

Management Skills:

A Crucial and Frequently Overlooked Element of Self-Care

Like most clergy, you probably didn't decide to become a pastor because you were drawn to the management responsibilities embedded in the role. However, as you have moved through your ministry, you may well be finding yourself spending more time on management and administration than what you would prefer – at the expense of being able to focus on more fulfilling aspects of your ministry.

Management and leadership skills are often some of the most frequent derailleurs of effective ministries, yet they are often among the most overlooked elements of pastoral self-care. Research indicates that up to 90% of clergy feel inadequately trained to lead a congregation.¹ Moreover, while a majority of pastors feel that



seminary prepared them well for preaching, pastoral care and providing spiritual guidance, a much smaller percentage feel their seminary experience prepared them adequately (“completely” or “quite a bit”) in the areas of conflict mediation (26%), organizational leadership (22%), developing lay leaders (20%), supervising others (10%) and handling finances and administration (9%).² A 2017 study published by the Barna Group identified that the top eight areas of ministry for which pastors wish they had been better prepared all relate to management and leadership responsibilities (including handling people problems, administrative burden, conflict, delegation and training, and church politics).³ As a result, it is not surprising that most pastors find management and leadership responsibilities to be less personally meaningful for them than elements of their pastorate⁴ or that they spend far more time on administrative related tasks than they believe would be ideal.⁵

The leadership and management challenges that clergy face are complicated by a misalignment in leadership expectations between pastors their congregations. This misalignment occurs on several fronts. First, pastors face an unparalleled range of responsibilities and required competencies that is far broader than the requirements of virtually any other profession. Not only do pastors feel the pressure to deliver in each of these areas, but few of their congregants realize the incredible breadth of the demands placed on them. In fact, the vast majority of parishioners only experience or see a small subset of the wide range of the responsibilities that their pastor performs -- potentially resulting in both underappreciation of the pastor's performance and also unrealistic expectations regarding what the pastor can realistically get to in a given day, week or year. Second, while congregants look to clergy to fill

the roles of spiritual leader, shepherd, and counselor or caregiver, pastors also find themselves as essentially the CEO, COO, and CFO of a small to medium-sized non-profit organization. In addition to all of the core pastoral duties a pastor has on their plate, most congregations look to their pastors to help substantively define the vision and direction of the church, as well as to make sure that the “trains run on time” as the church strives to fulfill that vision. This requires a tremendous range of management competencies, including vision setting, managing finances, leading and supervising staff, developing and motivating lay leadership, managing conflict, utilizing influence skills, change management, and board management, among others. Finally, this element of pastoral leadership is further complicated by the fact that congregants are also “consumers”, de-facto benefactors of clergy, and evaluators of the pastor’s job performance who often have hiring or firing influence.

The challenge for pastors is significant. One retired pastor put it this way, “As pastors, we often don’t see leadership or management skills as part of the call. But we get stymied by this stuff – it gets in the way of what we want to do or feel called to do; and in the worst case, it derails us...”⁶ Research supports his statement. When pastors who experienced forced terminations were asked to identify the most significant sources of tension in their ministry, five of the top seven reasons identified related to management gaps (including inability to manage unrealistic expectations, conflicting visions for the church, and personality conflicts).⁷

My belief is that many pastors do not consider leadership and management skill development when they think about and determine their self-care focus areas or their self-care routine. In fact, management skill development may often be a self-care area where the investment of time and energy could provide a most significant payback in terms of both pastoral effectiveness and job satisfaction.

As you reflect on the question of whether your self-care and your calling could be strengthened by further developing your leadership and management skills, a couple of important questions to ask might be what leadership and management skill areas are strongest or are you most confident in, and what are the areas where your skills are less developed or where you are least confident? While you may be able to identify these areas without assistance, it may also be helpful to gain input from colleagues, staff, or key lay leaders. In addition, a simple Pastoral Leadership & Management Skills Assessment can be found attached to this article or online at www.NorthernElmMentoringGroup.com/Resources/Assessments. Relatedly, I encourage you to consider utilizing self-diagnostic tools that are readily available to help assess and prioritize developmental leadership and management competencies. Additional self-diagnostic tools that are readily available to help include management style and personality testing (including the DiSC model, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Enneagram) and conflict management style testing (Thomas-Killmann Conflict Management Assessment).

Once you have identified what management areas you would like to further develop, it is helpful to formalize a development plan and determine what additional outside resources you could engage to help you in your efforts. One approach might be to explore courses and continuing education opportunities that are targeted to meet your management development priorities. Sources might include denominational resources, local colleges and universities, as well as courses conducted by the American Management Association (AMA). In addition, you might prayerfully consider engaging a leadership and



management mentor to walk alongside you. This could take a number of forms, including a peer mentoring relationship with a fellow pastor who has strong leadership and management skills, or utilizing a faith-based business leader as a leadership and management mentor. While the latter could come from within your congregation (if there is someone with whom you can have a fully safe and confidential relationship), you may instead consider exploring the potential of partnership with a professional leadership/management mentor (some may offer pro-bono services to pastors) or utilizing a faith-based business leader from another congregation.

It is easy to overlook management skills in your self-growth and continuing education plans. Making a commitment to further develop your management skills can be a significant step forward in your overall self-care, as well as in your desire and efforts to strengthen your calling and improve the satisfaction you take from your pastorate.

Reflection Questions:

- Do you find the management or administrative elements of your pastorate to be life-giving or life-draining? To what degree could your effectiveness and satisfaction with your calling be improved if you were more effective and efficient from a managerial standpoint?
- What are the three specific skills that would most effectively strengthen your leadership and management capabilities? How would these skills specifically improve your self-care and your effectiveness?
- What commitments are you willing to make to help make this happen? What outside resources are you willing to engage to walk alongside you and support you?

Notes

¹Krejcir, C. R. (2007). *Statistics on Pastors*.

<http://www.intotheyword.org/apps/articulos/default.asp?articleid=36562&columnid=3958>

²Gortner, D. (2014). *2014 Transition into Ministry Impact Study: Clergy Leadership for the 21st Century: Are We Up to the Task?* Virginia Theological Seminary.

³The State of Pastors: How Today's Faith Leaders Are Navigating Life and Leadership in an Age of Complexity. (2017). Barna Group. 66.

⁴*Summary Report: 2014 Statewide Survey of United Methodist Clergy in North Carolina* (p. 8). (n.d.). Duke Clergy Health Initiative. 18.

⁵Hoge, D., & Wenger, J. (2005). *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Ministry*. Wm Eerdmans Publishing. 118.

⁶Interview with Rev. Jack Craft, retired minister PCUSA. York, PA. April 2019.

⁷Barfoot, D. S., Winston, B. E., & Wickman, C. (2007). *Forced Pastoral Exits: An Exploratory Study*. Pastor in Residence.org.

Additional Resources:

If you are interested in a deeper exploration of the importance of pastoral leadership and management skills, I recommend several outstanding readings as well as two powerful ongoing support opportunities.



My favorite books with terrific insights into the importance of pastoral leadership and management skills include:

- *The Minister's MBA: Essential Business Tools for Maximum Ministry Success* (B&H Publishing Group) by George S. Babbes and Michael Zigarelli.
- *What They Didn't Teach You In Seminary: 25 Lessons for Successful Ministry In Your Church* (Baker Books) by James Emery White.
- *Today's Pastors: A Revealing Look at What Pastors Are Saying About Themselves, Their Peers, and the Pressures They Face* (Regal Books) by George Barna.
- *Faithful and Fractured: Responding to the Clergy Health Crisis* (Baker Academic) by Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Jason Byassee.

In addition, the Pastoral Respite Ministry at Silver Bay YMCA (Silver Bay, NY) offers online Pastoral Self-Care Cohorts where groups of pastors come together to support each other and explore different wellness topics, including leadership and management skills. Please contact Rev. Garth Allen (gallen@silverbay.org) or Rev. Bruce Tamlyn (btamlyn@silverbay.org) if you are interested in joining a pastoral self-care cohort or in initiating a spiritual direction relationship to further support your self-care efforts.

Finally, if you are interested in exploring either a short-term or ongoing mentoring relationship to strengthen your leadership and management skills, or to accompany you on your broader self-care commitment, please contact me at ChrisClark@NorthernElmMentoringGroup.com (additional information on mentoring services is available at www.NorthernElmMentoringGroup.com). All mentoring engagements are conducted on a pro-bono basis, with the request that participants prayerfully consider a donation to Silver Bay YMCA's Pastoral Respite Program in lieu of mentoring fees.

About The Author:

Chris Clark is a strategic, passionate, faith-based, retired executive with over 20 years of executive leadership with a successful global med-tech company, as well as extensive lay leadership experience. Chris seeks to help address what he refers to as "The Crisis in Comprehensive Pastoral Health" through public and lay advocacy, and by walking alongside pastors in individual mentoring relationships focused on providing leadership and management insights. You can learn more about Chris and his ministry, Northern ELM Mentoring Group, at www.NorthernElmMentoringGroup.com.





Pastoral Leadership & Management Skills -- Assessment Tool (rev 010422)

Instructions:

Please rate your level of confidence in the following specific leadership or management tasks (1 = not at all confident in my abilities in this area; 6 = highly confident in my abilities in this area).

I am confident in my ability to...

1.	Manage through a difficult interpersonal conflict with a key lay leader.	1 2 3 4 5 6
2.	Engage my congregation in a process to develop and implement an impactful and motivating vision and strategic plan that guides our future focus and efforts.	1 2 3 4 5 6
3.	Manage and be a steward of the church's finances.	1 2 3 4 5 6
4.	Run a strong hiring process that results in hiring the right people for any potential staff opening.	1 2 3 4 5 6
5.	Proactively develop and delegate to lay leaders in my congregation as an effective strategy for multiplying my/our ministry efforts.	1 2 3 4 5 6
6.	Clearly communicate goals and expectations to others.	1 2 3 4 5 6
7.	Gain the trust of others on staff and in the congregation, and to reinforce that trust through my actions and engagements.	1 2 3 4 5 6
8.	Communicate in a manner that helps others understand the principles or thinking behind my decisions.	1 2 3 4 5 6
9.	Define and implement a management process that helps ensure key strategies, projects, or programs move forward as needed.	1 2 3 4 5 6
10.	Keep a good work/life balance even during stressful periods at work (e.g., during Advent, Holy Week, difficult periods, etc.)	1 2 3 4 5 6
11.	Manage a challenging conflict where the Board and I are in disagreement.	1 2 3 4 5 6
12.	Work with lay leadership to create a culture that reinforces our stated core values.	1 2 3 4 5 6
13.	Ensure that my church has appropriate governance structures and systems in place (e.g, oversight, policies & procedures, etc.).	1 2 3 4 5 6
14.	Ensure our staff and key lay leadership are appropriately and consistently accountable for their performance, and in my ability to manage any performance gaps to successful outcomes.	1 2 3 4 5 6

I am confident in my ability to...

15.	Be intentional and effective in developing and equip staff and key laity to lead.	1 2 3 4 5 6
16.	Identify and manage expectations others might have of me, even if they are informal or unspoken.	1 2 3 4 5 6
17.	Motivate and empower others to accomplish more than they previously thought possible.	1 2 3 4 5 6
18.	Deliver constructive feedback to others (staff or lay leadership), even when it is awkward or I believe they may react negatively.	1 2 3 4 5 6
19.	Adapt how I engage with and manage others by meeting their unique needs and styles.	1 2 3 4 5 6
20.	Clearly identify my personal vision and goals, and to actively use these to anchor me during turbulent times and when facing key decisions.	1 2 3 4 5 6
21.	Successfully manage an interpersonal conflict with a key staff member or lay leader.	1 2 3 4 5 6
22.	Manage this congregation through a period of significant change (e.g., change in direction, new strategic plan, significant staff or lay leadership turnover, etc.).	1 2 3 4 5 6
23.	Talk with the congregation about money and financial matters (e.g., individual and communal stewardship, church financial matters, etc.).	1 2 3 4 5 6
24.	Identify when it is appropriate to fire a problem employee and to manage a fair and humane separation process that respects the needs of the employee and the needs of the church.	1 2 3 4 5 6
25.	Consistently delegate key projects to staff and lay leadership in a manner that develops their abilities and reinforces the critical roles they play for our church.	1 2 3 4 5 6
26.	Manage my own expectations of myself, ensuring that I have a realistic view of what I can and cannot accomplish.	1 2 3 4 5 6
27.	Demonstrate appropriate leadership presence, even when under pressure or when facing difficult situations.	1 2 3 4 5 6
28.	Consistently persuade and motivate others.	1 2 3 4 5 6
29.	Manage my time effectively, even during periods with heavy workloads and conflicting demands.	1 2 3 4 5 6
30.	Recognize the most important tasks/issues and effectively prioritizing my work to ensure I appropriate handle those items.	1 2 3 4 5 6

TABULATION:

Instructions: Add up the total scores (1-6) for each group of questions, as noted below. Categories with higher scores indicate areas or competencies in which you have the strongest confidence level in your abilities. Categories with lower scores indicate areas or competencies in which you are less confident in your abilities, and which may benefit from developmental focus or mentoring.

Conflict Management (questions 1, 11, 21)	Total Score	_____
Defining and Implementing a Strategic Plan & Vision (questions 2, 12, 22)	Total Score	_____
Financial Management and Governance (questions 3, 13, 23)	Total Score	_____
Personnel Management (questions 4, 14, 24)	Total Score	_____
Delegation and Development (questions 5, 15, 25)	Total Score	_____
Setting and Managing Expectations (questions 6, 16, 26)	Total Score	_____
Influencing Skills (questions 7, 17, 27)	Total Score	_____
Communication Skills (questions 8, 18, 28)	Total Score	_____
Management Processes (questions 9, 19, 29)	Total Score	_____
Personal Management (questions 10, 20, 30)	Total Score	_____