

PSALM

# A Systems and Developmental Perspective on the Seasons of Pastoral Life & Ministry

BY TONY HEADLEY

Ministry is an extremely complex and formidable occupation. Much of its difficulties derive from the interaction of the systems that form the matrix in which ministry is conducted. In this article, I discuss four systems: the minister as individual system, the family system, the congregational system, and the denominational system. First, I provide a basis for understanding how each of these systems intersects with ministry. Second, I take a developmental perspective and demonstrate how each system and its respective needs impact ministry. Finally, I draw a few conclusions on how some of the difficulties may be addressed systemically.

## Defining Systems

Before proceeding, the nature of systems needs an appropriate brief discussion. Simply put, a system refers to a group of parts interacting as a whole. The focus in systems thinking is on the *interrelatedness* of the parts (Carter and McGoldrick 4-6 Steinke 3). In such systems, change in any one or more part influences the whole. For example, applied to a family, a change in one member would influence the whole family system. This notion of systems has largely become the basis for a variety of family therapy models (e. g., Nichols; Nichols and Schwartz ).

## Four Systems That Impact the Seasons of Pastoral Life and Ministry

In addition to its applications to family life, systems concepts can serve to foster a better understanding of life within religious communities and congregations. This relevance has been demonstrated in works such as Edwin Friedman's

*Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* and Peter Steinke's *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*. These authors use systems language and concepts to describe and understand ministry. They illustrate how various concepts such as emotional triangles and feedback loops influence relationships within the church; however, we might go further in applying these concepts. Not only do systems dynamics operate within the church but ministry also takes place within a matrix of systems including the individual, the family, the congregation, and the larger denomination.

This understanding of multiple systems interacting in ministry finds a strong precedent in the literature. For example, in a recent article, C. Darling, E. Hill, and L. McWey use system concepts to understand quality of life issues among clergy and clergy spouses. The authors conclude, "Clergy do not exist alone, but are part of a family and congregational system. Thus, the stresses and dissatisfactions faced by their spouses and congregations are also an influence on their lives and the well-being of their families" (272). This statement explicitly references two systems—the family and congregational systems—and implies the individual system. Nevertheless, one can logically argue for the inclusion of the larger organizational system. Similar perspectives can be found in other authors (e.g., Frame and Shehan; Krause, Ellison, and Wulff; Malony and Hunt; O'Donnell; Pienaar). Indeed, some have spoken of the ecological system of the minister (e.g., Lee, "Specifying Intrusive Demands"; "Spouses and Families"; Malony and Hunt; Pienaar). Johannes Frederick Pienaar notes that this ecosystem is distinctive and that stress involves the complex interplay of various factors within this system. Further, he notes this ecosystem influences the clergyperson's life and ministry in a variety of ways. For example, it influences the way a minister



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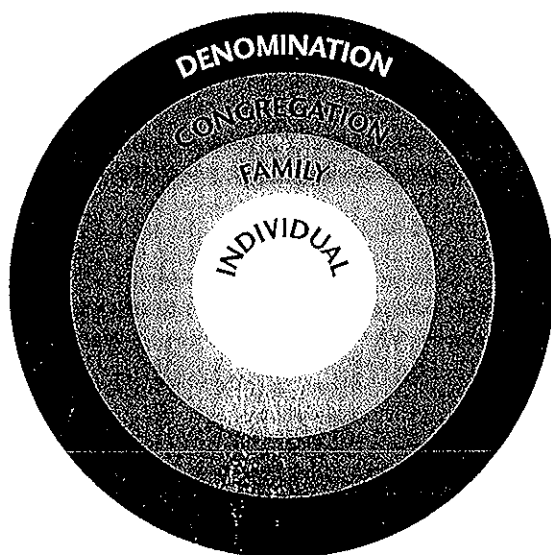
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manages midlife tasks such as self-differentiation (that is, the ability to distinguish oneself from others as well as one's role) as well as how one evaluates one's career, how one demythologizes their career, as well as how one grapples with a home orientation. In short, the minister's ecosystem demonstrates personal, family, and vocational implications. Similarly, H. Newton Malony and Richard A. Hunt indicate various personal elements in the ecosystem of clergy. These include expectations, competencies and commitment, and environmental variables such as family, tragedies, unexpected events, and even God.

Evidently, one could speak ad nauseam on this subject; however, I have chosen to speak about the four systems indicated earlier, which directly impinge on ministry. These systems are indicated in Figure 1. I later describe each of these at further length.

Figure 1. The Four Primary Systems Influencing Seasons of Pastoral Life and Ministry



First, one must consider the minister as an individual system. I am aware one does not typically think of the individual as a system, but it does, nevertheless, function as one. In their book on the family life cycle, B. Carter and M. McGoldrick identify the individual as a system level (9). Arnold Lazarus, founder of Multimodal therapy speaks of the BASIC.ID, thereby identifying some of the individual system parts. By BASIC.ID, he means persons are comprised of behavior, affect, sensations, images, cognitions, interpersonal relations, and drugs/biology. These modalities may be considered interacting parts that make up the whole person (13-16). To these, I would add spiritual denoting a central aspect of our lives. Various researchers intuitively imply the relevance of this system when they speak of terms such as self-differentiation (e.g., Beebe; Pienaar) and how it relates to the practice of ministry. Self-differentiation implies a personal system boundary to be maintained.

Second, the practice of ministry involves the family system

and is the most immediate system with which the minister must interact and on which the success of ministry often hinges. Family therapy models have developed quite a body of literature related to the system dimensions of family (Bowen; Carter and McGoldrick; Nichols; Nichols and Schwartz). This system impacts ministry to a large degree. Often the pressures of ministry demands are most keenly felt by families that typically get short-changed when these pressures conflict with family needs. Long ago, John Scanzoni described the complex interplay of family and ministry dynamics using the terms sect-type and church-type clergy. These ministry orientations largely revolved around grappling with and resolving tensions between home and church. Sect-type clergy totally capitulate to the demands of ministry without due attention to family. In contrast, church-type clergy seek to balance these two areas, giving priority to family needs.

This struggle to balance home and church continues. In a recent article on clergywomen, Frame and Shehan report the tremendous difficulties clergywomen experience in balancing work and family demands. Indeed, this area is described as the major source of clergywomen's strain, but male clergy often experience similar difficulties as demonstrated by various authors (e.g., Headley; Lee, "Specifying Intrusive Demands"; Krause, Ellison, and Wulff; O'Donnell).

One significant related area of difficulty involves the intrusiveness clergy and their families experience in ministry (Lee, "Specifying Intrusive Demands"). Lee sees this intrusiveness as "a career-specific type of boundary ambiguity, one characterized not by traumatic or ambiguous loss within the family, but by the intrusiveness of extrafamilial systems" (479). In his research using the *Ministry Demands Inventory*, he describes four types of intrusiveness: presumptive expectations, personal criticism, family criticism, and boundary ambiguity. Presumptive expectations occur in situations where personal or family plans are canceled or interrupted by congregational emergencies or crises. Personal and family criticisms are precisely as they sound—criticisms directed either at the minister or at his or her family. Boundary ambiguity involves such events as intrusions on the family by phone calls, unannounced visits to the pastoral home, and various invasions of family privacy. According to Lee, presumptive expectations and boundary ambiguity problems were more frequently reported than either type of criticism. Furthermore, boundary ambiguity type demands occurred more often than presumptive expectation type demands.

These problems point to the congregational system and how it interacts with family and personal systems to create difficulties in ministry; however, even though Lee's study primarily looked at the impact of congregational intrusiveness on ministry, one could make similar arguments about the denominational system. Any balanced understanding of ministry pressures must give due consideration to the denominational context. Denominations bring their own brand of systems factors that directly and indirectly impinge on ministry practice. One could speak of vertical and horizontal stressors as well as the normative structure as ways in which the denomination influences ministry. I address these concepts in later parts of the paper.



Some of the stirrings within the Episcopal Church due to the ordination of an openly gay bishop in New Hampshire demonstrate the relevance of larger organizational dynamics for clergy and congregations. As a result of this denominational decision, some clergy and congregations decided to remove themselves from affiliation with the larger U.S. Episcopal Church. Indeed, this decision has had worldwide consequences as individual ministers and congregations have abandoned the supervision of local Episcopal bishops and aligned themselves with Anglican bishops in faraway lands; for example, some ministers and congregations in Kentucky are now receiving Episcopal supervision from bishops in Guatemala and Uganda ("Ugandan Bishop").

### The Developmental Stages (Seasons) Attached to Systems within Ministry

Each system described has its own developmental cycle, that is, each goes through fairly predictable stages as it moves

across time. Moving through stages is another way of speaking about seasons. A variety of authors address this seasonal aspect of life relative to individuals, families, and organizations (e.g., Carter and McGoldrick; Gibson et al.; Gilligan; Gould; Levinson, "Conception of Adult Development"; Sheehy; Straughan). In Table 1, I indicate various developmental stages relevant to our discussion. Because the life cycle issues of clergy interact with vocational issues across the life span, I have chosen to indicate both the individual and vocational stages as expressions of personal needs. I should note that a minister will simultaneously experience stages in each life cycle. For example, ministries may be at the midlife transition of the individual life cycle while wrestling with maintenance issues in the vocational life cycle. To further complicate matters, at the same time they may be grappling with adolescents in the home (family life cycle) while serving within congregations and denominations in decline (stages in the congregational and organizational life cycle).

Table 1. Life Cycle Issues of Various Systems Related to Ministry

INDIVIDUAL LIFE CYCLE <sup>1</sup>	INDIVIDUAL VOCATIONAL LIFE CYCLE <sup>2</sup>	FAMILY LIFE CYCLE <sup>3</sup>	CONGREGATIONAL LIFE CYCLE <sup>4</sup>	ORGANIZATIONAL/ DEVELOPMENTAL LIFE CYCLE <sup>5</sup>
Early adult transition 17-22	Preparation 20s	Leaving home: Single young adults	Growth Stage: First 10-20 years	Start-up
Entering adult world 22-28	Entry level 3 years after ordination	The joining of families through marriage: The new couple		Growth
Age 30 transition 28-33			Maturity (plateau or gradual decline): 30-40 year period	Maturity
Settling down 33-40 Midlife transition 40-45	Advancement 30-40s (50s)	Families with young children		Decline
Entering middle adulthood 45-50 Age 50 Transition 50-55	Maintenance late 40s-60s	Families with adolescents	Decline (opportunity to renew life and mission or decline)	Death (or Revival)
Culmination of middle adulthood 55-60		Launching children and moving on		
Late adulthood transition 60-65, Late adulthood 65+	Decline	Families in later life		

1. See Levinson, *Seasons of a Man's Life*. Although the stages are applied to women, the research was done with males. For a perspective on female development, one should consult such authors as Carol Gilligan.

2. See Malony and Hunt.

3. See Carter and McGoldrick.

4. See Elias; Walton. W. Frank Walton speaks of churches going through three stages of risk taking, caretaking, and undertaking.

5. See "Organizational Life Cycle"; Straughan. For a definitive discussion of organizational life, see Gibson et al.



This seasonal, developmental perspective finds precedence in the literature on ministry (Hambrick; Malony and Hunt; O'Donnell). For example, in their 1991 text, H. Newton Malony and Richard A. Hunt suggest ministry interacts with several other cycles. The authors identify the interaction of ministry with the personal and family cycles as well as the cycles of relatives, friends and work associates, as well as the cycle of one's parishioners and people in the community; the cycles of growth or decline of local churches and communities; and local, national, and world events (123).

In a similar vein, Kelly S. O'Donnell addresses developmental issues as they relate to missionary families. The author identifies three life cycles impinging on missionaries. These include the individual, family, and missionary stages. According to the author, the essential features of the model proposed were "its consideration of the interaction effects of all three dimensions as a means to understand and anticipate the developmental tasks of mission families" (283).

Each stage brings its own needs and tasks that have to be successfully completed if it will continue to make appropriate progress and effectively transition to the next stage. For example, a family in the adolescent stages should regulate boundaries in a flexible manner to permit entry and exit of adolescents, which, in turn, promotes individuation and independence (Carter and McGoldrick (15). However, these system stages and needs are not always complementary. Indeed, much of the time they are out of synch with each other. When this imbalance occurs, the needs of related systems compete with each other, leading to a veritable colliding of cycles. In such a pileup, lives are often crushed or damaged.

### How Competing Systems and Developmental Needs Impact the Seasons of Pastoral Life and Ministry

As indicated earlier, each system goes through its own stages and possesses its own developmental needs, demands and expectations. These needs are particularly important at critical transition points when anxiety is highest. Hunt and Malony point to this reality: "[A]ny time of change is potentially a critical time in the ministerial life cycle" (123).

Carter and McGoldrick discuss the flow of anxiety in systems as both vertical and horizontal. The vertical refers to various family patterns, myths, secrets, and legacies influencing family functioning. The horizontal refers to anxiety in the system "produced by the stresses on the family as it moves forward through time, coping with the changes and transitions of the family life cycle" (8). The horizontal can be subdivided into the developmental life cycle transitions and other non-normative, unpredictable pressures such as deaths, accidents, and chronic illness (4-10). Carter and McGoldrick refer to these as vertical and horizontal stressors.

I see these stressors as bearing relevance to ministry, not only at the family level but at all systems levels. After all, individuals, churches, and denominations, all experience horizontal stressors, both normative and nonnormative, as they move across time. Furthermore, each of these systems experience vertical stressors derived from embedded patterns, myths,

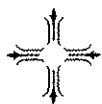
secrets, legacies, and beliefs; however, later in this article, I only hint at the possible horizontal and vertical stressors operating at the organizational level. The reader can think of how these dynamics might operate at other levels and the kinds of interactions and stress fostered at all system levels.

The question is how these competing systems and developmental realities impact ministry. Sometimes addressing the needs and expectations of one system can lead to the neglect of other systems. Unfortunately, much of the time, the organizational demands of church or denominations work against meeting individual or family needs. The constraints of these system demands become visible in such problems as time management, role conflict, and role overload.

Sometimes the conflict arises between the individual and family systems' respective needs. For example, a minister may vocationally be at the advancement stage of the individual vocational cycle. She or he may be seeking to do everything to continue this advancement. At the same time, she or he may be in a family life cycle stage such as the family with adolescents where the demands at home are great, demanding emotional and physical presence and energy. At one time or another, ministry advancement or the family is sacrificed for the sake of the other.

On occasion, the conflict is between the individual's systems needs and those of the congregation or denominational organization. In such cases, giving attention to the needs of the latter detracts from or inhibits meeting individual needs. Some of the documented problems of stress in ministry can partly be explained in this way, namely, time given to ministry, congregational, and denominational demands does not allow appropriate time for self-care activities. This recognition is not to deny the minister's personal responsibility for self-care but affirms the contributions of congregational and denominational factors to difficulties in this area.

Changes or events within the family, congregation, or denomination, what Carter and McGoldrick refer to as horizontal stressors, might also create difficulties for ministers and vice versa. The authors say the stress generated from events occur as the organism moves across time. Such stress-precipitating events can occur at all systems levels; however, I provide an example below of the impact of congregational events. Hopefully, this true but brief example might suffice to demonstrate the power of horizontal stressors: Prior to the coming of a new pastor, one congregation had experienced two pastoral failures. The first involved financial mismanagement; the second involved a case of sexual misconduct. Both violations led to the dismissal of the offending ministers. Needless to say, these events involving betrayals of trust deeply wounded the congregation and disrupted their capacity to trust a new minister. As a result, the new pastor experienced a great deal of distrust, which made his transition into the church extremely difficult, but the pastor was not the only one who suffered. His family, noting the congregational distrust of him through no fault of his own, likewise felt the pain and hurt he experienced. Each system, individual, family, and congregational, suffered, and the reverberations were also felt at the denominational level as the district superintendent became aware of these difficulties in the parish.



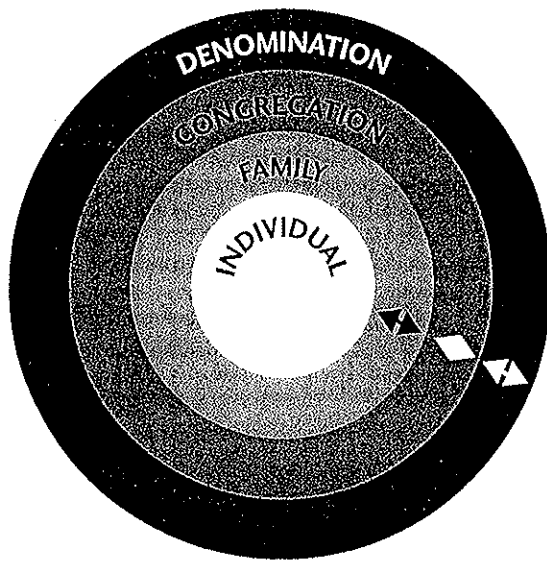


Figure 2. A Summary of boundary problems in ministry.

### Boundary Intrusiveness

(Lee, "Specifying Intrusive Demands")

- Personal criticisms
- Family criticisms
- Presumptive expectations
- Boundary ambiguity problems

### Boundary ambiguity

(Boss, *Family Stress Management; Family Stress Management: A Contextual Approach*)

- Emotionally present/physically absent
- Physically present/emotionally absent

### Boundary violations (Grentz and Bell)

In addition, one might envision situations where congregational and denominational demands create boundary problems for individual pastors and their families. Of course, pastors can create boundary problems when they violate the space of congregants such as occurs in sexual misconduct (Grentz and Bell; Robison). Nevertheless, I have chosen to focus here on boundary ambiguity problems as described by Pauline Boss (*Family Stress Management; Family Stress Management: A Contextual Approach*). Though related, the concept is somewhat different to that described by Lee ("Specifying Intrusive Demands"). Whereas Lee refers to intrusiveness of others on the ministerial family's boundaries, Boss refers to uncertainty surrounding the physical or emotional availability of an important family member. Such uncertainty derives from situations where an important family member is emotionally or physically absent from the family for long periods of time. Boss describes these circumstances as problems of high boundary ambiguity and denotes two types. The first type exists when a member is *physically absent but psychologically (emotionally) present*; the family remains emotionally preoccupied with the absent member. Examples include families with missing children or cases involving political hostages or MIAs. The second type occurs when a member is *physically present but psychologically and emotionally absent*. The family remains intact but a member is still unavailable. Debilitating illnesses and addictions to substances or work often lead to the latter kind of boundary ambiguity. According to Boss, these high boundary ambiguity situations exacerbate stress within family systems. Figure 2 summarizes possible boundary problems occurring in ministry.

Unfortunately, boundary ambiguity often impacts ministerial families; ministers can become so involved in parish work that they are physically absent from their families for much of the

time. Additionally, even when physically present, they may yet be emotionally absent due to absorption in the problems of the parish. In such cases, the outside systems have placed undue demands on the clergyperson, detracting from involvement with and attention to family system needs.

Many more interactions and intersystem boundary conflicts might result; however, I will mention here one final illustration. In the church, all the systems and their various needs conflict and collide at some point in time. Such problems occur across the seasons of life of clergy families. Nevertheless, the difficulties are particularly exacerbated at critical life cycle junctures when stress and anxiety are already high. The boundary ambiguity problems at these stages make an already difficult situation even more stressful. Such critical family transition points include the stages where the clergy couple has young children or adolescents—both times of high stress. To illustrate, I once heard of a clergyperson faced with such a collision of cycles. The minister's family was in the adolescent stage of family development with a child approaching the final year of high school. At the same time, the itinerant system determined this year the minister needed to move to a new charge. The latter represented advancement for the pastor. One might readily see that this situation pits several systems against each other: the individual at the stage of vocational advancement, the family system with an adolescent wanting to graduate with his class, congregational systems ready for exits and entries, and an organizational system needing to make a new appointment. Fortunately, the minister was able to come to a creative solution. Because the new move was to a nearby city, about twenty-five miles away, the minister was able to make the move and still arrange for the child to remain at the old school and graduate with his class. Such intersystems conflicts are not so easily solved, yet a myriad of clergy have to make similar



choices frequently without much possibility of the type of creative solutions noted in the example.

Besides these difficulties, problems can develop because of factors related to vertical aspects operating within systems (Carter and McGoldrick). As described earlier, the vertical factors include patterns of relating, myths, secrets, legacies, and the like and may operate at all levels. For example, congregations and denominations have their own operational patterns for relating to persons within their systems. This model may be evidenced in the norms and values guiding relationships within the organization, the ways in which power is used and the manner in which roles are allocated. Cary Cherniss describes these aspects as elements of normative structure, which, in turn, include the norm structure, power structure, and role structure. Viewed through the lens of Carter and McGoldrick, these configurations appear to me to be vertical elements governing relationship patterns. Additionally, the theological stance (beliefs) of pastors, congregations, and denominations can be viewed through this vertical lens. The concept of vertical stressors could also be used to understand denominational legacies such as the itinerancy, deeply rooted as it is in tradition.

Not surprisingly, each of these aspects may contribute to difficulties in ministry. For example, difficulties in relating sometimes arise because each system holds different norms or values. One might experience difficulties because the exercise of power in the organization allows for little personal or congregational autonomy. Alternately, ministers might have little say about how roles are allocated to them or they discover that assigned roles create conflict with their developmental needs and those of their families. I can also visualize situations where each system holds radically different theological stances or beliefs, thereby creating conflict. C. W. Mueller and E. McDuff refer to this difference as "theological mismatch." They demonstrate that this problem creates dissatisfaction when the minister is more liberal than the congregation. The same dissatisfaction does not occur when the clergyperson is more conservative than the congregation.

One might use one or more of these concepts to understand the recent controversy within the Episcopal Church over the ordaining of a homosexual bishop, which indicates a decisive shift in the norms and values of the church. This shift has created tensions and reverberations across the Episcopal Church as well as the larger Anglican community. It has had systemic impact on both clergy and congregations as they have sought to adjust to the new norms. This change has sometimes led to forced decisions, schism, and new alignments. Some argue these departures were partly precipitated by a rigid power structure allowing little dissent or differences around the issue. We may also view this controversy as being deeply rooted in the theological mismatch of different systems and people.

We may likewise use these concepts to understand the itinerant system within the United Methodist Church. As indicated earlier, the itinerancy is related to the vertical dimensions of the church system. One would not be incorrect in saying the itinerancy can sometimes cause stress for individual clergy and their families. This system is not always sympathetic to

the developmental needs of its pastors or pastoral families. Sometimes, pastors may have little power to change or modify a new role (new pastoral assignment) they see as out of synch with the developmental needs of the family. The example shared earlier about the pastor who was reassigned and asked to move right before the senior year of his son's graduation partly illustrates this issue. The pastor was able to come to a creative solution; not everyone is able to find such possibilities. Some continue to bear the load but in the process experience a great deal of stress personally and as a family. Others, recognizing the conflict with individual and family needs, choose to opt out of the system. In my own experience, some of the inherent difficulties in an itinerant system might be tempered if some degree of power or say in role assignment is given to pastors, families, and congregations. I know such possibilities exist as some bishops and leaders take a consultative stance, but the opportunities vary by Episcopal district and how flexible a bishop is in exerting power.

### A Few Conclusions from a Systems and Developmental Model of the Seasons of Pastoral Life and Ministry

I have sought to demonstrate the importance of system dynamics and developmental factors for the practice of ministry. Additionally, I have indicated how these factors impact ministry, providing relevant examples where possible. To close this paper, I now draw a few conclusions from such a model for the practice of ministry. Granted, much more could be said, but for the sake of brevity four conclusions are addressed. Hopefully, such implications might be useful both to individual pastors as well as to judicatories making significant decisions regarding ministry practice.

First, ministers and leaders of clergy need to become aware of and acknowledge the system dynamics negatively influencing the practice of ministry. Unfortunately, when ministers develop problems, others are more likely to blame the minister and ignore the systemic pressures contributing to the difficulties. Acknowledging such pressures should place the problems of ministry in their appropriate context and lead congregations and denominational leaders to craft systemic interventions to address some of these difficulties (Darling, Hill, and McWey; Krause, Ellison, and Wulff; Lee, "Specifying Intrusive Demands"). Such action requires congregational and denominational leaders to address some of the pressures and demands in ministry, including issues of role overload, time constraints, and the presumptive expectations and boundary problems that systemically work against pastors, their families, and their well-being. Systemic problems demand systemic interventions, not simply personal ones.

Second, a consideration of these issues should make one aware that the minister's well-being does not simply impact the individual clergy or his or her family. It has implications for the congregation and the denomination. Maxie Dunnam, the former president of Asbury Theological Seminary has a commonly used maxim: "As goes the seminary, so goes the pastor; as goes the pastor, so goes the church." This statement is a simple acknowledgement of the systemic nature of ministry. I



would highlight the part: "As goes the pastor, so goes the church." To guard the well-being of the minister is to protect and enhance, hopefully, the health of the congregation and the denomination. This statement is not made to foster interest in the pastor's well-being simply for the sake of the church or the denomination but to suggest that the health and futures of pastors, churches, and denominations are firmly linked together.

Third, each system needs boundary maintenance to remain balanced and healthy. Unfortunately, boundary intrusiveness is a constant reality in ministry (Frame and Shehan; Darling, Hill, and McWey; Lee, "Specifying Intrusive Demands"). As indicated earlier in this paper, Lee documents several problems involving boundary intrusiveness concretized as personal and family criticism, presumptive expectations, and boundary ambiguity. Additionally, I indicated the difficulties related to boundary ambiguity according to Boss (Family Stress Management; Family Stress Management: A Contextual Approach) and the resulting physical and emotional absence of pastors. All of these boundary problems work against the health of clergy and their families and ultimately impact congregational and denominational health. Congregations and judicatories should be aware of these boundary problems and their negative impact. They should encourage and support ministers and their families in their efforts to maintain appropriate boundaries around themselves and their families. Appropriate boundaries that permit self and/or family differentiation promote health (Beebe; Meek et al.). For example, Beebe demonstrates that clergy who function at a higher level of differentiation experience lower perceptions of role overload and ambiguity, which, in turn, leads to decreased instances of burnout. Moreover, such clergy are more likely to display a collaborative spirit when conflicts arise within congregations. Ministers who are in good health are more likely to display healthy attitudes in their interactions with congregations; the opposite is also true (4086).

Church leaders should exhibit a keen interest in all boundary problems, not simply those in which a minister violates the boundaries of a parishioner, as occurs in sexual misconduct. They should seek to guard boundaries to protect the pastors'

and families' well-being. The violation of all boundaries creates chaos when ministers cross the boundaries of parishioners and become involved in inappropriate behavior, but it is also true when parishioners and congregations constantly violate the boundaries of the ministerial family. In recent years, appropriate and long overdue attention has been given to pastors' violation of the boundaries of congregants. Similar attention should be given to the protection of the boundaries of clergy and their families. Not coincidentally the two are related. Ministers laboring under stress from violated personal and family boundaries of time, role, energy, and space are much more likely to participate in the boundary violation of others (Grentz and Bell 152-56; Krause, Ellison, and Wulff 737). All sorts of boundary violations create chaos.

Fourth, all organisms, human and institutional, have their developmental needs, and they are not always in harmony. Some of the needs of a congregation or denomination at any given time may have devastating impact on the personal well-being of a minister. Sometime ago, I read about a large church in a southern state. The church had experienced phenomenal growth and required an increase in the number of services and a corresponding increase in administrative responsibilities. As a result, the pastor eventually came to the point of preaching three services each Sunday. Additionally, he was so enmeshed in administrative responsibilities that he was absent from the home most nights of the month. Needless to say, these changes had negative repercussions for the pastor, leading to an eventual surrender of ministry credentials. The family impact was no less dramatic; it eventually dissolved. The problem was not purely one of congregational demand; the pastor's life had problems as well. Nevertheless, at critical transition points within the life of a congregation, one should consider how such changes would impact ministers and their families. Having done so, caring congregations and denominational leaders need to institute plans and/or policies to guard against unnecessary overload and potential role and family conflicts. All systems would benefit and be enhanced from such interventions.

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