**Module 6: Wellness**

“The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God” (Psalm 92:12-13)

**Devotion**

Over the last several decades pastors have become aware of self-care. No doubt, some pastors always realized the need for exercise, down-time, and the value of their own spiritual growth. But people who offer others care during times of distress or seek to be the “non-anxious presence” in their communities can easily lose touch with their own bodies, and sometimes even their souls. There is much wisdom in the advice that urges pastors to exercise, carve out rest time, and recharge.

Undoubtedly, most pastors approach their work with humility. But it is easy for those in ministry to think that providing care to others resides wholly on their shoulders, as if God were sidelined. When pastors fall into this trap, they are vulnerable to overwork, court stress, have poor eating habits, and the like. Indeed, it is a rare pastor who at some point won’t feel like Atlas, holding the entire world on one’s shoulders. Since it is so easy to fall into this trap, and it is so believable that this trap is tantamount to care, it often takes a challenge to one’s health or even anxiety to give pastors the wakeup call they need. Jesus is big enough to handle all the stressors. Because that is true, we really can let go of them. It will all be okay in God’s time.

I once ministered to a congregation in significant conflict. For some months I internalized the conflict, and it ate away at me. But at some point I realized that the congregation was God’s, and the pastoral ministry there was as well. At that point, I could let go of the stress I had held since I believed that I held it for others. I was not less responsible because I let go of the stress. Far from it! Instead, I was more in tune with reality. God promises to take care of the congregation, me, and my family. One Sunday a parishioner approached me and said, “Pastor, with all that is going on, I’d think you’d be under a lot of stress. But you sure don’t look it!” I explained to her how I had put the matter in God’s hands and trusted that everything was going to be okay.

God wants us human children to be well. After all, Jesus came to heal. We need to remember to claim Sabbath rest for ourselves in our own ministries.

**Prayer**

*Help me, God, to remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy through the way you provide: that I too receive your goodness from word and sacraments. Help me to foster those habits that center me in good health so that I can be support for my family, friends, and congregation. Amen.*