

Cultivating Pastor Wellbeing

A Wellbeing in Ministry Resource for Congregations

Your pastor's wellbeing is vital to your congregation's health.

This resource invites congregations to engage their pastor(s) in conversations about creating a healthier and more fulfilling work environment. When a congregation supports its pastor's wellbeing, the whole church benefits.

Key Areas of Care:

-  **Physical**
-  **Financial**
-  **Time, Rest, & Flexibility**
-  **Spiritual**
-  **Professional/Relational**
-  **Emotional & Work-Life Balance**
-  **Family Support**
-  **Inclusion & Appreciation**

These topics address many pastoral needs and can be adapted for congregations of all sizes and resource levels.

How to Use This Resource:

- **Focus on what is realistic with your congregation's resources.**
- **Acknowledge the complexities of your congregation's role as an employer.**
- **Work with your pastor to identify what changes would be most impactful.**

Reflect together. Support generously. Grow faithfully.

Pastor Wellbeing Checklist

Assign one point per item checked

Use this tool to reflect on how your congregation supports the health and flourishing of your pastor(s).

Physical Wellbeing:

- ☐ The congregation has taken steps to encourage or eliminate barriers to walking, running, biking, or other types of exercise during the pastor's workday (e.g., secure bike storage, place to shower and change).
 - ☐ When snacks are provided at church functions, the congregation provides healthy options such as fruit or vegetables.
 - ☐ The congregation makes sure there is convenient access to drinking water at the church/church offices.
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Financial Wellbeing:

- ☐ The congregation encourages and pays for half of financial planning consultation services for the pastor(s) (e.g., Everence).
 - ☐ Congregational leadership reviews the MC USA pastor salary guidelines annually and takes them seriously when making decisions.
 - ☐ The congregation supports access to affordable housing or offsetting commuting costs, especially in high-cost areas.
 - ☐ The congregation offers a financial incentive for specific wellness activities (e.g., through The Corinthian Plan or its own program).
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Time, Rest, & Flexibility:

- ☐ The congregation provides pastoral staff with sabbaticals, following MC USA's pastor salary guidelines.
- ☐ The congregation encourages the pastor to preach no more than three Sundays per month on average.
- ☐ Congregational leadership reminds the congregation of the pastor's Sabbath day and honors

it (Sunday is a workday).

- ☐ The congregation regularly revisits and reaffirms boundaries around availability (e.g., work hours, vacation, digital communication).
 - ☐ The congregation has a clear process to cover pastoral tasks when the pastor is absent, ensuring vacation is truly restful.
 - ☐ The congregation is creative and flexible with special, reasonable requests (e.g., data plan, remote work, standing desk).
 - ☐ When the pastor volunteers with community organizations, this time is considered part of their paid work.
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Spiritual & Emotional Support:

- ☐ The congregation encourages and pays for spiritual direction and considers it paid work time.
 - ☐ The congregation encourages and supports access to professional counseling or mental health services and helps to normalize their use within the church community.
 - ☐ The congregation implements a clear plan for individuals or groups to regularly pray for the pastor(s).
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Professional & Peer Support:

- ☐ The congregation considers area conference and denominational work as paid time.
 - ☐ The pastor is encouraged to regularly participate in local pastor peer groups as part of paid work time.
 - ☐ The congregation has a pastor support committee (e.g., PCRC) that meets at least twice a year with the pastor.
 - ☐ The congregation has a regular review structure for giving direct and honest feedback, and consults with trained professionals (e.g., conference ministers or counselors) as needed.
 - ☐ The congregation has clear, annually reviewed processes to address harassment or abuse that may occur in church life/work.
 - ☐ The congregation provides adequate tech tools and administrative support (e.g., internet, software, secretarial help).
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Family Support:

- ☐ The congregation provides support for pastors with young children or aging parents (e.g., flexible schedules, ride assistance, child care help).
- ☐ The congregation fosters a culture that includes and supports the pastor's family (e.g., inviting participation without expectation, checking on their wellbeing).

Inclusion & Appreciation:

- ☐ The congregation expresses appreciation for the pastor at least annually in an intentional way (e.g., Clergy Appreciation Day).
 - ☐ The congregation is intentional about creating an inclusive environment that supports pastors from diverse backgrounds and identities, including training and advocacy.
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Other ways we support pastor wellbeing:

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Score Summary

Total each item checked.

Our congregation's wellbeing score: _____

Pastor Wellbeing Score Interpretation Guide

Use this guide alongside the *Pastor Wellbeing Checklist* to assess how your congregation is supporting the wellbeing of your pastor(s). This is not a test but a tool for reflection, growth, and encouragement.

Basic Support (10–14 points):

Your congregation is beginning to cultivate practices that support pastoral wellbeing. You likely:

- Are aware of the importance of pastoral care.
- Support your pastor in informal or occasional ways.
- May be limited by size, staffing, or finances.

Next Steps:

- Identify 2–3 achievable practices to implement over the next year.
 - Prioritize high-impact, low-cost actions (e.g., honoring Sabbath time, praying regularly, peer support).
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Healthy Engagement (15–20 points):

Your congregation is actively investing in the wellbeing of your pastor(s) and addressing multiple aspects of support. You likely:

- Offer structured feedback and support systems.
- Include your pastor's wellbeing in decision-making.
- Provide a mix of spiritual, financial, and relational care.

Next Steps:

- Meet with your pastor to prioritize additional supports.
 - Strengthen weaker areas (e.g., mental health access, implementing tech support tools).
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Thorough Commitment (21–26+ points):

Your congregation deeply integrates pastoral care into your church culture. You likely:

- Regularly assess and adapt your practices.
- Involve leadership and lay members in shared care.
- Offer generous, proactive, and consistent support.

Next Steps:

- Celebrate what's working! Share your model with others.
 - Review annually to maintain and evolve your commitments.
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Reflection Prompts:

- Which checklist items have the most impact for our pastor?
 - Are we balancing financial, emotional, spiritual, and practical care?
 - What prevents us from improving in some areas—and can that be addressed creatively?
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Annual Wellbeing Goal Setting:

Our current score: _____ (*Total from Pastor Wellbeing Checklist*)

Practices we want to add this year:

Reviewed by:

Date: _____

Let this be a living tool, revised with your pastor's input, your congregation's growth, and your shared mission in mind.

Pastor Wellbeing Checklist Appendix

Use this reference alongside the Pastor Wellbeing Checklist to spark creative ideas, find helpful tools, and strengthen your support of pastoral wellbeing across several dimensions.

Physical Wellbeing:

- Promote the Corinthian Plan wellness incentive.
- Encourage walking meetings when appropriate.
- Host “Bike to Church” or “Walk to Church” Sundays.
- Organize a congregation-wide walking challenge.
- Make space available for exercise in the church building.
- Hold healthy themed potlucks: salads, vegetarian meals, soups.
- Host a healthy dish challenge.
- Provide smaller dishware to promote healthy portions.
- Share garden produce and plants.
- Offer occasional blood pressure checks at church.

Financial Wellbeing:

- Review and use the [MC USA pastor salary guidelines](#).
- Encourage use of [Corinthian Plan wellness incentives](#).
- Connect pastors with [Everence financial planning services](#).

Time, Rest, & Flexibility:

- Review MC USA's Sabbatical and Study Leave Guidelines: [Study & Service Leaves PDF](#)

Spiritual Wellbeing:

- Use the [MCUSA Spiritual Director Directory](#) to help pastors connect with a director.
- Learn more about spiritual direction and practices at [Spiritual Director International](#).
- Include prayers for your pastor(s) during worship, small groups, elder meetings, and other congregational settings.

Professional / Relational Wellbeing:

- Establish or enhance a Pastor Support Committee (e.g., PCRC): [learn more](#) by visiting the MC USA webpage on Pastor Congregation Relations.
- Use MC USA [Safe Church](#) resources to be proactive in keeping children, youth, and vulnerable adults safe from abuse of any kind.
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- Refer to MC USA's [Sexual Abuse Prevention & Response guidelines](#).

Emotional / Work-Life Balance:

- Offer monthly respite or child care options (volunteer or paid).
- Reduce Sunday preaching load through:
 - Lay members sharing faith stories.
 - Scripture dramatization by church/youth groups.
 - Hosting a hymn sing Sunday.

Inclusion & Appreciation:

- Explore and share MC USA's [Diversity: God's Design](#) resource for cultivating inclusive and affirming congregational cultures.
- October is Clergy Appreciation month. Pastor Appreciation Day is the second Sunday of October.

Use these ideas as conversation starters.