

## Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing for Clergy and Church Leaders Managing Pandemic-related Stress

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic includes increased rates of mental health concerns and substance use and abuse. Clergy and Church Leaders have adapted quickly to provide care for others during this season. It is important to remember that these caregiving demands can lead to stress, anxiety, fear, and other strong emotions. How you cope with these emotions can affect your well-being, the care you give to others, and the well-being of the people you care about. To care for yourself and to care for others in a healthy and sustainable way, it is critical that you recognize what stress looks like, take steps to build your resilience, and know where to go for help.

Recognize the symptoms of stress you may be experiencing.

- Feeling irritation, anger, or denial
- Feeling uncertain, nervous, or anxious
- Feeling helpless or powerless
- Lacking motivation, trouble concentrating
- Feeling tired, overwhelmed, or burned out
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Having trouble sleeping

Tips to cope and enhance your resilience.

- Communicate with others about your stress.
- Remind yourself that everyone is in an unusual situation with limited resources.
- Identify and accept those things which you do not have control over.
- Increase your sense of control by keeping a consistent daily routine when possible.
- Try to get adequate sleep, eat healthy meals, and exercise.
- Take breaks to rest, stretch, or check in with supportive colleagues, friends and family.
- Spend time outdoors either being physically active or relaxing.
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media.
- If you feel you may be misusing alcohol and other drugs (including prescriptions), ask for help.
- Maintain spiritual practices, including prayer, and try breathing/mindfulness exercises.

(Adapted from [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov))

Know where to go if you need help.

For Clergy and Conference Staff:  
Methodist Healthcare Employee Assistance Program (EAP)  
[www.methodisteapcanhelp.org](http://www.methodisteapcanhelp.org)  
901-683-5658

For connection with other Mental Health Resources:  
Dennis H. Jones Living Well Network  
[www.thelivingwellnetwork.org](http://www.thelivingwellnetwork.org)  
901-762-8558