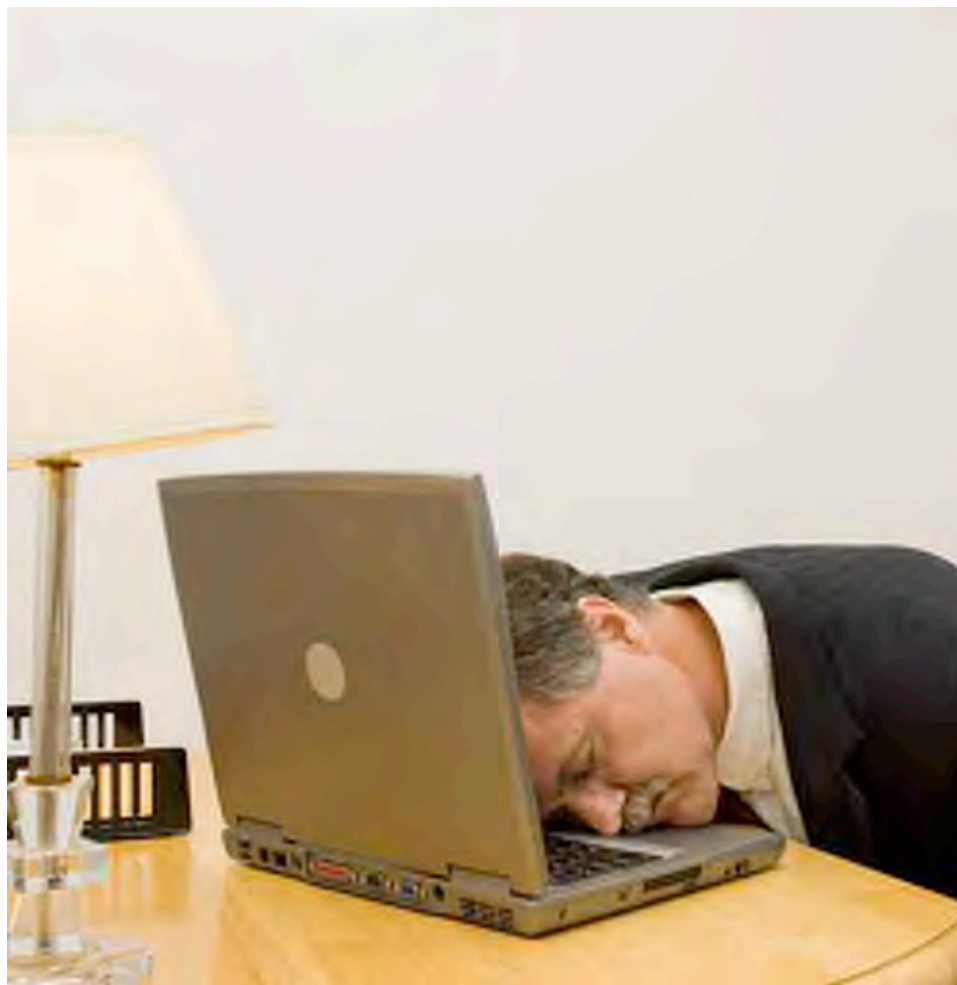


VOLUME 3 NUMBER 3 FALL 2006

*An Inter-Lutheran Journal
for Practitioners and
Teachers of Pastoral Care
and Counseling*



CARING CONNECTIONS

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THE PURPOSE OF CARING CONNECTIONS

Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling is written by and for Lutheran practitioners and educators in the fields of pastoral care, counseling, and education. Seeking to promote both breadth and depth of reflection on the theology and practice of ministry in the Lutheran tradition, *Caring Connections* intends to be academically informed, yet readable; solidly grounded in the practice of ministry; and theologically probing.

Caring Connections seeks to reach a broad readership, including chaplains, pastoral counselors, seminary faculty and other teachers in academic settings, clinical educators, synod and district leaders, others in specialized ministries, and—not least—concerned congregational pastors and laity. *Caring Connections* also provides news and information about activities, events, and opportunities of interest to diverse constituencies in specialized ministries.

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Editorial

One day I sat for hours with a man waiting for news of his brother. His brother had been shot and taken to surgery before he had arrived. We waited for word, and I didn't expect good news, having seen the extent of his brother's injuries. When the surgeon appeared he broke the news quickly, his brother was dead. He wailed and cried and raged while I sat silently with him. After crying himself to exhaustion, with his eyes red and puffy, he looked up at me suddenly and said, "Boy, *your* job sucks!"

This and many other clues continuously remind us that the work of pastoral care is very hard work. The work will drain us if we are not continuously replenished. This issue of *Caring Connections* is dedicated to the important topic of Sabbath and Self-Care for Spiritual Care Providers. This issue writers share with us a variety of perspectives regarding this replenishment, including sobering cautions for us if we don't attend to it.

John Eckrich shares a vision of a better ordered life for care providers built around a wellness matrix conceptualized in the Shema.

John Martinson details a comprehensive definition of many kinds of health that make up a healthy life and ministry.

Tammy Devine portrays the concept of the Wholeness Wheel and how healthy leaders seek well-being in many areas of being.

Christopher Cahill and Ronald Jones urge a rediscovery of Sabbath and rest in the lives of pastors and other caregivers.

Bryn Carlson introduces us to an idea of how church leaders can care for congregations in the wake of clergy misconduct which may lead to healing; an intentional ministry that cares for congregations "after crisis."

Jan Wiersma admits us to a behind-the-scenes look at a retreat community where the needs for Sabbath and rest for sabbathmakers is uplifted.

For anyone interested in learning more about retreat opportunities, we provide the following information available online through the Lutheran

Church—Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The [Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support](#) web page includes helpful information about self-care. The links section of the page contains referrals for retreat sites and other organizations concerned with clergy care. The [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Outdoor Ministries](#) includes a searchable tool to find ministries according to community.

Caring Connections can be read in two places, both in its own dedicated website, [caringconnections.org](#), and also on the Lutheran Services in America website. We plan to knit these sites together in exciting ways to create a rich resource and network for pastoral care providers. We are creating a resources center on the site. If you have any resources such as case studies, care plans, creative liturgies or any resource of interest to the pastoral care provider community, please share these with us for inclusion on the site.

If you have not already done so, we encourage you to subscribe online to *Caring Connections*. Subscription is free! By subscribing, you assure that you will receive prompt notification when each issue of the journal appears on the [Caring Connections website](#)—no need to keep checking to see if a new issue is there. You will also help the editor and editorial board keep a clear idea of the level of interest our journal is generating. You can subscribe by clicking on the subscription link on [caringconnections.org](#) or by following the information appearing on the masthead (page 3) and also (in larger print) on page 24.

Caring Connections is the product of many partners. I would like to especially thank Chrissy Woelzlein for assistance with layout and publication. I would like to thank everyone at Lutheran Services in America, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod St. Louis offices, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Chicago offices for their ongoing support and assistance with the journal.

Call for Articles

Caring Connections seeks to provide Lutheran Pastoral Care Providers the opportunity to share expertise and insight with the wider community. We would like to invite anyone interested in writing an article to please contact the editor, [Rev. Kevin Massey](#). We would like to specifically request articles for upcoming issues on the following themes.

Spring 2007 "Special Zion Conference Issue"

This issue will share the central presentations enjoyed at the Zion Conference. Additionally, special comment, rebuttal, and commentary raised by the conference will be shared.

Summer 2007 "Topics on Pastoral Counseling"

Lutherans have a rich tradition of leadership and excellence in the field of Pastoral Counseling. This issue will highlight topics and trends in this distinct healing modality among the Spiritual Care disciplines.

Balance...Balance...Balance: A Wellness Matrix for Pastoral Care Givers

It is in the balancing of the parcels that we might learn how to carry and deliver the gifts of our healing Savior.

The other day in the St. Louis airport, my wife and I saw a slightly corpulent fellow, dressed in a brown suit with black shirt, clerical collar, and scuffed tan hushpuppies trotting...well wobbling...down the corridor, carrying enormous suitcases in each hand, smaller bags under each arm, scurrying to catch a plane. "Lutheran pastor!" I said to my wife. "Lutheran pastor, about to have a stroke!" she chimed.

Frankly, it got me wondering. What would a *healthy* Lutheran pastor, chaplain, CPE director or pastoral counselor look like? In fact, do we have *healthy* Lutheran pastoral care providers in the early part of this century? Or...is being a Lutheran pastor synonymous with chronic fatigue, disrupted immune system, stomach and headache, depression, near poverty, personal family crises, constant state of sweat, or wandering in a spiritual desert?

Before you respond, consider a few comments from recent Lutheran and other denominational studies: 20% of LCMS clergy are in a state of burnout; only 20% are truly joyous in their work – Klaas, 1999 (I suspect similar figures for the ELCA); clergy shortages are widespread in all mainline denominations due to lack of career candidates, professional burnout and unhealthy congregational environments – Alban Institute, 2001. From Klaas's study done for the Board for Higher Education of the LCMS, among causes for unhealthy professional settings are pastors "beating up" on each other, mismatching of pastors and congregations, lack of seeking or accessing counseling for pastors and their families, poverty-level clergy income and total fatigue trying to fulfill a never-ending task.

My own personal medical career has been woven intricately with the lives of seminarians, parish pastors, teachers and synodical judicatory as their family physician for more than 30 years. My primary observation has been simple and reproducible: Lutheran church workers, particularly clergy, continuously burn themselves up trying to negotiate personal life with commitment to their Call, as if the two could be anything but a whole pathway or assignment. In fact, I would suggest that vibrant, lengthy and healthy Christian service springs from balanced, ordered and integrated personal health, centered and empowered in one's personal relationship with Christ and rehearsed in the family and home life.



The baggage carried by our Lutheran pastoral airport traveler looks an awful lot like the heavy pastoral care load which each of you lift daily. Now, we would *not* expect that the amount of work, the stressors, the challenges, and the opportunities will diminish. There is no end to the need of God's people for His touch of grace and peace. However, if we carry weighty bags of challenges out of balance (too much work, too little rest), we tend to strain to the point of personal and professional injury. It is in the *balancing* of the parcels that we might learn how to carry and deliver the gifts of our healing Savior, while remaining well and whole ourselves. I believe the Lord wishes us to be well

Lutheran church workers, particularly clergy, continuously burn themselves up trying to negotiate personal life with committment to their Call.

and to be complete, to be our best in handling his precious gifts, don't you?

And, how does Christ direct and assist us in bringing these good and gracious gifts to needy people? We understand his presence in his purpose. He came to restore our relationship with our Triune God.

More specifically, Christ came to restore health, order and balance to our personal life as well as the life of the world, and to restore it with *abundance* (John 10:10), to restore the kingdom of God. His hand becomes intertwined with ours; he *grace-grasps* us.

So what might an abundant, a healthy, ordered, grace-grasped and, yes, a balanced life look like? Perhaps, it looks like a *matrix*, components all intimately interrelated, where disruption of one component disrupts all the others. I believe Christ gives us a model of this “abundant life matrix” in his own living and in his instructions to us, for example, in Mark 12: 29-31. He centers the matrix in the Shema: The Lord our God is One. *Understand that the first step in order restoration is to be in proper relationship with the One God...and Christ will accomplish this for all in his obedience on the cross.* Secondly, love the Lord with all your heart [emotions], soul [spirit], mind [intellect], and strength [physical being]. *Be balanced and ordered in self-relationships.* Finally, love your neighbor as yourself. *Have order as you relate to others...in vocation and in leisure.*

Another excellent word for this “balanced, abundant life matrix” is SHALOM. Shalom means more than just *peace*. Shalom means a peaceful and right relationship with one’s self, one’s fellow, and God. In both the Old Testament and New, Shalom defines health. The angels announce this Shalom to the shepherds in Bethlehem, and Christ re-emphasizes this Shalom twice as he greets his followers immediately after his resurrection. It’s central to his health ministry matrix.

Therefore, using the definition of Shalom, as expanded in Mark 12, how might we put this balanced matrix of health into 21st Century terms?

Firstly, put the One God in the center: the core of the matrix is our relationship to God, focused in our direction, our intention and attention to all we do, say, ponder and worship.

Then, love the Lord with all your heart: we might think of this emotional component of the matrix as living in *hope and joy*; living assured of the cure for all disease found in the cross and resurrection. The resurrection assures us that no matter how wild and marauding the wilderness, we will all be rescued...immediately, eventually or ultimately...but certainly completely.

Love with all your soul: key to our health is our *prayer* life, where we talk in conversation with our Lord (kataphatic prayer) or merely sit at his feet, like Mary at Bethany, and listen to the Word (apophatic prayer). As Dr. Luther reminds us, the more we have to carry, the more time we need to spend in carrying it to the Lord in prayer.

Love with all your mind: maintain the intellect by continuing *study*...study of God’s Word in the exploration of Scriptures through more than sermon preparation, and additionally through a personal devotional life, and by persistent examination of the gifts of his creation in the arts, music, science, literature.

Love with all your strength: *invest* in your personal physical health...exercise, proper rest, diet, weight control, and fiscal as well as physical balance. Care for the talents entrusted to you. Here, you might remember the importance of rest, which the Creator did on the seventh day of creation, and which our Savior did, when needed, in his earthly

Shalom means more than just peace. Shalom means a peaceful and right relationship with one’s self, one’s fellow, and God.

journey. A nice way to visualize this is to think of each day of the week as having three time-pods, and with seven days, a total of 21 pods available per week. Proper balance should include three (1/7th) blocks per week for total personal rest. For pastoral counselors, that may not be all on a Sunday day off, and occasionally there will be the requirement of evening meetings, funerals, emergency counseling sessions. However, to get into a pattern of not preserving three pods per week for personal rest is, literally, deadly!

Love your neighbor as yourself: interpersonal relationships begin with *forgiveness*. Forgiveness is the balance-skill most difficult to command, but most essential to move toward health. The burden of trying to carry bad neighbor-baggage for any distance is self-crippling.

Further, a vocational word to consider in this matrix is *service*. Christ gives us the model of the servant as the orientation for our work-life. Servant hood is the key to our effectiveness and to our satisfaction and joy.

At last, *sanctify* our leisure. We sanctify our rest by avoiding pornography, addictions, unhealthy relationships, behaviors that rob us of true rest, and solitude, and comfort.

So...center your attention in Christ, pray, study, live in hope and joy, forgive, invest, serve, and sanctify. These might be thought of as *discipline-cogs* in a matrixed, three-dimensional gyroscope; not disciplines based in law (for certainly we cannot accomplish these of ourselves), but rather disciplines growing out of being *grace-grasped* in the power of the Spirit, anointed in the Water and Word, sustained in the Bread and Wine.

Will the luggage load lessen? No, and Romans 5 reminds us that we can rejoice even in our challenges, which produce “perseverance: perseverance, character; and character, hope,” given to us through the Holy Spirit.

Our own program, Grace Place Lutheran Retreats, offer pastors, teachers and other professional church leaders and their spouses, experiential training in learning these preventative health skills and attitudes through five-day, five-night ‘pause points’. Our retreats are held in beautiful resort and retreat settings throughout the country multiple

times each year and are heavily underwritten to encourage maximum participation.

In the past six years, Grace Place has retreated over 650 pastoral couples, single clergy, and over 150 Lutheran seminary students. Our goal is to ‘inoculate’ clergy against unhealthy and unbalanced living styles that lead to professional and personal disorders and burnout. Major initiatives this year will include retreating of church leaders of music and worship, teachers and DCE’s.

We would encourage anyone interested in studying balanced self-care to contact Grace Place about a retreat in their region at our website:

www.graceplaceretreats.org, or to communicate with me directly at jeckgracepl@aol.com.

John D. Eckrich, M.D. is an Internist and Gastroenterologist practicing in St. Louis for the past 30 years. He is a life-long Lutheran and comes from an entire family of Lutheran health professionals and church musicians. After providing direct primary care for many church workers and their families, seminarians at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, and synodical personnel, and alarmed at the health crises and burnout arising particularly in Lutheran clergy, he founded Grace Place Lutheran Retreats. Dr. Eckrich is a graduate of Washington University, Un. of Missouri School of Medicine and a Fellowship in Gastroenterology at the University of Chicago. He is married, has three grown children, and lives, when not on retreat or in an endoscopy suite, in St. Louis or the high Rockies of Colorado. He is also the head of a Wheat Ridge medical task force building a medical clinic in Bethlehem, Palestine.

Self-Care for Pastoral Care Providers

Our genuine desire to do good, and our deep belief in what we are doing, also leaves us vulnerable to over-functioning.

We who have dedicated our careers to the pastoral care of others know that good self-care is important, even a requirement, for the effective care of others. After all it is our “selves” that we bring to the task of pastoral care. If the “self” we bring is not healthy the care we provide will be accordingly diminished.

Gwenn Halaas writes in the preface to her book *The Right Road: Life Choices for Clergy*, “Healthy leaders enhance lives – your own life, the lives of your family members, the lives of your congregation members, and the lives of those in your community. . . . Being an effective leader in your ministry requires self-care and balance to respond to the complex issues and needs of people.”

Though we know the importance of self-care, many of us have a very difficult time caring for ourselves. Dr. Halaas headed up a research project on clergy wellness for the ELCA and shares some of the findings in her book along with findings from other studies of protestant clergy.

Suffice it to say, we as clergy did not do well. When compared to the general population, more of us suffer from stress and depression, more of us are overweight, one in four of us report no exercise, and we rank only about average in poor nutrition, high cholesterol and high blood-pressure. In addition we are in the top ten occupations for dying of heart disease.

The good news is that, with motivation and discipline, there is much we can do to better care for ourselves. The Network on Successful Midlife Development (MIDMAC), a research network of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s program on Health and Human Development, identify six distinct components of psychological well-being. Each component also represents an important area for self-care.

1. Having a positive attitude toward oneself and one’s past life (self-acceptance);
2. Having goals and objectives that give life meaning (purpose in life);
3. Being able to manage complex demands of daily life (environmental mastery);
4. Having a sense of continued development and self-realization (personal growth);
5. Possessing caring and trusting ties with others (positive relations with others);
6. Being able to follow one’s own convictions (autonomy).

Others have also sought to identify important arenas for self-care. The Inter-Lutheran Coordinating Committee on Ministerial Health and



Wellness, sponsored by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, developed the “Wholeness Wheel”. Rebecca McLean and Roger Jahnke developed the “Circle of Life”. Both resources not only identify each arena but also offer helpful material in both assessing current patterns of self-care (or lack of self-care) and ways to improve self-care.

Parker Palmer (*Let Your Life Speak*), and Dawna Markova (*I Will Not Die an Unlived Life*) make strong arguments out of their own life journeys for the importance of discovering one’s own “true self” and living a life consistent with this

*Though we know the importance of self-care,
many of us have a very difficult time caring
for ourselves.*

“true self”. The ability to live with deep integrity is important in both one’s vocational life as well as one’s personal life. This integrity is fundamental to good self-care.

In this article I will explore briefly some basic principles of self-care in arenas of life that I have come to believe are important. My thinking has been greatly enriched through conversations with

CPE students at Fairview Health Services in the Twin Cities who have participated in workshops I have led on self-care. Following are the arenas included in this discussion:

- Physical
- Mental/Emotional
- Spiritual
- Relational (Family, Friends, Colleagues, Acquaintances)
- Vocational
- Recreational
- Financial

It is important to note at the outset that no formula for self-care fits all people. What is life draining for one person may be life giving for another. What follows, therefore, are guidelines for each person to consider in light of his or her unique nature and specific circumstances.

Physical Health

Importance

Good physical health increases energy and endurance; diminishes vulnerability to depression; improves our capacity to think clearly and creatively; enables us to be more fully attentive to others including family and friends along with those in our care, and makes it possible to enjoy a wide variety of life activities. Good health enables us to more fully enjoy life.

Elements of Self-Care

Good practices include:

- Regular exercise
- Good rest (7-8 hours a night)
- Healthy nutrition –including a balanced diet, adequate liquids, meals spaced throughout the day, and eating in moderation.
- Good medical care (including regular physicals)
- The avoidance of such physically self-destructive activities as smoking, excessive use of alcohol and other drugs, and taking unnecessary risks (not wearing a seatbelt or riding a motor cycle without a helmet).

Mental/Emotional Health

Importance

The primary “tool” we bring to our ministry is our “self”. It is important to know our selves well and to have resolved the important issues in our lives – at least to the point that we will not unknowingly seek their resolution in relationships with those for whom we are caring. Mental and emotional issues that plague many of us include Shame, Guilt, Low self-esteem, Depression and Anxiety, Lack of self-differentiation, Substance-Related disorders (e.g. Alcoholism), and Personality disorders (Narcissistic, Paranoid, Avoidant, Dependent, Obsessive-Compulsive, etc.). Of course good mental and emotional health is not only important

to our pastoral care work but is important to all dimensions of our lives, including family life and friendships.

Elements of Self-Care

- Develop our self-knowledge – awareness of our thought patterns, emotions, behaviors and personality traits. By being open to the feedback of others, actively seeking such feedback and careful self-observation, we can more fully know ourselves.
- Work at owning and acknowledging our personal weaknesses, vulnerabilities and mistakes.
- Seek professional help for mental/emotional issues that diminish our ability to function effectively and rob us of our ability to enjoy life.
- Continue to grow in the areas in which we are naturally gifted. There is great value in nurturing our strengths.
- Participate in activities that promote our psychological and emotional growth.

For us who are called on to provide spiritual guidance, spiritual grounding is absolutely necessary.

Spiritual Health

Importance

A healthy spiritual life is of great value to all people. For us who are called on to provide spiritual guidance, spiritual grounding is absolutely necessary. Spiritual grounding informs our purpose in life, provides guiding values, enables the development of moral integrity and authority, offers hope in times of despair, encourages the development of an authentic self, provides a foundation for deep self-acceptance, helps us avoid judgmental attitudes as we more fully accept others, and connects us with all creation.

Elements of Self-Care

Each person discovers personal disciplines that nurture spiritual health. These may include:

- Study and reflection on scripture and other spiritual/devotional writings
- Regular times of prayer and meditation. This might include contemplative prayer, corporate meditation, meditation exercises, prayer retreats.
- Time to reflect on the people and events of our life. Journaling is a helpful discipline for such reflection.
- Silent retreats of one or more days to read, reflect, walk and rest.
- Involvement in a religious community that holds common beliefs and values and both

supports and assists us in our continued spiritual growth.

Relational Health

Importance

Our work occurs in the context of relationships, at the boundary between us and those to whom we minister. We must, therefore, be able to relate in a healthy and effective manner. The quality of our relationships heavily influences the quality of our lives.

Elements of Self Care

- Be particularly attentive to the closest, most intimate relationships in our life.
- Develop an awareness of our relational style, including our strengths and weaknesses.
- Understand how our emotional vulnerabilities and personalities influence the ways we relate to others.
- Seek opportunities to strengthen our communication and relationship skills.
- Maintain as guiding standards such goals as striving to always relate with honesty, integrity, transparency, consistency and empathy.
- Seek opportunities to serve others.

Vocational Health

Importance

We spend 1/3 of the hours we are awake involved in our work - too many hours to be unhappy, too many hours to simply earn the money we need to enjoy the rest of our lives. The goal of every person ought to be to find a life work that matches with her or his life passions and enables the use of God given gifts. Vocational fulfillment is based on enjoyment of one's work, feeling competence and some measure of success, and believing that what one is doing has value.

The work of pastoral care is emotionally demanding as we engage people in the most difficult times of their lives. It requires our full attention and genuine concern for those to whom we minister. The relationship between our call to ministry and personal factors behind our call can leave us particularly vulnerable. Our very reasons for choosing ministry may contain the seeds of future problems. Our genuine desire to do good, and our deep belief in what we are doing, also leaves us vulnerable to over-functioning. Our need to please and be liked leaves us even more vulnerable

Elements of Self Care

- Develop our understanding of the reasons we chose pastoral care ministry and the ways these reasons influence our functioning in ministry.
- Be committed to continual growth in our pastoral care knowledge and skills.
- Explore opportunities to expand the scope and/or depth of our work.
- Work with a coach or mentor.

Guard against over-functioning.

Take time apart from work to gain new energy.

Spend quality time with family and close friends.

Spend time in life-giving activities.

If ministry is overly stressful and does not provide satisfaction and there are no remedies, be ready to explore new opportunities.

The goal of every person ought to be to find a life work that matches with her or his life passions and enables the use of God given gifts.

Recreational Health

Importance

Participating in activities that we enjoy and opportunities to exercise our creativity in arenas apart from our work adds to the richness of our lives. Pursuing interests apart from our work enables us to stay more balanced and offers some protection against the danger of over-functioning or over-identifying with our ministry.

Elements of Self Care

Set aside adequate time for activities we enjoy and honor this time as much as we honor the time we have committed to our ministry.

Take the initiative to engage in activities that provide enjoyment, excitement, relaxation, and renewal - activities that are life giving.

It is also important to take the initiative to stop engaging in recreational activities we no longer experience as life-giving.

Explore new forms of recreation.

Be willing to venture outside our zone of activities that know to be enjoyable. This will entail taking some risk in that we are stepping into the unknown and are therefore less safe.

Include time with family and close friends, linking recreational activities or simply relaxed conversation with those people who are important in our life.

Financial Health

Importance

Most ministerial salaries are relatively modest. That is for the most part OK in that none of us went into this work for the money. Even knowing we're not in it for the money, however, does not eliminate the desire for the greater comfort, freedom and opportunity that financial resources provide. For some, low salaries not only prevent the more "ideal" life but also contribute to fears of poverty, fears of not having "enough". We must be clear on our personal values and sources of joy, clear on what ultimately gives our life meaning, so that we don't look to financial resources for the source of happiness. We must also carefully manage the resources we do have so that we remain financially secure.

Elements of Self Care

Honor the value of our work and expect to be compensated fairly.

Determine, in at least broad terms, the life-style that seems comfortable in terms of both material surroundings and freedom to pursue activities.

Develop a plan for managing our resources.

Budgeting our income can be very helpful

Spending wisely (e.g. spending on goods that will appreciate or goods that will provide long term satisfaction).

Not spending money we do not have.

Credit card debt at high interest rates, for example, can lead to serious financial problems.

Carefully consider charitable giving, using our resources to benefit others in a way that is consistent with our values and priorities.

Developing and implementing a savings and retirement plan.

401K and 403B savings are often the most beneficial ways to save for retirement in addition to our church/corporate pension plans.

These strategies can form the basis of a sound approach to maintaining healthy lives. Certainly we each find our own life-giving practices and habits from among these themes. May we find our ways to bring these practices to life and form examples of healthy living.

John Martinson is an ordained minister in the ELCA with 36 years experience in ministry. In addition to his M.Div. degree he holds a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology and a Doctor of Ministry degree in Pastoral Care and Social Change. John served as a parish pastor in Las Vegas, Nevada, and Vienna, Virginia, and directed pastoral counseling centers in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Washington D.C. He currently serves as Program Director of Fairview's Ministerial Health and Leadership Resources (a clergy assessment, counseling and leadership training resource of Fairview Health Services in Minneapolis, Minnesota). Seeing first hand both the struggles pastors face and how the lack of self-care contributes to emotional pain, John has developed a strong interest in and commitment to supporting clergy in healthy self-care.

Notes

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Wholeness Wheel

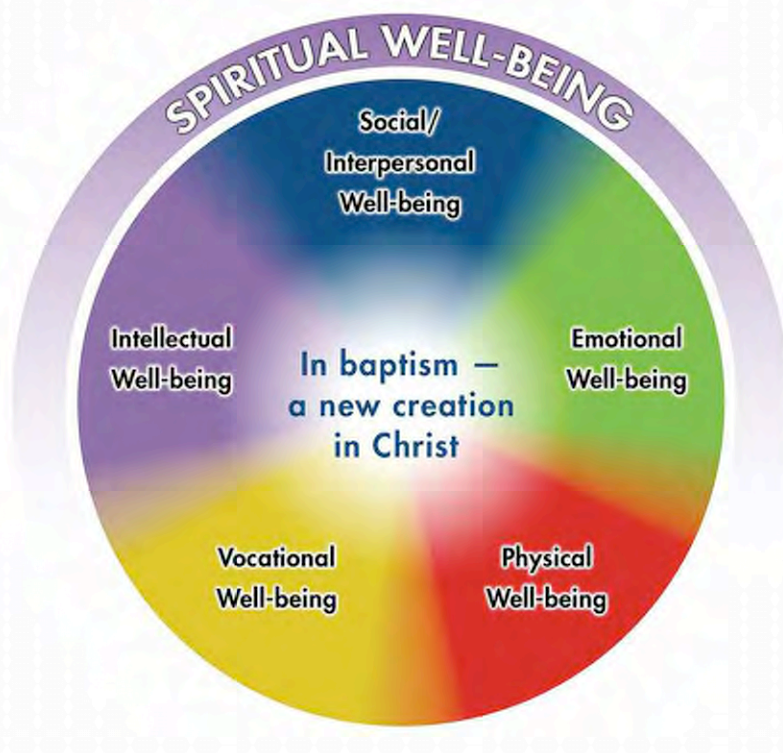
Is your life balanced? Ponder the Wholeness Wheel and ask yourself if there is a dimension that is flat or one that is bloated.

God calls us through the waters of Baptism to live as a new creation in Christ. Our old sinful and broken self has been washed, redeemed and forgiven, and we are called to live well and pass on our faith. We are called to be stewards of the gifts we have been given: caring for our body, mind, spirit, possessions, time and God's creation. Central to finding balance in our busy lives is our relationship with our Creator, our Comforter and our Savior, who strengthens and uplifts us as he accompanies us on our journey.

Nurturing our relationship with God is essential to living well. Spending time in prayer, devotion and reading scripture (for your own personal growth and not only for sermon preparation) is one way we can refocus, renew and enliven our relationship with God. Spiritual disciplines such as praying scripture, writing psalms, lectio divina, examen and journaling encourage and enhance our communication with God. For some of us, music, art or finding God in nature provide a deep connection with our creator. Worship and individual or group spiritual direction are important for others as they listen to God and discern their path in life.

When God is present in every aspect of our well-being, we find peace and focus on what is life-giving and necessary for us to be whole people of God. As multidimensional people, living well includes taking care of our physical, emotional, social/interpersonal, intellectual, vocational and spiritual well-being. Physical well-being includes taking care of our body. It includes what and how much we eat, drink, sleep and are physically active. It means being good stewards of our earth and its resources and being conscious of social-justice concerns, such as where our clothing was made. It also means expressing our love to our neighbor and being conscious of their circumstances (e.g., whether they have adequate food, shelter and meaningful work). Our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6).

Reflect on the gifts God has given you and if you are sharing them with all God's people. Vocational well-being involves expressing and caring for those gifts, whether our gift is leadership, healing or the gift of being a parent, child, nephew, farmer or doctor. Discovering and acknowledging our gifts can be difficult. Part of our call is to be a guide for others so they also can recognize the gifts God has given them. Knowing who you are — and whose you are — allows you to recognize the practices and disciplines that will support you on your journey to living well in Christ.



Emotions are a wonderful gift, but we often struggle to express and manage them in a healthy manner. We are indeed shaped by both nature and nurture. Ways of expressing emotion have been modeled for us in our families of origin and continue to be shaped in our immediate family. Our lives are filled with circumstances that can be stressful. Managing our level of stress in a

When God is present in every aspect of our well-being, we find peace and focus on what is life-giving and necessary for us to be whole people of God.

healthy manner is important to our well-being and the well-being of those around us. Listen to your self-talk. Are your messages supportive and uplifting, or are they negative and self-defeating? How do you view life? Is your cup half full or half empty? Are you an idealist, optimist, pessimist or realist? Can you laugh at yourself, or do you take yourself seriously? Reflect on how you express your emotions, including anger, stress, joy, love and laughter.

Nurturing your relationships with family, friends, colleagues and congregants is part of your social/interpersonal well-being. Growing relationships takes time and energy. Unfortunately, the people most important to us often get only our leftover time and energy. Forgiveness, communication, compassion, empathy and understanding are important qualities as we live and minister. Social wellness includes finding time to play. Some of us have been raised to get our work done and, if and when there is time, we can relax and have fun. When life circumstances drain our batteries, it is important for us to recharge, renew and reenergize. Know yourself and give yourself permission to re-create through things you find fun and entertaining: theatre, time in the outdoors, sports or other activities. Find the child within — and play!

Stimulating our mind through reading, discussion, continuing education, lectures or crossword puzzles keeps our minds sharp and boosts our intellectual well-being. In our often frantic and chaotic lives, it is also important to discover ways to rest our mind. Often, when our heads hit the pillow, the chatter of the day is replayed, preventing us from getting the sleep that we need to be renewed for the ministry that awaits us the next day. Evening bedtime rituals like a warm bath, hot tea, reading, prayer or mantra recitations can signal our body and mind to slow down and prepare for sleep.

Living well calls us to be countercultural. The world calls for us to busy ourselves; there are just so many wonderful things to distract us. Our culture tempts us to turn from God's desire for each of us to live abundant life — here and now. What does abundant life look like to you? Reflect on your life, schedule, demands, challenges and fulfilling, joyful areas. Is your life balanced? Ponder the Wholeness Wheel and ask yourself if there is a dimension that is flat or one that is bloated. Are there some things you are ready to change to bring life into balance? Set a specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and trackable (SMART) goal. The smaller the goal, the more likely that you will believe you can reach it and the greater success you will have in achieving it. We defeat ourselves when our goals are too large, we aren't convinced we can reach them and we have no one to support us and hold us accountable.

As we respond to our call to live well in Christ, we may encounter detours, obstacles and road blocks or find ourselves stuck in a ditch. Remember that God is with us throughout our journey, especially in moments of disorientation, when we feel lost, anxious and alone. The sign of the cross has been marked on your forehead; you are a Child of God, sealed with the promise of eternal life. You have been named, claimed, redeemed and called to live as a new creation in Christ. Remember your Baptism, make the sign of the cross on your forehead, and begin again. We can lean on God, who is our compass and guide, as we seek to live well and celebrate abundant life each and every day.

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Tammy joined the Board of Pensions in 2004 to provide whole person health promotion, education and inspiration to ELCA rostered leaders and lay employees. Prior to joining the Board of Pensions, Devine served as director of wellness at Martin Luther Manor in Bloomington, Minn. She has also served as the organization's director of health and community ministries and parish nurse coordinator, and as director of nursing for Southern Metro Medical Clinics in Belle Plaine, Minn.

After Crisis

In recent years a culture of intentional ministry has developed that addresses the issues that are often characteristic of a congregation 'after crisis.'

One day last October, my cell phone rang a few blocks from home. I pulled over to the side of the road to answer and as I did I heard a voice say, "Pastor – do you have a few minutes to talk?" It was the current vice-president of the congregation where I had served a two year interim ministry over some four years ago. I had not heard from him since I had completed that ministry. I could tell by the fact he was calling and the urgency and tension in his voice that this was not a social call. "Give me ten minutes to get home and we can talk". We did then, for about an hour.

He and the president of the congregation begin to detail to me what appeared to be their pastor's involvement and entanglement in an internet fiscal scam. The scam had all the earmarks of an advance fee fraud, a swindle whose victims, through a series of emails, are asked to provide money, information and services in exchange for promised fortune. As the scenario unfolded, it became evident that the pastor had invested a substantial amount of his personal money and had also borrowed sums from parishioners under the pretense of assisting the destitute. He suggested that the Patriot Act limited him from wiring any more money through Western Union under his name, he convinced and coerced some parishioners and staff members to do so using their personal identification.

After further consultation and conversation with the Bishop, the resultant action was that the pastor immediately resigned from the parish and was subsequently removed from the clergy roster by the Synod Council. The pastor had resigned from his position and had been removed from the roster for some ten months when staff at the church received a rather desperate email from the scam artists looking for the pastor's new email address, stating, "I have found the group that swindled the church fund". The implication was clear. Contact us, provide a small fee and we will help you unravel this mess. This was the second successive 'called' pastor of this congregation who was requested to leave.

In the Spring of 2002, I was requested by the Bishop, along with another synod staff member, to accompany him to a specially called congregational meeting at another church, this one on the north side of metro Atlanta. The occasion for the special meeting was to read a letter of disclosure to the congregation regarding the alleged sexual impropriety of the pastor. His resignation was subsequently requested and submitted. It was during this initial



time together in this crisis that synod staff began to deal with the pain and anger of the members of the congregation. After a ten month pastoral interim ministry the congregation 'called' and was served by

Ministry to rostered personnel in 'after crisis' may actually be more difficult than ministry to congregations.

a clergy couple. It was a mistake and a mismatch. In less than a year the pastors packed their bags and with the comment, "lets move on to the next gig", they left. There were other factors involved, but it was not long before the church closed its doors and ceased to exist as a congregation.

During our synod staff meetings, we had been kept apprised of the deteriorating situation between a pastor and congregation in east metro Atlanta. It was not long before the pastor voluntarily resigned and entered secular work. The congregation experi-

enced a period of vacancy and transition ministry for a two year period while they sought to ‘call’ a pastor.

Since retirement from a pastoral career of institutional ministry, I have served four congregations as an interim pastor and during the last two years have served as an Assistant to The Bishop. Perhaps it has been my many years of seclusion serving in prison ministry, perhaps it has been that during the last ten years of my ministry I have served where there have been troubled congregational and pastor relationships; as a result, I look through shaded glasses. But I am saddened at what appears to me to be a number of troubled and painful situations existing Churchwide between our congregations and our pastors.

Synod structures provide a candidacy process for prospective rostered persons. We provide mobility days or a mobility process to screen pastoral candidates seeking a ‘call’ in a particular synod. We provide a process for a congregation to engage in a self study and evaluation while engaged in the ‘call’ process. We intercede in the midst of a congregation and pastor crisis. We celebrate installations of newly called pastors and rejoice during those times, yet it seems that we lack intention in providing pastoral care to congregations and to pastors in ‘after crisis’. This is particularly true when one or the other or both congregation and pastor are seen as culpable for what has transpired. There seems to be a dire need for our synod structures to seek ways to enhance ministry to congregations and pastors who have gone through a crisis. At times we are able to diagnose an impending crisis and intercede. Yet, more often we are called upon only after a ‘cancer’ has become inoperable in a congregation/pastor relationship.

A review of the staffing in the 65 synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America finds that of approximately 200 persons listed as either Associates or Assistants to the Bishop, one synod lists an Assistant/Associate with the subtitle of Pastoral Care (and that is listed along with three other subtitles of Ministry, Candidacy and Mobility). One synod lists an Assistant/Associate as responsible for Congregational Health. Admittedly, about one third of those listed as Associates or Assistants to the Bishop do not have subtitles delineating their responsibilities. It may be that intentional specific pastoral care to pastors and congregations in an ‘after crisis’ is within their portfolio. However, given the current listing of responsibilities within our current synod structures, I wonder if that is the case.

Many of the rostered personnel in our congregations are very good at responding and ministering to persons in their time of crisis and walking with them in time of desperate need. We minister in times of sickness, officiate and provide comfort in times of death, but after the immediate crisis has passed, we lack pastoral intentionality in taking the time to sit

or be with loved ones in a time of ‘after crisis’.

There are some existing models synod structures use to minister in ‘after crisis’. Some of these models are intentional and ongoing; others are developed and implemented as individual need arises. In the Southeastern Synod of the ELCA we have employed both. The synod has a long standing relationship and contract with a professional Pastoral

A significant resource that is underutilized by judicatories in providing pastoral care to pastors in ‘after crisis’ is retired clergy.

Counseling Agency. The Bishop, often at synod expense, makes references to this professional agency. We are also fortunate to have ecclesiastically endorsed and professionally certified pastoral counselors and pastoral clinicians to whom referrals are made. In the case of the first instance cited in this article, the Bishop formally appointed one of his Assistants to walk through the ‘after crisis’ with the congregation. At our recent synod assembly, the Synod Council approved the appointment of a recommendation from the Bishop of an Assistant to a one year term with the distinct title of “Coordinator of Pastoral Care Ministry for Gulf Coast Recovery”.

In recent years a culture of intentional ministry has developed that addresses the issues that are often characteristic of a congregation ‘after crisis’. Intentional Interim Ministry or Transition Ministry has evolved as a specific ministry with its own vocabulary, goals and organizational structure. Although this ministry addresses other than ‘after crisis’ issues, I believe one of the reasons it has flourished is because it addresses the needs of congregations in ‘after crisis’ that were not being or unable to be met by many main line judicatories.

Judicatories could encourage more of their retired pastors and/or those who are able and available to receive professional training with specific emphasis for/on pastors who have the skills, energy and passion for ministering to congregations in ‘after crisis’. If a judicatory had a cadre of its own rostered personnel trained and able to provide this type of ministry to its congregations – the judicatory would not have to reach outside of its own frame of reference for assistance. The use of rostered personnel within its own judicatory would contribute to familiarity, collegiality, loyalty and accountability. The continuing nurture of pastors serving in an ‘after crisis’ situation is important. In the Southeastern Synod we conduct a biannual or annual training event for those pastors ministering in an interim/transitional congregation more often than not characterized by some form of ‘after crisis’.

Even before the appointment of an interim/transition pastor, a judicatory could be intentional about assigning a staff member to walk with and provide pastoral care to a congregation in immediate ‘after

crisis'. My limited experience has been that judicatory staff will assist a congregation in an immediate crisis, but then often wait until the appointment of an interim/transition pastor to deal with the left over fragments from the crisis. A judicatory staff person would be an excellent resource to assist the congregations in an immediate 'after crisis' up until the appointment of an interim/transition pastor. This would enable the judicatory staff person to provide an intentional and informative introduction to the next step in ministry for the congregation. This would also assist congregations in perceiving that the judicatory is engaged and involved in their congregational health in their 'after crisis'. However, there are synods within the Church where geography and staff resources do limit what pastoral care can be realistically provided to congregations and pastors in 'after crisis'.

Ministry to rostered personnel in 'after crisis' may actually be more difficult than ministry to congregations. Some resign or are removed from the roster and may leave the area or resist any continuing relationship with a judicatory. Nevertheless there are strategies that judicatories can employ in providing ministry to these persons.

As cited, judicatories could develop a retainer contract with a professional counseling agency and/or ecclesiastically endorsed and professionally qualified and certified pastoral counselors or pastoral clinicians. This would provide for an ongoing immediate professional resource. For many reasons judicatories often resist assigning staff to provide pastoral care to their pastors in 'after crisis'. The rationale used is three fold.

Time and resources.

Staffs are often perceived as being too close in having been involved in dealing with the immediacy of the crisis.

Also, staff may be too tied to the structures of the synod with confidentiality and loyalty being issues of concern. While this certainly may be true, I don't feel this should necessarily or categorically prohibit well grounded, boundary-respectful judicatory personnel from being able to provide ministry to pastors in 'after crisis'.

The Conference Deans are a resource in the synod structures that are expected to provide ministry to pastors and congregations in 'after crisis'. Conceptually, this is one of their major responsibilities. My sense is that time, energy and other agenda crowd out or at best impinge upon the fulfillment of this expectation. I do believe that we as a Church could be more intentional in calling upon our Deans to meet this need.

A significant resource that is underutilized by judicatories in providing pastoral care to pastors in 'after crisis' is retired clergy, including retired Bishops. There is a wealth of skilled, mature, experienced and pastorally sensitive retired clergy in our judicatories. Many have the heart and demeanor to

be of enormous assistance in this area. I can think of a half a dozen retired pastors in the synod where I am rostered to whom I would turn to for pastoral care in a professional or personal crisis.

Intentional ministry on behalf of our judicatories to congregations and pastors in 'after crisis' will contribute to continuing congregational health, the strengthening of ties between judicatories and their congregations and perhaps hopefully to the health and restoration of rostered personnel who have experienced crisis with their congregations.

** The use of 'pastor' or 'rostered persons/personnel' is used interchangeably in this article.*

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On the Seventh Day: Rest for the Caregiver

Those of us who should know better have less and less time for ourselves, for our families, and even for God.

Our lives are in a shambles. The forty-hour week is a long-past relic of another generation. We are often scheduled almost every hour of the day, and we can go nowhere without a Day Planner or an electronic scheduler. As parents we sign up our children for more and more extra-school activities, and suddenly our schedules are even more filled as we shuttle from one activity to another. Even our children are the sometimes unwitting victims of all this chaos, as there is less and less time with family, less and less time simply to rest.

With more activity than there is time, and more on our schedules than there are days in the week, it is no surprise that something or someone must be shortchanged. What seems most amazing is that those of us who should know better have less and less time for ourselves, for our families, and even for God.

When Ron first moved back into the parish four years ago, the congregation told him that Monday was traditionally the pastor's day off. That seemed fine, but then he met with confirmation students and parents to determine a schedule. Monday night was the best and most obvious choice. From there Monday afternoon became the best time to prepare the two classes. Then he began dropping into the office on Monday morning simply to organize the week a bit. After a while he began to notice a loss of both physical and mental energy. It certainly helped when his wife began a new part-time job that gave her Fridays off. Soon he made a very intentional decision to take Fridays off as well. There have been at least two benefits. One is that he actually has a day off, unless a death or other emergency intervenes. The other is that he has a day to spend with his wife.

The Beginnings of Sabbath

The Sabbath is intended to be the day of rest from everything that consumes our lives. Even God rested on the seventh day. We may wonder why an all-powerful being would need to rest, but that's not really the point of the Genesis account. What it says is that God had finished his work of creation. Then he blessed the seventh day as a Sabbath, or day of rest, to be a reminder of all that he had done in creating the world.

The Sabbath was so important for the Old Testament people of God. In the covenant stipulations of Exodus 20, what we often call the Decalogue, God tells his people to remember the seventh day because it was the one when he had rested and that he had blessed. Other passages in the



Pentateuch connect the seventh day to God's deliverance of his people from Egypt, or to the need for people and even animals to rest. These texts remind us that keeping the Sabbath is a way to love the neighbor and to honor God's gifts of freedom and rest (Peterson, 114).

In the 1958 film *The Ten Commandments*, Rameses II questions Moses about his reason for giving the Hebrew slaves one day a week to rest from their labor of making bricks for the monuments and palaces of Egypt. Moses provides a practical answer for his labor policies, one that preachers and pastors would do well to remember: "The strong make many bricks, the weak make

God blessed the seventh day as a Sabbath, or day of rest, to be a reminder of all that he had done in creating the world.

few, and the dead make none!" Moses was not being soft or benevolent so much as he was being practical and realistic. Nobody can work all the time without negative effects sooner or later (McMickle, 27).

In our productivity-driven age, however, we can easily become enslaved by an attitude that sees the day of rest as necessary to regain enough strength to be even more productive at work the next week. The danger with accepting this view of work and worker is that we admit that they are nothing more

than commodities. If there is a common lesson from what the Old Testament tells us, it is that we need a day of rest, and that we should devote it in some way to God.

Jesus and the Sabbath

Clearly Jesus was not enslaved by the Sabbath laws. To be sure, he was regularly in the temple or the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he even participated in worship. Yet there were more important principles. When there were those oppressed by demons or disease, he addressed their needs, even though this violated Sabbath laws. When his disciples were hungry, he had no problem with their gathering food, even though this was prohibited. In one of his familiar sayings, he told his listeners that the Sabbath had been made for humans, rather than the other way around, perhaps recalling the Old Testament's concern for those who worked long hours and many days.

A number of years ago Chris was with several teenagers on a one-week mission trip. As they left the church they were visiting for worship that Sunday, one of them said to him, "Hey, Pastor, I guess you get a break from preaching today." He started to say, "I guess you're right," but the young man wasn't finished. "And the people get a break from you!"

Yet while Jesus viewed the Sabbath laws as of less importance than human need, he remained very concerned about rest and about time with God. When the disciples had returned from their first "tour of duty," Jesus went away with them for some hoped for R&R. He often prayed, as was his custom, sometimes even through the night. Even he needed time with God. And so do we.

Abbot Anthony was conversing with some brethren, and a hunter who was after game in the wilderness came upon them. He saw Abbot Anthony and the brothers enjoying themselves, and disapproved. Abbot Anthony said: Put an arrow in your bow and shoot it. This he did. Now shoot another, said the elder. And another, and another. The hunter said: If I bend my bow all the time it will break. Abbot Anthony replied: So it is in the work of God. If we push ourselves beyond measure, the brethren will soon collapse. It is right, therefore, from time to time, to relax their efforts (Merton, 63).

Our Failure to Observe Sabbath

The continuing dangers with the Sabbath are many. For one, there are those who simply fail to take their day of rest. For another, as noted earlier, there are those who observe the Sabbath simply to improve their performance the rest of the week. For yet another, there are those who approach Sabbath with all the wrong reasons, forgetting what it has to offer.

While waiting for a flight at the Detroit airport

last year, Chris was fascinated to watch the gleaming red monorail that runs on a linear track above the gates from one end of the concourse to the other, stopping only at each end and once in the middle to discharge and receive passengers. He wondered if the monorail, rushing back and forth in its one-track existence, ever meets itself coming and going. The monorail is always rushing and seldom stopping (in

While Jesus viewed the Sabbath laws as of less importance than human need, he remained very concerned about rest and about time with God.

reality, stopping to let off passengers is only part of its job). It lives a one-track life, never looking to the right or to the left, neither up nor down, and so it misses the excitement, the thrills, the anxieties, the impatience—in short, the entire life of the people that it serves and moves among. Although "concourse" is the preferred word for the monorail's locus of existence, the older word "terminal" seems somehow more appropriate. So Chris asks himself occasionally, where in my life am I rushing back and forth, never really going anywhere? Where am I living a one-track life, not paying attention to what is going on around me but only to myself? And why am I surprised when I realize that, for all my rushing, my work, my focus and my determination, when all is said and done I am still living a "terminal" life.

Perhaps we avoid Sabbath because we are afraid of what we will find if we are left alone. If solitude is going to be "the place of the great struggle," as Henri Nouwen suggests, we may want to avoid it because we think we are in a great struggle most of the rest of the time. We want a place where there will be a break from the struggle, not more. But solitude, as Nouwen adds, is also the place of "the great encounter with the loving God who offers himself as the substance of the new self" (Nouwen, 26). In the desert the Israelites discovered that they had left the fleshpots of Egypt—surely an exaggeration and denial of their enslaved condition!—only to be confronted by the harshness of the desert. Yet it was in the desert that God gave them manna, the food of his grace and mercy. Sabbath and solitude may mean facing the person I have let myself become under the pressures of our culture, but they may be just what I need to open my eyes to who I really am as the beloved of God, upon whom he wants to shower his blessings every morning.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SABBATH

Sabbath is not only about rest from work, nor is it only about solitude, as important as these are. It is also about gratitude to God the Father for his creation. It is about celebrating the freedom from cap-

tivity to sin that Jesus the Son gave us in his resurrection. It is about fulfilling the commandment to love one another as the Holy Spirit brings us together in the church in this life and in the life to come (cf. Bass, 85).

Sabbath is putting aside our usual occupations and distractions so that we can develop a deeper intimacy with God. The “Sabbath day” commandment provides a discipline we may need in our overcrowded, overscheduled lives that sets an appointment with God at least as important as the appointments we make with clients, parishioners, or doctors. Understood this way, Sabbath may be observed at any time – morning, evening, a full afternoon, an entire week.

The very first thing we need to do is set apart a time and a place to be with God and him alone. The concrete shape of this discipline of solitude will be different for each person depending on individual character, ministerial task, and milieu. But a real discipline never remains vague or general. It is as concrete and specific as daily life itself (Nouwen, 31-32).

Few of us may change our approach to scheduling, so we have a simple suggestion. If you are going to fill in your whole week, then schedule some time for Sabbath: for yourself, for your family, and for God.

On the seventh day God rested. As those entrusted with the care of others—and of ourselves—so should we.

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Rest for the Sabbathmakers

Knowing the healing effects of Sabbath in our own lives, we feel called to provide it for others.

Few people are privileged to live in a place of perpetual Sabbath.

Sometimes I believe I am one of the few.

Currently, my ministry is inseparable from the ministry of the ARC Retreat Center where I live in intentional community with three other resident staff members. Our mission is to offer hospitality to groups and individuals seeking time apart, rest, and spiritual renewal. Simply put, we make Sabbath.

ARC is a place of rest. The very air, filtered through venerable pine woods, envelops guests in silent serenity. Visitors report that the moment they turn onto ARC land, they feel tension rolling away. Some walk to the door barefoot on soft pine needles. The ground, they say, is holy. One told me, "I felt as though a pound of burden slipped off my shoulders with every step."

We have grown accustomed to greeting people blank with fatigue. As the retreat deepens, faces relax and take on color. Sometimes, the "after" image bears only a passing resemblance to the "before."

People come to ARC for a day, a weekend, a week. Some settle in the lodge, where they join the resident community for simple healthy meals at regular intervals. Others, in the privacy of hermitage or cottage, sit in solitude and watch the sun rise and set. All are invited to join the community morning or evening for a contemplative worship service. Some local pastors find that a morning at ARC once or twice a month satisfies their need for time and space apart.

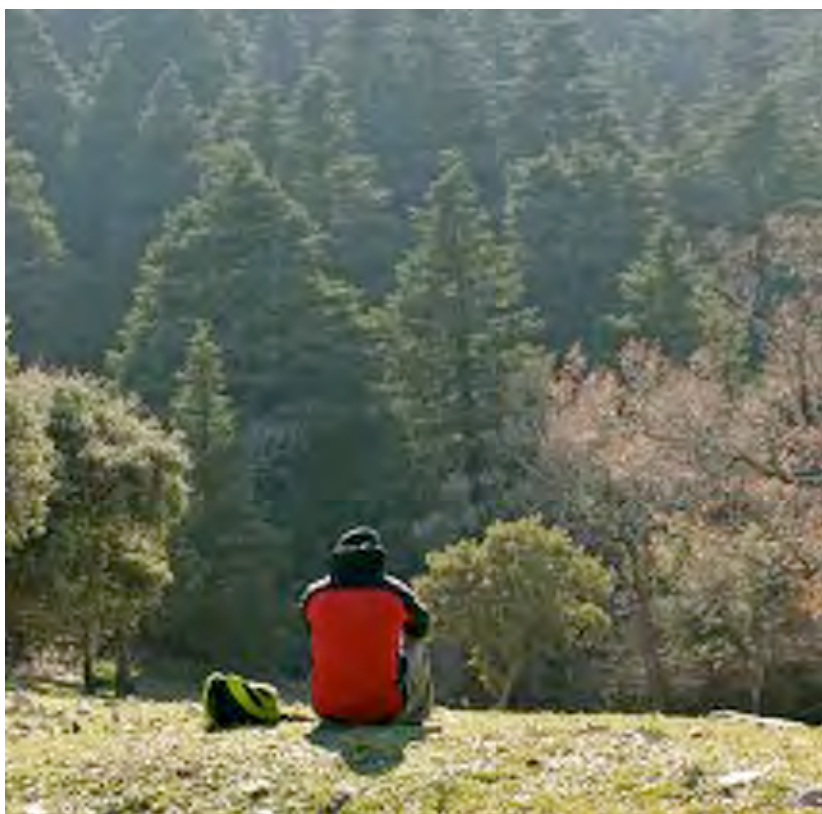
At ARC, every day is a Sabbath. We make it so. Telephone, email, and television are silenced. Most cell phones don't even work this deep in the country. Community members maintain a non-intrusive presence, available if needed but mostly invisible. ARC provides a safe container where emotions can surface, needs can be expressed, and the stillest, smallest voice can be heard. Jesus walks the halls here, and sits beside you in the library alcove, telling stories to make you laugh and weep.

Sometimes we who are privileged to live here look at each other and wonder aloud what unaccountable grace brought us to this place of perpetual Sabbath.

Those are the good days.

Then there are the...well, the *other* days.

Those are the days we keep the doors shut tight between retreat space and staff space. Step behind them and you might think you had fallen into an episode of *West Wing* or *ER*. Phones ring ceaselessly. Crises raise a hundred Hydra heads. The



bread is frozen, the soup has burnt. We're out of granola, *again!* Why did the weeping fig choose this exact moment to weep all its leaves on the liv-

Our mission is to offer hospitality to groups and individuals seeking time apart, rest, and spiritual renewal.

ing room carpet? Why did no one tell us that we are expecting a vegan, a gluten intolerant, *and* a low-carb diet all at once? Something has apparently died inside the walls – several days ago by the smell of it.

Gathering our forces, we bless one joyful, tearful, departing group, and wave them down the drive, only to see – God, please, no! – the next group arriving hours ahead of schedule, with the sheets all unwashed and the bathrooms still thick with soap scum.

On those *other* days, from 6 am when the first pot of coffee greets the first early rising retreatant, until 10 pm when the kitchen floor is scrubbed and the hall lights dimmed to a sooth-

ing semi-darkness, there is little rest. What our guests do not see and need not see is the enormous foresight and energy and, yes, occasional chaos, required to create a seamless retreat experience.

On those other days, we look at each other and ask (only partly in jest), what vile deeds of our murky past consigned us to this Sisyphean hell? Is there never a break, never a rest for the Sabbath makers?

Yet we are all here by choice and by calling. Knowing the healing effects of Sabbath in our own lives, we feel called to provide it for others. We are here because we feel called to live together, convinced that our common dream of living simply and spiritually is more easily realized in community with others. We cling to this dream.

The crux, it seems, is sustainability. How do we sustain our ministry of Sabbath making for others without foregoing Sabbath rest ourselves? Community conscience compels me to honesty: we often fail. We forget the Sabbath. We wear ourselves out and we pay the usual price in irritability, stunted relationships, and meager spiritual lives.

And yet, if life together in retreat ministry has its own peculiar challenges, it has characteristic strengths as well. We care not simply for ourselves but for one another. We care for one another as individuals, and we care for each other collectively. We protect the community and the community protects us. And as we, individually, require Sabbath, the community, too, requires Sabbath.

When we are at our best, the community recognizes – indeed, insists on – each person’s need for time away. People drawn to retreat ministry tend to be introverts, nurtured by solitude and accustomed to hearing God in silence. We understand what people on retreat need because we need it, too.

Some of us go to the city and mingle anonymously in crowds. Others retreat deeper into silence. ARC is blessed with neighbors who generously share their private hermitage with those who need more time alone. This need often strikes outsiders as unbearably funny: “You live in a *retreat center* in the *woods* and on your day off you do *what?*” We just smile.

As community, we call one another to be mindful in our work. People outside the resident circle often assume that working in a retreat center resembles being on retreat, involving hours of contemplation, waiting for wisdom to speak. Some even join the community with that illusion, ripe for shattering! Our labor is by nature far more physical than spiritual, yet God is never far away. One is reminded of the wry wisdom of the Eastern mystics: “Before enlightenment: chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment: chop wood, carry water.” Our tasks are essential to every life lived in the body: find food, clean dishes, sweep floors, scrub toilets, stoke furnace. Mindfully performed, each act is holy. To

regard such labor as menial is an offense against the love with which it is offered. At our best we realize that.

And at our best Sabbath observance becomes a community experience. Spending time apart together is recognized as a *necessity*.

Monthly we declare a moratorium on work and take a day off campus in one another’s company. We visit a museum, or attend a concert in the city, or hike through a nearby state park. Once we visited the home of a labyrinth designer and walked the multiple labyrinths she has created for public use. Afterwards, one community member was inspired to shape a labyrinth in our own front lawn. Taking the time to walk it becomes a small Sabbath for both community and guests.

*Sabbath is the inward journey that inspires
the outward journey back to service
among God’s children.*

Twice a week, we take a scheduled break for an exercise class we fondly call yoga because it always ends with the *sivasana* (or “corpse”) pose. Lying still and breathing deeply for ten minutes of a busy day undoubtedly qualifies as Sabbath time. What’s equally important is that this is *community* Sabbath time.

Three times in almost every day we share meals, frequently with guests. Conversation flows long beyond the time required for physical sustenance. People expose the most vulnerable parts of themselves on retreat, around a table with others who help them feel safe. Every noon, we follow the monastic tradition of reading at table. When guests are many, mealtimes are more strenuous, involving deadlines and daunting stacks of dirty dishes, but we never fail to rest for a few minutes. How many American families can say the same?

If any one community practice keeps us sane, though, it is our daily worship. At 8 am and 8 pm, the community gathers in ARC’s chapel with any guests who wish to join us. Sometimes we use one of the liturgies collected over ARC’s 30-year history; sometimes we sit in silence – the most inclusive of all worship. Lighted candles remind us of our connection to the rest of humanity, of people and places we “hold in the light,” in Quaker fashion. And we pray together. We pray for one another and for the world. We embrace our guests with love in prayer before they arrive, and enfold them in prayer after they have gone.

Worship is life. The time that is so hard to find in my private schedule becomes, in community, a comforting given. Because the others will be there, praying, I know I will be there, too.

No place on earth offers perpetual Sabbath. To imply that it can is to forget that Sabbath is only one precious piece of the larger life to which God calls

us. Sabbath is the inward journey that inspires the outward journey back to service among God's children. But the ARC community is privileged to share Sabbath, however imperfectly, with one another and the world.

Jan Wiersma is a Minnesota native with global experience, having spent nine years of her adult life living and traveling in about 30 countries on five continents.

*Jan is a convert to Lutheranism, and attended Luther Seminary, graduating with an M.Div. in 1993. She has served both large and small congregations, first in Metro Chicago, and more recently as interim and redevelopment pastor in Indianapolis (Indiana/Kentucky Synod). While a pastor, she produced written educational and bible study materials for the ELCA and wrote articles and reviews for *Lutheran Woman Today*, *dialog*, and the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*.*

She first became acquainted with ARC and retreat ministry through the Halvorsons. Since she assumed the directorship in October, she has found this ministry to be spiritually renewing and a fascinating challenge that complements the experience of parish ministry.

New and noteworthy

"Give Something Back" Scholarships

This year will mark the inaugural distribution of "Give Something Back" Scholarship funds. The "Give Something Back" endowment fund began as a three-year campaign in 1992. Funds raised for the endowment were to provide financial assistance to recipients seeking clinical educational preparation for service in ministries of Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Supervision. In addition, the endowment created an opportunity for those who had received financial assistance for their own education to "give something back" by helping others with similar needs.

The Inter-Lutheran Coordinating Committee for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education (ILCC-MCPCCE) has appointed a scholarship committee and has designed an application process that will enable it to begin awarding \$6,000 in scholarships per year.

The "Give Something Back" endowment will make a very limited number of financial awards available to individuals seeking ecclesiastical endorsement and certification/credentialing in ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education. Applicants must:

- ✓ Have completed one (1) unit of CPE.
- ✓ Be rostered or eligible for active roster status in the ELCA/LCMS.
- ✓ Not already be receiving funds from the ELCA/LCMS national MCPCCE offices.
- ✓ Submit an application with a financial data form for committee review.

Applicants must complete the Scholarship Application and Financial Data forms that are available from ELCA and LCMS Offices for Ministries in Chaplaincy, Pastoral Counseling, and Clinical Education. Contact information, including web links that provide further information about ELCA and LCMS ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, and clinical education, is provided below.

ELCA

Theresa Duty
Administrative Assistant
Theresa.duty@elca.org
www.elca.org/chaplains
800-638-3522, ext. 2417

LCMS

Judy Ladage
Administrative Assistant
Judy.Ladage@lcms.org
www.lcms.org/spm
800-248-1930, ext. 1388

Application deadline in 2007 will be February 15, with awards made in April.

February 8th to 11th, 2007, Zion XIII Conference will be held in San Antonio

Zion XIII will be held at the Oblate Renewal Center in San Antonio, TX, during the dates of February 8-11, 2007. Rev. Dr. Arthur A. Just of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN, and Dr. Diane Jacobson of Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, will be plenary speakers. Reserve those dates and look for registration and more details in the near future.

Christus in Mundo to be Awarded at Zion XIII

The Christus in Mundo ("Christ in the World") Award is the highest honor granted by the Lutheran Church to persons serving in ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling and clinical education. It recognizes both a high level of service and a significant and lasting contribution in the field of specialized pastoral care.

This year candidates were nominated by their peers and selection was made by the InterLutheran Coordinating Committee. The 2007 recipients are Harvey Berg, Serge Castigliano, Ken Siess and Dick Tetzloff. The presentation of the Christus in Mundo award will be the highlight of the Friday banquet at Zion XIII.

Recent and upcoming events

Inter-Lutheran

- Nov 13-14 Emergency Services Chaplaincy Conference is held in St. Louis.
- Feb 8-11, 2007 The Zion XIII Conference is held in San Antonio.

How to Subscribe

Subscribers to future issues of *Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling* will be notified by e-mail when each issue is published. We hope you will subscribe. The process is simple: go to *www.lutherservices.org*, select *Networks*, then select *Affinity Networks*, then select *Chaplains' Network*, then select *Resources*, then select *Caring Connections* and register on that page. You will need to provide your name, your organization's name, your e-mail address, and your ZIP code. Subscribers and nonsubscribers alike will also be able to access this issue of *Caring Connections* electronically by visiting the LSA website.

Caring Connections: An Inter-Lutheran Journal for Practitioners and Teachers of Pastoral Care and Counseling welcomes your submissions of news germane to specialized ministries as well as announcements of forthcoming events. You may e-mail news items and announcements to one of the Caring Connections news editors: John Fale at John.Fale@lcms.org or Bryn Carlson at bcarls@covcable.com