STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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Silent sufferers: Female clergy sexual abuse

Cutting across race, class, occupational status, and sexual orientation, most sufferers of clergy sexual abuse are thought to be women. by Wanda Lott Collins

Deep green impact: The church caring for the environment

Is your church ready to be called into accountability as stewards of God’s good creation? by Tri Robinson

Finding a home in the immigrant church

More than a place to worship, the immigrant church provides a network of support and community. by Kretcha Roldan-Rodriguez

A Faith Practices Scale

What if a simple tool could help your congregational members deepen their faith practices? by Michael E. Sherr, James Stamey and Diana R. Garland

Regular Departments:

2 Editor’s Note Jon Singletary
Faith in Action
4 Stories of Hope for Families Heidi Unruh
New Life for the Urban Church Sterling Severns
21 Hear My Plea Photo by Diane Walker
22 A Confession of Faith Michael D. Sciretti, Jr.
26 Everyday Leaders in Reconciliation Chris Rice & Emmanuel Katongole
Sunset Photo & poem by Diane Walker
42 Making Room for the Sacred at Table Rick Bennett
45 Thin Air Vicki M. Kabat
46 Waiting for ‘Real Life’ to Begin Kayla McClurg
48 Books and Resources
56 This Too Shall Pass Vicki M. Kabat

The Journal of Family and Community Ministries is a resource for the heart, head and soul, committed to helping congregations and religiously affiliated organizations to be the hands and feet of God. Through the journal, the Center for Family and Community Ministries seeks to provide resources for family and community that foster creativity, promote critical thinking and inspire contemplation.
In February a year of planning came to fruition as the School of Social Work, Truett Theological Seminary and the Leadership Network offered our conference for church-related ministries. Participants offered great feedback and appreciation for our content and our lineup of speakers that included Lynne Hybels, Eric Swanson, Rick Rusaw, Amy Sherman, Dennis Myers and two journal staff, Diana Garland and Heidi Unruh. (Diana has served as editor and now senior editor, and Heidi joins us in this issue as editor of the Faith in Action section.)

With a name like “The Next Big Idea,” we knew we had a lot to live up to! The event was organized around the theme of transforming ideas into action. We are a university; we are “ideas” people. Yet, we trust that God does transform these ideas into action and we see it in the ministries offered by students, alumni, friends and colleagues. Our theme can be slightly adjusted for the church; we are equally interested in transforming faith into action.

Eric was the first to speak and highlight this connection. He really talked about the transformation of churches and communities where deep faith and vast ideas have been put into externally-focused action. Most speakers emphasized similar themes. Ideas, faith, our lives, our churches, our cities—all must be transformed as we seek to put into action the love that God first offered to us.

The next big idea can be no larger or more significant than the core commands of love that are central to the Christian faith—loving God and loving our neighbor. We closed the conference with a reminder that the next big idea is really as old as God’s love expressed in all of creation, as the prophet’s commitment to justice and mercy, as the gospel message of Christ’s grace and compassion, and yet as new and fresh as the calling that Christ offers us each day to follow him wherever he leads.

Empowering us to heed Jesus’ call often takes the kind of encouragement many of us heard in this event. The attitude of worship that Ryan Richardson combined with the word of God the speakers brought to us served as a reminder that our love is meager in light of the love God first offered us, but meaningful in light of the needs of our neighbors. However, even when we offer the first steps of a faithful response, and even when we know Christ will be faithful despite our meager efforts, we can’t help but realize that there is another side to engaging in ministries that really makes a difference in the lives of neighbors we love.
This other side asks us to consider the same kind of preparation for community ministry that we offer for pastoral ministry. The prayers and preparation look and sound different, but the skills required for community transformation do take time and energy to develop. Just as a preacher engages in prayer and study and writes several iterations before a sermon is ready for delivery, community and family ministers must understand family and social systems and human development and behavior in learning how to deliver service that can be effective. There are relevant theories of ministry and more and more research on what actually works, and why, is being offered – here in our journal and in books and presentations that share effective models and best practices.

It takes time to understand the complex lives and experiences of some of our neighbors and while the call to love sounds simple, the responses that overcome cycles of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, abuse, addiction, and mental illness only come with much prayer and preparation. I was with a friend from church this week who went back to school last year to become certified to teach middle school. She felt called to teach in inner-city schools as a part of her response to how God is calling her to service through the lives of the children in our community and in light of some of her own experiences as a child. Halfway through this first year of teaching, she told me she already feels “chewed up and spit out.” She’s applying for positions in schools where she’ll have support from colleagues and administrators, and more in common with the children. Perhaps her calling is to teach children in a different setting, but equipping for service in situations of poverty does not just come naturally. It takes time, energy, research, and resources. It takes prayer and it takes preparation.

To see lives transformed through the kinds of action that can be sustained takes big faith and it takes big ideas. Even as an academic I am leery of some of the ways we present our big ideas. Oftentimes our statistics and our methods make finding the relevant information and ideas a daunting task. However, our journal is but one example of a growing trend to transform ideas into action, to make research relevant.

We hope that if you made it to our conference, you left feeling a little more prepared (and prayed up) than when you arrived. We hope that as you read through these pages, you find the kinds of ideas that might contribute to the transformative ministries you are engaged in. And, we hope you’ll let us know how we’re doing.

At the end of our conference, after singing “Wherever he leads I’ll go,” an emotional Kay Warren reminded us of the simplicity of following Jesus while also suggesting that our faithful response must engage in the everyday challenges of fostering partnerships with local leaders, listening to the genuine needs of our neighbors, and offering well-planned ministries that are able to truly make a difference. Our purpose in the Journal for Family and Community Ministries is to encourage each of these things.

We hope the prayers and meditations this month nurture your sense of calling. Michael Sciretti continues to bring us insightful resources for contemplation and spiritual formation as we walk the inner journey of preparation for ministry.

The research articles from Wanda Lott Collins, Michael Sherr, Diana Garland, and James Stamey as well as the contributions by Heidi Unruh, Sterling Severns, and Kretcha Roldan-Rodriguez all point to examples for transforming ideas into action.

May these pages offer you next steps in prayer and preparation as you practice Jesus’ commands to love God and your neighbors. And, may our faith and all our ideas be truly transformed into actions used for the sake of God’s reign in our world.

View videos of the main presentations and media stories at: www.baylor.edu/bigidea
In the face of rising poverty, one way churches can have a strategic impact on their communities is by strengthening and supporting families. As financial stress is a main contributor to family instability and marital dissolution, addressing the practical needs of families in crisis reinforces relational bonds and contributes to the healthy development of children. Ministries become even more meaningful when churches go beyond aid to offer friendship – when a struggling family makes a lasting connection with someone with a personal interest in helping them reach for “a future with hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). These three examples of church-based family ministries come from the “stories of hope” in The Salt & Light Guidebook, a resource manual for Christians in the Knoxville, TN, area who take seriously the mandate to “seek the welfare of the city” (Jeremiah 29:7).

FAMILY PROMISE: HOSPITALITY FOR THE HOMELESS

Amy Davis

Homeless shelters typically conjure up images of institutional-sized rooms, rows of cots, and cafeteria-style meals. Knoxville has a few of these places, and hundreds of men, women, and children gratefully receive their services every night. But Family Promise of Knoxville (www.famlypromiseknoxville.org) is thinking in smaller numbers. It purposefully keeps its case load low – only four families – so that they can offer guests the personal attention they so critically need.

Family Promise is part of the national Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) model, which organizes church-based temporary housing, meals, and assistance for homeless individuals and families. The Knoxville network of 12 host congregations and 17 supporting congregations shares
the responsibility for caring for the families and providing volunteers, as well as managing meals and shelter.

What makes Family Promise uniquely effective is that it brings together a circle of existing church resources to do what individual churches or volunteers alone could not do. Some churches in the network set up temporary bedrooms in their building; others bring food; others supply people to stay overnight with the residents. Executive Director Joyce Shoudy says, “Everyone, anyone, can do just one little piece."

A key to the program’s success is how volunteers serve as the welcoming front door for the families, who typically stay in the network for up to three months as they save up for more permanent housing. Joyce helps families prioritize their most pressing needs—employment, housing, day care, health services—and walks with them on the path to self-sufficiency.

But overcoming homelessness is not just about finding a place to live. Often it is also about overcoming the personal challenges of low self-esteem and lack of hope. Volunteers not only provide tangible assistance; they offer a listening ear, cheer leading, and prayer. They encourage and guide participants through the maze-like world of social services.

One notable success is Family Promise’s own van driver, Mike, who graduated from the program in November 2006. Once a long distance trucker, he’s now a single dad raising his 18-year-old daughter, Kylie. Kylie has been disabled since a stroke at age 3, and she cannot be left alone because of recurrent seizures. But despite these difficulties, this family of two is giving back. Mike drives the van each morning, picking up guests at the host facility and taking them to the day center, and Kylie is his copilot. Because both Mike and Kylie have “been there,” they can serve as mentors, advocates, and guides for the families who ride along with them daily.

“We must think in terms of impact on a community, not raw numbers,” says Shoudy. Through Family Promise, many different congregations are working together to make a deep impact. The lives they touch may be only a drop in Knoxville’s homeless population, but they are forever changed.

HEALING HEARTS: A NEW CHURCH FAMILY, A NEW FUTURE
Robert Finley

Ulana and her little son share an apartment in Knoxville. She has a good job and money in the bank, and her main goal is providing a better life for her son. Her future might not look so hopeful, had it not been for Healing Hearts.

Originally from the Seattle area, Ulana became homeless when she moved east to Pennsylvania. “A family at a church there took me in. I wasn’t married, and when I got pregnant, my church shunned me.”

A man at a different church put Ulana in touch with Veta Sprinkle, member of Farragut Church of Christ in Knoxville. Veta told her, “We’ve got a ministry called Healing Hearts. The ministry has an apartment, and you can come stay there.” So Ulana got on a bus to Knoxville.

Toni Garland met Ulana at the bus station – Ulana’s introduction to what would become her new family.

When Ulana’s son Aaron was born, Toni Garland was her doula. “This church opened its heart to us,” Ulana reflects. “They helped with the baby, rocked him to sleep. They helped us to get furniture, diapers, and wipes. They want to see single moms succeed.”

At first, Ulana shared the three-bedroom apartment with other single moms, who became close friends. People in Ulana’s church family helped her find a job in sales and customer service, paying much better than minimum wage. Ulana opened a savings account for the first time. The church also helped her and Aaron get

“Everyone, anyone, can do just one little piece.”
into an income-based subsidized apartment, meaning Ulana’s rent will not rise above a certain percentage of her income. They helped her find low-cost health insurance and access to government services.

This support allows Ulana to focus on being a good mom. “It’s hard being a single parent, but you can’t give up. It’s about Aaron, about being a family. He motivates me to get up out of bed and go to work. I want to be a positive influence on him. I want him to see me keep going, not quitting on him.”

Toni has become a second mom to Ulana, godmother to Aaron. If you look for Ulana and Aaron on Christmas and Thanksgiving, you’ll find them at Toni’s. “My church is welcoming, with constant support, constant prayer. It became home very quickly. This family, this church, has molded my life.”

MINISTERING TO THE WOMAN AT THE WELL
Nancy Wahler

The police left the hospital room. Kim Jaggers choked back tears while watching her youngest son’s chest rise and fall. He’d been struggling to survive since his premature birth a year ago, and now his father was gone. Someone brought her other son to her. Her mind was fuzzy from a sedative when he looked into her eyes and asked, “Where’s Daddy?”

The world seemed to stop. How could she explain suicide to a three-year-old? She told him simply, “Daddy is dead.”

Pulling his little body to her as he sobbed, she prayed and ached for the strong arms that were supposed to wrap around her. Instead, God used her church, First Baptist Concord in Knoxville, to wrap them in love. Diapers appeared on her doorstep, clothing was donated, cards with justtherightscripture arrived when she needed them. The church even finished her half-built home.

Through the turbulence of tragedy, Kim found an anchor in the Goid who is “a father to the fatherless” (Psalm 68:5). But for many single mothers Jesus’ love is a message that gets lost in piles of laundry and mounting debts. It’s hard to conceptualize a loving heavenly father when all the men in your life have abused and abandoned you. Kim eventually remarried and regained stability, but she felt the call to use her experiences to serve others with similar stories of pain and loneliness. She launched an outreach to single moms at her church called The Well (www.fbconcord.org/thewell).

On Friday nights once a month, a diverse group of single mothers gathers for a meal, fellowship, and spiritual nourishment. While volunteers lead the children in an activity, Kim leads the women in Bible study and discussion. “The Well is important to me because everyone in that room understands what I go through on a daily basis of trying to be both mother and father to my daughter,” affirms one participant. “If I am struggling with something, chances are someone has already gone through the same thing.”

Kim helps women discover how Scripture serves as a practical guide to life. The focus is not on what has gone wrong before, but on how
single moms can daily put God at the center of their household and receive strength and encouragement to overcome personal challenges. The Well also offers financial and personal counseling as well as car care. Regardless of whether they are church attenders, participants have a church safety net when they need it. One participant describes how coming to The Well “refreshes her spirit,” true to its metaphorical name. “Before coming to The Well,” says another mom, “my heart had been ripped out and stomped on. Now I know, no matter what, God is with us.”

Food for the Journey: a resource for your church

Biblical reference:
Isaiah 58:1, 6-7

Personal application:
It was my junior year of high school. We were on our big class trip to Washington, DC, to tour museums and visit important historic sites. One stop was at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. It was a cold morning, and we had waited for hours to enter the museum, but that cold was nothing compared to the chills I experienced in seeing the true horror of the Holocaust.

There are so many images and words from that day that are imprinted on my heart, such as these words from Pastor Martin Niemoller:
First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was none left to speak for me.

Although I did not know yet about “advocacy,” this is when I first realized the importance of speaking up for others. Pastor Niemoller’s words helped me see that sometimes another person or group of people need someone to stand up and fight for them. It’s easy to say to myself, “It’s none of my business,” but the truth is that it sometimes takes a person from outside the situation to raise awareness. It takes someone outside the situation to speak up for those who are suffering because their voices are being ignored.

Prayer:
Lord, help us to speak and act with wisdom, to be a voice for those whose voice is not heard, to stand up for those who are oppressed, to defend the rights of the poor and the hurting. Help us to be open-handed rather than tight-fisted and to embrace those around us with the same love with which you welcome us.
(Adapted from Proverbs 31:8-9, 20)

— by Sam Oakley, MSW 2007/MDiv 2008, associate director for the Center for Family and Community Ministries

Food for the Journey is one of several free resources available in the Walking Alongside curriculum prepared by the Center for Family and Community Ministries. Find more at: www.baylor.edu/cfcm

ENDNOTES

Family and Community Ministries | 7
he turned out the light in the hallway and wondered, “Where did they all go?” We both knew the answer to her question. The Education Building, once filled with the laughter of children, sits virtually empty. The devastating flight from our cities in the 1960s and ’70s wreaked havoc on our urban congregations. Desegregation of the public school system, crime and disillusionment with organized religion are all documented factors in the decline of the urban church.

It wasn’t always this way. The end of WWII served as a catalyst for unprecedented growth. New economic and educational opportunities, and the arrival of all those baby boomers, field an optimistic chapter in the American story. Likewise, the church thrived and, in many ways, mirrored the neighborhoods in which they were located. Sunday school, discipleship training and music and mission programs played key roles in the development of family life. Many of our churches in urban centers built large structure to embrace record growth and reap the benefits of new classrooms, larger sanctuaries and multiple corridors. Many of us now find ourselves wandering down those same hallways wondering, “What in the world have we gotten ourselves into?”

BLESSING AND CURSE

The curse of this impractical physical space is a lack of financial resources, upkeep and management. The blessing is the story the space has to tell and the potential it still possesses. Many downtown churches folded, merge or moved to the suburbs. The
result of these decisions seeded new opportunities for now-thriving ministries. A handful of church families literally held their ground and served faithfully through four decades of decline. The longevity of ministry and resulting stories are true testaments to God’s guidance amidst a great season of change.

OLD SPACES, NEW FACES

Simply state, many of us in urban churches are growing again. The renewal of our cities marks a new day as socioeconomic and racial diversity abound. People are moving back into the city, and they are hungry for authentic community and meaningful relationships. The church stands ready to embrace a new form of urbanism.

We need to prepare ourselves for the resurgence of the downtown church. Are we ready to receive our neighbors? Are we willing to reframe the conversation and understanding of facility use in our churches? Will our immediate family, those persons active in weekly worship and Bible study, seek opportunities to connect with what is becoming our extended family?

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Our neighbors first see our buildings as large fortresses with beautiful sanctuaries, long corridors and a myriad of classrooms. The second impression is the quality of hospitality we offer to those willing to venture inside. We’ve begun to figure out what to do with all of the space. Many of us already have assumed the role of host with numerous community organizations. Childcare centers, nonprofit offices, support groups, musical ensembles and teachers, food pantries, clothes closets, tutors, team sports, counselors, and many others have brought life back into our once-quiet corners. We are learning to share God’s house with a new generation of community servants.

Unfortunately, there tends to be a disconnect between these individuals and the church at large. Misunderstanding occurs when messes are made, “rent” is late or furniture is rearranged. Resentment sets in, particularly with childcare center families, when persons using the facility on weekdays don’t show up on Sundays. Renewal and relationships begin with the quality of our hospitality. Our motives should not center on growth but on our mission to serve in Christian love. God is breathing life into the familiar places in our lives and unfamiliar persons are coming through the doors. I urge the church to embrace them and find ways to make them feel at home.

HOSPITALITY

You’d be amazed at what can be accomplished when people take the time to learn one another’s names, serve one another and find creative ways to work together. For example:

- The Boy Scout troop is sponsoring a blanket drive in January; perhaps we should ask everyone in the church to join in?
- The secretary in the office upstairs just lost her father; we could put her on the prayer list and ask someone to send a card.
- The children in the childcare center have been working on some art projects related to Africa; perhaps we could use some of the images to help promote international missions next Christmas?
- Wouldn’t it be nice if some of our members crocheted baby blankets and a church member delivered them to the new family whose child is in the childcare center?
- How about providing some cookies and punch for the Divorce Recovery Group as it concludes its last meeting?

Our large structures initially were built to embrace unprecedented growth. What if God has something more than numerical growth in mind? What if the purpose of the space is changing along with the neighborhood in which it is located? I pray our churches will become places where strangers become family and new partnerships are forged to serve. I thank God we have the opportunity to lead by example.
Cutting across race, class, occupational status, and sexual orientation, most sufferers of clergy sexual abuse are thought to be women, though children and men also may be targets of sexual abuse (Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1992; Frame, 1996). Clergy misconduct can range from verbal harassment to violent rape. When clergy betray their office of trust, their inappropriate behavior creates anguish, rage, shame, and powerlessness for both the church and the victim. In such instances, churches are traumatized and victims feel betrayed and confused (Fortune, 1989; Hopkins & Laaser, 1995; Lebacqz & Barton, 1991; Poling, 1991). It is not uncommon for churches to deny reports of clergy misconduct and blame the victim (Kennedy, 2003; Lind, 2005). Such denial is no less damaging, spiritually and emotionally, when the victim is female clergy. Sentilles (2008) states, “Women endure sexual harassment, individual discrimination, and systemic discrimination on a regular basis. And yet, when asked, most congregants don’t think sexism is a problem in the church” (p.17).

Although the fear of harassment is a constant reality for female clergy (Lind, 2005) there is a paucity of empirical data concerning sexual misconduct, especially as it relates to sexual harassment within the church (Birchard, 2000; Frame, 1996). Lind (2005) states, “Female pastors are concerned about protecting themselves from unwelcomed approaches. Male pastors are concerned about protecting themselves against unfair allegations” (p. 77). Although there is a glaring gap in the literature, Seat, Trent, and Kim (1993), show in their research that 76.5% of surveyed clergy admitted having knowl-
edge of a minister who had engaged in sexual intercourse with a person affiliated with his church. In another report, Birchard (2000) explored the cause of clergy sexual misconduct in a study that examined the behavior of men with adult women. The data showed that the absence of awareness training was the single most important factor in the causation of misconduct. However, other factors such as ambiguity of boundaries that come with the role, the neediness of the cleric, and the inattentiveness of the organizational structure also played major roles.

This article is intended to increase understanding and address how professional helpers (e.g., members of the clergy, crime victim/witness protection programs, licensed mental health professionals or counselors, and social workers) can respond to sexual harassment complaints from female clergy and to discuss preventative strategies that can protect church members from its damaging effects.

CASE VIGNETTE

Consider Kendra’s story that was shared during a personal interview. Although personal details have been changed to protect her identity, her narrative illustrates this prevalent problem within ministerial relationships.

Kendra is the fictitious name of a 55-year-old mother of five who acknowledged her calling to preach at 46 years of age. Similar to others, she wrestled with the inner call to serve in ministry. Finally her sense of purpose and growing commitment led her to enroll in seminary and complete a Master’s of Divinity degree. While she was at seminary she served an urban congregation of 200 people with the male senior pastor and one male associate. At first she was impressed and grateful that the senior pastor gave her so much personal attention and taught her basic day-to-day duties that were not taught in seminary.

The suave salt-and-pepper-haired senior pastor was married with one adult child living away from home. His wife stayed home to manage the household. Often working late hours or during times when the church was barely occupied, Kendra noticed the seemingly insignificant comments he made related to her physical appearance. He made comments about her hair or the gentle, pleasing scent of her perfume. She dismissed it as flattery. She recalled how he would sit or stand closer than she considered appropriate when showing her documents or during conversations, making her uncomfortable. Once when she shifted her position to put more physical distance between them, he inquired if something was wrong. She replied, “Not really.” Gradually he gave her admiring glances when others were not around or he would seek her out in her small office to talk about the stagnation in his marriage. Once he brushed against her. Again she dismissed any discussion relative to boundary violation and his too-familiar mannerisms. She convinced herself that if she avoided him, he would get the message and give her more physical space and she could still work within the church.

Things changed when the pastor informed her that his wife was out of town and asked if she would stop by his home for dinner and dessert. His emphasis on Dessert was a strong clue that he did not mean Jell-O. Kendra finally confronted the pastor about his implication that she would become romantically involved with him. Rather than apologize, he shamed her and told her how ungrateful she was for all he was doing for her. From this point on she increased her avoidance of him but felt guilty and alone. She felt that there was no one she could tell. The pastor was very persuasive and had a likeable personality. He could convince people that she was the problem, which would mean that she would probably be asked by the congregation...
to leave. Within a year, Kendra left the church presuming that the congregation would merely dismiss her complaint and deny her allegations without direct proof. She reasoned that the ongoing stress of trying to prove her complaint was too much to endure.

For Kendra the trust that she had placed in the senior pastor over a period of two years was shattered. She had a fervent desire to preach and had invested in seminary education to honor and prepare for the sacred calling of God. Likewise, the congregation had evaluated and affirmed her calling with joy. How does she ignore the call for service and spiritual ministry in her life? What church would accept her if the senior pastor disparaged her name and reputation? How does she effectively respond to the pastor’s pressure and the fact that sexual harassment would put her ministry at risk? Kendra felt trapped because she had less social power, while he had wisdom, power, position, and the heart and trust of the people.

THE IMPACT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment can take many forms, including requests for sexual favors, unwelcome sexual advances, or other conduct of a physical, verbal or visual nature that is unwelcome and offensive. It can be a supervisor who requires sexual activity in order to keep a job or receive a promotion. It may come from co-workers who create a hostile working environment by making suggestive or demeaning comments; displaying sexual objects or pictures; telling dirty jokes; or touching, patting, or pinching (New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Women, 1997). Lind (2005) states that sexual harassment is more about power than about sex and it can also take the form of manipulation of a situation that threatens the integrity of the other person. In the church, it is primarily experienced by women, but not exclusively (p.77). Another form of sexual harassment is quid pro quo (“this for that”) in which someone with power over another person offers some kind of advantage in exchange for sexual favors (Friberg & Laaser, 1998, p. 60).

According to the National Women Law Center (2000) sexual harassment is widespread and affects women in every workplace setting and at every level of employment. No occupation is immune from sexual harassment, but the incidence of harassment is higher in workplaces that have traditionally excluded women. Very few harassed women, only 5% to 15%, formally report problems of harassment. The report indicates that women are sometimes reluctant to make allegations of sexual harassment for a number of reasons. Their reluctance includes fear of losing their jobs or otherwise damaging their careers, fear of not being believed, the belief that nothing can or will be done about the harassment, and embarrassment or shame at being harassed (Garland, 2006; Lind, 2005).

Sexual harassment often has a serious and negative impact on women’s physical and emotional health; the more severe the harassment, the more severe the impact. The reactions frequently reported by women include anxiety, depression, sleep disturbance, weight loss or gain, loss of appetite, and headaches (Frame, 1996; National Women Law Center, 2000). Socially, people may distance themselves from a complainant because they don’t want to get involved or don’t understand what she is experiencing.

Every clergy or minister is a symbol of religious authority. By virtue of the pastoral office, the minister interprets religious truth, the meaning of life, the way of faith, and even the reality of God (Chibnall, Wolf, & Duckro, 1998; Poling, 2005; Robinson, 2004). Add to that status the power of the pastor’s presence through ministry, and the special influence a minister holds among his or her congregation. In addition, female clergy supervised by senior male clergy may develop a special trust that can lead to openness and vulnerability. Feeling bonds of trust and affirmation, female clergy may bring the vulnerable, wounded, and intimate sides of themselves into the relationship, seeking acceptance, emotional support, and a role model. When the male clergy exploits his privileged position for personal sexual satisfac-
tion, he violates a sacred trust that is contrary to Christian morals, doctrine, and canon laws. Because of the respect and even reverence the position carries, there is an imbalance of power and hence a vulnerability inherent in the ministerial relationship (Chibnall, Wolf, & Duckro, 1998; Poling, 2005; Robinson, 2004). In these circumstances, this imbalance of power makes it the responsibility of the church leader to maintain appropriate emotional and sexual boundaries with colleagues. Once violated, the female clergy may feel deep shame or self-condemnation. She may be afraid others will not believe her or fear being blamed by church officials or members. The sad consequence is that many times the female clergy can experience a crisis of faith and even leave the Church altogether, believing that neither God nor the body of Christ was present in her suffering (Francis & Turner, 1995). Sexual harassment may affect one’s image of God, and one’s relationship to God (Chibnall, Wolf, & Duckro, 1998).

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Sexual misconduct is a troubling matter for communities and especially congregations. When it occurs among female clergy who have responded to a sacred call, it represents a distortion of power and trust. Sadly, sexual misconduct damages the morale of the entire church body. However, churches show wisdom when they take action to address the brokenness and pain experienced by the church and female clergy. The following is not an exhaustive list of prevention strategies but it is offered as a guide to assist churches in reducing incidences of female sexual harassment.

1. Increase Awareness Training – Because of differences in Biblical interpretation, many churches do not recognize or advocate for women in ministerial roles as God’s spiritual leaders. Therefore, in their role as God’s spiritual authority, male clergy usually have the benefit of a significant power differential with respect to female clergy (Birchard, 2000; Kennedy, 2003). Male clergy should receive ongoing awareness training regarding this imbalance and be instructed in behaviors that may violate or blur the boundaries of a professional relationship. Awareness training can also benefit male clergy regarding ways to effectively address their emotional, physical, and personal needs related to ministry. For example, when male clergy encounter personal problems (i.e., marital, loneliness, or neediness), requesting help from professional psychotherapists or trusted mentors would involve less risk than seeking out female clergy as sympathizers. Awareness training could increase sensitivity about male power issues, significantly minimize the danger of boundary violations, and promote actions and behaviors that are considered safe, acceptable, and respectful.

2. Require Specialized Ministerial Training in Counseling – Similar to other professionals whose duties may include the need to counsel others, ministers also struggle with receiving specialized training and demonstrating expertise in counseling techniques within the scope of ministry. Even though male clergy receive training in theology, many are not equipped to deal with diverse and complex
human problems and needs (Kennedy, 2003). Likewise, many may not have received clinical supervision in counseling, training in transference (unresolved feelings, conflicts, and dependencies of the client onto the therapist/counselor) and counter-transference (the therapist/counselor’s unresolved feelings, conflicts, and dependencies onto the client) issues (Kennedy, 2003), or instruction relative to standards for professional ethics (Frame, 1996). Such training would address the risks regarding inappropriate sexual situations, the inherent hazards of the therapy process, maintaining appropriate boundaries (Birchard, 2000; Lind, 2005), and the ethics of professional behaviors.

The development of such training requirements could help senior clergy in their leadership roles to show care and warmth and to demonstrate competency and trustworthiness when female clergy seek their counsel. Without clinical training or expertise, churches should recognize that females seeking help can be in a vulnerable position. For this reason, guidelines should be adopted to assist male clergy who may be called upon to help female clergy needing assistance to cope with a personal or professional crisis. However, the responsibility for not breaching the pastoral bond or the balance of power within the pastoral relationship lies solely with male clergy.

3. Create Written Guidelines and Disciplinary Measures – Churches can benefit from clear ethical codes, polices, and procedures regarding what constitutes sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation. These guidelines and clearly stated disciplinary measures regarding clergy abuse or misconduct will assist congregations in providing a safety net for the male pastor and those under his leadership. Kennedy (2003) states, “Every denomination should have policies and a complaints procedure in place. Discipline committees should be composed of public members experienced in sexual offences and cases of professional abuse. There should be victim support systems in place, including tracking systems to follow up on both victims and offenders” (p. 235). This step could ensure that safeguards are in place to pursue pastoral and congregational accountability and the avoidance of colluding in, covering up, or ignoring sexual harassment or abuse.

4. Prevention, Education, and Intervention Training for the Congregation – Prevention, education, and intervention training accessed through conferences and in-house programs should be provided to members and various leaders within the church on a regular basis. It is not an uncommon practice for congregations to “blame the victim” when male clergy are guilty of inappropriate sexual misconduct. Regrettably, the church usually maintains a state of denial regarding sexual misconduct and male leaders will frequently continue to hold prominent positions within the church while the victimized female experiences shame and trauma. Training should be mandatory within all levels of the church so congregants can help both male and female clergy be accountable and become skilled in developing and assessing policies and complaints. Additionally, the church can seek opportunities to share its advocacy efforts with others in the community and model ways to successfully respond to complaints, break the continuum of brokenness, and advocate for change in order to help the entire church membership to heal.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE THE HEALING PROCESS

Female clergy need assistance dealing with sexual harassment to minimize feelings of guilt, helplessness, frustration, and anger and to advance the healing process. As they reach out to professional helpers for counsel-
When churches deny the violation of clergy sexual contact they support the perpetrator rather than the victim.

1. Encourage the Harassed Clergy to Acknowledge the Violation. People who experience sexual harassment often feel intimidated, embarrassed, or humiliated. They also may be fearful of repercussions if they speak up. Fear of ridicule and a sense of hopelessness about the dilemma may cause them to keep the problem concealed. In addition, some women affected may feel that the situation is a “private” one and therefore they may be reluctant to bring it to the attention of those who can help. Telling someone else about the experience is a way of getting help rather than keeping it hidden inside. Confiding in someone trustworthy, whether it is another clergy person, a close family member, a good friend, or a professional helper, is a step toward healing and doing something about the issue. Ultimately, it is imperative for her to realize that her feelings are not abnormal and that there are professionals who can provide the proper assistance to help her emotionally and psychologically with her pain. Fortune (1989), one of the foremost experts on clergy sexual misconduct states, “When victims can give voice to their specific experiences of violation, the secret loses its potency” (p. 114).

2. Advise the Survivor to Investigate Available Options Within and Outside the Church. To respond to the consequences of injustice, the victim must explore and weigh the available options inside the religious system as well as outside the bounds of the denomination or church. Depending on the extent and duration of the harassment, the clergy should examine her choices to determine if she will file a complaint, which may result in continued sexual harassment, individual discrimination, or systemic discrimination (Garland 2006). Other options include asking the harasser to publicly apologize, seeking financial and medical damages through the legal system, or pursuing a form of redress that would include restitution to compensate her for counseling. Should she strive for prompt and remedial action, she may be successful in compelling the church or denominational body to formally monitor the harasser and to insist that he participate in training and qualified counseling to ensure that he understands the damage and inappropriateness of his conduct (Garland, 2006).

3. Validate the Survivor’s Pain and Need to Gain Control by Taking Back Her Power. Validating the hurt and anger and giving voice to the impact of the sexual harassment experience is another way for female clergy to take charge of her life and to move from a place of shame. When churches deny the violation of clergy sexual contact they support the perpetrator rather than the victim. The survivor should be encouraged to share her story with other survivors (Fortune, 1989; Garland, 2006), re-establish ties with people she may have distanced herself from because of the harassment, and to form relationships with people who will be supportive. Accepting that sexual harassment happened and that she is not to blame helps her to view herself as a survivor. She may also find power in participating in victim support agencies or organizations that focus on sexual harassment issues, advocating for educational programs, sponsoring empowerment seminars for other female clergy, writing articles relative to sexual harassment issues, or lending her financial and spiritual support to individuals and groups that address the problem.

4. Encourage the Survivor’s Desire to Become a Resource to Other Women – De-
pending on the severity and longevity of her trauma, the female clergy may or may not be able to serve as an advocate for other women in ministry. If she can, she can lend her voice and insight to denominational or congregational efforts to draft policies regarding sexual harassment. Many congregations are independent and many denominations lack structures to address this issue, so there may or may not be safeguards in place to monitor or discipline male clergy who misuse their power and authority. When feasible, she may consider reading and providing input relative to proposed sexual harassment policies, accepting invitations to speak at special policy planning meetings, or serving in other capacities that are comfortable and appropriate to her interest in promoting safe environments for female clergy.

5. Teach the Survivor to Embrace the Process of Healing and Recovery. A system that perpetuates ignorance regarding the issues of power, sexuality, countertransference, and professional clergy ethics that is left unchallenged can result in fragmented and unhealed individuals and unhealthy boundaries (Robinson, 2004). To embrace the healing and recovery process survivors should seriously consider finding counselors who have experience working with sexual assault survivors so they can integrate the trauma and return to their previous level of functioning. If in-house congregational counselors are available, survivors of clergy abuse might benefit from individual, group, or support counseling outside of their denominations or congregations in order to minimize the pressure to forgive too quickly and minimize the effects of sexual harassment.

CONCLUSION

Sexual misconduct or sexually inappropriate behavior in the church is troubling and problematic for congregations and female clergy within the ministerial relationship.

Yet, too often faith communities tend to keep quiet about measures to address and prevent sexual harassment. Social workers, pastoral staff, mental health providers, pastors, and other helping professionals have a unique opportunity to provide support for female clergy who may seek counseling or spiritual direction about ways to cope and buffer stress in a male-dominated profession.

Providing care to female clergy may include advocating for prevention education within churches and faith-based conferences, assisting congregations to create safe environments for vulnerable women, establishing protocols for reporting and investigating reports of sexual misbehavior, developing proper training in boundary violation, and identifying community resources that will address intervention and elements of healing following reports of sexual misconduct. Moreover, in regards to female clergy, Frame and Shehan (2004) recommend that professional helpers facilitate groups for female clergy that may can help build self-esteem, buffer isolation and loneliness, and offer a safe haven for survivors dealing with personal and professional issues.

Sadly, the misuse of power and the experience of sexual harassment do occur in houses of faith. Therefore, professional service providers and church leaders are challenged to address the reality of sexual harassment in the church, which entails the violation of trust and the disintegration of a safe working environment.

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People recoil reflexively at the topic of sexual harassment in the church, particularly for those who have never experienced sexual harassment first hand. Surely this can’t and doesn’t happen, we say to ourselves, and most surely it won’t happen in “our” church. Even those who have known it to happen probably have dismissed it as the rare “bad apple” in the pastorate or perhaps a result of the seductive behavior of a woman working closely with an attractive, charismatic male leader. I have heard some male church leaders mutter (though not in print so that I can quote them) that “this” is what you can expect when women are allowed into positions of leadership in the church.

But sexual harassment does happen in our churches and seminaries and church agencies, and when it does, lives are destroyed, marriages are thrown into crisis and often destroyed, and faith in God and in the church is crippled. I have just completed more than 80 interviews with survivors of clergy sexual misconduct, including the primary victims—women and men whose trust in their religious leaders was misused to engage them in sexual relationships—and also spouses and friends whose lives were deeply affected.

The biggest challenge to dealing with this topic is overcoming the denial that it is a problem at all. Sexual harassment doesn’t happen in every congregation, or even in most congregations, so perhaps we can just hope for the best and stay focused on the positive aspects of church life. To deny the possibility of it happening in our church, however, is the very response that deepens the silence and shame of victims when it does occur.

Moreover, “hoping for the best” does not take seriously the brokenness of humanity, not only in the world but also in the church. Christianity is a faith lived in community, not in isolation, and to live in community means to take seriously the ways we can hurt one another as well as build one another up. Jeremiah 6 makes it clear that covering up problems or treating them as superficial when, in fact, they are life threatening calls for God’s judgment (Jeremiah 6: 13-15). Sexual harassment is a life-threatening wound to the body of Christ.

What, then, is a church to do? Collins focuses first on awareness training for clergy and better preparation for the counseling role. She suggests clearly defined guidelines and disciplinary measures. Last, she comes to prevention training and education for congregations. Although these are all appropriate and useful, I would flip the order and the emphasis. First, we must begin with Christian education about sexuality and power dynamics with a much broader brush that focuses on all the places we live as Christians, and within that framework, we can include the church. By doing so, we can avoid that initial recoil that keeps congregations from dealing with this topic. Sexual harassment takes place in workplaces, social gatherings, and schools, as well as churches—very few would deny that. Sexual harassment is not simply a crossing of a personal boundary; it is what Jesus talks
about as the sin of adultery (Matthew 5:27-28). It is looking at another as an object of self-gratification rather than as a human being worthy of respect and self-sacrifice (Garland & Garland, 2007a, 2007b). In a society that emphasizes individualism and self-actualization over community, adultery is a natural outcome. Therefore, sexual harassment is not just the individual behavior of an errant leader; treating others as objects for self-gratification is tolerated and even supported by the values of our culture. Nevertheless, for Christians, using the power we have in relationships to get what we want from others without regard for their well being is abuse of that power. Beginning with the teachings of scripture about how we are to treat one another as sexual beings gives us a much broader framework for understanding sexual harassment wherever we experience it, and especially in the church. In a real community, when people see behavior that makes them uncomfortable or that raises questions, they speak up. It’s like caring enough about a friend to tell them they have spinach stuck in their teeth. People who love one another intervene lovingly in one another’s lives—for the sake of the other, not for their own self-interest.

Instead, let’s consider the broader issues that sexual harassment represents—the distortion of sexuality and power. I would flip the order and the emphasis. First, we must begin with Christian education about sexuality and power dynamics. In a society where “looking out for number one” is a virtue, it becomes natural for people to treat one another as a means to their own ends. Adultery—treating another as a sexual object—is a natural outcome. When adulterizing another—treating another as a sexual object—takes place in a relationship of unequal power, however, it crosses the line, even in our culture. It is abuse to use one’s power to take sexual advantage of the other. These frameworks of adultery and abuse of power give us a much broader framework for understanding sexual harassment wherever we experience it, and especially in the church. Consider a study of sexuality and Christian faith, looking at how Jesus addressed these topics. Look at clips of current movies that conflate sex and power for what they teach us about these aspects of human life.

Second, we need to provide resources to help churches learn how to be real communities. One of the startling findings of our research with survivors is that the sexual misconduct almost always began in a public setting. We heard of pastors who hugged too closely and for too long, who held hands with or kissed female parishioners in front of congregation members, who made sexualized comments—and yet no one questioned the behaviors and comments. Some leaders invited women into the privacy of their offices for “counseling” multiple times a week for months and even years with the full knowledge of other staff members. It isn’t just victims who dismissed the errant leaders’ actions as benign; others around them evidently did so as well. Perhaps others said to themselves, as did the victims, “I’m just being too sensitive.”

We must recognize that our leaders are human beings. They need delivering from evil, especially the evil they can wreak in the lives of others. That deliverance will not

RESOURCES
Many denominations now have policies on sexual harassment and misconduct. Check with your denominational office. Other resources include:
Faith Trust Institute:
www.faithtrustinstitute.org
The Hope of Survivors:
www.thehopeofsurvivors.com
Advocate Web:
www.advocatweb.com
The Nathan Network:
www.nathan-network.org
Tamar’s Voice:
www.tamarsvoice.org
Spiritual Abuse Recovery Resource:
www.spiritualabuse.com
come if we allow people to act in ways that can create such great harm, just because we are embarrassed to speak up. We must learn to love one another more than that. Being a community of faith that holds one another accountable is a topic much broader and more inclusive than leaders’ sexual harassment, yet we must deal with its reality so that we can ensure that congregations truly can be “sanctuary”—safe places—for all of God’s children, including female leaders. Yes, we need to educate our clergy to use their authority compassionately and to understand well the protective nature of professional boundaries.

Educating clergy, however, cannot correct the broader systemic issues of an adulterous society that treats persons like sexual objects, nor can it turn collections of persons into loving communities that look out for one another and intervene lovingly and protectively in one another’s lives. Sexual harassment of female clergy is a horrific problem, but it seems on the surface to be a narrow one; proportionately, there just aren’t that many female clergy to be harassed. When placed in the larger context of how we disciple Christians to deal with sexuality and power dynamics in all the relationships and contexts of their lives, we suddenly realize that, yes, this issue affects every congregation, whether we choose to deal with it or not.

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Diana Garland is dean of the School of Social Work at Baylor University and the founding director of the Center for Family and Community Ministries. She is the author of Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide (InterVarsity Press) and Sacred Stories of Ordinary Families (Jossey Bass). She is currently conducting national research on clergy sexual misconduct with adults.

A Psalm - When God Created Me

O God, it is hard enough to imagine that I actually have a liver, lungs, and a brain inside of me even when I know the science of it all.

How much more difficult to conceive that I have a soul where You have forged a place for You to enliven this body, mind, and spirit that is me.

Forgive my inattention to this marvel from time to time and renew a sense of wonder, much like when as a baby I grabbed my own toes for the first time and was thrilled with the connectedness of me.

Let me see myself as the miracle You do so that I may be free to see my neighbors this way too.

by Angela Dennison
Hear My Plea

They asked Abba Macarius, “How should one pray?”

The old man replied, “There is no need to lose oneself in words. It is enough to spread out the hands and to say, ‘Lord, as thou wilt and as thou knowest best, have mercy.’

If the battle is fierce, say, ‘Help!’

He knows what is suitable for you and he will take pity on you.”

— Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Photo by Diane Walker
A Confession of Faith
Michael D. Sciretti, Jr.

I abandon myself to the one God, the Holy, Loving Mystery,
Beyond all names and rational conception,
The Source and End of all things,
The true Lover of my soul,
The deepest Desire of my heart.

I abandon myself to Jesus, Holy Epiphany of God’s love,
Incarnation of God’s Word, Teacher of God’s Wisdom,
Prophet of God’s passion, Channel of God’s healing,
Guide to the heart of God,
Who by his baptism reveals I am Beloved,
By his life reveals the way to God,
By his death reveals the love of God,
By his resurrection reveals the power of God.

I abandon myself to the Holy Spirit,
The Breath of God filling my being,
The Fire of God purifying my passions,
The Wisdom of God dispelling my illusions,
The Light of God revealing my true self.

I abandon myself to becoming another Christ,
An epiphany of God’s care and concern,
A conduit of God’s truth and wisdom,
manifesting God’s mercy and peace.

I abandon myself to the community of the Holy Epiphany,
The seekers of God who follow the way of Jesus,
Worshipping God together in spirit and truth,
Serving others together in humility and love,
Becoming the eyes, mouth, hands, and feet of Christ in this world.

I abandon myself to God’s reign, the Eternal Now,
Within me and all around me,
where heaven and earth become one,
a state where we taste and see God’s goodness,
accessible to all who are attentive to their heart
and practice metanoia.

I abandon myself to the reality of my mortality,
Trusting that in death, life is transformed, not snatched away,
and that we will return to the Holy, Loving Mystery,
The Source and End of all things,
Who receives us into the light, life,
And love of God for all eternity.
Amen.
As I took the pulpit that morning, there were two conflicting emotions stirring within me—fear and excitement. I have preached many messages on controversial topics, but never one that could be so potentially polarizing to the congregation or detrimental to my position in ministry. However, I was also so excited about the opportunity and the momentum of the moment, I couldn’t wait to see what was going to happen. Hopefully what I had seen in Scripture, heard from God, and read from well-respected Christian leaders from centuries ago was still relevant today. I couldn’t be missing it, could I?

This message had the potential to be quite politically charged. It had everything to do with politics and nothing to do with politics. More than anything, it was about doing the right thing at the right time for both my church and my community. I had to shed my inhibitions and insecurities in order to be obedient to what I felt like the Lord was leading me to share with my church. How would the congregation respond? There was only one way to find out.

As soon as I finished my message I was in for the shock of a lifetime. With my “great” faith, I thought the response could be anywhere from throwing me out on my ear to a tepid reception before a warm embrace. Never could I have imagined what happened next.

Instead of any of my worst or (admittedly limited) greatest expectations coming true, I watched in awe at the end of both services that morning as the congregation rose to their feet and applauded. Over my 25 years in ministry, that has never happened to me. I have received plenty of pats on the back or firm handshakes with an additional “atta
boy” but never a standing ovation. It was in that moment that I knew this was more than a timely message. This was something that our church community on that particular Sunday morning had rediscovered as a responsibility. It wasn’t something that was in conflict with their faith or even their political beliefs. It was shedding light on a responsibility the church not only has, but a responsibility the church has to be leading the nations on this issue.

And the issue? The church’s responsibility to environmental stewardship. Simply put, the church must be diligent to tend the garden God has given us.

In the nearly four years that has transpired since this event, we have witnessed the beauty of what happened when we wove our fledgling Let’s Tend the Garden environmental ministry with other outreach-oriented ministries. Though our initial intent was to do something that was merely good and right in the eyes of the Lord, we never quite realized how the simplicity of such a message could also be a connecting point in personifying the hands and feet of Jesus.

When we started Let’s Tend the Garden, our goal was to equip and mobilize people in our congregation to take a greater lead in caring for the environment within our community. We started a recycling program at church called “Tithe Your Trash” where members could drop off their recycled goods on Sunday mornings if they didn’t have curbside pickup. We also worked with the U.S. Forest Service to help with projects such as campground cleanup, repairing trails, planting trees and GPS trail mapping. Teams flew into the vast Idaho wilderness to remove noxious weeds. The momentum created behind our efforts even earned our church a volunteer award from the U.S. Forest Service.

Over time, we began to see how some of our other ministry outreaches fit into a bigger picture of Let’s Tend the Garden. For example, our benevolence ministry faithfully feeds families each week through our food pantry. Once we started a naturally-grown garden on our church property, it made perfect sense to funnel that fresh produce to our benevolence ministry.

We also partnered with other ministries in the church to hold sustainable living classes. Participants learned how to can food or grow an organic garden.

In an effort to get people to care for the environment, we realized more people needed to experience it in order to develop that deep love for the outdoors. So, we set up family hikes and campground clean ups along with nature walks along the Boise River. Such experiences served a two-fold effort of inspiring people to care for creation as well as spending time together with their family and others in their church community.

We also saw how some of the benefits of recycling could help fund other ministry ventures. When Hurricane Katrina struck the U.S., we parlayed a recycled cell phone drive into money to help pay for volunteers to go on one-week trips to New Orleans for cleanup work. As
a result, we managed to send a team per week to New Orleans for 12 straight weeks.

Any time you are pioneering a ministry, there are plenty of challenges. One of the biggest challenges any ministry faces is engagement. So before we ever announced our new care for this value to the church, we had plenty of opportunities lined up and in place for people to volunteer immediately. That alone helped us build momentum quickly in what otherwise could have been an arduous task. We also faced some rejection from people who couldn’t see past the politics of the environment and thought we were becoming too liberal. But those challenges have been trumped by lives our Let’s Tend the Garden ministry has blessed.

As we have sought to reduce our footprint, we have garnered the respect of the community and broke down barriers to those who have long held the church suspect for their unwillingness to actively engage in caring for the environment. It has opened doors for me to speak on secular college campuses all across the nation without ever watering down the powerful message of redemption in the Gospel. In just a short period of time, we have witnessed how this message has enabled us to embody the Gospel message and empower people to do something about this beautiful world that God created.

Over the last couple of years as we have entered into unsettling times, we have been able to see this message of stewardship not only bring life to our community but also our congregation. Our message on Small Footprint, Big Handprint, How to live simply and love extravagantly made a lasting impact on our people. Families down sized their homes; people got out of debt; individuals reorganized their lives—and it was all in the name of being free to serve others with the heart of Christ when difficult times struck. Well, difficult times are here—and who knows for how long—and our church is prepared to serve a hurting community as a result of understanding how stewardship in all areas of our lives is imperative to making a greater impact.

The moment is right for the church to reverse its wrongs in the area of environmental stewardship. By abandoning our short-sighted thinking and returning long-term vision to the church, Christians have an opportunity to change things. It won’t be easy. Many people from both liberal and conservative camps alike are likely to cast a suspicious eye on such a sudden reversal of position. But if the statistics are true and one-third of the world is comprised of Christians, what would happen if one-third of the world became serious about upholding the value of environmental stewardship? This would make a difference. This would change the world.

**Two Ways**

There are two ways to get enough: One is to continue to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less.

G.K. Chesterton
Wherever we find hope in a broken world, we see the significance of everyday leaders. Unlike experts, Christian leaders are both inspired by a vision of God’s future and grounded in the thick stubbornness of the now. They have made the conflict their struggle. They are on a journey whose end they envision but whose realization is beyond them. They know the journey will be costly but that the victory belongs to God.

Leadership in the ministry of reconciliation is more about heart and soul than strategy…. The story of the ministry of reconciliation always begins in the humility of everyday life, with someone responding to a gap. This is also where leadership begins.

It is easy to miss both how big and how small a thing it is to respond to a gap. The gap cries out for people to respond. Yet few have ears to hear or eyes to see. Surrounded, numbed and seduced by the pressing noise of getting ahead and the seeming normality of the way things are, few see that the gap exists. Fewer are bothered. Still fewer respond. Leaders are ones who begin to see, to be disturbed, to go out of their way to respond to the gap. They are immediately out front in doing so.

Yet being out front is not spectacular. Responding to gaps is casual, small, unnoticed. The person may not even be saying or thinking ‘I am leading.’ He or she was simply interrupted or disturbed—and responded. This is why learning to tell the story over and over again is crucial.

Chris Heuertz went to volunteer for two months with Mother Teresa in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) when he was a college student. He had no plans beyond that. He had heard of Mother Teresa and wanted to see what her ministry was about. But Chris could not forget the men and women he saw dying on the streets of Kolkata. He was captivated by the same gap to which Mother Teresa had initially responded.

Over the next few years and more visits to Kolkata and meetings with Mother Teresa, Chris helped re-image Word Made Flesh, an incarnational missional community that serves Jesus among the most vulnerable of the world’s poor.

Responding to a gap is not about starting everywhere but about starting somewhere. Wherever we find ourselves, there are gaps. The gap can be as small and near as people in our own family, town or congregation. The challenge is for each of us to be faithful to discern and respond to the gap God puts before us.

Leaders see a gap. They become disturbed. They go out of their way to respond to the gap. This is the beginning of leadership in reconciliation.

Emmanuel Katongole (left) and Chris Rice are the founding codirectors of the Center for Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School. This piece is excerpted with permission from their book, Reconciling All Things.
Recent studies demonstrate an overlapping relationship between faith practices of individuals, family functioning, and the corporate faith of congregations. This study reports on the psychometric properties of the Christian Faith Practices Scale (CFPS), which was created to empirically measure Dykstra’s faith behaviors or “practices.” Analysis of a large purposive sample (N=7,403) indicates initial evidence of reliability and validity for the instrument. We conclude that the CFPS is a useful tool for empowering faith practices through practical measurement and offer specific recommendations for using the scale with congregations, small groups, and family meetings.

Throughout the past decade, the interaction of faith practices, family relationships, and faith has gained the attention of researchers and church leaders alike in the literature. Though the specifics of the studies are unique, there is a general consensus about the overlapping relationship among faith practices of individuals, family functioning, and the corporate faith of congregations. For instance, individuals actively involved in a community of faith are more often happy or satisfied with their family relationships. At the same time, congregations having a solid nucleus of families regularly attending worship, participating in fellowship, and volunteering for service are more active in corporately sharing their faith through words and service to the community (Call & Heaton, 1997; Deveaux, 1996; Ellison, Bartkowski, & Anderson 1999; Garland & Edmonds, 2007; Stinett, Stinett, Beam, & Beam, 1999). As congregations continue to recognize
this overlapping relationship, pastors and lay leaders could benefit from having resources that encourage faith practices. The current study examines the initial psychometric properties of the Christian Faith Practices Scale (CFPS)—a tool we posit as useful for reflecting on faith practices.

DEFINING FAITH AND FAITH PRACTICES

Protestant Christian traditions generally agree that faith is the affirmative response to the free and unmerited gift of God toward human beings through the power of God's grace. Faith is further developed and nurtured through a personal relationship with God (Dykstra, 1999; Lee, 1990a, 1990b). Given that overarching definition, scholars offer different perspectives on faith. For instance, Fowler (1986), one of the most influential theorists exploring faith, emphasizes cognitive processes—how persons understand their experiences and find meaning in them. He defines stages of faith that are congruent with human development theories and that build on stage theories of cognitive and moral development. In his perspective, there are universal stages of faith development, even though the content of faith may vary greatly. Fowler suggests that all people have faith, because all people develop and revise frames of meaning, or ways of understanding their world.

Nelson (1990) describes three aspects of faith. First, faith requires having knowledge of God encountered in the historical Jesus. Second, faith involves a commitment to what it knows, particularly the truthfulness of the story of God’s action in the world. This involves an assent to the interpretation of human history transmitted through the Christian tradition. Third, faith is, above all, a trust in God, not only for forgiveness, but also for direction in life now and eternally. Therefore, from Nelson's perspective, faith is a relationship to God involving knowledge, commitment, and trust. Although Nelson and Fowler offer laudable understandings of faith, neither of their explanations translates well to measurement. For purposes of measurement, the CFPS is our attempt to operationalize Craig Dykstra’s perspective on faith. For Dykstra (1986), faith is not just a way to create meaning or to understand the world, it is an activity of responding appropriately and intentionally to who God is and what God is doing (p. 55-56). Dykstra explains (1999: 17-18):

Faith involves being related to God in a particular way, indeed, being in right relationship to the true God. Ultimate relationship to anyone or anything other than God is considered to be idolatry, not faith. The notion of faith as a human activity is not denied, but this activity is set in the context of a relationship, and that relationship depends on the prior activity of God, who takes initiative in making the divine nature and presence known and accessible to human beings. Thus, faith is primarily a response to a gift, an activity of recognizing and accepting God's grace ...

Thus, faith is primarily a response to a gift, an activity of recognizing and accepting God’s grace, which gives rise to a way of life—a way of believing, trusting, committing, and orienting all one's thoughts and actions.

Therefore, understanding faith as an activity of recognizing and accepting God’s grace. Dykstra (1999) builds upon the work of Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) to offer a theoretical list of universal activities—referred to as “practices of faith”—that together constitute a Christian life of faith. The CFPS assesses “faith” according to Dykstra’s list of Christian practices. Those practices include:

1. Worshipping together—praising God, giving thanks for God’s creative and redemptive work in the world, hearing God’s word preached, and receiving the sacraments given to us in Christ.

2. Telling the Christian story to one another—reading and hearing the scriptures and also the stories of the church’s experience throughout its history.
3. Interpreting together the Scriptures and the history of the church’s experience, particularly in relation to their meaning for our own lives in the world.

4. Praying— together and by ourselves, not only in formal services of worship but in all times and places.

5. Confessing our sin to one another, and forgiving and becoming reconciled with one another.

6. Tolerating one another’s failures and encouraging one another in the work each must do and the vocation each must live.

7. Carrying out specific faithful acts of service and witness together.

8. Giving generously of one’s means and receiving gratefully gifts others have to give.

9. Suffering with and for one another and all whom Jesus showed us to be our neighbors.

10. Providing hospitality and care, not only to one another but to strangers and even enemies.

11. Listening and talking attentively to one another about our particular experiences in life.

12. Struggling together to become conscious of and to understand the nature of the context in which we live.

13. Criticizing and resisting all those powers and patterns (both within the church and in the world as a whole) that destroy human beings, corrode human community, and injure God’s creation.

14. Working together to maintain and create social structures and institutions that will sustain life in the world in ways that accord with God’s will.

This list of practices has evolved in the mainline Protestant denominations’ theory and practice of Christian education, beginning with the work of John Westerhoff more than three decades ago (Westerhoff, 1980; see also Bass, 1997). It is a useful list, though not necessarily comprehensive, reflecting mainline Protestant Christian traditions. Moreover, it is theoretical and thus not designed as a direct measure of faith or religiosity. Nevertheless, it has potential for a richer examination of the complexities of faith than the typical measures of religiosity that include one or more of the following: frequency of worship attendance, engaging in personal prayer and devotion, psychological maturity, Bible knowledge, and sense of spiritual well-being (e.g., Belanger & Cheung, 2006; Cain, Combs-Orme, & Wilson, 2004; Dudley & Cruise, 1990; Hackney & Sanders, 2003; Hill & Hood, 1999; Koenig, 2008; Kristensen, Pederson, & Williams, 2001). It addresses the impact of faith not only on private but also interpersonal relationships and on commitments.

**PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This project is part of a larger study that is exploring the impact of service ministry on Christian faith and congregational life (Garland et al., 2002; Garland, Myers, & Wolfer, 2005; Hugen, Wolfer, & Renkema, 2006; Sherr, Garland, & Wolfer, 2007). In the larger study, the research team selected a purposive sample of 35 congregations located in six states that were (1) Protestant Christian, because the project was not large enough to study the array of U.S. religious congregations; (2) urban and/or suburban rather than rural because of the greater potential for formal community service programs in urban settings; and (3) currently involved in at least one community service program.

The sample included congregations with diverse identities and affiliations: Baptist (including Southern Baptist, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, National Baptist, and Missionary Baptist) (n=9); Christian Reformed (n=7); United Methodist (n=5); Episcopal (n=3); Presbyterian (n=3); nondenominational (n=3); Assemblies of God (n=2); Lutheran (n=1); Seventh Day Adventist (n=1); and African Methodist Episcopal (n=1). Researchers also selected a distribution of congregations that were predominantly Anglo American (n=18), African American (n=9), Latino (n=5), or multiethnic, i.e., with no dominant ethnic group (n=3). The total sample consisted of 7,403 participants that completed surveys attending the 35 congregations.
THE CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY

Respondents completed a four-part congregational survey developed by the research team. First, the congregational survey gathered demographic information about congregants—length of time attending the congregation, frequency of church attendance, gender, ethnicity, age, and family living situation. Next, it included a brief version of the Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) (Benson, Donahue, & Erickson, 1993). The FMS is a 24-item structured instrument that asks respondents to indicate how true each statement is personally, using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “always.”

The team then developed the Christian Faith Practices Scale (CFPS) creating statements that related to Dykstra’s (1999) faith behaviors or “practices.” Some items were combined and wording adapted to a survey for congregations. For example, Dykstra’s items “Carrying out specific faithful acts of service and witness together” and “Suffering with and for one another and all whom Jesus showed us to be our neighbors” became the item “I volunteer time to help those less fortunate.” The scale also includes the item “I share the Christian story with others,” which specifically addresses evangelism. The faith practice “Confessing our sin to one another, and forgiving and becoming reconciled with one another” became the two items “I confess my faults to others,” and “I forgive and work toward healing relationships with others.” Other such

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Factor Loadings with Varimax Rotation for CFPS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CFPS Items</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend weekly worship services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study History of the Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confess faults to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgive and work on healing relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage others, especially in failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give financial support to church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide hospitality to strangers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer time to help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in activities to promote social justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss Christian response to contemporary issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* indicates item in factor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
modifications can be identified by comparing Dykstra’s faith practices, listed earlier, with the items in the Appendix. The items in the scale thus do not directly correspond to the Dykstra list, although we sought to preserve the intent of all the original items.

Respondents were asked to fill out the same seven-point Likert scale used in the FMS to indicate how often they participated in the various faith behaviors or “practices” (see appendix for copy of CFPS). A final section of the survey asked respondents to indicate whether they were personally involved in “community ministry,” a term familiar in American Protestant congregational life (Bobo & Tom, 1996; Dudley, 1991; e.g., Dudley, 1996; e.g., Garland et al., 2002; e.g., Martin & Powers, 1981; e.g., Smith & Brown, 1996). “Community ministry” is defined on the survey as “involvement in activities encouraged by your church that support the physical, material, emotional, and social well-being of people from your congregation, neighborhood, and community.” The survey provided examples of community ministry to facilitate accurate responses.

RESULTS

The results of a factor analysis with the CFPS revealed three sub-scales. After reviewing the scree plot and eigenvalues, we conducted a varimax rotation; extracting three factors (see Table 1). We subsequently named the factors: (a) Serving; (b) Devotional Practices; and (c) Relating. Using factor loadings above .55, Serving consisted of three items, including providing hospitality to strangers, volunteering time to help others less fortunate, and participating in activities to promote social justice; Devotional Practices consisted of four items including, attending weekly worship services, Bible study, evangelism, and studying the history of the church; and Relating consisted of three items, including confessing faults to others, forgiving and working on healing relationships, and encouraging others, especially in failure. Prayer, giving financial support to the church, and discussing Christian responses with contemporaries to contemporary did not load into any of the factors. Instead, these items may be stand-alone practices or influence more than one factor.

RELIABILITY

We used two methods of analysis to determine reliability of the scale. First, Chronbach’s coefficient alpha was computed to assess the internal consistency of the CFPS by measuring the relationships between each individual item and the sum of the rest of the items. A value greater than .7 is accepted as a good indicator of internal consistency. The Chronbach alpha for the CFPS was .86, indicating acceptable reliability for the tool. As an added measure of caution, we used the split half method as a follow-up analysis for reliability. The split half method splits the items of an instrument and treats them as alternate forms. Then the Spearman-Brown coefficient is used to assess the reliability of each half. Similar to the Chronbach alpha, a value greater than .7 is accepted as a good indicator of split-half reliability. A Spearman-Brown coefficient of .79 for the CFPS confirmed the reliability of the scale.

CRITERION AND CONSTRUCT VIABILITY

Three methods of analysis determined validity of the scale—Pearson’s r correlation, linear regression, and binary logistic regression. We computed Pearson’s r correlation to examine the concurrent and convergent validity of the CFPS with the FMS. Concurrent validity is a subtype of criterion validity that determines a scale’s correspondence to a coexisting variable. Convergent validity connotes that different measures of a similar construct will strongly correlate. For the current study, a strong and
positive correlation \( r = .784, p = .000 \) existed between Christian Faith practices and Faith Maturity relationship as measured by the CFPS and FMS, respectively.

Next, regression analysis determined that 61.4\% \( (\text{adj} R^2 = .614, p = .001) \) of the variability in the FMS was explained by the CFPS. With a regression equation of \( FMS = 39.24 + 1.31 \times \text{CFPS} \), for each increase in one in the score of CFPS, on average, the FMS will increase 1.31 points. Therefore, the predictive validity of the CFPS on FMS appears strong and could be quite helpful to clergy and lay leaders as a practice tool because the CFPS is shorter and easier to administer than the FMS. At the same time, a computed tolerance value of 1.00 and variance inflation factor (VIF) of 1.00 indicate that multicollinearity was not a problem for the two scales. This means that the CFPS measures a construct (faith practices) that is distinct from faith maturity.

Finally, we used binary logistic regression to determine predictive validity with a behavioral variable—in this case predicting involvement in community ministry (binary yes/no variable) given a particular score on CFPS. The CFPS was a significant factor \( p = .001 \) for predicting community involvement. The relationship between the two variables indicated that for each point increase in the CFPS a person is 1.081 times more likely to be involved in community ministry. With a total possible score of 91 for the CFPS, the significant connection of community ministry with engagement in faith practices is powerful, according to these findings. Clergy and church lay leaders need to be sensitive to these diverse narratives and offer individuals different opportunities to deepen their faith. Nevertheless, a consistency of activities seems to exist. The practices measured by the CFPS emerge as “activities” persons “do” as they live out their faith through worship and services—thus reinforcing the corporate faith of congregations. As Miles (1990) aptly describes this relationship, “The aim of faith practices is the production of a combination of understanding and strong experience that creates a religious self and, ultimately, together

\[ \text{probability (y=1)} = \frac{e^{\alpha + \beta x}}{1 + e^{\alpha + \beta x}} \]

where: probability \( (y=1) \) is the probability of a person being personally involved in community ministry; \( \alpha \) and \( \beta \) are parameters of the regression estimated from the data, and corresponding to the intercept and slope of the regression line; \( x \) is a person’s score on the CFPS; and \( e \) is the base of the natural logarithm (approximately 2.718). Based on this model, a person that scores 10 points higher on the CFPS would be approximately twice as likely to be involved in community ministry.

**DISCUSSION**

Considered together, the acceptable psychometric properties of the CFPS is an important finding because it provides empirical support for Dykstra’s (1999) notion of understanding faith as an “activity” of responding to the unmerited gift of God’s grace. Similar to other scholars, the research team remains cautious about using quantitative research methods to reduce “faith” to a concept with measurable units for statistical analysis. We posit the efficacy of the CFPS as a practical tool, however, because it does not directly measure faith. Rather, the CFPS measures the practices that are connected to how people develop and live out their faith.

The conceptual distance between faith practices and the actual construct of faith is paramount because it prevents our understanding of faith development from becoming prescriptive. As Garland (2002) discovered, individuals and families have unique narratives that influence how their understanding of God develops and becomes evident in their lives. Clergy and church lay leaders need to be sensitive to these diverse narratives and offer individuals different opportunities to deepen their faith. Nevertheless, a consistency of activities seems to exist. The practices measured by the CFPS emerge as “activities” persons “do” as they live out their faith through worship and services—thus reinforcing the corporate faith of congregations. As Miles (1990) aptly describes this relationship, “The aim of faith practices is the production of a combination of understanding and strong experience that creates a religious self and, ultimately, together
with many people who participate in similar experiences and understanding, community” (p. 90).

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations in how we developed and tested the CFPS warrant caution when considering the initial validation statistics. Although basing the items of the scale on the theoretical work of Dykstra (1999) ensures a certain degree of content validity, we did not use standard procedures of developing a test bank of items that were then narrowed down through a process of field testing and item analysis. To account for this shortcoming, we ran two forms of reliability analysis to be sure that the items produced consistent responses, and the responses appeared to be consistent. Still, we do not know if a different group of items phrased differently or in another order would produce more reliable information or if the scale is more reliable with some faith traditions than others.

Another limitation in development is the extent of face validity of the CFPS and the possibility of a circular relationship between the scale items in predicting community ministry. The items are straightforward statements about practices of faith that could produce socially desirable responses. In addition, we decided not to include reverse scoring items or items that would detect whether or not respondents were forthright in their responses. It is possible to conclude that the scores of the CFPS are inflated relative to the actual faith practices of respondents. In the same way, it is possible that the relationship between the CFPS and participation in community ministry may be circular and, therefore, technically limiting the relationship as evidence of predictive validity. The practical value of the scale remains intact, however, because fluctuations in the scores can still indicate increases or decreases in the prevalence of faith practices, even if the absolute scores are inflated or the relationship between the scale and participation in community ministry remains unclear.

Testing of the CFPS was also limited to people in Protestant denominations. The strong initial findings, however, warrant attention to future research. For instance, future assessment of the CFPS is needed to examine the use of the scale outside of Protestant traditions. Furthermore, future research should examine whether certain faith practices are emphasized more among people with certain characteristics (e.g., age, gender, family status). Likewise, research examining the impact of faith practices on measures of personal well-being and social risk factors (e.g., health, life satisfaction, school performance, and avoidance of drugs) will also contribute to the literature.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USING THE CFPS

We posit several uses for the CFPS. First, congregational leaders could periodically ask members of a congregation to complete the CFPS anonymously in order to understand how the congregation as a community is actually practicing its faith. Congregational leaders can focus worship, Bible study, or family service activities to reinforce faith practices that are prevalent and to address faith practices they would like to see occur more frequently.

The CFPS could also be used in connection with community ministry. One way of making community ministry more meaningful in congregational life is to provide opportunities for reflection (Garland, Myers, and Wolfer 2005). Clergy and church lay leaders could use the CFPS to encourage individuals and families participating in community ministry to reflect on how their service impacts other areas of their faith. We recommend having people
meet in small groups, complete the CFPS confidentially, and then have facilitators use the questions as “step-off points” to encourage them to reflect on how their participation in community ministry has impacted their faith development.

Finally, Garland and Edmonds (2007) found that families want churches to help them enhance their faith in six areas, including, serving others, planning family devotion and prayer time, improving communication, developing healthy lifestyle habits, developing strong marriages, and talking about faith together. Clergy and church lay leaders can provide families with copies of the CFPS to use on their own at home. Family members can consider the 13 statements both as individuals and in the context of their family system. Then they can reflect together on the practices most prevalent in their family and focus on ways to develop other practices that could enhance or “deepen” their faith as individuals and together. Furthermore, as families use the CFPS as a practical tool for reflection and devotion, further study is needed to determine if the reliability and validity of the scale can be extended to family systems. By empowering family systems to reflect on their faith practices, congregations ensure a solid and growing nucleus of active families attending worship, participating in fellowship, and volunteering for service to the church and the community.

REFERENCES


Brazos Press.

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My life
is
my
message.
Mahatma Gandhi

Source; Gandhi’s Life in His Own Words
Christian Faith Practices Scale (CFPS)

Describe how often you participate in each of the following activities. Be as honest as possible, describing your true level of participation and not how active you would like to be.

**Please circle your answer to the right of the statement.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Once in a while</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Almost Always</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I attend weekly worship services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in Bible study activity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share the Christian story with others (evangelism).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I study the teachings and history of the Christian church.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I pray.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I confess my faults to others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I forgive and work toward healing relationships with others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage others, especially when they fail.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give financial support to my church.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide hospitality and care to strangers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I volunteer time to help those less fortunate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I participate in activities that promote social justice in society.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I discuss Christian response to contemporary issues with other Christians.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Identity**

Thomas Merton

If you want to identify me, ask me not where I live, or what I like to eat, or how I comb my hair, but ask me what I think I am living for, in detail, and ask me what I think is keeping me from living fully for the thing I want to live for. Between these two answers you can determine the identity of any person.

*Source: Unknown*
Application to the church

by Dennis R. Myers

S herr, Stamey, and Garland’s validation of the Christian Faith Practices Scale (CFPS) provides congregational leaders with a trustworthy tool to use in understanding how faith finds its expression when the individual, family, and congregation are involved in community ministry. The authors suggest that the CFPS can be used to better understand the connection between faith practices and community ministry. This insightful observation deserves more elaboration. In another article, Garland and her associates (Garland, Myers, & Wolfer, 2005) document the interplay between faith and community ministry. Application of the CFPS to this relationship offers a unique opportunity for congregational leaders to understand how involvement in the life of service affects how faith is lived out in the lives of congregants and those they serve.

How congregational volunteers respond to the 12 CFPS Christian practices provides an indication of the kind of community ministry activity that will most likely activate and sustain involvement. For example, if the congregant frequently practices “suffering with and for another,” a ministry involving a relationship with persons or families in crisis may be an appropriate volunteer opportunity. “Working together to maintain and create social structures that will sustain life in the world” suggests involvement in ministries that call forth more institutional forms of advocacy for persons on the margins in society. Because of this capacity to pinpoint specific faith practices of candidates for community ministry, the CFPS can be used in their orientation to the service and affirmation of the decision they have made. In effect, living out faith practices with intentionality in the context of service provides a powerful motivator for showing up and staying with the ministry.

Once the congregant is engaged in service, knowledge of the volunteer’s pattern of faith practice(s) permits the congregational leader to follow up to see the extent to which the community ministry is actually providing opportunities for rewarding faithful expression. Such a conversation invites reflection on the faith practices/service interaction. Asking congregational volunteers to retake the CFPS after participation in a ministry for a period time may provide an indication of the impact of the service on the congregant’s faith practices. This method of evaluating how the service is affecting faith also offers an opportunity to engage in conversations about changes in specific practices as a result of volunteering. This interaction is one that takes on more significance if this is done in a small group that calls forth conversation about how community ministry relates to practicing one’s faith.

Those who are the recipients of community ministry may also be actively engaged in faithful practices. This possibility is one that should not be overlooked. Asking those who are the object of our compassion about their faith practices opens up new avenues for relationship development and helpful responses. If appropriate, the CFPS instrument could be part of a process for getting to know the recipient of care in a more meaningful way. When the person...
offering to serve asks about faith expression, there is an implied acknowledgement of strengths and opportunity to affirm the equality and reciprocity of the relationship. With knowledge of their pattern of practice, the volunteer may be able to facilitate the person’s participation in their deepest faithful acts. If praying or confession is significant, the relationship can become the sanctuary for these expressions. Attention to faith practices may mean that the volunteer facilitates the recipient’s faithful acts of “carrying out faithful acts of service” or “providing hospitality and care.”

God is at work in the sacred transactions between those who serve and those who receive. The ways that faith is being enacted and strengthened often go unnoticed and unexpressed. The CFPS provides a tool that congregational leaders can use to discover more precisely how faith wishes to come alive in the process of giving and receiving compassion. It provides a language for the transaction, a way of acknowledging and sharing what is being affirmed in the exchange and what is being transformed as a result.

Endnotes


Dennis R. Myers is associate dean for graduate studies at Baylor School of Social Work.
When storms subside, I know light will return, blazing a new path across the troubled sea.

Photo and poem by Diane Walker
As a migrant learning to speak English, I found that my 12 years of private schooling hadn’t quite prepared me to live among the English speakers. As soon as I opened my mouth, people in the Northeast, where I first lived, knew that I had studied the language, but I felt too self-conscious of my own accent. As conversations developed and involved knowing the context of a new culture, I ran out of words.

I wanted desperately to say what I was thinking; I wanted to communicate my inner-most feelings and my deeper thoughts about my new experiences. This was possible, but with only some success, and it was always complicated and extremely frustrating. It was simply not easy to find the correct and exact words to make an informed argument without sounding like I was going in circles. Some have argued that the Spanish language does go off in circles and that English is more linear. Hence, I have always felt a heavy heart. Experiences I processed incredibly in my mind felt trapped there, without any promise of liberty. I was beginning to feel imprisoned in my own world.

When I found the immigrant church, however, I felt a sense of relief and new freedom. In that place, I could be me. It was a refuge and a secret place where other immigrants suddenly found acceptance. They came from all different countries in Latin America — Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and others. We celebrated each other during the Hispanic Awareness Month and found out about what made each country different and special. During family gatherings, we shared about our country’s history and political struggles, our people, differ-
ent food and diverse use of Spanish words. Our gatherings made us feel at home. Suddenly, the intensity and stress of living as a foreigner was less painful and more manageable.

To this community of faith I owe so much. When I had difficulties in my job they listened. When I was preparing for tests and papers in college they prayed. When I got sick they visited. When I felt lonely they were there. We lived as a community bonded by the love of Christ and a commitment to each other.

Immigrant churches have been instrumental in providing a range of ministerial services. They provide support through social networks, helping with basic needs (food, shelter, transportation and money), pastoral guidance and fellowship, empathy and advocacy, among other things. They also are a healing place for all the suffering caused by civil wars and extreme poverty. These stories are very important in our communities. I have heard stories of pain and suffering on the lips of very brave and faithful men and women. This is how we, as immigrants, process the reasons for leaving what is familiar and important to us. We tell each other about our migratory travel and our first day in the United States. We share how God has provided for us and our families abroad and how much closer our relationship has been because of this experience. We seek stories in the Bible that mirror our experiences, such as Ruth and Naomi, and Abraham and Sarah. Suddenly these stories have a new meaning for us; now they seem real. When we look at our trespasses, we often first think about whether or not we have lied to get into the United States, and if we have, our hearts feel heavy and remorseful. We know that we have sinned, but we also know that we are justified in Him through His blood, and we again feel redeemed.

Our experience is full of contradictions: sometimes we wished we could go back to our native countries with our families, and other times we know that we have improved the quality of life for our children by coming here. It is a struggle between the heart and mind that has no resolution in this life. We are most certainly pilgrims in this land seeking for an eternal one where there is no more suffering, tears, hunger, violence, corruption and injustice. We seek a place that for eternity we can call home.

Serving and worshipping together

Kretcha and Rady moved to the continental United States from Puerto Rico soon after they married in 1993. Rady had been accepted at the graduate sociology program of Rutgers University, NJ, and they planned to both pursue graduate degrees and then return to Puerto Rico. They found, though, that their lives were enriched as a result of working with immigrant churches and their plans changed.

They have participated in three immigrant churches: at Primera Iglesia Bautista that targeted Latino urban youth in New Brunswick; at Primera Iglesia Bautista de Trenton, NJ, where Rady pastored and Kretcha worked with youth as social outreach coordinator; at Primera Iglesia Bautista en Everett in Lawrence, MA, where they worked with Latino youth from throughout greater Boston; and currently as founders of the Hispanic-American Baptist Church of Hewitt, TX.

In 2004, the family, now with son Benjamin and daughter Gabriella, moved to Waco, Texas, when Rady accepted a faculty position at Baylor’s George W. Truett Theological Seminary. Kretcha most recently worked in the Baylor School of Social Work with literacy programs for Texas churches.
“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” — Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NIV)

A recent purchase of furniture for my wife’s birthday was an opportunity to begin a significant family tradition, contributing to the spiritual formation of my sons for years to come. Since beginning a renovation of our dining room, my wife talked about wanting a dining room table. Last year I decided that her wish would come true. Wanting to make the gift extra special, I combined the gift with the beginning of a new family tradition – keeping the Sabbath.

Because my work makes keeping the traditional Christian Sabbath especially difficult, my family observes the Jewish Sabbath. Consistent with Jewish tradition, our Sabbath begins with a meal at sundown on Friday around the new dining room table. This weekly occasion brings with it a special blessing, not unlike that offered by the Jews at the beginning of their Sabbath. In this way, we keep the Deuteronomic commandment to impress God’s commands upon our children “when you sit at home” and at table.

For months leading up to her birthday and the delivery of the table, I taught my sons the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4). Each night, as part of their bedtime prayer routine, I recited the Shema in Hebrew and English and told them that their learning of the verse was a surprise for their mother’s birthday. Their little sponge-like brains quickly picked up both the Hebrew and English versions. During these months, I developed a responsive prayer for reciting at the table that I hoped would become a long-standing family tradition. By the
time of my wife’s birthday, the boys each had memorized their shared part in the responsive blessing prayer. Somehow, we managed to keep both the table and the responsive prayer a secret from my wife. Imagine her surprise when she heard her 6 and 3-year-old boys speaking in Hebrew!

Our responsive prayer of blessing for welcoming the Sabbath begins with the lighting of the Sabbath candles, what the Jews refer to as “kindling the Sabbath lights.” We begin our tradition with the lighting of just one Sabbath candle, but our boys each wanted to light the candle each week. To eliminate the fuss, I chose to borrow again from our Jewish friends the practice of lighting two candles—one called “observe” and the other “remember.” These candles represent the two distinct Sabbath commandments in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), one in Exodus and the other in Deuteronomy. After the boys have lit their respective candles, we hold hands and, with eyes wide open, I recite the Shema in Hebrew. The boys then follow the Hebrew version with the English version.

What follows is a leisurely supper that, unlike most weekday meals, always includes catching up and dessert! I have toyed with making the meal and the Sabbath even more memorable by offering the children some kind of rare treat such as a soda. I’ve also entertained the idea of having one of my children open the door to welcome “Queen Sabbath” in the Jewish tradition. Regardless of how you form your prayer, the point of course is to bring God to the family table, his work to the family’s awareness, and to welcome the Holy Spirit into your home and into the lives of your children.

OBSERVING SABBATH

One of the most effective ways to invite God into your home is to observe the Sabbath—the indirect subject of this article. To observe the Sabbath, you’ll need to prepare for its coming by turning off all phones and putting away all work. The sacred space that Sabbath provides is a prime time for making room for the sacred in family life; its unusualness begs the question, “Why is this day different from the others?” and offers a wonderful platform for sharing our faith and God’s intention. There are so many reasons for recovering this forgotten commandment and Marva Dawn treats all of them well in her book Keeping the Sabbath Wholly.

With a little creativity and a desire to partner with God in the spiritual formation of your children, you can create a special prayer and occasion that could potentially last generations. In the process, you will lead your family to take seriously what is perhaps the most neglected of all the Commandments. You are welcome to adapt any or all of these ideas for your own family’s use.

Shabbat Shalom!

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The Shema

**Parent:** Shema, Yitzra-el, Adonai elo-enu, Adonai ehod.

**Children:** Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your mind.

**Parent:** This is the first and greatest commandment, and the second is like it.

**Children:** You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

**Parent:** Let us give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever!

**Anyone:** (a brief extemporaneous prayer)

**All:** Amen.
SPIRITUAL FORMATION AT MEALTIMES

• Consider a litany already written from the resources listed at right.
• Incorporate verses meaningful to you and your family’s faith story into a litany of response like the one given. Ever since learning the significance of the Shema, I wanted my children to know it, thus I chose it as the cornerstone of our tradition and as a way to constantly place before them the greatest commandments as summarized by Jesus.
• Share a lengthier responsive prayer or table litany just once a week; don’t try to make every night special, but send the message that at least one night a week things are different.
• Involve everyone and give children roles they can easily memorize and in which they take pride. Letting them light a candle is one of the simplest ways to include them in a table ritual.
• Evolve your ritual over time; as children are young, keep it simple, and as they grow older, add parts to the ritual from year to year.

RESOURCES FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION AT TABLE

Why Not Celebrate by Sara Wenger Shenk – a plethora (150) of substantive ideas for giving attention to the sacred in everyday life. This resource is a “must have!”
A Day in the World: Family Life as Spiritual Discipline – this resource offers a brief, meaningful, and lay-oriented explanation of spiritual formation in the home as well as three services for the home: A Service for the Night, A Service to Welcome the Day, and Inauguration of the Sabbath.
Sabbath Time by Tilden Edwards – part 4, Living a Sabbath Day, is especially helpful if you want to begin welcoming the Sabbath as a family or want to create a unique service to do so.

What You Desire
Julian of Norwich

I am ground of your prayers.
First, it is my will that you have what you desire.
Later, I cause you to want it.
Later on, I cause you to pray for it, and you do so.
How then can you not have what you desire?

Source: Revelations of Divine Love
I live in thin air, bouyed tenuously by mystery and hope. I travel this airy tendril honoring what has been engaged in what is now and envisioning what can be. It is a place between and above and within. I breathe in this thin air, inhale its possibility, and am filled with expectation. Breath of God, Spirit mine!

Vicki M. Kabat
I’ve been thinking about Howard Thurman’s warning that “to postpone living significantly in the present is a serious blunder.” What does it mean to “postpone living,” whether significantly or insignificantly? Each morning that I’m nudged out of sleep, aren’t I living? Each moment I’m given to breathe and laugh and wonder and cry and love, isn’t each of these the present moment, regardless of the attention I bring to it or fail to bring to it? What does it mean to “postpone living significantly in the present”?

The truth is, I don’t have to ‘understand’ it for my inward being to know I tend to do this. I dwell in places of perceived failures/successes (who knows which is which?) of the past or the future more than the joys and troubles of today. The Now sounds like a less complicated, more refreshing place to be, a simpler place where it’s easier to breathe, a place of new beginnings. I imagine it to be a wonderful realm, and maybe I’ll get there … some day. But a few things are demanding my attention first. Soon, when things are in order, I’ll spend some quality time there. Later this week maybe. Next month for sure, or at least by summer. And in the meantime, millions of moments float down the river, while I blunder along, slogging through the past and the future, lands of the living dead.

I notice I tend to put off other pleasant excursions as well. Like visiting the Grand Canyon or Crater Lake or the Everglades or any number of other natural wonders that I really do intend to see … some day. Or much more accessible pleasures like spending an entire day lying on the couch with my CD collection, listening to symphonies and Johnny Cash and Garrison Keillor, or lying belly down in new grass just to smell life at worm level, or driving with no particular destination in mind and exploring whatever
ordinary, quirky towns crop up along the way—so many ridiculously simple pleasures waiting to be enjoyed. Maybe I’m reluctant to experience them because I enjoy looking forward to them. Nibbling on familiar fears and excitement of the past and the future takes the edge off my hunger for the Now; anticipation of the feast replaces the feast.

Or could it be that I just need to get some things in order first? Once I’m living significantly in the present, I might not be very interested in organizing files and photos and tax papers, or cleaning out drawers and cupboards and closets, regardless of how much these things need to be done. So first let me answer this stack of letters and return these phone calls and emails and get my calendar and address book up-to-date and checks written and direct deposit and other features activated on my bank account and the recycling sorted and the unworn clothes taken to Goodwill and the worn clothes laundered and new filing systems and containers purchased … and maybe I should sign up for a retreat on the theme, just to get me started. THEN I’ll be ready.

Could this be the blunder? To use large chunks of this precious moment trying to prepare for the Now rather than diving in, ready or not, and letting the Now prepare me? There will always be more to do, more to understand, more to relinquish. There will always be something interrupting my desire to be here now. So until I learn to bow reverently to the interruption itself as the gift of the moment, I’ll be forever waiting for my Real Life to begin. Especially on the way to the cross—that divine interruption—I want to practice saying a courageous yes to whatever comes in this moment, seeing the interruptions not as barriers to be endured but as signposts marking the way to what’s Real.

Each dark night of prayer, each simple meal with friends, each betrayal, each fragile promise—I want to be in them all, moment by moment by moment, like Jesus, discovering the path by walking it. Not some day. Now.

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Everywhere

God is indeed everywhere—in the darkness as well as in light, in the ordinary life lived with extraordinary consciousness, in the sacred center of a creation that is secular to its marrow. It is in the separation of life into categories of the holy and the unholy, the spiritual and the material, the earthly and the heavenly that the human soul gets divided as well.

— Joan Chittister

Source: “Living in the Breath of the Spirit,” collected in In My Own Words
The “Just Neighbors Toolkit” is a treasure chest for anyone interested in teaching his or her church about poverty in the United States. As the introductory material in the kit explains, “Just Neighbors” is a unique, interactive, multimedia curriculum that will educate your congregation about poverty… it includes original videos, hands-on activities, role-play exercises, lively discussions and more.

Divided into nine hour-long sessions, the curriculum does a great job of giving some structure to the complex and confusing issue of why so many people in America don’t seem to be “making it” even though they are working. Each session starts with a scripture reading and ends with suggestions for further reading and ideas for how to take action; in between you’ll find high-quality video and a wide variety of thought-provoking, engaging activities.

Five of the sessions include well-produced, original videos that take the problem of poverty out of the realm of statistics and factoids and into the lives of families who are caught in a web of practical dilemmas: How to help the kids with homework when you have to work until it’s almost time for bed; how to provide decent nutrition when your wage barely covers the rent; what to do when you make too much for Medicaid, but not enough to afford health-insurance.

My personal favorite is the video associated with Session 7: “Our Children, Our Future.” It is a collage of pictures taken by children. It shows their neighborhoods, families, schools and friends from their points of view. Interspersed with the pictures are snippets of the children talking about their life circumstances. Quotes like, “My mom gets her pay check next week. That’s when she’ll pay the electric bill. The others [bills] just pile on each other,” hammer home the reality that the stress of living in poverty doesn’t stop with the adults.

The videos are excellent, but the real genius of the curriculum is in the activities that get you engaged with the issues by getting you to “walk a mile in their shoes.” For example, in Session 3: “What Would You Choose?” participants take on the role of Annie, a struggling mother of two. At the beginning of the exercise Annie and her husband Jeff are both employed. They and their two children, Malcolm and Nikki, are living in a rented house. Though their house is “nothing fancy” they are at least making ends meet. They live in a decent neighborhood and they can sometimes afford treats like a night at the movies or an annual trip to an amusement park. Then Jeff loses his job and eventually walks out on the family, leaving Annie to figure out how to manage things on her pay as a part-time waitress. The exercise simulates the decisions that Annie must make along the way: Move, or try to find a house mate? Work longer hours, or have time with the kids? Take a course, or take on another job? Sell the car, or keep it? Each decision results in a mixture of intended and unintended consequences that vividly illustrate the discouraging “one-step forward, two-steps back” dance of trying to make it and be a good parent when you really don’t have enough to live on.

The facilitator’s guide included in the kit is well-written and should make it easy for anyone with any teaching experience at all to conduct the lessons. Besides clear-cut instructions and recommendations regarding timing,
supplies, and other practicalities; the facilitator’s guide is a reference book in itself. It’s filled with relevant facts and background information to share with the class or just to build instructor understanding and confidence.

The only slight criticism I might make of this fine toolkit is that I think the sessions are so engaging it would difficult to finish each of them in an hour. They are sure to spark lots of discussion; I think an hour and a half would be a more reasonable time frame for most of them if you plan to use them as written.

On the other hand, I want to point out what I consider to be the toolkit’s greatest strength – flexibility. Although Just Neighbors is designed to be taught as a series of nine sessions, most of the sessions (probably all except for the last one) could easily be used as standalone lessons, or three or four could be pulled out for a shorter series. Each session is designed to be one-hour, but they could all be easily expanded to an hour and a half or even two hours especially if you were able to supplement them with information from your own community. If you are trying to find something meaningful for a shorter time slot – say 20 or 30 minutes – you could easily show one of the videos as a stand-alone activity with a short discussion, or use one of the reproducible hand-outs on its own as a short activity. Even though it is marketed as a resource for “communities of faith,” each lesson could easily be adapted to a secular audience by simply leaving off the scripture reading at the beginning. Though the sessions were designed with adults in mind, I think the interactive activities make it a natural for youth.

“Just Neighbors” is a program of Family Promise. Cost for the kit is $175.00 plus shipping and handling.

Reviewed by Ashley Bean Thornton, director of professional and organizational development at Baylor University.
Ashley attends Lake Shore Baptist Church in Waco, TX, and maintains a Web site for local community service: www.actlocallywaco.org.

Small Footprint, Big Handprint: How to Live Simply and Love Extravagantly, by Tri Robinson

Culture tells us to “leave our mark” as a way to prove our lives have value and meaning. But in a consumer-driven culture it has become all too easy to seek status via cars, clothes, accessories, and trendy home decor. We allow our possessions and desires to dictate how we spend our time. We spend more and more time working to pay for stuff, or worse yet, we buy it with credit.

Tri Robinson, founding pastor of the Vineyard Boise Church in Boise, Idaho, challenges Christians to look more closely at the way in which our use of time and energy impact the world. What witness does this bear? he asks. As Christians we should be mindful of the way we interact with God’s creation, being conscience of waste and overuse. Robinson gives several examples of how an evaluation of your budget and use of time can offer simple, yet meaningful ways to change your lifestyle. This impact can result in less pollution and expense, and more efficient use of time. Most important, he says, these changes will be a positive witness to others.

Small Footprint Big Handprint is an easy read and perfectly designed for an individual, couple, or small group. It should serve as a great catalyst for discussion and introspection of one’s life choices. Each chapter has questions for discussion and an action point to guide you through the self evaluation process. Christians can benefit from this book by learning to challenge their use of time and money. Robinson says that as followers of the promise of salvation that Christ brings, we should be living our lives in such a manner that when global, political or economic tensions arise we are so sure-footed on the foundations of our faith in Christ that we are ready to tend to those in need.

Our actions should bear positive witness. Our consumer habits should show how to live in God’s creation respectfully. Our faith
and lack of excess can set an example during economic downturns, and enable us to help others. And as Robinson so wisely points out, giving is not only done with money, sometimes it is showing up and doing work with our hands. Time is often the most valuable asset we have to give. If we choose to live such jam-packed hectic lives that we aren’t left with time to give, what does that say about our priorities? Have our own comforts, desires and guilty pleasures become more important than living the way that Jesus did?

“No matter where we are in our life’s journey we can always readjust our vision and begin seeing the world around us through the lens of eternal perspective,” Robinson writes.

Reviewed by Kimberly Schlesinger, administrative associate for the Center for Family and Community Ministries and the Center for Literacy, Baylor School of Social Work, Waco, TX.


Last October we took a dozen staff and students from the Center for Family and Community Ministries to CCDA – the Christian Community Development Association’s annual conference. We heard Wayne Gordon and John Perkins each day offer bits of wisdom for churches coming together to engage their communities in transformational development. These leaders, and others, have written extensively on the lessons they have learned from churches participating in community development. At this conference, they offered insights from a new book focused on urban-suburban partnerships.

Gordon and Perkins, together with Ron Sider and Al Tizon, have authored Linking Arms, Linking Lives as a resource for churches on either side of the urban divide. As these four experienced leaders define the terms “urban” and “suburban,” they focus less on geography and more on socioeconomics, providing theological insights for diverse experiences Christians have with regard to race and class. These authors remind us that Christians working for justice and living out compassion must engage our poverty and our wealth, as well as the advantages we have, those we lack, and those we take for granted.

Rooted in a biblical theology of partnership that seeks to overcome our divisiveness, the authors share their own personal experiences of what helps followers of Christ cross our divisions to address oppression and exclusion and to create radically different communities of “jubilee justice.”

Reconciliation is a driving theme in the book, one that begins the journey toward the “authentic relationships and collaborative action” that are the goal as churches overcome mistrust and misunderstandings that have shaped our past racial and economic divisions.

After a discussion of why reconciliation matters, the middle section of the book reads as a handbook for partnerships. It offers clear and useful lists of dos and don’ts for urban and suburban partners. Items here include principles such as sharing responsibility and leadership, interdependence and mutual learning.

The final section then moves to examples of how urban and suburban churches, parachurch agencies, businesses and individuals have partnered together in ministry based on the experiences of these four leaders and others. Included is one of the first models of partnership ministry I was able to be a part of, Strategies to Elevate People (STEP) in Richmond, VA. With a leadership team comprised of individuals from urban and suburban Richmond, this project is a great example of churches coming together to walk alongside each other as they address the needs of families in urban public housing. From informal, yet highly relational “family share teams” to after-school and summer programs, this program serves to overcome racial tensions in this highly divided and historic city.

Throughout, this book is an insightful and sensitive read that can easily be used to guide difficult discussions about our experi-
ences of race and class in a Christian context. Each chapter offers discussion questions that seem to come straight from the authors own conversations: What is the relationship between being God’s people and doing God’s mission in the world? How are the works of justice, compassion, and reconciliation related to the mission of the church to take the gospel to the ends of the earth? How do these fit into God’s call to be radical community?

I can hear the four men discussing these items throughout these pages. I hope, as they do, that we hear churches discussing them all over our nation.

— Reviewed by Jon Singletary

Care of the Soul, by Thomas Moore

While rummaging through a used book-store recently, I rediscovered this classic first printed in 1992 and then a New York Times Bestseller. I can’t remember the first time I read it, but this time, the book seemed to read me!

Moore, who lived as a monk in a Catholic religious order for 12 years, has degrees in theology, musicology and philosophy. A psychotherapist for many years, he became a well-known lecturer and author in the areas of archetypal psychology, mythology and the imagination. From these perspectives, he draws the reader along a path toward heightened spirituality that is both gentle and challenging.

Describing self-knowledge and self-acceptance as the very foundations of the soul, Moore asserts that psychology is a secular science, while care of the soul is a sacred art. He says that in the modern world we have separated religion and psychology, spiritual practice and therapy but that the two need to be seen as one. “Our very idea of what we are doing in our psychology has to be radically reimagined,” he says, adding that he sees therapy “as nothing more than bringing imagination to areas that are devoid of it.” Because most, if not all, problems that people bring to psychologists deal with love, Moore believes it makes sense that the cure is also love: “Taking care of the soul is a way of loving it … the ultimate cure … comes from love, not logic.”

Care, not cure is the process Moore encourages as we struggle with the themes of our lives. He asks us to consider how our “shadow” side, as Jung called it, can enlighten us and be integrated into our whole – a much different perspective from “fixing” them or “getting rid of them.” Moore says that to care for the soul is to “open our hearts wider than they have ever been before, softening the judging and moralism that may have characterized our attitudes and behavior for years.”

Moore outlines the different ways to care for the soul in relation to family and childhood, self-love and its myth, love’s initiations, jealousy and envy, power, depression, illness and the effects of work, money, failure and creativity. Relying heavily on figures from Greek mythology, the author introduces us to these ancient stories and their underlying relevance to our modern psychological and spiritual struggles. He writes with as much imagination and poetry as he encourages each of us to practice as we care for our souls. It is a style that effortlessly blends storytelling, information, application and possibility.

Although not overtly Christian in its ideology, Care of the Soul does contend that “a spiritual life of some kind is absolutely necessary for psychological ‘health.’” To befriend and be willing to learn from that which plagues our emotional well-being brings balance and wholeness to our lives, Moore says. “Suffering forces our attention toward places we would normally neglect,” and it is at that difficult point when we don’t know what is going on or what to do that we can find “an opening to true faith.”

In a day when we increasingly turn to therapy and pharmaceuticals to ease our minds and quiet our restless souls, perhaps taking time to rediscover this book and its holistic approach to soul tending would serve us all well.


— Reviewed by Vicki M. Kabat
A JOINT CALL FOR PAPERS
FOR SPECIAL ISSUES OF
SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY
http://www.nacsw.org/cgi-bin/publikio.cgi
AND
THE JOURNAL OF FAMILY & COMMUNITY MINISTRIES
http://www.baylor.edu/FCM_Journal

The two leading academic journals in the field of social work practice and faith integration are producing parallel issues on the topic of the Latino/a Perspective in Serving Communities. Latino/a practitioners are especially encouraged to submit manuscripts.

Two types of manuscripts are solicited:
1. Academic, peer-reviewed manuscripts (20-25 pages)
2. Profiles of existing community ministries and their impact or reflections from practice experiences, written in first person (4-6 pages)

- Topic: Latino/a Perspectives in Serving our Communities
- Date of Issue: Summer 2010
- Guest Editors: Virginia Rondero Hernandez and Kretcha M. Roldán-Rodríguez
- Managing Editor: T. Laine Scales
- Deadline: August 1, 2009

The Latino community has a strong tradition of mutual aid and informal support networks that can take the form of a neighborhood, church, cultural or grass roots organizations. Latinos traditionally have worked within these systems to empower and bring social change into their communities. These parallel issues attempt to shed light on the multiple narratives, history and contributions of services offered for and by Latino/a populations. They also attempt to define systemic resources and service limitations confronted by Latinos. Considerable attention will be given to submissions by Latino/a social workers, ministers and other professionals working in faith-based communities.

Submissions describing approaches, strategies, programs, community projects, church ministry and initiatives by and for the Latino/a Community will be considered.

Guidelines for All Submissions
All authors are strongly encouraged to contact the special edition managing editor, T. Laine Scales, by e-mail or phone (see contact information below) to discuss ideas for paper submissions. The deadline for all submissions is August 2009.

Guidelines for Academic Peer-Reviewed Manuscripts
Articles should begin with a title page, including the author’s name, address, phone number, e-mail address, abstract of no more than 200 words, and a list of key words. Only the title should be repeated on the first page of the text. The article text should be double-spaced and is limited to 20-25 pages, including all references and appendices. Please use the American Psychological Association Style Manual format (5th edition) for in-text references and reference lists. Submissions will be accepted by e-mail in Microsoft Word as an e-mail attachment.

Guidelines for Profiles of Ministries and Reflection Articles
These articles should be written in the first person and provide an overview of an existing community ministry or program or practice experiences with reflections. Authors are encouraged to incorporate aspects of their faith in the profile. Consider this an opportunity to network and share ideas about innovative programs that work and how they began and operate. Submissions should be four to six double-spaced pages.

Submit all manuscripts by August 1, 2009, to: FCMJournal@baylor.edu
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES
For complete instructions, visit www.baylor.edu/FCM_Journal

ACADEMIC ARTICLES
The editorial board specifically seeks articles on the following topics:
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• research that advances developmental and practice theory in congregational or faith-based settings
Manuscripts for full-length articles should not exceed 15 pages, including references and tables. The review process is anonymous. Three reviewers critique each manuscript and then make a recommendation for acceptance based on the following criteria: relevance of content to major issues concerning the topics of family and community ministries, literary merit, conciseness, clarity and freedom from language that conveys devaluation or stereotypes of persons or groups. Final decisions regarding acceptance will be made by the editor and associate editor.
Submit articles electronically to FCMJournal@baylor.edu.

COLUMNS/ESSAYS
The purpose of these submissions is different from the academic articles. These articles are not peer reviewed. Tone and writing style should be first person, straightforward, informal and accessible. Consider this a forum for networking with others in your profession and these articles as a way to share practical, helpful information and/or inspiration. We adhere to no one denomination but hope to draw from the best of all, and all language should reflect this approach.

Faith in Action
First-person accounts of family or community ministries that address specific needs with emphasis based on analysis of practice and indication of effectiveness. Submit Faith in Action articles electronically to Vicki_Marsh-Kabat@baylor.edu.

Reflections
Personal stories up to 750 words that convey a spiritual truth or revelation to encourage others in their faith journeys. Submit Reflections electronically to Vicki_Marsh-Kabat@baylor.edu.

Spiritual Formation
Throughout the journal are several opportunities for meditation and contemplation. We are especially interested in original poetry, hymns, artwork and short meditations. If you would like to submit your work for consideration in the journal, please send a hard copy as well as a digital copy to Michael D. Sciretti, Jr., 1824 Northcrest Dr., Waco, TX 76710, Michael_Sciretti@baylor.edu.

In My Opinion
An opportunity to explore topical local or global issues that impact families and communities to encourage dialogue and progress. Length is 1,200 words. Submit to Vicki_Marsh-Kabat@baylor.edu.

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FCMJournal@baylor.edu

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CONTRIBUTORS

Rick Bennett is director of congregational life at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Atlanta, GA.

Wanda Lott Collins is associate professor at Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville, in Louisville, KY. She received her master’s of science degree in social work from the University of Louisville and her PhD from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. An ordained minister, she also is a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers.


Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice are the founding co-directors of the Center for Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School and the authors of Reconciling All Things.

Kayla McClurg is editor of inward/outward, a devotional site on the Web for The Church of the Saviour, Washington, DC.

Dennis R. Myers is associate dean for graduate studies at Baylor School of Social Work. He has 27 years of experience teaching, serving and writing for older persons in community and organizations.

Tri Robinson is the founding pastor of the Vineyard Boise Church in Boise, Idaho, a growing fellowship of more than 2,500. He has served on the national board for the Association of Vineyard Churches USA and as a regional overseer for more than 100 churches. Tri and his wife, Nancy, live in Sweet, Idaho.

Michael E. Sherr is assistant professor of social work in the School of Social Work at Baylor University. He has published extensively on topics that include integration of faith in social work education and practice, volunteerism, gerontology, Afrocentrism, and rural social work. He is the author of Social Work with Volunteers (Lyceum Books Inc., 2007) and assistant editor for Social Work and Christianity.

Sterling Severns is entering his fifth year as pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, a re-emerging congregation in Richmond, Virginia’s historic Fan District. The congregation will spend the next five years focusing on the prevention of poverty in their city. The plan centers on Refugee Resettlement Ministry, a potential food cooperative, youth mentoring, and the reshaping of their child development center. Sterling and his wife, Laura, are the proud parents of three children, Wade (6), Brynne (5), and Cole (2).

James Stamey is associate professor of statistical science at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Diane Walker is the former director of communications for the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia in Seattle. Her photographs and meditations reflect her years of study under Cynthia Bourgeault and emerge out of her daily practice of centering prayer and lectio divina. http://picasaweb.google.com/woodenhue or visit her blog at contemplativephotography.com.

SECTION EDITORS

Spiritual Formation: Michael D. Sciretti, Jr. is pursuing a doctorate in historical studies through Baylor University’s Religion Department. After graduating from George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Michael attended the Epiphany Academy of Formative Spirituality in Pittsburgh, Penn. He and wife, Rachel, have two daughters, Anastasia and Zoe. Michael_Sciretti@baylor.edu

Academic Review: T. Laine Scales is a professor of higher education and associate dean of Graduate Studies at Baylor University. She previously served as professor of social work and associate director of Baylor’s Center for Family and Community Ministries. She is author or co-author of seven books and numerous articles. Laine_Scales@baylor.edu. She and husband, Glenn, are parents to April.

Faith in Action: Heidi Unruh is director of the Congregations, Community Outreach and Leadership Development Project, co-author of two books on church-based social ministry and co-editor of Hope for Children in Poverty: Profiles and Possibilities (Judson, 2007).
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  - David Sherwood, George Fox University (Writers Workshop),
  - Peter DeJong, Calvin College (Solution Focused Therapy)
  - Mary Ann Brenden, College of St. Catherine
  - Barbara Shank, University of St. Thomas (Catholic Social Teaching)
- Thursday Opening Plenary Session
  - Gilberto Perez, Northeastern Center
- Alan Keith Lucas Lecture – Friday morning
  - Terry Wolfer, University of South Carolina
- Awards Banquet Speaker – Saturday evening
  - Lorraine Blackman, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
- Up to 18 Continuing education contact hours available
- For rates and information on exhibiting, advertising in the final Convention brochure, or sponsorship opportunities please contact NACSW.

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We were standing in the church hallway making conversation – the male pastor, a mother and her teenage daughter and myself. Like any of the hundreds of such visits that occur on any given Sunday, we were just talking about the events of our week.

The mother made a comment about a necklace her daughter had received that she was wearing that day. And the pastor joked, “I’d like to hang around your daughter’s neck like that.”

The mother and daughter laughed nervously and changed the topic.

No big deal? A little joke?

No. Sexual harassment.

Wanda Lott Collins in her research article on page 10, “Silent Sufferers,” tells us that the main reason sexual misconduct occurs in churches is lack of education and awareness. That, we can do something about, and we must.

Like the mother and daughter in the above conversation, most of us in the church don’t really know what sexual misconduct is or what to do about it. We err on the side of caution, not wanting to make a mountain out of a molehill. We trust our clergy so completely that we distrust our own “red flag” reactions. We give our pastors the benefit of the doubt, we forgive and we forget.

Clergy, as with any other member of society, should be held accountable. In the business world, classes on sexual harassment are required for every employee. Why? I’d like to think it’s because of a high moral obligation, but more likely it’s because of the threat of litigation. Is that what we need in the church – the threat of litigation – before we take measures to assure that every individual is treated with respect, dignity and Christian love?

What if it was meant as an off-hand comment, or even a feeble effort at humor? That doesn’t change the fact that it was inappropriate. Left unchallenged it feeds a culture of disrespect and objectification of women that is ethically abhorrent and spiritually shameful.

If no place else in society is safe from the modern sexual onslaught, sometimes not even one’s home, then the church absolutely must be.

What did I do when the pastor made that comment about my friend’s teen daughter? Nothing. I moved quickly by the awkward moment. But I can’t forget it. Nor should I. I pray that the next time it happens – and it will – that I speak up. I pray you do, too.