Clergy members Reexpress their need di for taking time off

WACO (AP) — A pastor's occupa-tion is sometimes viewed as a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week calling by congregations and by pastors

But mental health professionals and clergy members say they have found that pastors, like other professionals, need a regular day off. Ministers who feel pressured to spend all of their time tending the flock may not make such good shepherds, some say.

Ken Jordan, a consultant in the Southern Baptist Sunday School board's family ministry department, said in an article in the Baptist Press that "It's easy to become so en-meshed in the life of the congregation that we have no lives of our own. The greatest need in some ministers' families is the ability to say

Most people agree that pastors have a highly stressful job, comparable with the demands on a doctor Pastors must deal on emotional and organizational levels and must be available to their congregation for emergencies.

Dr. Barry Click of the Samaritan Counseling Center in Waco, said he believes the main pressures are being a public figure and meeting the expectations of others

"Usually, he or she is the main person, the chief staff person, and there's a tremendous pressure on them to meet everyone's expectations," he said.

Other Waco pastors agree on the need to take a break.

'In the dynamics of ministry, there is the give and take, and the minister lands most often in the pos-ture of giving," says the Rev. Jim Johnson of Calvary Baptist Church.

The Rev. Delbert Taylor of Sparks Memorial United Methodist Church said he found he would get so involved with people and their problems that he would need to get away. And the Rev. William Anderson of Christ American Lutheran Church says he needs a day off to recuperate from the emotional drain of dealing with people, especially in crisis situations.

Pastors sometimes have to get be-yond feelings of guilt in order to al-low themselves needed time off, Click said.

The Rev. Jim Abel of Austin Avenue United Methodist Church said feelings of guilt are "always a real struggle. I think it's almost an occu-pational hazard."

"Most ministers I know are con-

scientious, and you could say, conscientious to a fault," Click said.

"They're trying to model God's love for humankind. It's difficult for them to let go of that ethic for 'selfindulgence

'The role is so powerful in terms of expectations, one of the struggles is for them to come to terms with their limitations.

Click said Jesus himself went away

from the crowds to be by himself.
"The longer I'm in the ministry,

the more I realize that it really is important," said Anderson. He said he used to be concerned with taking a day off, but now advises other pas-tors to "take it seriously."

Talking to retired pastors over the years, most of them will say if they had anything to do over, it would be to spend more time with their family," Anderson said.

One difficulty some may have is relaying their need for a day off to their congregations.

"The congregation has to kind of enter into a companion covenant with their pastor to look at the pas-tor's limitations," Click said. "The pastor has to be instructive to his or her people so they learn his limitations and they learn not to make excessive demands on themselves.

The Rev. Paul Taft of St. Alban's Episcopal Church said his congregation honors his day off pretty well, and usually only intrudes in an emergency. In dealing with some-one who calls on his day off in a nonemergency situation, Taft said, "Generally, I try to be tactful and not act irritated, but I also remind

them that it's my day off."
"What I get hacked at is so body calling me and saying, 'Wh is the ladder at the church?' "A

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Guideposts Magazine offered

hint for congregations:

"Respect his time.... And just cause he's on call 24 hours a don't call him at all hours. The speak to him during his offer. hours, and if you must see him home, call before you drop in ! nally, if your minister doesn't take

"The role is so powerful terms of expectations, on of the struggles is fo them to come to tem with their limitations."

- Dr. Barry Click of the Samaritan Counselin Center in Wat

egular day off, encourage him He needs it as much as you do."
The pastors say they generally the day off as family time

Jordan said ministers and t wives or husbands have "diffic seeing each other for significant regular, quality blocks of times therefore have a high need for alone together." He also said isters who "never have enought sometimes leave their mates children out because they "co

Christianity with church work." Click, said that ideally, the pa would have a day off for himself. a day off for his family. Click u pastors to consider days off stry to him or herself and family

"The family sees the pastor or for others, and giving his or best, and then, if they're not care the minister will give the leftown the family," he said.

Taft said a day off "enables family to count on me being a

able to be with them," but a that he "cannot use the day offa excuse to not be with them at o

times during the week."
"Days off are critical, for you and your family," Johnson said. certainly easy to neglect your and family. It has become suc phenomenon right now preacher burnout.

Abel said, "I just need to bea that I'm my wife's only hus and my two sons', ages 13 and only father." He says he sees hist off as "a witness to my people, what I'm trying to do is authento model Biblical faith."

Abel echoed the other pa when he said he feels it is impo to be available for emergencie times. He said he would in fact upset if not notified during emergency, such as the death

church member. But having a regular day off. mini-vacations, long vacations sabbaticals, not only rejuven them, but make them better passo the ministers said

Taft said time off allows the gregation to see him "as a more listic person" and a model for

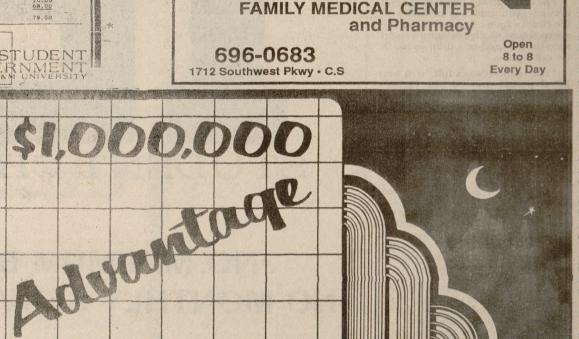
'It's the concept of the Sabbat Johnson said. "Christian pread don't really have a Sabbath." He said he tries "not to us! brain" on his day off bear

preaching is a lot of intellect

"I don't think people undersuche braindrain," or creative press of coming up with about threes mons per week, Johnson said.

"You really want to say something that is true and yet that is fresh the point that people want to pup on it and apply it to their life."

Taylor said that in the long he knows he is not indispense The church can run without me hurts my pride sometimes, but.



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