



**First
Presbyterian
Church**
of Waynesboro, Virginia

The Columns -Online.

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PC(USA) pastors report widespread fatigue, burnout and isolation

by Dr. Angie Andriot and Dr. Susan Barnett, Research Services
Special to Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — In a survey completed prior the COVID-19 pandemic, PC(USA) ministers reported being generally satisfied with their life and find fulfillment in their call, according to research published by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Research Services. However, this overall positive finding hides some underlying issues regarding minister wellbeing. Although 9 in 10 ministers are satisfied with their life, only 41% are *very* satisfied. So, what's the problem?

Minister fatigue, burnout, and isolation are widespread within the PC(USA). Nearly half of ministers, 49%, report fatigue as a part of their daily experience, while 35% are concerned about burnout and 32% are concerned about isolation; 13% of ministers reporting they are worn out most or all the time. These concerns are greater for bi-vocational ministers, i.e., ministers who work in a secular position in addition to their ministry call. Additionally, specialized ministers, i.e., ministers serving in another form of ministry than congregational ministry, tend to report greater satisfaction — and less burnout — than pastors who serve in a congregation. In addition, although ministers are generally satisfied with their life, those without a call and those working secular jobs rate their satisfaction much lower than those in a call. And the highest life satisfaction is reserved for those who are retired.

continued below

COVID average Incidence Rate per 100,000
from the Virginia Dept of Health.

Augusta County:	16.7
Harrisonburg	23.8
Rockingham	37.1
Staunton	26.4
<u>Waynesboro</u>	<u>121.8</u>
Average/100K	45.16

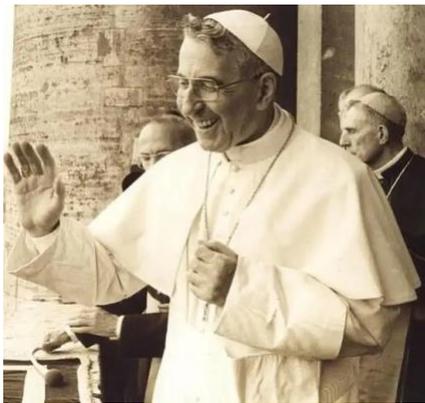
Level of Community Transmission

High

Substantial

Moderate

Low



Pope John Paul I born
October 17, 1912



Nuremberg Trials begin
October 18, 1945



Cornwallis Surrenders to Washington at
Yorktown
October 19, 1781



Battle of Trafalgar
October 21, 1805

As fatigued, burnt out, and isolated as ministers are, one third do not take a day off from work and chores each week. In addition, only 34% of ministers have taken a sabbatical. Pastors are most likely to have taken a sabbatical – 36 % of ministers whose call is to a congregation have taken one. More than half, 55%, of ministers in a call do not meet monthly or more often with other ministers for reflection, study, or sharing. According to the findings of this study, the more fatigued a pastor feels, the less time they spend with their congregation.

Presbyteries can help support and bolster ministers by providing a sense of belonging, information, support, and advice. However, support from presbyteries differs by ministerial situation. Those with secular jobs and those without a call report receiving significantly less support from their presbytery than ministers who are in a call. Among those in a call, pastors report receiving greater support from their presbytery than specialized ministers. What presbyteries provide more than anything is a sense of belonging – and this is greatest for pastors. As one pastor put it, “It’s like family ... Sometimes great, sometimes not-so-great; but it’s always wonderful to belong.”

Despite all these issues, ministers in a call still overwhelmingly feel that their call is rewarding: 93% report gaining a lot of personal satisfaction from working with people in their ministry, 90% report having enthusiasm for their work, and 89% agree that their ministry gives real purpose and meaning to their life. As one might imagine, call satisfaction increases with the extent to which a minister feels appreciated.

The study results provide several topics for individuals, congregations, mid councils, and the national church to consider. How can ministers be encouraged to take time off from work? Are there ways to provide financial support so all ministers can take a sabbatical? What changes in expectations and structures are needed to enhance the wellbeing of ministers as they respond faithfully to God’s call?

Sources of Information

click on the links

[PC\(USA\) News](#)

[Virginia Department of Health updates](#)

Sources of Inspiration

click on the links

[Daily Readings from the Lectionary](#)

[Jan Edmiston's Blog](#)

[The Upper Room Devotional](#)

Sources of Fun

click on the links

[Today's Holiday](#)

[Mr. Boffo](#)

October

Music Notes for this week.



Fisk Jubilee Singers, early 1900s

The closing hymn for this 22nd week of Pentecost will be *There Is a Balm in Gilead*. The beloved spiritual traces its textual roots back to 1779. Almost a century later, in 1876, Dennis F. Douglas wrote about the hymn in *The Southern Workman*, a journal from Douglas' alma mater, Hampton University. Douglas wrote about the hymn while teaching in South Carolina and

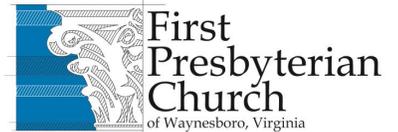


Fisk Jubilee Singers, today

Georgia: "Our folks sing a song running like this, *Though I cannot sing like Silas, neither can I preach like Paul, I can tell the wondrous story; free salvation for all.*" The hymn as it is known today was published in 1907 in the collection *Folk Songs of the American Negro*. Two years later, in 1909, the Fisk Jubilee Singers recorded the spiritual, digitized and preserved by Document Records.

Our Worship Channels

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