

A serene forest scene with tall trees and a stream in the foreground. The water reflects the surrounding greenery and trees. A green banner is superimposed over the middle of the image.

USER'S GUIDE

TO THE PASTORS' SPIRITUAL VITALITY

Toolkit

View the toolkit at crcna.org/SPE/toolkit



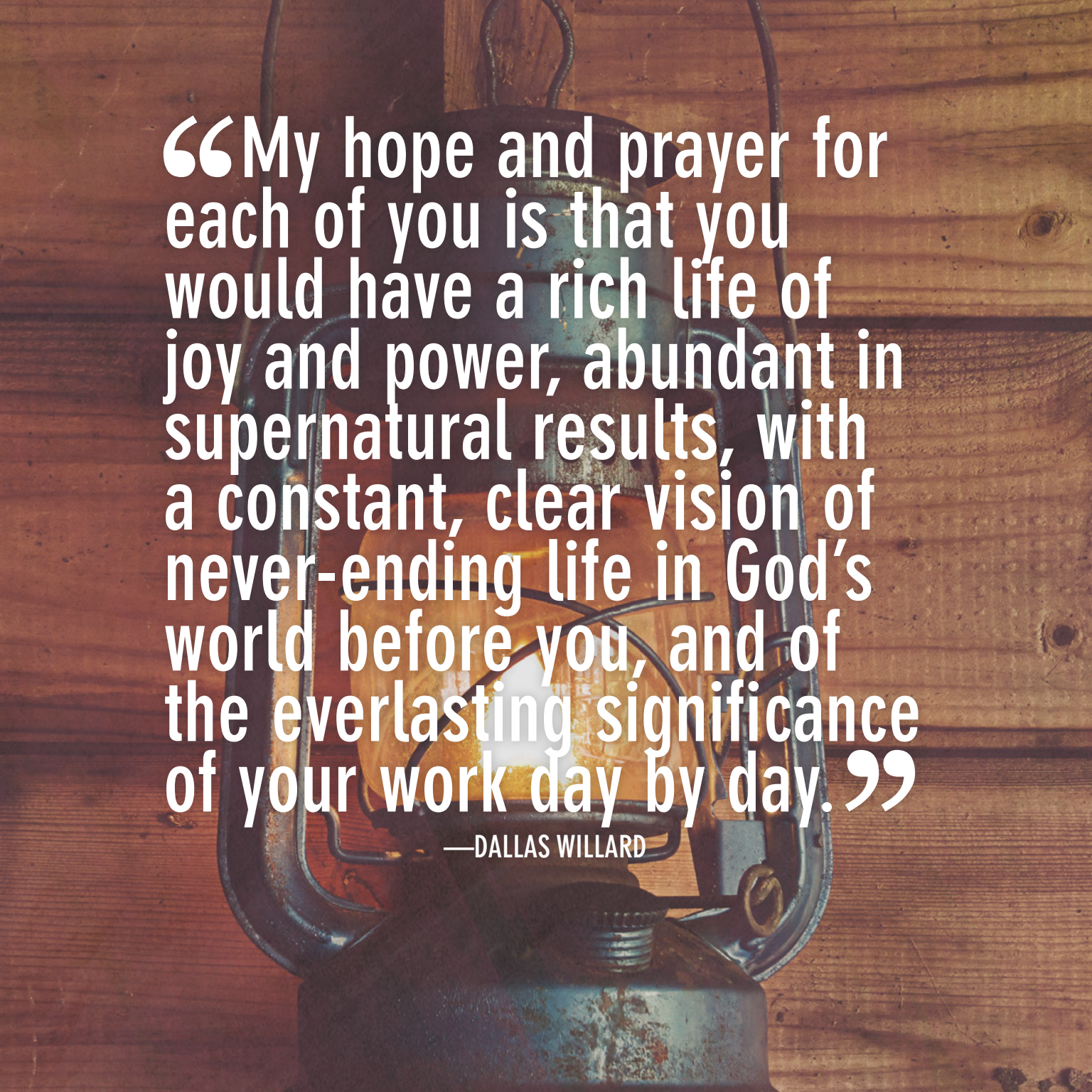
Christian Reformed Church
**Pastor Church
Resources**

crcna.org/PCR



Christian Reformed Church
**Faith Formation
Ministries**

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A glowing lantern with a warm, yellow light emanating from its glass globe. The lantern has a dark, possibly metal, frame with some rust or patina. It is set against a background of horizontal wooden planks. Overlaid on the lantern and background is a large, white, serif font quote. The quote is enclosed in large opening and closing quotation marks. Below the quote, in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, is the attribution. The overall mood is warm and inspirational.

“My hope and prayer for each of you is that you would have a rich life of joy and power, abundant in supernatural results, with a constant, clear vision of never-ending life in God’s world before you, and of the everlasting significance of your work day by day.”

—DALLAS WILLARD



When briefing for an emergency, airline flight attendants instruct passengers to put on their own oxygen mask before helping others. The same might be said of pastors. If you are drained, depleted, or spiritually “stuck,” tending to your own spiritual health before you tend to that of others is crucial.

But even if you’re feeling spiritually healthy, you can always draw closer to God.

The brochure you’re holding is a user’s guide to the online Pastors’ Spiritual Vitality Toolkit. This online resource collection is designed to help pastors tend to their own spiritual health and develop life-giving rhythms and practices.

About the Toolkit

Open the online toolkit at crcna.org/SPE/toolkit and check out the resources we’ve gathered there. Work through each of the toolkit’s main tabs, choosing the resources that will benefit you most.

You’ll find guidance for

- * strengthening self-awareness
- * making room for God
- * meeting with a spiritual companion
- * gathering regularly with a peer group
- * retreating with other pastors
- * finding an ongoing rhythm that promotes spiritual health



Bookmark our toolkit page for easy reference:
crcna.org/SPE/toolkit

EXPLORING THE PASTORS' SPIRITUAL VITALITY TOOLKIT

Here's a closer look at the helpful resources you'll find in the Pastors' Spiritual Vitality Toolkit. Visit the toolkit online at crcna.org/SPE/toolkit.

Strengthening Self-Awareness

Knowing ourselves can help us experience our Creator more fully. Knowing our Creator more fully can help us live more wholly. This section of the Pastors' Spiritual Vitality Toolkit shares guidance for using four helpful assessment tools:

- * The Birkman Assessment
- * The Strengthsfinder Profile
- * The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
- * The Enneagram

Making Room for God

This section of the toolkit examines four Christian practices that help pastors make room for God:

- * silence and solitude
- * sabbath
- * meditating on God's Word and world
- * prayer

Meeting with a Spiritual Companion

Spiritual vitality happens in community as well as individually. This section helps pastors and others discern when to engage with a coach, a regional pastor or mentor, a spiritual director, a counselor, or a psychotherapist.

Gathering with a Peer Group

The privilege of pastoral ministry also comes with a cost. Almost everyone in ministry experiences times of loneliness, disequilibrium, and weakness. This section examines how pastor small groups or peer groups can help address these challenges and offer a safe place to share and pray.

Retreating with Other Pastors

Retreating with other pastors helps prevent isolation. Sharing ministry experiences and wise practices develops camaraderie. Listening together and telling stories grows *koinonia* (Christian fellowship, community). And when you spend time with others who “get it,” hope rises. This section explores available pastor retreat opportunities.

Finding an Ongoing Rhythm

This final section helps you “put it all together,” inviting you to imagine and develop habits or rhythms of life that generate conditions for personal spiritual growth.

SPIRITUAL HYGIENE

BY CORNELIUS PLANTINGA, JR.

What would a spiritually sound person be like?

A spiritually sound person fits the universal design. She functions properly: in the range of her relationships to God, others, nature, and self we can spot impressive manifestations of shalom. Or, following one line of New Testament usage, we might call them impressive manifestations of hygiene.

Although it sounds as if it might have something to do with the brushing and flossing away of small particles of vice, spiritual hygiene is actually wholeness of spirit—that is, wholeness of what animates and characterizes us. Spiritual hygiene is the wholeness of resources, motive, purpose, and character typical of someone who fits snugly into God’s broad design for shalom. A spiritually hygienic person is one who combines strengths and flexibilities, disciplines and freedoms, all working together from a

renewable source of vitality. This is a person who flourishes like a fine sapling rooted into the bank of a dependable stream.

What are some features of this flourishing? As Christians see her, a spiritually whole person longs in certain classic ways. She longs for God and the beauty of God, for Christ and Christlikeness, for the dynamite of the Holy Spirit and spiritual maturity. She longs for spiritual hygiene itself—and not just as a consolation prize when she cannot be rich and envied instead. She longs for other human beings: she wants to love them and be loved by them. She hungers for social justice. She longs for nature, for its beauties and graces, for the sheer particularity of the way of a squirrel with a nut. As we might expect, her longings dim from season to season. When they do, she longs to long again.

She is a person of character consistency, a person who rings true wherever you tap her.

She keeps promises. She weeps with those who weep and, perhaps more impressively, rejoices with those who rejoice. She does all these things in ways that express her own personality and culture but also a general “mind of Christ” that is cross-culturally unmistakable.

Her motives include faith—a quiet confidence in God and the mercies of God that radiate from the self-giving work of Jesus Christ. She knows God is good; she also feels assured that God is good to her. Her faith secures her against the ceaseless oscillations of pride and despair familiar to every human being who has taken refuge in the cave of her own being and tried there to bury all her insecurities under a mound of achievements. When her faith slips, she retains faith enough to believe that the Spirit of God, whose presence is her renewable resource, will one day secure her faith again.

This passage is excerpted from *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, Eerdmans Publishing, 1996. Reprinted by permission.

10 WAYS TO BECOME A HEALTHIER PASTOR

- 1 Be still and know.** The frantic pace of ministry mitigates against spiritual health. Develop the discipline of silence as you listen for God's voice.
- 2 Develop life-giving sabbath celebrations.** If you're a pastor, Sunday is a workday. It's essential to set aside additional sabbath time for rest, restoration, and recreation.
- 3 Lead from your strengths.** Taking time-tested assessment tests will help you gain a deeper understanding of who God made you to be and how your unique gifts can serve others.
- 4 Strategically compensate for your weaknesses.** Be honest about your weaknesses by acknowledging them, delegating tasks to others, and asking for help. Doing this keeps weaknesses from sabotaging your ministry.
- 5 Find a listener.** Ministry involves deep listening. But who listens to you? Find a coach, mentor, spiritual director, or counselor with whom you can share your doubts, fears, and insecurities.
- 6 Be a learner.** Peer learning groups are essential for renewal, refreshment, support, and encouragement.
- 7 Have some fun!** Experiment with hobbies and activities that help you relax and recharge. Pursue your God-given passions and interests with curiosity and joy.
- 8 Think small.** Join or form a small group that is a safe place for you to express ministry joys, hopes, frustrations, and sorrows in confidence with friends.
- 9 Retreat and regroup.** Scheduling regular times of retreat with other pastors is critical to your spiritual vitality and will deeply bless your soul.
- 10 Develop a rhythm.** When you're pulled in many directions at once, having a daily spiritual practice allows you to operate from a place of strength and calm.

Learn More in the Pastors' Spiritual Vitality Toolkit

The Pastors' Spiritual Vitality Toolkit is an online resource designed to help pastors tend to their own spiritual health in order to better serve God. You can access this toolkit at crcna.org/SPE/toolkit.

For more information on how to meet the faith formation challenges in your church, contact one of Faith Formation Ministries' Regional Catalyzers (crcna.org/FaithFormation/Coaching).



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