

Mental – Emotional: Navigating inner changes. Webinar 2

Thank you for participating today. You include a broad range of experience - some early planners, leaders in transition, and retirement pros. Our topic is timely for all of us.

Let's start with a brief overview of these six webinars. First, we will identify the top areas of interest for NWD ministers as they think about the future. Second, we will make a presentation focusing on one topic. Third, you will discuss questions with a few other participants in a breakout group. Finally, we will wrap up with shared discoveries and recommended resources. Jared and I will each take the lead on various sessions.

The Third/Third and NWD team conducted four surveys of licensed ministers to identify top interests of those 50 years of age and older. You were clear about these six topics: spiritual, mental/emotional, social, physical, financial, and timing.

The purpose of these webinars is to: *Equip ministers to be spiritually faithful, emotionally healthy, socially connected, physically strong, and financially free.* What we mean by "retirement" is being "Free to serve without needing money, roles or an organizational platform". We believe that planning for your future is about being free. Free to be a steward of your gifts and callings without the need for role, remuneration, or reciprocation.

We are Ann and Jared Roth, Foursquare planters and pastors for 47 years. We retired three years ago as co-lead pastors of Evergreen Christian Center in Hillsboro. We are adventurers who love to hike. In the past 3 ½ years we visited 50 national parks in our adventure van. We hiked in Switzerland, New Zealand, Patagonia, Italy, Croatia, and Bosnia. This fall we are headed to Iceland, Turkey, Greece and Slovenia. We enthusiastically contribute to our home church Evergreen. We have fun experiences with our four-generation family. Our life is full of conversations with wonderful friends—new and old. We initiate!

Your vision for your Third/Third may be different. Your context may be different. But we all share a common interest - to be mentally and emotionally healthy so we can continue to make helpful contributions to others.

Today we tackle the second of six areas: *Mental/Emotional: Navigating Inner Changes.* Use the chat box to offer suggestions and ask questions. We will read and respond after the session.

The purpose of this session is to help pastors and leaders *prepare for good mental and emotional health in retirement.*

We are laughing because it is audacious to try to address this topic in a few minutes. But we'll share some ideas that might stimulate your thinking and discussion.

We are interested in the impact of emotional health on our Third/Third. Paul wrote, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." So, let's address a few mental and emotional challenges many ministers face as they anticipate retiring. These are candidates for some "renewing of the mind" attention.

Many of us plan for our future wealth and health. Few prepare for an equally essential aspect of retirement: how to continue to feel seen and valued.

In Jennifer Wallace's new book, *“Mattering: The Secret to a Life of Deep Connection and Purpose”*, she tells this story. The moving boxes were barely unpacked when Nancy and her husband, Steve, joined a small group of recent retirees for dinner in their new city. When a former medical school dean asked Nancy, who had just stepped away from a 40-year career in higher education, about her retirement plans, she told him she hoped to consult with local nonprofits. “I'm excited to get involved and see how I can contribute,” she said.

The former dean gave her a weary smile. He'd hoped to assist in teaching a biology course after retiring, he said, but every attempt had gone nowhere. Around the table, heads nodded. Despite decades of expertise, each person there was stunned by how hard it was to find meaningful ways to contribute after winding down their careers.

What these retirees were describing wasn't just disappointment in a lack of opportunities. It was an erosion in something far more fundamental—their sense of mattering, the deep human need to feel valued and to have a chance to add value to the world. We plan for our wealthspan and healthspan, mapping out financial security and physical well-being. Yet very few of us prepare for an equally essential dimension of retirement: our mattering span, or how we will continue to feel seen, useful and capable of making a difference in this next chapter of life.

We have this same conversation with Foursquare pastor friends. They leave their role. They expect the phone to ring with an invitation. They wait for a text seeking advice. They look for an email with an opportunity. Crickets. Mattering is now up to your initiative. We have learned to initiate! One of my identity statements that I review daily is, “I am an initiating friend”.

To experience the benefits of mattering, we need to feel valued, but we also need the opportunity to add value. Research increasingly shows that having this sense of purpose plays a central role in retirement satisfaction and mental health.

But purpose alone doesn't capture the whole picture. What retirees often search for is the experience of being depended on. People who regain that sense of being needed tend to follow a simple, repeatable pattern: They identified a genuine need and met it with 3Ts—time, talent or treasure.

This may be even more important for us due to the unique calling of vocational ministry. Ministry is a vocation of identity, not just a job. Retirement can feel like a loss of calling, belonging, and identity.

Many church leaders experience intense emotional challenges in retirement. Feelings of grief, loneliness, or decreased relevance. Struggling to adjust to less structure and fewer

responsibilities. Navigating the tension between letting go and staying connected to a congregation.

We can all start new healthy practices for resilience. Establishing new rhythms of prayer, exercise, reflection. Especially practicing gratitude. Building supportive relationships outside the pastor role. Pursuing counselling, coaching, or spiritual direction. Engaging in lifelong learning, hobbies, or ministries of presence.

For us Roths our purpose statement about mental and emotional health is: *We continue to grow through exploring the Wonder in God's big world, investing in lifelong learning and curiosity that leads us to initiate with people, try new things, and broaden our perspective.*

This purpose statement comes with a warning! Last summer we were asked to help with an Evergreen Kid's Camp for 5th and 6th graders. We were thrilled. We're camp champions. We have a lot of experience. Our jobs? Jared was the bonfire builder to roast hot dogs and smores! I arranged locations and logistics. Watch out – your invitation to serve may come. But your contribution may be more presence than proclamation. It matters, but in new ways.

One of our coaches of our daily workout always ends the workout with a series of affirmations. I am strong! I am determined! I am courageous! love myself! What has Jesus said about you that you can create your own series of affirmations with? We listen to a lot of self-talk each day! We have 50,000-70,000 thoughts per day. 95% of these are repetitive and 80% are negative, influencing our feelings and actions. Let's counter that with what Jesus is saying about us!

I am loved!

I am forgiven!

I am gifted...! (Story from camp)

I am strong through Christ!

I have good to do today that Jesus planned a long time ago for me!

Now for the best part of our session – conversation. “How do we navigate these inner changes?” Discussion questions, that will appear briefly in your group, are asked from the point-of-view of planning toward retirement. If you already made that transition, restate the question in the past tense and address your experience in this area.

Please introduce yourself in your group. You can give your name, location, and role. A series of questions will be posted in the chat box. You might take a screen shot or photo, so you have access to them during your discussion. Pace yourselves so everyone can contribute. A countdown will let you know we're going to reconvene in this large group. One of you from each group will be prepared to briefly share an insight directly related to these questions. See you on the other side of some great discussion.

1. What fears or concerns surface when you think about letting go of vocational ministry?

2. How would you alter the Roth's Learning Purpose Statement to fit your story? *We continue to grow through exploring the Wonder in God's big world, investing in lifelong learning and curiosity that leads us to initiate with people, try new things, and broaden our perspective."*
3. What role could counseling, coaching, or peer support play for you?

Each group share an insight from the discussion that addresses one of these specific questions.

Resources: The Development Lattice on the NWD website is a Costco warehouse of high-value resources. In the "Future Planning" section you will find several featured suggestions. A link at the end of that sampler list is a document with 50 resources curated specifically for these webinars.

Among others we suggest:

Your Happiness Portfolio: It's Not About the Money by Marianne Oehser, 2019

The Happiness Curve: Why Life Gets Better After 50 by Jonathan Rauch, 2018

Mattering: The Secret to a Life of Deep Connection and Purpose by Jennifer Wallace, 2026

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: It's Impossible to be Spiritually Mature, while Remaining Emotionally Immature by Peter Scazzero, 2017

If you have a question or comment, put it in the chat box before you leave.

Next week we will discover what people who are happy, stay healthy, and who live the longest do that you can do to. Thanks for participating today.

Remember, as one recently retired leader said, "If you're in a hole, feeling like you don't matter, go somewhere you're needed, where you're relied on, where people depend on you. You have a responsibility to make yourself useful."