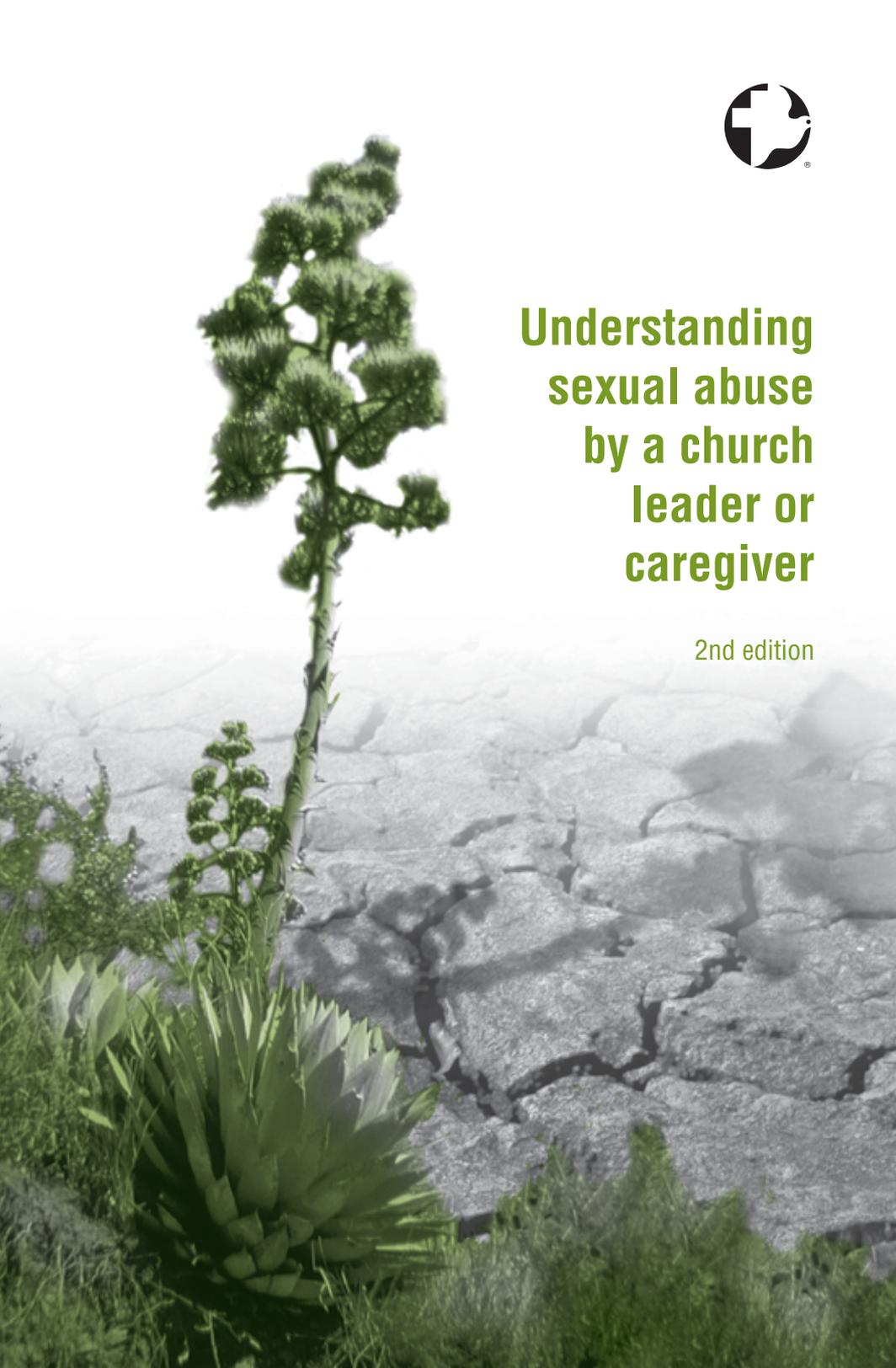




Understanding sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver

2nd edition



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Acknowledgements

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I. Introduction

Sexual abuse by church leaders is a topic most of us would rather avoid. However, for those who have experienced abuse in this way, the effects can be devastating. What's more, sexual abuse is often misunderstood and misnamed. Often, those who have been victims are blamed, rather than their perpetrators.

The vision for this booklet grew out of witnessing the difficulties of survivors and churches in the aftermath of sexual abuse by a church leader. A number of individuals recognized the need for more information. Kathy Shantz, a former MCC Canada Women's Concerns Coordinator, approached Heather Block to write two documents: a training manual for advocates working with survivors and this introductory booklet.

This booklet starts with the Biblical text as our foundation and provides a clear definition of what constitutes sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver. It includes a composite story of actual abuse experiences, gives tools to help individuals and groups understand some of the dynamics of sexual abuse, and provides a list of suggested resources for further study.

The path of healing and justice for survivors of abuse by a church leader and the path of healing and accountability for those who have victimized them is never easy. This booklet is a resource for persons dealing with this difficult issue.

II. Biblical foundations

The Bible guides and informs the church as it seeks to understand sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver. The prophet Ezekiel is adamant that God opposes leaders who fail to strengthen and nourish those under their care, but instead prey on them to meet their own needs:

The word of the Lord came to me: '...Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?... You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured... Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: As I live... because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals... I am against the shepherds, and I will demand my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them. For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out...'¹

In Matthew 18, Jesus echoes these concerns for those who are vulnerable:

If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea... Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.²

The Greek word for stumbling block is "skandalizo" and literally means to impede, jump up or snap shut as in a trap or snare.³ Clearly, Jesus' disciples must not entrap or take advantage of those with less power, but carefully avoid hurtful behavior and even deprive themselves of something rather than "...get it at someone else's expense."⁴

In the parable of the lost sheep (verses 12-14), Jesus again describes the qualities of a good shepherd, as one who cares deeply for the sheep and goes out to seek those who are lost or forsaken.

¹Ezekiel 34: 1-11; see also Fortune, Marie. *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook*. FaithTrust Institute, p. 7-14.

²Matthew 18:6,10.

³Myers, Ched and Elaine Enns. *Ambassadors of Reconciliation*, Volume 1, Orbis Books, 2009, p. 59, 138-139. See also Romans 11:9 and 14:13.

⁴Enns, Elaine. "70 x 7: A Theology of Reconciliation," *Conflict Transformation and Restorative Justice Manual*, edited by Michelle Armster and Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, 5th edition, Mennonite Central Committee, 2008, p. 10.

This concern for the welfare of all is clearly seen in Luke 4:18 where Jesus declared his mission, passed on to us—to bring release to the captives, sight to the blind and freedom to those who are oppressed. This includes bringing freedom and healing to those victimized by others, giving sight to those blind to the destructiveness of their behavior, and ending all types of oppression within our families and communities.

The Hebrew Scriptures also repeatedly emphasize God's concern for all people, especially those who are most vulnerable: widows, orphans, strangers and the poor. Passages such as Psalms 40, 55 and 57, and Isaiah 43:1-7 provide comfort to those who suffer violence and injustice, as they speak of God's presence in the midst of pain, and God's desire to rescue us from harm.

Ultimately, God longs for all to follow the way of Christ: to show love to everyone, work for justice, care for the suffering, empower the weak and hold accountable those who hurt others. As the Scriptures urge, "Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy."⁵

⁵Proverbs 31:8-9.

III. No beginning or end

Sharon's story—part one⁶

They ask me to tell them when it began. I don't know how to answer. Did it begin when he first kissed me, or when he told me I was beautiful and that no one had ever moved him as I did, or when we first had sex? It's not like when I dated my husband and we had a first date to refer back to.

Perhaps it began when my daughter was diagnosed with leukemia. When I heard the diagnosis I felt my world collapse beneath me. I felt so alone and had no one to talk to. My husband was busy dealing with his own grief in his own fashion: working all the time and staying out of the house. We grew apart until we were simply two strangers sharing a bed. I turned to the only person I knew I could count on to comfort me—my pastor.

He seemed a wonderful support. He listened without judging or giving advice. He spent hours just sitting with me in the hospital. I missed the comforting touch of a caring person and so sometimes he would simply hold me. I felt safe with him and came to depend on his support.

My daughter's leukemia went into remission and I rejoiced that I could return to what I thought would be a normal life. I became involved in church activities again. Since the pastor and I had established a rapport, he encouraged me to work with him on a number of projects. It seemed a way to both maintain the emotional connection we had established and to repay him for his kindness. The relationship seemed to become a mutual one, as he began to share his concerns, needs and hurts. He let me know that the reason he understood my marital difficulties was because he and his wife were also estranged. He couldn't let people know because it would affect his ministry but he knew that I would understand. He gradually let me know that he needed me as much as I needed him.

The question keeps haunting me. When did it become sexual abuse? Was it when he encouraged me to become dependent on him? When he began sharing his personal problems with me? When he told me that we had a special and secret relationship and that no one had ever understood him as I did? The first time I felt his erection when he hugged me? Or when he hugged me in the hospital for the first time? Our emotional intensity was so great, he said, that it wasn't right that we didn't make the relationship complete as God intended. He said that while we were both married to other people "in the eyes of men," in God's eyes we were each others'

⁶Sharon's story is a compilation of many women's and men's stories. Similarities to anyone's personal story is purely coincidental.

spiritual and sexual partners. He left me feeling that there was no spiritual impediment to a sexual relationship.

Once the sex began, the relationship seemed to change. We still worked together but he was much more furtive about arranging times with me. He barely spoke to me when others were around and warned me not to let anyone find out about our relationship.

I was afraid and confused. I was afraid that people would find out and they would blame me for seducing a good man. I was afraid my husband would learn what was happening and leave me. I was confused because my pastor had said this was God-ordained and then wrapped it in secrecy. I thought I loved him, but I felt such shame at what was happening.

I don't know when the abuse began but I do know when it ended. Another woman from our church approached the deacons (my husband and I were deacons) and said that our pastor had been sexually involved with her for the last four years. I froze, terrified they would all find out about my relationship with him. My face flooded with shame as I joined the others in saying that we didn't believe her. I thought it couldn't be true because I knew he loved me. When I confronted him, he denied her story. For some reason, I cut off the relationship anyway. If people treated her like that, how would they treat me, for whom it was true?

No, now that I think of it, I don't know when it ended. In fact, I don't think that it has. When I confronted him, the sexual contact ended. But it's not over. I left my church because I couldn't bear seeing him every week, pretending everything was normal. I couldn't stand calmly by when I heard others say what a gentle man he was and how safe they felt with him. I'm still afraid that people will find out and condemn me. My husband and I have just started rebuilding our marriage; disclosure could ruin everything.

I read an article the other day about the importance of beginnings and endings. Maybe that's why I can't move on. My experience has no beginning and no ending.

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.*

*My heart is in anguish within me,
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me.
And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest; truly I would flee far away;
I would lodge in the wilderness;
I would hurry to find a shelter for myself
from the raging wind and tempest."*

*It is not enemies who taunt me—I could bear that;
it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me—
I could hide from them.
But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend,
with whom I kept pleasant company;
we walked in the house of God with the throng.*

*My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me
with speech smoother than butter, but with a heart set on war;
with words that were softer than oil, but in fact were drawn swords.*

Psalm 22:1-2 and Psalm 55:4-8, 12-14, 20-21

IV. Understanding sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver

It wasn't just the sexual abuse that hurt; it was feeling that he had raped my soul.

— A survivor of sexual abuse by a church leader

Sharon's story is about being abused sexually by her pastor. Contrary to the ways he described the relationship, it wasn't an affair, falling in love, or the result of a spouse's inadequacies. It wasn't a "fall," an indiscretion, or a lapse of judgment. It was a misuse of power and a betrayal of trust.⁷

Definitions and statistics

Sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver refers to any sexualized behavior that occurs within the church context and where one party has more power than the other. The perpetrator can be anyone in a leadership position, either paid or volunteer. It could be a pastor, Christian counselor, youth leader, deacon or Sunday School teacher.

Sexual abuse or sexualized behavior includes any physical contact, bodily movement, or verbalization that uses sexual expression to control or intimidate the less powerful person in the relationship. The acts involved may be **overt**, involving actual physical contact of a sexualized nature or **covert**, as in pornography, sexual innuendo, or inappropriate disclosures of a personal nature regarding sexual matters. The person victimized may be an adult or a child, female or male, and the same or the opposite sex as the offender.

Sexual harassment is also a type of sexual abuse. There are two forms:

- **Quid pro quo harassment** occurs when a person is subjected to unwelcome sexual advances, and submission to them is made the basis for firing, hiring, and/or advancement.
- **Environmental harassment** refers to any type of unwelcome sexual behavior that creates a hostile work environment. This can include offensive jokes, display of sexually suggestive objects or posters, and unwelcome flirtations or propositions.⁸

Several surveys indicate that Sharon was not alone in her experiences:

- In 2008, 3,559 people responded to a national random survey done by Baylor University, determining the prevalence of clergy sexual misconduct with adults. More than 3% of women reported that they

had been the object of clergy sexual misconduct at some time in their adult lives. This means that in a congregation of 400 people, 7 women will have personally experienced clergy sexual misconduct. 92% of these advances had been made in secret and 67% of the offenders were married to someone else at the time of the advance. 8% of respondents reported having known about clergy sexual misconduct occurring in a congregation they had attended.⁹

- A study completed by the United Methodist Church revealed that in their denomination 77% of women clergy had experienced sexual harassment in the church.¹⁰

To date, there is no indication that sexual abuse is more or less prevalent in any one denomination.

Unfortunately, sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver has often been minimized. The church has resisted identifying it as abuse and the violation of one person by another. If the church is to intervene and confront misconduct appropriately, it must be clear about what it is, because the way such misconduct is understood determines the response. The church must be absolutely clear that sexual misconduct is a violation of a sacred trust in which a person in a position of leadership takes advantage of a vulnerable person instead of protecting them.¹¹

Patterns of behavior

Clergy sexual misconduct generally follows a predictable pattern:

1. The perpetrator *grooms* the victim, making them feel important and valued.
2. The perpetrator encourages dependence on him or her so the victim feels they need this person's help and support.
3. The perpetrator then convinces the victim that they need the victim. They may say that "no one else understands the stress I'm under." Or they may violate confidentiality, inappropriately telling the victim about church problems or the personal problems of other counselees.
4. Gradually, the abusive person introduces sexualized behaviors in a way that the victim may interpret as appropriate, such as ending each counseling session with a hug, gradually increasing the intensity of it.
5. Finally, the perpetrator engages in more blatantly abusive behavior with the victim.

⁹Clergy Sexual Misconduct Study, Baylor University, at www.baylor.edu/clergysexualmisconduct/.

¹⁰UM Sexual Ethics, The United Methodist Church, www.umsexualethics.org.

¹¹Fortune, Marie M. *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook*, FaithTrust Institute, 2009, p. 29-30.

⁷Fortune, Marie M. *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook*, FaithTrust Institute, 2009, p. 29-30.

⁸Canadian Human Rights Commission, www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca.

The perpetrator may use spiritual or therapeutic rationalizations to support their behavior. For example, “You’ve spoken about difficulty in sexual relationships. Sex is best experienced in an open, trusting relationship. Since we have worked hard at developing such a relationship here, this is likely the best place to work on improving your ability to respond sexually. I can teach you to love your husband more fully, to be the wife Christ intended you to be.”

By the time the abuse becomes apparent, the victim believes they need the pastor or caregiver, and that the pastor’s well-being depends on keeping silent. There will also usually be threats, convincing the victim they would not be believed if they told anyone of the abuse.

Sexualized behavior within a leadership or care giving relationship is **always** inappropriate and abusive for these reasons:

- There is a misuse of power and authority. The leader uses their power to meet their own needs rather than to minister to those in their care.
- Vulnerability and trust are exploited as the leader takes advantage of the needs of the other person.
- There is a serious violation of the leader’s role, which is to serve members of the congregation and work in their best interests.
- There is no possibility of meaningful consent. In a professional or pastoral relationship, the unequal balance of power precludes meaningful consent to sexual activity. In order for consent to be meaningful, there must be mutuality, choice and equality, as well as the absence of fear.¹²
- Church leaders can be charged with fraud if they misrepresent their role as a church leader.

Even in those cases when a parishioner may appear to initiate an inappropriate relationship and does not see oneself as a victim, it is a violation of pastoral ethics for the church leader to accept such advances. Because of the power imbalance, it is *always* the responsibility of the caregiver to maintain appropriate, ethical boundaries and immediately refer a counselee to another professional when a situation like this arises.

¹²Fortune, p. 49-50.

V. Understanding power

In order to understand sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver, it is important to understand power. Power can be both creative and destructive.

Webster’s Dictionary defines power as the “possession of control, authority, or influence over others; the ability to act or produce an effect.” Most people have several sources of power due to a number of factors: class, education, knowledge or information, employment position, creativity, relationships, finances, personal charisma, gender, race, physical size, church role or spirituality. Having power gives one the means of making changes in one’s life and in society.

As MaryKate Morse explains:

Power is less like a tool we use to make something happen and more like the water we drink to stay alive. Personal power is essential. It means knowing that I am an individual and can make decisions about my life. Personal power is key to emotional health and well-being.¹³

This recognizes that all people need some power in their lives. Without power, a person feels inadequate, out of control and lost. The crucial distinction is whether one uses power creatively or destructively.

Creative power

Richard Foster speaks of creative power as “... the power that creates, gives life and joy and peace. It is freedom and not bondage, life and not death, transformation and not coercion. The power that creates restores relationship and gives the gift of wholeness to all.”¹⁴

Dr. Sarah Mitchell elaborates that “We need to learn a new way of understanding power. When we understand power not in terms of domination but in terms of mobilizing resources, releasing creativity and enabling community, then real transformation can occur.”¹⁵ When power is used creatively, it restores relationships, liberates those who are oppressed, brings inner and outer healing, nurtures confidence, enhances communication and inspires faith.

¹³Morse, MaryKate. *Making Room for Leadership: Power, Space and Influence*, InterVarsity Press, 2008, p. 41.

¹⁴Foster, Richard J. *The Challenge of the Disciplined Life: Christian Reflections on Money, Sex, and Power*, Harper & Row, 1985, p. 196.

¹⁵Canadian Red Cross: RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention programs, at <http://www.redcross.ca/RespectED>.

Destructive power

Power can also be used to hurt. Peter Rutter speaks of the impact of male power on a woman's well-being, influencing "whether she experiences her femininity as a force to be valued and respected or as a commodity to be exploited."¹⁶

Sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver is one of the ways in which power becomes destructive. Abuse occurs when there is an imbalance of power and persons with greater power misuse their power for their own benefit and to the detriment of another. In situations of sexual abuse within the church, the abusing leader has greater power than the victim, often in several areas: gender, physical size, leadership position and education. In addition, church leaders have enormous power because they are perceived by some to be God's representatives. The perpetrator may also have the power of information because church leaders often possess information that is not available to others.

Acknowledging power

While perpetrators of abuse have more power than their victims, they sometimes do not feel powerful, and most refuse to acknowledge their power. In fact, they frequently feel inadequate, overworked, unsupported, ineffective, powerless, and as though they are not in control. Therefore, the notion of pastoral power may not be something with which they readily identify.

Additionally, within churches that emphasize the "priesthood of all believers" there is less willingness to recognize power differentials within the congregation. The appearance of humility may in fact silence any criticism and increase a leader's power.¹⁷ Inability to identify power differences is dangerous. When pastors have difficulty acknowledging their power, they stand in greater danger of abusing it. As Carolyn Shrock-Shenk explains, "Power is ambiguous, slippery and intoxicating and will control me if I am not conscious of its role in my life. I cannot control or manage something I deny having."¹⁸

¹⁶Rutter, Peter. *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*, Fawcett Crest, 1989, p. 30.

¹⁷Private correspondence from Muriel Bechtel to Heather Block, former Program Coordinator, *Voices for Non-Violence*, MCC Manitoba, February 8, 1996.

¹⁸Schrock-Shenk, Carolyn. "Fessing Up" to Power," Mennonite Central Committee, *A Common Place*, September, 1999.

Power eroticized

A power imbalance is easily sexualized or eroticized. Carolyn Holderread Heggen notes that:

The imbalance of power between men and women has become eroticized in our culture. Many persons find male power and female powerlessness sexually arousing. In general, men are sexually attracted to females who are younger, smaller, and less powerful than themselves. Women tend to be attracted to males who are older, larger, and more powerful. Male clergy have a great imbalance of power over their congregations, which are often predominately women, therefore, the stage is set for a sexually inappropriate expression of this power differential.¹⁹

In some instances, misuses of power can be sexualized in situations that begin as mentoring. This could happen in the case of an older man or woman taking an interest in a younger person of either gender for the purpose of encouraging that youth's development. Youth activities that begin as play can become a context of power and authority when youth leaders do not understand the power they possess simply by virtue of their age, authority and gender.

Because they have greater power, the leader always bears primary responsibility to protect the boundaries of the relationship. The person with the greater power must act in the best interests of the person with lesser power.²⁰ This holds true even when the person with less power makes sexualized advances. A leader is the keeper of a trust and, as such, is responsible to ensure that no sexualized behavior occurs, "...no matter what the level of provocation or apparent consent."²¹

¹⁹Heggen, Carolyn Holderread. *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches*, Herald Press, 1993, reprinted by Wipf & Stock, 2006, p. 111.

²⁰Rutter, p. 24.

²¹Ibid, emphasis in the original.

VI. Understanding those who have experienced abuse²²

No one is immune from sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver. There are no common traits except that the person is, at the time of the abuse, vulnerable in some fashion. A person may be susceptible to abuse due to physical size, physical needs due to a disability, employment or training needs, financial needs or emotional upheaval. A previous history of abuse, either witnessed or experienced, may also create vulnerability as the person may have learned to be passive, to accept inappropriate behavior as well as responsibility for the harm done to her or him.

The consequences of sexual abuse

Sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver has many long-term consequences. The abuse affects one's whole life, including feelings, relationships and spirituality. Common effects include overwhelming feelings of fear, guilt and anger. Betrayal by someone who should be trustworthy often shatters one's ability to trust and leaves victims feeling unsafe. Persons who have experienced abuse often blame themselves and feel dirty, ashamed and devalued. They often experience depression, anxiety and physical difficulties, such as sleeplessness, eating disorders and fatigue. The abuse may affect relationships, causing difficulty with intimacy and sexual relations, work, parenting and friendships. It may also result in future abusive relationships. The person who has experienced abuse may turn to alcohol or drugs to lessen the pain or may show suicidal or self-destructive tendencies.

There are also spiritual effects. People who were abused often experience a loss of trust in church leadership and separation from their congregation. They may feel betrayed by God and the church. Or they may feel sinful and question God's love for them.

The healing process

Recovery from sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver is often very difficult for a victim. The wounds are deep and often made worse by the attitudes of those around them.

In many ways, the healing process can be compared to grief work which accompanies major life losses. It includes intense emotions and takes a long time, with movement through multiple stages. Survivors need to grieve what happened and what was stolen from them.

In order for healing to occur, survivors need a place of safety, where they are believed and free from further abuse and blame. Once they feel safe,

²²Block, Heather. *Advocacy Training Manual: Advocating for Survivors of Sexual Assault by a Church Leader or Caregiver*. Winnipeg: Mennonite Central Committee, 2000, p. 11-20.

they can begin talking about what happened, express their feelings and recognize how the abuse has affected them. Eventually they can come to a place of resolution or vindication and let go of their feelings of anger, rage and injustice.

At this point they are able to recognize that the abuse was not their fault, and they are better equipped to set healthier patterns of behavior. They can let go of the control that the abuse had over their lives and relationships. This often lengthy process may feel very overwhelming to the person experiencing it.

Because the abuse occurred within the church context, spiritual healing is also needed. Those who experience abuse may feel that God is on the side of the perpetrator and therefore that God has betrayed them. This may mean grieving their lost perception of God as protector and expressing their anger. Hopefully, they can come to a renewed understanding of God as one who walks with them at all times and provides hope and strength for new life.

What the victim needs for healing

The needs of those who have experienced abuse vary from person to person, depending on previous experiences and on what has been stolen from them. However, there are a number of elements that may assist survivors in their healing. While an awareness of these elements will help others to be supportive, one cannot make assumptions regarding an individual's needs.

In general, survivors of abuse need to have someone listen to them, believe them and reassure them that the abuse was not their fault or responsibility. The harm that was done to them needs to be acknowledged and their reactions and responses validated. They need to know that they will not be judged for their behavior, ways of coping or for their attitudes and the questions they pose. It is important that they be in charge of their own lives and decisions, while being befriended by a trusted person who will walk with them through the healing process. They need to know that an official or institutional response is available to them and they need to experience a sense of justice and restoration.

Forgiveness

There is often strong pressure put on the victim of abuse to quickly forgive and be reconciled to the offender. Texts such as Colossians 3:13 and Matthew 6:15 are used to urge the offended person to forgive. Church members may believe that if the victim forgives, then everything can go back to "normal." However, quick forgiveness without true repentance

and restitution on the part of the offender is not a healing experience for either the victim or the perpetrator of abuse.²³

In Luke 17:3 Jesus teaches that repentance must precede forgiveness. Genuine repentance includes not only remorse and confession, but also taking full responsibility for the abuse, naming the injustice, making long-term changes in beliefs and behavior, and making restitution, such as paying for counselling for the victim. Ezekiel 18:30-32 makes it clear that repentance involves getting a ‘new heart.’

Forgiveness is ultimately a process the survivor experiences by the grace of God, so that the abuse does not dominate her or his life anymore. It is a process of letting go and moving on in healthy ways.

²³Fortune, Marie M. *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook*, FaithTrust Institute, 2009, p. 63-64.

VII. Understanding church leaders or caregivers who abuse

Characteristics of those who abuse

As mentioned previously, the perpetrator of sexual abuse within the church could be anyone in a leadership position, either paid or unpaid. Unfortunately there are no identifying physical traits of perpetrators of sexual abuse. The characteristics are more internal.²⁴

Those who abuse positions of power are often respected in their community and their ministry inspirational, charismatic and effective. Yet, those who behave abusively also have a need for control and may have a strong sense of entitlement. They are likely overworked and overwhelmed in other areas of their lives. While they have a great deal of power, they often feel powerless and so increase their sense of power by controlling another person. This control or domination may be very subtle.

Furthermore, those who victimize others often have difficulty in a number of areas, such as:

- poor inter-personal communication skills
- lack of awareness regarding appropriate interpersonal boundaries and their own motivation
- inability to recognize their own sexual feelings and a tendency to confuse affection and sexual desire
- difficulty with intimate relationships
- limited impulse control and poor judgment
- manipulative behavior
- an active fantasy life

Although they may appear to empathize with others, perpetrators do not really have the skills to do so, or even to sense the damage caused by their behavior. They often have a distorted sense of self and minimize, deny and rationalize their behavior.

It is not unusual for perpetrators to seek out positions where they have access to those who are vulnerable. For example, pedophiles may volunteer with children’s programs or attempt to find employment in camps or day care centers.

²⁴Fortune, Marie M. *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook*, Faith Trust Institute, 2009, p. 23-25.

Effects of abuse on perpetrators and their families

Disclosure of the abuse has significant impact on perpetrators' lives. They may feel shame and guilt, and fear further disclosures. There is a disruption of relationships with family members, the victim and the congregation. They may lose their reputation and their job. Legal liability, criminal charges and incarceration are also possibilities.

In most cases, the perpetrator denies having behaved abusively. The church is then caught in a dilemma and may become divided, not knowing whether to believe the church leader or the victim. At times, there may even be an outpouring of support from the congregation and the denomination.

It is also important to remember the effects on the perpetrator's family. The offender's spouse and other family members will likely feel betrayed. They may also face isolation from the congregation. For example, Ann and Derek Legg quote one offender's wife who said:

'The congregation lost one; I lost hundreds. Not one person from the church hierarchy ever called me and asked how I was getting along, how the children were doing... I know we had to leave, but we still were human. Law without gospel is dead. For us, the church was without heart and soul.'²⁵

Church leaders must recognize "...that the family is not guilty and should not have to suffer the punishment of the guilty. The inevitable pain of shame, humiliation, loss and grief is quite enough for these forgotten members of God's church."²⁶

What the perpetrator needs for healing

Healing for the person who victimizes is very different from that of the victim. In order for healing for both offenders and victims to take place, perpetrators must be held accountable and truly repent of what they have done.

Repentance involves much more than remorse or feeling bad. It involves acknowledging the full extent of one's actions, deeply feeling the effects of these actions, confession, experiencing consequences and taking full responsibility for both the actions and the effects. Further, it involves making some form of restitution or paying back what was stolen from the victim. This requires professional counseling, accountability and

monitoring. A perpetrator's healing is neither simple nor quick. This process takes years of concentrated effort.

When thinking about healing for perpetrators, it is important to remember that their motivation, background and psychological makeup will affect how long rehabilitation will take and if it is likely to occur.

Marie Fortune describes perpetrators as fitting on a continuum between two categories: wanderers and predators. The wanderer "wanders" across boundaries while the predator is sociopathic, lacking conscience and preying upon the victims.²⁷

Wanderers and predators have different prognoses regarding the effectiveness of treatment. The prognosis for wanderers is fair to good if they are highly motivated to change. Predators have a poor to fair prognosis even if highly motivated. It is important to have an assessment completed by an unbiased expert, trained to work with those who sexually abuse, before recommending a course of therapeutic rehabilitation.²⁸

²⁵Legg, Ann and Derek Legg. "The Offender's Family," *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, edited by Hopkins, Nancy Myer and Mark Laaser, Liturgical Press, 1995, p. 154.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Fortune, Marie M. *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook*, Faith Trust Institute, 2009, p. 23-24.

²⁸Ibid, p. 97-98.

VIII. Understanding congregations affected by sexual abuse

The climate in which clergy or professional sexual abuse occurs. Sexual abuse by a church leader or caregiver does not occur in a vacuum. Perpetrators often situate themselves in settings that tend to support this misuse of power. Such congregations often exhibit the following characteristics:

- They are isolated or closed systems with a tendency to be suspicious of connections with other groups or intervention from outsiders.
- There are previously existing divisions, blurred boundaries and a lack of individuation between members.
- Patterns of communication are distorted, including an unspoken understanding that one should not question congregational rules or talk about difficult feelings or events.
- There is a tendency to cover up unpleasant events or silence those who disclose bad news such as abuse.
- Shame and perfection are used to motivate congregants' behavior or performance.
- Blind obedience to authority is emphasized, often coupled with authoritarian leadership.
- Leaders are placed on pedestals, and members want to believe they can do no wrong.
- Leaders lack support, supervision and accountability, and are unwilling to acknowledge abuse as a power issue.
- There are no abuse-related policies or guidelines.²⁹

In addition, there are often implicit underlying rules for behavior. Women may feel they are responsible to protect the feelings of men and heal their wounds. Women and children are taught to “overlook, forgive and tolerate” boundary violations by a professional.³⁰ Men are taught to value control and to fear emotions, vulnerability and dependency on others.³¹

Understanding the climate in which the abuse occurs is important. It helps explain how the abuse could continue for such a long time without anyone saying anything, and why there is often more support for the perpetrator than for the victim. Understanding these dynamics also prepares those who confront the abuse for the many levels of resistance they will encounter

²⁹Brubaker, David. “Not in our Family! When the Organizational Family Turns Incestuous,” Paper presented at the *National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution*, June 6, 1991.

³⁰Cooper-White, Pamela. “Soul-Stealing: Power Relations in Pastoral Sexual Abuse,” *Christian Century*, (February 20, 1991) p. 198.

³¹Rutter, p. 107-110.

as they work toward healing and justice. They are confronting not only individual behavior but deeply ingrained patterns in the community. **This does not, however, excuse perpetrators or justify avoiding responsibility.**

The congregation's response to disclosure³²

The congregations or institutions in which perpetrators work and worship are deeply affected by the abuse. They become secondary victims, with members feeling betrayed by their trust in this leader. Other feelings include shock, disbelief, confusion, betrayal, fear and a sense of vulnerability. They may also feel anger towards the victim or the perpetrator, and isolate them and their families.

There is often denial or minimization of the problem and division in the congregation. Members may lose confidence in their leadership and face a loss of credibility in the wider community. The church may also face legal liability and potential financial payouts.

From the outset, it is essential that the congregation seek guidance and support from their denominational leadership as well as from a consultant experienced in responding to sexual abuse by church leaders. The congregation also needs to receive information regarding the allegations, while protecting the identity of the victim, and be assured that due process is being followed. These steps can minimize the risk of additional hurt or even a church split, and facilitate the journey of transformation and reconciliation.

Healing for the congregation

As a secondary victim, the congregation needs to go through a process similar to the individual who directly experienced the abuse. It is helpful to see this process from the perspective of the familiar phases of grief as outlined by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross.³³ The grief model helps congregations deal with the feelings, reactions and ways of coping with the abuse. It also allows time and space for resolution and restoration to occur in the church. The phases are:

1. **Denial:** Individuals disbelieve the allegations. Denial provides emotional protection from information that is too painful to absorb.
2. **Anger:** As denial becomes difficult to maintain, people become angry. Anger, at this stage, is often expressed not toward the offender, but at the victim or those bringing the allegations forward, because it is still too painful to acknowledge betrayal by the offender.

³²For more information, see Fortune, Marie M. *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook*, FaithTrust Institute, 2009.

³³Patricia Liberty. “Grief and Loss: Dealing with Feelings,” in *When a Congregation is Betrayed, Responding to Clergy Misconduct*, Beth Ann Gaede, ed. The Alban Institute, 2006, p. 40-45.

3. **Bargaining:** The congregation negotiates with the offending leader, setting conditions for accountability.
4. **Depression:** This is a time when people have the capacity to feel at a deeper and non-reactive level. There may be resistance to and fear of depression, but if the congregation is open to this phase, it can be an opening for insight and recovery.
5. **Acceptance:** People come to their own understanding and sense of peace regarding the misconduct. There is agreement that the congregation has suffered and renewed commitment to the church.

Larry Graham provides another description of the church's journey towards transformation:³⁴

1. **Secret:** The abuse is occurring, but no one knows except the perpetrator, the victim and those the victim may have told. Any rumors of inappropriate behavior are not pursued.
2. **Discovery:** Someone comes forward with an allegation. Community members learn about the allegations and feel torn and confused.
3. **Polarization:** The situation becomes public and the accused may give out information to control the damage. People choose sides, either in favor of the accused or the complainant.
4. **Recovery:** Healing begins as the congregation re-examines its structures and policies that enabled abuse to occur. Relationships in the congregation begin to be restored.
5. **Transformation:** The church makes changes in its structures and policies, in order to prevent further abuse.

It is helpful to remember that these phases are fluid and the process is not linear. Church members move through them at their own pace, in their own way. People move back and forth between stages, and may even appear to be in more than one stage simultaneously. Some individuals may be resistant to move through the stages in any way, thereby creating barriers for the congregation as a whole to heal. As challenging as it is, awareness of these different phases helps people understand each other and acknowledge the impact the sexual misconduct has on the church, while affirming the need to work together toward restoration and reconciliation.

³⁴Larry Graham "Healing the Congregation," *Conciliation Quarterly*, "Pastoral Sexual Misconduct: The Church's Response," (Spring, 1991), p. 2-4, at: <http://us.mcc.org/programs/peacebuilding/resources/print/conciliationquarterly1993-91>.

IX. The need for the institutional church to respond

When abuse occurs, there is great brokenness. This extends to the victim, the victim's family and friends, the congregation and wider church community, the perpetrator's family and friends, and the perpetrator. As the body of Christ, the church is called to be an instrument of healing in this situation. It is called to stand with those who are hurting and oppressed, and to seek justice within the church and in society.

Legal implications

Historically, moral or ethical obligations have not been enough of a motivating factor for the church to respond in a helpful manner. Until there were legal or financial ramifications, allegations of abuse within the church often resulted in the conference or denomination moving the perpetrator to another congregation. As this did not address the deeper issues, perpetrators would be enabled by the church structure to continue to abuse in new congregations. Sometimes the original congregations hired others who were also perpetrators. In this regard, society has recognized the damaging effects of professional sexual misconduct more quickly than the church.

While churches have often been hesitant to intervene out of a fear that the abuser will either sue or leave the church, no one is helped by remaining silent. In order for healing to occur for the victim, abuser and all other affected persons, the church must respond.

Both congregations and individual leaders within the church are liable for damages resulting from professional sexual misconduct. Churches can be held liable for the actions of those they employ and for failing to adequately train or supervise their employee(s). A lawyer explains the liability:

Many churches and clergy are not aware that they could face civil liability for sexual relationships between clergy and parishioners which were considered to be "consensual" but which a Court determined involved a breach of fiduciary duty by the clergy. A fiduciary duty may arise if an individual is in a position of vulnerability or dependency to another and is subject to the discretion of another who has power over the individual. Thus, if an individual came to a member of the clergy for counseling and the clergy exploited that relationship for sexual gratification, a Court could well determine that a breach of fiduciary duty had been committed giving rise to substantial claims for damages... Obviously there is the need not only for awareness of the legal ramifications but also of the personal implications of relationships which can develop between members of the clergy

and their parishioners. It would be better for churches and clergy to take proactive steps before problems occur, rather than to be on the receiving end of a lawsuit for several hundreds of thousands of dollars which could be avoided.³⁵

While it is important to recognize this legal possibility, avoiding a lawsuit should not be the motivating factor for churches to take proactive steps toward abuse prevention and response.

Prevention

There are a number of proactive steps that can be taken by the denomination, the church and its leaders to lessen the possibility of sexual abuse occurring.³⁶

At the *denominational* level, the following steps are essential:

1. **Training** of church leaders includes an understanding of ethical guidelines regarding boundaries, power and authority, and sexual conduct.
2. **Policies and procedures** for responding to allegations of leader sexual misconduct are developed by conferences and denominations.
3. **Continuing education** for all ministers regarding professional ethics is required.
4. **Consultation and supervision** are available to all ministers.

At the *local church* level, it is important that:

1. **Church leaders and congregants are familiar** with clergy misconduct policies and procedures.
2. **Clear job descriptions** for the minister are provided.
3. Regular **performance evaluations** based on job descriptions are done.
4. **Workload and stress level** are manageable.
5. **Long-term counseling** of congregants is referred to professional counselors.
6. **Leave policies** (paid and unpaid) are generous and **educational leave** is supported financially.
7. **Supports** such as accountability, consultation and supervision are in place.
8. **Leadership is shared** among clergy and laity.

³⁵“A Legal Response” by Peter E. Jervis, Lerner & Associates, Toronto, in *Context: Research to Make Religion Relevant*, MARC, Canada, a division of World Vision Canada. May 1993, Vol. 3, Issue 2, p. 2.

³⁶*Clergy Misconduct: Sexual Abuse in the Ministerial Relationship, Workshop Manual*, FaithTrust Institute, Seattle, WA, 1992, p. 61-62.

9. All leaders practice good **self-care**, paying attention to their emotional needs.
10. **Relationships that are healthy and supportive** both within and outside the church community are developed. Relationships with multiple roles are avoided if possible.

It is also essential to have *child protection policies and procedures* in place in the congregation, such as:

1. **Safe meeting places**, with windows in all interior doors.
2. **Two adults present** when meeting with children and youth.
3. **Screening** for all volunteers and staff.
4. Requiring all volunteers to attend the church **at least six months** prior to working with children and youth.
5. **Regular training** for parents, Sunday School teachers and youth workers about harassment and abuse.
6. **Education** for children and youth on safe touch and healthy sexuality.
7. **Procedures for reporting** disclosures or allegations of abuse.
8. **Guidelines for relating to a sex offender** in the congregation.

Unfortunately, the church often finds it difficult to act in a way that promotes justice and is compassionate to all. The institution may default to a self-protective mode and hope the problem goes away. However, there is a moral and legal obligation to take appropriate action.

Elements of justice-making

The FaithTrust Institute in Seattle, Washington has worked at response and prevention of clergy sexual misconduct for over 30 years. In listening to hundreds of survivors, the staff at FaithTrust began to realize that the elements required for healing fell into seven categories:

1. **Truth-telling:** to give the victim/survivor the chance to tell their story.
2. **Acknowledgement:** to give a response to the victim/survivor, by someone who matters to them. This person stands beside them as an advocate, and can say, for example, “What he did to you was wrong.”
3. **Compassion:** to suffer with the victim/survivor – and not pass by.
4. **Protection of the vulnerable:** to do everything possible to ensure that no one else is harmed by this perpetrator.
5. **Accountability for the offender:** to call the offender to account either in the church and/or legally.

6. **Restitution to the survivor:** to give material compensation to the survivor for the cost of the harm done.
7. **Vindication for the survivor:** to set the survivor free and restore them to the community.³⁷

Few survivors actually experience all aspects of justice-making, but it is important that they experience enough to be able to move forward in their lives. A deep scar will remain, but fullness of life can be restored. The faith community must take responsibility to do everything it can to make healing possible.³⁸

*“There can be no healing without justice,
and justice takes courage.”³⁹*

³⁷Fortune, Marie M. *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook*. FaithTrust Institute, 2009, p. 61-62.

³⁸Ibid, p. 62.

³⁹Ibid, p. 62.

X. Working toward an ending

Sharon's story—part two

It seems impossible. I've been told that there can be an ending to my experience. I'm still trying to believe it.

When our family moved to another city I started attending a support group for parents of children with cancer. Through the group I met a counselor, whom I started seeing on a more regular basis. We had a rocky start until she asked me to tell her about relationships with previous caregivers. I broke down and, out of desperation, told her about my former pastor.

She really surprised me. She told me how sorry she was that he had misused his power and taken advantage of my vulnerability. She explained to me that in legal terms this was known as a breach of fiduciary duty and was a form of sexual abuse.

Her words explained my confusion, my feelings of powerlessness, my shame, and my sense of betrayal. It's been hard for me to realize that it was his responsibility to uphold the boundaries of the relationship and that if I hadn't been so vulnerable I would never have considered a sexual relationship with him. I remembered the other woman who said he had been sexually involved with her. I started realizing that this was likely a pattern—I wasn't his only victim.

It seems so simple when I write it on paper. And yet this whole process has involved months and months of intense pain. I have cried for hours on end, missed days of work and spent a lot of time feeling scared to leave the house. But I'm starting to see the other side. Last week when I was playing with my daughter, I laughed for the first time in months.

My journey back to faith has been slow. My pastor had represented God to me. How could I trust in God when this man of God had abused me in God's name? But slowly I am coming to realize that God did not condone my pastor's actions, nor does God condemn me for being seduced by him. Gradually, through friends at my new church who model integrity and compassion, I am coming to believe in a God who can handle my anger and my doubts, a God who hates injustice.

I've been thinking about others who were hurt by this man and am wondering if there is any way to prevent it from happening again. I may lodge an official complaint with our denomination. My counselor has suggested that I find an advocate or support person who could walk with

me through this process -- helping me decide what I need to do, offering support and assisting me in negotiating the conference structures.

Hopefully, lodging the complaint will let others know this man isn't trustworthy, protect them from being hurt, and hold him accountable.

XI. The journey toward healing

If you have experienced abuse by a church leader or caregiver

While it may be hard for you to believe, what happened to you was not your fault. Someone else chose to misuse their power in a way that hurt you. You may feel a great deal of anger, guilt, shame and fear. You may question your faith. These are normal responses.

Abuse often leaves a person feeling isolated and alone. It is important to find someone you can talk to—someone who will believe and not blame you. If you don't feel comfortable with anyone you know, contact your local sexual assault crisis line. People on staff there should be able to support you and perhaps help you find other resources. Books, audiovisuals and websites may also be helpful in understanding your situation.

You may choose to lodge a complaint with the denomination or institution that employs this leader. Most denominations and institutions have policies and procedures to follow in these situations. Try to find someone who knows this policy and can help you start this process.

Most policies include offering an advocate to the survivor. This is someone trained to walk through the process with you. They should not take over the process but accompany you. Often survivors of abuse find it difficult to trust someone enough to share their story and this may make it difficult to trust an advocate. Feel free to take your time—you set the pace for your own journey.

If you are providing support to someone who has experienced abuse

Remember that you are supporting a person who has experienced a great deal of pain and whose survival shows much inner strength. Listen and treat your friend with respect and without judging. A person who has experienced abuse may need to speak of the whole experience many times. You may want to keep reminding your friend that the abuse wasn't their fault and that they didn't deserve to be hurt. Also keep in mind that confidentiality is essential.

You may feel overwhelmed by what you hear. If you know the perpetrator, you may have difficulty believing that he or she could do this. These questions and feelings are best shared with someone other than the survivor, so that you don't add to her or his pain. You may contact a confidential sexual assault crisis line or someone who is trained to deal with these issues. If you do so, remember to maintain confidentiality and focus on your responses and how you can be most helpful to your friend.

Reading books on the topic will also be useful in understanding what the survivor is experiencing.

Sometimes survivors of abuse choose to report their offenders to the denomination or employing institution. Reporting the abuse helps to prevent harm to others and hold the perpetrator accountable. The survivor will need a great deal of support and encouragement through this process. Your main support may be in the form of listening and giving tangible assistance. Denominations and church institutions should offer the services of an advocate to the survivor. An advocate is trained to walk with survivors and help them navigate the institutional process.

For more information, see the *Advocacy Training Manual: Advocating for Survivors of Sexual Assault by a Church Leader or Caregiver* by Heather Block. This is available for free download on the MCC website: abuse.mcc.org.

XII. Resources

Books

Adams, Carol J. & Marie M. Fortune, editors. *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*. New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1995.

Benyei, Candace Reed. *Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems: Scapegoating, Family Secrets and the Abuse of Power*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 1998.

Fortune, Marie M. *Is Nothing Sacred?* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Reprinted Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008.

Fortune, Marie M. *Responding to Clergy Misconduct: A Handbook*, FaithTrust Institute, 2009. This is a complete revision of *Clergy Misconduct: Sexual Abuse in the Ministerial Relationship*, 1992, 1997.

Fortune, Marie M. *Sexual Violence, The Sin Revisited*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2005.

Gaede, Beth Ann, editor. *When A Congregation is Betrayed: Responding to Clergy Misconduct*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006.

Grenz, Stanley J. & Roy D. Bell. *Betrayal of Trust: Confronting and Preventing Clergy Sexual Misconduct*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2nd edition, 2001.

Harder, Jeanette. *Let the Children Come, Preparing Faith Communities to End Child Abuse and Neglect*, Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2010.

Heggen, Carolyn Holderread. *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993. Reprinted Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence — from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 2nd edition, 1997.

Hopkins, Nancy Myer & Mark Laaser, editors. *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995.

Hopkins, Nancy Myer. *The Congregational Response to Clergy Betrayals of Trust*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998.

Horst, Elizabeth. *Recovering the Lost Self: Shame-Healing for Victims of Clergy Sexual Abuse*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998.

Kroeger, Catherine Clark & James R Beck. *Women, Abuse and the Bible: How Scripture Can be Used to Hurt or Heal*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996.

McClintock, Karen A. *Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations: A Resource for Leaders*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004.

Morse, MaryKate. *Making Room for Leadership: Power, Space and Influence*. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008.

Orlowski, Barbara. *Spiritual Abuse Recovery, Dynamic Research on Finding a Place of Wholeness*. Eugene OR. Wipf & Stock, 2010.

Ruth, Kibbie Simmons & Karen A. McClintock. *Healthy Disclosure: Solving Communication Quandaries in Congregations*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2007.

Rutter, Peter, M.D. *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*. Los Angeles, CA: Tarcher, 1989.

Shupe, Anson, William A. Stacey & Susan E Darnell, editors. *Bad Pastors: Clergy Misconduct in Modern America*. New York, NY: University Press, 2000.

Smedes, Lewis. *Forgive & Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve*. HarperOne, 2nd edition, 2007.

Yantzi, Mark. *Sexual Offending and Restoration*. Waterloo, ON and Scottsdale: PA: Herald Press, 1998.

DVDs and Videos

A Sacred Trust. Boundary Issues for Clergy and Spiritual Teachers, DVD, 100 minutes, FaithTrust Institute, Seattle, WA, 2007.

All God's Children: The Ultimate Sacrifice. A Documentary by Scott Solary and Luci Westphal, DVD, 70 minutes, 2008.

Ask Before You Hug: Sexual Harassment in the Church. Video, 31 minutes. Produced by UMCom, 1995.

Beyond the News: Sexual Abuse, DVD, 21 minutes. Producer: Jerry L Holsopple, Mennonite Media Productions, 1993.

A Training Program on Clergy Misconduct: Not in My Church (DVD, 45 minutes) and *Once You Cross the Line* (DVD, 50 minutes), Produced by Michi Pictures. FaithTrust Institute, Seattle, WA, 1991.

Websites

Abuse Response and Prevention, Mennonite Central Committee: www.abuse.mcc.org

Clergy Sexual Misconduct Study and Resources, Baylor University: www.baylor.edu/clergysexualmisconduct/

Dove's Nest Collaborative: www.dovesnest.net

FaithTrust Institute: www.faithtrustinstitute.org

Interfaith Sexual Trauma Institute: www.csbsju.edu/isti

United Methodist Website on Sexual Ethics: www.umsexualethics.org

Free resources from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC):

Abuse: Response and Prevention: A Guide for Church Leaders
MCC, 2008. Available in English, German and Spanish. English versions can also be downloaded from abuse.mcc.org

Block, Heather, *Advocacy Training Manual: Advocating for Survivors of Sexual Assault by a Church Leader or Caregiver*.
Winnipeg: MCC, 2000. Available for download at abuse.mcc.org.

Home Shouldn't be a Place that Hurts brochures; available in Chinese, English, French, German, Spanish and Swahili.

Programs at MCC which address abuse

MCC British Columbia

Abuse Response and Prevention Program

31414 Marshall Road, Box 2038
Abbotsford, BC V2T 3T8
604-850-6639; 888-622-6337
endabuse@mccbc.com

MCC Manitoba

Voices for Non-Violence Program

159 Henderson Highway
Winnipeg, MB R2L 1L4
204-925-1917; 866-530-4450
vnv@mennonitecc.ca

MCC Ontario

Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Resource Team (SMARRT)

50 Kent Avenue
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1
1-800-313-6226
smarrt@mennonitecc.on.ca

MCC US

Women's Advocacy Program

21 South 12th Street, PO Box 500
Akron, Pennsylvania, USA 17501-0500
717- 859-1151; 888-563-4676
womensadvocacy@mcc.org

