



Flourish! Self-Care Toolkit

A practical and helpful toolkit for churches on
promoting emotional wellbeing

FLOURISH!



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Introduction

A journey from 'workaholism' to self-care consciousness.

This resource is created in recognition of the need for self-care practice to protect the health and wellbeing of Clergy as they take on their important and valued work with individuals, families and communities who are living with ever increasing levels of emotional distress.

In his book *Riding The Dragon* Robert Wicks draws the following analogy between ministers and camels: "Camels are fascinating animals. They can walk through the desert carrying their cargo for days without water. They are able to carry very heavy burdens. Yet, even these wonderfully sturdy animals will dry up, fall down, and die if they are unable to find water and rest at some point . . . Like sturdy animals, ministers are able to journey with others in the most difficult circumstances, helping them to shoulder their burdens through psychological and spiritual deserts, but for them to survive and thrive they must find oases of peace and joy or they will dry up themselves . . . And so they need to be aware of their own oases and renewal zones. Renewal zones are essential if we are to remain compassionate and grateful."



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Often we go too long without checking in with our renewal zones and we become stressed. There is good stress. The pathway to flourishing - It's when we're doing what we feel called to do and when we're positive and eager about the challenges we face.

There is bad stress, the pathway to burnout: "a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion marked by physical depletion and chronic fatigue, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and by development of negative self-concept and negative attitudes towards work, life and other people.", as defined by Christine Maslach in her article "Burned-Out".

(www.maslach.socialpsychology.org/publications)

The latter is not a destination any of us want to reach and **it can be avoided** by taking responsibility for our self-care .

It is our hope that this resource will encourage you to reflect on your own renewal zones and needs for incorporating self-care practice into the heart of delivering your important vocational work. We hope that you enjoy browsing through the content, that you enjoy the beautiful visual imagery contributed by local photographers.

Most of all we hope that you will feel encouraged to take action on your own self-care practice.

It's when we're doing what we feel called to do and when we're positive and eager about the challenges we face.

What is self-care ?

Simply put, self-care practice is learning about and integrating what nourishes and renews us personally and professionally.



How do we know that we need self-care?

Signs: Our bodies have powerful inbuilt feedback systems which are available to us and enable us to sense when we are experiencing distress.

Our Emotional Feedback System is actively communicating and helping us to notice when we are and are not congruent and aligned physically, mentally and spiritually. Accepting our emotions unconditionally is a starting point, being curious about what it is they are telling us about what is working and not working for us right now.

Resistance is another powerful physical feedback system within our bodies. Notice any resistance that you might have to an emotion, an activity, a situation. If you sense that you are forcing yourself, pushing through a situation or experiencing resistance, it is your body's way of helping you recognise more consciously that you are out of alignment. Something now needs to shift or change for health to be restored. What will enable you to feel more personally aligned...

Physical Feedback:

When your body is not receiving what is necessary for its health, welfare, maintenance and protection it has a powerful feedback system which alerts you. This can be manifested in a range of physical symptoms ranging from minor ailments through to debilitating illness.

Emotional Signs

- Upset
- Confused
- Anxious
- Low Mood
- Irritation
- Guilt
- Shame
- Anger
- Fear
- Worry
- Overwhelmed
- Blame
- Fluctuating moods

Resistance Signs

Generally heard in the inner voice:

- I don't want to do this
- Why are they making me do this?
- Why is this happening to me?
- I don't want to go but I have to go
- If I just do this it will all be better
- I can't stop now

Physical Signs

- Reoccurring cold, flu
- Exhaustion and fatigue
- Higher heart rate
- Change in breathing
- Breathing from the chest
- Poor concentration
- Over/under eating
- Over/under sleeping
- Reduced Libido
- Aches and pains
- Immune system compromised.

Pressures ~ Compassion ~ Rest The Minister's dilemma

Pressures placed upon those engaged in ministry are not new. Already in the gospels we find evidence that stress and strain were part of the life of Jesus' co-workers. In Mark's gospel there is a passage in which we see Jesus manifesting concern for His disciples' well-being. Jesus said to them: You must come away to some lonely place, all by yourselves and rest for a while; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. (Mark 6:31). In the verses that follow we read: The disciples went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves, the people saw this and many could guess where they were going; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. Jesus was moved with compassion when he saw the crowd, He took pity on them and began to minister to them in their need (Mark 6:32). Clearly, Jesus discerned on that day that the people's clamour for help simply could not be ignored; He esteemed that their needs merited immediate attention.

If, on occasion, Jesus felt obliged to delay His plans for rest and recuperation before the pressing demands made of Him, He was never entirely deterred from creating the time and finding the space to recoup His expended energies. Jesus knew that He needed time to commune with His Father in prayer if He was to be able to respond to the many demands made upon Him. We are told how Jesus would often go off to a place apart in the early morning. Christ would get away before those around Him were able to hinder Him from doing so.

The gospels also show us how Jesus invited His disciples to come aside with Him to lonely places. The Transfiguration was one such moment. What happened on the Mount of Transfiguration had for purpose to enlighten and prepare those Jesus associated with Him in His ministry for what lay ahead of them, to help them make sense out of it. Albert Camus' insight comes to mind here: In order to understand the world, one has to turn away from it on occasion. Christian ministers do well to apply this principle to their ministry. Times of quiet retreat can help them better discern and respond to people's needs.

If Christian ministers today are called to be compassionate as Jesus was during His earthly ministry, this will sometimes lead them to discern that well-laid plans for respite and rest just have to be delayed on occasion; but, if they are true to Jesus' example, they will be careful not to completely ignore their need for regular recuperation. It is indispensable for those who care for others not only to find, but to actively create, time and the restful space wherein they can revive their drooping spirits (Psalm 23).

Ministers' own well-being is enhanced by them taking desert periods, finding quiet, uncluttered places in which to experience restoration. They need to relax and recreate. In recreation they can find themselves quite literally re-created.



Scriptural support for self-care:

Considerations when introducing self-care practice



Wisdom:

Prayer... Give me the wisdom to take good care of myself so that I may be equipped to care for others from a healthy place.

Clarity:

Be clear with your reasons for self-care practice.

Balance:

Self-care practice requires us to attend to many facets of our health and wellbeing. Self-care practice means seeking to balance these many facets and weave them into the fabric of our lives. The 6 key elements of self-care can be described as physical health, emotional health, psychological health, spiritual health, personal health and career/work health.

Mind Shift:

Schedule work and commitments around your self-care practice rather than planning self-care practice around your work and commitments.

10 Minute Ideas:

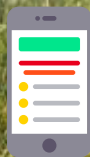


Caregiver self-care and well-being is often overlooked in this fast-paced world with the multitude of requirements and demands put on clergy, whether it be increased paperwork, productivity, or stretching ourselves thin in order to help more parishioners. So how do we self-care? How do we unwind from the intensity of our work and issues we face?

The answers to those questions will be unique to each of us, yet have common threads as well. Some of us will find our renewal zones in gardening, crafting, socialising with friends, going to the cinema, dancing, exercising, reading and even in ironing! The list is endless and your list of self-care activities will be unique to your personality, interests, and likes.

There are however commonalities in our self-care activities these can be described as the need for personal outlets away from the job, the need to find activities that bring us pleasure and replenish us, the need for supervision and mentoring, and the need to connect with our kindred spirits, caregivers like us who can identify with the stressors that accompany our line of work.

Being time poor doesn't mean self-care practice cannot happen, these activities will help support an aspect of self-care on those super busy days where 10 minutes is all you have. Keep in mind though that self-care practice requires a wider more holistic and balanced commitment and approach.



Take Notice



- Take ten minutes in the morning to sit with yourself and to notice how you are feeling, physically, emotionally, spiritually.
- Take ten minutes before bed and complete a personal reflection journal



Move



- Change your state by moving - vary where you sit
- Get out of the car and walk
- Plan to arrive 10 minutes early to house calls, hospital visits and meetings and take this time to listen to an uplifting or mind clearing pod cast or walk around the vicinity

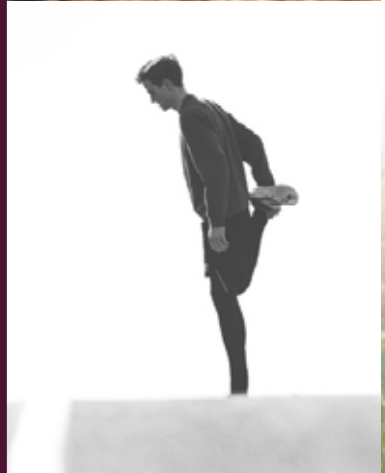


Stretch

Your 10min work out!



- Rotate slowly 8 times in both directions your ankles, knees, hips, shoulders and wrists.
- Neck: Gently move your neck from centre in the direction of your right shoulder, hold for 5 seconds and bring back to the centre and hold for 5 seconds. Then repeat to the left. Repeat this 4 times to loosen your neck.
- Power Stretch: Feet apart, arms above your head - stretch and hold for 2 minutes.
- Shake it all out and you're ready to go!



Breathe



- Breathe...
- in for a count of 2 out for a count of 2,
- in for a count of 3 out for a count of 3,
- in for a count of 4 out for a count of 4, repeat up to 10 times



Dream



- Find your favourite Guided Meditations. There are a host available online which you can download to your phone or tablet - somewhere that you can access them easily. Choose a few with different objectives e.g. one that is relaxing, one that is motivating, one that is reassuring, one that allows you to escape etc. Also think about their durations - it is useful to have a 2min, 5min and 7min version at hand. Now it's as simple as sitting back, closing your eyes and listening.
- Read inspirational poetry or literature

Be



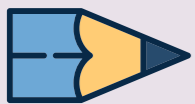
Complete a mindfulness Body Scan
(on opposite page)

Switch Off



- Switch off your phone,
- Mute your emails,
- Switch off your television

Create



- Sing
- Sketch
- Colour in a Mandala



The Body Scan 10 Minute Idea

1. Find a chair in a quiet place where you will be undisturbed and feel comfortable.
2. Wherever you are you become mindful of your breath and the sensations in your body.
3. You begin to become aware of where your body makes contact with the chair and how that feels.
4. Focusing on each out breath you allow yourself to let go as you sink a little deeper into the chair.
5. Set an intention for this practice "I aim to bring awareness to the sensations in my body as I tune into how I am right now".
6. Now bring your awareness to the physical sensations in the lower abdomen, becoming aware of the changing patterns of sensations in the abdominal wall as you breathe in, and as you breathe out. Take a few minutes to feel the sensations as you breathe in and as you breathe out.
7. Having connected with the sensations in the abdomen, bring the focus or "spotlight" of your awareness down the left leg, into the left foot, and out to the toes of the left foot. Focus on each of the toes of the left foot in turn, bringing a gentle curiosity to investigate the quality of the sensations you find, perhaps noticing the sense of contact between the toes, a sense of tingling, warmth, or no particular sensation. Feel the left foot in your sock or shoes and notice the sensation, the pressure, the feeling. Become aware of your heel, and the instep and notice how they are making contact. As you do this you slowly bring your attention to your right foot and repeat the exercise, focusing at first on each of your toes and then right through your right foot.
8. All the time breathing in and out - no right no wrong breathing, just perfect breath creating life, in and out.
9. When you are ready for an in-breath, feel or imagine the breath entering the lungs, and then passing down into the abdomen, into the left leg and into the left foot, and out to the toes of the left foot.
10. Then, on the out-breath, feel or imagine the breath coming all the way back up, out of the foot, into the leg, up through the abdomen, chest, and out through the nose. As best you can, continue this for a few breaths, breathing down into the toes, and back out from the toes.

11. It may be difficult to get the hang of this just practice this “breathing into” as best you can, approaching it playfully.

12. Repeat this for the right toes and foot. On the in-breath feeling or imagining the breath entering the lungs, and then passing down into the abdomen, into the right leg and into the right foot, and out to the toes of the right foot.

13. Allow the awareness to begin to expand up through the body, from the feet and into the ankle through its bones and joints, moving your focus up towards the lower left leg—the calf, shin, knee, thigh, pelvic area, back, abdomen, chest, fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, head, and face.

14. In each area, as best you can, bring the same detailed level of awareness and gentle curiosity to the bodily sensations present. As you leave each major area, “breathe in” to it on the in-breath, and let go of that region on the out-breath.

15. When you become aware of tension, or sensations in a particular part of the body, you can “breathe in” to them—using the in-breath gently to bring awareness right into the sensations, and, as best you can, have a sense of their letting go, or releasing, on the out-breath.

16. The mind will inevitably wander away from the breath and the body from time to time. That is entirely normal. It is what minds do. When you notice it, gently acknowledge it, noticing where the mind has gone off to, and then gently return your attention to the part of the body you intended to focus on. Acknowledge disruptive sounds in the background and return your attention back to the breath and into the body where you intend to focus.

17. After you have “scanned” the whole body in this way, spend a few minutes being aware of a sense of the body as a whole, and of the breath flowing freely in and out of the body.

SELF-CARE IS A **PRIORITY** AND NECESSITY - NOT A LUXURY - IN THE WORK THAT WE DO



Self-care Wellbeing Audit

This assessment tool provides an overview of effective strategies to maintain self-care. After completing the full assessment, choose one item from each area that you will actively work to improve.

Using the scale below, rate the following areas in terms of frequency:

5 = Frequently 4 = Occasionally 3 = Rarely 2 = Never 1 = It never occurred to me

Physical self-care

- Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- Eat healthy
- Exercise
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when needed
- Get massages
- Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that is fun
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take vacations
- Take day trips or mini-vacations
- Make time away from telephones
- Other:

Psychological self-care

- Make time for self-reflection
- Have your own personal psychotherapy
- Write in a journal
- Read literature that is unrelated to work
- Do something at which you are not the expert or in charge
- Decrease stress in your life
- Let others know different aspects of you
- Notice your inner experience—listen to your thoughts, judgments, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings
- Engage your intelligence in a new area, e.g. go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, theatre performance
- Practice receiving from others
- Be curious
- Say “no” to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Other:

Emotional self-care

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people
- Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself
- Love yourself
- Re-do favorite books / favorite movies
- Identify comforting activities, objects, relationships, places and seek them out
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Express your outrage in social action, letters and donations, marches, protests
- Other:

Spiritual self-care

- Make time for reflection
- Spend time with nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish your optimism and hope
- Be aware of nonmaterial aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life
- Meditate
- Pray
- Sing
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which you believe
- Read inspirational literature (talks, music, etc.)
- Other:

Workplace or Professional self-care

- Take a break during the workday (e.g. lunch)
- Take time to chat with co-workers
- Make quiet time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
- Set limits with your clients and colleagues
- Balance your caseload so that no one day or part of a day is “too much”
- Arrange your work space so it is relaxing and comforting
- Get regular supervision or consultation
- Negotiate for your needs (benefits, pay raise)
- Have a peer support group
- Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest
- Other:

Balance

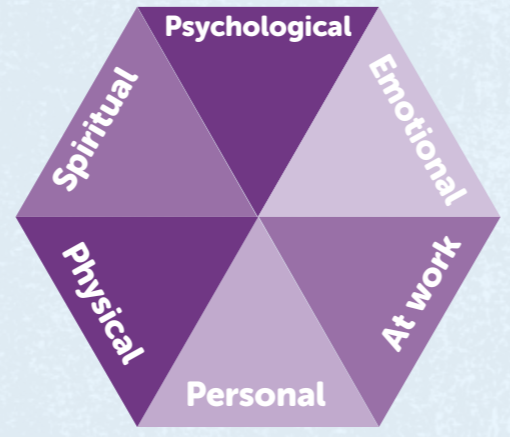
- Strive for balance within your work-life and workday
- Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play and rest

What stands out that you want to improve on most?

What are other clergy doing for their self-care practice?

✓ Physical self-care

- Visit the doctor
- Dentist appointments
- Eating healthy
- Regular Exercise
- Quality Sleep
- Planned Holidays
- Regular time out
- Massage & Alternative therapies
- Baths
- Fostering Relationships
- Switch off days (the phone)



✓ Psychological self-care ideas

- Self reflection
- Therapy
- Journal
- Self Awareness
- Self Help
- Ask for help
- Receive help
- Support Groups
- Acknowledge your positive qualities
- Sensory work eg Relax in the sun, Aromatherapy / Draw / Paint / Music/ Dance / Garden



✓ Emotional self-care

- Affirmations
- Self love
- Self Compassion
- Permission to cry
- Social Justice Work
- Laughter
- Watch a funny movie
- Find a hobby
- Reward yourself
- Affection and touch
- Pet time
- Practice Forgiveness



✓ Spiritual self-care ideas

- Time in Nature
- Spiritual community
- Meditate
- Sing
- Play
- Dance
- Swim in the ocean
- Watch sunrises and sunsets
- Spiritual mentors
- Foster self-forgiveness



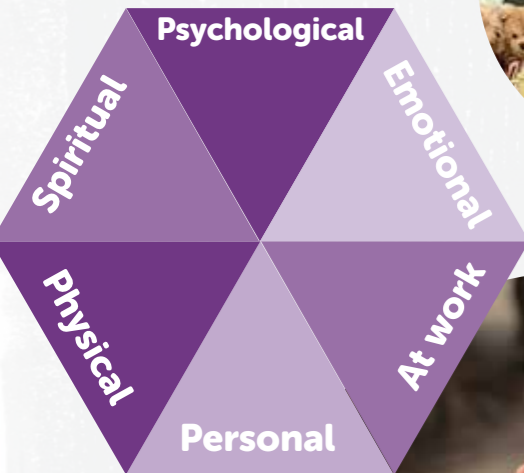
✓ At work self-care ideas

- Time for lunch and breaks
- Set boundaries
- Know your limits
- Say no to overtime
- Leave work at work - time off from work is clear
- Supervision regularly
- Support from colleagues
- Take mental health days
- Learn new things
- Holidays



✓ Personal self-care ideas

- Personal Development
- Setting Goals
- Setting Intentions
- Make vision boards
- Foster friendships
- Go on dates
- Coffee with friends
- Relax
- Write a poem or book
- Spend time with family
- Cook
- Learn something new



SELF-CARE IS
NOT SELFISH. YOU
CANNOT SERVE FROM
AN EMPTY VESSEL



You can download these quotes as a motivational powerpoint here: www.wewillflourish.com



Learning to live by the unforced rhythm of grace ~ Freely and Lightly

There is a well-known passage in Matthew's gospel wherein we hear Christ inviting His disciples to come to Him for rest, so that they may learn from His way of being. Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this gospel passage captures the essence of what Jesus has to say to those who may be feeling weary in ministry today. Peterson's The Message renders Christ's words recorded in Matthew 11:28-30 in contemporary idiom: Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. At this point Peterson introduces a beautiful phrase which is worth pondering. He places on Christ's lips this instruction: Learn from me the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

Christian ministers do not always live freely and lightly. They often live with a strong sense of duty and carry a heavy weight of responsibility. How many ministers truly respect the unforced rhythms of grace in their lives? To fail to heed the warning not to strain oneself unduly can lead many well-intentioned ministers to follow a dangerous course of action and, ultimately, to act irresponsibly – in their own regard and in other people's regard as a consequence. It costs a person dearly to lose their proper rhythm. A life out of sync becomes unhealthy and is at risk of break-down. Compassion fatigue sets in when a minister's heart is permanently under strain. A story from the early Christian monastic tradition captures this well. In the Sayings of the Desert Fathers we read a story which speaks of the need to relax before one reaches breaking point. It encourages God's servants who are under strain to enjoy life a little more, so as to better serve the needs of those they are called to care for. A hunter in the desert saw Abba Anthony enjoying himself with the brethren and he was shocked. Wanting to show him that it was necessary sometimes to meet the needs of the brethren, the old man said to him, 'Put an arrow in your bow and shoot it.' So he did. The old man then said, 'Shoot yet again,' and the hunter replied 'If I bend my bow so much I will break it.' Then the old man said to him, 'It is the same with the work of God. If we stretch the brethren beyond measure they will soon break. Sometimes it is necessary to come down to meet their needs.' When he heard these words the hunter was pierced by compunction and, greatly edified by the old man, he went away. As for the brethren, they went home strengthened. It is surely encouraging to see how the austere desert saint, Anthony the Great, insisted upon the importance of relaxation in order to serve God and others without being stressed and strained to the point of breakdown.

The first step in many pastor's efforts to arrive at a healthier life-style will be to recover the unforced rhythm of grace in their lives. For some who have always pushed themselves in their care for others, the challenge may be to discover this unforced rhythm of grace for the very first time.



I allow divine light and love into my heart daily. I live in the present moment, forgiving and releasing all past hurts. I am now open to receive all of God's abundant blessings and miracles. Everyday prosperity consistently flows through all areas of my life. I am so very grateful. Thank you God!



Safe-care ~ Self-protection ~ Trust in God

The exercise of self-care actually begins by putting in place self-protection. As we have seen, the gospels show us how Jesus was anxious to protect His disciples from the constant pressures they were under. Admittedly, certain pressures are completely beyond a pastor's control, but it happens that many pressures, and the strain that accompanies them, can be due, at least in part, to a failure on behalf of Christian ministers to respect their personal limitations and put proper boundaries in place in their lives.

When nothing is set in place to safeguard a minister's own well-being, he or she will become completely worn out. Christian pastors can and do fall prey to onslaughts of anxiety.

The apostle Paul clearly found himself under great pressure much of the time. In his writings he shares with his readers strategies which can help ministers today to guard themselves against the troubles they encounter in their lives. The apostle was clearly aware that pressures of all sorts can so easily distort the Christian minister's thought patterns. In his Letters to the Colossians and to the Philippians, Paul gave sound advice which Christian ministers of our own day would do well to be pay heed to. In Colossians 3:2 he writes: Clearly there is little point in spending time worrying about things, for this will only serve to further weaken the troubled mind. In Philippians 4:4-7 he comes back upon the futility of worrying unnecessarily and encourages his readers to express their concerns honestly in their prayer. His advice is clear: Every need and worry should be handed over to God, coupled with a prayer of thanksgiving. The Apostle insists upon the importance of believers recognising the good things happening within and around them.

While encouragement is given to help others carry their burdens, a warning has to be given against the tendency for ministers to allow themselves to become unduly laden by other people's burdens to the extent that they are rendered ineffective and are devoid of the energy they need to be of help to those to whom they are called to minister.



If we are brave enough often enough, we will fall; this is the physics of vulnerability.

Brené Brown

Philippians 4:6-7
Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Psalm 53: 3
When I am afraid, I put my trust in You.

Joshua 1:9
Be strong and courageous. Do not fear, do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Isaiah 41:10
Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed

Deuteronomy 31:6
Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread. The Lord your God goes with you. He will not forsake you.

1 Peter 5:7
Cast all your anxieties on the Lord, because He cares for you.

Matthew 6: 23-34
Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life. (...) Which of you being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?

The truth is, rarely can a response make something better — what makes something better is connection. And that connection often requires mutual vulnerability.

Brené Brown

Ours is a culture so consumed with the relentless pursuit of happiness, its secrets and its science, that it layers over the already uncomfortable state of unhappiness a stigma of humiliation and shame. But unhappiness can have its own dignity and can tell us as much, if not more, about who we are than happiness.

Albert Camus

Our way of thinking, our intellect, our affect, our personality — these aren't things we expect will ever change. We take them for granted. We fear having an accident that will make us paralyzed, change our ability to move around, or cause us to lose our hearing or sight. But we don't think about having an accident that will cause us to lose ourselves.

Brené Brown

The quality of presence, an ability to project poised confidence, passion, and enthusiasm in high-pressure situations, which can't be easily faked but can be deliberately cultivated.

Amy Cuddy

The Psalms: Honesty in Prayer ~ Expressing Emotions

Jesus' prayer was largely fashioned by that of the Book of Psalms. He was so evidently familiar with this Book of the Praises of Israel. The psalmist speaks frequently of trusting in the Lord and again of waiting patiently on the Lord, holding one's heart and mind in silence and in peace. To this attitude proposed by the Psalmist, the prophet Isaiah responds, making a promise of renewed strength to those who trust in God. Isaiah states: They that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (Is. 40:31).

While it is undoubtedly important for Christian ministers to halt and take quiet time to listen to the Lord, it is also vital for them to honestly express their own emotions in prayer.

In light of this, it seems appropriate at this point to offer a brief reflection on how the prayer of the Psalms can be beneficial to Christian ministers wanting to practice proper self-care.

The first thing the Psalms do is to liberate those who pray them to be completely honest in their prayer. The Psalmist encourages his readers to dare to pray through their life experience in frankness and without pretence or censure of any kind. The psalms encourage those who use them to pray in simplicity of heart.

It is impossible to express adequately the richness, the breadth and the depth of the wide and varied collection of prayers contained in the Psalter. The Psalms look to God in moments of personal despair and community disaster, at times of communal suffering and national rejoicing. Again and again, God's People is shown to have found release by expressing their heartfelt laments and in giving voice to their praise and thanksgiving in prayer. This collection of poetic prayer formulae is brimming with a wide range of honest emotions. It gives expression to anguish and adoration, suffering and compassion, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows. In some psalms the psalmist is heard to openly question God's actions and cry out in protest at the Lord's apparent inactivity; through others he expresses his awe at God's wonderful works and what he esteems to be signs of the Lord's mighty intervention. Annoyance and assurance, heartache and happiness, pain and praise are all allowed freedom of speech in the psalms. Seeming contradictions are held together in the Psalter. The Psalms do not provide neat little packages of answers tied with pretty bows. They are living documents, a collection of spiritual diaries from people who in an honest and unadorned way sought to give voice to the most disparate emotions that emerged from deep within their hearts. The psalmist prayed seeking God's gracious help to see them through the challenges of life. Given their stark honesty, the Psalms can help greatly all those who have recourse to them in their prayer. They lead those who use them for their personal prayer to bring before the God of compassion the joys and sorrows, the hopes and aspirations which they themselves carry, along with the people to whom they minister, as they pursue life's journey in this complex and greatly challenging world.



God listens and gives answer

One of the most difficult challenges facing people of every age and generation is the call to listen and in listening to hear what the Lord God has to say. One Psalm reminds us that those who listen hear God's voice that speaks of peace. (Psalm 85:8)

A basic call addressed to Christian ministers is the call to listen: to listen to God and to others. This requires of them that they cultivate a quality of presence to the Lord and to others. That, in turn, depends upon ministers learning to be attentively present to themselves. Called to care for others, ministers should strive to be more with themselves so as to be able to be better present to others.

To be present to oneself and others, it is necessary for Christian ministers to occasionally distance themselves from the many demands made upon them.

St Anselm captures this idea well when he addresses the following invitation to those who are feeling pressurised by the many demands made upon them. He encourages his readers to return to God, the source of their being to find peace and quiet within and renewed vision for their lives: "Come on now, little one, get away from your worldly occupations for a while, escape from your tumultuous thoughts. Lay aside your burdensome cares and put off laborious exertions. Give yourself over to God for a little while, and rest for a while in Him. Enter into the cell of your mind, shut out everything except God and whatever helps you seek Him once the door is shut. Speak now, my heart, and say to God, 'I seek your face; Your face, Lord, I seek.'" (Proslogion)

Ministers who seek to listen to God and relay His message of life to others need to silence clamour, whether inner or outer, in whatever shape or form, including their inner monologue. They need to create inner silence so that they can better listen to the life-giving Word of God. While discipline is needed for this, it is perhaps more helpful to see this discipline in terms of offering oneself the gift of a regular rendez-vous with one's better self.

The following Scripture passages which have been found helpful by some who have benefited from the Flourish programme are offered for the benefit of readers of this booklet. Space has been left for readers to add their own discoveries of life-restoring words from Sacred Scripture and other sources.



"No one who, like me, conjures up the most evil of those half-tamed demons that inhabit the human beast, and seeks to wrestle with them, can expect to come through the struggle unscathed."

Sigmund Freud

INVEST IN YOU. POWER TWO.

TAKING DAILY ACTION TO NURTURE YOUR OWN NEEDS, STRENGTHENS THOSE FOR WHOM YOU LOVE AND CARE. WE CANNOT GIVE FOR THE LONG TERM WHEN WE FAIL TO SUSTAIN OUR OWN RESOURCES. TAKING CARE OF OUR PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS IS NOT A LUXURY. IT IS A NECESSITY.

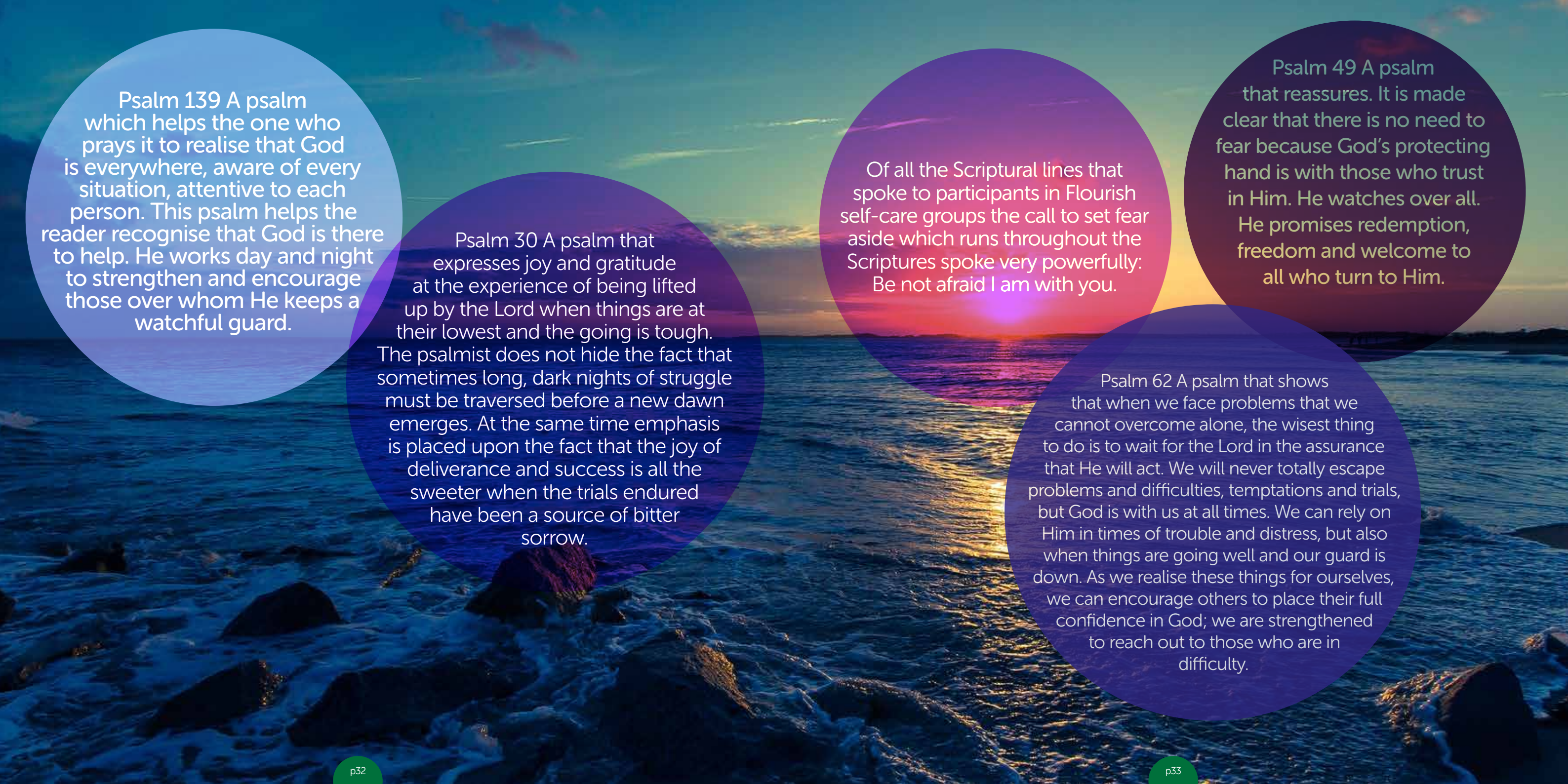
John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no ill, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Isaiah 26: 3 You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in You.

Proverbs 12:23 Anxiety weighs a person's heart down, a good word makes a person's heart glad.

Lamentations 3:57 You came near when I called to You; You said, 'Do not fear'.



Psalm 139 A psalm which helps the one who prays it to realise that God is everywhere, aware of every situation, attentive to each person. This psalm helps the reader recognise that God is there to help. He works day and night to strengthen and encourage those over whom He keeps a watchful guard.

Psalm 30 A psalm that expresses joy and gratitude at the experience of being lifted up by the Lord when things are at their lowest and the going is tough. The psalmist does not hide the fact that sometimes long, dark nights of struggle must be traversed before a new dawn emerges. At the same time emphasis is placed upon the fact that the joy of deliverance and success is all the sweeter when the trials endured have been a source of bitter sorrow.

Of all the Scriptural lines that spoke to participants in Flourish self-care groups the call to set fear aside which runs throughout the Scriptures spoke very powerfully: Be not afraid I am with you.

Psalm 62 A psalm that shows that when we face problems that we cannot overcome alone, the wisest thing to do is to wait for the Lord in the assurance that He will act. We will never totally escape problems and difficulties, temptations and trials, but God is with us at all times. We can rely on Him in times of trouble and distress, but also when things are going well and our guard is down. As we realise these things for ourselves, we can encourage others to place their full confidence in God; we are strengthened to reach out to those who are in difficulty.

Psalm 49 A psalm that reassures. It is made clear that there is no need to fear because God's protecting hand is with those who trust in Him. He watches over all. He promises redemption, freedom and welcome to all who turn to Him.

SELF-CARE IS
NOT ABOUT SELF
INDULGENCE, IT
IS ABOUT SELF
PRESERVATION



In conclusion

We hope you have found this book to be of worth and a help to your journey in self-care. It is a constant work in progress and through time, commitment and mindfulness to your wellbeing - you can help others around you by first investing in yourself.

Below are more agencies and helpful support links to where you can gain advice and support.

www.wewillflourish.com

www.lighthousecharity.com



A full range of interactive materials for self help are available for FREE on our website, use this QR code.



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