

# Managing Stress, Strain and Burnout

Hi Pastors,

We recognise that many of you are feeling very weary and tired at the moment. As much as we were all looking forward to 2022, the start of this year has been another tough one for many with more COVID lockdowns and the floods that have ravaged many. Coming on the back of 2 years of challenges as we navigated our way through the ever-changing landscape of COVID, this has been a straw that is threatening to break the camel's back.

In the last couple of weeks, I have been notified of no less than 5 pastors who are looking to take extended stress leave because of exhaustion and burnout. And I know this is just the tip of the iceberg. It is not all together unexpected that as we "emerge" from the 2 years of pandemic and as leaders start to relax and take a few deep breathes, that some realise just how tired and worn out they are.

I was speaking to Greg and Meryem Brown about this emerging trend and in checking in whether they'd remained high and dry through the recent floods, I joked that although I knew they were in an apartment, I didn't take anything for granted any more. I relayed the fact that John Sweetman's unit at Caloundra was flooded on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor because of an external crack that let in water.

Greg & Meryem, in such an insightful way, wrote this ...

*Your description of John S's unit is a parable for what's happening. You wouldn't expect a 5th floor unit to flood. Our first-floor unit flooded too! The deluge has both exposed hidden structural weaknesses and created new problems. We think some pastors whom we normally would not have been concerned about - usually '1st or 5th floor' people - will crash. Even those committed to self-care and balance - good structures - have not been able to manage the intensity of demands. Cracks are coming for the first time. Others have long term structural weaknesses - like a proneness to depression, despair or anxiety; or low frustration-tolerance or perfectionism - which they have been mostly able to manage until now. But the sustained wear and tear from simultaneously chronic and acute stress, decision and pivot fatigue, congregational COVID conflicts, and cumulative disappointments over the last two years have exposed and widened the existing cracks. The January COVID issue, followed by this flooding crisis, becomes the tipping point.*

So how are you – my brother or sister? Are you normally a 1<sup>st</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> floor pastor that is suddenly feeling vulnerable? We are not surprised and in response to what we sense will be a year of ongoing struggle for many of our pastors, we wanted to provide some resources that we hope will be helpful as you reflect on your own wellbeing and take appropriate steps to manage it.

A few of these resources have already been distributed through our Regional Ministers, but there are many more that we'd like to share with you that you may find helpful. There are no doubt many more good resources and if you have some you would like to share, we encourage you to do so through our Pastor's Facebook page. We will also be focusing in on these topics over the coming months in our Pastor's Forums, so please stay tuned.

**As you unpack some of this information, if you feel as though you are not as healthy as you should be or want to be, we encourage you to reach out and tell someone. Seek help – professional help as well as support from your church leadership.**

We pray that these resources will be a blessing to you.

David Elvery

Director of Pastoral Services.

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# RESOURCES

## To Gauge How I am Doing

[Carey Nieuwhof Burnout Quiz](#)

[Maslach Burnout Inventory Self Test](#)

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## To Help You Understand Stress & Burnout

[Ministry Burnout Factsheet – Greg & Meryem Brown](#)

[Towards Better Mental Health – Dealing with Anxiety & Depression – Greg & Meryem Brown](#)

[9Marks Journal – Pastoral Burnout](#)

[NCLS Report – Thriving, Surviving and Burnout in Church Leaders](#)

[Podcast - From stress and burnout to surviving and thriving with Valerie Ling](#)

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## Identifying Causes of Burnout in Pastors

[Seven Reasons Pastors Burn Out – Thom Rainer](#)

[9 Signs you're Burning Out in Leadership – Carey Nieuwhof](#)

[Workbook: from recent webcast on Resilient Leadership \(for pastors\) produced by World Vision/Barna](#)

[Are You Dangerously Tired? Exploring the Symptoms and Sources of Spiritual Exhaustion in Ministry – Ruth Haley Barton](#)

[9Marks Journal – Pastoral Burnout](#)

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## How To Avoid Burnout

[7 Ways to Avoid Pastoral COVID Burnout: How to Care for Your Soul While Caring for Others \(set in COVID setting\) - Paul Maxwell](#)

[Why Burnout Is Not Inevitable and How Pastors Can Avoid it – Carey Nieuwhof](#)

[Beat Burnout Webinar – Valerie Ling](#)

[Practices for Sustainable Ministry Practices of the Long Term – Dave Paroz](#)

[9Marks Journal – Pastoral Burnout](#)

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# How To Recover From Stress & Burnout

[Recovering from Ministry Burnout – Greg & Meryem Brown](#)

[How to recover from Burnout - Sermon – Carey Nieuwhof](#)

[How I recovered from Burnout : 12 Keys to Finding your New Normal – Carey Nieuwhof](#)

[A Decade Later: My Top 10 Insights On Burnout](#)

[9Marks Journal – Pastoral Burnout](#)