

Title: Equipped to Care: Why the Church Needs a Pastoral Toolkit for Mental Health

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July 3, 2025

What happens when the wounded show up to church—and so does the pastor, wounded too?

In parish halls and hospital rooms, on Zoom calls and behind pulpits, clergy are facing an unrelenting tide of emotional, spiritual, and mental health challenges. Many are offering comfort while privately struggling with their own depression or anxiety. Others are ministering to neurodivergent congregants without the training or tools to do so well.

We can no longer ignore the reality: our shepherds are bleeding.

That's why Clergy Care Collective has launched a Pastoral Care Toolkit—a practical, spiritually rooted, and trauma-informed resource designed to help clergy accompany those living with mental illness, trauma, grief, or disability.

This toolkit isn't just a collection of templates. It's a theological statement: that caring well for the suffering is part of the Gospel itself. It contains guides for pastoral responses to mental illness, sample liturgies and prayers for those in distress, templates for confidentiality, reading lists, and self-care resources for clergy themselves.

We created it because we've heard from too many pastors who feel unequipped. From seminarians unsure how to balance compassion with boundaries. From ministers who have been crushed by the weight of invisible pain in their communities—and in themselves.

As someone who has both needed and provided pastoral care, I know how critical this is. Ministry is sacred, but it is not sustainable without support.

Too often, churches act as if faith alone is a substitute for professional wisdom. We shame those with mental illness. We reduce the pain of trauma to platitudes. We mistake exhaustion for failure.

But the Incarnation tells us that God meets us in our bodies, our minds, our mess. And the Church must do the same.

This toolkit is our attempt to help the Church show up better. To hold space with humility. To tend wounds with wisdom. To preach the Gospel not only with words, but with presence and care.

It is free, ecumenical, and shaped by insights from theologians, clinicians, clergy, and those

with lived experience. It will keep growing, because the Church is still learning.

If you're a pastor: this is for you.

If you're a seminarian: this is for you.

If you're a church leader who wants to serve the suffering with greater integrity: this is for you.

Let us not be a Church that tells the broken to "just pray more." Let us be a Church that offers prayer—and resources, accompaniment, and love.

Because Christ did not come to shame the weary. He came to lift them up.

Visit www.clergycarescollective.org to download the toolkit, learn more, or support this ministry.