

Eileen Campbell-Reed, Pastoral Imagination

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SPEAKERS

Andy Hale, Eileen Campbell-Reed

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I have this unique role, with CBF, North Carolina, in which I get to work alongside clergy and churches that are in time of transition, one of the things I found myself coaching search teams on right now, especially as budgets become tighter, is to think of the intangible things that you can give your ministers to, to care for them. Things that we learned from the pandemic, and so, you know, I was actually met with a search team last night and I told him, you know, your personal handbook probably says, you can give your minister two three weeks of vacation, how about six, you know, and what it might cost you is \$150 honorarium to pay for somebody to come and preach on the Sunday morning. But imagine the self care practices that can be put into place now doesn't mean they've had to take all six weeks off in a row. You know, you got to negotiate those kinds of things. But what are maybe some other I guess for this week's CBF podcast conversation is Reverend Dr. Eileen Campbell-Reed. She's a visiting professor of pastoral theology and care at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She is the founder and host of Three Minute Ministry Mentor, along with the co-director of the Learning Pastoral Imagination Project. She has authored several books including anatomy of a schism and the state of clergy women in the US, Eileen, welcome to the conversation. Thanks so much, Andy. I'm delighted to be talking with you today. I will have you know, and I know we talked about this last time we were together I had been humming "Come on Eileen" all morning long knowing we were literally and then like I actually caught myself doing I was like why am I singing that song? Oh, yeah. This morning's the Eileen Campbell-Reed interview.

03:25

Oh, it was popular right when I was in the latter years of high school. So I've heard it, sung it, danced to it. And people bring it up to me all the time.

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unfortunately, I think a review of the song it maybe isn't that great. Lyrics wise. I don't know if we want to glorify necessarily the lyrics as much as the tune at the song. So it's very

03:47 danceable. That's true, but the lyrics are a little Yeah, like, that's not hope that's not exactly my life.

03:55

Problem. You obviously do a lot. Tell us you know, we're gonna get into your latest book and some of the report coming out of your work but love to learn more for our audience as far as the [Three Minute Ministry Mentor](#), what is it and what do you hope to do through it?

04:13

Absolutely. Well, it's a good connecting point with the book [Pastoral Imagination \(Bringing the Practice of Ministry to Life\)](#) that came out last year because taking a few steps back when I working with Chris Scharen in the starting in 2009, wanted to understand how it is people learn the practice of ministry. What is that trajectory from you know, the time they're called have a sense of vocation through seminary training through those first years in ministry, what's the learning curve? What does that look like? And how do people embody something we would we call a pastoral imagination. And so we started the study, we started interviewing people in our cohort we follow through with them every few years and reinterview them. And we wrote a lot of academic articles and a long report about at the five year mark of the study. But we weren't doing enough in my view to get what we were learning into the hands and hearts of people who actually do ministry. So in 2018, several different things came together in my work life and in my sort of my own vision for what we were doing. And I just decided it was time to launch [Three Minute Ministry Mentor](#), because I wanted to share what we were learning in the research, I want to support ministers, that's been something important to me, from the time I was in seminary, because I was involved with Baptist women in ministry. And so I've been a supporter, friend, mentor, coach, to women in ministry and men as well, for a very long time. And so Three Minute Ministry Mentor is a fuller expression of that. We have a whole variety of ways that we like to say we inform and inspire the practice of ministry. Even the idea of ministry as a practice is new to the larger world. And it's not new, like in my lifetime, but well my lifetime, but not my life as a scholar. It's new in the sense of being sort of re imagined ministry as a practice, starting in the 90s, and then into the early 2000s. And there were certainly many treatises and all kinds of discipline manuals, and whole entire church councils about what priests and pastors and ministers should do, and how they should do it, and what they, what their work should be like. But often priesthood was thought of like an identity, and not much about something people learned, you were born to be a priest. And with the Protestant Reformation, there were major changes both in Protestantism and Catholicism, about how ministry and priestly duties and all the rest were understood, more education became important. And how one lived in one's vocation became more central. Instead of just sort of, well, you're in a family that produces a lot of priests. And so we're going to bring you into the priesthood. You're one of the designated ones. And, and when vocation became something that was both communal and personal, in the thinking of Martin Luther and others that followed, it really turned us toward an expansion of who could be a leader in the church was no longer limited to just celibate men. But the expansion of ministry to many people also gave us more of a chance to think about gifts and calling and eventually, in the latter end of the last century, ministry as a practice. And so that's what Chris Sharon and I have been studying, how do we understand that ministry as a practice? And then pastoral imagination is a way of thinking about the capacity, it takes an embodied relational, emotional, spiritual and integrative capacity for how one does

that practice and learns it over time. So all that long trip through the the ages, there was to say, Three Minute Ministry Mentors trying to bring forward these ideas and then many discrete aspects of how one learns in practice. And that's what I wanted to get into the lives and thinking of ministers for sure. And also the people who teach them like me theological educators, so that we would all be thinking more intentionally and deliberately about how we're educating in that little short window of time, three, four years of time when we're educating people for the practice of ministry. How can we do that better. So that's kind of my subplot always as well.

09:12

And I'd love for us to spend some time in your latest book [Pastoral Imagination](#). This book invites readers to consider the practice of ministry to life. You wrote, as I complete this book in the spring of 2020, the entire world is upside down and burning. We are facing more waves of the Coronavirus pandemic with no vaccine, and no clear and inside the number of COVID-19 cases have surpassed 2 million and deaths keep climbing in the United States and globally. The number of deaths have released the massive disparities revealed the massive disparities in our country. Take us back to that moment. That moment. You had been writing this amazing resource for ministers, and then this world altering thing happened.

09:57

Yeah, that's right. The way I launched [Three Minute Ministry Mentor](#) was in the in the fall of 2018. Well, Advent actually. So we're at the four year mark, we're having our fourth birthday right now, when I launched it, I knew that I would be doing a whole year of episodes with three minute videos, blogs, and those videos were turned into podcasts as well. And so I knew that first year of material would become this book that we're talking about now. That's called pastoral imagination. And so I even had a conversation with Scott Thompson, who became my editor at Fortress, he knew what was coming. And he followed along with us. And it was really a full process of thinking about sharing this weekly material, inviting people to think with me, but also is going to eventuate in a book. But when all that happened, 2018 the tail end of 2018 or 2019, and then starting into 2020, we had no idea that we'd also be in the middle of this global pandemic when I was finishing the actual book. So yes, it was a real time of shifting what we were doing at Three Minute Ministry Mentor, and what I was doing in my teaching, what I was doing in all my conversations with my fellow scholars and with ministers themselves. You know, there's no real way to estimate the impact yet that the Coronavirus pandemic, and then the chronic and multiple pandemics that rolled out in in the after, you know, while we're all sitting at home and locked down. America, the United States of America starts waking up to its longer, deeper, more insidious pandemics. And these were not new ideas for me. But I think they were because they became urgent to everyone in a really powerful way. So I wanted the book because of when it was being completed to gather up as much of that learning moment that was happening in 2020, which is when I was finalizing the manuscript. And so I found ways to integrate sort of the counterpoints the the different ways that ministry was challenged, and in some regards undercut by what happened during the Coronavirus pandemic. And, and I did that with a number of different chapters. So you'll find that woven in to various places throughout the book. But I also really want to address it right up front and that introduction, because I think that we have a very powerful moment happening. And by moment, I mean a long cultural moment. Right now we're living in it, which is to say, it's been easy to just continue

to train people for ministry in the 20th century and into the 21st century, sort of leaning on the traditions that we have been doing for quite a while. And those are very defined by the guilds. When I say the guilds, I mean the organizations that give authority to scholars, so seminary professors don't just get authority from the teaching in the classroom. They also get authority, we hope from their own vocation and calling from God and also from their guilds. So if there are biblical scholars, there are biblical guilds that authorize their work. If they are practical theologians like me, there are several different guilds that publish my work, review my work, say to the world whether you know, a scholar of any notoriety or not, and the guilds have so formed and shaped theological education for so long, that they are constantly reasserting themselves. And it means that they, sometimes those teachers who are so shaped Lee, who are shaped by our guilds, forget that the life world that we are teaching for is the Lifeworld of ministry. Most of the time, that ministry might take a lot of forms. It might be congregational, it might be activism, it might be chaplaincy, it might be education. But we're training people who are going to do the work of ministry, who are answering a vocational call, not just people who are going to become professors like us. And that's a tricky, subtle kind of shift that people who are teaching in theological, theological education need to make but they're so shaped by it. It's hard for them to see it's a little like the old you know, showing water to fish Um, so the way we talk about it in our, in the book I talked about a little bit in the book and other writings Chris Sherman and I have done is that there's, there's the concern for knowledge acquisition, when you're going to seminary, you're going to acquire a lot of knowing a lot of knowledge, a lot of information, history, stories, theologies, etc. But what's important is that you also have a sense of knowledge use, what are you going to do with what you learn? How are you going to use it? How is it shaping you, as a pastoral person, a person with pastoral imagination? And that is a question everybody across every guild who's teaching in seminary needs to be thinking about. And they do and they don't, some of them do it better than others. I'm also trying to empower students and ministers themselves, to be thinking that way, and always asking the question in the seminary classroom. So what I just learned about, you know, the six major councils of this period of history, what difference does that make to how I'm going to do ministry? Now? How does that shape who I am? Or does it need critique? You know, there's a million questions to ask about. So what, how does one use what one is learning? So those are some of the things that we're, we're up against, when we came into this moment, this moment of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lockdown. It's up ended, a lot of what people were trained in, that wasn't really fully adequate. It didn't really equip them with a robust pastoral imagination, for coping with something so out of the blue, so unprecedented, as a pandemic, a healthcare pandemic, and then all the other pandemics. And so this is a moment where the church can be asking, and, and its leaders, ministers, and theological educators, should all be together asking, what are we really training people for here? What are they learning to do? How are they learning to do it? Can they be flexible? Can they be improvisational is one of our favorite words in the study? Can they pay attention to the situation and really respond in the way that that acknowledges the holy and all the other shaping forces in that situation, and bring a truly pastoral moment? And not like that, sort of that's reflecting on the person of the pastor, but as reflecting on the care and justice that the world needs so much.

17:57

Yeah, a critical aspect of processing the book is understanding what you mean by imagination. you're alluding to that earlier, but can you kind of help frame that for us?

18:06

Yes, great question. I like to say that pastoral imagination is three different things. It is the name of the project that we've been talking about the longitudinal study of people and how they learn in practice. It is also the book that I wrote *Pastoral Imagination* is a book that came out in 2021, with fortress and that's what we've been talking about what's in that book. And the third thing, the most important thing is it's a concept. Pastoral imagination is a concept that was first coined a term, the phrase was coined by Craig Dykstra, and late 90s, and popularized most in his article that was in a book called for life abundant. And he wrote an article or chapter in that book about pastoral and ecclesial imagination, how people and churches live in the world in a way that is responsive to the fullness of the world and holiness of that world. We, we have gone further with his concept in a couple of different directions. We connect it with for an *Asus*, which is Aristotle's idea of practical wisdom. So, when we talk about imagination, we're not talking about that, that thing that you often hear the word imagination, and you think, Oh, well, can someone be creative? Can they think about some artistic or crafty kind of thing and in a cool or creative way? Those are forms of imagination, but that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about a *habitus*, a way of life, a way of seeing the world a way of being in the world. And that draws on the fullness of history and tradition and wisdom and theology and prayer and we talk about it in terms of being embodied. It's a knowing. Pastoral imagination is a knowing that is embodied not just in your head, but in your whole self. It's knowing how to sit stand be with people stand in the pulpit, sit at the bedside, stand in the streets protest in March, knowing not just how to move your body in those places, but how to take action, for love and justice and the world. Or whatever your tradition that you know, states that values most highly, because that can be a little different, depending on whether you've been formed as a Catholic priest, or a Pentecostal pastor or a Methodist chaplain, you know, there's those traditions and values that shape you are a little different, but you still need a capacity for engaging them fully. It's also about relational knowing, we don't just do what we do, because we learned it in seminary, and somehow we know now what to do. We're in relationships with all the people that we're in ministry with the person we pass on the street, the person who comes through the door of the church, the person in the hospital, but we are in relationships constantly. And in those relational spaces is where the Holy shows up so readily, and we have to be attuned to that part of pastoral imagination is being attuned to that, and not being preoccupied. And that's a natural part of the process. When you're new. At ministry, you're worried a lot about how you're doing? Did I do that? Right? Did I say that? Right? Did I mess that up? Is that person gonna, like come back after me. And, you know, we worry about how we're doing, because that's a natural part of the developmental process of learning, and adult human practice, like ministry, we also worry about it and things we're doing other ways, you know, whether it's playing tennis or basketball or driving a car, the early stages you worry about how you're doing. But there comes a point where there's a flip. And this flip is that you stop worrying so much about what you're doing, how you're doing. And you give your full attention to the situation in front of you. And you're able to ask yourself, what is going on here? What is the depth of what is happening? What are the psychological dynamics, the family dynamics, the political forces, the history that's shaping this moment? What is happening of God's movement? What if the Holy is enacted here? And you have to ask yourself all those questions really, really rapidly, because the situation might be looking to you as the pastor, you as the Minister, the chaplain, the priest, the activist, and saying, What help us. You know, you're the you're the one in the in the leadership role. And so,

when you can switch your attention from worrying about how am I doing, to what is happening here? And how am I going to respond and not just personally respond but gathered the people to make the appropriate response. Then you are embodying and enacting a fulsome, robust pastoral imagination. And with time that grows with a kind of patina it more shine more. And it's not to say there aren't we can talk about blockades as well, there are things that make this hard. But with time, we've interviewed people who are in the 25 to 30 year range of their ministries. And yeah, their knowing is so almost unconscious about what they do. They do it and they do it beautifully, but they no longer think deliberately about it. They simply enact it. That kind of pastoral imagination, if they're priests and ministers and pastors,

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You're seeing ministry as a practice that is learned by trial and error through recognizable stages of growth and through many rounds of experience allows us to take seriously the reality that learning ministry is a lifelong endeavor, and not a three year process of seminary and internships. You know, most professions, outside of ministry required continuing education hours in order to continue to be a licensed professional in this area, why not vocational ministry? And why should it?

26:20

Yeah, that's a great question. And and there are some denominational traditions that are much more intense and robust in what they offer about continuing education. So it's, I think there's sort of two prongs to the answer. One is Yes, could some denominations be more deliberate about providing continuing ed and really giving regular loops of feedback to people about how they're doing and how's it going, and for sure, there's also just the simple reality that if you're in ministry for extended number of years, you are in a constant learning process. Now, if you lose your sense of things being new or something yet to be learned, you're stagnating in some kind of way that's not good for your well being or the people you serve, probably. And that's not so much a judgment is more on the person as like, we have many situations that just are not. They're not set up to create conditions for you to be in a continuous learning process. To be in that kind of process. You need to have feedback loops, as I already said, somebody's telling you know how you're doing. But as you do need to know, even if you're not preoccupied with how am I doing, you still need to get some feedback. It's easy to feel defensive about that. But if you can approach it with an openness, this is about learning in my becoming more grounded in what I'm doing, and serving this community, whatever community it is better. Then you're much more open to that feedback. You need mentors, those can be peer mentors, those can be senior mentors, those can be skill based mentors, but seeking out the people who will give you a sounding board, and who will listen to your growing edges and give you honest feedback when you speak, not to judge you or critique you, but to be alongside you as you're learning to be that person you turn to because you know ministry can put you in some really crazy ridiculous situations. And you need you need a one of my group, groups of friends calls themselves the advisory board, you need the advisory board, you need some people, you can turn to confidentially and say, Look, I'm up against this situation, in my congregation, or in my chaplaincy ministry or in my military service ministry or wherever you are serving. And when you have that group of people that you cultivate relational knowing with over time, they really can have your back and you don't feel like you were so isolated. Isolation is one of the worst things that people face in ministry, one of the hardest things they face in ministry, where they don't feel like they have people that have their back or that they can consult with when they need to consult. So I think it's important for denominations as you're asking, or ministry groups, there's all kinds of great centers in the different denominations that do this sort of work. CBF has variations on it with peer learning groups and whatnot. So that's important. Having a culture that supports this is really important, but also, individuals can say I can create my ecology My network of people I'm going to turn to when I need them. And now with the world, so available to us through phone and zoom, and all the various ways we can connect. That's realistic. It's possible even if you live in Iowa, or you know, a very rural part of Mississippi or something, you can still find a network of people that can really be part of your sounding board and your and have your back. So I think it's both it's a both and

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we recently shared some time together in our collaborative work around CBF of North Carolina's helping pastors Thrive initiative. And at our planning retreat, we went down a really healthy rabbit trail of what seminary doesn't prepare you for in ministry, you know, much, much of what you covered in the book, whether equity issues, emotional intelligence, Relational Approach to Ministry, practicing self care, and on and on, is just not things typically covered in seminary is this more of a need for

seminaries to adapt their approach to teaching the practice of ministry or a need for ministers to continue their education, post seminary graduation or combination of both?

31:11

Yeah, I think it's a combination of both. And I'll say more, just a little more about both. Kind of in talking about that, you can think in a way of the topics in the book. Any one of them could be taught in any number of courses in the seminary, like they could be a part of what one learns, in any number of courses, a preaching course of Biblical Studies course, a history course. So there's ways to fold in practice, to all the whole curriculum of seminary. And that is what I regularly am trying to help my colleagues in theological education, think about how to do that. Don't leave all the integrative work, to feel that professors and CPE, Clinical Pastoral Education, those are essential, we've got to have them I'm not, I don't want to dispense with them at all. But don't leave all the work of integration up to them. You know, ask these questions at the use of knowledge in your course, no matter what it is, if you're a professor, you are helping students hang on to what they learn much longer by asking them to use it. And you are equipping them for thinking in the ways they need to think with pastoral imagination when they leave your institution. So seminary education, there's also some real big swaths of practical stuff. seminaries are still not doing very well. And, and in my most recent round of interviews with recent grads from Austin Seminary in Austin, Texas, I heard again, what we've been hearing for more than a decade, which is things around administration, finances, how to supervise people how to manage buildings, and facilities, how to read a spreadsheet, just some really basic functions of any organization. seminaries are still largely not doing an adequate job of that. They're also not giving students enough. This, again, writ large, not just about Austin, but every, every seminary just about, it's still struggles to give students enough chances to try on what they're learning in really practical ways. You know, you take a preaching class, you're going to get a chance, or two or three to preach in that class. So the practical fields tend to do this better. And pastoral care, you're going to have probably some practicum hours of learning to listen in and Christian ed course, hopefully, you're going to have a chance to actually create some curriculum or a Bible study or some kind of training and try it on with your peers. These are low stakes, low, low bar opportunities to practice ministry, when there's not a church, you know, out there waiting on you to do something and, and, and, and paying you every week. So seminaries can do better in a in a in many different ways. Also, the students, the new ministers, the ministers at any stage of their life, and work, can really start to grasp, Hey, I am in a very long arc, as my friend Chris Sharon says, a very long arc of learning the practice of ministry, it had a beginning before seminary, it included those crucial years of intense learning, and it goes on through the rest of time and, and then ask themselves, we can ask ourselves, what is it I need to know? What is it I need to learn and who cannot be learning this with? And there's so many different ways to do that. It's not limited to the seminaries continuing ed program. There's so many different ways to learn what we need to know, with the people we serve, not just so We can take it to them. But in partnership with them, that was one of the great things about the pandemic pastoring report was how much I could see this really crucial relationship between lay leaders and paid clergy in the congregational setting, for doing work together. And there's desire on all sides to do that. But we can do better. So learning is a shared enterprise. Wherever you go from seminary, to being in ministry, 25 years, still learning and doing that with a community.

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Let's shift to that work. The pandemic pastoring report set the stage for us on how you conducted this research and and who you interviewed.

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Yeah. Well, we had this ongoing longitudinal study, we'd started in 2009, we have a cohort of 50, people who went to 10 Different seminaries across the country, from East Coast, West Coast in between. And periodically, we not only interview them in small cohorts of five people who graduated from a particular school. But we also will send out a survey to all of them, we've surveyed them about a variety of things pay salary, use of technology, health related issues. And so we we surveyed them about a variety things. And we had just really begun the process of the 10 year round of interviews. So these are folks who had been in seminary and graduated at least 10 years ago. And they're in our study. And so we have ongoing relationships with them. But March of 2020 came, and of course, at the very beginning, everybody's saying, Oh, well, maybe maybe two or three weeks, maybe a month will be locked down, you know, and that I could see that really wasn't quite the case. And I'm not trying to declare I had knowledge that would be where we are right now, almost three years later. I didn't. But it was clear to me it wasn't going to end immediately. And that was having some impact on people, my students, for sure. And then ministers are say, so I said, let's put together a survey, find out how folks are doing. Let's ask some questions about their concern levels, and then how they're taking care of themselves and how they're what they're learning what's what maybe some hidden surprises or delights, some struggles, challenges, griefs, and and really, the framework of that survey is pretty, pretty connected to the Ignatian spirituality kinds of questions about consolation and desolation, which is not unfamiliar to what we do sometimes with our research and how I do my teaching. So put together a survey, not not a really long one. sent that out to our folks, we're meanwhile, interviewing them. And then I decided, hey, there's another group I'm working with. I'm consulting and mentoring with pastors in North Carolina, as you mentioned, the helping pastors Thrive initiative. And we decided to also send a survey to them did that in collaboration with the other mentors and Scott Hutchins, the director, got that those surveys back and then some months later, we're thinking about what we're going to do with that we're continuing we meanwhile, got funding to do the tenure research. So we're really meeting intensely with the pastors in our LPI study. And then Austin Seminary approached me and they had a Pathways grant from ATS Association of Theological Schools wanted some help by asking me to interview their recent graduates. And I said, Oh, I would love to do that. And can I also ask them questions that are on the survey we've been working with. They said, of course, and get permission from them to you know, let me utilize that data. As we're thinking about what's happening course this by this point, we're talking about 2021. vaccines have started to roll out. But there's still a lot of people. And just that summer and 21 and fall of 21, people were thinking, Oh, we're gonna go back to regularly scheduled worship and meetings and gatherings. And along came Omicron. And it was, it was chaotic. That's exactly when I was interviewing the 50 Plus folks from Austin seminary and wasn't just their graduates also a group, a large group of late leaders who were a part of churches affiliated with the seminary. So I was really just really fortunate actually to have that invitation, and some funding additional funding to be able to interview so many folks who are living right in the midst of the pandemic at that moment, making really hard decisions, feeling the severe kinds of loss. And I had a team of others, Austin graduates who helped me with interviewing. And when I got through with that, it was

November of last year, got to kind of all the interviews in the can, I was like, Okay, we've got a lot to look at here. So starting through all that data, and trying to suss out what was happening in the surveys, they all took the surveys and what was happening in our interviews. It was just increasingly clear, as I wrote and wrote and wrote, January, February, March, all through last summer. There's been a, there's been a sea change. We're not just talking about adjustments, or pivots, that was everybody's favorite word pivot, or, you know, even even adaptive change. I'm not sure that's adequate, as a metaphor for what we've been living through. So I've been using the language of a new era of ministry, I think we are in a new time. And, of course, the people are many people are still living as if the old time hasn't changed. But large numbers of people are living in, like, what is happening here? What so much is different about ministry and of course about life, not just ministry, but that's part of the point. So the pandemic pastoring report came out in September of this year. Well, I should really say that, because you're not going to publish this till later. Right. So, this, the pandemic pastoring report came out in September of 2022. And I tried to gather up the major learnings that I had, while interviewing and surveying more than 100, clergy and lay leaders, and giving a portrait of what it is to be living in this new era of ministry, and the major questions it's raising for everyone as we do it.

42:25

Let's talk about some of the findings own specifically zero and two, finding number five differences in clergy and lay leader experience. I don't think until I was afforded a break between ending at university Baptist Church in Baton Rouge and starting my role here at CBF. North Carolina did I realize just how tired I really was. I've always been an adaptable person. Maybe my wife and friends would argue differently, but but I feel like, you know, I pivoted well and helped our church to that well during the pandemic, but in many congregants, they enjoyed the at home on demand experience of spiritual formation and worship ministers were on the back end, figuring it all out, taking on roles that volunteers usually filled, worried about church financial stability, did double work and dealt with the personal effects of the pandemic. Talk to us a little bit about that specific finding.

43:26

Yeah, there's a couple of different ways we got at it through the survey. And they were kind of surprising. I mean, it surprised me because I just didn't realize fully how different the experiences were made sense. As soon as I began to see what was there, that what you were just touching on was a big part of it. The pandemic moment when we in March of 2020, when things closed down, and then the months and for some churches, years following that. Of doing church in some virtual format. Yes, lay leaders. Were a were in a place where they could and did they wouldn't that they could because they wanted to. There's just they they took a step back from what they had done. And they one of the interesting things I learned in a couple of the interviews, Pastor sort of walked me through that and they said, here's the thing, we had an ethical dilemma as pastors, could we even call on our volunteers, many of them older than 65, who were at severe risk of contracting a disease of virus that could kill them. Could we do that? Could we do that ask them to take on more roles or come to the church house or no, we couldn't be good, we just ethically and morally could not do that. So therefore the work which shifted significantly in every place, still, as you say, earlier, but came more work for the pastors and ministers on staff. So we think about congregational ministry in particular. Ministers took on so much more of the work and they did it not because they were feeling like superheroes or like they needed to

be martyrs or any of that they did it because needed to be done and they felt a moral many of them an obligation not to endanger congregants. Meanwhile, congregants were having more of the experience of like, Oh, my goodness, I'm going home, I can go to church, my pajamas from a coffee cup in hand, and, you know, whatever. And, and they also have really beautiful, valuable experiences of like having their adult or college aged children home, or being able to reconnect with their family in a different way. And some ministers had those experiences as well, for sure. But But what revealed itself as as churches began to reconsider, how are we going to gather in person again, volunteers were out of the practice out of habit, many of them, certainly many volunteers stepped up and did huge amounts of work to put worship into a virtual format. So there, it's not like not, please don't hear me saying volunteers do tremendous amounts of work they did. And pastors know they couldn't have done it without them. Interestingly, when I asked volunteer lay leaders, what did you need your pastor to know, during this time? Like, what was something you needed? him or her to know? About? You or the church or whatever? What did you need your password? Now they might have known it? Or maybe they didn't. But tell me now, what do you need them to know? And lay leaders gave? The most common answer that they gave me was, we needed our pastor to know how much we had her back. We needed pastors and staff people to know how much we supported them. 200% We need them to know, we love them. So they said other things as well like that my mother had cancer or that in a more critical way. We heard a few comments from from a few bits of feedback from volunteers about when there was protests in the streets and people were responding to the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and Ahmad Ahmad Arbury, we did not need to hear a sermon about nature or something unrelated, we needed to actually have the cultural moment of our, the life of our country addressed, and it wasn't. So we heard some critique as well. But the bulk of the comments we got to that question, were how much support lay leaders felt and how much love they felt for their ministers? That's something ministers needed to hear. Because then on the other side, ministers were overwhelmed and exhausted. They didn't experience isolation the way lay people did. They experienced exhaustion and burnout. So there were these differences in experience, I think are incredibly valuable for churches to sit down and talk with each other about how was it for you to live through this time? How was it for you to live through this time, because it was not the same experience. And the more that we can hear each other or that they can hear each other. The more I think they can acknowledge and honor the grief of the period of time that we've just come through. And with that being heard and seen in one's losses and one's grief, makes more space for, okay, we've acknowledged a grief, our grief, we've honored our grief, we'll find ways to integrate that into who we are. And we can keep moving to be the church in this new era of ministry. Now, that's one story. And I haven't even told the parallel story about what was happening with chaplains. And we only touched on it a little in the report, because there's only so much room in that report. But chaplains also were really overwhelmed in this period of time. Also, I know a number of them who've experienced some burnout and are doing different work right now. So ministers themselves took on a real big burden of what work got done in this last two and a half years. Women took the biggest brunt of all, and the way it worked for for some women in my study, and in the study overall, was that it was so much that they had to step away from their ministry jobs. And it's yet to be told whether they will go back into them or not. I'm so there's a lot still to be learned about the impact of the pandemic on on women who are leading in ministry.

50:12

You know, this unique role with the CBF, North Carolina, which I get to work alongside clergy and churches that are in time of transition, one of the things I found myself coaching search teams on right now, especially as budgets become tighter, is to think of the intangible things that you can give your ministers to, to care for them. Things that we learned from the pandemic. And so, you know, I just actually met with the search team last night and actually told them, you know, your personal handbook probably says, you can give your minister two, three weeks of vacation, how about six, you know, and what it might cost you is \$150 honorarium to pay for somebody to come and preach on a Sunday morning. But imagine the self care practices that can be put into place now doesn't mean they need to take all six weeks off in a row, you know, you got to negotiate those kinds of things. But what are maybe some other things churches can do to better care for their ministers as a result of the pandemic?

51:13

Yes, I love some of the suggestions you're making about how to support ministers in some creative ways, so that they can do their work with a fuller sense of care for themselves and not a constant sense of self sacrifice, or putting the work ahead of everything else, like family or even ones on spiritual life. In fact, we need to be able to get those priorities in the right place. And it actually benefits everyone, when we do. There's some sense if you like, ask, make space for a pastor to really fully care for themselves or their family, that somehow you're gonna get less of them or be shortchanged as a congregation. And quite the opposite is true, the more that pastors feel cared for and secure in their work and, and like their families have what they need. And that's in terms of compensation, and time off, and even childcare, we'll get to that in a minute. It really makes them more available, and more energized to do the work that you as congregation have called them to do. So I think you were right on track with asking about things like more vacation, I just read a study, and I don't have it open here. So I'm not going to be able to quote the title for you. But we'll put it in the notes if you'd like for your your listeners. And it's that you actually, there's been a really important study that if you want to up your game, when it comes to diversity, equity and inclusion, the buzzword Dei, everywhere about how we pay more attention to the diversity of our employees and our congregations and also the inclusivity and equity of what we're offering everyone, we want to up that game, one of the things we can do is really pay attention to what people who are often marginalized need most. So the example and big example in the article is women and particularly women of color, who are working in any organization. This is not just about ministry, but any organization really could use more support, like vacation, making sure they're paid equitably. And something as simple as childcare, making sure they have the childcare they need or that the organization even pays for that childcare. And what what the outcome of this study was, when that happens when those needs are met. People stay longer, they're happier, and they do better work. Now, it's really hard to argue with that. And it seems a little counterintuitive that if you give a little more that you're really going to get there's this terrible mentality we have in the business world and in ministry world of thinking that if we give a little more to employees, somehow they're not going to give back more. And it's really misguided. It's really, I think the churches have the a wonderful opportunity to say, how do we fully embody our love of neighbor, starting with the people right here in our own organization? And how do we then not just embody put in practice, but then make this a culture of place where that's what we do we have a generosity of love for each other. And when we can do that and believe in that it goes into all the ministry we do in the world. I'm not just okay, I'm not just trying to talk about the prosperity gospel here. That like if you give more you're gonna get more that's that's really

not the equity I'm talking about. I'm talking about providing for people what their basic needs are. And if you're going to hire parents, men or women, moms or dads, non binary parents, you really need to be providing, making sure that they have their needs as parents met, and not ask them to constantly put their needs for parenting to the side. They can't give you good leadership if they're constantly feeling torn about caring for their families. So I think that's a really basic and really smart way to go forward. It's a benefit that's often overlooked or ignored, but can be really helpful.

55:44

And our last question gears around kind of looking towards the future of what the church is currently dealing with, and what it's going to have to deal with, which is kind of the result of delayed conflict. I know we talked about this recently, you know, a great deal of my doctoral work is essentially around organizational psychology and looking at it through a theological lens. It's inevitable that when we are not in close proximity with each other, psychologically, we begin to lack empathy, lack grace, and lack of the type of healthy communication that we have if we're around people. And so, in many regards, the isolation we experienced, the ways that we formulated our perspectives and opinions without really having to be in proximity with others that disagree with us is creating heightened anxiety around an already divided church theologically and politically. So what's your advice for ministers listening to this as they think through my God, there is a bunch of delayed conflict that's, that's coming that I'm gonna have to deal with.

56:56

Yeah, I do try to address this, to some small degree in the report that produced the pandemic pastoring report. And one of the ways I was witnessing in the people I interviewed this dynamic was that most churches, you know, have a site a lifecycle of birth, you know, sometimes people were pastoring churches that were born 200 years ago, they don't, you know, it feels very far removed, but churches have beginning and they have a lifecycle, which is often rises and declines. And it's a sort of normal organizational lifecycle. And what happens and what No, nobody really prepared me for in seminary at all. And I don't know anybody else who learned this. In seminary, I do try to teach a little bit of it in my field at courses when I'm teaching them, but is the idea that when you go into a decline this organization, when you start that tip over the peak of growth, and you start to lose either the numbers of people or you start to lose income, or you start to lose, perhaps harder to evaluate that sort of an influence in your community or impact in your community, when those little declines began, and they're really a normal part of the lifecycle of an organization. But what we do without recognizing that it's a normal part of the lifecycle is we get into conflict with each other. And so that conflict with each other looks like it's about the things we're fighting with each other about, like, you're not doing your job, right, or what can we really need red carpet not green? Or what are we going to do with that staple that's about to fall off the top of the church, we argue about and have conflict over things that are happening in the congregations life or some sometimes tangential things. And those conflicts have a way of misdirecting the energy of the church and creating more decline, because the conflict has erupted. So I one of the things I postulate, as I put the report together is that any number of churches were already in some kind of decline or another because that was where they were in the lifecycle. And if they were the pandemic moment, created an opportunity for people to put that conflict on the backburner and or hop on a shelf and just go into a survival mode. We're going to survive during this what are we what do we

need to do to survive during this time? What do we need to do to make things work? And there were churches that had increases in attendance, online money and other kinds of, you know, bits of growth because of the novelty of what was happening. And and because they did it. They did their parts well, and they attracted people and some of them managed to keep those folk all good. Those are all good, resilient stories. But that conflict that went on to the backburner at the top shelf When people winter just started to return, I heard stories about that conflict came back like a freight train. And so, one one thing I would say to pastors who are hearing me say this, tell the story and saying, oh my gosh, that sounds like what I'm dealing with, is to recognize the big picture of what is happening. And not only fun, not only allow yourself to be caught up in the little SCI conflicts that are happening about things that might not make you perhaps really wonder, because this really, we're having a fight about this in and keep the keep instead their attention on the big picture. And ret narrating for their people that they lead, whether it's in a you know, whatever kind of setting they're in, and doing them history, help help folks see the narrative of the larger sweep of their organization and its natural lifecycle, and help them recognize and pinpoint Hey, you know, we might have been in a moment where our budgets had been decreasing for several years or, you know, those are not the only measures. But those are the kinds of organizational measures that can make conflict possible. And then conflict is really just a symptom of the decline rather than about the conflict itself sometimes. Now, there are certainly real, real problems that people must deal with. I'm not dismissing all conflict as this. But often this, this framework can help people put in place what what is happening, and then it allows them to say if that's if this is our narrative, this is what we're dealing with? How do we ask the larger questions of what we need to hear each other? And our vision for what we can be together? And how can we build some trust with each other, so that we can find a sense of renewal, because renewal is what churches have to do on a regular basis, a regular cycle of renewal, and that means revisiting our purpose, our vision, you can use whatever words you want there, but we have to decide why are we here? What are we doing? What is God calling us to do, and have some really genuine conversations about that. And it might not be the things God has always been calling that church or that ministry to do. There might be something new in this new era of ministry that churches need to hear. And that means also letting go of some older things. And then I would add this one other piece of it, I painted a kind of simplistic picture there, and I didn't really mean to about paying attention to the big picture questions will help you out of this moment. Along with that, really, I think you have to pay attention to what people are grieving what they have lost in this last two and a half years. And some of those losses are very concrete, people have died. Buildings have closed, situations have changed. There's real grief about concrete things. There's also a ton of ambiguous grief, which is hard to see hard to name, and really needs our loving attention as a community of faith as communities of faith. And that means hearing each other making space for our grief, and ritualizing our losses, when we do that work hand in hand of paying attention to what we're grieving and also seeing the big picture of what we're doing here, what life is about for this congregation of faith. When we can do that work. Both of those steps of work, I think we have a chance of writing some new future stories for our ministries and for our love and justice in the world and our participation in that.

1:03:54

Our guest is Eileen Campbell read the book is [Pastoral Imagination](#), you can stay connected with her by visiting eileencampbellreed.org. Eileen, it's always a joy to be with you. Thank you for reminding us

that as we go about serving the world and serving a holy purpose, we need to cultivate a riches in them knowing about the world and ourselves.

1:04:14

Absolutely. It's been a joy to be talking with you today. Andy, thank you so much for some space for conversation.

1:04:21

Before we wrap up, we need to tell you about one more of our annual sponsors Baptist Seminary of Kentucky. Are you looking for a Bible study resource for your church? Responding to an invitation from the cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Virginia Baptist seminary of Kentucky has produced Bible study resources that is available for free of charge. The study title, faithful curiosity a five weeks study of Luke and Acts deals with three passages from Luke and two passages from Acts. It offers Bible study methods and provides two interpretive essays for each passage. The writers are BSK faculty, staff, students and alumni. Download this resource for free today at bsk.edu/faithful Okay, that's it. That's our conversation. If you want more, be sure to subscribe to CBF podcast on all major platforms including iTunes, Amazon Music, Spotify, SoundCloud and Google podcast. Don't forget to like and share this episode on your favorite social media platform. Check out CBF.net for more information about church starters, deal personnel advocacy work, and much more. And oh yeah, I think we mentioned that you should join the listener support community at CBF.net/podcast support