

# Among clergy, depressive symptoms preceded work-related distress while spiritual well-being proved to be a protective factor.



## WHAT WE STUDIED

What are the relationships over time between spiritual well-being, depressive symptoms, and work-related distress among United Methodist clergy? Our study examined data from 895 United Methodist clergy in North Carolina, noting changes in survey responses over a year-long period.



## WHY IT MATTERS

The finding that higher depressive symptoms were associated with higher work-related distress in the future means that noticing and addressing these symptoms early may prevent occupational challenges later.

In addition, the finding that higher levels of spiritual well-being are associated with lower future depressive symptoms underscores the importance of maintaining strong spiritual practices, not just for immediate well-being but also for managing long-term mental health and stress.

To read the full journal article, visit:  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/rel0000252>



## WHAT WE FOUND

Surprisingly, we found only two significant relationships.

**Higher depressive symptoms at Time 1 were significantly associated with higher occupational distress at Time 2.**

However, the reverse was not true; higher levels of occupational distress at Time 1 were only weakly associated with higher depressive symptoms at Time 2, indicating that depressive symptoms precede occupational distress and not that occupational distress precedes depression.

**Higher levels of spiritual well-being at Time 1 were significantly associated with lower depressive symptoms a year later,** suggesting that promoting spiritual well-being can be protective of future mental health.

However, it is also important to note that depressive symptoms at Time 1 were not associated with spiritual well-being a year later, showing that depression does not necessarily impede spiritual well-being.