

# Sacred Minds: Supporting Mental Health in Ministry

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NAMI Will Grundy

# National Alliance on Mental Illnesses (NAMI)

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NAMI Provides:

- **Education** – programs that increase understanding
- **Support** – peer-led groups for individuals and families
- **Advocacy** – promoting awareness and policy change
- **Resources & Referrals** – connecting people to services

# What is Mental Health?

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- We all experience mental health
- Being mentally healthy means:
  - Being able to enjoy life and feel good
  - Dealing with emotions, stress and challenges in positive ways
- Mental health can be maintained with good habits

# What are Mental Health Conditions?

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## Mental Conditions ARE:

- Medical conditions are like physical conditions
- Conditions that change the way people think, feel and act
- Common and treatable

## Mental Conditions ARE NOT:

- Anyone's fault
- Something to be ashamed of
- Limiting-you can still achieve your goals

# Common Mental Health Challenges Among Clergy

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- Depression: Persistent sadness, loss of motivation, or disconnection
- Anxiety: Excessive worry, tension, or racing thoughts
- Burnout: Emotional exhaustion, cynicism, or loss of joy in ministry

# Common Mental Health Challenges Among Clergy

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- Compassion Fatigue: Feeling drained from constant caregiving
- Substance Abuse: Using alcohol, drugs or overusing medication to cope with stress
- Gambling, shopping, internet, sex and food addictions

\* Disclaimer: You can't fix what you won't face \*

# Sacred Work, Strained Lives

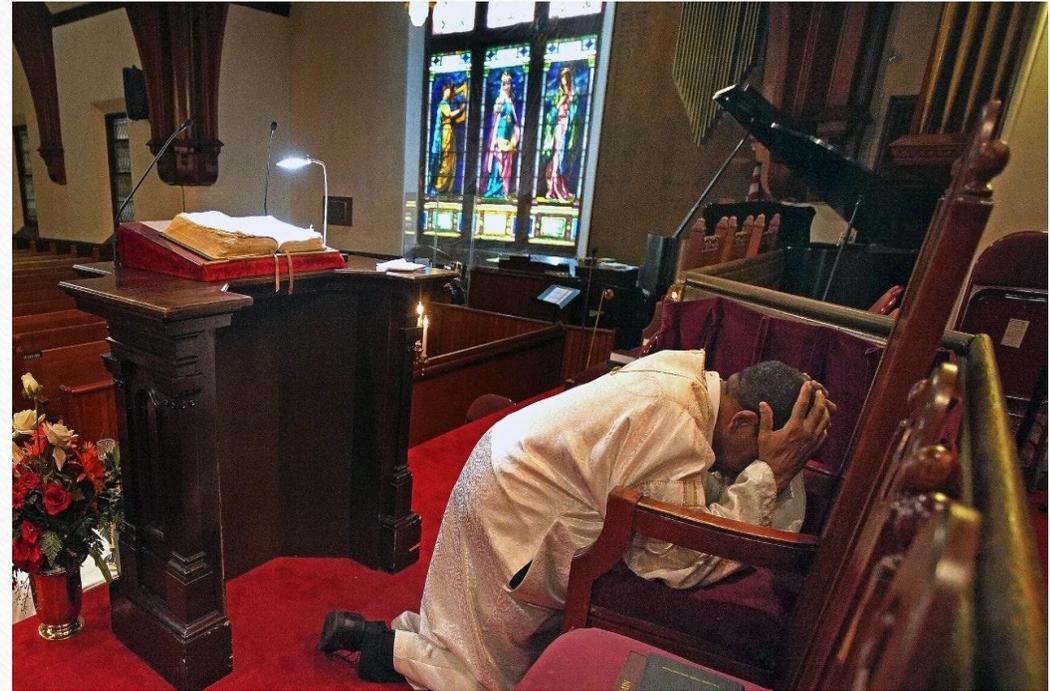
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“Clergy now face higher rates of obesity, hypertension, and depression than most Americans. Their use of antidepressants has increased, while life expectancy has fallen. Many would change jobs if they could.”

New York Times, August 2020

# Pastor Burnout by the Numbers

- 40% of pastors and 47% of spouses report burnout and unrealistic expectations.
- 50% feel unable to meet ministry demands.
- 45% have taken leave for depression or burnout.
- 70% lack close friendships.
- Clergy, doctors, and lawyers face the highest rates of addiction and suicide.



# Reasons for Burnout



**24/7 Mentality:** Many pastors can't "turn off" work, even on days off, leaving no time to rest.

**Expectations:** Trying to meet everyone's needs leads to exhaustion and burnout.

**No Friends:** Without safe, honest friendships, pastors lose needed emotional outlets.

**No Life Outside Church:** Few hobbies or healthy activities beyond ministry increase stress.

**Unwillingness to Seek Help:** Many struggle silently instead of reaching out for support.

# How Stigma Plays a Role

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*Stigma keeps many clergy silent about their struggles. Fear of judgment, shame, or appearing “weak” often prevents pastors from seeking help. But silence only deepens suffering. Healing begins with honesty.*

— Words from Dr. E. Dewey Smith





 LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH

# Sunday Worship Experience

W/ DR. E. DEWEY SMITH

# Vicarious Trauma

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The emotional and psychological strain from continually witnessing others' pain or trauma.

- Feeling numb, irritable, or overwhelmed
- Heightened anxiety or sadness
- Intrusive thoughts or images
- Trouble sleeping
- Withdrawing from others or ministry
- Turning to food, alcohol, or other coping habits

# Denial and Its Effects

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## Short-Term Relief

- Offers emotional protection and a sense of control during crisis.
- *Reduced Anxiety*: Temporarily shields the mind from painful reality.

## Long-Term Impact

- Delays healing and needed help
- Strains relationships
- Increases emotional and physical suffering

# Acceptance isn't defeat, it's agreement with truth.

And in truth, there is freedom.” — *John 8:32*



- **Peace:** Brings calm and reduces inner conflict.
- **Spiritual Growth:** Inspires trust in God.
- **Resilience:** Builds strength for future challenges.
- **Openness:** Fosters empathy and understanding.
- **Balance:** Unites faith with real-life truth.

# Wellness Tools

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- Prayer
- Therapy (Individual or Group)
- Exercise
- Medication
- Diet
- Practice Gratitude
- Attend Support Groups
- Self Honesty
- Personal Devotion
- Sleep Hygiene

# Closing Reflection

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- You can't pour from an empty cup.
- Caring for your own mental health allows you to serve others with compassion, clarity, and strength.
- Take one small step this week toward rest, connection, or self-care.

# Helpful Resources

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- **NAMI FaithNet:** [nami.org/FaithNet](https://nami.org/FaithNet)
- **NAMI Helpline:** 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** Call or text **988** anytime
- **Illinois Warmline:** 866-359-7953
- **Illinois Mental Health Living Rooms**
- **PsychologyToday.com** – Find therapists near you
- **PCP:** Consult your Primary Care Physician

# Contact Information

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Q & A

The image features three golden, three-dimensional characters—'Q', '&', and 'A'—arranged horizontally on a dark, textured wooden surface. The characters are highly reflective, with bright highlights and deep shadows that emphasize their metallic texture and 3D form. The wooden background consists of vertical planks with a prominent grain pattern, and the lighting is dramatic, coming from the upper right, which casts long, dark shadows and creates a warm, golden glow around the characters. The overall composition is clean and modern, with a focus on texture and light.