During the early days of SHAPE, it became evident that to address issues of pastoral health at the exclusion of addressing issues of congregational health would ultimately lead to a failure to transform the life and ministry of the Church of God. The disparity between health and unhealth at that level of relationship would certainly prove to be a hindrance to the goals of SHAPE. The task then became to adapt the principles and practices of SHAPE for the lay leaders of local congregations. That task has reached its initial stage and SHARE—Sustaining Health and Relational Excellence—is being introduced to a limited number of congregations throughout the United States to assess its value and strength in its ministry. SHARE will initially be provided only to pastors who have experienced SHAPE and understand the theology, practices, and intent of the SHAPE journey.

Here is a SHARE testimonial from Ryan Kellam, worship and youth pastor at Pendleton Church of God, Pendleton, Indiana:

Our church leadership team was disconnected and becoming stagnant. We didn’t even realize this until we began talking about implementing the SHARE program. The program has encouraged healthy communication, and now it is unbelievable how the energy level has increased. With a focus on Christ’s kingdom, we are witnessing a healthy vitalization at the core of our congregation.

SHARE is divided into two distinct experiences:

1. The Theology and Practices of SHARE. This initial phase will introduce congregational leaders to the same relational theology and practices of the SHAPE journey with only a few minor adjustments. The SHARE manual has added content that will more fully describe the intent of a relational theology for the life of the church. This new focus can be summarized in the following areas:

   • The development of an intentionally focused community of growth and maturing into the fullness of Christ.
   • The development of a discipling environment.
   • The experience of a common set of experiences, practices, and resources that help establish parameters for a healthy, effective leadership team.
   • The development of a personal/corporate plan of growth

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and development. Healthy leaders and missionally effective congregations intentionally plan to be healthy.

2. An Intentional, Specific Health Plan for the Congregation. Beyond the common experiences of SHAPE and SHARE that lead to a healthy community, there are specific needs to be addressed in the life of every congregation.

The intent of SHARE is to provide every pastor and leadership team with exercises, information, and resources that can enable each team to develop a training program that best fits their needs at any given time. Currently eight areas of congregational life have been identified and resources gathered. The resource list will most certainly expand prior to the launch of SHARE.

The current plan is to make SHARE available to SHAPE pastors in 2013.

Unless otherwise noted, SHAPE articles are written by Paul Dreger. He has served the Church of God for thirty-eight years as pastor, area administrator in Tennessee, and currently national director of SHAPE (Sustaining Health and Pastoral Excellence).

Here and There: SHAPE Happenings across North America

- The first Missouri SHAPE Retreat was held March 11–12 at the Tan-Tar-A Resort on the Lake of the Ozarks. Twenty-four pastors gathered for fellowship, inspiration, sharing stories of their SHAPE journey, and refocusing for the months ahead. In recognizing the challenges that face SHAPE clusters in light of the transiency of pastors, a plan was initiated to incorporate new cluster participants into existing SHAPE clusters. This retreat was an opportunity to bring together first cohort participants from each of the original clusters and to introduce new cluster members to the SHAPE experience. Guidelines were established to help clusters implement the transition process. Those guidelines will be shared in this newsletter later this year. Thirty-two Missouri pastors are currently involved in SHAPE.
- The fourth SHARE—Sustaining Health and Relational Excellence—pilot project was started at the South Memorial Drive Church of God, New Castle, Indiana, where SHAPE cluster leader Chris Gamello serves as pastor. Members of the congregation's leadership team have committed to the SHARE journey and will meet monthly with Paul Dreger as SHARE moves toward a national launch later this year. The New Castle congregation joins congregations in Hermitage, Tennessee; Roseburg, Oregon; and Pendleton, Indiana, in the SHARE pilot project.
- The quarterly SHAPE National Steering Committee conference call took place on March 21. This quarterly call keeps regional directors connected and able to share ideas and stories of the impact of SHAPE among the pastors of their region as well as plan for future ministry.
- Paul was privileged to attend the annual Western Area Regional Ministerium in Sacramento, California, April 9–10. He led two conferences during the meeting. The first conference, “Revive, Renew, Refocus,” invited pastors to revisit the gospel’s focus on what it means to be the body of Christ from a relational perspective. The second conference, “A Relational Foundation for Congregational Life,” encouraged pastors to develop stronger relationships and healthier lifestyles for more effective life and ministry. This conference also provided an opportunity to introduce the ministry of SHARE to West Coast pastors.
- A daylong SHAPE retreat was held on April 12 in Colorado Springs, Colorado, for pastors who have completed a three-year SHAPE experience, as well as for several pastors interested in becoming part of the SHAPE journey. The day concluded with an affirmation by all in attendance of the value of life and ministry in community. Regional Pastor Larry Taylor and the SHAPE leadership team in Colorado will be working on next steps for pastors in Colorado in the months to come.
- The cohort 3 orientation retreat in Michigan took place May 2–4 at the Michindoh Retreat Center in Hillsdale, Michigan. Two clusters of twelve pastors from northern (continued on page 3)
The pastor recognizes the importance of personal physical and emotional health to an experience of holistic personal health and wellness.

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. —3 John 2

In writing to his friend Gaius, John reminds us of the reality that our physical and emotional health is important to our personal health and ministry effectiveness. The Bible is rich with teachings and metaphors regarding the health of body as well as soul. Yet the truth facing us today is that many pastors struggle to maintain a proper care of self—body and emotions—amid the pressures of life and ministry. A sense of divine urgency for the task, unrealistic demands placed upon the pastor (either from without or within), the fast-paced nature of our culture with its technical advances, and many other factors tend to draw us away from the fact that our own personal health contributes significantly to the effectiveness of our ministry and our intimacy with God. Statistics among pastors in regard to heart disease, high blood pressure, stress-related illnesses, depression, obesity, burnout, divorce, and poor emotional health are staggering. Life expectancy has fallen among clergy.

Tom Hopkins writes, “To be deemed healthy a person must display balance in the areas of mind, body and spirit. We know that a successful life is comprised of finding balance physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.”

Balance. That is a greater challenge than most of us are willing to admit. What must be considered in developing a balanced approach to life?

- **A healthy work ethic.** Work is an integral part of life. Yet we must realize that such labor is just part of life, not the defining factor of life.
- **Rest and recreation.** Work must be properly balanced with rest and recreation. Adequate sleep and activity apart from the demands of our work life must be a priority.
- **Exercise.** At least twenty to thirty minutes of cardiovascular exercise four to five times each week is recommended.
- **Proper nutrition.** Our hectic pace of living can rob us of taking time to eat a proper diet of healthy foods.
- **Boundaries.** We must establish proper and clear boundaries in life.
- **Journeying with others in life.** Family, friends, mentors, accountability partners in a supportive, encouraging community contribute meaningfully to personal health.
- **Relationship with God.** We need to maintain a healthy relationship with God through prayer, Bible study, meditation, and worship.

The experience of **Sustaining Health and Pastoral Excellence** must include a sensitivity to the importance of personal health and wellness as it seeks to minister effectively to Church of God pastors and leaders. Do not neglect the care of your body while you minister to the needs of others.

I have been called.” What a profound and powerful statement! We are very familiar with that statement in our church environment. The “call” designates, elevates, and empowers; pastors, preachers, evangelists, and missionaries all attest to that experience that led them to a vocation focused upon service to God through the life of the church. The call is an awesome and solemn task initiated by the Lord and received with a sense of responsibility that transcends time and affects life in profound ways. The call propels us to a stewardship of life that has eternal implications for the one called and the ones served in response to that call. My call was clear. Just a few weeks after I accepted Jesus as my Savior, I sensed the Spirit of God saying to me, “Paul, I want you to shepherd my people.” It was a call I didn’t embrace immediately. Having watched my parents endure intense moments of pain and opposition as God’s servants, I was not interested in saying yes to the possibility of such events occurring in my own life. Yet three years later, at age fifteen, I made that complete surrender to the Lord that opened the door to the most amazing life’s journey one could ever imagine (well, that, at least, is my perspective)!

While we celebrate the vocational call, Servant of God, let us never forget that there was a call that preceded the vocational call. It was the call to be a devoted follower of Jesus Christ; the call to Christlikeness, the call to develop an intimate relationship with Jesus through a life of faith and obedience. This is the call that comes to every believer. We are called to love (Matt 22:34–40), to be disciple makers (Matt 28:18–20), to be witnesses to the world of the reality of Jesus (Acts 1:8), to develop the attitude of Christ (Phil 2:5), and, among other scriptural injunctions, to build up the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:7; 1 Cor 14:12; Eph 4:15–16; 1 Peter 2: 4–5).

The vocational call should never be the foundation of our kingdom service. To allow it to become so can lead to an abuse of power and position that can do inordinate harm to the kingdom mission, harming individuals, damaging congregations, and tarnishing the name of our Savior and Lord. Not even the vocational call gives us the right to be ungodly in thought, word, or deed. And yet how many times has the vocational call been used as justification to control and manipulate others, to promote personal preferences and agendas, to exercise fleshly desires, and to respond in ways devoid of the love and grace afforded us in our relationship with our Savior. Paul even reminds us that when speaking truth, it is to be done in love (Eph 4:15). Such teaching leads to the edification of the church and the fulfillment of the kingdom mission.

The first call: this call is to an intimate relationship with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the call to being a disciple maker; it is the call to love. It is the foundation for every other experience in the Christian life. It is the call that comes to every Christ-follower.

And some are also called vocationally. What an awesome experience! It is a call that does not abandon the first call but—to be most effective and God honoring—builds upon the first call. It is a call to a life of service that flows from divine love and permeates every relationship and activity of life. Whether professional or personal, within the church or outside the church, the vocationally called servant of God sees in every moment an opportunity to accurately witness to the truth that is Jesus and to exercise the giftedness that empowers God-honoring service.

We have been called, Child of God! Has your response to that call honored and blessed the Lord?