



Emmanuel Church
2026 Lenten Conversations

Calling a Priest: Nuts, Bolts, Faith
The First Sunday in Lent + February 22, 2026

9:00 a.m. & 11:30 a.m. in the parish library

The first order of business for these conversations will be an update from the Emmanuel vestry's Clergy Search and Transition Team, with opportunities for Q&A. The materials on the following pages are discretionary and are meant to get us wondering about 'ministry' – as a commitment and practice in which all Christians share – and about the ministry of priests in particular.

Materials in this document include:

Prayers, **Page 2**

An excerpt from the Catechism in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer that names the 'who' and the 'what' of 'ministers of the Church'. **Page 3**

The Examination and Consecration of a Priest, from the ordination rites in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. **Pages 4-5**

'What do we seek from a priest-in-charge?' Excerpt from the Emmanuel search profile. **Page 6**

'Popular Models for Pastoral Ministry' – a somewhat tongue-in-cheek but telling one-page reflection from ... a pastor. **Page 7**

'The Psychological Lives of Clergy and Their Congregations' A somewhat academic view that includes relevant, worthwhile findings and proposes some views and commitments worth considering. **Pages 8-10**

Almighty God, giver of every good gift:
Look graciously on your Church,
and so guide the minds of those who shall
choose a new priest for Emmanuel Church,
that we may receive a faithful pastor,
who will care for your people, inspire our faith,
and equip us for our ministries;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Adapted from the Book of Common Prayer, p. 818

Almighty and everliving God, ruler of all things in heaven
and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family.
Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent.
Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring
us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Book of Common Prayer, p. 817

How is Christian ministry conveyed in the (1979) Book of Common Prayer?

From the section of the Catechism titled 'The Ministry', p. 855-866

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

Q. What is the ministry of the laity?

A. The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

Q. What is the ministry of a bishop?

A. The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry.

Q. What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter? [priest]

A. The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Q. What is the ministry of a deacon?

A. The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Q. What is the duty of all Christians?

A. The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God.

How is ordained priesthood conveyed in the (1979) Book of Common Prayer?

The Examination & Consecration of a Priest, pp. 531-534 (from the Ordination rite)

Note: All instances of 'brother' may also be 'sister.'

The ordinand stands before the Bishop. The Bishop addresses the ordinand as follows

My *brother* [*/sister*], the Church is the family of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. All baptized people are called to make Christ known as Savior and Lord, and to share in the renewing of his world. Now you are called to work as pastor, priest, and teacher, together with your bishop and fellow presbyters, and to take your share in the councils of the Church.

As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. You are to preach, to declare God's forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God's blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you.

In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ's people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.

My *brother*, do you believe that you are truly called by God and his Church to this priesthood?

Answer *I believe I am so called.*

Bishop Do you now in the presence of the Church commit yourself to this trust and responsibility?

Answer *I do.*

Bishop Will you respect and be guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of your bishop?

Answer *I will.*

Bishop Will you be diligent in the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures, and in seeking the knowledge of such things as may make you a stronger and more able minister of Christ?

Answer *I will.*

Bishop Will you endeavor so to minister the Word of God and the sacraments of the New Covenant, that the reconciling love of Christ may be known and received?

Answer *I will.*

Bishop Will you undertake to be a faithful pastor to all whom you are called to serve, laboring together with them and with your fellow ministers to build up the family of God?

Answer *I will.*

Continued ...

Bishop Will you do your best to pattern your life [and that of your family, [*or* household *or* community] in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that you may be a wholesome example to your people?

Answer I will.

Bishop Will you persevere in prayer, both in public and in private, asking God's grace, both for yourself and for others, offering all your labors to God, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, and in the sanctification of the Holy Spirit?

Answer I will.

Bishop May the Lord who has given you the will to do these things give you the grace and power to perform them.

Answer Amen.

The Consecration of the Priest

All now stand except the ordinand, who kneels facing the Bishop. The hymn, Veni Creator Spiritus, or the hymn, Veni Sancte Spiritus, is sung. A period of silent prayer follows, the people still standing.

The Bishop then says this Prayer of Consecration

God and Father of all, we praise you for your infinite love in calling us to be a holy people in the kingdom of your Son Jesus our Lord, who is the image of your eternal and invisible glory, the firstborn among many brethren, and the head of the Church. We thank you that by his death he has overcome death, and, having ascended into heaven, has poured his gifts abundantly upon your people, making some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry and the building up of his body.

Here the Bishop lays hands upon the head of the ordinand, the Priests who are present also laying on their hands. At the same time the Bishop prays

Therefore, Father, through Jesus Christ your Son, give your Holy Spirit to _____; fill *him* with grace and power, and make *him* a priest in your Church.

The Bishop then continues

May *he* exalt you, O Lord, in the midst of your people; offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to you; boldly proclaim the gospel of salvation; and rightly administer the sacraments of the New Covenant. Make *him* a faithful pastor, a patient teacher, and a wise councilor. Grant that in all things *he* may serve without reproach, so that your people may be strengthened and your Name glorified in all the world. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.

The People in a loud voice respond Amen.

From the Emmanuel Clergy Search Profile, 2026

What do we seek in a priest-in-charge? Everything, of course.

Here are five key hopes:

- We will be blessed by a priest with a lively faith, ever deepening and prayerful, who will be an example to us and lead us in forming, re-forming and deepening our own individual faith in Christ and our relationships with one another in the Body of Christ.
- We will be blessed by a priest who is a leader, who can work with us to look outward, envision a future of abundance and navigate change.
- We will be blessed by a priest who accepts and loves us for who we are, individually and collectively – conveyed in the warmth of worship leadership and preaching, and in making time for pastoral care, particularly but not only among our elderly members.
- We will be blessed by a priest who is capable in administration and adaptable in management of ... whatever arises. For a while at least, we will prefer a priest who focuses on the needs of the parish and is not overly involved in commitments beyond the parish.
- We will be blessed by a priest who will appreciate living in our rectory and sharing in our community life, including connecting with local clergy.

Popular Models for Pastoral Ministry

Rev. David W. Hall, writing for Modern Reformation, 2013

Pastor as Ultimate Need-Meeter: The pastor is a sensitive therapist/social worker, understanding the congregation's needs and meeting these needs in extraordinary ways. Even the best versions of this model need to beware: only Christ is truly heroic and able to do for people what they really need done.

Pastor as Entrepreneur:

The church exists to support the pastor's organizational ideas. New plans are better than fixed roles and the pastor is the clever leader with a plan, regardless of whether his plans pass the tests of reality.

Pastor as Novel-ist:

Yearning to be recognized, the pastor is aware that novelty is one path to recognition. The pastor wants to invent the killer ecclesiastical app or patent a new style of ministry. In a pinch, will settle for a new title or a new theological discovery that no one else has ever made.

Pastor as Blogger:

Perhaps the most common model at present, the pastor cultivates a public image and builds celebrity capital with hundreds (nay, thousands) of Web and Twitter followers, many of whom are neither in that pastor's church nor even in the same denomination.

Pastor as Worship Leader:

The pastor as contemporary Christian worship arts star. Likes to work out new songs for that next album. Sometimes sings the closing prayer.

Pastor as Emcee/Youth Comic:

On-stage emcee, sort of Ryan Seacrest-Meets-Billy Graham. The pastor specializes in dazzling, inspiring, and motivating audiences (especially the least inspirable group, namely, cynical teenagers).

Pastor as Pastor:

Ministry is neither so complex as to require instruction by a small set of pastoral illuminati, nor is it unattainable to the average pastor. Our tools are actually quite modest and simple. And there is a divine reason for that: the Lord does not want the ambassadors to be confused with our God and King who sends the good news and calls us by his grace. We are not given certain powers, because God knows how easily the human heart creates idols. So he has designed a set of tools that, when successful, do not bring glory to us. In John 15, Jesus called us to bear fruit that will last. If you seek that fruit, you will be more interested in achieving a few things that endure, rather than chasing fantasies of ministry that easily evaporate into thin air.

The Psychological Lives of Clergy and Their Congregations

September 6, 2024 / Dr. Nathaniel R. Strenger, PsyD

Back in 2007, the University of Chicago put out a study examining job satisfaction among American professionals. As the results came in, trends became clear. “The most satisfying jobs are mostly professions, especially those involving caring for, teaching, and protecting others and creative pursuits,” reported Tom Smith. He is a senior fellow and director at Chicago’s National Opinion Research Center (NORC), and he was a key contributor to the most comprehensive study of reported happiness and satisfaction among American workers at the time. Those 2007 findings came in and America’s most fulfilling were thus revealed. Honorable mentions included teachers, psychologists, and authors. Physical therapists came in third with 78% reporting high job satisfaction. Second were firefighters at 80% reported gratification. And clergy, for the many hats they wear, came in with a whopping 87% declaring high satisfaction in their chosen vocations.

Of course, in so many ways, we now live in a universe entirely different. With COVID’s onset and the assent of the culture wars, clergy now navigate a landscape fraught in ways unimaginable even to the naivete of the aughts. The Barna Group, a social research group focusing its efforts on Catholic and Protestant trends in American, found that about four in 10 pastors considered leaving full-time ministry in 2021—and that number climbed to 42% the following year. The top three cited reasons were (1) the immense stress of the job, (2) loneliness and isolation, and (3) present-day political divisions.

Most pastors these days, at least according to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, wrestle with loneliness in a profession characterized by high demands, robust satisfaction, and increasing distress. Mental health among clergy, on the whole, declined in the dog days of the pandemic, said the Duke Clergy and Religion Research Collaborate. But those who were already feeling the burnout fared much worse than those receiving strong support. And the burnout is real.

Pastoral burnout. Drs. Cameron Lee and Kurt Fredrickson at Fuller Theological Seminary reviewed it in full. The concept itself, they write, became popular in the United States in the 1970s as yet another popular psychology fad. But in the decades since, a whole lot of research has solidified its place as bona fide phenomenon. Lee and Fredrickson defined burnout as “the emotional collapse or breakdown that sometimes comes as the result of chronic stress.” And the singular burnout guru, Dr. Christian Maslach, went further: job burnout is “the gradual process of loss in which the mismatch between the needs of the person and the demands of the job grows even greater.” It corresponds, too, with decreased productivity, interpersonal loneliness, and even marital challenges. Sadly, among American vocations, burnout seems to be hitting clergy relatively hard. Perhaps they need our help.

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We often think of clergy as givers. For many ministers, I suppose, that is indeed why they entered the vocation in the first place: *Answering a call to serve, to give*. But we parishioners spend less time conceiving of the ways a community might care for its carers. A congregation might work together to cultivate an ecology amenable to the mental health of its leaders, and here are a few things to consider in doing so.

A thread of peer-review literature, made up of studies published over the course of several decades, has come to categorize ministerial stressors into four kinds: *Personal criticisms*, *boundary ambiguities*, *presumptive expectations*, and *family criticisms*. Ministers and ministerial families are more often the target of personal nitpicking. And necessary accountability, if not boundaried, can easily devolve into gossip more malicious than productive. The effects this kind of environment can have on clergy are detrimental, perhaps even more so when the minister's family is involved.

Congregational Lesson 1: Know the difference between accountability and gossip. The former is structured, unified in voice, and serving the good of the community. The latter is chaotic, characterless, and self-serving in intent. Avoid the latter.

Then there is the matter of boundaries. Faith leaders wear oh so many hats. They are simultaneously liturgists, counselors, teachers, administrators, outreach coordinators, public speakers, and community organizers. The job is really a tangled web of role demands that can even conflict with one another. Skills sets needed to be a confident public speaker, for instance ([ahem](#)), perhaps detract from those needed to be gentle and humble counselors. And so a certain level of support is needed from a congregation, helping clarify expectations and respecting the transitions a leader must make from role to role. Boundaries are needed. But the professional lives of clergy are some of the least boundaried out there. And that is perhaps the job's greatest asset and its greatest liability. It enables a minister to embed her- or himself more fully in the lives of the congregation. But it also offers little protections for a pastor's private life and personal growth.

Congregational Lesson 2: Make sure your pastor is allowed both personal and professional boundaries and take great pains to honor them. Vigorously protect a personal sabbath, regular vacations or sabbaticals, and encourage friendships/mentorships *outside* the congregation.

And with all of this come a number of presumptive expectations, a category of stress that Dr. Cameron Lee has suggested is most predictive of positive or negative psychological outcomes among clergy. That "on-call syndrome" that plagues most pastors exacts that they remain available to any given congregational need at all hours of the day or night. And of course, not every intrusion proves equally necessary—there are not even consistent parameters for making such a judgement.

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Some of psychologists here at The Center regularly work with Catholic and Protestant ordinands, completing necessary psychological evaluations before entering a life in ministry. More often than not, evaluations reveal the kind of personalities that love to serve but hate to disappoint. And so, these clergy folks must make extra efforts to avoid promising the world to each congregant at the outset, instead learning to comfortably set reasonable expectations early to avoid confusions or unintended hurts later on.

Congregational Lesson 3: Do not forget that your clergy are bound by the same space-time dimensions as you. Eight hours of sleep, time to tend to physical wellness, counseling, and energy reserved for personal passions and family are musts. Certainly avail yourself of the help clergy joyously offer, but do take pause before making an ask.

This is all in support of ministerial longevity, buttressing a profession that rarely asks for help. I might encourage readers here, be they clergy, ministerial leaders, or congregants, to explore further the work of Dr. Cameron Lee, and also read up on the efforts of the Duke Clergy Health Initiative.