

1. INTRODUCTION

1. A. Resource for Bishops, Seminaries, Vestries, Clergy, and Families of Clergy

The material contained in this binder has been collated by FOCUS, Families of Clergy United in Support, a national organization born at the 2000 General Convention. For many years the role of clergy families, spouses, children, and even pets, was stereotyped and generally accepted. They were supposed to support and nourish the clergy, staying quietly in the background unless coming forward to do a job no one else wanted to do. That many people still buy into that role is evident in the popularity of the Mitford Series by Jan Karon, novels that portray the rewarding life of an Episcopal clergyman, his wife, an adopted son, and the dog, who responds to scriptural commands. A more accurate picture is found in the novels of Johanna Trollope where the Rector's Wife is seen as desperate for a life of her own and money necessary to send her daughter to school, or in the novels of Susan Howatch who captures the fall-out experienced by family members because of competition for spiritual glory. See the bibliography for more information about all three of these fictional accounts. The acuteness of the need for support for clergy families is also illustrated by a statistic from the Nathan Network about crises in clergy families, which found that every \$1 spent on prevention saves \$19 on remediation.

A draft version of the Resource Guide was ready in June, 2005. Seven dioceses agreed to pilot the Resource Guide: Georgia, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, Newark, Olympia and West Virginia. The Church Divinity School of the Pacific also worked with FOCUS to prepare a presentation for family members of seminarians. The purpose of the pilot phase was to evaluate the usefulness of the guide in assisting dioceses to enhance the health and well-being of clergy family members. Each diocese was visited by a FOCUS board member. In most dioceses the FOCUS member facilitated a one-day meeting of a core group (including a diocesan staff member who has oversight of clergy, perhaps one married couple with one ordained member and several spouses/partners of clergy, and if possible, one adolescent child of a clergy person) who used the guide to design a program to facilitate wellness for family of clergy members, inspired by the information contained in the guide. The facilitator met for one hour with the bishop prior to the meeting in order to explain the purpose of the meeting and answer any questions that the bishop may have about the project. In Spring of 2006 the dioceses were asked to report on their progress and evaluate the design phase of their project. They did so, and the pilot projects and evaluations are included in Chapter 2 of this guide.

The Resource Guide is still very much a work in progress. FOCUS' goal is to provide ideas and share experiences about how to promote clergy family wellness. Our hope is that the Resource Guide can function as a catalyst to encourage groups within each diocese to take actions that support clergy family members, clergy, and the church as a whole.

Are Families of Clergy different from other Families?

Families of clergy need not be different from other families. Family members can be non-participants in church. They can belong to a different denomination, or a different faith. If there is another church within reasonable distance in the ordained family member's denomination, they can attend that other church. Family members can and do live their own unique life style. But conversations and our own experience reveal that such choices often cause problems for the ordained family member and thus for the family. Those problems stem from the ordination vow, "to be a wholesome example to your people." In spite of changes in modern culture, most congregations and bishops, indeed most members of the community expect to see the 'wholesome example' sitting in the ordained member's congregation.

In what other job or profession is the family of the employee called upon to be an example? Perhaps the assembly line worker at Ford still feels pressure to drive only a Ford to work, but other family members may drive whatever vehicle they like. A doctor's family is not criticized when one of them is ill, nor does the doctor attempt to treat that member. A lawyer's family is not expected to know law. In none of these professions are the family members expected to appear at work or to participate in the job. In none of these professions is the family expected to be an example of the good work the employee is doing.

Pressures of time and money are uniquely felt by families of clergy. Many employees work long hours, but usually they do so to earn more money through overtime or second jobs, or to gain advancement, i.e. to make partner in a law firm, or because the profession requires 'on call' availability. Most doctors and lawyers are paid a fee for service, earning money for their 'overtime.' The ordained family member works long hours, often for a low salary, a salary that does not allow for the compensatory spending that overtime provides. If a family can afford to 'get away for a weekend,' they cannot do so because the weekend is a regular part of the work week. If the family has the monetary means for a more affluent life style will they be a "wholesome example' if they live that lifestyle, especially if members of their congregation cannot?

There is a growing body of research about the intersection of clergy members' personal and professional lives, some cited in the bibliography in this guide. The unique needs of families of clergy were brought to the attention of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 2003 in the form of the resolution. Other resolutions, one from the Episcopal Diocese of Maine and one from the United Methodist Church General Conference are also included in the appendix to this guide in Section 9.

Why is attention to clergy families important?

“In a 1992 survey by *Leadership*, on the causes for marriage problems in clergy families, these were the most frequently named: insufficient time together (81%); use of money (71%); income level (70%); communication difficulties (64%); congregational differences (63%); differences over leisure activities (57%) followed by difficulties raising children, pastor's anger toward spouse, differences over ministry career and spouses' career. A significant and troubling 80% of clergy reported that they believed their pastoral ministry negatively affected their families” (See May 2004 UMC General Conference Resolution, in the Appendix *PAGE XX*).

The many changes in society and the church have brought both relief and more stress into the lives of the families of clergy. Most families depend on two incomes, which augment traditionally low clergy salaries. There are different expectations of male and female clergy, and hence on male and female spouses. Many people are coming to the profession later, so that they may have equity in a house and retirement savings. Parishes have heard the message that the families need their own time and space, so do not presume to own them as of old. Housing arrangements for families of clergy are more flexible, so they need not always live in the rectory, often attached to or on church property. Yet, the ordination service still contains the words, “Will you do your best to pattern your life and that of your family in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that you may be a wholesome example to your people?” The clergy alone is to answer, “I will.”

What does that promise mean for the clergy person and for her or his family? What support do clergy have after they utter that promise? Why are they asked to answer for the family, who is usually present? What happens when the clergy family and the church disagree about whether they are patterning the life of the family “in accordance with the teachings of Christ”? How does that promise accommodate the possibilities of crisis and trauma that occur within any type of family (e.g. alcoholism, illness, divorce)?,The material in this Guide has been developed, collected, and is to be shared to help answer these questions.

Caring for Clergy Families is holy work!

Endorsement by The Rev. Bud Holland, Office for Ministry Development

Episcopalians begin to learn in the Baptismal Covenant that our lives are inextricably connected to one another in Christ. We then live a lifetime experiencing what connection to Christ and one another means in our work, in our relationships, and in contributions to the common good. As we live into this vision, we need to establish appropriate ways of caring for one another and respect boundaries that assist us in expressing that care in healthy ways. This Resource Guide to Promote Wellness within Families of Clergy reminds us that the Episcopal Church's collective vision about those in their circle of care includes families of clergy. With great sensitivity for these families, the resource guide provides wonderful resources for them as well as for congregations, bishops, dioceses and other church institutions to support families of clergy appropriately.

This resource is the result of the work of a number of people who began a new conversation about families of clergy at the General Convention in Denver in 2000. This newly forming group adopted the name FOCUS (Families of Clergy United in Support). Since 2000, FOCUS has sought to bring to the attention of the church some of the needs and concerns of families of clergy and to encourage the church to pay closer attention to these families in its life and work. FOCUS understands that this new focus of our common life needs to respect the privacy of families of clergy on the one hand and provide resources and attention to their needs on the other. What is clear is families of clergy, in the main, have great opportunities to experience life in the church from a unique perspective and also have great stress in doing so. For some it is a more positive experience than negative. Others choose to live on the fringe of the church in order to have a life not totally consumed by the work of the church. Family members of clergy who seek to support their clergy spouse or partner by being involved in the life and work of the church, sometimes receive little or no support themselves. In some congregations life for a clergy family is rich and meaningful. In some other congregations it is very difficult, made so by a whole host of reasons outlined in the resource.

One of the purposes of this resource guide is to say that families of clergy do matter! At best they need to be affirmed in ways that are most helpful to them. At the very least those circumstances that inhibit their capacity of engaging life (including the church) need to be addressed and changed. Yes, it is a matter of respect, fairness, justice, compassion, and hospitality. Yes, it is a matter of supporting the families of clergy and clergy in these important ways so that the energy and leadership provided to the church remains strong. But it is fundamentally important to respect families of clergy because they are an integral part of the community to which we pledge fidelity and commitment. It is important to be intentional about this commitment because, not doing so, will most likely lead to the community's removing them from their orbit of care and concern.

Many thanks to all who have helped prepare these resources. Many thanks also for all of you, the readers, who in a multitude of ways are seeking to be supportive of both families of clergy and the clergy, both of whom are of inestimable worth.

Message to Bishops

The good health of the Body of Christ is the concern of each of its members. As St. Paul tells us "... God has combined the various parts of the body, so that there might be no division in the body, but that all its parts might feel the same concern for one another." (1 Corinthians 12: 24-25). Although the awareness of the need for good health is shared among all Christians, the responsibility for facilitating good health in clergy and families of clergy, due to the church's hierarchical structure, rests with the bishop. To insure that the materials in this Resource Guide are used, discussed, revised, and shared, the bishop and the diocesan staff must show their understanding of the ideas presented and their commitment to the implementation of these ideas.

The thrust of this material is preventative. You are urged to include families of clergy from the beginning of the discernment process throughout the process, ordination, and deployment so that you will be supporting wellness in the relationship between the aspiring ordinand and his/her family, families of clergy and the diocese, and ultimately linking all persons in the system in a positive, inclusive manner.

Some families of clergy may choose to view the ordained family member's vocation as a job like any other work that brings income to the family, and therefore may elect not to participate in any of these programs. We should honor that choice. But most families of clergy discover that with ordination of a family member come life-altering changes. The families of clergy deserve the church's support as they adapt to and live out these changes.

1. B. How to use this guide

The Resource Guide has been divided into ten sections, beginning with some ways that attention to clergy family wellness can benefit the entire church system, moving to some of the unique dynamics facing clergy families, and then to specific issues raised at different points in clergy families' lives: discerning a call to ordination, accepting a first call to a parish, negotiating subsequent moves, crises and changes. The last three sections offer some general statistics (many of which are found elsewhere in the guide where relevant), information about diocesan resources, and resolutions from General Convention and some dioceses.

Each section has a more theoretical overview and then concrete resources from existing projects in dioceses around the nation that may be useful models for dioceses considering new programs. People interested in overall issues of clergy family wellness may want to read descriptions of the issues and prescriptions for offering support offered at the beginning of each section. Others looking for a particular tool to meet a particular issue may skip to relevant sections for outlines of workshops and discussions or other resources. There is some repetition so that each section can stand on its own.

This is a work in progress, offered as a first step in addressing needs of clergy families for the benefit of the whole church. Advice, suggestions and additional resources are welcome: FOCUS would like to be a central place to gather and disseminate materials as they become available. Contact FOCUS through the following venues:

Website: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/focus>

E-mail address: focus@episcopalchurch.org

Toll free telephone number: 866-673-5297, pin 8341

Post office box address: P.O. Box 829, Brunswick, ME 04011