

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary's

Clergy Burnout Survey

May 2002

Survey conducted by the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and in particular: Michael Jinkins, principal investigator; Keith Wulff, from the Research Services Office of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.); Ian Evison, director of research at the Alban Institute; Michael Murray, consultant and Presbyterian minister; and Alison Riemersma, faculty secretary. Survey results published in CONGREGATIONS (May/June 2002) by the Alban Institute, Inc., 7315 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 1250W, Bethesda, Maryland 20814-3211.

SURVEY OF RECENT GRADUATES WORKING IN PASTORAL MINISTRIES

Number of surveys mailed	272
Number of surveys returned	161
Response rate.....	59%

If you are not presently serving in pastoral ministries, please skip to Q-24.

Q-1. Below is a list of some sources of support for pastors. In the last six months, how helpful have the following supports been to you in your ministry?

	Very Helpful	Helpful	Slightly Helpful	Not Helpful	Not Applicable	
a. Members or groups in your congregation.....	38%	30%	23%	8%	1%	
b. Members of the Session or the Personnel Committee in your congregation	19%	33%	23%	17%	8%	+
c. Colleagues in ministry	37%	39%	20%	4%	—	
d. Ministerial support group	14%	18%	16%	17%	36%	+
e. Spouse or close family member.....	65%	17%	7%	3%	8%	
f. Pastoral or marital counselor, psychiatrist, or therapist	14%	8%	5%	2%	71%	
g. Executive Presbyter	14%	26%	20%	14%	25%	+
h. Committee of Presbytery	6%	15%	20%	27%	33%	+
i. Mentor	16%	24%	7%	4%	50%	+
j. Spiritual director	12%	6%	4%	1%	78%	+
k. Friend outside the congregation.....	38%	29%	15%	1%	17%	+
l. Other	21%	3%	3%	—	72%	+
If other, please specify: _____						

Q-2. Do you have a mentor?

Yes	41%
No (Skip to Q-5)	59%

Q-3. How frequently do you meet with your mentor? (If you have more than one mentor, answer about the one with whom you meet most frequently.)

	n=60
Weekly	17%
Bi-weekly.....	5%
Monthly	27%
Quarterly.....	8%
As needed	43%

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Q-4. Please check the topics that you discuss with your mentor. ◆

	n=60
Preaching	62%
Administration	62%
Interpersonal relationships	67%
Personal growth and development issues	73%
Family life.....	57%
Financial issues	28%
Spiritual issues	60%
Theological topics.....	65%
Social policy regarding interactions between the church and the community	38%
Other: _____	22%

Q-5. Are there other pastors with whom you have a high-trust relationship?

Yes	86%
No ≡ Skip to Q-8.....	14%

Q-6. With how many other pastors do you have high-trust relationships? _____ pastors

Mean	Median
4.4	3

Q-7. How frequently do you have high-trust conversations with these pastors? n=125

Weekly	22%
Bi-weekly.....	9%
Monthly	20%
Quarterly	7%
As needed	42%

Q-8. What is your trust level with your senior pastor? +

Low	7%
Medium.....	8%
High	19%
Varies.....	3%
Not applicable—no senior pastor or I am the senior pastor.....	62%

Q-9. What is your trust level with other paid staff at your congregation?

Low	8%
Medium.....	25%
High	31%
Varies.....	14%
Not applicable—no other paid staff here	22%

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Q-10. To what extent have you used the following methods to build trust between you and others?

	Very Great Extent	Great Extent	Some Extent	Limited Extent	Not at All	
a. Been vulnerable or shared emotions.....	13%	36%	35%	14%	1%	
b. Shared personal goals, hopes, or dreams	18%	41%	33%	8%	—	+
c. Created common goals	12%	42%	33%	11%	3%	+
d. Asked for, and acted on, corrective feedback..	12%	29%	45%	9%	5%	+
e. Acknowledged personal flaws or weaknesses	8%	43%	42%	6%	1%	
f. Shared my personal story.....	19%	38%	34%	8%	1%	
g. Gave corrective feedback	6%	15%	49%	27%	3%	
h. Invited others to share their personal stories ...	20%	38%	28%	10%	3%	

Q-11. How often do the following situations create stress in your life?

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at All	
a. Too many demands on my time	41%	33%	25%	1%	—	
b. Feelings of powerlessness in my work	10%	18%	40%	31%	1%	
c. Inadequate compensation or finances	16%	14%	29%	30%	10%	
d. Personal or family situations	14%	19%	48%	18%	1%	
e. Conflicting or ambiguous expectations for my work	11%	25%	36%	24%	3%	
f. Criticism of me and what I have done	6%	5%	40%	41%	8%	
g. Doubts about religious/spiritual beliefs	2%	3%	27%	43%	25%	
h. Doubt that the Bible has solutions to my problems.....	1%	3%	20%	35%	40%	
i. Feeling drained in fulfilling my functions in my congregation.....	21%	26%	39%	12%	1%	
j. My mental health problems	1%	5%	12%	37%	45%	
k. My being physically sick or hurt.....	1%	5%	19%	49%	26%	
l. Dealing with personal grief	3%	5%	22%	47%	23%	+
m. Problems I have with addictions.....	—	1%	4%	15%	80%	+
n. Other stress situations.....	—	—	—	—	—	

Q-12. Please indicate how often you have used the following factors in your personal and professional development.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at All
a. Bible study and exegesis for sermon preparation	56%	33%	10%	1%	—
b. Bible study and exegesis for personal enrichment.....	23%	35%	25%	16%	1%
c. Listening and responding to people's needs	38%	52%	9%	1%	—
d. Creating clear, articulated goals for my congregation.....	12%	40%	34%	14%	1%
e. Developing my interpersonal skills	16%	45%	35%	4%	—
f. Developing my administrative ability	8%	38%	43%	9%	1%
g. Learning and actively using visionary leadership skills.....	17%	27%	40%	13%	3%
h. Learning and actively using conflict					

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resolution skills 7% 31% 42% 17% 3%

Q-12. Please indicate how often you have used the following factors in your personal and professional development.
(Cont.)

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at All	
i. Prayer and meditation	46%	39%	13%	1%	1%	
j. Journaling	11%	11%	18%	28%	32%	+
k. Other	—	—	—	—	—	

Q-13. Please indicate to what extent the following have *contributed* to your success in ministry.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at All	
a. Bible study and exegesis for sermon preparation	56%	30%	11%	2%	1%	
b. Bible study and exegesis for personal enrichment.....	34%	34%	19%	10%	3%	
c. Listening and responding to people's needs	59%	33%	8%	1%	—	
d. Creating clear, articulated goals for my congregation.....	17%	32%	33%	14%	3%	
e. Developing my interpersonal skills	34%	40%	22%	3%	1%	
f. Developing my administrative ability	20%	29%	36%	13%	1%	+
g. Learning and actively using visionary leadership skills.....	21%	28%	33%	15%	3%	+
h. Learning and actively using conflict resolution skills	16%	26%	35%	19%	4%	+
i. Prayer and meditation	52%	32%	12%	2%	1%	+
j. Journaling	11%	10%	15%	19%	44%	+
k. Other	—	—	—	—	—	

Q-14. Please indicate to what extent the following have *hindered* your success in ministry.

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at All	
a. Lack of Bible study and exegesis for sermon preparation	3%	7%	26%	44%	20%	+
b. Lack of Bible study and exegesis for personal enrichment.....	4%	14%	32%	35%	14%	+
c. Failure to listen and respond to people's needs	1%	6%	41%	44%	8%	+
d. Failure to create clear, articulated goals for my congregation.....	—	14%	42%	34%	10%	+
e. Failure to develop my interpersonal skills.....	—	6%	37%	45%	12%	+
f. Failure to develop my administrative ability	2%	14%	33%	38%	13%	+
g. Failure to learn and actively use visionary leadership skills.....	—	14%	34%	42%	10%	+
h. Failure to learn and actively use conflict resolution skills	1%	11%	40%	37%	10%	+
i. Lack of prayer and meditation	4%	16%	33%	33%	14%	+
j. Lack of journaling	1%	7%	17%	30%	44%	+
k. Other	—	—	—	—	—	

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Q-15. When defining success in your pastoral role, how important do you consider each of the following to be?

		Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important	Not Applicable	
a.	Number of new members.....	8%	38%	41%	8%	4%	+
b.	Personally leading someone to Christ.....	31%	41%	17%	10%	1%	
c.	Affirmative feedback from worshipers.....	18%	47%	33%	2%	—	
d.	Increased giving by church members	10%	45%	33%	8%	4%	
e.	Affirmative feedback from persons to whom I have given pastoral care.....	22%	55%	20%	1%	1%	
f.	Affirmative feedback from persons I teach	21%	62%	15%	2%	—	
g.	Increased benevolences	8%	31%	41%	12%	8%	+
h.	Affirmative feedback from counselees	10%	41%	29%	8%	13%	
i.	Recognition for community work.....	3%	15%	38%	38%	7%	
j.	Serving on local committees or boards.....	3%	21%	35%	34%	6%	
k.	Serving the Presbytery	8%	32%	32%	12%	17%	+
l.	Other	28%	22%	—	—	50%	+

Q-16. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a.	I frequently ask advice of more experienced pastors	20%	46%	19%	14%	—
b.	I like to be challenged.....	31%	56%	10%	4%	—
c.	The church's first priority is to make disciples of the unchurched.....	15%	29%	40%	16%	1%
d.	I prefer to do one thing at a time.....	8%	32%	25%	32%	3%
e.	It is important for pastors to identify, train, and empower lay leaders according to their gifts	78%	22%	1%	—	—
f.	I have the energy to take on additional tasks	8%	46%	18%	23%	6%
g.	I get energized by being with people	29%	43%	9%	17%	2%
h.	I get energized spending time in personal reflection	26%	58%	10%	5%	1%

Q-17. How important are the following aspects of the Christian life for you personally?

		Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important	
a.	Knowing God loves you and me	91%	9%	—	—	
b.	Knowing Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior.....	84%	12%	4%	—	
c.	Denominational faithfulness.....	12%	45%	35%	8%	+
d.	Sharing with unchurched people our faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ.....	36%	48%	16%	—	
e.	Belonging to a small group of people who share, support, and encourage Christian living.....	37%	48%	14%	1%	

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f.	Serving humanity passionately through acts of love and justice	52%	42%	5%	1%
g.	Other	50%	10%	—	40% +

Q-18. Which of the following have you done to help church members *identify* their personal gifts and callings? (Check *all* that apply.)

	In Last Year	In Year Before Last	Both Years		
a.	Held study groups on this topic	56%	31%	13%	+
b.	Held workshops on this topic	53%	37%	10%	+
c.	Preached on the topic of personal gifts and callings.....	67%	4%	30%	+
d.	Provided one-to-one counseling	69%	5%	27%	+
e.	Worked with the church nominating committee.....	64%	11%	25%	+
f.	Encouraged people to engage in career guidance or assessment.....	50%	32%	18%	+
g.	Used denominational materials on spiritual gifts	75%	14%	10%	+
h.	Prayed for discernment	65%	2%	33%	+
i.	Other (specify):.....	—	—	—	

Q-19. In the past year, have you done any of the following to *enable* and *support* church members to use their gifts and exercise their callings? (Check *all* that apply.)

	◆ n=144
Discussed the issue one-to-one with officers, teachers, or staff	83%
Provided coaching and mentoring for volunteers	62%
Negotiated performance standards	15%
Gave affirmative and corrective feedback	81%
“Tailored” jobs to fit the gifts of the person.....	60%
Let people resign when there was not a “fit”	66%
Encouraged people who need to resign to do so (and helped them find new positions for exercising their gifts)	51%
Held discussions with people to discover what they are learning from their experiences of using their gifts and exercising their callings	46%
Other (specify):.....	6%

Q-20. In the past week, how often have you . . .

	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Not at All		
a.	Felt depressed	5%	12%	25%	35%	24%	+
b.	Felt sad.....	4%	12%	39%	31%	14%	
c.	Had crying spells	1%	1%	10%	23%	66%	+
d.	Felt you could not shake off the blues, even with help from family and friends.....	1%	5%	10%	27%	57%	
e.	Not felt like eating or had a poor appetite	1%	5%	9%	19%	66%	
f.	Slept restlessly	6%	14%	32%	21%	28%	
g.	Felt you could not get going	2%	11%	23%	32%	32%	
h.	Felt that everything you did was an effort	3%	13%	19%	31%	33%	+

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Q-21. What do you currently do to take care of your physical health? (Check *all* that apply.) ◆

	n=144
Take full vacation time allotted	69%
Get appropriate hours of sleep for my personal needs.....	56%
Get regular dental checkups.....	56%
Get regular physical checkups.....	59%
Eat a balanced diet.....	52%
Manage my weight	48%
Take vitamins	56%
Get regular (at least weekly) exercise.....	60%
Take a full day off each week.....	56%
Have private worship time.....	46%
Participate in worship at other congregations.....	15%
Other	8%

Q-22. What time management techniques do you currently use? (Check *all* that apply.) ◆

	n=145
Use calendar, planner, or computer methods for scheduling (e.g., DayTimer, Palm Pilot, Calendar Creator, etc.)	92%
Scheduled office hours	52%
Calls screened by secretary.....	33%
Saying no to certain invitations to serve.....	76%
Use of denominational calendar	68%
Disciplined or scheduled times for study.....	38%
Disciplined or scheduled times for sermon preparation	55%
Disciplined or scheduled times for prayer.....	49%
Limit counseling hours by referring people to other resources	37%
Personal and professional goal setting.....	34%
Establish clear expectations with Session or Personnel Committee and communicate those to the congregation.....	28%
Ask yourself “Who else could handle this?” and make sure to pass it to them quickly	44%
Review and assess time usage with Personnel Committee or other support group	12%
Use of the “two-thirds/one third” model (Divide the day into three waking segments and work only two out of the three).....	10%
Other	6%

Q-23. How satisfied are you in your current position?

Very satisfied.....	37%
Satisfied	44%
Slightly satisfied	13%
Not satisfied at all.....	6%

Q-24. Do you feel the seminary did a good job of preparing you for ministry? +

Yes.....	81%
No, I was not ready.....	18%
Not sure.....	1%

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Q-25. Please list courses you would have taken to better prepare yourself if the seminary had offered them.

[Not Tabulated]

Q-26. If the seminary offered these courses today as continuing education, would you take one or more of them?

Yes	78%
No	22%

Q-27. Please indicate if you have done any of the following in the last two years.

	In Last Year	In Year Before Last	Both Years	
a. Attended seminary continuing education events	46%	36%	18%	+
b. Stayed in touch with colleagues in ministry to find out what they are doing	58%	6%	37%	+
c. Maintained spiritual disciplines	59%	8%	33%	+
d. Attended conferences or workshops	56%	8%	36%	+
e. Used a speech coach (or had training in making effective presentations)	62%	12%	25%	+
f. Other (specify): _____	50%	12%	38%	+

Q-28. Are you currently . . .

	Yes	No
a. A member of a ministerial group?	58%	40%
b. Involved in disciplined exegetical study of sermon texts?	38%	62%
c. Working with a group to help decide how to use continuing education time and money?	15%	85%

Q-29. How many close, personal relationships did you develop with colleagues while you were in seminary? (Write the number on the line.) _____

Mean	Median
5.38	5

Q-30. How many of those have you sustained in the time you have been in the ministry? _____

Mean	Median
3.03	3

Q-31. How many close, personal relationships have you developed with colleagues since leaving the seminary? _____

Mean	Median
3.76	3

Q-32. How many of those have you sustained since leaving the seminary? _____

Mean	Median
3.68	3

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Q-33. To what extent did your seminary education prepare you in each of the following areas?

	Great Extent	Some Extent	Only a Little	Not at All
a. Administration	2%	17%	44%	38%
b. Leadership	9%	43%	36%	11%
c. Evangelism	9%	40%	35%	15%
d. Stewardship	2%	19%	40%	38%
e. Pastoral care.....	35%	46%	18%	2%
f. Preaching	60%	32%	8%	—
g. Biblical studies	72%	24%	4%	—
h. Theological reflection.....	72%	26%	1%	—
i. Historical understanding of the church.....	56%	36%	8%	—
j. Understanding of cultural context of church ...	33%	47%	16%	4%
k. Understanding of ethical issues facing Christians	32%	52%	16%	1%

Q-34. Which of the following best describes your current employment?

Solo pastor	43%
Head of staff	4%
Associate pastor	30%
Co-pastor	1%
Other (specify):.....	23%

Q-35. How many years were you, or have you been, in the ministry?

Less than one year	15%
Four to six years	33%
Seven to ten years	10%
More than ten years	8%

Q-36. Please indicate which theological degrees you have completed. (Check *all* that apply.)

Ph.D.	1%
D.Min.....	5%
S.T.M.	—
M.Div.....	97%
M.A.	6%
Th.M.	—
B.D.....	1%
Other:.....	6%

Q-37. Are you:

Female	54%
Male	46%

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Q-38. What is your race or origin? (Check *all* that apply.)

White or Caucasian	89%
Black or African American	4%
Indian (American) or Alaska Native	3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3%
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.....	2%
Some other race (please specify):.....	1%

Q-39. What is your age?

Less than 25.....	1%
25 - 38.....	28%
39 - 44.....	18%
45 - 56.....	44%
57 or older	9%

Q-40. Please use the space below for any additional comments regarding the topics covered in this form.

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