



A NEWSLETTER OF THE CATAWBA CLERGY NETWORK

WHAT PLANTS TEACH US ABOUT THRIVING



By The Rev. Betty Morton, PCC - Leadership, Life and Spiritual Coach and Consultant to the Catawba Clergy Network

"They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither... (Psalm 1:3)

It's Spring and Easter season. Christ is risen and it's greening everywhere! Hallelujah! And you? Despite the relentless deaths, distancing, and disquiet, are you able to find new life? Spring has me thinking about how plants survive winter's deaths, renew themselves and thrive. They don't do it alone. Plants need the right conditions and care to thrive. So do we.

Plants need basic things to stay healthy and productive - the right soil, light, water, air, nutrients and space to grow. They also have unique needs. Some thrive in sun, some shade. Some require lots of water, some little. Some demand a lot of attention, some less. And when their unique needs are not met, plants show clear signs of distress. Leaves droop, turn yellow, die at the tips, develop spots or fall off. These signs are distress calls that reveal the plant's particular problems and needs.

And humans are like plants. We too have basic and unique needs that, when met, promote thriving and when not met, lead to stress, distress or unhealthiness. However, too often we ignore or deny these distress calls. The simple lesson of plants is to know what you need to thrive, pay attention to those needs and answer when distress calls. This self-awareness and self-care are the heart of thriving.

So think like a plant and ask, "Am I thriving?" And if not, "What do I, uniquely me, need to thrive in body, mind, soul and relationships?"

- Am I green and well-nourished or green but not fertilized and not really growing or brown and fading or dying from burnout?
- Am I well-watered and appreciated or dry and drained of energy or overwatered and drowning in cares?
- Am I well-supported and standing upright or drooping and not getting the support I need?
- Am I encouraged or bugged by too many expectations eating away at my very soul?
- Am I flourishing or cramped like a rootbound plant, too confined to grow, unable to breathe and going in circles trying the same old things that don't work?

With honest self-reflection and attention to your needs, you can be that well-watered tree of God, standing strong and bearing good fruit in season. May it be so this Spring!

CLERGY THRIVING GRANT CORNER

ALL CLERGY NETWORK MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO APPLY FOR A GRANT TO SUPPORT YOUR THRIVING IN:

REST, RESOURCES, RELATIONSHIPS, & REFLECTION



CLERGY THRIVING GRANT

APPLICATION DEADLINE: MAY 15TH

The link to apply is in the email reply from when you joined the Network. If you are unable to find the link, email clergynetwork@catawba.edu

If you have received a thriving grant, look out for the **Grant Report Form** via email. It is also available on our website.

Since the beginning of the Catawba Clergy Network, Clergy Thriving Grants have been used to pursue retreat opportunities, ongoing education, and innovation in ministry. Throughout 2020, many grants went to helping Pastors and their congregations increase their capacity to minister in the midst of the many new challenges brought on by COVID-19, particularly around ministering in fully remote and digital spaces.

We also encourage Clergy to consider what a "restorative niche" might be for them; an activity that is undertaken for just the joy of it, which have been linked to thriving and overall wellbeing. As Matt Bloom, researcher at the Flourishing in Ministry Project writes, "A restorative niche has two characteristics. First, it is something we can do well, something in which we can acquire and pursue a sense of mastery. Second, a restorative niche is something we do out of intrinsic motivation: simply for the joy we experience from the activity itself. Some might call these hobbies, but we find that word does not do justice to the essence of a restorative niche. These are activities in which we have deep interest, a passion even, and that we aspire to do with excellence." His research found that Clergy who, "regularly engaged in their restorative niche...reported the very highest levels of flourishing." What might become a restorative niche for you? We hope and pray that such a practice can be meaningful, inspiring, and enlivening for your life and ministry.

While we accepted rolling applications in 2020 due to COVID-19, we are resuming an application deadline of May 15th moving forward.

If you have questions about this aspect of the Catawba Clergy Network please reach out to Shannon Axtell Martin at samartin12@catawba.edu.

"SEEING THE WORLD WITH A NEW EYE" CLERGY THRIVING GRANT SPOTLIGHT

By The Rev. Carol Gregg

Sometimes, it doesn't take much to get back on track.

I am grateful to God for the vocation of ministry with its diversity and demands, its typical issues and transcendent moments. Many days I am grateful it is a lifestyle for me, not work that is boxed into a set schedule, yet this also requires the constant balancing of work and restoration. I am grateful that a Clergy Thriving Grant through The Catawba Clergy Network has helped me with this balance. Especially in this pandemic year.

In one meeting with my spiritual director last fall, I opened the session by confessing that I felt weary -- weary of ministry in the midst of a pandemic and feeling guilty for feeling weary. Ministries had transitioned well to virtual formats, my home office is comfortable, and my family and I have been spared of the worst of what COVID brings, so I felt as though I had no reason to complain. Towards the end of the session, my spiritual director asked me to consider what activities might help me counter my weariness. Without hesitation, I told her of a long-standing interest in pursuing portrait photography, while simultaneously never being able to justify the expense of a better camera.



In response, she said, "Do you know that your face came alive when you started talking about photography?" I did not realize then what I know now is that I was looking for a "restorative niche."



With the support of a grant from the Catawba Clergy Network, I purchased a camera and began to pursue portrait photography. Taking portraits allows me to interact with people in a new way, (and a safe way during a pandemic) while recognizing and capturing their beauty. It allows me to see friends in a new way and to meet new people. I have begun to learn the technicalities of cameras and lenses, started to see light in a new way, and am stretching my creative muscles, all of which is stimulating and refreshing for me. And one of the best things about photography is that it fits into the rest of my life.

On one typical workday during the pandemic, I made pastoral care phone calls, answered emails, prepared for a meeting, did some reading, and had an evening Zoom meeting. In the midafternoon, I took a 45-minute break to photograph a clergy colleague. After my evening meeting, I reviewed the photos and sent some to her. At the end of the day, I was energized, not weary. I was grateful to God for the work I have been given to do and grateful to Catawba for helping me find a restorative niche.

*"Taking portraits
allows me to interact with people in a
new way...while recognizing and
capturing their beauty"*

Enjoy these portraits taken by Rev. Gregg!





COP ROUNDTABLE

FLOURISHING – JUST WHAT “COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE” ARE ALL ABOUT

By The Rev. Betty Morton, PCC – Leadership, Life and Spiritual Coach and Consultant to the Catawba Clergy Network

A UCC colleague, Rev. Daryl Moch, shared a great acronym he created to describe “Communities of Practice” (COPs). That acronym is “FLOURISH.” In COPs, ministers gather together monthly for peer learning and support. COPs offered through the Catawba Clergy Network (CCN), and all efforts of the CCN, are designed just for this purpose – to help ministers “flourish” or “thrive.”

Through his acronym, “FLOURISH,” Rev. Moch, Dean for Communities of Practice in the Central Atlantic Conference of the UCC, offers insight into how COPs help ministers thrive -- both in their personal lives and ministry roles:

- Fellowship:** Consistent access to deepened relationships with others
- Learning:** Continued growth and development in the skills and practice of ministry
- Opportunity:** Exploring change and challenge in a nurturing environment
- Unity:** Realizing that we are not alone and that we can do more in communion
- Reflection:** Includes an awareness of our Resilience and Responsibility and personal worship time in a shared community
- Integrity:** Commitment to our covenants that guide us in our call and vocations
- Support:** Practical and visceral connection and engagement with others
- Health:** Work-life balance

Also check out this video, which offers various clergy perspectives on the benefits of peer learning in COPs found at: <https://youtu.be/7qVBhujOOzA> (produced by the then “Pastoral Excellence Network” in 2015 and also funded by the Lilly Endowment).

For more information about participating in a Community of Practice, contact Rev. Betty Morton at: bjmorton19@catawba.edu.

The next Catawba Clergy Network COPs begin in September!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

DISCOVER YOUTH THEOLOGY INSTITUTE

You know the youth in your congregations- who is curious, who is wrestling with their calling, who has big questions about what their faith means in their daily life. If this brings a student to your mind, please nominate them to attend Discover, Catawba's Youth Theology Institute. We explore vocational discernment, theological reflection, and practical theology through tracks of Sport Management, Worship Music, and Service and Ministry Leadership. This on campus residential summer program is free after a \$50 deposit (which can be waived if it presents a hardship). More information can be found at www.catawba.edu/discover. Contact samartin12@catawba.edu to nominate a student or with any questions you may have. This summer the most up to date CDC COVID-19 protocols will be followed with all Discover activities.

If you are interested in sharing your call story with this group of young people, please contact Shannon at the address above.

SAVE THE DATE
DISCOVER 2021
HIGH SCHOOL: JULY 11-16
MIDDLE SCHOOL: JULY 25-30

Your nominations are requested!



REST RESOURCES RELATIONSHIPS
Save the Date
CATAWBA CLERGY NETWORK
CATAWBA CLERGY DAYS: OCTOBER 28-29, 2021
Join anytime at catawba.edu/clergy

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SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH US!

We would love to hear your thoughts on Clergy Days 2021.

What topics would be most meaningful? With whom would you like to connect?
Please take our short survey:

catawba.edu/clergydayfeedback

As always, please share any needs or feedback you have with us anytime.

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HELP US TRACK OUR RESULTS



You should have received an email to complete the **MBI**, a burnout inventory that all Catawba Clergy Network Members will periodically be asked to complete to help the Catawba Clergy Network to understand thriving and burnout rates of its membership. All data will be kept confidential.

When you open the email, please do not click the link until you are ready to complete the questions. It should only take a few minutes. Please contact clergynetwork@catawba.edu if you have any questions.

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JOIN THE DISCUSSION!

The Clergy Network "Discussion Hub" can be found within our private Facebook group. Through a simple application, you can apply to be a part of this group, which is only for current members of the Clergy Network. This is an informal space which offers a safe place for you to receive and share resources, rest, reflect, and meaningfully connect with fellow clergy as well as Catawba Clergy Network staff. We hope to see you all there! If you have any questions or have resources you would like shared through this Facebook group please contact, Hannah Hutchens McNeely, hhutchen18@catawba.edu.



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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/835469520163571/about>



CLERGY
NETWORK

Here's to thriving!

www.catawba.edu/clergy

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