

Self Description of a Traumatized Congregation

Characteristics

Historical experiences can include financial trauma, physical or sexual abuse traumas, individuals with various types of personal trauma

Absence of joy and spirit - low energy

Lack of trust

High reactivity

People describe feeling "close to their limits"

People leaving including long established members, perception that few are entering system

Personal feelings and convictions shared in public settings

Decline in constructive programming, cut backs in participation and staff

Formal communications decline, informal communication increases, rumors and assumptions increase, ultimate response is silence

Dissension increases and differences are less tolerated

Avoiding increases as negative information circulates and increases

Financial challenges increase

Disengagement - weariness and declining energy

Abandonment of each other and God

Loss of respect - resentment, loss of focus on God

Frustration - "why isn't what we are doing working?"

Needs

Action oriented strategies

Faith Boost - source of energy, skills, momentum

Listening - renewed dependence on God, skills to resolve issues

Sense of feeling valued - prayer, comfort, belonging

Inspired leadership - not weary, full of energy and spirit

Remotivation - momentum, credibility

Lay Leadership mentoring - implementing growth strategies

Name it - change it - stop avoidance

Response with urgency, timeliness

Desire for reconciliation, forgiveness, acceptance

Multi-faceted strategies

safe

sacred

*Program for the Prevention of Clergy Sexual Misconduct
ELCA, Division for Ministry, lframpto@elca.org
Director, Rev. Lorraine Frampton, D. Min. 773/380-2455*

The After Pastor's Experience*:

1. *Short or no "Honeymoon"*
2. *Congregation or a member wants to control the pastor's ministry*
3. *Negative comments—"You pray too much!" "You're never in the office."*
4. *Blamed for any perceived difficulties or is identified as the problem*
5. *Pastor's personhood (dress, speech) and/or family is attacked*
6. *The congregation's attitude toward the pastor doesn't make any sense—the pastor has done well in other ministry settings.*

*Please note that these symptoms can occur in other areas of misconduct; such as addiction or mishandling of money.

The Pastor's Symptoms:

1. *Anger expressed by depression, losing temper, whining*
2. *Questioning call to ministry*
3. *Feelings of incompetence*
4. *Feeling alone, colleagues may lack understanding*
5. *Sense of betrayal by the judicatory leader and/or congregation*
6. *Immobilized or over-working*
7. *Faith crisis*
8. *DESPAIR, a sense that they can't make it for too long-yet wanting to stay*

The Congregation's Behavior:

1. *Fragmented community—resistance to group gatherings with people they don't know*
2. *Lack of ritual/routine gatherings*
3. *Whispering—different levels of knowledge*
4. *Inappropriate boundaries; church leaders may be having extramarital affairs or into other addictions such as alcohol/drugs*
5. *Giving down, people leaving with no rational explanation—won't talk to anyone*
6. *Symbolic actions: Church leader yelling at a woman*
7. *Mistreatment of the victim—no sense of justice; power issues*
8. *Angry at the judicatory leaders; may avoid them*
9. *Lethargy, despair—we're going to close*

Anne Marie