

CARING FOR YOUR FAMILY WHILE SERVING IN CROSS-RACIAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY SETTINGS

One of the gifts of pastoral ministry within The United Methodist Church is our commitment to an itinerant or appointment-making process for clergy persons serving the local church. Within the itinerant process, clergy could be invited to serve in a variety of different contexts and cultures, all with a wide range of idiosyncrasies and complexity. While this allows the church to remain faithful to its dedication to inclusivity (¶ 425.1), itinerant ministry and ministry by and large, poses unique challenges with respect to caring for and walking alongside our families. For those clergy serving in itinerant cross-racial/cross-cultural (CRCC) ministry, particular care and attention is needed to walk alongside our immediate and extended families. Whether or not your family actively engages the life of your appointed church, they too serve, by virtue of responding to the ministry God has entrusted in your care.

What it means to care for and walk alongside our families will vary based on our context, social location, and lived experiences, but research suggests particular attention to family rhythms such as savoring, mindfulness, forgiveness, and self-compassion, may lead to more positive family experiences.¹ Learning how to foster a family culture where the present moment is nurtured (savoring), where we can be aware of ourselves and our experiences (mindfulness), and where we can be kind to ourselves as we figure out how to hold the complexity of our calling while also showing up for our families (self-compassion), is integral in caring for our family's emotional and spiritual health while in CRCC itinerant ministry.

As you journey with your family on what feels congruent to familial self-care, consider a family care checklist:

- **Talk it out.** Engage in meaningful conversation around the emotional and spiritual lives of family and friends.

¹ Waters, Lea. "Using positive psychology interventions to strengthen family happiness: A family systems approach." *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 15.5 (2020): 645-652.

- **Create systems.** Participate in rituals and activities that offer feelings of playfulness and relaxation.
- **Prioritize.** Find time at least once or twice a week to be physically active in a way that feels good and is restorative.
- **Time Block.** Find time weekly to have difficult conversations and time for constructive follow up if needed.
- **Be Present.** Find time in your schedule to simply be present without an agenda or to-do list.

Resources that assist with improving how we walk alongside our families:

- [Five Ways to Relate to Family Members Spiritually](#)
- [How to Show Emotional Support](#)
- [If You Met My Family, You'd Understand: A Family Systems Primer](#)
by Rev. Jack Shitama
- [Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue](#)
by Rabbi Edwin Friedman