

### *3.0 PASTORAL CARE OF THE CLERGY*

Clergy can experience unseen stress due to the unrelenting pressure of shepherding people and because of pressure they can put on themselves to fulfill their calling. Not only is theirs a twenty-four/seven responsibility – one spiced with intermittent joys and burdened with unexpected tragedies, and perhaps the feeling of needing to always be on-stage – the ordained ministry can be a lonely calling on a pedestal where one can feel as though they are expected to manifest inner strength without revealing their human frailty.

Physicians, lawyers and clergy have the most problems with drug abuse, alcoholism, and suicide, according to many studies. Financial problems, for example, can be a serious source of stress and certainly many clergy have more than a fair share of it in their lives.

The relationship of the Bishop to his clergy is first and foremost a pastoral one that is founded in Christ's love. No ordained person seeking the confidential pastoral care of his or her Bishop will be thought of as any the less for it; no, on the contrary, it is a sign of inner strength to admit one's needs and to seek wise counsel, spiritual as well as practical support, in the safety of the pastoral relationship.

As pastor to the pastors, your Bishop wants to spend time with, to pray with, and to offer appropriate help to, any clergy who could use a helping hand in one of these areas (or any other area of concern) affecting their lives:

- \* Marriage or family issues
- \* Financial concerns
- \* Unresolved issues with the Vestry or congregation family
- \* Health issues
- \* Alcohol or substance abuse
- \* Anger
- \* Burnout
- \* Time management (e.g., over committing oneself)
- \* Depression
- \* Anxiety
- \* Compulsive behaviors (e.g., over-eating, sexual issues)
- \* Unemployment
- \* Any other difficult personal issue

Clergy and Wardens should be aware of signs that personal problems may be adversely affecting the physical or mental well-being of the clergy of your congregation. These signs could include:

- \* Problems with sleeping
- \* Fatigue
- \* Irritability/Anger
- \* Increased drinking of alcohol
- \* Misuse of medications

- \* Difficulty staying focused
- \* Persistent sadness
- \* Excessive Anxiety
- \* Apathy
- \* Simply not being able to function as well as normally

The well-being of clergy is foundational to the health of the congregations they serve. Therefore, the Bishop has no higher priority than the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of the pastors whom God has given into his care at this time in their lives, that he may strengthen and encourage (to paraphrase 1 Timothy 5:1) “older men as he would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.”

### **Intervention**

Should the Wardens believe that an intervention is necessary, they must inform the Bishop as soon as possible prior to taking action.

### **Intercessors**

Congregations and clergy will benefit by having a recognized ministry of intercession that supports its clergy on a daily basis. Seasoned members of the Church, in particular, may be called to this ministry, along with any in the congregation who have the Godly gift of intercession.

