

A Handbook for
Non-Clergy Women and Men who are
the Spouses of Clergy
in the
Wisconsin Annual Conference of the
United Methodist Church

Prepared by the Clergy Spouse Support Network of Ministers' Mates with
encouragement and assistance from the
Board of Ordained Ministry and the Bishop's Cabinet

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Introduction	p.3
	Contact persons	p.4
	Other United Methodist Resources	p.5
Part I		
Chapter 1	Moving	p.6
Chapter 2	Adjusting to new Jobs	p.6
Chapter 3	Relating to Local Congregations	p.7
Part II		
Chapter 4	Homes & Schools	p.9
Chapter 5	Caregiving and Support for the Caregiver	p.12
Chapter 6	Divorce in a Clergy Marriage	p.15
Chapter 7	Death of a Spouse or Other Close Member	p.17
Chapter 8	Finances, Insurance, and Pension	p.22
Chapter 9	Communication and Mental Health	p.24
	Afterward	p.51

INTRODUCTION

We offer welcome to you in your explorations with this handbook! As fellow clergy spouses we reach out to you on your individual journey and remind you that you are not alone in your unique role.

This handbook has been compiled by members of the Wisconsin UMC Clergy Spouse Support Network Board. We discovered that it had been some time since a handbook to address many of our common questions and needs had been organized. As society around us has changed, so has the face of the clergy spouse which may bring new challenges. Many spouses are professionals working at full or part time positions. Some clergy families live in traditional parsonages, while others live in their own homes. Also, we welcome an increased number of male clergy spouses. Other clergy spouses enter this new role as their spouse begins a second career.

We embarked on an interesting process to provide a resource that may speak to many of the common, yet complex subjects that we may encounter as clergy spouses today. We hope that this endeavor may be helpful to you. By keeping this resource available on-line, updates will be available. A hard copy is available by request.

Our current Clergy Spouse Support Network (CSSN) Board at the time of this writing is comprised of the following members: Kathy Bartel, Jean Busker, Anna Gilbert, Char Groves, Laura Ida, Margaret McKay, Bob Miller, and John Moffat. Nancy Hanaman is a founding member of the Clergy Spouse Support Network who contributed to the writing of the handbook and continues to believe in the importance of support for clergy spouses. We welcome your comments and feedback. We invite you to our annual workshop and retreat for all clergy spouses. It is held the first full weekend of October, at Lake Lucerne each year. Blessings to you!

CONTACT PERSONS

These people have expertise or experience and are willing to take your call (May 2008).

Topic	Name	e-mail & Phone
Care giving and support	Kathy Bartel	bartelk@westerntc.edu
Divorce	Laura Ida	faithwalkerlee@yahoo.com (612) 801-6284
Mental health	Char Groves	carlotgrov@aol.com (920) 290-0107
Moving arrangements	Bob Miller	bmiller@tormach.com (608) 434-1241
Moving adjustments	Margaret McKay	elmo4501@hotmail.com (715) 834-4857
Young mothers	Anna Gilbert	annagilbert619@hotmail.com (608) 563-4557
Spouses of:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diaconal (lay) pastor • Local Pastor • Male clergy 	Bob Miller	bmiller@tormach.com (608) 434-1241
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retired clergy spouse • Second career clergy spouse • Student pastor spouse 		
Human capital issues	Clarence Austin	
Clergy Spouse Support Network		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair 	Jean Busker	jean@jeanbusker.com (608) 325-2439
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-mail chat 	Margaret McKay	elmo4501@hotmail.com
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clergy Spouse Retreat 	Laura Ida	faithwalkerlee@yahoo.com (612) 801-6284
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clergy Spouse Lunch 	Anna Gilbert	annagilbert619@hotmail.com (608) 563-4557
United Methodist Conference Office	Toll-free number	(888) 240-7328.

OTHER UNITED METHODIST RESOURCES

Within the Wisconsin Annual Conference, the conference web page is always a place to start. Enter <http://WisconsinUMC.org/>

For a “newcomer clergy spouse,” the place to start is with the print copies or online locations of two valuable documents the Secretary of Wisconsin Annual Conference produces each year. They are the “Wisconsin Conference Journal” and the “Directory’ for a particular year. E.g., 2006 Wisconsin Annual Conference Journal. One printed copy is sent to every charge in the Wisconsin Annual Conference and an electronic version on a CD is available for purchase each year. The Conference Secretary also posts it on the Conference webpage.

The directory provides contact information for staff at the conference office in Sun Prairie, WI , the four District Superintendents, and all Wisconsin UMC churches and clergy. The Conference Journal includes (under the heading “Miscellaneous”) the Rules and Policies of the Annual Conference which deal with many things that are important to clergy families.

Here is a list of the Policies and Rules that we believe are the most and immediate and important for clergy households.

20.0.0 Moving Policy [Which moves are supported and allowances and limits.]

50.0.0 Standards of Pastoral Support [This includes that policy that provides for a sabbatical Sunday at the start of a new appointment.]

60.0.0 Clergy Housing Policy [This is an important statement of what you can expect and what is expected of you.]

70.0.0 Sexual Abuse and Gender Harassment Policy [This policy is taken seriously and members of the parish are likely to expect their leaders to be aware of the protections and obligations that are entailed.]

80.0.0 Policy for Clergy Time Away [This policy is important to assure that clergy time-off is valid and honored.]

PART I

Chapter 1 **MOVING**

The Wisconsin Annual Conference has used Graebel Moving & Storage (founded in Wausau) as the primary mover of household goods and office materials to new pastoral appointments for over 20 years. Pastors may request the use of an alternate professional mover that meets the Conference EEOC and insurance standards, etc. Because we arrange for direct billing to the Moving Director, the Conference Treasurer pays all approved invoices. That means that our pastors are not required to pay large bills before their moving van is unloaded. After the move is completed, charge-backs for excess weight, packing costs, etc. are calculated and the Conference Treasurer bills the pastor. On the other hand, pastors who have less to move may want to do a self-move. The Moving Director must approve self-moves in advance. The pastor usually pays for those costs and then requests reimbursement for truck & equipment rental fuel, tolls, and packing materials. Receipts must accompany reimbursement requests for personal expenditures. Conference Moving Policy is stated in Section 20.0.0 in the Conference Journal. Among the important provisions is the requirement that the pastor pay the cost for weight over 12,000 pounds. The somewhat greater weight and packing allowances for pastor couples are stated in the policy. The Cabinet may also stipulate a dollar limit on interstate and international moves.

Section 20.2.1 of the policy states the assumption that “. . . the pastor shall sort and discard many items of questionable value before moving.” It also says, “The pastor is responsible for his/her own packing. A \$200 packing allowance is available to each pastor. Unused packing allowance may apply to overweight costs.” (Section 20.2.2) There are several other cost-saving restrictions. In particular, large and /or bulky items such as boats, riding mowers and snow blowers, fragile items, grandfather & grandmother clocks, and grand pianos are likely to incur mandatory surcharges and weight add-ons that will be charged-back to the person moving. Unlike corporate and governmental moves, we do not pay professional movers to wrap and pack dishes, pack boxes, etc. If those services are needed the pastor will be charged.

Because there is great variety in the circumstances of pastoral moves and changes in the moving industry, it is important to inquire about a possible move as early as practical. The DS and the Conference Moving Director are persons to consult.

For further information, contact the Conference Moving Director. He is listed in the Conference Directory and Conference Journal. E-mail MovingDirector@WisconsinUMC.org

Chapter 2 **ADJUSTING TO NEW JOBS**

Clergy and many other occupations are part of systems that require periodic moves to different locations. The trailing spouses experience career and job challenges. The trailing partners may end up under employed or unemployed. Family roles and responsibilities must be faced. Financial needs are real. Yet, we must trust in God, set career goals, and be flexible.

If we believe God has a plan for our lives and if we believe God is in the appointment system, we can trust God will bless our ventures into the unknown of each move. This is a comforting thought. With this in mind we still need to discuss practical issues and make decisions.

Discuss your commitment to career goals with your spouse and children. Understanding each other's challenges and passions helps during times of change. Talk to your district superintendent. You and your spouse have input into the appointment system and may be able to influence an appointment by voicing needs regarding length of stay and geographic location. Remember to ask God to work things out for the best.

The reality is that flexibility is a great asset. With dual careers, employment in the same geographic area is not always possible and compromise may be necessary. One spouse usually ends up driving a substantial distance. Some deal with this situation by negotiating a housing location to accommodate both people. Some focus on economical transportation. Some scale back on career commitments or goals. Some live apart for part of the time. Some are able to work at home.

When you move with your spouse to a new appointment and are job hunting, feel free to draw on church members for support. The Pastor/Parish Committee knows the community. Give them your resume and enlist their support in your search. The Board of Ordained Ministry through Support Services may assist clergy families with a career assessment (WI p.30).

Accepting a new job requires learning new skills. It requires adjusting to a new environment and coworkers. You may need to modify family roles and responsibilities to accommodate new job expectations. Be ready to deal with stress from these changes.

Taking a pay cut or being unemployed reduces income. Review your expenses. Find ways to cut back. Do not give up on your job search for more appropriate employment.

It requires hard work to make dual careers successful. Try to think of a move as a forced opportunity. It's a time to expect God to reveal your next step.

No quotes, but credit to: Report on Dual-Career Survey, Laurie McNeil and Marc Sher. The Dual Career family, 1969, Rapaport & Rapoport.

Chapter 3

RELATING TO LOCAL CONGREGATIONS

We all have **expectations**. Historically, women have been defined by their husband's career. Today, the clergy's spouse is not expected to be an assistant pastor, but we all have stereotypes, and expectations do show up. Male spouses of female clergy are not subject to the same expectations, but may have employment situations, long-standing involvement in hobbies, organizations or activities that are out-of-step with the new location. Perhaps he does not wear green and gold on Sundays when the Green Bay Packers are playing. Perhaps he does (or does not) go deer hunting, play poker, make pancakes, sing in the choir, wear a suit and tie to church,

attend every church service, change the oil in the family autos in the parsonage driveway, show proper respect to the UMW President, or offer to pray for meals at various occasions. What about the male or female spouse who yearns to control or be part of some particular church activity? What about the situation where the spouse of either gender is hired as a full-time or part-time employee of the church? How do we respond?

When the clergy spouse is not a church employee, there is no employment job description. Technically, "clergy spouse" is a marital status. Our socialization, our sense of identity, our feelings about ourselves and others will probably direct our behavior. If we are clear about our expectations, it will be easier to respond to the expectations of others. How do you respond to these questions about obligation, fairness, respect for people, and the meaning of life.

Do we feel *obligated* to do something or go somewhere? Do we understand the appointment system? Will we join our spouse's church and make vows "to uphold the church with prayers, presence, gifts, and service?" Do we have a need to please or a fear of rejection?

What is *fair*? How do we support our spouse's clergy career and how do we expect to be supported?

Do we *respect people*? How can we learn about a new congregation's traits and needs and expectations? How do we recognize God working through us and directing our lives? How do we wish our children to interact with the congregation?

What is the *meaning* of life? How can the congregation help us grow? What uniqueness do we have to offer the world? How can we all become what God knows we can be?

If we work through our own attitudes, we will be more confident when relating to others.

Wisconsin has many **established communities**. Have you heard this expression? "We have always done it this way." Communities with little movement and change are established. Their social relationships are hybrid. They know exactly what to expect from each other. Usually they have found ways to function smoothly. They are proud of their families. They monitor each other's behavior. When a majority of residents have been born in the community and are related to a few families, they easily identify new residents.

You are an outsider and there is nothing for it but to be patient. Time is the space in which trust can grow. Hope that love and understanding will help you become a part of their history and uniqueness. "If you have respect for people as they are, you can be more effective in helping them to become better than they are." (John W. Gardner)

Public people are sometimes **under attack**. Being a clergy spouse is sometimes frustrating because we are indirectly involved in church business. It is not our job to interfere in our spouse's job, but we cannot escape awareness of business. We are probably involved in some church functions where we overhear conversations and we care about whatever influences our spouse.

Clergy are public figures and they work with people. They will encounter people who disagree over important issues and trivial issues. Some of these people are emotional. Some are influential. There are also mean congregation members who intend to make life difficult for clergy. Churches have personalities and behavior patterns and some are dysfunctional. It goes with the job.

Sometimes it is best to wait out a problem. Sometimes confrontation is the only solution. Sometimes outside intervention is called for. Negotiation skills and compromise are helpful.

In a public position, one can expect attack. When it comes, attend to your spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. Support your spouse at home. Be positive in public. Network with another clergy family with whom you feel comfortable. We have all been through it.

If your **parsonage** is located in sight of the church building you have less privacy than you might if living farther away. Draw boundaries that are comfortable for you. Be as rigorous in defining your space as you need to be for your family.

If you have a housing allowance, you choose your own home. (See Wisconsin Conference Journal, 200_ Rules and Policies of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, 60.14.0 Housing Allowance)

If you live in a parsonage, it is still your home. Settle in. (See Wisconsin Conference Journal, 200_ Rules and Policies of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, 60.0.0 __) You will be interested in minimum requirements for parsonages and accountability guidelines for pets, maintenance and repair, and church and pastor division of responsibilities for a parsonage. Be a good steward of the parsonage. It belongs to the church. There should be an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to ensure proper maintenance.

Humor is good.

PART II

Chapter 4 HOMES AND SCHOOLS

A. Living in Ministry: House and Home

1. Family House and Home

This information will deal primarily with parsonage living the local church(es) provide. We are aware that housing allowances are provided by some local churches and that clergy and family are then involved with renting a residence or purchasing a home. For additional information, please refer to the Clergy Housing Policy, 60.0.0 in the current Wisconsin Annual Conference Journal. This includes the following topics: Minimum Requirements, Minimum Parsonage Equipment, Annual Equipment Inspection-under the direction of the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), Trustees and/or Parsonage Committee, Parsonage

Care, Procedure for Approval of Repairs and Maintenance, Local Church Responsibilities, Pastor Responsibilities, and Guidelines for Housing Allowances.

When you live in a parsonage, it becomes your home. The church owns the house and grounds, but is your home for the duration of your stay and not an extension of the church building. It is important to be a good steward of the parsonage and outside areas. When repairs or other work are needed, it is important to report that fact to the appropriate person or committee as soon as possible so the work can be completed in a timely fashion. It may be helpful to keep a dated copy of your written report or request for future reference.

2. What You Can Expect

When you move into your home, you should find a clean house awaiting you. It is helpful to visit the home on your initial visit to the prospective church and again at a later time before moving. You may want to take pictures or videos of the rooms and note room dimensions. If you notice problems at either of these times or when you move in, contact the Chair of the SPRC, Board of Trustees and/or the Parsonage Committee

Section 60.5.0 of the Clergy Housing Policy, states that there should be an annual inspection of the parsonage and grounds. (See section of Journal noted above regarding the Annual Inspection of Equipment.) The Annual Inspection is important for the clergy and family and the local church to keep current on upkeep as part of a long-term maintenance plan.

3. What the Church Expects

You will bring your own furniture and any appliances you want beyond the minimum requirements. (Refer to the Minimum Requirement section regarding appliances, window covering room size, etc.)

4. Parsonage Family Responsibility

You are expected to clean the home you are leaving. Your new home should be cleaned by the previous family and/or the local church. In most cases, utilities will be connected. You would need to arrange for cable or satellite television and computer connections, and check on local and long distance telephone service. In the past it has been customary for departing families to leave the telephone service intact because it was billed to the church. Only a name change would be required. Therefore, this should be discussed with both your “former” and “future” church officers before your move.

5. Relating to SPRC, Trustees and/or Parsonage Committee

Report any needed repairs as soon as possible to the appropriate person. Support the annual inspection of the parsonage for the benefit of your family and the local church. It is helpful for the clergy person and the appropriate committee to develop a plan for parsonage maintenance, including short and long range repairs and improvements. The Moving Director has told us that there are instances where the pastor has refused to allow or discouraged an inspection and cases where the local Trustees have failed to make annual inspections. This has resulted in the “discovery” at the end of the appointment that there are severe deficiencies in the physical status of the parsonage and/or severe pet damage, inadequate house cleaning, etc. Apart from the ill-will engendered, the last-minute delays required to prepare the parsonage for the next clergy family can create scheduling delays across the entire conference.

B. Life with Your Children in the Church and Community

1. Moving to your new home

The appointment has been set, you are finishing the packing, and you will be arriving in your new home with children. (The following resources at the end of this section may be helpful to you before and during your move: “A Moving Experience: Resources for Children and Parents: A Brief List,” “Helpful Hints for Moving with Children,” and the web page www.movingcompaniesusa.net/family_guide/teenagers.) As members of the clergy family, you and your children will experience many joys and concerns during the moving process and throughout your time in a church and community. If it would be helpful to you and your family, take your children with you on your initial visit. If this is not practical for you, plan to take pictures or videos of the house, church, school and other parts of the community for your children. You may want to plan a visit to the new community as soon as this can be arranged. Assure older elementary children and teenagers that they can stay in contact with friends through phone calls, emails, letters and visits if appropriate. Encourage children of all ages to pack a box with their special possessions so that they can unpack these soon after you arrive at your new home.

2. Sharing thoughts and feelings about the move

As we know from moving to a new church and community, this is a very stressful time for everyone in the family. Older children and teenagers will experience a range of emotions including anger at you and your spouse during and following the move. It is important to make the time to listen to your children’s feelings about moving. As much as you are able, share your feelings with your spouse and family. Family meetings and family devotion would be possible times to share your thoughts and feelings. It may be helpful to you to talk with Clergy friends within the Conference, other friends, or trusted members of your extended family. The adjustment time is longer for some than for others. Allow yourself and your family the time you need to become comfortable in your new church and community.

3. Children of all ages

From toddlers to teenagers, your children may be a focus of attention for your congregation. Remember to be an advocate for your children. Be watchful that members of the congregation do not make unreasonable demands because your children are part of the clergy family. As you decide how to share your gifts in a local congregation, guide your children as they become more involved in your local church and their faith journey. Talk with your children about being faithful Christians and how this is important in your life and the life of your spouse. Your children may find it helpful to establish and maintain friendships with other children in clergy families. This will help them to share their feelings and experiences.

4. Participation as part of a multiple charge

Your family will need to decide in which church you will be active participants. It may be helpful to for you and/your spouse to share your decision with the SPRC chair and/or committee. You will find different ways to be connected with the other churches, including attending joint worship services and other study or fellowship events.

5. Schools

Plan to contact the school(s) in your new community and visit with your children when appropriate. Before you move to the new community, you may want to check on registration for the fall, particularly if your children are in middle or senior high school. You can also check into extracurricular opportunities that might be of interest to your children.

6. Life in the Clergy Family

Enjoy the blessings of being part of a clergy family, part of the local congregation, and part of the greater community. Frustrating times are part of the experience as well. Keep the lines of communication open as you and our spouse share with each other and with your children. Laugh, live and love together as you share in this part of your life journey.

Credit to the “Thrival Kit” from the Virginia Annual Conference,
The United Methodist Church

Chapter 5

CAREGIVING AND SUPPORT FOR THE CAREGIVER

Taking care of you and the ones you love is a big job! As a part of being good stewards of God's creation, you and the ones you love, there are numerous ways to be advocates and to obtain resources to assist you and your loved ones. In addition to caring for yourself, caring for your children, your elderly parents, or for an extended family member may be a part of your job as a caregiver. Please note that in being a good caregiver, taking care of yourself as a part of the equation is every bit as important as caring for others, for without you, the caregiver, the ones who need you cannot receive the care they need. Following are suggestions for obtaining resources to help support you in the role of caregiver.

First, you must take care of you! "The Caregiver Helpbook: Powerful Tools for Caregiving" written by Schmall, Cleland, and Sturdevant, was written specifically for caregivers of the elderly. Its advice though, is universally true for all caregivers: "...if you don't take care of yourself first, you may not be able to help those who need your help. It's the same thing with caregiving. When you take care of yourself, everyone benefits. Ignoring your own needs is not only potentially detrimental to you, but it can also be harmful to the person who depends on you." This book further suggests that you must adhere to the following guidelines: "Take responsibility, have realistic expectations, focus on what we can do, communicate effectively with others, learn from our emotions, get help when needed, and set goals and work toward them (pg.1-3)." This is sound advice for all who are caregivers.

Another excellent resource is The Caregiver's Book, Caring for Another, Caring for Yourself by James Miller, clergyman and writer. This resource offers a compassionate exploration of the caregiver's role, feelings, and experiences as well as practical suggestions and inspiration. Miller states that it is not easy being a caregiver, there are demands and difficulties, yet being a caregiver may be one of the most meaningful things you'll ever do. This book also reminds us that the healthiest way to care for another is to care for ourselves by setting boundaries, finding

strength through flexibility, accepting support from others and finding "the sacred" in your acts of care.

10 TIPS FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS

1. Choose to take charge of your life, and don't let your loved one's illness or disability always take center stage.
2. Remember to be good to yourself. Love, honor, and value yourself. You're doing a very hard job and you deserve some quality time, just for you.
3. Watch out for signs of depression, and don't delay in getting professional help if you need it.
4. When people offer to help, accept the offer and suggest specific things that they can do.
5. Educate yourself about your loved one's condition. Information is empowering.
6. There's a difference between caring and doing. Be open to technologies and ideas that promote your loved one's independence.
7. Trust your instincts. Most of the time they'll lead you in the right direction.
8. Grieve for your losses, and then allow yourself to dream new dreams.
9. Stand up for your rights as a caregiver and a citizen.
10. Seek support from other caregivers. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.
(By Paraclete Press)

Serious Illness or Injury: When we care for a family member of any age with a serious or potentially life threatening illness or injury, the American Cancer Society advises, "One Day at a Time." Thinking ahead about the many treatments that may be needed or possible outcomes can be overwhelming. The American Cancer Society and the US Department of Health and Human Services have numerous resources available for both children and adults. Respect and consideration must be extended to all family members during times of high stress. Children and other family members are children of God and as such, should be nurtured and supported. Honesty and correct but simple information is essential for children who are ill or are concerned about a seriously ill family member. The Candlelighter's Foundation is an excellent national organization providing resources and support to families who have experienced a diagnosis of childhood cancer.

Elderly Parents: There is a plethora of information and resources available to those who must take care of their elderly parents.

First, check with your spouse on resources available within the United Methodist Church. One such resource is a comprehensive list of pamphlets available through Abbey Press called "Care Notes" (Abbey Press, One Caring Place, St. Meinrad, IN 47577 or at 1-800-325-2511)

Specifically, "Family Caregiving: When It Wears You Down" is for caregiving for the elderly. Others of different topics are also available. In addition, the Parish Nurse in your church or a neighboring church may be of assistance to you. Also, check with local hospitals for local groups and organizations that may assist you in support.

An excellent video resource is available from Paraclete Press, www.paracletepress.com, When Your Parent Needs You: A Guide to Positive Growth While Caring for Aging Parents. This resource would also be an appropriate small group discussion/study at church.

Tips for caregivers from Health Professionals:

1. Write questions down so you won't forget them.
2. Be clear about what you want to say to the doctor. Try not to ramble.
3. If you have lots of things to talk about, make a consultation appointment, so the doctor can allow enough time to meet with you in an unhurried way.
4. Educate yourself about your loved one's disease or disability. Information on the Internet is helpful.
5. Learn the routine at your doctor's office and/or the hospital so you can make the system work for you.
6. Recognize that not all questions have answers; especially those beginning with "why."
7. Separate your anger and sense of helplessness about not being able to help your loved one as much as you would like, from your feeling about the doctor. Remember, you are both on the same side.
8. Appreciate what the doctor and other medical professionals are doing to help, and say thank you from time to time.
(National Family Caregivers Assoc. website)

Resources:

Check with federal, state, county and local governmental agencies designed to assist you in support of the caregiving process:

Administration of Aging (AoA) at the federal level

Wisconsin State Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources –State level

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services found in each county

www.dhfs.state.wi.us>

Six Area Agencies and Regional Agencies on Aging

County Aging Offices (See also: County Department on Aging)

(Request the "Resource Guide of Services for Older Adults" from the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, 2850 Dairy Drive, Suite, 100, Madison, WI 53718,

1-800-366-2990, or <http://www.dwag.org> for complete list of groups in WI.)

National Council on the Aging: www.ncoa.org You may wish to search on the internet for available resources and information as well. Effective search terms include those associated with "aging or aging unit, seniors or senior services, caregiving, eldercare, family care, etc." Two helpful resources are Eldercare Locator at www.n4a.org/locator.cfm and Eldercare Web at www.elderweb.com.

In addition, check with healthcare organizations. Alzheimer's Assoc. 1-800-272-3900) or at www.alzgw.org has caregiver support groups in 24 counties in the Wisconsin, for example. You may also wish to see what information is available at your local hospitals and wellness clinics in your area. There may be some non-traditional centers for healing that might interest you and offer some help.

Additional Resources:

Helping Yourself Help Others: A book for Caregivers by Roselyn Carter
National Family Caregiver's Association www.nfcacares.org
The American Cancer Society

Chapter 6

DIVORCE IN A CLERGY MARRIAGE

Divorce is not an expectation when two people in love begin a life commitment together in marriage. However, despite thoughtful consideration and counsel, a couple may become estranged beyond reconciliation and may decide that divorce is inevitable. When a relationship comes to a point where it is characterized more by hurt than healing and genuine efforts to renew and revitalize it have failed, it is important to bring that relationship to as redemptive an end as possible.

Clergy spouses may experience an additional dissolution since they may also have felt an additional covenant or calling to support their spouse's ministry. Also during this time of crisis, the spouse may feel an additional separation from his or her own faith community due to the separation or divorce process.

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church, state: "When a married couple is estranged beyond reconciliation, even after thoughtful consideration and counsel, divorce is a regrettable alternative in the midst of brokenness. It is recommended that methods of mediation be used to minimize the adversarial nature and fault finding that are often part of our current judicial processes."

Caring for Clergy Spouses, Children and Youth during Divorce --2004 Book of Resolutions

(enter resolution here)

Topics of Concern

Children and Extended Family –The nurture and support of children and extended families are two areas of concern. Although the divorcing individuals may be experiencing great grief and stress, it is important that the welfare of each child is carefully dealt with respect and consideration. It is essential to assure that custody is not reduced to financial support, control or manipulation and retaliation. Children of any age must feel secure about their well-being during this time of critical change in their family. Securing professional counseling for children may be helpful in some cases. Many schools provide short term counseling for children experiencing family changes. It is helpful to inform your child's teacher of the stresses your child is experiencing. Professional teachers can monitor any changes in academic or social behavior and be a consistent support during this transitional time.

Emotional Well-Being – Most individuals experience periods of intense emotional stress during the divorce process. A relationship that was of utmost importance has been lost. This is similar to a death, there is intense grief and loss, but no funeral, flowers and casseroles. It is important that the spouse take steps to assure her/his well-being. Monitoring sleep, nutrition, exercise and getting the support needed is essential. Seeking support from a mental health professional may be extremely helpful. You will need to manage self care in order to have energy to expend on additional decisions that will need to be made, the legal parts of the divorce, as well as care and support for any children or extended family members. This will also be a time when drawing on your spiritual beliefs can serve as a life line. You are not alone.

Counseling - Counseling resources are available through our Conference Health Plan. (See item 7 of the Wellness for Clergy Spouses section of this handbook) In some situations, the spouse may now be dependent on her/his own health plan. In this case, make it a priority to be aware of your health benefits, including mental health benefits. Call the District Superintendent or Bishop's Office if you are in need of counseling services due to the divorce, and are not covered by insurance. Some funding may be available for your situation. It is important that you are an advocate for your own well being!

Housing – If the clergy and spouse have lived in a parsonage, the spouse is generally required to move out of the parsonage soon after the separation because the parsonage is part of the appointed clergy's salary package. Since the spouse has lived in a house previously provided by the church, the spouse usually has no place to go and often additionally may experience the stress of lacking the kind of equity needed to purchase suitable housing. In seeking housing, it is helpful to try to decide what you will need in the future, in order avoid additional moving costs.

Barriers to Self-Support - As a clergy spouse, you may not have had the opportunity to become self-supporting. Some clergy spouses may have been involved in supporting the pastor's ministry in such a way that employment was not sought outside the home, or family responsibilities necessitated more time within the home. Also, due to the nature of the itinerancy, longevity in a career position may not have been established or was limited and this affects salary and earning power. This may necessitate going back to school or seeking further training.

Many state, private, community colleges and universities offer career guidance and counseling services. Several colleges have women's re-entry programs and/or adult career resource centers.

Faith Community – At times of crisis, it is a great strength to have a faith community for support. This can cause an additional stress for a clergy spouse. It may be necessary to relate to a new congregation during this time of transition. This may be a difficult change, entering a new parish as an unknown lay person not married to clergy. Continue to advocate for your spiritual needs. Visiting other area churches may contribute significantly to your healing journey. It is an opportunity to hear the Word of God through other gifted people. Spiritual Directors can be helpful during this time. There is a list of Spiritual Directors available through our conference website. Crisis can initiate growth.

Advocacy – It is important for the clergy spouse to advocate for her/himself. You are important. If the first counselor, pastor, or District Superintendent that you call does not connect with you in the ways that you need support, allow yourself to make a second or third call.

Financial Support Issues –It will be important to investigate the related financial benefits of your clergy spouse and share this information with your attorney for the divorce agreement. The Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP), Personal Investment Plan (PIP), Life and Medical Insurance are assets that should be considered in the distribution of assets in the divorce. Contact the Benefits Officer, WI Conference Treasurer’s Office, 608-837-7320 for additional information. Also see Section 9 of this handbook, Finances, Insurance and Pension. Information on Social Security benefits is available from the Social Security Administration by phone at 800-772-1213 or on the website at www.ssa.gov.

Legal Services – Divorces are managed in various ways. For your protection, seek the names of competent, unbiased attorneys. Normally, the initial consultation with an attorney is free, and will help you decide if you are confident to seek their counsel. You will be responsible to collect a comprehensive list of the assets of your married life. Seek the possibility of spousal support. Advocate for, and expect to receive a fair settlement of property and adequate financial support for the children if you are the custodial parent.

Support – The Clergy Spouse Support Network is here to support you in any way that it can. We will provide a supportive listening ear, and refer you to any available resources. There is a divorced clergy spouse who serves on the CSSN board who would welcome hearing from you. You will find her contact information on page 4, Topic Divorce.

Hope - There is life after divorce. There is also a return to joy. A Malagasy Proverb about Resilience states “People are like plants in the wind: they bow down and rise again.” Nothing ends without something else beginning. May that new beginning eventually bring you peace, joy and new life.

Chapter 7

DEATH OF A SPOUSE OR ANOTHER CLOSE MEMBER

Planning for a death in the clergy family will help the survivors prevent making very important decisions in a time of shock and grief. It will also alleviate additional stresses at an already very stressful time. Life-altering dilemmas like employment, financial, legal and housing issues must

be addressed. This section discusses the information needed by a clergy family in preparation of and after the death of a loved one.

Where and How to Begin Planning

Begin by discussing with your spouse the following questions that will assist you in formulating a designed to meet your specific needs.

1. What are your concerns? Examples may be: estate planning/will, funeral arrangements, insurance, establishing a memorial, etc. Using your compiled list as a basis, provide answers to the following questions for each item.
2. What do you want to happen to or for your dependents?
3. What plans can be made at once?
4. Which of these issues will require assistance from an expert?
5. Which of these issues can you take care of yourself now?
6. How often will these issues need to be revisited and updated?

What is Estate Planning?

Estate Planning is the creation of a definite plan for managing your wealth while you're alive and distributing it after your death. When we talk about an estate, we mean all assets of any value that you own, including real property, business interests, investments, insurance proceeds, personal property and every your personal effects. These assets may be owned by you separately or jointly with others.

What are your Estate Planning options?

There are four basic methods you can use to plan your estate: Do nothing; Hold title to your assets in Joint Tenancy; Create a Will; Establish a Revocable Living Trust. An estate plan is a set of documents that includes your will and any additional documents created to plan for your death or disability. Such documents might include a trust, powers of attorney, or a living will.

What is a will?

A will is a written document that accomplishes three tasks:

- it directs the distribution of your property after your death;
- it states who will care for and distribute that property; and
- It names someone to care for your minor children.

Why is a will important?

A will is important because it allows you to decide:

- who gets your property when you die;
- who should act as legal guardian if you die leaving children under age 18;
- whether your beneficiaries receive their gifts from you outright or in a trust; and

- who will be your "personal representative," the person who will control your assets, pay bills, and distribute your estate.

What happens if I die without a will?

If you die in Wisconsin without a will, state law says your entire estate will be given to your spouse unless you have children from a prior marriage. In that case, your spouse receives half of your non-marital property while your children (including children of your current marriage) share equally the rest of your property. Non-marital property generally includes:

- property acquired before marriage;
- property acquired during marriage but before Jan. 1, 1986;
- property classified as non-marital by a written agreement between you and your spouse;
or
- property acquired by gift or inheritance.

Can I write my own will?

Yes, if you comply with Wisconsin's legal requirements. To be valid, your will must be in writing and signed by you. You must have two or more witnesses sign the will either after they watch you sign the will or after you acknowledge to them that it is your signature on the will. The witnesses should not be persons who are named in the will or could inherit from your estate.

Your family attorney can assist you with this very important document. The will may be responsible for transmitting all your wealth. A lawyer can recommend other aspects of your estate planning and make sure you have a legally enforceable will appropriate for your situation.

How do I change my will?

There are two ways to change a will. The first way is to execute a new will. The new will replaces all previous ones. The second way is to write a supplement, called a "codicil," which changes your existing will. The new will or codicil must be made with the same formalities required for executing the original will.

How can a will save money for my estate?

A will can provide ways to reduce estate and inheritance taxes. You also may eliminate the cost of a bond for your personal representative by including a simple clause stating that no bond is required. Clear provisions for minor children help avoid an often costly and clumsy court-supervised guardianship.

The Executor's responsibility

In your will, you can and should name a personal representative who will be responsible for collecting your probate assets, paying debts, expenses and taxes and carrying out the terms of the will, etc. The executor may also help family with any of the special personal business problems that may arise after your death. The representative is usually a relative, but may be a friend or representatives from a bank trust department. You may want to choose a resident of your resident state. It is beneficial for the executor reside in the same state to be on hand to sign and complete paperwork and to meet with primaries, such as lawyers, employers, consultants, etc. A non-resident personal representative may serve as long as there is an agent.

Your responsibility

It is your responsibility to carefully reflect and decide on how to dispose of an estate. Desires can conflict with necessities. Practical considerations may differ from ideals. Equality among beneficiaries may be financially impractical. Focus on your objectives.

Talk over your objectives with your spouse and advisors. Get their advice of what your will should provide.

Be candid about your feelings and the needs of your beneficiaries. The more information you can provide, the better your advisors can help you plan the shape of your will.

Consult an attorney. Drafting a will is generally not a do-it-yourself project. Your attorney is equipped to include all the important legal provisions that will insure that your objectives are carried out. Your attorney will also make sure that your will is drafted, signed and witnessed as required by state law.

Periodically review the terms of your will. The terms of a will are usually based upon current conditions, laws, asset values, planning techniques, financial needs, and objectives. All these factors change from time to time and your will must change with them. At least once a year is a good yardstick to use to review your will and see if it currently reflects your wishes.

Keep it in a safe place. You have several options for storing a will: with your attorney, with your executor, with your bank. You may decide to give copies to your children, close friend, or other relative, and/or a clergy colleague. Wherever you decide to place your will for safekeeping let key people know where the original can be found.

Anatomical gift

The donation of organs and/or tissues is the most precious gift any of us can give. However, the very personal decision to donate can be made more difficult during a time of crisis and family tragedy, unless you have had a prior discussion about your intentions. Although these intentions may be listed in your will, it is important to communicate directly to your family and document them separately in a “document of gift.”

Memo published: January 23, 2006 *Contact:* Richard Sweet, Senior Staff Attorney WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (266-2982)

Current law allows a person to make an anatomical gift by signing what is referred to in the law as a “document of gift.” In addition, certain persons listed in the statutes in order of priority are permitted to make a document of gift for a deceased person unless the deceased person has, at the time of death, made an unrevoked refusal to make an anatomical gift. The priority list in the statutes is as follows: (1) spouse; (2) adult son or daughter; (3) parent; (4) adult brother or sister; (5) grandparent; (6) guardian of the person; and (7) health care agent. Current law provides that a person in the priority list described above may not make an anatomical gift if a person in a prior class is available and objects, if the person knows of a refusal or contrary indications by the deceased person, or if the person knows of an objection by a member of the person’s class or a

prior class. A person in the priority list may make an anatomical gift by either executing a document of gift that is signed by the person, or by making a telegraphic, recorded telephonic or other recorded message, or other form of communication that is reduced to writing and signed by the recipient at the time it is received.

Funeral arrangements

Planning and discussing funeral arrangements in advance can be a blessing for the surviving spouse. The death of a loved one can be an overwhelming experience. In many cases, survivors are both coping with their grief and making funeral arrangements. Itinerant clergy families also must face the dilemma of funeral location and clergy selection. Contact the district superintendent immediately. They will respond as soon as possible and can assist, if needed, in the funeral arrangements as well as provide pastoral care.

Housing

In the case of the death of a pastor, the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee will work with the District Superintendent to determine how long the parsonage will be available for the family's use. The Annual Conference will pay for one move of the surviving members.

Pension Contacts

The Conference Benefits Officer (1-888-240-7328) will contact the family soon after the funeral about death benefits, pension, and health insurance.

For More Information

You may also contact General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits using the following methods:

- . 1-800-858-2201
- . General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits of
The United Methodist Church
- . 1201 Davis Street
- . Evanston, IL 60201-4190
- . www.gbophb.org

Your Responsibility

- . Immediately look over insurance policies, the will, trust, deeds, bankbooks, stock certificated and other important papers.
- . Be sure to obtain an ample supply of death certificates.
- . Notify the bank, the insurance company, your lawyer, social security, pension funds.

. Advise all creditors, including issuers of credit cards that you spouse has died. Some of your loans or perhaps the house may be paid for when death occurs and is verified.

. If your spouse was a veteran, there may be additional benefits. Contact the Veteran's Administration.

Contact Social Security to apply for widowed persons benefits and ask for details on eligibility for Medicare.

Resources

Bill Greenhalgh of Greenhalgh Legal Services, Baraboo, WI

Commission on the Statue and Role of Women of the Iowa Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Wisconsin Conference Clergy Spouse Network

Chapter 8

FINANCES, INSURANCE, AND PENSION

Contact person and policies: Benefits Officer (Jane Daniels, 2006), Wisconsin Conference Treasurer's office, 608-837-7320. The Benefits Officer reports to the General Board of Pensions, 1-800-356-4950. The Wisconsin Conference Yearbook includes "Rules and Policies of the Wisconsin Annual Conference." The United Methodist Foundation can assist with estate planning 608- 837-9582.

Financial management

1. There is advantage in both spouses understanding family financial assets and liabilities. Share the tasks of budgeting, bill paying and financial planning so both partners are prepared to live independently.
2. Shop for credit and don't abuse the privilege. A good credit rating is a valuable asset.
3. Keep good records. It helps you plan and it is great protection from the I.R.S.
4. Know where essential papers and records are kept. You should be able to locate information on the different kinds of insurance you carry along with any death benefits they offer. You should be able to locate information on pensions, annuities, and outstanding debts.
5. If all savings and checking accounts, safety deposit boxes and timed certificates are in both the husband's and wife's names you avoid inheritance taxes and delays caused by probate when a spouse dies. In most circumstances it is advisable to register property in both names. Consult a tax expert to determine the most beneficial arrangements.
6. If the signature of both spouses is on a safety box, either can gain entrance to the box. At the death of a spouse, you will have to wait for the County Assessor to accompany the remaining spouse to inventory the contents. It is a good idea to keep copies of essential papers at home.
7. In the case of divorce, address settlement of assets including pension, insurance, and social security. Develop a new budget. (See section 7.)

8. Tax deductions and tax laws tend to be different for clergy. Educate yourself about all possible deductions. Keep all relevant receipts. A web site for clergy tax information is www.ewebtax.com/income/clergy.
9. A budget that includes a tithe and offering can keep your focus on storing treasures in heaven.
10. In the event of financial hardship, you may ask the Joint Board of Pensions, Insurance and Equitable Compensation for assistance. They will review your request. (See Wisconsin Conference Journal, 2006 Rules and Policies of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, 100.1.4)

Financial planning

1. Set financial goals as early as you can in your ministry. Also set financial goals at retirement time.
2. Make sure your congregation pays their share of your pension.
3. Social Security provides benefits at retirement, upon disability, to a dependent of someone who gets Social Security and to widows, widowers and children of someone who has died. Check your social security record every 3-5 years. To apply for Social Security, contact the Conference Treasurer's office or the General Board of Pensions. When clergy are ordained, they may choose a Personal Investment Plan (PIP) in place of Social Security.
4. Start saving. You can start small, but save regularly.
5. If you are near retirement, keep an insurance policy rather than cash it in. If you need cash, it might be better to borrow on it than to cash it in.
6. Pension benefits may be excluded from taxable income if used for housing. A clergy widow is no longer eligible for this benefit.
7. At age 65 you are eligible for Medicare. Sign up for Medicare at your nearest Social Security office. It is advantageous for you to do this at least six months prior to retirement.
8. Estate planning is the preparation for the transfer of assets from one individual to another. Proper planning can save taxes and can provide a smooth transition for your family. Without a will, the state makes all the decisions regarding your estate including your finances and custody of children. Contact an attorney. Name an executor. Contact the United Methodist Foundation for information on estate planning.

Insurance plans

Comprehensive. Clergy under appointment within the Wisconsin Annual Conference in a local church or beyond the local church must participate in Conference Group Insurance, Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP). CPP is administered by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church and coverage policy is found in the conference "Comprehensive Protection Plan Adoption Agreement" (Wisconsin Conference Journal, 2006 Rules and Policies of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, 100.2.0 Comprehensive Protection Plan). Insurance coverage can change annually.

Disability

If a member of the clergy is forced to give up ministerial work because of physical or emotional disability the clergy family may be eligible for benefits from the CPP.

To apply for disability leave benefits, contact the Conference Treasurer's office or the General Board of Pensions.

Health. The Conference health insurance covers all active clergy and families, all retired clergy, all surviving spouses and dependents of deceased clergy. Divorced clergy spouses may continue in the Conference Group Health Insurance Plan at their own expense for 18 months following their divorce. Notification of changes in dependent coverage due to marriage, death, birth, etc. must be reported to the Treasurer's Office within 30 days of eligibility date. Health Insurance information is found in the Wisconsin Conference Journal (2006 Rules and Policies of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, 120.0.0 Group Health Insurance Policy). It can change annually. To apply for health insurance benefits or counseling services benefits, contact the Conference Treasurer's office or the General Board of Pensions.

At retirement and 65, your coverage through the Conference Health Insurance Program automatically changes to a Medicare supplement.

Life

In the case of death of a clergy, the spouse should contact the Conference Treasurer's office regarding survivor's benefits. (See Wisconsin Conference Journal, 2006 Rules and Policies of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, 120.1.5 Surviving spouse of an active clergy person.)

In the case of death of a clergy while in ministry, ask your District Superintendent to: notify members of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, to notify the Conference office, to discuss the funeral service, and to discuss with the Pastor Parish Relations Committee the parsonage arrangements and interim pastoral service.

Property

A parsonage owned by the church is insured by the church. It is important for the clergy family to insure their own possessions with a renter's policy available through an insurance agent.

Pension and benefits

Pension policies are found in the Wisconsin Conference Yearbook, 2006 Rules and Policies of the Wisconsin Annual Conference, 100.0.0 Pension policies. The Benefits officer in the Conference Treasurer's office will be aware of frequent changes in policy.

See also topics: 6 Communication and mental health, 7 Divorce, 8 Death of a spouse.

CHAPTER 9

COMMUNICATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

[Compiled & Edited by Char Groves & Margaret McKay]

Wellness for Clergy Spouses

Sections adapted from Virginia Annual Conference Thrival Kit May 2005

“Wellness” concepts go right to the heart of the “holistic health” movement for prevention and maintenance of the total person. It is about “how to take better care of oneself.” The concept of wellness relates to all aspects of the individual human life—mind, body and spirit. The following are observations and considerations of preventive processes for the clergy spouse to maintain and promote the quality of good health in mind, body, and spirit.

Areas of Wellness

1. Spiritual Formation

Clergy spouses, like others today in our culture are challenged to find and take Sabbath time. They often have to take some time other than Sundays. *“One suggested way of Sabbath-keeping is the setting aside of ‘an hour a day, a day a month, and a week a year’ for spiritual reflection, rest and renewal.”* (Phillip Amerson, “Clockwork Theology,” *Circuit Rider*, Jan/Feb 2000).

Find a “spot” in your home that will become a sacred place for personal reflection and time with God. Begin and/or end each day with quiet: journal, study the Bible, read, and restore. Meditative/reflective time during our Sabbath time is important: Paying attention to our breath during this time helps the nervous system move naturally toward relaxation since our breathing is interconnected with our emotions. We can consciously breathe in a positive phrase, such as “God loves me,” and then consciously breathe out some negative thought we often entertain.

Some clergy spouses feel that God is “in their spouse’s court” but not in theirs when they have struggles with issues with the church and their clergy spouse. The following is “A Letter” from God to the Clergy Spouse” presented to a Clergy/Clergy Spouse gathering. It was written and presented by the late Mark A. Olson, former pastor of Hope Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, WI. (Written with permission from the Mark A. Olson Estate.)

“Dearest Koinonos, (Greek word for companion)

You might have looked twice to make sure this letter was addressed to you. Most of the communication to your home from me, God, may seem addressed to your spouse. Be assured, this is no mistake. I am eager to speak with you.

And this is what I want you to know. Please never forget it. **I, the Lord YOUR God have heard your cries and your sighs too deep for words. I, the Lord YOUR God, am moved by your sighs. I have heard you and will not fail you.**

In the midst of what often seems to be my silence, you likely wonder whether these words are true. You (and I can understand your position) might be a bit cautious trusting such a promise. You might say, ‘Prove it. Show me you have listened and will be moved to action.’

Let me plead my case, if I may. First of all, I am a God who, throughout all of history has heard the cries of the oppressed, the silenced, the forsaken, the stranger. I am a God whose story reveals a bias toward the poor and forsaken. Slaves in Egypt cried out and I heard their cry. Exiles in Babylon lamented and their songs touched my heart. Finally, all creation wailed at its loss of hope. I heard their cry and sent my Son. Even today, I hear the cry of those neglected, forgotten and silenced. And, in the world of the church – in that world within the world – you as spouses of pastors are often the forgotten, neglected and silenced. You have no place to lift up your voice and cry out. But I, the Lord your God, hear your cries which cannot even find words.

You need not apologize for your hurt and disappointment. You need not stop your wailing. Your struggles are real and join all the cries of those who seek wholeness and healing.

And I know this as well – often your lashing out at me, at the congregation, at the world, is not just your appropriate anger and hurt. Often you carry your spouse’s anger as well. Your spouse

cannot, will not, get angry with me or the congregation he/she loves so much. There must be some escape valve for the disappointment and despair. You, as the spouse, are often the one who blows off steam. All of which, of course, makes you more angry and more disillusioned. Why should you have to do all the hard work! And yet you love me and the congregation no less than your pastor spouse.

You see, I hear your cries.

More than that, I am God who chooses to identify with you. It may not feel that way. I have heard you yell at your spouse in the middle of an argument about something at church. I am there when your spouse pontificates about the importance of the ministry and how God needs the presence of the pastor – which of course means God needs him/her right now. I have heard you say in such situations, ‘I am willing to fight with you, but it’s not fair to have to take both you and God on.’ Well, don’t assume I’m always on the pastor’s side. Remember, I have a special commitment to the underdog – the one who challenges the high and mighty – the Pharaoh, the King, the High Priest, or might we say the pompous pastor. They may think they have my blessing, but don’t be deceived.

And even more than this, I want you to know you have a ministry as well. You are not JUST a pastor’s spouse, you are not JUST a handmaiden of the ‘lord’ (read pastor). You are a baptized child of God who has been called to a vocation, a ministry. For each of you it is different. For many it involves ministry outside the congregation as well as within it. You serve me in a variety of ways. Yet, one thing you have in common. You are spouses of pastors. Thus, you are connected to me in a public way. It is this part of your call which pinches a bit and sometimes makes you angry. I have heard you say, ‘Why can’t we be like normal people?’

I, God, have heard your cries and I have been moved. I have been moved to act. This is what I have done for you and will continue to do for you. These are the gifts I long to give you. Receive them as gifts, freely given, by a God who hears your cries.

I freely give you the gift of my story. Receive the Holy Scriptures not as a rule book, or a ‘How To Manual’; receive it as a story. Find yourself in the story. In this Bible you will find a story of a God who is unrelenting in pursuing all creation so it might be made whole. In this story you will find a God who offers Jesus to you, so you might know life. This is my greatest gift.

I give to you the gift of prayer. I long to hear your intercessions, your thanksgivings. And, listen to me, for this part of the gift of prayer is often overlooked – I have a passion to hear your laments. I encourage you to march before me, fists clenched and voices loud with rage. Come and call me to account. With the Psalmist of old, do not be shy Lutherans [United Methodists]. Be bold in your demands. Pray your disappointments. Come to me and voice your hurts.

I give to you the gift of friends. I know it is difficult to build relationships with members of the congregation when your spouse is the pastor. Yet, there are friends to be found outside the parish. When you discover these gifts, these friends, cherish them, hold them, and nurture those relationships. See these friends for what they are, gifts from me, your God.

I give you the gift of Sabbath. Take time to be quiet. Take time to play and pray. Take time to

simply be, not do. In a world of hyperactivity, accept this gift and promise. The promise is this: I have done for you all the work that needs to be done. It happened on the cross. To say it another way: Lighten up – receive a life.

Finally, I long to give you a gift which too often is still wrapped tight and hard to set free. I long for you to have a congregation in which to be member, not a pastor's spouse, but a member. I give to you today the gift of imagination that you might find a way to be fed, held, nourished, provoked, forgiven, and empowered as a child of God. I know this rarely happens when your spouse is the pastor. Seek out ways to find a congregation to which you can belong – really belong. (I wouldn't however recommend requesting a letter of transfer to a congregation which has better sermons.) I am talking about a congregation in addition to where you presently serve, not to replace it. Actually, I am speaking about being part of a congregation where the Bishop is your pastor – your evangelical leader.

I, God, give you these gifts because I have heard your cries. I give these gifts because I have called you by name. You are mine. I will not fail you. These promises are sure.

Love, Theos, God"

Permission for further publication or duplication of this letter may be secured by contacting the Mark A. Olson Estate, C/O Elaine Olson, 2016 28th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55450

2. Couple Time and Family Time

Clergy families have a special challenge to consider making a commitment to setting aside time on their calendar just for the family and for themselves as a couple. It is challenging to hold to it just as a paid work commitment would take priority.

Often with work, meetings, visiting and school schedules (with older children), it is difficult to find one meal a day where everyone is together.

Consider family meetings once a week to talk through tough as well as good times.

Allow family members, from the youngest to the oldest, to take turns leading the family meetings. All agenda items to be presented at the family meeting could be given to the leader ahead of the meeting. This would be the only agenda allowed to be discussed during the family meeting. Encourage the family to pray together during family meetings.

Be open to your teenager. Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexual experimentation, and depression happen in parsonage families. The old adage of "the preacher's children always get into trouble to prove they are a part of a group" is often true. Listen to, talk with, and pray for your teenagers. Your parenting is not over yet! Times of playing together as a couple and as a family are just as important for you as a couple as they are for the children in keeping up your sense of connectedness and ability to communicate.

In the busy life of the ministry, we often get caught up in all the things that we're "called" to do and we forget about what makes for good relationships and communication: playing together. We often blame our troubles on an inability to communicate and we think we need to have someone teach us how to better communicate. It may be that we need some professional help to work through some impasses but it may be that we have stopped playing together and lost our friendship as the result (Hackett, 2003, pp 1-4). John Gottman, a leading researcher of couple

relationships, says that the marriages that last continue because the couples are friends (Gottman, 1999). Friendships are made by playing together. Watch children. When they have a fight, they go home, cool off and then soon are out playing together again. Think of how you were when you were dating. Did you work at being friends by doing fun things together. Couples during dating and courtship talk about things over and over. There's often no communication problem. Could weekly playtimes of a couple of hours, just as a couple, without children and no other adults, help your communication? Friends that have just had a wonderful playtime together tend to be able to work for win/wins where they are able to come to agreement about what is a win for both of them. This same concept applies to families. Families (and couples) that play together, as well as pray together, stay together.

Possibly one of the hardest lessons for clergy and spouses to learn, is to *apply the same concept of grace offered to others in ministry to one's self and/or to one's family*. Remember, it is: "*do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*" Clergy family members have to be considered "as others" sometime to keep in perspective applications of Grace. Also, Christ's challenge: "Love thy neighbor, as thyself," must apply to one's own self and family members. Clergy families can be neglected quickly. Too often, the minister goes to help others in difficulties, but leaves one's own family to take care of themselves in isolation. *But isn't this what following Jesus means: deny thyself and follow him? To whom was Jesus talking? Many such questions may be discussed in the family.*

The following is a letter presented to a Clergy/Clergy Spouse gathering designed to help the clergy person better understand his/her clergy spouse. It was written and presented by the late Mark A. Olson, former pastor of Hope Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, WI. It is a letter from a clergy person to his/her clergy spouse. (Written with permission from the Mark A. Olson Estate.)

"Dearest Koinonos, (Greek word for companion)

You, more than anyone, know me for who I am. Between us there is little illusion. As you tell the people at church – people who often idolize me (which drives you crazy and at the same time it makes you proud) – you speak to these adoring people with that sly smile of yours and say, 'The pastor may be God to you, but I know better. I wash the underwear.'

You know me. You know the joys I feel and what brings goose bumps to my skin. You know the convictions which drive me and make me struggle the way I do. You know the failures that haunt me and hold me captive.

You know of the restless Saturday nights which leave you bruised because you are lucky enough to sleep with a preacher. You know the unnerving pacing that goes on weeks before an annual meeting. You know the discounted sense of success after something at church goes really well, with only one minor disparaging off handed remark spoken all night. You know how I give such a passing remark such power that assumes the whole Christian faith will fall apart tomorrow and God will need to send Gabriel and the angels to save it, and it will be all my fault.

You know me. And the miracle – the miracle is that even knowing me like you do, you still love me. I smile when you tell others that you love me for one simple reason, 'Somebody has to do it,' you say. You speak the truth. And I am glad it is you God has chosen to be that somebody.

I wonder if you would have joined this adventure, the adventure of public ministry, if you had known all that is involved. Would you have committed yourself to this relationship if you knew the struggles? Would I have been bold enough to ask you to join me if I had known the difficult path before us?

Being married to a pastor demands much of you. There are other professions which are demanding. But being a pastor is not a profession, it is a confession. You are married to a person whose whole life is shaped and molded by a necessity to be faithful to God. This calling has profound implications for us, for our marriage, for our family.

First of all, and most importantly, it means I can say to you, 'You are the most important thing in my life – along with the other most important thing, my relationship with God.' I know this is hard to hear, but I can't say it any other way. I have TWO most important things in my life. I know this is difficult for you. It drives me crazy as well.

I feel like I am walking on a balance beam. Actually, I am dancing on the beam. I continually must struggle to keep my balance, I try to hold in balance the two most important things in my life – my relationship to you and my relationship to God as a pastor. Sometimes even I marvel at the grace of my movements on the beam. But other times, I fall. To be honest, more times than not, I fall off of the beam away from you. The fall happens when I make a fatal error. I assume God and the church, the congregation, are the same. So I get too involved, too enmeshed. I begin to believe all the wondrous words people say about me. In no time at all, I fall. The most painful thing about the fall, is that when I fall to that side, there is no one there to catch me. The congregation is absent, and God feels distant as well – most likely because God is not real pleased when I turn from worshiping God to worshiping the congregation.

And then the miracle. You come to my side. Broken, empty, and fallen. You bend to my wounds and speak words of hope and grace. You even encourage me to climb back up on the beam and begin the dance again. Though you may not know it, this is true: often the words you speak to me while I am laid low and broken mysteriously sound and feel like the healing Word of God. At these times the two most important things in my life become one.

So the first implication of being married to me, a pastor, is that you have to share me. Painful as it may be, you must watch me seek to balance between the two most important things in my life. Your willingness to endure this spectacle witnesses to your love for me and God.

Secondly, because you love me and know of my propensity for grandiosity, you have the joy of keeping me honest. You are to me what Nathan was to King David. You love me enough to expose my sin and call me to repentance. Often, I must confess you do not use the gentle narrative approach of Nathan, you are more straight forward in your indictment. Sometimes subtle nuance is not your strong suit.

And this is especially true when I commit the worse sin. It is a sin against our relationship and against my call to be a pastor. You, sometimes rather forcefully and normally appropriately, expose me when I get my intimacy needs met by the congregation, instead of by our relationship. I am called to serve the congregation. I have promised to be joined to you. Serving and joining

are too different things. I easily and often get this mixed up. And when I do, my whole world falls apart. Thank you for loving me enough to keep me honest about this.

Finally, there is one other big implication of being a pastor's spouse. You are so very necessary to me. Unlike professions, where the job and person have some distinction, being a pastor involves all of me. I cannot turn it off and on. So you must always live with a pastor. (Was that the subtle reminder you gave me when you presented me with those PJ's when we took some time for a romantic night away – those PJ's with a clerical collar?) But in addition to this unbearable burden, you realize that our relationship has much to do with the ministry to which I am called. Being a pastor involves all of me. And it is demanding – so demanding. For that reason, when things are not good between us, I cannot be the kind of pastor God needs me to be. To say it another way, I need you. I need you as a person and as a pastor. I could not imagine being a pastor without your presence. I need you to know me, to tend to me, to be honest with me, and to love me.

Would you do this all over again, if asked? Would you be a pastor's spouse? I can't answer for you. But I know I would not – could not imagine being a pastor without you.

You are God's greatest gift to me. And our relationship is the most important thing in my life, along with –

Love, Your Spouse"

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3. Physical Exercise

To maintain health and wholeness, clergy spouses, in the busyness of the "call," are challenged, like the rest of society to get regular exercise. Regular exercise can be as simple as walking. Walking outside has many benefits. If you have outside limitations, try making use of the stairs in your home regularly for more exercise. Also, it is a good idea when going to the store to park further from the store for additional walking. Stretching exercises daily, as well as use of a jump rope and lightweights, are highly beneficial also. Find someone or a group that enjoys your own preference for exercise and block out time each week for it. Virginia Annual Conference Thrival Kit May 2005

4. Get a Life

Clergy spouses, just like clergy, can easily get in a pattern of working all the time. Couple a passion for ministry with a vocation where there is always more to do, and workaholism (and the attending burnout) easily becomes a part of the equation. Because we cannot hold others responsible for our own happiness, we must find something that brings us great joy and cultivate our knowledge or practice of that activity. Whether it's gardening, line dancing, our own vocation or something else that engages us, we must make sure that we involve ourselves in activities outside the parish that replenish and revitalize us. Wholeness of life can depend greatly on balances, keeping ourselves balanced spiritually, emotionally, and physically. In a profession where we extend so much of ourselves to the nurturing of others, we are not likely to maintain the self-nurturing and balance in our lives that make for healthy lifestyles unless we are

intentional about it.

5. Vacation

Good vacation time benefits ministry and family relationships as well. Since clergy (and subsequently clergy spouses) are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, time away can bring renewal and refreshment for the tasks at hand. The following is our vacation guideline for all clergy who are under fulltime appointment:

- 1 At least four weeks vacation should be taken yearly.
- 2 At least one day per week should be considered personal time, apart from vacation.

It is recommended that clergy in their first year of a new appointment refrain from taking vacation during the first month of that new appointment. It is also recommended that first-year vacation be distributed across the year, not taken all at once. On the other hand, it is recognized that clergy and their families having just moved, with all the stresses moving can bring, certainly are entitled to, and should take, some vacation time during the first summer. Continuing education for pastors is a requirement of our denomination and time should be allowed for fulfilling this requirement. Continuing education is not to be considered vacation time.

6. Friendships

Often it is difficult to build relationships with members of the congregation when your spouse is the pastor. There are differing thoughts about if we should even try to have friendships in the congregation. Some believe that deeper levels of clergy and spouse friendships should only be outside of the parish and that friendships within the church should be considered very carefully.

The following is a letter presented to a Clergy/Clergy Spouse gathering designed to help the clergy person better understand his/her clergy spouse. It was written and presented by the late Mark A. Olson, former pastor of Hope Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, WI. It is "A Letter from a Hypothetical Congregation to Their Clergy Spouse." (Written with permission from the Mark A. Olson Estate.)

"Dear Koinonos, (Greek for companion)

It seems strange (and to be honest a bit unnerving) to write you in this way. I am used to talking to you; congregations and pastors' spouses do talk with each other. But ordinarily I talk to you through your spouse – the pastor. It seems I speak with you only as an extension of someone else. It is difficult to address you – you as a person. In fact, and this is very difficult to say, I am not sure that I really can separate you from your spouse's ministry.

I'm sure you feel this. I imagine you sometimes wonder if you have an identity of your own. Perhaps you feel like the beautiful fresh fallen snow which becomes caught in the pine trees. Everyone notices the beauty of the trees, but often overlooks the snow.

I am sorry for all of this. I wish, I really do wish, that it could be different. I wish we could be really good friends, and you could be just another part of the congregation. I wish you could have a life of your own – not be so attached to the pastor. I wish that we could deal straight with each other. But it doesn't seem to happen very often. And when it does, the exchange tends to end in disaster.

And I know you feel this, too. You feel the longing and the disappointment. I can see it in your eyes. Sometimes I hear it in your voice. Occasionally, I experience it in your absence, if not physically then emotionally from us, the congregation. I am sorry for the pain this relationship causes you. Like I said, I wish it could be different.

Yet, I don't know if that is possible. Let me tell you why.

You see, we, the members of the congregation, need your spouse to be our pastor. We need the leadership the pastor offers. We need the pastor to be a bit distant from us – separate but attached. We need a public leader whose commitment to witnessing to the Kingdom of God is central in his/her life. We need a pastor who knows it is more important to care for the whole community, as the Body of Christ, than attend to any one part of it. We need a pastor who can withstand our constant efforts to domesticate the call – to make the pastor another friend. You see, we want the pastor to be a good friend of ours. And at the same time, we know we NEED the pastor to be a pastor.

It is like the biblical times when God set apart the Levites to be a tribe without land, or income, or any apparently useful responsibility. The Levites were set apart to wander around to the other tribes, the tribes who were working the land, earning a living, and living in the real world. The Levites were to go and remind all these busy people about God. The very presence of the Levites was a call to the people to rethink their busy lives and imagine a new way of living. The Levites called into question, by their being, impelled the people to question their words, their actions, their whole life, the rest of the world. For this “service” the Levites were to be taken care of and supported by the very people they challenged.

You, as a spouse of a pastor are married to a Levite. You are connected, intimately connected, to a person who, when they come into our presence, makes us think differently, act differently, imagine the world differently. To say it harshly, you are married to, you sleep with, a weird, strange, and alien person.

And, again I am sorry to have to say this, but because you are so connected to that person, to the pastor, you become weird and alien to us as well.

And, what makes it worse, (and this is so hard to understand, but it is so important) – if you, as the pastor's spouse, lose your weirdness; if you, as the pastor's spouse, simply become one of us; if you become our friend and lose any distinctiveness; if you settle in and become one of the tribe, we will certainly try to use you to domesticate the witness of the pastor. We who are the congregation, will use you as an agent to make your spouse just one of us – a friend. But, we don't NEED another friend. We need a pastor. For that to happen, the pastor, and you, must be a little weird.

One other thing, as long as we are speaking honestly, sometimes we get jealous of you. Your spouse means so much to us. The pastor is there with us in the most intimate and trying of times. In a world where love and compassion are rare, we see in the pastor a person who practices these God-given gifts. In fact, if the truth be known, we sort of think of your spouse as a little closer to God. We give your spouse that much authority in our lives. So, when we see him look at you

with loving eyes, when we imagine the two of you together, when we think of how wonderful and tender the pastor is, and then think of your relationship, we get jealous. And sometimes, when the pastor chooses to spend time with you rather than us, we get angry. I know it doesn't make sense. But, it does happen. I'm sorry. I wish it could be different, but...

We who are the congregation are sorry you are caught in such an awkward situation. We can't imagine what it must feel like. It is likely just as confusing for you as it is for us.

This much we know. We need a pastor. We believe your spouse was sent to us by God to be our pastor. So, I guess that means you were sent to us as well. Maybe we can figure out a way to honor your ministry in our midst. Maybe we can find a way to let you know how important you are. Maybe we can find a way to tell you that the confusing awkward relationship as congregation and pastor's spouse in which we find ourselves is precisely where God has placed us and precisely where God needs us to be.

You see, we aren't really friends – we are companions in a ministry. We are linked together for a common mission, and we each have distinctive and important roles. Thank you for accepting the challenging and difficult call to be a pastor's spouse. Thank you for being a companion in the ministry of the Gospel.

In Christ, Ecclesia (The Congregation)''

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7. Professional Counseling

Sometimes we need professional care and sometimes we just need someone to talk to. Our Conference Health Plan works very hard to make mental health and counseling services easily available and financially feasible to all our family members. Our District Superintendents often know of Christian counselors and/or counselors whom others have found helpful. United Behavior Health, the company with which Blue Cross/Blue Shield contracts to provide mental health services, asks all the counselors with whom they are contracted to give their specialties of service. Therefore, UBH will have recommendations of counselors in your area that have specialties that you might be interested in, i.e., Christian Counseling, trauma, grief, alcohol and other drug issues, family and couple issues, etc. Information about mental health benefits may be found at: United Behavioral Health, 800-851-5188 or www.ubhonline.org.

Other referral sources for couple counseling:

- 1 American Association of Pastoral Counselors, 9504A Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22031-2303, 701-385-6967; email: Info@aapc.org; www.aapc.org.
- 2 American Association for Marriage & Family Therapy, 112 South Alfred St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3061. 703-838-9808; www.aamft.org; www.therapistlocator.net.
- 3 Yellow Pages – look under AAMFT listing or look for therapists who are state licensed as MFT's (Marriage and Family Therapists), Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, or Psychologists.

Referral Sources for Marriage Enrichment, Support Groups, etc.:

- 1 **Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment, P.O. Box 10586, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27108; 800-634-8325; acme@bettermarriages.org; ww.bettermarriage.org.**
- 2 **National Marriage Encounter; 800-828-3351; ww.marriage-encounter.org.**
- 3 **World Wide Marriage Encounter; www.wwme.org.**

Recommended Reading for Couples and Families:

- 1 *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, John Gottman, Ph.E., and Nan Silver, Three Rivers Press, 1999.
- 2 *The Relationship Cure*, John Gottman et al, Crown Publishing Group, 2001.
- 3 *Divorce Busting*, Michele Weiner-Davis, Fireside, 1992.
- 4 *Love is a Verb*, Bill O'Hanlon and Pat Hudson, Norton, 1995.
- 5 *How to Have a Happy Marriage*, David and Vera Mace, Abingdon, 1977.
- 6 *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*, Stephen R. Covey, Franklin Covey, 1997.

Dating Activities Books

- 1 *Romantic Dates*, Gregory J.P. Godek, Sourcebooks, 1997.
- 2 *1001 Ways to Be Romantic*, Gregory J.P. Godek, Sourcebooks, revised edition, 1999.
- 3 *The RoMANTic's Guide*, Michael Webb, Hyperion, 2000.

Who is the Spouse's Pastor?

The spouse needs a pastor. There are normal situations that arise throughout life in which regular lay people rely heavily upon their pastor for guidance. These times include periods of illness (personally or with a member of the family), death of parents and grandparents, the loss of a job, problem teenagers, a spiritual crisis when God seems far away, times when one feels distant to their spouse, loneliness, and anger. Most spouses (and PKs) feel that the clergy in the family deals wonderfully with crises in everyone else's life, but when it strikes the parsonage family, sometimes there is not a convenient time or any extra emotional energy left for his/her own family. Often, too, the clergy is dealing with his/her own emotions during the family crisis.

Clergy spouses feel as if there is no one for her/him to turn to during these trying times. Over the years, anger and resentment can build toward the profession of the ministry because of this felt alienation. The clergy spouse may need to be proactive concerning this issue and seek his/her own spiritual pastor. The following are some options:

- 1 **District Superintendent:** If there are family concerns that might reflect negatively upon the parenting skills of the clergy, spouses may feel that this will have a negative impact upon the next appointment. The same holds true for marital and financial problems. However, the district superintendent may be very effective in dealing with crises that involve sickness and death.
- 2 **Another Minister:** Often it seems that friends that you make among other clergy and/or clergy spouses within the conference may become your natural confidants. Your clergy spouse may feel uncomfortable having family "secrets" told to another minister, though, especially if there has been a history of gossiping between the two. This type of relationship with a clergy friend may cause some tension if the clergy you married finds out that you confided in a peer. If you are fortunate enough to live near the clergy that

you were closest to in your youth, he/she may be someone you can confide in when the going gets rough. If you select some clergyperson to be your pastor, make sure that all you say is confidential (and let your spouse know who it is). Most will honor this.

- 3 **Church Member:** Usually we want church members to think highly of us. When there are troubles in the parsonage family, there is the natural tendency to want to keep them private, even though every family has their dysfunctions as well as having things that are going well. Sometimes it seems that by the time you develop a really close friendship within the congregation, it is time to move! If you are fortunate to find a soul sister/brother within your congregation, nurture that relationship discreetly. Be careful not to flaunt that relationship before the other members of the congregation and cause jealousy. Often it is after you have moved away from a church that this type of relationship really blossoms, being careful not to interfere in the ministry of the clergy that follows us. Continuing the important personal relationships that we all develop during the lifetime of ministry is very important to our emotional well being.
- 4 **Other Clergy Spouses:** They are most understanding! These relationships are very rewarding, but it may take years to develop these contacts, especially if you work and don't have the time or the inclination to attend spouses' gatherings. Take time to find a kindred spirit among this group and you will have a special relationship throughout your ministry.
- 5 **Retired Minister Friend:** This is a very viable option, if you know one well enough! Their experience is invaluable and their guidance reaches beyond age boundaries.
- 6 **Associate Minister:** If you are in a large church that has an associate minister, or if you are married to the associate; the other partner of the ministerial team of that church may be your pastor. This can be a convenient and rewarding relationship.
- 7 **Spiritual Director:** A spiritual director joins a person in their journey toward God and mediates as well as supports the influence of the Holy Spirit in furthering that person's journey. The District Superintendent in your region is often aware of spiritual directors. Any retreat center, e.g., Catholic or other denominational retreat centers, often have access to spiritual directors.

Clergy spouses have a great need to be ministered to. Since this is a built-in equation in the strange life of a parsonage family, no one should feel guilty about needing his/her own pastor. When you are in need of spiritual guidance or pastoral care, don't hesitate to seek out help. You and your family will be stronger for it.

Clergy/Clergy Couples

Often the most successful churches with married clergy have spouses who are viewed as a team. To be the most effective and efficient, both spouses must understand their own needs and expectations, individually, as a couple and as a family, their churches' expectations, and the expectations of The United Methodist Church and then negotiate how to achieve those expectations so that all are experiencing a "win/win" (Steven Covey, 1997, p. 169-200).

Top Ten Clergy-Couple Questions by Congregations

10. Why can't the spouse help with Vacation Bible School? After all, we're getting two pastors for the price of one!
9. How will emergencies be prioritized? My pastor might not be available in an emergency if her spouse's emergency in another congregation places me on a lower priority.
8. Who is in charge of the house and children? Isn't one of them, in effect, part time?
7. Where will the children go to church?
6. Does a clergy-couple appointment mean a new charge has been created? We're not sure we want to share seasonal activities and events with another church.
5. Why should a church with a parsonage pay the other church for the privilege of their pastor living with his/her family?
4. Why can't one family live in two houses?
3. Who decides where they will live?
2. Do two appointments pay insurance for the same family...isn't that making double payments?
1. Will we ever see the spouse at Sunday worship, UMW, UMM, and fellowship events?

1. Learning to Communicate

In the busy life of the ministry, we often get caught up in all the things that we're "called" to do and we forget about what makes for good communication: Playing together. We think that we don't know how to communicate and need to have someone teach how to better communicate. It may be that we need some professional help to work through some impasses but it may be that we have stopped playing together and lost our friendship as the result (Hackett, 2003, pp 1-4). John Gottman, a leading researcher of couple relationships, says that the marriages that last continue because the couple are friends (Gottman, 1999). Friendships are made by playing together. Watch children. When they have a fight, they go home, cool off and then soon are out playing together again. Think of how you were when you were dating. Did you work at being friends by doing fun things together. Couples during dating and courtship talk about things over and over. There's often no communication problem. Could weekly playtimes of a couple of hours, just as a couple, without children and no other adults, help your communication? Friends that have just had a wonderful playtime together tend to be able to work for win/win's able to come to agreement about what is a win for both of them.

The following is a story from the Virginia Conference of a clergy couple who learned to make their ministry and relationship work together:

When we were first getting to know one another as students at Emory & Henry, we discovered that we each felt a calling to careers in full-time Christian service. By the time we announced our engagement, we had both decided to enter graduate school in religion and started candidacy studies for ordination. Well before the "clergy couple" dynamics that would occupy us later, we found ourselves working on communication skills. We took long walks, talking and listening. We prayed together. We practiced what we learned in psychology and Christian education classes on each other. We exchanged letters over the summer. In retreats and our weekly prayer fellowship, we learned to practice "active listening." In church camp, we discovered the wonder of forming Christian community in small groups, with its emphases on consensus and

sensitivity. Our college chaplain was our premarital counselor, leading us in a variety of exercises that illustrated various pitfalls in communication (something with Tinker toys back to back . . .). We wrote our own marriage vows, including the promise “to speak the truth to you, and to hear it from you.”

There have been times when our communication has broken down. Bob still can't recall what is on the calendar for today, much less next week. Mary Beth needs reminding what books we have, and which one has which helpful passages. We rediscover weekly the value of a regular “together time.” We have taken advantage of professional listeners when we have found communication difficult, usually after moving to new appointments and new work arrangements. Marriage Enrichment and Marriage Encounter weekends have offered helpful hints. We worked from a written schedule during much of our early marriage, attempting to divide fairly our home and vocational time. We have enjoyed keeping an occasional family journal. We try to write down what happened, keeping it as a letter to our future. Our family time has been rich, with loving, attentive, and forgiving children. We have tried to listen carefully to our children's needs for both active involvement in church and the freedom to choose which church activities to attend. Our future includes significant changes, as both of our children move into and beyond college, and as we consider God's ongoing call on our lives. As God is our steadfast Listener and trustworthy Counselor, we are confident of our ability to speak the truth, and hear it, with one another.” *Mary Beth and Bob Blinn, Clergy Couple, Virginia Annual Conference Thrival Kit May 2005*

2. To Work Together or To Not Work Together

One of the first decisions a clergy couple will make will concern taking separate appointments or working together in the same appointment. For some this is an easy decision. All along, your plan has been one or the other. Perhaps you already know whether your gifts are complimentary and whether you would enjoy working together. Most clergy couples ask for separate appointments and serve an entire ministry this way. Others seek opportunities to work together in full-time or part-time appointments, or a combination of both. Working together brings fulfillment and challenge! It is fulfilling to plan and execute ministry, lead worship, and attend fellowship functions together. If you have children, there are more opportunities to be together as a family. One of the challenges is communication: many of the details that one knows, the other must know, so that fewer things fall through the cracks.

Working in separate appointments means that your lives will intersect much less frequently. Opportunities to work together in ministry must be intentionally sought. But your identity as individual pastors will be much clearer to your churches and your community. The female pastor will hardly ever be called the “preacher's wife.” And working separately gives each of you the opportunity to develop skills and use gifts in all areas of pastoral ministry (when it is sometimes easy to rely on the other for things we don't like or want to do).
Virginia Annual Conference Thrival Kit May 2005

3. Built-In Support

Whether you work in the same appointment or not, you share the same ups and downs of ministry. When one of you comes home from a stressful church council meeting, the other can

say “I know what you mean” and mean it! The joy of an inspiring worship service or increased attendance is something you both can get excited about. Words of advice and support can be given when you both have similar experiences. Many good ideas have originated at home! There will be times when you both need support at the same time and may not find the other able to give you what you need. This is where other friends and colleagues are important sources of strength. The collegiality you share with your spouse should offer understanding and flexibility.

4. Time Together—Bedtime Is Off-Limits to Church-Related Discussions!

Spending time together requires planning and discipline. Usually time spent as a couple or as a family must be scheduled and kept free from last minute intrusions. There are always church things that need to be done. Try to keep these saved minutes, hours, or days for each other. Those who don't will find it one of the most regretted decisions of their lives. Set certain times and spaces as off-limits for church-related discussions. Most couples agree that such topics should be discontinued when your heads hit the pillow. You may also want to exclude these discussions from meal times and other leisure times. Virginia Annual Conference Thrival Kit May 2005

Where to Turn for Help

Clergy families experience the same stresses and strains as any other family. However, because of the unique role of clergy as caregivers to other families in time of crisis, sometimes it is hard to know where to turn for help in times of stress or crisis within the clergy family. It is important that family members not suffer in isolation but seek out the help that is needed to move through the crisis in a positive way and be restored to health and wholeness. Here are some resources to turn to in time of need.

Sources for Help

1. The District Superintendent

District Superintendents have a responsibility to give pastoral support and care to the “ordained, consecrated, and commissioned personnel and their families, and to counsel with clergy and consecrated and commissioned personnel concerning matters affecting their ministry and personal life” (*Discipline*, Paragraph 420). They are trained pastors and caregivers whose call is to stand with individuals in time of crisis and offer Christian support, counseling, encouragement, and sometimes financial help from an emergency fund. It is important to let district superintendents know about crises in clergy families so that they can be the pastor to pastors, which they are called to be.

2. Professional Counseling

Finding Help for Specific Crises

1. Separation and Divorce

The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church affirm (*2004 Book of Discipline*, in ¶161D, *Divorce*): *When a married couple is estranged beyond reconciliation, even after thoughtful consideration and counsel, divorce is a regrettable alternative in the midst of brokenness.*

If a divorce or separation is being considered in a clergy household, the clergyperson and/or the

spouse should inform the District Superintendent. The District Superintendent is available to discuss this development, to provide pastoral care, and to refer persons to other counseling resources. Should separation or divorce become a reality, the Bishop should be notified immediately.

As a spouse is separating from or divorcing a clergy person, he/she may feel a disconnection from their spiritual base. Upon request, the District Superintendent can refer the spouse to professional counseling.

The General Board of Pensions has held that clergy pension benefits are other assets that need to be considered by the divorce court in arriving at an appropriate settlement. The Board will assist in the implementation of a property settlement or court decree that involves the pension funds of a divorced clergy person, subject to certain limitations. You may call or write the General Board of Pensions for assistance (847-869-4550).

2. Disability

Disability of a clergy person is traumatic for the church as well as the clergy family. It may be either temporary or long term. In either event, it is important that the ministry of the local church be enabled to continue effectively during the period of disability.

Temporary disability is defined as an illness/accident that prevents a clergy person from doing the daily work of the church's ministry for more than 4 weeks, but less than 6 months from the date of disability. Local churches should determine the extent of their financial support during the period of disability. They may apply to the Commission on Equitable Compensation for additional funding. Staff-Parish Relations Committees should be in consultation with the District Superintendent.

Long-term disability is a disabling condition which is expected to prevent the clergy person from fulfilling pastoral responsibilities for at least 6 continuous months. To qualify for disability payments, the disabled clergy must have been an active participant in the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) for at least 180 days prior to becoming disabled. The 180-day waiting period is waived if the participant's disability is the result of an accident. Certain pre-existing condition provisions may also apply.

To apply for disability benefits from CPP, the disabled participant must submit three completed forms to the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits:

- Application for Disability Benefits
- Report of Complete Medical Examination
- Medical Information Release.

These forms can be obtained from the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits or the Conference Board of Pensions liaison, Don Rogers (1-800-768-6040). (John, I need some help here. This was in the Virginia book and sounded helpful. Is it accurate for us?)

The General Board's medical consultant will review the completed forms to determine whether the individual's condition meets the CPP definition of disability.

Disability benefits are not payable for any period during which a participant is receiving a salary from the salary-paying unit. Individuals who are receiving CPP disability benefits must make application and be approved annually for continued disability benefits. In addition, disability claimants must annually submit information on their total annual income for purposes of applying the earnings test. When total income from various sources (including the CPP

disability benefit) exceeds 75 percent of the Denominational Average Compensation (DAC), the CPP disability benefit may be reduced in a dollar-for-dollar ratio. Rehabilitation benefits may be payable to persons receiving CPP disability benefits. The total amount of the rehabilitation benefit will not exceed two-thirds of the DAC in effect in the year the rehabilitation benefits begin. To apply for rehabilitation benefits, the disabled participant must submit information to the board outlining the program to be pursued and the estimated cost. Benefits will be payable if (1) the proposed rehabilitation program can reasonably be expected to return the disabled individual to the duties performed prior to the occurrence of the disability, or (2) the program will result in the individual's ability to earn compensation at least equal to the DAC.

3. Incapacitating Illness

Here are two types of documents you should prepare in the event you or your spouse has an incapacitating illness—a separate set is needed for yourself and for your spouse:

- **Advance Medical Directive.** This document appoints one person (and potentially one or more alternates) to make healthcare decisions for you. It also states explicitly what your direction is regarding the application, withholding, or withdrawal of life prolonging procedures when you have a terminal condition (or are in a persistent vegetative state). In Virginia, this document needs to be signed in front of two witnesses and a notary public.
- **Power of Attorney.** This document gives limited or wide powers of authority for your spouse, relative, or other person to act for you in financial and other matters should you become unwilling or unable to make certain types of decisions on your own. A power of attorney needs to reflect the laws of the particular state in which you are a resident, so you may be well advised to make a new power of attorney if you have moved to Wisconsin from another state.

4. Death in the Clergy Family

a. Planning

Clergy families need to plan ahead for the eventuality of death. Here are five steps every clergy family should take now to prepare for the “possibility” of a death in the family:

- **Have a will.** This is your only chance to have input in the decision about the distribution of everything you own. Young clergy need a will perhaps even more than middle-aged pastors because of the high odds of death coming by accident that could take both wife and husband. Similarly, young clergy are more likely to want to appoint guardians for the minor children or separate financial conservators.
- **Get adequate life insurance.** In these days of two paycheck families, it is vital to carry insurance on each spouse. Evaluate the economic consequences of death for either and purchase accordingly. Term insurance is usually the best buy for younger clergy.
- **Tell somebody where the documents are located.** It's not enough to have a will and life insurance if no one knows where they're located. Have a family meeting to demonstrate the whereabouts of these important documents.
- **Talk frankly with your spouse.** It's not unusual for one spouse to have assumed the responsibility of money management. Perhaps this is why surviving spouses are frequently overwhelmed by this new burden. Help your spouse become aware of the bill-paying cycle, any debts or obligations, investments, and contact persons for each.
- **Discuss housing alternatives for the non-clergy spouse.** While it is wrenching to have to leave the house soon after the death of a pastor-spouse, it will be easier if this has been contemplated and planned ahead of time. As people of the resurrection we have no need to fear death in the ultimate sense. Still, a faithful effort to plan and prepare can make even this

awesome transition less painful. Start now and take these steps—just in case.

b. Grieving

When death occurs, allow yourself time to grieve. Whether it is a spouse or child, the death of someone in your family will occasion feelings related to grief that are normal and necessary. Anger, depression, shock, sleeplessness, and confusion are frequently part of the normal grieving process. Find a support system for sharing this process. You may want to seek out a therapist, special friends, family, or church members. It is important that you do what is best for you. There is no right or wrong way to deal with death. Give yourself and your family time for adjustments.

In the event of the death of an active clergy/spouse/child, contact the District Superintendent immediately. He/she will inform the bishop. The District Superintendent will respond as soon as possible with a personal visit to provide pastoral care. They may assist, if needed, with funeral arrangements. The Conference Pensions Office will contact the family soon after the funeral about death benefits, pension, and health insurance.

In the case of the death of a pastor, the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee will work with the District Superintendent to determine how long the parsonage will be available for the family's use. The Annual Conference will pay for one move of the surviving members. Consider carefully your options for church membership. A surviving spouse may wish to stay at your present congregation or find another church home as you move. The District Superintendent and the District Chaplain can help with this important decision for your continual spiritual comfort and support and that of your family.

c. Clergy Spouse Support Network

In April 2004, Char Groves (Borth/Poy Sippi) and Nancy Hanaman (Wautoma) met with Steven Polster (then Winnebago District Superintendent) to discuss the need for intentional support for clergy spouses and families in the Wisconsin Conference. As a result of this meeting and earlier discussions, Char and Nancy served as coordinators of the Clergy Spouse Support Network (CSSN) and contacted others to form the CSSN Leadership Team. Members of the Leadership Team in 2007 were: Char Groves, Poy Sippi; Nancy Hanaman, Wautoma; Kathy Bartel, West Salem; John Moffatt, Eau Claire; Jean Busker, Monroe; Laura Ida, Hudson; Char Lebakken, La Crosse; Margaret McKay, Eau Claire; Bob Miller, Baraboo.

To provide ongoing care and support, the Clergy Spouse Support Network is undertaking this effort with the support of the Board of Ordained Ministry. The goal is to provide a caring and supportive ministry for the needs of clergy spouses, former spouses and their families. The faces of clergy spouses have changed dramatically over the last 20 years. More spouses have jobs, many spouses are men and spouses are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Because divorces occur, former spouses and their families are among those who need our care and support.

The CSSN is designed for spouses of active clergy, including local pastors, elders, deacons, student pastors, spouses of retired clergy, widowed and those who are divorced from clergy. Support needs to be provided around common concerns such as moving, adjusting to new jobs, homes, schools; caring for elderly parents, communications within couples and families, mental health issues; divorce and death. Also, the CSSN sees the need to communicate with the cabinet, the Board of Ordained Ministry, and local Staff Parish Relations Committees with information regarding the unique needs and concerns involved.

One approach is to ask spouses to be a contact person with the other spouses in a circuit(s) which might involve an email list, personal meetings or other approaches. The annual Ministers' Mates Retreat and Workshop is scheduled in October of each year (usually the first full weekend) at Lake Lucerne Camp and Retreat Center. This has been held for a number of years and provides opportunities for relaxation, fellowship and renewal for all who attend. There have been a variety of retreat leaders over the years. Laura Ida and Char Groves have coordinated this event, including program planning and registration. A mailing was sent to spouses on the Wisconsin Conference mailing list in 2005 to provide information about the Clergy Spouse Support Network. We have an email list for "Joys and Concerns" and other communication to those who have attended the retreat and others interested. There has been a display at the Wisconsin Annual Conference to provide information about CSSN and resources for those interested. The CSSN Leadership Team is creating this handbook with information that would be helpful to families and individuals.

It is our hope that our bonds will become stronger as we provide needed support for one another through the Clergy Spouse Support Network in the Wisconsin Conference.

d. Annual Minister's Mates Retreat

See above.

Domestic Abuse (Physical, Verbal, Psychological, and Sexual)

The following information was adapted with permission from *The Guide: What do I do If...?* (Basic Information Handbook for Clergy Spouses) by the Commission on the Status and Role of Women of The United Methodist Church, Iowa Conference, June 2003.

Introduction

Despite the publicized prevalence of domestic abuse everywhere in society, our actions range from hesitating to talk about it to closing our eyes to the signs. We recognize that this is a painful subject. It is a parenting issue, a health care issue and a workplace issue. The truth is that many people in our churches have been or are the victims of domestic violence. (Battering does not only happen to females.) Many more mothers and fathers have agonized over children, siblings, friends, parents who were or are suffering abuse.

According to *The Clearinghouse on Religion and Abuse*, some batterers use religious doctrine to justify their domination of their spouses or significant others. Abused Christians often feel abused by God. Religion becomes a factor when Christians feel compelled to stay in abusive relationships based on the perception that it is mandated by Scripture (e.g. "submit to your husbands" or "turn the other cheek"). Rather than offering resources and alternatives to battered Christians, some church leaders have advised victims of domestic abuse to return to violent homes to be "better mates."

The United Methodist Church is committed to stopping domestic violence and lending aid to those who are suffering.

Policy

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state "We believe the family to be the basic human community through which persons are nurtured and sustained in mutual love, responsibility, respect and fidelity." And, we "recognize that family violence and abuse in all its

forms – verbal, psychological, physical, sexual – is detrimental to the covenant of the human community.” (2002 *Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 161, sections A & H).

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- 16 Provide all persons associated with The United Methodist Church with an understanding of the United Methodist Church’s position as it relates to physical, psychological, sexual and verbal abuse.
- 17 Ensure that all persons associated with the UMC understand that physical, verbal, psychological, and sexual abuse is illegal and such activity by clergy will be considered a serious violation of *The Book of Discipline*.
- 18 Provide an avenue for remedy to those who believe they are being or have been abused.
- 19 Provide contacts for those clergy, clergy spouses, staff, volunteers, and members who have concerns or questions regarding abuse.

Definition: Physical, emotional, sexual or other violence that takes place between people who are related (family members, for example), romantically involved (living together, for example), or who had a significant relationship (an ex-boyfriend and ex-girlfriend, for example).

Physical abuse includes hitting, slapping, pushing, punching, withholding vital medicine, or refusing to help someone with a medical need. Actions such as throwing things through windows, breaking things, or threatening to shoot someone are a combination of physical and emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse includes screaming, threatening, constant criticism, threatening suicide, shunning, adultery, harassment or stalking.

Sexual abuse includes violent sex, constant nagging for sex, forcing someone to participate in pornography, forcing someone into prostitution, or forcing someone to participate in a sexual act they are not comfortable with.

There are many other possible forms of abuse that are sub-sets of the above definitions. One example is religious abuse (a sub-set of emotional abuse), in which the abuser uses religious sayings or stories to make the victim feel like a failure.

Also known as: Physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, child abuse, battering, beating. Examples: Although it is not commonly considered this way, adultery is a form of emotional abuse.

The above definition was taken from the following website:

<http://incestabuse.about.com/cs/domesticabuse/g/defdomestabuse.htm>

Procedure

If a person believes she or he is being physically, verbally, or psychologically abused by clergy, the person is urged to discuss the occurrence with:

- 1 First level of supervision not named in the accusation (i.e. SPRC Chairperson, Circuit Leader, District Superintendent, Assistant to the Bishop, Bishop).
- 2 Any level of leadership with whom she or he feels comfortable discussing the problem.

The Book of Discipline specifies the standards expected of United Methodists and the responsibilities to carry out these standards that lie in the hands of the congregations, clergy, church officers, district and conference structures, District Superintendents, and the Bishop. This responsibility to deal with the tragedy of domestic violence is shared widely across our church.

Investigation/Remediation Action

In Wisconsin, the Bishop and Cabinet have made it clear that they take ministry standards seriously. Thus, anyone from a family of a clergy person or conference certified personnel who would go to the Bishop and Cabinet with concerns about domestic abuse in their family can be confident that justice and healing will be faithfully pursued through a process that takes into consideration the victim(s), family and offender. Once an incident has been reported to civil authorities, then the issue is no longer in the hands of church authorities although they may choose to make a response.

Your Responsibility

It is your responsibility to:

- 1 Know, understand and comply with the policy;
- 2 Immediately report all behaviors that may be perceived as verbal, physical, sexual or psychological abuse in your domestic setting to the appropriate church authorities (see above);
- 3 Know your rights to report to civil authorities and seriously consider making a report when there is cause;
- 4 Avoid any conduct that can be construed as verbal, physical or psychological abuse; and
- 5 Discourage behavior in others that may be perceived as verbal, physical or psychological abuse.

Sexual Abuse and Harassment

Introduction

The United Methodist Church strives to provide an environment in all its agencies, subsidiaries, and activities that respects all people and is free from sexual abuse and sexual harassment.

Policy

It is the policy of The United Methodist Church to treat sexual abuse and sexual harassment as chargeable offenses as stated in the 2000 *Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 2072.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- 1 Provide all clergy, clergy spouses, staff, volunteers, members, vendors, consultants, contractors, etc., with an understanding of the position of The United Methodist Church as it relates to sexual abuse and sexual harassment.
- 2 Ensure that all persons associated with The UMC understand that sexual harassment is illegal and chargeable offenses by the 2000 *Book of Discipline*, paragraph 2072.
- 3 Provide an avenue for remedy to those who believe they are being or have been abused or harassed, and

- 4 Provide contacts for those clergy, clergy spouses, staff, volunteers and members who have concerns or questions regarding sexual abuse or sexual harassment.

Sexual misconduct is defined as "behavior of a sexualized nature that betrays sacred trust, violates the ministerial role, and exploits those who are vulnerable in that relationship."

Sexual abuse occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (lay or clergy, pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader, or other position of leadership) "engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, coworker, or volunteer." (2004 Book of Resolutions, p. 150-51)

Sexualized behavior is that which "communicates sexual interest and/or content. Examples include, but are not limited to, displaying sexually suggestive visual materials; making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another person's body; touching another person's body, hair, or clothing; touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person; kissing; and sexual intercourse." (2004 Book of Resolutions, p. 151)

Sexual harassment is defined as "a continuum of behaviors that intimidate, demean, humiliate, or coerce. These behaviors range from the subtle forms that can accumulate into a hostile working, learning, or worshipping environment to the most severe forms of stalking, assault, or rape." (2004 Book of Resolutions, p. 151)

Gender

Sexual abuse and sexual harassment are not gender specific. Abusers or harassers and their victims may be of either gender.

Procedure

If you believe you have been sexually abused or harassed by clergy or staff, vendor, consultant or contractor, discuss it with:

- 1 First level of supervision not named in the accusation (i.e. SPRC Chairperson, Circuit Leader, District Superintendent, Assistant to the Bishop, Bishop).
- 2 Any level of leadership with whom she or he feels comfortable discussing the problem.

The Book of Discipline specifies the standards expected of United Methodists and the responsibilities to carry out these standards that lie in the hands of the congregations, clergy, church officers, district and conference structures, District Superintendents, and the Bishop. This responsibility to deal with the tragedy of domestic violence is shared widely across our church.

Investigation/Remediation Action

In Wisconsin, the Bishop and Cabinet have made it clear that they take ministry standards seriously. Thus anyone from a family of a clergy person or conference certified personnel who would go to the Bishop and Cabinet with concerns about domestic abuse in their family can be confident that justice and healing will be faithfully pursued through a process that takes into consideration the victim(s), family and offender. Once an incident has been reported to civil authorities, then the issue is no longer in the hands of church authorities although they may choose to make a response.

Your Responsibility

It is your responsibility to:

- 1 Know, understand and comply with the policy;
- 2 Immediately report all behaviors that may be perceived as verbal, physical, sexual or psychological abuse in your domestic setting to the appropriate church authorities (See above);
- 3 Know your rights to report to civil authorities and seriously consider making a report when there is cause;
- 4 Avoid any conduct that can be construed as verbal, physical or psychological abuse; and,
- 5 Discourage behavior in others that may be perceived as verbal, physical or psychological abuse.

Related Publications and Programs

The following are related policies and procedures:

- 1 *The 2000 Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 161, sections A, C, F, H (and subsequent editions which are updated every four years).
- 2 Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) website:
[www. COSROW.org](http://www.COSROW.org)

You may reach the District Superintendents at the following Regional Offices:

- 1 Conference Center: 750 Windsor St., Sun Prairie;608-837-8526
- 2 Chippewa – Heartland Region: 1233B Menomonie St., Eau Claire; 715-835-5181
- 3 Metropolitan Region: 1442 North Farwell, Suite 402, Milwaukee; 414-271-5080
- 4 Nicolet-Winnebago Region: 1500 N. Casaloma Dr., Suite 409, Appleton; 920-991-0548

You may also contact the Assistant to the Bishop and the Bishop using the following methods:

Phone: 608-837-8526, 888-240-7328
Address: 750 Windsor St, Suite 303
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

I Suspect Substance Abuse

Introduction

The UMC is also concerned with those abusing alcohol and drugs. The church recognizes that devastation on all relationships and takes the stand that, “Drug-dependent persons and their family members are individuals of infinite human worth deserving of treatment, rehabilitation and ongoing life changing recovery. Misuse should be viewed as a symptom of an underlying disorder for which remedies should be sought. The UMC is committed to assisting those who have become dependent, and their families, in finding freedom through Jesus Christ and in finding good opportunities for treatment, for ongoing counseling and for reintegration into society” (The UMC Social Principles, 2001-2004, pgs. 24-25).

Policy

The policy of The United Methodist Church is to provide a church free of alcohol and drugs and to take reasonable measures to ensure that alcohol or drug use does not jeopardize the success and safety of its operations. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession or

use of a controlled substance by leadership, clergy or staff on property owned or leased by The UMC or in conjunction with UMC-sponsored activities is prohibited.

Purpose

The following information is designed to assist you in helping when you suspect that someone close to you has a problem with alcohol or other drugs. Sometimes, being a good parent, a loved one, a friend, a spouse, means you have to intervene; but before you get involved, it is important to understand what is going on with the person in question, the signs and symptoms of substance abuse and what to do if you suspect that someone you care about is abusing alcohol or other drugs.

Signs of Substance Abuse

Exhibiting one or more of the following warning signs may indicate that a person has a problem with alcohol or other drugs (This list is some of the warning signs but not all. If one is questioning substance abuse, one should talk to a trained professional for more information.):

- 1 Drinking and driving;
- 2 Feeling run-down, hopeless, depressed, or even suicidal;
- 3 Constantly talking about drinking or using other drugs;
- 4 Having blackouts – forgetting what she/he did the night before while drinking, laughing it off as no big deal or pretending to remember;
- 5 Pressuring others to drink or use drugs;
- 6 Taking risks, including sexual risks;
- 7 Lying about how much alcohol or other drugs he/she is using;
- 8 Avoiding you in order to get drunk or high;
- 9 Giving up activities he/she used to enjoy, i.e., sports, hanging out with friends who don't drink or use drugs;
- 10 Hiding alcohol;
- 11 Drinking or using other drugs alone;
- 12 Getting drunk or high on a regular basis;
- 13 Frequent hangovers.

What to Do if I Suspect My Loved One of Abusing Alcohol or Drugs

If you suspect your loved one of using illegal or illicit drugs or abusing alcohol, according to the U.S. Government Department of Health and Human Services Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, you should do the following:

- 1 Begin by asking him or her;
- 2 Try to remain calm, unemotional and factually honest when speaking about his/her behavior and its day-to-day consequences.
- 3 Get help for yourself. Talk to someone knowledgeable, that you trust, in private, about your loved one's alcohol and/or drug use.
- 4 Get professional advice and help from someone who both you and your loved one can trust and talk to about the problem; one who can provide support to both your loved one and you.
- 5 Establish and maintain a healthy atmosphere in the home, and try to include the

- alcohol/drug abuser in family life;
- 6 Explain to the other members of the family that alcoholism and other drug addiction is an illness.
 - 7 Encourage new interests and participate in leisure time activities that the person enjoys. Encourage him/her to see old friends.
 - 8 Be patient and live one day at a time. Alcoholism and other drug addiction generally take a long time to develop and recovery does not occur overnight. Try to accept setbacks and relapses with calmness and understanding.
 - 9 Refuse to ride with anyone who's been drinking or using other drugs.

If you decide to speak to your loved one, discuss the following with your advisor when considering what to do and how you can help:

- 1 Talk to your loved one when he/she is sober or "straight;"
- 2 Don't accuse him or her of being an alcoholic or drug addict;
- 3 Let him/her know that you are reading and learning about alcohol and other drug abuse, attending Al-Anon, Nar-Anon;
- 4 Ask if he/she is experiencing a problem;
- 5 Let them know what you suspect and why. Have a frank and open discussion;
- 6 Try not to blame him or her for the problem;
- 7 Talk about your feelings, how it feels for you to see him or her drunk or high on alcohol or other drugs;
- 8 Describe specific examples of the behavior you've witnessed while he/she was under the influence of alcohol or other drugs;
- 9 Be prepared for denial and anger. When confronted, many users will defend their use, blame others for the problem, or give excuses for why they drink or use other drugs;
- 10 Find out where help is available;
- 11 If you suspect he or she is less than truthful, ask him/her to voluntarily submit to a drug or alcohol test. (If he/she is not using, then there should be no objection.);
- 12 If he/she admits to using drugs or alcohol or you suspect that he/she is not forthcoming or is less than truthful, consult a professional and/or treatment center in your area;
- 13 Be aware that no matter what, in order to get better, the person in question has to admit that he/she has a problem and make an effort to get help.

What "Not" to Do If I Suspect My Loved One of Abusing Alcohol or Drugs

The U. S. Government Department of Health and Human Services Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse and Substance Abuse, and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, recommends that you should NOT do the following if you suspect your loved one of using illegal or illicit drugs or abusing alcohol:

- 1 Don't attempt to punish, threaten, bribe or preach;
- 2 Don't try to be a martyr;
- 3 Avoid emotional appeals that may only increase feelings of guilt and the compulsion to drink or use other drugs;
- 4 Don't cover up or make excuses for the alcoholic or drug addict or shield them from the realistic consequences of their behavior;
- 5 Don't take over their responsibilities, leaving them with no sense of importance or

dignity;

- 6 Don't hide or dump bottles, throw out drugs, or shelter them from situations where alcohol is present;
- 7 Don't drink or take drugs with the abuser;
- 8 Above all, don't feel guilty or responsible for another's behavior.

Procedure

If you suspect your clergy spouse of using illegal or illicit drugs or abusing alcohol, you are urged to discuss the occurrence with:

- 1 First level of supervision not named in the accusation (i.e., SPRC Chairperson, Circuit Leader, District Superintendent, Assistant to the Bishop, Bishop).
- 2 Any level of leadership with whom he or she feels comfortable discussing the problem.

The Book of Discipline specifies the standards expected of United Methodists and the responsibilities to carry out these standards that lie in the hands of the congregations, clergy, church officers, district and conference structures, District Superintendents, and the Bishop. This responsibility to deal with the tragedy of alcohol and/or drug abuse is shared widely across our church.

Investigation/Remediation Action

In Wisconsin, the Bishop and Cabinet have made it clear that they take ministry standards seriously. Thus, anyone from a family of a clergy person or conference certified personnel who would go to the Bishop and Cabinet with concerns about alcohol and/or drug abuse in their family can be confident that justice and healing will be faithfully pursued through a process that takes into consideration the victim(s), family and offender. Once an incident has been reported to civil authorities, then the issue is no longer in the hands of the church authorities although they may choose to make a response.

Your Responsibility

It is your responsibility to:

- 1 Know, understand and comply with the policy;
- 2 Immediately report all behaviors that may be perceived as using illegal or illicit drugs or abusing alcohol;
- 3 Know your rights to report to civil authorities and seriously consider making a report when there is cause.

Related Publications and Programs

The following are related policies and procedures:

- 1 *The Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 161, sections A, C, F, H (and subsequent editions which are updated every four years).
- 2 Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) website:
[www. COSROW.org](http://www.COSROW.org)

You may reach the District Superintendents at the following Regional Offices:

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You may also contact the Assistant to the Bishop and the Bishop using the following methods:

Phone: 608-837-8526, 888-240-7328
Address: 750 Windsor St, Suite 303
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

Resources (Margaret, I have not tried these numbers. Can you? Billy Labomba at the Conference office may have some other good ideas about this, says Jane Zecoff)
The following referral numbers or agencies may be helpful:

- 1 The U. S. Government Department of Health and Human Services Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse (for treatment center referral numbers and for printed materials on the subject), 800-662-4357 or www.health.org.
- 2 National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA), 301-468-0985 or 888-554-COAS or www.nacoa.org
- 3 National Association for the Native American Children of Alcoholics (NANACoA) 206-903-6574.
- 4 Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco (LCAT), 202-265-8054.
- 5 National Black Alcoholism Council (NBAC), 202-296-2696
- 6 National Rural Institute on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, c/o Stout Solutions, Continuing Education University of Wisconsin, Stout, 715-232-2693.

Afterward

This is a handbook for Non-Clergy Women and Men who are the Spouses of Clergy in the Wisconsin Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. That's a mouthful, but members of the Minister's Mates group in our conference became aware that the spouses of our many of the clergy entering our Conference in recent years seemed unprepared for their new situation. This was not limited to spouses of younger seminary graduates, but also true for the non-clergy spouses of second-career clergy. They saw continuing need to provide mutual support among our clergy spouses as well as a reaching out to those who have recently become clergy spouses in our conference. That led to the formation of the Clergy Spouse Support Network (CSSN) within the Minister's Mates. (See the description of the creation of CSSN, in the Appendix on Communication and Mental Health, section Finding Help for Specific Crisis, 4.c.)

The CSSN leadership team agreed with the idea that a clergy spouse should be recruited to serve as a contact person in each of the 50+ Clergy Circuits within the Wisconsin Conference. When they became aware of a need, they would be able to forward it to the CSSN. That led almost immediately to the need for a current resource & referral list.

The lists of agencies and references in our 1991 handbook were out of date and limited. Handbooks from other conferences were excellent in many respects, but obviously shaped or limited by their local conference traditions and situations. It became apparent that an updated handbook would make a support network much more effective. Moreover, since the Wisconsin Annual Conference has achieved nearly universal Internet access for our clergy, the economic and access benefits of an electronic handbook are persuasive. Therefore, our solution has been to try to provide guidance to the unique and current issues affecting clergy spouses and clergy families in the Wisconsin Conference while pointing to helpful resources available elsewhere.

We urge all clergy spouses to find and give sufficient attention to these sections to at least be aware of what is covered in each one. Don't count on members of the congregation to know that information or call it to your attention.