

CLERGY LEADERSHIP & RESILIENCE

A CLERGY RESILIENCE PRACTICE

Life-Giving Relationships

Cultivating the Relationships That
Sustain a Life in Ministry

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CLERGY LEADERSHIP AND RESILIENCE SERIES

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About the Clergy Resilience Series

Ministry can be deeply life-giving. It can also wear you down.

The work asks us to enter people's grief, conflict, fear, hope, illness, joy, disappointment, and change. We preach and teach, lead organizations, respond to crises, manage conflict, accompany people through suffering, celebrate with them, make decisions, and carry responsibilities few people in our congregations ever fully see.

Sometimes we do all of that while trying to make sense of what is happening in our own lives.

Over time, ministry leaves its mark.

You may notice that you are more tired than you used to be. Criticism stays with you longer. You carry other people's problems home. Saying no produces guilt. Conflict occupies your mind long after the meeting ends. Prayer has become something you do professionally rather than something that nourishes you. Perhaps you feel lonely, spiritually dry, cynical, constantly hurried, or simply beaten up.

These experiences do not necessarily mean you are failing at ministry.

They may mean that something deserves your attention.

Resilience Is More Than Endurance

Clergy resilience is sometimes understood as the ability to withstand the pressures of ministry—to become tougher, develop thicker skin, recover more quickly, and keep going.

But resilience is not simply endurance.

Nor is it another name for self-care.

Resilience is the developing capacity to remain personally healthy, relationally connected, spiritually grounded, and vocationally faithful through the ordinary and extraordinary stresses of ministry.

That capacity develops over time.

Emotional awareness helps us recognize what is happening within us. Differentiation helps us distinguish what belongs to us from what belongs to someone else. Boundaries protect what matters. Relationships keep us from practicing ministry alone. Prayer reconnects us with the source of our vocation. Rest and recreation restore capacities that ministry consumes. Attention to sleep, nutrition, movement, and physical health reminds us that our bodies are not separate from our spiritual and emotional lives. Systems awareness helps us remain grounded when congregations become anxious. Reflection and discernment help us recognize when something needs to change.

These are not techniques for making us invulnerable.

They are practices that help us remain available to God, to others, and to ourselves.

Self-Giving, Not Self-Erasure

Christian ministry involves sacrifice.

There will be nights when someone is dying and sleep will have to wait. There will be seasons when the needs of a congregation require more from us than usual. Love costs something. Vocation costs something. Following Christ has never promised a life protected from sacrifice.

The question is not whether ministry will ask something of us.

It will.

The more important question is what kind of sacrifice faithfulness requires.

Jesus' life was profoundly self-giving, but it was not indiscriminately available. He withdrew to pray. He rested. He received food and hospitality. He lived in relationship with companions. He left places where people were still looking for him. He sometimes moved toward one need while passing by another. The existence of a genuine need did not, by itself, determine what he was called to do.

That matters for pastors.

People may genuinely need us and yet their need may not always be ours to meet. Someone may be disappointed by a boundary we establish without that boundary being unfaithful. Rest may sometimes be more faithful than another meeting. Prayer may take us away from people who want our attention precisely because we need to remember whose ministry this is.

Christian ministry calls us to self-giving, not self-erasure.

Resilience helps us give ourselves faithfully without losing the self God has given us to offer.

The distinction matters because suffering itself is not evidence of faithfulness. Exhaustion is not proof of devotion. Being indispensable is not the same as being called. Allowing ourselves to be consumed by every legitimate need around us does not necessarily make us more Christlike.

Faithful sacrifice is ordered toward life.

Sometimes it asks a great deal of us. Sometimes it stretches capacities we did not know we possessed. But resilience helps us recover, learn, mature, and return. It preserves and develops our capacity to love, serve, discern, and give again.

So one question runs quietly beneath every resource in this series:

Is this helping me become more capable of faithful self-giving, or am I simply being consumed?

Start Where You Are

This series is not a training program to complete.

There is no prescribed sequence. There is no expectation that you work through every resource. You may never need some of them.

Begin instead with what is wearing on you now.

Perhaps you need stronger boundaries. Perhaps you need to understand why a particular situation makes you so angry. Maybe you need relationships in which no one needs you to be their pastor. Perhaps you need a way to recover after demanding weeks, or help sorting out what belongs to you and what you have been carrying for someone else.

Perhaps ministry has hurt you and you need to tend the wound.

Perhaps you have stopped doing things that give you joy.

Perhaps your body is telling you something you have been too busy to hear.

Perhaps you are beginning to wonder whether something about your vocation needs to change.

Start there.

Each resource in this series focuses on one dimension of clergy resilience. It is designed to be read in about an hour and practiced for approximately a month.

The reading introduces the practice.

The month is where the learning happens.

You will be invited to notice what happens in ordinary ministry, experiment with a few practices, reflect on what you discover, and gradually decide what is useful enough to carry forward.

There is nothing to complete here.

You are practicing, not performing.

If you miss several days, begin again. If a practice doesn't fit, adapt it. If you discover that the issue you started with isn't really the issue, follow what you are learning.

The purpose is not to become proficient at another program. It is to become more attentive to yourself, your relationships, your vocation, and the presence of God within all of them.

You Were Never Meant to Do This Alone

Personal practices matter, but clergy resilience is not solely an individual responsibility.

Sometimes pastors become depleted because we have developed unhealthy patterns. Sometimes we are depleted because we are serving within unhealthy systems. Often both are true.

No amount of emotional intelligence can make an abusive situation healthy. Better boundaries cannot eliminate every unreasonable expectation. Prayer cannot substitute for sleep. A vacation cannot repair chronic organizational dysfunction. And resilience should never become an excuse for asking clergy to endure circumstances that need to change.

Healthy resilience includes knowing when we need someone else.

A trusted colleague, friend, clergy cohort, coach, spiritual director, therapist, physician, mentor, or denominational leader may sometimes be part of what faithful resilience requires.

Seeking support is not evidence that resilience has failed.

Relationship is one of the ways resilience develops.

One Practice at a Time

You do not need to become perfectly resilient before you can practice healthy ministry.

Resilience develops as we live.

Notice one thing.

Practice one thing.

Pay attention to what changes.

At the end of the month, you may decide to continue the practice. You may choose another resource because something else now needs attention. Or you may simply return to your life and ministry carrying one new capacity with you.

That is enough.

Read for an hour. Practice for a month. Then ask what you need next.

Beginning Here

Surrounded by People and Still Alone

Pastoral ministry is intensely relational.

You may spend much of your day listening, talking, teaching, encouraging, counseling, meeting, praying, visiting, and simply being present with people. You may know hundreds of people. Many of them may know you, care about you, and genuinely love you.

And still, you can be lonely.

That is one of the peculiar contradictions of pastoral ministry. A pastor can be **relationally saturated and relationally undernourished at the same time.**

Much of pastoral relationship carries an expectation, however subtle, that you will be attentive. You will listen. You will remember. You will ask the second question. You will notice when something is wrong. You will remain reasonably steady when others are not. You will show up.

None of this makes those relationships false. Some of the people you serve may become deeply important to you, and you to them.

But the pastoral relationship is different.

Over time, you can become so accustomed to being the person who attends to others that you barely notice how rarely you allow yourself to be attended to.

So begin with a different set of questions.

Who notices when you are unusually quiet?

Who asks the second question when you say, “I’m fine”?

Who can hear your uncertainty without becoming anxious about your leadership?

Who can disagree with you without threatening your vocation?

Who makes you laugh?

Who remembers who you were before your current ministry?

Who knows something about your life that has nothing whatsoever to do with church?

Who can sit beside you without needing anything from you?

And perhaps most importantly:

Who knows you as a person rather than primarily as a pastor?

Life-giving relationships are not a self-care strategy added to an otherwise complete pastoral life.

We were created for relationship.

Jesus did not practice his vocation alone. He called companions. He ate in people’s homes. He received hospitality. He developed friendships. He withdrew with those closest to him. Others provided for him, accompanied him, welcomed him, and remained near him in sorrow.

Paul’s letters reveal something similar. His ministry is almost unimaginable apart from the remarkable network of friends, companions, hosts, coworkers, messengers, supporters, and communities surrounding him.

Christian vocation has always been relational.

So is resilience.

Sometimes we remain resilient because we have developed internal capacities that help us navigate difficulty.

And sometimes we remain resilient because someone knows us.

Someone notices.

Someone listens.

Someone tells us the truth.

Someone makes us laugh.

Someone reminds us who we are when ministry has made that difficult to remember.

This resource is about those relationships.

Our question is:

Who are the people with whom I can be fully myself—not primarily pastor, caregiver, leader, or spiritual resource—and how am I tending those relationships?

We will work with four practices:

Notice → Receive → Tend → Deepen

These are not four assignments to complete on schedule. You might spend a week with each practice. One may need considerably more time. You may return to one repeatedly.

You are practicing, not performing.

The purpose is not to construct the perfect social life or acquire a prescribed number of close friends. It is to become more available to the relationships through which God helps sustain your life.

Life-Giving Relationships

A Relational Ecology

We sometimes talk about friendship as though everyone needs to find one or two people who can meet all of their relational needs.

Human relationships rarely work that way.

One person may be the friend who makes you laugh until you can barely breathe. Another may be the colleague with whom you can talk honestly about ministry. Someone else may share your love of gardening, woodworking, music, fishing, books, running, cooking, theater, travel, or baseball.

Someone may have known you for thirty years and remember versions of you your congregation has never met.

A spiritual director may accompany your relationship with God. A therapist may provide a place for work that friendship cannot appropriately carry. A spouse or partner may know dimensions of you no one else does. A clergy group may understand experiences that would require lengthy explanation elsewhere. A neighbor may simply enjoy sitting on the porch with you.

These relationships are not interchangeable.

Together, they form something like a **relational ecology**.

Healthy ecosystems depend upon diversity. So do healthy human lives.

Problems arise when one relationship is expected to carry everything.

A spouse should not have to be spouse, closest friend, therapist, ministry consultant, theological conversation partner, recreation companion, and sole safe place for every congregational frustration.

A clergy friend cannot carry every emotional need.

A congregation cannot safely become your entire social world.

And you do not need to find one extraordinary person capable of meeting every relational need.

No one relationship needs to carry the whole weight of knowing you.

And no one role should carry the whole weight of your relational life.

A healthy relational ecology includes different kinds of companionship. Some relationships may be intimate. Others may simply be enjoyable. Some carry shared history. Others are new. Some involve deep conversation. Others give you somewhere to belong without requiring much conversation at all.

The question is not whether you have the perfect friend.

The question is whether there are relationships in your life in which you can give and receive, know and be known, speak and listen, laugh and grieve, contribute and depend.

That is the relational life we will begin noticing.

The Practice

Movement One — Notice

See Your Relational Ecology

Begin with observation rather than correction.

Do not immediately decide that you need more friends or that something is wrong with your relationships.

First, see what is already there.

Take a sheet of paper and put your name in the center. Around it, begin writing the names of people who are meaningfully part of your life.

Do not rank them. Do not worry about whether someone qualifies as a “close friend.”

Just notice.

Then look at the names and begin asking different questions.

Who knows your ministry?

Who knows your history?

Who shares your interests?

Who can challenge you?

Who makes you laugh?

Who knows something about your spiritual life?

Who can hear your disappointment?

Who knows your family?

Who can sit comfortably with your uncertainty?

Who knows you almost entirely through church?

Who knows you apart from church?

One person may belong in several places. Some important dimensions of your life may have very little relational companionship. You may also discover more relational abundance than you expected.

The purpose is not to diagnose your social life.

It is to see it.

Notice the Shape of Relationships

Now pay attention to what happens when you are with people.

Where are you usually the one listening?

Where are you expected to remain steady?

With whom do you feel responsible for the emotional temperature of the relationship?

Where can you say, “I don’t know”?

Who can hear that you are struggling without becoming frightened for you?

With whom can you be playful?

Who challenges you without diminishing you?

Who allows you to change?

Who leaves you feeling more like yourself after you have been together?

That last question may be particularly revealing.

Life-giving does not necessarily mean easy.

A good friend may confront you. A spouse may tell you something you would rather not hear. A colleague may challenge an interpretation you have been defending. A therapist may ask you to look directly at something you have avoided.

Life-giving relationships are not simply relationships in which you always feel good.

They are relationships in which there is enough trust, reciprocity, honesty, affection, freedom, or shared life for you to become more fully yourself.

We Are Not Evaluating People

Be careful with the language of “life-giving.”

This is not an invitation to divide the people in your life into those who give you energy and those who drain it.

We are not evaluating the worth of people. We are noticing the shape of relationships.

People we love sometimes need far more from us than they can give.

A friend becomes ill. A parent requires care. A child struggles. Someone we love moves through grief, depression, unemployment, divorce, or crisis.

For a season, a deeply life-giving relationship may require considerable giving from us.

Relationships are not transactions to be kept in perfect balance.

Instead, notice the character of the relationship over time.

Can both people matter?

Can both people speak?

Can both people need?

Can both people give?

Can both people receive?

Can both people change?

That is reciprocity without scorekeeping.

Practice for This Movement

Keep your relational map somewhere you can see it for a while.

Add names as you remember them. Notice where your life is rich with companionship and where it has become thin.

You do not need to fix anything yet.

Carry one question:

Where in my life am I known rather than simply needed?

Movement Two — Receive

Let Care Move Toward You

For many pastors, giving is easier than receiving.

Giving feels familiar. Giving may even feel vocational.

Much of pastoral formation reinforces this posture:

I am here to care for you.

That posture serves ministry well—until it becomes the only relational position you know how to occupy.

Someone asks how you are doing, and you give a brief answer before turning the conversation toward them.

Someone offers help, and you say, “I’ve got it.”

Someone offers hospitality, and you immediately begin thinking about how you will repay them.

Someone notices that you are struggling, and you reassure them that everything is fine.

You may barely notice yourself doing it. You have simply become very practiced at being the person who cares. But Christian life does not divide people permanently into caregivers and care receivers.

Jesus cared for others, and Jesus received care.

He received meals and hospitality. He received material support and companionship. He allowed others to provide for him.

Receiving was not an interruption of his vocation.

Receiving is not the interruption of ministry. Receiving is part of Christian life.

There is humility in allowing care to move toward us. It requires acknowledging:

I am not always the strong one.

I do not always know what to do.

I sometimes need someone else.

That is not a failure of pastoral identity.

It is part of being human.

Stay in the Receiving Position a Little Longer

This is the practice for this movement.

When someone turns their attention toward you, notice what happens.

Someone asks:

“How are you really doing?”

Before automatically saying, “Fine,” pause.

Answer the question.

Someone says:

“You seem tired.”

Instead of explaining why you should not be tired, perhaps say:

“I am.”

Someone says:

“Can I bring you dinner?”

Perhaps say:

“Yes. Thank you.”

Someone offers to help.

Before saying, “I’ve got it,” ask whether you actually need to have it.

You do not have to transform every conversation into a disclosure of your deepest feelings.

Just notice your impulse to move quickly back into the familiar role of giver.

Then experiment with staying in the receiving position a little longer.

Sometimes Receiving Requires Asking

Receiving is not always passive.

Sometimes you have to ask.

“Could I talk something through with you?”

“I don’t need you to solve this. I just need someone who knows me to listen.”

“Would you have time for coffee? I could use a friend.”

“Could you pray for me about something?”

“I need another perspective. Would you tell me what you’re seeing?”

These sentences may feel surprisingly vulnerable.

Practice them anyway.

Receive Without Immediately Repaying

When someone gives you attention, hospitality, encouragement, help, or generosity, notice whether you immediately begin calculating how to reciprocate.

Healthy relationships naturally involve mutual giving over time.

But receiving is not indebtedness.

You do not have to restore relational equilibrium before bedtime.

Sometimes the faithful response to care is simply:

“Thank you.”

And then receive it.

Movement Three — Tend

Give Important Relationships More Than the Leftovers

Life-giving relationships require room.

That sounds obvious until we consider the structure of pastoral ministry.

Ministry consumes many of the hours during which other people maintain relationships: evenings, weekends, holidays, meals, community events.

Pastors regularly give relational energy to others precisely when friends and family are available to one another.

Then there is emotional fatigue.

You may technically have Tuesday evening free and still have very little relational energy left by Tuesday evening.

Important relationships can slowly become residual.

You see people when nothing else is scheduled. You call when things settle down. You plan the trip after the busy season. You reconnect when the congregation is less demanding.

But ministry rarely becomes permanently less demanding.

Relationships that sustain your life cannot always be asked to survive on what ministry leaves over.

Notice What Has Been Living on Leftovers

Return to your relational map.

Is there someone whose name brings a small sense of regret?

“We keep saying we should get together.”

“I haven’t called in months.”

“We used to do that all the time.”

“I miss her.”

“I wonder how he’s doing.”

Do not turn the feeling into guilt.

Turn it into attention.

Choose one relationship you want to tend.

Then do one thing.

Call.

Send the message.

Schedule lunch.

Plan the visit.

Take the walk.

Buy the ticket.

Put the recurring gathering on the calendar.

Not because friendship should become another pastoral obligation.

Because what matters deserves room.

Protect Some Ordinary Life

Not every important relationship needs a profound conversation.

Sometimes nothing particularly important needs to happen.

Watch the game. Cook together. Go fishing. Walk the dog. Play cards. Sit on the porch. Go to a concert. Talk about a novel. Work in the garden. Tell old stories. Laugh about something ridiculous.

There is something deeply restorative about being somewhere where nobody needs you to lead the meeting.

Ordinary life is not wasted time.

Play, laughter, recreation, shared interests, meals, hobbies, and unremarkable afternoons are part of the texture of human relationship.

They do not need to accomplish anything.

Pastors need places where they can simply participate in ordinary human life.

Friendships Within the Congregation

Some of the relationships that give life may develop within the congregation you serve.

That is not surprising.

People share meals, experiences, interests, affection, grief, humor, and years of life together. Genuine friendship can emerge.

These friendships can be real.

But they are never completely free of the pastoral relationship.

There remains an asymmetry of responsibility. You may know things the other person cannot know. You may someday need to make a pastoral or leadership decision affecting that person. Congregational conflict may change the relational landscape. Eventually, you may leave.

None of that makes the friendship unreal.

It simply makes it complex.

Receive these friendships gratefully.

Tend them wisely.

And do not ask them to become the only places where you are known.

Practice for This Movement

Choose one relationship that has been receiving the leftovers of your life.

Give it some room.

Not necessarily a lot.

Enough to say:

This relationship matters too.

Movement Four — Deepen

Let Yourself Be Known

Receiving and being known are related, but they are not the same practice.

Receive is allowing another person to care for you.

Deepen is allowing another person to know you.

There is a difference between being liked and being known.

Pastors can become exceptionally skilled at creating warmth without revealing very much of themselves.

You tell stories. You laugh. You share appropriate pieces of your life. People may experience you as open and accessible.

And you may still remain carefully protected.

There are good reasons for some of that.

Pastoral ministry requires judgment about disclosure. The congregation should not become the place where the pastor processes every fear, frustration, theological uncertainty, marital difficulty, disappointment, or unresolved emotional struggle.

Boundaries matter.

But appropriate boundaries can gradually become emotional concealment.

You can become so accustomed to asking:

“Is it appropriate for the pastor to share this?”

that you stop asking another necessary question:

“Is there anyone with whom I can share this?”

Not everyone needs to know you deeply.

But someone should.

Choose Trustworthy People

Vulnerability is not indiscriminate disclosure.

Trust should have a history.

Does this person respect confidentiality?

Can this person tolerate complexity?

Can they hear something difficult without immediately trying to fix it?

Can they disagree with me without withdrawing affection?

Can they distinguish me from my role?

Have they demonstrated that my vulnerability will not later become leverage?

Trust is not something you owe everyone.

But where trust has been earned, consider allowing yourself to become a little more known.

Say One Thing More

This is the practice.

You do not need to decide to “be vulnerable.”

Just say one thing more.

Instead of:

“Things have been stressful.”

perhaps:

“Things have been stressful, and I am more discouraged than I’ve been admitting.”

Instead of:

“The meeting didn’t go very well.”

perhaps:

“The meeting didn’t go very well, and I keep wondering whether I handled it badly.”

Instead of:

“I’m tired.”

perhaps:

“I’m tired, and I’m beginning to worry about how tired I am.”

One more sentence.

Then stop.

Let the other person receive what you have said.

Notice what it feels like not to manage their response.

Let Yourself Be Known Beyond Your Struggles

Being known is not only about revealing what hurts.

Let people know what delights you.

What fascinates you?

What are you learning?

What do you enjoy badly?

What makes you laugh?

What would you like to try?

What did you care about before ministry occupied so much space?

What parts of yourself have received very little attention lately?

A friend may remember that you love photography.

A sibling remembers the ridiculous thing you did when you were sixteen.

A neighbor knows you as the person who grows tomatoes.

A choir knows you as the tenor who occasionally misses the note.

A hiking partner knows whether you can make it up the hill.

There is grace in being ordinary.

You were not called to become a pastor instead of becoming a person.

When Loneliness Has Become Isolation

Loneliness is part of human experience.

You can feel lonely even when you have healthy relationships.

Isolation is different.

Loneliness is an experience. Isolation is a condition.

Isolation develops when the relational ecology of your life becomes so thin that there are few or no trustworthy places for honesty, companionship, support, belonging, or care.

Perhaps there is no one with whom you can speak honestly.

Perhaps conflict has made you suspicious of relationships.

Perhaps shame has convinced you that people would think differently of you if they knew what you were carrying.

Perhaps geography makes friendship difficult.

Perhaps you have gradually withdrawn without realizing how far you have gone.

Or perhaps the conditions of ministry themselves have progressively crowded relationship out of your life.

Congregational expectations can contribute to isolation.

So can excessive workload. Geographic distance. Conflict. Scrutiny. Role captivity. Repeated relocations. A culture of perpetual availability. The expectation that pastors should somehow have fewer human needs than everyone else.

Do not automatically interpret isolation as a personal failure to maintain relationships.

Sometimes the relational ecology needs tending.

Sometimes the conditions of ministry need changing.

Often both are true.

You may need to reconnect with an old friend, join a clergy group, find a spiritual director, begin therapy, work with a coach, participate in something completely unrelated to ministry, or intentionally develop relationships beyond the congregation.

You may also need conversations with congregational or denominational leadership about expectations that leave too little room for a sustainable human life.

Seeking relationship is not evidence that resilience has failed.

Relationship is one of the ways resilience develops.

You were never meant to sustain ministry alone.

A Coach's Reflection

Someone Should Know Your Name Without Needing "Pastor" in Front of It

There is a particular kind of loneliness that can develop when nearly everyone knows who you are but relatively few people know you.

They know the pastor.

They know your sermons. They know how you conduct a funeral. They know what you are like in meetings. They know how you respond when something goes wrong.

But vocation can become so visible that the person carrying it becomes harder to see.

That is one reason life-giving relationships matter.

They return us to ourselves.

Someone remembers your story.

Someone asks what *you* think rather than what the church should do.

Someone knows when your confidence is partly performance.

Someone can tell you that you are being unreasonable.

Someone calls and never mentions the congregation.

Someone sits across the table and has absolutely no interest in what happened at the session meeting.

What a gift.

These relationships do not pull us away from vocation.

They help make vocation sustainable.

The person who enters the pulpit on Sunday morning is also the person who needs friendship on Thursday evening.

The person who accompanies others through grief will eventually need someone to accompany them.

The person who listens needs to be heard.

The person who offers grace needs to receive it.

The person who reminds others that they are beloved children of God sometimes needs another human being to offer the same reminder.

Perhaps that is part of what friendship does.

It remembers us.

And when ministry has become particularly loud, a friend may quietly hand us back to ourselves.

Carry This With You

When you want to return to this practice, remember four movements.

Notice.

Who is in my relational ecology?

Where am I known rather than simply needed?

Receive.

Where can I allow care to move toward me?

Can I stay in the receiving position a little longer?

Tend.

What relationship needs room rather than leftovers?

What small action would make room for it?

Deepen.

With whom can I risk being more fully known?

Can I say one thing more?

You do not need dozens of intimate friendships.

You do not need one perfect relationship that provides everything.

You need places where care can move in both directions.

Places where you can give and receive.

Places where you can be serious and playful.

Places where you can tell the truth.

Places where you are more than useful.

Places where someone knows you.

Because resilience does not develop only within us.

Sometimes we remain resilient because someone knows us, someone notices us, someone makes us laugh, someone tells us the truth, someone sits beside us, and someone reminds us who we are when ministry has made that difficult to remember.

Closing Prayer

God who lives in communion
and creates us for relationship,

thank you for the people
through whom you have carried us.

For those who know our stories,
those who make us laugh,
those who tell us the truth,
those who stay when life becomes difficult,
and those who remind us who we are,
we give you thanks.

Teach us not only to care
but also to receive care.

Give us the humility to need others,
the wisdom to recognize trustworthy companions,
and the courage to allow ourselves to be known.

Help us tend the relationships
that give life.

Restore friendships we have neglected
where restoration is possible.

Lead us toward new companions
when old seasons have ended.

And when ministry becomes so consuming
that we begin to disappear inside the role,
send someone who remembers our name.

Remind us that before we are pastors,
leaders, caregivers, teachers, or counselors,
we are your beloved children,
created for communion with you
and with one another.

May the relationships you give us
help us become more fully human,
more deeply faithful,
and more capable of giving ourselves
without losing ourselves.

Amen.