

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Fall 1995

Vol. 29, No. 2

Who Cares for Church Workers?



ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A PUBLICATION OF CONCORDIA COLLEGE—SEWARD, NEBRASKA

Who Cares For Church Workers?

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CIRCULATION POLICY—*ISSUES* . . . in *Christian Education* (ISSN0278-0216) is published three times a year by the faculty of Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska 68434. *ISSUES* is sent free to each church, school, district and synodical office in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Copies are also sent to high schools, colleges and universities affiliated with the Synod.

Individuals wishing personal copies may obtain them as follows: Single copy @\$2.00 each; Subscription @\$6.00; 10 or more copies mailed to the same address @\$1.20 per copy.

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reflections

NEARLY 25 YEARS AGO, while serving as a faculty member and administrator at Concordia College, I was scheduled for a special leave to complete residency requirements for a doctoral degree. During that summer my supervisor was severely injured. On the day of the accident I told the academic dean that I would be willing to postpone my special leave if Dr. Koenig could not return to full-time ministry by the beginning of the school year. How well I remember a visit from a colleague in ministry for many decades. His words still seem clear as he shared them on that June afternoon. "Unless the head of your department at the University of Nebraska promises you, in writing, that your assistantship will be available a year from now, tell the academic dean that you have changed your mind." Then he added, "Colleges have short memories!"

Do congregations also have short memories? Who cares for church workers? Most of us have heard of congregations which finally raise abysmal salaries after four or five calls have been declined. This moves one to ask: "Is it fair that the new teacher will receive compensation much higher than her predecessor who ministered faithfully for many years when it appears that the major reason for the increase is the number of calls declined?"

The purpose of this edition of *Issues in Christian Education* is to highlight the importance of investments by congregations and the church at large in the care of called ministers of the Word. Attention is given to identifying significant care needs in the lives of church workers, ways in which congregations and schools can provide care for called workers, and opportunities for church workers to care for themselves.

Ronald Rehrer points out that "perhaps at no other time in our church's history have so many workers and their families been in need of care." He shares examples of difficult questions asked by church workers suffering personal losses that can lead to a crisis in faith. David Kruger mentions that professional church workers expect criticism and can even learn from criticism, but what hurts most is "the silence of the crowd" that can cause even more injury than the sharpest criticism. Roy Oswald says that a major goal in the care of church workers is to teach them how to take better care of themselves and avoid the twin destroyers known as stress and burnout. "Church workers are going to be effective in direct proportion to the way in which they are caring for themselves," he declares. It is his belief that the spiritual side is at the root of both the physical and emotional health of those in ministry in the church.

This edition of *Issues* will not answer some questions or solve all problems in the care of church workers. Hopefully it will provide new insights for those members of the royal priesthood of all believers who are concerned about the care of their ministers, as well as those of us called into specialized service of Jesus Christ.

Orville C. Walz, President



Tired . . . Beautiful Feet

ISAIAH PROCLAIMS and St. Paul restates in Romans 10:15b: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Pastors, teachers, Directors of Christian Education, and other church workers preaching and teaching the Gospel are indeed beautiful, but often their feet become tired, sore, and blistered. These servants of the Lord are footwashers of God's people. Who will wash their feet and ease their hurting feet?

Through experience, I am aware of four sources of caring for church workers and their well-being. The first and primary help comes from the Lord. The second is the congregation but more often individual members. The third is the wider church body providing conferences, growth and support opportunities through district and synodical personnel. The fourth, and probably the most important for teachers and DCEs, are other church workers and their families. They often listen with empathy, providing a sounding board for ideas and suggestions for help.

Certainly the Lord is sufficient for all our needs, and church workers must rely on Him and seek help through the Word, sacraments, and prayer. And yet, workers need people who assist the Lord in ministering to those called into the full-time ministry. People are needed who comprehend the stresses for ministers who deal with spiritual problems day in and day out and are able to respond with empathy and genuine assistance.

As Jesus was a mentor to his disciples and Paul was to Timothy, Christian mentors are needed today who have wisdom, experience, listening skills, helping hands, and referral ability. Perhaps our church could identify retired workers who would be "on call" to respond to the needs of active church workers. The model may be a combination of the Stephen (caring) and the Laborers for Christ ministries (go to the need). Volunteers could include retired professional church workers and lay persons with specific skills.

For example, mentors may be available for help when a church worker may need a prayer partner, a sabbatical, an assistant for three months, someone with expertise in the congregation or school, a family counselor, an experienced teacher to

guide a young teacher through a first year, or a financial advisor. I might envision a clearing house and an 800-line. The mentors could work by telephone, fax, internet, or come in person for the length of time needed. Former pastors, teachers, principals, DCE's, accountants, counselors, fund raisers, and faithful laypersons could assist in renewing the tired, hurting, sore, but beautiful feet of those who preach the good news.

Allan Schmidt
Professor of Education
Concordia College-Seward

The Best Dictum of All

"The dangerous practice of becoming all things to all people and conforming to roles that are not real can all have a devastating effect on marriage. So much so that among professionals clergymen rank third in the number of divorces granted each year." (L. Lavendar, *They Cry, Too!*)

Lavendar's words have re-echoed since printed in the 1970's. Disturbing research data show an increased divorce rate. Literature focusing on issues in church workers' lives and congregational systems increases each year. In response to a fatal heart attack of a 55 year old pastor, *The Living Church* (March 12, 1995) published an article titled "We're Killing the Clergy."

We've discovered the problems/issues of the past are the problems of today—only exacerbated by a diversity of beliefs in society, churches and homes.

We have a plethora of solutions. Some of them are:

- Teach or review relationship, management and task skills with congregations and professional church workers.
- Provide clear job descriptions and well-defined roles in the Church.
- Congregations need to respect the privacy of professional church workers. They especially need to *commit to provide equitable, supportive wages, continuing education and vacation time.*
- If problems arise in the congregation, examine the total congregational system rather than scape-goating a professional church worker or spouse.
- Professional church workers need to view their marriages as primary. With a happy, secure marriage the church worker's ministry will be more successful.

- Professional church workers must spend time with family for mutual benefit. A famous actress who reared drug-using teenagers in the 1960's received counsel that was not helpful. "Being there" with her teens worked.
- Church worker couples ought to decide together what each will do at church and home. *Communicate.*
- Professional church workers must eliminate the "have-tos," "what will people think?" and "shoulds" as motivators. Keep the joy of ministry!
- In addition to relevant continuing education, support systems and trustworthy counselors, the denomination needs to issue an official statement stressing the importance of professional church worker marriages.

Together, professional church workers and congregations form *community*. What exemplifies a mission-centered Christian community?

- one flock under one shepherd;
- minds free of preconceptions and prejudices;
- acceptance of individuality;
- common sharing of the Gospel in faith and in other spiritual and mutual gifts;
- deliberations and discussions;
- agreement by consensus rather than majority rule;
- avoidance of divisions and schisms.

As I grow, the more mindful I am that secular theories have their derivation in Scripture. Matthew 18:15: "Go directly—." A laudable management theory. Go to the source. Don't gossip. Matthew 6:33: "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you—." Stay focused, the secular world says. Know your mission.

Our Lord through St. John gave the best dictum of all, "—love each other as I have loved you." John 15:12.

Together with you, I pray for richest blessings in your ministries.

Arleen M. Keyne
Consultant to Professional Church Workers
and
Associate Director, Pastoral Center
San Mateo, California

Who Cares?

IN THINKING ABOUT THE THEME of this edition, "Who Cares for Church Workers?" two words that I have heard quite often lately came to mind: "Who cares?" It is a question that seems to be asked by some pastors who have the feeling that few seem to care for them. When they feel that way, it can have a very negative impact on their ministry. On the other hand, I also look at other pastors and sense a tremendous joy and excitement for ministry. In making these observations, the question arises, "Why the difference?"

Instead of trying to answer the question, "Who Cares for Church Workers?" I believe we can be better served by identifying what can be seen in a pastor who knows he is cared for and the impact this has on his ministry.

When one knows and experiences God's care, especially His great love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ, and when that relationship is growing, the impact on one's life and ministry is amazing. There simply is no substitute for spending time with your Lord. I'm not talking about sermon or Bible study preparation time, but rather time in prayer, time for meditating on God's Word and what He is saying to you, time for talking to Him about whatever may be upon one's heart, including joys, struggles, hurts, and failures. This involves talking to Him about the real you. As one does this, it is important to listen to God's response as He personally speaks to us in His Word. What we hear is "I forgive you; I love you; I am with you; you are Mine." Our baptism tells us this every day.

When that relationship is strong and growing, it impacts another emphasis that is so important—*Love for God's people*. What I see in pastors who know they are cared for and loved by God is a tremendous love for God's people, a love that is not so much expressed in words as it is in relationships.

What opportunities pastors have to care for God's people as they open their lives in very special ways! They ask us to be a part of special events such as birth, marriage, and death. We are a part of the joys, hurts and struggles that occur in the lives of God's people. We show God's love and our love for them as we serve and care for them. When pastors are afraid to do this for whatever reason, I often sense and hear the thought that few care for them.

This reminds us of one more aspect of caring—*Let God's people care for you*. What a blessing there is when we are open to sharing a need, when we can be real and let God's people care for and love us. They do not expect us to be perfect. They know, perhaps better than we do ourselves, our faults and weaknesses. As we learn to say, "I'm sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me. I hurt," God's people reach out in care and love in so many special ways.

As we know and experience God's care and love for us, as we love and care for God's people and let them love and care for us, it is not a question of "Who cares?" that we struggle to answer. Instead, we can celebrate our ministry together.

Eugene Gierke, President
The Nebraska District—LCMS

Planning Together

BY FOCUSING AN ENTIRE EDITION of *Issues* on care for church workers, the editors have done our church a great service. It is important to examine more closely the struggles and pressures experienced by church workers, their spouses and their families. To identify some of the specific needs is a central first step.

It is further important to explore ways that parishes (and other institutions) can support their workers. The actual units of health are not so much individuals as they are communities. How communities of people, parishes, schools and the like organize themselves and behave in relationship to church workers and to each other is a central concern, and understanding these behaviors to work toward developing more healthy dynamics is a vital continuing step.

And, it is important for the workers themselves to assume personal responsibility for their health and care. To continue lifestyle habits which neither give glory to God nor nourish the soul at the same time that concerns are identified does not speak positively of the church worker. Assuming responsibility for personal health stewardship is a crucial continuing step.

Together, though, these three themes hold promise: identification of the struggles, pressures and needs of the worker; exploration of how the community of the parish can provide supportive and health-giving care; and assumption by the worker of personal responsibility for lifestyle issues.

For instance, we know that persons who see themselves growing and learning in the work that

they do tend to stay more energized and sharp in their vocation. We also know that persons for whom their position functions have become routine will lose energy and not be as vital in their work. Staying sharp in ministry, therefore, by learning and growing professionally, is good for the worker. It is also good for the community.

Our research through the Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support has indicated that almost 50 percent of our congregations provide neither funds nor non-vacation time for continuing education. Congregations can support church workers by making the professional growth of the worker a priority as to time and funding. This is a function of the community as it assesses its supportive functions.

The worker also would need to commit to professional growth for him or herself, recognizing the need for it and moving to satisfy that need.

Congregation and worker, planning together about organizational and personal growth needs thus move forward. The worker is cared for and about; the congregation provides the supporting community; the worker is enriched and brings new skills, understandings, and energy to his or her work. The congregation feels more cared for and about, too!

I hope the reader finds this edition of *Issues* helpful, encouraging, and even a bit provocative. But as an end result, may its pages help us all care for all the earthen vessels, church workers and layfolk alike, who need support and care to carry the treasure of the Gospel.

Bruce M. Hartung, Director
Ministerial Health/
Health and Healing Ministries
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Church Workers at Risk . . . and in Need of Care

Ronald L. Rehrer

Five Snapshots

■ **They sat** in the counselor's office looking defeated. Today they would file for bankruptcy. They could see no other way out. They were a Lutheran educator couple.

■ **A pastor called . . .** an urgency in his voice and deep worry in his words. "There's something you should know," he said to the counselor, and then, after a long pause, he continued, "We are reporting our Director of Christian Education today for child abuse."

■ **He said** he'd not been sleeping well. In fact, last night he'd bolted upright in bed, out of a deep sleep, his heart

pounding in his chest, palms sweaty, and having difficulty breathing. He was the principal of a school with a staff in conflict and its economic survival doubtful.

■ **She was** a pastor's wife, and she felt ashamed. She was reporting her husband to church authorities because he refused to stop having affairs. He was a sex addict.

■ **Her voice** quivered, soft, barely audible. "They've asked me not to return. I'm not a bad teacher, but some parents complained. I feel awful. Sometimes I think death wouldn't be such a bad thing."

Ronald Rehrer, M.A., is a pastor and a licensed therapist who serves as a full-time counselor for professional church workers of the Pacific Southwest District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod with offices throughout the PSW District.

■ **The above "snapshots"** are of church workers in trouble. In the **first** we see a teacher couple in financial ruin and on the verge of despair. The **second** shows a pastor facing the difficult task, as a mandated reporter, of making a child abuse report on his DCE co-worker. The **third** reveals an administrator with high anxiety, suffering from panic attacks. In the **fourth** we see a pastor's wife beginning to reveal a secret she carried for a long time. In the **fifth** we see a teacher who has begun to think about death as a resolution to her emotional pain and hopelessness.

Across the nation, contact with teachers, administrators, DCEs and pastors reveals a host of struggles that are impacting ministries and congregations. Perhaps at no other time in our church's history have so many workers and their families been in need of care.

For several years worker problems have been

gaining national attention. Some have been turned into "made-for-TV" movies while others have made national and local newspapers. Stories about workers involved in alleged sexual misconduct, child abuse, embezzlement of funds, and even attempted homicide have often been sensationalized in the media and have given the church an embarrassing black eye. A number of lawsuits have been threatened and even brought against workers, schools and congregations as the litigious atmosphere of our society grows. Though the majority of church workers are functioning in productive ways, a quick survey of workers engaged in counseling across the country shows many workers with marital problems, chemical dependency, psychiatric disorders, parent-child problems, stress and burnout, and occupational difficulties. In the rising tide of worker dysfunction, the church has been made aware that something is wrong and needs its attention. The question being raised is: How will the church respond?



WHO CARES FOR CHURCH WORKERS? How do they show they care? Are there ways to prevent church worker problems? Are there steps church leaders can take to care for its workers?

Our church body has already begun its response on several levels. At the national level, Rev. Bruce Hartung, Director of Ministerial Health, and Health and Healing Ministries, continues to work hard to develop prevention programs and give technical support to many church workers and leaders on a variety of issues. Rev. Peter L. Steinke, writer, therapist, and superb educator, has for many years been a consultant to our seminaries, our Council of Presidents, and other Synod officials regarding ministerial health, and has done numerous workshops for church workers, leaders, and conflicted congregations. Health insurance companies and foundations associated with the Lutheran church are involved in strengthening workers and congregations through prevention and treatment grants and programs (for example, the Wheatridge Foundation, Lutheran Ministries Health Plan, Lutheran Brotherhood, Aid Association for Lutherans, and Concordia Health Plan).

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Closer to home, each District now has a Ministerial Health Committee to address worker issues and to advise the District President. A growing number of Teachers', DCEs', and Pastors' Conferences have offered workshop/presentation themes on worker self-care and ministerial wellness, such as "How to Prevent Burnout," "Sex in the Forbidden Zone," and "Steps to Strengthen Church/Staff Relationships." There are also hard-working professional Lutheran therapists in various parts of the country who are making a difference in workers' lives.

Like a sleeping giant, the Church is waking up to the realities of worker difficulties and is getting serious about addressing these concerns. We praise God for all of those who are currently working tirelessly on behalf of workers and their families!

But there is still so much to do. We have only scratched the surface in our on-going effort to identify workers at risk and offer help needed before causing harm to others or themselves (see Conrad Weiser's new book, *Healers Harmed and Harmful*). We are in the infancy stage in educating lay leaders in congregations and schools about worker problems and how they can promote worker stability and positive morale. It also seems clear that far too little is being done to care for church workers in various regions of the country, and that far too little is being done at the local level. That is why this edition of *Issues* is such a welcome contribution because it is an additional voice lifting up such

a critical issue for the future welfare of our churches, schools and other institutions.

It is a positive sign that more and more congregational and church leaders are becoming aware of and sensitive to worker pressures, problems and frustrations. Many of these leaders want to learn what they can do to support their workers. While there are still some who simply want to get rid of their worker at the first sign of trouble, and are unwilling to try to understand or do the hard work of reconciling/rebuilding together, there are many more who are asking for guidance in addressing their workers' needs and concerns. To that end, the remainder of this article is an attempt to highlight just a few of those areas where leaders can assist workers in their local setting.

Five Frustrations Felt by Many Called Workers Today

Loneliness and Isolation

BENEATH THE "MASK" of the professional smile worn valiantly by some workers lies a profound loneliness and isolation. Even when they are surrounded by many people they serve, they may feel alone. At the root of much of this loneliness is a longing for friendship. An unmarried DCE may have difficulty finding a friend who cares for her in the church. A principal may suffer from a deep longing for a buddy his own age with similar interests. A pastor's wife, feeling neglected by her workaholic husband, may feel afraid to confide in a friend for fear of damaging her husband's reputation and ministry. A gathering of Ministerial Health Committee representatives from each of our Districts identified one central need among most workers. It was summed up in the words: "I wish I had a safe place to talk." Yet in spite of this central need, many workers are afraid to confide in a "friend" within the church for fear that their confidence will be betrayed, resulting in negative consequences to their reputations and ministries.

Many lonely workers long for someone they can "get real" with, someone with whom they can drop their professional mask and to whom they can self-disclose with a high level of trust. If loneliness is the "greatest disease of all diseases," as one physician called it, then this could be a great opportunity for church leaders and congregational members to be healers. A simple thing such as inviting a worker over for dinner can go a long way to ending the sense of isolation. Or, involving a worker in a social activity such as going to a baseball game, or movie, or play can help a worker feel cared for. On a deeper level, laypersons might invite workers on an overnight fishing or camping trip in which everyone can drop roles and become more real and

"present" to each other. When workers feel they have friends who care about them, they are less likely to act out in inappropriate ways, or seek affection in boundary violations. They also can develop "safe havens" in which to share their pains, hopes, dreams, worries and frustrations, and receive feedback, advice and love.

A Personal Sense of Failure

SCHOOLS STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL while congregations are in decline in many parts of our Church. This leads many of our workers to a profound sense of personal failure. Pastors take it personally if their church doesn't grow. Principals become anxious, wondering if they are to blame for declining enrollment. DCE's fear they may be blamed if the youth group falters and kids seem disinterested in Bible study groups. Too often there are members of the church or school who do in fact look for someone to blame when groups are not growing or things going as planned.

Lay leaders as well as church workers need to take a look at the larger picture, however. Rarely is it one person's fault for what looks like a declining church, school or program. Multiple factors usually converge to create the problems. But many church workers really do feel personally responsible for failures around them.

What they need is not judgment or criticism, but support, encouragement, and a pat on the back for what they have attempted. Everywhere in Synod, people are looking for answers to what works and what doesn't. Lay leaders can assist workers in removing their guilt-burden by simply reminding their pastor, principal or other worker that "we are in this together." Too often people look to the pastor or school administrator or DCE as the "savior" they have awaited. But the men and women called to serve them are not "saviors," and they always come with strengths and weaknesses, assets and liabilities. For those areas in which a worker may not be as proficient or capable as lay leaders had hoped, leaders should encourage (and fund!) continuing education and training for that aspect of the work needed to be done. Patience, forgiveness, and great love go a long way in building teamwork of lay leaders and called workers.

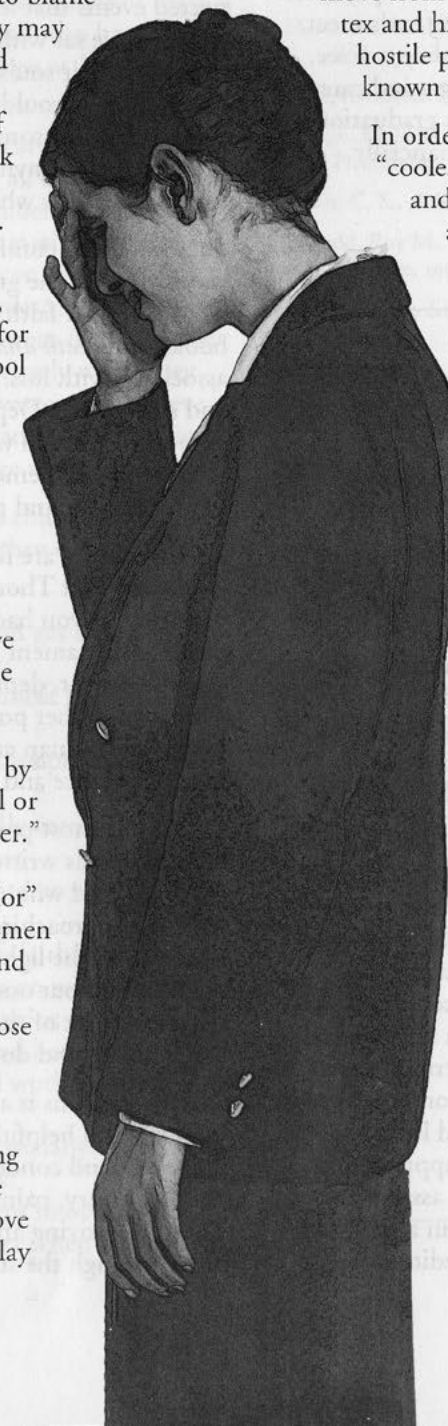
Tired of Battling Alligators

I AM INDEBTED TO PETER STEINKE for his thoughts about "anxiety" in the church, and I highly recommend his new book, *How Your Church Family Works*. Church workers tire of battling alligators (those church and school members who complain, snipe, argue, undermine, disrupt, attack, and generally make life miserable for workers). Every church and school has one or more. The insight Steinke brings is that these are all responses which arise out of anxiety. As members become more anxious about something, the more they stop thinking, and the more they become emotionally reactive. In Steinke's model, they move from being rational people (who use their neocortex and higher brain functions) to being reactive/hostile people (who use their lower brain functions known as the "reptilian brain").

In order to lower the anxiety in the system, the "cooler heads" among lay leaders need to step in and calm down those people who are up in arms. While the greatest portion of congregation/school members may not know what's going on, may not care, or may choose to avoid conflicts, leaders within the "inner circles" need to bring a calm presence and Christ-centered love and wisdom to prevent further embattlement. Those conflictors who are making rash accusations or who are highly critical need to know that there are other leaders who approach conflict with fairness, sensitivity and without prejudice.

Workers need to be protected at times for the sake of "decency and order." Conversations need to become "solution focused" rather than worker bashing. Where a worker has legitimately been at fault or has violated someone or something, there should be clear policies and procedures to rectify the situation. But too often leaders become polarized in the midst of high anxiety, and the ministry grinds to a halt or is seriously impaired. Enormous energy is consumed in battling one another!

In general, if an antagonistic layperson refuses to calm down and refuses to work towards a solution, then other lay leaders may need to consider a strong response to that "alligator" so that the church's vision and ministry may continue. If the problem cannot be resolved within the



congregation/school, then it becomes necessary to involve conflict resolution personnel available within the District. Sometimes a more rational outsider can help untangle the knot at the heart of the matter. When anxiety runs high, the knot usually gets pulled tighter. When anxiety cools, there are often new ways of untying the knot that come to mind. (Knots in the stomachs of workers and leaders also relax!)

Financial Problems and Growing Personal Debt

EACH YEAR IN MY COUNSELING PRACTICE, I see several church worker families with large debt and little hope of recovery. Like many other workers, they live from paycheck to paycheck, but fall further behind in making ends meet. Bankruptcy soon becomes the only solution they can see. While a recent inquiry of several of our colleges indicated that many students are having less debt upon graduation, many workers in the field are hard pressed financially.

Such thoughts coming from church workers may be shocking.

The common denominator among workers facing a financial crisis is the experience of shame. They feel badly about themselves and are afraid of anyone knowing their plight. Congregations and schools which underpay their workers contribute in part to the problem. Workers who have not learned how to budget, how to balance check-books, how to save, or how to use credit cards wisely, also contribute to the problem.

Many churches and schools have lay leaders or members skilled at money management who could sit with workers to discuss overall strategies for financial health, including credit repair, budget matters, and the advantages and disadvantages of filing for bankruptcy. This certainly could be done on a circuit level, with the invitation for personal followup. It could be one of the greatest contributions to worker stability and family success. Or if a worker is already known to be struggling financially, a wise and loving member of the church/school may consider approaching the worker with sensitivity and care, offering assistance. Consumer Credit Counselors, nationwide, can also be of enormous help for one being hounded by creditors.

A Crisis in Faith

"DOES GOD REALLY CARE ABOUT ME? Does He know what He's doing in my life?" These are the kinds of questions even church workers privately raise when they suffer a terrible blow. A worker's newborn baby suddenly dies in its sleep. A worker is devastated when her fiance breaks off their engagement. A worker who has several years of successful ministry in the same location finds himself stunned by the attacks of people he thought were his friends and supporters. A graduate finds himself being placed in a geographical area he absolutely hates.

We could make a long list of personal losses and unexpected events that lead some church workers into a crisis in faith. I have sat with workers while they cried out of the depths of their souls: "I thought God would not give us more than we could bear!" "Does God hate me?" "Is this punishment for something I've done?" "I'm not sure I even believe in God anymore." "I've served the Lord all these years, and this is what I get in return?"

Such thoughts coming from church workers may be shocking. But the greater the perceived loss, the greater can be the crisis of faith. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her famous book, *On Death and Dying*, observed five stages of grief associated with loss: denial, depression, anger, bargaining and acceptance. Depression and anger can be strongly felt emotions. Church workers are not immune from feeling these same deep emotions which can lead to questioning God's wisdom and power in their lives.

The Scriptures are full of similar expressions. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" says the anguished psalmist. "If you had been here, my brother would not have died!" is the lament leveled against Jesus by the sister of Lazarus. Anger, depression, doubt, angst, terror. . . the psalms and other portions of Scripture portray the feelings within the human condition where one is uncertain of the Lord's presence and potency.

One of the most poignant portrayals of doubt about God's intentions was written by C. S. Lewis following the death of his beloved wife. In *A Grief Observed* Lewis writes that it feels like approaching a mansion where God dwells, in which all of the lights are burning brightly, only to watch them turned out one by one as he approaches, until he stands in front of the door, hearing the sounds of locks being bolted and doublebolted against him.

Once again, this is a time when lay leaders can be understanding and helpful. Workers need safe places, free of judgment and condemnation, in which to express their sense of injury, pain and deep disappointment with God. They need loving and caring lay leaders/co-workers as they move through the stages of grief. They need to "bleed

away" the feelings of abandonment and sense of betrayal they have, just as the physical body needs to bleed in order for cleansing to happen. Church workers need the Church and its representatives to "hold them," "wipe away their tears," and "nurture and comfort them," in their time of need, so that there is a bridge built to renewal of hope and trust in God's infinite Wisdom and Presence again.

It takes sensitivity and patience to sit with a worker who feels abandoned or completely rejected by God. Workers may not be immediately ready to hear reassuring words. In fact, they may even reject these words initially. But as a worker comes to know that he/she has someone close at hand on whom one can lean in the greatest times of need, a person may find the way back to the Lord who has always been with them in their darkest hour, even as He was with His own Son during His darkest hours.

While it is impossible in the space of an article to list all of the problems workers face or to discuss all of the pressures they are under, it is important to remember that a lot is at stake for workers and congregations. Sometimes workers do "shoot themselves in the foot," and this can make us feel hurt, disappointed and angry. But at times these problems and pressures are inherent within the system in which they work. Sometimes workers act inappropriately when they attempt to misuse their power, try to overcontrol, believe that they are above the law, or try to manipulate situations to their advantage. Workers, after all, are sinners, too.

One of the greatest needs today is good church leaders who can help workers become the best that they can be. Here are some suggestions:

- invite workers over for dinner and get to really know them;
- remember they are first and foremost human beings who also make mistakes;
- treat them as Jesus did his own disciples . . . with love, respect and compassion;
- help them feel that someone really cares about them and really wants to listen to them;
- keep absolutely confidential whatever workers share with you personally;
- make workers take their days off, faithfully and regularly, and make sure they do no work on those days, except for genuine emergencies;
- pay workers the highest salary and benefits available . . . it will pay off with increased worker morale and productivity;
- help workers feel they belong, especially single teachers, DCEs and pastors' wives;
- take the loving and necessary steps to obtain the right kind of help for your worker when you think a worker may be at risk;

- pray for your workers and their families at all times, and if they "sin against you," find ways to forgive them, and find ways to repair your relationship for the good of God's Kingdom among you.

Church workers are at risk . . . and in need of care. Let us do everything we are able to do to cherish, uplift, support and praise them. They need and deserve it.

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How Congregations Can Care for Church Workers:

■ The week had been excruciatingly long . . . the day was following suit as the Evangelism Committee meeting entered its second hour. Although in retrospect what was said was not surprising, the timing and force of the accusation hit its mark with surgical precision. "Pastor, why didn't you visit Mr. Bourgeois?" the committee member queried. "I tried to reach him by telephone several times and was unsuccessful, was the pastor's response. The discussion which followed indicated to all present that the pastor had been given inadequate information to make the contact. The exchange became heated and ended with the parishioner spitting out, "You'll have to answer to God for that!" The accusation was not a total surprise, but its predicted judgment stung, striking home in the guilt repository always available to the professional church worker. The hurt became anger as the deeper injury was inflicted by the silent four who witnessed the exchange without responding . . . there was neither support for the accusation nor defense of the pastor or his ministry.



A Word of Encouragement

David Kruger

THIS INCIDENT HIGHLIGHTS the most critical ingredient in a congregation's care of its professional church workers—the nurturance of a caring community. People will accuse and attack; there will be antagonists in the church. Professional church workers can expect criticism and even learn from it, but the silence of the crowd causes more injury than even the sharpest of criticism, for the worker is isolated and alienated. Congregations cannot resolve nor even predict all the personal or professional issues that arise among their church workers. . . but congregations can help to create and sustain an atmosphere where issues can be admitted and addressed. Schools and churches must work to create an atmosphere where all voices can be heard and where dialogue is the key. If professional church workers know they are loved and supported, they can bear much more criticism and use it to improve their ministry. A word of encouragement pays rich dividends in church worker care.

Ways church workers can care for themselves is the subject of another article in this journal. However, when discussing how congregations can care for workers, it must be first acknowledged that *it is critical to the development and sustenance of a caring community that workers be committed to caring for themselves.* If a person has entered the work of the church to be cared for, that person has begun with misdirected and problematic intent; yet many professional church workers begin ministry with just such intent, whether spoken or subconscious. The educational debt that a worker accumulates is a personal debt, not the community's debt, and it is not the community's responsibility to remove the debt. The average debt of a graduate is approximately the cost of an average priced new car. Considering the projected income of beginning profes-

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sional church workers, the debt is steep. The investment is, however, far superior to investment in a finely trimmed and tuned automobile, and the warranty never expires. The congregational community is not here to take care of each and every problem the worker experiences; it is not intended to serve as the worker's family, spouse, or friends.

A Caring Congregation

HAVING BEGUN WITH THAT CAVEAT, congregations can care for their church workers by working with them to foster a truly caring congregational community where the shared ministry of professional and lay church workers can be openly and honestly integrated, evaluated and supported. St. Luke says of the Jerusalem Christian community, "The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common," and "There was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:32 and 34b). The character of the first Christians was marked by a personal commitment to one another that included the sharing of all things. That character created an atmosphere of trust and openness that permeated the community. The most disruptive and incendiary of issues (e.g., does the ministry of the church extend *even* to Gentiles? and, *my* mother is being ignored in the food distribution) could be discussed openly and honestly because the foundation of the Heavenly Father's care in Jesus Christ had become the pattern for the community's care for one another. Such sacrificial caring spawned actions that surprised even St. Paul, for in 2 Corinthians 8:1-2 he reports with a certain awe, "The grace of God which has been shown in the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part." Tested and afflicted, with every reason to turn in on themselves, the Macedonian churches reached out in love and care for others, sharing their meager resources. Truly caring communities do not ignore their own needs; they find their needs being filled in their care for one another. A congregational community that cares for each other and for the surrounding community will show the same care for its professional church workers, *and vice versa!*

Modeling Care

FATHER JOHN FRANCIS PATRICK MULCAHY, after spending fearful days in preparation for a visit by his supervising bishop only to have all the preparation appear useless because of his response to a M.A.S.H. crisis, proclaimed in his own simple, sensitive way, "God did not put us here for that pat on the back. He created us so that he could be here, so that God could be here in the people he created in his image." *A second practical congregational design is the*

development of a small group organized specifically to express care for the church's professional workers. The group provides a means for God's presence to reside among his people. Although the intent is to develop a small group where workers can receive care, the goal of the group needs to be the development of a model caring community. However, if the focus is on the church workers only, the care of the group could become "curious care" and thereby border on voyeurism. When the focus is on developing a caring small group, it becomes not only a healing fellowship but also a model for the entire parish. Although it does not matter what the group is called, it is important that the group's responsibilities are carefully defined, and that generous time is available for nurture and support. Some congregations use established boards such as Elders or Deacons for such a purpose, while others create a separate, specific group. The fellowship designated should include a cross section of congregational members, various ages and both genders, who themselves are committed to confidentiality and to growth in faith and service, and who are willing to be open, honest and willing to risk sharing themselves.

A pastor was frustrated with a Board of Elders' discussion regarding the revision of the elders' job description. For years it was apparent that the responsibilities were overwhelming and that the elders were unwilling and unable to fulfill them. Part of the job description centered on the care of the congregation's professional church workers, and that segment had become the center of discussion. The pastor finally blurted out, "This discussion is akin to rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic!*" The administrative wrinkles of the elders were replaced with puzzled frowns. The pastor continued, "I have served among you more than ten years, and many of you have been elders most of that time. We have scheduled meetings all this past year, and they were attended sporadically by everyone. I doubt that any one of you is aware that the past year has been perhaps the most difficult year of my life." Puzzlement was replaced with concern and, to the credit of this particular Board of Elders, changes were made and time was committed to develop a caring, nurturing community among them. However, it is easier to respond to a moment of need than it is to sustain such a response as the continuing character of a designated group. On the other hand, the latter is more critical to the care of professional church workers and the communities in which they minister. *If your congregation has no group designated for church worker care, create one; if your congregation has such a fellowship, support, encourage and enable them in their important ministry.*

Caring: Job Descriptions

There is no substitute for carefully designed, sensitively written job descriptions. They serve as valuable tools for search

committees, planning committees and evaluation of church worker ministry. It is important that some flexibility be built into the job descriptions in order that the individual gifts of the worker can be utilized, but everyone needs to know on the basis of prepared guidelines what is expected and what is being accomplished. Dr. Peter Steinke in *How Your Church Family Works* emphasizes the importance of "self-differentiation." Simply stated, self-differentiation means knowing and respecting one's personal and professional boundaries and the boundaries of other people. Job descriptions certainly do not guarantee self-differentiation and appropriate boundaries, but they give congregations and workers a basis for conversation regarding the concept. In the development of job descriptions it is important to consider what the needs of the community are and what the training of a church worker prepares that person to do. It is also imperative that both worker and community remember what God calls his church workers to do. When the Greeks complained that their widows "were neglected in the daily distribution," the twelve told the believers, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables." Their responsibilities were to "devote [themselves] to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:1-7). It is a matter of congregational and small group conversation to determine what "the ministry of the word" and "to serve tables" mean in a particular community, but devotion to prayer and ministry is the primary responsibility of the church worker, and ample time must be allowed for the task. Professional church workers are human beings, and none will fit or fulfill even a carefully prepared, sensitively written job description. The commitment is to a caring community. Congregations can practice their care for church workers by having job descriptions that are used in the calling, planning and evaluating processes.

Caring: Continuing Education

Caring for professional church workers includes encouragement, planning and support for continuing education. Some congregations find that a church worker who is particularly suited for some of their needs is untrained and unsuccessful in another critical area of need. Even with focused job descriptions and updated information regarding church workers on a congregation's call list, some search committees are frustrated because they cannot find the "perfect fit." As in marriage, there are very few "perfect fits." In both cases it is better to look for



compatibility and a willingness to learn and grow. Congregations are encouraged to investigate the willingness of a church worker to become more proficient in a particular area of the church's need. Such investigation assumes a church's or school's willingness to offer, encourage and support continuing education with time and money. The finest automobile needs regular attention with tune ups, fluid changes and replacement parts; the human spirit needs refreshment and retooling at regular intervals also. Most church workers welcome the opportunity to learn, to listen, to be renewed and regenerated; their most frequent reason for not participating in continuing education offerings is lack of time and insufficient finances. The caring congregational community will make such experiences possible for the health and functioning of both congregation and worker.



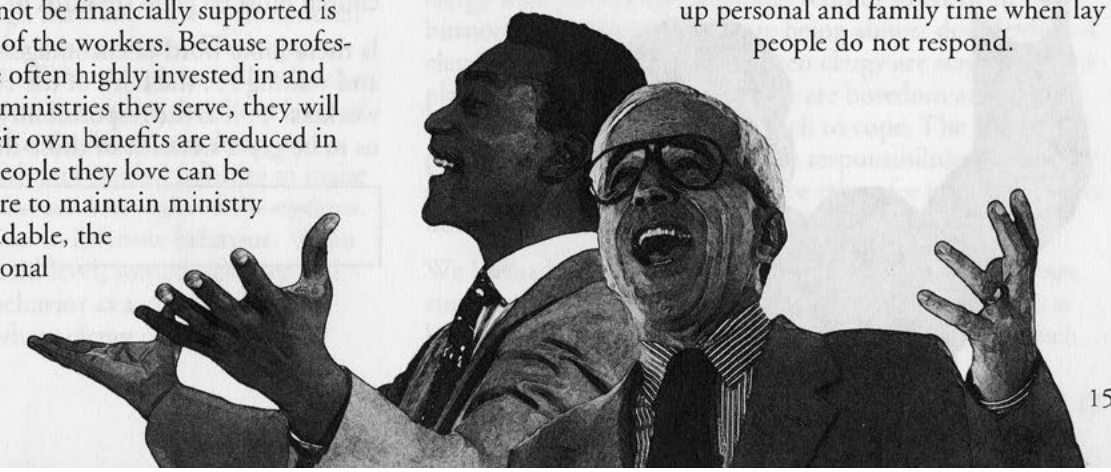
Caring: Financial Support

The area of the relationship between community and professional church worker that offers the most opportunity for creative care is salary and benefits. Salaries can be sensitive to the opportunities tax law offers for housing, transportation, continuing education and retirement investment, but they must first of all be reasonable pay considering the education, experience and expectations of the professional. Unrealistic salaries and an inability to support a family are two of the major reasons given for dissatisfaction in ministry and for leaving the formal ministry. In 1995 there is no nonprofit, volunteer organization in the United States, let alone a church or school, that does not have to show careful stewardship of the gifts given by the community. Volunteer gifts of time and money are at a premium, and the need for and cost of ministry programs continue to increase. In a market where there is strong competition for each dollar available in the church, it is tempting to place the burden on professional church workers by retaining or reducing current salaries and benefits. There is no need to be embarrassed when a once viable, productive ministry can no longer be maintained; there is reason to be embarrassed when a ministry that cannot be financially supported is continued at the expense of the workers. Because professional church workers are often highly invested in and deeply committed to the ministries they serve, they will rarely complain when their own benefits are reduced in order that a ministry or people they love can be served. Although the desire to maintain ministry is understandable and laudable, the essential needs of professional church workers deserve to be addressed.

When designing salary and benefit packages, churches and schools must insure that the salary for a beginning professional church worker is sufficient to include repayment of educational loans. Recent graduates, as was noted earlier, often have a heavy debt to repay following completion of their education. District leaders have salary and benefit guidelines to assist in developing an appropriate package. In addition, congregations may consider supplemental ways to assist in the repayment of student loans. Encouraging offerings designated for this purpose as part of regular stewardship opportunities will often lead to individual gifts; inclusion of student loan repayment in the annual congregational budget will offer an incentive for the worker to remain in the position longer and will mirror the community's continuing care and encouragement. Congregations and schools in an area might band together to raise funds for repayment assistance. The York Circuit of the Nebraska District offers financial assistance to pastors, teachers, and Directors of Christian Education presently working in the circuit or who originated in the circuit and have taken full-time church work elsewhere. Church workers who have benefited from this assistance might be encouraged to contribute once their own debt is repaid.

Caring: Personal and Family Time

"IF YOU CANNOT SPEAK LIKE ANGELS, if you cannot preach like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus. . . ." Congregations that exhibit exemplary care for church workers allot generous time for personal and family time. Religious communities cannot offer salaries commensurate with other vocations, but they can show the love of Jesus in their caring for church workers by being generous and creative in benefits, especially with time for family and self. Teachers who are in the classroom five days a week during the school year (working much more than forty hours when preparation and extracurricular time is included) need the weekend to relax, refresh and regenerate as well as a summer vacation for recreation and renewal. DCE's and pastors need regular days dedicated to family and personal time and vacations that take them far from the stress of parish life. Professional church workers are not a substitute for unwilling lay workers and should not be expected to give up personal and family time when lay people do not respond.



When Ms. Devoted DCE or Pastor Conscientious still does not want to take time off—continuing to work through days off—they have a problem. A caring small group fellowship is designed for just this sort of situation. With an active small group designated for church worker care (a group that is regularly *paying attention to the care of each other*), there is a place for sensitive, honest, encouraging dialogue with the worker. Part of that encouragement may include educating a congregation regarding the need for such time and reminding the church worker of benefits to body and spirit.

The bulletin announcements the previous Sunday had included the pastor's intent to take Monday and Tuesday (which did not include his normal day off) as personal time. While shaking hands at the door following worship, several people pleasantly inquired if he had enjoyed his *vacation*. "It was nice, but I tend to think of two days off as a *weekend* rather than a vacation," he replied with equal pleasantness. The exchange highlights a dilemma common to church workers and usually foreign to parishioners—*there is no such thing as a weekend for professional church workers*. Encouraging workers to take two days off on a regular basis, considering it a "weekend" and enabling the worker to take the time is a marvelous way to show church workers that the community is sensitive to their care. One church worker has described the "perfect vacation" as a trip *anywhere they could be undetected, unknown and from which they did not have to report to the congregation*.

Sensitivity to personal time includes showing respect for office hours, personal time, meal times, vacations and days off when making contact by telephone. Church workers who minister in caring communities want to be contacted at any time in crises or emergencies. They also show deep appreciation when their personal and family time is respected in the course of their ministries.



Caring: Equipped Lay Ministers

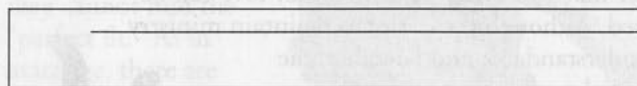
Congregations and schools that cannot pay high salaries can encourage and assist in the development of skilled lay ministers that will allow professional church workers to take and enjoy personal time critical to their spiritual and physical health.

When a church worker takes time off, it creates a problem for the worker—it often takes more work to get ready to leave and to catch up afterwards than the time-off is worth. Church-worker-time-off also creates a problem for the congregation, that of providing care in the interim. Both problems offer opportunity for the careful development of trained lay people capable of handling ministry tasks and crises. Professional church workers can train willing, capable people to carry out an interim ministry. A program such as Stephen Ministry is designed to identify and train gifted people for lay caring ministry, many of whom are used by congregations and pastors for just such an opportunity.

Caring: One More Word

WHILE WORSHIPPING IN ANTIOCH of Pisidia Paul and "his company" were invited to speak by members of the community who said, "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, speak up." This article is a word of encouragement. Sensitive, intentional care of church workers by congregations is good stewardship. Investment in a caring community will result in more joyful, productive ministry in church and school. *There is one more word of encouragement congregations can speak; support the efforts of your District and Synod to supply care and caregivers to professional church workers*. One District, when faced with the choice of calling a caregiver for church workers or a planned giving counselor, both important and critical in the life of the church, was led to call the latter. Planned giving counselors produce revenue for congregations, District and Synod. . . caregivers produce no revenue; their work is done within the quiet seclusion of confidentiality, and, if done well, communities may not even be aware that a worker has received care and has begun the healing process. Yet professional church workers are the cherished and essential gifts of the Body of Christ, and the church must be good stewards of this gift also.

Is there some word of encouragement? The harvest is ready and waiting . . . the Lord of the Harvest will supply the workers . . . it is the responsibility of each of us and of all of us to be good stewards of those the Lord supplies.



Ways Church Workers Can Care for Themselves: An Interview with Roy Oswald

Roy Oswald is a pastor of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America who is a senior consultant with the Alban Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, with his office located at 144 South Main Street, Boonsboro, Maryland 21713.

How did you become interested in exploring ways church workers can care for themselves?

To begin with, I needed to deal with my own stress and burnout. I became aware that as a parish pastor my stress level was exceedingly high, and it had some effect on me physically. I suffered from some heart palpitations and migraine headaches and later on burnout when I began working for a Synod office. I began to experience some of the effects of burnout, so I knew I needed to find a new way of managing my own health and wholeness if I were to be of assistance to others.

The research became much more focused when Alban Institute did a research project on clergy transitions which I coordinated. Basically we were studying clergy and their families moving from one congregation to another—how they said goodbye, how they said hello—what were the effects of those transitions.

What we discovered was that the stress level for some clergy and their families was so high that they were dysfunctional in the opening months of the new ministry. We began to see some of the detrimental effects of high stress levels when starting a new ministry. If one is over the threshold level of stress, one's perception level is decreased, resulting in not being able to take in the vital data needed in order to make an effective start-up. One also can lose sight of the options. Most devastating is regression to infantile behavior. When people are over their threshold level, sometimes they will regress to former types of behavior as a child and do something stupid. This is where clergy can shoot them-

selves in the foot in the opening months of the new ministry, such as letting someone get to them and snapping at them, destroying that relationship.

So we began to teach stress management in our seminars on clergy transition, helping clergy and their families cope with stress as they move from one situation to another. At that time, we developed self-care strategies. I began to become more and more interested in some of the self-care tactics and strategies that were most helpful to other people. So I attended seminars in secular institutions on stress management to see what I could learn to translate into seminars that I was conducting for clergy. I also began to subscribe to some medical self-care magazines, such as *Prevention*, *Medical Self-Care*, *Wellness Letter* (The University of California-Berkeley), and the *Harvard Medical School Newsletter*.

The other major research project that contributed was our research on the long pastorate, and we discovered that clergy who are in long pastorates tend to suffer from burnout, with the burnout rate being almost double that of clergy in a normal rotation. When clergy are staying in one place for ten years or more, there are boredom and increased responsibilities with which to cope. The longer people are in one place, the more responsibilities they accumulate. They also begin to be taken for granted and are not given the support that they normally would receive.

We learned very quickly that there is a difference between stress and burnout, and one of the things that we teach is how stress and burnout differ. Stress basically is too much

stimulation, too much novelty, too much change, too much in flux, all of which have negative effects on the body which is always in a "fight-flight" state, resulting in high blood pressure, nervousness, upset stomachs, or a disease. Burnout is an overuse of our listening and caring capacities, which, in effect, makes someone dull, hollow, and uninteresting. One can begin to see what a devastating effect this has on a normally effective, vital pastor who exhibits signs of burnout. Four signs of burnout are: physical-emotional exhaustion, cynicism, disillusionment, and self-deprecation. Burnout victims begin to blame themselves for the malaise they are in. It is very difficult to be a channel of grace, a channel of good news, when you are exhausted, cynical, disillusioned, and self-deprecating.

One of the things that we do in our seminar on "New Visions for Long Pastors"—a four-day seminar where we help clergy stay in one place because we believe in long pastorates—is to emphasize the need to monitor for burnout. To avoid burnout, one needs to be extra vigilant about taking days off and limiting the number of hours one is working to 50 hours a week and arranging a three-month sabbatical every four years. There is no way one can stay long-term and be effective without having some radical self-care strategies that are going to keep one vital and vibrant.

Through this I have come to see that the vitality of clergy is probably the most important commodity that they have to offer their congregation. When clergy lose their vitality, they lose the very enthusiasm that makes the Gospel credible. When lay people say to their friends, "Hey, you've got to meet my pastor," that's the way to grow a church by having something at the core of one's person that is exciting and interesting, evidencing that there is substance to engage. This does not happen when people are burned out. When people are burned out they are dull, hollow, and uninteresting, and they become an embarrassment to their parishioners. They do not want to introduce their friends to them because there is so little vitality to engage them. So I've come to see over time that stress and burnout are lethal to an effective pastorate, which became so apparent to me in these two research projects.

As I continue to travel around the country and increasingly find clergy suffering from both stress and burnout, finding ways of coping has become my major theme and the center of what I have to offer clergy. This appears to be my unique mission with the Alban Institute and with clergy: to teach clergy how to take better care of themselves and to avoid these twin destroyers of stress and burnout.

What are some factors related to an increasing interest in the self-care of church workers?

I continually encounter more and more clergy who are

aware of the fact that they are living on the edge. They are frightened, and they do not know what to do about it. They see that the way they are going about doing their ministry is detrimental to their health, and their families are concerned. I am finding a ready openness to learn something about self-care. Secondly, I am also discovering that with the increasing stress in our culture, concerns about the economy, and corporations laying off thousands of people, people who are laid off are in one kind of stress while the people who keep their jobs are in another kind of stress because they are going to have to work twice as hard and produce better quality with fewer people. People are bringing this kind of stress to the church, and church workers who are seeing this in their lay people want to know how they can help their lay people cope with both stress and burnout. Church workers are going to be effective in direct proportion to the way in which they are caring for themselves, and I continually hammer home the point that a church worker is not going to be of help to people if they come to church and discover that one is more burned out or more stressed than they are. So, if one is to be an authentic spiritual leader, a person needs to call people on the madness that we are all in and simply say, "I'm not going to live that way. I encourage you not to. This is not the way God meant life to be." There is a ready openness to engage this topic.

For you, what are important ways in which church workers can care for themselves?

The most important is heightened self-awareness. It is first of all important that church workers have some clear understanding about themselves, their own addictions to work, their own neurotic tendencies. They also need to be aware of where stress is impacting their body and the symptoms of stress that appear in their bodies. This is where each person is unique. There is not one self-care strategy that is going to work for everyone. If there is a group of people and you ask, "Where does stress hit your body?" and then go around the circle, you will find that some get headaches, some get stomach aches, some get dizzy, some get depressed, some say that their back goes out of whack, while others say that their eyes start to flutter. It is incredible how unique stress is, and how it strikes different people in different ways. This is where our heredity is very important, and we need to understand what is the weak link in our genetic code. So heightened awareness is the first step, knowing what this job is doing to one, knowing where it affects one, knowing where stress is going to show up first, and then recognizing choices in doing something about it. But if one is not able to understand what drives one's self, then it is difficult to move to any health-care strategies.

How important is spiritual nurture in the lives of church workers?

For me, this is the foundation. At the root of most of our destructive patterns is a spiritual issue. When I can help clergy to confront their workaholic tendencies, the root is basically a spiritual issue in which they either don't feel they are worthy and have to work harder than everyone else, or they feel that it's up to them and they have a hard time trusting in grace. They at times don't seem to be able to see that their ministry means they are the branches and not the vine, and that they need to plug into another source of energy. Unless they are plugged in to another source of energy, they are going to try to do it out of their own strength and energy, which are never going to be enough.

Where there are physical symptoms or emotional imbalance, I think at the root of these is a spiritual issue as well. I usually start here and say that in order for us to be healthy we need to be healthy on three fronts: physical, emotional, and spiritual. All of them are tied together, and yet one will likely give us more difficulty than the other two, and one is going to be easier than the other two. The spiritual side is, I think, at the root of both physical and emotional health.

The challenge here is that the clergy and church workers have been given so little training on how to keep their spiritual lives alive and healthy. First of all, we need to recognize that when we went to a seminary or church worker college, chapel was always available, and that somehow between chapel and Bible study and systematic theology we were supposed to develop into spiritual giants. Seminaries and colleges really do not teach a whole lot as to how to maintain spiritual health when one does not have a chapel community with which to relate. In many ways our church workers are ill-equipped to stay healthy spiritually. For example, I spent four years in a Lutheran seminary, and not once did anybody ask me if I prayed, how I prayed, whether I had a rule of life, or whether I even believed in Christ. The attitude was, "Why are we interested in those things? Come on, we've got chapel to attend and we've got Bible courses to take care of." They supposedly were making me into this resident theologian who was going to answer everybody's problems. When I was ordained, I was waiting for people to come to me with deep theological problems. That was not what they came to me with, and frankly, I am glad that someone did not come to me and say, "Pastor, I'm having trouble with my prayer life. Can you help me with my prayer life?" I would have had to return to my confirmation instruction for anything that I learned about prayer. My seminary gave me absolutely nothing on prayer, types of prayer, what happens when you do not feel that prayer works for you, some of the pitfalls of prayer life, or even a history of spirituality. Hopefully, this need is being addressed today, but it certainly was not in my day.

How can church workers nurture their own families?

This is a two-edged sword. In some ways, if church workers are the ones in charge in their church, leading people in worship and study, and then they have to go home and do the same thing with their families, they do not have any place to go for what we call "extra-dependence," that is, a place where they are being taken care of and someone is paying attention to them. Families, particularly couples, need to trade off—sometimes I take care of you; sometimes you take care of me.

Clearly, if a church worker's family is in trouble, depressed, or feeling neglected, this is going to affect the church worker. So church workers ought to be very concerned about what is happening in their families. They need to find sources for nurturing their families without being the ones who do the nurturing. This is where some judicatories have what we call "Pastor-to-pastors and their families." Someone in the system needs to be ministering to clergy families. Quite often, this is not happening. In fact, this does not happen in the majority of cases.

However, there are some United Methodist Conferences which hire a pastor-to-pastors, and there are some Presbyterians who do this. Generally, they try to integrate this role with other duties; however, other duties always crowd out the pastoral care that is supposed to go to church workers and their families. I think one of the best things that anyone can do is to provide inexpensive, accessible pastoral care for clergy and their families, with the key being anonymity and low cost. When church workers need to go to a counselor or deal with a family crisis and then need to report this to their District or Synod, they would just as soon try to cover it up rather than admit that they have a problem because this affects their ability to be seen as a competent person or their chances for a call. We know that if anonymity is not guaranteed, people will not use a service. Secondly, if the cost is too high, many will not be able to afford the service. One of the ways that we see systems helping clergy and their families is providing inexpensive, anonymous help so that a church worker or spouse can call an 800 number and talk for an hour, knowing that what he/she says will remain anonymous.

Where can church workers find support systems?

Basically, we've discovered that a casual gathering of church workers generally is not usually supportive. They may all need support, but most casual gatherings of church workers degenerate into complaining and bragging, and that's not support.

I was able to do a research project with Presbyterians in the Carlisle Presbytery, where they felt that their clergy were

seriously demoralized and wanted to know what the Alban Institute could do. As we studied the situation, we concluded that if clergy in that system were to become part of an effective support group, that their morale would rise considerably. We made this recommendation while knowing that most clergy groups do not work. However, we had a theory about the ones that did work, and this research and theory are spelled out in a book I've written, *How to Build a Support System for your Ministry*. It is an Alban publication, and basically it is a report of what happened in this research project.

We find that the support systems that work are ones where there is clear leadership. Without leadership, trust does not develop. One may say, "That's pretty easy. Aren't all of us leaders? Certainly we don't need some outsider." Well, in fact, we discovered that clergy groups that worked best are those that paid an outside facilitator to help develop trust and to get down to tough basic issues of family and ministry. In this research project, I visited groups every six months for two years and found that those groups that had good leadership from an outside facilitator tended to develop trust very quickly and were the most helpful for church workers. Groups that did not have that kind of leadership tended to falter.

We need to revise the idea that support systems should happen by accident. That is an erroneous notion. Good support systems take hard, intentional work. Any effort that church workers put into upgrading the quality of their support will be beneficial, and yet, most get so consumed by their work that they do not take the time to develop support systems. We need to get church workers to become much more intentional about the development of the support networks. We need to help them develop the skills of going into a new community and developing the kind of support networks that are going to sustain them in their ministry for the long haul.

What is the role of mentors?

We have benefitted greatly by the research of Daniel Levinson who discussed the life transition of males in his book, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. He has proposed doing the same kind of research involving women. Levinson found that mentors are helpful especially to people experiencing role confusion, which suggests that mentors are most helpful to newly ordained clergy. District offices that provide ways in which newly ordained people can connect with people whom they respect will provide real ministry in helping to shape clergy for the long term.

Church work is very complex. Our seminaries and colleges give us subject matter piecemeal, and we somehow need to integrate the pieces. Colleges and seminaries can't integrate

for us; we need to do that ourselves, and when we can see how other people have done the integration and matched it with their personality and their life style, then we can figure it out for ourselves. In almost all cases, one who identifies a mentor and deliberately takes time to spend some time together will be more effective in ministry. Mentors can be vital to the development of effective clergy. Yet, we don't do nearly enough to promote this concept and help people identify those mentors that are going to be helpful. Something to remember about mentors is that one cannot assign a mentor to someone. The individual needs to choose someone whom one honors, respects and can learn from. So, we need to encourage church workers to identify people who could be mentors and then find a way to support spending more time with each other.

What are possible contributions of spiritual retreat centers?

For some clergy, spiritual retreat centers are a way of managing their health and wholeness. This is especially true if spiritual retreat centers have a spiritual director whom a person respects. For introverted clergy, the most nurturing experience may be to spend a couple days of silence at a retreat center to gain inner vitality and spiritual nurture. If one is going to spend time in silence, one ought to invest at least an hour a day with a spiritual director and then spend the rest of the time in silence in order to really talk about what is happening internally with someone else. Generally, retreat centers that have these kinds of spiritual directors are Roman Catholic, so one may want to consider finding a spiritual director to help one to grow spiritually.

How can one find time for rest, relaxation, and hobbies?

All of us have the same amount of time. I would like to refer back to the question about mentors. We may not be able to figure out a way to keep all these plates spinning without sacrificing our body, our families, or our spiritual lives, and we need to see some successful church workers who do ministry in 50 hours a week or less without sacrificing their bodies, families, or spiritual lives in order to be a success. So we need to know how they organize their time.

Once again, all of us are different, and we all need different amounts of rest. Some people have much higher levels of stamina than others, so what works for one may not work for another. If we are working with a mentor, we can figure out how we can go about finding time for rest, relaxation, and hobbies. If we don't do this, we certainly cannot encourage our lay people to do so. If our lay people aren't doing it, we are not being an effective witness for the balanced life. There is no way we are going to experience

the peace that passes understanding if we are not taking time for rest, relaxation, and doing things that we enjoy.

What is the role of continuing education?

This depends on the choice. Church workers often can benefit from help in identifying the continuing education that is going to be most helpful to them in their ministry. Most of us assess ourselves, and we assume that if we were only better at theology or if we were only better at Biblical studies, that we would be more effective if we would take more and more Bible courses. In fact, over time we have developed strong Biblical reflection and interpretation skills. What we need to do is use continuing education for something else that helps us live a much more balanced life.

We need a process by which we can assess where our lives are out-of-kilter and then find a continuing education experience that will help with that area of my life. This is where Districts can be helpful to clergy by providing self-assessment experiences which take clergy through a three or four-day experience of evaluating all aspects of their ministry and then developing a continuing education program. I think continuing education can play a very important role in the health, wholeness, and continuing development of church workers.

What other perspectives would you like to share?

I am going to close by coming back to where I started, and that is, self-care cannot be a peripheral issue for church workers. This needs to be much more front and central. The very profession we are in sets us apart from other professions. When we come to our work and we are exhausted, burned out, cynical, and complaining, and then we go to visit a member of the congregation and ask for a deeper commitment to one's Lord and to the church, it would not be out of place for a lay person to say, "Wait a minute, Pastor, let me get this straight. You want me to make a deeper commitment to Christ and to become like you? Why aren't I excited about this? You certainly do not seem to

be living a life of joy and peace. I don't see the fruits of the Spirit in your life. So, Physician, heal yourself. If the message you proclaim is so great, why is it not manifest in your life in a way that I can identify?"

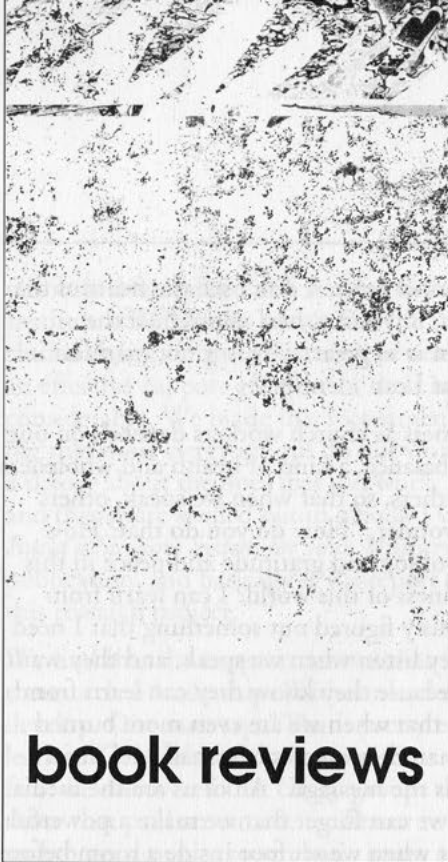
So our very effectiveness as church workers depends on our exhibiting a kind of balance, a kind of health and wholeness that is attractive to others, so that when we speak, others listen because they wonder, "How do you do that? How can you live this life of joy and gratitude and peace in this madness, in the craziness of this world? I can learn from you. You have obviously figured out something that I need to figure out." So they listen when we speak, and they want to come to church because they know they can learn from us. They will not do that when we are even more burned out or stressed out than they are. As Marshall McLuhan said, "The medium is the message." All of us are the media of our message, and we can forget that we make a powerful theological statement when we set foot inside a room before

we open our mouths. People can take one look at us and decide whether we have anything to offer, and often they dismiss us because in one look they clearly see that our lives are out of balance without a lot of attractiveness in our lifestyles.

We need to have people coming to us who see that in the way we are living our lives they can gain something from us. I believe to the roots of my being that anything church workers do to increase their health, either physical health, emotional health, or spiritual health, will make them more effective church workers. This is going to make them more attractive, energetic, and vital.

So our lifelong task as church workers is to take on our addictions one at a time, our neurotic tendencies one at a time, our compulsions one at a time, and become healthier. The healthier we become, the more effective we are as witnesses of the Gospel. This is a lifelong journey into wholeness. We are basically in a health and wholeness ministry, and we are going to call others to health and wholeness in direct proportion to how we are living out health and wholeness ourselves and making these evident in our lives.





book reviews

HOW YOUR CHURCH FAMILY WORKS by Peter L. Steinke. Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 1993.

IN THE LIFE OF EACH CHRISTIAN there are surprises and disappointments related to the behavior of other members in the Christian church who seem to behave in blatantly unacceptable ways. If and when human emotions abate and intellectual processes return to normal, they accept the fact that they along with other humans behave in other than Christ-like ways. During such periods of normal sinful behavior, individuals become anxious, emotionally distraught, and look for someone to blame.

Drawing upon rich experiences and obvious knowledge of how people in general and also in the church family behave, Peter Steinke points out that people have always displayed diabolical behavior since the beginning of the Christian church. A problem arises in the fact that when the church is often depicted metaphorically in splendor, we would like others to live up to such glorious metaphors. In reality the church is often an ugly picture; as an emotional system, a church can be anxious and irritable.

The emotional system embodies emotional individuals. Members are drawn toward the church when they experience positive emotions but repelled by anxiety-producing negative emotions. Unresolved anxieties and other negative emotions among leaders and members cause a church family to be distracted from its mission. The author indicates that the problem is not only anxiety, but how leaders and members deal with resultant behavior.

The author's goal is that the reader conceptualize emotional processes so that he/she can more readily recognize them, and ultimately, let them serve rather than corrupt the purposes of our bonding. His book is not a simple discussion of

"how to" fix anxiety-laden problems, but rather a presentation of psychological theory and helpful insights gained from knowledge and experiences.

The book is divided into two major parts: "Conceptualizing Emotional Processes" and "The Congregation as an Emotional System."

Chapters on "Anxiety and Reactivity" and "Separateness and Closeness" offer extended insights into ongoing conflicts and anxieties which immobilize many congregations. Church leaders will easily identify with disrupting and challenging situations found in chapters with such humorous creative titles as "Do Not Go Gently into That Glob of Glue," "Being a Prophet is Nice Work—If You Can Find a Job," and "What Shall It Profit a Parish If It Gets Over the Hump but Falls into the Abyss?" Ideas for solutions are interspersed throughout the practical chapters.

The theme of this edition of *Issues*, "Who Cares for Church Workers?" will not be answered directly by Steinke's book. Rather, his first concern is the reason for such questions as "Who Cares for Church Workers?" The author's task is to offer knowledge and skills to assist church leaders to deal more adequately with conflict situations in the church family. The anticipated or hoped for result is a less desperate search for special caring and curing.

As one with a personal knowledge of Peter Steinke and/or his previous writings would expect, the book offers valuable and timely insights. He has a unique writing style with an easy touch of humor. Clear and direct answers are few, but readers will find scores of ideas that assist in formulating questions to motivate a further search for helpful answers. It is recommended reading for persons in or preparing for congregational ministry. This resource can help to change harmful situations in the church family into growth experiences.

Herman Glaess
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HANDBOOK OF SPIRITUALITY FOR MINISTERS edited by Robert Wicks. New York: Paulist Press, 1995.

The Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers is designed to be a practical guide for those preparing for or in professional ministry who wish to develop spiritually and nurture spiritual development in their parishioners. The collection, written by predominantly Roman Catholic scholars, addresses critical issues related to prayer and spiri-

tual growth, spirituality and religious life, scripture and psychology, contemporary social issues in ministry, and ministry to specific populations. The quality of scholarship and the variety of topics in this volume provide thought-provoking reading and make the collection a valuable resource for teachers, pastors and concerned laity.

The first collection of essays is a helpful, somewhat prescriptive, set of meditational and personal strategies for prayer and devotional life. The most provoking of these essays draws on nontraditional approaches to contemplative life, including articles on facilitating spiritual growth through meditational writing and the study of literary expression. Other articles focus on more traditional studies of meditation and prayer and on women's spirituality for insight into personal spiritual growth. These articles offer references on the need for and nature of spiritual regeneration as well as quality surveys of contemporary and historical Catholic thought on these topics.

The second part deals with the stress that accompanies ministry and the need for spiritual growth by church professionals. These essays offer the reader practical strategies and a sense of reassurance for dealing with daily life in the ministry, including articles on Christian discernment, spiritual maturation, stress, and day-to-day ministry. Two articles in particular, "The Stress of Spiritual Ministry, Practical Suggestions on Avoiding Unnecessary Stress" by Robert Wicks and "Rediscovering God in the Midst of Our Work" by Joyce Rupp, offer tremendous encouragement and practical assistance as they address ways that ministers can rejuvenate their relationships with God and renew joy in service.

Section three of the handbook ties together topics of spirituality, theology, scripture, and psychology, with the primary emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about psychological and spiritual health. Kevin Gillespie's article, "Listening for Grace: Self-Psychology and Spiritual Direction," provides a capstone for this section and challenges both teachers and pastors to consider how they practice and facilitate self-psychology in their ministry.

The final two sections on contemporary issues and ministry to specific populations are the most insightful and meaningful sections of this collection. The contributors offer solid commentary and well-documented interview-based research to highlight some of the most troubling issues for those in ministry today and the impact that those issues have on minister and parishioner. The authors honestly assess and provide ministerial admonitions on social justice, intimacy and sexu-

ality among singles, marriage, ecological responsibility, homelessness, AIDS, adolescent and older adult spirituality, ministry to Hispanic and African American populations and more. These articles inform and support the minister faced with a changing world and suggest ways to alleviate the frustrations and helplessness that arise when confronting such issues. Both sections should be read and considered prayerfully by those ministering in today's world.

In summary, *The Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers* provides a valuable resource and a well-documented analysis of issues related to spiritual survival in the ministry as well as a solid introduction to contemporary Catholic thinking on these issues. The book is well worth the reading and would serve as a helpful reference to the church professional and interested laity.

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SPIRITUAL LIFE: THE FOUNDATION FOR PREACHING AND TEACHING by John Westerhoff. Westminster: John Knox Press, 1994.

DURING THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR I teach a course which is new at Concordia College-Seward, which every student is required to take: "Ministry in a Changing World." At its heart, this course is a study of ethics and the doctrine of Christian vocation. Pre-seminary graduates, teacher and Director of Christian Education candidates, business, art and pre-medical students will sit side by side to explore their various callings under Christ.

When a new book appears as a new course develops, I pay attention. When a book is published by one of the best known and most prolific professors associated with Duke University, who has for years addressed the problems of clergy burnout and has recently made a change in his own dynamic spiritual pilgrimage, it becomes irresistible. In addition, *Spiritual Life* is inexpensive, short, easy-to-read, and is to be given as a gift to every new pastor and teacher. Why would this book not be on my syllabus? Frankly, it couldn't make the cut.

Westerhoff is long on method and meditation, but very short on doctrine. His answers tend to come from the mystics of the past and the inner voice which speaks in silence. When he wishes to hear God talk, he sits politely, patiently, passively, perhaps using a line from Scripture to get the process started. But it is not the Lord only who can speak through an inner voice. His is not the only

word which can break through the silence to address a tormented mind. The silence which comes from the quieting of one "demon" might easily be filled by seven more, all asking "Did God really say . . .?"

There is much that is helpful in Westerhoff's book. Quiet time spent seeking the face of God in meditation, prayer and devotion must be a priority for all of God's children. But if you would hear the Father speak, you must listen to his Word.

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THE ART OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION by Patricia O'Connell Killen and John DeBeer. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995.

THE NAME OF THE BOOK, *The Art of Theological Reflection*, places it into the category of "art" and insulates the authors against the criticism that any kind of empirical data or scientific research data is lacking to substantiate the assertions and procedures which they so confidently advance.

The practice of theological reflection searches for new truth and meaning for living. According to the authors, it seeks to train us to discern the presence of God in the social events and movements we encounter. Revelatory qualities are ascribed to our experiences and our feelings about them. New truths are revealed to those who take the time to reflect according to the guidelines and prescriptions of the authors of the manual. These truths are in the areas of interpersonal skills, attitudes, interpretations of the meaning of life's experiences, transformation of perceptions, and behaviors. For the most part, such truths are new because they are new to the practitioner.

While the authors philosophize within the milieu of the Christian heritage and tradition, the knowledge and insights derived from theological reflection are not limited to Christianity, they say. In fact, they begin their discussion with a quotation from the old Navajo healer, Betonie.

What we encounter here is a curving in on the human spirit in order to mine new insights and attitudes for living "faithfully" through a dialogue with history and tradition. The great enemies which block "new" insights and deeper understanding are identified as "certitude" and "self-assurance." In the authors' definition, certitude is thinking that we already know and understand "our religious heritage." Self-assurance means quickly placing Scripture passages, theological

themes and questions, and the like, into neat boxes of preestablished interpretation. To help overcome certitude and self-assurance requires "Exploration," a process recommended by Killen and DeBeer, which is directed to one's own experience and religious heritage. Here is how the matter is defined on page 51:

Theological reflection is the discipline of exploring our individual and corporate experience in conversation with the wisdom of a religious heritage. The conversation is a genuine dialogue that seeks to hear from our own beliefs, actions, and perspectives, as well as from those of the tradition. It respects the integrity of both. Theological reflection therefore may confirm, challenge, clarify, and expand how we understand our own experience and how we understand the religious tradition. The outcome is new truth and meaning for living.

The deficit of *The Art of Theological Reflection* lies in not recognizing the area in which all knowledge and experience of fallen mankind is absent. It is true that we are informed by experience, research, and reflection in personal relationship, social justice, ethics, beauty, ecology, etc. History, psychology, sociology, and philosophy provide new truth and meaning. And perhaps "theological reflection" could help human beings incorporate these truths and meanings into a lifestyle which is faithful to these truths and promote what is called "civil righteousness." But our five senses, the rubrics of logic, and even intuition, cannot inform us as to the nature of God, His love for me, nor on things eternal, nor on the mysteries of free will. Knowledge in those areas does not flow from reflection, but requires God's revelation to us and the power of the Holy Spirit to engender faith in us. The Lord speaks to us of a needed rebirth (John 3) and not of an exploration of our feelings according to a prescribed process of reflection.

The Art of Theological Reflection will seem shallow, inadequate, cumbersome, mechanical, and unnecessary to anyone who is clear on God's answer to the question, "How do benighted sinners come to know theological truth?"

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