

# SUPPORTING LEADERS *Through*

PASTORAL CARE & DEVELOPMENT



northwest conference  
developing leaders. thriving churches.

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## WHAT IS PASTORAL CARE & DEVELOPMENT


In support of our mission to engage, empower and equip healthy, missional leaders we are committed to the care and development of our pastors and ministry staff. This includes focus on both personal and professional growth.

Ministry has become an increasingly challenging vocation because of the unique leadership dynamics in the local church setting. Difficult times are to be expected. Our intent is to be present for personal support and discernment during difficult and confusing times. We are also seeking to collect and develop resources that can be applied to the care and development of our pastors and ministry staff in the many unique seasons of life and varied ministry contexts.

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## WHY WE INVEST IN CARE & DEVELOPMENT OF MINISTRY STAFF

- ▶ Separate studies by the Alban Institute and Duke University reveal anywhere **between 50% and 85% of pastors leave ministry within the first 5 years out of seminary.**
- ▶ attrition included: **“We were not well connected,” “We did not see matters of self-care and self-discipline,”** and **“We were not able to manage or resolve conflict.”**
- ▶ We feel blessed to have the opportunity to try to **reverse the trend in our Conference.** To do that we are addressing some of the key risk factors mentioned above.
- ▶ A comprehensive study in 2004 by the Louisville Institute found key factors in clergy
- ▶ Ministry staff members are in positions of **great influence and great vulnerability.**

A photograph showing three individuals seated at a white table in a meeting room. On the left, a Black man with glasses and a red shirt is looking towards the center. In the middle, a man with a beard and a green jacket is smiling and looking towards the right. On the right, a woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a tan cardigan, is smiling and looking towards the center. A water bottle is on the table in front of the man in the green jacket. The background shows a wood-paneled wall and purple chairs.

“These days (and maybe every day) there is real tension between what the human soul needs in order to be truly well and what life in leadership encourages and even requires.”

– Ruth Haley Barton



## HEALTHY PEER CONNECTIONS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

We care deeply about our pastors and ministry staff. Knowing that we are better together, we seek to build and encourage healthy group connections and solid spiritual friendships. This happens through formal and informal gatherings.

The 15 NWC districts are drawn along geographic lines with anywhere from 5 to 12 churches per district. Most of these groups meet monthly during the school year.

The affinity groups are targeted at those with similar specializations, similar stages in their church development,

or similar places in their personal journey, such as:

- ▶ Camp Staff
- ▶ Chaplains
- ▶ Children and Family Pastors
- ▶ Church Planters
- ▶ Clergy Women
- ▶ Retired Pastors
- ▶ Revitalization Pastors
- ▶ Worship Leaders
- ▶ Youth Pastors

“Dallas Willard’s words that both stopped me and changed my life: ‘In the end, Keith, what God gets from your ministry for Him is you.’ I have found that when God stops us long enough to get us, others will stop and be caught up in what we are doing with Him.”

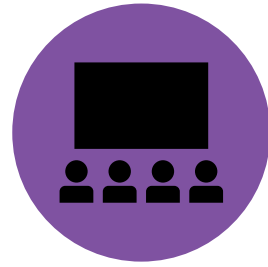
– Keith Meyer, Pastor of Hope Covenant Church, St. Cloud, MN



## ONE-ON-ONE

We have many opportunities for counseling, referrals, spiritual direction and coaching in order to help pastors navigate challenging personal or professional situations like job loss, marriage trauma and health crisis—to name a few.

It is also a privilege to serve in some very significant public services like the installation of pastors and ministry staff or funerals for clergy or clergy spouses.



## CONNECTING YOUR MINISTRY STAFF WITH GREAT RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

We continue to build lists of resources that will contribute to the care and development of pastors. The lists include: counseling services, books, classes, seminars, retreat centers.

As a way of modeling our value of connections, we carry out our work in partnership with other groups that have common work and mission.

This includes local, regional and national partnerships.

### LOCAL

The Clergy Care Team includes pastors from each district who are in quarterly contact with the Covenant credentialed clergy in their districts. We work with the

Clergy Care Committee to gather the whole team twice a year for training and collaboration.

### REGIONAL

There is an ongoing partnership with the Officers of the Ministerial Association in helping with the planning of events for our Covenant credentialed staff. When the Committee on Ministerial Standing meets to interview people for license or ordination,

we sit as advisory members on the interview teams. The Spiritual Directors Network is another valuable resource.

### NATIONAL

The Department of the Ordered Ministry staff in Chicago are our partners in the care of pastors going through crisis and in the development of pastoral skills and stamina through the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program.

“The people who are most in position to enhance the health of a system are precisely those who have been empowered to be responsible, namely the leaders. They are the chief stewards, they are the people who are willing to be accountable for the welfare of the system. They set the tone, invite collaboration, make decisions, map a direction, establish boundaries, encourage self-expression, restrain what threatens the integrity of the whole, and keep the system’s direction aligned with purposes.”

- *“Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach” by Peter Steinke*

## HEALTHY LEADERS ARE ESSENTIAL TO THRIVING CHURCHES

Such a job description for a leader requires support and encouragement. We need to provide opportunities for such leaders to be strengthened in their souls. Parker Palmer writes in “A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life”:

“The soul is like a wild animal—tough, resilient, resourceful, savvy. It knows how to survive in hard places. But it is also shy. Just like a wild animal, it seeks safety in the dense underbrush.”

Today’s challenging environment often sends

the leader’s soul into the underbrush. While leaders are usually in very visible roles, their souls can go into hiding; sometimes hiding not only from the things that threaten but even the things that would nurture them, like their own

personal relationship with the Lord.

Among all the things we are about, helping pastors cultivate and maintain a close relationship with Jesus is the greatest leadership asset we can encourage.

*If you’d like to get involved, please contact:*

Hollis Kim  
Director of Pastoral Care & Development  
(800) 756-6692 • (612) 721-4893  
hollis@northwestconference.org







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**The Northwest Conference  
of the Evangelical Covenant Church**

3106 47<sup>th</sup> Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55406

(800) 756-6692 • (612) 721-4893 • [northwestconference.org](http://northwestconference.org)