



Gut Check: How Are EPC Pastors Doing, and How Can We Grow?

Each year, the Effective Biblical Leadership Team surveys EPC pastors (Teaching Elders and Commissioned Pastors) to gauge their well-being and identify opportunities for growth. In 2025, for the first time, we conducted a separate survey of retired pastors. Thank you to the 239 current and retired pastors who participated!

Below is a summary of key findings from the 2025 survey, compiled with help from SurveyMonkey and ChatGPT.

How We're Doing

Overall Satisfaction

The vast majority of current EPC pastors surveyed express satisfaction in their roles.

Q7: How would you rate your overall sense of satisfaction in your current role?

- **Positive** (Very Satisfied/Satisfied): 86%
- **Neutral**: 10%
- **Negative** (Very Dissatisfied/Dissatisfied): 4%

Sources of Dissatisfaction

While grateful to see the overall high degree of satisfaction among pastors surveyed, we wanted to know the factors that contribute to any sense of dissatisfaction they have. Pastors named a range of challenges with the most common being:

1. **Unhealthy/Unmanageable Stress (28%)**
Emotional weight, anxiety, “tyranny of the urgent.”
2. **Unmanageable Workload (23%)**
Time management, prioritization, heavy responsibility.
3. **Lack of Meaningful Friendships / Isolation (20%)**
Feeling alone in leadership.
4. **Compensation / Financial Pressure (17%)**
Cost of living strain, inadequate pay.
5. **Impact on Personal Life / Family (14%)**
Distance from family, caregiving demands, insufficient time with family.

6. Leadership / Staff Dynamics Problems (11%)

Tensions with supervisors, misaligned values, planning issues.

Spiritual Health

The vast majority of current pastors surveyed had a positive assessment of their relationship with God (85%), but nearly 16% rated it as Neutral or Unhealthy.

Q12: How would you rate the state of your spiritual health/relationship with God?

- **Healthy or Very Healthy:** 85%
- **Neutral:** 14%
- **Unhealthy:** ~2%

Resources Used for Personal Growth

Each year, we ask pastors about the resources they are utilizing for their own growth and development. Most current pastors rely on **Spiritual Practices** (97%), **Family**, (84%) and **Friends** (73%). **Books** are a source of growth for most (57%), and there is also substantial participation in **Small Groups/Cohorts** (47%). Over three times as many current pastors (74% combined) draw on professional resources such as **Counselors**, **Spiritual Directors**, and **Leadership Coaches** compared to retired pastors (22% combined).

Crisis Support

In a personal crisis, most pastors surveyed would turn to their inner circle for support.

Q19: If you faced a personal crisis, where would you be most likely to turn for support? Choose all that apply.

- **Family:** 81%
- **Friends:** 73%
- **Spiritual Practices:** 73%

Fewer pastors say they would turn to professional supports in a crisis:

- **Counselor:** 37%
- **Leadership coach/mentor:** 26%
- **Presbytery leadership:** 25%

- **Doctor:** 19%
- **Spiritual director:** 11%

Pastors are encouraged to seek immediate help when needed. The **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** is always available.

How We Can Grow

1. Proactive Support for Faithfulness and Longevity in Ministry

For EPC pastors, high satisfaction exists alongside significant challenges—stress, workload, isolation, and relational strain. Many pastors are not accessing the professional supports that could help them thrive.

We strongly encourage every pastor to establish at least one intentional, supportive relationship with someone not dependent on them for spiritual leadership—whether a small group, counselor, spiritual director, coach, or mentor.

Connectional opportunities:

Presbyteries can foster pastoral cohorts, mentoring relationships, and chaplain care. Denominational gatherings (Small Church Summit, Next Gen Summit, retreats) and online cohorts provide additional avenues for support.

When focused care is needed:

Organizations such as [PastorServe](#), [PIR Ministries](#), and [Standing Stone](#) offer specialized pastoral coaching. Therapy can also address deep wounds, stress, and grief.

For help finding a therapist, spiritual director, coach, or cohort, pastors may contact their presbytery chaplain or [Annie Rose](#), National Director of Ministerial Health.

2. Caring for Our Bodies

Pastors face physical strain from stress and often-sedentary work. Churches are encouraged to provide the **EPC Medical Plan** which supports preventive care and mental health services. If your church is not yet participating, explore [Benefit Resources, Inc.](#)

Financial challenges should not prevent pastors from accessing the care they need. Please see **Additional Resources** below for more info.

3. Prioritizing Our Life with God

While most pastors report a healthy relationship with God (85%), more than 15% describe their spiritual life as neutral or unhealthy. Ministry is meant to flow from our intimacy with Christ; we cannot give what we do not possess.

There are many ministries which specialize in helping pastors apply the gospel to their own lives. Pastors seeking renewed spiritual health are encouraged to reach out to their presbytery chaplain or [Annie Rose](#) for resources and support.

Additional Resources for EPC Pastors

- **Sabbatical Planning Toolkit (from PIR Ministries)**
Free to EPC pastors and Sessions. Includes video guidance and a free consultation with a PIR coach. Contact [Annie Rose](#) for access.
- **Medical Benevolence Fund**
Financial assistance for eligible pastors. [Info available online.](#)
- **Care of Pastor & Spouse Fund**
Supports pastoral spiritual and emotional wellness through retreats, counseling, specialized programs, and more. Contact [Annie Rose](#) or [Chris Curtis](#), Chair of the Ministerial Vocation Committee.