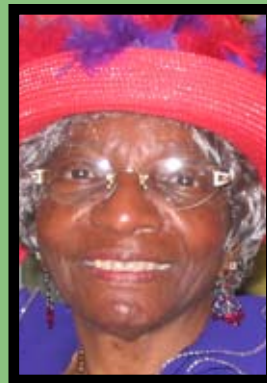
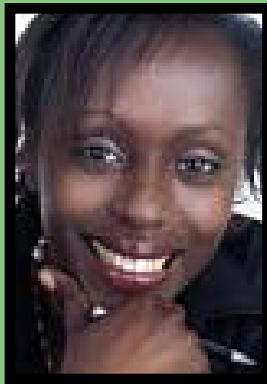
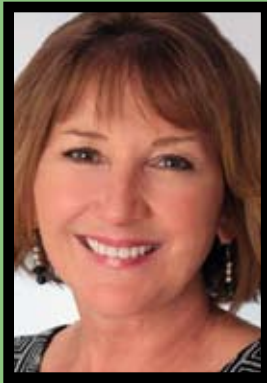


THRIVAL KIT



Virginia Conference of
The United Methodist Church

MOVING ON

You can't live in Jerusalem forever
You must move on, you know
As you say "good-bye" to the old loved days
And with courage high, face the days to come.
This day will stand out as a golden day
A day of achievements—of victories won.
As the gates of your dreams swing wide
And you tread with joy a pathway new
May faith and hope with you abide
'Till the fairest dreams of your life come true.

Eva Priddy Robertson, *Clergy Spouse*, 1953
(*Collected Thoughts and Writings*; Used with Permission)

The Thrival Kit was developed for
The Clergy, Clergy Spouses, and Clergy Families
of the Virginia Annual Conference
of the United Methodist Church

PREFACE

We all need road maps in our lives so that as we choose where we would travel, we have a guide to help us reach the goals that we believe God has set for our lives. This Thrival Kit is intended to be just that, a guide and a road map to the ministry to which we are called as clergy families. It does not determine where we travel nor does it set the rules for our journey. Rather it gives direction so that—by being faithful to who we are and to where God has called us—we may better find our way to joy and fulfillment. That is how we would like you to use this Kit. May it answer some questions, give some advice, inspire your calling, and add to the bliss of the journey for your entire family.

The Thrival Kit is a resource notebook provided to clergy families. The scope of the Thrival Kit is to assist clergy in the wide range of family situations: single, married, first career, and second career, as well as clergy couples and clergy spouses. The resources of the Thrival Kit include not only information about the connections and procedures for the Virginia United Methodist Conference but also informal advice about expectations, time and resource management, and problems encountered by many clergy families over the years. Remember, this kit contains information and advice, not a set of rules.

The first edition of the Thrival Kit was prepared in May 2000 by a task force created by the Cabinet, composed of clergy and spouses (including Bishop Pennel and his wife Janene Pennel) to foster the enrichment of clergy family life for those in the initial stages of ministry. A special edition of the Thrival Kit is also prepared for new cabinet members and spouses.

The Thrival Kit is provided by the Clergy Family Enrichment Committee, related both to the Board of Ordained Ministry and to the Center for Clergy Excellence of the Virginia Conference. The Thrival Kit is under continuous revision—comments and suggestions for new material are always welcome and can be sent to the Center for Clergy Excellence, P.O. Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058; ClergyExcellence@vaumc.org. The cover was designed by Neill Caldwell. We thank the many people who have contributed to the Thrival Kit over the years.

Excerpts from *Hand in Hand Growing Spiritually With Our Children* by Sue Downing used by permission of Discipleship Resources, Nashville, Tennessee. The article “When a Pastor Moves—Five Steps to Healthy Departures,” by Rev. H. Donald Hawks for the Leadership Development Institute and published by *Connexion*, was used by permission of the publisher. The poem “Moving On” from *Collected Thoughts and Writings* by Eva Robertson was used by permission of the author. Excerpts from the *United Methodist Book of Worship* used by permission of the publisher.

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1. GREAT EXPECTATIONS

As we enter the parish ministry, there are always concerns about what expectations the church, the district, and the conference have for us, as clergy and as clergy spouse. The roles do carry some expectations with them, but fortunately, in this day and age, these expectations are things we can live with. Also, it works both ways. We have expectations of the church, the district, and the conference. The trick is to balance all of these in the real life of ministry!

A. EXPECTING GREAT THINGS IN PARISH MINISTRY

We enter the parish ministry with joy, commitment, and trepidation. The local church to which we have been appointed, the district, and the annual conference all have a calling on our lives. Now add to that family and personal commitments and we find the need for balance. Where do we begin?

One minister begins ministry in a new parish with the following words in the first sermon. It is not “Here am I, serve me” or “Here am I, let us serve you” but “Here am I, let us serve Christ together!” With these words the stage is set for a shared ministry among the clergy and the laity. As clergy and clergy families we become fellow servants *with* the laity, not servants *to* the laity. We become involved in ministry not in isolation but in fellowship with other believers.

Within the life of this shared ministry we need to set boundaries. Robert Frost says in his poem Mending Wall, “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,” and “Good fences make good neighbors.” How can we as clergy families build fences that enrich and enhance our ministry and not erect walls that become barriers to our shared life together in Christ? Let’s take a look at some fences that make good neighbors.

1. We need to build fences of confidence. Clergy and clergy families will, of necessity, know many confidential things. Sharing the burden of these confidences is one way a spouse can minister to his/her clergy spouse, but care must be taken to hold these confidences in sacred trust. Slips of the tongue are something we all must guard against. Think of this as a means of grace you can give your congregation—to hold their trust inviolate. We have an opportunity to teach our children the good manners of keeping the confidences they will sometimes overhear. We should all be especially careful that we do not allow confidential matters to be shared where young children who do not understand the concept of confidentiality can hear them.
2. We need to build a fence of privacy and respect for our children. Never are we called to allow our children to become the objects of curiosity, and in no regard does the church have the right to make demands on the lives of parsonage children. We can

set the example as parents as we respect our children's rights and our children's privacy. Never use personal stories about your children as sermon material without their permission. What might seem amusing or insightful to us might be embarrassing for the child.

3. Share the burden of personal family problems only as you are comfortable. Our church family can be a wonderful support for us, but it is the right of the clergy family to decide what is to be shared and in what way it is to be shared. A family might decide to lean on close friends and extended family for support or on the District Superintendent. It is the choice of the clergy family. Just remember there are places to turn for help.
4. Remember what is expected of the clergy professionally. Church members want to feel pride in their clergy. The duties of leading worship, preaching, leading Bible study, visiting in homes and hospitals, counseling, conducting the business of the parish, and relating to the many groups of the church—done well and in a timely fashion—will free the clergy to enjoy, with the blessing of the church, times of family rest and play. It says to the church I am responsible to you for pastoring and I expect you to respect my right of family time, study, and self-renewal.
5. Establish a partnership in ministry with the laity of your parish. Sharing ministry together will set the model for understanding and mutual respect as you share the work of Christ together. Where there is mutual respect, there is understanding of the need for space and boundaries both for the clergy and the laity. Clergy can be just as demanding of laity as the laity is of the clergy. Laity need good fences in their lives too!
6. Be yourself! This is important for the whole clergy family. This is the fence of self-respect. It says, as God is my helper I will be the best me I can be, but I will be me. Being true to who you really are makes you an authentic person—warts and all!! This keeps us from building walls of resentment, as we feel pulled to be someone we are not.
7. Build a fence of flexibility. Parish ministry calls on the clergy and the clergy's family to change plans and bend rules when life's tragedies and emergencies come. Our son was overheard telling a friend that we were going on vacation if no one died. He said that without anger, accepting what had become a familiar life style. Life happens and we are called to respond. Vacations and other personal times can be rescheduled. We build strong bonds of love and respect with a congregation when we respond with love and integrity.

“Good fences do make good neighbors.” But “something there is that doesn't love a wall.” Build good fences! Do not erect walls! The joy will be yours.

B. MYTH OF EXPECTATIONS

Do you feel the need to have an open house? Are you planning three Bible studies to be held at the parsonage? Do you feel responsible to feed the District Superintendent at every District Conference? Do you spend the months of October and November preparing a Christmas gift for your congregation? Do you have four UMW/UMM events scheduled for the fall? Are

you doing these things out of obligation? Are you confused over your role as a clergy spouse? Do you feel like jell-o cooling in a mold of someone else's design? You may be suffering from the *Myth of Expectation*.

Where did this myth originate? Perhaps it comes to life in our minds as we, unable to assess our own gifts, take on the roles we see in mentors and other clergy spouses. Maybe they are roles projected for us by well-meaning but misguided church members. Perhaps they come from a lack of understanding of what our clergy spouse expects of us or from our need to please or from a fear of rejection. Whatever the source, these myths are often hand-me-downs whose origin is lost and whose only purpose is to keep us from being who we were created to be: unique individuals cherished and blessed by a loving God.

Take heart!! Think again of the vows you made as you became, not a clergy spouse, but a member of Christ's Holy Church. You promised to uphold the church with your prayers, your presence, your gifts, and your service. These are your unique gifts, and only you can determine how best to use them in the service of Christ and His church. Only you can chart your own special path to fulfillment. As you do, I would like to give you some things to think about.

1. It is easier today for clergy spouses to be themselves. This gives you many options as you seek to find your special place that blesses the church with your very personal and unique gifts.
2. Use your gifts! The church needs your special touch, but do not allow yourself to become a "two for one" unpaid assistant pastor. This can happen in subtle ways. When your clergy spouse is away from the parish you may be called upon to respond to parish needs. Talk with your spouse and set clear standards for handling these requests. I was sometimes asked to respond with hospital visits in my spouse's absence. I did not feel it my place to do hospital visits, yet when a young teen had a fatal car accident I found myself responding out of a natural flow of love and concern. I discovered that while boundaries are necessary and healthy, having a gate set firmly in that boundary to open in extreme circumstances was also a good and healthy thing. The key is to keep ourselves open to respond as God calls us to be dedicated laypersons that happen to be married to clergy.
3. Set boundaries with the church early. We have permission just by being loved children of God to set limits in all our relationships. Cherish for yourself, your spouse, and your family sacred times of Sabbath rest, privacy at home, time to nurture and enjoy children, protection for children from the fish bowl of parsonage life, time to play and vacation, as well as time for exercise, personal spiritual growth, and development. Set these boundaries in love seeking God's will, building not walls to shut out the church but clear boundaries that enrich the relationship of the clergy family to the parish. This may not be easy. *The myth of expectations is hard to shake!!!*
4. Expect your clergy spouse to affirm and insist upon your personal right to be yourself and not conform to roles you are uncomfortable with. Find out what your

clergy spouse expects of you. Listen in love and then adjust these expectations to fit your gifts!!

5. Maintain a healthy balance. You do not have to be in church every time the door opens.
6. Take time to find your place in the life of the church. I have gotten stuck in Sunday school classes where I did not “fit” because I attended the first one I was invited to. Visit. Get to know lots of people. Find the right fit for you. Become a part of the church where you can find deep personal fulfillment. Your personal joy will be a great blessing for the church.
7. Find your place in the church with a deep, thoughtful sensitivity to your clergy spouse’s position. Some places in the church are difficult for spouses to serve in.
8. Never be intimidated by the roles of other clergy spouses, especially the spouses you follow. I followed a female clergy spouse that had many professional gifts to give to the church, but she was never in the kitchen. I was great kitchen help—I love to cook. I did not have her gifts but the church loved us both.
9. Establish warm and loving relationships with your church family, finding natural and honest ways to express that love. Practice the art of hospitality in your own special, unique way. Maybe a weekly Bible study at the parsonage might meet a deep need. Maybe you would rather finger paint with four-year-olds or drive seniors to the mall or doctor’s appointments. A beautiful solo, a warm loaf of bread, a computer problem solved or a roof mended, a hug and a warm smile, a quiet display of concern, and a kind word or a listening ear can all establish the “ties that bind our hearts in Christian love.”

Do you remember those membership vows? To uphold your church with your prayers, your presence, your gifts, and your service. Finding your own special path to service will be a blessing for you, your clergy spouse, and your church wherever that might be. This may not be easy and each stage of your life may find your path changing, but the journey is one of blessing and fulfillment. Definitely worth the struggle.

C. CHURCH EXPECTATIONS OF THE CLERGY

The words “Here am I, let us serve Christ together” help to establish the role of the minister in the local church as a fellow servant of God, not a slave to any one person or group of persons within the local church, or as a person above the laity of the church.

Local churches expect the minister to do his/her job, and these specific duties may have different priorities in each church. Since these have undoubtedly been covered in many of the classes you have taken through the years, they will just be briefly mentioned.

- Leading worship
- Preparing and delivering sermons
- Leading Bible study

- Visiting hospitals and shut-ins
- Counseling
- Attending to administrative duties within the church
- Relating well to all age groups within the church
- Enforcing the rules in the Discipline of the United Methodist Church.

Church members want to be proud of their minister within the community. They do expect the minister to dress professionally when he/she is acting in the role of the minister. This is not to say that you should wear a suit to church picnics, but on Sunday morning and during office hours at the church, attention should be paid to dress. However, this should not extend to his/her private life!

D. WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN THE MINISTER YOU MARRIED IS UNDER ATTACK BY CHURCH MEMBERS?

- Support him/her at home. Listen to and love him/her. Pray for him/her and for the church members.
- Hold your head high and hold your tongue with church members. Trying to gain support from one corner of the church may divide the church into two camps, making reconciliation even harder.
- Seek support from other clergy families. We've all been through it!
- This is a time to go within for spiritual nourishment from prayer, Bible reading, and theological and spiritual reading.
- Work out your frustration through a healthy form of exercise.
- Keep in mind that it may be the personality of a few people in the church to make life miserable for every minister. Talk to the district superintendent (DS). If this is so, don't take it personally. Compartmentalize it and get on with your ministry. Just as there are dysfunctional families, there are a few dysfunctional churches.
- Examine how you and your spouse are relating to people and see if there are changes that you can make. Usually, there are two sides to every disagreement.
- Remember that this is a work situation as well as your way of life. There are always tensions on a job. Dealing with people will always have its joys as well as its heartaches.

E. GENDER, AGE, AND RACIAL BIASES

Biases do exist. Some churches want only 35-year-old males with a perky wife and three well-behaved children. (Some churches do not want an Asian American, African American, Hispanic, or a woman as their minister. They do not always get what they want!) Of course this rules out 95 percent of all the people whom God has called into the ministry. Trust the Bishop

and the cabinet to send you to the church that will receive you well and let the Holy Spirit work through you and the congregation. There continue to be breakthroughs of these barriers across the conference each year. Rejoice in these breakthroughs and pray for those who seek to hinder the work of God through their prejudices.

If you are in a church that has members who are biased against women, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, or any other minority group, it is your responsibility to help prepare them for the acceptance of anyone that the Bishop and cabinet might conceivably appoint there. You can do this by inviting members of different ethnic groups or women to preach from your pulpit or to lead in Bible studies or other study groups. As churches are exposed to real people in these roles, their prejudices will be harder to maintain. Remember that the assumption is that each church is potentially eligible to receive any clergy regardless of race or gender.

F. BLESSED BY THE SMALL MEMBERSHIP CHURCH

As you begin your ministry in the life of the conference you may begin in a small membership church—a place where families have been a part of one church for generations or have recently arrived new in the community; a place where you hear the words “come here” attached to people who were not born in the community; a place that changes little; or a place of transition and growth. They exist in small towns, county seats, open rural areas, as well as urban settings. Many have aging memberships, some young families, and others a mix of generations.

Small membership churches have many gifts and graces. Often these churches have launched many new pastors into ministry, understanding the lack of experience and need for support and encouragement. Small membership churches share a profound pride in their communities and a real sense of how to do ministry in their special place, opening the possibility to real ministry in the community. Small membership churches allow a pastor the opportunity to get to know the members in a way that is not possible in larger churches. Small membership churches are not lesser churches, just smaller churches which need all that a good pastor can give: preaching, pastoral care, program development, and spiritual formation.

Small membership churches also offer challenges. If you, as the new pastor, have only been a part of large membership churches, the small membership church will be a new experience. Even if your experience has been with a small membership church your appointment will not be to your home church and, as you will discover, not all small membership churches are alike. Each small membership church is unique with a history and a calling all its own. Time, love and patience are the keys to understanding and becoming a part of that history and uniqueness.

How do you begin in ministry to a small membership church? You begin with respect and a genuine desire to serve where you are appointed. “If you have respect for people as they are, you can be more effective in helping them to become better than they are.”(John W. Gardner) If you share a mutual respect for each other as you minister together, both you as the pastor and the congregation of your small membership church, can, with God’s grace, become better than you ever dreamed you could be. It is important to remember as you begin to serve that God looks not on the size of the church but on the souls to be served and the opportunities for ministry to be met. Remember that you are called to be faithful in all things. This is the road to fulfillment and happiness amid the challenges throughout your ministry.

G. DISTRICT EXPECTATIONS FOR THE CLERGY SPOUSE

There are none! You are more than welcome at any district function and it is a delight to see you at district dinners and picnics. This is a special time to get to know other clergy spouses. Not only will they keep popping up in your life throughout the years, but they will understand and appreciate your life in ways that lay people cannot.

If there is not an active spouses group on your district, and you would like to be active in one, contact the DS’s spouse. There may be others who feel this need. Also, the spouse of your DS will always listen if you need to talk and not pass any judgment. They’ve all had their joys and heartaches in the ministry and in life as you have.

H. CONFERENCE EXPECTATIONS FOR THE CLERGY SPOUSE

There *are* none! There is an annual spouses retreat in the spring (around March 1st) and a gathering for spouses during Annual Conference, but these are all completely voluntary. These are opportunities to make new friends and see old friends. The retreat offers time away from the church with a spiritual emphasis as well as fun interest groups. Information regarding these events will be in the “Advocate” and on “SpouseNet.”

I. JOYS OF LIVING NEXT DOOR TO THE CHURCH

- You’ll know where your spouse is. Of course, all of the church members will too.
- It will be convenient for her/him to eat lunch at home any time between 11:00 and 2:30.
- Members of the church may very well cut your grass and trim your bushes.
- It frees up a vehicle when the minister has office hours.
- There’s no reason to cancel church services when it snows 3 feet. The minister can always get to church.
- You are close to the church when the burglar/fire alarm goes off at 3 a.m.

- Remember you are not the extra kitchen or set of keys. You may have to be more rigorous about setting boundaries to maintain a sense of privacy for you and your family.

Begin saving your pennies. As soon as possible, buy your own place anywhere you want. Use it as a vacation/get away for you and your family throughout your ministry. Decorate it to your heart's content. It will provide you with an emotional outlet, a sense of ownership, one constant place for your family to call home, and provide some tax benefits.

J. SUMMARY

Expect to:

- have friends, lay and clergy all over the conference.
- have a funeral at least once on your wedding anniversary or during vacation.
- know every great casserole recipe that ever existed.
- remember only the best about each church you've served.
- feel like you and your children are second to the church. Demand a night a week for family. Require a date with your spouse at least one night a month.
- have your child reprimanded for running in the sanctuary and climbing on the communion rail.
- see the neurotics coming out of the woodwork during Christmas.
- have great meals delivered on moving day. You won't have to cook all week!
- cry on your last Sunday at a church and be overwhelmed with a warm welcome two days later.
- see your pet run away the morning the moving van arrives.
- have someone comment on the new color you paint your nails or dye your hair.
- have at least one person in each church who thinks every sermon preached was meant just for them.
- have the one person the sermon was meant for to be out sick that Sunday.
- sit in someone else's sacred seat on your first Sunday in a new church.
- meet the most troublesome person on moving day. He/she will be the one to stop you from unpacking while he/she dumps all sorts of emotional baggage on you when you are tired and sweaty.
- have your schedule known in small communities (e.g., when you go to the doctor, where you grocery shop, and maybe even what you buy).
- be loved by your congregation, even when you are not that lovable.
- live in a variety of interesting locales.

- fall madly in love with the church you really did not want to serve.
- acquire a great collection of church cookbooks, mugs, and UMYF T-shirts.
- be asked to pray a lot. Spouses, if you are uncomfortable with this, memorize two prayers, one for a blessing and one for opening a meeting.
- see an exhausted minister on Christmas Eve.
- have to force the minister you married to take 2 days off in a row. You'll be lucky if you can depend on the same day off each week.
- hear at least once, "I sure wish I had a job where I worked only one hour a week!"
- be wary of those who criticize your predecessor's spouse and children. They'll criticize yours. It comes with the territory, don't take it personally.
- be unaware of the number of lives whom you touch in a most profound way.
- have your children make lifelong friends at UMYF.
- have your children never to want to move.
- sit by the phone for one full week, waiting for the DS to call about your next appointment. She'll call as soon as you have to leave to run a vital errand.
- wonder if the Cabinet has lost its collective mind when you hear about a colleague that is to get a \$15,000 raise. What you don't know is that he/she hasn't had a raise at all for three years and that he/she will earn every penny of that raise. Professional jealousy is so tacky!
- hear about your new appointment from the "kitchen cabinet." It is pure gossip; let it stop with you.
- be swamped with homemade Christmas goodies. You may not have to bake at all!
- collect monogrammed silver trays as you move from place to place.
- be awed by the spiritual depth of church people as they face difficult circumstances in life. Your own spirituality will be enriched.
- be nervous when the DS or Bishop comes to your worship service. Relax. They are worshippers too.
- hear good things and bad things about the church you're about to move to. Expect the best. How you relate to them *will* be different than any other pastor.
- feel like a single parent at times. Do you really believe your spouse would rather be at a finance meeting than at home with his/her family?
- have many "adopted grandparents" for your children all over the conference.
- look upon annual conference as a family reunion.
- praise God that you listened to the call.

2. MOVING

A. WHY THE APPOINTIVE SYSTEM OR WHO IS TELLING ME TO MOVE WHERE?

Appointive itinerant ministry exists to enable The United Methodist Church to fulfill its mission. A church will be better able to fulfill its mission when the church has appropriate leadership. The authority for providing pastoral leadership for congregations resides with the Bishop and the Cabinet.¹ The primary principle used in order to make appointments is to match the congregational needs and missions with the gifts and skills of a pastor. It is important that pastors and families realize that the pastors are a part of a covenant within the connection by which the Bishop can appoint appropriate pastors to churches. One's willingness to serve enables the church to fulfill its mission. Because of this need to match the minister to the congregation, the cabinet relies on the pastor profiles and church profiles, as well as the personal knowledge of the pastor and congregation by the district superintendents.

When the church requests a change of ministers, do not take it as a repudiation of your ministry. Most times you were the right person for the church at that moment and time and you gave them valuable spiritual guidance. They love you and your family, but they recognize that it may be time for a change. The same holds for you. When you request a move, you are not leaving because you just can't take it any longer—it is just time for a change for you and your family. When you make this decision, make it for concrete reasons and be open with your church members about your requests. Be honest about it while at the same time affirm your time with them. Most of your church members have been United Methodists much longer than you and are familiar with the routine of moving. Even though it may seem that you are sparing the feelings of your congregation if you tell them that the cabinet is asking you to move when you want to stay, you are actually causing the church great harm. In most cases the move is made only when the minister asks to move or with the consent of the pastor. If you “blame” the move on the cabinet, the congregation then blames the cabinet for taking away their beloved pastor, making it particularly difficult for the new pastor to establish a good relationship and making it very hard for the district superintendent to have a good working relationship with the church. The bonds of trust have been broken when the pastor is not honest with the church about moving. The beauty of our system is that the churches are exposed to many different spiritual leaders and are able to

¹ The Cabinet is composed of the 16 district superintendents in the Virginia Conference.

grow because of each one of them. If it has been a particularly difficult assignment for you, refrain from the desire to “let them have it” through a sermon or newsletter. Take the high road. You will be surprised at the good things you will remember about them and they will remember your gifts long after you are gone.

1. Leave Taking

The following are some suggestions for a healthy and Spirit-filled leave taking, something that must be done well by the church as well as by the pastor:

- Have the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC)² hold an event to honor the departing pastor, and focus the celebration on affirming the pastor’s gifts and the contributions the pastor has made to the church.
- Recognize the special needs of the pastor’s family, especially the children, which may find the departure to be difficult, leaving friends and classmates.
- Make sure the parsonage is ready for the incoming pastor. Have the trustees and S/PPRC do a detailed walk-through, itemize what needs to be done, and complete the work, where possible, before the new pastor arrives.
- Take care of unfinished business. For the church, this means bringing payments up to date for pension and health benefits, as well as for travel or accountable reimbursements.
- As pastor, take time to find thoughtful and wonderful ways to affirm the ministry of the congregation, especially about the gifts that the congregation has given to the community, as well as the faith journeys of the members of the congregation.
- As pastor, prepare your church emotionally and spiritually to receive the new pastor who is coming. Identify and carry out, if possible, some symbolic act that represents the transition to take place. An example would be identifying a stole or other item worn during your ministry that you could leave for the new pastor.
- As pastor, prepare notes for the incoming pastor about special needs in the congregation and the community, such as those in the hospital, nursing homes, or prison; and those who are temporarily or permanently house bound. Make sure there is an accurate congregational directory. Annotate that directory with notes that could help the new pastor connect the names with elements of their faith journey.
- As pastor, be very clear about the fact that someone else is coming to be the pastor: “I have had the privilege to preach sermons in this pulpit. I have had the privilege of officiating at your weddings, baptisms, and funerals. I have had the privilege of visiting you in the hospital, and now someone else is coming to do that. That person is your pastor now; I am no longer your pastor.” Find diplomatic ways to write in your newsletter and to say from the pulpit, “I have loved you and I have been with you but now someone else is coming to be your shepherd, to serve you the

² This and other abbreviations are listed in the Glossary (Appendix C).

sacraments, to baptize your children, to marry the persons who need to be married, to officiate at your funerals, to make the hospital calls. I want you to make room for that person just as you have made room for me, because if you do the church will be strengthened.”

- As pastor, help the congregation do its grief work, especially those for whom you have had a close and intimate ministry. Find words and acts that will support them in that grief.

2. Arriving

The following are some suggestions for receiving a new pastor:

- Hold a “big” event and include children and youth and representatives from the community—other professional people in the community with whom your pastor will be working such as police chief, principal of the high school, fire chief, and undertakers.
- Meet soon with the pastor and pastor’s spouse to identify areas where the parsonage still needs improvement and develop a plan for meeting those needs.
- Welcome the children of the pastor’s family to the church and church school; include children of the ages of the pastor’s children. Identify schools and principals appropriate for those children and offer to help with introductions.
- Be willing to quickly alert the new pastor to situations and events that occur which have a negative reaction from the congregation. Often these can be averted or simply managed if the pastor is told what expectations were not being met, such as elements of the service (e.g., how baptisms are held) or sanctuary (e.g., memorial gifts) that have special significance.
- Give the new pastor time to settle in, getting to know the congregation, its mission, and the community it serves. Give the pastor time to come to know you, understand the rituals, and feel a part of your community life.

The following are some suggestions for the new pastor:

- As new pastor, carefully plan your chances for first impressions. Think very carefully about what you are going to say and how you are going to say it, what you are going to wear and why you are going to wear it.
- As new pastor, study the history of your congregation. Have members tell you of significant events and their own personal stories. Knowing the history of the congregation and the stories that helped shape the life of the church can help you begin to understand why the congregation feels like it does, thinks like it thinks, and believes what it believes. If you can understand how the church came to be the way it is, you can better understand how to preach the gospel in that church. Understand the personality of the church.
- As new pastor, don’t make any changes in the governance of the church, the worship life of the church, or the educational life of the church unless you have a good theological reason and unless you have done a lot of teaching before attempting the

change.

- As new pastor, know the community which will be your context for ministry. If your church is to be a missionary congregation, you need to know the mission field where you are working. Let your lay people be your teachers. Have them tell you where people hurt, where the pain of this community is, and where the joy of this community is.
- Above all, be prayerful in all that you do. Find ways for laity and pastor to have seasons of prayer at the beginning of the ministry. Find ways to join the pastor and laity for the purpose of prayer, reflection, and meditation; and let your ministry, both as laity and clergy, grow up out of a season of prayer.

B. MOVING EXPERIENCE

In most cases the previous parsonage family will vacate the parsonage the morning of the same day that the incoming family moves in (that afternoon). Therefore, it is most important to be in direct communication with the pastor moving out so that the two of you can coordinate exit and entry times.

Hopefully you have already visited the parsonage or have satisfied yourself with what to expect. Obviously, this is one of the most awkward pieces in the transition: how to express concern for what needs to be done before you arrive without appearing demanding. There is no easy way through this in some instances. Yet in most cases, you can come to an understanding with the S/PPR Committee on what to expect and what will be satisfactory.

You are responsible to make your own moving arrangements. Check with your District Superintendent for a list of moving companies, and ask if any of the companies has negotiated a special schedule of tariffs for pastors moving in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Consult with the S/PPRC chair to determine if there is a professional mover in the congregation. It is important to get estimates for moving costs from at least two moving companies. This allows more control in the selection of movers and scheduling. Consider renting a self-move truck to help defray the costs. Be good financial stewards in this matter. Please refer to the “Virginia Annual Conference Guidelines for Moving Expenses”, found at <https://www.vaumc.org/SPPRCResources>. The “Checklist for Leaving the Parsonage” is also a useful resource prior to your departure.

Be sure to update your parsonage inventory and to request a copy of the latest parsonage inventory from the District Superintendent for the Church to which you will be moving. Additional resources, including the furnishings *you* are responsible for, can be found in Section III of the “Minimum Standards for the Parsonage” (<https://www.vaumc.org/SPPRCResources>).

Inform the chair of your new S/PPR Committee of your moving arrangements, expected costs, form of payment, and the scheduled arrival time.

C. THE ROLE OF THE CLERGY SPOUSE ON BEGINNING AGAIN!

Most of us know what it means to “begin again.” You have experienced starting a new job, transferring schools, or marrying, etc. Just as with those beginnings, so in this, you may have mixed feelings of excitement, anxiety, anticipation, and uncertainty.

Ten suggestions, NOT commandments:

- Become familiar with the community. Take the family for a walk or drive. Stop in stores, schools, etc.
- Become familiar with the church and its history. Ask people questions about the church’s history.
- Take time to read what is being asked of the laity (especially S/PPR Committee). You’ll find this information in the “Pastoral Transitions – Guidelines” booklet. A copy of this booklet, revised in 2009, is available on the “Cabinet Policies” page of the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)³.
- Remember your family. Schedule time to be with them and encourage your spouse to be intentional about being with the family. A pastor will often be involved in pastoral duties immediately while spouses/children may suffer enormous loneliness. Plan for some fun and adventures together. Your attitude can help your children experience this move as an “adventure.”
- Expect grief. Do not be surprised if you suddenly miss your former congregation more than you thought you would. The familiarity and comfort of your former church can be very attractive at this point.
- You are still a stranger. Remember that the new congregation does not love you yet nor should it be expected to. More likely they love your predecessor. Let them know it is okay for them to miss their former pastor and family. We are not called to be loved but to love and serve. Serving others with compassion, sensitivity, openness, and competence will win their respect. The love will come later!
- Remember the fundamental commandment: “Thou shalt speak no ill of your predecessor, your predecessor’s spouse, your predecessor’s children, nor cat, nor dog, nor anything that is your predecessor’s.”
- Another basic commandment is to not talk constantly about previous places you’ve lived. Lay people don’t want to hear this any more than you want to be compared to the former pastor’s spouse!
- Hopefully the parsonage will be ready for you when you arrive. If there are problems deal with them patiently and thoughtfully, and avoid unnecessary disputes. If there are major problems, please call the District Superintendent, who will send a committee of three as mandated by the Annual Conference to deal with your concerns.

³ From “Administrative Services” menu, click “Policies and Forms” on the left; then “Cabinet Policies”.

- Some things to bear in mind as you begin again:
 - Do not lose heart.
 - You come to love more than to be loved.
 - You seek to understand more than to be understood.
 - You are willing to listen even if not heard.
 - Never lose your nerve.
 - Affirm everyone and everything you can.
 - Pray, and then pray some more.
 - Have fun!

D. VIRGINIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE GUIDELINES FOR MOVING EXPENSES⁴

A charge, district, or conference agency receiving a new clergy shall be responsible for all his/her moving expenses under the following provisions:

- A maximum weight limit as weighed in the van of 16,000 lbs. Charges for moving goods over 16,000 lbs. shall be the responsibility of the clergy.
- A maximum allowance for cartons and packing of \$500.
- A limit of \$125 for piano handling.
- Where there is a pastor's study at the church and extra stops must be made by the mover for loading and unloading books or office equipment, a maximum allowance of not more than \$165.
- Seminarian entering the Virginia Conference from outside the conference shall be entitled to the moving expenses listed above with the limitation that the maximum total compensation shall be \$4000.
- Clergy other than seminarians entering the Virginia Conference from outside the Conference shall be entitled to the moving expenses listed above with the limitation that mileage-based moving expenses shall be based on the distance from the appropriate boundary of the Conference to the place of appointment.
- Insurance (replacement value equivalency) shall be provided by the receiving church/charge for personal injury or damage to clergy family property during the move. The matter of additional insurance on furnishings above that provided by the hauler shall be the responsibility of the persons moving.
- Where possible, the moves of less than 30 miles shall be arranged under the hourly rate.
- The Cabinet will review annually the costs of moving and update the moving allowances to reflect inflation pressures.

⁴ Reviewed and updated by Cabinet, February 2013. Available on the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org>); from the "Resources" menu, choose "Staff/Pastor Parish Relations", then scroll down to "Section 3."

- All churches/charges should build a moving expense fund by annual appropriations for moving expenses regardless of which year the move may be expected to occur. The Cabinet strongly urges churches/charges to budget an amount equal to 1/6 of the most recent move.
- All moving of clergy will be done professionally and in a responsible manner.
- Clergy are expected to secure at least two estimates for comparison. Moving estimates must be submitted to the S/PPRC of the receiving church in a prompt manner. Clergy are expected to exercise reasonable standards of stewardship when determining what items to keep/move or dispose. Unless there are physical limitations all clergy are responsible for packing of books, linens and general household effects. The new relationship between clergy and receiving congregations has a much better chance of success if the clergy family avoids the appearance of entitlement.
- Additional information on “Tips for Moving” is posted on the conference website⁵.

We remind the clergy of our conference of the large element of stewardship entailed in their decisions concerning what to move and what to sell or abandon. It is neither wise nor morally justifiable to expect payment for a charge for large items, other than necessary furniture, where the hauling of these significantly increases the expense to the churches. Nor is it thoughtful, in most instances, for the clergy to indulge himself/herself by having a company pack books, linens, and general household effects when he/she can, at great savings to the church, pack himself/herself.

E. FAITH STATEMENT FOR PARSONAGE STEWARDSHIP

To Be To Each Other What We Are Called To Be to the World

“...Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.” (Ephesians 4:15-16)

How can we as members of our United Methodist faith community develop relationships as clergy families that will assure our caring for each other as we are called by Christ to care for the world? How can we become Christ to each other—supporting, encouraging, and equipping one another for ministry by offering gifts of grace and love?

We find the answer for these questions as we reflect on the form of ministry to which God has called us.

⁵ From the home page, click “Clergy Excellence”, then “Clergy Family Resources”.

God has called us to be a body “joined and knit together” so that each part of the body fulfills its purpose and enables the whole body to grow in love. When we let each other down in the care and stewardship of parsonages we share, we break the bonds of faith and trust, and the whole body falters.

God has called us to be a people sent to “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”

God has called us to “love your neighbor as yourself.” When we let each other down in the care and stewardship of the parsonages we share, we break the bonds of love and empathy, doing what is both hateful to our neighbor and ourselves.

We are called by God to be a people of hospitality, to be a guest in each other’s homes—cherished and honored. This is the spirit with which we must care for our parsonages and the spirit in which we must enter and leave these homes, for these homes are the sacramental places where we experience the presence of God as we grow in faith, rest in His love, laugh and play in His Grace, break bread around His table, welcome friends and family into His fellowship, and live out the daily command of His call in our lives. It is and should always be a holy place, a blessing.

May we be to each other what we are called to be to the world.

F. PARSONAGE INVENTORY

The District Superintendent provides two parsonage inventory forms to each pastor, Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee, and Parsonage Committee or Board of Trustees. These forms are designed to do the following:

- Check the space and facilities provided in the parsonage against the minimum standards for parsonages in the Virginia Annual Conference;
- Provide a complete list of furnishings and equipment provided by the Church for the parsonage.

These forms are to be updated every year and provided to the District Superintendent. They can be used to note improvements, purchases, major repairs, and deficiencies, together with planning dates for addressing deficiencies. A current set of forms can be obtained on “Cabinet Policies” page of the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)⁶.

⁶ From “Administrative Services” menu, choose “Policies and Forms”, then “Cabinet Policies”.

The forms have the value of not only documenting detailed characteristics and facilities of the parsonage but also of being a resource for newly appointed clergy and families.

G. CHECKLIST FOR LEAVING THE PARSONAGE

The Checklist may be used to help each clergy family plan and carry out the necessary work to make the parsonage ready for the next clergy family. Not included in these forms are some other items worth noting:

- Turn in church telephone calling cards, discount membership cards, and credit cards before departure.
- Read meters and leave a memorandum of the readings with the S/PPRC and in the parsonage for the new pastor.
- Leave some information on the estimated size of expected utility bills, such as gas, telephone, electricity, water, and sewage, together with your understanding of how these bills are to be shared with the new pastor during period of transition.
- In the event of the death of the clergy, the above requirements may be adjusted with supervision of the district superintendent.

H. ON-LINE RESOURCES

Many policy statements adopted by the Cabinet are available on the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)⁷.

⁷ From “Administrative Services” menu, choose “Policies and Forms”, then “Cabinet Policies”.

3. LIVING IN MINISTRY

A. PARSONAGE LIVING

The parsonage can be a wonderful place where you are received graciously and it becomes your home. It can also be a place where you may feel out of control and discounted because you are in someone else's house. And yet it affords a comfortable, convenient place that is made ready with food and flowers for you without any investment of your energy in finding a place to rent or buy. It's their house but it's your home!

1. What You Can Expect

When you move in you, hopefully you will find a clean house ready for you. If not, you will want to work with designated members of the Parsonage Committee or Board of Trustees to correct any problems you find. Church members will often make repairs. Fortunately there are usually very competent repair men and women in each church. Generally, if you address problems at the beginning and are very gracious about whatever you find, church members are more than willing to help you improve things at the parsonage.

In working with a parsonage committee, it is imperative to have them come to the house on a yearly basis. This way they can keep up with the needs rather than having them pile up for years at a time and costing a bundle to repair all at once. Yes, you'll have to clean the house for them. Expect them to respond in a timely fashion to your needs, not necessarily to your wants. Keep in mind the church's financial situation and be creative with solutions. If you are able to do some work or improvements, check with the church to see if it will pay for the materials for the project you have in mind. Put people on the parsonage committee who have good taste in decorating their own homes, are handy with tools, or own a furniture or carpet store!

The parsonage yard—keep it trimmed! They will notice. They may not appreciate it if they see the minister's wife cutting grass in a halter top (or pastor's husband in bathing trunks), but you'll hear complaints if the lawn is shaggy all of the time. Some churches will have a work day at the parsonage to do heavy trimming or raking. You will have to decide if this oversteps some privacy boundaries for your family; it depends on your congregation and their respect for your privacy, as well as your desire to get some help on yard work.

2. What the Church Expects

They expect you to take care of the house and furniture as if it is your own. They do expect normal wear and tear. Very few churches expect you to keep furniture and paintings

where you find them on moving day. Feel free to rearrange all the furniture and even change the function of a room if it suits your needs.

When you move out, the church and conference expects you to *leave the house very clean*. Yes, this is a real drag on energy and time when everyone in the house is under strain. It is most embarrassing for church members to come in with food for the new pastor and find a dirty house and only 30 minutes before the new family arrives. The district superintendent will be notified and your reputation will be soiled, pun intended.

3. Parsonage Family Responsibility

The previous parsonage family, before you arrive, is responsible for leaving the house and furnishings clean (washed, scrubbed, waxed, shampooed—CLEAN!). You should be moving into a house with *no garbage* and *no junk* in the attic or garage.

- Have repaired at the pastor's expense any damage due to negligence of family members, guests, and/or pets.
- Make sure the utilities are on for the incoming pastor. Utilities, where practical, should be in the church's name with the parsonage address so that services will not be terminated.
- Pastors are responsible for lawn mowing and trimming of shrubs.

Note: Please refer to the brochure, "Minimum Standards for the Parsonage" if you have any questions (<https://www.vaumc.org/SPPRCResources>).

4. Pets

Be sensitive to church members who visit the Parsonage when invited and have pet allergies. Forewarn them regarding the presence of pets or consider keeping one room free of pets for receiving such visitors.

5. In-home Businesses

If anyone residing in the church parsonage is considering conducting a for-profit business that may compromise the tax-free status of church-owned property, consultation about such business should be made with the District Superintendent before establishing the business.

6. Relating to the Parsonage Committee

Following are some ideas on the parsonage committee and living with them:

- Remember to invite them willingly and joyfully into your home. Most committees are not white glove inspectors and would rather see us living as we really do, dust and all, than to be made to feel unwelcome in the parsonage.

- These visits, while they should be welcoming, should be on your terms and at your convenience. It is your home.
- Be firm about a once-a-year inspection. This should be a walk through to allow the committee to see how the house is being maintained and what repairs need to be done.
- When a committee—made up of laity who have their own homes to care for—spends time helping to care for the home they provide for you, it is both kind and good manners to show appreciation. A desert/coffee or a light supper once a year or so can say thank you in a very nice way.
- It is much easier to maintain a house if you have regular meetings to assess the condition of the parsonage. This way things remain in a manageable condition. If some members seem to want to turn a blind eye, do not let them for their own good. A neglected house can become a real problem for clergy families and churches. They will thank you for insisting they maintain their property, and your clergy colleagues will love you.
- Enjoy your parsonage! Have huge family dinners, play ball in the back yard, invite friends often, and plant flowers! If you try your best to love this house, the church will respond by appreciating your appreciation of what they have provided for you.
- Take pride in your parsonage home in all its imperfections. That is the only way we can honestly expect to work with the church in Christian love, to cure the imperfections, and to make it the home we can be proud of.

B. KEEP RECORDS

Consider using a computer software program for **financial record keeping**. Consider **developing a spreadsheet** to list business expenses (miles, meals, and other expenses related to the performance of ministry.) Your business related expenses can then be automatically tallied. Save all business related receipts! **Developing a computer spread sheet of your daily activities for the year** (date, event, mileage, expenses) will also provide an effective way to provide appropriate documentation of your business activities when needed.

Your district superintendent has information about **the mileage logs and documentation you must keep for accountable reimbursement plans**.

You may also wish to keep **visitation logs and information about ongoing pastoral care needs**. Files which may compromise anyone's privacy should be kept in a locked file cabinet, preferably at home, not the office.

Books are available at Cokesbury⁸ and other religious bookstores for **keeping records of funerals, services for new members, weddings, and baptisms.**

Keep your **church membership books** up to date, including a current list of membership changes, baptisms, etc., according to the data required for the annual Charge Conference. Doing so will make filling out charge conference forms much easier.

C. BOOKS TO READ

If you are in an area with a good library, use it. Clergy view books as necessary “tools of the trade.” Take advantage of inter-library loans and search for available library books on your branch’s website. Don’t buy every book you wish to read. Some bookstores allow you to sit and scan or read books without buying them. If you do buy and read a book you are not likely to read or refer to again, pass it along to a colleague or donate it to the church library or a seminary.

⁸ Cokesbury is a 24/7, secure web store available at <http://www.cokesbury.com/>. Cokesbury is the retail division of The United Methodist Publishing House

4. CONFERENCE RELATIONS

A. ESTABLISHING CONFERENCE RELATIONSHIP

Conference relationship is the designated relationship of a clergyperson to the annual conference. The first aspect of conference relationship is whether one is ordained (deacon or elder), commissioned as a provisional member, or licensed.

For licensed pastors, licensing is done annually based upon the recommendation of the district committee on ordained ministry and the granting of an appointment by the Bishop and district superintendents. A license is usually first granted at the session of the annual conference and renewed by the district committee in the spring. A license may be granted between sessions of the annual conference if the person has attended Licensing School. A licensed pastor may be discontinued according to the provisions stated in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*.

A second aspect of conference relationship is whether one is on active status, retired status, or some kind of leave of absence. These relationships are voted by the Clergy Executive Session at Annual Conference upon recommendation of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Information in the following paragraphs is taken from the *2016 Book of Discipline* (in ¶¶352-360, *Changes in Conference Relationship*).

To seek a change in conference relationship, you must make a written request to the Board of Ordained Ministry, stating the reasons for the requested change of relationship. Address your letter to the chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry in care of the Center for Clergy Excellence and send copies to the Bishop and your district superintendent. In most cases, you will be interviewed by the Conference Relations Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry or for licensed pastors the District Committee on Ordained Ministry prior to a recommendation being made.

B. CHANGES FROM ACTIVE STATUS

The following are the difference kinds of conference relationship changes you may request. Please refer to the *2016 Book of Discipline* (¶¶352-360) for more details.

Voluntary Leaves of Absence (*2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶353) should be requested in writing at least 90 days prior to the session of the annual conference:

Personal Leave of Absence may be granted to diaconal ministers and clergy who are provisional, associate, and full members, who self-determine for personal reasons that they are

temporarily unable or unwilling to continue in a ministry appointment. This relationship must be approved annually and shall not be granted for more than five years except by special action of the Clergy Executive Session.

Family Leave of Absence may be granted to diaconal ministers and clergy who are provisional members, associate members, and full members who, because of an immediate family member's need for full-time care, are temporarily unable to continue in a ministry appointment. This relationship must be approved annually and shall not be granted for more than five years except by special action of the clergy executive session.

Transitional Leave of Absence may be granted for up to twelve months with approval of the bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry Executive Committee to provisional and associate members and full clergy members in good standing who are temporarily between appointments. A transitional leave of absence may be granted for the following reasons:

(1) A provisional or full member deacon needs to seek and secure an appointable primary position—compensated or nonsalaried.

(2) A provisional member, associate member, or full member elder needs to transition from an extension ministry to another appointment.

During transitional leave, the clergyperson shall provide quarterly substantiation of his or her effort to obtain such an appointable position to the bishop and to the Board of Ordained Ministry Executive Committee.

Involuntary Leave of Absence (2016 Book of Discipline, ¶354). The bishop and the district superintendents may request an involuntary leave of absence without the consent of the provisional, associate, or full member, preferably ninety days prior to the annual conference session. They shall give to the clergy member and the Board of Ordained Ministry in writing specific reasons for the request. The fair process for administrative hearings as set forth in ¶ 361.2 shall be followed in any involuntary leave of absence procedure. The clergyperson has a right to a hearing before Conference Relations Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry prior to being placed on involuntary leave of absence.

An involuntary leave may be requested by the bishop and the district superintendents when:

a) A written or signed complaint is not resolved through the supervisory (¶362.1b), complaint (¶362.1e), or trial process within 90 days, or clearly cannot be resolved within 90 days.

b) Action pursuant to ¶363 (Involuntary Status Change) is required to address allegations of incompetence, ineffectiveness, or inability to perform ministerial duties.

c) Should there be complaints or charges pending at the time of a request for involuntary leave of absence, they should be placed in the personnel file of the clergyperson. All subsequent actions concerning such entries should be duly noted and placed in the file.

Involuntary leave of absence shall be approved by two-thirds vote of the clergy session of members in full connection with the annual conference. Involuntary leave shall be approved annually upon written request of the district superintendents and shall not be approved for more than three years in succession.

Other Leaves and Changes in Conference Relationship:

Maternity or Paternity Leave. May be granted to diaconal ministers and clergy who are local pastors, probationary members, associate members, and members in full connection and who so requests it at the birth or arrival of a child into the home for purposes of adoption. This leave cannot exceed one-fourth of a year. The request should be filed with the committee on pastor/staff parish relations after consulting with the district superintendent at least 90 days prior to its beginning. Maternity or paternity leave of up to one quarter of a year will be considered as an uninterrupted appointment for pension purposes. (See *2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶355.)

Clergy Medical Leave. May be granted to clergy who are local pastors, provisional members, associate members, and members in full connection who are unable to perform their ministerial work because of their physical or emotional disability. This leave must be recommended by the Boards of Ordained Ministry and Pensions and a majority vote of the Clergy Executive Session after a thorough investigation by the Joint Committee on Clergy Medical Leave. This relationship may be initiated by the clergy member or district superintendent with or without the consent of the clergy member. A detailed outline of the process for making this request is available from the Center for Clergy Excellence and the Office of Pensions and Benefits. Receipt of disability benefits for those enrolled in the Comprehensive Protection Plan is determined by the General Board of Pensions. (See *2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶356)

Retirement. Retired clergy members are those who have been placed in the retired relation either at their own request or by action of the Clergy Session upon recommendation of the Board of Ordained Ministry. Requests for retirement shall be stated in writing to the bishop, cabinet, and Board of Ordained Ministry at least 120 days prior to the date on which retirement is to be effective, unless granted an exception by the Bishop and Cabinet. Refer to *2016 Book of Discipline* (¶357, *Retirement*) for age and years of service required for retirement.

Honorable Location. May be granted to clergy members in full connection and associate members at their own request who intend to discontinue service in the itinerant ministry. They must be examined in their character and found in good standing by the Board of Ordained Ministry and approved by the Clergy Executive Session. An annual report is required. (See *2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶358)

Withdrawal from the Ordained Ministerial Office. May be granted to ordained members in good standing to unite with another denomination or to terminate their membership in the denomination. When clergy members are accused of an offence and desire to withdraw, they are permitted to do so by withdrawing under complaints or charges. Credentials are surrendered to the district superintendent. (See *2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶360)

C. FURTHER STUDY

The *2016 Book of Discipline* in ¶350, *Continuing Education and Spiritual Growth* and ¶351, *Sabbatical Leave*, gives guidelines and support for pastoral study leaves, continuing education, and sabbaticals. In addition, ¶350.4 addresses the issue of financial support. In terms of time, the requirement of the Discipline is that clergy shall spend at least one week each year and at least one month during one year of every quadrennium for continuing education. These leaves are not to be considered vacation. Study leaves of up to six months may be taken by clergy who have held full-time appointments for at least six years. All such leaves are to be scheduled in consultation with the local church pastor/staff-parish relations committee, the church council, and the district superintendent.

Financial support is offered to all clergy through the Ministerial Education Fund. The amount of funds granted is determined by the base compensation of the clergy. In addition, other sources of funding include Foundations, local church, district, and conference funding.

The Board of Ordained Ministry has developed a resource listing of opportunities for continuing education. Links to these resources are posted on the “Clergy Continuing Education” page of the conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org>).⁹

1. Continuing Education

The following persons are required to receive a minimum of one Continuing Education Unit (CEU) per year and at least eight CEUs per quadrennium:

- Full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study
- Active Associate Members under appointment

⁹ From the home page, click “Clergy Excellence”, then “Clergy Continuing Education”.

- Active Elders under appointment
- Active Deacons under appointment
- Active Diaconal Ministers under appointment
- Certified Lay Professionals.

The clergy, in consultation with the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee and the District Superintendent, shall develop a continuing theological education program annually. Funds are available for events that meet the criteria set by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The *Discipline* recommends that clergy be allowed at least one week each year and at least one month during one year of each quadrennium for continuing education and spiritual growth. Such leaves shall not be considered as part of the minister's vacation. Go to the "Clergy Continuing Education" page on the conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)¹⁰ for application forms.

2. Clergy Development

Clergy Development is an initiative to promote and support life-long learning through personal and spiritual growth of clergy, diaconal ministers, and certified professionals in the Virginia Conference to enable excellence in ministry through a partnership of the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Cabinet. Using Ministerial Education Funds, grants are awarded to cover the cost of registration, lodging, and meals for learning experiences selected by the Clergy Development Committee. Participants contribute travel costs, time, and full commitment to the satisfactory completion of the learning experience. The application process can be initiated by the District Superintendent or by persons self-selecting for a specific learning experience. Primary consideration will be given to applicants with special identified needs and applicants who are at critical points in ministry, including appointment changes, life changes, or potential for exemplary leadership. Go to the "Clergy Development" page on the conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)¹¹ for more information.

3. Sabbatical Leave

Sabbatical Leave may be requested for a program of study or travel approved by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry. Associate members or clergy members in full connection, who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years or in a less-than-full-time appointment equivalent to six consecutive full-time years, may be granted a sabbatical leave for up to one year. A written request must be submitted to the Board of Ordained

¹⁰ From the home page, click "Clergy Excellence", then "Clergy Continuing Education".

¹¹ From the home page, click "Clergy Excellence", then "Clergy Continuing Education", then "Clergy Development".

Ministry six months prior to the annual conference. See *2016 Book of Discipline*, ¶351, for more details.

D. ON-LINE RESOURCES

1. Cabinet Guidelines and Policies for the Virginia Conference

Many policy statements adopted by the Cabinet are available on the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)¹².

2. Other Guidelines and Policies for the Virginia Conference

Other guidelines are available on the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)¹³ under the Center for Clergy Excellence.

3. Web Sites for The United Methodist Church

The following websites may be of use:

- www.umc.org for The United Methodist Church (includes sites for portions of *The Book of Discipline*)
- www.vaumc.org for the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church
- <http://gbgm-umc.org/connections/> for links to websites related to The Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church
- <http://www.vaumc.org/UMVIM/> for United Methodist Volunteers in Action
- <http://www.vipcare.org/> for The Virginia Institute for Pastoral Care (VIPCare)
- <http://www.gcfa.org/> for the General Council on Finance and Administration.
- <http://www.gcfa.org/tax-packet> for clergy tax information.

¹² From “Administrative Services” menu, choose “Policies and Forms”, then “Cabinet Policies”.

¹³ From the home page, click “Clergy Excellence”; then “Clergy Information and Resources”.

5. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

*This life, therefore, is not godliness but the process of becoming godly,
not health but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise.*

We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way.

The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on.

This is not the goal, but it is the right road.

*At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle,
but everything is being cleansed.”*

Martin Luther

A. INTRODUCTION

Here’s a riddle for you: “What do hula hoops and heresies have in common?”

Answer: “They both keep coming back.”

You may have noticed there are several heretical ideas about the nature and practice of ministry which, like the hula hoop, just seem to keep coming back. . . or, even worse, appear never to have left the Christian community we call the church.

Have you ever heard a statement like this? “I saw the pastor leaving the gym yesterday – *at two o’clock in the afternoon!* Sure wish *I* could take off in the middle of the day and go to the gym! Guess she doesn’t have enough to do.”

Here’s a golden oldie: “Fridays are our pastor’s day-off. I called the parsonage at 8:30 AM last Friday and asked to speak with pastor about next month’s Trustees meeting; his wife had the audacity to tell me he was ‘sleeping-in’ and she would have him call me back on Saturday, because Friday is his day-off! Sleeping-in past 8:30 AM; days-off; I guess they don’t make pastors like they used to!”

How about: “Our pastor told us she couldn’t spend Saturday afternoon working at the church yard sale ; she said something about wanting to attend her daughter’s softball game – *can you imagine?* I mean, *where* are her priorities?”

Let’s conclude with a real chart-topper: “I called the church office this morning at 9:30 and asked to talk to the pastor about the curriculum for next year’s Christian Education program. The administrative assistant had the nerve to ask me to call back after 10:00 AM – ‘because the pastor was *praying* and wasn’t to be interrupted except in an emergency!’ ”

B. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Scripture teaches us that life is God's good gift, and that each of us – made as we are “in the image and likeness of God” - is comprised of body, mind, and spirit. Yet, from the earliest days of the Church until the present, women and men have struggled with the concept of wholeness – the idea that faithfulness to God and to Christ's teachings dictates we not focus too deeply on (*or neglect*) any single aspect of our being at the expense of the whole. In the same way that we cannot faithfully attempt to separate the Persons of the Trinity, neither should we attempt to compartmentalize our lives, separating and segregating our physical, emotional/mental and spiritual health.

As Moses learned from his father-in-law Jethro, ministry is not intended to be a “one woman/man show,” and exhaustion is not necessarily a mark of faithful discipleship or effectiveness in ministry. Likewise, developing a deep and mature spiritual life, while neglecting our physical bodies, is not only unwise but – from a Christian standpoint - *unfaithful*. The Apostle Paul spoke strongly to the dangers of attempting to separate the spiritual from the physical, pointing out that while libertinism and asceticism represent opposite ends of the Gnostic continuum, both ideas are clearly heretical.

Even the Greek philosopher Plato recognized the essential truth of human wholeness, and emphasized the role played by the soul in attempts to achieve wellness:

As you ought not to attempt to cure the eyes without the head,
or the head without the body,
so neither ought you to attempt to cure the body without the soul . . .
for the part can never be well unless the whole is well . . .
And, therefore, if the head and body are to be well,
You must begin by curing the soul.

In the final analysis, the way each of us chooses to live, and to care for the life that God has entrusted to us, is ultimately a matter of Christian stewardship. Still, as Bishop Todd Ousley (ECUSA) has been known to remark, “All Christians would all do well to consider the fact that the way a person cares for a gift says a lot about their relationship with, and their feelings toward, the giver.” A call to ministry, whether as a clergyperson or the family of a clergyperson, is never supposed to be a call to self-neglect or self-destruction. Remember, Jesus stated quite clearly, “I came that *you* might have life, and have it abundantly” – and that word *you* includes both people God calls into ministry as well as their spouses and children.

Acknowledging that our bodies, minds, and spirits are intended by God to be inseparable and equally important components of our human identity is the first step on our journey to understanding *wholeness*. Understanding wholeness is the first step on the road to *wellness*.

Achieving some degree of wellness through the various types of health it encompasses is a very significant way for us to come to know what it means to have *life*, and have it *abundantly*.

Before moving on, here's an essential truth you will encounter again and again in our discussion of health and wellness: **"It is *not* selfish to practice self-care and care of your family."** Remember, self-care is a matter of stewardship. If you've ever flown on a commercial airliner, you've heard a safety announcement which includes the following instruction: "In the event the use of oxygen becomes necessary, passengers traveling with small children or others requiring assistance should *put their own oxygen mask on first, before attempting to assist others*."

So, whether you've been in ministry 35 minutes or 35 years, click your heels three times and repeat after me: "It is *not* selfish to practice self-care and care of your family; it is *not* selfish to practice self-care and care of your family; it is *not* selfish to practice self-care and care of your family."

This isn't Oz - it's the land of ministry; but, my dear Toto, one thing is for absolutely certain - we're not in Kansas anymore!

C. WELLNESS¹⁴

Wellness is commonly understood as a state of being encompassing physical, emotional/mental and spiritual health. In reality, all three expressions of health are very closely related and quite tightly intertwined. Simply put, changes in any one aspect of our health have an effect upon all the others.

Consider something as simple as a consistent lack of sufficient, healthy sleep. Recent studies across the clinical spectrum have demonstrated that chronic, insufficient sleep negatively affects blood sugar levels and is related to Type II Diabetes, weight gain, cardiovascular disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), a weakening of the immune system, and chronic inflammation - all *physical* conditions. However, chronic lack of sufficient sleep has also been shown to negatively affect both memory and cognitive function - elements of *mental* health - as well as raising levels of anxiety, fear, and anger - components of *emotional* health. Further, recent studies have documented the negative effects of insufficient sleep on persons suffering

¹⁴ Dimensions of health are based upon definitions contained in the 1997 InterLutheran Coordinating Committee on Ministerial Health and Wellness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

from clinical depression.¹⁵ Clinical depression, while primarily impacting mental/emotional health, has the potential to negatively affect physical and *spiritual* health as well.

Physical Health: While we are not all born perfectly healthy, and certainly are not able to live life without experiencing injury or illness, we can live *well* if we tend to our bodies and provide them with appropriate care and nurture. Honor your life as a gift from God, and respect your body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Feed your body healthy foods, provide it with proper hydration, build your physical endurance through regular activity/exercise, and respect your body's need for rest. Get enough sleep. Establish a relationship with a primary care provider (personal/family doctor or nurse practitioner), receive an annual physical, and be sure to have preventive screenings appropriate for your age and medical condition, as recommended by your physician.

REMEMBER: We live and work in a stressful vocation. . . we all get older. . . and, as we age, “no news is not always good news!”

Here are some simple tips for improving and maintaining your physical health:

- Regular exercise can be as simple as developing a daily regimen of walking for a set period of time. Research has proven that 30 minutes of walking each day provides definite benefits to our bodies – even if that walking is divided into three 10 minute intervals!
- Walking outside has many benefits. If you have outside limitations, try using the stairs in your home for exercise. When going to the church, hospital, or store, park farther away – skip the shuttle – and enjoy the additional walking.
- Performing daily stretching exercises, making use of a jump rope and/or light weights, are other suggestions to increase physical fitness.
- Find an “exercise buddy” or a group of people with similar levels of physical ability and who share your preference for exercise, then block out time on your calendar each week to participate. Hold your exercise buddy(ies) accountable - and ask that they do the same for you.
- Remember: *You are worth it – and your personal, vocational and family life all will profit from this investment in yourself.*

¹⁵ A representative example of associated research findings is contained in Brandon Peters, M.D., *About.com Guide*, Updated September 2011

Emotional Health: Being emotionally healthy means feeling the full range of human emotions and expressing them appropriately. Self-awareness is a critical first step. Recognizing and honoring your own feelings and those of others – feelings like stress, contentment, anger, love, sadness, joy, resentment – will help you to be emotionally healthy and to live abundantly. There are circumstances in all our lives that we cannot change; how we deal with them, and how we allow them to impact our personal and family life, is our responsibility.

As previously noted, the clergy/family lifestyle can prove very challenging. Clergy marriages are not immune to relational difficulties. Ask yourself this question: “Is my home a center of peace (an oasis) in my life? Is it such a place for my spouse? My children? If the answer is “no” or “not nearly as much as it should or could be” – what might you do about changing the situation?

Far too often clergy and their spouses avoid dealing with their relational issues out of a sense of shame or embarrassment, or do not take advantage of marriage counseling for fear confidentiality may be violated. Congregations are not blind; in fact, they see and realize far more about clergy and their families than we might imagine. Marriage is a sacred covenant; clergy need to be willing to take the same medicine they so readily prescribe for their parishioners, and seek counseling if/when difficulties arise in their marriages.

Mental Health: An inability to feel emotion, or to control the emotions you feel, can be a sign of stress, clinical depression, or mental distress. “Critical Grief” is the name given to a condition which can result from an inability to perform the emotional, mental, and spiritual acts of “letting go” of something that has been lost. Grief is a natural, healthy, and expected part of the itinerant experience; however, if after an extended period of time you find yourself unable to achieve closure and move on, you would be wise to seek professional counsel.

Mental and emotional health issues can affect our physical health. For example, anger and hostility are two emotions that can put a person at significantly greater risk for heart disease. God has provided us with the gift of medical science to help us be healthy and well; there is no shame in seeking the assistance of a counselor or mental health practitioner, and/or in making appropriate use of prescription medications to help us be healthy and to move toward wellness.

A word for and about spouses of clergy: spouses of clergy live in a unique situation where the sharing of personal problems needs to be handled carefully and of course *with the utmost confidentiality*. There are a number of resources available to spouses, such as private counselors, support groups that do not include church members, and VIPCare (Virginia Institute for Pastoral Care).

Begin by contacting a company representative (normally accomplished by calling a telephone number listed on the back of your health plan card), and determining if your plan includes mental health coverage. If it does, identify the type and level of coverage it provides (e.g., Clinical Social Worker, Licensed Professional Counselor, or Licensed Psychologist). [NOTE: all health plans sponsored by VUMPI provide mental health coverage].

If your insurance does not provide mental health coverage, most pastoral care institutes (like VIPCare) are willing to bill for their services on a sliding scale.

Additionally, clergy and their families may be eligible to receive benefits under the Ministerial Family Counseling Program (MFCP). Information on this program is available in the Thrival Kit section “Where to turn for help.” An MFCP brochure and program guidelines are also available from the Virginia Conference web-site (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)¹⁶.

These services, both health plans and MFCP, are there *for your benefit and for you to use*. Do not hesitate to ask for help – and remember: these processes are strictly and completely confidential.

Spiritual Health: As previously noted, the philosopher Plato understood the place of the soul at the center of human wellness. Many centuries later, John Wesley would write:

The love of God, as it is the sovereign remedy of all miseries, so in particular it effectually prevents all the bodily disorders the passions introduce, by keeping the passions themselves within due bounds. And by the unspeakable joy, and perfect calm, serenity and tranquility it gives the mind, it becomes the most powerful means of health and long life.

Living a life focused on God and centered in Christ affects each aspect of our wellness, and is particularly important to our spiritual health. We must turn to God for strength as we seek to live well, and healthily, in Christ. Nurturing our relationship with God through daily prayer is a critical first step, since it keeps us aware of *who* we are and *whose* we are. Being aware that God is always present, and that through Christ God has given us the gifts of grace and forgiveness, provides us the courage and energy to press ahead confidently on the road of ministry, while keeping us from getting lost along the way. In addition to daily prayer - worship, Eucharist, Scripture, the arts, music and nature are powerful ways for us to encounter God and to experience God's love and grace.

¹⁶ From the home page, click “Clergy Excellence”; then “Clergy Family Resources”.

Christian meditation, *lectio divina*, contemplative prayer, and guided imagery are dynamic and rewarding ways to approach and combine prayer and the personal study of Scripture. Remember, there is no right or wrong way to attend to your own spiritual health; some people pray for a continuous hour per day, others pray for shorter periods throughout the day. Some folks use written prayers, prayer books, and liturgies; others pray informally and extemporaneously. The use of what has come to be known as “The Breath Prayer” – a phrase of gratitude or thanksgiving spoken aloud or silently with each breath – has proven to be an exceptionally meaningful experience for many people, and powerfully embodies the wholistic concept of “body, mind, and spirit.” Experiment with one or all of these techniques; discover what works best for *you*.

One thing is absolutely certain, however: ***“If you are too busy to pray, you are too busy!”*** Given the stresses, pressures, and competing demands of ministry and the vocational life, it may be tempting to set aside one’s personal prayer life and to neglect one’s spiritual health. After all, these deal with non-tangible and internal realities. . . and there are so many other, visible and more easily documented tasks to be completed.

Remember, though, that in the midst of establishing the Methodist Connection, John Wesley and the early Methodists placed great emphasis on answering the question, “How is it with your soul?” Jesus himself had earlier posed a related question, “What does it profit a person if they gain everything but lose their soul?”

Consider working with a Spiritual Director who is trained to accompany you on your faith journey and to help you grow in Christ and remain spiritually healthy. Many clergy attest to the fact that engaging a Spiritual Director has made a significant difference in their personal spiritual health and development; some go so far as to say that engaging a Spiritual Director has been a life-changing experience!

A final note: It is tough enough to be the spouse of a clergy person without being asked to evaluate/critique your spouse’s sermons. This is neither fair to the spouse, nor healthy for a marriage, and it is not apt to provide the clergy person with honest feedback. (What loving spouse is going to grade you as less than an “A”?). If you really want your sermons evaluated, record them and ask several laity - who are not members of your congregation - for their opinion. Better yet, give your recorded sermon to a few pastors from other denominations and ask them what they think.

Your spiritual health is fundamental to your overall wellness, and to your faithfulness in fulfilling God’s call upon your life – whether as a clergy person or the spouse or child of a clergy person; it is far too important to be neglected! Be diligent in guarding and protecting the

time and practices you use to nurture your relationship with God through Jesus Christ – no one is going to do this for you.

D. THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICING SELF-CARE AND FAMILY-CARE

Often, one of the most difficult lessons for clergy to learn is the critical importance and theological validity of practicing self-care and caring for their families. While this tends to be especially true of younger clergy, even older clergy (particularly those who are new to the vocation of ministry), must be attentive to such issues. We've all heard the old adages, "The cobbler's kid has no shoes!" or, "The auto mechanic's wife drives the worst car in town!" Such sayings warn us that anyone who is passionate about, and committed to, her/his vocation runs the risk of unwittingly neglecting both themselves and the people they love.

Once again, *it is **not selfish to practice self-care and care of your family.*** Clergy need to be careful to apply the same concept of Grace to themselves and their own families that they so willingly impart to others. After all, Jesus said we are to, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Occasionally, clergy might need to see their own family members through the lens they use to view "others" in order to help them keep a proper perspective on their application of Grace. Far too often, the minister readily goes to help others in difficulties, but leaves her/his own family to care for themselves. Spouses and children can feel isolated, neglected, and undervalued. Christ's challenge, "Love thy neighbor, as thyself," must apply to both the clergyperson and her/his own family members.

During Annual Conference 2011 a retired clergyperson in his nineties, reflecting on his life and ministry, noted that his one child, a daughter, had herself turned 65 and was preparing to retire. He then told this story:

When I was a young man I was so *driven* in my ministry. . . .
I remember one evening, I called my wife and told her that I would be home for dinner, but would then have to hurry back to the church for yet another evening meeting (I did that far too often back then). Anyway, I came through the front door just as my wife and daughter were sitting down at the table. We said Grace and ate our dinner – afterwards I jumped up, kissed my wife and daughter, and went to fetch my coat and hat. As I turned to leave, my daughter – who was then the tender age of two – said to me, "Thanks for stopping by; come again!"

Then, with tears in his eyes, he concluded, "And now she's 65. . . but I remember her words, and the innocent look in her eyes, like it was yesterday. I wish I had spent more time with her when she was young!"

If you have not already done so, consider finding a designated time each week for you and your spouse to sit together in a quiet place, review your respective schedules, and share your

feelings about the amounts of time being set-apart for, and spent on, ministry and family life. You might be very surprised at what you learn. . . .

The longer we are in ministry the more we come to understand that this vocation truly is a matter of establishing *priorities*, setting *boundaries*, and maintaining *balance*. Achieving and maintaining balance in our lives and ministries offers us, and our families, an opportunity to receive and experience all the goodness (abundance), our Lord wants for us.

Here are some things to consider as you plan for and practice self-care and the care of your family:

Worship. Many clergy experience Sunday as a “work day.” Given the central role played by clergy in planning and leading worship, many find they do not derive as much spiritual fulfillment from leading a Sunday worship service as they do from worship experiences in which they are participants. If this is true for you, look for other opportunities to worship and receive Eucharist. Some denominations offer weekday or evening worship services; ecumenical clergy fellowships sometimes include worship and sacramental sharing as part of their communal life. Again, take the initiative in caring for yourself, and in obtaining what *you* require to satisfy *your* spiritual needs.

Sabbath. Most clergy are familiar with the admonition that they should attempt to have a regular “day-off” each week. However, little discussion normally centers on the need for clergy to observe Sabbath. A “day-off” - or personal day - is just that: time to attend to the business/busyness of daily life – dog to the vet, oil changed, shopping done, grass mowed, etc.

Sabbath is time set apart for God; or, as Abraham Heschel has observed:

The first holy thing in all creation was not a people or a place but a day. God made everything in creation and called it good, but when God rested on the seventh day, God called it holy. That makes the seventh day a “palace in time” into which human beings are invited every single week of our lives.¹⁷

Ideally, clergy should work with their Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committees in an attempt to move towards a five-day workweek (understanding that emergencies, and other pastoral events – e.g., weddings, funerals, etc. – take priority and may interrupt such a schedule). With a five-day week, clergy are able to use their day-off/personal day to attend to life’s “chores,” while reserving one day for Sabbath. If this is not the practice in your current ministry setting, and does not appear practical for the foreseeable future, consider the following as an

¹⁷ Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath* (Boston: Shambhala, 2003), 3.

interim alternative: “*One suggested way of Sabbath-keeping is the setting aside of ‘an hour a day, a day a month, and week a year’ for spiritual reflection, rest and renewal.*”¹⁸

Family Prayer and Worship. Given the “busyness” of ministry, and the fact that the clergyperson provides leadership of Sunday services, some clergy and families find they need “personal worship time” in addition to Sunday mornings and meal times. Such “worship” and/or prayer times do not need to be lengthy; however, the goal is always to have *undisturbed time* for family devotions. This is both an excellent way to nurture the spiritual health of family members and an opportunity for clergy to demonstrate the priority they place on their own spiritual health and that of their family.

Family Time. At the end of every month, review your calendar for the coming month and set aside time on your calendar just for family. Give this commitment equal priority with other ministry events, and do everything in your power to try to honor it.

Try to find one meal a day where everyone is together and can meet at table.

Consider scheduling family meetings once a week to talk through problems and celebrate praises. Allow family members, from the youngest to the oldest, to take turns leading the family meetings. All agenda items to be presented at the family meeting could be given to the leader ahead of the meeting; these would be the only items discussed. Encourage the family to pray together during family meetings.

Be open to your teenager. Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexual experimentation, and depression happen in parsonage families. The old conventional wisdom, “Preachers’ kids get into trouble because they want to be part of a group, and to prove they are like the other kids” is too often – and too sadly - true. In today’s society, making the transition from childhood to adulthood is perhaps tougher than ever before – and filled with temptation. Peer pressure and bullying are additional factors that can add to a teenager’s stress, especially when changing schools and social environments. Serving as a clergyperson can be a tough vocation, but can also exact a price on children going through this emotionally charged time of life. Listen to, talk with, and pray for your teenagers; if they ever needed their parent(s), this is the time.

Friendships. Cultivating clergy and clergy family friendships is one way to develop “holy friendships,” to share spiritual life, and to enhance spiritual health. Refrain from talking about “church matters” - don’t make this personal sharing time into just another “church business” (and/or “gripe”) session.

¹⁸ Phillip Amerson, “Clockwork Theology,” *Circuit Rider*, Jan/Feb 2000

As valuable as it is to develop holy friendships, it is equally valuable to develop friendships outside of your local church, beyond the clergy of your own denomination, and even outside of the clergy of other denominations. Friendships with non-clergy provide a healthy way to “take off your collar” and can help you learn to relate to others beyond the realm of the church and your role in the office of pastor.

Which leads us to our next point:

Get a Life!

It can be easy to fall into a pattern of working all the time – in fact, this is one of the greatest pitfalls of the clergy lifestyle. Couple a sincere passion for ministry with a vocation in which there is always more to do and workaholism (and the subsequent burnout it will eventually induce) can easily become part of the equation. Find something apart from your ministry that brings you joy, and cultivate your knowledge or practice of that activity.

Whether it’s gardening, dancing, sports, crafts, or automotive mechanics – find *something* that interests you, engages you, fulfills you, satisfies you, replenishes you, and revitalizes you. Remember: personal growth requires intentionality, it rarely “just happens.”

You were a whole person before God called you into ministry, you will be a whole person after you leave ministry, and you are a whole person each and every day you serve and fulfill God’s calling. . . so, ***Get a Life!***

Vacation. Self-care for the clergy family includes taking time off - together - from the stresses and demands of active ministry. Believe it or not, churches continue to exist when clergy enjoy time away with their families. In fact, simply planning such times away can be a good boost to family morale and self-esteem. Carrying out the plan is an even greater boost for the family *and* the church; trading coverage with another pastor can benefit both clergy and their families.

The observation of “special days” (birthdays, anniversaries, academic achievements, sporting events, and other life milestones) is perhaps even more important for the families of clergypersons than for members of other vocational groups. Parish clergy are on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and pastoral emergencies can often interrupt family life. Participating in these special days as a family unit demonstrates that despite an often uncertain schedule, the family is an important priority to the pastor. Never underestimate the importance of observing such milestones *together*.

The appropriate use of vacation time can improve and enhance ministry. Time away can provide opportunities for renewal and refreshment. Because the demands of ministry are

different from those of most secular occupations, the standards by which clergy accrue vacation time are different from those of business and industry. The following is the vacation policy for all clergy who are under full-time appointment in the Virginia Conference. This policy is applicable to licensed local pastors, provisional members, associate members, and members in full connection.

Four weeks vacation shall be available beginning the first year of appointment and every year thereafter for all full time clergy in the Virginia Conference.¹⁹

It is further expected that clergy who are in the first year of an appointment show sensitivity concerning the scheduling of their vacations. It is recommended that clergy in their first year refrain from taking vacation during the first month of their new appointment. It is also recommended that first-year vacation be distributed across the year, not taken all at once. On the other hand, it is recognized that clergy and their families having just moved, with all the stress moving can bring, certainly are entitled to, and should take, some vacation time during the first summer. It should be emphasized that clergy moving from one church to another within the United Methodist connection should not be expected to “earn” vacation in each new place as new employees. The situation is analogous to a branch-manager of a company being sent to another branch, but within the same employer-employee relationship.

Finally, we acknowledge that continuing education for clergy is a requirement of the denomination (§351, The Book of Discipline), and time should be allowed for fulfilling this requirement. Continuing education is not to be considered vacation time. This policy should be applied with utmost cooperation and sensitivity between the clergyperson and congregation, considering both the needs of the local church and of the clergy family. If there appears to be a problem in this regard, it is imperative that the clergyperson, the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee, and the District Superintendent meet to seek a solution.

E. NEW BEGINNINGS

Arriving at a new appointment – whether your first appointment or your tenth - can be a wonderfully holy and fulfilling time in the lives of clergy, spouses, and children. The arrival, and the new beginning it brings, represents the culmination of so many prayers, hopes, and dreams...

¹⁹ This policy was adopted by the Bishop’s Cabinet on January 10, 2006.

so much preparation for the new ministry that is to come... so many opportunities to share this new experience as a family in ministry together.

In the midst of all the joy and excitement, however, some spouses (and children) report the first year in a new ministry setting has found their clergy husbands/wives consumed by the needs of the parish. To a certain extent this is understandable; after all, there is so much to learn and so much to do in establishing one's ministry in a new setting! However, clergy must be careful their deep personal and vocational investment in establishing a new ministry does not result in their neglecting the people closest to them. Clergy need to remember their spouse/children also are establishing themselves in a new setting, and experiencing every situation for the first time. New beginnings are a happy time, but they can be a lonely time as well. So, how do we manage that first year?

As previously mentioned, wholeness depends greatly on maintaining a sense of balance - spiritually, emotionally/mentally, and physically – both by clergy and the members of their families. In a vocation where both clergy and their spouses invest so much of their time, and expend so much physical, emotional, and spiritual energy in caring for others, clergy must be deliberate in practicing self-care and diligent in maintaining a balance in their lives. This is perhaps most important during the first year of ministry in a new setting; care must be taken to establish a solid, healthy foundation upon which to build ministry and enjoy family life. Again, this vocation truly is a matter of establishing *priorities*, setting *boundaries*, and maintaining *balance*. And always remember, **“It is *not* selfish to practice self-care and to care for your family.”**

F. CLERGY SELF-CARE – A COVENANT²⁰

In response to the findings of the “Study of Clergy in the Virginia Annual Conference, 1997-98”, the Board of Ordained Ministry proposed (among other initiatives) the development of a self-care model as a standard for a healthy, balanced lifestyle for Conference clergy, diaconal ministers, and certified professionals. The BOM's Clergy Self-Care Committee was charged with envisioning such a model and, in response, developed a “Covenant for Self-Care.”

This Covenant has been used by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Cabinet to model, support, and encourage further use of this valuable resource throughout the Virginia Conference. The Covenant document can be found at <https://www.vaumc.org/SPPRCResources> under Personnel Resources.

²⁰ “Self-Care Covenant,” Virginia Conference, September 2002.

G. TEN BEST PRACTICES FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS²¹

1. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
2. Love your neighbor as yourself – be an example of self-care as well as caring for others.
3. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy – be intentional about time for rest and renewal within your week, church year and life in ministry.
4. Honor your body as a gift from God and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Feed it healthy foods and build your physical and emotional endurance with regular physical activity.
5. Honor your mother, father, siblings, spouse, and/or children with your love, respect, and time.
6. Reflect your faith and use your gifts in your vocation.
7. Develop healthy habits to keep your life in balance and to be fit for a ministry of service.
8. Equip yourself to use your gifts effectively to proclaim and live out the Gospel in the world.
9. Practice and seek forgiveness.
10. Pray daily.

H. HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESOURCES

An additional resource is available to members of active health plans sponsored by Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc. **Health Advocate, Inc.** provides a wide range of health and wellness related services – at no cost to participants. Additionally, **spouses of plan participants, children to age 26, parents, and in-laws are covered – also at no cost.**

Services provided by HA include:

- a. Personal Wellness Coaching – unlimited coaching by trained professionals via email, telephone, and text messaging
- b. “Find a Physician” – assistance with finding a doctor, transferring personal/family medical records, and appointment scheduling
- c. On-line courses on a variety of health and wellness topics (active clergy can receive CEU equivalency for completing HA’s courses)

²¹ ELCA Board of Pensions, modified.

- d. Assistance with resolving claims and health plan billing issues
- e. Answers to your medical questions
- f. Assistance with eldercare issues, including help navigating the Medicare system and locating eldercare services
- g. Cost estimates and comparisons for required medical procedures
- h. Personalized individual and family reminders of diagnostic and preventive procedures
- i. Information related to the care and management of chronic conditions
- j. Optional *Wellness 100* program through which individual and family plan participants can qualify to lower their personal health plan premiums.

Information about Health Advocate can be found from www.vumpi.org, then clicking on the Health Advocate tab. Currently enrolled members with further questions can go straight to <https://members.healthadvocate.com/Login.aspx> or call Health Advocate at 866-799-2731.

6. BEING SINGLE IN THE MINISTRY

Being single in ministry definitely presents unique challenges. Navigating these challenges successfully, or having a plan to do so, can save one a great deal of grief and ensure that one's effectiveness in ministry is not compromised.

You may find that congregations that are familiar with having a larger clergy family—whether a couple or persons with children—will be a little unsure about how to respond to a single clergy person. There may be curiosity about your past, which you do not have to divulge. There may be disappointment that there is not a spouse or children. Some people feel awkward including a single person in a social event when they are accustomed to inviting couples. Some may feel sorry for you because you are alone and feel the need to “rescue” you.

If most of the church's ministry is with couples or families with children, awareness of single adults may be limited. This is a wonderful opportunity to help people understand that there are just as many single adults as married adults in our society. This may facilitate an automatic connection with those in your congregation who are living alone. Those struggling with loneliness, whether because of divorce, separation, or death of a spouse, will often turn to you and ask how you like living alone. However, be careful that your pastoral concern may sometimes be misinterpreted as personal interest. Other singles may be encouraged to have you in the church, demonstrating that personal wholeness does not require a spouse. Single persons are not “less successful,” “less important,” or “less valuable” than married persons, yet there can be a subtle message in the church that singleness is less fulfilling than being married.

Unlike your married colleagues, as a single clergy you do all the household duties. Congregational members may forget that you have no one at home to help you. In addition to all your pastoral duties, you clean the parsonage and do the shopping and take out the trash, etc. This means time management awareness of personal limitations is important.

This may be a time to educate Trustees and others about personal safety and privacy issues, particularly for single clergy women. Additional lighting, locks, or window coverings may be important to your feeling of safety. If the parsonage is on a very public street, for example, living room or bedroom windows without draperies or blinds can leave one vulnerable and at risk. Trimming shrubbery away from carports and doorways should be considered. Exterior lighting at the church can be evaluated for everyone's safety. After dark, try to leave the church with others; ask them to wait for you if you are the last to leave, and encourage awareness of the needs of single persons alone at night.

Consider home repairs and maintenance according to your expertise and strength. You may desire or need self-propelled lawn mowers, for example, or it may be appropriate to ask someone in the church to take care of mowing the lawn or shoveling the snow. You may or may not be a “fix it” person, but learn all you can about the parsonage and its upkeep so that you can deal with Trustees.

Self-awareness is essential. In times of loneliness or discouragement, we need to be aware of our vulnerability. Pay attention to personal spiritual development and stay grounded. Time off to spend time with friends and family is very important. It is also helpful to have some time alone for personal refreshment and renewal. It is most helpful to have a number of friends and colleagues one can contact outside of the congregational environment. As singles, the temptation to overwork is strong. Plan regular days off, away from the parsonage and community, and develop hobbies and interests. A local book club, a photography course at the community college, or a gardening class with the extension service are possible ways to meet new people. Don't be afraid to go out of town, even if it is just for the day. Talk about these things with the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee.

It's tough out there. From one of our single clergy:

I realized immediately after assuming this pastorate that the biggest difference in being a single versus a married pastor is that, as a single pastor, I have no one to help me to interpret things that happen within the church (e.g., “...did I hear that right?” or “...what do you think she meant when she said...?”). There are times when we need immediate feedback from a third party, and a spouse can often fill that role.

I wonder if it isn't easier to be a single pastor than a married pastor. I do not have a spouse or children as targets for the disenchanted to abuse. On the other hand, the right spouse could be a real asset in ministry.

Seek Out and Cultivate a Professional Support System. Ministry can be isolating for both single and married clergy. Lectionary study groups, area ecumenical clergy groups, covenant discipleship groups, and retired clergy are good places to seek out nourishing, supportive relationships.

Set Boundaries. There may be parishioners who drop by the parsonage, knowing you are alone. It is important that you establish boundaries and perhaps suggest meeting with persons in public places or with someone else present in the church while you do counseling in your office. Ask that persons call before they stop by to visit. When visiting other singles who are alone, you may wish to invite someone to go with you. Visits to other singles of the opposite gender can be fairly brief and still effective. Be sure to always have a professional demeanor and dress appropriately—this will establish boundaries as well.

Regarding telephone calls, get a good voice mail system. Consider two features when choosing a voice mail system: the capability to obtain messages from a telephone not in your home and a display that tells you who is calling.

What About Dating? Single clergy are often drawn to single members of their parish for many reasons—frequently they share similar values, goals, and interests. One reason it is not a good idea for single clergy to date members of their church is the considerable complexity of such “dual relationships.” Some of the ethical concerns can be addressed with a few simple safeguards, such as always talking to your District Superintendent and being certain the relationship is not secret. Other safeguards and considerations will be addressed in the annual training sessions for clergy in the Virginia Conference. A simple policy may be best for you—don’t date a church member if you are the pastor.

Single clergy sometimes attract parishioners who want to see them married off and who will go to great lengths to try to fix them up with various potential partners. Thank them, but suggest to such people that you would prefer to do your own social planning.

Cherish Your Privacy. Whether one is married or single, parishioners often ask questions that are personally invasive. Back over them mentally with a steamroller if you must, but *avoid responding with defensiveness or anger*—and don’t provide more information than you are comfortable with confiding. Early in the ministry one single pastor, while on a date at a local restaurant, ran into a couple from her parish; two weeks later, following worship, parishioners greeted her with “Congratulations on your engagement!” She wasn’t engaged but annoyed that her dating life had been such a topic of conversation. She responded by simply saying, “No, I’m not engaged,” and left it at that. That ended the conversation.

7. THE TWO OF US

A. WHO IS THE SPOUSE'S PASTOR?

The spouse needs a pastor. There are normal situations that arise throughout life in which regular lay people rely heavily upon their pastor for guidance. These times include periods of illness (personally or with member of the family), death of parents and grandparents, the loss of a job, problem teenagers, a spiritual crisis when God seems far away, times when one feels distant from their spouse, loneliness, and anger. Most spouses (and PKs) feel that the minister in the family deals wonderfully with crises in everyone else's life, but when it strikes the parsonage family, sometimes there is not a convenient time or any extra emotional energy left for his/her own family. Often, too, the minister is dealing with his/her own emotions during the family crisis. Ministers' spouses feel as if there is no one for her/him to turn to during these trying times. Over the years, anger and resentment can build toward the profession of the ministry because of this felt alienation. You need be proactive concerning this issue and seek your own spiritual pastor.

What are our options? What are the pros and cons in finding your own pastor?

- **District Superintendent.** If there are family concerns that might reflect negatively upon the parenting skills of the pastor, spouses may feel that this will have a negative impact upon the next appointment. The same holds true for marital and financial problems. However, the district superintendent may be very effective in dealing with crises that involve sickness and death. Let's face it; some superintendents are more approachable than others.
- **Another Minister.** Often it seems that friends that you make among other clergy within the conference may become your natural confidants. Your spouse may not want the secrets of his family told to another minister, especially if there has been a history of gossiping between the two of them. This type of relationship with a clergy friend may cause some tension if the minister you married finds out that you confided in a peer. If you have grown up in a Virginian United Methodist Church, the pastor that you were closest to in your youth may be one that you can confide in when the going gets rough. If you select some clergyperson to be your pastor, make sure that all you say is confidential (and let your spouse know who it is). Most will honor this.
- **Church Member.** You want the church members to think highly of you and your spouse. If there are weaknesses in the parsonage family, there is the natural tendency to want to keep them private. Sometimes it seems that by the time you develop a really close friendship within the congregation it is time to move! If you are fortunate to find a soul sister/brother within your congregation that you trust with all of your secrets, by all means nurture that relationship. Be careful not to flaunt that relationship before the other members of the congregation and cause jealousy. Often it is after you have moved away from a church that this type of relationship really

blossoms. We do have to honor the “code” of not interfering in the ministry of the pastor that follows us, but continuing the important personal relationships that we all develop during the lifetime of ministry is very important to our emotional well being.

- **Professional Counseling.** Often you don’t need professional care, you just need someone to talk to. Counseling services are not always conveniently located or financially practical. Two options for counseling are: (a) mental health benefits provided through your Conference Health Plan; and (b) Ministerial Family Counseling Program. Health Plan coverage information is available on the VUMPI website²². More detailed information about the MFCP is available on the “Clergy Family Resources” page of the conference website²³.
- **Other Clergy Spouses.** They are most understanding! These relationships are very rewarding, but it may take years to develop these contacts, especially if you work and don’t have the time or the inclination to attend spouses’ gatherings. Take time to find a kindred spirit among this group and you will have a special relationship throughout your ministry.
- **Retired Minister Friend.** This is a very viable option, if you know one well enough! Their experience is invaluable and their guidance reaches beyond age boundaries.
- **District Chaplain.** Every district should have a district chaplain. If you are not aware of whom this person is, contact your district superintendent. This can be a very effective pastoral relationship. He/she will keep all that you have to say in the strictest confidence. None of the information that you share will get back to the district superintendent.

Clergy spouses have a great need to be ministered to. Since this is a built-in equation in the strange life of a parsonage family, no one should feel guilty about needing his/her own pastor. When you are in need of spiritual guidance or pastoral care, don’t hesitate to seek out help. You and your family will be stronger for it.

What About My Vocation?

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
Jer. 29:11 (NIV)

I am a woman, a spouse of a United Methodist minister. My husband loves the ministry and fully believes in moving where God has called the Cabinet to move him. He has never wavered from this decision. I have gone kicking and fighting, and asking questions about what will happen to my career and don’t I count in this process, etc?

²² VA United Methodist Pensions, Inc. (<http://www.vumpi.org/>), click “Plan Descriptions” on the left.

²³ From the conference home page (<http://www.vaumc.org>), click “Clergy Excellence”; then “Clergy Family Resources”.

Then I began to believe that the scripture from Jer. 29 was also written for me, not just my minister spouse. God cares about me also. God cares about each member of our family. When I looked to God, rather than the imperfect itinerate system of which we are a part, peace and trust filled my soul. We prayed about our next move even as we trusted the Cabinet was praying about our move. At the next appointment, all the doors opened for me to finish my training and subsequently to open a highly successful business.

I don't pretend to understand the concept of tithing and finding the more we give to God's work, the more our money worries disappear. In the same arena of faith, I don't pretend to understand that the more I turned my career goals over to God, the more I was able to fulfill my heart's desire for careers. It's all a part of the faith walk—a faith walk that is not an exclusive walk just for my husband, the minister, but an adventure in faith for each member of our family.

It will be one of the hardest “letting go and letting God” decisions you will have to make as a couple, as you consider your two careers. It can be one of the most awesome and exhilarating experiences of learning about God's faithfulness when we totally believe the words of Jeremiah. Praise God for all we will learn about the mystery of God and also about ourselves in the process!

B. CLERGY COUPLES

Top Ten Clergy-Couple Questions by Congregations

1. Why can't the spouse help with Vacation Bible School? After all, we're getting two pastors for the price of one!
2. How will emergencies be prioritized? My pastor might not be available in an emergency if her spouse's emergency in another congregation places me on a lower priority.
3. Who is in charge of the house and children? Isn't one of them, in effect, part time?
4. Where will the children go to church?
5. Does a clergy-couple appointment mean a new charge has been created? We're not sure we want to share seasonal activities and events with another church.
6. Why should a church with a parsonage pay the other church for the privilege of their pastor living with his/her family?
7. Why can't one family live in two houses?
8. Who decides where they will live?
9. Do two appointments pay insurance for the same family...isn't that making double payments?
10. Will we ever see the spouse at Sunday worship, UMW, UMM, and fellowship events?

1. Learning to Communicate

Once clergy couple has said, “When we were first getting to know one another as students at Emory & Henry, we discovered that we each felt a calling to careers in full-time Christian service. By the time we announced our engagement, we had both decided to enter graduate school in religion and started candidacy studies for ordination. Well before the “clergy couple” dynamics that would occupy us later, we found ourselves working on communication skills. We took long walks, talking and listening. We prayed together. We practiced what we learned in psychology and Christian education classes on each other. We exchanged letters over the summer. In retreats and our weekly prayer fellowship, we learned to practice “active listening.” In church camp, we discovered the wonder of forming Christian community in small groups, with its emphases on consensus and sensitivity. Our college chaplain was our pre-marital counselor, leading us in a variety of exercises that illustrated various pitfalls in communication (something with Tinker toys back to back . . .). We wrote our own marriage vows, including the promise “to speak the truth to you, and to hear it from you.”

There have been times when our communication has broken down. Bob still can’t recall what is on the calendar for today, much less next week. Mary Beth needs reminding what books we have, and which one has which helpful passages. We rediscover weekly the value of a regular “together time.” We have taken advantage of professional listeners when we have found communication difficult, usually after moving to new appointments and new work arrangements. Marriage Enrichment and Marriage Encounter weekends have offered helpful hints. We worked from a written schedule during much of our early marriage, attempting to divide fairly our home and vocational time.

We have enjoyed keeping an occasional family journal. We try to write down what happened, keeping it as a letter to our future. Our family time has been rich, with loving, attentive, and forgiving children. We have tried to listen carefully to our children’s needs for both active involvement in church and the freedom to choose which church activities to attend. Our future includes significant changes, as both of our children move into and beyond college, and as we consider God’s ongoing call on our lives. As God is our steadfast Listener and trustworthy Counselor, we are confident of our ability to speak the truth, and hear it, with one another.”

Mary Beth and Bob Blinn, Clergy Couple

2. To Work Together or To Not Work Together

One of the first decisions a clergy couple will make will concern taking separate appointments or working together in the same appointment. For some this is an easy decision. All along, your plan has been one or the other. Perhaps you already know whether your gifts are complimentary and whether you would enjoy working together. Most clergy couples ask for separate appointments and serve an entire ministry this way. Others seek opportunities to work together in full-time or part-time appointments, or a combination of both.

Working together brings fulfillment and challenge! It is fulfilling to plan and execute ministry, lead worship, and attend fellowship functions together. If you have children, there are more opportunities to be together as a family. One of the challenges is communication: many of the details that one knows, the other must know, so that fewer things fall through the crack.

Working in separate appointments means that your lives will intersect much less frequently. Opportunities to work together in ministry must be intentionally sought. But your identity as individual pastors will be much clearer to your churches and your community. The female pastor will hardly ever be called the “preacher’s wife.” And working separately gives each of you the opportunity to develop skills and use gifts in all areas of pastoral ministry (when it is sometimes easy to rely on the other for things we don’t like or want to do).

3. Built-In Support

Whether you work in the same appointment or not, you share the same ups and downs of ministry. When one of you comes home from a stressful church council meeting, the other can say “I know what you mean” and mean it! The joy of an inspiring worship service or increased attendance is something you both can get excited about. Words of advice and support can be given when you both have similar experiences. Many good ideas have originated at home! There will be times when you both need support at the same time and may not find the other able to give you what you need. This is where other friends and colleagues are important sources of strength. The collegiality you share with your spouse should offer understanding and flexibility.

4. Time Together—Bedtime Is Off-Limits to Church-Related Discussions!

Spending time together requires planning and discipline. Usually time spent as a couple or as a family must be scheduled and kept free from last minute intrusions. There are always church things that need to be done. Try to keep these saved minutes, hours, or days for each other. Those who don’t will find it one of the most regretted decisions of their lives. Set certain times and spaces as off-limits for church-related discussions. Most couples agree that such topics should be discontinued when your heads hit the pillow. You may also want to exclude these discussions from meal times.

5. Children with Two Preacher Parents

Parents are encouraged to take maternity/paternity leaves that are provided for in *The Discipline*. Yes, your church can survive without you for that long. Going back to work can be gradual and the laity can be very supportive at such times. The first Sunday back at your three-point charge will be difficult, wondering if your baby will decide to take the bottle after all.

Given the flexibility of pastoral ministry, it might be possible to avoid full-time childcare if you both are able to adjust your schedules.

At some point the baby is ready to be brought to church. Hopefully you find some willing church member (paid or not) to care for your child on Sunday morning. This will be a concern well into the child's life. Establishing a pattern that the child is comfortable with will be important. If you are serving different churches, a decision must be made about where the child(ren) will go to church. Factors such as nursery, Sunday School, children's ministries, youth group, and other opportunities may be the deciding factor. Or it may be the personalities of caring adults, transportation, location, or time schedules that will support one choice over another. There will probably be one parent who does not have the joy of being with his/her children on Sunday morning—an unhappy necessity.

People will ask, "What if you both get called out in the middle of the night?" Though this is *very* unlikely to happen, there will be several caring church members who could be on call for such a possibility. Normal day-to-day schedules can be planned so that one parent is almost always at home after school and in the evening if a couple feels that this is important.

Children benefit from having several church families—there are that many more supportive, loving role models for them as they grow up. And then there's the opportunity to be in two, three, or more different Christmas plays! There is the risk that children with even one preacher for a parent will feel pressure from the congregation to be "perfect." One might assume that having two preacher parents would compound this problem. Be sure that participation in church activities remains a positive experience. Arrange to have other adults to be leaders of your children's groups whenever possible. Don't expect your children to attend all church events, especially when you serve a multiple church charge. Continue to provide opportunities for faith development at home and outside the church so that "faith" is not just something you do at church but is a positive way of living.

6. The Moving Decision

The decision to move is always a difficult one for everyone involved—pastors, spouse, children, and churches. When there are two clergy in the family, this decision may be especially hard. What if one pastor is ready to move before the other? This will probably always be the case to some extent. Communication throughout the years of the appointments is essential so that there are no big surprises. There will be times when the decision to move requires sacrifice on the part of one of you—either in leaving before you are ready or taking an appointment that may not be exactly what you expected. Hopefully the sacrifice can be shared throughout your

ministry so that both of you feel that your needs were met in a balanced way. Much of the time these decisions, couched in prayer, lead to fruitful ministry for both pastors.

Our conference seems to work hard to provide appointments that work for clergy couples. Though we have been considered a “challenge” over the years, that often means that our family’s needs have been taken seriously and have been a priority in the appointment-making process. It has also been evident that clergy couples are a valuable resource for ministry, and, as our numbers continue to grow, we find more creative opportunities are being made available to us.

C. WHEN THE NEST EMPTIES...REJOICE!

Every now and then, as we were raising our three wonderfully active children, there would be a serendipitous moment or two when all the kids were “gone.” With a glint in the eye, we would wonder aloud with each other how it would be, “someday—just the two of us again!” There is nothing new about “the empty nest”—we’ve heard about it and read about it for years. But when it happens to you, it is far more powerful and awesome than any book has ever described.

Of course the nest empties for all married couples with children, not just clergy families. But there are some perspectives that are particularly appropriate for clergy and their spouses to consider and discuss. Through the grieving, letting go, and celebrating each child’s emancipation, we have embraced refreshing joy with them, and with each other.

It should not be left unsaid that the nest must be emptied (except for special children—now adults—with profound needs that keep them in their parents’ care). Good boundaries and clear expectations discussed early in life are critical to the maturation from child to adult, from dependent to independent functioning. The emancipation of each young adult is hard work for all concerned. Since we live in a society that tends not to work hard at good family dynamics, it is not surprising to see the trend toward longer seasons of dependency, with young adults returning “home.” As in so many other areas of our lives, we clergy families can quietly live out a good example of healthy relating and emancipating, as our children develop and start their own lives.

Once the nest is empty, there is both a quiet, and a space that seems to be living with the two of you! Now is the season of re-adjustment. Children—especially in their teen-aged years—require lots of our time, our energy, and our effort, which we parents have carefully prioritized among many other responsibilities. Although the parenting tasks and roles continue after the nest is emptied, the intensity greatly decreases—life feels more expansive, somehow.

Couples can re-adjust in many directions: greater investment in work, in other family members (aging parents), in the marriage itself, and in new interests for one or both of you. Of course there is no “right way” for everyone to re-adjust. Some suggestions:

- It may be easier to plan your days off together.
- Couples can enjoy greater spontaneity in every dimension of their relating.
- Spouses may try out some new involvement in ministry that interests them.
- Clergy may find a new involvement in their spouse’s employment community.
- Couples may choose a new hobby or interest to pursue together.
- Opportunities to embrace any type of appointment in any location are now available.

So much of the truth of Jesus’ gospel is paradoxical (*first shall be last, and the last, first; to save your life you must lose it*). So it should not surprise us that the “good news” about the empty nest is also a paradox. When we live into all the newness and mysteries of this emptiness, we discover yet another blessing from God as life continues in a new fullness.

8. CHILDREN AND THE CHURCH

You have received your first appointment and you will be arriving with children and all the joys and concerns that are a part of a parsonage family. Most churches will be thrilled that you have children that will become a part of their church family. Take your older children along on your “Meet Your Pastor” visit. If that is not possible, be sure to take pictures of their new home, church, school, and community. *The Berenstain Bears’ Moving Day*, by Stan and Jan Berenstain (Random House), is a good book to share with younger children. Create a scrapbook with pictures of the old house, bedroom, friends, church, school, and teachers. Assure older children that they can stay in touch with old friends through letters, phone calls, and e-mail. Let each child pack (and decorate, if you have time) one special LOVE box with their most beloved personal items, to be unpacked as soon as you arrive. Remember, *children mirror your emotions*. If you are anxious and sad, your children are likely to feel this also. Certainly those are valid feelings, but if you can also treat this move as a new adventure that God is calling you to begin, the adjustment will be easier for all.

We are invited in Sue Downing’s book *Hand In Hand Growing Spiritually With Our Children* to “come and discover the tremendous privilege and responsibility of sharing the Christian faith with your children.” Learn creative ways to pray, read scripture, attend church and walk life’s valleys with your children. “We cannot emphasize enough to our children that their lives are a gift from God, and that God created each one of them unique.” With these words and this inspiring book we can move toward equipping our children to thrive in the pastoral ministry as children of clergy households.

*Lord,
We come before you in prayer for our children.
Help us to lovingly reach out, clasp their hands, and draw them ever nearer to
you.
Make us aware of the tremendous privilege and responsibility we are entrusted
with.
Impress on our hearts the importance of celebrating and sharing special times
together....
Fill us with your love so that we are able to embrace our children during times of
sadness, confusion, and doubt.
Help us to feel our children’s trusting hands holding ours.
Help us as, hand in hand, we grow in faith together.
Amen*

Sue Downing

A. THE VISION AND MINISTRY

1. Including Children in the Clergy Family Ministry

In helping our children adjust to the demands and upheavals of the itinerate ministry, it is very important to do what John Westerhoff calls “modeling the adult pilgrimage.”²⁴ Talk to your children about why serving God in this profession is so vital to your life, why you are willing to make such sacrifices as moving, living in someone else’s house, long hours away from home. Include your children in ministry.

Nursing homes love to see children, as do some shut-ins. Ring the Salvation Army bell together as a family at Christmas. In these and other family activities you can model your commitment to a servant ministry. Children who are included are more likely to understand, and less likely to resent, your calling. After all, we are raising disciples.

Including your children in the clergy family ministry will go a long way to help at those times when you should be there for them but cannot. On the day of our daughter’s wedding rehearsal, her Dad was called to the hospital to minister to a dying parishioner. Our daughter had seen enough modeling ministry to have the faith to reflect that we as a family could have been having a funeral instead of a wedding and to give thanks for her Dad’s call to care giving. Children need to be included in our faith and ministry.

2. Infants and Young Children

There are many pros and cons to moving with or having children while in the ministry. In the mind of your members your children will become theirs, especially in churches where there are few little ones.

PRO: You will have a church full of grandparents, uncles and aunts and more babysitters than you know what to do with. Take advantage of good sitters to provide needed adult time for you and your spouse.

CON: You won’t want everyone who offers to baby sit your child. Use the same caution accepting a member of your church as a sitter as you would choosing from someone in the community. It can be difficult to accept one person and refuse another without risking offending someone. Do not feel like you have to compromise what you want in a sitter to assuage someone’s feelings.

PRO: Your child may get more Christmas, birthday, “We got this on vacation,” and “It just looked like something he’d like” presents than you can count. Use this wonderful

²⁴ John Westerhoff, *Bringing Up Children in the Christian Faith*.

opportunity to teach your child the value of thank you notes (scribbled picture with a line or two from you).

PRO: Small children can be such a blessing to your ministry b/c most everyone loves small children and they will be inclined to pass those tender feelings on to you.

CON: Because everyone loves children they will want to hug and pick up your child. This can cause several concerns:

- It can be difficult to teach ‘Stranger Danger’ without offending people who don’t consider themselves “strangers.”
- Young children will take an instant like or dislike to certain people for unknown reasons. Some people will be offended if they are not one of the chosen.
- Children have many different temperaments. Not everyone is as understanding of shy or withdrawn children, or colicky infants. Do not get into the habit of apologizing for your child. It implies that your child is at fault, when he or she just has a different temperament.
- Many adults do not respect a child’s right to personal space. They would never dream of tickling an acquaintance who was having a bad day or picking up a stranger, but feel it acceptable to force these same attentions on a small child. You are your child’s advocate, but you must beware not to offend. Pick an innocuous phrase that deflects unwanted adult attention from your child.

PRO and CON: As any new parent will tell you, you will get tons of advice on how to raise your child and criticism for your choices. Because your congregation feels a sense of attachment to you and your family you will get even more than from strangers. While this can be beneficial for new parents, it can also be very overwhelming and unwanted. Again, pick an inoffensive phrase and follow your own choices.

B. SPECIAL AREAS OF CONCERN

What are some special areas of concern that face you and your family as you begin this new phase of your life?

1. Housing

Safety, Size, and Sanitation. Hopefully, the cabinet has taken the needs of your family into consideration as they have made your appointment and you will not be moving with three children into a two-bedroom parsonage, located on a busy highway with no fenced in yard and a dirty carpet for your infant to crawl on! However, as you walk through the parsonage you may see things that will need attention. Will you need to child proof the house with covers for electric outlets, or secure kitchen and bathroom drawers and doors with safety catches? Do you need to

install a stairway gate that attaches to the wall? If you have concerns about these or other housing issues, please discuss them with your District Superintendent.

The following are special considerations when reviewing the parsonage:

- Lead paint.
- Radon testing.
- Carbon dioxide detectors as well as fire detectors.
- Cherished (read breakable) heirlooms of the congregation that are in the parsonage need to go into storage.
- Mini blinds with lead.
- If parsonage has well water, check for recent water testing report.
- It might be possible for safety features to be installed before you move in like outlet covers and cabinet latches (do not forget to also do a safety check on the church where your child will attend).
- Bring a good friend to help unpack or watch your toddlers if family is not available.

2. Children in the Church

You have been appointed to a two-, three-, or a four-point charge and you know that your family cannot attend more than one worship service and Sunday School each week. How do you choose which church to attend without hurting the feelings of the churches not chosen? There are some things to consider as you make your choice. Which church has a safe, clean nursery with capable attendants? Does one church offer to have someone sit with your older children if they invite you to sing in the choir? Is child care provided for church functions? If you have teenagers, which church has the best or only youth Sunday School class or youth fellowship? The religious growth and development of your family is very important so you will want to choose a church home that is child or youth friendly. If you choose to participate in one church on Sunday morning, it is very important that you attend special events and social occasions at the other churches so that the members have an opportunity to know and love the parsonage family. If you have no churches with children or youth, Christian education in the home becomes very important. Order an age-appropriate Sunday School curriculum from Cokesbury and have a good time learning together at home.

Small Children. There will be many different ideas of how a small child should behave in church and the minister's interaction with his or her children during the worship service. Some ministers will hold their young child while singing a hymn or offering the benediction. Some members of the congregation love this as a sign of God's children being welcome in his house while others will say other people don't take their children to work with them. Some ministers

and their spouse are uncomfortable with the tiniest squeak from their child disrupting the service and choose to leave them in the nursery or have the spouse stay home if there is no nursery. You cannot please everyone and should not try. You must find what works best for you and your congregation.

Preacher's Kid (PK). While you don't want your child favored because she is the PK, remember to also not penalize her. A two-year-old child will act out occasionally be she the child of Larry Lay-member or yours. Do not have unreasonable expectations for your child b/c she is the PK. And don't let other's impose unreasonable expectations on your child. Remember you are your child's advocate. Just let your PK be a kid.

3. Be an Advocate for Your Child

Do not be afraid to claim your parental authority. If someone really pushes their advice or attention on you or your child find a way to politely ask them to stop. Always remember that you are your child's best and truest advocate.

Consider:

- To avoid unwanted attention to your child:
 - “He prefers a handshake or high five to a hug right now.”
 - “We're teaching her no adult can touch her or pick her up without our permission. She's safe here, we know, but it's such a dangerous world out there.”
- When given Advice:
 - “Has that worked for you?” (Talking about their own experiences deflects them from you and your child.)
 - “We'll certainly consider that.” (Then do things the way you've decided.)
 - “I appreciate your concern.” (Try to remember they really do care.)
- When you really disagree with their advice or actions, add to any of the above phrases:
 - “But we've decided to...” and state your position kindly, but firmly.

Also keep all of this advice in mind when dealing with other people's children.

4. Giving Birth

Before the baby gets here the congregation will worry every time you rest your hand against that kick boxer you are carrying, want to know what you are having and what you'll name him or her, and tell you more stories about their labor and delivery then you'll want to hear. They might throw you a shower and you will probably get a week or two of meals brought to you after the baby is born. You'll have endless offers from sitters and tons of care and support.

Of course once the baby arrives everyone will also want to touch and hold your new family member. While flattering, this can cause great concern for parents of an infant with a fragile immune system.

If you are at a congregation awhile before you have a child make sure you announce whenever anyone has a new baby a few guidelines for the congregation to keep in mind. Things like don't touch an infant's hands b/c hands frequently go in their mouth, please wash your hands and tell the parents before you touch the baby, and if anyone is sick please keep a safe distance for the sake of the baby's health. Then when you have a child people will not think you are criticizing them when you make the same announcement for your child. If there are no infants in the church before yours or you are entering a new church with an infant talk to the PPR committee or lay leader and have them make a similar announcement. Remember this idea whenever you are moving also, so you can make this same announcement for a new couple coming in with a baby.

Have your speaker chosen and prepped for a call anytime a few months before your due date because emergencies happen and labor is not usually planned or convenient.

Some note about Discipline policy on Family Leave and the need to prepare in advance.

5. Education

Having your children happily settled in good, safe schools is certainly one of the most important goals for a new parsonage family. After your appointment has been announced, make appointments with the schools your children will attend. Often the guidance counselors are the best first contact for your child. They are, as a rule, caring persons with a real interest in your child. If your child has special interests, contact the teachers, coaches, or leaders in those areas. Search the Web page for your child's future school; then explore it together.

If you have a special needs child and you do not feel the public schools can meet those needs, be sensitive to the feelings of teachers and other parents in your congregation as you choose alternative forms of education. If you feel that your special needs child must have a certain type of education offered in some, but not all, school systems around the conference, it is your responsibility to inform your district superintendent during the appointment making period. The cabinet will do its best to put you in a situation where that education is likely to happen.

A preschool may be difficult to find if you live in a rural area. Kindergarten teachers are often good sources of information about preschools, or you just might want to start one in your church as other clergy families have done. It helps your children, as well as the church and other children in the community. As you are looking for a preschool, remember that schools that are a

part of the ministry of a church (especially United Methodist churches) are usually schools of quality.

If you have a high school student that needs to graduate from a particular high school within two years, the cabinet will be sensitive to this. However, there is no guarantee.

6. Child Care

If both parents are planning to work outside the home, finding good, affordable childcare can be a challenge. Go slow in using someone from your church to provide care for your child. This can work quite well, but check it out carefully before making a decision. If it is not satisfactory, it could cause tension in your church, especially a small church. Other clergy, preschool teachers, or the public schools may be a good resource for suggestions on quality childcare.

7. Moving Day

If you have young children, try to have a grandparent, other relative, or a friend to help on moving day. They can either accompany you to your new home or invite your children to spend the day and night with them. If neither of these is possible or right for your child, ask if there is a youth in the church who could help you while you are moving in. When loading the van, plan to have your children's toys and beds unloaded and put in place *first*, especially if your children are with you on moving day. As parsonage families, we are usually blessed with food in the refrigerator and delicious food for the first meal in our new home. Just in case the food is not exactly what your children like, bring along something you know they will enjoy or check out the fast food options. If you think it would be helpful for your children, at the "Meet Your Pastor" visit ask if there are children in your new church who might stop by for a brief visit on moving day.

9. FINANCES

A. SOURCES AND REFERENCES

- David Dommissie, Conference Treasurer and Business Manager, at 1-800-768-6040.
- Dollars and Sense: monthly on-line publication of Conference Treasurer; recent issues are available on line at the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>): from the “Administrative Services” menu, click “Business Office” at the left, click “Business Office Home”.
- *Journal of the Annual Conference*: provides summaries of the actions taken at the Annual Conference in June.
- Policies adopted by the Cabinet of the Virginia Conference: many policy statements adopted by the Cabinet are available on the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)²⁵.

B. COLLEGE

United Methodist Colleges in Virginia offer additional financial aid for children of United Methodist clergy. For detailed information:

- Request the leaflet “Financial Aid Available at Virginia Conference-related United Methodist Colleges” from the Higher Education and Campus Ministry (1-800-768-6040).
- Contact the financial aid office at each school you are considering.
- At the United Methodist Colleges in Virginia, children and spouses of clergy will have a fifty percent reduction in their tuition, as long as they are pursuing a degree.
- Other resources available from the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)²⁶

C. CREDIT UNION

The United Methodist Credit Union (TUMCU) was established over 65 years ago by a group of clergy who pooled their financial resources to help each other. Today, TUMCU has grown to include United Methodist churches, clergy, individual church members, organizations and agencies within the conferences of North Carolina, Virginia, Western North Carolina, West Virginia and Baltimore-Washington (churches and organizations only). It is a full service financial cooperative offering savings and checking accounts, loans, VISA credit cards,

²⁵ From the “Administrative Services” menu, click “Policies and Forms” at the left, click “Cabinet Policies”.

²⁶ From the “Ministries” menu, click “Ministries with Young People,” then click “Higher Education” at the left for additional menu options.

educational lending and online account management. Service is available throughout the state of Virginia and across the United States, at shared branch locations. Visit www.tumcu.org or call 1-866-657-0004 for membership information.

D. TAXES

Tax deductions and tax laws tend to be different for clergy. Educate yourself about all possible deductions. Keep all relevant receipts. Go to the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) website (www.GCFA.org) for clergy tax information.

1. Accountable Reimbursement Plan²⁷

The Accountable Reimbursement Policy adopted by the Virginia Annual Conference on November 11, 1997, is as follows.

The Accountable Reimbursement Account is a designated amount in the church's Administrative budget providing reimbursement to the pastor for funds expended in the performance of his/her duties and responsibilities as a United Methodist pastor. The Accountable Reimbursement fund plus the salary is the compensation provided the pastor of the church. These monies are not the church's dollars but an agreed upon amount by the pastor, Staff Parish Relations Committee and Administrative Board available to the pastor for expenses incurred for travel and other business related expenses.

Appropriate substantiation of expenses are to be provided by voucher to the Treasurer of the local church. A six month Accountable Reimbursement policy may be adopted which would be especially helpful to moving ministers.

The following are examples of proper reimbursement items (Note: The items listed are, in most case, proper. There may be some circumstances in which the church has specifically prohibited purchases. Each individual church must, in consultation with staff, make its own decision about what expenses are “professional and business” expenses and whether it will cover those items.):

- Reasonable travel and related expenses for attending meetings (e.g., annual conference, United Methodist meetings, etc.)²⁸
- Church-approved trips to preach at another church
- Trips to meet with the district superintendent, bishop, or conference council director
- Trips to visit members at hospitals, nursing homes, or parishioner's homes

²⁷ From the “Administrative Services” menu, click “Policies and Forms” at the left, click “Cabinet Policies”.

²⁸ If the conference pays a clergy 14 cents per mile for attending a conference meeting, it is proper for the church to reimburse the difference between the church's rate and conference rate. For example, if the church reimburses staff travel at 55.5 cents per mile and the conference reimburses 14 cents per mile, then the church would pay 41.5 cents per mile for mileage.

- Lunch meetings with officers of the church to discuss church business
- Supplies for the church office (e.g., paper, pens, forms, notebooks, etc.)
- Church-related continuing education
- A computer required for church work
- Vestments worn for worship
- Church-related books and periodicals
- Office furnishing and equipment (desk, chairs, telephone, etc.)
- Spouses travel expenses where the spouse accompanies the pastor **but only if the spouse was required to be present for a business purpose** (e.g., the spouse is an elected delegate to the church meeting or group in charge of registration at the meeting and making a speech to the business meeting, etc.)
- Business-related automobile expenses (if standard mileage rate was not used)
- Long distance telephone calls to church when on vacation
- Church-related telephone calls from the parsonage (most telephone expenses are covered under the housing allowance)
- Most expense allowable on Schedule C of the IRS tax return.

The following are examples of *improper* reimbursement items (Note: The items listed are, in most case, improper. There may be some circumstances, particularly where the church has directed the staff person to make the expenditure for church mission, when these items may be proper. Each individual church must, in consultation with staff, make its own decision about what expenses are “professional and business” expenses and whether it will cover those items.):

- Mileage to church from home for daily work (considered personal)
- Mileage to home and back to church for lunch break
- Meals with friends at which church matters are discussed
- Spouse’s travel under most circumstances (see example of proper reimbursement in limited circumstances above)
- Vacations (including trip to Holy Land)
- Books to plan vacation to Holy Land
- Trips to visit a sick relative
- Trips to funeral home where that pastor is paid an honorarium for service (may be deducted on Schedule C)
- Tickets to attend the play, “Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat”
- Expenditures (e.g., travel, books, phone calls) to research a book or article
- Continuing education primarily for personal improvement
- A computer used primarily by family

- Everyday clothing, including business suits
- Medical expenses (may be part of a cafeteria or flexible spending accountable reimbursement policy)
- Child care/dependent expenses (may be part of a cafeteria or flexible spending plan)
- Charitable contributions, tickets to charity functions
- Expenditures related to a private business or generating income from a non-church source
- Housing-related expenses (e.g., utilities, furniture, upkeep; part of housing allowance)
- Subscriptions to a national news magazine for the pastor's personal use.

2. Parsonage Exclusion

The Parsonage Exclusion (sometimes referred to as Housing Exclusion) is an amount set by the Charge Conference (each year) that provides income tax exemption for any housing-related expenses, to include such items as utilities, insurance, and furniture, as well as rent or mortgage should a cash housing allowance be paid in lieu of a church-provided parsonage. No money changes hands as a result of this exclusion—the taxable income that goes on the W-2 is reduced by the amount of the exclusion, but the compensation paid to the pastor is not reduced. Any portion of this exclusion for which the pastor does not have verifiable expenses must be reported on Line 21 of the IRS 1040 as other income. The current-year exclusion was set for every charge at the charge conference in the Fall of the previous year. This amount will continue for the new appointee unless the new person would like to adjust the exclusion. Any request for a new exclusion amount must be approved by the Administrative Board/Council before the first pay day. [It also needs to be reconfirmed or adjusted for each calendar year thereafter by December of the previous year.]

3. W-2 Information

The amount of taxable income reported in Box 1 of the W-2 should be calculated as follows:

Additions:	Base Salary (Total Compensation minus ARP)
	Cash Housing Allowance (if not living in a parsonage)
	Premiums on Life Insurance over \$50,000 (a minimal amount figure will be provided by the Annual Conference Treasurer)
Deductions:	Parsonage Exclusion
	Personal Pension Payments (UMPIP) designated as pre-tax
	Personal payments withheld for Conference Medical Plan (excluding life insurance and disability insurance).

4. Self-Employment Taxes

United Methodist clergy are required by an Act of Congress to pay Self-Employment (SECA) Social Security and Medicare Taxes (a total of 15.3 percent). One-half of this payment may be taken as a credit on Line 27 of the IRS 1040 when filing income taxes. Self-employment taxes must be filed quarterly on an IRS Schedule SE—Self-Employment Tax form. Calculations for the amount upon which SE taxes should be paid should include the following:

- Projected W-2 income less the Parsonage Exclusion
- Net Schedule C income (income minus expenses)
- Fair Rental Value of Parsonage.²⁹

Self-employment taxes must be paid with estimated federal income taxes quarterly.

5. Estimated Federal and State Income Taxes

Estimated federal and state income taxes must be paid quarterly.

Estimated federal taxes (Social Security, Medicare, and Income). For estimated tax purposes, the year is divided into four payment periods. Each period has a specific payment due date. If you do not pay enough tax by the due date of each of the payment periods, you may be charged a penalty even if you are due a refund when you file your income tax return. The following chart gives the payment periods and due dates for federal estimated tax payments (for those whose tax year begins on January 1st):³⁰

Federal Tax: For the Period	Due Date: On or Before
January 1 through March 31	April 15
April 1 through May 31	June 15
June 1 through August 31	September 15
September 1 through December 31	January 15 next year

²⁹ The “Fair Market Rental Value” of the parsonage or home in which a clergy lives has traditionally been a limiting factor on the amount that salary can be reduced for housing-related expenses. A tax court case in May 2000, referred to as the Warren Case, threatened to declare the housing allowance exclusion to be unconstitutional. On 20 May 2002, President Bush signed legislation previously passed by both houses of Congress that clarifies the tax treatment of the clergy housing allowance. It confirms that clergy can continue to exempt the fair rental value of housing from their income taxes and should stop [the Warren] court case.... The rationale for the clergy housing tax exemption is that clergy use their houses for church business. Clergy are expected to be available to their congregants at all hours of the day and night in response to personal crises, and their homes are frequently used for church functions. Moreover, most clergy are paid modestly and therefore are dependent on their churches to provide or pay for their housing. By protecting the tax exemption Congress avoided a drastic alteration in the financial well being of many clergy that most church members are ill prepared to make up. Source: “Press Release - Bush Signs Clergy Housing Legislation,” Barbara Boigegrain, General Secretary of the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church, 21 May 2002.

³⁰ “Estimated Tax—When to Pay Estimated Tax,” *Your Federal Income Tax*, IRS Publication 17. The website is at www.irs.gov.

Estimated Virginia state income taxes. File Form 760ES Payment Voucher 1 by May 1st. Estimated income tax payments for income earned in 2007 must be made in full on or before May 1st; or in *four equal installments* on or before May 1st; June 15th; September 15th; and January 15th the next year. For those with Virginia income meeting the minimum requirements on July 1st, two equal payments are required on or before September 15th; and January 15th next year.³¹

E. TITHING

It is important for you, as a clergy family, to model tithing. Put this item in your budget.

F. FINANCIAL HELP—PREACHERS’ RELIEF SOCIETY

Financial emergencies sometimes strike clergy families. For more than a century the Preacher’s Relief Society has assisted those with urgent needs by making grants. The grants, though modest in amount, are intended to alleviate the immediate crisis and financial stress, give opportunity for further financial planning and strengthen the bonds of ministry. Requests for aid must be initiated, presented in an objective way and endorsed by a district superintendent. Those eligible for consideration include active and retired clergy and widows, widowers and orphan children of clergy.

³¹ “Virginia Estimated Income Tax Payment Vouchers for Individuals, Estates, and Trusts,” Form 760ES and Instructions, Virginia Department of Taxation, Processing Services Division, P. B. Box 1478, Richmond, Virginia 2312-1478. Blank vouchers can be obtained by calling 804-236-2760 or 804-236-2761 in the Richmond area or 1-888-268-2829 outside the Richmond area. The website is at www.tax.state.va.us.

10. PENSION AND BENEFITS

Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc. (VUMPI) is charged with the responsibility of making sure you are enrolled in the appropriate pension programs and other benefit plans. VUMPI, in partnership with Wespath, develops and administers the numerous clergy pension and benefit plans sponsored by the Virginia Conference. Some plans are employer-paid, while others are voluntary and 100 percent participant-paid. For clergy participants, these plans include:

- **VUMPI programs:**
 - Medical
 - Prescription
 - Dental
 - Supplemental Life
 - Voluntary Life
 - Long Term Care
 - Medical Spending Account
 - Daycare Spending Account

- **Wespath programs:**
 - Pre-1982 Pension Plan
 - Ministerial Pension Plan
 - Clergy Retirement Security Program
 - United Methodist Personal Investment Plan
 - Comprehensive Protection Plan, including life and disability insurance

Please make all initial inquiries regarding enrollment in these programs to the VUMPI office at 800-768-6040. On-line resources from the VUMPI are available on the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>): from the “Administrative Services” menu, click “Pensions and Benefits.”

11. WHERE TO TURN FOR HELP

Clergy families experience the same stresses and strains as any other family. However, because of the unique role of clergy as caregivers to other families in time of crisis, sometimes it is hard to know where to turn for help in times of stress or crisis within the clergy family. It is important that family members not suffer in isolation but seek out the help that is needed to move through the crisis in a positive way and be restored to health and wholeness. Here are some resources to turn to in time of need.

A. SOURCES FOR HELP

1. The District Superintendent

District Superintendents have a responsibility to give pastoral support, care, and counsel with all clergy, diaconal ministers, and certified personnel “concerning matters affecting their ministry and personal life”. (*Discipline*, Paragraph 420.2). They are trained pastors and caregivers whose call is to stand with individuals in time of crisis and offer Christian support, counseling, and encouragement. It is important to let district superintendents know about crises in clergy families so that they can be the pastor to the clergy, which they are called to be.

2. The District Chaplain

The District Chaplain program was adopted in 1993 as a *model by which the conference can respond to ministers who by reason of burnout, stress, unusual circumstances, rigors of ministry, or mental health may be suffering so as to impair their continuing performance as a minister. The purpose of this model will be to reclaim, restore, reconcile, and/or redeem such persons for ministry.*

The District Chaplain program recognizes that the office of District Superintendent is both pastoral and administrative. In most instances superintendents are able to engage effectively in both roles. In certain crises the superintendent needs to focus on the administrative role, and in certain crises clergy and their families may desire to seek pastoral support from another source. District Chaplains are available to offer pastoral support, prayer, counsel, guidance, advocacy, mediation, and collegial friendship to troubled ministers and their families, ministers and families facing crises, and ministers and families in transition. They are there to provide supportive counsel, advocacy, referral, and encouragement to ministers in their efforts to seek reconciliation in broken or stressed relationships in their families, or within the context of their professional ministry. District Chaplains maintain strict confidentiality.

Call or write your district office to learn the name of your District Chaplain.

3. The Ministerial Family Counseling Program

The Ministerial Family Counseling program provides confidential financial assistance for counseling services for clergy of the Virginia Conference and their families using the resources of the Virginia Institute of Pastoral Care and other counseling agencies throughout the state. Guidelines and program instructions can be found on the “Clergy Family Resources” page of the conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)³².

4. Preachers’ Relief Society

Financial emergencies are a part of the life of clergy families. The recognition of these special needs spurred the creation, more than a century ago, of the Preachers’ Relief Society. From its founding, the society has assisted clergy families by making grants to meet the most urgent needs, and in so doing, to strengthen the bonds of ministry.

Each year the society receives requests initiated by the district superintendents who endorse the needs of clergy and present the circumstances in an objective way. The grants, though modest in amount, are intended to alleviate immediate needs, to provide a measure of relief from financial stresses, and to offer an opportunity to improve financial planning.

B. FINDING HELP FOR SPECIFIC CRISES

1. Separation and Divorce

The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church affirm (*2008 Book of Discipline*, ¶161C, *Divorce*):

When a married couple is estranged beyond reconciliation, even after thoughtful consideration and counsel, divorce is a regrettable alternative in the midst of brokenness.

If a divorce or separation is being considered in a clergy household, the clergyperson and/or the spouse should inform the District Superintendent. The District Superintendent is available to discuss this development, to provide pastoral care, and to refer persons to other counseling resources. Should separation or divorce become a reality, the Bishop should be notified immediately.

As a spouse is separating from or divorcing a clergyperson, he/she may feel a disconnection from their spiritual base. Upon request, the District Superintendent can refer the spouse to pastoral care, or the District Chaplain may be consulted.

³² From the home page, click “Clergy Excellence”; then “Clergy Family Resources”.

The General Board of Pensions has held that clergy pension benefits are other assets that need to be considered by the divorce court in arriving at an appropriate settlement. The Board will assist in the implementation of a property settlement or court decree that involves the pension funds of a divorced clergyperson, subject to certain limitations. You may call or write the General Board of Pensions for assistance (847-869-4550).

2. Long-Term Disability

Long-term disability is a disabling condition which is expected to prevent the clergyperson from fulfilling pastoral responsibilities. To qualify for disability payments, the disabled clergy must have been an active participant in the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) for at least 180 days prior to becoming disabled. The 180-day waiting period is waived if the participant's disability is the result of an accident. Certain pre-existing condition provisions may also apply. No disability benefit shall be payable in the event that the Active Participant becomes disabled within the two-year period beginning on the date that he or she first became an Active Participant, and as the result of any pre-existing conditions.

To apply for disability benefits from CPP, the disabled participant must submit three completed forms to the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits:

- Application for Disability Benefits
- Report of Complete Medical Examination
- Medical Information Release.

These forms can be obtained from the Conference Board of Pensions (1-800-768-6040).

The General Board's medical consultant will review the completed forms to determine whether the individual's condition meets the CPP definition of disability.

Disability benefits are not payable for any period during which a participant is receiving a salary from the salary-paying unit.

Individuals who are receiving CPP disability benefits must make application and be approved annually for continued disability benefits. In addition disability claimants must annually submit information on their total annual income for purposes of applying the earnings test. In addition, after having received disability benefit payments from the Plan for 24 consecutive months, the Participant shall be considered disabled only he or she is unable to engage in substantially all of the usual and customary duties pertaining to any employment for remuneration or profit in any occupation for which he or she is reasonably qualified by training, education, or experience. When total income from various sources (including the CPP disability

benefit) exceeds 70 percent of the Denominational Average Compensation (DAC), the CPP disability benefit may be reduced in a dollar-for-dollar ratio.

Rehabilitation benefits may be payable to persons receiving CPP disability benefits. The total amount of the rehabilitation benefit will not exceed two-thirds of the DAC in effect in the year the rehabilitation benefits begin. To apply for rehabilitation benefits, the disabled participant must submit information to the board outlining the program to be pursued and the estimated cost. Benefits will be payable if (1) the proposed rehabilitation program can reasonably be expected to return the disabled individual to the duties performed prior to the occurrence of the disability, or (2) the program will result in the individual's ability to earn compensation at least equal to the DAC.

3. Incapacitating Illness

Here are two types of documents you should prepare in the event you or your spouse has an incapacitating illness—a separate set is needed for yourself and for your spouse:

- **Advance Medical Directive.** This document appoints one person (and potentially one or more alternates) to make healthcare decisions for you. It also states explicitly what your direction is regarding the application, withholding, or withdrawal of life-prolonging procedures when you have a terminal condition (or are in a persistent vegetative state). In Virginia, this document needs to be signed in front of two witnesses and a notary public.
- **Power of Attorney.** This document gives limited or wide powers of authority for your spouse, relative, or other person to act for you in financial and other matters should you become unwilling or unable to make certain types of decisions on your own. A power of attorney needs to reflect the laws of the particular state in which you are resident, so you may be well advised to make a new power of attorney if you have moved to Virginia from another state.

4. Death in the Clergy Family

a. Planning

Clergy families need to plan ahead for the eventuality of death. Here are five steps every clergy family should take now to prepare for the “possibility” of a death in the family.

- **Have a will.** This is your only chance to have input into the decision about the distribution of everything you own. Young clergy need a will perhaps even more than middle-aged pastors because of the high odds of death coming by accident that could take both wife and husband. Similarly, young clergy are more likely to want to appoint guardians for the minor children or separate financial conservators.
- **Get adequate life insurance.** In these days of two-paycheck families, it is vital to carry insurance on each spouse. Evaluate the economic consequences of death for either and purchase accordingly. Term insurance is usually the best buy for younger

clergy.

- **Tell somebody where the documents are located.** It's not enough to have a will and life insurance if no one knows where they're located. Have a family meeting to demonstrate the whereabouts of these important documents.
- **Talk frankly with your spouse.** It's not unusual for one spouse to have assumed the responsibility of money management. Perhaps this is why surviving spouses are frequently overwhelmed by this new burden. Help your spouse become aware of the bill-paying cycle, any debts or obligations, investments, and contact persons for each.
- **Discuss housing alternatives for the non-clergy spouse.** While it is wrenching to have to leave the house soon after the death of a pastor-spouse, it will be easier if this has been contemplated and planned for ahead of time.

As people of the resurrection we have no need to fear death in the ultimate sense. Still, a faithful effort to plan and prepare can make even this awesome transition less painful. Start now and take these steps—just in case.

b. Grieving

When death occurs, allow yourself time to grieve. Whether it is a spouse or child, the death of someone in your family will cause feelings related to grief that are normal and necessary. Anger, depression, shock, sleeplessness, and confusion are frequently part of the normal grieving process. Find a support system for sharing this process. You may want to seek out a therapist, special friends, family, or church members. It is important that you do what is best for you. There is no right or wrong way to deal with death. Give yourself and your family time for adjustments.

In the event of the death of an active clergy/spouse/child, contact the District Superintendent immediately. He/she will inform the bishop. The District Superintendent will respond as soon as possible with a personal visit to provide pastoral care. They may assist, if needed, with funeral arrangements. The Conference Pensions Office will contact the family soon after the funeral about death benefits, pension, and health insurance.

In the case of the death of a pastor, the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee will work with the District Superintendent to determine how long the parsonage will be available for the family's use. The Annual Conference will pay for one move of the surviving members.

Consider carefully your options for church membership. A surviving spouse may wish to stay at your present congregation or find another church home as you move. The District Superintendent and the District Chaplain can help with this important decision for your continual spiritual comfort and support and that of your family.

C. ANNUAL RETREAT FOR CLERGY SPOUSES

Almost every year, in early March, clergy spouses meet for a time of relaxation, informal conversations, prayer, singing and program. Registration forms and event information is available from with “Clergy Family Resources” page of the conference website and at the district offices. It is always a good idea to check with other spouses on your district to work out carpools. Scholarships are usually available. Thursday afternoon and evening are usually informal social occasions with games, chats, hymn sings, and other traditional kinds of fellowship. It is fun to meet lots of new people, greet those you already know, and inquire about others. The retreat program begins on Friday with a resource leader, times for worship and interest groups. The event draws to a close on Saturday with a communion service.

D. CLERGY FAMILY ENRICHMENT COMMITTEE

Founded in 2001 as a ministry of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Clergy Family Enrichment Committee continues to address issues that impact the lives of clergy in the Virginia Annual Conference and their families by offering support, care, and understanding. This is done in many ways:

- The **Thrival Kit**, a journal of inspiration and guidance, seeks to provide a road map, offering direction for clergy families. This resource, revised annually, is available electronically on the Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)³³. The Thrival Kit is also available in printed form from each District Office.
- The **Welcome Meal** is one of the first events at Annual Conference. It celebrates the beginning of ministry for those accepting their first appointment in the Virginia Conference. Each new clergy and spouse is invited to attend, together with the district superintendents, their spouses, and members of the Clergy Family Enrichment Committee.
- The **Spouse’s Open House** is also a special event at Annual Conference, where clergy spouses join together in a time of fellowship and fun. The event varies from a luncheon to a less formal open house, depending on the conference agenda and host location.
- The **Annual Spouse’s Retreat** is usually held early in March, with informal activities for those who are able to arrive on Thursday evening. This popular event is a time of inspiration and renewal for clergy spouses.

³³ From the home page, click “Clergy Excellence”, then click “Clergy Family Resources.”

In providing these events and resources, the Clergy Family Enrichment Committee is striving to foster a climate of caring for each other among our clergy families, as we share this journey of faithfulness and are inspired by God’s call on our lives.

YOU HAVE A FRIEND

YOU HAVE A SUPPORT SYSTEM THAT CARES AND UNDERSTANDS

YOU HAVE THE CLERGY FAMILY ENRICHMENT COMMITTEE

E. OTHER ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

Spouse-Net. In addition to the Clergy-Net that is used to share information through the clergy, “Spouse-Net” allows publication of information of specific interest to spouses (e.g., finding a ride to a district event, deaths, illnesses, etc.).

District Events. District spouses often hold events (e.g., brunch) for clergy spouses, and many districts have a newsletter for clergy spouses. Call or write your DS office to find out what’s been done and how to get something else started.

Conference Events. Conference events are usually posted on the Virginia Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>): click the “Events” menu and note the events planned for the current month. Then click other months for similar information.

F. PUBLICATIONS OF THE VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

The follow describe several publications produced by Virginia United Methodist Communion, Inc., which can be reached at 1-800-768-6040 or 1-804-521-1100 in the Richmond area:

- The *Virginia Advocate*—the conference’s official monthly new magazine is an excellent source for encouragement, ideas, and news. Can be mailed to your home at a nominal cost. The special edition of the Virginia Advocate distributed at Annual Conference in June identifies all the names of clergy and their assignments or appointments for the year beginning July 1st. To subscribe to the Virginia Advocate, visit the conference website at <http://www.vaumc.org/>: from the “Resources” menu, click “Publications” at the left and choose “Virginia United Methodist Advocate.”
- Conference website (<http://www.vaumc.org/>)—features resources, coming events calendar, and news from the annual conference. Remember, there are also resources for clergy spouses!
- *The Sunday Advocate*—an insert published weekly for dissemination in local church bulletins, bulletin boards, and e-mail lists, distributed electronically.
- *Neighbors Newsletter*—a pamphlet produced three times per year (Back to School, Christmas, and Easter) whose purpose is to provide a strong complement to your

church's full outreach ministry.

- *Clergy/Diaconal Directory*—an address book for the Virginia Conference published in the fall; however, a current version is maintained electronically on the conference website at: <http://www.vaumc.org/FindClergy>.

12. DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT SPOUSES

A. INTRODUCTION

You now have a new title “DS Spouse”—whatever this means. You are the person who will decide what it means. You can choose anonymity, listener, supporter, or avoider. What do you remember about your DS or DS spouse?

You do not have a congregation to love or to give your support. However, think of it this way—your district can be your congregation. The clergy, spouses, and family members of each charge need your love, support and concern. What can you do to take an interest in them? They have hurts and needs like you. Remember they do not have a pastor or pastor’s spouse. If you have 50 charges or 80 charges on your district this can be your ministry or congregation. This is not required for you to be a DS Spouse; however, I think you may find your life a little lonely at times with no congregation and then, you will have days you won’t miss any of the congregational responsibilities. We are all different and have different needs but we all want to be loved and we need love.

B. KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH CLERGY FAMILIES

Keeping in touch with clergy families on the district throughout the year can be very rewarding. This can be done with birthday cards, an appreciation of ministry card saying thanks for all the hard work and encouraging their dedication, a gift of baked goodies or card when someone has been sick or in the hospital or had a death in the family, a quick phone call or short note when you know things are not going well or when a spouse or clergy has had a special time in his or her life: finishing a degree, getting a promotion at work, or making a meaningful contribution to a district program, and when a clergy is newly ordained elder or deacon. Also, remember how much a thank-you note means when our clergy families and the district laity do special things for us.

Surveys have shown that clergy spouses don’t get enough support from the church. Many spouses are unaware of the resources available in times of crisis. The studies also found that even if spouses are aware of the resources, they often don’t ask for help out of fear of jeopardizing their mate’s career. The studies said they had no one to turn to for pastoral support except their clergy spouse. This Thrival Kit describes a number of other support systems and resources for clergy spouses. You can help by just letting them know what is available to them. In addition, covenant with yourself to pray for the clergy families on your district and to keep their

confidences a sacred trust. We have a special, privileged relationship with clergy families on our district and we never want to violate that trust. We want to nurture it.

C. WHAT ABOUT MY VOCATION?

For many of us, our spouse's new appointment as a District Superintendent has prompted an uncertainty about what will happen to us as individuals. What expectations of us will we discover? What roles will be available for us to choose from? Will we measure up? Fit in? Will we be able to use our vocational skills and training? How can our various experiences, interests, and abilities be useful in this new situation?

Living the answers to these questions is an ongoing process, reflecting the uniqueness of each spouse and of each district.

Maybe having to leave your profession, own church, church choir, community organizations, Bible study, friends, and numerous other involvements in your church, upon your spouse's new appointment, causes you to be concerned about what the future holds for you.

It is important for you to join one of the churches on your spouse's district. You never know when you or a member of your family might need a minister. There is no rule about which church to join—visit around and take some time to make up your mind—this may be the first time that you have had a choice about the church which you would like to join. Think carefully before accepting a leadership role in any church. Although you will miss regular attendance at your own church, if you travel with your spouse, you will enjoy a wonderful variety of worship experiences. Even if you can't regularly participate in local church activities, many of you might participate in UMW or UMM, study groups, etc., when you can. Our churches understand and accept our need to belong somewhere, even if our participation is only occasional.

You are encouraged to travel with your spouse when possible, both for the companionship and because the spouse's presence is greatly appreciated by the people. Remember you will understand their work and situations if you can travel and be there with them. However, "Learn that you don't always have to go."

D. GETTING TO KNOW NEW CLERGY AND FAMILY

It is important to meet and greet your new clergy and their families when they move into your district. You might be in the middle of getting settled; however, it is so important to welcome them to the district.

Possible Ways To Greet Your New Clergy. The following may be considered for welcoming new clergy families:

- One of our districts presented a canvas bag labeled, “Welcome to the _____ District”, filled with goodies, drinks, cookies, watermelon, etc.
- Take a plant or a hanging basket for their new home.
- Baked goods are always good, from a bakery or homemade.
- One of our districts takes a candle with a letter on the theme, “You are the light to this community.”
- Take a directory of your district and maybe a copy of your newsletter.
- You may consider a letter of welcome to the spouses ahead of the move with your phone number or any other important information.
- Be ready to listen.
- You might want to take a little “Goody Bag” for the children especially if they are young (Crayons, coloring books, etc.—the Dollar Store or Everything’s A Dollar is a good place to find these items).
- You might call the local Welcome Wagon to make a visit or you could ask the Chamber of Commerce for brochures to take with places of interest, road map, etc.

E. PERSONAL MATTERS: HEALTH AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Being a District Superintendent’s Spouse can be a demanding role, and one can ill afford to neglect one’s health. Keep yourself as physically, mentally, and emotionally strong as possible.

A daily, devotional life is absolutely essential to our call-and-response to ministry. Never underestimate the need for spiritual centering for your day. Thank God for the gift of only one day at a time—THE PRESENT.

Take care of yourself; no one else will! Eat well, exercise the mind and body, and sleep well. Some ways of cutting calories while still enjoying the bounty the churches like to share with you: eat slowly, take small portions, take healthy snacks in the car, and ask to wrap up and take home a plate. Charge Conferences may serve food you weren’t expecting or may not serve anything at all.

Be a good listener, but be careful to keep confidences. Pillow talk is important, but save the bad news and complaints for a time when you and your spouse are rested.

Laughter can be redeeming and renewing. Tears can cleanse and release.

Learn to receive, to be grateful, to give time to yourself and to others for renewal of mind, body, and spirit.

Love is the key to open doors, to change hearts and minds, to minister with hospitality, to practice reconciliation, to vision faithfully, to affirm, and to make effective decisions. THANKS BE TO GOD!

F. SEASONS IN THE LIFE OF A DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT FAMILY

As in any clergy family, there are seasons of busier times, and less busy times. The good news for the family of a District Superintendent is that some of the busiest times for the local church clergy are the very times the District Superintendent and family have fewer demands on their time. The seasons of Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter are such times. While this is good news for your family life, it is quite an adjustment for our clergy's spouses.

Exceptionally busy times for the District Superintendent are the fall, during Charge Conferences, and Winter/Spring during meetings with local church committees and cabinet meetings to work on appointments.

G. ENTERTAINING, GIFTS, AND COURTESIES

Entertaining opportunities and expectations, as well as gift-giving and other courtesies, differ greatly. Some traditions may already be established, such as a District Christmas Party, Welcoming Picnic, final celebration just before Annual Conference for those moving, etc. Some spouses start new traditions. *Remember there are no expectations except what we put on ourselves.*

Sometimes the cabinet spouses come for the long cabinet meetings. The Virginia Conference has two long cabinet meetings a year. The spouses who are free and/or in town will join the other spouses for special times together. The spouses might tour the area, look for antiques, shop, have meals together, have visiting/sharing time, and hold mini-retreats.

We always have a Cabinet Dinner with spouses before Annual Conference begins and a Christmas Dinner in one of our Districts. The spouses are usually in attendance for these special times together. We understand that there will be conflicts sometimes.

1. Possible Ideas for Entertaining on Your District

- Open House—Some like the idea of a brunch on a Saturday morning because this is less expensive and more people are able to come.
- Catered Dinner—Paid by each family or by the district.
- Some give handmade crafts such as ornaments, angels, candles, or they might purchase a gift. A contribution to a cause in honor of District clergy may be given.
- A January luncheon for spouses only.

- Invite them to the parsonage for Fireside Chats.
- Some include all of the family at the brunch and have a small gift for the children (examples: Nativity Set from the Dollar Store, Christmas puzzles, books, etc.).

2. Courtesies

The following are some basic courtesies to remember while in this new role. Remember you have to be the judge on what you, as an individual, should do.

- Take a gift if you are invited to someone's home.
- Remember to write thank you notes for a meal at a home or a church, or to the persons or groups that have been your host.
- Some of our spouses will send a card for a death in a family, maybe "Thinking of You" when appropriate, or birthday and anniversary cards.
- If you don't want to or don't have the time to send notes or a card, you might want to make a telephone call to the home if you know of a special need.
- Annual Conference Spouses' Luncheon – newly married spouses, first time appointment spouses, and newly retired spouses are guests of the district.

H. DS FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Saying good-bye to your church family and your community will be an emotional time for you and your children. Moves are never easy or routine. School-age children in particular may express more sadness than you had anticipated. On the other-hand, they may surprise you with their delight about the change. If siblings have different reactions, it is important that each be understood and supported in their uniqueness. Obviously a child who is distressed about the move should not be compared to a sibling who is happy; each is a valid reaction. It may be helpful to point out that during the course of a move, everyone experiences both loss and excitement, even when they may not realize it.

Some of the practices you have grown accustomed to during moves will be different when your spouse goes on the cabinet. When you were the spouse of a local church pastor, you could expect that the new parsonage would be clean and ready for you. Food would be brought in and a stream of church members would drop by to welcome you and your children. Things will be different when you move to a district parsonage. The house is clean, the lawn mowed, and food may be shared, but the usual stream of visitors never appears. At first it may seem that you are all alone because there is no one there to welcome you and help you feel at home. If your children are accustomed to having many friends from the families of your home church, the

differences also will affect them. Please be aware that the feeling of isolation changes very quickly. You will find support from your new faith community, composed of the families of the district pastors and the cabinet.

It is particularly important to find a new “home church” when there are children and/or youth in the family. Being a district family provides a unique opportunity to choose your church and all family members should have a voice in the decision. It is essential to value everyone’s perception of whether or not a church is a “good fit” for your family. Please remember that children and teens are more likely to participate in a church’s ministry if they feel accepted by their peers and excited about the programs.

Your children may be surprised at the other benefits of having a DS parent. For some children it is meaningful that they will be able to sit with both parents on Christmas Eve. Between the end of charge conferences in late fall and Minister’s Convocation in January, District Superintendents have the possibility of taking more time for family. This period coincides with the children’s holiday break and the district family might have an opportunity to go out of town. Depending on the schedule for spring cabinet meetings, you might plan a vacation or activities during the school’s spring-break. A benefit for the whole family is this realization: the chances are greatly reduced that a family vacation will be cut short by an emergency phone call.

I. DISTRICT PARSONAGES

District parsonages are cared for in various ways and on different schedules. Ask the exiting parsonage family to explain your district’s routines. You will be given the residents’ copy of the parsonage notebook and asked to continually update it.

A meeting of the District Parsonage Committee should be held soon after you arrive. Be prepared to share your concerns and desires pertaining to the parsonage. An annual meeting of the parsonage committee is helpful both to your family and the families that will follow. Timely maintenance and upgrading is always more effective and cheaper than allowing problems to compound by delaying needed repairs.

APPENDIX A. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Directions to United Methodist Conference Center at Glen Allen (near Richmond)

DIRECTIONS TO UNITED METHODIST CONFERENCE CENTER

10330 Staples Mill Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060

FROM I-64 WESTBOUND (FROM TIDEWATER)

Take the I-295/US-60 exit, exit number 200, towards Washington/Rocky Mt. NC
Merge onto I-295 N. for approximately 19 to 20 miles
Take the US-33 EAST exit, exit number 49B, towards Richmond
Merge onto Staples Mill Rd/US-33 E for 1.75 miles
Conference Center on right at Cross Ridge.

FROM I-64 EASTBOUND (FROM CHARLOTTESVILLE)

Take the I-295 exit, exit number 177, towards Washington/Norfolk
Merge onto I-295 S, for approximately 3 to 4 miles
Take the US-33 EAST exit, exit number 49B, towards Richmond
Merge onto Staples Mill Rd/US-33 E for 1.75 miles
Conference Center on right at Cross Ridge.

FROM I-95 SOUTHBOUND (FROM NORTHERN VIRGINIA)

Take the I-295 exit, exit number 84B, towards Charlottesville
Merge onto I-295 N for approximately 4 to 5 miles
Take the US-33 EAST exit, exit number 49B, towards Richmond
Merge onto Staples Mill Rd/US-33 E for 1.75 miles
Conference Center on right at Cross Ridge.

FROM I-95 NORTHBOUND (FROM PETERSBURG)

Take the I-295 exit, exit number 84B, towards Charlottesville
Merge onto I-295 N for approximately 4 to 5 miles
Take the US-33 EAST exit, exit number 49B, towards Richmond
Merge onto Staples Mill Rd/US-33 E for 1.75 miles
Conference Center on right at Cross Ridge.

FROM US-360 NORTH (FROM DANVILLE)

Take Powhite Parkway Exit off 360 near Brandermill
Take Powhite Parkway and merge onto I-195 after crossing James River
Take I-64 West from I-195
Take the I-295 exit, exit number 177, towards Washington/Norfolk
Merge onto I-295S, for approximately 3 to 4 miles
Take the US-33 EAST exit, exit number 49B, towards Richmond
Merge onto Staples Mill Rd/US-33 E for 1.75 miles
Conference Center on right at Cross Ridge.

APPENDIX B. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX C. GLOSSARY

BGM	Board of Global Ministries	S/PPRC	Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee
BOM	Board of Ordained Ministry	SLI	Supplemental Life Insurance
CEU	Continuing Education Unit	TUMCU	The United Methodist Credit Union
CHP	Conference Health Plan	UMM	United Methodist Men
CPP	Comprehensive Protection Plan	UMPIP	United Methodist Personal Investment Plan
CRSP	Clergy Retirement Security Program	UMVIM	United Methodist Volunteers in Mission
DAC	Denominational Average Compensation	UMW	United Methodist Women
DS	District Superintendent	UMY	United Methodist Youth
GFC	General Council on Finance and Administration	UMYA	United Methodist Young Adults
GBOPHB	General Board of Pension and Health Benefits	UMYF	United Methodist Youth Fellowship
IRS	Internal Revenue Service	VAUMC	Virginia United Methodist Conference
JCCML	Joint Committee on Clergy Medical Leave	VIM	Volunteers in Mission (The United Methodist Church)
LTCI	Long Term Care Insurance	VIPCare	Virginia Institute for Pastoral Care
LTD	Long Term Disability (insurance)	VLI	Voluntary Life Insurance
PK	Preacher's Kid	VUMPI	Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc.
RHP	Retiree Health Plan		