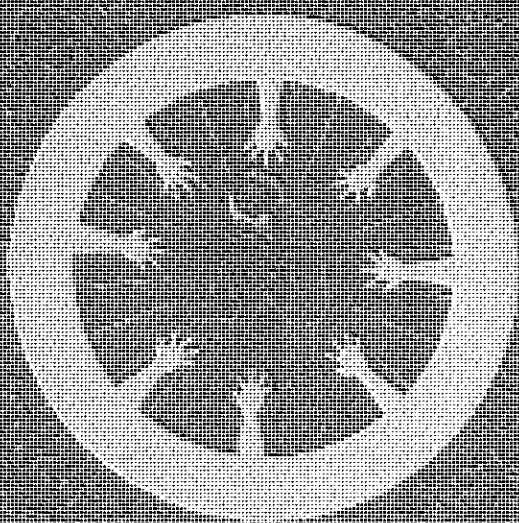


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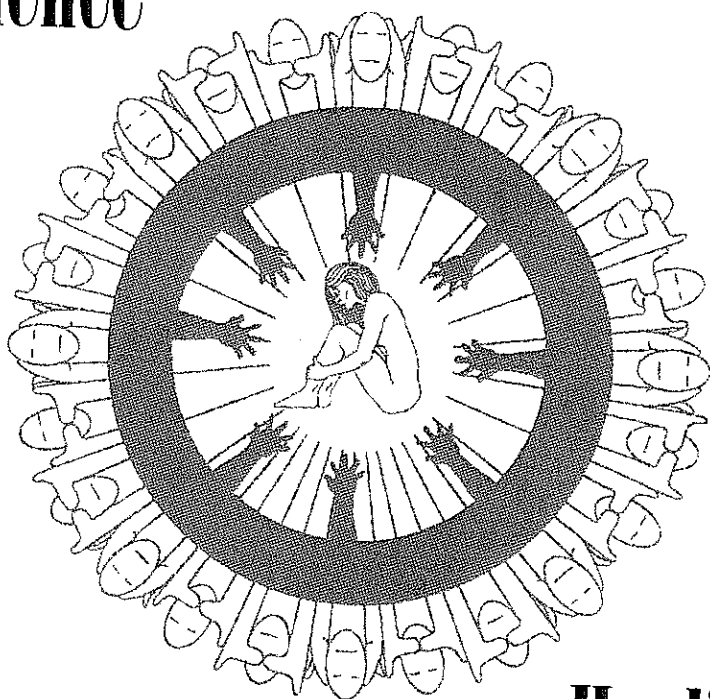
Hearing the Silence



Stories of
Professional Misconduct
Through Sexual Abuse
in the Church

Healing the Pain

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*Stories of Professional Misconduct
Through Sexual Abuse
in the Church*

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Having worked for several years on the issue of sexual abuse in the church, **Mary Kuhns**, then associate for Justice for Women in the Women's Ministry Unit searched for a vehicle for the telling of stories, hoping to increase the knowledge of persons around this issue, giving voice to those who wanted to share their stories, and presenting actual information in a more creative format.

Many thanks go to **Rebecca Todd Peters (Toddie)** for her writing of this booklet, for taking written stories and interviews, putting them into story form, and adding the didactic material around each story.

Many thanks as well to **Wanda O'Bannon** for several drafts and computer wonders, and **Mary Ann Millhone** for editorial work and **Donna Gunnoe** and **Susan E. Jackson** for design and for editorial work. Also to others (including **Judy Wrought**) for comments and suggestions along the way.

And now **Unzu Lee**, associate for the Office of Women's Advocacy, has completed this work.

Many persons—a labor of love of conviction and compassion.

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INTRODUCTION

A new phrase has come into use in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as well as in other denominations: “professional misconduct through sexual abuse.” It describes a practice that is NOT new.

What is NEW is that awareness of the phenomenon has become so much more widespread in the past twenty years, as part of the public discovery of the insidious presence of sexual abuse in American society at large. What is also (relatively) new is that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has developed policy and procedures for church judicial cases of professional misconduct for offenses in this category.

As the church addresses the misconduct issue, it is not surprising that a multitude of questions arise. Exactly what constitutes professional misconduct through sexual abuse? In the case of adults, why do pastors/counselors/supervisors become sexually involved with men and women in their congregations and workplaces? Where are the lines between an “ordinary” responsible relationship between two consenting adults, and “professional misconduct through sexual abuse”? Is the extent of the problem really so great?

The latter question is answered by growing numbers of courageous victim/survivors who have broken the taboo about speaking out against abuse. Stories are emerging from all over the church that testify to the ongoing presence of misconduct and betrayal through sexual abuse in Presbyterian church life. We have collected a sampling of these stories to set before you in this booklet in order to inform church members about the concrete realities of situations where the charge of “professional misconduct through sexual abuse” can be raised.

Individuals’ identities are concealed in the stories. Only

adults' stories are told and none of the abusive relationships occur between people of the same sex. All the stories involve whites but this does not mean that no abuse occurs involving communities of color or across racial lines. Although references are made to legal proceedings which would contain the testimony of others involved, the stories are all told from the perspective of the victim/survivor of the abuse. Finally, while this booklet refers most often to clergy abuse, violations also occur by others in positions of trust and authority such as directors of music, church school teachers, and youth directors in the church.

Even within these limitations, we think these stories that we do have in hand will help focus on the destructive impact of the larger story of professional misconduct through sexual abuse. The dynamics involved in both the individual and larger stories are complex. We think this selection will help church people as they struggle to understand the multiple layers of the issue, and we hope it will help motivate people to work for the prevention of this form of sexual abuse.

So a special thank you goes to the women who have told their stories. May their words and witness help prevent professional misconduct through sexual abuse and encourage healing of victims, families, accused abusers, and congregations.

PART I

THE ISSUE THAT WON'T GO AWAY BY ITSELF

DEFINITION OF PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT THROUGH SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE CHURCH

The following definition comes from the General Assembly policy, revised, 1993. That policy uses the term *sexual misconduct*. "Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy and its procedures to include:

1. Child Abuse, as defined here:

Child sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. No upper age limit of child sexual abuse has been given in this policy because the age of adulthood varies from state to state. The upper age limit is intended to be that recognized in the state in which the act was committed.

2. Sexual Harassment, as defined here:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- a. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or a condition of an individual's employment or their continued status in an institution;
 - b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individuals; or
 - c. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.
3. **Rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.**
 4. **Sexual conduct** (such as offensive, obscene or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching or fondling) that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.
 5. **Sexual malfeasance** defined as sexual conduct within a ministerial (e.g. clergy with a member of the congregation or in a professional relationship such as counselor with a client; lay employee with a church member; presbytery executive with a committee member who may be a lay person, a minister, or an elder. Sexual conduct includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition is not meant to cover relationships between spouses, nor is it meant to restrict church professional from having normal mutual social intimate, or marital relationships.
 6. **Sexual Abuse as found in the *Book of Order*, D-10.0401** (see Accuser/Victim).

Thus "professional misconduct through sexual abuse" is a concept which includes incidents ranging from rape and sexual abuse of children to subtle harassment and innuendo. We have chosen to highlight women's stories here because women are most often the victims of this professional misconduct. According to Peter Rutter's book, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*, 96 percent of professional sexual abuse is perpetrated by men against women. The intent of this booklet is to broaden the Presbyterian public's understanding of professional misconduct through sexual abuse and the resulting problems within the church community. If you are a victim/survivor of professional misconduct through sexual abuse

and would like more information about disciplinary proceedings, contact the Office of the General Assembly to request the PC(USA)'s "Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures." (Write to 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202, or call 502/569-5360.) See also the summary of procedures at the end of the section. You may also wish to contact the stated clerk in your presbytery as many governing bodies have their own policies and procedures.

RELIGIOUS BARRIERS TO DISCUSSION

Many Christians are uncomfortable talking about issues of sexuality within their faith communities. Our Christian tradition often has forced a separation of sexuality from spirituality. The historic roots of this phenomenon are apparent from the earliest years of Christianity. During the first five centuries of Christian history, church fathers wrote negatively about the body and sexuality. One's spirit was considered part of God's good creation, and one's body and sexuality were considered part of humanity's fallen nature.

This point of view continues to affect Christians' comfort in addressing matters of sexuality. Many persons, including those in church leadership positions, have not been taught healthy attitudes toward the human body. Our views of ourselves as sexual beings are skewed more towards the attitude that sexuality means only "sexual intercourse" sex should be just for procreation; sex is "dirty."

Yet it is possible to recognize sexuality as part of God's good creation even when discussing abuses that have occurred. When we acknowledge and affirm God's good gift of sexuality, the differences become more clear between healthy and life-affirming sexuality and sexuality used in manipulative and harmful ways. Sexual misconduct harms other people and, therefore, cannot be considered a healthy expression of God's gift of sexuality. Sexual misconduct is harmful because it is manipulative, abusive, and a violation of the pastoral or professional relationship. We emphasize "Professional Misconduct" in the title of this booklet, "Stories of Professional Misconduct Through Sexual Abuse," because the effects are more far-reaching than sexual. Clearly, part of the issues surrounding misconduct are about complex aspects of sexuality.

But professional misconduct through sexual abuse is particularly about sex without mutual consent because of the imbalance in the relationship between church leader and parishioner, counselee, employee, or student.

THE POWER DIFFERENTIAL AND PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

To understand professional misconduct through sexual abuse by the clergy is to understand the function of power in professional relationships. An “affair” between two members of a congregation cannot be paralleled to a sexual relationship between a pastor and parishioner. An inherent power imbalance exists in the pastor—parishioner relationship. In the ministerial role, pastors function as spiritual leaders, often as mentors, and at the very least as authority figures. Two people cannot develop a mutual relationship when one partner is an authority figure, and the other disempowered by a crisis or particularly vulnerable in some way. A pastor or counselor assumes responsibility to uphold standards of professional conduct and ethics. When a professional initiates or responds to sexual intimacy with a client or parishioner, serious professional boundaries will have been crossed. Finally, part of the pastor’s or counselor’s professional responsibility is to act in the interest of the parishioner or client. Sexual activities or relationships between the two individuals are never in the interest of furthering the pastoral or professional relationship.

Boundary issues with vulnerable counselees—This power differential is evident when reviewing actual cases of professional misconduct through sexual abuse. Some who became victims of professional misconduct through sexual abuse originally sought help from a pastor or counselor because of a personal trauma or dilemma, and their vulnerability made them all the more susceptible to victimization. In counseling situations, a counselee may develop a crush on the counselor. (In the counseling field, this phenomenon is known as one kind of transference.) There is some debate among psychologists and theologians about whether boundaries may sometimes be crossed in a healing context. However, the predominant view holds that the professional is always responsible for maintaining boundaries and rejecting advances

made by clients. According to this view, two people in a counseling relationship cannot create an atmosphere of mutuality in a romantic or sexual relationship. Therefore, such a relationship is liable to be based on nothing less than manipulation and is potentially harmful to the client/parishioner.

Boundary issues with colleagues and congregants—In other cases of clergy professional misconduct through sexual abuse, people working closely together find themselves experiencing what appears to be mutual attraction. This might be the case between a pastor and a member of session, a member of staff, or a member of the congregation. Regardless of how mutual the relationship might appear, in most cases the two do not possess equal power, so the one with greater power is responsible for maintaining appropriate boundaries. Variations in power exist for a variety of reasons. Between two staff people, one is often in a supervisory position over the other and holds power related to professional development, evaluations, advancement, and the like. Between a pastor and a member of the congregation, the pastor serves in the role of spiritual leader/adviser for that person, and the pastor may hold symbolic power as a mediator in the parishioner's own struggle to find and understand God. Some victims of professional misconduct through sexual abuse explain that they felt resisting would have been impossible because if the pastor approved, then surely God must also approve.

Addictive personalities—Perhaps the most insidious cases are those in which a pastor or counselor preys on women and actually becomes involved with more than one woman (other than his spouse) at a time. (Perpetrators of this type of abuse are referred to here in exclusively male terms because these offenders are so often men. However, we remain aware that some offenders are females.) These pastors have power addictive personalities, similar to those of pedophiles, and should not serve in professional positions where they hold power over people. Sexually compulsive pastors manipulate and exploit their power to initiate sexual relationships with those who trust them. Often these men are charismatic, and they can manipulate large numbers of people into believing their innocence. Yet if they are transferred to another congregation, they almost surely continue their patterns of abuse. (For more information about this type of clergy professional misconduct

through sexual abuse, read Marie Fortune's, *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship*. (See Bibliography.)

SINGLE PASTORS

Since Christian communities and congregations are often the most important part of the pastor's social life, the appropriateness of single pastors dating members of their congregations must be addressed. Hopefully, this booklet will have helped to illustrate that, in most circumstances, for pastors and parishioners to pursue romantic relationships or involvement is problematic. Of course this is not always the case. Many of you know and celebrate the stories of couples whose love began when one was a minister and the other in his or her congregation; when one was a teacher, the other a student. So in some circumstances, pastors and parishioners can form bonds of mutual respect and admiration within a romantic or sexual relationship. However, it is increasingly clear that relationships like these should not be entered into lightly by the couple and that members of the congregation should be informed when the nature of a relationship changes.

The pastor who uses the congregation as a source for casual dating takes serious risks. This practice can seriously hurt individual members of the congregation as well as the morale of the congregation as a whole. First and foremost, healthy relationships differ from the situations in this booklet because they are based on mutuality. Possibly, a pastor and a parishioner can approach each other as equals if each is open and honest about roles and expectations. To help neutralize the power differential, it would be advisable either for the pastor to resign and take another job or for the parishioner to find another church home. A relationship of mutuality would be easier to establish.

If the couple decides to pursue a relationship and both remain in the same congregation, appropriately then at least the session (and perhaps the Committee on Ministry) should be informed that the nature of the relationship has changed. Consequently, the elements of deceptive behavior and secrecy, so often key components of professional misconduct through sexual abuse, could be eliminated.

WHEN CLERGY MISCONDUCT IS ALLEGED

The following information is from Zane Buxton, manager of Judicial Process, Office of the Stated Clerk, General Assembly.

What happens if someone believes that a minister of word and sacrament has committed an offense? The alleged offense may be reported to a variety of persons with responsibilities in Presbytery. A Misconduct Policy may guide the Presbytery's response processes. The 1993 Presbyterian Church Sexual Misconduct Policy recommends a response coordination team as part of a governing body's procedures (GA Minutes, 1993, 570ff.). But once an allegation is made in writing and transmitted to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, the process for investigation follows the *Rules of Discipline* (the third section of the Book of Order). The Presbytery should have provisions in its operations to provide pastoral support for victims and others affected, including congregations.

The Investigation—An Investigating Committee (IC) is appointed according to the process adopted by the Presbytery. That committee has up to a year to conduct an inquiry. The committee will talk to the person or persons identified as the victim or victims of the misconduct (if applicable), to the accuser (if that is a different person), to the accused, to witnesses identified by both victim and accuser, and anyone else the committee believes may have information related to the allegations. Any related records may also be examined. The committee must, at the beginning of its investigation, notify the accused that he or she is under investigation and give that person a copy of the written accusation. Persons making written accusation must be aware that they are not anonymous.

It is the IC that determines whether official charges of offense are filed against the minister under investigation. An offense is an act or omission contrary to the Scriptures or the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The IC may file charges which will lead to a trial before the Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC) of the Presbytery. The IC may simply report to the Presbytery that no charges will be filed. The IC must notify the accused and the original accuser that no charges are being filed. In that case, the matter is ended unless the original accuser files with the PJC a petition for review (see D-10.0303). While the IC is not to report its reasons for not filing charges, it may be because no charges are warranted or it may be because the IC does not believe a case can be proved on the evidence available.

But if there is a decision to file charges, those charges are transmitted to the PJC through the Stated Clerk.

The Trial—In a trial, one or more members of the IC (serving as a Prosecuting Committee representing the Presbyterian Church) presents evidence in support of the charges. The victim or accuser is not directly a party to the trial, but serves as a witness. The accused presents evidence in defense. The PJC (in closed session) then determines whether the accused has been proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt or not. If the accused is found not guilty, the minister continues in good standing in the church. If the accused is found guilty, the PJC may impose one of three levels of censure.

1. **Rebuke** is a statement of censure which is read and entered into the minutes of the Presbytery.
2. **Rebuke with Supervised Rehabilitation** involves the statement, but also requires completion of some steps of rehabilitation under the supervision of the Presbytery.
3. **Temporary Exclusion from Office and/or Membership** imposes exclusion from the exercise of ordained office (and sometimes from membership in Presbytery) either for a specific period of time or during a supervised rehabilitation process. If the minister is in an installed pastoral position at the time of temporary exclusion, the Presbytery may dissolve the relationship once the case has been resolved.
4. **Removal from Office and/or Membership** is the most severe censure which the church may impose. If a person has been removed from office, that person is not to use any titles associated with that office not to do any functions related to the office (such as presiding at weddings).

There are provisions for appeal of the trial by the accused.

Renouncing the Jurisdiction of the Church—There is confusion about one option open to the accused in a disciplinary case. The accused minister may renounce the jurisdiction of the church at any point in the process. Some believe that this is a way of getting off free and are offended. What it means for the accused is a decision to impose on oneself the highest censure the church can impose. Even worse, while there is provision for restoration for a person removed from office or membership, there is no such provision for one who has renounced the jurisdiction.

PART TWO

THE STORIES

PAT'S STORY

"She had originally sought professional help from Rev. Brad Wilson, . . . but the sexual liaison that ensued did nothing to help Stacy deal with her problems. In fact, it increased them . . ."

"People adored him . . . but sometimes looks are deceiving."

"He had broken his ordination vow to be a faithful minister."

The first narrator is a person who became involved in the story while serving on a presbytery Permanent Judicial Commission. She heard the case of a pastor whose conduct falls into the category of "charismatic but sexually power-abusive professional," preying on more than one woman.

Notice the ways the power differential operates between Brad Wilson and the two women in his congregation, Teresa and Stacy. See if you agree that there is little doubt he was acting against their interests and using manipulative deceptive tactics.

The Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC) is the court of the church that conducts trials when charges are brought from the Special Disciplinary Committee (SDC), appointed by a presbytery to determine whether sufficient evidence exists for trial. My experience with one incident of professional misconduct through sexual abuse comes from my position on a PJC.

Sadly, this is only one of several cases of professional misconduct through sexual abuse we dealt with during my tenure on that commission.

The case concerned the Reverend Brad Wilson, pastor of a large and growing congregation in the Southwest. He had helped start the church eleven years earlier, and his personal charm and charisma helped that church to quickly grow into a congregation of several hundred members. People adored him; he was a great salesman of both the church and himself. He was in his forties, married, and the father of an elementary-school-age daughter: the picture-perfect minister with the picture-perfect family. But sometimes, looks are deceiving.

The first charge brought before the PJC came from Teresa, a 27-year-old member of the congregation who acknowledged that she had been in a sexual relationship with Wilson for the previous six years. Teresa had worshiped in Wilson's congregation during high school. After leaving college, she returned to find a job, even though her parents had moved to another city. The relationship began almost as soon as she returned.

After a couple of months without a job, Teresa had used all her savings. She no longer could afford rent and did not know what to do. Finally, she turned to her pastor. Wilson talked with his wife and convinced her to let Teresa stay with them for a while. He then hired Teresa to help with the youth program so she would have some income. Both arrangements allowed the two to spend a great deal of time together without raising the suspicion of the pastor's wife or other church members.

A sexual relationship quickly developed between them. Teresa finally realized he was not going to divorce his wife and marry her as he so often had promised. Then she discovered that another woman in the congregation, Stacy, was also having a sexual relationship with him.

Stacy's was the second charge brought before us. Before getting professional help, Stacy suffered a nervous breakdown and told several people in the church about her relationship with the pastor. So Stacy and Rev. Wilson's four-and-a-half-year relationship became public. She had originally sought professional help from Rev. Wilson, and she began attending his church. But the sexual liaison that ensued did nothing to

help Stacy deal with her problems. In fact, it increased them to the point that she could no longer cope, and she had the breakdown.

Stacy, in her late 30s, was a rather lonely woman, so Wilson and his wife often invited her to dinner or to go out with them socially during the period of Stacy's relationship with the pastor. Stacy also had lived with the Wilson's for five months after the business she worked for went bankrupt. Just as he had done with Teresa, Wilson managed to get Stacy some work around the church until she could find another job. Everyone loved Wilson. What a wonderful pastor he was to help his parishioners as he did! But once again, appearances sometimes deceive.

Two additional charges against Wilson were that he had broken his ordination vow to be a "faithful minister" and his vow "to be a friend among colleagues in ministry." The latter charge represented Wilson's intentionally deceiving his associate to help him carry out his intentions toward these two women.

When presented with the testimonies and the charges against him, Wilson pled guilty to all four charges. While that made the PJC's job easier, we were left with the dilemma of how to censure this man for the obvious wrongdoing he had committed and still act pastorally toward him by helping (and requiring) him to get the professional help he desperately needed.

JANICE'S STORY

"He didn't rape me. I didn't have sex with him. I didn't even really kiss him. But that experience affected me emotionally for years."

Neither Janice nor her art professor recognized how significant the power differential was when he first began to make advances. But over time, Janice came to understand the confusion she felt when an authority figure whose advice and friendship she valued persisted, over her objections. Professor Draper crossed the boundary between teacher and romantic partner.

Like many survivors she eventually realized that her early reaction of blaming herself was misplaced. Her trust in the

teacher's experience and authority blinded her to the reality that from the beginning she had shown that his sexual attentions were unwelcome, but Draper had chosen to ignore her. She describes the long-lasting and far-reaching effects of his behavior.

In this case, the jurisdiction of a Presbyterian college, rather than a presbytery, would probably have governed disciplinary procedures, if Janice had chosen to pursue official action.

In my second year at a Presbyterian college, I was 19 years old. My painting professor started coming on to me. I had a steady boyfriend for three years, and we had a great relationship. I had often talked to Draper about my boyfriend, but that didn't seem to bother him. Draper and I had become pretty close friends since I had taken his intro course during my first year. Art was not a big deal at my school, and Draper thought I had real talent. After class, we spent long hours talking about different painters and techniques. Sometimes he showed up at the pub on campus or invited a few students to hang out at his house after an art opening. We drank wine and talked about the show.

I took another painting course from Draper the first semester of my sophomore year, and I really began to appreciate and value his judgment of my work. He kept encouraging me and telling me I should major in art. He planned to take a group from school to the Southwest during the January term to study Georgia O'Keeffe and other southwest painters. I was considering art as a possible major, and I thought the trip would be fun, so I decided to go.

The day of the trip, as about fifteen of us waited to leave the parking lot, we all saw Draper and his wife have a huge screaming match in their car. He got out and stormed onto the bus, and she screeched out of the parking lot. He told me later that she threatened to leave him. At the time, it did not seem strange that he told me so much about his personal life. I knew he shared a lot more with me than he did with other students, but that made me feel special. I felt important because this accomplished art professor thought I was worthy of a friendship deeper than what he had with other students.

Several days into the three-week trip, Draper and I walked together in the desert near the cabins where we were staying. Suddenly, he grabbed my arm and turned me around

to face him. He kissed me and told me how special I was and how important I was in his life. He told me that I understood him as no one else could and that he was in love with me. All the while he was kissing my face, my arms, my hair.

I was so caught off guard that, initially, I was in shock at his outburst. As soon as I gathered my wits, I pulled free and ran away as fast as I could. I was terrified. I knew he had been drinking, but I did not think these were the random ramblings of a drunk man. Although I had never been physically attracted to him, I was anxious that I had led him on in some way. I convinced myself that the episode was all my fault. I also convinced myself that what had occurred between us was merely an incident between two consenting adults. Because we were “friends,” I assumed there was equality in our relationship. I could not have been further from the truth, but I would not realize that for almost four years.

Draper continued to come on to me in various ways during the rest of our trip. One time, I woke up, and he was in bed with me trying to kiss me and again profess his love. I told him several times that I was in love with someone else and that I was not interested in him. Finally, he stopped harassing me. He withdrew and became a total pain for the rest of our stay in the Southwest.

He didn't rape me. I didn't have sex with him. I didn't even really kiss him. But that experience affected me emotionally for years. Because I didn't understand the dynamics of a student-teacher relationship, I assumed that I was equally responsible for the incidents that took place. I was convinced that somehow I must have led him on or encouraged him. Because I was so ashamed and embarrassed, I told only one person while I was in college. Four years later, I read Peter Rutter's book, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*, then I began to understand how he had violated our relationship. So, ultimately, a professor went free when he should have been reported and disciplined for abusing my trust and our professional relationship. As for me, my mentor was stripped away. Furthermore, I decided not to pursue art as a major because I would have to work closely with him for two and a half years. I just couldn't stand to face him.

"I could see no good that would come from making a public fuss . . . I was told things were as much my responsibility as the pastor's."

"Those three men who dedicated their lives to preaching and teaching the Word of God have caused me more pain and separation from God than anyone or anything else in my life."

Revictimization—In Susan's story, confusion and self-blame were supported by all to whom she turned for help, with the one exception of her husband. Again, boundary issues came into play. Look at her story to see how three different pastors exploited her vulnerability and how her first experience (when she was a Seminary student) influenced her response to later incidents.

Frequently, when women have a history of experiencing sexual abuse, they are more vulnerable and susceptible to revictimization. They may appear to be promiscuous. They may have reputations for "sleeping around" or having loose morals. But these judgments are made without knowledge and understanding of how sexual abuse affects victims psychologically.

Sexual abuse—whether incest, rape, professional misconduct through sexual abuse or other offenses—is clearly related to a violation of boundaries. From their parents, children should be able to expect certain things regarding nurture, protection, love, and the fulfillment of physical needs, such as food and shelter. When a parent perpetrates incest on a child, a violation of the boundaries of that relationship occurs. When people experience the violation or distortion of expected boundaries without their consent, they have difficulty understanding how to set and uphold clear boundaries in their own lives as they get older.

This is true, as well, with respect to clergy professional misconduct through sexual abuse. Certain expectations are inherent in the relationship between a pastor and a parishioner or a supervisor and a supervisee. For example, people in positions of authority are expected to use good judgment and act with the interests of the parishioner or supervisee in mind. An assumption is inherent in these roles that sexual activity will

not be part of the relationship. Yet some pastors, counselors and supervisors do not honor the integrity of those boundaries. Sometimes the advances are unwelcome and rejected, but at other times, victims appear to respond willingly to sexual advances.

Victims who submit do so for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a pastor will declare that the relationship is God's will and that it cannot possibly be wrong or sinful. Some victims may have come to the pastor for counseling during a difficult period of life—a major life transition or a bout of depression. The attention of a well-respected and close “friend” gives a much needed boost to their self-esteem and sense of worth, however short lived. In other instances, particularly if they have a history of sexual abuse, victims may not know how to set boundaries or even recognize when they have been violated. So once again, these persons succumb to sexual relationships they may not want at all.

As for Susan, her first “submission” was based on her belief that her pastor would keep his promise to marry her. Revictimization occurred, in part, because she held to the same pattern of trusting clergy, and remained unaware that she had the possibility of setting boundaries when the “professional” did not.

When I was a 22-year-old student at a non-Presbyterian seminary and married to another seminary student, I was “seduced” by a Presbyterian minister. It was the third time.

The first minister who took advantage of me was the pastor of my home church. I was 17 and a first-year college student. The second was a staff person for the national church. I had gone to General Assembly as a 20-year-old youth delegate. The third was the pastor I worked with for only two weeks during my first year of seminary.

Now I am 41 years old. Whenever I try to put these sordid pieces of my past into a little box and stuff it away in a distant corner of my soul, something happens to make me relive the messiness again. Just sitting through a worship service can be a challenge. I have not sat through an entire hour of worship without at least feeling as if I would weep. Sometimes I am unable to hold back the tears.

At the age of 17, I didn't realize I would hurt as long as I have. When the sexual relationship with the pastor of my home church ended (during my second year at college), a

handful of people learned about it: his wife; my parents; the assistant pastor; the pastor's marriage counselor, also a male minister who insisted on seeing me. But I felt as if all these people were concerned only about his wife, their young children and the congregation. These adults all assumed that I was young, intelligent, resilient, and would recover from all this in no time. I think they all believed me to be a young seductress, looking for a good time with no concern for the consequences, my pastor's family, or morality.

No one asked who initiated the relationship or about the circumstances. No one used the words sexual abuse or victim. No one raised issues of the power and authority that he held as my minister or the fact that I was a minor when the relationship became sexual. Because I was 19 when it ended, I was an adult supposedly, and so was considered to have been a willing partner in a sinful act. I even believed that myself.

I didn't know I had recourse within the Presbyterian Church or secular courts. I was counseled (by my pastor's marriage counselor) to keep my silence for the benefit of the pastor's marriage and his congregation. In addition, my pastor-lover had just been elected chairperson of the presbytery's Ministerial Relations Committee, the committee in charge of investigating the conduct of allegedly wayward ministers.

A year later, I became engaged to a young man from my college. That summer, I went to General Assembly as a youth delegate from our presbytery. I was 20. A pastor from the national church office became attracted to me. For five days, he relentlessly pursued me. I repeatedly told him I was committed to someone else, but he would not listen. I was flattered that he was interested in me. He was important, intelligent and had a powerful presence; I didn't know how to walk away from him. The last night, I again refused his sexual advances, but he became angry and mean toward me. I felt hurt and even more confused, so I spent the night tossing and turning, trying to reconcile his feelings of disapproval with my own conscience. By morning, I had decided that his approval was more important than my own worries about values and commitments, so I went to his hotel room and let him have sex with me.

I was married the following year and graduated from college the next summer. My husband and I entered seminary as a couple. During our first year, we were supposed to spend two weeks shadowing a pastor to see the job firsthand. To-

ward the end of the two weeks, the pastor I worked with made a “pass,” and the scenario happened all over again. I did not know how to refuse him, so I caved in. I did not want to become involved. I did not know why I was doing this awful thing again. I was 22. Three years had passed since the end of my relationship with the pastor of my home church. I could not understand why this kept happening to me, but I could no longer take it. I dropped out of seminary.

Two years later, I broke down and told my husband about the encounters with the pastor at General Assembly and with the one during seminary. He already knew about the pastor from my home church. He was understanding and compassionate, and although we are still married, my revelation put our marriage on shaky ground. My husband was a third-year seminary student when I told him, so we went to one of the professors for counseling.

Both of us went to the first session. Then, I went several times by myself. The seminary professor never informed me that I could explore pursuing legal action against any of the three pastors who had seduced me. Again, I was a woman who had sinned, not a victim of sexual abuse.

At that time, I thought about reporting the pastor of my home church to the proper authorities when I found out who they were. I wrote him a letter telling him so. He called me and told me I could not take legal action because five years had passed and the statute of limitations required that I turn him in within three years. Besides, he added, our relationship had been a fifty-fifty relationship between two adults. I could see no good that would come from making a public fuss over everything that had happened to me—things I was told that were as much my responsibility as the pastor’s. So I kept quiet, and many years passed.

I now try to determine where justice lies in this situation. Those three pastors—the first who promised to marry me and the other two who were interested in nothing more than a sexual encounter—terribly changed my life, forever. Those men who dedicated their lives to preaching and teaching the Word of God have caused me more pain and separation from God than anyone or anything else in my life. My soul cries out for justice as I ask, “Where was God when these things happened to me?” and “Why is the church not holding its pastors accountable for their actions?”

If a professional woman, a Presbyterian since birth, wife of a pastor, and an elder in her own right, has no idea what recourse exists within the church in time to avail herself of it, what happens to other emotionally vulnerable women out there who may have even less information? Does the Presbyterian Church really believe that emotionally vulnerable women who become involved with their pastors have the resources to report incidents before three short years have passed? Does the church expect the pastors in question to inform these women of their rights?

The notion of a statute of limitations is ridiculous in cases of clergy professional misconduct through sexual abuse. I believe this cycle of despair can be stopped only when guilty pastors are faced with having to submit to psychological treatment, losing their churches, and possibly being barred from the ministry. Yes, the church is to be a forgiving institution, but how many repeat offenders must we have before we say, "We are sorry. You can no longer serve as a Presbyterian minister; the risk to the people of our community is too great?"

I struggle along, trying to make sense of all this. I have never received the intensive, long-term counseling I need because of the cost of a good psychologist's time. As a result, my counseling sessions have been sporadic. But the most important issue for me is what to tell my daughters, ages 10 and 14, about male pastors. Never trust them? Do not be alone with one? Always look for hidden meaning in the words, "I care about you and would like to discuss your problems?" What kind of world is this? What kind of church is this?

I do not want to frighten my daughters, yet it seems criminal for me to say nothing, to not warn them of potential dangers within the church, of mixing spirituality and sexuality in unhealthy ways. These issues were irrelevant when my husband was in the parish ministry. I did not worry about my girls. They were in contact with other male pastors only for short periods of time. However, my husband is now a university chaplain, and we are members of a Presbyterian church.

One side effect of these wretched experiences is that I cannot pray anymore. My original pastor-lover was very big on prayer. He even made us pray together before we touched each other the nights he took me to hotels and on Christmas Eve when we had sex in the bedroom he shared with his wife.

I have found that when I try to pray, I hear his voice and feel his presence. It gives me the creeps. So I don't pray. This may seem like a cliché, but I think God knows what is in my heart and mind and understands why it has to be this way without my uttering a word in prayer.

I think God also knows how angry I am for God's having created a world in which teenage girls are not safe from ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I feel weak and soiled, and I keep telling God I am not strong enough to survive such terrible abuse of my mind and body, especially when so many years have passed, and the memories will not go away. But somehow the strength comes, and I keep on moving forward. I am surviving. I am strong, three abusive Presbyterian pastors notwithstanding. And I am still waiting for the day when justice will come rolling down.

MARGARET'S STORY

"Immediately red flags went up! David seemed to have no understanding of the boundaries separating his relationship with his wife and his relationship me as a potential colleague . . . When I shared my concerns with the CPM, their response to me was, "This is all very well and good that you shared this with us . . . but why do you think he became attracted to you?"

Blaming the victim—In our culture, we would never blame victims of robbery for flaunting their wealth or victims of homicide for being out on the streets or victims of car theft for leaving their cars parked unattended. Yet many people who find these suggestions ludicrous often blame victims of sexual abuse for the crimes committed against them.

Women who choose to wear tight-fitting or revealing clothing are thought to be "asking for it." "It" usually refers to rape. Women abducted on the streets after dark or raped on the way to their cars "should have known better" than to be out at night by themselves. Women who are date raped are hardly ever believed because "she probably agreed and then changed her mind later." Even women who are raped by strangers in their own homes are often questioned about what they were wearing and whether they undress in front of open windows. Everywhere one turns, members of our culture are

convinced that women are seducers and temptresses just waiting to find the right man to entrap or ensnare.

This attitude draws historical support from Judeo-Christian roots. As the popular interpretation of Genesis 2 goes, Eve was the cause of original sin by tempting Adam to join her in eating the forbidden fruit. “Everyone knows” that the apple symbolizes sexuality, that original sin is related to sexuality and that all women are the descendants of Eve. Therefore, all women are sexual temptresses. As faulty and dangerous as this logic is, it prevails—though often unconsciously—in the minds of many people in our culture today. To excuse their own sexual arousal, some men blame women for arousing them and often go further to accuse women of “tempting” them. This attitude becomes most dangerous when applied to cases of sexual abuse and victimization.

Cases of professional misconduct through sexual abuse are no different. Female victims are often blamed by perpetrators for initiating their behavior or for “causing” perpetrators to initiate sexual relationships. People outside these situations also frequently blame victims for chasing pastors, or they may claim that victims have loose morals and ensnare pastors. These attitudes are most often voiced by people within congregations who are fond of their pastors and cannot imagine them guilty of professional misconduct through sexual abuse or manipulation. But such attitudes do nothing to help pastors heal, and they do everything to harm and further victimize victims.

Healers and authorities like Marie Fortune agree that, no matter how attractive a woman is, no matter how she dresses, and no matter what her personal values and morals are, no one asks to be abused sexually, physically, emotionally or spiritually. Instead, they agree that where power imbalances exist, women victims of clergy professional misconduct through sexual abuse are never to be blamed for the abuse. Blaming them can only serve to prolong their healing process. Additionally, attitudes that blame victims function as barriers for other women to acknowledge their own abuse. Women will, in their own therapy, grow in self-understanding regarding their abuse. They feel plenty of guilt without others heaping on more, with little or no understanding of their situations.

Margaret had just finished her preparation for ministry and was exploring her call, when she encountered the “blame the

victim” syndrome. Unlike some of the earlier narrators, she had some preparation for recognizing boundary violation. But this did not eliminate the distress when she first dealt with a congregation searching for a new minister to youth.

I decided to do a year of clinical pastoral education (CPE) before looking for a call as an associate pastor in youth ministry. While I enjoy all aspects of congregational life, and I like to preach, I really feel called to work with young people. I was in my mid-20s when I began to look for my first call. During seminary, I had heard that women pastors frequently experience sexual harassment or strange power dynamics, or both, with senior male pastors, but I had never had such an experience. Then I interviewed with a church in another part of the country.

Sunday night when I arrived, the senior pastor, David, picked me up to show me around the fairly large urban area where the church was located. He was nice, and we chatted amiably, mostly about him. I learned that he was in his 40s, married, and that he had three children. He talked to me about the church and the neighborhood. We arranged for him to pick me up the next morning to take me to an ecumenical ministry breakfast that he participates in monthly. Before the breakfast, while I was meeting people and chatting, a Methodist minister leaned toward me and said he would “take me aside later and tell the real story about David.” I thought that was a curious statement, but I did not dwell on it.

During the breakfast, David put his arm behind me and rested it on my chair. I know this may seem like something small, but reflex caused me to lean forward from discomfort at such an intimate gesture from a man I had just met. When I leaned forward, he removed his arm, but when I leaned back again, within a few minutes his arm would once again be behind me. This happened several times during the breakfast and the program. I tried not to think too much of this, excusing it away as just a gesture by an affectionate, friendly pastor.

We had a lunch meeting scheduled at a location about an hour away. During the drive, David said to me, “This is all a formality before we hire you.” This comment caught me off guard because I had not even met with the Permanent Nominating Committee (PNC) yet. After saying that, he continued his story from the previous evening about himself, except he

went into much greater detail about his personal life. By the time we reached our destination, I knew about his problems with depression, how he had been in and out of therapy for years and was now taking Prozac, about his wife's recent miscarriage, how that was affecting their relationship, as well as other very personal details about his private life. I was glad to have had a year of CPE, because I felt as if I had just finished a counseling session. I began to really worry that David had a significant problem with boundaries, particularly in a professional setting. The church had not yet extended a call to me, and I knew more about this pastor's personal life than I was ready to know.

On our way back to the church after lunch, he resumed the conversation but kept saying to me, "You're too quiet; you're too quiet. Say something." At one point during the return drive, he looked at me and said, "You know, I really enjoyed showing you around town last night. My wife doesn't like to do things like that." Immediately red flags went up! David seemed to have no understanding of the boundaries separating his relationship with his wife and his relationship with me as his potential colleague.

The rest of the day and evening, we visited with church members and the PNC. I was staying with a couple in the church, and later that night, David and the husband came home to tell me the vote had been unanimous. I told them I had already made a commitment to interview with another church in two weeks and that I felt I must honor that commitment and honestly consider both situations before I could give them a final decision.

During the next few weeks, David and his secretary left several messages on my answering machine, and I got a birthday card from the PNC. They were trying to convince me to take the call. As flattering as this was I just was not sure. The problem was partially my experience with David and partially because I just was not sure if the church was right for me.

I talked with David a few weeks later and told him I was really struggling with this decision. I felt that if the church were really interested in me, I would need them to fly me out again so I could attend the Sunday worship, talk more with the committee, and meet the person they had just hired as a part-time associate pastor. David called back to tell me the committee had decided to fly me out for worship and then he

and I could drive to where the synod was meeting for a couple of days. He told me there might be a problem finding me housing at this late date but that he had a lot of friends I might be able to stay with. Then he added, "There might be a problem with housing. If it comes down to it, my room might have two beds. If it doesn't one of us can sleep on the floor." I became confused trying to justify his actions. I was second guessing myself, thinking that all of this was in my head, and that I was being too sensitive. I was really trying to give him the benefit of the doubt. Despite my feelings of discomfort, I decided I could figure this out only by flying out to meet with him and the church one more time. On this second visit, the committee was wonderful. They had a potluck for me to meet more of the church members. I was beginning to feel a genuine sense of call until I found out the PNC had exaggerated the budget available for youth ministry. I also found out they wanted me to devote a significant amount of time to developing a Stephen Ministry program. After talking with more people from the church, I realized I would have difficulty starting a strong youth program. The chair of the PNC pushed me to commit, but I told him the deciding factor for me would be talking to David.

David and I went to the synod meeting late one afternoon. That night he said he had made dinner reservations for us. I thought that would be a good time to really talk with him about the church and sort out how I felt about taking this position. The restaurant was a good bit away from the conference site. It was an intimate little restaurant with low lighting and lots of candles. They seated us in a small booth from which we could not be seen or see other customers. The dinner was \$40 a plate, and I began to feel more as if I had been taken on a date rather than a business dinner to discuss my career options with a colleague.

During dinner, David began talking about the sexuality report that was being debated by the General Assembly. He told me that my aura was very sexual. I tried to ask questions about the job and, at one point, finally told him that I had serious concerns about boundaries with him. He looked hurt and claimed not to understand what I was talking about.

Walking back to the hotel, he told me he was frustrated because he wanted me to commit to the job, but I told him I just had to think more about it. That night, I talked with several

friends and family members on the phone. Finally, I realized I could not take the job. I told David over lunch the next day. I tried to explain my struggle to understand what a call is and that I just felt this was not it. David became enraged and lashed out at me saying, "This is where your immaturity comes in." He went on to tell me that this was the perfect church for me and that I would get to preach and work with the Stephen Ministry program as well as do youth ministry, all of which would prepare me to take my own church one day. I realized then he had not heard my trying to tell him that my call was to youth ministry and that I did not want my "own" church.

We parted at the hotel, and he tried to recover some semblance of professionalism. When I returned home, the chair of the CPM called to find out how things had gone. When I told him I had turned down the position, he insinuated I had flown out just for a free trip. I became angry and told him the committee did not know the whole story, which I proceeded to tell him. When we met with the CPM later that afternoon, I shared with them the complete story. I was thinking to myself how cathartic this was for me to share my story with people that would support me. When I finished, there was a silence. Then somebody said, "This is all very well and good that you have shared this with us . . . but why do you think he became attracted to you?" The implication was that I had done something to provoke his interest. I was utterly and completely dumbfounded. I became more hurt by the actions of the CPM than the pastor. About two weeks later I received a letter from the pastor telling me; "our relationship has been severed." "I took a big chunk of him away with me with nothing reciprocal." He also expressed, again, his anger that I had turned down the position. I contacted the chair of the CPM once again regarding this matter. He scheduled an emergency meeting with me and a few people of the committee. Unfortunately, this meeting was not helpful or productive, but hurtful and painful. It was again presumed that I was the one who had the problems with boundaries.

Two years later, I was a minister commissioner to the General Assembly and I shared my strong concerns with the Discipline Committee regarding sexual harassment not only of people of power, such as minister's but of CPM's which are quote—"Care" Committees.

Later that day a man stopped me and said, "I listened to

what you had to say earlier today, and I appreciated what you had to say.” Thank you, “ I said. However, she went on to say, “But you know . . . you are a very beautiful woman, and you are just going to have to deal with it.” I said, “I’m sorry, I didn’t catch your name.” He said his name and that he was a stated clerk. I also noted an important factor of which presbytery he was from. My final response to him was, “The pastor of which I expressed concern comes from your presbytery, and I have serious concerns about the actions which are taking place there.”

ELIZABETH’S STORY

“I had the sensation that I was being seduced, but I could not explain how. He neither looked at me improperly nor touched me nor said anything that I could interpret as having explicit sexual connotations.”

“During the hearing, I experienced the acute awareness that I was in this alone. The entire system appeared to be against me and seemed bound to defend the minister. For me, there was no advocate—no counsel.”

Cases show that few women make up stories about rape, professional misconduct through sexual abuse, or sexual abuse. Women who agree to share their stories go through a process that often is nothing short of revictimization. They may be forced to tell their experiences over and over again to scores of different people. Often these stories are sexually explicit and very painful to recall. Yet they prompt accusations that women make up stories to get back at someone, hurt someone’s career, or “punish” someone for not responding to sexual advances. The figures do not support such accusations. The percentage of women who falsely accuse has been shown so far to be only 2 to 3 percent, suggesting that in fact each accusation regarding professional misconduct through sexual abuse warrants being taken seriously. (Of 1,400 cases with which the Center for the Prevention and Sexual Violence in Seattle has been involved, less than nine have been false accusations.

Convincing other people the story is true is particularly difficult in cases of clergy professional misconduct through

sexual abuse. Perpetrators often are among the most upstanding members of their communities. Usually their reputations are spotless, and they are well loved and respected both by their congregations and by their communities. Perpetrators often deny charges against themselves and attempt to malign the character of accusers. Because they are well respected, they often are believed. Victims have difficulty finding someone to listen to them and believe them. The added trauma of bringing denominational or legal charges can be daunting.

Additionally, most churches and presbyteries have not wanted to believe that professional misconduct through sexual abuse occurred—and they certainly have preferred non-public solutions. The fear of negative publicity about clergy professional misconduct through sexual abuse and fear of litigation impedes churches' and presbyters' responses. This attitude is changing as denominations become better educated and more compassionate about this issue. Unfortunately, in the past this has meant that some presbyteries, upon becoming aware of misconduct, moved perpetrators to other presbyteries to "get them off their hands." Only recently, because of the implementation of policies and procedures governing professional misconduct through sexual abuse, have some pastors begun to receive needed counseling, and future congregations been spared abusive behavior.

The following true account describes revictimization through repeated disbelief, after reflection on a bizarre series of events with her pastor. When Elizabeth tried to file misconduct charges with her presbytery, no one took her seriously. In fact, the perpetrator did everything possible to undermine her character.

For two years, my husband and I had been members of a conservative evangelical Presbyterian church in the northwest United States. Paul Whitaker was the senior pastor. After hearing several statements made by parishioners that showed harsh attitudes toward the poor, I decided to talk to the pastor. Encouraged by my husband, Rob, I made an appointment to see Whitaker in his office.

What happened in this pastor's office will forever be etched in my memory. It was so unexpected and so unusual, but at the time it felt so very good. Immediately after entering his office, I sensed something unusual was going on.

Whitaker walked toward me with a broad smile, looking extremely pleased. He made a remark in a very intimate tone of voice that I had never heard him use before. He continued to use this tone throughout the interview.

When I sat down, he appeared nervous and paced the office several times. He then picked up a sheet of paper from his desk and abruptly started reading aloud from it. I had no idea what it was about or why he read it until he read the last sentence: The poor are people who do not know how to postpone gratification. He gave that last word considerable emphasis, and as he said it, with wide-open eyes, he stared hard into mine. I felt myself looking at him as if I were mesmerized. He pointed to a magazine we both had read and asked me about one of its articles. I was prompted to give an answer that contained the word sex. He looked strangely satisfied with my answer.

Finally (20 minutes had passed, and he was still standing), he sat down. He did not say anything more about the article. Instead, he talked about pleasantries. After a while, I interrupted to remind him of the purpose of my visit. At this, he showed a momentary flash of anger. Then, as Whitaker resumed speaking, I had the sensation that I was being seduced, but I could not explain how. He neither looked at me improperly nor touched me nor said anything that I could interpret as having explicit sexual connotations. Still the awareness of seduction became stronger. At one point, in embarrassment, I noticed the provocative way his lower body was displayed but assumed he was not aware of this. After more than an hour, I decided to leave. As he walked me to the door, still smiling broadly, he said, "If you ever have any problem, just come back to my office, and we can discuss it as friends." Fortunately, I had already decided against ever going back because although the experience had been pleasurable on some level, I realized that real danger was present in the seductive atmosphere of that room.

During the following weeks, I experienced several subtle advances by the pastor, indicating that something was going on. Once, he came to our house while Rob was at work. He called when Rob was out of town. He had his wife invite me to their house for dinner when Rob was away. He smiled a lot, fawned over me, and his touches in church lingered a bit too long. On several occasions, he again stared deeply into my eyes as if looking for the answer to an unasked question. And twice, he explicitly invited me back to his office.

Finally, I was convinced something was really going on, and I confided in Rob. After initial amazement, anger, and disappointment, Rob began to understand the meaning of recent questions Whitaker had asked him: When are you going out of town again? How are things at home? Rob, too, began to note the way Whitaker stared so intently at me. He observed the pastor's excited behavior when in our house. I told Rob that I had felt as if I were being seduced while in his office but that I found the act of seduction impossible to describe.

Rob thought this over and subsequently remembered he had once heard a professional lecture describing very sophisticated methods of seduction, so subtle most people do not recognize them as seduction. As a high-school guidance counselor, Rob was not well informed on this issue. However, he pursued the topic with several colleagues who not only confirmed the seduction techniques but also named them.

The terms *covert hypnosis* and *neurolinguistic programming* were used. It appeared likely, Rob was told, that Whitaker chose texts to read to me and conversation topics that contained suggestive, seductive phrases that would reach me subliminally and excite me sexually. Evidently, ministers who secretly pursue sex with parishioners sometimes apply these covert methods because they are extremely difficult to prove, and they are very effective. These subversive methods lead women to make initial overt suggestions toward physical intimacy, thus leaving the pastor free from charges that he initiated sexual contact.

Subsequently, Rob conferred with several other professional counselors. Each time, he was told about these same techniques, generally known only to professionals in psychology and counseling. We asked ourselves whether this explained why Whitaker consistently discouraged troubled parishioners from seeking counseling. No doubt, he was afraid a woman he had seduced might discover his techniques through her counselor. It further impressed us that many people, especially young couples, were continually leaving the church and that Whitaker would not allow anyone to look into the reasons for their leaving. We wondered what really had caused their departure.

Incredible as my experiences with this pastor had been, in the following months reactions from several people who were told about my experiences were equally unbelievable.

After I had confided in her about my experience, one person from the church wrote letters to other persons inside and outside the congregation. She warned them that I was schizophrenic and could not be trusted to tell the truth. Whitaker later used this letter to attempt to convince his session that I was a severely disturbed woman. Also, in the office of a well-known counselor during a failed attempt at reconciliation, Whitaker read part of the same letter and denied that the incidents I described ever happened.

At this point, I filed charges of professional misconduct through sexual abuse against Whitaker with the presbytery. The chair of the disciplinary committee called to set a date for a hearing and became angry when I asked whether the procedure would come from the *Book of Order*. Then I learned that my charges, with enclosures, had been sent to Whitaker, who engaged an attorney. Having been contacted by this attorney before the hearing, one of my witnesses withdrew her statement. Rob attended the hearing with me, but even though he had been an eye witness to several incidents, he was not given an opportunity to speak. Nevertheless, I provided several more documents, among them a statement from my own counselor declaring that, in the opinion of this professional (with a Ph.D. in counseling), Whitaker had used covert seduction methods on me. Unfortunately, only two of the five members showed interest in the case.

During the hearing, I experienced the acute awareness that I was in this alone. The entire system appeared to be against me and seemed bound to defend the minister. For me, there was no advocate—no counsel. I related several incidents, and one committee member asked for names of witnesses and wrote them down. Afterward, a hearing was held with the accused and his attorney.

I received only one official communication after this hearing. It was a photocopy of a letter the chair had sent to the stated clerk, stating that the committee found no probable cause and would not go to trial. That the committee thought so little of me and the pain I had suffered devastated me. Obviously, I did not even merit any form of personal communication, much less an expression of pastoral concern. At this point, I especially felt that the church had failed me greatly.

At the next presbytery meeting, a member of presbytery who knew about my case asked whether all witnesses had

been located and questioned as the *Book of Order* required. A committee member stated that the committee had done all it could do. Later, when I was called at home by a member of presbytery, the committee member stated explicitly that all witnesses had been contacted. However, I telephoned my witnesses and learned that none of them had been contacted by the committee.

Meanwhile, rumors about my mental instability had been allowed to float freely throughout the church. Following the presbytery committee's decision, these rumors were given new life. Occasionally, I run into members of this church, where I am no longer a member. I can see pity and disbelief in their eyes as we exchange quick pleasantries and try to escape one another's presence. I have been made to feel mentally unstable and unreliable. I am not crazy—I know what I saw and experienced. Why do so few believe me?

CATHERINE'S STORY

"I was stuck in our Midwest town with no car . . . I had no place to live, no income, desperately needed counseling. Jake had said he would help me financially, but no money came. I called a female member of the search committee . . . and asked for help . . . I was unaware that Jake was already heavily involved in a sexual relationship with this very woman."

Pastor's spouse and family—When married pastors perpetrate professional misconduct through sexual abuse, the betrayal of the pastor's spouse and family are added to the deception and betrayal of the victim. Furthermore, the charge of adultery is added.

Spouses face their own particular set of problems and questions. Their partners not only have been unfaithful to their marriages but also have been the perpetrator of abuse and are in need of professional help. The embarrassment of publicity can be devastating for perpetrators' families. If pastoral couples choose to heal their marriages, they need to work hard to rebuild trust.

If pastoral couples decide to divorce, multiple issues can cause potential problems for nonclergy spouses. Catherine shares some of these in her story.

My perspective on the issue of clergy professional misconduct through sexual abuse is a bit different from what most people usually hear. I am a freelance architect in the upper Midwest, and I am the exwife of a pastor who has a repeat history of professional misconduct through sexual abuse with parishioners. The betrayal, lies, and manipulative behavior I lived through illuminate another aspect of the reality of professional misconduct through sexual abuse. Never does only one "victim" exist in the case of clergy professional misconduct through sexual abuse. Rather, multiple victims include the spouses, children, and congregations of ministers who perpetrate professional misconduct through sexual abuse.

Jake, my exhusband, was forced to resign his position at Westminster Presbyterian Church, where I am still a member. Jake was nervous and agitated when certain people in the church began to insinuate it was time for him to resign. He did not tell me what was going on, but I noticed the change in his behavior and wondered what was wrong. After a couple of months, some people in the church became more vocal, and although they had a whole list of complaints about his ministry, a couple of them indicated that something unidentified was the real reason they wanted Jake to leave.

Jake began looking for another church and resigned from Westminster as soon as the rumor leaked that he was involved with a member of the congregation. He found a position on the West Coast and left the church as soon as possible. Because I still had some projects to complete, Jake suggested that I stay in our house until it sold and follow him to the new church a couple of months later. The rumors about his infidelity had not yet reached me.

I still find remarkable the events of the year that followed, as much so as the intricate web of lies he had been weaving that began to unravel. I do not know exactly when he decided, but two days before the scheduled closing on our house and my moving to join him, he called and told me not to come. He wanted a divorce. Originally, he told his new church that I would not move with him or come to visit because I was preoccupied with my career and making money. Furthermore, he told them that I was manic-depressive and was not dealing well with the prospect of moving. At the same time, he told me that we just did not have enough money to fly me out to visit and that he was so busy he would have no time for me.

Two days after calling and telling me he wanted a divorce, I received another call from Jake. He said he had been wrong, he loved me and claimed to want to work out our problems. He said he would call again, and we could work out the details of my moving. So I moved in with friends and waited. After five days, I could wait no longer, and I called him. He announced that our marriage was definitely over, and he did not want me to join him because it was "his church."

Later, I learned that the church had been angry that he lied about his marital status and that his reconciliation call was merely an attempt to save his job. He wanted to be able to tell the presbytery Committee on Ministry and the Personnel Committee of his church that we were going to try to save our marriage. When he found out that his job was secure even if he divorced, I again was pushed out of his life.

Because I am a freelance architect and I had just finished all my jobs, I was stuck in our Midwest town with no car (Jake had it with him). I had no place to live, no income, and I desperately needed counseling. Jake had said he would help me financially, but no money came. After a couple of weeks, I called a female member of the search committee and a session member of the new church. I told her about my situation and asked for her help. I also decided to tell her of Jake's relationship with a member of his former congregation and that I really thought Jake needed serious counseling. I was unaware that Jake was already heavily involved in a sexual relationship with this very woman.

Later, I sent a letter to the clerk of session at Jake's new church. I explained the situation and again asked for help, but the letter was forwarded from the outgoing clerk to this same woman, the new clerk of session. Obviously, she made no attempt to act on any of my requests, and I continued living with the generosity of good friends.

During this time, I also called the Board of Pensions (BOP) to ask if they would pay for my counseling. I was told they would pay half if the presbytery executive from Jake's new presbytery called and approved the counseling. I had already spoken to the presbytery executive about my situation, so I called to ask him to contact the BOP. He never did.

After several frustrating months of no help, I sent a detailed letter to the moderator of Jake's new presbytery. I outlined everything that had taken place. I began with the story of his affair with the woman at the Midwest church. I detailed

the move, the divorce proceedings, his affair with the clerk of session at his new church, and our current situation.

After I had lived this fragmented life for more than a year, the presbytery PJC finally took action. Jake was temporarily excluded from the exercise of ordained office for a period of 24 months. He had to go through counseling, and a special subcommittee of the Committee on Ministry (COM) was formed to help counsel and guide him during those two years.

I know most people suffer when their marriages break up. But especially difficult for me to deal with was the lack of support from Jake's new church and presbytery. I have been a minister's wife for more than half my life, and my support system crumbled when Jake decided to divorce me. I know that mine is a voice not often heard during discussions of clergy professional misconduct through sexual abuse, and that is why I believe telling my story is important. Others are harmed in these situations, not just the women with whom the pastors, counselors or chaplains are sexually involved.

My husband was sexually involved with two different women in two different churches. Not surprisingly, I didn't know about either relationship until long after most other people. I believe an important point in all this is that his misconduct was not just about his sexual relationships (that is not my story to tell). His misconduct was also in the web of lies he created to hide his sexual relationships. He lied to me, to our children, to both congregations, to presbytery committees, and colleagues. His entire life was a lie.

I do not know if his counseling helped—whether he is healed. I hope and pray that he is better now, because once again he is pastoring a church, and he is married to the clerk of session with whom he had an affair. If he is no better, I pray for the congregations that he serves now and in the future, and I pray every day for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Education about clergy professional misconduct through sexual abuse has become my own personal mission, because I do not want other women to suffer experiences similar to mine.

GRACE PRESBYTERIAN'S STORY

“Several couples who had been married by Rev. Jason Masterson wondered whether their marriages truly had been blessed if the charges were true.”

“All this hierarchical buck-passing and rules-modifying to assure [his] protection reflects the lack of honesty, openness, and assertiveness in dealing with the issue.”

“The concept of the Presbyterian system is good. It protects ministers from acts of vengeance and hostility by members who truly have misunderstood a counseling relationship and act from anger or fear. But a balance must be maintained.”

As Catherine mentioned in her story, incidents of clergy professional misconduct through sexual abuse always leave multiple victims. One victim often forgotten or overlooked is the congregation. Congregations are always affected by this abusive behavior. Often they are caught in the middle of the lies, the betrayal, and the deceit, not knowing whom to believe. These incidents can destroy a church.

Honesty is imperative when dealing with a congregation that has endured a pastor accused of misconduct. Sessions and presbytery committees may report directly to the congregation and make available information about a case being investigated, within the bounds of confidentiality, of course. Decisions of the Special Disciplinary Committee and Permanent Judicial Commission may be clearly reported to all congregation members. A congregational meeting after a Sunday service of worship to explain the process and answer questions can be beneficial. Congregations left in the dark will concoct their own stories, which are usually far from the truth of the matter.

Another important fact to remember is that after the incident is declared over, it is not really over. Memories of the lies and betrayal may continue to affect the congregation. Perhaps a trained interim pastor could be hired, one who can help the healing process begin before the congregation attempts to call a new pastor. Outside consultants—brought in as early as possible in a judicial process—also can be crucial to the healing of both staff and congregation. These things were missing at Grace Presbyterian. The resulting disintegration and pain are detailed below.

Jason Masterson is a very intelligent person. Hundreds of people placed their trust in him as the senior pastor of our church. We enlisted him to perform the Sacraments and ceremonies of the church: Communion, Baptisms, weddings, and

funerals. We trusted that the Holy Spirit was alive in this man and working through him and that he was a true vessel and servant of the Lord. We were deceived by him. He abused his power and authority, and we were wronged. Power in itself is not bad, but the misuse of power is deleterious. The impact of the misuse of power on our church was divisive, long lasting, and humiliating.

Many people honored Jason Masterson and believed unshakably in his goodness. Questions about his misuse of church funds, his inappropriate access to members' assets, and his indecorous verbal and physical contact with women were quickly explained away. And the explanations were accepted. To this day, some persons still believe that Masterson was treated poorly by the church—forced to leave as the result of a witch-hunt.

The impact of his lies pitted groups within the church against one another. Congregational members and staff of the personnel committee, session, singles' ministry, and the counseling department analyzed what small shreds of information were given to them. Conclusions were reached, and positions taken based on rumor and strong desires to believe in the purity and honesty of the authority figure.

The impact was divisive and intensely painful for many individuals. Women (usually single, usually grieving the loss of a relationship, often confused, always vulnerable) accepted his apparent caring, reaching out, and affection as a normal part of his style of counseling singles. But is it normal for a pastor to invite a single woman counselee to spend a day with him, so he can get to know her better to help their counseling relationship? Masterson was sexually involved with many women (at least eight have been identified) from our congregation. During the presbytery judicatory process, they were made to feel that they were the perpetrators and that Jason Masterson was the victim.

Many congregation members felt abandoned by the session and the church when their first hint of the accusations was the story on the front page of the local paper. Several couples who had been married by Masterson wondered whether their marriages truly had been blessed and consecrated if the charges were true. Parents whose children had been baptized by him wondered whether their children truly were blessed by the Holy Spirit if the allegations were accurate.

Few facts were known about anything during the process. Why was Melanie Oswald fired? Why was Jacob Kensington let go? Why were women who asked to speak to the session, personnel committee, or presbytery not allowed to speak? Was the person who filed the charges against Masterson male or female? mentally deranged? reliable? Why was the person who filed charges not allowed to speak with session or personnel committee? Why did the local church decline to take ad hoc administrative action until charges were proven or dropped? Why did the church postpone periodically providing the congregation with even minimal information?

“Secrecy,” “mystery,” “not above board,” “deceived,” “confused,” “isolated,” “uninformed,” “abandoned,” “betrayed,” “suspicious”—these words were used by congregation members both during the investigatory process and during the process of separating Masterson from the church. Information is power. Information allows people to make rational, informed decisions. Information allows people to pull together to support either a wronged church member or an unjustly accused pastor. Factual, concrete information from presbytery, from session, from personnel committees would have provided increased respect for the process, patience in working toward the conclusion, and more open-mindedness in looking at both sides of the situation.

So what happened to Jason Masterson? The response in the church toward him was divided. Some people believe his career was put in jeopardy by this event and the presbytery process. Some believe he was treated fairly through the church judicial process and that, for the healing of the local church, it was important for him to leave this particular ministry. Other people believe it criminal and unconscionable that this man, who had a similar history of professional misconduct through sexual abuse in his previous church, should ever be allowed to serve in a church, preach from a pulpit, and perform church Sacraments.

What about the women involved with Masterson? Some of them have transferred their church memberships. Some have remained at the church, but they blame the church and presbytery for not listening, hearing, respecting, believing, and, ultimately, healing. The woman who originally filed the charges is no longer in the state.

What about the church—my church, Grace Presbyterian?

The people finally are healing. I do not believe all the facts will ever be revealed to the congregation, and I do not think they should be. During the period of the investigation, Grace Presbyterian never publicly accepted responsibility for what happened. But now, people are finally meeting together in small groups to dig out and talk about the questions: Where do we go from here? How can we help this church represent the gospel and be filled with the Holy Spirit?

All this hierarchical buck-passing and rules-modifying to assure Masterson's protection reflects the lack of honesty, openness, and assertiveness in dealing with the issue. The women involved could not heal personally (within the church), and the church could not effect a corporate spiritual healing within. A woman (especially separated, divorced, guilt-ridden, and vulnerable) has difficulty trying to convey to a male-dominated session or church organization how she feels in such a situation. Not to be believed or to have been blamed and viewed as the perpetrator (as often happens) is even worse.

The concept of the Presbyterian system is good. It protects ministers from acts of vengeance and hostility by members who truly have misunderstood a counseling relationship and act from anger or fear. But a balance must be maintained. A process must be established for wronged church members. Resources (advocates, legal assistance, and psychological support) must be available for persons who have been violated. We should be able to trust authority. We should be able to trust that those in positions of authority will not use their power to manipulate, but to empower, to reward, and to bring each of us closer to God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS TO USE WITH EACH STORY

1. What elements make this a case of professional misconduct through sexual abuse?
2. What do you think should happen to someone who abuses power in this manner?
3. How do you think you might respond to a similar situation?
4. What is the church's/presbytery's responsibility in a case such as this?

GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the difference between professional misconduct through sexual abuse and a healthy sexual relationship?
2. Do situations ever exist in which pastors should permanently be removed from office and not allowed to serve another church? What circumstances should warrant that discipline?
3. What should be the church's response to the spouses and families of ministers accused of misconduct?
4. How can congregations more effectively deal with situations of professional misconduct through sexual abuse by their ministers or other persons in positions of trust?
5. Why is this problem so large in our church?
6. What are some Scripture passages that help us understand the role and authority of ministers of the Word and Sacrament? What light do these passages shed on the issue of professional misconduct through sexual abuse?
7. Are there times when it is okay for a pastor to date a parishioner? Under what circumstances?

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