

#miLCMSpastors

When *Darkness* Hits Home

*"The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
on them a light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16 ESV).*



Michigan District, LCMS presents

North & East Pastors' Conference

May 5, 2021 | Virtual Conference

Speaker

Rev. Ronald R. Farah is a 1963 graduate of Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Mo. He has served parishes in Minnesota and Michigan (English and Michigan Districts). In 1975, he earned an M.A. in Psychology from the University of Detroit with a major in Marriage and Family Therapy. Although now retired, he previously served as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and spent a significant amount of time working with congregations in conflict for the Michigan District, LCMS.

Pastor Farah and his wife, Talitha Ann, have been blessed with five children, eight grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.



Rev. Gabriel Martin was born and raised in Michigan. He graduated from high school in 1997. After a fifteen-year career as a carpenter he went on to attend Concordia University Ann Arbor, earning a bachelor's degree in 2013. He received his M.Div. from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind. in 2017. His first call was to Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tawas City, where he currently serves.

Pastor Martin and his wife Tina have been blessed with four children. His hobbies include spending time with his wife and kids, hunting, fishing, cooking, and coaching.

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

8:30 a.m.	Zoom Opens / Fellowship
9 a.m.	Welcome / Worship Rev. Timothy Azzam
9:50 a.m.	Session 1 - Everything Must Be Divided Rev. Gabriel Martin
10:35 a.m.	Breakout Rooms
10:45 a.m.	Q & A
11:00 a.m.	President's Report Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier
11:45 a.m.	Announcements / Table Prayer / Lunch Break
12:15 p.m.	Rejoin Zoom / Fellowship
12:30 p.m.	Devotion Rev. Bill Winter
12:45 p.m.	Session 2 - Besides the Obvious, How Can a Pastor Help an Abused Person? Rev. Ronald Farah
1:45 p.m.	Breakout Rooms
1:55 p.m.	Break
2 p.m.	Q & A
2:30 p.m.	Northern Michigan Children's Assessment Center (Video) Mrs. Theresa Muhle
2:45 p.m.	Church Extension Fund (Video) Mr. Andy Sohn
2:50 p.m.	CUAA Update (Video) Rev. Dr. Ryan Peterson
3 p.m.	Announcements / Regional Business / Closing Devotion / Adjourn

➔ **CONFERENCE SURVEY**

What did you think about this year's conference? Please tell us! A survey will be emailed to you following the conference. Please be sure to complete it and share how you have been encouraged, enriched, and refreshed. Thank you!

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OPENING HYMN

Come Let Us Sing unto the Lord

Venite

sung to LSB 470

Come let us sing un - to the Lord With psalms of
 Great is the Lord our God is King A - bove all
 The sea is His as is the land He formed them
 Be - fore our Mak - er, let us yield. For we're the



Thanks our prais - es soar Sal - va - tion's Rock we now a - dore.
 gods, His reign we sing. In height or depth, His pow'r He brings.
 both with His own hand. He is our God and we're His brand.
 sheep of His own field. The peo - ple by His grace, re - vealed.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Text © 2016 Rev. Timothy Azzam

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

OPENING SENTENCES *Psalms 146:1-2, 5, 10*

Pastor: Praise the LORD!

People: Praise the LORD, O my soul!

Pastor: I will praise the LORD as long as I live;

People: I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Pastor: Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,

People: whose hope is in the LORD his God.

Pastor: The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations.

People: Praise the LORD!

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: As penitent people, we ask God for His grace and mercy, confessing our sin to God, our merciful Father.

People: Gracious God, in heartfelt repentance we admit and confess our sinfulness. We are sin-stained people by nature. Each day we have sinned and done things we ought not to have done and have not done that which we should have been doing as Your servants. We have not seen people in the loving way that You see them. We have not always been ready to care and quick to help. We do indeed deserve Your punishment in this life and for eternity. Trusting in Your mercy, we come to You for forgiveness. Our trust is in the merits of Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Have mercy on us, O God. Grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and by the power of the Holy Spirit at work within our hearts and lives, lead us into ways that reflect Your goodness and love.

Pastor: God is loving and merciful. He sees us with loving eyes and graciously hears our supplications. By the command of our Lord and as His called and ordained servant, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

INTROIT Psalm 66:1-2, 8-9, 20; antiphon: v. 16

Pastor: Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what He has done for my soul.

People: Shout for joy to God, all the earth;
sing the glory of His name; give to Him glorious praise!

Pastor: Bless our God, O peoples;
let the sound of His praise be heard,

People: who has kept our soul among the living
and has not let our feet slip.

Pastor: Blessed be God, because He has not rejected my prayer or removed His steadfast love from me!

People: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Pastor: Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what He has done for my soul.

HYMN OF PRAISE

All Glory to God on High

Gloria In Excelsis

tune: LSB 813



1. All Glo - ry to God on High and Peace on -
2. Oh, Fa - ther, - God and Lord; Al - migh - ty -
3. On Cal - va-ry's cur - sed Tree You set ev'-ry
4. For Ho - ly You are a - lone. You on - ly -



Earth to men! We Praise and ac - know - ledge
Heav'n - ly King And You the On - ly
sin - ner free. From God's right hand you
are the Lord. To - geth - er - with the



You to be - the Lord In shouts of thanks we cry:
Son - of - God Oh Lamb, our praise we bring:
sit and reign; now hear our anx - ious plea.
Ho - ly - Ghost the God by all a - dored.



Sing Praise, Sing Praise, Your Name we Glo - ri - fy!

Text © 2016 Rev. Timothy Azzam

SALUTATION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Let us pray. Risen and ascended Lord, while we were still in our sins, You chose us, laid down Your life for us, and called us friends. By Your great love for us, inspire us to love one another and to go out into the world to bear fruit according to Your promise; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

FIRST READING Acts 10:34–48 (People from every nation are accepted by God.)

Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him. As for the word that He sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all that He did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree, but God raised Him on the third day and made Him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.”

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared,

“Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE 1 John 5:1–8 (The victory of Christ overcomes the world.)

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

GRADUAL adapt. from Matthew 28:7; Hebrews 2:7; Psalm 8:6

Christ has risen from the dead.

God the Father has crowned Him with glory and honor,
He has given Him dominion over the works of His hands;
He has put all things under His feet.

HOLY GOSPEL *John 15:9–17* (Obeying Christ's commands and remaining in His love)

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the fifteenth chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

[Jesus said:] "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

HYMN OF THE DAY Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling

LSB 650

1 Holy Spirit, ever dwelling
In the holiest realms of light;
Holy Spirit, ever brooding
O'er a world of gloom and night;
Holy Spirit, ever raising
Those of earth to thrones on high;
Living, life imparting Spirit,
You we praise and magnify.

3 Holy Spirit, ever working
Through the Church's ministry;
Quick'ning, strength'ning, and absolving,
Setting captive sinners free;
Holy Spirit, ever binding
Age to age and soul to soul
In communion never ending,
You are worship and extol.
Public domain

2 Holy Spirit, ever living
As the Church's very life;
Holy Spirit, ever striving
Through us in a ceaseless strife;
Holy Spirit, ever forming
In the Church the mind of Christ:
You we praise with endless worship
For Your gifts and fruits unpriced.

SERMON

"We're ALL Oddballs" | Acts 10:34–48

Rev. Dr. David P. E. Maier

CATECHISM *The Third Article*

Pastor: We learn from our First Reading today that the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to Gentiles as well as to Jews, which includes all the peoples of the world. Let us speak together the words of the Apostles' Creed regarding the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

People: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Pastor: What does this mean?

People: I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Pastor: Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs ... We thank God for the Church and pray that God's people live confidently and joyfully share the message of salvation in word and deed. Gathered by the Holy Spirit, we pray that we be blessed with all grace and evidence the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Lord, be with us and bless us. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: Hear our prayer.

Pastor: We pray for our families, and all parents as they seek to fulfill their God-given tasks and responsibilities in a way that is pleasing to you. Bless them with strength, wisdom, and patience in these difficult times and this spiritually degraded society in which we live. Help all parents in their provision of love, protection, instruction, and spiritual training for their children. Lord, grant that we bring Your blessing to situations of need in all places. Lord, in Your mercy,

People: Hear our prayer.

Pastor: Most merciful God, we thank You for all those faithful people whose words and actions have guided us in the past, especially remembering those no longer with us on earth, who now share in Your eternal presence. By the working of Your Holy Spirit, direct us to walk Your servant way throughout our lives, seeing each person through Your loving eyes, until that day when we stand in Your glorious presence in heaven.

People: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER *Matthew 6:9–13*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICTION *Numbers 6:24–26*

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

People: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

Love in Christ Is Strong and Living

LSB 706

1 Love in Christ is strong and living, Binding faithful hearts in one;
Love in Christ is true and giving. May His will in us be done.

2 Love is patient and forbearing, Clothed in Christ's humility,
Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring, Reaching out in charity.

3 Love in Christ abides forever, Fainting not when ills attend;
Love, forgiving and forgiven, Shall endure until life's end.

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Those serving:

Rev. Paul Kruse, Pastor of St. John, Houghton Lake - Liturgist

Rev. David P. E. Maier - Preacher

Mrs. Jane Radulski - Organist

[illegible]

[illegible]

Besides the Obvious, How Can a Pastor Help an Abused Person?

Abuse is any deliberate action that physically, spiritually, emotionally/psychologically, sexually, financially, or verbally harms another person regardless of age and regardless of relationship. Coming in many different sizes and shapes means that there is no one way to help an abused person. If you had a way of discovering the number of people within your congregation or circle of relationships who have experienced or were experiencing some form of abuse, I believe you would be very surprised, if not shocked. While many abused people keep it buried and make adjustments to live with it, many cannot. Some will come to you for help. So what can you do to help them?

Note that I have been asked to focus on a very defined subject related to this problem. This one hour does not give me the time needed to cover all the important issues related even to this defined subject. What to include in this presentation and what to leave out was difficult to decide. Concerns you have that I do not bring up can be addressed during the Q&A session.

The title of this presentation begins with the words, “Besides the obvious.” Let me briefly state what some of those obvious things might be.

1. One obvious thing you need to do is pray with them. If they are the abuser, that they would change their behavior. If they are the abused, that God would give them the insight and strength to do the right thing. Etc., etc.
2. Another obvious thing, depending on the severity of the abuse, is to report it to Child or Adult Protective Services. Michigan law demands it and those laws were passed, in part, because too many clergyman, doctors, therapists, etc. wanted to respect people’s privacy, did not want to damage their professional relationship with the person, and feared the possible disruption of a family. But the Law recognizes that the damage being done outweighs those concerns. I stated “depending on the severity of the abuse” because you may know it is happening but neither you nor the legal authorities can prove it.
3. Another obvious thing is to recommend that the person get professional counseling. But when doing that, do not give the impression you want to distance yourself from their problem. Even while receiving professional therapeutic help, they may still need and/or want spiritual encouragement from you. Ask them to stay in touch with you. Try to make another appointment to meet with them in a couple of weeks. Ask them if they would allow you to contact them. This can be difficult if they live with the abuser. If they agree, you would need to determine the best time and the best way to do it. While a professional therapist can help them in ways you can’t, you help them in ways the professional therapist (unless they are solidly Christ centered) can’t. The abuse may have damaged their faith and/or left them spiritually empty. That is where your role becomes vital.
4. Give them a list of your community’s available resources.

Who are the abused? We need to consider this question so that when we encounter it we do not take it lightly.

1. A wife
2. A husband
3. A child being abused by a parent, an adult, or a bully
4. A sister, a brother, a cousin, etc.
5. An employee
6. A single mother being abused by a teenage son

7. A man or woman in an unhealthy relationship
8. Church workers abused by parishioners, parishioners abused by church workers, students abused by teachers, teachers abused by students
9. The list can go on. I repeat, do not take it lightly. If they have come to you, it is probably because they are feeling damaged physically, emotionally, or spiritually. They are looking for help.

How can you help an abused person? First, remember the old adage, “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink”. You can only help those who want to be helped and you can only help them to the degree they want to be helped.

1. When you begin to understand that the reason they came to you was because they felt they were being abused, you should inform them that, depending on the nature of the abuse, you may be obligated by law to report it to the proper authority. In most cases that would be Child or Adult Protective Services. That could end the conversation.
2. Many abused people try to hide what is going on. Suddenly you notice things: 1) Someone has stopped showing up for worship because they have become discouraged or they are bruised and didn’t want anyone to see and ask questions about the bruises; 2) someone has started looking depressed; 3) someone is looking frightened; 4) someone is looking unkempt. Try to find a time to talk with them privately and ask them how they are doing. You might even mention you have noticed a change in them and you were wondering if everything was alright. They may talk or they may not. But give it a try. Galatians 6:2 is a reminder that we are to bear one another’s burdens.
3. If someone tells you they have been abused, determine the extent of the abuse. Some happens only occasionally. Some happens often. Some is physical. Some is verbal. Some is financial. Some is emotional. Some is spiritual. Some is subtle, private, and unnoticed. Some is blatant and obvious. But keep in mind: it all does damage to some degree. Show sincere concern and never give the impression you see it as a minor issue. Try to find out:
 - a. How long it has been going on? The longer it has gone on, the greater the damage, the longer it may take to get over (if ever), and the harder it may be to learn to live with the residual feelings. This will give you some idea of the kinds of help the abused person will need to achieve some form of peace in their life. Ex: A woman complained of being depressed and suicidal. I learned she had been sexually abused by her father over a period of 15 years that ended about 20 years earlier. I worked with her for close to 20 years—off and on—before she regained an acceptable level of contentment in life. This is not expected of you.
 - b. Is it a new phenomenon in their life? Has something traumatic just happened that has angered and frustrated the abuser that they are now taking it out on you? If that be the case, maybe an intervention to help the abuser deal with their situation can resolve the problem quickly. BUT, it is very possible the abuser has demonstrated an inability to handle stress in an appropriate way. It is very likely that if the abused person maintains a relationship with the abuser, they will live with the fear it will happen again.
 - c. A child or teen talks about being subtly abused at school. Assure them they are loved by God and that the abusive “peer” is probably insecure or unhealthy in some way. Go out of your way when possible to support and encourage them. That can go a long way in helping a young person develop a healthy Christ-centered identity at a critical time in their life.
4. Ask them why they came to you. Don’t assume you know the answer.
 - a. Maybe they want a shoulder to lean on but no other intervention.

1. Why would that be?

- a. They love the abuser and want no harm to come to them.
- b. They are dependent and do not know how they would survive without the abuser.
- c. They fear the abuser will become more abusive.

2. However, if the abuse has been clearly physical you must intervene by calling Protective Services.

- b. They feel you are someone they can trust. They can unload their burden. But they expect it will be confidential. If others find out, it could be embarrassing. If the abuser finds out, it could get worse. Do not do anything to destroy their trust in you.
- c. They are feeling demoralized and worthless and are looking for someone to give them a sense of self worth. Christ, through you, can give them that. But that will not happen in one conversation. It may have taken years to get them to the point of feeling worthless. It will take concerted and prolonged effort to help them reverse those feelings.

Caution: If you are talking with a woman, beware of her becoming emotionally attached to you. Do not be aloof but maintain boundaries. Be caring but remain careful. Keep your emotions under control. Avoid physical contact. Don't get an inflated head because of their need for you. If you allow them to become emotionally attached to you, you run the risk of becoming an emotional/spiritual abuser.

d. They may be looking for help and encouragement to do the right thing.

- 1. Should they report the abuse?
- 2. Should they stay in the relationship?
- 3. Should they leave the relationship?

Note: I, personally, never encourage someone to get a divorce. If they take your advice and later regret it, they may turn their anger on you even if divorce was the right thing to do. I have recommended separation and I have supported someone who made their own decision to divorce.

e. They may be looking for assurance they are not at fault. Abused people can be easily convinced something they did brought about the abuser's behavior.

f. It is advisable to never counsel a couple involved in domestic violence together. If the abused person is a woman, she will shut down.

- 5. If possible, meet with the abuser. If you have some counseling skills and the abusive person is willing to talk to you, your intervention could help. Consider the following example: Abusive behavior begets abusive behavior. I was asked to consult with a church because they were having a problem with an abusive woman. Because of her, people were leaving the congregation and others were threatening to do the same. She knew how to play the game. She was very involved as a volunteer, was very good at what she did, and had the congregation thinking they could not get along without her. That put them in a very difficult position for fear of upsetting her and possibly having her leave the congregation. This gave her a license to become verbally and emotionally abusive if she did not like the way you were doing something. Being very aggressive, she fended off all loving and gentle efforts to get her to stop. The pastor and leaders of the congregation did not want to offend her for fear she would leave the church BUT they were also concerned about those she had driven away from the church. They sought my assistance. During our third meeting, the "committee" allowed me to take the lead in the discussion and I was able to ask her about her childhood and got her to talk about her past and a father who was very demeaning and abusive. I asked her how that felt. She began to cry and stated it was horrible. I asked her if she now understood why others did not like it when she treated them that way. As far as I know: problem resolved.

6. Never minimize the extent of the problem but remind them that they can regain a sense of wholeness and worth through Christ who was abused for us.
7. What if the person talking to you is a fellow pastor who believes he is being abused by a member of his congregation? This is a tough one and my encouragement is to listen, be empathetic, but do not take a side because you are only hearing half of the story. These can be very complex situations. Some things you may suggest he do:
 - a. Encourage the pastor to talk with the abuser to get a clear understanding of the problem. Have him do a lot of listening. That could lead to a resolution of the problem.
 - b. If that does not work, ask permission from the abuser to have another meeting with an elder present. Permission not given is a bad indicator. The person may be an antagonist who is only interested in causing trouble.
 - c. Discuss the problem with the Board of Elders. If they support the pastor's position, they need to talk with the abuser and insist that the abusive behavior stop to avoid being disciplined. If they do not support the pastor, he needs to find out why. It is not uncommon for the pastor to be the problem.
 - d. If that does not resolve the problem, an outside mediator may be required (the District or some other consultant). This could lead to the beginning of a process that could take some time.
8. Encourage and help the person develop an "escape" plan: where they will go, what they will do to survive, saving money, method of transportation, making certain they are protected from the abuser, etc.

Help the abused person understand the nature of an abuser.

1. They are emotionally unhealthy and angry people who have never learned the proper way to deal with conflict and stress. There is a very strong chance their abusive behavior will continue and escalate.
2. They often grew up being abused and it has become part of their life.
3. It is like an addiction. Changing is very, very difficult.
4. Showing sorrow and promising to stop being abusive more often than not turns out to be a promise they do not keep.
Note: As pastors we want to consider a confession as a sincere indication of an intent to change. With an abuser, that generally does not happen. Without the force of a significant consequence hanging over their head, there will be no change. Even the threat of a consequence may have no effect.
5. Most abusers have sociopathic personalities. They are narcissistic and have a poorly developed moral conscience. They care only about themselves. Every problem they have is the fault of someone else. The failure of others to satisfy their need is all the justification they need to be abusive. Too often, when talking to a sociopath their ability to con us gives us the impression they are a good ole neurotic who knows the difference between right and wrong, cares about others, and just needs a second, third, fourth, etc. chance. Don't get conned.
6. Many of them are highly insecure and need to feel dominant and in total control to have any self worth. If pushed too far they can become dangerous to those around them.
7. One of your main tasks is to help the abused person understand they are involved with a very sick person who will not willingly change. Ask them how many times in the past the abuser promised to change but eventually reverted back to their abusive behavior. Some abusive teenage boys living with a single mother may not even bother to say they are sorry. To protect themselves, abused people often need an authority figure to "force" the abuser to get help.

8. Remind them that forgiving their abuser is a good thing but that the offer of forgiveness does not assume the abuser can be trusted. And do not feel guilty for taking necessary action to stop a person's abusive behavior.

Examples of mistakes I have made or encountered in the past due to the failure to understand the nature of abuse or missing the signs:

1. A male who was sexually abusing his stepdaughters appeared contrite and promised to stop. His wife, the mother of the daughters, pleaded with me to give him a second chance. In Christian love I did. Knowing what I know now, I would have advised her to get her daughters as far away from him as she could and I would have reported him to protective services. Six months later, she was back in my office telling me the abuse had not stopped. I supported her as she took action against her husband.
2. Women and men who told me they were sexually abused by their pastors. Never wanting to see a fellow pastor hurt or see his congregation disrupted, I kept silent. Synod now has a zero tolerance policy. Spiritual abuse (using your position to take advantage of someone) is alive and well.
3. Abused wives who were told by their pastor that they needed to become more submissive. That would be good advice if the husband responded by sacrificially loving his wife as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 2:21 and 25).
4. A harsh husband demanding his sick and homebound wife get up and make me tea. I saw she had become a quiet, timid, submissive woman who had lost her sense of identity and feared her husband. It saddened me to see it but I said nothing because I felt it was not my place to interfere. I should have talked to the husband about his attitude toward his wife.
5. Believing an alcoholic or drug addict who says they will kick their habit on their own. We feel we should say something to them but fear we will drive them away from the church. So we say nothing while the members of their families are being damaged. We need to get over the idea that saying nothing is good for the family.
6. A woman was being physically abused by her husband several times a week. While meeting with them I told him that needed to stop. He agreed. Several weeks later the wife asked to meet with me because the abuse had not stopped. When I confronted the husband, his argument was that his wife should be happy because he was now only hitting her about once a week. I should have called protective services.
7. Being convinced by children—who are obviously being abused—not to report their parent(s) because they love them and don't want to be taken from them.
8. Failing to understand that abusive people are not moved by God's love. Even though they claim faith in Christ, they are driven by self-centered desires and needs.

Part of our problem is that some abuse is hard to prove. Example: A husband who "forces" his wife to have sexual relations with him. She succumbs to his "demands" but becomes demoralized and loses respect and love for her husband. She feels like she is nothing more than a tool to satisfy his pleasure. I have experienced situations that clearly are abusive and are doing some damage to the abused person but it has not reached the point where it is severe enough to prove. The abused person needs our pastoral support and care. They need encouragement and permission to consider options. We need to take the initiative to maintain contact with them.

An example of a woman who decided she had experienced enough abuse. Zion - Tawas City (1966-69) - A fairly regular attender who always looked like she had just gotten out of bed and walked through a meat grinder (dressed shabbily, hair a mess, looking depressed). We will call her Josephine. One Sunday I noted a woman in church I had never seen before. She was dressed very smartly, her make-up was well done, and she had a nice hair-do. I greeted

her at the end of the service, invited her to return, asked if she was new in town, and asked if I could contact her. She smiled and said, "I am Josephine." I was embarrassed and "bowled over." I learned she reached a point where she could no longer tolerate being abused by and being dependent on an alcoholic husband. She began going to Al-Anon, got a job, bought new clothes, went to a hairdresser and became a new woman. She stopped being dependent on an abusive husband and the abuse stopped. I missed the obvious "signs."

Bibliography

I will disappoint many of you at this point. The above presentation is based almost entirely on my personal experience as a person, a pastor, and a Marriage and Family Therapist. I have not done extensive reading on the subject. My personal reading of books is limited to the very short list below and covers very little of the subject. I have read several articles in journals over the years but cannot recall what those journals were. I recommend you do a search on the internet to find what you need. One suggestion is: Concordia Publishing House - books on Abuse.

Adult Children of Alcoholics by Janet Geringer Woititz, EdD published by Health Communications, Inc.

Antagonists in the Church by Kenneth C. Haugk, published by Augsburg Publishing House

Healing Spiritual Abuses by Ken Bleu, published by Inter Varsity Press Books

Never Will I Leave You - A pastor's Handbook on Domestic Violence by The LCMS President's Commission on Women, published by CPH

Toxic Churches by Marc A. Dupont, published by Chosen Books a division of Baker Book House Co.

Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect by Cynthia Crosson-Tower, published by CPH

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a full page of blank white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook or legal stationery. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.



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Calendar of Events

MAY 2021

- 11 South & East Pastors' Virtual Conference
- 12-13 Circuit Visitors' Conference
Frankenmuth
- 18 West Pastors' Virtual Conference
- 25 Board of Directors' Meeting
Immanuel, Grand Rapids
- 26-27 Intentional Interim Spring Conference
Michindoh Conference Center, Hillsdale

JULY 2021

- 23-25 En Gedi Music Festival
En Gedi Resort, Leonnidas

AUGUST 2021

- 2-4 Principals' Conference
Higgins Lake
- 10 Early Childhood Directors' Conference
Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton
- 11 Early Childhood Conference
Shepherd of the Lakes, Brighton
- 15-16 Board of Directors Retreat
Location TBD
- 31-9/1 Circuit Visitor's Conference
Ann Arbor

SEPTEMBER 2021

- 7-8 Emeriti Conference
Frankenmuth
- 24-26 Church Extension Fund Conference
Auburn Hills
- 27-30 Intentional Interim Fall Conference
Michindoh Conference Center, Hillsdale

OCTOBER 2021

- 10-13 All Pastors' Conference
Shanty Creek Resort, Bellaire
- 19 Board of Directors' Meeting
Ann Arbor

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