

STRATEGIES FOR LIVING

By: Dr. Trudy Corry Rankin

The strategies listed below are the result of seventeen interviews with United Methodist Clergy Spouses from the Florida Conference. These interviews were conducted to complement the dissertation research conducted by Trudy Corry Rankin. The investigation examined the level of coping resources of spouses of clergy persons and the relationship of these coping resources to perceived levels of management and satisfaction in the role. 191 spouses completed the Coping Resource Inventory, with a demographic categories list and two questions related to perceptions. A significant difference was found in the total level of coping resources of the spouses and the normative sample of the Inventory. There seems to be a relationship between the level of coping resources and the perceptions of management and satisfaction. Three demographics of age, having children in the home and being the adult child of a clergy person were correlated. There was no significant difference determined between the coping resource level, the perceptions and these three variables. The coping resources were discriminated between five domains-social, cognitive, physical, emotional and spiritual. From these independent domains, comments on strategies for well-being are given.

Social Strategies

Find friends outside of the church who know you as a person rather than a role. With friends in the church, be realistic about how much can be shared. Your spouse is always their pastor.

“There is a certain level of disclosure that is appropriate for church members.”

“It helps to have a friend who knows the church”.

“This is the hardest thing to establish friendships with people who are not in the church, if most of your social activity tends to be in the church. It is even difficult when the pastor doesn’t have enough friends, the spouse becomes the sounding board.”

“Isolation is too strong a word, but there is a sense of separateness from other people.”

“Push yourself to know the neighbors, and attempt to develop other things to talk about than the church.”

Having something outside of the church, such as volunteer work or a job, really helps in keeping church issues in perspective. It also helps with finding friends.

Have a “girls night out”

“I have had something to look forward to that doesn’t involve my husband.”

Emotional Strategies

If your extended family is a healthy one that understands your commitment to the church, strengthen that tie which will not change with moves.

“Having known the role in watching my mother is a coping resource[for me].”

Develop times of the day and week for communication with your spouse.

“Taking time with my husband, making sure that we have communication time, as well as time together everyday [has been really important].”

“We have a date every Friday night.”

“If we were not communicating and bantering issues [that we disagree on] back and forth despite the conflict, we would be growing continuously apart.

Help your children talk about being clergy kids.

“I have the attitude that we are going to be at this church a long time, and encourage the children to think that way as well.”

Allow your spouse to protect you from the church.

“My husband has the attitude that I am not an employee of the church. If I want to do something it is up to me. Anything that he wants me to do as his wife, I rely on him to tell me.”

“When we came to a new situation, my husband would say, you people hired me. When my wife finds where she wants to fit in, she will do it.”

Cognitive Strategies

Find a counseling center that provides you with support for the values that you have for your own development.

“We are very open to counseling when we need it as a family. We do it as preventative, if I see something starting. We have an accountability group, if not counseling.”

-for help in developing flexibility -for help in accepting your spouse’s Call

Learn the skill of saying no. Work through not feeling guilty when you say no.

“I don’t over-commit. I prayerfully narrow down my gifts and use my gifts wisely, not feeling that I have to do everything.”

“It is really to be following what God wants and not what other’s want. I am not working to please them, but God.”

Identify your thoughts about yourself. Thoughts often contribute to a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

“I am the only person that can make me happy. I can’t count on others.”

“Feelings about myself cause me to feel that I can make a difference” “I can be as happy or as sad as I choose to be. I can make the best of a situation or I can dwell on it and make it worse in my mind”. “I made a decision to not let my joy be affected by the church issues.” “My satisfaction of myself as a person really helps me to make the role easier.” “I did have a difficult time. It was rough at the beginning. I felt cheated. . .the way I felt was that I just made up my mind to get involved

and be a partner. The way we have worked is, we are a team. If we didn't work it that way, we wouldn't have stayed together."

Love the Church with God's love, if you can't with your own.

Learn time management.

"We sit with the calendar on Sunday nights. We compare our schedules. There are times that I have him do a 'hour count', because I know that he has put in more than 60 hours. He doesn't realize it because he loves his work. With the hour count, he gives me back hours if it is over 60."

Spiritual Strategies

Develop a spiritual life separate from your spouse and the church.

"My relationship is with God, not the church."

"Without my relationship with God, I am dead in the water."

"Setting up a support system has been helpful for me. It is such a peaceful thing to know that people are praying for me."

"I married someone who happens to be a minister. My relationship with God is of importance to me. I have taken my role on as a calling. I am willing to be the minister's mate."

"Prayer and my relationship with Jesus Christ are my coping resources."

Physical Strategies

Physical exercise helps with the inertia of low energy, with a sense of accomplishment and with a physical sensation of invigoration.

"It's hard to balance everything!"

"We walk the inside of the Mall at least twice a week."

Try to make the home a haven and protection from external factors, which cause stress.

"This is being a minister to the minister".

(Responses to interviews conducted by Trudy Corry Rankin 2004 for dissertation research on "Coping Resources in Relation to Perceptions of Management and Satisfaction in the Role of Clergy Spouse", EdD in Pastoral Counseling, Argosy University, Sarasota, Florida)

CLERGY CARE RESOURCES IN THE UMC

P.O. Box 3767
Lakeland, FL 33802-3767
1-800-282-8011

RETREAT CENTERS

LARC

839 Lake Asbury Drive
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
863-282-4514

LEC/Warren W. Willis Camp

04990 Picciola Rd.
Leesburg, FL 34731
351-787-4345

South Florida Camp

6355 CR 78 West
Alva, FL 33920
941-675-0334

OTHER RETREAT CENTERS IN FLORIDA

San Pedro Retreat Center

2400 Dike Road
Winter Park, FL 32792
(www.sanpedrocenter.org)
407-671-6322

Lake Aurora Christian Camp & Retreat Center

237 Golden Bough Road
Lake Wales, FL 33898
(www.lakeaurora.org)
863-696-1102

Lake Placid Conference Center

2665 Placid View Drive
Lake Placid, FL 33852
(www:lppc@htn.net)

St. John Lutheran Retreat Center

42528 Maggie Jones Rd.
Paisley, FL 32767
352-669-5322

YMCA camps

Dove Shores

Life Restoration Program
Pensacola, FL
(www.thedovecenter.org)
850-492-3683

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

Spiritual Directors Listing
www.shadeandfreshwater.org

CLERGY-FAMILY WHOLENESS

Shade and Fresh Water

(www.flumc.org or
www.shadeandfreshwater.org)

**REFERRALS FOR RETREATS AND SABBATICALS
AND OTHER RESOURCES OF SUPPORT
FOR CLERGY FAMILIES**

All Seasons Renewal Center – (Minneapolis) 612-866-0462

Amicus Ministries International Retreat Center – (Canada) 705-742-5195

Blessing Ranch – (Colorado) 970-495-0920

Broom Tree Ministries – www.broomtreeministries.org 262-646-7774 (three locations for retreat-individuals and couples)

Buffalo Ridge Hospitality – (Kansas) www.HisWayMinistries.org 785-746-5418

Candlelight Inn – (Indiana) 219-267-2906

Cedaryl Pastors Retreat – (Wisconsin)-www.cedaryl.org (individuals and couples)

Chestnut Ridge Retreat Center – (Ohio)-740-622-1912

Christian Prayer Retreat House – (Colorado)-303-567-4601

Commonweal Retreat Center – www.commonweal.org

Eagles Nest Retreat – (Colorado)-(800)533-4049

Fallen Goose Ministry – (Montana)-406-821-1552

Fairhaven Ministry – (Tennessee) www.fairhavenl.com fhmin@aol.com Kevin and Linda Swanson (15 chalets; \$45 per night; clergy families; no program, counseling; meals)

Faith Mountain Retreat Center – www.faithmountain.org 304-364-4019

Green Bough House of Prayer – (Georgia), 478-668-4758

The Healing House – (North Carolina) 704-479-8320

Holy Name Monastery – (St Leo, Florida) 352-588-8320

Manna House of Prayer – (Kansas) www.mannahse@theonramp.net 785-243 4428

Marble Retreat – (Colorado) www.marbleretreat.org (interdenominational counseling center for clergy in crisis) 888-216-2725

Mepkin Abbey – (South Carolina) www.mepkinabbey.org-843-761-8509

Middle Earth Healing Center – 251-866-7204 Minnesota Renewal Center –
www.minnesotarenewal.com

Mountain Top Retreat – (Montana) www.mountaintopretreat.org

Our Father's House – Minnesota www.ourfathershouseinc.org (5 day sabbaticals)

Pastorcare.org
(telephone referral line for financial, legal, counseling, retreats around the country)

Pastors Retreat Network www.pastorsretreatnetwork.org (three retreat centers in Texas and Wisconsin for clergy and/or spouse)

Pleasant Vineyard Ministries – (Ohio)-937-452-3347

Quiet Waters Ministries Retreat Home – 1(866)5Waters

Religious vacations – Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, 954-763-8400 Hugh Hoffman (free for the clergy family)

Restoration Ministries – (Wyoming)-307-235-9100

Sonscape – www.sonscape.com

OTHER SERVICES

Alban Institute – www.pwalker@alban.org

The Chopra Center for Well Being – www.chopra.com

Clergy Financial Services – promise@clergy-financial.com [Financial]
Clergytaxnet.com/tax_services.htm

The Clergy Recovery Network – www.christianrecovery.com [Addictions]

Emory Clergy Care – 678-924-9280

The Epiphany Center – 404-760-1110

Ministry Wives –760-345-3868

Westwood Ministries – www.westwoodministries.org