

**VIRGINIA CONFERENCE**  
**OF**  
**THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**WELLNESS SURVEY**

*EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND DETAILED FINDINGS*



**OCTOBER 2009**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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All active and retired members of the Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church and their spouses were invited to participate in an online survey about their and their families' health and wellness. In total, 1,105 clergy and spouses completed the survey for an overall margin of error of +/- 2.4 percentage points. Specifically, 663 active clergy, 35 retired clergy under current appointment, 160 retired clergy not under current appointment, 179 spouses of active clergy, and 68 spouses of retired clergy participated. Fifteen percent of active clergy and 10% of retired clergy indicate that their spouse is or was a clergy member as well.

Survey fielding took place between March 23 and May 15, 2009. The survey was conducted entirely online and was estimated to take between about an hour or an hour and a half to complete. No tangible incentive was offered for participating in this research project.

This executive summary highlights some of the key findings resulting from this survey. For more information on these findings and others, please see the detailed findings report.

### RESPONDENT PROFILE

Of all active clergy, 81% work in a full-time capacity, 4% work three-quarter time, 8% work half time, and 5% work one-quarter time.

Slightly more than two-thirds of participating active clergy are in parish ministry in a single station charge. Another 18% have a multi-point parish ministry charge. Extension ministry is the setting for 11% of active clergy and the remaining 2% state that they have some other type of appointment. Roughly two-thirds (64%) of retired clergy say that their last ministry setting was single station parish ministry, 10% say that they had a multi-point parish charge, 21% say that their last position was in extension ministry, and the remaining 6% say that their last position was some other type of appointment.

#### Official Relationship of Respondents

Relationship	Active clergy	Retired clergy	Total
Ordained Elder	400	125	525
Licensed Local Pastor	154	7	161
Provisional Elder	63	0	63
Associate Member	19	9	28
District Superintendent	18	8	26
Ordained Deacon	16	8	24
Provisional Deacon	5	0	5
Bishop	1	1	2
Diaconal Minister	1	0	1
Other	21	2	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>858</b>

The length of service in the Virginia Conference ranges from less than 1 year to more than 50 years, with the average being 15 years for active clergy and 32 years for retired clergy. The average number of appointments in the Virginia Conference is four for active clergy and six for retired clergy.

Of those spouses who do work, a "professional" occupation is the most popular. The most common workplace setting is government agencies, with 35%.

## WELLNESS SURVEY

The majority of active clergy and their spouses are baby boomers, with an average age of 53 for active clergy and 54 for their spouses. Not surprisingly, retired clergy skew older, with the majority in the Silent/ GI generations. The average age for retired clergy is 72 and for their spouses is 71.

The majority of participating active clergy are male (68%). Retired clergy are even more likely to be male (86%). Therefore, not surprisingly, the majority of clergy spouses participating in the survey are female – 80% for spouses of active clergy and 97% for spouses of retired clergy.

The majority of respondents are Caucasian. There were also 39 African American respondents, 21 Asian respondents, 11 Hispanic respondents, 1 Native American respondent, 1 Pacific Islander respondent, 3 multi-racial respondents, and 16 respondents of another race.

Participating clergy are highly educated. Two-thirds of both active and retired clergy have a Master's Degree and an additional 15% of active clergy and 20% of retired clergy have a PhD. Only 9% of participating active clergy and 3% of retired clergy have less than a 4-year college degree. Spouses are also educated. About a third (32%) of spouses of active clergy and 28% of spouses of retired clergy have a Master's Degree or higher. With the exception of one spouse, all graduated from high school. Twenty-one percent of spouses of active clergy and 18% of spouses of retired clergy attended college for 1 -3 years, and 34% of spouses of active clergy and 44% of spouses of retired clergy have a 4-year college degree.

There is a wide variety of geographic locations represented within Virginia. Slightly more than a quarter (28%) reside in the Richmond area, a quarter live in the Charlottesville/Farmville/Lynchburg area, 21% in Northern Virginia/ Winchester/Culpepper, 14% in the Tidewater area, and 11% in Southwest Virginia.

## **OVERALL HEALTH & WELLNESS CONCERNS**

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Throughout the survey, respondents were asked to rate the impact that a particular issue has had on their and their families' physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means "strong negative impact" and 5 means "strong positive impact." One overarching trend was that there were a lot of neutral (i.e. a rating of 3) responses. Even when respondents might have had strong feelings about the issue at hand, they did not always draw the connection to their physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

When asked as an open-ended question, according to respondents, the top health concerns affecting clergy today are stress/burnout, time constraints/work load, lack of exercise, and obesity. It is interesting to note, that spouses of active clergy are far more likely than others to cite time constraints/work load as a major health concern. Regarding the families of clergy, not having enough family time/feeling neglected by clergy and the itinerancy/moving/lack of consideration of family in move are the biggest health and wellness issues.

Clergy and their spouses offer a wide variety of suggestions for what needs to be done to address the health, well-being, and wellness issues affecting clergy and their families, including such suggestions as supplementing gym memberships, encouraging/mandating time off, educating congregations on appropriate expectations, and supporting families more. No one response, however, stands out as more prevalent than the rest.

## **FAMILY COMPOSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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### **MARRIAGE**

The majority of respondents are married, including 85% of active clergy and 93% of retired clergy. About two-thirds of respondents report that they are very satisfied with their marriage. Retired clergy and their spouses are even more likely than active clergy and their spouses to say that they are very satisfied – 74% of retired

clergy rate their satisfaction a 5 versus 62% of active clergy and 70% of spouses of retired clergy rate their satisfaction a 5 versus 56% of spouses of active clergy.

Across the board, retired clergy and their spouses are happier with each aspect of their marriage than are active clergy and their spouses. For the most part, responses do not differ substantially from national averages. One exception, however, is that active clergy and spouses of active clergy are significantly less happy with the amount of time that they spend with their spouses. Respondents were also asked if during the past year they ever thought that their marriage might be in trouble. Sixteen percent responded that there were times during the past year that they thought their marriage might be in trouble – this figure is exactly the same as the national average.

### **IMPACT OF MINISTRY ON MARRIAGE**

Respondents were asked to indicate their understanding of the potential impact that ministry could have on their marriage, their spouses career, and their spouse's life in general either when they were entering the ministry (for those who were married prior to entering the ministry) or when they were getting married (for those who got married after entering the ministry). Very few reported that they had no understanding at all on any of these attributes. However, full understanding was far from unanimous. About two-thirds of active and retired clergy reported that they understood the potential impact their ministry could have on their marriage, their spouse's career, and their spouse's life in general. The lowest understanding, however, was from spouses of active clergy who were already married before their spouse entered the ministry. On the other hand, spouses of retired clergy rated their understanding highly.

Of the 42 respondents who are either separated or divorced, about half of them say that the divorce happened while they were under appointment in the Virginia Conference. Most say that their ministry was not a large contributing factor to their divorce or separation, but about a quarter report that it was.

### **CHILDREN**

Most clergy and their spouses report that they have children. Retired clergy (96%) and their spouses (96%) are the most likely to say that they have children. Eighty-seven percent of active clergy and 93% of their spouses have children. The majority of clergy and their spouses feel as though their relationship with, and the social and emotional support that they receive from, their children positively impacts their physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness. Retired clergy and their spouses are more likely than active clergy and their spouses to say that their relationship with their children has a strong positive impact on their physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness.

### **GRANDCHILDREN**

The majority of retired clergy (84%) and spouses of retired clergy (85%) report that they have grandchildren, yet few live with them. Not surprisingly, active clergy (33%) and spouses of active clergy (37%) are much less likely to report that they have grandchildren.

### **DATING**

Of those who are not currently married (114 respondents), 47% say that they go on dates at least occasionally. On average, single clergy are likely to be less than satisfied with their current dating situation. About a quarter say they are "not at all satisfied" with their dating situation. Clergy offer a number of different obstacles to dating or being in a dating relationship. The most common response is that they simply haven't met a person whom they are interested in dating.

### **CARING FOR OTHERS**

About a quarter of all respondents report that they have provided regular care or assistance to a friend or family member who has a health problem, long-term illness, or disability during the past month. The most common relationship between the caregiver and receiver is child-parent, with almost 4 in 10 respondents reporting that they provide care for a parent.

Caring for friends or family members with health problems was found to cause some difficulties for the caregiver. Seventy-one percent report facing a difficulty as a caregiver. Creating stress (38%) is by far the most common complaint. Other difficulties include not leaving enough time for oneself (7%), creating a financial burden (7%), affecting family relationships (6%), not leaving enough time for family (3%), interfering with work (2%), and creating or aggravating health problems (1%).

The impact on the wellness of those caring for their friends and family is mixed. Almost a fifth say that it negatively impacts and a quarter say that it positively impacts their physical health. Slightly more than a third say that it negatively impacts their emotional health – as compared to a quarter who say that it positively impacts their emotional health. Spiritual health appears to be most positively impacted by caring for a loved one – 44% say that caring for a loved one positively impacts their spiritual health.

### **LOSING LOVED ONES**

About a third of respondents indicate that they have lost a close friend or family member within the last year – 5% have lost someone within the last month. The most common relationship with the loved one who was lost within the last year is a close friend (41%). About one in five (19%) say that they lost a parent and 10% lost a spouse's parent. Over half were over 70 years of age, with 28% being between 71 and 80, 31% between 81 and 90, and 16% over the age of 90.

Again, the impact of the loss of a loved one on the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of respondents is mixed. Most reported that the loss had neither a positive nor a negative impact. In terms of spiritual health, respondents were more likely to say that the loss of a loved one had a positive impact on them than they were to say that it had a negative impact.

### **PETS**

Across all groups, 65% of respondents said that they have some kind of pet. The most common pets are dogs, followed by cats. The majority of clergy and their spouses feel as though having a pet has a positive impact on their physical, emotional, and spiritual health and that of their family.

## **MINISTRY PREPARATION AND EDUCATION**

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### **ENTERING THE MINISTRY**

On average, clergy entered the ministry at age 33. Active clergy are more likely to have entered the ministry later, on average, than retired clergy. The average age of entry for active clergy is 34 and the average age for retired clergy is 29 years of age. Women, part time clergy, and those in parish settings are more likely to have entered the ministry later in life. Those who are married, those with children, and those with advanced degrees are more likely to have entered the ministry at a younger age.

Active clergy are also more likely to enter the ministry as a second or third vocation. Elders are more likely than licensed local pastors to have entered the ministry as their primary vocation.

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In terms of theological education, about three in five clergy have a Master of Divinity degree and about one in ten has a Doctor of Ministry. Women are more likely than men to have a Master of Divinity degree.

### SEMINARY EDUCATION

Most clergy – particularly retired clergy – say that their basic seminary education prepared them well for the ministry. Preparedness by individual subject area, however, varies dramatically. They feel most prepared in the subjects of denominational history and the New Testament, with almost half giving their preparedness based on their basic seminary education the highest rating. On the other hand, only about 10% gave the highest rating to Hebrew language and stewardship.

Whereas many clergy feel as though their primary seminary education prepared them well on individual subject areas, their preparation in seminary for practical areas of ministry lags behind. At most, half of the clergy rated their seminary a 4 or 5 (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means not at all and 5 means very) in terms of how well it prepared them for any single practical area of ministry. Clergy felt most prepared in terms of understanding the itinerancy and communication skills and styles. Almost no one felt their seminary prepared them for grant writing and establishing Community Development Corporations.

Retired clergy tend to feel as though their seminaries did a slightly better job than did active clergy at preparing them for the practical areas of ministry. Retired clergy were slightly (and statistically significantly) more likely to say that their seminary prepared them “very well” (a rating of 5) in the areas of communication skills and styles, church administration, dealing with change, organizational skills and development, practice of stewardship, building programs (financing/fundraising, architectural design, construction, etc.), establishing Community Development Corporations, Human Resource Training, faith community nursing, health ministries, and church finances.

Slightly more than half of all clergy say their seminary education provided adequate field education experiences that applied classroom knowledge to every day parish ministry.

### INTERNSHIPS

Active and retired clergy differ on whether an internship should be required as part of the preparation for ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church. Retired clergy are more likely to agree they should be required, with 61% agreeing it should be required, including 40% saying they “strongly agree.” Only about half (51%) of active clergy agreed internships should be required, including only 27% saying they “strongly agree.”

Active and retired clergy agree, however, that the current three year provisional period for individuals seeking to become an ordained elder should be reevaluated if an internship program is mandated, with 63% agreeing.

### CONTINUING EDUCATION

About nine in ten active clergy say they have met or exceeded the minimum CEU requirements per year and per quadrennium. Part-time and the oldest clergy are most likely to say they have not. Among the 9% (55 respondents) who did not meet the requirement, the most common reasons cited were lack of time (25%), inconvenient location of offering (11%), insufficient relevant topics (9%), personal budget constraints (8%), church budget constraints (4%) and miscellaneous other reasons (43%).

## WELLNESS SURVEY

Nearly six in seven (86%) active clergy members say that continuing education is important to their growth and development, with nearly two-thirds (64%) saying it is very important. Women and those in extension ministry are more likely to agree that it is very important.

### VOCATIONAL CALLING

The majority of clergy say their calling was the result of growing up in a faith community. Very few say that during the last five years they have doubted they were called by God to the ministry. Some, however, have considered leaving the ministry or at least leaving pastoral ministry. This is much truer for active clergy than for retired clergy. About 15% of active clergy and 10% of retired clergy say they have thought about leaving the ministry to enter a secular occupation during the last 5 years (or during the last five years of their active ministry in the case of retired clergy). More – 26% of active clergy and 8% of retired clergy – have thought about leaving pastoral ministry for another type of ministry position.

### VOCATIONAL SETTING

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On average, active clergy report that they have been in their current ministry setting for approximately 4.4 years. Retired clergy have been retired for an average of 7.8 years. The average worship attendance of the church or charge active clergy served at the close of 2008 was about 189 with an average reported membership of 433.

### DEMANDS

On average, active clergy work approximately 48 hours a week and retired clergy report that during their active ministry, they worked approximately 57 hours a week. Active clergy working full-time report that they typically work about 53 hours a week and those working part-time work about 28 hours a week.

Clergy feel a number of different pressures as the result of their ministry. About half of active clergy say that they feel pressure to grow the membership of their congregation through baptisms or professions of faith and almost half say they experience stress because of the challenges they face in their congregation.

Likewise, some spouses of clergy feel demands as a result of their spouse's ministry. About a third of spouses of active clergy say they feel lonely and isolated in their role as spouses of a clergyperson and that people in their spouse's congregation/ministry setting make too many demands of him or her (the clergyperson). For the most part, spouses of retired clergy agree with the demands and pressures felt by spouses of active clergy. One exception, however, is that more than twice as many spouses of active clergy feel guilty about not doing enough in their role as the spouse of a clergyperson, as compared to spouses of retired clergy.

### ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

On average, active clergy say that they spend 14% of their working time fulfilling administrative requirements for the District and Conference. Those in extension ministry spend significantly more time fulfilling administrative requirements than do those in parish ministry. When asked how they complete and submit various pastoral administrative reports, over three quarters of active clergy (79%) say they complete and submit them on their own electronically.

Twenty-eight percent of active and retired clergy say that the Conference and District administrative requirements create stress for them and 40% say they could be more productive in ministry if Conference and District administrative requirements were reduced or streamlined. Clergy are mixed on the value of preparing and updating their Pastoral Profile – 27% agree it is a productive experience, whereas 39% disagree.



### COMMUNICATION FROM CONFERENCE AND DISTRICT

For the most part, active and retired clergy receive the information and communication they need from both the Conference and the District. There does, however, appear to be some database issues as many respondents report that their communications are not delivered to a consistent location. Thirty-nine percent of respondents say that some of the Conference mailings come to their residence/parsonage and some come to the church/official ministry office and 26% say that is the case with District communications.

More active clergy would prefer to receive official Conference and District mailings at the church/official ministry office (61%) as compared to their parsonage/residence (34%). Not surprisingly, retired clergy were much more likely to want their mailings delivered to their home.

In terms of the format for these communications, over three quarters of active clergy (79%) would prefer emails, 18% would prefer regular mail, and 2% would prefer the Conference or District Web site. Over half of retired clergy (56%) would also prefer email but there are 40% who say they would prefer regular mail. Only 3% of retired clergy would prefer the Conference or District Web site.

### CHURCH AND PASTORAL OFFICES

The large majority of active clergy (82%) say the congregation/ministry setting in which they serve has a designated church office or other official office. Three quarters (73%) of active clergy say the church or other official ministry office is situated in a location that is prominent, easily identifiable, and accessible to members. Slightly more than half say they agree that the church office or other official ministry office is aesthetically pleasing and another quarter give a neutral rating.

In terms of their pastoral study or personal workspace/office, about half (54%) of active clergy say their pastoral study/workspace is part of the church or other official ministry office. Twenty-nine percent say their pastoral study/workspace is located in the parsonage or private residence and is not part of the church or official ministry office. About two-thirds of active clergy agree their study/workspace has adequate space and sufficient furnishings. About half agree the overall location, entrance, and construction of the study/workspace make that space conducive to having conversations and holding meetings. Three in five also agree that the study/workspace is aesthetically pleasing.

For most active clergy, their workspace environment (or lack thereof) including the church office and pastoral study and the equipment they have available has a neutral impact on their physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness. About four in ten, however, say that it has a positive impact.

### STAFF

Most active clergy (62%) have at least one assistant or administrative staff, with nearly all of those being paid positions. In general, those who have administrative staff feel as though there is adequate staff to conduct the official work of ministry and that that staff has the required resources. Of those who do not have administrative staff, however, about two-thirds feel as though they could devote more time to their ministry if they did and 41% say that not having administrative/support staff negatively impacts their ministry.

The majority of active clergy (71%) say there are no other clergy officially on staff in their congregation or ministry setting.

## WELLNESS SURVEY

Seventy-three percent of active clergy have at least one paid professional or other official staff in their congregation or ministry setting. Almost half have unpaid professional or other official staff. As with administrative staff, most clergy feel as though there is adequate staff to conduct the official work of ministry and that staff has the required resources. Many say that not having professional staff has a negative impact on their ministry, yet this impact is less widespread than among those who do not have administrative staff. Likewise, of those who do not have professional staff, 43% say they could devote more time to their ministry if they did and 30% say that not having professional staff negatively impacts their ministry.

### **FAITH COMMUNITY NURSING**

Only 10% of active clergy have an official faith community nurse in their congregation and only 13% have ever served a congregation with an official faith community nurse. Among those active clergy who do not have a faith community nurse, only 17% say that they have considered getting one – 10% considered it and decided not to get one, whereas 7% are actively considering it.

Those clergy who have or have had a faith community nurse have found them to be valuable to their congregation with 65% of active clergy saying valuable and three quarters (79%) of retired clergy saying so. The majority of those who have had a faith community nurse say that it had a neutral impact on their physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness, as well as that of their families. More than a third, however, feel as though it had a positive impact on their health and wellness, although slightly less feel as though it had a positive impact on the health and wellness of their families.

Most active clergy (86%) say their church does not have an intentional health ministry, focusing on the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions of health. However, about half of active clergy say they are interested in having a health ministry with faith community nursing started in their church. Furthermore, about half of active clergy say that it would be beneficial to have more information about the ministries of faith community nursing.

### **LEISURE TIME AND VACATION**

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#### **LEISURE TIME & TAKING DAYS OFF**

Both clergy and their spouses report that the amount of leisure time they have has an impact on their physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness.

Seven percent of active clergy say that they do not take any days off from work each week. Most take one day off, 20% take two days off, and 14% take half a day off. Those in extension ministry are about twice as likely as those in parish ministry to say that they take two days off each week. Part-time clergy are much less likely to say they take any time off. Nineteen percent of part-time clergy say that, including their other job(s), they do not take any days off.

A quarter, however, say they are not consistent at taking their designated days off. Those who are not consistent say it is primarily because of an unexpected parish/ministry setting occurrence (56%), their study/workspace is in their home and they slip into working (43%), lack of personal discipline (40%), and/or the congregational/ministry setting expects them to still be available (34%).

Being able to take time off each week does play a role on the physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness of active clergy and their families. The majority of those who take at least one day off a week say that it has a positive impact on their health and that of their families – and their spouses agree. On the other hand,

more than half of those who do not take any days off a week say that it negatively impacts their health and approximately half say that it negatively impacts the health of their families.

### **VACATION**

Almost all active clergy have paid vacation. When it comes to taking that vacation time, however, slightly less than half say they are consistent in taking it. In fact, 24% say they are “not at all consistent” about taking all of their time. Those in parish ministry are particularly unlikely to take all of their vacation time. Among those who are not consistent about taking all of their vacation time, 40% cite lack of personal discipline, 32% cite unexpected parish/ministry setting occurrences, 26% cite congregational /ministry setting expectations that they still be available, and 21% cite their spouse not being to schedule same time off as the primary reasons.

About two thirds of active clergy say that one of their vacations includes one Sunday off and slightly more than a quarter say that one of their vacations includes two or more consecutive Sundays off. Almost all active clergy (84%) say they took a vacation lasting at least one week in the past 12 months and 83% say they have a vacation planned or tentatively planned for this coming year. There is no difference in whether or not clergy have taken vacation between those who have paid vacation and those who have unpaid vacation. Full-time clergy and elders are much more likely to have taken a vacation of at least a week within the last year and to have one planned for this coming year than are part-time clergy and licensed local pastors.

Almost all active clergy who take their allotted vacation time consistently say their vacation time has a strong positive impact on their personal and their family’s physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness and clergy spouses agree. On the other hand, those who do not have vacation or those who say they do not take their vacation consistently say this has a negative impact on their and their families’ physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness. Likewise, their spouses agree.

### **SPIRITUAL LIFE AND SABBATH TIME**

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Spiritual life impacts all areas of health and wellness in a positive way, with almost all active and retired clergy saying that their spiritual life positively impacts their physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness.

### **RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF PASTORAL DUTIES**

Amount of time devoted to prayer outside of public worship and pastoral duties varies dramatically. Only 14% of clergy say that they spend less than one hour a week praying and 35% spend one to two hours. Twenty-two percent spend three to four hours, 12% spend five to six hours, 10% spend seven to eight hours, and 7% say that they spend more than eight hours a week in prayer outside of public worship and pastoral duties. Full time clergy and those in extension ministry are more likely to say that they spend less than one hour a week in prayer and those who are less than 44 years of age spend less time praying than those who are aged 45 or older.

Slightly more than half of respondents say they read the Bible or other devotional literature, not in preparation for sermons or other work-related tasks, at least once a day. Similarly to prayer, those less than 44 years of age are less likely to read the Bible daily.

About 8 in 10 say that they do some other activity to support their spiritual life in addition to prayer and reading religious literature. These activities vary from person to person. Some of the most common responses include: meditation, listening to Christian music, singing or playing musical instruments, reading spiritual or

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Christian books, taking walks, exercising, listening to sermons on tape or podcast, quiet or silent time, meeting and talking with other clergypersons, including spiritual directors, religious retreats, fasting, and journaling.

Few active clergy attend weekly religious services when they are not the one leading the service. Not surprisingly, retired clergy are much more likely to attend regular religious services that they are not leading. Almost half (44%) say that they attend weekly or more and an additional 34% say that they attend nearly every week.

The majority of both active and retired clergy believe that their spiritual life has a strong positive impact on their physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Women are more likely to think their spiritual life has a strong positive impact on all three measures of health and those aged 45 or older are more than those aged 44 or younger to feel the strong positive impact.

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

Both active and retired clergy report a strong relationship with God within the past six months. More than three-quarters give high ratings to the frequency of experiencing the presence and power of God in the ordinary (86%) and close relationships (78%), sensing the presence and power of God in their thoughts and feelings (84%), and seeing examples and signs of God's purposes and reign in their ministry setting (79%). Some – albeit a smaller number – have felt God's absence (16%) and felt that their relationship with God has been one of struggle within the last six months (21%).

There are no significant differences between the experiences of active and retired clergy. There are, however, a number of demographic differences in the extent to which clergy have felt each of the above. With the exception of feeling as though their relationship with God has been one of struggle and feeling God's absence, women report experiencing each spiritual event more often than did men.

Those aged 44 and younger are less likely to say they have experienced the presence and power of God in the ordinary, consciously practiced discerning the presence and power of God, felt God's grace and love for them as they are, felt that their prayers have been answered, or felt that they have a vital relationship with God. On the contrary, however, those aged 64 or older are more likely than others to say that they have felt the absence of God in the last few months, with 11% saying that this has happened very often.

Elders are less likely than licensed local pastors and deacons to have experienced the presence and power of God in the ordinary, sensed the presence and power of God in their thoughts and feelings, consciously practiced discerning the presence and power of God, and felt that events were unfolding according to God's intent. In addition, licensed local pastors are the most likely to have felt that they have a vital relationship with God.

There are also differences in experiences based on education. Those with a course of study or bachelor's degree are more likely than those with more advanced degrees to sense the presence and power of God in their thoughts and feelings, felt God's grace and love as they are, felt their prayers have been answered, felt that events were unfolding according to God's intent, and felt that they have a vital relationship with God. Almost 9 in 10 active clergy report they consistently feel the presence and power of God while administering the sacraments, planning and leading worship, and receiving Holy Communion. They are less likely, however, to feel the presence of God in the midst of serious conflict (58% agree that they often do) or while participating in ministry-related meetings (44% agree that they often do).

## **SPIRITUAL SUPPORT**

Many clergy report that they have a holy friendship, are members of a covenant support group or a clergy peer support group, and/or share their struggles and difficulties with other clergy.

About 8 in 10 respondents report they have at least one holy friendship. Those who have holy friendships say that they have a strong positive impact on their health – most notably their emotional and spiritual health. Many of those without holy friendships are neutral about the impact that it has on their health, yet others – 24% for physical, 34% for emotional, and 37% for spiritual believe that not having any holy friendships has a negative impact on their health.

Slightly more than half of active clergy are currently participating in a covenant support group or a clergy peer support group and of those who are not currently participating in a group, 80% of active clergy say they have done so in the past. Of those who either currently participate in a covenant support group or clergy peer support group or who have done so in the past, about two-thirds are satisfied with group activities and interactions and feel they were able to share their struggles with the group. Those who are current or past participants of a covenant support group or clergy peer support group report that such participation has had a positive impact on their health – particularly emotional and spiritual health, with about two-thirds reporting a positive impact on those areas of health.

About half of clergy respondents say they have often shared their personal or vocational struggles with other clergy in the past six months and about a third report they often share their difficulties in loving God and their neighbors with other clergy. About 4 in 10 clergy respondents – 42% of active clergy and 30% of retired clergy – say they often confessed their failures and sins to other clergy in the past six months.

Only 16% of clergy respondents say they have a spiritual director. Among those, contact with spiritual directors is frequent. About two-thirds talked with their spiritual director at least once a month during the past year, 10% talked to him/her every other month, 12% three to five times, and 10% once or twice.

Slightly more than three-quarters (78%) of active and retired clergy are aware that every district in the Virginia Conference has a chaplain. Despite the high level of awareness of the District Chaplains, only 14% report that they actually spoke with their District Chaplain within the last year.

## **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

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More than half of all respondents say they get the social and emotional support that they need. Retired clergy and their spouses report that they get the social and emotional support they need more often than do active clergy and their spouses.

## **FRIENDSHIPS**

About half of all respondents say they are satisfied with the number of close friends they have. Once again, retired clergy and their spouses are more satisfied than active clergy and their spouses. Many clergy and their spouses feel strongly that the social and emotional support they receive from their friends positively impacts their physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness.

Active clergy are much more likely than their spouses to report they have close friends in their congregation or ministry setting. Almost 4 in 10 active clergy have close friends in their congregation or ministry setting,

whereas only 26% of clergy spouses do. Almost half, however, of both active clergy and their spouses believe their role as a clergyperson or clergy spouse makes it difficult to make friends.

### **SUPPORT FROM CONGREGATION OR MINISTRY SETTING**

In general, clergy and their spouses feel as though they get a great degree of support from their congregation or ministry setting. Almost three-quarters of active clergy and two-thirds of their spouses say that their (or their spouse's) congregation make them feel loved and cared for. When thinking of the last congregation they served, 79% of retired clergy and 68% of their spouses say they felt loved and cared for. Very few (approximately 10% when averaging across all groups) of any group gave low ratings for the amount of love and care that they received. Few, however, reported that the people in their congregation or ministry setting listen to them talk about their private problems and concerns. On average, 16% of both active and retired clergy and their spouses reported that this happens often.

About half of active clergy and their spouses say that the social and emotional support they receive from their or their spouse's congregation or ministry setting positively impacts their emotional and spiritual health and wellness.

### **GRATITUDE**

Both active and retired clergy and their spouses report high amounts of gratitude in their lives. About 90% or more agreed with the following statements: Every day, I am aware that I have so much to be thankful for; On a daily basis, if I had to list everything that I felt grateful for, it would be a very long list; Every day, I am grateful for a wide variety of people; As I get older, I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history. Almost all clergy and their spouses disagreed with the statements "When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for" and "Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful for something or someone."

### **VIRGINIA CONFERENCE CLERGY FAMILY ENRICHMENT COMMITTEE**

Almost three-quarters of spouses of active and retired clergy have attended or used at least one of the events/resources of the Virginia Conference Clergy Family Enrichment Committee. The most popular event for both active and retired clergy spouses is the Annual Spouses' Luncheon. The Welcome Dinner is also popular with active clergy spouses and the Annual Spouses' Retreat is popular with retired clergy spouses. Less than 10% have used the resources of the Clergy Spouse Support Coordinators' Program and the Parsonages Support Committee. Among those using the services, the Annual Spouses' Retreat receives the highest rating in terms of helpfulness. Almost half rate the other resources highly as well.

### **HOME, NEIGHBORHOOD, AND COMMUNITY**

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About half (53%) of active clergy report they currently live in a parsonage, 42% live in a house or condo that they own, and 5% live in a home or apartment that they rent. The majority of retired clergy (88%) live in a house or condo that they own. Only 3% live in a home provided by the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation, 6% live in a home or apartment that they rent, and 3% have another living situation.

When asked, regardless of their current housing situation, if they would generally prefer to be provided with a parsonage or with a housing allowance, 61% of active clergy and their spouses said they would prefer a housing allowance and 29% said they would prefer a parsonage. The remaining 10% have no preference.

Only 4% of active clergy and their spouses report that they live in a separate residence from the rest of their family. Of the few who do live separately from their family, the primary reason is because of their spouse's

work position. Proximity to extended family, children's schools, separation or divorce, and waiting for homes to sell were other reasons.

### **PARSONAGES**

About 64% of active clergy report that they find parsonage living to be convenient, as compared to 53% of their spouses. Retired clergy and their spouses both also report that they found parsonage living to be convenient (70% and 65% respectively). Both active and retired clergy see both the advantages and disadvantages of parsonage living, with about two-thirds saying there are advantages and that same number saying there are disadvantages.

Overall, about two-thirds of those who have lived in a parsonage were satisfied with the physical setting of their current or most recent parsonage. The majority (83%) believe their current parsonage is an adequate size for them and/or their family. Likewise, most (80%) say the parsonage is an adequate size for their furnishings and belongings. In terms of meeting the Virginia Conference's Minimum Standards for Parsonages, two-thirds give it a rating of 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means it does not meet the standards at all and 5 means that it fully meets the standards.

Of those currently living in a parsonage, slightly more than a third say that at the time they arrived in the parsonage, there were major problems that had to be addressed to make living in the parsonage acceptable to them and their family. Approximately two-thirds of those say the problems were resolved to their satisfaction in a timely fashion, yet the remaining third say they were not.

Almost all of those who currently live in a parsonage say the ministry setting they serve conducts annual parsonage reviews with a representative group of lay leaders, yet slightly more than a quarter say that this process is stressful. Most say that, within the last 10 years, their parsonage has been evaluated and updated where needed with regard to its aesthetic appeal (including such things as fresh paint, window treatments, furnishings, carpeting/flooring, outside lawn, landscaping, etc.) and functionality/efficiency (including such things as heating, air conditioning, kitchen modernization, cable installation, etc.).

Almost three-quarters agree that they and/or their family work collaboratively with the leaders of their ministry setting to maintain and improve the condition and grounds of the parsonage. Slightly less (61%) agree that leaders from their ministry setting work collaboratively with them to maintain and improve the condition and grounds of the parsonage.

Slightly more than half of those currently living in a parsonage agree that the parsonage is far enough away from the church/ministry setting office to afford them and/or their family adequate privacy and separation from ministry setting life. On the other hand, however, about a third disagree with this statement.

The majority of respondents who are currently living in a parsonage report that the parsonage in which they live has either a neutral or positive impact on their physical, emotional, and spiritual health – with almost half saying that it has a positive impact. Few say that it has a negative impact.

### **PRIVATELY OWNED HOMES**

About a third of those living in their own or a rented home say that the allowance they receive is adequate for the housing costs in the community where they live. About another quarter say that they receive a housing allowance but that it is not adequate and the remaining 40% do not receive a housing allowance. Licensed local pastors, older respondents, and part-time clergy are the most likely to say that they do not receive a housing allowance.



## WELLNESS SURVEY

In terms of the most important features of home ownership among those who currently own their own home, clergy homeowners and their spouses highly value having a sense of control, choosing the location and type of home, and building equity. Across the board, spouses of active and retired clergy tended to rate more factors as very important than did clergypersons.

The majority of those who currently live in a home they own or rent said that the home in which they live positively impacts the physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness of themselves and their family. Retired clergy and their spouses are even more likely to rate the impact favorably than are active clergy and their spouses. Across all measures, impact of privately owned homes on health and wellness is more positive than impact of parsonages on health and wellness.

### **RETIRED CLERGY HOUSING CORPORATION**

Only nine respondents reported that they live in a house that was provided by the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation. The majority are satisfied with the physical setting that is their current home. Likewise, the majority are satisfied with the ease of finding a home through the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation, location of their home, and the cost of living in the home. About 6 in 10 active clergy and their spouses say that when they (or their spouse) retire, they plan on purchasing a home. About 13% say that they do not plan on purchasing a home and the remainder are unsure.

Most active clergy say that they are unlikely to seek housing through the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation. In fact, more than half (55%) rate their likelihood a 1 on a 1 to 5 scale (where 1 means not at all likely and 5 means very likely). An additional 16% rated their likelihood a 2. Only 8% rated their likelihood of seeking a home through the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation a 4 or 5. Older respondents, who are therefore most likely closer to retirement, are even less likely to seek housing through the Retired Clergy Housing Corporation.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY**

Twenty-eight percent of active clergy describe the location of their ministry setting as rural or open country. An additional 19% say that they are in a town or village of less than 10,000 people. Fifteen percent have an appointment in or around a city of 10,000 to less than 50,000, 18% are in or around a city of 50,000 to less than 250,000, and 19% of active clergy are in or around a city of 250,000 people or more.

Not surprisingly, how they would describe the community in which they live closely replicates their ministry setting. About a quarter (24%) say that they live in a rural area or open country, 20% live in a town or village of less than 10,000 people, 17% live in or around a city of 10,000 – less than 50,000 people, 20% live in or around a city of 50,000 to less than 250,000 people and 19% live in or around a city of 250,000 or more.

The majority of respondents feel that their neighborhoods and communities are safe, aesthetically pleasing, and conducive to taking walks. They also say their neighborhoods and communities contribute positively to the physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness of themselves and their families.

About a quarter live within five minutes of an exercise facility or gym. Another third live within 5-10 minutes of one and only 6% say there is not an exercise facility or gym within half an hour from their home.

### **MOVING BECAUSE OF A NEW APPOINTMENT**

Moving because of a new appointment creates stress for many. Six in 10 active clergy spouses and 47% of active clergy agreed that moving and settling into a new community created a lot of stress for them. Likewise, slightly more than half agreed that moving and settling into a new community created a lot of stress for their family.



Of active clergy and their spouses who have ever had to move because of an appointment, 43% said they did not choose to continue any established health care provider relationships. Some, however, did choose to continue their relationships – 39% continued their relationship with their dentist, 38% continued their relationship with their primary care physician, 33% continued a relationship with a medical specialist (such as an OB/GYN, pediatrician, eye doctor, etc.), 7% continued their relationship with a mental health professional, and 4% continued their relationship with their spiritual advisor. Most (77%) established at least one new medical relationship after they moved. Two-thirds (66%) found a new primary care physician, 58% found a new dentist, 54% found new medical specialists, 15% found a new mental health professional, and 5% found a new spiritual advisor.

About a third believe that moving and settling into a new community positively impacted their physical, emotional, and spiritual health and that of their family. A fifth, however, said that it had a negative impact.

## **HEALTH CONDITIONS**

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It is important to note that the health conditions described in this section are self-reported and may not represent all conditions that may be present.

### **GENERAL HEALTH**

In general, clergy and their spouses rate their health quite highly. Slightly more than half of all respondents say that their health is very good or excellent. Whereas retired and active clergy rate their health on par with the rest of Virginians, spouses of retired clergy rate their health slightly higher and spouses of active clergy rate their health slightly below the state average for their peers.

### **MEDICAL CARE**

About three-quarters (74%) of respondents say they have seen a doctor for a routine checkup within the past year. Another 15% have seen one in the past two years, 7% have seen one in the past five years, and only 4% say that it has been more than five years. Respondents were even more likely to have visited a dentist within the past year, but less likely to have visited an eye care provider.

### **DIABETES, CHOLESTEROL, AND BLOOD PRESSURE**

About 14% of respondents have been diagnosed with diabetes. An additional 7% have been identified as having pre-diabetes or borderline diabetes and an additional 1% have had diabetes but only during pregnancy. Retired clergy are much more likely than others to have been diagnosed with diabetes. In fact, slightly more than a quarter (27%) have diabetes, as compared to 13% of active clergy, 12% of active clergy spouses, and 10% of retired clergy spouses. In the general population, 18% of those aged 65 or older have diabetes – slightly lower than the incidence among retired clergy, but higher than the incidence among spouses of retired clergy. Approximately 8% of those aged 45-54 in the general population report being diagnosed with diabetes – slightly less than both active clergy and their spouses.

Slightly more than half (58%) of all respondents say they have been told at some point in their life that their blood cholesterol is high. Retired clergy are the most likely to have high cholesterol, with 64% saying that they have had high cholesterol. This compares to only 54% of the 65+ Virginia population in general. Almost 6 in 10 (59%) of active clergy have had high cholesterol. This is significantly higher than the 41% of the 45-54 year old Virginia population. Half of active spouses have been told they have high cholesterol, and 54% of spouses of retired clergy report having high cholesterol at some point.

## WELLNESS SURVEY

Likewise, almost half (45%) have been told by a health professional at some point in their life that they have high blood pressure. Again, retired clergy are the most likely to have high blood pressure at 60%, as compared to 40% of active clergy, 49% of spouses of active clergy, and 45% of spouses of retired clergy. Spouses of retired clergy is the only group that is not significantly more likely than the general population to have been diagnosed with high blood pressure at some point in their life. Only slightly more than a quarter (28%) of Virginians aged 45-54 have been told they have high blood pressure and 57% of those aged 65 or older have.

### **CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE AND ASTHMA**

Not surprisingly, cardiovascular diseases are much more prevalent among retired clergy than active clergy, with approximately 10% of retired clergy having had angina or coronary heart disease, a heart attack, or a stroke, as compared to less than half that number among active clergy.

Clergy and their spouses do not vary substantially from the overall population in terms of angina or coronary heart disease, heart attack, or stroke. One exception, however, is that spouses of retired clergy were far less likely than the average population to report they have had a heart attack.

Clergy members and their spouses are also about equally as likely as the Virginia population in general to report having asthma. Asthma is about equally as prevalent between the different groups at approximately 15% prevalence – with the exception of spouses of retired clergy, with significantly less saying they have been told at some point in their life by a health professional they have asthma. Of those who said they have been told at some point that they have asthma, 60% still have it. This number also does not vary from the Virginia average.

### **ARTHRITIS**

Slightly more than a third of active and retired clergy and their spouses have been told by a doctor or other health professional they have some form of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia. Not surprisingly, retired clergy and their spouses are far more likely than active clergy and their spouses to have some form of the above illnesses. This incidence does not differ substantially from that of the general population.

### **RECOMMENDED HEALTH SCREENINGS**

Almost all female respondents say they have had a mammogram at some point in their life. Of those who have not, the majority are under the age of 40. Seventy-one percent of those who have had a mammogram at some point in their life say they have had one during the last year. An additional 17% say they have had one in the last two years. Only 5% say it has been five or more years. All but four respondents say they have had a clinical breast exam at some point in their life and 75% say it has been in the last year. An additional 15% have had one in the last two years and again, only 5% say it has been five years or more.

All but two respondents say they have had a Pap test at some point in their life and 59% say that the test was within the last year. An additional 21% say the test was within the last two years and 9% say it has been five or more years.

Slightly more than three-quarters of male respondents aged 40 and over say they have had a Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) test at some point in their life. Not surprisingly, those who are older are far more likely than younger respondents to have had this test. Of those who have had the test, 73% say they have had one within the last year and an additional 15% say it has been within the last two years. Only 2% say it has been five or more years since they have had a PSA.

Almost all (93%) of men aged 40 and above have had a digital rectal exam and 60% say they have had one within the past year. An additional 18% have had one in the last two years, 10% in the last three years, 7% in

the last five years, and 6% say it has been five years or more since they have had a digital rectal exam. Again, older respondents are far more likely than younger respondents to have had this exam.

Of all respondents (both male and female) aged 50 or older, 57% say they have had a blood stool test, which is a test that may use a special kit at home to determine whether the stool contains blood. Again, older respondents are significantly more likely than younger respondents to have had this test. Slightly more than a fifth (22%) have had a blood stool test within the last year, 21% say they have had one within the last two years, 27% within the last three years, and 30% say it has been five or more years since they have had a blood stool test.

Of respondents aged 50 or over, 80% report they have had a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy to screen for colon cancer. Again, not surprisingly, older respondents are much more likely than younger respondents to have had one of these tests. About a fifth (21%) have had the test within the last year, 27% within the last two years, 36% within the past five years, 14% within the past 10 years, and 2% say it has been 10 years or more since they had their last sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy.

### **MENTAL HEALTH**

In general, almost all respondents report that they are quite satisfied with their lives. Only about 5% of respondents overall say they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Retired clergy and their spouses are slightly more likely than active clergy and their spouses to report they are very satisfied with their lives and spouses of active clergy are the least likely to report they are very satisfied. Both active clergy and their spouses are somewhat on par with the satisfaction of Virginians aged 45-54, yet retired clergy and spouses of retired clergy are slightly more satisfied with their lives in general than are Virginians aged 65+.

Prevalence of depression was evaluated through the Patient Health Questionnaire 8 (PHQ-8). No respondents were deemed to have severe depression, only a few were considered moderately severely depressed, and less than 5% had moderate depression. Fourteen percent of retired clergy and their spouses, 16% of active clergy, and 20% of spouses of active clergy, however, were deemed to have mild depression. This prevalence does not differ from Virginians in general.

A quarter of active clergy and spouses of active clergy say they have been told by a doctor or other healthcare provider at some point in their life that they have a depressive disorder, such as depression, major depression, dysthymia, or minor depression. This compares to 18% of Virginians aged 45-54 who have received this diagnosis. Retired clergy and their spouses were somewhat less likely to have received this diagnosis than active clergy and their spouses.

Spouses of active clergy are more likely than others to say they have been told by a doctor or other healthcare provider that they have an anxiety disorder. Seventeen percent of spouses of active clergy have been diagnosed at some point in their life with an anxiety disorder, as compared to 11% of active clergy. Thirteen percent of those aged 45-54 in Virginia have been told that they have some sort of an anxiety disorder. Only 7% of those aged 65+ in Virginia have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, compared to 11% of retired clergy and 9% of spouses of retired clergy.

### **HEALTHY BEHAVIORS**

Not getting enough rest or sleep appears to be a concern for many clergy and their spouses. Overall, 83% report that there was at least one day in the past 30 days in which they did not get enough rest or sleep. Active clergy and their spouses are much more likely to say they are not getting enough rest or sleep – 86% of active clergy and 88% of their spouses say this was the case at least once in the past 30 days, as compared to only

## WELLNESS SURVEY

66% of retired clergy and 65% of their spouses. Active and retired clergy and their spouses are significantly more likely than the Virginia population in general to have not gotten enough rest or sleep on at least one day in the last month. On average, active clergy say that they didn't get enough sleep on 8.4 occasions in the last month and their spouses said that this happened 10.3 times. On the other hand, retired clergy said that they got enough sleep on all but 4.8 days and spouses of retired clergy said that they didn't get enough sleep on 4.7 days.

Slightly more than a quarter of respondents say that they have smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their life. Clergy – both active and retired – are more likely than their spouses to say that they have smoked. The incidence of smoking is significantly lower among clergy and their spouses than the population of Virginia in general. Only 5% of those who have ever smoked, however, say that they now smoke cigarettes every day and 3% say that they smoke them sometimes – again, significantly lower than the state average. Of the few who currently smoke, 58% say that they have stopped smoking for one day or longer in the past 30 days because they were trying to quit smoking.

About 4 in 10 respondents say that they have had at least one drink of an alcoholic beverage in the past 30 days. Spouses of retired clergy are slightly less likely than other survey respondents and the state average to have had a drink in the last 30 days. Active clergy and their spouses are also significantly less likely than the state average to have had a drink, whereas retired clergy do not differ substantially from the state average of their age group. Of those who have had a drink within the past 30 days, the average number of days that they had at least one drink is 7.8. The average number of drinks is 1.8. When asked how often they had consumed five drinks or more for men or four drinks or more for women, only 6% say that they had done that at all and only 4% had done it more than once. Driving under the influence does not appear to be a problem. Only one person in the entire survey says that they drove one time when they had perhaps had too much to drink.

### **EXERCISE**

Eighty-seven percent of active clergy and 84% of spouses of active clergy say they participated in physical activities or exercises, such as running, calisthenics, golf, or walking for exercise within the last month, which is on par with the 80% of Virginians aged 45-54 who gave this answer. Ninety-one percent of retired clergy and 86% of spouses of retired clergy say they have participated in physical activities or exercise in the past month, significantly higher than the 67% of Virginians aged 65 or older who say that they have.

Of those who have participated in physical activities or exercises in the last month, 93% say that they do moderate activities for at least 10 minutes at a time, such as brisk walking, bicycling, vacuuming, gardening, or other activities that cause some increase in breathing or heart rate. On average, respondents say that they participate in these types of activities 4.2 days per week. Almost two-thirds (63%) say that they have participated in vigorous activities for at least 10 minutes at a time, such as running, aerobics, heavy yard work, or other activities that cause large increases in breathing or heart rate. On average, those who participate in vigorous activities say that they do so 3.2 days a week.

The majority of respondents say they are currently trying to increase their daily amount of physical activity or exercise. Eighty-one percent of active clergy and 85% of their spouses say they are trying to increase their daily amount of physical activity or exercise. Likewise, 70% of retired clergy and 78% of their spouses say the same.

### **WEIGHT & DIET**

Weight appears to be an issue with a number of clergy and their spouses – namely active clergy and spouses of active clergy. More than three-quarters of these groups are currently considered overweight or obese. Spouses of retired clergy are the least likely to be overweight or obese, with 53% reporting a weight with a Body Mass Index (BMI) in these ranges. BMI, however, does not differ substantially from the average in Virginia.

A number of respondents have either gained or lost weight within the last year – 28% say they have gained weight, 40% have lost weight, and 32% have stayed the same. Half of those either gaining or losing weight within the last year say that the change was intentional. Almost three-quarters of active clergy (71%) and spouses of active clergy (72%) say they are currently trying to lose weight. Forty-six percent of retired clergy and 56% of spouses of retired clergy are also trying to lose weight.

Both active and retired clergy and their spouses report consuming significantly more fruits and vegetables than the general population of Virginia. Spouses of retired clergy in particular report consuming the highest number of daily fruits and vegetables.

## **FINANCIAL PRACTICES, LEGAL MATTERS, AND INSURANCE**

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### **INCOME, ASSETS, AND DEBT**

Total annual household income (before taxes and including housing allowances) varies by respondent type. The mean annual income for both active clergy and spouses of active clergy is \$83,000. Income is slightly lower for retired clergy with a mean of \$71,000; and the mean for spouses of retired clergy is \$67,000. However, the opposite holds true for investable assets. The respective means for retired clergy and spouses of retired clergy are \$326,000 and \$292,000. In the case of active clergy, the mean is \$252,000 and spouses of active clergy it is \$233,000.

Income and investable assets are correlated with education, such that those with the highest level of education also have the highest income and assets. Likewise, elders have higher incomes and investable assets than do licensed local pastors.

When asked how much of the household income is used to pay off current debt, active clergy and spouses reported a higher percentage than did retired clergy and spouses. A fifth of active clergy/spouses say that more than 35% of their income goes towards paying off current debt, compared to only 9% of retired clergy/spouses. Slightly more than half of retired clergy/spouses (56%) say that less than 15% of their income goes towards paying their debt, whereas 38% of active clergy/spouses say this.

### **FINANCIAL SERVICES**

About half of all respondents had checked their credit scores in the past 12 months. Retired clergy and their spouses are more likely (38%) than active clergy and their spouses (19%) to have completed a Net-Worth Statement within the past year. Likewise, 41% of active clergy/spouses have never completed a Net-Worth Statement, whereas only 18% of retired clergy/spouses say they have not.

### **RETIREMENT**

Active clergy and their spouses expect to retire later than their already-retired counterparts. The mean expected retirement age for active clergy is 68 and for their spouses is 66. The mean age that retired clergy retired is 63.

### **WILLS AND OTHER LEGAL DOCUMENTS**

Not surprisingly, retired clergy and their spouses are much more likely than active clergy and their spouses to have wills and other legal documents in place.

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Ninety percent of retired clergy and spouses and 59% of active clergy and spouses say they currently have Last Wills and Testaments in place. Seventy-two percent of retired clergy and spouses and 34% of active clergy and spouses say they currently have General Durable Powers of Attorney. Seventy-five percent of retired clergy and spouses and 38% of active clergy and spouses say they currently have Advanced Medical Directives. Fifty-seven percent of retired clergy and spouses and 25% of active clergy and spouses say they currently have Health Care Powers of Attorney in place.

Almost half of all respondents say they would be interested in attending a Conference sponsored workshop offered by an attorney who specializes in topics such as Wills and Trusts, General Durable Power of Attorney, Advanced Medical Directive, and Health Care Power of Attorney if the time and location worked for them.

### **CONFERENCE-SPONSORED FINANCIAL WORKSHOPS**

Across the board, clergy and their spouses are interested in Conference-sponsored financial workshops. In terms of interest and past attendance, the most popular programs are pre-retirement counseling, tax awareness seminars, and identity theft seminars.

### **SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE**

Most respondents pay taxes for Social Security and Medicare – 89% of active clergy do and 81% of active clergy spouses say that their spouses do. Further, 97% of retired clergy say they paid for Social Security and Medicare while they were in active ministry and 92% of retired clergy spouses say that their spouse did.

Of the 52 respondents that opted out, 22 did so for economic reasons, 18 because of the soundness of the program, 13 were opposed on religious or conscientious grounds, 8 gave other reasons, and 7 reported that they did not know why they opted out. Many do not recall if they informed the Board of Ordained Ministry and Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc. of their decision, but eight said they did, one only informed the Virginia United Methodist Pensions, Inc, and 16 did not inform those groups. Thirty-one filed a form with the IRS to opt out, but nine did not. About three quarters (34 respondents) discussed all the implications and consequences of opting out with their spouses.

About a quarter of active clergy and their spouses and about half of retired clergy and their spouses were not aware, prior to reading a description about participating in the Social Security Program, that any of these were regulations. Knowledge of individual regulations varies, but does not exceed two-thirds (and in many cases is less than a half) for any one regulation.

### **IMPORTANCE OF BENEFITS**

Eighty-one percent say that the Medical Benefit is the single most important health and welfare product or service provided by the Virginia Conference. Active clergy and spouses are even more likely than retired to say so. In second place is the Prescription Benefit (8%), which more retired than active respondents found to be important.

### **ENROLLMENT IN VIRGINIA CONFERENCE PLANS**

Of those enrolled in the Virginia Conference medical plan, type of plan varies by status. Active clergy and spouses are more likely to be enrolled in the PPO, while retired clergy and spouses are more likely to be enrolled in Medicare.

Forty-eight percent of those enrolled in the medical plan use Anthem's online support. Spouses of retired clergy are the least likely to use the online support. Most who do use it, refill prescriptions online.

In terms of concern about the ability of the Virginia Conference to provide plans, programs, or coverages, respondents have the most concern about health plan coverage during retirement, the cost of health plan coverage, and prescription coverage.

### **HEALTH CARE COVERAGE PAID BY RESPONDENT**

Many respondents indicate that less than a quarter of their total health care coverage is paid by them. The next most popular answer is 25% - 49%. Perhaps more interesting, however, is the fact that about a third (and almost a half in the case of spouses of clergy) report that they do not know how much of their total health care coverage is paid by them.

### **APPOINTMENTS AND THE ITINERANCY**

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#### **INFLUENCE ON CURRENT AND FUTURE APPOINTMENTS**

Overall, clergy are divided on the amount of influence they feel they have in the appointment process. Among active clergy, 40% gave a rating of 1 or 2 (on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means no influence at all and 5 means a lot of influence), yet almost the same proportion (36%) gave a rating of 4 or 5.

When asked how much of an influence specific factors have on their appointments, professional factors were seen as much more influential than personal. For example, active clergy are most likely to believe their particular gifts and graces for ministry, their previous experience, their previous performance, and their theological match with the congregation/ministry setting were the most important factors in their current appointment. Retired clergy agree that these factors were important over the course of their ministry, yet they also cite the Conference's need to appoint all elders as an important factor. Likewise, almost half of retired clergy believe that the pressure to increase salary for pastors moving to a new appointment played an important role in the appointments they received over the course of their ministry. Most active clergy, on the other hand, did not feel as though this was a factor in their current appointment. Both groups – and particularly active clergy – feel that their and their families' health conditions, their spouses', children's, and extended families' needs, and their parsonage or housing needs, were less important factors than others.

With few exceptions, active clergy predict that the individual factors cited above will have a more substantial influence on their next appointment than they had on their current appointment.

#### **REQUESTING A CHANGE OF APPOINTMENT**

Slightly more than half of active clergy and two-thirds of retired clergy say that they have requested a change of appointment at some point in their ministry. Full-time clergy, elders, and those with master's or doctorate degrees are more likely to have requested a change. Reasons for change requests, in no particular order, varied dramatically. Some of the common reasons include:

- Need to switch from a part-time position to a full-time position
- Poor match
- Felt calling to go somewhere else
- Been there for a long time and it was time for a change
- Unresolved conflict or differences with congregation
- Desire to move from an associate position to being a pastor
- To be near seminary or school of theology
- To move away from a multi-point charge



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- Desire to move to extension ministry
- For new challenges
- Fulfilled goals of appointment/ministry
- Spouse's job
- Children's education
- Health needs of family, including aging parents

### **BEING ASKED TO MOVE**

About a fifth of active clergy and a quarter of retired clergy say that a congregation has asked them to move at some point in their ministry. Elders are much more likely to say this than those with other relationships to the church. Some of the most common reasons, in no particular order, given by the PPRC/SPRC for being asked to move are:

- Not a good fit
- Policy to only keep a pastor for a certain number of years
- Mutual decision
- Other gifts and graces were needed
- Conflicts with church leadership
- Time to go
- Lack of experience
- Inability to pay current salary or inability to pay appropriate salary when appointed as elder
- Congregation was displeased with amount of home visits
- Gender issues – congregation wanted a male pastor
- Conflict over change
- Mismatch of personality and leadership styles
- Congregation felt that sermons were not strong enough

When asked how the reasons given by the PPRC/SPRC were addressed by the local church, district, or Conference, there is a variety of different answers. Many say that the issues were not addressed and in many situations, they were simply moved without a resolution. Others, however, say that they met with the District Superintendent and were given the option of staying and trying to work out the issues. Some say that they increased dialogue with the PPRC/SPRC and congregation in order to work through the issues. Some others report attempting to correct the situation by taking actions such as attending classes on writing sermons and preaching.

### **BEING TOLD BY BISHOP OR CABINET TO MOVE**

About a quarter of active clergy and half of retired clergy say that at some point in their ministry, they have been told by the Bishop/Cabinet that they were changing appointments. Men, full-time clergy, elders, and those with advanced degrees are more likely than others to say that this has happened.

The vast majority of those who have been told by the Bishop/Cabinet that they were moving say that the reason they were given was that their gifts and graces were needed at a different appointment. Other common reasons, in no particular order, were:

- Going from being an associate pastor to an elder
- Going from being part-time to full-time
- Good opportunity in the new appointment
- To provide coverage for a congregation who recently lost a pastor (due to death or moving)



- Current appointment was not a good fit
- Length of time at current appointment – it was time for a change

### **COMPENSATION**

Clergy and their spouses are also divided on whether or not they are fairly compensated for the level of ministry that they provide their congregation/ministry setting. Spouses of active clergy are the least likely to believe that they are fairly compensated for the level of ministry that their spouses provide – both when including and when excluding benefits and housing allowance. About half of all respondents say their compensation has a positive impact on their emotional and spiritual health and wellness. Most of the rest say that it has a neutral impact, with fewer saying it has a negative impact.

### **MEET YOUR PASTOR MEETINGS**

Most active clergy and their spouses report they have participated in at least one “Meet Your Pastor” meeting. About two-thirds of those who have participated in a “Meet Your Pastor” meeting say that they have been helpful in understanding their or their spouse’s projected appointment. Likewise, three-quarters say they have been helpful to the members of the PPR or SPRC.

Two-thirds of active and retired clergy say that “Meet Your Pastor” meetings should be continued with their present purpose, structure, and format. Likewise, 78% of spouses of active clergy and 72% of spouses of retired clergy agree. Only 5% overall say that “Meet Your Pastor” meetings should be discontinued and the remainder say they should be continued but that the purpose, structure, and format need to change.

### **INTERIM MINISTRY**

Nine percent of active clergy and 24% of retired clergy indicate they have served as an interim pastor at some point in their ministry. Additionally, twelve percent of active clergy and 10% of retired clergy have been appointed to a church/charge in which they followed an interim pastorate. Of those who followed an interim pastorate, feelings were mixed on whether or not it was effective in dealing with the issues the church was facing – 24% gave the effectiveness the very highest rating, yet 18% gave it the lowest rating. Twenty-nine percent of respondents have been appointed to a church/charge which, in hindsight, they felt would have benefited by having an interim pastorate prior to their arrival.

Three-quarters of respondents believe it is important for the Conference to utilize an intentional Interim Ministry Program that specifically trains pastors for this ministry and appoints them to churches facing difficult challenges.

### **GENERAL VIEWS ON THE ITINERANCY**

In general, clergy believe that the itinerancy supports the connectional nature of The United Methodist Church. Slightly more than half support the current itinerant system of matching pastors and congregations. Likewise, about half believe the itinerancy supports the mission of the Virginia Conference and that it facilitates the ministries of The United Methodist Church. Less than half, however, believe appointment making in the Virginia Conference is conducted in a fair and just manner. In general, about half of active and retired clergy believe the itinerancy has enabled their call. Only 2% say it strongly thwarted their call and another 8% rated it a 2 on the 1 to 5 scale.