 20, 1849 when he died, he lived the last five years of his life quietly studying the Bible. In addition, many of the Millerites preachers had left the movement after the “Great Disappointment” and so there was a shortage of preachers to take the advent message to the world. The situation of the shortage of preachers became even more complicated because many of the Millerites preachers believed that it was their responsibility to preach the message to the world. They argued that there was no need for an organization to be formed to have a larger group of preachers to take the message around the world. They feared that any new organization would immediately become a part of Babylon, and the call from the Bible was to come out of Babylon (Revelation 18:1-5).

The work of preaching the gospel was limited to a few preachers for several years at the beginning of the church’s history. However, as the number of believers increased, the number of reasons for having an organization to increase the number of preachers increased as well. This increase did not result in more hired clergy, even though the need was demanding. Jemison (1955) says that if they were supposed to meet as groups, someone would have to provide the meeting places and who would be the owners of such places? How would they determine how

one could become a member of the church? Who would define doctrinal positions? And who would determine the qualifications of preachers and other workers?

The church struggled in its early years to determine how it would be organized and who would hold important offices of influence over the growing group of believers. This became even more complex for the newly organized group of believers, as they heard about a seventeen year-old elementary school dropout, home schooled girl, reporting that she is receiving visions from God for the church. This young lady by the name of Ellen Harmon continued to report that she was given these visions from God about the church. Her popularity grew quickly, and her claims about her visions were substantiated by others. The church leadership reluctantly accepted her as legitimately hearing from God, but tried to keep her out of the public's eyes. The church did not want to send an untrained young female to the public to represent its doctrinal positions on certain key biblical subjects. Hence, the work of the preaching and the teachings of the church for several years from the late 1800's to early 1900's were relegated to a small number of overworked pastors, less than 50.

### **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO BURNOUT**

While the exposure to sickness, dying and death are major contributing sources of burnout amongst clergy, there are several other contributing factors that I will be exploring in this project. I will explore my own experience with burnout, but will discuss in groups with my peers what their experiences have been. I will also discuss with them interventions that they would suggest to ameliorate suffering. Amongst these other contributing factors are:

• *Clergy serving in multiple roles to the congregants and to the employing organization.*

Wicks, Parson and Capps (1985), in describing the primary role of the clergy and the parish say:

The first feature of the parish setting is that it is an institution whose primary reason for existence is corporate worship. The praise of God and the celebration of the gospel form and bind the community...When a person comes to the parish clergy for counseling they are keenly aware that these pastors are overseers who regularly lead the congregation in worship and exercise much practical leadership in its organizational and instructional life...The parish context undergirds people's awareness that the pastor represents life's sacred dimension and the call to worship. The parish pastor is one who takes worship seriously and serves the people of God in their worship life (pp. 335-336).

The clergy in the parish will find himself/herself doing more than just worship services. He/she may be asked to be counselor, legal advisor, teacher, family therapist, and the list goes on. If the clergy does not establish clear boundaries that he/she will honor, then he/she will be exposing himself/herself to a wide range of work and responsibilities that are outside the scope of just being the worship leader.

There are many clergy that have assumed multiple roles in their congregations not because they desire to be involved in many areas of ministry of their churches, but because of the unavailability of parishioners to do the work required. Many clergy, although not being skilled in certain areas of ministry, are forced to take on additional responsibilities to accomplish desired results. While this is somewhat admirable for the clergy to step in to get the job done, this places significantly more work on an already over-worked clergy.

In addition, serving in multiple roles not only to the congregants, but also to the organization that employs us could result in severe anxiety for the clergy. Having to meet the expectations of two groups (congregants and employer) at the same time could cause the clergy

to invest equal or much time to meet the needs of both groups, while still trying to address personal and family needs.

When clergy finds themselves in multiple roles that cause them to feel anxious, they may develop defense mechanisms. Frankland (2010), describes a defense mechanism as “a typically unconscious mental process that protects the individual from anxiety-provoking, unacceptable or otherwise distressing psychic experiences. Often classified as immature, neurotic, or mature defenses.” (pg.9)

• ***Clergy overseeing multiple “non-pastoral” projects such as building and other infrastructural projects.***

Churches, synagogues and mosque are big businesses. These are not just places of worship anymore, but places where you can shop for CDs, DVDs, books, food, clothing and the list goes on. Worship sites are becoming more and more like multi-purpose centers. The constructions of these buildings are major multi-million dollar projects that require special supervision by the pastor and other top level leaders.

These “non-pastoral” projects such as the purchasing of a new building or the renovations of an existing building can be very demanding and time consuming. Having to meet with professionals and government agencies for the filing of documents and obtaining approvals can be stressful. There are times when a building project may be one of several projects that the clergy needs to attend to at any given time. Community based- projects such as reduction in crime, youth program, food programs, and after school programs are only a few of the other projects in which the clergy is often asked to participate.

While overseeing these “non-pastoral” projects, gives the pastor first-hand knowledge of what is happening at his/her church, the pastor sometimes become distracted from his/her primary responsibility of engagement in worship.

•*Clergy dealing with congregational conflicts.*

Sometimes clergy has to invest much time and energy into resolving congregational conflict amongst parishioners and other times between themselves and parishioners. Regardless of the parties involved in the conflict, interventions by the clergy can be emotionally taxing and painfully exhausting.

Ennis (2016), speaking of the complexity of congregational conflict says:

There are those times however, when damaging congregational conflict is, in fact, either caused or escalated by the pastor. Suffice to say, and it is generally understood, that like all other human beings, pastors do have strengths, weaknesses, limitations, and flaws. That being said, there are specific types of personal baggage that will almost always trigger conflict. Susek identifies two of these types of baggage as (1) destructive family background and (2) unresolved psycho-social needs. Reflecting on these two concepts, I agree with Susek that the spiritual leader’s psycho-social needs are best met by God Himself, or by a qualified person who functions in a professional capacity. Attempts by a pastor to extract personal sympathy or any other form of emotional support for the satisfaction or fulfillment of personal psychological or psycho-social needs from the congregation may trigger unnecessary conflicts as the members begin to question their leader’s credibility and emotional stability (pg. 19).

Congregational conflicts are inevitable and sometimes in abundance. They require a clergy skilled in conflict resolutions to deal with them in a timely and effective manner. Even skilled clergy in conflict resolution finds it time consuming and sometimes very distracting from accomplishing the mission of the church, synagogue or mosque. Sometimes these conflicts require long-term counseling that the clergy is not skilled at doing or have the time to invest in.

Congregational conflicts cannot be ignored or they could fester into much larger problems for other parishioners and clergy.

**•Clergy dealing with conflicts and “politics” with peers.**

Conflicts and “politics” between clergy are inevitable. These conflicts will happen from the mere fact that there are so many differences of opinion, personalities, cultural background and ambitions amongst clergy. “Politics” refer to the desire to have certain leadership positions of influence and the methods that one engages in to achieve such positions. These methods may include promising someone a position if he/she gives their support and influence others for their support of a particular person. It is also the decision to elevate or show favor to some and not to others. There are clergy who believe they can escape dealing with conflicts and “politics” by claiming to be completely “un-political.” This claim is purely political in itself. The issue for the clergy is not avoidance of conflicts and “politics” with peers, but rather how to manage conflicts so that it does not distract from the primary mission of the church, synagogue or mosque.

The responsibility of pastoring a church is very challenging and demanding. As clergy, we are asked to work with a wide demographic of people with various personalities. These dynamics of personality types oftentimes require great skills to deal with effectively. However, even more stressful is dealing with conflicts and “politics” between our peers. It is sometimes very disheartening to deal with the conflicts and “politics” with our peers. Relationships are sometimes damaged severely and trust between colleagues begins to dissipate. Sometimes the tension that develops from these conflicts hampers unity and progress towards one common goal. As a result it forces clergy to work in isolation from each other, hence producing less with greater stress than would be the case if they were working together.

Clergy are sometimes jealous of another clergy's position and success and may become resentful of peers over time. These conflicts develop sometimes because one clergy may feel that he/she has invested more time to the work as a clergy than the other clergy vying for the same position. Sometimes these conflicts develop because of experience and expertise in a particular area of ministry. As such one clergy may feel that he/she is more qualified to function in a certain role or capacity. Regardless of the nature or origin of the conflict between peers of clergy, the result is the same stressful burnout.

**•Clergy having to provide pastoral ministry to multiple congregations**

The demand to pastor one congregation effectively requires much skill, creativity, knowledge and wisdom. Hence, the demand to pastor two or more congregations with similar or differing challenges is even more exhausting and demanding physically and emotionally. When a clergy serves in a multi-district context he/she will attempt to address the needs of each church, mosque or synagogue. To address these needs effectively will be time consuming and labor intensive. Unfortunately, it is likely that one or more of the congregations' needs will not be adequately met, and the clergy's health and well-being will be heavily taxed.

Compounding this daunting challenge of working in a multi-church district is the location of each place of worship in the district. Oftentimes the geographic locations of multiple congregations are far away from each other for practical reasons. Clergy serving in this context will be subjected to constant long travel back and forth that will eventually take a significant toll on the clergy, his family and the mode of his transportation.

The success of the clergy working in a multi-congregational context is also dependent on his/her success in building strong relationships with the parishioners. This will be extremely

difficult to accomplish in a multi-congregational ministry because the time required to form such important relationships will be divided among multiple congregations. The clergy will have to extend himself/herself to invest the time needed to even have an effective relationship with key people in leadership, which is of absolute necessity.

In addition, the expectations of the congregants may still not be realistic based on the demand the clergy has to satisfy multiple congregations. When parishioners are sick there is an expectation that the clergy would be there for that family or individual in their time of need. The birth of newborns, baptisms, bar mitzvahs, marriages and funerals are all special events that congregants expect to share with their clergy. Having multiple congregations may bring about conflict in schedule for the clergy with congregants celebrating equally important events at the same time.

***•Clergy having to deal with multiple expectations and demands from congregants and upper church administrations.***

The expectations placed on the clergy from both parishioners and the upper organization of the church can be very time consuming, demanding and unrealistic. Sometimes the parishioners expect the pastor to be the answer to all their questions, the solutions to all their problems and the compass to chart their future. Rhodes (1973), speaking of the high expectations that parishioners have of clergy, believes that ministers today are oftentimes overwhelmed and under severe pressure. If today's ministers do not have adequate resources and support to deal with the challenges of ministry they will become burnout quickly if they do not incorporate the support from lay leadership of the congregation. An example of this is Jethro's counsel to Moses, found in Exodus 18:21-22

Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers



of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: and let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.

Clergy have to be careful not to allow the expectations from their parishioners to cause them to over commit themselves to do things that they should empower their parishioners to do.

Clergy are also looked at as being successful when they meet the goals set by upper management. However, many times they are operating with limited resources and in environments that are highly stressful with congregational conflicts and multiple congregations. The expectations to have increases in church membership, income and other goals are sometimes seen as oppressive by the clergy if they are not supported with the appropriate resources.

• ***Clergy having to deal with issues of transferences with congregants: e.g. God-like figure, object of sexual desire, ideal man/woman.***

Transference is the inappropriate repetition in the present of a relationship that was important to an individual's past (childhood). All congregants have experienced unique early childhood relationships that sometimes often have unresolved aspects to them. Since the clergy occupy a significant role in congregant's lives and are often idealized, this can result in a projection of the early unresolved relationship unto the person of the clergy in the current time. These issues of transference are not always easy to handle and can have a severe, negative impact on the clergy.

Wicks, Parson and Capps (1985), says:

Transference is common because we all have ingrained learned patterns of dealing with the world. Likewise, everyone has at least some unresolved childhood conflicts which are beyond awareness. There is no such thing as totally analyzed, personally aware

individual. Anytime people interact there is some aspect of distortion in the way one person views the other. In order to remain in touch with our own unresolved conflicts and needs and to see reality as clearly as possible, it is important to monitor our transference on an ongoing basis. There must be an effort to keep the interferences of the past to a minimum, while recognizing that it is impossible to screen them out altogether (pg. 76).

Clergy plays an extremely vital role in the lives of parishioners. For many congregants their pastor is that God-like figure that they adore and think very highly of. While this is admirable, this can create a lot of stress and anxiety for the clergy to live up to these images of perfection. Congregants also may look at their pastor as sexual objects. They may be having some challenges in their own relationships and see the pastor as the ideal mate. Or, the pastor may represent everything the congregant wanted in a mate. It is important for pastors to be aware of these issues of transference and guard themselves appropriately from being seduced into inappropriate relationships.

• ***Clergy having to address wider needs and issues of the community outside of the church community.***

The role and responsibility of the clergy go beyond the parish he/she is assigned to. As clergy, we are also an integral part of the communities that in which we ministry. The issues and challenges of the community become our issues and challenges. The wider community concerns include issues such as fear of terrorism, violence and crime, illiteracy and drug use, and the list goes on. Therefore, the social, political and psychological needs are of great concern to the clergy as they are to any other leaders in the community. The clergy becomes an intimate member of the community and carries the burden of the community. To relate intimately to the community means to reveal oneself as one is. This makes the clergy vulnerable. Membership in the community is both costly and rewarding; and the rewards are commensurate with the investment the clergy is willing to make.

Having an intimate relationship in the community sometimes can give rise to tension between the church and the clergy. Parishioners are sometimes very possessive and territorial; and may view their pastor's relationship with the community as taking away from his relationship with his/her parish. There are times when parishioners may feel that working closely with the community may also be detrimental to the sacredness and holy standards that the parish is known for as the community becomes more involved with the church.

It is important for clergy and parishioners alike to recognize that the wider community outside those who worship in their specific context is more diverse than they may sometimes imagine. The demographics of the wider community do not always mirror the values, doctrinal beliefs and social practices of the religious community that worships at a particular site. When such conflict or differences occur the religious community must find a way to serve the entire community regardless of the differences that exist. The wider communities are made up of people of varying sexual orientation and sexual identity. Regardless of one's denominational belief, these members of the community have needs that must be met by the religious entity that worships in their community.

The issues that clergy are faced with in their communities today are varied and extremely complex. The culture of the homosexual community is diverse (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender {GLBT}) a partial list. Individuals with sexual identities that were suppressed or hidden in prior times are increasingly feeling more comfortable in identifying themselves in these ways. This community of varied sexual orientations and identities poses a great challenge for clergy, especially those of ultraconservative traditions. Regardless of the religious tradition, these are individuals in our communities, who are showing up at our churches, mosque and

synagogues with needs that they are asking the clergy to address. Roberts (2012), in discussing the challenge that clergy are faced with in addressing the needs of their community, writes:

Who do the GLBT persons of faith turn to as religious authorities when they are struggling? How do they know that the person they choose will be safe for them to bring their struggle for help? How do they determine the religious authority's openness and ability to help them with this struggle? And then, what about all the other issues that surround GLBT persons as they navigate through life? For all of the milestones that occur in everyone's family, such as birth, death, transitions, illness, crises, marriage, and so on, do they assume that their religious leader is going to be helpful? Will that person understand the issues that often accompany a person who lives as someone "outside the gates?" (pg. 283).

The work of the clergy outside in his/her wider community can be very demanding and stressful. These are some of the challenges that I will be asking members of the group to address. It is my intention to provide interventions based on the group process that will aid clergy in amelioration of this suffering of burnout.

• *Clergy balancing pastoral responsibility with family obligations.*

The responsibility to our families and pastoral obligations are two very demanding and important roles that all clergy are asked to honor. When I refer to the family, I would like to echo the sentiments of Carter and McGoldrick (1980) who describe the family as a group of individuals related to each other by reason of strong reciprocal affections and loyalties, through birth, adoption or marriage. This unit makes up a permanent household (or cluster of households) that exist for a very long time.

One of the greatest challenges for most clergy is balancing pastoral responsibility with family obligations. As pastors who take our sacred call to ministry seriously, we sometimes operate on the basis of trying desperately to save the world, while losing our own families. We

feel so compelled to do for others, sometimes even at our own and our family's expense. We sometimes find it difficult to say no to parishioners, but find it easier to say no to our families. We want our families to constantly make sacrifices for our pastoral ministries so that we can fulfill an obligation to the church or a congregant. We spend long hours at the office or at a meeting while neglecting the importance of dinner time with our families.

As clergy, it is of utmost importance that we establish boundaries that we honor. We should set boundaries that protect our time while at the office, and boundaries that protect our time while at home. It is important that our families know that we take our obligations to address and satisfy their needs seriously. Our families should not feel that they have to compete with our pastoral responsibilities.

It is of extreme importance for clergy to avoid severe stress and burnout by obtaining the necessary support and care that they are in need of because of the constant exposures of trauma. This means that those who provide care, are also at risk of being negatively affected by the trauma they are exposed to and should seek the help of a therapist or find someone they can speak with about how they are feeling about what they have been exposed to over time. It also means those clergy who are constantly at risk may need to take much needed time off from work periodically, such as sick, personal or vacation leave.

Schaefer (1994) suggest that there are several common causes of burnout amongst clergy. These factors are in addition to those previously discussed:

1. **Role Conflict:** *“Be a strong moral leader but don't offend anyone who might leave and hurt the budget.”*

Clergy are expected to take strong and decisive positions on moral issues. However, if the clergy's moral stance is not the same as that of the majority of the congregation or some of the more influential members of the community it could create great tension between the clergy and the board of directors in bringing about resolutions to such conflicts.

**2. Personal Struggles with Establishing Boundary** *“Promote personal balance for others but work relentlessly yourself!”*

Clergy are expected to encourage congregants to do that which is best for their spiritual and personal well-being, but are oftentimes not applying the same principles to their own lives. “Clergy often experience a similar conflict between what their jobs require of them and their calling to model a balanced life.” The clergy will promote rest and balance for parishioners, but not take his/her own words as sound advice for himself/herself.

**3. Conflict Between Vision and Reality:** *“It sounds like you’ve become disillusioned”*

Clergy often have high expectation of themselves and sometimes these expectations are not rationally attainable. Sometimes when these high and lofty dreams and ideas are not realized, the clergy can become despondent and disillusioned. They enter congregations with contagious enthusiasm, but after time passes, the wide gap between what the clergy hoped to achieve versus what is actually achieved may cause some clergy to question their calling and effectiveness in ministry.

**4. Public/Private Boundaries:** *“Why are they stealing glances at my shopping cart?”*

People oftentimes look at what the clergy has in his/her shopping cart in the super market to see if it is what someone “in your position” should be buying. The clergy is expected to buy a

house of a particular look and size in a particular neighborhood that reflects what someone in his/her position should have.

**5. Financial Pressures:** *“Why can’t we take exciting vacations like all my friends?”*

The desire to provide for one’s family and to provide opportunities for the clergy’s family can become stressful because of the limitation of the profession limited financial resources. Clergy are usually not amongst the highest paid professions, but are expected to live miraculously as such.

**6. Living in A Different Time Zone:** *“Why can’t we ever go anywhere on weekends?”*

Many people are free to use weekends and holidays for family-centered activities. The weekends are the busiest times for the clergy. The clergy’s family will often be asked to make a sacrifice to be with the clergy on the weekends at church services and programs. This could lead to resentment of the clergy’s job that denies his/her family opportunities to utilize the weekends like other families.

**7. Delicacies of Leadership:** *“But I can’t just tell that person he’s fired.”*

Clergy are oftentimes required to address some of the most sensitive things in the congregational life. He/she may be required to discipline or terminate the services of a paid or volunteer worker. These delicate situations can be difficult to address, especially when the individuals involved are members of the local congregation.

**8. Physical Health, Stress, and Depression:** *“You seem tired”*

Clergy often work long hours because they are not limited to only working 8 hours per day like most workers. This undetermined schedule oftentimes is not protected by established

boundaries to protect the interest of the clergy. As a result, the clergy exposes himself/herself to an overload of work that can cause a large number of health related issues such as stress and depression. Stress may occur for the overworked clergy because of secondary trauma (i.e. being exposed constantly to the trauma of others and not taking the time to adequately process it) or the clergy can expose themselves to becoming depressed from trying too hard to address the needs of others. If the results are not favorable, the clergy may become depressed because he/she may feel that he/she has failed the person in need. Many clergy do not invest the time necessary to address their health care needs and, as a result, experience severe physical and mental burnout.

#### **9. An Ambiguous Role in a Changing Society: “What is it you do, anyway?”**

The role of the clergy is fading in our society today. Clergy are shown to be marginal players in people’s lives today. The role of the clergy is being minimized to performing a few religious tasks at birth, sometimes marriage and death. As a result, it can be difficult for many in the society today to know what role, if any, clergy are to play in everyday life. This devaluing of the importance and role of the clergy can have adverse effects on many clergy.

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROJECT TO MINISTRY IN A WIDER CONTEXT**

It is my intention to use this project to bring clinical, theological, social and cultural significance through the formation of an experiential group on burnout comprised of twelve Seventh-day Adventist clergy meeting for 12 weeks, for one and a half hour each time. This is to help clergy with the issues involved in burnout in a confidential and supportive manner. I will be facilitating this experiential group, where clergy will be encouraged to share their experiences with burnout freely. The intention of the group is to help these clergy ameliorate their feelings



and experiences contributing to burnout in the present time. This is to help clergy explore the issue of burnout in a positive way by applying interventions that will protect them from future situations that may cause burnout and to ameliorate the issue of burnout that they may be currently experiencing. This means, as Walton (1988) describes in his article, “The Moral Manager”, that only a few organizations take the time to assess the character of their workplace; and that if such assessments were properly and objectively conducted it could be very revealing to the organization’s character.

This project will be a tool that religious organizations can use to assess the character and working conditions of those in its employment. It will seek to affirm working conditions that aid in the well-being of clergy through the interventions that are proven to be applicable in relieving the suffering of burnout. This project will examine the experiences that twelve Seventh-day Adventist clergy had with burnout prior to participating in the group they will be asked to participate in. I will analyze the interventions developed through group activities and discuss the effects if any, on each participant of the group. My assumption is that the interventions will help ameliorate the issue of burnout with the participants.

## Chapter 2:

**RELEVANT LITERATURE REVIEW**  
**THAT GUIDES AND INFORM THIS PROJECT**

**Theological Principles:**

This project will examine several theological issues relevant to the suffering of burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventist clergy. These latent issues include the theology of burnout, meaning how God relates to this topic. My intention is to show my understanding of God's intervention versus human responsibility.

- ***The Individual's Faith in God for Endurance Through Difficulties***

The phrase "faith in God" is an expression that is used widely in religious circle. What does "faith in God" really mean? In the New Testament Scripture, Jesus told his disciples that they should "*have faith in God*" (Mark 11:22). We demonstrate faith in things and people. Every time we rely on someone or something, we are demonstrating faith in that person or thing. Faith in God, therefore, means to rely upon God, to depend upon God to act in our best interest at all times. Renner (2003) says that the word "faith" is the Greek word "*pistis*." It conveys the idea of a person who is reliable, loyal and steadfast. It pictures a person who is devoted, trustworthy, dependable, dedicated, constant, and unwavering. According to Renner, God is the ultimate epitome of what it means to have faith or to be faithful. It is of extreme importance that the clergy, or any individual who will place their faith in God during times of difficulties, first believe that God is the supreme example of faith or what it means to be faithful. If this notion is not settled in the minds of individuals, then it will be very difficult for such persons to continue having faith in a God that is in any way less than the ideal for what real faith represents.

An individual's faith in God is tested during times of extreme difficulties. A clergy or religious person does not go through difficulties with fewer anxieties than the person who is not religious or spiritual. In some cases, the clergy or other religious person experiences heightened anxieties because they may have expectations of God based on their relationship with Him that might not be fulfilled. They may feel that because of previous loyalty and devotion, God will act favorably towards them during times of difficulties that might not be realized. They may think that because of their relationship with God, God has an obligation to show mercy, compassion or some form of favor, which again may not materialized.

The question, therefore, that we need to explore when it comes to the subject of "faith in God to endure" is what happens if one does not endure through difficulties? Is it because the faith of the clergy or other individual wavered in God, or is it because God was not willing to provide the individual seeking endurance with what they were seeking? I believe that faith in God for endurance does not void human responsibility in obtaining the desired result. As human beings we determine to a large extent our failures and successes. Therefore, as the clergy experiences the suffering of burnout, whilst "doing the work for/ of God," it is important for that individual to understand that he/she can receive the endurance necessary to make it through the suffering, until it is ameliorated completely. Obtaining the faith to endure to the end is as a result of a partnership that the individual and God share, not a responsibility on God to prevent something from happening.

Faith to endure through difficulties speaks more to the reality that while a clergy for example is experiencing the suffering of burnout, he/she is encouraged to know that they are not going through the experience alone. The faith to endure is also based on the reality that God is accompanying the clergy during the time of suffering. It is the idea of God's presence and

support that helps the individual to endure difficulties. Kushner (2003), speaking of the presence of God with people during times of difficulties says it this way:

The conventional assumption is that when bad things happen to us, they cause us to lose faith in God. “How can there be a God in a world where children die?” “Why do I have to go through this? I don’t deserve it.” And all too often, that conventional wisdom is true...People for whom the existence of God was remote, abstract, theological concept, people who believed in the existence of God the way I believed in the existence of Mongolia (“I’ve never been there, but people tell me there is such a place and I’m not inclined to take issue with them”), suddenly find themselves in the valley of the shadow, and what had been abstract and remote suddenly becomes pulsating real. At that point they find themselves saying, “God, I never could have made it through the valley and into the sunlight without your help and support, without the people you inspired to reach out to me, without the courage and resiliency you planted in me (pg. 101).

- **The Clergy’s Understanding of God to Provide Peace During Troublesome Times**

“*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*” (Psalm 46:1-King James Version) This scripture serves as a reminder from the Psalmist David that God does not ignore His people when they are in trouble, but rather, He shows that He cares for them by helping them to find a place of safety and providing them with the necessary strength. The clergy’s understanding of God to provide peace during troublesome times is based on his/her relationship with God and the promises that God has made to be with us during these troublesome times. I believe that peace is not an absence of trouble but the presence of God in the midst of trouble.

The presence of God with the clergy in troublesome times also speaks of the clergy’s understanding that God will provide peace. God will provide peace because God is the embodiment of peace. In Isaiah chapter 43: 2, we are reminded that God’s presence of peace will get us through difficult and challenging experiences “*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When you walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*” (Isaiah

43:2-King James Version). The knowledge of the presence of God brings peace to the clergy when he is in trouble.

Lucado ( 2013), speaking of the trouble that we sometimes will experience in life, says:

Every day God tests us through people, pain, or problems. Stop and consider your circumstances. Can you identify the tests of today? Snarling traffic? Threatening weather? Aching joints? If you see your troubles as nothing more than isolated hassles and hurts, you'll grow bitter and angry. Yet if you see your troubles as tests used by God for His glory and your maturity, then even the smallest incidents take on significance...The Hebrew word for test comes from a word that means to take a keen look at, to look, to choose. Dismiss the notion that God does not see your struggle. On the contrary, God is fully engaged. He sees the needs of tomorrow and, accordingly, uses your circumstances to create the test for today (pg. 48).

During times of difficulties, suffering and pain, the clergy is keenly aware that God is aware of the experience that he/she is having. God's awareness of the situation does not necessarily mean that God will bring peace to the situation in the manner that the clergy would like or expected. The clergy understands that God's method of bringing peace during troublesome times does not always mean that the circumstances will change or that God has an obligation to bring about peace, but rather God, in love and mercy, intervenes on our behalf because He cares for us. God's intervention does not mean that the situation has to change or be resolved in the manner in which it might be desired by the individual. But it could mean that the person is given the strength and peace of mind to cope with the unresolved situation until it is resolved

The peace that God brings during troublesome times can be emotional and not physical. By emotional peace I am referring to the state of being free from anxiety, stress or fear; the circumstances may not improve or, sometimes, may even become worse physically. For instance, while the clergy may have more work or responsibilities or he/she may have to travel longer

distances to his/her place of worship, yet the clergy going through the suffering of burnout can still experience emotional peace.

- **God's Power to Provide Balance for the Clergy in all of his/her responsibilities.**

The roles and responsibilities of the clergy are vast. As stated in chapter one, the clergy wears many 'hats.' This was, is and will always be the experience of a clergy committed in fulfilling the call that he/she has responded to from God. Knowing and understanding the nature of the work of clergy, the challenge that the clergy is often confronted with is how to find balance in all of the many responsibilities he/she is required to satisfy effectively. Balance is finding a middle ground or an even distribution of that which he/she is confronted with. It is the clergy recognizing, for example, all that needs to be done and not trying to do all that needs to be done at one time, especially when he/she does not have the resources necessary to do everything, but being willing to do proportionately what can be done without overexertion of oneself.

God seeks to provide his human agents with balance in fulfilling the tasks and responsibilities that He assigns to us. When God decided that He would assign Moses the responsibility to be His leader of His people in Egypt, God provided Moses with the balance he needed to facilitate the mission of leading the people out of Egyptian slavery. That balance was his brother Aaron to accompany him on his mission to Egypt. Exodus 4:27-30 (King James Version) says:

And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met with him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: And

Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

God provides balance to the clergy in all of his/her responsibilities by providing assistance through others to share in the responsibilities that need to be addressed. It is important for the clergy who believes that he/she has too many responsibilities for one person to undertake successfully to be cognizant of other human resources that God provides to help satisfy the responsibilities.

God is omnipotent; the clergy is not. God is omniscient; the clergy is not. God is omnipresent; the clergy is not. Therefore, the clergy should not try to operate outside his/her scope and abilities in an attempt to satisfy all of the responsibilities assigned. The clergy, understanding his/her limitations, ought to act accordingly and seek divine wisdom in serving the needs of the community. The clergy believes that God has the power to intervene on his/her behalf to provide balance to the multiple responsibilities that he/she has to fulfill. This God will do so by instructing the clergy about the importance of resting as needed. God who does not need to rest rested on the seventh day after six days of creation (Genesis 2:2) to teach us of the importance of rest. He encourages us to take care of our bodies by giving it rest appropriately.

- **God's Power to Heal and the Clergy's Understanding of His Power**

Physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual wounds are all part of the life of a clergy. Most clergy understands that it is the nature of the job that injuries will occur from time to time. This does not mean that the clergy will place himself/herself in harm's way because injuries are a natural occurrence of the job. The clergy is expected to protect himself/herself from hurt and danger.

The physical demands of the job can cause the clergy to experience hurt. Demands of excessive travel and limited rest time can cause severe harm to the body. When the body does not get enough rest it is not able to function at optimum capacity. When the body is not functioning at optimum capacity, but is constantly demanded to do more, it exposes itself to diseases and physical wear and tear. In addition, when the body is not receiving healthy balanced meals each day, it will not be able to sustain itself for too long before deterioration begins. The demands on the clergy's time sometimes will lead to poor eating habits and poor sleeping habits, if firm boundaries are not established to protect the health and well-being of the clergy.

In the Gospel of Matthew 16:24-25 (King James Version), Jesus, in outlining one of the basic requirements of the life of the clergy and followers of Him, describes the hurt that one will experience this way: *"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."* The "cross" referenced in the text is a symbol of hurt, pain and suffering. The point is this: the life of a clergy is one that will not be void of physical hurt.

Clergy also gets hurt emotionally. This is as a result of how he/she is treated or what he or she is exposed to. While the clergy's job entails helping and providing for the needs of others, the clergy also has a responsibility to speak the truth that sometimes will offend others. When people are offended, they are likely to offend those that are responsible for offending them in the first place. Hence, the clergy will be subjected to criticism, rejection, abandonment, persecution and hostility. The anger towards the clergy could also be as a result of issues of transference that an individual may be experiencing regarding who and what the clergy represents to that



individual or group of people. It is therefore of great importance for the clergy to be aware of the dynamics of transference that he/she may be experiencing in the relationships with congregants. For example, the clergy may remind the individual of a negative experience he/she had with another clergy in the past.

The clergy may also be hurt by the secondary trauma that is experienced from being with parishioners during times of crises. Secondary trauma is the emotional hurt that an individual experiences from being exposed to the hurt, pain and sufferings of others. Constant exposure to sickness and death for example may result in a severe traumatic crisis for the clergy if he/she does not get the appropriate intervention to ameliorate this suffering.

Regardless of the hurt that the clergy experiences as a result of the nature of the job, the clergy understands that God has the power to heal all manner of wounds. The clergy person believes that God's permissive will that allows hurt to occur in the life of the clergy is also designed to help the clergy in the process of becoming stronger and more resolute in carrying out his/her responsibilities as clergy. The constant demonstration of God's power to heal the clergy from the wounds sustained in his/her function and role, gives the clergy the inspiration to continue serving others even though he/she is subjected to future hurt and pain. The clergy understands that God has all power to do anything and everything, and this understanding is one of the great motivators that keep him/her going to work every day.

- **The Clergy's Understanding of God's Forgiveness**

*"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. . ." (Luke 23:34, King James Version)*

To forgive is to cancel the debt owed by another; it is to grant pardon to someone for the offense that he/she did to another. The Bible teaches that humans ought to forgive each other so that they can receive forgiveness from God. Matthew 6:12 (King James Version) says, “*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*” Forgiveness in Greek literally means “to let go.” Forgiveness is realized when one lets go of resentment and gives up any claim to be compensated for the injury or offense that was suffered.

The clergy’s understanding of forgiveness is based upon his/her understanding that God’s forgiveness is incumbent on the clergy’s forgiveness of others who have wronged him/her. The clergy, therefore, is expected to have a forgiving spirit. Forgiveness should be a natural element of the clergy’s existence. The clergy understands his/her need for forgiveness and understands also his/her need to forgive others to obtain forgiveness. While the clergy’s forgiveness is predicated upon the forgiveness he/she shows to others, the clergy’s response to forgive others should not come only because of his/her desire to be forgiven, but also out of a natural outgrowth of love and compassion for others. While there are benefits of forgiveness, such as letting go of the anger and resentment and letting go of the hatred and malice so that an individual can experience health and happiness, the motivation to forgive should be based on our recognition of our own imperfections and our love for others.

In order for true forgiveness to take place, an admission of the offense needs to take place. In 2 Samuel 12:9-13, God forgave David of his sins, but He did not protect David from the consequences of his sins. David’s sins are recorded and David’s admissions to his sins are also recorded in the Bible: “*And David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die (2 Samuel 12:13 King James Version).*” The knowledge that God is a forgiving God does not mean that we ought to

take God's forgiveness for granted. Our appreciation for being forgiven should be demonstrated in our intentions and actions not to offend the forgiver again.

- **The Clergy's Expectation of God**

*"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God: and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.t."* (John 17:3, King James Version) The clergy's expectation of God is based on the clergy's knowledge of God. The aforementioned text says that eternal life is knowing who God is, including God the Son, Jesus Christ. Knowing God comes from an experience with Him. It is based on this experiential knowledge of God that determines what the clergy's expectation will be. Blackaby and King (1994), in describing what it means to know God, say:

You'll never be satisfied just to know about God. Really knowing God only comes through experience as He reveals Himself to you. Throughout the Bible God took the initiative to reveal Himself to people by experience. Frequently when God revealed Himself to a person, that person gave God a new name or described Him in a new way. For the Hebrew, a person's name represented his character or described his nature. This is why we frequently see new names or titles used for God following an event where a Bible character experienced God. To know God by name required a personal experience of His presence (pp.1-2).

Therefore, the clergy's expectation of God is not the same for everyone, but is determined by the experience that individual clergy has with God. Clergy who has experienced God as a provider expects God to provide in times of suffering. The expectation would be for God to provide relief from suffering, based on prior experience. The prophet Job experienced God as a great provider prior to his suffering (Job 1:2-3 King James Version) *"And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great*

*household....”* The clergy who has experienced God as a protector in the past like Daniel in Daniel 6:21-22, when he was protected from the lions in the lions’ den, will expect God to be his/her protector in times of suffering and need.

Blackaby and King (1994), argues that the psycho-spiritual perspective is congruent with relational theory, which recognizes the influence of the relationship to the self, the other, and God. In exile, the search for a purposeful and meaningful relationship often includes seeking answers from God. Faith, patience, love and kindness are all attributes necessary to pursue theodicy, while feelings of despair, doubt, brokenness and anger may harden the heart and hinder the pursuit.

- ***God’s Power to Appropriately Deal with the Inner Critics and the Clergy’s Understanding of the Same***

Oftentimes when we are suffering we go down a check list of things to determine what, if anything we are responsible for that causes the suffering that we are currently experiencing. We ask ourselves questions like: “Was there something I could’ve done differently that would’ve averted this current situation that I am in?” “Am I good enough?” “Am I too weak or feeble to handle this much responsibility?” “Maybe I am just not competent to perform this task.” As we go through the check list of things to ensure that we are not responsible for the situation that we are in, or as we affirm to ourselves that we are the reason we are in the predicament that we are in, we find ourselves often riddled with guilt about what we could have and should have done differently.

Sometimes when we have exhausted all the critical questions on our check lists, our friends will come by with their check lists to make their own determinations as to the cause of our suffering. They are reminiscent of the prophet Job's friends who came to visit with him during his suffering (Job 4-36). Job's friends criticized his relationship with God and accused him of pretending to have a strong relationship when in fact according to them, he was disingenuous and lacked sincerity. They argued that the reason for his suffering was due to cherished, unconfessed sins that he held onto in his heart. In Job 8:1-8, Bildad (one of Job's three friends who came to visit with him during his suffering) said that Job's children were killed and Job's suffering is as a result of his (Job's) sins. He said it this way in the King James Version of the Bible in Job 8:1-7:

The answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, how long wilt thou speak these things? And how long shall the word of thy mouth be like a strong wind? Doth God pervert judgment? Or does the almighty pervert justice? If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression; if thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the almighty; if thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous. Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase. For inquire I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers.

Schwartz (2001), says that there are some inner critics within all of us that challenge us. These inner critics, he says, are different parts of us that are usually very critical of us. Schwartz says that it is important for each individual to get to know their parts better, so that we are able to answer the critical questions we are asked by various parts of our psyche. He illustrated how the critics work by sharing the following example:

To get a clearer picture of my clients' parts, I used an "empty chair" technique in which they would imagine they were talking to one of their parts in an empty chair across from them and then switch seats and give voice to the part in response. For example, I had Diane imagine a bitingly critical part in the empty chair and speak to it. She asked why it was so nasty to her. I then had Diane change chairs and reply as the critic. With a look of arrogance and a deeper voice dripping with disdain, she (as the critic) said, "Because you are totally worthless and incompetent." When she became the critic, I was disconcerted by her dramatic transformation and quickly had her move back to being Diane in her original chair. From

there, she feebly argued with the critic but was clearly outmatched. I decided to take over for her. I had Diane become the critic again, and I began pointing out to it various ways in which Diane was competent. Unmoved by my sales pitch, the critic laughed at me scornfully and said, "If you think you can help her, then you're incompetent, too. She's hopeless and in my power." (pg. 58)

Schwartz said that when we stop trying to control the critics inside and just acknowledge them and their function we would be much more successful in accomplishing the goal of inner peace. He argues that we should validate each part of us whether we like the part or not, letting each part know that it is appreciated for carrying out its assigned function and roles.

The clergy believes that God has the power to successfully deal with the inner critic. God's power is not only designed to subdue or overthrow the opposition, it is also designed to validate and affirm. God's demonstration of power is not designed to shut up or shut down the inner critics, but to affirm them in the role they play. God affirms the inner critic by allowing them to have a voice that he does not hinder from speaking up. He allows them to express their feelings about anything without condemnation or resentment. They help the individual who is suffering to become ultimately stronger and more resolute to succeed.

## Clinical Factors

- **Depression**

There are several clinical issues that should be considered with the subject of burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) clergy (but not limited to SDA clergy only) that I will be exploring in this chapter, the first of which is depression. Depression is a mood disorder which adversely affects a person from engaging or having an interest in everyday activities of life. These activities may range from difficulty getting out of bed in the morning to difficulty being around people at school or work. Seligman (1973) referred to depression as “the common cold” because of its frequency of diagnosis. Depression is usually easily seen, however, it can be masked easily by an individual claiming to be overly exhausted most of the time or seemingly expressing interest in a particular activity frequently that does not involve others. A clergy who spends most of his/her time in isolation—studying, meditating, or working on projects alone—could be using those activities to mask the depression that he/she may be experiencing. Lewinsohn (1974) says that depression is caused by the removal of positive reinforcement from the environment. This negative reinforcement for the clergy may be a reassignment from an urban area to practice ministry to a most secluded rural area, away from friends and family. This is sometimes the case for many SDA clergy who have no control over where they are assigned to work.

Although many clergy are not professional counselors, counseling is one of the important aspects of the role of the clergy. Clergy are sought after for spiritual guidance by many people who are experiencing trauma. During critically distressing times, clergy are often sought after first, before many other professionals such as social workers, attorneys and psychiatrists, to list a

few. Those who work in the “helping professions” are constantly asked to respond to crises. These crises are often experienced by individuals, [local] communities, the nation and international society. Clergy who offer assistance at the time of the event of crises or later, may be negatively affected by their exposure with these events and may find themselves suffering in like manner to those they are helping to ameliorate suffering. Clergy are exposed to both primary (i.e. direct) and vicarious trauma (VT). Stamm, Vara, Pearlman and Giller (2002) say that vicarious trauma can be caused by repeatedly hearing horrible stories about extremely stressful situations or events.

During the 1960s, psychodynamic theories were prevalent in psychology and psychiatry. For Freud (1917), depression was believed to be inwardly directed anger, introjection of love object loss and severe super ego demands. He also believed that depression was the result of loss or rejection of a parent. Depression, therefore, was the result of the loss of a significant relationship. If this is true, then one can understand the impact significant loss of relationship has on the clergy. A clergy experiences loss when parishioners die or move, or when the clergy is reassigned to another pastoral district. Klein (1934) understood depression as deprivation in the mother-child relationship during the first year. She also subscribed to the idea of a loss in a significant relationship. Freud later modified his understanding of depression in terms of loss, stating that loss was a natural occurrence; and that depression is the result of having an excessively severe super-ego. This means that depression occurs when the harsh and punitive super ego is directed towards the self.

Another approach in understanding depression is the cognitive approach. The cognitive approach focuses on people’s belief rather than their behavior. This is realized in the negative thinking of an individual about him/herself or the things and people around them. Beck (1967)



attributes depression to three perspectives: (i) the cognitive triad (negative automatic thinking), (ii) negative self schemas and (iii) errors in logic (faulty information processing). Beck describes cognitive triad as three negative and critical ways of thinking about the self, the world and the future. With negative self schemas, Beck believed that depressed individuals have a set of negative and pessimistic beliefs and expectations about themselves. This set of beliefs and expectations may be from childhood or after a traumatic event, such as the death of a parent or significant other. Beck also believed that depressed individuals process information with selectivity, only focusing on certain aspects of a situation, while ignoring equally important and relevant information.

There are clergy who are depressed because of their obsession with themselves and their responsibility to the world and the future because of their theological understanding of the Bible. They see themselves as martyrs saving the world. Similarly, there are those who believe that because of their experience they will not be able to achieve much more than they already have, and that other clergy will always get certain opportunities, but they will not. They believe that there are certain things that they will never be able to do and that it is their God-given assignment to acknowledge and affirm themselves as not being called for certain “big” or “great” opportunities. There are those as well, who pride themselves on looking for the fulfillment of prophecy and finding doom and gloom in everything that happens. They examine the Bible to find support for their beliefs and ignore other portions of the Bible that present an equally important and relevant balance to their theology.

- **Anxiety**

Wicks, Parsons and Capps (1993), describes anxiety as a mental health disorder that is characterized by feelings of nervousness, worry and fear usually about an event soon to happen or with the uncertainty of the results of an event. Anxiety is the body's natural response to perceived danger; or when there is a perceived threat or facing a stressful situation. I believe that these events that produce anxiety may range from someone coming home and noticing something out of place from where they left it, or someone having to make a special presentation before thousands of people. Anxiety has many physical symptoms that are sometimes masked as genuine physical ailments. These symptoms include rapid and pounding heart beats, dry mouth, sweaty hands, shortness of breath and difficulty breathing, nausea and headaches.

In psychoanalytic theory, there are two basic types of anxiety: traumatic anxiety and signal anxiety (Freud, 1926). Traumatic anxiety is as a result of overstimulation of the mind. This means that things (events) are happening much faster than the mind can comprehend them and, as a result, it creates a crisis for the individual. Freud believed that the experience of birth causes every child to experience traumatic anxiety. He believed that signal anxiety is derived from the mind's reaction to guard against disorganization of the traumatic anxiety. Signal anxiety is also derived from the fear of unacceptable thoughts, feelings and impulses emerging. The Ego assesses its own coping abilities, both its external demands and internal drives and desires. When the "normal" method of coping fails, the mind responds with anxiety, which influences a person to take new actions to protect it.

Clergy sometime become very anxious about their jobs because of the goals that their employers set for them to accomplish. Failure to attain these goals can create tremendous

anxiety for the clergy. Goals are sometimes attached to promotion and other benefits, which place even more pressure and stress on the clergy. Clergy also become very anxious when they are reassigned to new congregations. The expectations are sometimes very high and the clergy is unsure if he/she can live up to the required expectations. Some clergy experience great anxiety when they have to address the needs of a congregant in crisis. Someone who has experienced a traumatic loss via death, divorce or having to move away, for example, presents to the clergy a crisis situation that he/she may be uncertain about how to respond.

- **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that is caused by a traumatic or terrifying event that is experienced or witnessed, and then re-experienced emotionally at a later time. Some of the symptoms of PTSD include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety. People who experience PTSD sometimes have uncontrollable thoughts about the event that they witnessed or experienced. It is inevitable that most people, especially those who work in the “helping professions” such as clergy will experience or witness event that are traumatic in nature. Although most people who suffer from PTSD have considerable interpersonal and occupational challenges, the degree to which the symptoms of PTSD come to affect overall functioning varies a great deal from one individual to the next. The post traumatic syndrome is the result of a failure of time to heal all wounds. The memory of the trauma is not integrated as part of one’s personal past; instead, it comes to exist independently of previous schemata [i.e. it is dissociated] (Van der Kolk, McFarlane and Weisaeth, 1996).

Clergy are oftentimes witnesses of a traumatic or terrifying event. Many clergy are at the bedsides of dying congregants, or on the phone with a screaming spouse experiencing emotional

abuse, or at the scene of the accident or in the emergency room with the congregant who was just removed from the scene of the accident. The challenge for many clergy is if they move on to the next family or the next traumatic scene without finding a person that they can process their experience with therapeutically, over time healing may not occur. Over time the initial intrusive thoughts of the trauma may come to contaminate the individual responses to a range of other cues and reinforce the selective dominance of the traumatic memory networks (Pittman and Orr, Pittman, Orr and Shalev, 1993).

Van der Kolk, McFarlane and Weisaeth (1996), speaking of the frequency of experiencing trauma, put it this way:

Experiencing trauma is an essential part of being human; history is written in blood. Although art and literature have always been preoccupied with how people cope with the inevitable tragedies of life, the large scale scientific study of the effects of trauma on body and mind has had to wait till the latter part of this century-when the average life expectancy in the industrialized world is well above the Biblical three score years and ten; when almost all children can be expected to outlive their parents; and when famine and epidemics no longer wipe out large sections of the populations with the regularity they once did (pg. 3).

The complexity of clergy's response to trauma, and the victimization of self by some clergy who hold themselves responsible for the trauma they experienced, sometimes make it more difficult to provide that clergy with the help they are in need of. That feeling of helplessness and vulnerability may cause the wound of PTSD to remain unhealed for a long time. Clergy, who feel that if they had done more or if they had applied some spiritual ritual, the individual would not have experienced a traumatic event, sometimes will delay their own abilities to cope better with the trauma they witnessed or experienced.

- **Feelings of Abandonment & Neglect**

The feelings of abandonment and neglect are the result of a significant other forsaking or leaving a relationship without justification or a plausible cause. While abandonment is commonly seen in a broken marital relationship, a parent and a child relationship, a professional and a client relationship; abandonment is also experienced in more subtle, but just as devastating, ways. These relationships could be a clergy and his/her parishioners or a clergy and his/her employer. Working through issues related to abandonment and feelings of neglect are important steps in the therapeutic process. It is very important for those involved in significant relationships that are of a temporary nature based on the context in which they are formed, to prepare adequately to terminate those relationships in a timely manner to avoid feelings of abandonment and neglect. Most professional relationships such as therapist and client are temporary even though they may exist for more than one year.

Due to the nature of some individual's object relations, some relationships are more difficult to terminate. If an individual has a satisfactory relationship with his/her mother or other caregiver during the first year of life, they will tend to see other people as a mixture of both good and bad and be able to tolerate good and bad in a relationship. If they experience deprivation or too much frustration or lack of attunement from their mother in their nurturing during the first year of life, then they are apt to split objects into "all good" or "all bad," Mahler, (1968). If nurturing and attunement are positive enough, they are able to integrate the mother into a whole object. If splitting occurs it can result in more difficult termination of relationships. Some adults who idealize clergy because of who the clergy represents (God) may also be apt to find it difficult to terminate relationships with clergy, even when the clergy presents him/herself contrary to the idealized view that the individual may have. Frankland (2010), in speaking about object

relations says that “the term is used to convey the fact that sometimes people do not perceive others as they really are, but rather as they imagine them to be... A real person has a mixture of both desirable and less desirable qualities.” (pg. 6)

If the clergy has difficulty with object relations, they may see parishioners as “all good” or “all bad,” and the parishioner may see the clergy in the same way. Oftentimes when a clergy is asked to leave one parish for another, parishioners feel abandoned and neglected because they viewed the clergy as an ‘object’ that is all good, that is now being taken away from them. Likewise the clergy, who has objectified a church or specific parishioners, also experiences a sense of loss, abandonment and neglect. Clergy may also have an objectified relationship with their employer. Their employers may be seen as “all good” when the clergy receives from his/her employer that which is desired or “all bad” when the desires are not granted. This may result in the clergy feeling abandoned and neglected by their employers.

Pine (1990), in his discussion of object relations and the feelings of loss, abandonment and neglect, points out that the experience begins from early childhood. He states that

The object relation as experienced by the child is what is laid down in memory and repeated, and this experience is a function of the affect and wishes active in the child at the moment of the experience. Thus, illustratively and hypothetically, the same quietly pensive and inactive mother will be experienced as a depriver by the hungry child, but perhaps as comfortingly in tune by the child who is contentedly playing alone. Significant for the clinical relevance of the object relations psychology is the tendency to repeat these old family dramas, a repetition propelled by efforts after attachment or after mastery of both (pg.35).

Hence, the clergy’s feelings of abandonment and neglect are repeated feelings that he/she experienced from infancy when the mother or care giver appeared to be depriving the child of their desire for food and comfort.

- **Insomnia**

Insomnia is a sleep disorder in which there are long periods of difficulty falling or staying asleep. This period of sleeplessness is experienced even when a person has the opportunity to sleep, but finds it extremely difficult to do so. People experiencing insomnia usually experience symptoms of fatigue, mood disturbances, low energy and, as a result, low productivity at work, school or other engagements that demand energy and vitality.

Perlis, Jungquist, Smith and Posner (2005), speaking of the duration and severity of what characterizes a person to be diagnosed with insomnia, states that

Typically duration is framed dichotomously in terms of whether the illness is acute or chronic. Severity is more often than not, defined solely in terms of frequency of complaints. Insomnia lasting less than one month is generally said to be “acute” and is often associated with clearly defined precipitants such as stress, acute pain and substance abuse. Insomnia is characterized as being chronic when symptoms persist unabated for a duration of at least a month, and more typically for durations of time that are six months or greater (pg. 2).

Insomnia is a disorder caused also by anxiety, worry and pain. Individuals sometimes may be worrying about a previous or a future event and become so obsessed with it, that it prevents them from experiencing sleep even when they have an opportunity to do so. Clergy can become prey to worry if they do not process events carefully, being mindful of the things that are beyond their control. If a clergy is not getting adequate rest, he or she will be subjecting himself or herself to fatigue and even depression.

- **The Effects of Relocation**

Relocation is moving from one location to another. It may sound simple, but it can be one of the most complex and emotionally draining experiences a person will undertake. The stress of moving and the adjustments to a new location can be quite daunting. One of the stressful parts

of the experience is often deciding what to take with you and what to leave behind. Having to make such decisions about what to take and leave behind requires the person to put value on some things and not on others items. Leaving a painting you received from your mother and taking a book you received from your father could create tension and anxiety for all parties involved. While a person may look forward with gleeful expectation to their new residence or job, the old home or old job can be difficult to sever one's self from.

A person may actually experience separation anxiety when the decision has been made to move. Leaving friends and family behind can also can be depressing. Relationships with people are difficult to duplicate and it takes time to build new ones. The thought of leaving a space and a place that represents so many important and significant events in a person's life also makes moving away a very challenging experience for many. The loss of people, places and things can cause a person to become depressed and experience other psychological problems such as anxiety and feelings of abandonment and neglect, to list a few.

The cost to move things across the country or overseas can be very expensive, and may force individuals who are moving away the repurchasing of several items that they had before. This could cause significant stress and anxiety for the person moving away as well. Having to replace items that were either given away, sold at a reduced price or thrown away could be seen as financially irresponsible and emotionally draining. In some cases, paying more for a smaller or older space, or for a less desirable community than one previously had, can be a very challenging adjustment for the migrant to make. The overall cost of living at the new location where the person who had to move away will now live may be financially stressful. It is also true, that if a person has to move to a less desirable place that does not have the same or similar conveniences like the place they are moving from, it can be depressing as well.



The culture, language and food can also prove to be a major adjustment for the person who has moved to a new location. Clergy moving from one place to the next often find these elements challenging especially when they are moving away with members of their family, including children. To learn and adopt a new language sometimes take a lot of time. During this time of adjusting and learning another language, a person may experience stress, anxiety and depression as a result. As the choice of food changes, a person is not only concerned about taste, but also about their health. Will the new food make them sick, is often a question of concern by many who have to move away and make adjustment with their diets. Another question of concern would be, will we be able to adjust to this culture fast enough to be mutually beneficial.

While most of the relocation of clergy happens within a particular country or island, some countries like the United States of America are so big, that many of the concerns that a person would have when migrating to another country, the same concerns would be relevant for clergy moving from one State to another here in the United States America.

Akhtar (1999), speaking of the complexity of migration, says

Immigration from one country to another is a complex psychological process with significant and lasting effects on an individual's identity. Leaving one's country involves profound losses. Often one has to give up familiar food, native music and unquestioned social customs, and even one's language. The new country offers strange tasting food, new songs, different political concerns, unfamiliar language, pale festivals, unknown heroes, physically unearned history, and a visually unfamiliar landscape. However, alongside these losses is a renewed opportunity for psychic growth and alteration. New channels of self-expression become available (pg. 5).

For clergy who have to move away from one part of the country to another or from one country to the next, the process involves giving up part of one's identity in order to become part of one's new community. Moving away from one state to another for clergy can be even more stressful. Some states have unique cultural and social differences, which require significant

adjustment for the resident. There are even environmental factors such as a major change in weather or climate conditions that the new resident must make adjustment for. These factors can severely leads to burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventist clergy in particular, because they do not have a part in the discussion about where their next pastoral assignment will be and when.

- **Cultural, Ethnic and Nationality Differences**

Culture refers to a set of customs, behaviors, habits, attitudes, knowledge and language of a group of individuals. Everyone is part of a culture; there are no cultures that are better than the other. While cultures differ from one group to the next, it is of extreme importance that each culture demonstrates respect for the other culture. There are certain characteristics of each culture that makes a person reluctant to move from one culture to the next. Amongst these varied characteristics, one that holds true for most cultural settings is the feelings of safety and security.

Goble (1970), speaking of the security one feels in a familiar culture, highlights world renowned psychologist, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs and referring to the second basic human need, says

Once the physiological needs are sufficiently satisfied, what Maslow described as safety needs emerge. Since the safety needs are generally satisfied in a healthy, normal adult, they can be understood best by observing children or neurotic adults. Child psychologists and teachers have found that children need a predictable world; a child prefers consistency, fairness and a certain amount of routine. When these elements are absent he becomes anxious and insecure. Freedom within limits, rather than total permissiveness is preferred; in fact, it is necessary for the development of well-adjusted children for Maslow. Insecure or neurotic adults behave much like children (pg. 100).

People sometimes experience anxiety and stress when they are in another culture because of the feelings of insecurity. A clergy finds himself/herself having to relocate for new assignments and sometimes with the new assignment comes a new culture, which requires time for adjustment and learning for him/her to be able to immerse into the new culture.

Clergy are sometimes asked to work with different ethnicities and nationalities, and this can also be another area of anxiety and stress. The clergy must be willing to learn the differences and similarity between his/her ethnicity and nationality and the new ethnicity or nationality group he/she is working with. The challenge for the clergy may also be having to get beyond stereotypes and labeling of the relationship between his/her ethnicity or nationality and the other ethnicity that he/she is asked to work with. If there are feelings of inferiority or superiority with the clergy's ethnicity or nationality and any of the ethnic groups or nationality groups that the clergy is working with, this could prove to be a hindrance to a good working relationship because people are prone to work better with each other when they feel that they are just as valued as the person they are working with.

- **Gender**

According to my own observation, the demographics of many churches in the Christian community that I've visited were approximately 75% female and 25% male. I also observed that approximately 35-45% of those attending churches on a consistent basis are between the ages of 21 through 40. However, the role and complexity of gender go way beyond a casual observation of congregants attending church services.

A closer examination of gender reveals that there is a large population of people who do not identify their gender as male or female based on their sexual organ. I have spoken to

hermaphrodites who said that they are not limiting themselves to any specific gender types to satisfy any religious or political group's desires. Clergy are asked to provide care and support to these individuals who do not fit into the typical binary genders (male and female). This can prove to be very difficult and may lead to burnout because of the sensitivity and complexity of the needs of these individuals.

McGoldrick, Carter and Garcia-Preto (2011), in their discussion about the complexity of developing of a gender identity, say that "most of us have learned from courses in human development that by the age of 2, children are able to distinguish girls from boys and by age 4, they begin to identify tasks according to gender. It is common sense that boys and girls are different." This idea that gender is easily identified from a very young age is challenged by those who also feel; that they are everything else but what their sexual organ indicates. I have had the opportunity to work and attend schools with many such individuals who feel that they are trapped in a body that does not define who they are (pg. 233).

The clergy has the intriguing opportunity to carefully minister to the complexity that defines what gender is in our society today. Clergy cannot ignore the fact that beyond the two dominant genders (male and female) there are transgender people who are a part of our religious, and wider, communities whose needs must be addressed. This may be challenging especially for the Seventh-day Adventist clergy, because it challenges literal biblical dogma, requiring the clergy to go beyond previously held beliefs to understand and accept the uniqueness of the individual.

Chodrow (1978) a feminist who responded strongly to correct what she perceives as error in Freud's theory, that fathers play a very important role in the development of children, argues that mothers play an equally important role as well. She argues that mothers are all important in

shaping gender identity and behavior. Another view about the development of gender identity is that children learn different sex roles from their peers. Maccoby (1990) says that there is a culture where childhood sex segregation takes place. She believes in “a universal tendency for this polarization that has its origin in our evolutionary past” (Barnett and Rivers 2004, pg. 219). It is her view that as boys and girls develop physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually, there are some distinct differences in their patterns of interaction. Boys, for example, are much rougher in their play than girls and have the tendency for dominance.

Navigating the challenge of appropriately addressing all genders can be severely challenging and can lead to burnout for the clergy. While based on my observation, most clergy are males; most of the congregants that attend places of worship are female. This means that the predominantly male clergy workforce would need to have the skills necessary to address issues that may be gender specific and sensitive at times. The issue for the male dominated clergy profession may also be that many of the female congregants may not feel comfortable to discuss gender specific and sensitive issues with a male clergy. The result of this gender barrier between clergy and congregant could result in many unresolved issues that lead to other challenges for the clergy to address.

The female clergy may also experience severe burnout because of gender as well as her male counterpart. Her challenge may be the reverse of her male colleagues, where males are not comfortable discussing certain gender specific challenges with a female clergy. The female clergy's attempt to reach out to male congregants could prove to be futile, hence leaving many of the male gender specific issues unaddressed and unresolved.

Both male and female clergy are required to be careful and sensitive in their relationship with the opposite gender. This extra care and sensitivity that may be required oftentimes may hamper and or slows down progress and growth in the church and extended community. This may lead to burnout for the clergy who may choose to do more by him or herself, or to work with individuals that are not as skilled or experience to perform certain tasks that are needed to be done.

### **Age:**

As a religious community and society, we have to address the subject and the challenges of ageism in a meaningful and proactive manner. I believe people are living longer today than in the 1970s and 1980s. There are many factors that contribute to the current longevity that we are experiencing today. These factors range from better medical care, better diets and earlier retirements, to list a few. The challenges that we are faced with as a result of more people living longer are many. They range from housing, jobs, cost and medical care to mention a few. As people are living longer and more fulfilling lives of accomplishments, there are an increasing number of grand and great-grand parents (Drew & Silverstein, 2004). The stereotypes of the elderly are not as convincing as before; the elderly are not necessarily old-fashioned, rigid, boring, useless members of our communities. Butler (2008) says that much research has indicated that the aging process is much more variable and malleable than was long believed.

While focus must be given to the elderly, the needs for children, youth and young adults are equally important and must be addressed simultaneously. The needs of the younger and more active age groups of our religious and wider community must be addressed appropriately as well. The youth and young adults need mentors and opportunities to gain valuable experience

that will prepare them for adulthood. While the seniors need assistance from the youth and young adults with some of the physical challenges they may be faced with on a regular basis, the youth and young adults are in need of the senior's wisdom and experience to help them make good decision for their lives. The challenge is to show each age group on this continuum of life that everyone is valued and is a great contributor to the overall good of the society.

The issue of age for the clergy can be a very complex one to address appropriately. This complexity may begin with the actual or perceived age of the clergy. Sometimes a person's perceived or actual age is associated with the individual's knowledge, skills and experience. This assumption may lead to resistance or acceptance by some individuals of the clergy. The clergy may have difficulty establishing a meaningful relationship with individuals who make an unfavorable assumption about their age. The clergy may also experience burnout when dealing with congregants who believes that the age of the clergy will determine the level of support they can provide.

The challenge for the clergy is to provide relevant and meaningful ministry to members of all age groups in an effective way and to also provide an environment where members from all age groups can feel comfortable that they can be contributors to the religious and wider community. To accomplish this task may take considerable amount of resources and time. However, because addressing the needs of all congregants is one of the clergy's primary responsibilities, this could lead to burnout as the clergy tries invest much time and energy in addressing the needs of their parishioners.

- **Family of Origin**

Our family of origin will greatly influence our view of the world around us. By family of origin I am referring to the group of persons that someone grows up with. The person would be influenced by the group's ethnicity, nationality, religious background, country of origin, traditions and customs. These unique traits help to shape us into who we are today.

The family of origin will also be the lens through which an individual first see the world. If the family was a one-parent family because of divorce or separation, that younger individual growing up may have a view of divorce as an expected part of every relationship at some point, as opposed to the idea that it does not necessarily have to be the case. Likewise a person growing up in a single parent home may not think it is important to have both parents present in the family, if their single parent grew up in a similar home with a only one parent and lived a successful life.

If your family of origin had some substance abuse issues, nicotine addiction, infidelity or mental health needs, these behaviors could have a negative impact on a young child who has been exposed to these behaviors. It is likely that a child exposed to such behaviors for a long time may result in the child's engagement in such behavior as well. Adult awareness can help the individual not to repeat negative behavior over time. The complexity and nuances of one's family of origin is best described by Bowen (1976). Bowen believed that all members of the family seek closeness and to maintain that closeness and still handle anxiety; they form a triangle. Bowen intentionally used the word triangle rather than triad, to imply his specific meaning and to avoid confusion with other triangular concepts. In describing the triangular relationship, Bowen argued that every person will interact with another human being; when a



child is born that child will first interact with his or her mother or caregiver. The relationship between a child and his/her mother begins before birth. The mutual relationship remains calm until there is stress requiring outside help. The outside helper is the third person who assumes that position in the triangular relationship. The third person's (the outsider) responsibility is to preserve and protect the interest of the inside couple's relationship.

These dynamics when dealing with family of origin for the clergy can be stressful and riddled with anxiety. The clergy oftentimes may assume the third person (outsider) position, but must seek to be objective in his/her contributions to the insider's relationship. The clergy is, therefore, aware that a two-person relationship, according to Bowen, can only exist for as long as there is calm. When stress interrupts the calm of a two-person relationship, at least one outsider is needed to provide some form of intervention with the hope of helping the two persons to discover and maintain calm again in their relationship. The third person forms the triangle for Bowen; however when the stress, tension and anxiety are too much for only one other person to provide adequate intervention, additional triangles are formed. Extended triangles are formed with other professionals such as clergy, police, doctor, nurse, social worker, teacher, therapist, to list some of the more popular ones.

The clergy is often pulled in because of who he/she represents (God). The clergy is expected to provide solutions, bring clarity or maintain calm. Unlike other professionals such as police, doctor, nurse, social worker, teacher and therapist, the clergy because of who he/she represents also is pulled in because he/she is viewed as a long term solution that is unbiased and will address a multiplicity of needs, whereas other professionals may only be able to address one specific need.

- **Personality Type**

When we think of a person's personality, our thoughts take us to what are the unique characteristics of that individual. Allport (1937) describes personality as that unique conglomerate within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determines his characteristics, behavior and thought. Weinberg and Gould (1999) describe personality as the characteristics or mixture of characteristics that make a person unique.

McLeod (2014), highlighting the work of Sigmund Freud, said that "Freud's psychodynamic of personality assumes that there is an interaction between nature (innate instincts) and nurture (parental influence)." (pg. 1) For Freud, personality is a combination of several characteristics: instinctual drives (i.e. food, sex and aggression), the unconscious process and early childhood influence (the psychosexual stages). Personality development depends on the interaction of the instinct and the environment during the first five years of life. The parents' or caregivers' behavior during this time will strongly influence the personality of the child. Freud believed that an adult personality can be traced back to the first five years of life, how that child was treated in terms of food—neglected (did not get food when desired) or over-protected (given too much food when desired).

Freud (1923) described the personality as having three distinct parts: the id, ego and super-ego. The id is the inherent inclination and historical component of the personality. It is comprised of all the inherited (biological components) of the personality, including sex (life), instinct (Eros – which contains the libido) and aggression (death) instinct – Thanatos. The ego is the operating and decision making component of the personality. The super-ego is the part that

includes values and morals from the society. These values and morals learned from one's parents or caregiver.

The clergy has to deal with individuals who have these unique characteristics, influenced from their childhood that may cause them to think and behave based on the early influences of their lives. The individual's current life style may not give any indication to what the first five years of his/her life was like. Therefore the clergy would need to observe each adult closely to determine what the influences may have been that shaped each person's personality. Many may not be aware of these interesting dynamics according to Freud, and may become very stressed and anxious in dealing with certain personalities amongst his/her parishioners.

- **Secondary Trauma and its Effect on Clergy**

Roberts (2012), argues that traumas are among the common scenarios for sudden deaths. Chaplains are often an integral member of the trauma team and are the ones on many occasions to contact the family of the trauma patient. Trauma deaths are usually extremely difficult because they are sudden and disrupt the family emotionally, physically and psychologically. The clergy needs to be sensitive and supportive to the family during trauma. Special care must be taken in how the information about the trauma is communicated to the family. The clergy is usually asked to be with the family soon after their arrival at the hospital. There is often a considerable wait from the time they arrive until they can speak to the doctor who can give them a reliable medical update on their love one, and it is often the chaplain/clergy who is the liaison between the family waiting for updates and the medical team.

Secondary trauma is the negative affect of the exposure to other human beings' trauma, tragedy or suffering. Some of the common symptoms of secondary trauma are fearfulness,

emotional exhaustion, intrusive thoughts, anger, sadness, physical illness, chronic fatigue, shame, and frequent absenteeism from assigned station. These symptoms may become severe and inhibit the professional who works in the field where secondary traumatic stress is common to feel comfortable continuing in the same area of work.

Stamm (1995), speaking about the impact that secondary trauma has on the professional caregiver who is providing care for the traumatized person, says that the work of helping traumatized people during some of the most difficult experiences of their lives is gratifying, even though caregivers are sometimes emotionally and psychologically negatively impacted by these traumas. Professional caregivers realize early in their careers that traumatized people are most grateful for the care and respect shown to them in their pain and suffering. The level of great care that they receive inspires hope in the recovery process that might not have been there if the support and care they receive were not given. Being a professional caregiver, however, can prove to be risky. Caregivers are apt to experience pain as a direct result of their exposure to other people's traumatic experience. Unintentionally and inadvertently, this secondary exposure to trauma may cause caregivers to inflict additional pain, suffering and stress on the originally traumatized person. Stamm says, when this happens a new phenomenon called "compassion fatigue" or "compassion stress" or "secondary traumatic stress," occurs. Secondary traumatic stress is a natural occurrence; it is a predictable, treatable and preventable unwanted consequence of working with suffering people.

One of the areas clergy often find themselves providing service or ministry is with individuals experiencing end of life care. During these times, the clergy finds himself/herself working with the parishioner/patient, family and staff of the facility providing medical and social care to the individual. The level of traumatization is very high during this time by all

the professional caregivers and even higher amongst the family members. The clergy is being exposed to the stress and trauma that all of the aforementioned parties are experiencing, and is expected to provide a sense of peace and calm to a very high concentration of stress and traumatization. This exposure to the stress and trauma that several people are experiencing at the same time can affect the clergy adversely while he/she is attempting to provide care.

### Chapter 3: **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Overview and Research Method**

As I thought about this experiential group of Seventh-day Adventist clergy and their experiences in relation to the subject of burnout, I pondered what would be the more effective research method to extrapolate the wealth of knowledge and experience from my fellow colleagues. I thought of the two basic approaches to determine the method I would employ: qualitative and quantitative. Slevitch, (2011), in discussing the difference between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, says

Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations. It provides insights to the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypothesis for potential quantitative research. Qualitative research is also used to uncover trends in thoughts and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem...Quantitative research is used to quantify the problem by way of generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into useable statistics. It is used to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviors and other defined variables. Quantitative research uses measurable data to formulate facts and uncover patterns in research (pg. 73).

After carefully considering the difference between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, I decided to use the qualitative method for this group. Yalom (2005), in his discussion of what constitute a dynamic group, says that universality of suffering and need is one of the hallmarks. He says the feeling of having similar problems and needs as other group members unite and provides a cohesion that over time creates an impenetrable bond. Another dynamic that fosters a great environment for groups to succeed is altruism. He describes altruism as helping and supporting others in the group. It is the feeling that group members have that they can be vulnerable in the group because they believe that they will be helped and

supported by their fellow group members. Other dynamics involve developing social skills, learning new ways to talk about feelings, observations and concerns. In addition, Yalom suggests that looking closely at recapitulation of family of origin issues and challenges, and identifying and changing the dysfunctional patterns or roles one played in his/her primary family, will provide great insights amongst the group for better understanding and appreciation of each member of the group.

With these features in mind, I plan to use this chapter to develop a twelve-session self-discovery burnout group of Seventh-day Adventist clergy. I chose to run the group over a twelve week period to give the twelve participants what I consider to be sufficient time to share a sufficient portion of their experience with burnout in pastoral ministry. The group will meet once per week for one and a half hours on a day and time agreed to by all group members. Each participant will be encouraged to be as open and vulnerable as they are comfortable being. The group will be reminded that everything shared in the group is done so with the highest level of confidentiality. My first objective will be to recruit members for the group who are willing participants without any external benefits from participating in the group.

### **Recruitment of Potential Candidates**

My purpose is to identify Seventh-day Adventist colleagues that would benefit from being in a burnout recovery group. I will contact colleagues who have been serving for at least two years as a pastor. These colleagues will be both males and females. Contacts will be made using social media, telephone calls, emails, text and face to face conversation. I will also send a formal invitation letter to potential candidates of the group who express interest in becoming a member of the group. Once a participant agrees to be a member of the group, I will send an

acceptance letter thanking each person for their willingness and commitment to be a part of the group. The letter will also include the starting date and time of the group. Each participant will be told that the group is conducted as partial requirement for the Doctor of Ministry degree that I am currently pursuing. Group members will be asked to make a commitment for the duration of twelve weeks, at the end of which time the group will be dissolved. Group members will be asked to sign a consent form to be audio and video taped.

### **Informed Consent Form**

An informed consent form will be sent to each potential participant of the group. The consent form will clearly identify the purpose of the group and the activities and methodologies that will be employed over the duration of the group. Participants will be reminded that they will be audio and or videotaped by me, the facilitator of the group, for the purpose of accuracy in reproducing the information and/or body language that was shared or exhibited. All taped material will be discarded at the end of the twelve-week group process. A copy of the participant's consent form can be found in appendix A, page 101.

### **Confidentiality**

In addition to discarding the taped material at the end of the twelve-week group process, the information shared will be kept in a locked drawer in a locked office that only the group facilitator has access to. For the purpose of the write up of this demonstration project, each participant will be identified by a pseudonym (a fictitious name). The assignment of a name is not a reflection of the participant's intuitiveness and participation in the group. The names will be assigned randomly to protect the privacy of each participant. Group members will be prohibited from audio and video taping or taking notes outside the confines of the group. Group



members, who knew each other prior to the beginning of the group, will be asked to sign an additional consent form that they are willing to participate in the group and to share information that their colleagues might be familiar with or have a point of reference for.

### **Location, Date and Time**

The group will take place via Ovoo for ten of the twelve sessions and at a conference center for the first session and at my church office for the last session. Ovoo is a video conference program that allows twelve participants in different locations to be able to see; speak and interact with each other simultaneously. The hope is to have the first and last sessions at the library and the remaining twelve sessions via the video conference medium of Ovoo.

Participants will be asked to use a private location while they are participating in group to protect each other privacy. All cell phones will be asked to be turned off for the duration of each evening's group session. The group is scheduled to meet on twelve consecutive Tuesday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The group is scheduled to begin the first Tuesday evening in September 2016 and conclude in November 2016. Each participant will be encouraged to honor the agreement of location, date and time agreed upon by all. Accurate attendance of all participants will be kept by me.

In the first session, as facilitator, I will share with the group that they can initiate different forms of activities such as role play of previous experiences that highlight burnout as a teaching and learning exercise. Participants may choose any challenging experiences with the subject of burnout and share the effects these experiences have had on them and the congregations with whom they work. They are also free to share what, if any, activities they utilize to cope with the burnout they experience.

One of the learning goals of this demonstration project is “to uncover and illuminate what things mean to people (McLeod, 2003, pg. 5).” As facilitator of the group, I will be using my empathic listening skills to hear and understand what the experience of burnout is for others. I will not share my opinions or experiences with burnout with the group. My role as facilitator is to create an atmosphere where participants will feel comfortable to share their experiences.

## Chapter 4: **ANALYSIS OF THE TOOLS**

### **Demographics of the Group**

Initially the group was made up of nine men and three women. One of the women was not able to continue after the first week because of a family emergency. I tried replacing her with another female, but was unsuccessful in doing so; therefore, her replacement was a male. Therefore, the composition of the group for the remainder of the sessions was ten men and two women. All participants were of African-American descent and ranged in age from 30 to 75. All members of the group are seminary graduates and have been working as pastors for at least three years and as many as 45 years. Three members of the group have obtained doctorate of ministry degrees and two members are currently pursuing doctorate degrees.

Ten of the twelve members of the group are married and have at least one child. The two remaining members are married, but have do not have any children. The work responsibility of each participant varies. All participants, but one member worked in a multi-pastoral district context for at least four years. Multi-district context refers to having two or more churches to pastor simultaneously. Currently, four members of the group work in a multi-district context; five members work pastoring one church only and one member works as an associate pastor for a large church with membership of approximately 2000, and two members work as administrators in the organization's head office, while pastoring one church respectively simultaneously. All participants are working in the northeastern region of the United States: New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

**Table 1**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b># of Years Pastoring</b>	<b># of Churches Pastoring</b>	<b>Location of Church</b>	<b>Educational Accomplishment</b>
Ruby	45	Female	8	2	Long Island, New York	Master of Divinity Degree
Tyson	59	Male	30	1	Manhattan, New York	Doctorate of Ministry Degree
Cooper	63	Male	33	1	Bronx, New York	Doctorate of Ministry Degree
Pearl	42	Female	15	1	Montclair, New Jersey	Doctorate of Ministry Degree
Zachary	30	Male	3	1	Manhattan, New York	Master of Divinity Degree
Chet	42	Male	6	2	Buffalo, New York	Master of Divinity Degree
Pete	46	Male	20	1	Hartford, Connecticut	Doctorate of Ministry Degree
Silverman	43	Male	17	1	Brooklyn, New York	Bachelor of Arts Degree
Bronzel	62	Male	28	2	Bronx, New York	Master of Divinity Degree
Titano	60	Male	27	1	Bronx, New York	Doctorate of Ministry Degree
Niron	48	Male	12	1	New Rochelle, New York	Doctorate of Ministry Degree
Cedric	75	Male	45	1	Queens, New York	Master of Divinity Degree

**\*All names are pseudonyms**

The group was intentionally designed to have twelve participants of males and females with varied backgrounds and experiences. The objective of having twelve participants is to ascertain a wide-cross section of experience from individuals who dealt with the suffering of burnout. The structure of the group was also intentionally designed without an agenda, because the objective was not to lead or direct the flow of the discussion in each group session, but to allow the participants to share freely the issues that related to their experience with burnout when and how they felt like sharing. It was also intentional that the facilitator of the group refrained

from sharing his personal experience with burnout, and assumed a posture of listening, evaluating and analyzing the information shared from participants in the group. The facilitator's responsibility in this group process was to ensure that the group met at the agreed time and date, and to discuss or share information relevant to the group's experience with the subject of burnout. All of the participants' profiles, pre and post assessments can be found in appendix E.

## Chapter 5

### **Results and Discussion**

#### Group Trends

In this chapter I will be sharing the results of the demonstration group process. I will discuss the demographics of the group and a biographical sketch of each participant. In addition, I will be providing a summary of each of the twelve group sessions.

#### Domination:

I observed in the first group session that there were two participants (Tyson and Cedric) who were the most dominant participants in the group. Cedric spoke eloquently and at length about his many years as a clergy and the vast experience he has with being ill-treated by superiors in pastoral ministry that led to severe burnout and frustrations over his forty years of service. This trend of sharing lengthy experiences on almost all the issues shared in the group continued for the duration of the group. At times he would take the time to give advice and suggestions to other participants of the group even if it was not requested of him or warranted.

I reminded the group of the agreed time of ninety minutes per session, and that it is more beneficial for as many participants as possible to share their experiences. I also encouraged all the participants to hold each other accountable, so that most of the time would not be manipulated by one or two individuals. Everyone agreed that they would be more mindful of the time they take to share their experiences, so that others can have the opportunity to share as well.

During the second group session, Cedric began sharing his experience about unmet expectations that a large number of the churches that he pastored had of him. He spoke about how unrealistic the expectations were that the members of his congregations had; and he took

considerable time to defend his position of not multi-tasking and doing other things that would have satisfied his congregation's expectations of him.

I noticed that the participants were once again allowing an individual to dominate the group by taking a long time to share his experience. I asked the group what was hindering them from holding each other accountable as they agreed to during the last session. One person responded that they were trying to be patient and polite. I asked the other participants to reflect on the question I asked.

Tyson was also another dominant personality throughout the duration of the group sessions. Tyson's dominance of the group oftentimes manifested itself in his sharing his "expert" advice and suggestions with his fellow participants. He oftentimes referred to something he learned in one of his Doctor of Ministry classes or from a book he read, that he has applied personally and claimed to have seen tremendous results. Tyson did not share much about himself and the challenges he had with burnout, but he gave lots of advice and suggestions to his fellow participants. I believe that his self-reference as an expert and his reference to other experts on a particular subject became overwhelming at times for the group as they sighed and made comments like, "Okay, let's move on."

During the third group session, the group discussed the issue of conflict and the impact it has on the clergy, which oftentimes may lead to severe burnout. Tyson took the opportunity to inform everyone that his doctoral studies dealt with the subject of conflict. He referred to himself as an expert in the field of conflict resolution and began to share his knowledge on the subject of conflict to his fellow participants. However, he was asked by Niron to share briefly so that others would have an opportunity to share.

Conformity:

It became apparent as I listened to the discussions and the back and forth dialogue between participants, that there were some participants who seemed willing to quickly abandon their original positions and opinions on a particular topic and just went along with the position or opinion of the majority of the group. This display of conformity was evident throughout the duration of the twelve group sessions. The two female clergy (Pearl and Ruby), as well as the youngest and least experienced of the male clergy (Zachary), were the ones who oftentimes conformed to the rest of the group. I reminded the group that everyone had a right to their opinion, and that each person's experience in pastoral ministry brings a unique quality to the group, that everyone may benefit from.

During the fifth group session, there was an extensive discussion on financial remuneration and the significant impact it has on the suffering of burnout amongst many clergy. Pearl, Ruby and Zachary felt that if clergy managed their finances more efficiently, money would not be such a stressor for clergy. This opinion was quickly dismissed by the older and more experienced clergy in the group. The older and more experienced clergy's opinion was that clergy were not being compensated at fair market rate as other professionals in the caregiving and religious organization. As more participants chimed in agreeing with the sentiments of inadequate compensation is the root cause of financial burnout amongst clergy, those who had a different opinion, quickly abandoned their position. Once again, I reminded the group of the benefit of listening to different positions on any issue that is being discussed.



### Group Blockers:

During the twelve-week group session, the participants got to know each other better. They reported that they did not speak with each other as much as they did outside of the group prior to their participation in the group. As they got to know each other better, they also took great liberty with each other as the group progressed. It became clear to me that from about the fourth group session there were individuals who had assumed various “blocking” roles in the group. The Mind Editorial Team (2017), says that blocking happens when a participant in the group behaves in a way that disrupts the flow of information in the group (pg.1). Some of the participants in this burnout group adopted various blocking roles such as the following:

### The Aggressors:

By aggressor, I am referring to the person(s) in the group who oftentimes disagrees with others, or is inappropriately outspoken in the group. During the group sessions there were two participants who embodied the idea of the aggressors in the group. These two individuals were Pete and Chet. On one occasion Pete not only disagreed with Chet, but also questioned his ability and efficiency as a clergy.

I reminded Pete and Chet that the group welcomes different opinions, and that everyone has a right to his/her opinion. Pete insisted that he has facts to support his argument, and that Chet did not have facts to support his argument. I asked Pete and Chet to refrain from debating with each other, and I encouraged the other participants not to allow the group to be hijacked by one or two individuals.

Chet was often very outspoken and critical of others who did not share his opinions in the group. On one occasion when the group was discussing how clergy are oftentimes treated with

little respect today, Chet was very passionate in his remarks about the disrespect that he is confronted with on a regular basis from his community, parishioners, colleagues and supervisors. He was very blunt in describing many of his colleagues and supervisors as idiots, and that he is amazed that they are still working in pastoral ministry.

#### The “Negators”:

By “Negators”, I am referring to group members who are often very critical of others’ ideas. There was one participant (Titano) in the group that I would describe as a “Negator”. Titano was very critical of other group participants who did not experience severe loss in pastoral ministry thus far. He commented that clergy that have not yet experienced severe loss of a loved one or property, do not have true “war stories” of burnout and suffering yet in ministry to share. Titano was also very critical of group participants who were fortunate to have received scholarships to attend school and hired immediately after graduation from the seminary. He argues that clergy, who are blessed to get what they want when they want, sometimes do not appreciate the opportunity and the privilege of being a pastor.

I reminded Titano that everyone’s experience is not the same, and that making judgments about others who do not have similar experiences like his, may not be fair and beneficial to the group.

#### The Withdrawers:

As the term suggests, the ‘withdrawer’ is the group participant who does not participate in most of the discussion in the group. Niron was the group participant who can be identified as a withdrawer. He seldom participated in group discussion, but reportedly has a good relationship with all the participants in the group. There were times during the group sessions that his fellow

participants would check in to find out if he was feeling fine or still “with us.” He would often respond by saying, “I’m just listening” or “I am a good listener.”

I reminded Niron of the benefit he is to the group when he shares his experiences with the group. Pearl added that she would like to hear him share his opinions on what others have said.

### The Jokers:

The joker is that person that introduces humor at the most inappropriate times during the group. In the group there were two participants (Zachary and Pearl) whom I would describe as “the jokers.” On one occasion, Cedric was sharing with the group that he was in an accident and Zachary’s comment was that at his age he may need to “hire a chauffeur to drive him around especially since he has all that money in the bank doing nothing with it.” A few of the group members responded to Zachary’s comment as being “a bit insensitive.” I asked Zachary to reflect on the comment he made to determine if he had issues with getting older or people who are old. He quickly apologized to Cedric and said he was only joking.

On another occasion the group was discussing the challenge of multi-tasking and the severe burnout that it oftentimes leads to, when Pearl commented that as a woman she is able to do several things at the same time and do them well, “but most men cannot walk and chew gum at the same time.” Some of the male participants in the group laughed, but others challenged her on generalizing and minimizing the issue of multi-tasking as a severe cause of burnout.

I once again, reminded the group to refrain from making generalizations and passing judgments about others. I asked those who laughed to carefully reflect on their reason for laughing and those who challenged her, to reflect on the reason they were offended by her comments.

## Responses to Survey Questions and Reactions during Group Sessions

Nine of the twelve participants attended the group for twelve consecutive weeks. All participants were given a survey to fill out prior to the beginning of the first group session.

Table #2

Questions	Responses
Do you believe it is of great importance for the clergy to develop honest expectation of himself/herself and his/her congregation?"	All twelve participants answered yes, that they strongly agreed to this question. However, during the course of the group sessions, it was discovered that at least three of the participants shared that they may need to revisit some of the expectations they had prior to the beginning of their current pastorate.
Do you believe that clergy should develop a self-assessment wellness audit to determine his/her areas of strength and weakness?"	Seven of the twelve participants responded that they strongly agreed to this question, three participants answered that they agreed and two participants reported that they were not sure. During session four when the group's focus was on self-care needs of the pastor, it was unanimously agreed by all participants that a self-assessment wellness audit would be an important and useful tool to assist the pastor in recognizing strength and weakness and the impact both could have on his/her self-care needs.
Do you believe it is of great importance for all clergy to have great conflict resolution skills?"	Ten of the twelve participants responded that they strongly agreed to this question and two participants responded that they agreed. The subject of conflict resolution was discussed several times in several of the group sessions and the general consensus was that conflict resolution skills are a tremendous asset for all leaders including pastors.
Do you believe it is important for the clergy to have similar values mirroring the church that he/she works for?	Nine participants responded that they strongly agreed and three disagreed with the question. During session nine of the group sessions when the group discussed the subject of the pastor and the profession, it was discussed that when the pastor's value, passion and dedication is not similar to those whom he serve, the results are usually overwhelming difficult and challenging to accomplish goals.
Do you believe it's important for the clergy to know, understand and honor the institutional values and priorities of the church he/she is working with?	All participants answered that they strongly agreed with this question. The subject of understanding and sharing similar views and beliefs with the hiring institution is priceless. This consensus was shared by the entire group in many of the discussions conducted in the sessions.
Do you believe that a relationship of mutual covenant of respect and mission between clergy and parishioners is more effective than an employee to employer relationship?	Five participants responded that they strongly agreed, three participants responded that they agreed, two participants said they were not sure and two participants said they disagreed. During session seven when the theme for that evening's group was "Making Disciplinary Decision," the participants discussed the importance of having mutual respect between clergy and parishioners. Some participants argued that the clergy should be given the benefit of the doubt when it comes to making key decisions as the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the church. After much discussion of the respect that is necessary to facilitate an effective relationship between parishioners and clergy, the general consensus of the group was that it is more effective to have a mutual covenant of respect and mission between clergy

	and parishioners than an employee to employer relationship.
Do you believe that the clergy has a responsibility to address his/her physical and mental health needs appropriately so that he/she can provide effective ministry to parishioners?"	All twelve parishioners responded that they strongly agreed that all clergy should address their health care needs appropriately. This sentiment was also re-echoed during sessions four and eight respectively, "Self-care needs" and "Vacation and Down-Time." Participants also expressed that addressing their physical and mental health care needs are the areas that they need the most support in and the area that they are often most resistant to receive or embrace by appropriately addressing in meaningful ways.
Do you believe it was necessary for clergy to establish an ethical decision model that is to be used to analyze a given situation that will lead to a final decision?	Seven of the participants responded that they agreed, two responded that they are not sure and three responded that they disagreed. During session three, "Conflicts," the subject of how to respond to conflicts in an effective way, participants discussed the importance of having an established conflict resolution model that is used without partiality to address conflicts. The general consensus at the end of the session was that it would be more helpful to have an established an ethical model than not to have one when addressing conflicts.
Do you believe that it is in the best interest of the clergy and the congregation that the clergy is reassigned to a new congregation to avoid burnout after four to five years?	Four participants responded that they strongly agreed, four said they agreed and four said they disagreed. During session number ten, "Success-How Do You Measure it?" the subject of the importance of time to achieve success was discussed. While some participants expressed that they felt like after four to five years a clergy should be able to measure some areas of success or failures, others believed that there are some projects that require much longer time than four to five years to achieved long term success. At the end of the session the group was still divided approximately 50% for and against on the impact of time that leads to burnout and success.
Do you believe that if a clergy is suffering from burnout, is it ever necessary for the clergy to change profession and pursue another profession?"	Five participants responded that they strongly agreed, six said they agreed and one person said not sure. During session eleven, "It Gets Very Lonely Sometimes," participants discussed that having a lot to do with little or no support oftentimes lead to exhaustion and burnout amongst clergy. Some participants expressed that they felt strongly that after several years of pastoral ministry, it may be beneficial for clergy to explore other areas of pastoral ministry to avoid burnout. Some participants expressed that with the appropriate interventions to address the suffering of burnout, clergy should be able to continue serving in pastoral ministry for as long as they choose to. The group was divided on the subject of exploring other professions because of burnout.

## **Analysis of Factors that Contribute to Burnout**

Earlier on in this project, I listed several factors that I believe commonly contribute to burnout. During the twelve weeks group sessions I had an opportunity to receive feedback from the participants of the group on the effects that these aforementioned factors and their contribution to burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventist clergy, amongst others.

- **Clergy overseeing multiple “non-pastoral” projects such as building and other `infrastructural projects.**

Seven of the twelve participants in the group reported that they were currently overseeing multiple “Non-pastoral projects.” The other five participants reported that they have overseen ‘non-pastoral” projects in the last two years. All twelve participants described these projects to be building renovation and purchase of a new property. The participants described these projects as very time consuming and severely stressful. One participant reported that he felt like he was the chairman of the fundraising committee, because he spent more time planning to raise funds, than time spent preparing for sermons. One participant reported that the financial demands were so great, that he became more focused on raising a certain amount of money each week, than preparing to address the spiritual needs of the church. Some participants reported that their success is often measured by the building projects they accomplished, rather than the spiritual leadership they provided to their respective churches.

- **Clergy dealing with congregational conflicts**

All twelve clergy reported that they had to address several conflicts each year amongst parishioner and sometimes amongst themselves and congregants. Some of the participants shared that the most difficult conflicts that they had to recover from were the ones that directly

involved them. Other participants reported that having to deal with congregational conflict can be a major source of distraction and discouragement amongst the entire congregation and others as well. The participants of the group overwhelmingly, shared their opinion that dealing with congregational conflict is one of the most stressful experiences in all of their church life. Some participants also shared that sometimes congregational conflicts are so difficult and wide-spread that they oftentimes require the involvement of their supervisors or other third party to bring about resolution.

- **Clergy having to deal with issues of transferences with congregants: eg. God-like figure, object of sexual desire, ideal man/woman.**

All of the participants reported that they've experienced transference, countertransference, induced countertransference, objective countertransference and subjective countertransference issues while working with congregants. They reported that these experiences helped them to become more aware of their true feelings, biases, prejudices and vulnerabilities.

With reference to transference, the participants are referring to any inappropriate repetition in the present of a relationship that was important in a person's past, usually childhood. By countertransference the participants are speaking of any positive or negative reactivity to transference by a parishioner. When referring to induced countertransference the participants are speaking about feelings that arose during interactions with parishioners that don't have anything to do with the history. This is something that happens in the moment during a counseling session or dialogue with a parishioner. In speaking about objective countertransference, the participants are referring to an understandable reaction to that which the parishioner presents during a dialogue. This is considered as a natural response that most people would have if they were

presented with the same information or presentation. With reference to subjective countertransference, the participants are referring to a particular or unique reaction that the clergy has towards what is presented. This reactivity may be as a result of a transference issue that the clergy may have.

Five of the twelve participants reported that they had to deal with issues of transference with congregants. They shared experiences they had with parishioners who had marital issues that were traced back to family of origin, where the husbands treated their wives in a demeaning servitude manner, which is ruining a current relationship. Parishioners reported that they can remember from a child seeing their fathers treating or making certain demands of their mothers. These male parishioners also shared their inappropriate behavior with girls from when they were young children, stating that they saw them as lesser and treated them as such.

The participants reported that having to deal with some issues of transference creates major issues of burnout because of the large number of cases they have to deal with and the long length of time they often take to come to some form of resolution. Some of the participants reported that issues of transference sometimes cause the church to become stagnant and saturated with dissension, because of the ill feelings that oftentimes exist as a result of varied forms of transference amongst parishioners.

Seven of the participants reported that they had to deal with issues of countertransference on several occasions with parishioners. They reported that in most cases they had a negative reactivity to the transference by parishioners. In many of the examples shared in the group, the issues of countertransference experienced by the participants were inappropriate sexual conduct.



The participants reported that these inappropriate sexual behaviors were from parishioners who were in struggling or failing marital relationships.

Four of the participants shared that they experienced induced countertransference in counseling session with parishioners. One participant reported that he had to end a counseling session abruptly because he was so physically attracted to the parishioner, that he was unable to concentrate. Another participant reported that she became angry at a parishioner for touching her hands during the counseling session. These participants reported that having to deal with these issues of induced countertransference from time to time with parishioners creates severe burnout because they often have no one with whom to share these incidents.

All twelve participants reported that they have experienced objective countertransference very often in their everyday dealing with parishioners. They reported that when something happens and their natural reaction is crying, parishioners are oftentimes so affected by that, that they either see it as weakness or develop a closer bond with the clergy because of the heartfelt demonstration of vulnerability as a human.

- **Clergy having to provide pastoral ministry to multiple congregations**

All twelve participants reported unanimously that one of the main sources of stress and anxiety which led to their experience of burnout having to pastor multiple congregations simultaneously. The participants reported that they are not able to provide multiple congregations with the time, energy and other resources necessary to lead multiple congregations to their full potential in effective ministry. They shared that not only are the churches suffering, but they also suffer a lot by trying to address all of the needs of multiple congregations

simultaneously. They reported that the extensive travel to meetings, to oversee projects and to multiple worship services takes a toll on them physically and emotionally

- **Clergy having to deal with multiple expectations and demands from congregants and upper church administrations.**

Having to deal with multiple expectations and demands from congregants and upper church administrators, have proven to be another major source of suffering that leads to burnout amongst clergy. Several of the participants in the group reported that many of the expectations and demands that their congregants have of them are unrealistic and sometimes inappropriate. These unrealistic expectations by congregants influenced them to have a distorted list of priorities that did not achieve the most essential goals that they were hoping to accomplish. Participants shared that the most stressful expectations that they had to address were those from upper church administrations. These expectations were difficult because of the lack of or limited resources provided by upper church administration to the pastors to achieve goals set by those in upper leadership of the church. Participants discussed the overwhelming stress and anxiety that these unrealistic expectations caused for them as their next church assignments are based on whether or not these expectations were satisfied. Several of the participants shared that their concerns for their next assignments are not just based on the size of the church they are asked to pastor, but on the location that may require them having to move hundreds of miles away.

## **Implications of the Theological Principles**

### **Participants Faith in God for Endurance During Difficulties**

All twelve participants expressed that their faith in God remains constant during times of extreme difficulties. They shared that it is their faith in God that has helped them to endure the pain and suffering that they have experienced in pastoral ministry over the past several years. Some participants expressed that they believe suffering and pain are sometimes God's way of refining their faith in Him through difficulties. Others expressed that they believe that there is a great teaching and learning experience from going through difficulties.

The participants said that they believe God allowed them to go through the difficult experiences in pastoral ministry to prepare them for a greater good in the future and to become greater pastors. One participant (Bronzel) stated that he believes that faith in God during difficulties is to believe that God provides the physical, emotional and psychological strength needed to endure a situation rather than God changing the situation. Another participant (Niron) added that faith in God, ultimately, is to believe that God will always act in our own best interest, even if He allows suffering and pain.

### **Participants Expectations of God**

Participants' expectations of God were mixed. Some participants reported that they are not sure what to expect from God or what their expectations should be. They believed that God in His sovereignty will do what He chooses to do regardless of their expectations are; and that they can only hope that what God does will satisfy their expectations. One participant who shared this opinion reasoned that he used to have great expectations from God to do things on his behalf when he is going through severe suffering and difficulties, but when God did not respond

the way he wanted Him to, he believed that God in His sovereignty knows what is best for him to receive.

Other participants shared that their expectations of God are based on their previous experiences with God when they went through difficulties and sufferings. They believed that based on God's previous action and their relationship with Him, God will act in their favor at the appropriate time. They believe that God will alleviate the suffering and difficulties that they are currently experiencing. Their expectations reminds me of the expectation of the Psalmist in the midst of trouble and difficulties who called out to God in confidence in Psalms 46:1 and 2 (King James Version), "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." They argued that it is only a matter of time before their expectations are met. These participants who share this view also believe that suffering is a natural occurrence in the life of a believer in God; and God promises to all believers is that He will deliver, save and or set free at the appropriate time.

There were also participants whose expectation of God is to relieve them from the suffering and difficulties that they are experiencing. They reported that they have been praying for God to change their situation by removing them from their current work context or change those who have the power to create these difficult situations for them. Their expectations for relief from suffering is synonymous with the prophet Habakkuk asking God in Habakkuk 1:2 (King James Version) "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry unto thee of violence, and thou will not save!" These participants believe they are suffering unfairly and are desperately in need of divine intervention. They are disappointed that their situation has not yet changed. These participants are echoing the sentiments of Pruyser (1976) who argues that

“troubled persons are understandably upset with about the ratio of good-will and ill-will that comes their way...they typically asked the question: why me? What have I done to deserve this?”

## Chapter 6:

### **Conclusion**

#### Group Dynamics

As I began working with this group of twelve of my Seventh-day Adventist colleagues, I was not sure what to expect or what my learning goals should be. Although we have so much in common, I was opened to also discovering the differences amongst us. In addition, I wanted to find out what I would learn about myself from working with this unique group. I decided that I would try to seize every learning opportunity as I journeyed along for the twelve sessions.

One of the first things I learned from the group was that good group dynamics begins with good relationships between individuals and within the group as a whole. I discovered that having constructive relationships of mutual respect and understanding for each other is extremely important for the success of the group. I believe that constructive relationships helped all the participants of the group to express themselves openly, and created an atmosphere where the participants were comfortable to be vulnerable with each other. I learned that strong constructive relationships take time to build, and because most of the participants in the group knew each other for many years prior to the group, it made it easier for the group to have a constructive relationship from almost the onset of the group.

I also learned that it is important to have productive relationships as well. Productive relationships helped the group to focus on the essential issues being discussed and to find ways to address those issues appropriately. By identifying possible pitfalls that may hinder good group dynamics, participants can combat the effects and develop a more productive and successful group. Having group members who are committed to addressing the issues as they come up helps the group to manage the time effectively and move the group forward. I became aware of

the importance of creating a structure in the group that gives all participants an opportunity to share and be directly involved, or run the risk of having one or two individuals dominating the group. This group lacked that structure, and therefore gave room for a few individuals to dominate.

Another element of the group that I learned was of great importance was establishing clearly the goal of the group. Before the group began, all of the participants were told the goal of the group. This proved to be very helpful when, for instance, someone from the group deviated from the goal of discussing the amelioration of burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventist clergy, someone else was able to clearly articulate that the goal was not being addressed by the comments that were made.

In this group I functioned as the facilitator and did not share my personal experience with the group. The group would have benefited from a strong leader to provide direction and authority. With strong leadership present in the group, the group would have remained focused on the goal more often and spent less time distracted by non-essential issues. Having strong leadership in the group would also reduce the effects of the blockers in the group. Strong leadership in the group would have also helped to prevent group members from “free riding.” Free riders are those group members who make little or no contribution to the group at any given time. I have learned that it is also important to have clearly defined roles for each participant in the group. This group did not have a clearly defined role for each or any individual. Hence, group members did what they felt like doing.

I have also learned from the group that burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventists clergy has some similarities, but also has some differences. Some of those similarities include:

- i. The frequent reassignment from one congregation to the next that sometimes results in relocation of family and moving away from friends and other colleagues. All twelve participants in the group cited frequent moving away as the number one thing that they have no control over that creates considerable burnout. The clergy reported that if when they are reassigned they were also told how long they would be serving at their new churches, they would be able to make the necessary preparation for their next assignment. However, because they are not told and can be told at any time that they have been reassigned, this causes tremendous stress and burnout.

I must admit that, as a Seventh-day Adventist clergy, I share the concerns of my colleagues that this system of reassignment causes burnout not only in me, but also stresses my family. I believe that the system of assignment and reassignment of Seventh-day Adventist clergy to churches is one that I would strongly encourage the Seventh-day Adventist church administration to consider revising. There is absolutely more to lose than to gain if the church's administrative body continues to do assignments and reassignments the same way it is currently done.

- ii. Another area of great concern for Seventh-day Adventist clergy that is causing burnout is financial remuneration. This is another matter that the clergy themselves has no control over. In spite of the size, location or financial revenue of the congregation, the clergy salary remains the same. This is the second most stressful thing about the job of the Seventh-day Adventist clergy as reported by the group.



I believe that if clergy are not compensated equitably based on the magnitude of the responsibility they have been given, they will be forced to find other means of income that may take away from their primary responsibility of pastoring the church. To be expected to do more for the same salary as those who are doing less, will cause ill feelings amongst clergy and low productivity as well. The work of the clergy, if not managed carefully, can lead to burnout, even when the clergy believes that he/she is being compensated fairly. Hence, more work without equitable compensation will lead to burnout even faster.

- iii. In the group there were some clergy who differed from their fellow colleagues when it came to the issue of multi-tasking and the burnout that it may cause. Seven of the twelve participants reported that multi-tasking did not represent their top concerns of issues that may cause burnout, while five of the participants reported that multi-tasking has severely caused burnout for them. Those who said that multi-tasking was a major factor for burnout reported that they were doing things that took away their focus from basic pastoral responsibility such as sermon preparation, and had to shift their focus on issues that were too time consuming like building repairs and construction.

I believe that the Seventh-day Adventist church administration needs to provide their local churches with more specialized expertise so that the clergy can remain faithful to the end. Sometimes clergy are multi-tasking with responsibilities with which they have very limited experience. Hence, multi-tasking in such cases can become tremendously time consuming and overwhelming for the clergy.

- iv. Another area of concern where some of the clergy participating in the group shared mixed reviews on the extent to which they experience burnout was with regard to congregational conflicts. There were some clergy who reported that this was not a great cause for burnout for them because they oftentimes did not get directly involved or they did referrals as needed to address conflicts.

I believe it is important for clergy to intervene in congregational conflicts.

However, I think that it is important for the clergy not to be engaged in long-term conflict resolution with parishioners. It is important for clergy to make referrals or ask a third party to intervene in conflicts when necessary to minimize the burnout that he/she may experience.

## Chapter 7:

### **Personal Reflection**

#### Reflection on the Group Process

The group process was a challenging, yet a rewarding experience for me. I did not anticipate having such a great challenge working with my colleagues in a group. I had to make several calls, send emails and text messages weekly to ensure consistent attendance weekly. Participants would say oftentimes that something came up and they are not sure if they would be able to participate from one week to the next. I had to constantly remind participants of the importance of consistent participation in the group for me to hear and learn from their experiences, while fulfilling partial fulfillment of my Doctor of Ministry project.

Participants sometimes asked if the date and time could be changed some weeks to accommodate their busy schedule; and I had to remind each participant weekly of the commitment that was made prior to the start of the group. The starting time of the group was a challenge most weeks. There were some participants that called in late to every group session, despite the constant reminder of the importance of the group starting and ending on time. There were times when some participants wanted the group to continue after the agreed end time, which caused some anxieties for other members of the group who had other obligations that were time sensitive.

Another challenge that I was faced with as facilitator of the group was constantly reminding participants of the importance of the confidentiality of the group. Group participants would call in to participate in the group while they were not in an area that was private and secured. One of the disadvantages of having a group that meets via teleconference is that it is difficult to ensure that participants are honoring the privacy and confidentiality of the group. In

addition, not having the opportunity to see facial expression and body-language was also a missing dynamic of the group.

The group experience was also rewarding, many of the participants spoke freely and reported that they were more comfortable especially for the first five sessions of the group speaking via telephone than if they were in the same space with others whom they did not know. The information shared by the participants was insightful, supportive and enlightening to all in attendance. I learned coping skills to deal with burnout from listening to each participant sharing their stories on various subjects that led to or influenced burnout in their pastoral ministry. I recognized from going through the group process the importance of supporting and encouraging other clergy to find some kind of objective support team to assist us in ministry. I appreciate the fact that while support may not physically change a situation, it may change one's attitude towards a situation, making it more manageable to deal with.

The participants of the group appeared to be genuinely concerned about each other. Whenever someone was late or was missing from the group, there was a concerted effort by those present to do whatever was at their disposal to be done to assist their colleagues. There were times when the group stopped to pray for missing members of the group. The relationship between the all the clergy seemed to be genuine care, respect and admiration.

The title that was given to each group session was assigned by me (the facilitator) at the end of the session. The titles were determined based on the central theme that was discussed in each group session respectively. The facilitator did not choose a topic to assign it to the group for discussion at any time or on any occasion.

### Reflection on My Journey in the Doctor of Ministry Program

As I began my journey in the Doctor of Ministry program three years ago, I was excited to learn more about the art, skills and other nuances of pastoral counseling. I wanted to be a more effective pastor and counselor to my parishioners; I also wanted to be able to make a meaningful and tangible difference in the lives of the people I serve. However, I did not realize how much I would learn about myself in the process. I learned, as I looked introspectively, about my biases, prejudices and tendencies. As I became more aware of these personal traits, I soon realized that owning and acknowledging that these traits exist were important as I work with others, as opposed to denying their existence. I did not realize that as I got more immersed into the program that I would be challenged to take a much deeper introspective look at myself, my family of origin, my religious beliefs and faith tradition. The discoveries of the impact of these factors on the person I am have been astounding. The journey in the Doctor of Ministry program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion opened up my mind's horizon to thoughts and feelings about me that I strongly believe would not otherwise be explored at this time in my life.

One of the concepts that has impacted me the most is the examination of my personal theology versus my religious tradition's belief system. I discovered that there are several personal theological views and beliefs that I have that my religious tradition do not necessarily embrace. My personal theology on Christian dress and deportment, for example, differs from my religious traditions theological view. While I believe in the principle of modesty in dress (a very relative terminology), I do not believe that wearing of ornaments and jewelry have any bearing on a person's spirituality, as my religious tradition believes.

Another concept that I appreciated as I journeyed through the Doctor of Ministry program is the impact and understanding of the role and value of my family of origin. I discovered that who I am today has been shaped largely by my family of origin. When I was introduced to the concept of family of origin and the impact it has on individuals, I was somewhat skeptical about the relevance of family of origin. However, I am totally convinced that a person's family of origin has more meaning and significance on a person than I was willing to admit. This reality has helped me to better understand my tendencies, strengths and weaknesses, as well as my world view. I have learned that my likes and dislikes, feelings and views about the world around me has been largely affected by my family of origin. Family of origin has a direct impact on the things that I do and the choices that I make.

As my journey in the Doctor of ministry program is nearing its end, I was given the opportunity to write this demonstration project reflecting on my learning as I journeyed through the program. I decided to write a project that I could relate to from personal experience as a Seventh day-Adventist pastor. I chose the suffering of burnout, because of the nature and work-culture of a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. While I agree that burnout is not unique only to Seventh-day Adventist pastors, I believe that it is oftentimes more prevalent among Seventh-day Adventist pastors because of the fluidity and structure of the working policy of Seventh-day Adventists church organization. The working policy allows frequent transfers and limited resources to provide support and assistance to clergy. It is a common practice for one pastor to be pastoring up to four churches simultaneously in the United States of America and Canada, with the ratio even greater in the West Indies, Africa and other parts of the world. Therefore, my objective in this project is to examine the suffering of burnout by discussing its ideology and amelioration from both a clinical and spiritual perspectives.

When I decided to facilitate a group of twelve Seventh-day Adventists clergy for twelve weeks to examine the suffering of burnout, I did not imagine that even the process of setting up a group would be so challenging and difficult at times. Getting twelve colleagues who would be willing to participate in this group was a major challenge. Many of those I contacted said that they were not able to make a commitment for twelve weeks, even though they understood that they would benefit from being a participant. It was very frustrating for me at times trying to find twelve people to participate; however, I was eventually able to do so. After explaining the protocol of how the group would be conducted, including asking each participant to read and sign a consent form (Appendix A), several of the group participants did not return their consent form as requested by me by the first group session. On the date of the first session five of the participants gave reasons why they were not able to return their consent form as requested. My initial response was disappointment and frustration. I wanted the group to get started with everything in place. I believe I experienced objective countertransference at the beginning of that first session.

As the subsequent sessions progressed, there were several times when I experienced objective countertransference and countertransference as several participants shared their stories of lack of support from supervisors and limited resources to perform the job they are asked to do. I had to remind myself several times that I am the facilitator of the group, as I was tempted to share my story and opinion, because I can relate so much to the participants' experiences. I felt the frustration and anger that they were experiencing, but I also felt supported and encouraged to hear the stories. I can relate to the lack of support and limited resources, yet the expectation of my superiors was for me to not only finish an assignment, but to finish it well. I can remember instances of being treated as the God-like figure by parishioners, who believed I could do no

wrong and was the most ideal man they have ever met. I can relate to the experience of projective identification that many of the participants in the group experienced.

Projective identification involves the use of the mechanisms of splitting, projection, and identification. I've experienced parishioners employing the defense mechanism of splitting in an ongoing effort to keep me as their "good internal object" (the loving parts of the self) separate and safe from the "bad internal objects" (the aggression-filled parts of self). As I listened to the interaction of the participants of the group, I found myself nodding my head in agreement or shaking my head in disagreement as they dialogued about their experiences with parishioners. I believe I was sometimes the "good internal object" for my parishioners at times and "bad internal object" at other times for the same parishioners.

I believe I was sensitively aware of my countertransference experiences. I believe that my training in the Doctor of Ministry program, my prior training in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), my experience as a pastor for almost 20 years and my family of origin contributed to my development of awareness of countertransference. As the group's facilitator, I believe I was able to employ my countertransference to gain an emotional understanding of the participants of the group. That is, I allowed myself to participate emotionally in the dialogue presented by the participants each session. I heard and appreciated their vulnerability to share how they were feeling as a result of the suffering of burnout they were experiencing. I shared many of the feelings of frustration, anger, disappointment and even abandonment. I recognized that I was allowing myself to be influenced by the participants of the group, but I was aware of my emotional participation in the group.

As I allowed myself to participate emotionally during the group process, I must admit that several of my inner parts were also engaged in the process. Richard Schwartz (2000), in the



approach to psychotherapy called The Internal Family System (IFS) Model, suggests that we have these inner parts that protect us, manage, critique and feel humiliated and guilty at different times. As I listened to the experiences of suffering that several of my colleagues shared, I noticed that the protective parts of me kept on reminding me that in spite of the hurt and pain that I have experienced in the past, I would be well protected and safe. I was able to identify closely with my colleagues. Their stories and experiences influenced the parts in me to critically look at myself with a feeling of self-pity for allowing myself to go through the suffering that I have experienced thus far in pastoral ministry.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Consent to Participate in Burnout Support Group**

#### **Purpose:**

Burnout support group is a partial fulfillment of a demonstration project to satisfy the Doctor of ministry degree program at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. The purpose of this project is to determine the psycho-spiritual beliefs that can assist clergy who are affected by the sufferings of burnout as a result of fulfilling their responsibilities in pastoral ministry.

#### **Procedure:**

The Burnout support group will meet for twelve sessions on Tuesday evenings at 6:30-8:00pm. The participants will be able to share their views and experiences on any aspect of the subject of burnout. Participants will be allowed to role-play or demonstrate their experiences or view for the purpose of clarity in sharing information with other group members. All participants will be asked to meet twice (at the first and last sessions) face to face and on the internet via oovo streaming for 10 sessions.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The information shared in the group will only be used for the purpose of satisfying the requirement of the demonstration project for the Doctor of Ministry degree. The names of participants will not be used; pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names. All participants will be asked to protect the privacy of the group by using a safe, secure space free from outside influence during the time of the group.

### Financial Obligation

There will be no cost requirement for participation in the group. Participants are asked to travel to the two face to face meeting sites using their own monies. Monies used for travel will not be refunded by the facilitator. The information shared in the group will only be used to satisfy the partial requirement of the facilitator's Doctor of Ministry Degree program. The information and any part thereof, will not be used for any financial gain by the facilitator of the group or the school he's attending.

### Voluntary Participation

All participants are asked to volunteer their time and knowledge to the group. Participants are asked to participate in the group without duress and can withdraw from the group at any time without penalty. All participants are asked to share their experience with burnout; all other information shared is left up to the discretion of the participant.

### Consent Form

By signing this document you are agreeing that you've read and understand the information listed above; and that you are willing to be a participant of this burnout support group for twelve sessions, beginning Tuesday, September 6<sup>th</sup> –Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Email address of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Operational Terms

In this project there are some terms that I will be using frequently as I address the suffering of burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventist clergy and proposed interventions after facilitating a group of Seventh-day Adventist clergy for twelve weeks dealing with the said issue.

•**Burnout** – a group of work related signs of physical and emotional exhaustion accompanied by certain physiological changes. These changes are usually manifested as symptoms of anxiety, extreme weakness, frustration, irritability, apathy or fatigue.

•**Seventh-day Adventist** – A Christian group of people whose doctrinal beliefs include observation of the seventh day of the week as the required day of worship according to the Biblical text, and looking forward to the second advent of Jesus Christ.

•**Clergy** – Male and female employed as pastor, bishop, rabbi or priest to a religious organization.

•**Stress** – the emotional pressure experience by an individual in an unpleasant and difficult situation.

•**Suffering** – the physical, psychological or psycho-social pain experienced by an individual.

•**Intervention** – the provision of a method to provide relief for those suffering as a result of burnout.

•**Trauma** – emotional or physical wound

•**Secondary Trauma** – The psychological wound experienced by someone exposed to the trauma of another person.

## Appendix C

### Participants Assessment Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Most Profound Feelings Associated with Burnout:

Pre-Group: (1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

Post-Group (1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

Group Experience:

1. What was your most beneficial experience in the group?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What was your least beneficial experience in the group?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Would you participate in a group like this again, or recommend someone to do so? (please explain your response)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix D**

### **Material and Activities**

Participants will be given a questionnaire that they will be asked to complete prior to start of the first group session or during the first 25 minutes of the first group session about their experience with the subject of burnout. The questionnaire and survey will be used as pre- and post-observations of the group to measure the impact of the group process on participants. The questions to answer will be the following:

1. Do you believe it is of great importance for the clergy to develop honest expectations of himself/herself and his/her congregation?

- (i) Strongly Disagree
- (ii) Disagree
- (iii) Not Sure
- (iv) Agree
- (v) Strongly Agree

2. Do you believe that clergy should develop a self-assessment wellness audit to determine his/her areas of strength and weakness?

- (i) Strongly Agree
- (ii) Disagree
- (iii) Not Sure
- (iv) Agree
- (v) Strongly Agree

3. Do you believe it is of great importance for all clergy to have great conflict resolution skills?

- (i) Strongly Disagree
- (ii) Disagree
- (iii) Not Sure
- (iv) Agree
- (v) Strongly Agree

4. Do you believe it is important for the clergy to have similar values mirroring that of the church that he/she works for?

- (i) Strongly Disagree
- (ii) Disagree
- (iii) Not Sure
- (iv) Agree
- (v) Strongly Agree

5. Do you believe it's important for the clergy to know, understand and honor the institutional values and priorities of the church he/she is working with?

- (i) Strongly Disagree
- (ii) Disagree
- (iii) Not Sure
- (iv) Agree
- (v) Strongly Agree

6. Do you believe that a relationship of mutual covenant of respect and mission between clergy and parishioners is more effective than an employee to employer relationship?

- (i) Strongly Disagree
- (ii) Disagree
- (iii) Not Sure
- (iv) Agree
- (v) Strongly Agree

7. Do you believe that the clergy has a responsibility to address his/her physical and mental health needs appropriately so that he/she can provide effective ministry to parishioners?

- (i) Strongly Disagree
- (ii) Disagree
- (iii) Not Sure
- (iv) Agree
- (v) Strongly Agree

8. Do you believe it is necessary for clergy to establish an ethical decision model that is to be used to analyze a given situation that will lead to a final decision?

- (i) Strongly Disagree
- (ii) Disagree
- (iii) Not Sure
- (iv) Agree
- (v) Strongly Agree

9. Do you believe that it is in the best interest of the clergy and the congregation that the clergy is reassigned to a new congregation to avoid burnout after four to five years?

- (i) Strongly Disagree
- (ii) Disagree
- (iii) Not Sure
- (iv) Agree
- (v) Strongly Agree

10. Do you believe that if a clergy is suffering from burnout, it is ever necessary for the clergy to change profession and pursue another profession?

- (i) Strongly Disagree
- (ii) Disagree
- (iii) Not Sure
- (iv) Agree
- (v) Strongly Agree

## **Appendix E**

### **Participants' Profiles**

In the first part of this chapter I provided a brief biographical summary on each participant of the group, their pre and post-assessment before and at the end of the group. In this upcoming section of this chapter I will provide a brief summary of each of the twelve sessions the group met. The sessions were designed to meet face to face for the first and last sessions and via ovoo (video conferencing) for the ten sessions in between.

#### **•Ruby**

Ruby is a 45 year old African-American female who has been married to an African-American male for the past 10 years. She does not have any children and lives with her husband in Nassau County, New York. Ruby has two adult siblings, a brother and a sister who live in Canada. Most of her immediate family members live outside the United States. Ruby reported that she has been living in the United States for the past 16 years. She has a Bachelor degree in Religion and Theology and Master of Divinity degree. Currently she is pursuing a Doctorate of Ministry degree in pastoral counseling. Ruby also obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Nursing.

Ruby describes herself as determined, focused and purpose-driven. She believes that consistent hard work will eventually provide an individual with the desired result. She is the first female to be hired as a pastor by the organization that she currently works for. She sees herself as a pioneer for women in ministry in her organization. Her first pastoral assignment was a two church-district in Bronx, New York. She reported that this was both exciting and challenging for her. It was exciting because of her passion and desire to serve as a pastor for the first time, and challenging because of the mixed reception she received because of her gender as a female.

Ruby believes that she has to be twice as good as her male colleagues in order to succeed and to gain the recognition and respect that she believes she deserves. Currently, Ruby is working in her second pastoral assignment. She is again working in a two-church district, and continues to receive similar mixed reception by the parishioners in her new churches because of her gender. She reported that several members transferred from her churches to other churches when they were made aware that she would be their new pastor. Many of those who transferred out to other churches are females.

Prior to her first assignment as a pastor, Ruby worked as a Registered Nurse for several years. She believes that her experience as a nurse has prepared her to be compassionate in serving the needs of her parishioners.

### **Pre-Assessment**

Ruby identified the most profound feelings of dealing with the challenges of pastoring after 10 years as frustration, anger and feelings of isolation and abandonment. Ruby said that even though she is as qualified and even more qualified and skilled than some of her male colleagues, she often feels frustrated because she is treated differently because of her gender. She believes that although she is never told by her superiors that her gender plays a significant role in her pastoral assignments, she believes that it is overwhelmingly the determining factor when she is asked to do anything. She believes that her colleagues also treat her as the ideal preacher for women's, mothers' and other female specific ministries, while she may possess tremendous skills to preach and address other topics such as health, family or finance related programs and ministries. Ruby also feels frustrated when her parishioners do not give her a chance to be their pastor because of her gender.

Ruby reported that she feels angry at times even with God. She believes that God is the one who called her to be involved with pastoral ministry and that He (God) should eliminate some of the situations and circumstances she finds herself constantly facing since she is only responding to His (God) call to ministry like her male colleagues. She stated that she also feels angry at herself, sometimes, for feeling angry about the challenges she experiences in pastoral ministry. She said that in her earlier days in pastoral ministry it was worse than it is now. She reported that she has developed some coping mechanisms that seem to be helping her deal more appropriately with her feeling of anger. She does things like taking a day off each week consistently to treat herself to something special, and going for long walks with her husband and sharing her feelings with him.

Ruby also shared that she often feels isolated and abandoned by her male colleagues. She stated that she is often not a part of the private conversations at meetings and that she is often amongst the last to know what is going on. She reported that while she is surrounded by her male colleagues who are usually cordial with her, she does not feel a strong connection with most of them. She stated that she feels like she is trespassing on an island where she knows she has all legal rights to be on, but no emotional connection with anyone. Ruby also believe that having women in leadership roles within the organization would prove to be helpful for her, because she is not confident that she can speak with the all-male leadership of the organization to receive support.

### **Post-Assessment**

After the twelve-session burnout group, Ruby identified her most profound feelings as anger and frustration. Ruby reported that she no longer feels isolated and abandoned. She said that hearing other members of the group sharing their experience, she realized that she had a

stronger community of support than she previously realized. She said that she plans to show greater appreciation for her community and utilize the support she receives as opposed to focusing on how large or small her community is.

Ruby said that she does not feel abandoned by her colleagues, supervisors and parishioners, instead she feels angry and frustrated. She said her anger and frustration is centered on people's attitude toward her because of her gender and not based on the productivity of her work. She said while she is angry and frustrated, she will take the suggestion of one of her peers in the group and focus on trying to change her attitude instead of harboring anger and resentment for those who mistreat her because of her gender.

Ruby reported that the group was most helpful to her as she learned from what she heard from other people's experiences with burnout and how they were feeling about the way they were being treated by supervisors, colleagues and parishioners. "I felt like I was not the only one suffering," she said. "I felt like these people were my family for the past twelve weeks," she said with a smile on her face. Ruby said she discovered that she is more patient with others than she is with herself.

#### •Tyson

Tyson is a 58 year old African-American male who has been married for the past 31 years, but has been separated from his wife for the past year. He has two adult sons, one who lives with him and the other lives on his own in another state in the mid-west. Tyson reported that he and his wife are working on reconciling, but he admits that it will be a long and slow process. Tyson's father and brother died last year. His father died three months prior to his



brother's death. Tyson has five other siblings: three brothers and two sisters. Currently he lives in his parent's family home with his mother, sister and youngest son.

Tyson has been pastoring for the past 30 years and has obtained a Doctorate of Ministry degree in counseling. He has pastored for a few years in the Caribbean, but has spent most of his time pastoring in the United States. He has worked in two multi-district context (i.e. pastoring two or more congregations simultaneously), and was also in charge of overseeing an elementary school. He lives in New Jersey, but has never pastored in New Jersey. He has pastored upstate- New York, Brooklyn, Bronx and currently in Manhattan. Currently he is suffering from severe back pain and has not preached at his church for the past two months. Tyson stated that he is strongly considering retiring from pastoral ministry when he becomes 65 years old.

Tyson reported that in addition to pastoral ministry, he also worked as a Substance Abuse Counselor for five years with a private organization. As a Substance Abuse Counselor he had an average of 50 clients that he met with every month doing counseling and methadone maintenance treatment. He believes that the counseling experience has taught him how to make strong and meaningful connections with people who are less fortunate than himself.

### **Pre-Assessment**

Tyson identified the most profound feeling as anger after the death of his father and brother, who died less than six months apart. He believes that he did not receive the kind of support that he needed from his senior administrators of the organization that he works for. He has strong feelings of resentment and abandonment. He reported that shortly after his father died, he was having marital issues, and his wife separated from him. He reported that once again he got very minimal support from his organization's administrators. He reported receiving

promises that he will be provided with emotional and spiritual support, but has not seen those promises realized into tangible assistance.

Prior to the death of his father and brother, Tyson reported that he was feeling frustrated with the timing of his new assignment to the church he is currently pastoring. He reported that he was involved in a major renovation project at his former church when he was told that he would be reassigned to a new church. He said that even though he protested and shared what he was engaged in at his former church, he was still reassigned. Tyson stated that the constant moving around from one church to the next without any consideration at the time of the proposed reassignment is frustrating and disturbing to the life of the church family and his family.

Tyson said in addition to the feelings of disregard and frustration that he oftentimes experiences at the inconsiderate hands of his superiors, the distance between churches when he is assigned to a multi-church district is not practical. He states that the long distance takes a toll on him and his family physically and emotionally. He believes that both the church and he suffer as a result of these impractical decisions by his superiors. He believes that the strenuous working condition may have also indirectly impacted his relationship with his wife and family. There are many times when he had to travel without his wife to church services and other church functions, because his wife just felt tired and overly exhausted from the constant long distance driving back and forth. Tyson said he often has feelings of despair when he thinks about the future working for the organization that he loves, if there is not a radical change in the approach of leadership moving forward.

## **Post-Assessment**

Tyson reported at the end of the twelve-session burnout group that his most profound feelings were frustration and anger. He stated that while he feels supported by the group, he is very angry and frustrated with his administrators and will have to find ways to process his feelings of anger and frustration, so that these feelings do not affect his work adversely. He said that as a result of the twelve-week group session, his attitude towards pastoral ministry is changing.

He reported changes in his attitude and beliefs that were characterized as spiritual and relational. He experiences a sense of support. Tyson planned to work on establishing more meaningful relationship with his peers. He reported that the group served him in a therapeutic way, as he was able to express his feelings without reservation. “The group provided me with a safe space to reflect on my feelings, issues and challenges,” he said calmly.

Tyson reported two discoveries from being in the group. First he needs to obtain grief counseling to deal with the two significant losses of his father and brother; and counseling for the loss of his wife who has separated from him for approximately 14 months. Tyson said he realized that if he does not obtain the professional help that he needs to address the significant loss he experienced over the last year and a half, pastoral ministry would continue to be an unpleasant stressful occupation for him until he retires.

## **•Cooper**

Cooper is a 63 year old African-American male who has been married for the past 33 years. He has three young-adult children who live with him in New York City. He has two younger siblings, a brother and a sister who lives in the West Indies. His parents have been

deceased for most of his life. He reported that both parents died by the time he was 9 years old. He reported that he was raised by his aunts and uncles until he was 20 years old. Most of his aunts and uncles are still living in Jamaica, West Indies, and he stated that he keeps in touch with his family on a regular basis. He has a disabled daughter that requires constant care after meeting an unfortunate accident four years ago. His wife is a retired registered nurse that currently works with him as his partner in ministry.

Cooper reported that his father also worked for the church as a pastor. He has a doctorate of ministry degree and has written two books. Cooper has worked for the Seventh-day Adventist church as a pastor in the West Indies as well as in North-America. Currently Cooper serves the church in New York as a pastor and as a supervisor. He stated that he enjoys being a pastor and an advocate for healthy living. Cooper reported that he suffered a major health crisis 4 years ago that caused him to be hospitalized for approximately 10 weeks. He stated that this event change his approach and appreciation for life. He reported that he is a vegan and exercise at least 3 times per week.

### **Pre-Assessment**

Cooper identified feelings of fatigue, guilt and regret after being in ministry for 33 years. After he experienced a medical crisis three years ago, he decided that he would make some changes with the manner in which he approached pastoral ministry. He reported that he was trying to do too much with inadequate resources. He said he believed that his faith in God would cause him to do whatever he was asked to do. However, he has learned that there is a limit to what he is able to do and that faith in God does not mean that he should push himself beyond human limitations. He reported that in order to fulfill his obligation as a supervisor, it means that

he had to work very long hours, sometimes 8 -12 hours per day for several days each month. He said while he was highly motivated and inspired to provide resources to the constituency that he serves the combination of working long hours and long distance travel over 5 states took a toll on his body. He stated that he became overwhelmed with work, exhausted and physically sick for extended periods of time.

He said, “I was made to feel guilty when he was not able to deliver on the organization’s goal to the constituency, even though it was well known by all that I was working with extreme limited resources.” He also reported that he felt disappointed when he heard of individuals who could benefit from the ministry he provides if he had more resources. Cooper stated that in spite of his passion and pride to reach everyone with the life changing resources that he has to offer, he regrets not spending more time taking care of his personal health care needs.

He reported that it was only after he almost died that the organization that he works for saw the need to lighten his work load. His biggest regret to date, he said, is pushing himself to the point where he almost died because he believed that not pushing himself constantly regardless of minimal resources was an act of lack of faith. Cooper stated that he did not feel that his senior administrators had an interest in his personal well-being, but in his doing the job that made them look good in the eyes of the general public.

### **Post-Assessment**

Cooper reported that at the end of the twelve-session burnout group his most profound feelings were fatigue, guilt and regret. He stated that he found the group informative and supportive. Cooper said that the first six group sessions were most beneficial to him. Cooper said hearing his colleagues share openly about their challenges and feelings made him feel

comfortable to share his own feelings. He said he particularly enjoyed the first six sessions because all the group members in these earlier groups were willing to be very vulnerable even before they got to know each other better. Cooper said he is planning to attend a support group to help him deal with his feelings.

Cooper reported that he identified three self-discoveries over the twelve-session burn out group, these include:

- i. He was not alone, even though others experiences were different. He felt that it was good to hear and be with people who have similar feelings and were willing to talk about them.
- ii. He liked being in a group where he can be vulnerable. Even though he still feels the same way about pastoral ministry after 33 years, talking about his feelings with colleagues was therapeutic.
- iii. His feelings of fatigue, guilt and regret went far beyond his years in pastoral ministry. He realized that they were feelings of regret and guilt that went back to issues amongst his family of origin.

#### •Pearl

Pearl is an African-American female who has been married for the past 12 years. She is married to a Seventh –day Adventist pastor who works in New York City, while she works in New Jersey. She does not have any children and is not planning to have any children biologically in the near future. She is originally from the West Indies and migrated to the United States as a toddler. She has two younger siblings, one brother and one sister. Her parents are alive and live in the Southeast region of the United States. She is the second female pastor to be hired by the regional local conference (Headquarter for the church) in her area.

She reported that being married to a pastor as its benefits and challenges. “Having similar responsibilities we are able to share ideas, visions and experience about how we handle certain situations are beneficial,” she said gleefully. However, the nature and challenges of ministry sometimes causes her to be away from her husband more often than she would like. One of the challenges that she said she has learned to cope with is not being able to attend church services on a consistent basis with her husband.

She reported that she questioned the ‘call’ of God on her life to be engaged in pastoral ministry for a long time. Pearl said she wanted to be sure as a young woman that it was clearly God who was speaking to her. “Once I was clear that it was God who was calling me to ministry, I went forward with confidence, even though I knew that there are many who would question and doubt my calling,” she said passionately. She obtained a doctorate of ministry degree three years ago and is well respected as a scholar, preacher and administrator by her peers.

### **Pre-Assessment**

Pearl identified her most profound feelings after being in pastoral ministry for 12 years as loneliness and frustration as two of the major challenges she has to cope with in ministry on a regular basis. She reported that working in an organization that is almost one hundred percent male in the pastoral workforce can become lonely at times. She believes that the isolation and minimal meaningful conversation that she has with her colleagues stems from the fact that men and women are so different in many ways that she is not sure if her male colleagues know how to relate to her on the same wavelength as they would with male colleagues. She reported that she has similar experience with the male parishioners she pastor’s.

She identifies feelings of frustration with being treated differently from her fellow male counterparts. The difference in treatment comes from her colleagues and administrators as well as some of her parishioners because of her gender. She said, “although many people would agree that my training and skills places me in a position to do just as well and sometimes even better than many of my male colleagues, for many people it comes down to gender.” She further states that for many people it is based on their understanding or lack of the understanding of the biblical text.

Pearl says she feels like she has to prove herself every day to people who are not willing to give her a fair chance to succeed. She reported that there are those who appreciate her preaching and leadership skills, but remain adamant that she should not serve in the official capacity as a pastor. There are many people that believe God can use anyone, but also believe that there is an exception when it comes to pastoring. Pearl said to be a female pastor can be very lonely and frustrating especially when there is little support from upper management.

### **Post-Assessment**

Pearl identified her most profound feelings at the end of the twelve-session burnout group as disappointment and skepticism. She said that while she felt frustrated and lonely at the beginning of the group, she felt that after hearing the experiences from her colleagues she does not feel lonely or frustrated, but disappointed and skeptical that much if anything in pastoral ministry will change for her over the next 12 years.

She said while it was good to hear her colleagues sharing their stories and coping mechanisms they employ to survive the burnout of ministry, she was disappointed to hear that her experience and feelings have been true of many of her colleagues for decades. “It is sad that



this has been the experience for so long and the future doesn't seem to be optimistic," she said disappointingly.

Pearl said she had four self-discoveries during the group process that includes:

- i. She is far more comfortable sharing feelings with colleagues than she thought before. She said she was not sure how comfortable she would feel sharing her feelings about pastoral ministry with peers that she did not know prior to the group. However, the confidentiality that was established from the first session of the group, made her feel less anxious about sharing.
- ii. She was not alone in her feelings as a female pastor. Pearl said it was good to hear from another female pastor about her feelings that were so similar to her.
- iii. She discovered that there was such strong support for her as a female pastor from her male colleagues. "I didn't feel like my male colleagues in the group were just being cordial and polite with me and my other female colleague, I felt genuine love and support," she said happily.
- iv. She reported that she also found out that she has great coping skills to deal with some of the "unfortunates" or issues that are a part of the landscape of pastoral ministry. She said that she did not realize that she was not so "thin-skin" as she thought.

#### •Zachary

Zachary is a 30 year old African-American male who has been married for the past 6 years. He has one child, a daughter who is a toddler. He lives in New York City with his wife and daughter. He lives in close proximity to his parents who are in need of his assistance for

them to obtain medical care on a consistent basis. Zachary has two younger siblings, a brother and a sister. He reported that he has a close relationship with his family.

He is a seminary graduate with a Master of Divinity degree and has been pastoring for the past three years. Zachary reported that his first year of pastoring was a severely stressful one. He reported that the church that he was assigned to was in an undeveloped remote town in a rural area of the state, which has as its major business a federal prison. He stated that working at a very small church in this remote rural area created several moments of anxiety and stress on his relationship with his wife and family. He reported that the most difficult part of the experience pastoring in a rural town was not receiving any support from other colleagues and supervisors. Over the past two years he has been serving as the assistant pastor for a large church in the New York City area.

Zachary said that he is happy with the development of his preaching skills, and is looking forward to developing his administrative skills at his current assignment. He admits that working as the assistant pastor has its rewards and its challenges. He gets an opportunity to observe his senior pastor, with the opportunity to learn through observation, but also has to deal with the lack of opportunity to be engaged in meaningful service to the church. Zachary is anxiously waiting on the next opportunity to pastor without being under the shadow of a senior pastor.

### **Pre-Assessment**

Zachary identified his most profound feelings of anger, frustration and abandonment immediately after his first assignment entering the workforce for the first time. He said his enthusiasm and great longing of excitement soon became despair and dejection when he visited

the location of his new church for the first time. He said he was placed in an environment where he was convinced that learning could not take place for pastoral ministry. He said he felt tremendous anger and resentment towards his superiors for a very long time who were responsible for making the decision of his assignment.

He reported that the local leadership at the church disrespected him and was never cooperative with assisting him in his duty as pastor. Zachary said his feeling of anger was soon directed towards his new church family. He said it became clear to everyone that the union between him and the church would be very tense. Zachary stated that he began to feel abandoned by the church that he grew up loving and willing to serve. He said he felt that sending him to this assignment was the organization's way of abandoning him.

Zachary stated that not receiving any phone calls, emails or any form of contact or communication from his superiors caused him to feel frustrated, abandoned and angry with his superiors. He said the lack of support and concern shown to him made him feel unappreciated and that his purpose was just to be a warm body before the people in his church. His greatest frustration now is not being given the opportunity to utilize his skills, talents and overall ability. Zachary said during the early days, he questioned his call to ministry and ask God why it had to be so hard.

### **Post –Assessment**

Zachary identified his most profound feelings at the end of the twelve-week session as anger and frustration. He said that he no longer feels abandoned as he listened to the stories of his colleagues, he was encouraged and appreciated most of the time he was alone. After twelve weeks Zachary said that he is still angry at the system of the organization that he works for. He

said he feels most frustrated because he does not believe anything will change in the near future. Zachary reported that the last six sessions of the group were most beneficial to him, as he heard strategies that some of his more experienced peers in pastoral ministry shared about how they've been coping with the issue of burnout.

Zachary said he appreciated the vulnerability of the group and is planning to be a part of other support groups to help him navigate the terrain of pastoral ministry. He reported that he had four self-discoveries over the duration of the group which includes:

- i. He did not know that he could be so vulnerable with peers, especially those he did not know prior to the start of the group.
- ii. He is comfortable expressing his feelings about pastoral ministry even though his feelings may not be embraced by the majority.
- iii. He does not feel alone. He feels well supported and encouraged in spite of the challenges of pastoral ministry.
- iv. His feeling of abandonment goes beyond pastoral ministry. He reported that it goes back to his family of origin where his father left his mother and family when he was only 6 years old.

#### •Chet

Chet is a 42 year old African-American male who is married with two children ages 5 and 7 years old. Chet lives with his wife, two children and his youngest sibling, his sister. They have been living together for the past 6 years in Buffalo, New York. He has a twin brother and an older sibling (a sister). Chet reported that he is very close to his siblings, especially his twin brother. Chet is the only person working in his home and he is responsible for all of the

financial obligations of his household. He reported that, currently, things are financially very challenging for him and his family.

He has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religion and Theology, and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts degree in pastoral ministry. Chet reported that he got an opportunity to pastor prior to enrolling at a seminary, but plans to attend seminary one day soon. He reported that he is a strong advocate for education, and that he attends every seminar, webinar and all other learning opportunities to better prepare himself for pastoral ministry on an everyday basis. Chet says his wife recently completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Nursing; and that he is looking forward to her starting to work again so that she can help alleviate some of the financial obligations that he has to meet. Chet says he enjoys living and working in the western New York region of the country, because the cost of living is much more affordable than living in the larger cities like New York City.

Chet is currently pastoring two churches in Western New York. He stated that the demands of both churches are great. One church has membership of over 300 parishioners and constantly demands his attention; and the other has a membership of approximately 30 members, and needs nurturing and special attention as well. He says he feels torn at times when he has to make a decision to be at one church and not at the other especially when both needs are important and pressing.

### **Pre-Assessment**

Chet identified his most profound feelings after being in pastoral ministry for 6 years as loneliness, anger and fear. Chet stated that he has lost confidence in the leadership of the

organization that hired him. He reported that 4 years ago when the leadership of the organization changed, he expressed his view about the new administration and he was ostracized. He believed he was assigned to the Western New York area because he was not in favor of the change in administration. Although, he has not questioned his faith, he has questioned his faith in the leadership of the organization. He reported that he feels lonely because the proximity to the nearest colleague in the area that he is working is over an hour away. He also reported that being from a West Indian background and 90% of his parishioners are from an American background, the cultural differences sometimes prohibit a closer relationship with each other. He stated that while he is trying to adjust to the culture of the congregations he is pastoring, there is a clear cultural barrier that prevents him from being well immersed in his church families.

He said he was extremely angry for several months when he was first assigned to the area, and that his anger was directed to his new parishioners. Chet said while he still experiences anger from time to time because of how he feels he is been treated, he channels his anger towards the administrative officers of his hiring organization. He said he is also angry at himself for not treating his parishioners with the love and the care he thinks they deserve. Chet stated that his greatest fear is that he begins to question his calling to ministry and walk away out of frustration. He said his current working condition is depressing and frustrating.

### **Post Assessment**

Chet reported that is most profound feelings at the end of the twelve-session burnout group are anger and frustration. He reported that although he is over 200 miles from most of his

friends and family in ministry, he is going to explore the means of social media and other technological forms of communication to be in contact with colleagues, family and friends more often. Chet reported that his anger and frustration towards his employers remain the same. He does not believe that there will be any positive changes in the near future.

Chet stated that he made some self-discoveries during the duration of the group that includes the following:

- i. He is willing to be vulnerable when he perceives that he is in a safe, sacred and confidential space.
- ii. He is not ready to let go of the past. Chet said he is still hurt by the way he was treated 4 years ago by his employers, and is not yet at the place where he is able to move forward.
- iii. He is not alone in his feelings of anger, frustration and fear. He recognized that several of his peers are experience similar feelings.
- iv. He is afraid of the financial obligations that it is going to take for him to live and work closer to his peers, friends and families.
- v. He has some regrets about attacking the credibility of his employer four years ago.
- vi. He is not highly motivated at this time to be engaged in pastoral ministry, and is considering other alternatives such as hospital or army chaplaincy.
- vii. He is much stronger at coping with the challenges and stressors of pastoral ministry than he realized. His coping skills are admirable.

#### •Pete

Pete is a 40 year Old African American male, who has been married for the past 10 years, with two children ages 3 and 6 years old. He has been living in the northern New England area

for the past 15 years. His wife is also a resident of the same area. Pete reported that his parents and siblings also live in the same area and that having his family living in close proximity is very important to him.

Approximately six months ago, Pete obtained a doctorate degree in ministry. His studies concentrated on stressors amongst African-American families and the changes in family dynamics. He reported that he is considering furthering his educational pursuit, by enrolling in a PhD program in the next year or two. “I believe we should never stop learning,” he said. Pete describes himself as an avid reader and a family man. He said that his two daughters are the most precious gift next to the gift of salvation that he has received from God.

Pete is currently the pastor of one of the largest Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Southern New England area. The membership of his church is approximately 1200 people. He stated that he enjoys pastoring and believes that he was indeed called by God to pastor as far back as 13 years old. He said while he began preaching from 8 years old, he became certain of the call to pastoral ministry at 13 years old. Prior to his current assignment, Pete was the pastor of two smaller churches than his current church in the northern New England area. He reported that it was extremely difficult for him to move to his new assignment, after pastoring those two churches for seven years. He said leaving those two churches has been the most difficult thing he had to do in the last five years. “It was disruptive on so many levels, I had to move away from my immediate family and church family that I have a very strong bond with,” he said, shaking his head.

#### Pre-Assessment

Pete identified the most profound feelings of isolation, loneliness and fatigue after his being involved in pastoral ministry for the past 20 years and most recently his new assignment.



He said that having to travel more than an hour to church each week meant that his family would not always be able to travel with him. “When I am driving alone, the distance feels even twice as long,” Pete said in a low tone of voice. He said this new assignment is causing him to lose his immediate family, parents and siblings and the community he calls home in Northern New England. “I am losing all the people that are important to me,” he said, shaking his head. Pete reported that having a young child and a pregnant wife, he told his employers that it would not be the best time for his family to move to a new assignment. But, his feelings and opinions were not taken into consideration.

He added that he feels isolated and tired from the long trip that he has to make at least 2 to 3 times weekly. Pete said that the traveling is taking a toll on him physically and mentally. He says that many times when he gets home he does not have the energy to do anything but sleep. One of his concerns since the new assignment is also the new reality that he is spending less time with his wife and children. He said that many nights when he got home from church his family was already asleep for more than an hour. Pete said it is frustrating because he bought a new house six months before he was informed of his new assignment. He said that he told his employers that he recently purchased a new house and that moving at this time would not be feasible, but his economic needs were not taken into consideration as well.

### **Post Assessment**

Pete identified his most profound feelings at the end of the twelve-session burnout group as resentment, fatigue and isolation. He reported that he feels so strongly that his feelings and

the welfare of his family were not taken into consideration at the time of his most recent pastoral assignment. He is still struggling with feelings of resentment against his supervisors. He stated that he really appreciated the group process and found the first three groups to be the most beneficial to him. Pete reported that those earlier groups laid the foundation for him to feel comfortable being vulnerable with his peers. He reported that feeling safe, made him feel comfortable to be vulnerable to share his stories during the first three group sessions. This feeling of safety meant that he could trust his colleagues to value and support his feelings and opinions for the duration of the group.

Pete said that he had some self-discoveries during the twelve-session group process that included the following:

- i. He was more willing to be vulnerable when he feels safe than he previously thought.
- ii. He is developing strong feelings of resentment towards those who he believes are responsible for disregarding his feelings.
- iii. He believes he needs to address his feelings with a professional therapist.
- iv. He learns more from people when he believes that they have his best interest at heart.
- v. He is very emotional and does not mind shedding tears in a space that he considers safe.
- vi. He struggles to embrace women in ministry. He believes women should not be subjected to the same kinds of stress and anxiety, scrutiny and pressure to perform in pastoral ministry.
- vii. He is very rigid in some of his views.

**•Silverman**

Silverman is a 43 year old African-American male who has been married for the past 3 years. He has one 3 year old daughter and lives with his wife and daughter in Southern New England. He is the eldest of 4 children and the only one that has ever been married. He reported that his mother and step-father lives in New York City with his 3 younger siblings.

He is currently pursuing a Master of Arts degree in pastoral ministry. While doing his undergraduate studies, he double majored in Mathematics and Religion and Theology. He has worked as a High school Mathematics teacher prior to being hired as a pastor. He reported that he is considering doing a Master of Arts degree in Mathematics education. Silverman is the first in his family to attend and graduate from college. Silverman stated that he also has completed training in clinical pastoral studies, and is a certified hospital chaplain. He serves as a volunteer chaplain at one of the New York area hospitals in Brooklyn.

He is currently serving as the pastor of a small church of less than 100 members in Brooklyn. He has been serving as a pastor for the past 17 years in the New York City area and Long Island. He worked for 6 years as an assistant pastor and 12 years has a senior pastor. He reported that he is considering exploring career opportunities other than pastoral ministry. "I enjoy pastoral ministry," he said, but he has to expand his horizon.

### **Pre-Assessment**

Silverman identified his most profound feelings after 17 years in pastoral ministry as dissatisfaction, doubtful and pessimism. He reported that shortly after he was hired he soon became aware of the "politics" of ministry. He stated that while he was happy for the opportunity to be involved in pastoral ministry, there were several of his new colleagues that did not share his joy and happiness. He said he realized that many of his colleagues had friends that

they were hoping to gain employment. Therefore they were not as enthusiastic about his being employed, when there were those hoping to get hired long before he even came to the United States. He said the satisfaction that he thought he was going to be experiencing in pastoral ministry, working with colleagues who would love and support each other as a team, is not what he has experienced for most part of his ministerial life in the United States.

“I questioned myself several times if this is what I am really called to do,” he said with a look of despair on his face. Doubt has become synonymous with faith, for him in ministry. “I believe sometimes without a shadow of doubt, that in spite of the frustrations and disappointment of ministry, I am called to do this,” he said. “But I must admit that there are times when I say to myself, I don’t have to put myself through this.” Silverman said that his supervisor has not been supportive to him and that the lack of support makes it even more difficult and challenging for him to deal with his colleagues and parishioners who try to challenge his authority.

His outlook on ministry at this time is with great pessimism. He does not believe that anything will change anytime soon to restore confidence and trust he once had in the work of ministry. He believes that his colleagues are selfish and filled with jealousy of each other. He thinks that if the attitudes of his colleagues do not change dramatically very soon, the future of the local church is in grave jeopardy. He reported that he is doing his best to be optimistic, but does not believe that he will be able to continue in ministry for much longer. He is currently making plans to sell or rent his house and relocate to another state to further his education.

#### Post-Assessment

Silverman identified his most profound feelings at the end of the twelve-session burnout group as dissatisfaction, doubt and pessimism. He reported that being a member of the group and hearing the stories of his colleagues confirmed his feelings of doubt and pessimism for the

future. Silverman reported that the first four or five groups were most beneficial to him. He said hearing his peers shared their stories and coping strategies they have used successfully to maintain equilibrium were invaluable to him. He believes that he will be able to survive pastoral ministry until he decides to retire, but does not believe that the ‘politics’ and favoritism will ever change.

He reported that he had some self-discoveries during the twelve-session group that include the following:

- i. He is at a “cross-roads” in his life, and is trying to determine the best course of action to take for his family and self.
- ii. He is willing to be vulnerable with colleagues when he feels that he is in a safe and sacred space.
- iii. He is not certain that his call to ministry was in fact pastoral ministry.
- iv. He has lost some of the passion and enthusiasm he once had for pastoral ministry.
- v. He appreciates the group process and believes that he would benefit from being a part of other support groups to facilitate his feelings about various aspects of ministry.
- vi. He is not alone. He feels supported in ministry.

#### •Bronzel

Bronzel is a sixty-two year old Hispanic-American male who has been married for the past 35 years. He has 2 young-adult children (daughters) who do not live with him and his wife. He has been living in Brooklyn, New York for the past 38 years. Bronzel is the eldest of his 4 siblings and the only one living in the United States. He is also the only one from his family

who is a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. He is a immigrant from Nicaragua who has been living in the United States for the past 40 years.

He reported that he began working as a pastor in Nicaragua before migrating to the United States. Upon his arrival to the United States he was not able to continue working in pastoral ministry for 7 years. He believed this was because of the language barrier. He spoke Spanish and most of the pastoral opportunities were for English speaking pastors. Bronzel said that he discovered that amongst the Spanish speaking pastoral ministry in the United States, there were a lot of biases, jealousy and dissension. He said he learned that based on the Spanish speaking country a person was from, he/she would be shown more favor in obtaining a pastoral assignment. He believes that his country of origin, Nicaragua, is not one of the Spanish speaking countries that is shown any special favors.

He is currently pastoring two small churches of less than one hundred members respectively. Today he is able to speak English fluently, but is denied the opportunity to pastor an English speaking church. Bronzel said that he has experienced biases, prejudices and jealousy growing up as a young boy in Nicaragua. He recalls the mistreatment his family often received because they were one of the few families in his neighborhood that were able to travel back and forth to the United States for several years before permanently migrating to the United States. He said his neighbors felt like they were “showing off” and acted like they were better than other families. He said being one of the first boys to attend college from his neighborhood also made him the target of jealousy and envy from his neighbors.

## **Pre-Assessment**

Bronzel identified his most profound feelings after 28 years in pastoral ministry as annoyed, irritated, and disappointed. He stated that he also experiences periods of feeling severely lonely and abandoned by his peers. He reported that it was very annoying and disappointing for him to be constantly being promised to be treated fairly by his colleagues and superiors in ministry, but not being able to experience those promises. He said that being the only one from Nicaragua amongst the Spanish speaking pastors, he is oftentimes left out of most of the activities and is the last person to be informed about pertinent things that are taking place in the Hispanic work.

“I am amongst my Spanish people, but I often feel very lonely and isolated,” he said, shaking his head. Bronzel said that he believes that he is sent to the very small churches and to church districts of two or more churches to pastor, because he is still considered an outsider amongst his Spanish speaking colleagues. He reported that he gets little and sometimes no support from his superiors, even though he shares with them in detail many of the challenges he is experiencing. “It gets very frustrating at times,” he said calmly. He stated that his greatest challenge in pastoral ministry does not come from the ‘pews’ but from the people he expected to work with him as a team in unity, supporting each other, his pastoral colleagues and supervisors.

Bronzel stated that he finds it irritating that he is not given other opportunities to work with English speaking churches as some of his colleagues, since he speaks the English language fluently. He stated that he has seen other Spanish and French speaking pastors who are unable to speak English fluently, given the opportunity to work with English speaking churches. “I believe it’s all about favoritism and politics,” he said shaking his head.

## Post-Assessment

Bronzel reported that at the end of the twelve-session burnout group, his most profound feelings are frustration and disappointment. He reported that he really appreciated the group and found the last three groups to be most beneficial to him. He said he appreciated the role plays by his peers to demonstrate what they did and how they handled different phone calls and emails they received at late hours of the night and early mornings. Bronzel said that establishing firm boundaries were one of the things he struggled with as a pastor. He said he felt like it was just synonymous with the job of a pastor and considered himself a “true-servant” leader when he accepted the calls at any time of the night or mornings.

He said that during the twelve-session burnout group he made some self-discoveries that included the following:

- i. He has more in common with his peers in spite of the difference in cultural background.
- ii. He enjoyed the group process and is planning to seek other support groups that will give him an opportunity to grow as a pastor.
- iii. He does not have an issue being very vulnerable with his colleagues.
- iv. He oftentimes neglects the needs of his family to address the needs of the church.

Bronzel reported that being the only Hispanic pastor in the group he was unsure about how comfortable he would be in the group. He said he believed that his cultural background would hinder his participation and understanding of his peers, but he discovered that the issues and challenges of pastoral ministry transcend cultural and language barriers. H said he was pleasantly surprised at how well supported and appreciated his peers in the group were of him.



•**Titano**

Titano is a 60 year old African-American male who has been married for the past 25 years. He and his wife work for the Seventh-day Adventist church. He has been working for the church for the past 28 years and his wife has been working for the past 20 years. He has been working as a pastor and his wife as an educator. Titano has worked for the church in the United States and Central America. They have two young-adult sons in their early 20's. Their two sons live at home with them. He reported that while he has enjoyed ministry for the past 28 years, one of his regrets is not being a better father to his sons.

Both Titano and his wife have earned terminal degrees. He has earned a Doctor of Ministry degree in Young-Adult and Youth ministry and his wife a PhD in School Leadership and Education. Titano has authored two books and he is an avid reader and activist against social injustices. He reported that despite loving and being committed to the church, he has challenges accepting certain traditional views and practices of the church. These traditions include deportment, liturgy and appropriateness of music in the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Titano said that the last 20 years of working as a pastor in the United States have been the most challenging and difficult ones. He reported that he has been reassigned 5 times during this time to different congregations. The constant moving has caused adverse instability amongst his family, and has contributed to the poor relationship he has with his sons. In addition, the long distance he had to travel has forced him to relocate on two occasions. "This has caused his family tremendous stress and anxiety, for me and my family," he said shaking his head. He reported that he is looking forward to retirement, because of the constant stress and anxiety associated with ministry for him at this time.

### ***Pre- Assessment***

Titano identified his most profound feelings after being in pastoral ministry for the past 28 years has fatigue, dissatisfaction and anger. “It can be very challenging and difficult to work in an environment that you have no control over your own stability,” he said, shaking his head. The constant reassignments from one church to the next and sometimes from one city to the next are very tiring and unstable for him and his family. He reported that his family suggests that they may not be relocating with him the next time he is reassigned if it requires them moving to another state. He said that he is tired of moving, so he can only imagine how annoying this constant move has become for his family.

With the constant moving from one church to the next and relocation from one city to the next, he stated that he feels so vulnerable. He said he would like to make long term plans and get involved in long term projects, but feels that he is not in a position to determine the parameters of the time he will be at any church that he is assigned to. “When any day you can receive a phone call informing you that you’ve been reassigned to another town or State, that is not a comfortable and secure feeling to work with,” Titano said softly.

Titano reported that he is very dissatisfied with the structure of the organizational policy regarding hiring and assignments to churches. He believes that the pastor should have some autonomy over when he/she is eligible for reassignment. He believes that everyone (the pastor, his/her family and the parishioners) involved in the process stands to suffer as a result of these arbitrary decision made by an executive officer. “I am not sure how much longer I can work in this system,” he said. Titano said in a calm voice, “at 60 years old, I have been doing pastoral ministry for the past 28 years; I don’t think I need all this stress for too much longer.” Titano

believes that he will only be able to continue in ministry for a few years more, unless the system changes quickly.

### **Post-Assessment**

Titano identified his most profound feelings at the end of the twelve-session burnout group as anger and dissatisfaction. He reported that he appreciated being in the group and found the sessions very informative, encouraging and supportive. “I felt safe and comfortable sharing my feelings with my peers, and appreciated the level of vulnerability expressed in the group,” he said smiling. “I was not sure what to expect in a group setting with my peers, I thought everyone would be more politically correct in expressing themselves, but I experienced people sharing from their hearts. That made me willing to be vulnerable and express how I truly felt,” he said. During the group Titano said he made some self-discoveries that he probably would not have without being in a group like this one. These self-discoveries include:

- i. He is willing to be vulnerable if he feels that he is in a safe and sacred space.
- ii. His anger and dissatisfaction originates from his family of origin.
- iii. He is planning to be a part of other support groups in the near future.
- iv. He feels more connected with these colleagues that were in the group with him, than other relationships he has with other pastors for more than 20 years.
- v. He is more emotional than he thought when it comes to dealing with the challenges in ministry.
- vi. He is more accepting of female colleagues than he previously thought.
- vii. His “coping skills” that he has been using for several years to address the challenges of ministry are really more denial of the issues than coping skills.

viii. He is very passionate about the social and political issues that are affecting the church.

### •Niron

Niron is a 48 year old African-American male who has been married for the past 20 years. He and his wife have two sons attending elementary school. They live together with his mother-in-law in New York City. Prior to accepting the call to pastoral ministry Niron worked in law enforcement. He has been working as a pastor for the 10 years. He has pastored in three states: New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island and has obtained a Doctorate of Ministry degree with an emphasis on family counseling.

Niron reported that he responded to the call of ministry after several years of contemplation because he wanted to be certain that it was God who was calling him to ministry and not just his own desires. Since he began working in pastoral ministry he reported that it has taken a significant toll on his marriage and family. He said at one point because of economic reasons, he and his wife had to live in separate states and saw each other only on the weekends. “My two boys were growing up without me for about 4 years,” he said. He said the long distance that he had to travel to get home to see his family was also physically and emotionally exhausting. Niron said he heard that pastoral ministry can be emotionally and physically draining on the pastor and his/her family, but he is actually living that reality.

“Having a multi-church district (i.e. having two or more churches simultaneously to pastor) and living away from home was also added stress and very demanding,” he said. Niron reported that even though he asked for some consideration to be given to him because of the negative impact his absence was having on his family, he was told that there was not anything

that can be done to relieve him of some of the stress and anxiety he was experiencing. He said he was happy to respond to the call of ministry, but his happiness soon became sadness, frustration, anger and disappointment. “I feel like I was placed in a situation to fail, rather than succeed,” he said shaking his head vehemently.

### **Pre- Assessment**

Niron identified his most profound feelings after being in ministry for 10 years as anger, frustration, disappointment and sadness. He reported that he is very frustrated because he does not get the impression that the structure and dynamics of how ministry is conducted in his organization will be changed any time soon. He does not believe that the family life/dynamics of the pastor will be taken into serious condition when he/she is assigned to a pastoral district.

Niron also expressed his disappointment in not being able to do more for and with the churches he is assigned to because he is not able to spend more time with each church. “I feel like a guest speaker sometimes in my own church because I am not able to spend more time consistently with anyone of the two churches he was assigned to at the time. He also said that his parishioners expressed similar sentiments about them wanting to spend more time with him as well.

The frustration and disappointment sometimes lead to anger. He said he is often angry at his employers for not showing that they care more about him and the parishioners he serves. Niron said that he has to be very conscious about his anger so that it is not misdirected at the wrong individuals, people who do not have anything to do with his work as a pastor. “It is not a good thing to go to work feeling sad and angry, but that’s exactly how I feel sometimes when I

had to drive for 2 to 3 hours in a snow storm to get to church or get home from church,” he said of his experience in ministry over the past 10 years.

### **Post-Assessment**

Niron expressed that his most profound feelings at the end of the twelve-session burnout groups are anger, frustration, disappointment and sadness. He reported that he was very much appreciative of the group. “The group helped me to look at ministry through ‘clear lens’ and not rose-colored glasses,” he said sternly. “In the past ten years, I have been hurt, mistreated and I have also seen others hurt and mistreated, and this is the first time I got a chance to share openly how I truly felt for the past 10 years with my peers, who are not necessarily my close friends,” he remarked. Niron further remarked that, “although my feelings have not changed, just talking about my feelings and hearing my colleagues share their feelings, were tremendously helpful and encouraging to me,” he said with a look of satisfaction.

During the group Niron reported that he made some self-discoveries that he thought he might not otherwise have made if he was not in the group. These self-discoveries include:

- i. He was hurting much more than he thought prior to being a part of the group.
- ii. He is more vulnerable to share how he was feeling throughout the group than he thought he would be.
- iii. He needs to continue to seek out and be a part of similar groups as this one, to receive the support he needs.
- iv. He appreciates female pastors more, than prior to the beginning of the group.
- v. He appreciates hearing from colleagues who are not necessarily his friends. He values their opinions and feelings about issues in ministry.

- vi. His personal theology and beliefs are in conflict with some of his denominational views.

•**Cedric**

Cedric is a 75 year old male who has been pastoring for over 45 years. His wife of 43 years died 4 years ago. He has 2 adult children who are married and live in another state. He lives alone in the home that he and his wife lived in for 33 years together. His greatest loss in pastoral ministry has been the death of his wife. He stated that she was not only his biggest supporter, but also his partner who actively engaged with him in ministry.

He stated that he was not aware of how much his wife meant to him until she died. There were issues and challenges that he had with parishioners, colleagues and administration that she would address seamlessly. He said while he does not expect anyone to be as supportive and caring as his wife was, he feels unappreciated and often treated as unwanted and unnecessary to have around. He reported that he feels mistreated because of his age, even though he satisfies the goals given to him like any other of his colleagues. He said that he does all that is asked of him with the same efficiency as his younger colleagues, yet he is often ridiculed and jeered. Cedric said that after working for over 40 years in pastoral ministry, and working in large and small churches in 3 different states he feels dissatisfied with the level of support he has received from his administrative supervisors and colleagues. “It gets very lonely when you reach my age in ministry,” he said softly. He mentioned that the telephone calls, preaching assignments and other presentations from colleagues and even parishioners decrease significantly. Cedric said he would like to share his experience with younger colleagues, but is considered “old-fashioned” and no longer relevant.

**Pre-Assessment**

Cedric identified his most profound feelings about pastoral ministry after 40 years as loneliness, being unappreciated and sadness. He reported that his supervisors, colleagues, current and former parishioners do not call him as often as compared to when he was 10 or 15 years younger. Cedric reported that he sometimes feels like he is working on an island all by himself. He stated that the lonely feelings sometimes take a toll on him physically and emotionally. He said he becomes irritable and withdrawn for a few days.

After over 40 years of ministry Cedric believes that he has a lot to share especially with his younger colleagues, but believe he is not given an opportunity in a formal way by his supervisors to impart his knowledge and experience to those who would benefit from him. He feels unappreciated and attributes this feeling to his being one of the older pastors in the organization. He reported that it is a sad feeling to work for so many years and not feel like a valuable contributor to the work of pastoral ministry.

“I enjoy working, but sometimes feel very sad and lonely doing it,” he said in a low deep tone of voice. Cedric said he does not want to stop working until he is physically unable to do so, but struggles to motivate himself some days to find a good reason why he should continue working.

**Post-Assessment**

Cedric identified his most profound feeling at the end of the twelve-week session as unappreciated and sadness. He reported that he appreciated participating in the group and that he found it beneficial. Cedric said that he felt safe and comfortable being vulnerable with his



colleagues. “The middle sessions, from about session 4 through 10, I really appreciated. I felt like these people were now like my family. We could joke around a little with each other and we knew when it was time to get serious. Everybody wanted to hear from me after about the third group session because they thought I am supposed to be the old wise sage, but I learned a lot from these young guys,” he said smiling.

He said he did not realize how much he had in common with these younger ministers and also how much has not changed over the last 40 years when it comes to ministry. He mentioned that the same manner in which younger pastors are treated today is similar to how they were treated 40 years ago when he started in ministry. Cedric said that the only difference between younger ministers today and when he was a youngster is that today’s younger ministers, can find much more support and resources to cope with the stressors and challenges of ministry.

Cedric reported that there were some self-discoveries that he made during the twelve-session group that include the following:

- i. He has more in common with younger pastors than he previously thought before the group experience.
- ii. He is appreciated by his peers in ministry far more than he thought.
- ii. He appreciates the group experience so much that he is going to find other support groups to be a part of.

## **Appendix F**

### **Session Descriptions**

#### **Session 1 – Getting to Know Each Other**

The group began fifteen minutes after the scheduled starting time. Everyone introduced themselves to the entire group by first and last name. Each group member also shared what their current ministerial work context was and how long they were working in that specific context. Some of the group members knew and worked with each other prior to the beginning of the group. I re-introduced myself to the group and thanked each participant for his/her willingness to be a part of the group. I also reminded all the participants of the purpose of the group – i.e. sharing their experience with the suffering of burnout with the group and what their coping mechanisms were, if any. In addition, I shared with the group what my role as facilitator would be, underscoring the importance that I will not be steering or asking the group to answer any specific questions or discuss any particular subject matter, or be an active participant in the group dialogue.

Several members of the group reported that this was their first time in a clinical group of this nature and that they were not certain about how they would respond or what to expect. Others shared that they have been clinical groups prior to this current group and that they experienced tremendous self-discoveries and great learning from others. A group member (Titano) asked what the clinical ground rules were for the twelve-session group, and I responded by sharing the following:

- i. All participants are asked to respect the confidentiality of all members of the group.

Permission must be granted by the group or a member of the group to share

- information with anyone outside the group about the group or a specific member of the group.
- ii. All participants are asked to make a twelve-week commitment to participate in the group for the duration of the group.
  - iii. All participants are asked to respectfully disagree with each other's opinion without becoming disagreeable for the duration of the group.
  - iv. All participants were asked to find a secure and private space when they were participating in the group's conference call sessions.
  - v. All participants agreed to the group meeting structure of first and last sessions to be done face to face, with the other twelve sessions being done via teleconference using oovoo.

Everyone agreed with the ground rules and pledged to operate within the guidelines of the same. At the end of the time used to discuss the clinical ground rules protocol, a group member asked if he could share his experience with burnout. After being given permission, he began sharing his experience about the many times he had to be relocated. All the other group members followed suit and began sharing their experience with burnout and the contributing factors that led to the same. There were some members of the group that shared that their current ministerial context of pastoring two or more churches is causing severe burnout for not only themselves, but their families as well.

## **Session 2 – Unmet Expectations**

Five of the twelve participants called in on time for the second session. Within ten minutes, four more participants called in. The nine group members agreed to give the other three group members an opportunity to call in before the session officially began. While waiting for

the other three group members I had a discussion with the nine members waiting about the starting time of the group. After some discussion for approximately 10 minutes the participants decided not to change the starting time of the group. Everyone made a commitment to honor the starting time of the group. The group began twenty minutes later than schedule with 11 of the 12 participants.

Cedric, the oldest member of the group and the person with the longest tenure in pastoral ministry began the dialogue in this session by sharing that one of the contributing factors for severe burnout that he has experienced is failure to meet the expectations from parishioners and his administrative supervisors from the organization that hired him. Cedric reported that many of the churches that he pastored, the congregations had unrealistic expectations of him. Some wanted him to be like their previous pastor, others wanted him to be their pastor, others wanted him to be a great preacher like someone else they heard, some wanted him to be a community organizer; some wanted him to raise the income of the church so that they can have more funds to do more projects, some wanted him to increase the membership by 50-75 percent, all these goals and more they expected him to do with little or no involvement from the congregants.

Another participant in the group (Silverman) reported that many of his congregants expected him to be a great one-on-one counselor, a skilled public speaker, a scholar on every subject, an innovative teacher, a great financial manager, an effective fundraiser and a prophetic voice in world affairs. He reported that he found it extremely difficult and virtually impossible to be such a great 'multi-tasker' to meet all of the expectations placed on him. He said he often felt incompetent and ineffective when he was not able to successfully meet the expectations of his congregants, knowing that many would be disappointed in him. Other participants in the group shared their experience with Church Boards and parishioners' expectations that were

unrealistic that contributed to their stress as clergy. Many of the participants of the group shared that many of the original expectations of the Church Board were not possible with the reality of the churches they were pastoring.

The session ended with the group discussing the importance of establishing realistic boundaries to protect themselves from burnout due to unrealistic expectations. Some of the suggestions that were shared were:

- i. Taking a day off each week
- ii. Not answering the telephone after a certain time.
- iii. Prioritizing projects and programs
- iv. Being transparent about what one is skilled at doing.

Some of the participants also spoke about the importance of creating a balance between the clergy's job responsibilities and personal responsibilities. Many of the participants suggested that parishioners sometimes have unrealistic expectations of clergy, because many clergy present themselves as 'super-humans' who can do all things well at the same time. It was strongly recommended that clergy should reveal some level of vulnerability with their congregants, so that they can be viewed as people with some level of limitations like everyone else. Many participants expressed their feelings of satisfaction from being a part of the first 2 sessions.

### **Session 3 - Conflicts**

Eight of the twelve participants in the group called in on time for the session today. The other four participants called in within the next 10 minutes. The group began with one of the participants (Pearl) sharing with the group a major conflict as she describes it with her Board of Directors. She began by saying that she believed that since her arrival at her church 3 years ago,

the Board has been trying to determine her effectiveness in terms of her ability to support and maintain the business needs of the church and increase the membership. She reported that she is conscious of the financial position of the church and the need to increase the income and the membership alike. She stated that her views and projects to achieve increases in finances and membership is in conflict with that of most of her Board of Directors. She stated that she refused to be pressured in making decisions for purely business reasons and for making a large percentage of her congregants happy at the expense of her personal integrity and the core doctrinal beliefs and values of the church.

Other participants in the group shared their experiences with conflict with their respective Church Board and parishioners. They stated that these conflicts can last from a few months to several years and contributes immensely to the burnout of the clergy serving in a context of conflict for a long period of time. One participant (Bronzel) said conflicts between himself and his parishioners caused him to lose focus of the mission of the church and he began fighting to show that his position was the better way to go than his Board of Directors. Another participant (Pete) said that it becomes draining after a while when the church and the clergy are engaged in conflict, and the result is often that everyone loses.

Other group participants described their experience with conflict as a contributor to the experience of burnout in terms of not being able to take the same advice that they give to others to themselves. They reported that they work long hours for several days at a time in an attempt to address the congregants' needs of their churches, but neglecting their personal lives as spouses and parents. Their lives are far from balanced and while they get a lot done to satisfy their job requirements, their families suffer. They reported that this unbalanced life creates additional

stress and burnout as they try desperately to make up for the time they neglected the needs of their families.

The group ended with many of the participants stating that conflict has been a great contributor to their experience with the suffering of burnout. It was also mentioned by one of the participants (Niron) that it may be necessary for the clergy to adjust and or modify their vision and goals for their churches to avoid major conflicts at times. He said he believed that some of the conflicts are as a result of the clergy's unwillingness to make adjustment to avoid conflicts. The adjustment he said may mean to address some things in stages as opposed to trying to accomplish the entire project within a limited time span.

#### **Session 4 – Self-Care Needs**

The group began ten minutes after the scheduled starting time. The group began with everyone checking in with each other to see how each person was doing. Most of the participants reported that they were extremely busy with their jobs, attending school and home life. One participant (Chet) shared that he was struggling physically and emotionally to balance school, church, home responsibilities and himself. He reported that he has been working very long hours for the past few months overseeing a renovation project at his church and planning for the church's 50th anniversary celebration.

Chet stated that the work is taking a physical and emotional toll on him and his family. He shared that he has not been eating healthy and regularly over the past three months. He believes that because of poor nutrition and inadequate rest, his body feels drained and he has little or no energy to do anything for himself or his family when he goes home at nights. One of the participants (Pete) asked him if he had his annual check-up with his doctor this year as yet,

and he answered by saying that he has not been to the doctor in the past three years. Chet stated that his poor self-care is also affecting his family. He reported that he is not able to spend the time that he needs to with his young children, and his wife is not happy with their relationship over the last three to six months. He told his family that he will make it up to them after the renovations and church anniversary celebration ends, but he is scared that his family may not have the patience to wait for him.

Other participants in the group spoke about the importance of self-care and the need for everyone to take the time necessary to address their self-care needs. The subject of boundaries was once again discussed amongst the group, with the consensus being that it is of absolute necessity to protect the clergy and his family from overwork and infringing on family and personal time. There were some participants who shared that when they have established boundaries in the past, many congregants criticized them for not being accessible to them and for being lazy. However, the consensus of the group was that boundaries are important and should be established as soon as possible after the clergy's arrival at his/her new church.

The group felt that burnout amongst clergy is highest when their self-care needs are not met appropriately. Many of the participants in the group also expressed the need for clergy to delegate more responsibilities to local leaders and not to try to do too much to prove their worth. The importance of having an annual physical done was also emphasized as an absolute necessity.



## **Session 5 – Financial Remuneration**

The session began with 10 of the 12 participants calling. The other two group members sent messages with two of the group participants, that they would not be able to join the group today because of personal reasons, but would rejoin the group next week.

The participants began talking about how their day went. Some reported they had a good day, others said their day was terrible; still others say that their day was somewhat average. One of the participants (Ruby) said that she observed, based on the sentiments from those who shared that they had a terrible day, that lack of financial resources was the common factor. The group began discussing financial remuneration and pastoral ministry. Several participants shared that they believe that limited financial resources is one of the root causes of severe burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventist clergy. “We are expected to do so much, with so little,” another participant (Zachary) chimed in.

Some participants discussed that the issues and challenges with money may have to do more with how clergy manages their personal money and the monies of the church and less to do with the amount of money available. After much discussion between the participants of the group, it was the general consensus was that there is a need for better management of financial resources amongst Seventh-day Adventist clergy, but the limited resources available to provide meaningful ministry supersedes the issue of management of financial resources. The structure of the Seventh-day Adventist church with regards to eligibility for full retirement was also discussed as a stressful system. Participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the system of working for 30 years before eligibility for full retirement compensation.

The issue of where or what is the storehouse for all the tithe income to the Seventh-day Adventist church was also a heated topic of discussion. Some participants expressed that the

local church is the storehouse, while others offered that it was the local parent organization known as the local conference office which was the storehouse reference by scripture in Malachi 3:10. It was also discussed that the financial remuneration may also be a significant issue that causes some to question their call by God to pastoral ministry. Others expressed that it is commonly believed that if they are able to do much with little it speaks strongly of their spiritual connection with God as opposed to if they had unlimited resources to do the things that they desired to do. As the group concluded, it was the general consensus that financial resources, the lack and management of the same, are a major contributor of burnout amongst Seventh-day Adventist clergy.

### **Session 6 – Multi-tasking**

The session began with eleven participants calling in on time. It was reported that one of the participants (Bronzel) would not be able to participate in the group today because of an emergency at his church. It was reported that he is a member of the local Community Board and chairman of the Block Association where his church is located.

After a few minutes of greeting and sharing about how each other's day went, it was realized that many of the participants had to do at least two or three different tasks today, some that were planned for and others that just came about during the course of the day that they had to address. One of the participants (Cooper) reported that he is constantly forced to multi-task to get the things that are important done during the day. He stated that he is asked to multi-task not because there are no other competent persons available to do what needs to be done, but that his parishioners constantly asked him to do so much: counseling, community liaison and fundraiser, amongst other things.

Cooper shared that while he is able to multi-task and do well with what he is asked to do, there are times when it becomes overwhelming and stressful. Other participants shared similar experiences that they had and the stress that is often associated with the demand to multi-task as a pastor. It was reported that when they are not able to perform at their best in all the different activities that are sometimes placing a demand on their time, they are criticized and seen as ineffective and incompetent. The congregants are disappointed with the level of their pastor's performance and will soon be asking for a new clergy to pastor the congregation.

Most of today's session was spent discussing the challenges of multi-tasking. All of the participants expressed that there is an element of stress that they oftentimes go through, in order to multi-task. They believe that if they don't multi-task many of the important things will not get done or done properly. Several participants expressed that they believed they are oftentimes asked to do things that others could do and do effectively, but it is commonly believed amongst many parishioners that the pastor should represent the congregation as the leader to most external entities.

### **Session 7 – Making Disciplinary Decisions**

The session began today with two of the participants absent. It was reported that one of the participants (Cedric) was in a car accident yesterday and was in the hospital. The other absent participant, (Cooper,) went to visit Cedric at the hospital. The group decided to pray for Cedric's recovery from whatever trauma he may have experienced.

One of the participants (Pete) shared that he had a very difficult decision to make. He reported that his church is currently nominating members to serve in various capacities for the next two years. Pete reported that there are some highly respected and supportive members that

he will have to not recommend to the Nominating Committee in any capacity because of inappropriate conduct and unfaithfulness to church doctrine. Pete shared that he has a good relationship with some of these leaders and they have been great supporters of his ministry since his arrival to the church. However, he believes strongly that he needs to uphold the high and holy standards of the church.

Several of the participants in the group shared their experiences with having to make similar difficult but important decisions. Some said that while it was some of the most difficult decisions they had to make to discipline friends and in a few cases family members, after it was done, they felt relieved and confident that they did the right thing. One participant (Chet) shared that he had to discipline his son on one occasion. He reported that while it was most stressful and created great tension amongst his family, he knew in his heart he made the right, although unpopular, decision. The consensus from the group was that as difficult as it gets when they have to discipline someone publicly or privately, it is even more rewarding when it is done.

There were some participants who expressed concerns about the current disciplinary system that the Seventh-day Adventist church employs as corrective measures when a member does something that is against the policies and rules of conduct of the church. These disciplinary measures include: suspension from active service in the local church as an officer or member from six months to one year; or removal of name from active church membership until the parishioner has been re-baptized. Many of the participants believe that these measure have proven to be ineffective and outdated and should not be administered.

## **Session 8 – Vacation and “Down-Time.”**

All twelve participants of the group called in today. The Group Facilitator thanked everyone for calling in today and for their commitment to participate in the group for 12 weeks. The Group Facilitator reminded participants that the starting time for the group is 6:30pm. After a few minutes of greeting and catching up with each other, everyone welcomed back Cedric. Cedric expressed his appreciation for the calls, cards and visits he received from all the participants of the group.

Two participants of the group began by saying to the other participants that they are looking forward to the Thanksgiving holidays. The two (Niron and Pete) reported that they did not take any vacation time off this year because so much has been going on at their churches. They stated that their churches have been engaged all summer into massive church building renovations, while planning for church anniversaries at their respective churches. They reported that they have been working long days and nights to accomplish all the projects that they set out to accomplish.

A discussion on the importance of vacation ensued with many differing positions on the subject by the participants. Some participants believed that vacation should be taken by pastors and their families every year regardless of what is going on in the life of the church. Others expressed their concerns about the summer months being used by the pastor and family to go on vacations, because it is the best time for evangelistic programs and seminars. Still others argued that the best time to go out to go on vacation is when the work load is becoming intense and mentally draining.

All participants agreed that taking at least one annual vacation is good for the pastor, the church and the pastor's family. Three participants in the group reported that they have not yet

taken any vacation time this year. Those participants who have not yet taken any vacation time this year stated that they are tired and feel overwhelmed by people and events which shall not overwhelm them.

### **Session 9 – The Pastor and the Profession**

The group began today with nine of the twelve participants calling in on time. The other three participants called in approximately 15 minutes after the group began. The facilitator reminded all the participants of the importance of confidentiality of the group and thanked those who have been calling in on time each week. I felt the need to remind all participants of the importance of confidentiality, because I heard noise in the background from at least three of the nine participants who called in today.

Two participants (Niron and Pearl) expressed their feelings about the impact that the group has on them thus far. They stated that the group has helped to validate their profession as clergy, and that they have gotten to know and appreciate the other participants of the group even more now than at the beginning of the group. Several of the other participants chimed in by saying they felt the same way as well.

Another participant (Chet) shared that the challenges that he is often faced with, especially as a younger pastor, are the disrespect and ambiguity of his role as a pastor in his community. He said it is very stressful and frustrating at times when clergy personnel are treated as people who officiate at births, weddings and deaths. The role of the clergy in the everyday life of the community is not appreciated. Ruby, another participant in the group argued that people have births, weddings and deaths in their lives every day, so the clergy has a daily role to play. Some of the group's participants felt that while there may be some truth to the diminished

respect that is given to clergy today, clergy must also be willing to take some responsibility because of recent conduct by many of our popular nationally known clergy that included illicit operations, sexual misconduct and illegal drug usage.

The group discussed the role and relevance of the clergy in the everyday life of the community they serve. The consensus at the end of the group was that the role of the clergy is minimized and misunderstood by many in the community. Many of the participants shared that they do not have a strong seat of influence around the proverbial table that addresses the needs of the community. They are not invited to the meetings where pertinent decisions are being made that affects the community, and they are not consulted to share their opinions with those who are making the decisions that will affect the community. Others shared that they believe that it is also the responsibility of the clergy to establish and assert him/herself as a strong contributor at the proverbial table and not wait to be prodded and or acknowledged.

### **Session 10 – Success: How do we measure it?**

The group began with eight of the twelve participants present. Three other participants (Cedric, Pearl and Pete) called in approximately 10-15 minutes after the group began; one participant (Ruby) was not able to join the group because of an emergency family obligation. Group Facilitator expressed thanks to those participating in the group today and reminded everyone of the importance of keeping the group confidentiality group sacred. I reminded the group of the importance of honoring the confidentiality of the group, because one of the participants was having a conversation in the background with someone, while being on the phone participating in the group.

The discussion today began with one of the participants (Bronzel) sharing with the other participants about how he spent his weekend. He reported that he was blessed to spend some time with his mentor in ministry for two days. He continued to share how successful and effective his mentor's ministry has been for the past 40 years. He highlighted that his mentor is largely responsible for the success and effectiveness that he (Bronzel) has enjoyed in ministry to date. One of the other participants (Chet) asked the group how success in ministry is defined. Several participants chimed in giving various definitions that included membership growth, financial growth, personal growth and others said meeting the organization's growth.

Several participants shared that success is still a topic of great stress and anxiety for them on a daily basis. They reported that their church assignments (large, medium or small) are largely determined by the organization's opinion of how successful they have been in terms of membership and financial growth. Some participants reported that despite limited available resources given to them when they began working at their respective churches; they are still expected to have significant financial and membership growth. All participants agreed that the organization's definition of success is often arbitrary and too generalized. Some participants expressed that maintaining current membership and financial status is sometime considered success depending on the context they find themselves in.

One participant (Niron) reminded the group that success is achieving the goal that was established. The group agreed that it is important to established clear goals that are attainable, that will help to guide the direction of the church or organization. The Group Facilitator was asked for his opinion or definition of success. I reminded all participants that my role as facilitator does not lend itself for me to share my opinions, ideas or other commentary on the group's discussion. One participant (Cedric) reported the stress and anxiety that oftentimes



surrounds pastors trying to achieve the standard of success that has been predetermined by executive administrators, who are not always aware of the dynamics of the church.

### **Session 11 – It Gets Very Lonely Sometimes**

The group began with all twelve participants calling in within 10 minutes of the starting time. After approximately ten minutes of greeting and checking in with each other, one of the participants (Ruby) said, “Hey guys, we only have one more week and then this will be all over.” “That’s true,” another participant (Pearl) responded. Other participants began to chime in, that the group is coming to an end and that they are going to miss the weekly connection with each other.

Another participant asked Ruby what she will be doing on a Tuesday evening when the group is not in session any longer. Ruby responded by saying that she’ll go back to doing things with and for herself. Pearl chimed in saying, “It’s amazing, but when you think about it, ministry can be very lonely sometimes.” Other participants in the group began to encourage each other to remain in contact with at least one member of the group.

The group continued to discuss the loneliness that they have experienced in pastoral ministry over their careers. Several participants in the group reported that they are constantly around people most of the time, yet they feel lonely. They stated that they are oftentimes looked at as people whose lives are well organized and structured, but that they oftentimes lack the support and care that they are in need of from their fellow colleagues. One participant (Cedric) shared that he believes that the issue with feeling lonely when we have our colleagues and others around us constantly, stems from the fact that we have not spent enough time getting to know each other, to become vulnerable and trusting of each other.

The two female participants in the group kept on encouraging the other members of the group to stay in touch with each other. The female pastors expressed that they believe it is even more important for them, than it is for their male counterparts, to develop relationships with male colleagues.

## **Session 12 – Too Many Losses**

The group met face to face in a large room at my church. The participants greeted each other for the first 5-7 minutes. The group began today with seven of the twelve participants showing up on time. The other five participants showed up 15-20 minutes later. After 10 minutes of greetings and checking up with each other, the group went silent for about 30 seconds. Some of the participants looked around the room at each other, others just looked at the wall or an object in the room, but no one said a word. Finally the silence was broken with the sound of someone clearing his/her throat.

One of the participants (Chet) looked over at me and said that “it was good while it lasted.” He then proceeded to share with the group that he appreciated all the ideas and comments that they shared over the past eleven weeks. Another participant (Pete) said he was not so sure what to expect when he agreed to be a part of the group, but he is so glad that he made and kept his commitment to be a participant of the group. Several other participants spoke about how therapeutic the group has been for them, and that they would be willing to engage in another group like this one in the near future.

Titano shared with the group that one of the most stressful experiences he has to deal with in pastoral ministry is loss. He continued by sharing about the many different types of losses he experienced from death of family members and church family members, to having to

relocate from one church to another several times thus far in ministry; and the loss of meaningful relationships over the past 20 years. Other participants also spoke about their experiences with having to deal with several losses over their career and the impact they had on themselves and family.

After a lengthy conversation about loss, one participant (Niron) asked if the group could continue to meet at least once per month instead of once per week to avoid the loss in this context. Some of the participants thought that the idea to continue on a reduced frequency of schedule could work, but others thought that losses are a natural a part of our experience as clergy and as human beings, with which we find ways to deal. Other participants discussed with Niron what his specific need may be that he is hoping that the continuation of the group will address. He answered, “Having a meaningful relationship with colleagues that I have an opportunity to dialogue with at least once per week.”

Just before we said our final good byes to each other as members of the group, I reminded those that may have taken notes to remember to protect the confidentiality of the group by discarding notes and the use of participants’ real names in any future references. I thanked all the participants for their commitment and contribution to the group and they thanked me for bringing them together.