

New England Conference of the United Methodist Church

Clergy Spouse Field Guide: A Handbook for the Journey

When you turn to the right or when you turn to the left,
your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Isaiah 30:21

Introduction

I am a backyard birdwatcher. Generally I recognize all the birds that come to my feeders, but every now and then I see one that I cannot identify. When this happens, I go straight to my *Birds of North America Field Guide*. A few minutes of study in this book tells me what kind of bird I'm looking at and gives me information about its habitat and feeding habits. It's a great book and I keep it on a bookshelf near the window so I can always put my hands on it.

This *Clergy Spouse Field Guide* was written expressly for you - and other clergy spouses of the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church - to provide information that we think might be helpful to you. It contains materials written by clergy spouses of our Conference, and we have also included information from the Clergy Spouse Handbooks of the Wisconsin and Virginia Annual Conferences. We have addressed needs and concerns identified by clergy spouses in our Conference, and we hope that you will want to keep this *Field Guide* handy and turn to it often as a source of information and encouragement.

Please feel free to contact me with your concerns, corrections, and updates to the information in this *Guide*. If there is something additional that you would like to see included in next year's edition, please let me know. This is a work in progress, evolving to meet the changing needs of our clergy families. We have chosen a loose-leaf notebook format so that as new information becomes available, you can easily remove and add pages, keeping the *Guide* fresh and up to date.

I pray that this *Field Guide* will be a blessing to you and your family.

Shalom,

Colleen

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Wellness and Spiritual Self-Care

First of all, we want to encourage you to focus on your own wellness and self-care. As Christians we are taught to love others as we love ourselves, and if we do not lovingly care for ourselves, we may find ourselves burned out, resentful, and perhaps even physically ill. The concept of wellness relates to all aspects of human life—mind, body and spirit. The following observations and suggestions address ways for clergy spouses to foster and maintain good mental, physical, and spiritual.

Areas of Wellness

1. Spiritual Formation

Clergy spouses, like others today in our busy culture, may find it difficult to observe Sabbath time. We often have to set aside time other than on 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). It helps to choose a spot in your home to serve as a sacred place for personal reflection and time with God. Begin and/or end each day with a quiet time, if you can, or set aside some other time that works for you. You might use this time to journal or study the Bible or read. Many of us find meditation helpful. Focusing on our breath 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 whatever negative thought we need to release.

2. Family Time and Couple Time

Clergy families often find it challenging to set aside time for the family and for themselves as a couple. With work, meetings, visiting, and school schedules, it may be difficult to schedule one meal a day when the whole family is together. Yet weekly family meetings are essential for talking through the issues that are important to each family member. Allow family members, from the youngest to the oldest, to take turns leading the family meetings. Encourage everyone to give the designated leader their concerns ahead of time so that he/she can create an agenda. Include prayer at meals and family meetings, and encourage each family member, even the very young, to take a turn at offering prayer. Open lines of communication established early on will increase the likelihood that your teenager will discuss concerns with you. Parsonage families are not immune to drug and alcohol abuse, sexual experimentation, and depression. Listen with empathy and establish yourself as someone who will give honest answers to their questions.

As for your couple relationship, think back to when you and your spouse were dating. What kinds of fun things did you do together? How did you get to know each other? Don't assume that because you are married you know everything you need to know about each other. People are dynamic, changing from day to day, and it is important to keep up with what each other is thinking and feeling. Regular fun dates, when you relax and just enjoy being together, make it easier to share thoughts and feelings. Then when you have an issue to discuss, plans to be made, or a conflict to resolve, you will have a base of connection that will help you listen to and

understand each other and work for win/win solutions. This works for families, too. Play together, and pray together, to build a healthy relationship.

“Paul, in his first letter to Timothy (3: 4-5, 12), advises church leaders to care for their families and to be attentive to their children. Like it or not, the clergy family serves as a role model for the congregation and community. Furthermore, an unhappy and unhealthy home life drains a pastor’s energy and detracts from his or her ability to minister effectively. Clergy families do not need to be perfect (a myth that negatively impacts life in many parsonages), but hopefully they relate to each other with genuine love, forgiveness, and supportive care, responding constructively to whatever life brings and asking for help when they need it.” [from “Strengthening Clergy Families” by Jane P. Ives, United Methodist Marriage and Family Ministries Consultant (see Appendix F, page 46)]

3. Physical Exercise

Like everyone else, clergy spouses need regular exercise. Whether you get your exercise by walking, swimming, or going to a local gym, the important thing is to exercise faithfully, following your doctor’s recommendations. Find a regimen that works for you and do it. If you need encouragement, look for someone to be your exercise buddy, preferably someone who can serve as an accountability partner for this discipline.

4. Self-Care

Clergy spouses can easily get into a pattern of working all the time, as do clergy who tend toward workaholicism and who follow their passion for ministry into a vocation with undesignated time limits and unlimited things to do. This can result in burnout, and spouses may contribute to such a pattern as well. (See “Marriage and Family Ministries Begin at Home” in Appendix F for Margaret Stockwell’s story.)

Because we cannot hold others responsible for our 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, or something else that engages us, involving ourselves in activities outside the parish will replenish and revitalize us. Wholeness of life depends greatly on nurturing ourselves spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Because ministry involves us in extending so much of ourselves for others, we need to be intentional about self-nurturing and balance in order to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

5. Vacation

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

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

When your spouse is the pastor, it may be difficult to build relationships with members of the congregation. There are differing thoughts about whether we should even try to develop friendships within the congregation. Some believe that deeper levels of clergy and spouse friendships should be sought only outside of the parish and that friendships within the church should be considered very carefully. You will naturally be drawn into closer friendships with those with whom you have much in common and with whom you feel you can be your authentic self. We encourage you to enjoy that when it happens, and at the same time to be mindful of others who might feel excluded or neglected. Making friends in the community, with persons not involved in your church, is a great way to expand your connections and to learn more about the community itself. If you work, that may happen naturally, or you might seek out a Newcomers Club, Garden Club, or other such group of interest.

7. Support and Counseling

Sometimes we need professional care and sometimes we just need someone to talk to. Our New England 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. A list is also available at www.neumc.org/marriageandfamily.

Lay people rely on their pastor for spiritual nurture and for guidance in both everyday and challenging situations. These include illness of an individual or of a family member; death of parents, grandparents, or other significant persons; the loss of a job; problems with children; spiritual crises; loneliness; relationship difficulties; anger and depression. It is unrealistic to expect the minister to serve as pastor to his or her own family, especially when that interferes with the role of husband, wife, or parent. Many spouses and their children feel that the pastor in the family deals wonderfully with everyone else's crises, but when the parsonage family is struggling, that pastor may not seem to have enough time or emotional energy for them. Often, too, the clergy may be overwhelmed by his/her own emotions during a family crisis. After all, it is easier and less threatening to deal with the problems of others than with one's own. Clergy spouses need someone outside the family to turn to during these trying times. Over the years, spouses who feel abandoned and isolated can become increasingly angry and resentful toward not only the clergy person, but also toward ministry as a profession. The clergy spouse may need to be proactive in seeking his/her own spiritual pastor. Here are some suggestions:

District Superintendent: Unfortunately, clergy and clergy spouses may hesitate to share personal and family concerns with those who may be involved in the clergy person's next appointment. Certainly, however, the district superintendent can help with crises that involve sickness and death and should be able to recommend resources for marital, financial, and parenting support.

Another Minister: Other clergy and/or clergy spouses may become your natural confidants. Clergy may feel uncomfortable having family secrets told to another minister, however, especially if confidentiality is not assured. Confiding in another clergy person might cause some tension, but designating someone to serve as your "pastor" may be essential to your personal and spiritual health. If you are fortunate enough to live near a clergy person you were close to in your youth, he/she may be someone you can confide in. If you select a clergy person

to be your pastor, let your spouse know who it is and confirm that all you share will be held in confidence.

Church Member: Usually we want church members to think highly of us. When there are troubles in the parsonage family, we naturally tend to want to keep them private, even though we know every family has its ups and downs. Actually you may find that sharing your struggles (with the permission of the family members involved) may strengthen your ministry, as you demonstrate your acceptance of the facts that life inevitably brings challenges and that you are not immune just because you live in a parsonage.

If you are fortunate enough to find a soul sister/brother within your congregation, nurture that relationship discreetly, to avoid causing other members of the congregation to feel left out. Often it is after you have moved away from a church that this type of relationship really blossoms, although we must always be careful not to interfere in the ministry of the pastor who follows us. Close personal relationships are very important to our emotional well-being.

Other Clergy Spouses: Because their experiences may be similar to yours, other clergy spouses may offer the most understanding! These friendships 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 clergy spouses' gatherings. Take time to find a kindred spirit among this group and you can develop a special life-long relationship throughout your life. Clergy and their spouses also benefit from relationships with other couples who share the same vocation.

Retired Minister Friend: This is a very viable option. If you don't already know one, choose someone with whom to cultivate a friendship. The experience and wisdom of retirees is invaluable, and their guidance reaches beyond age boundaries.

Associate Minister: If you are in a large church with an associate minister, or if you are married to the associate; the other partner of the ministerial team could serve as your pastor. This can be a convenient and rewarding relationship.

Sections adapted from Virginia Annual Conference *Thrival Kit* and the
Handbook of the Clergy Spouse Support Network of Ministers' Mates of the Wisconsin UMC
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Mentoring Program

Our Clergy Spouse mentoring program, which pairs retired and active clergy spouses, is based on the belief that we all can benefit from the wisdom of those who have been around the block a few more times than we have. There are times in our lives when we have doubts about ourselves and our role as clergy spouses. Certainly we all need an encouraging word and a reminder that we are not alone in our Christian walk. A mentor can offer that word and be a companion on our journey. She or he can serve as a compassionate listener, validate our concerns, ask thought-provoking questions, and offer both biblical guidance and practical suggestions.

The goal of this program is to build Christian relationships between clergy spouses. If you are interested in participating in this mentoring program please contact the NEUMC Conference Clergy Spouse Coordinator. This contact information is available in Appendix A.

written by Colleen Williams

Dealing with Expectations

Historically, a woman has been defined by her husband's career. Today, although the clergy's spouse is not expected to be an assistant pastor, many churches cherish their clergy spouse stereotypes and have certain expectations. Perhaps because female clergy are somewhat new on the scene in some places, male clergy spouses may not be subject to the same expectations. They may, however, have employment issues and long-standing involvement in hobbies, organizations or activities that don't quite meet a congregation's expectations. 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 automobiles, show proper respect to the UMW President, or offer to pray for meals at various occasions.

In some situations the clergy spouse is hired as a full- or part-time employee of the church. However, when the clergy spouse is not a church employee, there is no job description. Technically, "clergy spouse" is a marital status. What we do will be directed by our socialization, our sense of identity, and our feelings about ourselves and others. If we are clear who we are and the roles we choose to play, we will find it easier to respond to the expectations of others. Consider the following questions. What do you feel *obligated* to do? What do you *choose* to do as an expression of your individual personhood and calling? Will you join your spouse's church and make vows "to uphold the church with prayers, presence, gifts, and service?" How driven are you by a need to please or by a fear of rejection? What is *fair*? How do you support your spouse's clergy career, and how do you expect to be supported in yours? How can you learn about a new congregation's characteristics and needs and expectations? How do you recognize God working through you and directing your life? How do you want your children to interact with the congregation? How can the congregation help you and your family grow? What uniqueness do you have to offer the world? How can you become all that God wants you to be? Working through your own perceptions and attitudes will help you be more confident when relating to others.

Some people perceive New England as a geographic area that does not welcome outsiders. Perhaps you have experienced this. Some communities with a history of little change are established in their ways, and they know exactly what to expect from each other. They are comfortable in their ways, proud of their families, and likely to monitor each other's behavior. When a majority of residents have been born in the community and are inter-related, they may see the new clergy family as being "from away." If you experience yourselves as outsiders, be patient and do not take it personally. Time is necessary for trust to grow. Pray that your love and understanding will help you become a part of their history and uniqueness.

Clergy spouses are sometimes frustrated because of our indirect involvement in church business. It is not our role to interfere in our spouse's job, but we will inevitably overhear conversations or be told things about which we will have to decide whether or not to react or whether to pass along to our spouse. Parishioners may expect that you know about matters they have confided in the pastor, but if you are genuinely surprised and can honestly say you know nothing, their trust in the pastor will increase.

As public figures, clergy work with many different kinds of people and will inevitably encounter persons who disagree with them over issues both important and trivial. Some of these people

may be emotional and reactive. Persons in a public position can expect to be attacked, and that is particularly difficult when it comes from people influential in the congregation and community. When that happens, attend to your own spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. Support your spouse at home. Be positive in public. If possible, connect with another clergy family who can offer support and encouragement and recreational release from the pressures you feel.

Churches have their own personalities and behavior patterns, and some are dysfunctional. Sometimes it is best to wait out a crisis, and sometimes confrontation is the only solution. Sometimes outside intervention is needed. You will need to utilize negotiation skills and practice compromise. Programs like Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication can help you hone those skills and teach others as well. (See "Cultivating Compassionate Connection" in Appendix F, page 49)

If your parsonage is located within sight of the church building, you may have less privacy than if you live farther away. Some congregations may have a history of holding meetings in the parsonage or dropping in whenever they please. Draw whatever boundaries are comfortable for you and be as rigorous in defining your space as you need to be, while at the same time practicing hospitality in ways that work for you. If you have a housing allowance, you can choose your own home. If you live in a parsonage, consider it your home. (See "Your Home" on page 10)

Becoming involved in the larger community expands your network beyond the church walls. The Garden Club and the PTA are always looking for new members. Joining organizations such as these helps you meet others with similar interests and also helps you feel at home and establish roots in a new community. Libraries are great resources for folks who are new to their communities. Some even have free or discounted passes to local museums and attractions that can be checked out on your library card just like a book. Ask at the desk and see what your library has to offer.

One helpful tool for learning to relate to your congregation in healthy ways is *Tending the Fire*. This program is offered for Clergy and for Clergy Spouses through the Preachers' Aid Society in New England. This program can help you understand why your church acts as it does and offers you healthy ways to interact with its members. Contact the Preachers' Aid Society for more information on this invaluable program.

Sections adapted from Virginia Annual Conference *Thrival Kit* and the *Handbook of the Clergy Spouse Support Network of Ministers' Mates* of the Wisconsin UMC - Used by permission

Your Home

It is the responsibility of the church to provide adequate and safe housing or a housing allowance for its appointed pastor and his or her family. In the case of a parsonage, the church is expected to provide a home that meets certain minimum standards as set forth by the NEUMC. These parsonage guidelines, accepted at the 2011 Annual Conference and still in use, are contained in Resolution #120 and can be found in the Conference Journal and on line at www.neumc.org. A copy of that Resolution and guidelines is also included in Appendix B on page 34 of this *Field Guide*.

Parsonage Living

The parsonage you live in is your home. The United Methodist Church (not the local church) owns the property, the house, and the land that accompanies it. It is your home and not an extension of the church building. Should you choose to open your doors to church meetings or Bible study groups, that is your privilege. Before you go down this path, however, take time to consider appropriate boundaries for your family, your time, and your personal space. Hosting gatherings in your home should not intrude on family members' privacy and needs for personal space. You do not have to host meetings in the parsonage just because the previous minister did so.

It is up to you to be a good steward of the parsonage and its outdoor space. In conjunction with your church's Trustees and SPRC, decide who is responsible for snow removal and lawn maintenance. Seeking the approval of the Trustees to put in a garden or plant trees is not required, but will engender good will and might get you some helpful input. Be sure to contact local utilities before you dig to make sure that you are not planting your hydrangea bush right where the water line comes into the house.

The church is responsible for an annual inspection of the parsonage, and it is in your best interest to insist that they do this. As the months go by you will notice non-emergency items that need attention from the Trustees. Write these items down so that you have a list ready for the inspection. You can print a blank copy of the *Annual Parsonage Inspection Statement* from the NEUMC website. A copy of this form is also located in Appendix C on page 41. This form can serve as the basis for your list. As you walk through the house with the inspection committee, point out your concerns. When the inspection is completed, make certain that your concerns are included in the report.

Parsonage inspections should bookend your stay in the house. If possible, ask the church to inspect the parsonage with you before you move in and make sure that obvious flaws/defects, such as chipped countertops or stained carpets, are noted on the *Inspection Statement*. It may be helpful to take photos of any problem areas and include these with the *Inspection Statement*. In the same way, as you prepare to leave, ask for an official walk-through and compare the condition of the home as you leave to its condition when you arrived.

There will be times when you and the Trustees will disagree. Only you can decide which battles are worth fighting and which ones are best let go.

Ask the Trustees for a list of names and numbers to call in the case of a broken pipe or some other parsonage emergency. It is your responsibility to alert the Trustees in a timely fashion if emergency repairs are needed. It's also important that you know the location of the main circuit breaker and the water and gas shutoff valves.

When it is time for you to move, it is your responsibility to leave the parsonage clean and junk-free. If you or your pets have caused damage to the home, you are responsible for repairs. These need to be done before you leave your home. Just as it is your responsibility to leave the parsonage clean when you move out, it is your right to expect a clean, habitable parsonage in your new locale.

It is always thoughtful to give the incoming pastoral family information about your community and its services. A note left on the kitchen counter for the new family could include such information as the day of trash/recycling pick-up, recycling regulations, names and numbers of nearby neighbors, a school calendar, names and numbers of doctors and dentists, and the farmer's market dates and locations. Anything that you can do to make their transition easier will be a blessing to them.

written by Colleen Williams

Moving

Usually clergy officially begin a new appointment on July 1; your actual moving date, however, will need to be negotiated with the outgoing minister and the churches. Since the church might want to take advantage of the time that the parsonage is unoccupied between ministers to do repairs or painting, they need to know your predecessor's moving date and the date that you plan to move in.

Although the church to which you are moving will pay for your move, the clergy family is responsible for making its own moving arrangements. It's a good idea to get quotations from at least two moving companies to present to the SPRC of the church to which you are moving. When the SPRC has given you the green light and approved one of your movers, you can set your move date with the moving company. At this time you can talk with the company about boxes and packing supplies. Used moving boxes are often available through the moving company, usually at a significant discount over new boxes. You can also buy boxes at stores like the Home Depot or COSTCO. Most moving companies do not want you to use odds and ends of boxes like those you might get at the grocery store because they are difficult to pack efficiently into the truck and they might not have the integrity to hold up under pressure. You are responsible for packing your belongings, since our Conference moving policy does not include packing services. You may hire professional packers, with the understanding that you will have to pay them. The moving company will provide you with moving tips and a list of items, such as flammables and caustic materials, which are not allowed to go in the truck.

You may elect to bypass moving companies and do a self-move. Again, you need to set the move-in date and reserve a truck or van. This option will undoubtedly save money for the church, not all families can manage this.

Start packing your belongings well ahead of your anticipated moving date. Packing generally takes longer than you expect, and no one wants the stress of being up all night in a frantic effort to be ready for the movers' arrival the next morning. Packing provides you with the opportunity to take stock of your possessions and perhaps divest yourself of excess baggage. An advance visit to the new parsonage will help you decide what to keep, assign rooms, and plan furniture arrangements so that things can be moved into the right space. A pre-move yard sale to get rid of unwanted items has the benefits of giving you a few extra dollars in your pocket and a few less boxes to pack.

Mark your boxes carefully as you pack so that you know what is in them when you arrive at your new house. When you need a can opener that first night in your new house, rummaging through twenty boxes marked "Kitchen Miscellaneous" will not put you in a happy frame of mind.

Another way to make your life easier is to pack "First Night" boxes. Pack each bed's linens into its own box, along with its pillow(s), favorite teddy bear, bedtime storybook, nightlight, nightclothes, towels and washcloths. This will help you have a good night's sleep amidst the chaos of the move. Mark the boxes "First Night" and make sure that they get to the correct rooms and are easily accessible.

When moving day comes and the movers start loading your things into the truck, you can vacuum/sweep each room as it is emptied. That way, when the moving truck pulls away from the curb and the house is completely empty, your final cleanup will go much faster. Once the house is clean and you are ready to go, do a final walk-through, opening all drawers and doors to make sure that you haven't left anything behind. Then leave all keys and your note of welcome to the new parsonage family on the counter. It's time to say good-bye and start out on your new adventure.

Arrange with your new SPRC ahead of time for a way to get into your new home. They may leave a key at the church or have someone waiting to greet you when you arrive. While the house is empty, do a walk through, preferably with a member of the inspection team. Jot down your impressions of the house and take pictures of any areas that need work. Before your belongings are delivered, take some time to pray over your new place, over the house and the surrounding property. Ask God's blessing on you and your family and on all who will enter your home. Pray that in your new home, love will guide your thoughts, words, and actions and that God will be honored in all that takes place within its walls.

written by Colleen Williams

When a Move Affects Your Career

Ministry in the United Methodist Church involves itinerancy and requires periodic moves to different locations. Spouses often experience career and job challenges and may end up under-employed or even unemployed. This can create problems for families dependent on two incomes, as well as for the spouse who wants to continue in his or her chosen career. Yet sometimes a move that appears to be a sacrifice for the spouse may result in new opportunities. It helps to trust in God, set clear 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 that God will bless our ventures into the unknown of each move. Even with this comforting thought in mind, we still need to discuss practical issues and make decisions.

Discuss your 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 do 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.

Flexibility helps. With dual careers, employment in the same geographic area is not always possible and compromise may be necessary. One spouse may end 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 for a time. Some live apart for part of the time. Some are able to work at home.

When you are job-hunting during a move with your spouse to a new appointment, feel free to draw on church members for support. The SPRC knows the community. Give them your resume and enlist their support in your search.

Accepting a new job may require learning new skills and adjusting to a new environment and co-workers. You may need to modify family roles and responsibilities to accommodate new job expectations. Be ready to deal with stress from these changes. Since taking a pay cut or being unemployed reduces income, you may need to review your expenses and find ways to scale back your spending. Do not give up searching for more appropriate employment. Dual careers present challenges. Try to think of a move as a forced opportunity, a time to pray for God to reveal your next step.

Credit to: Report on Dual-Career Survey, Laurie McNeil and Marc Sher. *The Dual Career Family*, 1969, Rapaport and Rapaport from the *Handbook of the Clergy Spouse Support Network of Ministers' Mates* of the Wisconsin United Methodist Church - Used by permission

Interstate Moves

The challenge of moving from one state to another is unique to just a handful of UM Conferences in the United States. We in New England are part of that exclusive group. While interstate moves provide opportunities for new cultural experiences, they also offer challenges to the pastoral family. The following paragraphs are designed to help you navigate through the processes involved in interstate moves.

Once you cross state lines, you and your spouse and any children with driver's licenses will need to visit the local Department of Motor Vehicles to get licenses for the new state. You will need to review the state-specific driver's manual and motor vehicle laws. While you are at the DMV, you can pay the excise tax (if applicable) and re-register your cars, motorcycles, and any additional vehicles. Please be sure to take all necessary paperwork, including proof of your identity and residence, with you to facilitate the process. Some states require car inspections prior to registration; others require registration before inspection; others only require emissions testing. You will also need to contact your insurance companies to see if you need different policies (for your vehicles and possessions) for your new state of residence. After your move you will also need to obtain new hunting and fishing licenses.

To best prepare yourself for the changes that are coming your way, as soon as you find out that you will be moving to another state, go to that state's web site and familiarize yourself with its DMV requirements. Make sure that you will be able to easily get your hands on such things as the titles to vehicles and current insurance information once you are in your new home. As a rule you will have thirty (30) days from your move-in date to take care of licenses and registration.

Another consideration in moving across state lines involves the possible need to be re-certified or re-licensed to work in that new state. For example, some states do not recognize certifications such as those for Certified Nurse's Assistants from other states. Recertification can be expensive, but often your new employer will pick up the cost if you agree to work for them for a given period of time. Information on recertification and re-licensure can be found on state web sites under agency headings such as Department of Health or Department of Education.

Please go to the following web sites for updated state government information.

www.ct.gov/dmv
www.maine.gov
www.vermont.gov

www.nh.gov
www.ri.gov
www.mass.gov

written by Colleen Williams

Good Transitions

When you leave an appointment, you can help welcome the incoming pastoral family to your community by providing them with up-to-date local information. Find out what the SPRC plans to do, and if they are not already doing so, stop by your local chamber of commerce or visitor's information center and pick up brochures describing local places of interest, such as historical sites, museums, and other attractions. Leave these brochures for the incoming family along with maps of your community and state, a calendar of community events, brochures about the community, and information about municipal and medical services. The incoming family will appreciate a list of names, addresses, and phone numbers of nearby neighbors and church members.

If you live in a parsonage, you will want to leave a packet of information about the parsonage itself. This should include appliance manuals and warranties, dates of repairs, and maintenance information such as the date of the most recent chimney or furnace cleaning. Whenever a new appliance is purchased for the parsonage, write the name of the supplier and date of purchase on the brochure accompanying the appliance. Staple the receipt and warranty information to the brochure. Such an appliance journal may be beneficial for years to come. List the locations of the gas and water main shut-offs, as these are best learned in a non-crisis situation. Also, consider labeling the circuit box switches or encourage the Trustees to do this. You will also want to list contact information for electricians, plumbers, and other service persons or companies that have worked on the parsonage.

A great way to help the new clergy family to get to know your congregation is to annotate a church directory, especially a picture directory, with information such as committee responsibilities, family relationships, special skills, etc. It can be helpful to know who your Trustees are and who in the congregation is a good carpenter and who would be glad to come to the parsonage to rototill the garden!

For the clergy family, the transition from one church to another is challenging and filled with concerns about the unknown. Any way that you can ease the next clergy family's transition into your community will be appreciated.

written by Colleen Williams

Multi-Point Charges

My spouse has been in the ministry since 1987, and all but two of our appointments have been to multi-point charges. Our first appointment was during seminary and thankfully was only to only one church, which was challenge enough to balance along with school and family. Our next four appointments were to multi-point charges, nine different churches in all over a span of twenty years. Our current appointment is our first single church charge since seminary. My spouse is also a Naval Reserve chaplain, and that really could be considered another charge! Needless to say, I have had a lot of experience in multi-point charges, and I am happy to share what I learned and how I handled being the spouse of a pastor who served more than one church at a time.

A multi-point charge usually consists of two or three churches that are served by the same pastor; however I know someone whose spouse served seven churches at a time! One of the biggest decisions you have to make when your spouse serves a multi-point charge is which church to attend. In all of our appointments, the parsonage was close to the biggest church of the charge. Early in our ministry, when we had three young children, I decided to worship regularly at the church that had Sunday school, which was also the largest church on the charge. When there was no Sunday school, I would alternate between the churches with our children in tow. When they were older and no longer had Sunday school available for them, we would usually alternate churches each week. When they were old enough to stay home on their own, I would still alternate between services and allow them to choose for themselves which service to attend. On special Sundays, I normally attended both services. The parishioners loved to have me and the children present, yet they understood why I did not always worship with them. Decide for yourself what is best for your family. Do try to be present once in a while at each church so that they all may get to know the parsonage family and so that you can get to know them as well.

A multi-point charge means multiple meetings. Each church usually has its own meetings of the Administrative Board and Trustees, as well as of other groups, which means double meetings for your spouse. Since those are usually in the evening, they take away from family time, which can be stressful. Being a pastor is not a 9-5, 5 days-a-week job. Pastors are likely to be called away from home when it is not convenient. This means the parsonage family must be flexible, but you may also need to insist that your spouse take time for the family. Over the years our churches were very supportive of family time, and my husband was able to carve out time to be present at events in which our children participated, such as scouts and sports. Figure out what is most important for your family. Even though you will sometimes need to be flexible, you can build strong family bonds, give yourselves and your children the gift of parental presence and attention, and – not incidentally – model for your congregation the importance of family life.

written by Joan Farrar

When You Are Both Clergy Spouses

The phone rings, and you answer it. "Is Reverend Anderson there?" You reply, "Which one?" Such a telephone interchange is not uncommon in two-clergy households. It comes with the territory, whether your spouse works as a hospital chaplain - as mine did - or serves a local church. A more uncommon scenario, but one which illustrates the challenges of being a clergy couple, is what happened when I met with the Staff Parish Relationship Committee of the church to which I was being newly appointed. Several of the parishioners knew my husband from his ministry at the local hospital. When they heard that Reverend Anderson was going to be their new pastor, they expected him. Seeing me walk through the door was a surprise for a few!

When you are both clergy and clergy spouse, maintaining your own identity is an on-going process. You need to be clear about what ministry and gifts of ministry belong to you and which belong to your clergy spouse. I didn't ask my husband to preach for me, and he didn't ask me to be on-call for him; yet he helped facilitate a program on advanced directives for the church, and I participated in a panel discussion at the hospital. We could be supportive of each other's ministries while being clear about what we didn't feel comfortable doing.

My husband's chaplaincy work was Monday through Friday with occasional on-call nights and weekends. My work as pastor of a church was Tuesday through Sunday with evening meetings and occasional weddings, funerals, and hospital emergencies. He had weekends off, and I took Mondays off. In many ways, the issue of time off together was no different for us than it is for a clergy person whose spouse works in a secular weekday job. Sitting down with our calendars and planning for time off together usually helped us avoid conflicts in our schedules, like the time Raymond planned a romantic Valentine's Day get-away for a night when I had already agreed to perform a wedding! Consider a weekly "date night." One couple I know said that their date nights saved their marriage.

Having the church office in the parsonage was a mixed blessing. I didn't have to go very far for work - and I didn't have to go very far for work! When your office is in your home, setting boundaries around work and home/family is not always easy. We made it a practice to let the answering machine take calls when we were having meals. I held counseling sessions and most meetings at the church. Now that my husband is retired and I serve in an extension ministry, my office is still in my home, and the temptation is still there to blur the line between work and time off.

Once we started a family, we had to negotiate the whole new world of parenting responsibilities. When our daughter was an infant, it made sense for me to be the primary caregiver at home. She went with me on visits, to the school where I taught a class, to meetings, and even to a funeral. As she got older, my husband took her to day care near the hospital where he worked. Things got a little more complicated when we had to negotiate whose schedule could accommodate a sick child at home and, when both our children were school age, how to share responsibilities during school vacations.

Being both a clergyperson and a clergy spouse is an on-going process of defining and maintaining appropriate boundaries around your individual ministries, your work time, your Sabbath/play

time, your church, and your home life. Sharing a profession is a wonderful opportunity for mutual growth and support. To be sure, this journey comes with personal and professional challenges, but a healthy sense of humor and the ability to communicate openly and honestly with each other can help make this life of ministry and marriage a wonderful and exciting experience.

written by the Rev. Catherine Anderson, Director of Pastoral Care, Preachers' Aid Society

Second (or Third or Fourth) Career Ministry

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the median age of theological students. As in no other time in the history of the United Methodist Church, ministers are coming out of seminary and entering parish ministry with years of experience in other fields and little experience as clergypersons. Their spouses are also coming into the parish with years of experience as lay folk in the church, but little or no experience as a clergy spouse.

Coming into the role of a clergy spouse in your third or fourth or fifth decade is challenging, to be sure, but so is stepping into any new role, regardless of your age. The best advice that I received as a new clergy spouse was to be myself and do the things that I was feeling called to do, regardless of the expectations of the local church. That's good advice for everyone. We all need to find our way in the local church and decide where and how to use our energy.

That said, there are certain concerns that are particular to the second career clergy families. For example, there are significant financial questions that you and your spouse need to address as you move forward into ministry. Do you already own a home? Are you paying a mortgage on a home that is far from where your spouse is appointed? Do you plan to keep your home as an investment and a place to retire, or will you rent or even sell it? Are you in debt? How much? If you need to get your finances under control, there are various programs to help you manage your money and get out of debt. Dave Ramsey's *Financial Peace University* and the *Good Cents* program put out by Word Press are two excellent resources. You can find information on these programs in Appendix D.

The appointment system is not always friendly to career-building for the clergy spouse. As mentioned in the Interstate Moves section of this *Field Guide*, moving from one area to another may mean that you will need to be re-licensed or re-certified in order to continue doing the job that you have been doing. Relocating can bring frustrations and pave the way for financial setbacks. It can also open the door to new opportunities, maybe even greater than you ever imagined. Sometimes it takes trials to shake us out of our comfortable roles and into exciting, uncharted territory. When looked at in this light, every new appointment can be an adventure.

Entering ministry as a middle-aged person may impact your retirement situation. Look carefully at the Conference information to get an understanding of the retirement benefits to which your spouse will be entitled. Remember that it is never too late to start putting money aside for your retirement. While time will not be on your side if you wait until you are in your fifties to start saving, that's better than never getting around to preparing for retirement. Both *Financial Peace University* and the *Good Cents* programs include retirement components and are highly recommended.

written by Colleen Williams

Planning for Retirement and “What-If?”

Pension from the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits

You and your clergy spouse will want to plan together for retirement. Your clergy spouse will be eligible for a pension from the church if she or he has served under full-time episcopal appointment to a church, charge, conference, district- or conference-controlled entity, or to an extension ministry for which the conference has elected to be responsible for benefits. Some part-time service may be included as elected by the conference. The amount is based on when and for how long he or she served, and there will be some choices. If your clergy spouse dies before you, there can be a pension for you. The pension can include 3 parts:

1. For years served prior to 1982, the benefit formula is a simple years-times-rate calculation – for example, if she or he served 10 years during this time, clergy pension is 10 x that year’s annuity rate (voted each year at Conference for the following year). A surviving spouse receives 85% of this amount as a pension. This portion is a defined benefit.
2. For the years from 1982-2006, the church contributed to the “Ministerial Pension Plan,” a set number of dollars each year into a fund in your name. You had choices as to how this was invested, and come time to collect the pension you have choices as to how it’s paid out, including whether you wish a raise on this portion each year, how much you want to go to a survivor, etc. All choices are considered “actuarially equivalent.” That is, the existing dollars in the account can produce benefits in a variety of ways. This portion is a defined contribution.
3. Since 2007 the pension plan has been a combination defined benefit/defined contribution, providing for a defined benefit for as long as clergy (and spouse if married) live and for a defined contribution portion, accessible as your needs require. Again, you will have some choices. In order to receive full defined contributions during these years, you must contribute at least 1% of compensation to UMPIP (see below).

United Methodist Personal Investment Plan

Clergy have been expected to contribute a portion of compensation to the Personal Investment Plan, also administered by the General Board. Again, you have choices as to how the funds are invested and how they are paid out. Some clergy who have lived in parsonages during their working years consider this their savings for retirement housing.

Social Security

Unless there is a philosophical objection to government insurance, both you and your clergy spouse have been contributing to social security whenever you have been working. Monthly income for life after retirement is a part of this program.

Personal Savings

In order to retire with a standard of living similar to that you have grown accustomed to during working years, you will also need some personal savings. This may take the form of contributions

to UMPIP (Personal Investment Plan – see above), investments, pensions from work (yours or your spouse’s) outside the church, IRA’s, etc.

Housing in Retirement

As you plan where to live during your retirement years, an important financial consideration is the IRS provision for clergy pension to be considered housing allowance. Unless or until Congress changes the rules (and for now we still benefit from the rules written first for the military), the conference designates each year that the full amount of a retired clergyperson’s pension from the church may be designated as a housing allowance. To the extent that you actually spend money on housing, and up to the maximum of the fair rental value of your housing, you can exclude that portion of the church pension from your gross income. This affords a great tax benefit, available only so long as the clergy person is alive. Figure things out for yourselves, but this MIGHT mean that a mortgage is a good idea, anticipating that if the spouse survives he or she would then pay off the mortgage at the time of the clergyperson’s death.

What If My Clergy Spouse Dies Before Retirement?

If a clergyperson dies while actively serving a church, the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) provides some benefits for surviving spouse and dependent children:

1. A death benefit (similar to life insurance)
2. A pension
3. Educational benefits for while the child is in college

What If She or He is Disabled?

Again the CPP provides benefits – disability income until able to return to work or retirement age, pension benefits, and the “insurance” as listed above.

What If We Divorce?

If you divorce, it is important to include in the divorce agreement provision for any future benefits such as pension. (See “Divorce in a Clergy Marriage” page 29.)

What If I Don’t Understand Some of This?

The Benefits Officer at the Conference Office can help you find the answers to your questions. You can find the contact information for this person on page 32 in Appendix A.

Insurance –Many Kinds, Many Unknowns

Insurance is simply a system where a group of people decide to share a risk that something costing a lot will happen to some of the persons in the group. If you pay more for a policy than you collect in payments, you are helping the person who had something terrible happen. Most of us feel we need insurance for health expenses, for our property, for our cars.

1. Health Insurance

While a pastor is serving at least $\frac{3}{4}$ times, the conference provides individual or family health insurance. The church pays the large majority of the premium and the pastor a smaller portion. If you elect to purchase health insurance elsewhere you do not have to pay the clergy portion but the church still has to pay its part, as this is a group benefit and all churches share in providing this. BE AWARE that if you elect to opt out of the conference health insurance plan this can affect your eligibility to participate after retirement in the Medicare supplement plan offered and subsidized by the conference.

The conference plan is administered by the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits and includes hospital and doctor payments, prescription benefits, mental health benefits, assistance in dealing with chronic diseases, assistance in life-style decisions (e.g., how can I find help for my aging parents who live a long ways away from me?), nurse consultations by phone when you have a question, and more. You pay your portion of the premiums as well as deductibles (the first part of your expenses each year) and co-payments (a portion of what is paid to a doctor or other provider). These amounts may change a little bit each year.

2. Homeowners' or Renters' Insurance

If you live in a parsonage, the church insures the building (through the conference plan), but you will need to provide for insurance for your belongings under a "renters" plan – you are considered a renter even through the rent is zero dollars. This can include provision for a certain amount of belongings carried to college by a dependent child; it might include liability insurance for a nurse or other professional.

If you live in your own home, you will want to insure both home and belongings with a "homeowners" policy. Again, you may want to consider some add-ons to this.

3. Automobile Insurance

Virtually every state requires all drivers to purchase insurance in order to operate a vehicle on its roads, and once more we are sharing the risk with others who purchase the insurance. Often it is possible to get a discount for purchasing more than one policy (car, home, boat . . .) from the same agency – ask!

written by Helen Curtis

The Transition to Retirement

Whether single or married, adjusting to retirement status may be challenging for clergy. Many of the suggestions for active clergy and spouses may still apply. There may also be striking differences, however, depending on the congregation and clergy with whom you hope to worship.

Unless the retired pastor is filling a pastoral vacancy, you may feel “redundant” as a clergy spouse. Hopefully you will find yourself in a congregation where the appointed pastor welcomes you with open arms, delighted for assistance with an already too heavy load. This may change, depending on the confidence of the pastor and spouse, if you jump in too quickly and appear to be taking charge. When you first arrive, hold back, even if you see where leadership is obviously needed. As a retired clergy person and spouse, you may need to reassure the pastor that you do not wish to interfere, but will help in ways that he or she requests. Observe the perceived and actual strengths of the appointed pastor and spouse. If you feel you have strengths in different areas, consider volunteering, but only in consultation with the pastor. The most important role you can play is that of “cheerleader” for the appointed pastor and his/her family.

The fact is that we are all human, clergy or lay, and we can suffer from feelings of inadequacy. The welcoming may turn to resentment if church members express praise for the retired and experienced clergy (and/or spouse). It may not be possible to avoid this all together, but some suggestions may help:

- 1) Avoid areas of administrative and financial responsibility, especially serving on the staff-parish committee.
- 2) If you are considering a leadership role in any area of the church, have a conversation - or several - with the pastor to determine if there is any disagreement about methods or approach. If there is disagreement, it is probably wise to refuse the request.
- 3) If tensions arise, participate only in worship, mission, and social activities – or, if necessary, consider attending a different church, even one of another denomination.
- 4) Be aware that the District Superintendent probably places priority on supporting the appointed clergy in any congregation and therefore may not be willing to support the retired clergy, if there is a conflict or even misunderstanding.

A couple other ideas:

- Find meaningful activities outside the church. It is valuable to have friends not involved with your church with whom you can enjoy social events, volunteering, and relaxation.
- Be aware that the retired spouse is often seen as an extension of the retired clergy. The pastor and spouse of your church may expect a retired clergy and spouse to share their views about clergy life, and they may feel unsupported and resentful if challenged by differing points of view.

Regardless of where you decide to worship, with the help of God, your family, and friends, you can find ways to use your talents to further God’s will and share God’s love in the world.

written by Gerry Harvey

Death of a Spouse or Other Close Family Member

Planning ahead for a death in the clergy family will help prevent the survivors from having to make important decisions while in a state of shock and grief. It will also alleviate additional stresses at an already very stressful time. Life-altering decisions about housing and employment and financial and legal issues must be addressed. This section discusses the information needed by a clergy family to prepare for and deal with the death of a loved one.

Where and How to Begin Planning

Together with your spouse, discuss and make a list of your concerns (estate planning/wills, funeral arrangements, insurance, establishing a memorial, etc.) Then answer the following questions for each item you have listed.

1. What do you want to happen to or for the surviving spouse and dependents?
2. What plans can you make now by yourselves?
3. Which of these issues will require assistance from an expert?
4. How often will these plans need to be revisited and updated?

Estate Planning involves determining how you will manage your wealth while you're alive and distribute 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 all your personal effects. These assets may be owned by you individually or jointly with others.

There are a variety of ways to approach estate planning. You can do nothing, and let the state dictate the distribution of your assets, you can hold title to your assets in Joint Tenancy, or you can create a will.

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.

Because the NEUMC covers many states with varying laws, it is not feasible to outline legal particulars about estate planning in this article. The best advice is to have an estate planning discussion with your spouse as soon as possible. Put things in writing and go over your plans annually, making corrections and changes as needed. It's a good idea to engage an attorney to help craft your will. That is an expense that can help prevent more expensive problems later on.

It is your responsibility to carefully consider and decide how to dispose of an estate. Desires can conflict with necessities, and practical considerations may differ from ideals. Because equality among beneficiaries may be financially impractical, focus on what you want to accomplish. Talk over your objectives with your spouse and legal advisor. Get advice about what your will should

provide. Be candid about your feelings and the needs of your beneficiaries. The more information you share, the better your advisors can help you plan and shape your will. 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. Keep your will in a safe place with your other important papers. You can also leave a copy with your attorney, with your executor, and/or with your children/beneficiaries. 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 more difficult during a time of crisis, 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, where applicable, with your physician's office, and on your driver's license.

Funeral Arrangements

The death of a loved one can be an overwhelming experience. In many cases, survivors have to make funeral arrangements while overcome by grief. Itinerant clergy families also must face the dilemma of funeral location and clergy selection. Contact the District Superintendent immediately. She or he will respond as soon as possible and can assist, if needed, in the funeral arrangements, as well as providing pastoral care.

Discussing funeral arrangements in advance, although that might seem uncomfortable, frees the surviving spouse from having to make all the decisions under stress and without knowledge of the deceased person's wishes. Why not take the time to outline your memorial service and your obituary? Writing your own obituary insures that your survivors know the parts of your life story that you wish to share publicly and gives you the opportunity for life review.

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 New England Annual Conference will pay for one move for the surviving members of the late clergyperson's family.

Pension Contacts

The Conference Benefits Officer will contact the family soon after the funeral about death benefits, pension, and health insurance.

Your Responsibility

Immediately look over insurance policies, the will, trust, deeds, bankbooks, stock certificates and other important papers. Be sure to obtain an ample supply of death certificates. Notify the bank,

the insurance company, your lawyer, social security, and/or any outside pension funds. Advise all creditors, including issuers of credit cards, that your spouse has died. Some of your loans and perhaps even a mortgage may be paid for when death occurs and is verified.

If your spouse was a veteran, there may be additional benefits. Be sure to contact the Veteran's Administration for information. Also contact Social Security to apply for widowed persons benefits and ask for details on eligibility for Medicare.

Adapted from the *Handbook of the Clergy Spouse Support Network of Ministers' Mates* of the Wisconsin United Methodist Church - Used by permission

Divorce in a Clergy Marriage

When two people in love begin a life commitment together in marriage, they do not expect to divorce. Sometimes, however, despite thoughtful consideration and counsel, a couple may become estranged beyond reconciliation and may decide that divorce is inevitable. When a relationship causes more 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 loss, since they may also have felt an additional covenant or calling to support their spouse's ministry. In addition, during this time of crisis, the spouse may feel an additional estrangement 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."

Topics of Concern

Children and Extended Family –The nurture and support of children and extended families are two areas of concern. Although divorcing individuals may be experiencing great grief and stress, it is important that the welfare of each child is carefully addressed 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. Professional counseling may be helpful for children in some cases. Many schools provide short-term counseling for children affected by family change. Do inform your child's teacher about the stresses your child is experiencing. Professional teachers can monitor any changes in academic or social behavior and serve as 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 or casseroles. It is important that the spouse take steps to assure her/his well-being. Restful sleep, good nutrition, exercise, and support are essential. Counseling with a mental health professional may be extremely helpful. You will need to practice good self-care in order to have energy to expend on additional decisions that will need to be made, such as the legal aspects of the divorce and 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. In some situations, the spouse may now be dependent on her/his own health plan. In this case, make it a priority to learn about your health benefits, including mental health services. 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 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 may have no place to go and may lack 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 to 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 be so involved in supporting the pastor's ministry or caring for the family that they do not seek employment outside the home. Itinerancy may have limited longevity in a career position, impacting salary and earning power. You may need to go back to school or seek 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 – In times of crisis, it is a great strength to have a faith community for support. A divorcing or divorced clergy spouse may need to find a new congregation during this time of transition. Entering a new parish as an unknown lay person, not married to clergy, may be a difficult adjustment. Continue to advocate for your spiritual needs. Visiting other area churches and hearing the Word of God proclaimed by other pastors may contribute significantly to your healing journey. Spiritual Directors can be helpful during this time as well. 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, allow yourself to make a second or third call.

Financial Support Issues – You will need 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 Conference Benefits Officer for additional information. Information on Social Security benefits is available from the Social Security Administration by phone at 800-772-1213 or on the internet at www.ssa.gov.

Legal Services – Divorces are managed in various ways. For your protection, seek the names of competent, unbiased attorneys. Normally, an initial consultation with an attorney is free, and that meeting will help you decide if you are confident in his or her counsel. You will be asked to provide 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.

Hope - There is life after divorce and there is also a return to joy. Consider this Malagasy proverb which describes resilience: "People are like plants in the wind: they bow down and rise again."

Whenever something ends, something else begins. May that new beginning eventually bring you peace, joy and new life.

based on material from the *Handbook of the Clergy Spouse Support Network of Ministers' Mates* of Wisconsin United Methodist Church – Used by permission

(See articles on Divorce Recovery, etc. at www.marriagelovepower.net)

Appendix A: New England United Methodist Church Contact Information

Benefits Coordinator

Janis Salesi (978) 682-8055 Ext. 121
benefits@neumc.org

Bishop's Office

P.O. Box 276 Essex Street, Lawrence MA 01842-0449
Phone (978) 682-7555 FAX (978)682-9555
Sudarshana Devadhar, Resident Bishop
bishop@neumc.org

Conference Clergy Spouse Coordinator

Colleen Williams
14 Christopher Drive, Enfield CT 06082
w (860) 265-3676 or h (860) 749-9595
cwilliams@preachersaid.org

Conference Office

P.O. Box 276 Essex Street, Lawrence MA 01842-0449
www.neumc.org

Preachers' Aid Society of New England

51 Charles Wesley Court
Wells, ME 04090
www.preachersaid.org

Appendix B: Parsonage Guidelines

These Parsonage Guidelines are also located on the Conference web page (www.neumc.org) under “Form Finder.”

RESOLUTION # 120

WHEREAS the New England Annual Conference has maintained Guidelines for the design and features for parsonage dwellings to assure adequate housing for all appointed clergy and to support the system of itinerant appointments, and

WHEREAS under Rules of the New England Annual Conference, such previously adopted Guidelines are scheduled to expire in 2011, and

WHEREAS the Board of Trustees and the Equitable Compensation Commission have worked jointly to revise and update the expiring Guidelines, and support their amendment and re-adoption as guidance to both local churches and the Conference in the acquisition and/or renovation of appointed clergy residences, and

WHEREAS the Board of Trustees and the Equitable Compensation Commission have endorsed the submittal of Revised Parsonage Guidelines for consideration and adoption by the Annual Conference at its 2011 meeting.

NOW THEREFORE, the New England Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church hereby adopts the following as “Parsonage Guidelines” to be effective until amended or replaced consistent with future Annual Conference action:

Parsonage Guidelines

These proposals for parsonage guidelines in the New England Conference were originally established by the Conference Trustees and have been amended and proposed for extension by The Commission on Equitable Compensation in consultation with the Conference Board of Trustees. They have been written with the following understandings:

- 1) It shall be the purpose of each church/charge to provide a parsonage, which will not only be a comfortable home for the pastor and family, but which will also provide an environment which will be helpful in the conducting of effective ministry.
- 2) Churches and communities vary widely in their norms, resources, and settings. A helpful guideline shall be that the parsonage should reflect the norm or the average of the homes of the parishioners.
- 3) There are certain standards regarding health, safety, etc., which are not negotiable because they are stipulated by law or the Discipline.

- 4) All parties involved will use common sense, reasonableness, and good will.

The following goals toward which churches/charges with existing parsonages should be working in order that these guidelines might be fully implemented, insofar as possible within the next ten years. These guidelines are operable now for parsonages which are being purchased:

Indoor Living Areas

- 1) Living and dining areas of a size adequate for entertaining.
- 2) A well-equipped kitchen, with appliances functioning as designed and adequate counters and cabinets.
- 3) A family room
- 4) At least three bedrooms
- 5) A room of appropriate size and privacy for the pastor's study, if an adequate study is not available at the church.
- 6) One full bathroom and a half bath
- 7) Adequate closet and dry storage space, including closet space in each bedroom and other storage space distributed throughout the house.
- 8) A laundry area with washer and dryer

Outdoor Areas

Appropriate to the community setting, the following are recommended:

- 1) a two-car garage
- 2) Outdoor living space (such as porch, deck, or patio)
- 3) A safe and adequate area in which children can play

Water intrusion which leads to mold and mildew can create a health hazard as well as cause maintenance expenses. Outdoor grading and landscaping should direct water away from buildings. Foundation drains or other features (including on-slab designs) should be incorporated to reduce the chance of future water problems.

Services

- 1) An adequate supply of hot and cold water, in all rooms using water
- 2) A sewage system that meets local and/or state regulatory requirements
- 3) Weekly rubbish pick-up when available
- 4) Water treatment if needed, including regular periodic testing for radon, bacteria and other contaminants if a private water supply is employed
- 5) Smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers are required.
- 6) Radon testing if the structure has a basement or other below grade space
- 7) Outside water faucets and electrical outlets
- 8) Snow removal and lawn service to be determined between the appointed Pastor and the SPRC/local Trustees at time of appointment

Utilities

The following utility services shall be provided at the expense of the church providing the housing:

- 1) Electricity
- 2) Gas and/or oil for fuel, or such other alternative fuels as may be employed (e.g. wood pellets)
- 3) Water and sewage
- 4) Basic cable TV or satellite service
- 5) Basic telephone service
- 6) Internet access – preferably high-speed internet

Furnishings and Equipment

- 1) Floor covering for kitchen, bathrooms, and utility room shall be of durable water resistant material, i.e. ceramic tile, vinyl composition tile or vinyl sheet
- 2) Hardwood or laminate floor surfaces should be encouraged; wall-to-wall carpet should be limited or avoided due to maintenance issues (frequent replacement) and because it can retain allergens which may not be fully removed with standard cleaning
- 3) Window shades, drapes or curtains throughout, if the pastor does not wish to furnish his/her own
- 4) Outdoor tools: mower, hose, snow removal equipment as needed (See Item 8 under Services)
- 5) Where basements are used for laundry and storage of personal property, and are subject to water infiltration during and after heavy rains/snow melt, it is strongly recommended that the trustees install adequate sump pumps with battery power backup.

Energy Conservation Features

- 1) All new parsonages must meet local energy codes for insulation in all exterior walls and spaces.
- 2) Consideration should be given to “energy efficient” windows and doors. New and replacement windows shall have insulated (double-pane) sashes in frames with a thermal-break. Wherever possible, Low-E / Argon gas filled glass shall be used.
- 3) Domestic Hot Water and hydronic heating pipes shall be insulated in basements and crawl spaces;
- 4) New and replacement toilets shall meet the existing requirements, currently 1.6 gal per flush;
- 5) Sinks and shower heads should be fitted with appliances to regulate flows.
- 6) Appliances should be “energy star certified” appliances.
- 7) Consideration should be given to alternate energy sources including solar energy.

Maintenance and Improvements

- 1) It is important to plan ahead for repairs and improvements. These should be a line item in the church budget in the amount of at least 1 1/2 % of the insured value of the parsonage to take care of routine and emergency expenses, as well as creating a capital reserve to ensure funding for structural, mechanical and electrical elements that are or will be in need of replacement. If it is not used in any given year, it is to be held in escrow for when it is needed.
- 2) The electrical service should be inspected, and all wiring, including the installation of circuit breakers, required number of outlets, wall switches, and light fixtures are to meet the National Electrical Code or other mandated local code.
- 3) It is important in the interest of both comfort and stewardship that all windows and doors be weather tight, with either storms or thermopane glass, and that there be screens for all windows. If new windows are being installed, they shall be high-performance type.
- 4) Both the interior and exterior of the parsonage should be kept in such repair as to preserve not only its physical condition, but its aesthetic value, and this includes sensitivity to the historical design of a building when making changes. Painting should be done regularly, in consultation with the parsonage family. Wallpapering should be discouraged in new structures due to maintenance issues, but in cases of historic use or architectural preservation, wallpaper should be maintained/replaced on a regular basis
- 5) It shall be the responsibility of the occupants of the parsonage to provide for the cleanliness of it and the repair of any damage which they or their pets have caused to the interior, exterior, or grounds. An exiting pastor shall also be responsible for removing swing sets, above ground pools, and other non-permanent additions. If, when pastor is leaving, the cleaning, restoration, and repair of damage have not been done, the pastor will be billed for same. If the pastor does not pay this bill, or contests it, a recording of refusal or negations shall become a permanent part of the pastor's record.

Re: Annual Inspection of the Parsonage and Dealing with Needs

In compliance with the 2008 *Discipline* there shall be an annual inspection of the parsonage by the Chairpersons of the Board of Trustees and Committee on Staff-Parish Relations. (Para 258.2G(16) and 2532.4) The purpose of this inspection is to discover needed repairs, improvements, and refurbishing, and to make short-term and long-term plans for accomplishing these, with prompt attention given to safety and health factors. Needs which arise between inspections should be taken care of promptly.

When a new pastor has been appointed, the incoming pastor (and spouse, if applicable) should tour the parsonage with a member of the Committee on Staff-Parish Relations at the convenience of the current parsonage occupants, and agree as to what repairs and redecorating are to be done before the new pastor moves in.

Safety and Security

- 1) If security is an issue in the community, whatever is needed to make the dwelling secure should be provided, i.e. dead-bolt locks, security systems, outdoor lighting, etc. A key change is suggested at the time of appointment change.
- 2) To make access to the house safe for occupants and guests, the driveway and the steps and sidewalks to all doors need to be of an even surface and kept in good repair.
- 3) All outside steps should have safe and secure railings.

Pets in the Parsonage

While it is recognized that it is the right of the parsonage family to have pets, it is also recognized that the ownership of pets requires the pastor to assume responsibility for them. At minimum these responsibilities include:

- 1) Caring for the pets in a humane and responsible manner.
- 2) Securing permission of the local church for the construction of any needed facility.
- 3) Assuming financial responsibility for the construction, maintenance, and eventual removal (at the time of a move) of any facility, such as a dog house, etc.
- 4) Replacing/repairing any damage done by pets to the carpets, floors, drapes, doors, lawn, etc., as well as cleaning and deodorizing to the approval of the appropriate committee and the incoming pastor.
- 5) Any cleaning, repair, or removal resulting from the ownership of pets that is not done by an outgoing pastor shall be billed to that person.
- 6) Breeding of animals is not considered reasonable use.

A Parsonage Notebook or File

It is recommended that the local church trustees maintain a notebook or file of records and helpful household data, including, but not limited to:

- 1) A record of the date and place of purchase of all appliances and equipment. Manuals and service contracts for these are to be kept together.
- 2) A record of the date and name of contractor and a description of any work done on the parsonage.
- 3) A record of any decorating or refurbishing, to include paint color, type, brand, etc.
- 4) Any special information necessary regarding shrubs, flowers, etc.
- 5) Any and all special licenses, permits and certificates issued by the municipality, county, state or federal government, including certificates of lead paint removal.

Parsonage families residing in the parsonage should turn over to the trustees any information which should appropriately be maintained in such a file, and incoming families should review and have available such records.

Appointment Change:

The responsibilities of the outgoing parsonage family at the time of a move shall include:

1. Removal of all personal property from the parsonage building and grounds
2. Leaving the house clean, particularly appliances, closets, cabinets, bathrooms, and storage areas.
3. Removal or arrangements for removal of all trash and discarded items.
4. Sanitization of house for pet odors and treatment for fleas.
5. Collection of all parsonage keys and transfer of same to the incoming family, being certain that all are clearly labeled.
6. As noted in the Maintenance and Improvements Section of this document, it shall be the responsibility of the occupants of the parsonage to provide for the cleanliness of it and the repair of any damage which they or their pets have caused to the interior, exterior, or grounds. An exiting pastor shall also be responsible for removing swing sets, above ground pools, and other non-permanent additions. If, when pastor is leaving, the cleaning, restoration, and repair of damage have not been done, the pastor will be billed for same. If the pastor does not pay this bill, or contests it, a recording of refusal or negations shall become a permanent part of the pastor's record.

An incoming pastor should be supplied with a "dwelling condition statement" by the Trustee Board upon moving into the parsonage. Any damage at the time of move-in must be listed on this form and returned to the Trustee Board. At the time of departure, the exiting pastor shall be presented with the "dwelling condition statement" issued when they moved-in which should indicate any damage beyond normal wear and tear with estimates to repair the damages.

The responsibilities of the church/charge at the time of an appointment change shall include:

1. Washing curtains, dry cleaning draperies and window coverings (if provided) or replacing as needed, and washing all windows, inside and out.
2. Cleaning all rugs and carpets (if provided), cleaning laminate, tile and vinyl floors and cleaning (or refinishing as needed) hardwood floors.
3. Ensuring that all appliances, cabinets sinks and countertops have been cleaned and disinfected.
4. Ensuring that all smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers operate as designed and have been inspected and/or serviced annually or as required.
5. Ascertaining that the parsonage is left clean and all personal property of the previous pastor and other items not needed by the incoming pastor have been removed prior to arrival of the incoming parsonage family.

Re: Lead Paint – The Trustees of any local United Methodist Church or Annual Conference are held to the same standards as a "landlord" in all New England states. The local church Trustees

are responsible for the lead remediation of the church parsonage and Conference Trustees are responsible for district/conference parsonages and staff housing to fulfill state law. Lead remediation shall be done prior to children living in the parsonage.

Re: Handicapped Accessibility

It is recommended that bi-level or split level homes not be built or purchased for use as a parsonage, unless in the acquisition of such properties consideration is given to adequate facilities being provided which could accommodate pastor or pastor's family member with handicapping conditions. The ownership of such homes limits the appointability of some pastors and pastors with family members with handicapping conditions. For further guidelines regarding accessibility see Para. 2532.6, 2543.3 (b), 2543.4(d), 2008 *Discipline*

Re: New or Extensively Renovated Parsonages – When purchasing, building, or renovating an existing parsonage at a cost of more than 25% of its replacement value, the District Board of Church Building and Location is to be consulted as stipulated in the *Discipline*.

An improvement resource for churches that are buying, building, or renovating parsonages is the current issue of the booklet: *Parsonage Planning, produced by The Mission Education and Cultivation Program of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church*. The guidelines set forth in this document, when used in consultation with an architect or quality builder will eliminate many of the commonly encountered difficulties.

Appendix C: Annual Parsonage Inspection Statement

The Annual Parsonage Inspection Statement is located on the Conference web page (www.neumc.org) under “Form Finder.”

Appendix D: Financial Planning & Debt Reduction Resources

Financial Peace University www.daveramsey.com

Good Sense www.goodsensemovement.org

Appendix E: Recommended Resources

The following resources have been helpful to Clergy Spouses in our connection and are listed as possible sources of encouragement for you. If you have further suggestions of books or articles that might benefit other clergy spouses, please pass them on to Colleen Williams for inclusion in next year's *Field Guide*.

Books readily available in New England are coded as follows:

[NEC] These resources are available from New England Conference Resource Library at the Conference Office, P.O. Box 276 Essex St., Lawrence MA 01842-0449, 978-682-7676 x201, RMcNulty@neumc.org

[BUST] These resources are housed at Boston University School of Theology Library. They are available through Inter-Library Loan from your local library. NOTE: You may be told that there will be a \$20. fee for borrowing these books, but BUST has waived their usual charge for the books in the "Ives Collection." Your local librarian should see this when placing the order, but if not, please contact Amy Limpitlaw, Head Librarian - (ael23@bu.edu or 617-353-1321).

Resources for Strengthening Clergy Families.

Recent Publications

Clergy Commuter Marriages: Living Apart, Staying Together, by Tom Mattick with Marilyn Mattick (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2013). The author shares what he learned when he accepted an appointment 150 miles away from his wife's work, requiring them to live apart for two years. He offers practical advice for making such a decision, creating a second home, planning for visits, developing rituals for parting and reuniting, and adjusting to living together again afterwards. His wife shares her point of view as well. [BUST]

Life in the Fish Bowl: Everyday Challenges of Pastors and Their Families, by F. Belton Joyner, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006). "A solid family life will help pastors focus and attentively minister to the needs of their congregation. Pastors often struggle with conflicting expectations. The most painful of these conflicts is between the expectations of their congregations and the needs of their families. They must, at the same moment, be available to parishioners and carve out private family time. Belton Joyner knows that often the best therapy for pastors caught in this dilemma is to laugh at it. With humorous illustrations and light-hearted straight talk, he helps pastors understand their own family dynamics, the role their families play in the life of the church, and how to be an effective minister of the gospel AND a responsible spouse and parent, all at the same time." (back cover) [BUST]

Families in Ministry: How to Thrive—Not Just Survive by Andreas and Angela Frész (Dresden, Germany: Golden Gate Ventures GmbH, 2009). The authors share out of their own experience as a family in ministry and include testimonies by other ministry families from all over the world. Addressing a wide range of issues, they offer sound theological reflection and practical advice for setting a family vision and priorities, communicating love, integrating God into family life, overcoming stress and crises, managing differences and conflicts, and dealing with challenges specific to families in ministry. This book could be used to facilitate a course spread out over eight sessions or could serve as a helpful resource to individual families. Particularly useful are the clear guidelines for Spouse Dialogue and/or Group Discussion and for Family Activities related to material in the text. Order through YWAM Publishing, 800-922-2143, www.ywampublishing.com. Visit www.families-in-ministry.com for more information. [BUST]

The Pastor's Family: Shepherding Your Family through the Challenges of Pastoral Ministry, by Brian Croft and Cara Croft (Zondervan, 2013). The authors address the problem of expectations – not just those held by others, but also those of the pastor and spouse themselves. Internal needs for approval and success may become idols tempting the pastor to neglect his/her family, which the authors declare actually dishonors God. This book contains deep wisdom and practical advice for faithfully balancing family and congregational life. [BUST]

The Pastor's Wife, by Jennifer Alee (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010). This engaging novel explores a clergy marriage that failed early on because of unreasonable expectations and poor communication. Brought back together six years later by the requirements of a deceased parishioner's will, the pastor and his estranged wife rediscover each other, realize the part each played in their marital failure, and heal their relationship. Throughout the story, the author touches on issues common to clergy families: clergy preoccupation with the problems of other families to the neglect of their own; parsonage stresses (the feeling of living in someone else's home); congregational expectations that ignore the individuality of clergy family members; and lack of private time. The author also portrays common marital difficulties caused by failure to communicate honestly about expectations and needs, to accept individual differences and negotiate ways to accommodate them, to build mutual trust, and to connect emotionally. [BUST]

Classics – Out-of-Print, but Available through Libraries and Online Booksellers

Clergy Couples in Crisis: The Impact of Stress on Pastoral Marriages, by Dean Merrill (Waco, TX: World Books Publisher, 1985). Although some of the expectations encountered by pastors and their families have softened since the publication of this book, the author presents helpful insights based on case studies, showing the effects of internal and external stresses and - in most cases - how couples learned to heal and strengthen their relationships and deal more effectively with their situations. In most instances, learning to share openly and honestly with each other was key to their recovery. [BUST]

Healthy Clergy, Wounded Healers: Their Families and Their Ministries, by Roberta Chapin Walmsley and Adair T. Lummis (Church Publishing Inc., 1997). The authors draw on the Family Systems Theory work of Murray Bowen and Edwin Friedman, who applied it to churches. While they agree that clergy and their families may function better when they understand some of their struggles as common to ministry, they also caution against overemphasizing this perspective to the point that pastors, their spouses, and their children abandon responsibility for managing their lives and blame the congregation or conference for their problems. The healthiest pastors and spouses seem to be those who effectively set boundaries between their relationship with the church and their family. [BUST]

The Winds of Promise: Building and Maintaining Strong Clergy Families, by Anne E. Streaty Wimberly and Edward Powell Wimberly (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2007). The authors share out of their own experiences growing up in clergy families and forming their own. Using a story-telling approach, they offer hope and tools for dealing with the challenges of moving, meeting expectations, making family life count, “meaning-making” while living in the public eye, and managing difficult life events. [BUST]

What’s Happening to Clergy Marriages? by David and Vera Mace (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980). This classic, written by founders of the marriage enrichment movement, grew out of two studies they conducted in the late 70s. The book contains lists of advantages and disadvantages generated by participants in the studies along with practical advice for dealing with the pressures of time, moving, and financial stress. The Maces present a companionship model for marriage, as opposed to the old hierarchical one generally accepted before the rise of democracy, and assert that the spouse’s calling must carry as much weight as the calling of the pastor. The authors also propose that in regard to vocation, the call of a clergy person and spouse to bear witness to Christian marriage may be even more important than the call to serve a church. [BUST]

Organizations

Local Church Expectations and What Clergy Spouses Most Want the UMC to Know (Part II of a study conducted by The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, 2009). This report is based on the responses of more than 1000 persons to the questions asked in this study. The responses, which reflect wide differences between the individuals involved, help deepen understanding of both the joys and the challenges experienced by clergy families. The report ends with nine suggestions designed to support clergy families, with an emphasis on “...treating clergy spouses as unique persons with many visions of their roles, both inside and outside the church...” Both the report itself and a separate reference list are available at the COSROW website: <http://www.gcsrw.org/ClergyFamilyandSpouseStudy.aspx>

Tending the Fire (<http://tending-the-fire.com>). The Preachers’ Aid Society and the Board of Ordained Ministry of the New England Conference of the United Methodist Church have been

sponsoring “Tending the Fire” events for clergy since 2006 and for clergy spouses since 2012. Participants learn to understand and apply family systems theory to their congregations and to their personal lives. The program requires a commitment of time spread over a number of months, including an Opening Intensive, Deepening Days, and a Closing Retreat, although schedule modifications have been made for the spouses and are under consideration for future offerings. Visit the website or contact the Preachers’ Aid Society at 508-830-9500 or www.preachersaid.org.

Appendix F: Relevant Articles

“Best Practices and Recommended Resources” articles addressing various aspects of marriage and family ministries (relationship education, parenting, marriage preparation and enrichment, and support for families in crisis, transition, or special situations) are posted at www.marriagelovepower.net. Some of these documents are also posted at www.gbod.org/marriage or www.gbod.org/family. These articles, which are updated from time to time, may be downloaded from the website, duplicated, and distributed, since the copyright information is already included on them. A few of those most relevant to clergy spouses are included below.

If you know of or come across other articles that might be of interest to clergy spouses, please pass that information along to Colleen Williams for inclusion in future editions of this *Field Guide*.

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Strengthening Clergy Families

Like many professions, especially those in the public eye, ministry offers unique challenges and opportunities for the families of those involved. Learning how others have dealt with similar situations can help clergy and their families respond effectively to the common experiences they share. Unfortunately, clergy families may be tempted to blame all their difficulties on the nature of ministry or on the church, forgetting that every family has struggles - simply because they are human. Clergy and their spouses, like everyone else, need support for healing the emotional baggage they bring into their marriages and for dealing with both anticipated and unexpected life events that may stimulate change and growth or overwhelm them.

The emotional health and the relational skills that clergy persons and their spouses bring into marriage determine how they respond to the specific pressures they encounter in ministry. Those who “need to be needed” will more likely try to live up to unreasonable expectations of others and fail to set healthy personal boundaries. Addictive personalities will fill up their days - and nights - with work, justifying their busyness as a necessary aspect of serving God. Those uncomfortable with intimacy will find it easier to minister to others than to the families they have covenanted - before God - to love and protect. While some spouses speak up in protest, others may collaborate in putting everyone else’s needs before those of the family. Some pastors and church leaders even misuse the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:28 to defend family neglect.

Paul, in his first letter to Timothy (3: 4-5, 12), advises church leaders to care for their families and to be attentive to their children. Like it or not, the clergy family serves as a role model for the congregation and community. Furthermore, an unhappy and unhealthy home life drains a pastor’s energy and detracts from his or her ability to minister effectively. Clergy families do not need to be perfect (a myth that negatively impacts life in many parsonages), but hopefully they relate to each other with genuine love, forgiveness, and supportive care, responding constructively to whatever life brings and asking for help when they need it.

Marriage and family life are considered by some as sacred vocations in and of themselves, perhaps no less important than the call to serve a church. Effective ministries to and with clergy families help them become more aware of their own needs and motivations, improve their skills for communication both within the family and with others, and encourage them to take time for self-renewal and family care. Clergy families who seek to maintain balance in their lives - and those who want to support them - will find helpful insights in the following resources.

Jane P. Ives, United Methodist Marriage and Family Ministries Consultant (10/16/13)

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Marriage and Family Ministry Starts in Our Own Homes

As a clergy spouse, I struggled to balance being in ministry with honoring personal needs – both my own and our children’s. Through marriage enrichment experiences, fortunately, my husband and I developed deeper self-awareness and mutual understanding, while learning communication and conflict management skills that transformed our family life. I realized the folly of trying to shield my husband from the demands of marriage and family life. His full engagement as husband and father, in fact, enhanced his ministry. I came to see that sometimes being busy and distracted is more about feeling important than serving God – and maybe even a way to avoid the profound demands of intimate relationships. I began to wonder about the effect of praising laity who are “always at church” and decided that the church should do more to train disciples of Jesus Christ for transformation of their homes, as well as the world.

While on a mission trip in Argentina in the year 2000, I met Margaret Stockwell, widow of Rev. Eugene Stockwell, a renowned missionary and church agency executive. She showed me an article she was writing and encouraged me to share her story and her thoughts with others. “How is it possible,” she wrote, “that those who denounce systems of injustice in society so frequently practice injustice in the very heart of their own families? I refer here to pastors, missionaries, and church lay leaders who put the needs of others first, while neglecting their own family members. I see this not just in a few extreme cases, but throughout the church, wherever raising a healthy family is considered less important than ministering to a congregation or shaping church policy.”

Margaret and Eugene grew up in missionary families in Africa and Latin America respectively. After marrying and then serving as missionaries in Uruguay for ten years, they moved to the United States in 1962. Eugene worked for the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries in New York City for ten years, then with the National Council of Churches for eleven, followed by six years with the World Council of Churches. When they came to the United States and Eugene began to travel a lot, Margaret found integration into American culture very difficult. The adjustment was even more challenging for their four children, then ranging from one to ten years of age. Neither Eugene nor the church realized the pain the family was experiencing. When Eugene traveled, Margaret and the children awaited his return with joyful anticipation, eager to hear of his journeys and to reunite once again as a family. They soon realized, however, that Eugene now had little time for his family. There were always letters to write, speeches to prepare, and meetings to attend. Margaret said, “We felt isolated and broken, sacrificed for the urgency of ‘The Kingdom.’ Surely Eugene did not mean for this to happen, but it did, and I take responsibility for that as well. We hurt our children by living a lifestyle that had been modeled for us, because we didn’t know how to do differently.”

“When I speak of a family being broken,” Margaret explained, “I mean something much stronger than wounded. ‘Broken’ - in this sense - refers to a hole in the soul, a very deep sense of abandonment and lack of love. This terrible experience takes place when we feel as though we are the last to be cared about and for, and then only if there is time and energy left over. We feel like orphans, marginalized within the very heart of the church. Protecting, listening, disciplining, loving, and being present are all basic to the care of a healthy family. Children need to receive tender love and care from both parents and experience the unique gifts each one has to give. The sense of abandonment is even more painful when parents are present physically, at least now and then, but not emotionally.”

Margaret explained that she grew up believing that God called her to work outside the home. Many times, she confessed, even though physically with her children, she was not present emotionally and spiritually. She was thinking about "the work of God," blinded by belief and training to the fact that our children are part of God's community, gift, and creation. "Often I neglected them to get to my meetings or to whatever I thought God was calling me to do, ignoring their needs in order to respond to what I was convinced was God's call."

Margaret reports that she has seen many pastors, missionaries, and other church leaders running busily about trying to mend a broken world, while the very pain they are trying to heal elsewhere festers in their own homes. Overlooking or ignoring the needs of those with whom we have covenants of love and care casts doubt on whatever we say about God's love. God calls us to follow Christ and proclaim the Good News to all, including - although not limited to - those with whom we have made sacred covenants. In a sense, our first "church" is the family. Learning to really love in that hard place, even imperfectly, empowers us to love and serve more effectively in our churches, in our communities, and in our world. Margaret asserts her conviction that God calls pastors, missionaries, and other church workers who marry and have families to treat their spouses and family members with honor, respect, and loving care.

Margaret noted that early in our Methodist history, pastors were not allowed to marry. When finally given permission to wed, it was understood that wives and children were the last to be cared for, as documented in Charles Ferguson's *Organizing to Beat the Devil: Methodists and the Making of America* (Doubleday, 1971). Some of our missionaries took this model of family neglect all around the world. Even business and other professional groups often expect their employees to make a primary commitment to their work, with families receiving only whatever time and energy is left over. Some pastors' wives, daughters, and sons decide that they want nothing more to do with the church and look elsewhere for the love and care they crave. Some even develop addictions or mental illness as a result of their feelings of abandonment. By encouraging clergy and lay persons to put limits on and boundaries around their work, congregations can foster healthy growth for families and individuals.

Margaret expresses deep gratitude for Karatana, a Christian lay-ecumenical community that helped her family experience some healing before Eugene's death - and even more after. Likewise, my husband and I are indebted to persons and programs that have helped us develop deeper, healthier relationships within our family. When our adult children remind us of times when they felt we cared less about their needs than about the needs of others, we are grateful for the opportunity to express our regret and make amends. For clergy and lay families alike, love flowing more freely within our homes may overflow into our churches, communities, and world. Strengthening our own marriages and families empowers us to help others do the same, thus more effectively nurturing "disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

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Cultivating Compassionate Connection

During a recent webinar on Self-Empathy offered by the Center for Nonviolent Communication, Mary Mackenzie, a Certified NVC trainer, instructed participants to write down a statement about something that troubles us and to notice our physical reactions. I wrote, "I really hate it when my home is a mess and I can't find things." As I tuned in to my body, I perceived my shoulders stiffening, my jaw clenching, and tension building in my chest, arms, and stomach. Next she told us to rewrite that thought as a positive goal statement and, again, to notice our physical reactions. I wrote, "I love it when my house is neat and I can find things." I felt my shoulders and jaw relax, tension evaporate, and a surge of energy nudging me to begin creating order, one step at a time.

Next Mary instructed us to go deeper by focusing on the positive goal statement and considering what need we would meet by achieving that goal. Then we were to ask ourselves if that need were met, what deeper need would also be met, repeating the question several times until we felt we had discovered our most basic underlying need. In response, I wrote, "When my house is neat and clean and I can find things, my need to feel competent is met. And if my need for feeling competent is met, my need for self-respect is met. If my need for self-respect is met, my need for confidence is met. If my need for confidence is met, my need for safety is met. If my need for safety is met, my need for peace is met." I was amazed to find that my feelings went so deep! No wonder I feel such frustration and anxiety when my home is cluttered. Typically I used to fuss irritably and blame others for not helping more. Deeper self-understanding enables me to stay calm, start cleaning up, and ask for help in a more positive way.

How would you like to offer those in your congregation and your community similar opportunities to deepen their self-knowledge, connect with themselves and others more compassionately, work through conflicts in such a way that everyone's needs are met, experience inner peace, and serve as more effective peace-makers in all their spheres of influence? Recently, when invited to teach a communication class for adults in a local church, I recalled reading Marshall Rosenberg's book, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion*, and ordered it to use as a text, along with the companion workbook for additional ideas and exercises. As we worked our way through the thirteen chapters, week by week, I was delighted by the responses of the group and by their willingness to share their struggles to apply these teachings in their everyday lives. Although I have taught communication skills to couples for years, this was my first experience with singles and married individuals participating without their spouses in the group. The NVC concepts and materials worked perfectly.

Marshall Rosenberg developed Nonviolent Communication, a model for increasing understanding and cooperation, after a lifelong struggle to find solutions to conflict. He was motivated by childhood experiences during the 1943 Detroit race riots and by the beatings he received from classmates because he was Jewish. His Ph.D. studies in Clinical Psychology, his work with Dr. Carl Rogers, and his mediation work with families, businesses, gangs, and prisoners shaped his developing concepts. In 1984 he established the Center for Nonviolent Communication (www.cnvc.org), which now offers training workshops throughout the USA and in more than fifty other countries. The Center also provides mediation and consultation services in places of conflict around the world.

Nonviolent Communication separates experiences into four components: 1) what is actually happening; 2) what we feel about what is happening; 3) what needs we have in relationship to what is happening; and 4) what requests we want to make of ourselves or others

in order to meet those needs. Considering these four components enables us to express honestly, without judgment or criticism, what is going on within us and to receive empathically verbal or nonverbal messages from others. In order to use this process, we must let go of our evaluations and judgments and seek to connect both with our selves and with others. We usually find that it is not events or words that cause our emotional reactions, but the thoughts we have about them that trigger feelings. Those feelings can, if we observe them carefully, lead us to an understanding of our underlying needs and help us find effective ways to meet our needs, instead of just reacting. We can use the same process to seek understanding of other persons by focusing on what they might need, instead of just judging their words and behavior.

Although most of us require considerable practice to unlearn our old habits of evaluating and attacking others, the resulting benefits of inner peace and healthy relationships are well worth the effort. While the language of Nonviolent Communication is not overtly Christian, the teachings clearly resonate with Christian concepts and practice. Churches can provide opportunities to learn and practice Nonviolent Communication by contacting certified trainers; publicizing and promoting NVC events, including online webinars; and providing Nonviolent Communication books and resources for use by individuals or groups.

Resources for Learning and Cultivating Nonviolent Communication

CNVC.ORG – Visit this website and click on “How to Use This Site” to find scheduled training events, certified trainers, organizations, practice groups and more.

Connection: A Self-Care Approach to Conflict Management, by Bonnie R. Fraser (2010). 480-278-3702, bonnie@connectionselfcare.com. The author clearly presents the basic concepts of Marshall Rosenberg’s Nonviolent Communication model, with examples and exercises that effectively facilitate understanding and skill development. She emphasizes the importance of active self-care and self-awareness in order to improve our communication and conflict management. This text would serve well for group or individual study. Visit the website www.connectionselfcare.com for sample pages and exercises.

Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life, (previously *A Language of Compassion*), by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D. (Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press, 1999). This clear and straightforward text shows how to break through patterns of thinking that lead to arguments and anger and how to communicate with mutual respect and understanding. The skills (separating observation from evaluation, taking responsibility for our feelings, making requests instead of demands, and listening empathically) can enhance any relationship. A Companion Workbook available at the website provides discussion questions and exercises for individual or group study. You can also order related books addressing a variety of topics for parents, teachers, community leaders, and others. (www.nonviolentcommunication.com).

NVCTRaining.COM – This website offers both free and fee-based resources, tools, webinars, and teleconferences. Free resources include Weekly NVC Reflections, NVC Training Videos, and Online Classes. See also <http://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/aboutnvc/aboutnvc.htm>

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