ISSUES
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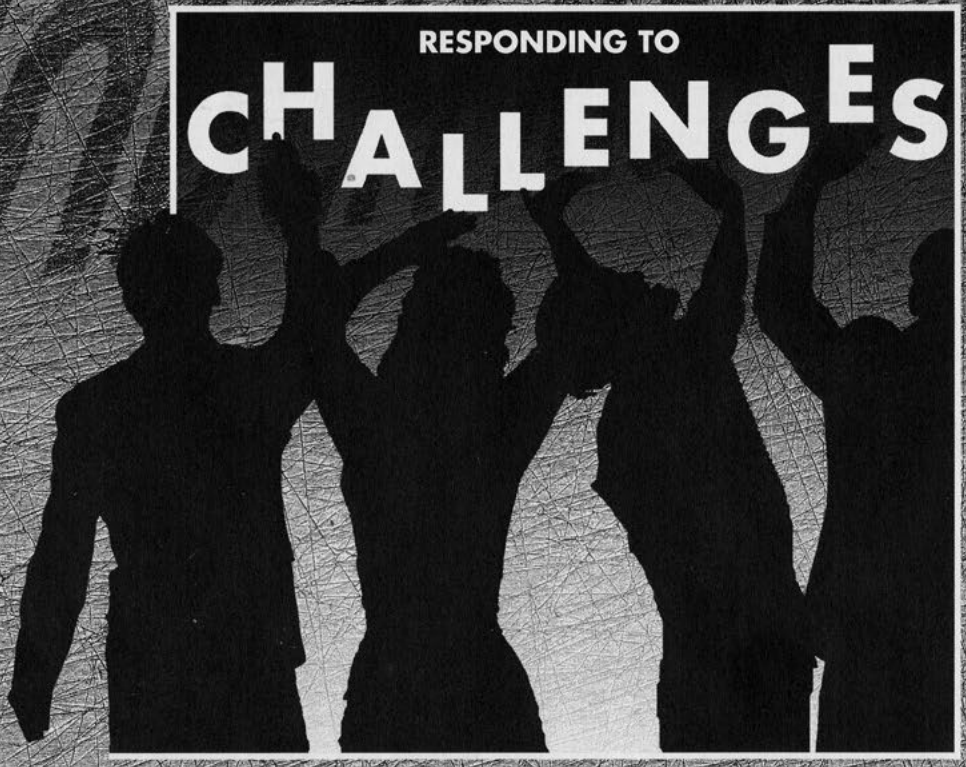
CHURCH WORKER FAMILIES:

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES



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ISSUES
IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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Church Worker Families: Responding to Challenges

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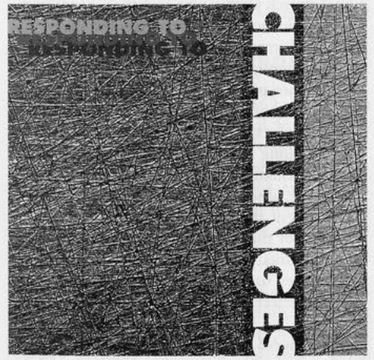

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reflections

Several years ago while visiting with a high school senior about plans for his life's work, I asked if he had ever considered serving in some area of full-time professional church work. His answer still rings in my ears: "Never! I've seen first hand in my father what being a church worker has meant to our family!" From there he went on to express frustrations about stress, impossible time demands on his father and the entire family, low salary and unreasonable expectations by the congregation. How sad! Or, how realistic?

The reputation of children born in church worker families is nearly proverbial. At one point in our nation's history (the 1950s), more children of church worker families appeared in *Who's Who* than children of any other occupation. However, the struggles of some church worker families also are known. Today a number of factors present important challenges to the families of church workers, as well as possibilities for serving as models. How church worker families view their roles and ways in which congregations can nurture church worker families also deserve exploration.

The aim of this edition of *Issues in Christian Education* is to explore special challenges facing the families of church workers. Possibilities for modeling and significant growth by members of such families also are presented. Particular attention is given to the stresses church worker families face, numerous contributions made by their families, and how congregations can nurture church worker families.

It is my prayer that readers of this edition will find rewarding growth as servant leaders for Jesus Christ in their important roles as church workers and members of church worker families. The admonition of editorial writer Jean Garton seems good advice for all of us church workers: "We don't have to play God. The job is taken, and He does it 24 hours a day with no time off for vacations or sabbaticals. We don't have to save the world or the country or our schools or even our congregations. We don't have to be another messiah. The One and Only already came and finished the job. . .We can just follow in His footsteps and share in His ministry. . ."

Orville C. Walz, President

editorials

Everybody Expects!

When an audience of professional church workers was asked to select one word to describe what they most desired in their families, the majority chose the word unity: unity of faith, unity of commitment, unity of purpose.

Yet, if anything characterizes some homes today it is disunity, brokenness and separation. Church worker families have not escaped many of those same problems. Spouses and children pay the price for the long days, night meetings and busy weekends of a church worker, all of which are often expected, defended and justified in the name of serving the Lord.

As a result, many fewer children of church workers are going into full-time church work compared with a generation ago. The explanation offered in a recent study was that the quality of spirituality of church worker parents is less than it was in those of the past.

True or not, I believe there is another factor. I suspect that some of our children view church work as a snowball going down hill, picking up steam, gathering momentum and force, with the potential for self-destruction.

Each year there is another project, another program, another addendum to an already extensive job description. Our families see us frantically trying to keep up with all the expectations. The board expects this, the congregation expects that, the district expects . . . the Synod expects . . . everybody expects, expects, expects!

In terms of careers and lifestyles, I have lived as many lives as the proverbial cat. However, in no work or service in which my family and I have been involved has the matter of living up to an image—of attempting to fulfill expectations *just because they are there*—been as pervasive and destructive as we have experienced in church work.

James Dobson, the popular counselor of *Focus on the Family,* was asked what he believed was the biggest obstacle facing the family today. He said:

It is over commitment; time pressure. There is nothing that will destroy family life more insidiously than hectic schedules and busy lives, where spouses are too exhausted to communicate, too worn out to have sex, and too fatigued to talk with their kids. That frantic lifestyle is just as destructive as one involving outbroken sin. If Satan can't make you sin, he'll make you busy, and that's just about the same thing.

In the book of Micah, chapter 6, Micah, a "church worker" of that day, was trying to clarify his job description. "Just what does the Lord expect from me?" he asked. "Burnt offerings? Rams, rams and more rams? Rivers of oil? Should I sacrifice my first born? Just what is it *You* expect of me?"

Today's Micah might phrase the question in this way: "Lord, what do You expect of me? That I direct the Stephen Ministry? Organize servant events? Initiate a fund drive? Promote the 150th Anniversary of the Synod? Generate support for the next youth gathering? Direct the choir, plan the Christmas pageant, organize VBS, coach the school basketball team? Just what *do* you expect of me, Lord?"

The Lord's answer to us today is not unlike that which He gave to Micah. "This is what I expect of you—pastor, teacher, professor, deaconess, DCE, DCO, lay minister and church workers of every sort—that you act justly, love mercy, and walk (not run! not jog!) humbly with your God."

Isn't that awesome! We don't have to play God. The job is taken, and He does it 24 hours a day with no time off for vacations or sabbaticals. We don't have to save the world or the country or our schools or even our congregations. We don't have to be another messiah. The One and Only already came and finished the job.

We can just follow in His footsteps and share in His ministry, beginning with our own families because the home is, after all, the first church, the little church.

Jean Garton
Member, Board of Directors
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

A Blessed Formula

I'm grateful to see the relevant subject of this edition of *Issues in Christian Education* and its knowledgeable authors. As long as we have congregations we will have professional church workers with needs. The response to these needs by Synod and its districts is laudatory. Not so long ago workers felt a lack of resources and isolation.

Some professional church workers take advantage of the resources, yet others do not. They suffer in silence and sometimes negatively affect those around them. Issues facing our church workers seem to be constant: multiple, often unreal expectations, financial constraints, overwork, burnout and lack of family time. While congregations should be familiar with these issues because of much publicity, there are still too many congregations who expect too much of their workers and give them too little in return.

Some see a double standard: one for laity and one for professional church workers. Knowing the issues and coping with them become two distinct challenges for workers. The literature and experts instruct workers to prioritize, making family their first priority, and to set boundaries between church and home. But an element to implementing these instructions that is necessary is *self-confidence.* One needs to feel confident to cope with antagonistic individuals, strong boards/committees and some voters' assemblies. Sometimes a worker finds himself/herself standing alone without an advocate.

Pastor Tom Rogers[1] writes about the professional church worker who verbalizes needs to the congregation with positive results. But the worker has to feel strong to stand in front of others and say, "My family and I need this—," sometimes to fail, and then to try again. Rogers also writes about the attribute of affirming. Clearly, affirmation of church workers, their families and members should be happening in congregations. Yet, in many places affirmation is lacking.

No one, absolutely *no one,* has more reason to be confident than we, the people of God. The promises of the Scripture are clear: "Fear not, I have redeemed you, you are mine"; "I am with you always, even to the end of the age"; "My strength is made perfect in weakness"; "Ask, and it shall be given you."

Professional church workers are leaders. Congregations look to them for direction and for modeling mature, healthy behavior.

Workers, be confident enough to
- Articulate your needs to congregations. No one knows them better than you.
- Share vulnerabilities. ("I hurt. I need your help.")
- Seek help (spiritual, physical, emotional) when necessary. Healthy individuals make healthy organizations.
- Establish a circle of friends. It's your support system.
- *Learn, grow, continue your education.* Knowledge really is powerful and induces confidence.

Congregations, be confident enough to
- Listen, and respond in love.
- Affirm workers and accept them as God's gifts. Affirm each other!
- Realize that when we nurture our workers we really nurture ourselves, the congregation.

What a blessed formula for all of us: Self-confidence grounded in His strength! *Confidence!* Believe He can—through you. Feel it! *Live it!*

[1]Rogers, Tom. *Life in the Fish Bowl, Building Up Church Workers.* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996).

Arleen M. Keyne
Member, Board for Congregational Services
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

A Delicate Balance

Each occupation in which a Christian finds him or herself has the potential for harm or blessing. Every occupation has its unique constellation of stressors and opportunities. Every occupation is equally blessed by God for service to the neighbor. How has it come about then that this concern about church workers and their families is currently a hot topic in the church and is being singled out for discussion?

There are many good and important reasons why we are focusing on the health of church worker families, and they will be explored in this edition of *Issues in Christian Education.* Some would say it's about time, while others would prefer to return to simpler times, as if there ever was such a time. I would like to suggest that part of the reason we as a church are struggling with these issues is confusion and misunderstanding about three important terms: vocation, call and occupation.

It would be good for the church as a whole and for each calling body to revisit these concepts and in that way begin to lay a foundation for discussion. Confusion about these central ideas could lead to assumptions, strategies or interventions which are misguided. These brief thoughts are offered as a beginning to the conversation.

In the broadest sense, God calls all people through the creating Word. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, faith occurs, and those who were no people are now the people of God. All the people of God are called to lives of service without distinction or a hierarchy of stations. The priesthood of all believers forms the foundation for our understanding of various forms of ministry within the church. Vocation is not a particular occupation; it is the given which is under, behind and throughout all facets of one's life in the church and world. It is the unifying element which places all occupations on an equal basis. The occupation of church worker does not stand apart from other occupations on the basis of value or significance.

Each Christian shares a common vocation. What makes Christian vocation unique is that in it we have a call to work for the good of the neighbor. Our vocation brings God's creative activity to the neighbor and is shaped by the need of the neighbor. That same Gospel, combined with personal circumstances and opportunities, urges and moves some of the elect into public offices in ministry. Public ministry is both a gift and a command from God. God has called a people into a covenant relationship, and in that community God has established offices of public ministry. The distinctness of the office of church worker is in its God-ascribed relation to the community of believers.

Specific offices in public ministry are a particular expression of the general call given to all Christians. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a congregation, school or other institution calls a person for specific tasks in specific situations. Offices of ministry are not possible without communities of believers. The person in office does not command the calling body, and neither does the congregation or school rule the office. The community has within itself an office to be filled, and that is accomplished through the call. This gives structure and order as vocation is lived out in a specific place.

The final career decision on the part of the church worker is clearly a combination of human factors and divine involvement. There is mutual conversation between Christian brothers and sisters as one considers a particular office. Equally valid would be a conversation or the observation that one is not suited for a particular occupation. Entry into a church work occupation combines a spiritual dimension with individual factors. Personality, skills and ability, social/cultural background, family history, values, environment and future plans all become involved. Accepting a call is not a life-time commitment to a particular situation. The church worker is free to explore other opportunities for service. This interplay is not always acknowledged as church workers enter or leave a position and experience the stress of their occupations.

Church workers, their families, and calling bodies need to recognize the complex nature of public ministry. Church work shares many characteristics with other occupations in terms of the changing world of work, the changing public perceptions of various jobs, as well as the importance of professional growth, salary, challenges and opportunities. At the same time, one has entered into a unique relationship with a calling body centered around the themes of service and proclamation. At one extreme is the danger of misusing the concept of vocation to excuse low pay, long hours and minimal attention to health. At the other extreme is seeing church work as just another job, thereby losing the vision of servant leadership. It is indeed a delicate balance.

William Wachholz
Director of Counseling
Concordia College-Seward

Sue Schaar

Health and Wholeness in Professional Church Worker Families: What Are the Issues?

ARE THE FAMILIES OF PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKERS (PCWs) different from other families? *Yes. And no.* Is it easier or harder for children of PCWs to grow up healthy and happy? *It depends.* Are there issues that PCW families face that other families do not confront? *Absolutely.*

After observing PCW families informally (and living in one!) for the past quarter of a century and after studying clergy families formally for several years, one thing has become clear about predicting health and functionality in PCW families and among family members: there are few certainties and many variables. Some families can (and do!) tell one horror story after another about every parish they have served. Others seem to remember their tenures only with fondness. The same is true for individual members of PCW families. A fascinating aspect of this is that the same issues—frequent relocation, lack of extended family, low salaries—had, in some cases, opposite results. Is this just another case of considering the glass as either half full or half empty? *Probably not.* More likely it is a mixture of the dynamics inherent to the PCW role, specific dynamics found in PCW families, and a host of other variables.

Each family and context are unique: individual personalities within the family, family composition and circumstances, the stage of family development, the parish setting, individuals within the parish, the demographics of the community and its regional setting. Because neither personalities, experiences nor contexts are replicated from one family to the next, it is impossible to generalize from one PCW family to another, concluding that if *x, y,* and *z* were done, everything and everyone would be fine. There are simply too many variables. This article examines dynamics that affect every PCW family, whether parents are clergy, educators, or supporting ministers. Actual parent profession may have some bearing on intensity, but the dynamics themselves are very similar, if not the same.

Dr. Sue Schaar is an assistant professor of education at Concordia College, Bronxville, New York. She qualifies as both a "T" (teacher) and a "P" (professor) and also as the wife of a "T" and "P" (principal and pastor). She and her husband Jerry are the parents of three PK-TKs, ages 18-23.

Certainty: Stereotyping and Expectations

Mention the term "preacher's kid" to any unenlightened passerby who has had even a fleeting experience with a pastor's child, and you are sure to get a knowing look, a slow nod, a widening of wizened eyes. The passerby will describe an "angel" (quiet, well-behaved, highly achieving, well-adjusted) or a "hellion" (rebellious, impolite, underachieving and maladjusted) and believe that he or she has just described all PKs. Few describe anything in between, but some describe both if they have known such siblings in the same family. I use the term "unenlightened" because such descriptions are simply another case of stereotyping that happens all too frequently. Unfortunately, the stereotyping can beget expectations of personal "goodness" or "badness" that are internalized and become self-fulfilling prophecies (Schaar, 1992). I suspect this phenomenon has happened for millennia (see the story of Eli and his sons, 1 Samuel 2).

Perhaps I simply never heard it, but I doubt that people automatically stereotyped my "goodness" or "badness" when all they knew about me was that I was the daughter of a shoe repairman and a public school cafeteria manager. I have, however, listened painfully as I was stereotyped simply because I am a pastor's wife. This does not happen only in clergy families. If you are a teacher's or professor's child, you are expected to be smart. If your parent is a minister of music, you are expected to be musical. That is true in non-PCW families as well. The difference is that all PCW families have specific values associated with the profession of the parents. Maeder (1989) points out that the deep philosophical commitments woven into their daily lives and relationships cause clergy to *embody* (italics added) the principles they espouse. Their jobs become inseparable from their identities, and therefore become part of the families' identities as well. . .Ministers are supposed to be good. . . they are the human incarnation of theological beliefs, ethics and judgments. . .Ministers' families are inevitably expected to support and extend the minister's role. . .The burden of goodness can be unbearable for the minister's children and may create insoluble problems. (pp. 49–50)

The term "professional church worker" is laden with connotations that stereotype. While I believe that the dynamic that Maeder discusses is true for all PCWs and their families, my observations have led me to believe that this is an especially difficult issue for clergy families, possibly because people tend to see more power, authority and responsibility associated with the role of pastors than with other PCWs. The results may be unfortunate, especially for the children involved.

Expectations can be good things, to be sure. As a teacher I know that if my expectations of students are high, their performance levels will likely be higher than if I had not expected as much. However, if my expectations are *unrealistically* high, students will not only not attain them, they will become so frustrated that they turn off completely. They may become angry with me in the process. The same is true of PCWs and family members, adults and children alike.

One pastor's wife stated: "We always laugh when we think of the time we announced we would be adopting our first son. One little old lady came to Mike and said, 'That's how every pastor and his wife should have children'" (Shelley & Muck, 1984). Although this example is humorous, many are not. Abdon (1977) points out that a pastor is expected to be expert in many roles: priest, preacher-teacher, prophet/change agent, counselor, enabler and organizer-administrator. He reminds us that no one does more than two or three of these things well. He also discusses the fact that pastors are to be at the same time servants and leaders—a paradox indeed. Study after study indicates that such role ambiguity leads to burnout for many clergy. All PCWs run the same risk. I have seen elementary teachers who drove school bus routes before school, taught classes all day, did a school bus run in the afternoon, returned to coach basketball and were expected to be at church meetings in the evening.

Expectations may, however, be about things other than only the tasks one performs. As representatives of God, PCWs are frequently expected always to be even-tempered, kind, forgiving, energetic and happy. It is expected that we will deal with difficult situations and/or people with grace, *ad infinitum.* And since we are such good models to our children, they are supposed to be the same way. Add to this mix the fact that there are expectations from family members, parishioners, community members and ourselves, and then throw in the fact that sometimes the expectations of all these entities don't mesh. For good measure, add the facts that expectations may vary from place to place and that expectations are frequently not communicated. Is it any wonder that there can be problems?

Friedman (1985) feels that the most devastating expectations are the ones we place on our children to protect our own images. He states that placing a child in a double bind can be "far more pernicious than smacking the kid around" (p. 270). I caught myself doing this when I insisted that my 12-year-old daughter always wear a dress to church when other girls her age wore only jeans and big T-shirts. It took me awhile to realize that my insistence on a "suitable appearance" was damaging her enthusiasm to attend and participate in her worship of the Lord.

While I feel that Friedman makes an excellent point, I believe the expectations we place on ourselves can be just as damaging as the double bind in which we may place our children: they can ruin our health and cause hardship for our spouses and children. In family after family, adolescents and adults alike talked about the expectations they had of themselves, expectations that originated from others but were internalized, sometimes at a very young age (Schaar, 1992). Frequently these expectations led to high degrees of perfectionism which, in turn, led to health problems of one sort or another, physical (for example, colitis, high blood pressure), emotional (such as depression and anxiety attacks), or a combination of both. (Anorexia and bulimia, for example, are quite common among adolescent female PKs.) Sometimes individuals claim they are not perfectionists because they don't seem to be perfectionistic in all areas of life, but it takes only one area to cause serious damage to one's health. (I find it interesting that a well-known author in the area of perfectionism, Marion Adderholt-Elliot, is the daughter of a pastor.)

Certainty: Boundary Ambiguity and Overlap

In secular jobs, the parents' workplace and work are not usually frequented by the children. Husbands and wives most usually do not work in the same place. Children and parents all go off to their respective schools and workplaces; they come home in the evening and share or withhold news of their day, as the case may be. Not so for many PCW families, especially if both parents are PCWs. Whether or not we ride to school/church together in the morning, we see each other in chapel or on the playground. It is not uncommon for a TK to be a student in one of his or her parent's classes. Even if parents and children are at different schools and work sites, peers can be a problem.

Another frequent issue for all family members revolves around friendships. In secular occupations, adults frequently choose co-workers as friends, people with whom they can share personal and family problems or "secrets," seek advice, and spend time enjoying one another's company. Children and adolescents do the same. But whom do I choose as my confidant if my husband is likely to be that friend's pastor or principal? And whom do my children tell about the awful argument between their parents last night when Mom happens to be that friend's teacher and Dad is his basketball coach or confirmation teacher?

And then there is the issue of others hearing or seeing us at our worst and spreading the news. One grown PK stated (London *et al,* 1987):

> There was always a bunch of little spies at public school who went to your church. "You know what the pastor's son did at school today, Mom?" And then the mom would tell the deacon's wife and so on. You never escaped the tension. (p. 133)

These are issues of *boundary ambiguity,* one of the most critical issues for PCW individuals and families because it concerns individual identity and family identity. As an individual, there is great overlap between my set of friends, my workplace (or school), my place of spiritual support and nourishment and my family. Normal boundary lines are non-existent. Using an X to represent myself and circles to represent various systems of human relationships (family, friends, workplace/school), if I were a physician or another non-PCW, a diagram of my relationships would probably look like Figure 1. As a pastor's wife who teaches at my husband's parish school where my children attend, my diagram may look more like Figure 2. If the scenario were the same as the last, but I choose not to have friends within the congregation and don't make the effort to find friends outside the congregation, my diagram will look more like Figure 3. Notice two things: 1) how the family is subsumed by the congregation in the last two figures and 2) how the dynamics of my life as an individual are changed as a PCW. (By the way, it is not uncommon for PCW couples to have no friends, either inside or outside of the parish, by choice or circumstance. Of course, this can be a serious issue, but

FIGURE 1.

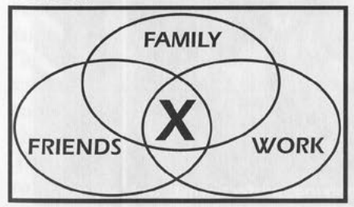


FIGURE 2.

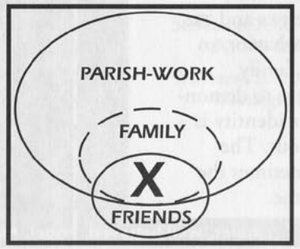
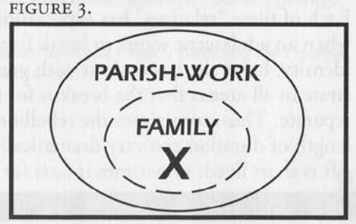


FIGURE 3.



one of the contributing factors is generally the fear, conscious or not, of what boundary ambiguity can do.)

The multiple and sometimes paradoxical role of the PCW as servant-leader simply compounds the complexity of the dynamics of boundary ambiguity. When there are hard feelings or poor relationships between the PCW and parishioners, this lack of boundaries can be devastating. Additionally, many parsonage and teacherage battles are fought because of this issue. Whose house is it anyway—the landlord's or the (servant) leader's?

How can we avoid boundary overlap for family members? It's almost inescapable. An exception might be if the family lives in a large metropolitan area in which the children go to public school; the parents have no professional interaction with their spouse, children or the children's peers; and the children don't attend the parish at which a parent works. Of course, this is highly unlikely, but I do know of several cases in which the pastor's spouse and/or children belong to different parishes so that they can avoid some of this overlap.

Certainty: Identity Issues

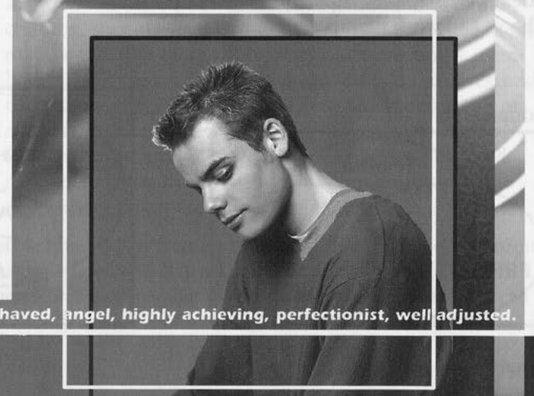
There are two kinds of identity issues—individual and family. Maeder (above) referred to both when he stated that our "jobs become inseparable from (our) identities, and therefore become part of the families' identities as well." Expectations and boundary ambiguity can easily affect the identity formation of children and adolescents, but the effects of these are critical for adolescents. The primary emotional job of adolescence is to gain independence from the family and form a personal identity. If the family identity is perceived as "too good" (a value judgment that may be communicated by adolescent peers, or at least perceived as such by the adolescent), it is possible that he or she will break away from the family emotionally, at least for awhile. Drinking, drugs, promiscuity, underachievement and hanging with the "wrong crowd" are ways of disengaging from the "goodness" of the family identity.

Stevenson (1982) points out that sometimes adolescent children of PCWs have an especially difficult time because they have an "extended family" of non-relatives. Because PCW families frequently live in places where there are no blood relatives, members of the parish become "aunts," "uncles," "cousins," and "grandparents" to the PKs and TKs. Each of these "relatives" has expectations for behavior, so when an adolescent wants to break free of the family identity, he or she has to do it with greater force to demonstrate in all arenas that the break is for real, the identity is separate. Thus, sometimes the rebellion is serious. The length of duration can vary dramatically—sometimes the rift is short lived; sometimes it lasts for a lifetime.

An interesting backlash of this is called sibling de-identification, and it is not uncommon in families when at least one child is acting out. The "rebellious" child (Sibling 1) and parents are studied by a second child (Sibling 2). Sibling 2 decides that brother or sister is making life so miserable for the parents that rescue is in order. So Sibling 2 becomes the "angel," highly achieving, friendly, faithful and at least seemingly well-adjusted, sometimes at a price: *perfectionism.* Meanwhile, Sibling 1 sees that Sibling 2 is the Goody-Two-Shoes (or worse!), becomes even more turned off, and increases behavior not acceptable to the family. Sibling 1 becomes "odd-man-out" and/or the scapegoat for family dysfunction. This is called "triangulation" by Bowen (1978) and others (e.g. Whybrew, 1984) who advocate family systems therapy.

Another individual identity issue that may concern adolescents or adults is that of spiritual identity and growth. Questioning faith is an issue common in adolescence, so PCW children who are trying to dissociate from family may need trusted adults other than parents with whom they can discuss spiritual issues. But there are other issues as well. Who is my pastor if the man in the pulpit is my father, and I know that he doesn't always (or even usually) practice at home what he preaches on Sunday? Who is my pastor if I sleep with the man who occupies the pulpit every Sunday? What if, as a PCW's wife or husband, the relationship with my spouse becomes so dysfunctional that it interferes with my faith life or causes me to wonder if there even is a God who loves me? These are hard questions indeed, and although perhaps they should not affect one's spiritual identity and relationship to God, they frequently do.

By now, I expect that you have seen the relationships of the three "certainties" that I have outlined. Does it mean that there is no hope for PCWs and their family members? *Of course not!* Many PCW individuals and families not only survive, but they thrive and grow. The large majority of PKs in the families I studied did become productive, healthy citizens, many of them faithful to Christ and expressing the values they had learned from their parents. But that does not necessarily mean it was easy. A number of families pointed out that while they thrived in one place, they did not in another. It seems that the variables—frequency and satisfaction with relocation, the ability to make and keep friends, adequate remuneration, satisfaction with educational opportunities and challenge for children, and the dynamics of the family and parish relationship—had profound effects on the health and wholeness of the PCWs and their families. The importance of these factors cannot be overestimated.



...quiet, well-behaved, angel, highly achieving, perfectionist, well adjusted.

Divorce rates among PCWs are up. According to insurance carriers, reported dysfunctionality rates are up. (In one way this may be a good sign; PCWs and family members are starting to deal with some of these issues.) Enabling PCWs and their families to be healthy and whole is not an easy task, but it is a critical issue at this time and one that the Church must address consistently and systematically at all levels.

Guidelines in promoting health and wholeness among PCWs include:

1 *Training must take place at the pre-professional level in seminaries and colleges.* Future PCWs must be knowledgeable about the dynamics involved, and they must be equipped to use creative problem-solving skills to deal with some of the problems that will arise. Future PCWs must also learn to deal with their humanity and their roles as servant-leaders. They also need to learn that gaining and maintaining health and wholeness will be a lifelong process that requires continual education and renewal at both formal and informal levels.

2 *Parishioners need to understand the plight and needs of PCWs and their families.* Awareness is the first step, but it cannot be the last. Parishioners need to understand the dangers of gossip and judgmentalism and avoid them at all costs. Congregations must carefully and prayerfully examine issues that may affect the health of their servant-leaders *before* making decisions. They need to be mindful of the expectations of time and energy that they place on PCWs and the effects of workaholism that destroy family and congregational health. They need to understand that PCWs are fully human.

3 *Local and regional support needs to be easily available to PCWs and family members.* This may take a variety of formats, but there need to be places of sanctuary where PCWs and family members can dialogue with others in the same position, seek counsel, find relaxation and a place to "let down their hair" without being judged, and receive the spiritual nourishment all humans require. Networking via computer or phone is an option, though it would not be able to rival the cathartic value of an actual "safe haven." The special needs of novice and single PCWs are important to consider at this level.

4 *Circuits and districts (conferences and synods) need to continually support personal, emotional and professional growth.* Offering workshops and seminars on servant-leadership and related issues on a continuing basis is a necessity. Financial assistance to those who need it should be a priority. Insisting that PCWs keep current and address problems that threaten personal and family health and wholeness is essential. Concerted efforts must be made to support PCWs who are struggling in their ministries.

5 *Support must be offered at the national adjudicatory level.* One very real way this can be done is to ascertain that counseling (long and short term) for PCWs and family members is confidential, readily available, promoted as an acceptable opportunity and *easily* affordable. Another way is to include articles in publications widely read by parishioners and PCW families.

Being a PCW or in a PCW family is a challenge, to be sure. The issues are complex and have many layers, but they are not insurmountable, by any means. Let us pray for wisdom and understanding as we serve and lead, walking humbly with our God.

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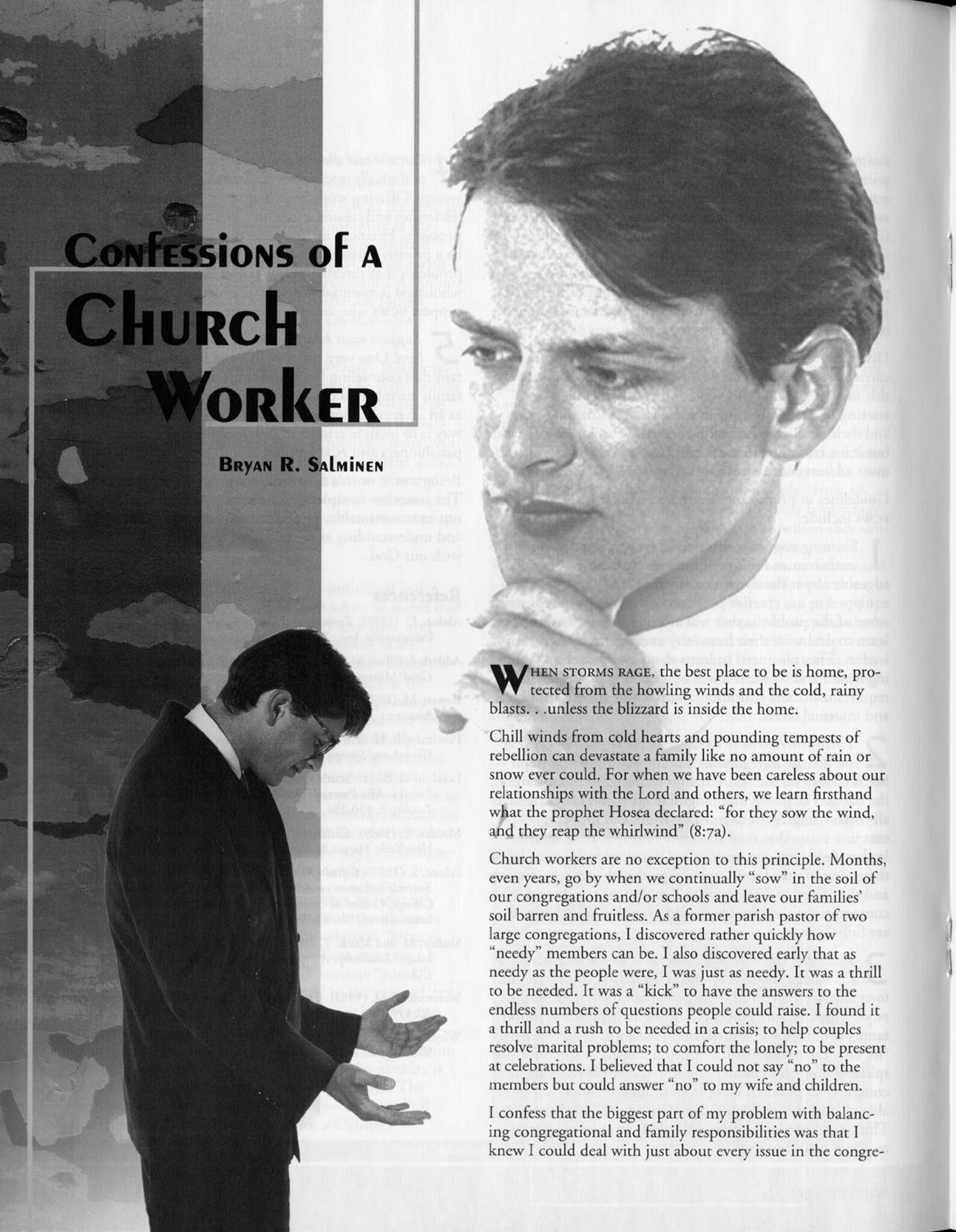
Confessions of a Church Worker

Bryan R. Salminen



When storms rage, the best place to be is home, protected from the howling winds and the cold, rainy blasts. . .unless the blizzard is inside the home.

Chill winds from cold hearts and pounding tempests of rebellion can devastate a family like no amount of rain or snow ever could. For when we have been careless about our relationships with the Lord and others, we learn firsthand what the prophet Hosea declared: "for they sow the wind, and they reap the whirlwind" (8:7a).

Church workers are no exception to this principle. Months, even years, go by when we continually "sow" in the soil of our congregations and/or schools and leave our families' soil barren and fruitless. As a former parish pastor of two large congregations, I discovered rather quickly how "needy" members can be. I also discovered early that as needy as the people were, I was just as needy. It was a thrill to be needed. It was a "kick" to have the answers to the endless numbers of questions people could raise. I found it a thrill and a rush to be needed in a crisis; to help couples resolve marital problems; to comfort the lonely; to be present at celebrations. I believed that I could not say "no" to the members but could answer "no" to my wife and children.

I confess that the biggest part of my problem with balancing congregational and family responsibilities was that I knew I could deal with just about every issue in the congregation. However, the family was a whole different matter. I knew the Gospel story—or thought I did. I was a preacher and teacher, a proclaimer of the message. I had learned the original languages of the story, been immersed by my education in its long development, and taught how to translate it into the present. I was steeped in the theology that kept my mind sane and honest in the story and conversant in the history that gave perspective proportion. In the pulpit and behind the lectern, I read and told this story week after week. I loved doing this, reading and pondering and preaching these Gospel stories, making them accessible to people of different cultures who lived with different weather and under different politics. This is the glorious work of ministry. This is the work that I expected to do when I became a pastor, and for which I was adequately trained.

A Confession

But this other set of stories, the story of my wife and children, was a whole different matter. All bets were off when I came home. When entering my study to begin my day of pastoral work I felt confident, exhilarated, empowered. When I left my study for home, I felt insecure, uncertain what the evening might bring. What would the mood of my wife and children be when they greeted me at the door? Had it been a good day or bad day for my wife? These questions and more came pouring in as I prepared to meet the family. As I entertained and fed on these questions, I became afraid. Afraid of what? I don't know. But I do know that fear played a great part in my repeatedly placing the congregation first and my family second. There was a fear of failure as a husband as well as a fear of failure as a dad. There was fear of my "warts" being exposed. Facing the exigencies of life often concerned me. At the church I was in charge, in control. At home, well, who knows what might happen. As I allowed these fears to have their way, I distanced myself from the very ones who could help me understand what it means to love; what it means to be a faithful pastor; what it means to be a man, a child of God, a faithful husband and father.

I was afraid. Like many pastors my identity was hooked up with external, institutional functions. I did not know what to do or how to function outside of the role of pastor. Like many pastors, I lived in terror of the thought of what would happen if my "institutional" identity disappeared. Without realizing it, I was dealing with the very "sin" issue my people faced. My life had been built upon an impressive list of accomplishments. By "these two hands" I had built a name for myself, and I was planning on keeping it that way. I had bought into the great deception of the enemy that my life was shaped, molded and determined by what I did or didn't do. I had forgotten that "who I am" does not depend on "what I do." Identity does not depend on titles, on degrees, on functioning in roles. Identity depends only on the great fact that God has loved in the death and resurrection of His son Jesus Christ. I am loved just as I am by a God who gave His son into the flesh for my sin. When a pastor knows that, the home is different, the hospital is different, the church is different and his relationships are different.

In retrospect, of course, I was neither serving the congregation nor my family the way God wanted me to serve. Living a life based on deeds, titles, transaction, accomplishments and contracts can be an awful way to live—and die." And I submit, it is death to others as well. It is simply the old law of salvation by our own integrity, and it blows the Gospel of grace to bits. In the risen life of grace there are not just the trappings of our death, but also our death itself; not just the tinder of sin but the full, raging fire. To make a distinction between the unlit tinder and the blazing inferno, and then to suggest that as long as you do not get lit you are safe, is to fly straight in the face of the Sermon on the Mount and to require not only more than human nature, even under grace, has ever been able to manage but also more than grace itself has ever demanded. It is a case of theological imagery riding roughshod over revelation. The Gospel invites us to believe not that we are safe, *provided*, but that we are safe, *period*. It is not that sin should not have dominion over us, but that it cannot, for its power has been destroyed by Jesus. It reigns in our death, of course, as it always did; but what is that? What is it to have sway over a valley of dry bones? The main thing is that sin does not reign over Jesus, and Jesus is our life.

And this is the crucial point: therefore, we are safe. Not safe, if. . .not safe as long as. . .not safe, provided. . .Add anything, even a single qualifier or a single hedge, and you lose the Gospel of salvation, which is just Jesus Christ! I had forgotten that truth. I saw the church and my family as places where I had to perform in order to be a success. I had been led to believe that somehow my presence must be "useful." I had to always be doing something. I could never let down my emotional guard. Meanwhile, I had forgotten that it is often in "useless," unpretentious, humble presence to each other that we develop closeness and intimacy. Simply being with someone is difficult because it asks of us that we share in the other's vulnerability, enter with him or her into the experience of weakness and powerlessness, become part of uncertainty and give up control and self-determination. And I did not want to give up control of myself or others. I could never let down my defenses

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because if I did, someone might discover that I, too, have chinks in my armor. Church and family became synonymous with work, and I knew that I "worked" much more effectively at the church. The rules were much clearer.

A New Perspective

I had forgotten that Jesus wanted to meet me, not only in the members of the parish, but in the presence of members of my family as well. Because I was safe and no longer needed to perform, I could meet Jesus in Casey, Lauren, David and Michael. In the stories of my family, I re-experienced the Lord. I wanted to see the Jesus story worked out in each member of my family as much as I saw it worked out in the lives of the apostles and disciples of our Lord revealed in the Scriptures.

C. S. Lewis, in *The Weight of Glory,* gave me a text for this perspective:

> It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you say it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or another of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendship, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. Next to the blessed sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses" (Lewis, 1949, p. 18).

"There are no ordinary people." I had forgotten that my beloved wife and children were indeed no ordinary people. I was treating them as if they were merely "throw-away people." It was fine to have them around when you needed them but dispensable when the need passed. Every morning God was providing the context for me to be "surprised by joy." In His Holy Word God encountered me, confronted me, loved me and forgave me. Jesus met me in that word. And now in my family, I was encountered, confronted, loved and forgiven. From that moment till now, every conversation with my wife and children, every event shared, has become a "holy moment" for in those moments I discover again and again the Jesus story being worked out in the lives of my wife and children.

Of course, this means that there is a whole lot more than just "showing up." I need to listen for nuances, make connections, remember, anticipate and love. However, I do need to "show up," which means I have to start saying "no" to some things and some people in the congregation. Placing a boundary around my wife and family is of the utmost priority. Next to my relationship with Jesus Christ, there is no relationship of greater importance and significance than one's family. Like all other families, clergy families need time spent together. I find the notion of "quality time verses quantity time" to be a myth. Time spent and time enjoyed is the one thing pastors must provide for their families and their spouses.

Needed: Communion in the Family

So the first step in placing the family as top priority is by "showing up." I need to be there to hear the stories and to attend the voices of my loved ones. But it is more than simply showing up. It is also "opening up." As Eugene Peterson has pointed out, we are great at communication, poor at communion. Opening up requires exposure. It means taking the risk of letting a piece of myself, this mystery of who I am, be exposed. If I stand here mute, you have no idea what is going on with me. You can look at me, measure me, weigh me, test me, but until I start to talk you do not know what is going on inside or who I really am. If you listen, and I am telling the truth, something marvelous starts to take place, a new event. Love comes into being. Words used this way do not define as much as they deepen mystery, entering into ambiguities, pushing past the safely known into the risky unknown. Words that seem to matter most to those who are suffering and dying are communion words. They do not want to hear information about the latest stock market report or the Detroit Tigers. They do care, however, about a reality which is greater than anything a person can see. They care about love, compassion, hope, eternity. They care about Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sin and life everlasting. They care about friendships, memories and relationships. So do families.

Of course, there is a place for communication. We need to pay our taxes, discuss events and get our children off to school. But more than anything else, families want communion. Not the least of the trials of our families is the endless stream of clichés and platitudes to which they have to listen. As teachers enter the classrooms to communicate facts, family members communicate their anxieties and friends communicate the gossip of the day. Not all of them do this, of course, and not always, but the sad reality is that there is not a great deal of communion that goes on in our homes.

Perhaps regaining the sense of the wonderment, the specialness, the extra-ordinariness of our family members may help us develop communion in our homes. There are no ordinary people. There are no ordinary moments. There are no ordinary wives or children.

In his book, *Making Sense Out of Suffering,* author Peter Kreeft writes:

> I shall never forget reading about the boy in the bubble. . . He had a rare disease (how common rare diseases can be) that necessitated his living his whole life in a sterile plastic bubble. Any touch, a single germ, could kill him. All communication, recreation, education, everything was through the bubble. Finally, he was dying. Since he was doomed anyway, he asked to touch his father's hand, his father, who had loved him and stayed with him all his life. What unspeakable love and pain was in that one touch" (Kreeft, p. 5).

Many church work families feel like that boy; their whole life is spent trapped inside a sterile family bubble void of affection. They, too, ache for the approving touch of their father's hand. Members of church work families long for love, affection, affirmation, communion.

Some of us were conditioned not to show any physical affection. Some of us were taught to put work first and family second. Although we know that is not appropriate, it nevertheless seems to work out that way.

Don't make that same mistake with your family. Don't just tell them you love them or assume that they know this simply because you buy them things. Show them. Imitate your Father in heaven who demonstrated his love for you through Christ.

Oh, what unspeakable love can be communicated, what pain can be eased by your physical and emotional touch.

Joy in Congregation and Family

I have found great delight in being a church worker. Despite the trial and tribulations of ministry, God has given us a grand life. We are privileged to work for a King who loves people even unto death and now sees fit to place us into His divine service. We are called. Some of us have been called to serve in the inner city while others in suburbia. Some have been called to move away from our familiar surroundings and live with the sick and the dying. But no one will be able to hear or understand these very blessed calls if he or she has not recognized the smaller calls hidden in the hours of a regular day among the people God has placed in our families. Not everyone is called in the way Saint Francis, Martin Luther or Jean Vanier were called. But everyone must live with the deep conviction that God acts in his or her life in an equally unique way. No one should ever think that he or she is just an "ordinary citizen" in the kingdom of God. As soon as we start taking ourselves and God seriously and allow Him to enter into the daily dialogues of our lives, we will discover that not only are we "no ordinary citizens," but neither are those in the congregation, school and homes. We have been granted an opportunity to encounter the living Christ in the faces of those we have been called to serve. Each hospital visit and shut-in call, each counseling session and board meeting become opportunities to encounter the risen Christ.

I also find great delight in serving as a church worker with a family. My family reminds me who I am. They remind me that I am first and foremost—DAD! My wife reminds me that I am above all else her husband. But more than anything else, my family keeps my feet on the earth, reminding me that although I have feet of clay (large feet to be sure), I am, nevertheless, forgiven. Gazing into the eyes of my beloved wife and children I discover that I too am no ordinary father or husband. I am the Lord's man. With all my faults and foibles, I am a child of God redeemed by Christ, the crucified. In me, my family meets the crucified and risen Lord. All the joys and sorrows shared; the Little League outings and Girl Scout meetings; the quiet times with one's spouse; summer vacations and holidays; cutting the grass and playing catch all become the moments where extraordinary things happen—love is created, shared and celebrated. Memories are made, and new hope is born. Jesus Christ is shared among family members.

Because God has used my beloved wife to help me "get first things first," I have been granted a quite unique and gracious privilege, to fall in love all over again with the woman of my dreams—my dear wife. "Don't you think I was made for you?" Zelda Fitzgerald asked F. Scott Fitzgerald shortly after they met. "I feel like you had me ordered—and I was delivered to you" (quoted in Fraser, p. 143). And so God made us for each other. He designed us to cherish the little time we have together in this world. He created us to seize the moments and to thoroughly, uproariously, without apology, enjoy the presence of the other. We model the mystery of divine love for people. We love with divine intimacy. Our love for each other is the expression of our being new people in Christ. In Christ, we become capable of the all-embracing and deeply moving love of God. And in Christ, we remember, "There are no ordinary people, families, or children."

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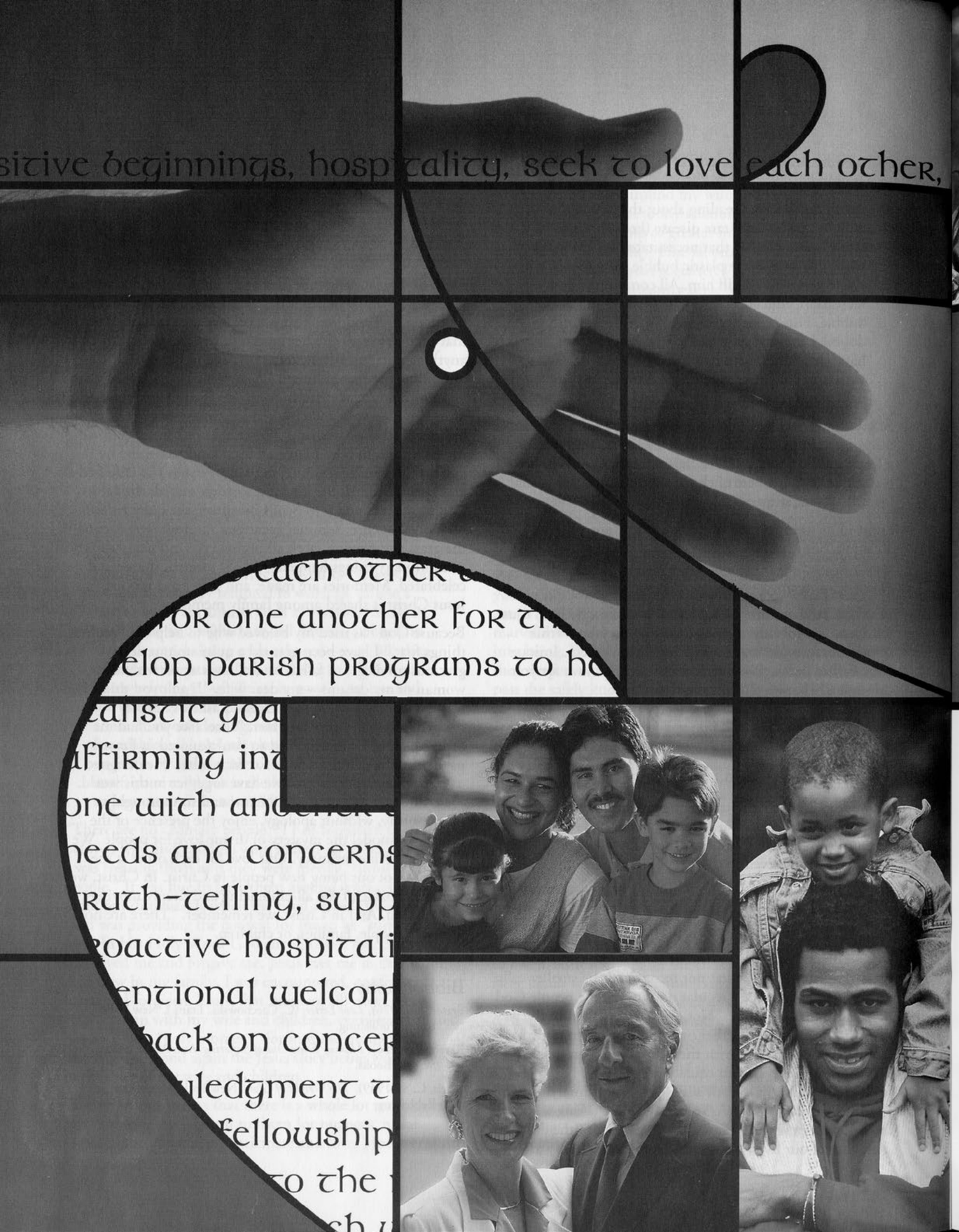

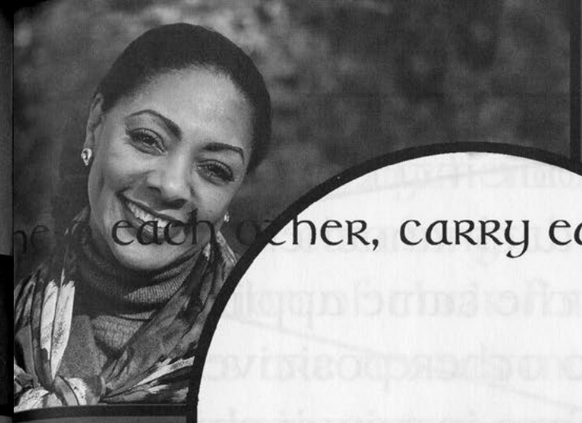

BRUCE M. HARTUNG

WAYS CONGREGATIONS CAN CARE FOR CHURCH WORKER FAMILIES

SEMINARIAN AND MRS. GRAEBNER were surprised to receive in the mail a rather thick package from the chairperson of the trustees at the parish where Pastor Graebner was placed at the call service a month earlier. This was the third mailing from congregational leaders that they had received. The first was a letter from the congregational president expressing delight in Seminarian Graebner's placement there. Included in the letter was general information about the parish (for example, pictorial directory, recent Sunday bulletins and voters' assembly minutes) and the community (material about local businesses, regional attractions, a history of the town, opportunities for recreational and personal activities for their children and school descriptions). Also included were the names of two persons in the congregation who, as it turned out, were the chairperson of the board of elders and the president of the parish Lutheran Women's Missionary League, respectively. They were identified as those who would serve as primary contact persons for Seminarian and Mrs. Graebner. The congregational president also indicated that the Graebners would be placed on the congregational mailing list immediately and would be receiving weekly the Sunday bulletins.

The second letter was a letter from the circuit counselor and his wife welcoming the Graebners to the circuit and inviting them to a circuit picnic to be held shortly after their arrival when they would be able to meet fellow pastors and their spouses.

The third letter from the chairperson of the board of trustees included pictures of the parsonage and a floor plan, complete with room dimensions. This, the trustees thought, would give the Graebners an advance opportunity to consider usage of the rooms and placement of furniture. Also included was a listing of medical and health practitioners in the region. The general tone of the letter was optimistic concerning the Graebners' coming and solicitous of any questions they might have about their moving arrangements, resources in the community, or any other concerns.

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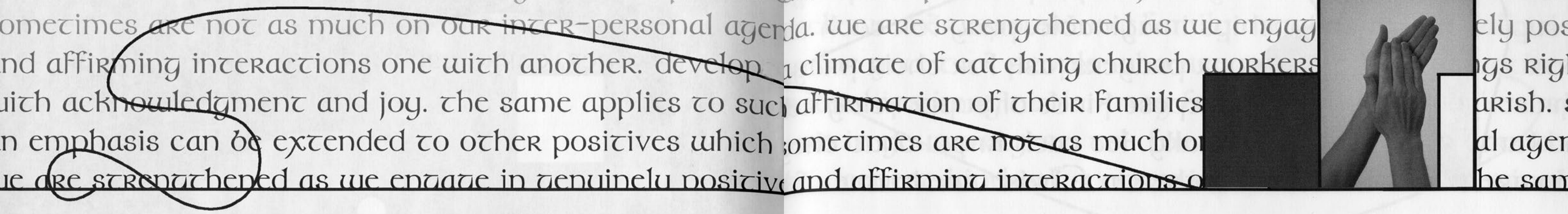


Positive Beginnings!

Is it likely that this parish and the Graebners will begin together on a relatively positive note? The odds for such a beginning are positive. Why? In part, because the parish and its leadership were both *intentional* and *proactive* in developing a positive supporting relationship between themselves and the Graebners from the very beginning; in part, because attention was directed to all persons in the Graebner family, not just the worker; in part, because the gift of *hospitality* was seen by the parish as an important resource for any new people who connected to the parish community.

"We started to see ourselves as being welcomed into the community, as belonging even before we first set foot there," commented Mrs. Graebner. "It feels like they care about all of us," said the Graebner's ten-year-old son.

Congregations can care for church worker families by being intentional and proactive in doing so. That is the first step. These behavioral characteristics can emerge more easily as the congregation reflects about itself and its gifts of hospitality. As persons led by God's Holy Spirit seek to love each other (1 John 4:7), to help each other on a daily basis (Hebrews 3:13), to draw all members of the Body of Christ together in courage and with love (Colossians 2:2), to carry each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2), and to share the faith (Romans 1:12), we all give attention in an anticipatory as well as immediate way, to the needs and concerns of our sisters and brothers in the faith.

Some congregations have professional worker support committees whose sole task is to work with the worker concerning both professional and personal needs which are present. Other congregations place this responsibility within the congregational board charged with specific areas of the life of the parish. In this latter case the board of elders might intentionally address these concerns for the pastor, and the board for Christian education or school board might address these concerns for teachers and directors of Christian education. There are likely many other ways to address intentionally the needs of the church worker, the worker's spouse and the worker's family. The point is that the needs have a spot, a place within the parish structure, where they are to be addressed.

Intentionality does not wait for the emergence of problems and then create a vehicle for dealing with the concerns. The need for this more reactive way of dealing with things is quite present enough in the world. Intentionality, in contrast, makes a commitment. It says that certain things are important to do, that they are important enough to have a place and space where they are to be dealt with, and resources are made available to deal with the concerns. A congregation with intentionality about the support of the church worker's family will create an internal responsibility to do so, provide the resources to make it happen, and outline an accountability structure so that it gets done. In this context, an attitude of concern for the worker, for the worker's spouse, for the worker's family and for the worker's extended family will become an important priority of the parish. If this is an overall attitude concerning people and families, it will most surely infect the entire congregation as it builds on the strength of its gifts of hospitality.

Likewise, an approach that is proactive is not passive. Rather, it engages assertively those issues which it values. In the Graebners' case, the parish did not wait to hear from Seminarian Graebner. Rather, it took the initiative. Proactivity anticipates; it uses knowledge to identify concerns and issues that more than likely will emerge. For instance, it is assuredly true that moving is a stressor which affects people. A passive approach waits until someone says "ouch," and then mobilizes, hopefully, to respond. A proactive approach anticipates the "ouches," and works to meet them. Proactivity also has the capability of being a positive infection. What would a parish really be like if its culture included folks taking the initiative with each other about life issues? Like its twin, intentionality, proactivity does not wait. It creatively seeks to identify and resolve! Let's return for a moment to the Graebner experience. What if the parish had been served by a pastor for 30 years and had no recent history of a move into its midst by a professional church worker? It could wait and see. It could assume that if there are any real concerns, the seminarian would bring them up. It could think of itself as ready and willing to help, but also as not knowing how or what to do.

In contrast, however, an intentional and proactive approach would consult with district officials or seminary faculty, call up the congregational president of a neighboring parish that has just received a new pastor a year or so before, or talk with several pastors, their wives and their children who had recently moved. In this way, information about what can be done is gathered. In order to get all this consultation done and suggestions implemented, responsibility and authority for dealing with these things would need to be lodged somewhere in the life of the parish. For that to happen, there would need to be a general consensus within the parish that supporting professional church workers and their families is part of the gift of hospitality which is cherished by the parish and valued within its culture.

Intentional and proactive hospitality for professional church workers, their spouses and their families, and, as well, for all the members and their families in the Body of Christ, is, indeed, the goal.

Another Scenario

Pastor and Mrs. Eubulus and their three children (ages 15, 11 and 9) were nearly at their breaking point. In congregational ministry for seven years, Pastor Eubulus had responsibility for the repayment of educational loans that continued to drain the finances of the family and would likely do so for at least another seven years. In his second parish since graduation from the seminary, he was not quite at the district-suggested standard for salary. Mrs. Eubulus worked part-time, wanting, however, to be as much of an available at-home mother as she could and as the family could realistically afford. Both Pastor and Mrs. Eubulus had been raised in a lower middle-class suburban setting and had generally lived in such settings until the time he began studies for the pastoral ministry. Now in a second rural call, they continued to feel a bit of a cultural strain, for there was so much in a smaller town environment and its dynamics that was strange to them. Most of all, they really never felt like they belonged. It was clear to everyone in the Eubulus family that things were not "improving."

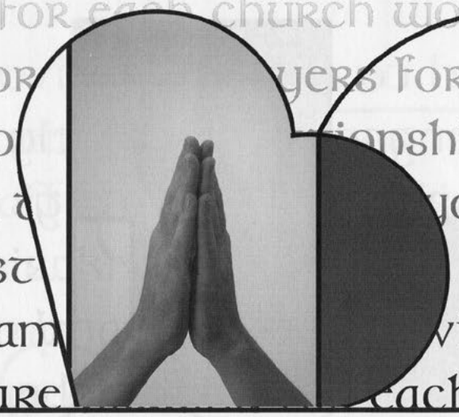
His energy ebbed. Members of the parish began talking, wondering if Pastor Eubulus was "looking" for a call. Relationships became more strained. Mrs. Eubulus, the person in the marriage who was primarily responsible for managing the finances, was becoming increasingly distressed. Her distress was not spoken about openly with her husband, because she thought it would only cause him more problems. After all, she reflected to herself, he was out doing the work of the church. Pastor Eubulus felt more distance from his wife, but had little energy to try to address the gap because he was feeling overwhelmed by tensions in the congregation. Complaints about his work continued to be circulated.

Dealing with Stress

Financial concerns and communication tensions are major causes of marital and family stress, and do significantly and profoundly affect all of our capacities to work joyfully. With each member of the Body of Christ left to herself or himself to deal quietly and privately with these stressors, we create a culture of individualism and loneliness. If, in contrast, we create a culture within the Body of Christ that considers these personal and familial experiences to be significant concerns for the Body as a whole, then how can we intentionally and proactively address them?

We would begin by prayerfully recognizing that things are not going as well as had been hoped. The first step is always to prayerfully identify the truth of a situation. Denial of what is, exhortations to do and be better, passive conversation in the darkness, and blaming are all clearly unhelpful to everyone. In the case of the Eubulus' family, the congregational leadership could take the intentional and proactive leadership necessary to create safe forums where these significant concerns could begin to be addressed.

As the congregation, the worker and the worker's family began to prayerfully speak of the concerns, to take responsi-



bility for missing the mark either by omission or commission and to engage the concerns in a constructive way, passive displeasure can turn to active assaults on the problems identified.

In the case of the Eubulus family, *truth telling* becomes an important characteristic of ways a parish can care for its workers. There is no care in the darkness of denial or ignoring. Care comes in moving issues, even difficult ones of great concern, into the light. Parishes who wish to move behaviorally toward communities of healing will intentionally and proactively work at this characteristic.

Without truth telling, the Eubulus family will likely leave the area as he takes a call to another parish. Members of the parish will carry unfinished pieces of emotionality around which will then affect their relationship with their next pastor. Pastor Eubulus, his wife and their children will also likely enter their new community somewhat gun-shy and still raw. This is bound to affect how they engage their new relationships, unless, of course, the new parish has enough intentionality and proactivity concerning the gifts of hospitality that they can themselves help heal these wounds.

With truth telling, empowered by the work of the Christ who is *the* Truth, everyone has an opportunity to identify together issues of concern between the parish and the pastor that then influence the life of the pastor's family. Then, on the basis of that identification, they can begin to address those concerns. Evil flourishes only in the darkness; the light of truth brings the possibility of healing. Issues related to church workers, their spouses, their families and their congregations all need to be placed in conversation so that they can bask in the light of the Son, in the light of the Truth.

In a community gathered around the cross of Christ, *intentional* and *proactive hospitality* is practiced in a context of *truth-telling*. People brought together in the washing of Baptism, connected to each other through the person and work of Jesus the Christ and led by the Holy Spirit to increase in their care and love of each other do develop core standards, expectations and values that are part and parcel of the everyday interactions one with another. These standards and expectations are not just in relationship to church worker families, but church worker families are surely included in them.

Thus, one of the more fundamental and basic ways that congregations can care for church worker families is to assess the standards of care of families in the congregation. *Intentional* and *proactive hospitality* practiced in a context of *truth-telling* could well be a normative expectation. Left to ourselves we as individuals and the congregation as a group will miss the mark often. That is why we need a Savior. But we identify our sins, we come to the cross, we receive forgiveness, and the Spirit through Sacrament and Word sustains and strengthens us all toward this goal.

Positive Steps

There are some specific items related to church worker families that parishes might consider in addition to and building upon the items that emerged in our stories above.

• Evaluate where in the parish the responsibility for discussion concerning church worker and church worker spouse and family needs is housed. The creation of a particular group of people or committee to relate with the worker in this way is a good option.

• Protect time off as much as possible, but in an assertive manner. While in many ways a deaconess, for instance, is "on call" all the time, the protection of blocks of time that are interrupted only in special circumstances is important. It is not simply up to the individual church worker and family to protect this time. There needs to be a general acceptance of the need for this time throughout the parish culture.

• Attend assertively and responsibly to financial issues. Lutheran school teachers tend to be paid at much lower rates than their public school counterparts while also assuming many more out-of-classroom responsibilities. Financial concerns are major stressors for people and impact in significant and important ways the health and well-being of the worker and her/his extended family. Parishes and schools gain little by significantly underpaying their church workers. In general, raise salaries!

• Develop a climate of "catching" church workers doing things "right," and responding to these discoveries with acknowledgment and joy. The same applies to such affirmation of their families and of individuals and families throughout the parish. Such an emphasis can be extended to other positives which sometimes are not as much on our inter-personal agenda. We are strengthened as we engage in genuinely positive and affirming interactions one with another.

• Make room for the reality of church workers as human beings rather than as total saints. While there may be a certain modeling of the Christian life that is expected of our workers, there is also the reality that in the real world life is not postcard perfect. Expect our church workers, their spouses and their families to be human beings. Refrain from laying on them expectations of behavior and deportment that would never be placed on anyone else. In this way we also become more realistic in the parish community concerning our expectation of others as well. The parish community is made up of persons who are wounded, who are sinners, who are in need of a Savior and who are in need of fellow Christians in a supporting community gathered around Sacrament and Word. In that way, church workers, their spouses and their families are no different than any other member of the parish.

• Identify a feedback and/or grievance process within the parish to be used by all members. This means that if there is a concern about the worker, the worker's spouse or the worker's family, then that concern is brought forward in a process agreed to by all and used by all. Parking lot grievances, anonymous concerns and problematic reactions are all brought into the light of open concern. They do not remain in the darkness of anonymity and gossip. Additionally, continue to work to create a parish culture where face-to-face discussions of issues and concerns early in their development are applauded as a way of life. This is parallel to looking for the positives in persons. In the case of concerns or positives, communications concerning them are done face-to-face or in accordance with an established community process.

• Encourage relationships for the church worker, spouse and family outside of the parish. Do not be blocking the development of such relationships. Persons need multiple levels and arenas of social interaction. Many church workers want and need arenas of such interaction apart from the parish or school where they serve. This is good time away. It broadens people and gives them respite. It is not a threat. Encourage such!

• Pray for each church worker, spouse and family member individually. Let each know that they are in your prayers. Ask for their prayers for you, too. People who are praying for each other in Christ are in one of the deepest kinds of supporting relationships imaginable.

• Help the parish develop programs and initiatives that are family-friendly and that help families be together in constructive and healthy ways. Discourage parish programs that divide families and separate them on a regular basis from time together. If this is a parish priority, then there will be more of an emphasis on and opportunity for family-friendly activities for the church worker family.

• Come to divine worship often since we are all centered around Sacrament and Word. Repent and receive the forgiveness of the Christ often. In so doing, we all know that we all walk as imperfect, forgiven and loved creatures of God.

Intentional and *proactive hospitality* in the context of *truth-telling* allow all of us to develop sensitivities to each other as members of the Body of Christ. As we do this, we can develop creative responses to difficulties and imaginative interventions related to life needs. In these ways we support professional church workers, their spouses and their families. In these ways, we also support all families of the Body of Christ.

book reviews

RAISING CHILDREN IN A SOCIALLY TOXIC SOCIETY by James Garbarino. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

In 1962 Rachel Carson presented the view that the biological environment was in danger of becoming so affected by the application of chemicals that humankind was in danger of facing a silent spring. Three and a half decades later, James Garbarino has presented the somewhat parallel concept of a socially toxic environment and has attempted to identify the potential impact which continued exposure to such an environment can have on the development of children.

The author identifies a number of social toxins including unsupervised viewing of television, the single-parent family, unrestrained use of language that is not appropriate in a civilized society, abdication by many parents of their roles as moral educators, an unwillingness on the part of many adults to accept responsibility in spite of inconvenient circumstances, and the acceptance of violence as a legitimate means of resolving conflicts in human relations.

This reader was impressed by the author's presentation of rather convincing arguments that children are being rushed through and virtually deprived of childhood by forces which are often based on economic considerations or misguided judgments on the part of supervising adults. The loss of a leisurely childhood deprives children of an adequate period of life in which to formulate maps of their social environments, often leaving them to cope in floundering fashion with issues quite beyond their levels of social maturity.

Dr. Garbarino does not accept the frequently-stated assertion that conditions have not really changed but that it simply seems that way to the aging members of the population who tend to have incomplete memories of their own childhoods. Drawing from objective statistical data, the author presents a rather convincing argument that social values and mores really have declined, creating the socially toxic environment that is so damaging to children. He does not assume that caring parents can easily change the social environment. Rather, his hope is that parents can help children to develop coping mechanisms which will assure their survival in a toxic environment. The tone of his comments addressed to parents is more that of compassion and support than of criticism.

It is encouraging that Dr. Garbarino does not simply call attention to serious social deficits in our socially toxic environment. He attempts to offer some very specific suggestions as to how parents and other caregivers can make a difference. He closes each chapter with a section titled "What Can We Do?"

Following the final chapter Dr. Garbarino has included a "Resources" section devoting seven pages to the presentation of very specific suggestions to parents, teachers and other adults who are placed in the role of caregivers for the young. The subtitle of this section, "What We Can Do from A to Z," calls attention to the very practical nature of the suggestions provided. In addition to proposed courses of action, the section also includes addresses, including his own, of parties to whom the reader may appeal for assistance.

Although Dr. Garbarino seems to write more from a moral than from a Christian frame of reference, it would be difficult if not impossible to identify any proposed strategies which are in conflict with basic Christian principles.

While based on scholarly research, the book is presented in language easily processed by parents who do not consider themselves to be specialists in the art of child rearing. The book would be a fine addition to a church or school library and should also be considered as an addition to the libraries of homes responsible for the rearing of young children and adolescents.

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FAMILIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD by Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.

Carolyn Osiek is a professor of New Testament at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, and David L. Balch is a professor of New Testament at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas. Their book, *Families in the New Testament World,* sets the New Testament teachings on the family within the social and cultural context of the Greco-Roman world.

In Part One, "Material and Social Environment of the Greco-Roman Household," Osiek and Balch do an excellent job of informing us about the architecture, culture and society of the early church. They explain what the common homes in that era were like and how this affected the establishment of the Christian house churches. For example, larger homes included an atrium at the front of the house for public and business purposes; in effect, a reception area. In first century society everyone had the right to enter a home's atrium, reserving as private space only bedrooms, dining rooms and baths. This provides insight into passages such as 1 Corinthians 14:23, "If the whole church comes together. . . and some unbelievers come in" and Matthew 26:6–7, "While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came to Him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume. . ." Osiek and Balch observe that, "We must imagine ourselves back in a radically different sociocultural setting in order to gain some perception of an early Christian assembly in one of these houses."

In Part Two, "Early Christian Families and House Churches," Osiek and Balch examine family religion. They investigate what their environment meant for Christians living and worshipping in their houses, how married partners related to each other, how education occurred, and the types of meals and celebrations of the Christian family. The authors provide an interesting study of slavery in the ancient world. For example, no one race or nationality was enslaved. Those defeated in war and those who fell into debt often were made slaves. Many slaves later were given their freedom, and often they were able to become Roman citizens. When Jesus says in John 8:36, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed," the allusion is to a transformation of status from slave, not only to a freedman, but to being a freeborn member of the household with full rights.

It is unfortunate, however, that throughout this book references are made to the historical-critical viewpoint, including the assumption that the epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians were not written by St. Paul. An example is the comment, "David Balch has interpreted the deutero-Pauline and deutero-Petrine Christian 'household codes' as a conservative reaction against earlier progressive possibilities for women in the Jesus movement." Commenting on Colossians 3:22–25, the authors state, "These dramatic changes in early Christian Christology, ritual and ethics mean that the secular Greco-Roman household ethic has significantly blunted early Christian theology and ethical practice." The authors reveal a liberal theological bias by asserting that the "deutero-Pauline" pastoral epistles "reserve ecclesial office for males, which has had disastrous consequences for two millennia."

The book is an attempt to prove that early Christian women enjoyed wider ranges of freedom and leadership, and how unfortunate it is that later Christians took those freedoms away. I would recommend the book, especially the first half, to anyone interested in a scholarly look at the life and times of first century Christians. The book is valuable in showing how life in Greco-Roman households influenced relationships in early Christian house churches.

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FAMILY: THE FORMING CENTER by Marjorie J. Thompson. Nashville, Tenn.: Upper Room Books, 1996.

The intent of this book is to suggest that families of committed faith are the initial and most natural context for the positive spiritual formation of children. My approach will be two fold: to show how the family is intrinsically formative spiritually and to indicate how various spiritual practices may realistically support the health and growth of the family within its larger (church) community. (p. 11)

From this thesis statement Thompson has developed a very useful 144-page primer for anyone interested in family life ministry. Supported by ample text references, reflection questions and end notes, she accesses Scripture, the practice of pastoral counseling, traditions in spiritual direction, and psychological theory to provide an informed and thoughtful discussion of the family as the spiritual and social center in which family members form some orientation—whether good or bad—to the things of faith.

The book is composed of nine readable chapters which might be separated into two parts. The first three chapters define the family as God's own creation, not merely as the object of the church's teaching mission, but as one of the most basic units of the church's mission to the world. For Thompson, the family is, or can be, a "domestic church." This domestic church does not replace the local congregation; rather, the family is the key fellowship both for nurturing Christian faith and character within the church and for witnessing God's love and promises to the world. Thompson tempers this view with appreciation for the reality of sin within the family and is careful not to idealize the family: "Christian families, like the individual Christians of which they are comprised, are 'simultaneously sinners and justified' (to use Luther's signature phrase)." She notes that it is exactly within this dual condition that families have a high calling to pursue. She also addresses the realistic challenges that families face today, including a culture that is often hostile to the mission of the church, a narcissistic and excessively individualistic society, the negative values associated with competition and violence, and the confusion of secular and sacred through the emergence of diverse, non-Christian spiritualities.

Citing such a context, Thompson does not apologize for seeing the family as a "sacred shelter" rather than a socializing and launching vehicle of members into the world. Families are to function especially as formative centers for the spiritual well-being of their members and especially their children. Formation happens when families reflect God's love through the qualities of acceptance, presence with each other, affirmation, accountability, forgiveness and hospitality. Thompson includes a brief but interesting discussion on supporting the child's religious experiences. She maintains, "Children have an innate capacity to relate to God, a truth that often amazes and unnerves adults. Yet it should not surprise us. Someone once said to me, 'You realize, don't you, that children have come from God more recently than we?'" Though attention is not given to original sin, she does prompt us to take seriously children's receptivity to love and their readiness to receive God's love in the context of the family.

For this formation to happen, Thompson addresses five practices or spiritual disciplines for families, devoting a chapter to each. She encourages prayer, family worship and ritual, sharing stories both from Scripture and from the family's own spiritual experiences, involvement in serving one another and those outside the family, and engagement in a congregation. Thompson sees an essential relationship between the family as a domestic church and the ministry of the congregation, supporting each other as a living out of God's love and commitment through His church to the world.

The book has not worked out a rigorous definition of the family. Some readers will wonder what Thompson would say to the single Christian and what the church should say to the single spiritual pilgrim. Thompson's concept of the family as a "sacred shelter" may leave some to wonder how a family in prolonged conflict can serve as a shelter. Her critiques of the culture around us may at some points be a bit simplistic, such as: "It seems to me that superficiality, despair and violence run like undercurrents throughout North American culture, not so much *despite* our national economic achievements as *because* of them."

The book, however, is intended to be brief and is a positive introduction to the roles of families and churches together as the context for fostering lives of discipleship among those of whom Jesus spoke this special concern: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them."

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