# Pastoral Vulnerability: Navigating the Nuance of Disclosing Clergy Mental Health Challenges

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#### Importance of Clergy Disclosure

- Validates the experience of others
- Creates safe space for healthy vulnerability
- Builds foundation for true community
- Supports clergy authenticity and integrity
- Helps humanize clergy
- Supports teaching and modeling

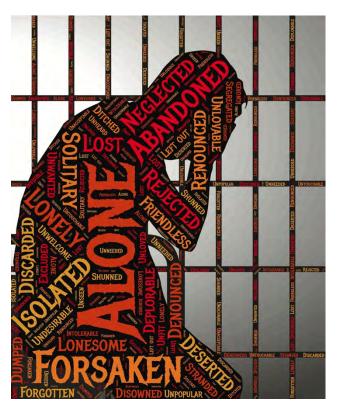


#### **Barriers to Clergy Disclosure**

- Misconception that mental illness is a sign of spiritual weakness, failure, or demonic possession
- Misunderstanding of what vulnerability is
- Stigma: Mental illness requires a "whisper"
- Disclosure has potential to be used against us and our professional competency
- Lack of knowledge and education about mental health and illness



### Types of Vulnerabilities



#### When In Need When In Service







## **Sharing When in Need**

- 1. Feeling Forsaken
- 2. Dark Night of the Soul "Jesus as Light"
  - Spiritual crisis as normal
  - Trust vs. understanding
- 3. Theology of the Unknown
  - Felt experience vs. yearning
- 4. Grace, Blame, and Causality
  - Understanding cause for treatment vs. blame



### **Sharing When in Service**

#### 1. Power of Testimony

Story of healing that brings healing

#### 2. Humanization of Clergy

- Allowing clergy to be more human than divine
- Teaches healthy expectations

# 3. Modeling/ Spiritually Edifying Congregation

- Using your platform of influence
- Setting tone for healthy expectations





# Sharing Pyramid Family

Friends

**Intimate Circle** 

Therapist
Spiritual Director
Professional Support

Trusted Peers
Pastoral Relations Committee

Board, Elders, Church Leadership

**Congregation/ Community** 



# Closing and Q&A

Thank You!



#### Resources

**NBA** Mental Health Initiative

www.nbacares.org

**Duke Divinity Clergy Health Initiative** 

https://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives/clergyhealth-initiative

Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society by Henri Nouwen

