

Mental Health Issues Among Clergy and Other Religious Professionals: A Review of Research*

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The authors reviewed the literature on mental health issues among clergy and other religious professionals, using electronic searches of databases of medical (Medline), nursing (CINAHL), psychology (PsycINFO), religious (ATLA), and sociological research (Sociofile). The existing research indicates the Protestant clergy report higher levels of occupational stress than Catholic priests, brothers, or sisters. Catholic sisters repeatedly reported the lowest work-related stress, whereas women rabbis reported the highest stress levels in various studies. Occupational stress appears to be a source of family stress among Protestant clergy—a factor which clergy and their spouses believe the denominational leadership should address. High levels of stress also have been found to be associated with sexual misconduct among clergy. The authors make several recommendations based on these and other findings they report in their review.

Religion is important in the lives of most Americans, providing meaning, support, and affiliation. They rank churches and organized religion near the top among institutions in which they have confidence.¹ Nationwide, there are nearly 500,000 places of worship with a presence in almost every community.² According to a recent Gallup poll, approximate-

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This article is dedicated to Maryknoll Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clark, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel, and lay missionary Jean Donovan who were taken on December 02, 1980 by members of the National Guard of El Salvador to an isolated spot where they were shot dead at close range for ministering to the poor. "For the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" *Thessalonians* 4:13-18. Also, the authors express gratitude to Eileen Gorey, R. N., Julia Oppenheimer, and Lisa Matsumoto, M. LIS., for their generous help in the development of this project.

¹E. Hastings and H. Hastings (Eds.), *Index to International Public Opinion, 1993-1994* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994).

²M. B. Bradley, N. M. Green, D. E. Jones, M. Lynn, and L. McNeil, *Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1900* (Atlanta, GA: Glenmary Research Center, 1990).

ly 70% of Americans claim membership in a church or synagogue, and about 40% worship at one at least weekly.³ Almost 90% in this country want some form of religious education for their children. Three of five of them consider religion "very important" in their lives—90% indicate that they pray, and 95% of those believe that their prayers are answered. These rates of religious commitment and involvement have remained fairly constant in the United States from the mid-1960s through the 1990s.⁴

Many Demands on Time and Energy

There are 353,000 Christian and Jewish clergy serving congregations in the United States (4,000 rabbis; 49,000 Catholic priests; and 300,000 Protestant ministers, according to the U. S. Department of Labor, 1989). In addition, there are 92,107 sisters and 6,578 brothers in Roman Catholic religious orders nationwide,⁵ and more than 10,000 chaplains working in health care institutions.⁶ These are among the most trusted professionals in society.⁷

Professor Dennis Orthner⁸ at the University of North Carolina found in a national survey of almost 2,000 United Methodist pastors that their work can be rewarding, but it is highly demanding. Clergy are required to fulfill many responsibilities to parishioners and community that place heavy demands on their time and energy. They are expected to fill a variety of roles at once, including administrator, teacher, preacher, counselor, and fund-raiser. There are few times when pastors are not "on call," and they often must deal with persons who are severely troubled.^{9,10}

On average, United Methodist clergy spend 56.2 hours per week in ministry, and 12 evenings a month away from home on church duties.¹¹ About one in four of the surveyed pastors work more than 60 hours a week. In addition, although clergy rank in the top 10% of the population in terms of education, they are only 325th of 432 occupations in terms of salaries received.¹² In part because of time pressures and financial distress, the burnout syndrome has unfortunately become increasingly associated with

³G. H. Gallup and D. M. Lindsay, *Surveying the Religious Landscape: Trends in U. S. Beliefs* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999).

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵R. Stark and R. Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

⁶L. VandeCreek and L. Burton, "Professional Chaplaincy: Its Role and Importance in Health-care," *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 2000, Vol. 55, No. 1, pp. 81-97.

⁷Gallup and Lindsay, *op. cit.*

⁸D. K. Orthner, *Pastoral Counseling: Caring and Caregiving in The United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church, 1986).

⁹A. J. Weaver, "Has There Been a Failure to Prepare and Support Parish-based Clergy in Their Role as Front-line Community Mental Health Workers? A Review," *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 1995, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 129-149.

¹⁰A. J. Weaver, H. G. Koenig, and F. M. Ochberg, "Posttraumatic Stress, Mental Health Professionals and the Clergy: A Need for Collaboration, Training and Research," *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 1996, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 861-870.

¹¹Gallup and Lindsay, *op. cit.*

¹²M. L. Morris and P. W. Blanton, "The Availability and Importance of Denominational Support Services as Perceived by Clergy Husbands and Wives," *Pastoral Psychology*, 1995, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 29-44.

pastoral work.^{13,14,15}

To illustrate the demands placed upon clergy, researchers have found that pastors are the primary mental health counselors for tens of millions of Americans.¹⁶ They are frequently the first persons to help with a family or marital problem or a personal crisis.¹⁷ The National Institute of Mental Health found that clergy are as likely as mental health specialists to have a person with a *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* diagnosis come to them for help. Clergy are seen for assistance with even the most severe forms of mental illness, including schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder.¹⁸ Further highlighting the prominent role that ministers play, the *U. S. Surgeon General's 2000 Report on Mental Health* found that one in six adults and one in five children annually obtain mental health services either from a health care provider, *the clergy*, a social service agency, or a school.¹⁹ The public's frequent use of pastors should not be a surprise, given their accessibility and the high trust that Americans place in them. Young adults rank clergy higher in interpersonal skills (including warmth, caring, stability, and professionalism) than either psychologists or psychiatrists.²⁰

Given the important role that pastors fill in society and the high demands on their time and emotional resources, we undertook and did a needed review of the research literature on clergy mental health outcomes. The questions included the outcomes experienced by clergy compared to the general population. We also tried to assess what factors predicted the results, given the published research.

Method

The data collection for this review involved three steps. First, we searched five electronic databases for the years 1975 through 2000 relevant to clergy and health issues: medicine (Medline), psychology (PsycINFO), religion (American Theological Library Association Religion Database [ATLA], sociology (Sociofile), and nursing (Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature [CINAHL]), to find published studies on clergy or other religious professionals and mental health issues. We cross searched multiple terms to clergy, chaplains, and other religious professionals (*e.g.*, nuns, parish nurses) with multiple search terms related to mental health

¹³S. Daniel and M. L. Rogers, "Burn-out and the Pastorate: A Critical Review with Implications for Pastors," *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 1981, Vol. 9., No. 3, pp. 232-249.

¹⁴H. J. Freudenberger, *Rabbinic Burnout: Symptoms and Prevention* (New York, NY: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1982).

¹⁵J. Sanford, *Ministry Burnout* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1992).

¹⁶A. J. Weaver, H. G. Koenig, and D. B. Larson, "Marital and Family Therapists and the Clergy: A Need for Clinical Collaboration, Training and Research," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 1997, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 13-25.

¹⁷A. J. Weaver, L. A. Revilla, and H. G. Koenig, *Counseling Families Across the Lifespan: A Handbook for Pastors and Other Helping Professionals* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001).

¹⁸A. A. Hohmann and D. B. Larson, "Psychiatric Factors Predicting Use of Clergy," in E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Psychotherapy and Religious Values* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), pp. 71-84.

¹⁹D. Satcher, "Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General—Executive Summary," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 2000, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 15-31.

²⁰F. Schindler, M. R. Berren, M. T. Hannah, A. Biegel, and J. M. Santiago, "How the Public Perceives Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Non-psychiatric Physicians, and Members of the Clergy," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 1987, Vol. 18, pp. 371-376.

(e.g., stress, disease, mental illness). Second, we examined the references of retrieved articles to identify additional research. Third, we consulted two experts in the field to identify any other studies of which they were aware that we had not included.

This examination of published articles on clergy mental health led naturally to a consideration of what they said about salient issues affecting clergy life. We primarily focused our review on key research published during the past 25 years on mental health issues. The research focused on three primary areas: morale and occupational stress, marital adjustment and family stress, and impairment (sexual misconduct).

Clergy Morale and Occupational Stress

Morale and job satisfaction are important factors determining how individuals perform their jobs and commit themselves to their work. Researchers studied a group of 250 religious professionals that included equal numbers of seminarians, Protestant ministers, and Roman Catholic priests, brothers, and sisters.²¹ Among the groups, Protestant clergy had the highest overall work-related stress and were next to the lowest in personal resources to cope with the occupational strain. Ministers, especially those who were sole pastors, indicated that they frequently felt isolated and had few friends or colleagues to whom to turn for help. Many Protestant clergy expressed concern about their inability to set time limits, show their vulnerability, or express appropriate anger with parishioners.²²

In contrast to the Protestant clergy, Roman Catholic priests, brothers, and sisters reported having less vocational strain and stronger supportive community than Protestant ministers. Nuns had the least occupational stress and the highest levels of personal resources. The sisters were the lowest risk group in terms of emotional distress and its detrimental effects. In a second study Rayburn, Richmond, and Rogers²³ found that nuns had less perceived pressure and stress and better coping resources than either female rabbis or Protestant clergywomen.

In a comparison of male and female clergy, researchers found that the women had much less role ambiguity in their ministry than their male counterparts.²⁴ Female ministers demonstrated a better sense of understanding what they needed to do in their vocation and how to accomplish it than their male colleagues. Clergywomen also appeared to have fewer problems in setting limits with others, reported greater cognitive coping skills, and suffered less stress from feelings of being trapped in conflicts than did the males. Additionally, female ministers had less occupational strain, although they tended to have fewer recreational activities than male clergy.²⁵

Later work by Carole Rayburn and her colleagues on clergywomen is enlightening. One of those studies compared the stress levels of 45 female rabbis to those of 54 Catholic priests, 61 Protestant clergymen, and 60 Protestant clergywomen.²⁶ In contrast to the above finding, the female rab-

²¹C. A. Rayburn, L. J. Richmond, and L. Rogers, "Men, Women and Religion: Stress within Leadership Roles," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 1986, Vol. 42, No. 3, pp. 540-546.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Rayburn, *et al.*, 1986, *op. cit.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Rayburn, *et al.*, 1986, *op. cit.*

²⁶Rayburn, *et al.*, 1988, *op. cit.*

bis reported significantly higher levels of stress from role or occupational overload compared to each of the other three groups who were investigated. They also reported much greater stress levels with respect to their responsibilities and resources compared to Catholic priests, although the rabbis did not differ from male or female ministers on these factors.

A subsequent study by Rayburn²⁷ examined the job-related stress experienced by 254 clergymen and their available resources to cope with stress. The questionnaire responses of 51 Catholic sisters, 45 female rabbis, 122 Protestant clergymen, and 36 female seminarians were compared. The sample of Protestant clergymen was composed of 45 Presbyterians, 45 United Methodists, and 32 Episcopalians. The seminarians were from Episcopal and United Methodist theological schools. The study utilized a stratified random sample of individuals who volunteered to participate in the survey. As found in the 1988 research, female rabbis exhibited the highest levels of stress, compared to all other groups studied, while nuns exhibited the least. Sisters also reported having the most available resources.

Some of the stress experienced by clergymen may stem from being in a male dominated profession.^{28,29} The findings of Rayburn³⁰ support the earlier findings of Rayburn, Richmond, and Rogers³¹ that most female clergy (87% in the present study) believe clergymen experience suspicion or rejection from their colleagues and/or congregations. Moreover, many of the female ministers in the 1991 survey believed clergymen "get blamed for going against the tide of male traditionalism."³² Interestingly, whether married or single, clergymen reported comparable levels of stress.^{33,34}

In a nationwide study of 1,362 clergymen in the Presbyterian denomination, researchers found that pastors reported more negative interactions, taking the form of criticism and demands, than laity.³⁵ These experiences had an injurious effect on the ministers, lowering psychological well-being in spite of some positive social support within the church.

Dewe³⁶ used in-depth interviews of 38 clergymen in the Protestant Church of New Zealand to examine sources of stress and coping strategies. Their average age was 46 years, 90% were married, and 92% were men. Most had served at least 16 years in the ministry, had relocated in their vocation an average of three times, and about 2 of 3 served as sole pastor in their setting. Among 59 possible stressors, the top three listed were: congregational conflicts and church conservatism, difficulties involving parish

²⁷C. A. Rayburn, "Counseling Depressed Female Religious Professionals: Nuns and Clergymen," *Counseling and Values*, 1991, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 136-148.

²⁸M. T. Bochini, "Discussion: Clergymen and Stress," *Psychotherapy in Private Practice*, 1991, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 147-151.

²⁹L. J. Richmond, "Stress and Single Clergy Women," *Psychotherapy in Private Practice*, 1991, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 119-125.

³⁰Rayburn, *op. cit.*

³¹C. A. Rayburn, L. J. Richmond, and L. Rogers, "Stress Among Religious Leaders," *Thought*, 1983, Vol. 230, pp. 329-344.

³²Rayburn, *op. cit.*

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Bochini, *op. cit.*

³⁵N. Krause, C. G. Ellison, and K. M. Wulff, "Church-based Emotional Support, Negative Interaction, and Psychological Well-being: Findings from a National Sample of Presbyterians," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1998, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 725-741.

³⁶P. J. Dewe, "New Zealand Ministers of Religion: Identifying Sources of Stress and Coping Strategies," *Work and Stress*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 351-363.

commitment, and the emotional and time demands of crisis counseling. Among 65 coping strategies, the most frequently utilized were: receiving support through spiritual commitment, developing the capacity to deal with the problem, and social support.

In spite of the pressures of job stress and the extraordinary demands, most clergy continue to find their work satisfying. Three of four United Methodist pastors indicated in a confidential survey that they were either "extremely" or "quite" satisfied in their ministry and the congregation they served.³⁷ When they were asked about the aspects of their work that they enjoyed, the clergy indicated that their greatest rewards came from: a sense of accomplishment, the feeling that they were fulfilling their "calling," the importance they attached to their pastoral role, and the support they received from their congregation.³⁸ About 60% of the United Methodist pastors reported high levels of self-assurance, which is associated with positive self-esteem, hopefulness and well-being, while 24% experienced a moderate level. Of great concern, however, are the nearly one in 6 clergy who showed signs of serious distress with their high levels of isolation, loneliness, fear, abandonment, anger, and boredom. Pastors without a strong sense of well-being and personal adjustment will have a hard time guiding others in their spiritual development.

Marital Adjustment and Family Stress

Clergy and their families are in highly visible positions and are often expected to meet numerous and sometimes unrealistic expectations of their congregations. Tension, fatigue, and the pressure of excessive time demands can drain resources necessary for dealing with the normal responsibilities of family life. In a study of 189 Presbyterian clergymen, their wives and laity, the ministers and their spouses experienced greater loneliness, more emotional exhaustion, and lower marital adjustment than their lay counterparts.³⁹ Researchers found that almost one in three pastors leaving ordained ministry had family difficulties,⁴⁰ and clergy rank third in percentage among professionals who are divorced.⁴¹ In a study of Episcopal priests and their spouses, over half thought family stress was the most important subject that their denominational leadership should address.⁴²

In a comprehensive national study of almost 2,000 United Methodist pastors, the overall quality of clergy marriages was good.⁴³ About 8 of 10 ministers reported satisfaction, high marital commitment, and good levels of communication. However, about 10% of the marriages were in great distress, while another 10% to 15% were under stress and could easily become destabilized. Twenty-one percent of the married clergy studied indicated

³⁷Orthner, *op. cit.*

³⁸Orthner, *op. cit.*

³⁹J. Warner and J. D. Carter, "Loneliness, Marital Adjustment and Burnout in Pastors and Lay Persons," *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 1984, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 125-131.

⁴⁰G. Jud, E. Mills, and G. Burch, *Ex-pastors: Why Men Leave the Parish Ministry* (Philadelphia, PA: Pilgrim Press, 1970).

⁴¹L. J. Richmond, C. A. Rayburn, and L. Rogers, "Clergymen, Clergywomen and Their Spouses: Stress in Professional Religious Families," *Journal of Career Development*, 1985, Vol. 12, pp. 81-85.

⁴²Episcopal Family Network, *Episcopal Clergy Families in the 80s* (Hartford, CT: Episcopal Family Network, 1988).

⁴³Orthner, *op. cit.*

commitment, and the emotional and time demands of crisis counseling. Among 65 coping strategies, the most frequently utilized were: receiving support through spiritual commitment, developing the capacity to deal with the problem, and social support.

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³⁷Orthner, *op. cit.*

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³⁹J. Warner and J. D. Carter, "Loneliness, Marital Adjustment and Burnout in Pastors and Lay Persons," *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 1984, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 125-131.

⁴⁰G. Jud, E. Mills, and G. Burch, *Ex-pastors: Why Men Leave the Parish Ministry* (Philadelphia, PA: Pilgrim Press, 1970).

⁴¹L. J. Richmond, C. A. Rayburn, and L. Rogers, "Clergymen, Clergywomen and Their Spouses: Stress in Professional Religious Families," *Journal of Career Development*, 1985, Vol. 12, pp. 81-85.

⁴²Episcopal Family Network, *Episcopal Clergy Families in the 80s* (Hartford, CT: Episcopal Family Network, 1988).

⁴³Orthner, *op. cit.*

that poor communication was the major problem area, while 43% saw inadequate companionship in the marriage as the primary difficulty. The most often cited areas of discord were: inadequate time with spouse, lack of affection, financial problems, not enough time with children, and sexual relations. Marital conflict was most common among young pastors and those unhappy in their work and with their financial situation.⁴⁴

In a separate investigation, researchers examined the impact of work-related stress on 272 clergymen and their wives from six traditions: Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod; Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee; American Baptist; Seventh-Day Adventist; Southern Baptist; and Episcopal.⁴⁵ Eight of 10 of those surveyed were senior pastors who had been in ministry an average of 17 years and averaged 51 hours of work per week. The study found work-related stress on clergy families in two areas: the lack of available social support, and intrusion on family life. These two factors were also related to lower parental, marital, and life satisfaction for clergy and their spouses. The research also identified decreased life satisfaction as related to increased occupation-related moves, time demands, intrusiveness, and low levels of financial compensation and having social support. Intrusiveness brought both emotional and physical infringement on couples' privacy and autonomy, preventing clergy from creating space for themselves to permit relaxation, reflection, or personal social networks.

Support develops from activities and personal relationships found in community social networks. Strong families work to develop and maintain connections beyond the family unit that give the members a sense of being valued and appreciated.⁴⁶ However, many pastors and their families are "placed on a pedestal" that makes it difficult for them to form normal friendships. Feelings of loneliness and isolation in clergy families can result from the "fish bowl" effect of living in the public eye. As a consequence, the lack of social support is a source of stress faced by many parsonage families. When outside relationships are not available, the demands on the family infrastructure increase. Clergy, whether men or women, and their families need involvement in social networks that affirm them apart from their church identity. When the wives were asked what services the denomination could provide that would be of the greatest benefit, they most frequently indicated counseling/therapy and family adjustment services.⁴⁷

One study examined 75 clergymen and their wives in the Uniting Church of Queensland, Australia (Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists). The pastors reported working an average of 64 to 70 hours per week.⁴⁸ Using the Marital Adjustment test, the researcher found that among couples, 35% indicated high marital adjustment, 47% moderate adjustment, and 19% low adjustment. The author pointed out that "there are at least a small number of clergy couples that are very unhappy in their marriage." Low adjustment couples lacked private time together, personal autonomy, and clarity about congregational expectations of the wives. They

⁴⁴Orthner, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵Morris and Blanton, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶H. I. McCubbin and M. A. McCubbin, "Resilient Families, Competencies, Supports and Coping Over the Life Cycle," in L. Sawyers (Ed.), *Faith and Families* (Philadelphia, PA: Geneva, 1986), pp. 65-88.

⁴⁷Morris and Blanton, *op. cit.*

⁴⁸P. Noller, "Clergy Marriages: A Study of a Uniting Church Sample," *Australian Journal of Sex, Marriage and Family*, 1984, Vol. 5, pp. 187-197.

also felt that the time-demands of church work were out of control. As one might imagine, unhappy pastors tended to work the longest hours and were unlikely to keep a day aside for relaxation and family involvement. Frequent moves and financial issues were also concerns of the families. Not surprisingly, wives of the pastors who were employed were happier than those who were not.

Repeated relocation has been discussed as a distinct problem among clergy and their spouses⁴⁹ and children.⁵⁰ It appears to be an increasing concern in pastoral ministry. The Southern Baptist Convention reported that between 1984 and 1989 the numbers of pastors who were asked to leave their churches increased by more than 30%.⁵¹ Figures like these are of concern.

One study surveyed 212 married clergymen and their wives in the Florida Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church regarding relocation stress and their ways of coping.⁵² On average the couples had been married 21 years, served in ministry 19 years, and had moved five times. The annual income of these families in the early 1990s was \$34,911. Wives indicated that they had greater stress, more negative feelings about moving, fewer coping resources, and less sense of well being than did their pastor husbands. Relocation brought several areas of extra stress, including an increased demand for household labor, disruption of the children's school life and friendship networks, interruption of wives' employment with a reduction or elimination of family income, an increased financial burden from moving expenses, and disruption of the wives' social networks.

Impairment (Sexual Misconduct)

In a study of Southern Baptist senior pastors working in six southeastern states, researchers examined the factors contributing to sexual misconduct with adult members of the church.⁵³ They found that high levels of stress and sexual misconduct were strongly associated. Ministers with chronic stress from several sources were at the greatest risk of such misconduct. For example, clergy in the midst of personal crises (such as painful marriages or other emotional difficulties) are particularly vulnerable, especially if they are unable to reach out for needed counseling.^{54,55} In addition, those with less confidence in their training as counselors were more likely to engage in sexual misconduct than those with more confidence in it. Unfortunately, a substantial 80% of the clergy had been given no written guidelines aimed at preventing sexual misconduct.⁵⁶

⁴⁹Morris and Blanton, *op. cit.*

⁵⁰R. M. Stevenson, "Children of the Parsonage," *Pastoral Psychology*, 1982, Vol. 3, pp. 179-186.

⁵¹H. Whittemore, "Ministers Under Stress," *Parade Magazine*, 1982 (April 14), pp. 4-6.

⁵²H. W. Frame and C. L. Shehan, "Work and Well-being in the Two-person Career: Relocation Stress and Coping Among Clergy Husbands and Wives," *Family Relations*, 1994, Vol. 43, pp. 195-205.

⁵³J. T. Seat, J. T. Trent, and J. K. Kim, "The Prevalence and Contributing Factors of Sexual Misconduct Among Southern Baptist Pastors in Six Southern States," *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 1993, Vol. 47, No. 4, pp. 363-370.

⁵⁴J. W. Thoburn and J. O. Balswick, "An Evaluation of Infidelity Among Male Protestant Clergy," *Pastoral Psychology*, 1994, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp. 285-294.

⁵⁵P. C. Francis and N. R. Turner, "Sexual Misconduct within the Christian Church: Who are the Perpetrators and Those They Victimize?" *Counseling and Values*, 1995, Vol. 39, pp. 218-227.

⁵⁶Seat, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

The study of Southern Baptist pastors found that 5.8% indicated that they had had sexual contact with a person currently affiliated with their congregation.⁵⁷ This frequency of sexual misconduct is slightly lower than that found in a nationwide study of psychiatrists at 6.5%.⁵⁸ Based on the 5.8% misconduct rate and the U.S. Department of Labor's 1998 figure of 353,000 clergypersons in this country, it could be extrapolated that more than 20,000 clergy have had sexual contact with at least one adult connected to the congregation. These high rates are further supported by a survey of psychologists, which found that among therapists treating persons who had been victims of sexual misconduct by prior therapists or counselors, clergy accounted for 11% of the cases in Wisconsin and 17% of the cases in Rhode Island.⁵⁹

Recommendations

In view of the findings gleaned from this survey, the authors make the following recommendations:

1) Theological students need to gain self-awareness and understanding of the issues that arise in ministry, particularly in terms of interpersonal dynamics. All persons seeking ordination would benefit from Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). In a national study of almost 2,000 United Methodist pastors, the one in four who had taken CPE were much less isolated and more willing to seek assistance from mental health specialists (especially pastoral counselors) when they had a personal or family problem than were those without CPE training.⁶⁰ Clergy who believe in the process of positive change through counseling are more likely to be willing to seek help with their personal problems. In addition, CPE experience is predictive of greater confidence as a counselor in the parish while other seminary course work has not been shown to have the same effect.

2) Experts in psychological assessment should be used by religious bodies to screen persons who are seeking ordination for potential problems. Those with psychological issues, such as persons who draw their identity almost entirely from their work, those with personality disorders (e.g., narcissistic, dependent, anti-social), or addictive personalities need to be identified early in the process because they are particularly vulnerable to self-destructive and impulsive behaviors such as sexual misconduct. Candidates for ordination with psychological problems should be required to enter psychotherapy to assess whether their issues can be resolved sufficiently to continue the candidacy process.

3) Once a clergyperson is serving in ordained ministry, arrangements should be made to provide professional consultations or supervision for all those who do pastoral counseling. Such clinical assistance should not be seen as professionally negative but as a normal part of the ministry of pas-

⁵⁷Seat, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁸N. Gartrell, J. Herman, S. Olarte, M. Feldstein, and R. Localio, "Reporting Practices of Psychiatrists who Knew of Sexual Misconduct by Colleagues," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 1987, Vol. 57, No. 2, pp. 287-295.

⁵⁹J. P. Wincze, J. Richards, J. Parsons, and S. Bailey, "A Comparative Survey of Therapist Sexual Misconduct Between an American State and an Australian State," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 1996, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 289-294.

⁶⁰Orthner, *op. cit.*

toral counseling. Furthermore, it is crucial that this assistance be adequately funded.^{61, 62}

4) Research indicates that there is a great need for clergy to have continuing education in pastoral counseling,⁶³ especially since only 24% of clergy feel they received enough information from their seminary education to prepare them to provide it.⁶⁴ Without such continuing education, clergy confidence as a counselor will not improve with years of experience as it does in all other areas of ministry including preaching, teaching, and administration.⁶⁵

5) Researchers emphasize the importance of adequate self-care on the part of pastors, including making a priority of their own spiritual health. This might include receiving spiritual direction from a trusted confessor or mentor and having a disciplined spiritual life.⁶⁶ A clergyperson's commitment to personal and professional health would include the important tasks of tending to one's own self-care and intimacy needs.⁶⁷ In that vein, Muse⁶⁸ suggests that ministers consider treating themselves to therapy and joining a support group in which there is a satisfying depth of intimacy.

6) Clergy families may be affected by the pressures placed upon them, and many need pastoral counseling and other forms of interpersonal support. We endorse the position of the 85% of surveyed pastors who believe that religious bodies should provide opportunities for clergy and their families to receive private, confidential, low cost counseling.⁶⁹ In addition, churches can help parishioners understand the problems faced by the clergy family through educational programs promoted by their judicatories. Families of pastors who experience frequent relocation indicate that they could use several services that are often unavailable, such as spouse employment assistance, crisis phone numbers, child adjustment services, and help with rebuilding support networks.⁷⁰ Denominations need to carefully reappraise policies that affect the morale of clergy families, such as frequent relocation and low salaries.

7) Leadership can be provided at the denominational and/or regional levels to address the problem of clergy sexual misconduct. This includes taking the lead in recommending reasonable workloads, insuring that clear job descriptions are established, and providing opportunities for collegial contact.⁷¹ Additionally, guidelines for counseling the same sex and the opposite sex can be formulated,⁷² as well as written policies regarding sexual misconduct by clergy.⁷³

8) It is vital that pastors know the limits of their expertise and then be able and willing to refer to other professionals.⁷⁴ They should also be trained in the areas of professional ethics and in the psychological con-

⁶¹Seat, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁶²Orthner, *op. cit.*

⁶³Orthner, *op. cit.*

⁶⁴Muse, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵Vogelsang, *op. cit.*

⁶⁶Muse, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷Orthner, *op. cit.*

⁶⁸Morris and Blanton, *op. cit.*

⁶⁹Vogelsang, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰Seat, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁷¹Francis and Turner, *op. cit.*

⁷²Weaver, *op. cit.*

cepts of transference and countertransference, without which clergy may be blind to some of the inherent hazards in the counseling process.⁷⁵

9) Quality research must continue to be conducted on pastors, their families, and clergy morale. There must be studies on the needs of spouses and children of pastors, giving special emphasis to young clergy and those who serve in rural areas. More research on the positive aspects of ministry is needed in order to better understand how to enhance its rewards and decrease unnecessary hardships. There is evidence that large numbers of well-trained clergy are leaving the ministry at a great cost, financial and otherwise, to the religious community.⁷⁶ In addition there are few young clergy to replace the ones who leave.⁷⁷ The Alban Institute recently found that mainline Protestant clergy younger than age thirty-five are scarce—with only 7% of United Methodist, 6% of Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 4% of United Church of Christ, 7% of Presbyterian, and 4% of Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. clergy under that age. More research is needed to find out why so few of the next generation are becoming clergy and what can be done to improve the situation. ✠

⁷⁵Seat, *et al.*, *op. cit.*

⁷⁶J. Wall, "Taking the Measure of UMC Clergy," *The Christian Century*, 1996, Vol. 113, No. 25, pp. 807-808.

⁷⁷M. Marty, "Young Clergy: Where Are They?" *Sightings*, jmooore@midway.uchicago.edu, 3/26/01.