



DEPRESSION AND THE CHURCH LEADER: RESOURCES FOR CARE

WELS Leadership Conference
January 17, 2023

Dan Nommensen and Pastor Kurt Ebert

Our Time Together

- Depression overview/stats
- A life-event example
- Resources for leaders
- Questions – at any time



“How are you?”

Confused; Betrayed
 Useless
 Broken
 Never good enough
 Fragile; Anxious
 I'm falling apart and
 you don't notice it
 Pathetic; Annoying
 Rejected
 Lonely
 Defeated

I don't know what Jesus wants me to do.

My depression is constantly dragging me down.

I have major financial problems.

I do not have healthy relationships with many people in my life.

Every day that I wake up alive is a disappointment.



Called worker immunity?

- *"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." Psalm 51:5*
- *"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23*





Called worker immunity?

- "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also."*

John 15:18-20





What is Depression?

The DSM-5 outlines the following criterion to make a diagnosis of depression. The individual must be experiencing five or more symptoms during the same 2-week period and at least one of the symptoms should be either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure.

- Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day. (e.g., feels sad, empty, hopeless).
- Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day.
- Significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain, or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day.
- Insomnia or hypersomnia nearly every day
- A slowing down of thought and a reduction of physical movement (observable by others, not merely subjective feelings of restlessness or being slowed down).



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- Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day.
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt nearly every day.
- Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day.
- Recurrent thoughts of death, recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.



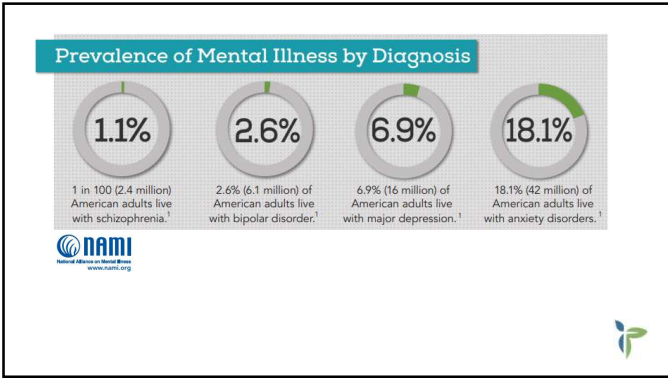
Key Symptoms for Called Workers

- Loss of social support/communication challenges
- Spiritual lethargy and loss of freedom
 - *"I should do . . ."*
 - *"I'm not doing enough/right/as good as . . ."*
- Exhaustion (physically, emotionally, spiritually)



Fact: 43.8 million adults experience mental illness in a given year.





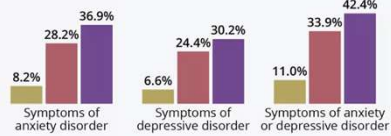




Pandemic Causes Spike in Anxiety & Depression

% of U.S. adults showing symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder*

■ January-June 2019 ■ May 14-19, 2020 ■ December 9-21, 2020



* Based on self-reported frequency of anxiety and depression symptoms. They are derived from responses to the first two questions of the eight-item Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2) and the seven-item Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-2) scale.

Sources: CDC, NCHS, U.S. Census Bureau



Pastor Wellbeing Study

- Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) study published in 2021
- Survey with 900 PCA pastors and 16 focus groups to get a snapshot into their current state of wellbeing and to gain insight into the practices, conditions, and choices that promote and hinder wellbeing.
- Relationships; Identity; Systems

PASTORAL WELLBEING

PCA Pastors Reflect on the Tensions of Ministry

Reflections & Insights
CHRISTIAN WELLNESS, BARRY ROSENBERG, & DONALD C. GUTHRIE



Pastor Wellbeing Study

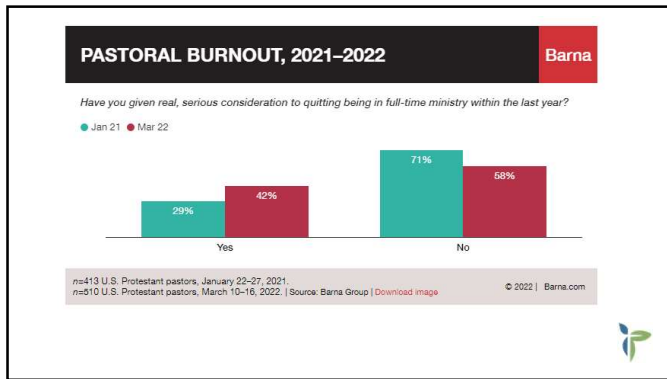
Pastoral work is hard and it is good. It is discouraging and it is thrilling. It is vital to the priorities of God's kingdom and it is an ongoing act of submission to Jesus. And it can be incredibly isolating. As we have analyzed the data and listened to dozens of pastors share about ministry and life, it is clear that connection is the overriding theme. When people have meaningful connections to others who love and care about them and an abiding connection to God through Christ, the road to holistic health becomes smoother.

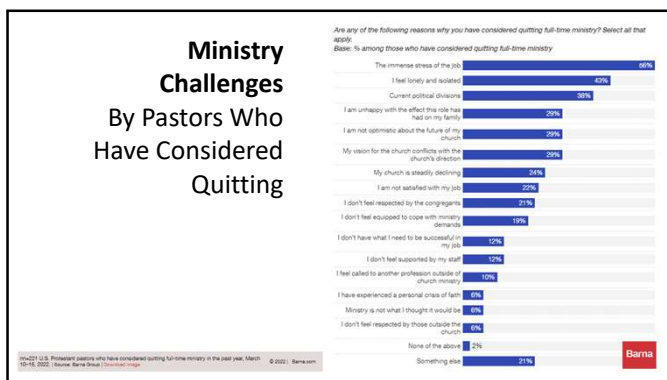
PASTORAL WELLBEING

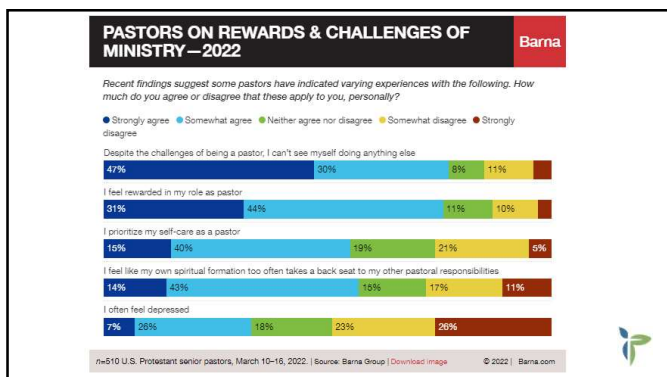
PCA Pastors Reflect on the Tensions of Ministry

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Contributing Factors

- Age and Gender
- Family History – Learned or biological?
- Physical Health – Issues that drastically change your lifestyle.
- Personality – Pessimistic, low self-worth, perfectionistic, conflict avoidance/sensitivity to criticism.
- Medication/Substances – Side effects of medications or recreational drugs and alcohol use used to minimize negative emotions.
- Life Events – Abuse, birth of a child, moving, job loss, divorce/breakup, grief, etc. Importance is on how one perceives and deals with these events.



A life-event example: Family Crisis

Pastor Kurt Ebert



Self-messaging in the face of a son's suicide

- How can this be happening in MY family?
- What did I miss? And how did I miss it?
- Oh my God, WHY WHY WHY?
- Just let me die, now.
- You could have stopped this, God.
- I don't think I can continue to minister.
- Who will ever listen to me again?

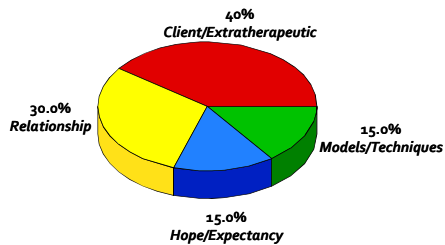


Game changers for this broken heart

- Sabbath rest away
- Counseling as a family, couple, and individual
- Reading short books, devotionals on grief and loss
- Getting back to my Bible, worship
- Setting appropriate social boundaries
- Ability to talk with my spouse, friends, others
- Vulnerability without fear
- Positive busyness as appropriate



Outcome Research



Resources

- WELS/ELS Christian Therapists Network - <https://christiantherapistnetwork.com/>

WELS | ELS CHRISTIAN THERAPIST NETWORK

- Care Committee for Called Workers – WELS Special Ministries. Kurt Holzhuter, chairman of WELS Care Committee for Called Workers. <https://wels.net/serving-you/christian-life/special-ministries/care-for-called-workers/>




Resources


- WELS Marriages – (Marriage Moments, Marriage Maintenance, Marriage Keys) <https://welscongregationalservices.net/ministry-resources/wels-marriages/>




Marriage
MOMENTS



Marriage
MAINTENANCE

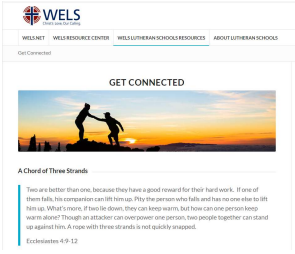



Marriage
KEYS




Resources

- WELS Lutheran Schools Resources - <https://cls.welsrc.net/connect/>
 - Resources for parents, children, educators






Resources



MARTIN LUTHER COLLEGE

WELS Lutheran Schools and Martin Luther College:

- New Teacher Induction (NTI) – Providing mentors for teachers during the first two years <https://mlc-wels.edu/nti/>
- Principal Training Program (PTP) - three-year mentoring process for graduates assigned to be principals
- CLS will also work with schools and congregations to assist new leaders.



Resources

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary - Pastor Partners Initiative

- Pastor Partners is an initiative of Grow in Grace that seeks to provide a system of support and encouragement for pastors from “seminary to sunset” – from seminary graduation through retirement. While being thankful for the rich blessing of support and encouragement that often happens informally brother to brother, Pastor Partners seeks to enhance that support by making more formal avenues of encouragement readily available.

- Pastor Partners Mentoring – Prof. John Brenner
- Pastor Partners Retreats – Prof. Brad Wordell



Resources

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary - Pastor Partners Initiative

- Pastor Partners Retreats
 - Remaining in Grace for pastors & spouses marking the 35th anniversary of their graduation;
 - Excelling in Grace for pastors & spouses marking the 25th anniversary of their graduation;
 - Renewed in Grace for pastors & spouses marking the 10th anniversary of their graduation; and
 - Begun in Grace for pastors & spouses marking the 3rd anniversary of their graduation.



Resources

- CrossTrain Ministries-
<https://crosstrainministries.com/>
- *CrossTrain coaching helps WELS pastors develop healthy spiritual, emotional, and physical habits, along with transparent relationships, that foster resilience. These efforts all take place under the grace of God and in a network of brotherly relationships.*



Resources

- WELS Western Wisconsin District – Committee for Called Worker Mental Health – Pastor Jeff Seelow.
- WELS South Atlantic District - leadership triads where leaders get together for devotion and mutual support – Eric Brown.

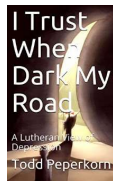


Resources

- I Trust When Dark My Road: A Lutheran View of Depression by Todd Peperkorn

"By traveling down that dark road, I have come to understand what the light of Christ is all about."

- Hollow Heart: When a Christian Minister Has Depression by Luke Italiano





Christian counseling is quality, professional care integrated with the healing power of the Gospel.

As a para-synodical organization, you can trust CFS to use God's Word in its truth and purity.

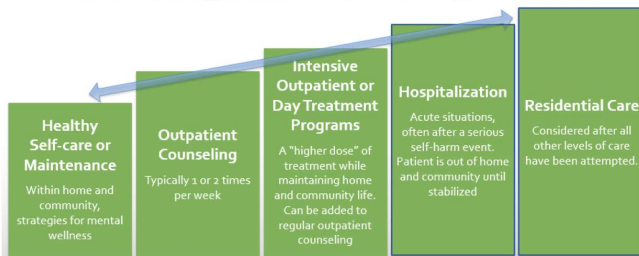
“For such a time as this.”

- CFS has 110 clinically trained mental health providers
- Dedicated to clinical excellence *and* the truth and purity of God’s Word
- Licensed to serve clients in 8 states, in person or through telehealth
- Provide services anywhere in the world through our Member Assistance Program (MAP)
- Higher levels of care to meet more acute needs



Getting Help

Understand the typical levels of care offered in your community:

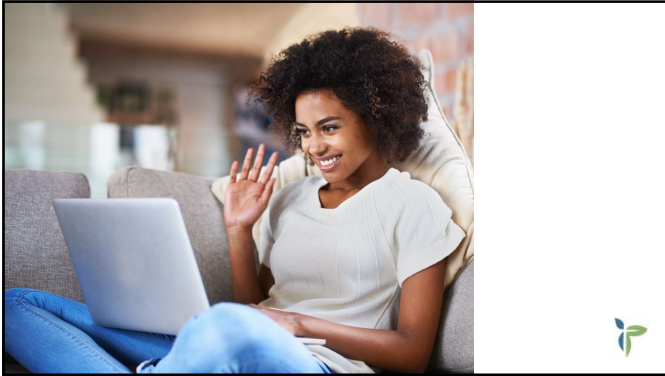


Member Assistance Program (MAP)

Partnering with religious organizations to provide services for their students, members, & employees

- High schools
- Colleges
- Seminaries
- Congregations
- Districts
- Other organizations





In their own words . . .

"I wanted to reach out to let you know how beneficial the MAP program was for me. I was quite a mess when I started, wasn't sleeping well, full of anxiety. I'm in a much better place now and feel more equipped to get through the challenges I'm facing in life and ministry. So thank you for all that you do to help us!"



In their own words . . .

The counseling helped. Immensely.
And the reason it helped... was that it took me to Jesus.
It helped me identify the lies my heart spoke.
It helped me see the deceptions I had trusted.
And it took me to the truth.
That Jesus has already won the fight. That Jesus loves me. That he is not ashamed of me.
That he claims me. That he forgives me.
That it is not my burden to carry.
I have depression. Jesus has me.



*Why are you running here and there, tormenting yourselves with anxious and sad thoughts, imagining that God will not keep you in His grace and that there is no longer any Christ for you? Why do you insist on finding him within yourselves, insist on feeling holy and without sin? You will never succeed ... You are being guided by your feelings and think you can grasp Him with your thoughts. **Come to the place that is driven neither by your own nor by any human being's business, but by God's business and rule. So come to His Word.** There you will find Him and hear and see that there is no wrath and disfavor against you in Him, as you fear in your despair. Christ has nothing but grace and warm love in store for you."*

— Martin Luther, W2 11:453-55



QUESTIONS?





Your support will directly help those we serving.

Text CFSGive to 262-217-3500



For more information on these services,
contact us:

800.438.1772

www.ChristianFamilySolutions.org



WISCONSIN LUTHERAN CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE, INC.
