

Summary of Responses from Bishops and Annual Conference Leadership

For the COSROW Summit on Clergy Family Health - as of October 16, 2014

By Jane P. Ives, United Methodist Marriage and Family Ministries Consultant

BAGUIO EPISCOPAL AREA (PHILIPPINES) - Rachel V. Rol, secretary to Bishop Torio

Pressing Issues: low pay for pastors

Helpful Resources:

P1Million District Church Workers' Salary Trust Fund

GEMS E-Network Credit Cooperative for pastors and deaconesses

(Gender Entrepreneurship Markets?)

HOLSTON CONFERENCE

- Rev. Pete & Ginny Rowlett, Better Marriages Certified Leader and Trainer Couple

At the 2003 annual conference, the Rowletts presented a resolution challenging the annual conference to strengthen its ministries with married couples and families, including a specific emphasis on clergy families. A Task Force was established to assess marriage and family ministries within the conference. Among its recommendations to the 2004 annual conference were marital enrichment events for clergy and laity, training for clergy in marital and pre-marital counseling, a resource center/lending library with relevant materials, expanded counseling services or counseling referral sources, support for single-parent families and their children, support for families going through divorce. The Task Force held a clergy/spouse marriage enrichment retreat in April, 2005; distributed a brief video titled "Marriage and Family Ministry in Your Church" for use in every local church; reviewed resources and made them available through the conference library; and compiled a list of counseling referral resources. The Holston Conference continues to sponsor a weekend marriage enrichment retreat every year for couples serving in professional ministry, funded fully by the conference budget. As of 2014, seventy-two couples had participated. These couples were all invited to a "reunion weekend" in 2014, and so many of them signed up that two retreats were scheduled. Five other leader couples have now been trained through Better Marriages, and with guidance from Pete and Ginny Rowlett, they planned and provided most of the leadership for the reunion retreats. These younger couples are committed to the continuation of this ministry.

Recently the Rowletts met with the leaders of an organization called Partners in Crisis, which was organized in the Holston Conference in 1999 to help clergy spouses who encounter serious challenges when their marriages fail. (www.Holston.org/pic) They have now received substantial funding and are seeking to expand their ministry to prevention as well as crisis intervention. As a result of this conversation, the Better Marriages leader couples are exploring offering an additional retreat for couples in ministry. You can contact the Rowletts at 865-966-9776 or p.rowlett@charter.net. Visit www.bettermarriages.org to learn more about Better Marriages.

The Holston Conference Pastoral Counseling Center supports and encourages "the emotional, spiritual and relational wellbeing of the clergy and clergy families of the Holston Annual Conference. Services include counseling, spiritual direction, individual, couple and family therapy about a variety of issues including grief and loss, divorce recovery, vocational discernment, depression and anxiety...." ("Partners in Crisis Guidelines and Resources for Spouses of Clergy," page 14,

www.holston.org/pic). These services are free for all clergy, spouses, and children, including ex-spouses for two years following a divorce.

ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS CONFERENCE – Janice Griffith, Executive Assist. to Bishop Keaton

This conference offers divorce/separation reviews for both the clergy and the spouse in the form of meetings with a team of one District Superintendent, one represent from BOOM, and the Executive Assistant to the Bishop. The goal is primarily pastoral and supportive. In addition, this conference offers a Clergy Assistance program (modeled after corporate Employee Assistance Programs) providing free counseling for any clergy, spouse, or child at a nearby site. The first six sessions are free, and then health insurance coverage kicks in. The brochure provides a toll-free number available 24/7 for brief intake interviews and scheduling of appointments for appropriate and confidential service. The CAP is designed to address personal concerns before they impact persons' emotional well-being and work performance. At www.chestnutglobalpartners.org (user name: **igrc**) you will find self-assessment tools, articles, and more information about the variety of issues for which support is available.

LIBERIA CONFERENCE - Bishop Innis

Pressing Issues:

Pastors have to work at additional jobs because salaries are inadequate to support
Desire and need for further theological education

Helpful Resources:

Proposed graduate studies at the United Methodist University
Pension scheme for payment to clergy widows/widowers
The Pastors' Wives Association, headed by Mrs. Innis, has helped spouses get
education, training, and jobs.
The Clergywomen Association – recruits and encourages young women called to
pastoral ministry, including seminary scholarships

NORTH CAROLINA CONFERENCE

- Rev. Timothy J. Russell, Assistant to Bishop Ward/Director of Ministerial Relations

Pressing Issues:

Clergy have higher rates of chronic disease, obesity, and depression than their
non-clergy peers (Duke Clergy Health Initiative findings)

Helpful Resources:

Clergy Health Initiative funded by Duke Endowment, in cooperation with the
North Carolina and Western North Carolina Conferences and Duke
Divinity School – articles on self-care and healthy lifestyle issues
<https://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/clergy-health-initiative>
One participant noted inadequate focus on relationship education
Pastor & Parish curriculum resources for training Staff/Parish Committees
<https://pastorandparish.knowclassic.com/>

NORTH GEORGIA CONFERENCE

- Rev. Christopher Carlton, Director Emory Counseling and Consultation, for Bishop Watson

Pressing Issues:

Stress and Maladaptive coping mechanisms – high percentage of introverts with higher than average need for approval, may withdraw under stress, exhibit symptoms of depression, obesity, pornography and other addictions

Isolation – hierarchical structure can create paranoia

Itinerancy more stressful for dual-income families, housing allowance problematic due to collapse of housing market

Expectations

Special challenges for women in ministry (home/vocation balance, perception as unequal)

Helpful Resources:

Emory Clergy Care/Emory Counseling and Consultation – access to clinicians, educational programs on healthy lifestyle and stress management

Personal contact/expression of concern by the Bishop

Contract with outplacement agency for clergy exiting ordained ministry

WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE - Bishop's Poll of Cabinet

Pressing Issues:

Isolation – need for healthy relationships and support systems, single pastors included

Identity – clergy, spouse, children; single pastors

Time management/balance – self/family care including elderly parents and young adult children vs. pressing demands and expectations

Itinerancy – especially for spouse and children, making the parsonage your home, schools, finding community services and resources.

Finances – clergy spouse job loss during move, buying a home for retirement

Overcoming barriers of racism and cultural insensitivity

Helpful Resources:

Other individual clergy, support groups

Community networking

Continuing education (time management, relationship education, healthy lifestyle, personal growth – personal types and family of origin issues,

Effective Trustees and SPCR Committees

Emphasis on covenant and “the Connection” especially for children and spouses

Teaching Time Management and delegation

Stephens Ministries

More effective recruitment and screening clergy

Focus on the Family's “Pastor to Pastor” resources

UPPER NEW YORK CONFERENCE

“Cabinet Procedures when a Clergy Family faces Marital Separation or Divorce” - Bishop Webb

Helpful Resources:

Policy calls for meeting with clergy and advocate, spouse and advocate, district supt.
Covenant to be crafted including personal leave for the clergy; counseling sessions for clergy and for spouse; provisions for spiritual care for both; financial assistance for counseling, housing, moving, etc.; coverage for congregation and intentional care for processing and moving forward.

VIRGINIA CONFERENCE

- Rev. Meredith McNabb, Director for Center for Clergy Excellence, for Bishop Cho

Pressing Issues:

Isolation (perceive/real) especially in rural and cross-racial/cultural lines, singles, and Families
Self-care/ministry balance
Spiritual nurture

Helpful Resources:

Clergy Family Enrichment team - <http://www.vaumc.org/page.aspx?pid=4425>
Provides welcome lunch at conference, resources for spouses, annual retreat
Thrival Kit for spouses available on line. <http://www.vaumc.org/ThrivalKit>
Ministerial Family Counseling – confidential financial assistance for clergy and their families <http://www.vaumc.org/page.aspx?pid=4004>
Cross Racial/Cross Cultural Resource Team to raise the cultural competency level of the local church, district, and conference.

WISCONSIN CONFERENCE - Rev. Stephen Polster, Assistant to Bishop Jung

Pressing Issues:

Financial - seminary/education debt couples with low starting pay
Itinerancy – stresses on spouses and family

Helpful Resources:

Pastoral care provided by District Superintendents
Connections with others in similar situations
Funds for counseling accessed through District Superintendents
Clergy Spouse Network – sometimes active and sometimes not
<http://www.wisconsinumc.org/Resources/Documents/Tools/clergyspousehandbook.pdf>

OTHER INPUT - Some Clergy are dealing with issues related to homosexuality, which are exacerbated by conversations at the General Church level. Pastors’ children who hear negative teachings about homosexuality fear “coming out” and being considered “incompatible with Christian teachings. Clergy parents who support their children who are in same-gender relationships and marriages may face criticism and hostility. Clergy who themselves “come out” are likely to lose their jobs, their vocations, and their families.