



The Clergy Program *"Resilient Leadership"*

Davidson Clergy Center part of Davidson Centre for the Professions

Davidson, North Carolina

www.davcp.com

704-895-6487

The Clergy Program offers on-site programs available for the upcoming months of March, April, May, and June of 2013 for pastors, church professionals and other church leaders. The five-day intensive Program features daily individual and group consultations, fitness assessment and training, spiritual direction, and professional follow-up coaching.

Our consultants are highly experienced, and the program truly makes a difference in the lives and careers of pastors who have been through the Program—**helping clergy to become strong resilient leaders in their professional and personal lives.**

The Board of Pensions assists pastors offset program costs through the Shared Grant Fund. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance has long sponsored pastors affected by trauma.

If you have a pastor in your Presbytery interested in the Program or a referral, please contact us. We understand the unique stresses currently facing Presbyterians, and we are ready to welcome those pastors for a time of revitalization, renewal, and self-reflection.

Pastors register as openings are available and convenient to their personal schedule. Below is a recent article in the Charlotte Observer about clergy renewal and Davidson Clergy Center.

The Charlotte Observer

By Tim Funk

Posted: Monday, Jan. 07, 2013

Clergy Stress: A Common Challenge Davidson Center Offers Help



The Rev. Jody Seymour, Davidson United Methodist pastor, and the Rev. George Jacobs, head of the Davidson Centre for the Professions, know clergy burnout well.

On Sunday, the congregation at Myers Park Baptist Church heard about the Three Kings, sang “The First Noel,” shared the bread of communion, and prayed for those absent members in need of healing. Including their pastor. The Rev. Steve Shoemaker, a high-profile Charlotte preacher who has led the 2,200-member church for 13 years, recently entered a 30-day treatment center in Maryland.

In a Dec. 28 letter to his flock, Shoemaker mentioned years of struggling with depression and anxiety as well as his recent self-medication with alcohol. Last year, he was divorced from his wife, Cherrie.

“I’m physically, psychologically and spiritually depleted,” he wrote in the letter, “and must get help.” Though many of the details of his particular case remain private, Shoemaker’s decision to take a medical leave appears to shed a spotlight on clergy burnout, which is partly responsible for up to 1,500 pastors per month leaving their jobs.

Among the stresses: long hours, too little time with family, delayed or interrupted vacations, nonstop counseling of people in crisis, and pressure to have the perfect family.

“If you’re a good pastor, you’re never ‘off,’ ” said the Rev. Jody Seymour, pastor of Davidson United Methodist Church and author of “A Time for Healing: Overcoming the Perils of Ministry.” “If you’re on vacation and somebody dies, you have to come back.”

Increasingly, the costs of such stress can lead to drug and alcohol abuse, family breakups, and less passion for their vocation. The problem is so widespread, there’s a website – PastorBurnout.com – that posts statistics on the problem. Including this one: 45 percent of pastors in one survey said they’ve experienced depression or burnout to the extent that they needed to take a leave of absence from their ministry.

Shoemaker, who is expected to return to Myers Park Baptist in February, spoke to the church’s members again Sunday via a letter he sent from the treatment center to the Rev. Robin Coira, the church’s executive minister.

She read one line of it aloud: “I am where I need to be.”

Not all congregations support ministers who check out to get well, said Maria Hanlin, executive director of Mecklenburg Ministries: “When clergy make human mistakes, too often they are not given the grace they give to other people.”

But it was clear before and after Sunday’s service that members at Myers Park Baptist, a liberal church affiliated with the American Baptist Association, were committed to what Hanlin called “pastoring their pastor.”

George Campbell, a 20-year member who retired from Bank of America, saluted Shoemaker for “the bravery it took” to ask for help. “I wish I could put my arms around him now and give him a big hug,” Campbell said.

Beth Resler Walters, a 34-year member who read the Gospel about the Three Kings, said she and others in the congregation also recognize how tough it can be to shepherd a growing church with so many members.

“This church can be very demanding on a senior minister. It can become a 24/7 job. Even if you love the church, where do you set boundaries?” she said. “I’m glad he’s getting this absolute break. ... I think people here have the heart for Steve that he has for other people. And I hope this (support for Shoemaker) can be a model for other churches, that the care needs to go two ways. ”

A center offers help

Clergy burnout is not new. And especially in recent years, various groups – including denominations, universities and various centers and institutes – have tried to come to the rescue.

North Carolina is in the forefront of that move.

Since it opened 10 years ago, the Davidson Centre for the Professions has worked with more than 500 clergy from around the world who needed renewal – often after overwhelming stress. (The center started out working with clergy but has expanded to include lawyers and doctors).

The center, in downtown Davidson, offers counseling, life coaching, spiritual direction, fitness assessments and small-group sessions for clergy with a wide variety of challenges: military chaplains coming from Iraq and Afghanistan, ministers who have worked through natural and man-made disasters – a minister whose church was swept away by Hurricane Sandy is due to arrive soon – and clergy going through everything from the loss of a job to separation from a spouse.

Like those in other helping professions, clergy tend to overwork.

“There’s no fine line between who you are and what you do – you’re always on, you’re never not a minister,” said the Rev. George Jacobs, a Presbyterian ministry who directs the Davidson center.

Elsewhere in North Carolina, the Duke (University) Clergy Health Initiative offers programs for United Methodist ministers in the state.

Davidson United Methodist pastor Seymour, who is active at the Davidson program and has long worked with fellow clergy who need help, said ministers also need to remember to tend to their own spiritual and human needs.

“My favorite expression,” he said he tells ministers who work so hard for others that they neglect themselves, “is: ‘You can get awfully thirsty giving other people water.’”

Read more here: <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2013/01/07/3768966/myers-park-baptist-pastor-takes.html#storylink=cpy>