

Weathering the storm: Solutions to major pastor problems

Henry Ford once said, "Most people spend more time and energy going around problems than in trying to solve them." As the "go-to" person for calming the storm, where do you turn when you find yourself in the middle of one? Let God guide the way and be proactive. Here are the most common pastor problems and a few problem-solving tips to guard against the winds and help you weather the storm.

Time management

This is a problem in most professions, but for pastors it can be an especially sensitive one. How do you manage a schedule that is often filled by the spiritual and physical emergencies of others? The very nature of your job requires a certain amount of spontaneous availability. Still, there are many benefits of project management and several steps you can take to make the best use of your time.

- Be selective when making appointments and time commitments. Establish your priorities and think carefully about them. You don't have to say yes to everything. Don't be afraid to ask for help and to delegate.

- Schedule breaks, lunches and family time. Put those "appointments" in ink. Too often, pastors willingly and easily forgo these times for the sake of others. While emergencies that require your attention are sure to occur occasionally, you should be very protective of your personal time.

- Be organized. Organization may not be your strong point, but it is perhaps one of the best time-management tools. Staying organized helps avoid wasting time. Free online programs such as Google for Nonprofits can offer great resources to help you get started.

- Create "to-do" lists and tackle the hardest things first. There is freedom in knowing you won't forget things because you have written them down, and there is a feeling of accomplishment in marking off completed tasks. Don't worry if you don't accomplish everything on your list everyday; simply carry over uncompleted tasks to tomorrow's list. Consider using simple personal productivity apps like Any.do to schedule tasks. Any.do will send you push notifications in the morning and reward you with positive messages when you finish.

Despite your unique calling, you as a pastor are not immune to difficulties. In fact, because of your position, you may be more vulnerable to certain struggles. Ignoring them won't make them go away. Take a serious look at the problems you and other church leaders are facing, and take positive steps to help correct them today.

Read more of this article at umcom.org.

— *United Methodist Communications*

New award announced for Annual Conference 2017

The Virginia Annual Conference Board of Discipleship has announced a new award to be given at Annual Conference. The award, "One Matters," recognizes significant improvement of baptisms and professions of faith. "With the One Matters Discipleship Award, we want to lift up the importance of discipleship and help interpret, across the connection what zeros in professions of faith and baptism mean and what moving away from the zeros means," said Jeff Campbell, director of Annual Conference Relationships at Discipleship Ministries. "Each 'one' in those categories represents a transformed life – a life that matters to God, and a life that should matter to us."

The award, which includes \$1,000 and a One Matters Discipleship Award plaque, will be presented to the pastor and lay leaders of a congregation that has done significant work to make its zeros from previous years become positive numbers.

Criteria for the award is a church that has a history of zero baptisms and zero professions of faith for a minimum of three to five years and has significant increases in these two areas in 2016. Nominations should include the historical record which can be verified through Year End Statistics for at least four to six years. Included in the application should be a short story of how the church has turned itself around. **Applications are due no later than Friday, Apr. 21, 2017.** More information available at <http://www.vaumc.org/ncfilerpository/Events/OneMatters.pdf>

Conference-wide Week of Prayer will be Apr. 2-8

A prayer movement in response to the Council of Bishops initiative is called Praying Our Way Forward. You are invited whether clergy or laity to pray for God's guidance. The Virginia Conference will hold its designated Week of Prayer from Apr. 2-8. The website umcprays.org will host prayer resources and prayer support for the church. Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett of North Alabama Conference and Bishop Al Gwinn serve as co-chairs of the Praying Our Way Forward movement. "Our prayer focus is two-fold: We are praying that God will help us to fulfill the mission of the church, and we are praying to be one in Christ," said Bishop Wallace-Padgett. Virginia Conference resources are available at vaumc.org/prayforward.

UM Communications offering local church grants

United Methodist Communications has established a series of grants and resources to support local church communications. All grants are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis. Grants include website development, new church starts and demographic data. Visit www.umcom.org. For questions, email localchurchgrants@umcom.org.

Published weekly, the electronic *Sunday Advocate* summarizes news events affecting Virginia United Methodists and serves as a link to the in-depth reporting of the *Virginia United Methodist Advocate*, the official magazine of the Virginia Conference. To subscribe to the monthly *Virginia Advocate* magazine, call (804) 521-1110 or 1-800-768-6040, ext. 110; or e-mail Advocate@vaumc.org. Unless indicated, all news compiled courtesy of the *Virginia Advocate*, the weekly *e-Advocate* or United Methodist News Service.