Reimagining the Future
The Afterpastor Serving a Post-Traumatic Congregation

by

Gina C. Jacobs-Strain

Date: 4/27/2020

Approved:

Dr. Curtis Freeman 1st Reader

Dr. Warren Kinghorn, 2nd Reader

Dr. William Willimon, D.Min. Director

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in the Divinity School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

How do churches thrive after they have experienced trauma caused by clergy sexual misconduct, especially in a denomination that does not provide uniform protocol and processes for a response, education, and prevention? This paper addresses the problem of clergy sexual misconduct, its impact on the entire congregation, and the role of specialized interim pastors within the context of the American Baptist Churches-USA. It examines the post-traumatic impact of this kind of breach on the local church.

This paper persuades the reader that the afterpastor, who is gifted and called to this specialized interim ministry of healing for the purpose of discerning and gathering resources to restore the church, is especially crucial in ABC churches. In the absence of a judicatory body, the afterpastor carries the responsibility to develop and implement a strategic plan that reconnects the congregation to God and to each other. Researching denominational missteps and other denominations’ responses to clergy sexual misconduct as well as case studies, led to new ways of considering a response to clergy sexual misconduct for ABC churches. Moreover, this paper proposes a collaborative leadership that includes region support and a restoration team which is critical to the success of the afterpastor and the renewal of a post-traumatic congregation. An appendix provides a resource guide for ABC churches and afterpastors to use in responding to clergy sexual misconduct.
Dedication

“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go,
for to you I entrust my life.” Psalm 143:8

This work is dedicated to those who have experienced trauma due to clergy sexual misconduct and triumphantly held onto their faith. It is dedicated to those that are standing up and refusing to be silent by demanding justice. Finally, it honors the survivors that shed light on a secret.
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Introduction

The following example provides a snapshot of a congregation grappling with clergy sexual misconduct. First Baptist Church USA, a male pastor began to have 1-1 meetings with a female congregant, against the informal rules of the church. The pastor was gently reminded that a deacon or deaconess should be present. The pastor apologized and dismissed it as a one-time event. After another 1-1 meeting, a friend and church officer reminded him that it was necessary to have a board member present during the 1-1 meetings and that it would be best if the door was opened. The private meetings continued. Rumors persisted, soon facts confirmed both suspicions and denials.

The pastor was confronted by a few leaders. He was questioned about his relationship with a female congregant. He initially denied any wrongdoing, until he could not. He began arriving late for church events, Sunday worship, and church meetings. His behavior continued despite pleas from the leaders to correct his behavior. Finally the leadership decided that a leave from pastoral duties was best. The church agreed to support counseling. Post counseling, the pastor met with a group of leaders to determine his readiness to resume pastoral duties. The pastor and the leaders could not reach an agreement to implement new processes for counseling. He justified his actions. He was dismissed. The leadership was devastated.

The leadership had to face the fact that they ignored early warning signs of his inability to be accountable to the board. He was an authoritative leader. He created a hierarchy of favorites within the trustee and deacon boards which divided the board and
weakened the leadership team. He determined his annual compensation without the benefit of a review or goals from either board. He was consistently unwilling to be accountable to either board. These patterns of unhealthy behavior contributed to clergy sexual misconduct and other breaches along the way. Long after he was gone the leadership discovered, that he had similar issues at a prior church which were not shared during the reference checks.

This pastor was followed by local clergy providing pulpit supply. The congregation was deeply divided about his removal. Some leaders were loyal to him, some to his wife but very few to the victim. The leadership struggled to sustain the church. The pastor continued to influence the church and community. About 50% of the members left within 6 months. The leadership formed a search committee but did not invite the region into the process. This congregation had not healed from the first clergy sexual misconduct, yet the leaders moved on as if it did not happen. His name was rarely spoken as if the silence would lessen the breach and the devastating impact on the congregation. They ignored the small things, never addressed the aftermath of a beloved pastor’s departure and the deep wounds within the congregation. Perpetrator and the victim were absent, silence seemed like a reasonable response. The leaders were slow to respond to the initial pastor’s behavior and responded quicker to subsequent matters with another pastor but in a manner that caused a congregational showdown between opposing sides. For this church the afterpastor was the antipastor as he violated the office of pastor
and took advantage of a deeply wounded and vulnerable congregation. He was ultimately dismissed due to sexual misconduct.

The disclosure for the antipastor was not handled well, much like the disclosure with the first pastor. Again, the leadership’s response focused on the removal of the pastor but it did not include a plan for recovery, communication, and healing. In many ways, the leadership hired a very similar pastor with similar education achievements, personality, and administrative skills. Again, they ignored the early warning signs of problems. Once again the church was deeply divided and membership dwindled as many people left. Church meetings were contentions and embroiled in aggressive conversations for and against the second pastor.

For many years the congregation simply hovered in place, sustaining itself, not facing the issues and wounds of the past. The church did not grow and ministry was directed toward those within the church. They stopped participating in ecumenical events, region and association events. They had years of pulpit supply and multiple interims. Generations of young and seasoned Christians lost their connection to God, to church, to the community and to the office of the pastor. Their spiritual growth and maturity was stunted. Local pastors discussed the issues and yet no one assisted the leadership as they suffered. The congregation finally began to recover when the leadership and the congregation hired a settled pastor that focused on healing and renewal through bible study, prayer, revival, and group discussions of the painful past. This time the region supported the search process. This afterpastor entered the church amidst emotional and
spiritual chaos. The status of the church, sudden departure of pastors and rumors were well known in the community. Leadership was overwhelmed and sometimes despondent. Some leaders were too eager to abdicate all responsibilities while others wanted to hold all the power. They swung back and forth, like a pendulum, having difficulty finding balance. The afterpastor had a restoration team.

This example is similar to the experiences of many churches. It evidences the need for regions to be engaged. The region’s wisdom and support in finding a settled pastor was critical for this church. It also highlights the need for protocol and processes to guide leaders and congregations when they are faced with clergy betrayal and especially clergy sexual misconduct. The afterpastor’s restoration team continued their support for several years.

The absence of denominational protocols and education make it very frustrating and emotionally scarring for leadership. They do not know what to do first. The congregation is traumatized, while leaders jockey for position. It is clear that Baptist polity hinders effective response due to the absence of enforceable protocols and processes for effective prevention, education and response to clergy sexual misconduct. Moreover the associational nature of volunteer relationships within American Baptist Churches-USA, prevents regions from advising the leadership until they are invited into the process.

Clergy sexual misconduct is a like a pervasive disease in the church. Three percent of women who regularly attend church in the U.S. reported being the object of a
sexual advance by a church leader after the age of eighteen. More recently, Peace Makers, the #Me Too and the #Church Too movements have provided knowledge and insight into systemic injustice, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment in the halls of the academy, the pulpit and the pew as well as the entertainment industry.

Church trauma is an overwhelming disruptive event that breaks the relationship between the congregation and God. Clergy sexual misconduct is church trauma that breaks the relationship between clergy and God and congregant and God. This kind of trauma destroys the trust between the shepherd and the church, thereby limiting the congregation’s fellowship with God and each other. The breach also causes congregants to disregard the sacred call of any pastor diminishing their respect and reverence for the office of pastor.

The way the congregants relate to the community and the way the community sees this church is negatively altered. People believed their personal reputations are tarnished, and their faith is challenged. Congregants and especially leaders are tentative about the purpose of the church and often become despondent. They are disconnected as a body of believers and disconnected from the community. ABC’s Covenant of Relationships Agreement claims,

Essential marks of the church include being a: (a) worshiping community, (b) fellowship of regenerate believers, (c) caring, supportive Christian community, (d) an agent for proclaiming the gospel and being involved in God’s mission in

the world, and (e) an inclusive fellowship that transcends all discrimination on
the basis of race, sex, ethnic background, social position or economic status.2

The church facing the trauma is not able to manifest these marks, yet the hope is that it
will in time.

Trauma caused by clergy sexual misconduct, especially perpetrated by the senior
pastor is unlike other trauma caused by a conflict in which mediation or reconciliation is
a goal. Churches that seek to reconcile with a pastor that has inflicted trauma may
painfully learn that the abuser cannot be reconciled to the current congregation. As in the
example provided, congregations will go to great lengths and expense to reconcile a
beloved fallen pastor to their pastorate. However, the aberrant behaviors and deeply
unhealthy habits and boundaries take years to correct. It does not mean that the person
cannot be reconciled and restored to a pastorate at another church in time. The fallen
clergy may serve again, but demons need to be wrestled with and they need to participate
in meaningful counseling. They must own their misuse of power and repent.

There are certainly some cases of sexual engagement between consenting adults
that some people believe should not be judged as clergy sexual misconduct. In these
situations, the imbalance and misuse of the office of pastor are either not considered or
not considered a significant factor in the event. Such a view presumes that the clergy and
victim are equal. However, Marie Fortune, founder of Faith Institute and Duke University

2 ABC-USA, “The Covenant of Relationships and Its Agreements among the General, National,
And Regional Boards of the American Baptist Churches,” https://www.abc-usa.org/wp-
content/uploads/2012/06/ABCCovenantofRelationships1.pdf, 8.
alum, notes four fundamental reasons that clergy sexual relationships with a congregant, client, employee, student or staff member, is a violation to the office and the role of the pastor. Deborah Pope-Lance summarizes Fortune’s argument,

1. It is a violation of the role and fiduciary responsibilities; there is an implicit understanding that ministers will use their skills, knowledge, and office to act in the best interests of those they serve.

2. It is a misuse of authority and power granted through ordination to ministers.

3. It allows clergy to take advantage of another’s vulnerability.

4. Absent meaningful consent provided by the congregant because of the imbalance in power and authority.  

Here, Fortune provides a concise and accurate framework to consider sexual unethical behavior and the imbalance of power. Clergy’s responsibility to care for the spiritual and emotional well-being should never include sexual misconduct.

There are laws that govern the reporting of sexual abuse and each church is subject to these laws. In some states, sexual relationships between clergy and a congregant is a legal matter. Thirteen states and the District of Columbia have penal statutes that, in at least some circumstances, support the criminal prosecution of clergypersons engaged in sexual misconduct with congregants or parishioners. These statutes, enacted by Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Dakota, Texas, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin and the

District of Columbia turn on various linguistic formulations, including, most commonly, “the specification that the misconduct occur within the confines of the counseling relationship.”

Due to this breach, the church is not well spiritually, emotionally and physically; its soul is sick. Oftentimes the congregation is unaware of the depth of the wound, due to shock and inability to process, like an undiagnosed cancer, the sickness, continues to spread. Ralph Elliott likens broken fellowship to murder: "to murder our relationship with God results in murdering our relationship with our brother as depicted in the Cain and Abel narrative. The vertical and horizontal relationships always go together.”

When a congregation is traumatized, complicated and intense feelings abound. There is an emotional loss when a pastor or significant clergy relationship has abruptly ended due to the clergy sexual misconduct. Congregants find it extremely difficult to reconcile the fallen clergy’s actions with the person they trusted. Their emotions encompass mourning the loss of the pastor, feelings of shame, guilt, anger, blaming the victim and abuser for betrayal.

The congregation’s response to sexual misconduct can be swift and quiet to limit legal liability, but the silence is paid for with immeasurable soul erosion for those directly and indirectly impacted. Swift responses often yield long term destabilization of church


and community life, because the behavior may be removed but the issues often remain. While clergy action may have brought a problem to the surface. Yet, before the tipping point, there was likely evidence of blurred boundaries, concentration of power, and loss of missional focus. The church was probably disconnected from the community and minimal connection with the local churches, region and within the denomination, as well as unresolved conflict within the church family.

Pastors are invited into relationships of intimacy, like a therapist, with those they serve in the local church and community. These intimate and confidential interactions needed for this position also require well-maintained boundaries. The office of pastor has power, access, and position in the community that is being served. This relational power is given, oftentimes without awareness or conscience consent of the pastor. It is assumed by congregant and pastor that the relationship between the pastor and congregants is personal and spiritual. Congregants may share vulnerabilities and concerns so that the pastor may pray for and with them. These delicate and/or intimates moments are possible due to the social and spiritual status of the office of pastor. The pastor’s role is to serve the people and to show them how to live a holy life. It is expected that the pastor is praying for the congregation in crisis, in everyday situations and is celebrating their joys and answered prayers. Betrayal breaks the sacredness of the priestly duties, ordination vows and creates a void in the spiritual and relational lives of the congregants. When the shepherd of the flock has lost his way due to sexual misconduct; generations of hope and
trust can be lost. For many, their deep disappointment and anguish spills over into other personal relationships with other congregants.

A group of ministers in Minnesota coined the term “afterpastor,” as each of them followed pastors that left their pastorate because they engaged in sexual misconduct. The afterpastors worked together to prioritize and to strategically address issues due to clergy sexual misconduct and healing in their churches and communities. They supported each other by meeting regularly, sharing, and developing strategies to deal with the needs of the congregation. Individually and collectively they sought to understand how the “afterpastor” might lead a post-traumatic congregation so that they are healing, renewed and hopeful. This group also helped to manage self-care as they served as sounding boards for each other. Afterpastors are often the recipient of harsh criticism and blamed for things that happen due the breach and prior to entry into the community.

Congregations that experience clergy sexual misconduct, especially if it is the senior pastor, need to be guided by an interim pastor/afterpastor that is trained and gifted in healing, prayer, and restoration. An afterpastor is an interim who specializes in guiding churches back to their mission by strategically coordinating all of the resources that are needed to heal and recover from this kind of trauma and begin to reimagine a new future. An afterpastor is also a person that can thrive in a chaotic environment by staying focused on the goals of congregational renewal. Moreover, the afterpastor has the skills to lead congregations through this traumatic period.

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that are needed to care for a congregation through the phases of trauma and the post-traumatic season as they wrestle with clergy sexual misconduct. Within the context of ABC’s polity, the afterpastor is an essential component for congregational recovery and healing. The afterpastor has three major obligations; restore healthy fellowship with God, restore the office of pastor and ready the church for the settled pastor. The afterpastor must lead without clearly delineated authority and serve amidst suspicion and doubt about the role of the pastor and the pastor’s motives. The Minnesota pastors realized that they needed the collected wisdom of colleagues to help the congregations heal and to preserve their well-being. They formed an ecumenical restoration team, yet the differences in their doctrine did not limit the benefits of the collected wisdom.

While the afterpastor is caring for the congregation the victim or survivor must be considered. If the afterpastor does not feel that he has the right skills needed to create a safe and supportive dialog with the survivor then a mentor, therapist or someone on the restoration team should maintain a relationship with the survivor. There is often so much emphasis on legal concerns and removing the pastor that the victim may be ignored. Leaders may be uncomfortable including the victim in church activities because they don’t know what to say and because it reminds them of a failure to protect and prevent the misconduct. The victim is part of the congregation and his/her healing is embedded in the community’s spiritual wholeness; ignoring the victim is not healthy. If the congregation and the leaders terminate their relationship with the victim, the person is revictimized. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s (CBF) Safe Church’s guide, prepared by
Pam Durso and CBF’s sexual misconduct task force, highlights the importance of supporting the victim,

[Ensure that the survivor is kept within circles of support and not excluded from congregational life in any way. This includes clear honest communication and referral to other professionals when appropriate. Lastly, meet the survivor where they are; allowing them to grieve, protest, and be angry.]

The afterpastor must take the lead in finding the right balance for the victim and the congregation. The ability to finesse the ways the congregation interacts and is restored individually and collectively requires a spiritually mature, well-grounded person called to the ministry work of the afterpastor. It is not a pastorate that can be assumed because one is a gifted preacher and or excellent administrator. While these skills are needed, an afterpastor must be able to negotiate difficult situations initially without the authority of the office of the pastor and the trust that is afforded a minister of the gospel. It must be someone who has the spiritual gift of loving indiscriminately those who are deeply wounded and may look to release anger and rage on the afterpastor. Pamela Cooper White, ordained Episcopal priest and counselor, writes this about the afterpastor,

[Inviting people to share their grief, anger, and betrayal is a sacrificial work with real danger over time of succumbing to compassion fatigue and secondary traumatization.

In other words, misdirected emotions are not personal but may feel personal and will impact the afterpastor’s well-being. White’s comments support the specialty nature of

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this type of interim ministry and further supports the position that a restoration team and collaborative leadership is necessary for afterpastors to be effective and healthy.

In addition to the afterpastor’s three major obligations, he/she should guide the church through a self-examination process to discern their understanding of clergy sexual misconduct. They will need to define clergy sexual misconduct, examine their role in detecting it, and the ways they desire to move forward. It is essential for the leaders and the congregation to have healthy discussions about event and healthy boundaries (both discussed in chapter 2). Together, the afterpastor and the congregation will examine formal and informal practices, procedures and rules, considering the impact and usefulness. He or she gently but persistently guides the congregation until they begin to reimagine their future, reclaim their hope and reset their mission.

The responsibilities of the afterpastor are layered and in many cases, afterpastors have become afterpastors unknowingly or without fully understanding all that is required. Hopkins notes, “Many clergy are unwitting afterpastors, serving congregations that have a strong anti-clerical streak or exhibit other symptoms of a troubled relationship with former pastors.” Those that enter this pastorate without prior knowledge do so because the truth was concealed. A small group was aware of the breach. The pastor left quietly, possibly retiring. In these situations, the truth is buried along with the emotions and

8 Hopkins and Laaser, 11.
problems related to the clergy's sexual misconduct. The victim may have left the church or may be an attending member.

After a discussion of church trauma and the afterpastor, it is necessary to look more closely at ABC polity, at its structure historically and currently, and the intersection of ABC polity and the afterpastor.

Going back to 1660 the concept of the association was developing and taking root in Baptist polity. The associational connection evidenced interdependence with a goal to provide a vehicle for church work to be achieved beyond the local church and without interfering with the ministries of the local church. By 1749, the Philadelphia Baptist Association (PBA) defined the associational relationship between the region and the local churches by having an equal emphasis on the local church’s independence as well as the interdependence of the churches.

This historical commitment to doctrine and desire to maintain fellowship feels less secure today due to an emphasis on independence, shrinking church attendance and living in the shadows of the non-denominational mega-church. In the last 15 years, Baptist's willingness to separate over theological differences, like same-sex marriage, has emphasized autonomy and has weakened the denomination, region and local churches. The Philadelphia Baptist Association (PBA), as well as current regional ministry teams, support local churches in a variety of ways. This support is useful and practical for churches to be healthy, financially vital, to engage in mission, to grow spiritually and to
stay connected to a body of churches with common goals within the associations and regions.

Through a collaborative process between the local church, the region, and ABC, clergy are ordained, following the region’s ordination requirements. Clergy sexual misconduct violates the ordination, the ordination process, and standards as well as the professional code of ethics. Therefore, it is a reasonable hope and expectation that local churches, regions, and ABC, as well as other national partners, would address and establish protocols and processes.

This voluntary relationship is sustained as evidenced in the ABC’s Covenant of Relationships, dated 6/24/1984.

It is appropriate, therefore, that American Baptists join together in local congregations and in denominational organizations by way of a covenant to accomplish common purposes related to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Believing that the strength of our fellowship lies in unity achieved through voluntary cooperation, the General, National, and Regional Boards of the American Baptist Churches enter into a Covenant of Relationships.9

This agreement highlights an understanding that there is strength in associations, unity and covenental understanding needed for ABC churches to achieve a common purpose grounded in the Gospel.

Consistent with the statement, it is appropriate for ABC to be accountable and responsible to address and educate clergy, leaders, and congregations about clergy

breaches and healthy boundaries. Sometimes a region's response may be the same, as a congregation, as the work of theological reflection is hard, time-consuming and can feel worse before it is better. Moreover, region teams are dealing with multiple crises in multiple churches that require time, resources and confidentiality.

Baptist polity does not include a judicatory body that executes processes and procedures across churches, associations, regions or throughout the denomination. At times ethical standards are not uniformly followed and cannot be enforced. Therefore, broadly within the denomination and specifically within ABC, there are no formal and enforceable standards, rulings or covenants that require reporting, dismissal, or processes for disclosure, discussion, communication, and theological reflection. The limits of the association relationships, within ABC, are most striking when churches face the reality of clergy sexual misconduct because the associational framework lacks accountability and responsibility for clergy sexual misconduct.

Afterpastors may be particularly valuable within ABC given its polity and lose organizational structure which isassociational and therefore is a network of cooperative volunteers. Each church independently governed and their response to clergy sexual misconduct does not follow established standards or protocols. The afterpastor ministry is essential to the health and wellness of the local church and the denomination. Region teams should provide on-going support preferably through a designated team, restoration team, that covenants to sojourn with the afterpastor for at least 18 months to support restoration, transformation and transition.
In summary, clergy sexual misconduct is a traumatic event in the life of a congregation. It betrays the trust of the victim, misuses the authority afforded pastors, and diminishes the role of the office of pastor. It breaks down the fellowship between pastor and congregant and between congregant and God. All denominations and all types of churches are impacted by this epidemic.

Chapter 1 identifies the phases of trauma as the congregation responds to the clergy sexual misconduct. The temporal phases of a post traumatic congregation overlap and reappear until a critical mass of people decide to move forward. The phases include naming (identifying and verifying the validity of the claim); othering (blaming leaders for the breach), truth-telling (new reality now that the clergy is dismissed) and finally shedding (members leave, and the congregation moves forward to a new future).

The afterpastor facilitates the transition from one phase to the next and must recognize that people will express grief and anger as they process the breach individually and collectively. Chapter 2 discusses the afterpastors, their healing role as well as the key leadership skills needed. The afterpastor must have leadership qualities and practical skills in six key areas, listening and discerning, recognizing a coverup, sharing hope, managing conflict and promoting healing, transformational leadership and reclaiming sacred language.

Going forward ABC regions and national organizations need to consider new ways to support the afterpastor and post-traumatic churches. Every ABC afterpastor should have a restoration team sojourn with him/her for 12-18 months. The purpose and
benefit of the restoration team and collaborative leadership is explored in chapter 3. This chapter argues that the ABC needs a proactive position and response to clergy sexual misconduct to protect the well-being of the local church and the denomination. A lack of response to a problem that ravishes the souls of local congregations cannot be ignored or justified by its polity.

The restoration team as a collaborative partner is more fully developed in chapters 4 and 5. The purpose and influence of both the region and restoration team will continue to be recommended as a vital aspect of the afterpastor’s success and the post-traumatic congregation’s healing and renewal.
1 Trauma and the Post-Traumatic Congregation

Clergy sexual misconduct is an action that misuses the inherent power assigned to clergy and violates the sanctity of clergy-congregant relationship. It is a breach of the clergy’s spiritual and emotional fiduciary responsibilities to the victim and the congregation. It violates the clergy’s ordination and clergy code of ethics agreements. The response to clergy sexual misconduct is often removal of the pastor or fallen clergy, silence, viewing it as sin or keeping it a secret.

Silence denies all witnesses of clergy sexual misconduct. The perpetrator may remain in the pastorate. The victim is asked to leave or shamed into leaving. For nearly 20 years, silence was the Southern Baptist Convention’s response as hundreds were victimized and pastors sustained their pastorates and freely moved from one congregation to the next. SBC was aware of hundreds of victims’ accusations, as well as perpetrators ‘convictions.

They chose silence, systemically oppressing and revictimizing victims. It as if the victim does not exist, slowly this silence kills the soul of the church. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Some believe that clergy sexual misconduct is a sin. However, to see clergy sexual misconduct solely through the lens of sin may be reductive, minimizing the event as one that takes place between the victim and the perpetrator. It also assumes it is consensual and may focus on sex or intimacy between two people, which mitigates the injury to the congregation and the community. The perpetrator's injuries and abuse of another person must be considered along with the sacred call to ministry. Their actions are sinful and traumatizing to the congregation. It is sometimes easy to look at sin and say, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (Romans 3:23) or surely there is no righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. (Eccles. 7:20). These beliefs are true yet they cause congregants to neglect the impact of fallen clergy or to view clergy sexual misconduct as a single errant action. Clergy called by God to serve God's people cannot be given a pass. Sin requires reflection, repentance and actions. Clergy must have time and professional support to analyze their behavior and habits that led to deceit. They need time to repent and develop healthy habits and new self-care practices. Moreover, seeing clergy sexual misconduct as sin mitigates the misuse of power and the detrimental impact on the congregation. Forgiveness, which misses the

importance of theological reflection and healing for both victim and congregation, sidesteps the problem. Patricia Liberty, in her theological reflection on the issue of clergy sexual misconduct, supports this view of sin and notes that sin and adultery "reflect a value of the congregation regarding the importance of sexual purity and fidelity, they are too narrow to name the damage done to the entire congregation." Ignoring the impact of clergy sexual misconduct on congregational life is a temporary fix. Systemic and structural aspects of congregational life that create an imbalance of power, the opportunity for inequity, and abuse as contributors to sin must be considered. In churches all voices do not matter equally, even in a congregational led tradition like American Baptist Churches-USA. Pastors hold more power and influence than a member. They are held in higher esteem and more deeply regarded. They are the spiritual leaders, biblical experts and intercessors for the congregation. The office of pastor is not equivalent to a deacon or any officer of the church. It is distinct and set apart. If those that serve as pastors do not balance power with humility and self-imposed healthy boundaries abuse is predictable. Moreover, church leadership and the congregation must be empowered to sustain boundaries and balance. The very structure that endorses clergy power is the same structure that provides opportunity for abuse and repeated offenses. Sometimes clergy sexual misconduct is not reported or ignored because it involves male perpetrators and

3 Patricia L. Liberty, “Theological Reflection: Naming the Problem,” in When a Congregation is Betrayed: Responding to Clergy Misconduct, ed., Beth Ann Gaede (Middleton: The Alban Institute, 2017). 16-17. She is the cofounder and director of Associates in Education and Prevention in Pastoral Practice, an ecumenical resource for individuals and organization recovering from sexual clergy misconduct. She is nationally known for her work with victims of clergy sexual misconduct.
female victims. Patriarchy justifies clergy sexual misconduct. One of the afterpastor's significant challenges is to restore the office of the pastor not only because of the clergy's actions but because the structure of most churches supports a pattern that will facilitate abuse of power. In any system that allocates power to some and none to others, patterns of sin and related trauma are inevitable. Pastors, church leaders, and congregations that honor and collaborate to create spaces of healing, equity, justice, and boundaries can stem clergy sexual misconduct. Recognizing clergy sexual misconduct as a sin that is related to both the person and the structure provides a fuller picture and a framework to address the problems.

Keeping sexual misconduct a secret happens when a few recognize the event but after the pastor is removed it is never discussed. All things that remind the congregation of the pastor are removed. For example a fellowship hall is renamed. A few know the details but the circle is small and the secret is protected at all costs. The pastor is removed, the reasons are murky, and the people are suspicious.

Each response requires mass buy in. Therefore, people that do not agree with silence, secret or sin can be coerced into agreement. They can be ostracized and set aside. Victims that desire justice can be revictimized by the intentional decision to respond in these ways. Each of these responses is inadequate and leaves the victim and the congregation traumatized.

Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships...
and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives.\textsuperscript{4}

Church trauma is an overwhelming disruptive event experienced by the entire congregation that breaks the fellowship between the congregation and God and with each other. Clergy sexual misconduct is church trauma that breaks the relationship between clergy and God, congregant and clergy. It violates the office of pastor. In addition this kind of trauma spills over into the communities connected to this church. Clergy sexual misconduct that elicits an emotional, spiritual, and physical response from the victim, congregation, and the community. It is a traumatic event for everyone that is directly or indirectly impacted.

\textbf{1.1 Phases of Congregational Trauma}

There are four phases of congregational trauma which include naming, othering, truth telling and shedding.

\textbf{1.1.1 Naming}

In the naming phase, certain leaders are made aware of the event or events. Leaders must verify the facts, support the victim and follow applicable laws for reporting. Leadership may begin to formulate a plan to address the problems caused by the clergy breach. One of the early decisions will be who to tell and what to tell. Leadership must determine communication to the congregation and community. Disclosure is an essential\textsuperscript{4} American Psychological Association. Trauma. Accessed on 1/31/20. https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/.
aspect of naming but also crucial in recovery and healing along with “education, processing individual emotional responses, beginning to look ahead and spiritual reflection.” Terms like sexual misconduct, abuse and potential legal matters should be explained to ensure a common understanding. Statements should be simple and should not share specific details that may indict the accused and expose the victim. Disclosure statements should be carefully crafted so that they do not escalate emotions.

Leaders are generally emotionally overwhelmed and spiritually challenged during the naming phase. Most likely, they are familiar with clergy sexual misconduct but did not expect it to happen at their church. They must manage their own feelings so that their emotions and actions are measured and in the best interest of the congregation and the community.

1.1.2 Othering

In the othering phase, individuals are blamed for the problems and sometimes leaders or the pastor’s perceived confidants are blamed for hiding or not handling the misconduct. As people process the information, some will personalize it, asking, “Why didn’t I know? Why did God allow this to happen to me and to my church?” The congregation will begin to prayerfully wrestle with these questions. If the fallen clergy is a new pastor, hired within 5 years, some will blame the search committee for doing a

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6 Sample disclosure statements are provided in the Resource Guide, found in Appendix D.
poor job or inadequate due diligence. Some will blame the boards: deacons and trustees and they will distance themselves from these groups. Some congregants will have difficulty reconciling this new knowledge with the person they know. These people will separate themselves from the fallen clergy and the church; both will be othered. This group will leave the church as soon as clergy sexual misconduct is disclosed. They are most likely newer members or close to the victim. The othering phase also manifests itself in a breakdown of congregational relationships. Congregants may doubt their ability to judge a person’s sincerity, creating insecurity in existing and future relationships.

1.1.3 Truth-telling

The pastor is removed, now everyone is operating in the same reality. The pastor has vacated the pulpit and now the congregants acknowledge the new reality. Removal can trigger trauma for some that were in denial and cause others to leave the church. In this phase the region or association may assist with pulpit coverage. Leaders are feeling overwhelmed by new or reemerging concerns as leaders are tasked to work with local pastors, the association, or the region to secure pulpit coverage and to respond to the congregation’s concerns. Leaders assume duties like teaching bible study, representing the church at community organizations, as well as handling administrative/operation duties. Priorities must be set as triage begins. Victims are cared for, individually and collectively. Legal issues are more clearly understood and communicated to the congregation. This is a lengthy process and initially may feel like “naming” until the
afterpastor and others (i.e. leaders and restoration team) can move people to solutions by setting goals and envisioning the future.

1.1.4 Shedding

In the shedding phase it becomes clear that clergy dismissal solved a problem but congregational trauma has generated new questions and more problems to address. The future is not secure. Leaders jockey for control in the absence of a pastor. This is where rumors and misinformation can add to a chaotic environment. While the church’s response is separate from the community, each congregant represents and interfaces within their community. Therefore, congregants may feel dislocated in their community and church during this time of transition.

Oftentimes members are not comfortable with the perceived randomness of preachers providing pulpit coverage. This pulpit rotation and lack of pastoral leadership leads to mass exit. In this phase gossip and rumors may be heightened as congregants and community members attempt to interpret this new reality. By now the region should be involved to assist with pulpit coverage and strategic thinking. The region can assist with the search process and help leadership focus on the church’s mission and calling an afterpastor.

Finally, the afterpastor arrives during the shedding phase. However, the afterpastor enters at a time when expectations may be unrealistic. He/she will be blamed for things, expected to restore things to normal, to attract new members, and encourage
old members to return. The afterpastor will gather and validate stories of betrayal that the people share. Prayerfully, leadership and healing intersect in the afterpastor.

1.2 State of a Post-Traumatic Congregation

A new pastor asks her mentor, “What advice do you have for me as I begin my pastorate?” Mentor responds, “Love the people.” Years later the same pastor asked the mentor, “Did you know how hard loving the people could be?” Her reply, “Yes.” This is the plight of the afterpastor loving the people is necessary and difficult because the love they expected and perhaps believed was promised to them was suddenly withdrawn. They are both wounded and cautious. The state of the post-traumatic congregation is determined by their emotional wellness. Much like the phases of temporal trauma, emotional and spiritual wellness is a moving target especially at the beginning of the healing process. Moving from unhealthy emotional and spiritual chaos to wellness is the afterpastor’s goal. Progress is inconsistent, and feelings of anger and blame are often directed at the afterpastor. The afterpastor must be called to this work as he/she must be able to love the loveable and the unlovable alike, trusting that God is doing the work that is sometimes hidden from plain sight.

There is a dysfunction that settles into churches and communities that have experienced clergy misconduct that can become systemic, establishing an unhealthy

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7 This is my memory of my own conversation between, myself and my mentor in 2016.
norm. Patterns evolve that foster confusion.”

An afterpastor that walks into a church that is entrenched in patterns of protection and denial is doomed from the outset, as the congregation is more vested in maintaining a secret than truth and healing.

Unresolved conflict may spur a response to difficult issues including, clergy sexual misconduct, that seem disproportionate or irrational. As congregations operate like families, people also respond to church conflict in the same way they react to personal conflict. The afterpastor should note reactive behavior that is suspicious, cautious, and often unconscious; because people have developed “defenses against recognizing the disturbing reality of their behavior. Successful encounters with conflict provide better tools to respond to trauma and to future conflicts.

### 1.2.1 Discovering Fractured Relationships

However, in the post-traumatic congregation fractured relationships are rationalized as a new norm. Practices and policies may be added in an effort to make things seem normal for church operations and ministries to be more effective. However, the efforts to improve the environment is likely masked under new bylaws, ministries makeovers, or even new outreach efforts that seem sincere and may have a positive impact for a while. Much like families, congregations learn adoptive behavior to minimize anxiety. However, unhealed wounds and secrets often surface. Subsequently,

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8 Hopkins and Laaser, 83.
9 Hopkins and Laaser, 83.
10 Hopkins and Laaser, 91.
the church eventually withdraws from the community, and ceases to be a welcoming place even to long-time members. Ministry becomes perfunctory.

The behavior of persons in the community and their reaction to the situation is also determined by where they are placed in relation to others in the congregational structure. This has to do with issues of power, as well as the family projection system.11 Congregants relate to one another, not according to who each person is but according to their projective assumptions about the other person as if that person becomes the imagined figure. Those that view themselves as powerful may not recognize the ways they are engaged in fractured or unhealthy relationships. Families that have a long history at the church will stay and cope with issues because that is what they believe they are supposed to do.

Finally, the clergy-congregational partnership in many denominations has many qualities of marriage. When healthy, both the clergyperson and the congregation are enabled to become whole as each challenges the other and works well together. When unhealthy, this partnership “disintegrates into a parent-child relationship, which may lead to disempowerment, burnout, abuse, abandonment, and divorce.”12


12 Benyei, 19.
1.2.2 Discerning and Revealing the Overlap of Conflict and Trauma

There is a certain amount of conflict in any system where people are working together; churches are no different. Churches are living breathing organisms filled with people that not only share space, but experiences that include joys like weddings and baby dedications as well as sicknesses, sad time and losses. Church conflict exists within a system, and congregants feel and share a variety of experiences both individually and collectively. The congregation is deeply impacted and shaped by these experiences. Yet these experiences seldom prepare leadership for the emotional rollercoaster or provide a foundation for a unified response to clergy sexual misconduct; it ignites confusion and discord. As the afterpastor delves deeper into congregational life she will be able to see where conflict is distinct from trauma. The afterpastor can employ tools for resolving conflict without heightening emotions connected to the traumatic event of clergy sexual conduct.

Equipping congregations to have difficult conversations before it is necessary is useful. Also, acknowledging that a church’s desire to remain connected to the church’s universal mission to make disciples (Matt 28:19-20) may require difficult conversations. Even a church’s desire to be relevant and an active influence in local communities may need to self-reflect by examining ministries, demographics, and emerging community needs, which may result in conflict. As many churches look to proactively engage changing demographics that impact a church’s mission, growth and presence in the community healthy conflict is needed and possible.
The afterpastor can assume that the church has experienced conflict, but she will need to uncover the ways they have successfully and faithfully or unsuccessfully mediated conflict. Joyce Mercer notes that “conflict is struggle over differences” and that conflict is inevitable when people talk about things that matter, therefore it is inevitable in faith communities. There are several questions afterpastors should consider in assessing the congregation’s readiness to address conflict. These questions should provide insights into the conflict, the ways the leadership and congregation successfully or unsuccessfully negotiated the conflict and the outcome, what if anything changed.

In addition, Mercer notes several tools needed to enable congregations to keep conflict constructive, which include consistently and persistently “teaching practices of open communication around differences and practices of dispute resolution as practices of faith.” This can be achieved through Christian Education, making conflict transformational and understood as a regular and ongoing part of leadership training, laity workshops, a book-club, congregational retreats and revivals.

For ongoing viability, the afterpastor and leaders must also “pay attention to the practices that help maintain connections apart from the controversy.” Individually and collectively the congregation must define itself by its faith in God, fruit of the Spirit.


14 Refer to Appendix A for a detailed list of questions to consider.

15 Mercer, 1.

16 Mercer, 4.
friendship, hobbies, and family connections. Most importantly, they must see themselves beyond the current crisis in order to have a future that is not bound by present circumstances or the past. Mercer notes that “in conflict identities often become narrow.” 17 People may begin to think of their identities completely in terms of whether they agree or disagree. 18 It is especially important that leaders do not take sides or forget their duty in sustaining connections apart from the conflict and the emotions connected to an issue.

Spiritual practices are essential during conflict: prayer, meditation, fasting, prayer walks and shared meals help to remind people that they are connected in other meaningful ways. The afterpastor may promote “controversial issues in conversational spaces like religious education and pastoral care.” 19

Ground rules for discussion should be shared, prior to every discussion. The purpose of the ground rules is to enable the congregation to have an open discussion that is respectful and equitable. All voices have equal value and diverse opinions must be shared without fear and with the idea that the discussion is needed for the well-being of all and the future of the church. It will be important to think through the details of these discussions, determining location, childcare, and time limits. 20

17 Mercer, 4.
18 Mercer, 4.
19 Mercer, 5.
20 Refer to Appendix B for more details about ground rules for productive meetings.
In addition, Mercer asserts that part of good communication is knowing how to have a good fight. In churches disagreements that could potentially help to refine ideas or solutions may be avoided because people do not know how to disagree respectfully and without taking it personal. Often diverse opinions are dismissed with a “churchism” such as, lets agree to disagree or bless your heart. Unfortunately these expressions are useful in burying an issue but not resolving it. Mercer shares that it is important to set community norms so that a good fight is embraced and productive.

Be prepared to put boundaries around behavior that cannot and should not be tolerated—personal attacks, name calling, etc.—by working with others to set explicit expectations with the community about what is and is not appropriate in a fight. Anticipate conflicts, not for the purpose of avoiding and/or shutting them down, but in order to strategically plan ways of creating a context in which people can engage their differences in a healthy, constructive manner.21

All of the practices encourage good communication and it will take a team effort to model and enforce these community norms. The afterpastor and all other leaders should be especially proactive in this area as a congregation can easily slide back poor communication tactics when conflict is not anticipated and/or potentially handled poorly. If conflict is not handled well it may also revive hopelessness and discord.

“Hold listening sessions in smaller groups that allow people from various perspectives in a controversy to experience themselves as being heard and acknowledged.”22 Small group conversations also allow people to hear alternative perspectives on the conflict in what may be a less threatening context than a formal

21 Mercer, 5.
22 Mercer, 5.
meeting or an all-congregational forum.” 23 It is not easy, but hopefully an afterpastor can help congregants to see conflict as normal and healthy. Within the Baptist context conflict can overemphasize autonomy and deflate the interdependence of Christians living their faith in community with one another. Regions and national organizations should offer workshops on conflict tools.

Churches, like many organizations that have volunteers may have conflict within leadership, theology, direction, or mission emphasis. There may be family rivalries if the church has a few historic families within the church. It may have an identity crisis as it seeks to determine what is authentically Baptist, especially when people come from diverse theological and religious experiences. Many churches have developed a way of managing and coexisting with conflict, but never quite resolving it, and possibly never addressing it or only rarely acknowledging it. For example, First Baptist Church-USA acknowledges we have a problem. Deacon Tate has been the trustee chair for thirty years and he does not like new people to lead ministries. This kind of reality represents an informal rule, something that is unconsciously known by everyone but challenged by no one. Thus, new people are never invited to lead ministries. It is understood by those who witness an unpleasant event when a new person attempts to participate, he or she will be met with resistance. It is an unwritten informal rule that is part of the church’s ethos,

23 Mercer, 1.
stifling the church’s growth, new ideas, new ministries, and certainly limiting the churches ability to fully actualize its mission.

The origin of a conflict may be elusive as the people initially involved may no longer be part of the church. Yet, habits and coverup initiated and was sustained in order to move forward. Rules or habits can remain in place even when there is not a good reason. Most people know the story of the woman that cooked the ham for Thanksgiving dinner in two pots. One day her daughter asked, “Mom why do you cook the ham in two pots? The Mom responded, “This is the way my mom does it.” The young girl said, “But why?” So she called her mom and asked, “Why do we cook the ham in two pots? Her mom replied, “it is the way my mom, your grandmother showed me, and I always followed her recipe.” Now curious the grandmother called the great grand mom and asked the same question, “Why do we cook the ham in two pots for Thanksgiving dinner?” The great grandmother replied, “I used to cook it that way because I did not have a pot big enough for the ham, so I cut it in half and cooked it in two pots.”

Institutional practices, rules, and habits are passed on long after they are useful. While the root cause or origin of conflict may not be obvious and may be historic it can have lingering negative effects on the congregation and the afterpastor will need to implement healthy practices for addressing senseless habits. This will not be simple and may be slightly more complicated in a church fortunate to have multiple generations involved in church life.
Other factors such as birth year and generational placement impact the way we problem solve. For example, not all but many millennials (26-40 years old) want to lay out all the cards on the table and talk it through. By contrast, the silent generation (1939-1945) may not want to dig up and discuss hurtful events in an open forum, especially exposing personal information about church members. For example, a pastor was in a car with teens and they drove pass a person that was on a street corner with a sign that listed all of the people that were going to hell. The list included, working women, sports fans and gay people. One of the teens read the sign and said, “‘Gay People.’ I knew it. There I am. I am gay, but I am not going to hell.” The teen was comfortable and willing to share this information freely. However, someone in their eighties might be uncomfortable with this statement shared openly even though they might be feeling the same or living the same truth. Heathy dialog with boundaries, appropriately facilitated and peppered with community gatherings that are not connected to the problem of clergy sexual misconduct will lead to transformation.

1.2.3 Discussing Clergy Sexual Misconduct

After the congregation has engaged in identifying, assessing and addressing conflict that lays under the clergy sexual misconduct the post-traumatic congregation will need to engage in healthy discussion about clergy sexual misconduct. First, the afterpastor, leadership, and restoration team, and then the congregation should begin to talk openly and honestly about the past so that it can become the past. Discussing the phases of trauma and the feelings or emotions that individuals may be experiencing.
Next, the leadership needs to focus on the congregation to determine its phase of trauma. Is the congregation primarily in the naming phase or have they moved on to shedding? Where are the leaders and the information trustees? Regardless of where some folks are at some point, collectively and individually the majority of the congregation must decide to move forward. Multiple meetings may be necessary so that all can have access to support and have their voices heard. Their concerns and feelings must be validated but they also need to be guided forward. Setting healthy expectations and goals for themselves and the ways they choose to participate in the future of the church is part of the transformation.

Certain leaders may feel responsible for the pastor’s breach. There may be leaders who believe they have fallen out of favor with God and need to earn God’s grace. These leaders may feel that they need to win back the trust of the community and that certain acts that are deemed acceptable by the congregation will enable them to earn favor with the congregation and with God. Shame makes it difficult for some to accept grace, and some will place a great emphasis on spiritual performance in an effort to improve or reestablish a relationship with God. Leaders that suffer from guilt, shame or spiritual performance have clearly been wounded by the clergy's misconduct and now have a distorted image of God and the "terms" of their relationship with God. They may think

25 Johnson and Vonderen, loc., 756.
that grace is limited, not given freely, or that they need to meet certain spiritual hurdles to secure grace. It is essential to provide multiple ways for people to discuss the breach and to share feedback.

Inviting the congregation to do a photo essay is another tool that can engage the congregation in problem-solving and reconnect them around a common goal. It can also provide a way to move forward and discuss challenges and fears as well as hopes. It may inspire new ministries or collaboration with ministries, other churches, the region and local community partners. If trying to determine a new ministry or to evaluate the church's connection to the community ask the congregation to take pictures of their community to answer a few simple questions, such as: Where do you see God at work in the community? Where do you see a need for God? Where do you see First Baptist USA providing ministry in the community? The pictures can be shared, patterns identified, and new knowledge may help the congregation determine shared goals and their mission.

In summary, clergy sexual misconduct is a traumatic event in the life of the victim and the congregation. It creates congregational trauma for all that are directly and indirectly impacted. The congregation experiences and emotions spill over into the communities connected to the church. Churches much like families, experience this event together sharing the same emotional distress and spiritual loss. The responses to clergy sexual misconduct include silence, keeping a secret and processing the breach as sin are inadequate and leave the trauma untreated. The temporal phases of a post traumatic congregation overlap and reappear until a critical mass of people decide to move forward.
The afterpastor facilitates the transition from one phase to the next and must recognize that people will express grief and anger as they process the breach individually and collectively. The phases include naming (identifying and verifying the validity of the claim); othering (blaming leaders for the breach), truth-telling (new reality now that the clergy is dismissed). And finally shedding (members leave, and the congregation moves forward to a new future). Each person moves through the phases individually yet it is necessary for the church to collectively pass through these phases in order to reimagine the future and move forward. The post-traumatic church, leans into the future but has all the markings of a church that has experienced clergy sexual misconduct. There are patterns of behavior that must be addressed so that the congregation begins to heal. Past conflicts bubble up into the trauma caused by clergy sexual misconduct. Therefore significant past conflict must be identified, assessed, and addressed. It may not be resolved but it needs to be identified so that it is distinct from the present issues connected to trauma.

Chapter 2 will look at the afterpastor as a specialized interim ministry and the skills needed to serve a post-traumatic congregation. This chapter will delve into the afterpastor’s active engagement and discovery with the community in order to develop a strategic plan. Afterpastors must build confidence and enable both leaders and the congregation to witness and experience success. Six key leadership skills are identified: 1) listening and discerning, 2) recognizing a cover-up, 3) sharing hope while shaping imaginations, 4) managing conflict and promoting healing through addressing unresolved
hurts, 5) leading in transformational and collaborative ways, 6) and restoring sacred language.

Everyone that experienced and witnessed the breach is impacted, it effects the congregation and the surrounding communities. The purpose and influence of both the region and restoration team will continue to be recommended as a vital aspect of the afterpastor’s success and the churches healing and renewal.
2 The Afterpastor: A Specialized Interim Ministry and the Post-Traumatic Congregation

Pastors receive trust without request and often without a deep understanding of the sacredness and the possible pitfalls of this kind of trust. This trust bears great responsibility and often occurs without proper enforceable and conscious boundaries. Trust may feel wonderful and empowering to a pastor but can be crushing when misused or when it is the means to an end. All too often, pastors that have fallen into sexual misconduct have developed a pattern of behavior over the years which often excludes healthy boundaries and accountability. They are skilled at defensive maneuvers and avoiding transparency. Even when caught with evidence of a breach, many pastors deny the allegations. On the other hand, leaders/churches can fall into a pattern of helplessness; a desire to be taken care of and only minister to themselves. This kind of church may give too much power to the pastor and ignored early warnings, oblivious to clues and “numb to signals.”

Afterpastors are called to lead the post-traumatic congregation that is still living in the past but must claim its future through restoration, forgiveness, and recognizing the remnant of God’s love. He or she helps the congregation recognize God’s faithfulness amid difficult circumstances. The afterpastor’s transition and transformational role are


2 See Appendix C for an-depth job description for an after-pastor.
shaped long before he or she arrives through the communication with the congregation and the community as well as the information that is omitted. Although clergy misconduct is familiar to both congregants and leaders it is always a surprise when it happens in their church. The local church and the region seldom have a predetermined response and protocol to follow, in that each situation is different and the role of the region varies. However, the range of emotions and the phases of trauma are often very similar for every church that has experienced clergy sexual misconduct.

The afterpastor is a spiritually mature person called to this ministry. He or she must be anointed and gifted in healing. The skills are divided into two primary areas of focus, congregational/pastoral care and community interaction. In line with congregational care the afterpastor must restore the office of pastor and the role of the minister; be a vessel of healing for all that are impacted and strategically move the congregation through the stages of renewal toward healing in an intentional and planned manner. Once these things are in place the afterpastor can refocus the congregation on its mission.

The community interaction is an ongoing process of rebranding and repositioning the church within its context. Internally the church needs to see itself as a body of believers and externally the community needs to see the church as a source of support.
and safety. It is often best to solicit someone that has public relations and communications skills to lead this effort.3

Afterpastors often serve as an interim or transitional pastor preparing the church for the next “settled pastor.”4 Therefore, the transformational process cannot be contingent on the afterpastor's personality or presence but is centered in the word of God and a personal relationship with God. The afterpastor should think of themselves as part of a relay team: after his leg, he will hand the baton to the settled pastor, the anchor. Therefore, transformation must be connected to a deepened understanding of God’s faithfulness. Moreover, leadership must be grounded in new protocols and procedures to facilitate and sustain a healthy congregation. The settled pastor will greatly benefit from processes and protocols that facilitate boundaries and purpose. Ineffective and harmful practices must be disengaged while creating new ways to think and live as a community. When the baton is passed to the settled pastor, the people must feel confident in their relationship with God and the pastoral role. They must possess the collective ability to be vessels of the Gospel and willing to handle the responsibility of being the priesthood of believers. Harker and Sharma note, that in turning a company around a leader must implement a process that takes a situation of poor performance to a situation of good

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3 See Appendix C.

4 The “settled pastor” is one who is called and installed as senior pastor in accordance with ABC-USA guidelines.
sustained performance. The afterpastor facilitates spiritual growth in order turn the church toward becoming a healthy community. It would be disappointing for the settled pastor and the congregation to meet at the same point that the congregation met the afterpastor.

The need for pastors to have safe spaces to be vulnerable and to be held accountable to an objective party is necessary for healthy ministry. This need for accountability and support is heightened for the afterpastor in order to facilitate success in an emotionally charged environment. Self-care for the afterpastor may include a spiritual director, therapist, a psychiatrist and an accountability group that may be within the denomination or may be ecumenical. Hopkins notes, “the experience of the afterpastor often brings out the worst in other people, and the afterpastor is the target for any weakness in the church.” She further notes that not taking things personally is essential for restorative leadership and self-care. Hopkins posits a "self-differentiated leader will take a nonreactive and clearly defined position on issues sticking to defining the self and not others in the system.”

However, it is fair to note there are cultural contexts in which therapy is viewed as a weakness and a lack of spiritual and emotional maturity. Clergy within these contexts


7 Hopkins, “Further Issues.”
carries burdens because they choose secrecy over being judged and potentially exposed. Therefore, pastors may be reluctant to both seek counseling and to refer congregants to counselors. Sometimes, clergy participate in accountability groups, as a tool for self-care and to share concerns. Yet, these interactions may be reduced to surface conversations and at a boy dialog. It is easy for healthy boundaries to be ignored.

The afterpastor will need the following leadership qualities and practical skills to be effective in this pastorate and to facilitate transition and transformation.

2.1 Leadership

Every afterpastor will need to discern the nuances of their congregation. Each congregation has a culture, traditions, and ethos unique to its setting and mission. There are some common leadership skills and characteristics that are essential. The desire to return to normal or the appearance of normal is often triggered with a new pastor as it signals to congregants and the community, that things are okay. It may feel normal if the congregants have learned to operate in extreme stress and conflict. Trauma creates wounded leaders, a loss of membership, and ongoing discord in the church. Suspicion of leadership and the afterpastor is heightened as the initial disclosure is often limited and does not provide information about next steps. The afterpastor has a challenging role to play in balancing communication and privacy. Moreover, biblical teaching, preaching, and Christian education is often underdeveloped in the post-traumatic stress church.

The afterpastor must possess these six key essential leadership skills: 1) listening and discerning; 2) recognizing a cover-up; 3) sharing hope while shaping imaginations;
4) managing conflict and promoting healing through addressing unresolved hurts; 5) leading in transformational and collaborative ways; 6) and restoring sacred language.

2.1.1 Listening and Discerning

Each person in the congregation has a truth about the events that led to the trauma, and they need to be able to name it and share it with the afterpastor. There are many sides. The afterpastor must acknowledge individually and collectively each person’s truth without minimizing anyone’s pain while maintaining everyone’s confidence. The afterpastor will realize that some congregants are chronic complainers and/or enjoy the perceived power of having the pastor’s ear. In their truth, the afterpastor will need to find hope or inject it. The congregant needs to have hope and to see themselves as integral to the healing and restored vibrancy of the congregation. The stories will include, personal stories, personalities, joys that are part of church life. Knitting these stories together will provide so much more than the story of the church. Stories have the ability to restore freedom and imagination as the story-tellers recall God’s faithfulness.

The interconnection, of story, memory and resilience will empower the community to reimagine their future. Benyei highlights the reasons stories and discovering aggregate experiences of the congregation are so important for the afterpastor. She notes, “The religious community is not a gathering of separate persons,
but an interrelated system.”

Molded by collective and aggregated experiences—churches, like any systems, are molded by their history—the events that they experience as a unit.

The congregants are the witnesses of the community’s celebrations, milestones, accomplishments and the trauma.”

Rambo notes, “this witness is not abstract; it is a testimony borne somatically, giving rise to new forms of life through the breath of these witnesses.”

These witnesses, the congregation and their stories as well as the community, have a shared experience. Their witness, drawn from shared experiences, is a catalyst to claim their future. Their witness allows differences to coexist and to make space for new gifts needed in ministry and leadership. The afterpastor will seek the witnesses that are ready for renewal. The witnesses will have different perspectives and the afterpastor will need to integrate the voices so that there is equity amongst the witnesses. Steinke notes, “Some individuals feel threatened by the disorder that differences cause. They confuse community with sameness . . . learning to deal with the threat that differences arouse is a task of healthy living.”

The community will continue to experience the lingering effects of the breach differently and have different viewpoints.

8 Benyei, 1.
9 Hopkins, “Further Issues.”
10 Hopkins, “Further Issues.”
11 Peter L. Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 27.
on how to move forward. These differences can lead to productive dialog and new beginnings.

### 2.1.2 Recognizing a Coverup & Unhealthy Role of the Pastor

Secrets that are sustained often result in a congregation developing tools for survival; systemic behavior and responses. Collectively the congregation works together to keep the secret and to move on. Uniform behavior and responses is necessary for the cover-up and limits diverse ideas. It may be unconscious by some and intentional by others, but over time secrets become part of the new normal.

One of the skills for the afterpastor is listening and discerning. Obtaining new knowledge about patterns of behavior that are symptoms of past crisis, unresolved relationship issues, power struggles and hidden truths. Planning a ministry event becomes overly complicated with forms and required signatures for an evening meeting. The process may be overly rigorous due to a past problem of abuse during an evening meeting or misuse of space. These discoveries expose the congregation’s vulnerabilities and areas of healing. Hopkins shares,

>[I]t is a matter of attentive listening and careful perception to understanding congregational patterns as revelatory of possible painful secrets expressed in the cryptic language of symptomology.12

Sometimes congregants maintain secrecy so that they are not isolated from the church. Others keep secrets because initially it seemed easier than facing the problem.

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12 Hopkins and Laaser, 90.
The coverup is ingrained in the routines and patterns of the church. “Pattern” is defined as “a cluster of symptoms, behaviors, and attitudes that compromise congregational health, productivity; and joy.”\textsuperscript{13} The afterpastor may encounter reactive behavior that is suspicious, cautious, overt and often unconscious. For example, at First Baptist USA, the deacon ministry became the caretakers of the narthex and the hospitality schedule. They decorated for holidays and posted communication in the narthex. All communication had to pass through the deacon board. The deacons did not consistently serve communion to the sick and shut-in. Several deacons did not have communion kits. They seldom met for prayer. They had set aside the deacon ministry to maintain order and appearances. There was persistent confusion as leaders undercut each other. Unfortunately, this disorder is quite common in the aftermath of clergy sexual misconduct. Furthermore, just as in ordinary families, important or traumatic events in the life of the congregation, such as the events of its formation, the sudden loss of a beloved leader, or clergy sexual misconduct, place an indelible stamp on the community’s history and future. This body will act and react in predictable ways when similar circumstances occur. Congregations born in conflict may always be conflicted, or alternatively, so terrified of conflict that the congregation may simply give up. Congregations that live under the cloud of clergy sexual misconduct distrust both clergy and lay leadership.

Effective leaders identify patterns of destructive behavior that cause systemic issues that prevent healing and imagining the joys of restoration supported by vibrant ministries. Successful afterpastors trust the renewing power of the Holy Spirit.

### 2.1.3 Sharing Hope

Churches and communities that experience clergy sexual misconduct lose hope and faith and the ability to dream. These communities do not see God as Creator. They do not believe the Holy Spirit can give them new hearts and new visions. They are so wounded that they believe a new pastor is only an opportunity for more hurt. Nancy Hopkins notes,

> the tendency of communities to assume that similar circumstances will produce similar results, limits a community’s freedom of behavior and often prevents growth and rejuvenation.  

After sexual misconduct many will feel like the prophet Habakkuk, forsaken and forgotten by God. Others, also like Habakkuk, may have hope as they recall God’s past blessings. It is likely that congregants will experience both sides of Habakkuk’s concerns. Ultimately, hope in God is the power needed for the congregation to imagine a new season that is not connected to the breach. This kind of hope is inspired and cultivated through prayer and the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Congregants can serve in ministries reconnecting with the missional work of the church. It is contagious and freeing and it enables to face a difficult past and to strengthen their faith.

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14 Benyei, 18.
Identifying the phase of trauma for individuals and the congregation is also useful in healing. If everyone is still in the naming phase (accepting the truth of the breach), restoration is not immediate. Yet, by the time the majority of the congregation is in the shedding phase, (congregants are leaving) those that are staying are ready to reclaim the mission of the church. Those that remain chose not to be defined by the event but desire to share the gospel as they reconnect with the community. The transition of the post-traumatic church is the power of the Spirit to imagine new life. It is the job of the afterpastor to be custodial of the Spirit until people can curate it on their own. When the congregation is ready to name the trauma they can begin to find life-affirming witness after the loss of a trusted pastor. Initially this transition process is a priority for every afterpastor. If the ethos of the church, its culture, is not transformed the church is doomed to live in its past perpetually.

The afterpastor will need to discern the culture and ethos of the church as well as its public image by asking questions, observing, and reading. There are obvious places to look and gather information, like bylaws, church minutes, special celebrations like pastor and church anniversary books, and church-wide milestone celebration (i.e. 100th birthday). Visiting the deacons and trustee rooms to look at past and current board photos will help to connect people with years of service, family connections, and ministries that have been sustained as well as those that have dissolved.

The afterpastor can share hope as he/she gains insight into church life by learning about the state of the church:
• How do they do what they do?

• When do they do what they do (e.g., revival) and how do they show what they do (advertise on the radio, community outreach)?

• What things (photos, paintings, quilts, special Bibles, plaques, awards, banners, named rooms, anniversary books, newspaper articles, website, online publications) represent this congregation?

• What do the signs and banners communicate? (is the service time correct, are letters missing from the church name)

• What is hanging on the walls in the sanctuary, choir rooms, deacons’ and trustees’ rooms, the prior pastor’s office?

• What is the mission of the church as evidenced by the mission statement and the ministries and events?

• Are they doing what they say they do? When and how?

People learn how to function in a church based on the rules of the church. After a traumatic event like clergy sexual misconduct, people may align with their group and the rules of the group. The group may be determined by family members, oldest members, neighborhoods, ministries, and function.

There was a local church that held a church family conference to call a new settled pastor proposed by the search committee and accepted by the deacon and trustee boards. This proposed settled pastor would follow a pastor that was released due to sexual misconduct. The choir became a group and they organized to vote against the proposed settled pastor. Members of the choir were strongly urged and in some cases told to vote the same way. This group had learned to function as a group where norms of compliance were established and expected. They successfully thwarted the hiring of the proposed settled pastor. The interim pastor recognized that many in this group were
hopeless and did not trust the processes used to call a new pastor. She set up a special Sunday Bible Study for the choir and she met with them regularly. She also engaged the congregation in guided discussion about their feelings about the clergy breach and disclosure. Slowly they built a more genuine fellowship, became less territorial and began to trust the processes that enabled the congregation to have a voice in the church's future. They hired a settled pastor 2 years later.

As the afterpastor delves into the stories of the church, systemic conflict, power struggles, power brokers and unhealthy alliances will become more obvious. Now he/she must take the acquired knowledge and find ways to help people change to healthy and healing processes and relationships. “God is doing a new thing; do you not perceive it?”

### 2.1.4 Managing Conflict and Promoting Healing

While clergy misconduct is unlike most conflict in that all parties involved cannot sit at a table and reach a compromise. The afterpastor must assess relationships that are directly and indirectly impacted. He must also distinguish other conflict that may impact the leadership, members, communication patterns, fiscal policies, and ministries. Even though it may feel like the church and the clergy sexual misconduct are inseparable, the church is God’s people, filled with dreams and hopes.

All too often conflict is avoided at churches because people have not engaged in healthy conflict. Clergy sexual misconduct will unearth seemingly dormant issues. Thus, the afterpastor will need to engage people in dialog that allows conflicting views to be shared. Lyon and Mosley highlight that the way we view conflict is essential to the way
that we lead. Moreover, leadership is exercised within the framework of conflict due to competing interests, so assume “conflict is an inherent dimension of leadership.” In a post-traumatic congregational afterpastors will have to address existing conflict in order to facilitate healing and to demonstrate that conflict can be inspiring. Lyon and Mosley distinguish conflict in three primary ways that are especially helpful: “intrapsychic (internal conflict), interpersonal (between individuals), and intragroup (between groups of people).” The afterpastor must assume that these conflicts exist and overlap, and new conflicts will arise.

In the church, conflict is often viewed as problematic and it can be. However, if understood and worked through, conflict can be useful in sustaining the vibrancy and relevance of ministries. Some conflict is healthy as it can challenge us to refine solutions and to stretch our imaginations. Yet, layers of historical conflict can make it difficult to deal with a new and unrelated problem. These layers of conflict, involving parties who have been both victims and victimizers, should be acknowledged and addressed, if possible, by the afterpastor or the restoration team.

However, the afterpastor will also need to know when her work is complete and when there is a need to refer someone to a therapist for deeper and more personal

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16 Lyon and Moseley, 9.
restoration. If the afterpastor is participating in a collaborative process, with the region and/or a restoration team, they will be able to add useful perspective in this decision.

Sandy Wilson says all of us have been hurt by people who were hurt by other people. She posits that receiving or imposing hurt is part of being human. Wilson defines hurt broadly, “hurts” I mean actions, words, and attitudes, that are intentional or unintentional, visible or invisible, hands-on or hands-off, other perpetuated or self-inflicted and barely survivable to hardly noticeable.”17 If this idea is internalized by those who are wounded, it may be easier to discuss hurtful actions and to begin to forgive ourselves and others. Forgiveness is liberating and necessary in healing and addressing prior hurts. Sometimes in dealing with betrayal, especially one caused by a senior pastor, congregants lose the ability to consider that everyone needs healing and forgiveness. Wilson’s understanding of hurt may enable a community to give and receive grace. This idea may also help abusers that are in denial to recognize a pattern of betrayal and hurt in their lives.

Systemic leadership issues and unhealthy congregational relationships are often the results of unresolved hurt and sustained conflict. The afterpastor should assume that this trauma is layered over prior experiences of conflict. Therefore, leading after trauma often means leading in heightened conflict. Serene Jones notes that after trauma ”people grapple with profound existential and moral questions raised by experiences of violence

17 Sandy Wilson, *Hurt People Hurt People* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2001), loc., 59.
and their long-term effects on communal and personal formation- and the reality of the
graces that exist in the midst of it all.”18 The afterpastor must help people recognize and
appreciate God's faithfulness and rediscover grace from God and for others.

Individuals and groups can sustain a healthy community if they have a sense of
coherence; evidenced by meaningfulness, manageability, and comprehensibility.”19 A
high sense of coherence helps people to appraise tension more realistically and less
anxiously. “It allows people to make more resourceful responses to challenges and
stressors.”20 The afterpastor is looking for ways to re-establish or to establish a “sense of
coherence” through fellowship and opportunities for small successes that will build trust
and confidence. Peter Steinke, a congregational systems consultant, notes that
meaningfulness (a sense of purpose21), manageability (individual actions matter22), and
comprehensibility (people use sound judgement to determine danger23) are needed to
develop a sense of coherence. These three factors are a significant indicator of the
group’s ability to move forward and maintain well-being24. Church life is restored as
coherence is regained. There is a reduced emphasis on the event and heightened

19 Peter L. Steineke, Healthy Congregations, 31-32.
20 Peter L. Steineke, Healthy Congregations, 31-32.
21 Peter L. Steineke, Healthy Congregations, 31-32.
22 Peter L. Steineke, Healthy Congregations, 31-32.
23 Peter L. Steineke, Healthy Congregations, 31-32.
24 Peter L. Steineke, Healthy Congregations, 31-32.
awareness of spiritual wellness. Conversations are not centered around clergy sexual conduct but on ministries that will build community within the church as well as in the community.

These attributes evidence the congregation’s recognition that they are part of the solution and must help themselves be renewed. Leaders and many congregants may have felt powerless to prevent the breach and unprepared to respond to it. Yet, as they begin to actualize a new truth, which is that they have the power within themselves to move beyond this event. They regain their sense of purpose as God’s people and as a missional church. While restoring a congregation is the work of mending broken hearts, once the heart begins to heal the afterpastor must have a plan of action for transformation. A congregation that has both meaningfulness and manageability will be ready to move forward strategically and collaboratively. Comprehensibility will be evidenced as energies are redirected to its mission and engaging the members and the community in the work of the church.

2.1.5 Transformational Leadership

Harker and Sharma indicate that in business a transformational leader is needed for turnaround, this is also true for congregations. Harker and Sharma also note that transformational leaders motivate and inspire people to move beyond normal expectations and to concentrate on intrinsic higher-level goals. For believers to trust in God and be led by the Holy Spirit to a greater mission is motivation to turn around a church. The transformational leader must appeal to the heart and provide intellectual
stimulation that leads to action. He or she strategically offers new ways to rethink old ways of doing things. They must also utilize the spiritual gifts that God has placed within this congregation.

Transformational afterpastors need to consider this question, “are you ready to lead without authority?” Congregants must be able to trust the pastor for them to heal and for broken fellowship to be restored with God and each other. The transformational pastor is able to win over congregants through prayer, bible study, keeping promises, being consistent, and by setting high expectations as well as boundaries. Displaced feelings and emotional or reactive responses can quickly derail trust and healing. To be truly transformational, the afterpastor will need to find other leaders who may also respond to issues in this manner. Eventually, these leaders may be from the church but initially may consist of members of the region and/or restoration team.

The afterpastor must have the heart and mind of a servant leader and be able to systematically change practices to tell a new story that is championed initially by leadership and then the congregation. Healing and community-building lead to new practices and vice versa. Congregants must witness and experience the afterpastor valuing all members, through new systems of communication, equity in leadership, and inclusion of new voices. According to Greenleaf in a low trust community, "the heart,

25 Gina Jacobs-Strain served as the Associate Regional Pastor for Women in Ministry, ABC-NJ 2009-2018. She served as an afterpastor as an ABC-NJ post-traumatic congregation and as served as an Associate Pastor in a post-traumatic congregation. The question was posed by mentor and senior pastor Rev. Bernadette Glover.
mind, and soul of the employee is not vested in the company,”26 which would be similar to those who have experienced trauma in a church. High trust is restored or initiated when “structure and systems are nurturing institutionalized servant processes;”27 people feel valued and they believe their input and presence matter.

Serene Jones shares that understanding trauma is critical for pastors and leaders as they try to build community because, in understanding the trauma, “we can better know what kind of thought patterns, and bodily habits (practices) might help us reimagine a better future.28” Sharing the intersection of trauma and grace in sermons, prayers, and communication. Being able to express and demonstrate grace to those that may feel trapped by the trauma is a step toward restoration. Deepening an understanding of trauma is the persistent work of the afterpastor.

The afterpastor must ask hard questions about the effectiveness of current ministries. It is necessary to identify the ministries that undermine or support the mission and well-being of the church. This is necessary to reach the third step, comprehensibility so that they can move the church forward.

Effective leadership can birth a new norm: a congregational culture of loving, truthful, and equitable relationships ultimately evidenced in a vibrant congregational life

27 Greenleaf, loc., 151.
28 Serene Jones, Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World (Louisville: Westminster, 2010), loc., 94.
(bearing the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22-23), deepened interpersonal relationships, and spiritual maturity. It is a collaborative effort, wherein leaders and the afterpastor discern together the will of God and begin the hard work of restoration and reinvisioning. Slowly the office of pastor is also restored, and the appropriate authority and trust are given to the afterpastor.

2.1.6 Reclaiming Sacred Language

Reclaiming sacred language is necessary as congregants and especially victims are confused by the contradiction of clergy saying things like, “God orchestrated this relationship” justifying their actions of misconduct. Congregants are divorced from or ambiguous about the sacred language and biblical text that was preached or taught in Bible study by the same person that defiled their trust. This language has lost its meaning. The same clergy who used the sheep shepherd metaphors to take advantage of the imbalance of power. Survivors are left with conflicting images of God and many congregants may have difficulty accepting the shepherd/sheep metaphor, which was once sacred and reassuring.

Reshaping the image of God is an essential aspect of healing and forgiveness. Congregants need to know the character of God has not changed and that God is faithful. Bible study will be very useful in reclaiming sacred language. Healthy congregations, with a critical mass of seasoned believers, will seek ways to reclaim sacred language and

a unified response to move beyond this crisis. This is especially true with congregations that have been triumphant over adversity in the past. This causes the body to act and react in predictable ways when similar circumstances occur. Each interaction shaping the ways they interact and support each other. It is this reservoir of experiences that will inspire or discourage them as they grapple with a clergy breach of conduct. Effective leaders identify patterns of destructive behavior. For example, congregations that have experienced the loss of a leader and are unable to resolve their grief may keep searching for an identical replacement, firing one clergyperson after another because he or she somehow doesn't fit the bill. As with every other family, the family of faith can be subject to the “inter-generational transmission of sorrows”\textsuperscript{30} passing on hopelessness.

\section*{2.2 The Afterpastor Gathers Information}

Afterpastors must gather information that allows them to fully engage with their congregation beyond the initial crisis. Any congregation engaged in conflict today does so within a wider ecology of the church-in-struggle that encompasses denominational, regional-national, and now with the Internet, digital- and global- space.\textsuperscript{31}

\subsection*{2.2.1 Discovery: Fact and Fiction}

The afterpastor understands that there was a crisis that brought him/her to this church, but the church is far more than this crisis of clergy sexual misconduct. However,

\textsuperscript{30} Benyei, 12-13.

\textsuperscript{31} Mercer, 1.
in the unveiling of the church’s story, the afterpastor should be mindful that some revealed information may not be reliable. In churches, there are almost always unofficial meetings and sidebar conversations where fact and fiction are mixed. After a church family conference there is often the informal meeting in the parking lot, or after Sunday worship during the coffee hour or when the Thanksgiving baskets are being prepared.

Rumors and gossip are part of communities of people and the church is not an exception. Congregants often desire to know the whole story and therefore information is gleaned from both reliable and unreliable sources. Negative communication diverts the community’s effort to build a cohesive community thereby limiting their engagement in its mission and work of the church, broadly and specifically. It also prevents authentic fellowship. The person’s motive for sharing gossip, making up a lie or sharing confidential information may not be malicious but may simply be an effort to verify or acquire better information. Sometimes confidential information may be revealed to gain status.

The afterpastor and leaders should be prepared for these types of communication. Just as important they should not be the source of gossip, rumors or releasing confidential information and should resist participating in these types of conversations as their presence made imply validity. Ruth and McClintock note four problematic types of revealed information that must be acknowledged and discerned: rumors, gossip, exposure, and leaking.

Rumors are misinformation that is fabricated in the absence of accurate information. Gossip may be more accurate but is problematic because it is shared outside formal channels. Exposure is sharing personal data that would normally
be reserved for a more intimate or confidential relationship. Leaking information is released despite relevant and agreed upon boundaries to keep it contained.”

Each source of information is common wherever groups of people gather. These sources of information coexist with the reality of the facts and the damage of sexual misconduct. The leaders and afterpastor will need to address the merit of these forms of communication; discerning fact from fiction. Once the afterpastor has a more comprehensive picture of the church, new and better communication processes and protocols can be implemented and reinforced. The afterpastor and leaders must be early adopters and lead by example. Ruth and McClintock assert that the afterpastor with the active support of a few leaders can change negative communication. For example, if a church has been characterized by negative discussions about the community. A few leaders refusing to participate in negative dialog can change the communication processes. This can be the beginning of new positive communication patterns of the church. This change is necessary as it is nearly impossible for healing and hope to coexist with perpetual negativity. Sometimes the afterpastor may encourage those that are persistently unhappy to seek fellowship at another church that is more conducive to their preferences. In addition, the afterpastor’s sermons, Bible studies, and communication will need to focus on building community and unity, forgiveness, fellowship, reconciliation and hope. He or she will need to be careful to discern and avoid each of these problematic

32 Kibbie Simmons Ruth and Karen A. McClintock, Healthy Disclosure: Solving Communication Quandaries in Congregations (Herndon: The Alban Institute, 2007), 72.
33 Ruth and McClintock, 234.
forms of communication, as some will use these forms of communication to seek information and power. It is easy to become triangulated when engaged in negative communication. Tactical and problematic communication patterns may be used by clergy and leadership to secure and sustain power. Therefore, these patterns must be shed by the leaders first.

If the disclosure statement, as well as subsequent updates about clergy misconduct, is well crafted, timely and transparent congregants are better prepared, and speculation and gossip can be minimized. Effective disclosure has the potential to raise the standards for good communication. Oftentimes people are lured into discussions believing that it is essential information that is needed because they lack information.

Good communication also requires discipline and care from the leaders that are trusted to safe keep information to be shared at an appropriate time. However and historically, most of the emphasis in clergy sexual misconduct communication is focused on verifying the facts and quickly removing the pastor. It takes time to formulate a plan and often the overburdened leadership and/or region team may not provide timely or consistent updates or be able to stay connected to both the leaders and the congregation. Unless the region team has helped the leaders during a successful pastor search and placement or another project they may see them as a last resort and reach out only is a crisis.

We often see signs in church parking lots that read, "All are welcome. This parking is for the church only, all violators will be prosecuted." Is this truly a welcoming
church sign? Is anyone truly welcomed? Much like this sign, there will be obvious clues, some that are confusing, and some that require time to discover the true meaning. The afterpastor will gather information that is straightforward and obvious, or hidden.

2.2.2 Rules of Operation

There are formal or written rules, informal rules or unwritten, and implicit or unconscious rules that might be called “family messages.” Some of these rules help the congregation function well, and some of them hinder it. Benyei asserts, “All the rules of a community are an evolutionary product of its history.” 34 Rules may be implemented based on both positive and negative experiences in the life of the church. Churches are living breathing organisms, where people blend family experiences and expectations with congregation life. In a truly miraculous way, the church often functions as a group, knowing and understanding the formal and informal rules, as well as those that are implicit. Congregations understand the things that are expected and acceptable and it may not be written anywhere except on the hearts and minds of the members. It is shared like an inheritance from one generation to the next, passed on and understood. Community norms established by action and inaction.

They govern the members’ most intimate communication patterns as well as their most important behaviors. These rules are imparted to the congregation from the historic families of its members, particularly its leadership, as well as from evolutionary events. An example of such a rule might be, "Don’t rock the boat." That is, don’t do or say anything that will upset anybody. 35

34 Benyei, 1.
35 Benyei, 5.
The rules may be like family rules and therefore spill over into church life easily. In churches where a few families dominate their rules become church rules, even in a Baptist church. If the dominant families’ rule is we handle all matters internally, the church is likely to be similar. This church may have many hidden secrets, refuse outside support, and experience great difficulty recovering from clergy sexual misconduct.

Organizations, including churches, have both formal and informal rules that guide the community’s interaction internally and externally. In churches, which are also not for profit organizations, there are external legal requirements. These requirements are translated into more formal rules which include, constitutions, by-laws and personnel policies. Other formal rules include traditions and denomination doctrine that are translated into books of order, canon law, and denomination policies and practices (ordination). These rules evolve to meet the growing needs of the institution for structure as a result of the diversity of its tasks and the way it wants to be present in the world. These rules are publicly accessible by the congregation, decided by congregational consensus and require congregational approval to change. Most people in the congregation may not observe or even be aware of the formal rules until there is a problem or an issue that requires the congregation to engage these formal rules to vote on an issue or to respond to a new need.

Unlike formal rules, informal rules are known but not written down. These are important rules because they have to do with the image of the church both real and perceived. Though informal it is “the public face, the ordering of everyday behavior, the
comfort of the congregation”36 and the acceptable norms of communication. It is the way a church does things and names it by saying, “This is the St. Paul way,” or “We always have revival the first weekend in May and our speaker is always…..”

Informal rules are conscious but not written down. They may include an unpublished dress code, such as “no jeans in the pulpit,” or others that are silently agreed upon behaviors such as… “stand during the prayers”37

Informal rules include community expectations that establish norms. The afterpastor will need to pay close attention to the non-verbal and unwritten rules by discerning collective actions and behaviors of the congregation. It may not be obvious at first, but through careful observation it will become clear that care is given to maintain these informal rules. For example, in historically African American churches, deacons generally sit in the front row wearing black suits, white shirts, and color coordinated ties. The trustees often in similar attire sit on the opposite side of the church, also on the front row. The idea is that both the trustees and the deacons create a layer of prayer and support for the pastor, this is also the amen corner – those that will support the pastor. If a visitor or new member sat on the front row it is highly likely that an usher, member or a board member (possible all three) would relocate the person. This informal rule is not written yet the attire and location of the boards is sustained by the congregation.

Often congregants assume these informal rules because value or status is attached to the rules, which can be particular to a specific congregation or universal. Actions that

36 Benyei, loc., 278.
37 Benyei, loc., 275.
violate these rules can result in disapproval or rejection. Informal rules may be more difficult to change since there is no formal structure through which to amend or even discuss them.

Implicit rules became part of the churches DNA and they are passed on from historic families. It is as if a historic family adopts everyone that is part of the church family. Implicit rules impact habits; things we do without thinking about them. Just like a real-life adoption until the person knows they are adopted they simply accept things as presented. However, once someone realizes they are adopted, curiosity or necessity causes a shift because new knowledge impacts the implicit rules. These rules may be altered or discarded after awareness.

Many Baptist churches have members that did not grow up Baptist and did not attend church regularly as children. The diverse backgrounds and often aging and dwindling membership push many churches to fulfill roles, even when people are not called to a ministry. In a Baptist church, one can find a bible study teacher teaching predestination or leaders that have a nominal understanding of Baptist polity and therefore create and try to impose a council decision making body over a congregation led governance which is characteristic of free association churches.

Today, seldom do churches have walking deacons. A tradition of having a person spend a year or more learning the duties and subtleties of a being a deacon as well as

38 Benyei, loc., 303.
attending Bible study, leading Bible study, visiting the sick and shut-in, sharing fellowship, administering communion in nursing homes and hospitals, and regularly praying with and for the pastor, are rare. These practices have dissipated and in some churches vanished in exchange for presence at meetings and church attendance. Moreover, the depth of the deacons’ spiritual maturity, discernment and biblical knowledge that is assumed and desired may not be at the level needed to effectively deal with clergy sexual misconduct. They may not be the information trustees\textsuperscript{39} in this situation. It is also sometimes assumed that the trustees must have financial acumen but do not need to be spiritual prayer warriors for the church. The combination of non-Baptists and non-traditional deacons also erodes the strength of the congregational governance.

Congregations are also bound by ties of loyalty, which cause the membership to elevate group needs and values above that of the individual members. While loyalty is a survival resource for the community as a whole; it can also cause the family of faith to tolerate the abuse of individuals in the service of the system.

2.2.3 Social Media/Community Relationships

There was a time wherein newspapers and TV news were a primary source of information and the after pastor had to consider both reactive and proactive communication to these media forums. Many churches embrace technology by live

\textsuperscript{39} Ruth and McClintock, 8.
streaming services, using Facebook and other social media to extend their reach. Clergy sexual misconduct may have a ripple effect in the community, within the denomination, and in social media. When there is clergy sexual misconduct it can overshadow everything, yet every person and experience cannot be seen through or connected to the fallen clergy. The baptisms, weddings, Sunday school classes, revivals, family vacation Bible school, youth services, funerals, community events, disasters and celebrations and so much more must be unveiled. Church milestones and special occasions in the life of the church will also help to form a more complete picture of church life.

Considering social media, and its influence in popular culture, the afterpastor will have to assess the church’s social media image and the ways it may be impacted by postings of leaders, community members, released clergy, and press. Also, it will be important to determine how and who will handle social media as the congregation moves forward. The afterpastor and the restoration team should consider these questions.

- Did congregants post on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, or Instagram about the clergy sexual misconduct?
- Did persons (clergy, victim, family members, church members, extended family members) involved in the sexual misconduct share information on social media?
- Did leadership post on social media denying or affirming claims of clergy sexual misconduct?
- Was the community tweeting about the church and if anything what did they say?
- What was communicated via the church’s website and social media when the senior pastor suddenly resigned?
- Is the senior pastor’s information still on the website?
• Did ministerial staff share information on social media and is a response needed?

In general, all communications (passwords, website, phone messages, etc.) must be checked and appropriately updated. These discoveries along with information that is part of public records will shape the strategic plans for future follow-up communication with the church and the wider community. Also, if the pastor participated in the community, regional, or ecumenical boards the afterpastor will need to tactfully communicate with these organizations and assume uncompleted tasks. The afterpastor may have to reconsider church commitments to the broader community; like hosting a holiday bazaar or an ecumenical event. The congregation may be too raw and unraveled to be an appropriate host.

2.3 The Afterpastor’s Role in Restoring Broken Relationships

Afterpastors generally last 3-5 years. However, Hopkins and Laaser believe that those that last longer have entered into a situation wherein one or more of these conditions existed; the breach was not considered significant, the congregation was ready to heal, and finally, the congregation received support and the denomination supported the afterpastor. These factors along with a recognized need to do things differently can add to the afterpastor’s tenure and success. The work of the afterpastor impacts her health, family, vocational efficacy and calling. They can be the scapegoat for all that continues to be wrong with the church. Afterpastors encounter leaders that feel shame or

40 Hopkins and Laaser, 158.
guilt as they have determined they are responsible for the breach. Shame makes it difficult for some to accept grace and the idea that neither works nor spiritual performance improves or worsens your relationship with God. Leaders that suffer from guilt, shame or spiritual performance anxiety have been wounded by the clergy's misconduct and now have a distorted image of God and the “terms” of their relationship with God. They may think that grace is limited, not given freely or that they need to meet certain spiritual hurdles for grace. These leaders may also seek congregational approval if they have been blamed or rebuffed for not preventing the situation. Therefore, they are seeking approval and affirmation from both the congregants and God often in a similar manner. These leaders may need to seek professional support to get beyond these feelings of shame.

2.4 Addressing Leadership Issues and Gaps

Just as the afterpastor must be a good listener and discerning, he or she must also gather intel using different methods to determine who is ready to move forward, who can be trusted with confidential information and who can be sensitive to the needs of the congregation.

Surveys can be a useful tool to help the afterpastor and the congregation see leadership gaps and issues within ministries. These surveys can be executed simply and should be simple. They can be shared after church and via email, and can be anonymous.

41 Johnson and Vonderen, loc., 754, 756.
or provide space for people to share thoughts without anonymity. It can also be more involved like a photo essay, but in either case, a survey that provides feedback and insight about leadership, events, ministries, and church outreach is useful. The survey can address ministry participation, years of service, and years of membership. It can determine the top five things they believe the church universal should engage, the top three things this church should engage and the top three things the church can engage now. Surveys invite the congregation into an indirect conversation, which will be healing for some and received with suspicion by others. Hopefully, the survey information will be useful for all.

From a practical position, a survey must be announced a few weeks in advance and be shared consistent with applicable bylaws. The distribution date and discussion date for the survey results should be provided at the same time. The opportunity for discussion will allow inclusion and a chance to see if other issues rise to the surface. If there is a restoration team in effect they should participate in the invitation to the congregation to do a fellowship survey, ministry assessment, and a spiritual gifts assessment. These tools will provide another perspective to see leadership gaps and gifts.

A photo essay is a useful tool to gather information and to engage the church in fellowship and an intergenerational project. This may help move the church from an inward focus (primarily centered on issues of clergy sexual misconduct) to thinking about mission and sharing the gospel. Intergenerational teams of teens and seniors can work together to explore the community. Therefore, a benefit of a photo essay project is that
teens can teach seniors how to better use their phones, providing an intergenerational connection and an opportunity to build relationships. All pictures can be displayed in the categories/questions that the pictures address. The photo essay survey could include a few broad questions such as:

- Where do you see God in our community?
- Where do you see God needed in our community?
- Where do you see our church at work in the community sharing/doing the Gospel?
- Where would you like to see our church at work in the community?

The discussion of the survey results should be facilitated by an objective third party who is not vested in a desired outcome. The survey or the photo essay will likely show a disconnect between the church and the community, ministries that are not thriving, as well as opportunities for new ministries and a need to reconnect with the community. If the afterpastor is prepared for the results; it is an opportunity to spring into action with a plan that addresses the survey results. It is important to respond quickly to address the things the congregation has shared. A quick and intentional response will reassure the congregation that they are valued, that the afterpastor is paying attention.

The results provide an opportunity for theological reflection and discussion of God’s faithfulness.

Attending leadership meetings and initially simply being present with the heads of ministries, deacons, trustees, missionaries, joint board meetings will provide information. Each ministry will provide an opportunity for the afterpastor to observe protocol and
processes (formal and informal). For example, do people speak freely or only when recognized by the chair of the committee? Reading church minutes will shed light on church politics. It will also provide perspective on the church leadership. Did the leadership follow the wishes and the decisions as voted upon or amend the action as they interpreted the congregation’s vote? The afterpastor will need to schedule regular meetings with the executive team and ask them to share concerns and prayers. Clergy and leaders should agree to engage in prayer and fasting before determining priorities that the church needs to address.

Engage the leadership and the congregation in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis (see sample in resources). The strengths and weaknesses are things that the congregation controls, it is an internal analysis. While opportunities and threats turn one’s attention to outside factors that one does not control, but new possibilities as well as potential and present problems to address. The SWOT analysis is another faith building opportunity that can provide resources and tools, beyond the afterpastor.

There are “information trustees”\textsuperscript{42} that are ready to be instrumental in the wellbeing of others and some can be developed to participate in this ministry. Information trustees must know when to keep information private, when to break a confidence for safety reasons, and when to share information for the liberation.

\textsuperscript{42} Ruth and McClintock, 8.
(emotionally and spiritually) of the community. They must be spiritually mature as this responsibility is pivotal in the life of the church. Their decisions can create and support healthy or sick communities. They are accountable to the congregation in three ways:

They must be exceptionally conscious of the information they are given and what they do with it. They must analyze their motivations for disclosing or withholding information. They must clearly articulate to the congregation the information that they have and do not have and the reasons for the differences.43

For leadership issues and communication gaps to be addressed, the afterpastor, information trustees and other leaders must be able to RISE:

Recognize and agree on the communication gaps, set priorities and identify leadership growth areas.

Instruct leaders by teaching better communication tools, processes and establishing communication standards that inspire equal access, transparency, and authenticity within the church and surrounding communities to be addressed.

Systems of communication are reviewed regularly to sustain effective and productive communication and to facilitate unity and ministry growth.

43 Ruth and McClintock, 8.
Execute new strategies, training, and education to improve the leadership’s care for the congregation’s well-being. Workshops and Bible studies will facilitate their spiritual formation and growth. 44

Over time, information trustees should be educated about issues that leaders often encounter, such as domestic violence prevention, clergy sexual abuse, creating and supporting equity within church leadership and ministries, safe and healthy boundaries and interaction for clergy, staff, and the congregation. Information trustees may be ministers, trustees, deacons, mothers of the church, or members of historic families, young and seasoned. They may also be useful in anticipating problems and proactively responding and creating better communication and protocol within a church. Information trustees are especially helpful in congregationally-led churches like those that are part of ABC as they can be part of the infrastructure to rebuild the church. They add a layer of accountability similar to a judicatory.

Each tool—survey, attending meetings, SWOT, creative conflict discussion and developing information trustees—can be implemented as part of Christian education, spiritual growth workshops and deepening the congregants’ faith and spiritual practices. Each event should be part of the church calendar.

Autonomous and congregational governance, as well as independent theological and liturgical practices, are inherent in Baptist polity, yet independent thinking may not

44 The RISE acronym is my own creation.
be appreciated in a crisis when getting back to normal rests on conformity. Being Baptist is not part of the dialog even when it could help reframe an issue and support independent thinking. Making sure that leadership understands Baptist polity would help create space for differences, independent thinking, and especially the responsibility and accountability in the priesthood of believers. It may also be useful in developing genuine acceptance of different theological responses to the same issue. In a church trying to recover from a senior pastor’s sexual misconduct, one member noted “Just because I don’t think like most of my friends and I desire to forgive, all of sudden I am not a Christian. I feel unwelcomed in my own church. I have been a faithful member for over 35 years, and this situation has cost me friends and deep hurt.” Her theology and biblical understanding of forgiveness put her at odds with many in her church family. Polity does not impact the fact that people generally desire uniformity in a crisis and that nonconformists may not have the support they need. Yet, it can help create a more gracious context for differences to be addressed. The congregation will make choices together and while the region and restoration team will provide support, in the end, the congregation must determine to move forward together.

In summary, the congregation must be guided by an afterpastor in order to understand the trauma, restore its relationship with God and each other. The afterpastor is

45 A member of a local ABC-NJ church shared with Gina Jacobs-Strain after a church service, 2011.
46 Chapter 4 discusses the restoration team and its function in depth.
called to this work and has certain skills and qualities that are needed to guide a
congregation from emotional and spiritual exile to a reconciled and healing community.
He must have leadership qualities and practical skills in six key areas: listening and
discerning, recognizing a coverup, sharing hope, managing conflict and promoting
healing, transformational leadership and reclaiming sacred language. The afterpastor
must delve into the stories of the church in order to have a full and deep understanding of
the church. The collective experiences show that this body of believers is more that the
over shadowing event of clergy misconduct.

The afterpastor and leaders must consider that conflict alone is complex and
therefore conflict and trauma have a myriad of issues to be understood or at a minimum
acknowledged. For example, prior conflict at church, home, work, and school will impact
the way a person handles conflict at church. The emotional investment in the outcome
may cause people to dig in more deeply to a point of view. The removal of the falling
pastor’s name from a building, scholarship, or community center due to clergy sexual
misconduct may cause emotions to resurface. The interaction with the press or social
media may be met with suspicion if this is new to the church’s communication system.
Simply, we bring all our experiences into conflict. The leaders will need to work with the
afterpastor as the layers of hurt and pain are too much for one person to discern and
strategically address; restoration and wellness is a team effort. It also requires the team to
participate in prayerful reflection and discussion to determine priorities.
The next chapter will look at ABC polity, the purpose of composition of a restoration team and the intersection of ABC polity, the restoration team and the afterpastor. It builds a case for ABC to consider using a restoration team as a part of the support process for local churches.
3 Polity and Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct

3.1 Role of ABC Polity and Response to Clergy Sexual Misconduct

The American Baptist Churches-USA (ABC) consists of national, regional, local associations and churches. Regions are comprised of associations. Local churches join associations and regions that are geographically and/or theologically aligned. Individually and collectively they seek to make disciples and to build the body of Christ. Each entity is independent yet spiritually, and theologically connected. ABC’s Covenant of Relationships Agreement defines the ways this cooperative volunteer group interacts. It is an agreement to work together and is an acknowledgment of shared ideas and mutual dependency. It is not legally binding, nor does it impact or limit the bylaws, board actions or freedom of each entity to fulfill its mission. It does not create a hierarchical structure of power or consolidate authority within any one entity. It affirms that all organizations within the denomination will work together to fulfill the mission of the church and that each organization within the denomination is comprised of the local church or its representatives.

As noted in the introduction by 1749, The Philadelphia Baptist Association (PBA) was forging a balance between the local church’s independence and interdependence. The association’s integrity and influence were intertwined with the local congregations. Maring notes that “Baptist doctrine of the church impelled a congregation to be
associated with other churches.” Therefore, the threat that local congregations could be dismissed if they were damaging the integrity of the association was a way the association could use its influence to resolve problems. The possibility of dismissal resulting in the church breaking a covenantal understanding and breaking its doctrine compelling unity of the church further supported the associational relationship.

PBA also provided pulpit support for churches and examined and certified clergy much like Regions, as they play an integral role in ordination and sustaining ordination standards. PBA sought candidates for ministry, albeit mostly men, and provided scholarships. As only 10% of ABC churches have senior pastors that are women this trend is still prevalent. Similar associations developed in South Carolina, Virginia and New England. The foundation was also being laid for a national denomination that connected the associations.

Yet, in this layering of connections, it is not always easy to distinguish the expressed joys and concerns of the local church at the national level or to directly connect the agenda of the national organizations to the local church. There is a tension between the churches, regions and national organizations that keeps these relationships slightly off balance. It also mitigates the potential of one entity becoming too powerful. Baptists historically and presently, bounce back and forth trying to sustain the balance between its broader commitment to the church universal and its loyalty to the local church. PBA also provided pulpit support for churches and examined and certified clergy much like the

† Maring, Hudson, and Gregg, eds., loc. 2273.
thirty-three regions in ABC-USA. Its footprint has been sustained in local regions which also seek candidates for ministry and scholarship, albeit mostly men. Only 10% of ABC churches have senior pastors that are women so this trend is still prevalent. The regions play an integral role in ordination by determining and sustaining ordination standards.

Most churches are very focused on their mission, members and community and are often unaware of the associational relationship between the local church and the region and the region and the national organizations within the ABC family. Often congregants are unaware of a church’s denominational affiliation as well as resources. When called clergy are considering ministry they look for positions in local churches, they seldom consider roles within the regions or national organizations. A church’s leadership may not have had experience working with their association or the region team, unless the church has a minister in the ordination process or is currently calling a pastor or has a problem that has led them to contact the association. Often the connection to the region team begins with the senior pastor’s familiarity and allegiance to the denomination. However, clergy breaches such as financial impropriety, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment may force a local church to seek advice or to join forces with a region team.

Today region ministry teams engage local churches in a variety of ways that are useful and practical for churches to be healthy. Congregations’ financial vitality and ability to engage in mission is often enhanced when they collaborate with the regions. Regions and associations usually have annual conferences and workshops for clergy and lay throughout the year. In these gatherings, they cover topics such as spiritual growth,
financial strategies and budget planning, and retirement opportunities. They bring in
speakers to talk about church growth and youth programs. However, seldom if ever are
workshops included about clergy breaches, clergy fiduciary responsibilities, sexual
ethics, or healthy boundaries for laity and clergy.

The role of the region is executed well when it sustains communities of believers
for the purpose of fulfilling its mission in its context. The region does this by increasing
resources available to church and connecting churches and community organizations with
mutual goals. The region moves the local church beyond the local church's demographics
and boundaries to address mission, discipleship, and evangelism in a collaborative
response, domestically and internationally. The regions provide an umbrella for churches
to connect and work together in a coordinated fellowship. For example, when disasters
like Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico, local ABC churches collectively provided
financial support. Teams of people volunteered time and local churches were able to help
their brothers and sisters in an organized and comprehensive manner through both the
region and the national partners like American Baptist Women’s Ministries. However,
this connectedness and sense of urgency needs to be present without a natural crisis.
There should be greater emphasis from region and national partners on developing and
sustaining healthy and healing churches. The well-being of local churches is directly
connected to the well-being of the associations and the regions.

Most regions offer new clergy (first-time pastorate and new to ABC) orientations.
These seminars acclimate clergy to ministry in the region, and the services of the broader
family of ABC. In a Biennial year, ABC provides an orientation to Baptist Life through a
series of pre-biennial webinars and workshops during the biennial. In many regions, mentors are assigned to support new clergy especially those that are serving in their first pastorate. For example, ABC-NJ has bridge pastors that support clergy in a designated association. The bridge pastor journeys with any pastor who is interested in a supportive relationship and desires access to region resources. Regions are also helpful in forming search committees and finding senior and youth pastor candidates for churches to consider.

The afterpastor is a newer concept for ABC regions and churches. ABC has an interim ministry team to train and send interims to serve in local churches. Their training does not include a module for the pastor who is called to serve the post-traumatic congregation. However, when region teams have witnessed and negotiated clergy sexual misconduct within the local churches, they are positioned to assist church leaders.

Local churches, associations, and regions collaborate in the ordination process, each having a distinct yet overlapping role. The process is fairly uniform region to region. The local church recognizes the gifts and calling of a person to ministry. The person is affirmed by the deacon board and licensed by the local church to preach the gospel in that church. Licensed preachers may also accept opportunities to preach in other churches as long as they are affirmed by the senior pastor.

In most cases, the person is then supported through the application process to the region to be considered for ordination. The application is reviewed by the Professional

2 ABC-NJ has bridge pastors who serve voluntarily as a “pastor to a pastor.”
Ministries and Church Relations Committee. The committee reviews the applications, determines an interview, and then votes to move the candidate forward for ordination. If the committee agrees after these three steps the person is officially an ordination candidate.

In many regions, the local church and the region share the cost of the required psychological evaluation which is submitted to the region’s executive minister for review. If all goes well, the ordination candidate is assigned a mentor from the association who guides the candidate in the writing and completion of the ordination paper. The paper’s content and format is decided by the region.

Once ordination paper is completed, the association, local church, and the region determine a date for the ordination paper to be presented to the churches in the local association. In large associations, only active churches may receive mailed copies of the ordination paper. The candidate presents the paper. Representatives are asked to read the paper in advance so they are prepared to ask questions related to its content. It is moderated by the association moderator, chair and secretary of the ordination committee (from the association). The churches that are present vote. If the outcome is favorable, the ordination date is set. This event is also a coordinated effort from the local church, association, and region. The region provides the ordination certificate, the association

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3 Professional Ministries and Church Relations Committee is a common committee in most regions designated to review applications and interview potential ordination candidates. Once this committee completes a successful assessment and the candidate receives sufficient votes the person is an ordination candidate. This committee operates under different names in different regions but serves the same purpose.
provides the results of the ordination hearing and verifies that the ordination requirements were met in compliance with the region’s ordination standards. The local church recognizes the ordination by providing the tools needed for ministry. These tools often include a robe, Bible, hymnal, and a communion kit. The ordination ceremony is formal and is a highly spiritual worship service.

The ordination process is intricate and often lengthy. It is a collaborative process that has standards and protocols. The process demands an investment of time, financial resources, and dedicated volunteers from the association and staff from the region. Unfortunately, this kind of collaborative effort will not be duplicated in any other area of the life of most ministers or regions. This kind of procedural collaboration is atypical in Baptist life, and some ordained clergy are not prepared for the lack of collaborative opportunities that will characterize their pastorate or ministry journey.

It seems counter-intuitive not to establish similar collaborative standards and processes for sustaining healthy pastorates and ministry life. The emphasis on autonomy within Baptist polity, which deemphasizes uniformity and conformity, enables clergy sexual misconduct to ravish congregations. The associational framework has no authority in the matter of clergy sexual misconduct and no accountability or liability in the event of such misconduct. Churches struggle alone to find a solution.

ABC’s Covenant of Relationship Agreement stipulates the following,

The freedom of the congregation is genuine, but not absolute, since the nature of the body of Christ calls for interdependence between congregations whether in
associational, regional, national, denomination-wide, or international expressions of the Church.¹

It is in the interdependence between the local church, the region and the national organizations that should facilitate a response for healthy boundaries and establishing protocols to address clergy sexual misconduct. Lack of response coupled with the breach is devastating the local church, region, and national organizations. Baptist polity enables independence, but requires interdependence for healthy and healing churches.

The limits of the association relationships, within ABC, are most striking when churches face the reality of clergy sexual misconduct alone. Leaders such as the deacon board or trustee board must grapple with this issue alone without a road map. They may choose to privatize the matter, keeping it quiet, reject or fail to solicit outside support like the region team, executive minister; or outside consultants. The interaction with outside agencies including police, domestic violence counselors, lawyers, therapists, and social workers may heighten leadership's anxiety due to limited expertise and familiarity. These factors may also encourage leaders and clergy to justify secrecy veiled as discretion. The leaders will remove the pastor, comply with the law but try to say as little about the situation as possible. Only a few leaders may be included in this decision.

Baptist polity does not include a judicatory body that executes processes and procedures across churches, associations, regions or throughout the denomination. At times ethical standards are not uniformly followed and cannot be enforced. Therefore,

broadly within the denomination and specifically within ABC, there are no formal and enforceable standards or covenants agreements that require reporting and dismissal of perpetrators. There is no oversight committee to review disclosure statements, subsequent discussion, and communication with media and the community. There is no committee that facilitates theological reflection and strategically guides the church toward healing and reimagining their future.

A region team may support leaders in local churches manage the aftermath of clergy sexual misconduct, when they are invited by leadership or by congregational consensus. Although the region cannot enforce a process or even enter into a partnership with a church unless invited, it should have standard protocols. Leaders need a framework to consider options for response. Congregations should not feel abandoned by the fallen pastor and the denomination. Leader of a church that is experiencing this kind of trauma need guidance about the right way to engage the victim and wisdom regarding how to investigate accusations. The availability of sample disclosure options and “what if” scenarios will also help leaders see a way forward. In addition, leaders need knowledge about ways to interact with the media and about legal matters to consider. Regions can help leaders facilitate a reasonable a pastor exit, sustain the pastor's and the church's reputation, and care for the clergy’s family and for the victim by limiting exposure of details. Due to the region’s resources they can easily provide pulpit coverage and assist the church with finding an afterpastor. However, often region teams emphasize

5 See Appendix D.
the removal and replacement of the pastor who caused the breach. Removal is often swift amidst many unanswered questions; however, no problem can be managed with a single step or in isolation.

In the truest sense of Baptist polity, “The system (the church) is the locus of the problem, the problem is in the interaction between the parts. The same is true for solutions and corrections.” The interaction between the region, the leadership, the congregation and the resources of the denomination as well as the community (e.g., therapists, police, and lawyers) provides a comprehensive response. Most regions are unable to expend the time and resources to delve deeply into the culture and ethos of a congregation. Therefore, regions often provide limited support and limited essential information about the church culture and congregational trauma to the afterpastor. However, the region team can be a better partner to a restoration team.

Currently, churches are often on their own to determine the best course of action in response to clergy sexual misconduct. They are overwhelmed and often unable to formulate a cohesive or comprehensive plan. As this disease of clergy sexual misconduct is prevalent in so many churches, it erodes the soul of the denomination for generations. Headlines of clergy sexual misconduct exposing the underbelly of the church minimizes the church’s appeal to seekers and new believers. Without standards, education and a culture of no tolerance clergy sexual misconduct moves from victim to victim and church

7 See Chapter 4.
to church. Baptist polity was not intended to ignore care and justice or to enable sexual predators to persist. How long can Baptist churches maintain their position in the community as places of healing, hope and generosity if its representatives persist in abusing people and power? The character of the church is being eroded and is on public display. Clergy sexual misconduct causes victims, congregants to doubt the character of God. Maring notes,

No community can long retain its character and achieve its aims without established patterns of operation; what begins as a spontaneous movement must achieve some level of organization to keep moving forward. Further, a predictable order is necessary to maximize the freedom of the community and its members to fulfill their callings: both absolute control and absolute disorder destroy freedom.

In this regard, it is difficult for the Christian community broadly and Baptist churches specifically to retain its sacred character without a pattern of operation or response to systemic abuse and trauma. The lack of an organized response is a conscious decision to sacrifice the freedom of some for the sake of those who are deemed more important and privileged. If churches are to have a value to communities as safe places of hope and renewal, then they must have consistent and obvious standards that values all lives. Moreover, denominations must evolve and meet the needs of those who are most vulnerable. Yet the act of clergy sexual misconduct is often buried by all religious traditions until it is a public scandal and even then it may not be addressed by assuming responsibility.

*Maring, Hudson, and Gregg, Baptist Manual, 708-709.*
A Dartmouth University alum wrote a letter to the Dartmouth University’s President about retired professors who had been accused of sexual abuse.

Reform can occur only when there is clear recognition and ownership of an underlying problem. The problem here is that Dartmouth and its president can’t bring themselves to admit they were truly and egregiously wrong. And that even after such wrongs were revealed to the world, they can’t bring themselves to do the right thing.  

While this alum is addressing sexual abuse at Dartmouth, she could easily be addressing ABC. Even when ABC’s associations and regions witness the post-traumatic church struggling, pastors falling and victims stacking up, it wrongly justifies the lack of denominational culpability and response. There is a standard code of ethics ministers are expected to sign and live by when they are called, ordained and employed. Yet there are no standards or immediate consequence to hold them accountable to ABC’s code of ethics. Education, prevention and resources made available through the associations, regions and national leadership is part of the solution.

ABC’s region’s Professional Ministries and Relations Committee is a good place to initiate reform and new standards. They should develop more probing questions about sexual and ethical behavior during the ordination interview and especially during the psychological assessments. Regions should encourage churches to complete more thorough background checks when hiring and create resources that support more fact-finding background checks.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Sexual Conduct Code of Ethics and the Referral document developed as part of their Clergy Sexual Misconduct Task Force resources, are useful tools that could be modified and used by the region and local churches. These two documents and the associated processes should be included in the ordination and search processes for all candidates. The regions should share the ways they may currently flag abusers so that the information can be shared with other regions in a more formal manner. Moreover, the American Baptist Profile System (ABPS) a source used by clergy to create an employment profile should be considered as a source for flagging convicted abusers and those that have been successfully sued. The American Baptist Home Mission Societies provides this employment profile resource.

Regions and associations should provide workshops about clergy sexual misconduct, safe and healthy boundaries and collaborate with national organizations to establish standards and protocols. They should also assist local churches establish safe space ministries. Workshops for church leaders about clergy breaches should include topics such as sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, self-care, and healthy conflict vs destructive conflict. A cycle of these regular workshops should be included throughout the ordination process, in new pastor orientation, and in every annual meeting.

Pastors and congregations need to be educated about healthy sexual ethical behavior, sabbatical practices and guided self-reflection for clergy. It is very common for pastors to go years without vacation and decades without a sabbatical. A pastor of a large ABC-NJ church took a sabbatical after 25 years. He was asked, “What are you going to do while on sabbatical?” and “Why did you wait so long?” He shared many wonderful
plans about travel and study. However, to the second question, he replied, "I was crazy!"

Unhealthy habits are cultivated and sustained in churches when they forget their pastors are human and that healthy pastors need Sabbath, as well as the collaborative efforts of leaders and the congregation in order to lead.

The regions are also in a good position to engage and educate leaders about Baptist polity and especially the concept of the priesthood of believers and being a covenantal community of believers. These are important concepts for the afterpastor to develop within the congregation so that leaders and congregants understand the relational aspects of the denomination and the responsibility for all believers to know and to share the Gospel. Workshops and retreats examining the church covenant can help congregants develop good spiritual practices like prayer and studying the Bible. Many Baptist churches read a church covenant on the first Sunday along with taking communion, but they seldom pause to reflect upon the words and real-life application of that covenant.

Several industries require Continuing Education Units (CEU) to keep a license to practice. For example, doctors, lawyers, nurses, teachers, and accountants must take courses to keep their licenses current and their skills sharp. Denominations, like UM, require continuing education to help pastors to sustain spiritual growth as well as to learn new best practices in administration and church growth. Education, sabbatical or required vacation are not the answers to clergy breaches however the absence of these required pauses in ministry life makes pastors and congregations more susceptible to ethical violations and fiduciary breaches. Pastors can become very isolated in ministry and can readily justify absolute power, control and ethical infractions.
Addressing the clergy sexual conduct persistently so that church leaders are better prepared will make churches safer places. Moreover, these topics should be addressed at the denomination’s biennial conference. Workshops and education is a beginning and must be complimented with standard and practices for both prevention and education. The denomination must develop mechanisms to train afterpastors who are called to this ministry in the trenches with the post-traumatic congregation.

3.2 Other Baptist Responses to Clergy Sexual Misconduct

As previously noted the problem is not unique to ABC churches. In 2015, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Baptist Women in Ministry began to discuss the ways they could connect and address the persistent and prevalent issues of clergy sexual misconduct. The goal was to work together to assist ministers, church members, partner organizations and congregations to address the issue. A task force led by Pam Durso and Stephen Reeves was developed in late 2016. Due to the complicated nature of this issue the task force consists of “two attorneys, two pastors, four church staff members, four social workers degrees, two seminary professors, two leaders of CBF partner organizations, one pastoral counselor and several survivors and/or family members of survivors.”

CBF found that during their research they received several reports of clergy sexual misconduct. Receiving claims was not within the scope of their work. Yet, it was within the scope of those that were violated and so they turned to the Task Force.

Pam Durso (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Task Force for Clergy Sexual Misconduct, co-founder) notes, churches and leaders in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) and Baptist Women in Ministry (BWIM) are wrestling with the persistent crisis of clergy sexual misconduct. She asserts,

For too long, Baptists have found shelter in a congregational polity that limits denominational liability. CBF and BWIM are committed to doing better and to leading churches and organizations in our spheres to do better as well. The time for silence and denial is long-since over.\footnote{Pam Durso and Stephen Reeves. Clergy Sexual Misconduct Task Force Releases New Resources, Weekly Words by Baptist Women In Ministry. Oct. 10, 2018, https://bwim.info/category/weekly-words/}

CBF and BWIM are connected in this work along with a task force that produced materials to help churches identify, respond and eliminate clergy sexual misconduct.

This is a step in the right direction as it provides tools and encourages CBF churches and the denomination not to hide behind polity. However the local church is still burdened with the responsibility, liability and challenge to change a denominational culture of acceptance to one of no tolerance. Denominations seem comfortable distancing themselves from the word of Jesus, “Love thy neighbor as thyself,” as if it only applies to believers in local churches. Many denominational leaders seem comfortable with the hardline that has divided congregation and denomination accountability for clergy misconduct. To date, CBF, SBC, and certainly not ABC, has connected the associational nature of the denomination beyond the common missional goals to definitively include clergy sexual misconduct as a problem that rests equally with all related and associated entities within the Baptist family. It leans into a patriarchal system that ignores the
offenses of clergy that are primarily male and the victims which are primarily women. There is an unethical, unspiritual, and unholy justification to leave the issue of clergy sexual misconduct unaddressed with formal protocols and processes because of Baptist polity.

In 2019 the Houston Chronicle and the San Antonio Express, in a six part series, disclosed decades of clergy sexual abuse in Southern Baptist Churches (SBC). The articles revealed sexual misconduct that was suppressed and ignored for decades. The series includes videos from abusers, victims and investigators exposing systemic clergy abuse of a sacred trust, power and the office of pastor. They uncovered 20 years of abuse in Southern Baptist Churches as they looked back at allegations and unheeded cries for help from victims from 1998 to 2018. Their investigation revealed 380 Southern Baptist church leaders and volunteers who faced allegations of sexual misconduct. Many of the accused were convicted, resigned or were successfully sued. The perpetrators victimized more than 700 survivors. Some of the victims were advised to forgive, shunned by their church families and left to grapple with the abuse on their own. Moreover, Southern Baptist Convention commissioned a study to look at the systemic issues and the findings determined that local churches had hired registered sex offenders and other facing charges of sexual abuse. In 2008 they rejected the committee’s findings and recommendation to establish a registry so that known sex offenders could be flagged.

They refused to protect the least of these even when the perpetrators were known. They hid behind Baptist polity and oftentimes white privilege. The denomination could have saved so many and yet they condoned the abuse. Refusal to establish a data base flagging convicted individuals while local churches continued to hire youth pastors, senior pastors and engage volunteers that were convicted and registered sex offenders. Silence facilitated generations of abuse and broken people, who lost their faith and their spiritual connection to church, to God and their communities. In addition #MeToo followed by #Church Too further demonstrates that clergy sexual misconduct is a bully within every denomination.

While long overdue, denominations are beginning to feel a sense of urgency to provide a formal response. Many see the need to be a catalyst in setting new expectations and in creating a no tolerance environment for clergy sexual misconduct. Southern Baptist Churches (SBC) created the Caring Well Challenge in response to clergy sexual misconduct. SBC has taken a baby step, acknowledging there is a problem, but will need to do more to support local churches, the victims and prevent continued abuse. Processes and standards are needed to help local churches especially those with limited resources to properly vet clergy candidates and volunteers. SBC’s Well Challenge brings light to clergy sexual misconduct and the abuse crisis. It falls short as it leaves responsibility and accountability with the local church. It has not elevated the matter to be a problem for the Southern Baptist Convention to solve.

The Well Challenge (CWC) is a unified call to action on the abuse crisis in the Southern Baptist Convention. The goal is to equip churches to be safe for survivors and safe from abuse. It provides churches with an adaptable and attainable pathway to immediately enhance their efforts to prevent abuse and care
for abuse survivors. We urge all Southern Baptist churches to commit to taking the challenge over the next year as an important next step in addressing the crisis of abuse. Beginning at the SBC annual meeting in Birmingham, churches committed to the challenge.\textsuperscript{14}

SBC developed a curriculum, “Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused,” which consists of videos in English and Spanish. SBC encourages all staff and volunteers to go through the training and for churches to update policies to deter clergy sexual misconduct. However, the response seems feeble in the wake of 700 victims and their silence for 20 years. Caring well for the abuse is not the same as creating a no tolerance environment.

\textbf{3.3 Other Denominational Responses to Clergy Sexual Misconduct}

The Christian Reformed Church, The Episcopal Church, United Methodist, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), and Baptist Women in Ministry (BWIM) have responded to the urgent cry for education and prevention of clergy sexual misconduct. Each denomination has developed resources to address clergy sexual misconduct. They have developed both education and prevention tools, response strategies, sermons, bible studies. Episcopal Dioceses has a standard disclosure statement and processes for response and recovery.\textsuperscript{15} Similarly the ruling of a Bishop or District Supervisor\textsuperscript{16} as in the United Methodist Church, guides process, discussion and internal and external

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Hammeal-Urban, chapters 5 and 6 in Wholeness after Betrayal (New York: Morehouse, 2015).
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Conference Call with Bishop William Willimon, Duke Divinity School Faculty, (Retired UMC Bishop), 1/14/17.
\end{itemize}
communication. Robin Hammeal-Urban, attorney and coordinates Safe Church training for the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, notes that in the Episcopal system leaders receive the same information as members, just a bit sooner.\textsuperscript{17} The Episcopal standards and policies establish protocols for communication and procedures that lay a foundation for healing to begin. Hammeal-Urban also asserts it is essential that members know when others outside staff and vestry were informed. Especially in the case “of misconduct and erosion of trust, it is important for members to know if some individuals have been provided more information than others.”\textsuperscript{18} While there is a range of processes and tools available there remains limited information and resources for the afterpastor serving a post-traumatic congregation.

In summary, reform and education is needed within ABC to address clergy sexual misconduct. ABC can benefit from the deeply ignorant and misguided responses of SBC, while using the responses of CBF, the Reformed church, new policies of the SBC, and others to shape their protocol and position. Overhauling systemic processes, like ordination and new pastor orientation to address clergy sexual misconduct is needed. Rethinking the traditional pastoral model for the afterpastor, so that collaborative leadership is implemented through a restoration team. Tapping into underutilized resources that include retired clergy, underemployed clergy, professionals and others in the community to build a collaborative pastoral response is critical to local churches.

\textsuperscript{17} Hammeal-Urban, \textit{Wholeness after Betrayal}, loc., 1497.

\textsuperscript{18} Hammeal-Urban. \textit{Wholeness after Betrayal}. See Appendix D where some of these disclosure statements are specified.
While afterpastors are called to this specialized ministry they need to be supported. Similarly, the regions, local churches and the national organizations need to collaborate to develop tools that will educate and prevent clergy sexual misconduct. They also need to develop standards and processes to share with churches that provides a roadmap to healing and restoration. This kind of support would help to alleviate fear, hopelessness and despair that overwhelms leaders that must respond to clergy misconduct. Finally, ABC needs processes that allow for redemption of the abuser and new life for the victim with an equipped church in the center.

Chapter 4 will look at the purpose and usefulness of a restoration team. The importance of a new pastoral model to respond to clergy sexual misconduct that includes both the region and a restoration team and the relevance of collaborative leadership.
4 Restoration Team and Collaborative Leadership

For the post-traumatic church, perhaps the second biggest adjustment after the trauma caused by clergy sexual misconduct is to embrace a new leadership model. The collaborative leadership of the afterpastor and the restoration team embraces the anointed gifts of the afterpastor and the broad resources of the restoration team needed to help the post-traumatic congregation reimagine its future. Despite the congregational trauma their deepest desire will be to return to normal, in other words, to look like other churches, “appoint to us, then, a king to govern us, like all other nations” (1 Sam. 8:5b, NRSV). However, going back to normal is not possible as there is trauma and other systemic issues that need to be addressed.

Clergy sexual misconduct takes place within the life of the church. In a post-traumatic congregation, everyone needs renewal. Leaders need time to process their emotions and to be able to experience the phases of trauma. Just as the congregation needs a specialty interim who is gifted in healing and transforming chaos, they also need a deeply spiritual team that can objectively support the afterpastor and the congregation. On some level, the congregation is aware that the congregation itself is a contributing factor to the phases of congregational trauma and that they need support. However, the urgency to move beyond this event may tempt the congregation to discount the impact of clergy sexual misconduct on their future wellness.

4.1 The Restoration Team

The overarching goal of the restoration team is to assist the afterpastor as he/she restores the office of the pastor and the congregation’s fellowship with God and each
other. They expand the resources and expertise available to the post-traumatic church, its leadership and the afterpastor. Together, the afterpastor and the restoration team will develop a strategic plan for healing. A plan that will enable the afterpastor and the leaders to implement sustainable change for long-term healthy habits that include spiritual growth and healthy boundaries for leaders and congregants. An essential aspect of healing is hope, the restoration team and the afterpastor will curate that hope until the congregation is ready to claim its future. They are establishing a new norm. Often, the restoration team will also facilitate the transition from the afterpastor to the settled pastor. By the time the afterpastor and the restoration team are leaving, congregants and leaders are able to express affirmations of God’s love and participate in loving and respectful relationships. Ministries evidence God’s faithfulness and transformative love.

The restoration team can support the afterpastor and the congregation, or in a very severe situation, it becomes the governing body for a short period. There are some churches that the leadership is too fragile or fragmented to move forward. It may be a small congregation, limited people or poor financial condition. It may be because they are emotionally and spiritually devastated. The restoration team leads the church until an afterpastor is called. Regardless of the size of the church, the leadership will need to strongly support the restoration team and then the congregation will need to adapt and accept the team as part of the healing and renewal process.

4.1.1 Composition of the Restoration Team

Deeply spiritual leaders are needed to bring in new perspectives and to shoulder the responsibility of renewal and transformation. The restoration team should consist of
members of the region team (2), local pastor (1-2) affiliated with the association, local retired pastor (1), and laity from the congregation (3). This team should have 7-9 members that serve as the core and other professionals may rotate on and off, as needed. The members of the restoration team who are from the church must be selected by the church and will provide insight to the team. The region team offers a fairly objective perspective. They are vested in sustaining and supporting healthy churches in their region through providing insight and prayerful support. Initially, the restoration team may include a therapist or trained facilitator who can guide the leaders, deacons, trustees, ministry leaders, and the congregation in constructive conversations about clergy sexual misconduct and its impact on a congregation and community. It is time to discuss abusive actions, healthy boundaries, and misuse of power and privilege. Having a trained professional lead these discussions adds objective oversight and takes the pressure off the afterpastor.

The restoration team should have the capacity to react in a wholistic manner due to the range of capabilities and experience on the team. They also provide a bridge to the region and the denomination. It enables the region team to distribute its staff so that they may serve other churches in crisis and sustain other region duties. It enables them to be a participant in the restoration of a church in its region. The restoration adds another layer of accountability similar to a judicatory body. It does not have the power of a judicatory body, but it is a team committed to a plan of renewal. Therefore, they will help to hold the leaders and the afterpastor accountable to systemic changes. The team can utilize untapped capacity within the region and community. The restoration team provides an
opportunity to demonstrate collaborative support from clergy, professionals, and laity working toward church restoration. It takes both the church and the community to restore a post-traumatic church. They both bring lots of experience that will be helpful to the afterpastor and may function much in the same way the Minnesota afterpastors served each other.

Pope-Lance notes that often clergy sexual misconduct includes multiple ethic and boundary violations that impact the congregation’s trust and understanding of the pastoral role. The breaches appear in clusters, such as unethical conduct as determined by professional codes, embezzlement, sexual harassment, and other boundary breaches. Pope-Lance suggests that because the breeches are in clusters “misconduct is not merely a specific behavior event, rather a process of interactions by which trust is betrayed in a ministerial relationship.” A restoration team can assist in unraveling a web of breeches causing systemic issues and implement new practices. “The problem of abuse is too prevalent and too complicated for simple answers” and collaborative leadership is part of the answer.

4.1.2 Establishing Triage Priorities

There are so many things that need to be dealt with all at once when an afterpastor begins his/her ministry. There will be many opinions on priorities. Therefore, it is

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2 This quote is from a draft report by Pam Durso, which as of 10/30/19 was not yet public.
essential that the restoration team and the afterpastor set priorities with the congregation’s input and address each item systemically and strategically. The nature of the breach will mandate action and priorities. If sexual misconduct involves a minor, assault, or any type of crime that requires legal proceedings, it will be at the top of the list. Additionally, the afterpastor needs to be able to distinguish between healthy conflict—that may be in the form of a debate over different strategies to reach the same goal—and destructive conflict, when people are wounded and differences of opinion result in people feeling personally attacked and devalued.

### 4.1.3 Safety of Property and Operations

Ensuring safety of property and operations is one of the many things that will need to be a priority. The safety of the church is compromised when password-protected systems need to be updated (i.e. security systems, phones, utilities, bank accounts, etc.). Old passwords that are active and initiated by prior staff and church officers can leave the church vulnerable. Oftentimes people forget that information for password-protected systems is known by the fallen clergy. He or she may also be the primary contact on accounts for things such as cell phones, cable, security systems, church vehicles, and insurance. The restoration team, especially local pastors may be able to assist with local resources/experts to address security concerns.

### 4.1.4 The Afterpastor and the Restoration Team

There are many emotional battles for afterpastors; they often feel invisible except to receive criticism, to be undermined by lay leaders, or blamed for the post-traumatic state of the church. Congregants sometimes assume that the presence of clergy means
things should be immediately returned to normal. Normal might be resuming bible study on Wednesday nights only no one is coming because the fallen clergy taught the class. Often it is issues around church growth that become a source of frustration for church leaders. The expectation is now that we have a pastor old members should return and new ones should be attracted. Afterpastor must persist even though, initially, they are not trusted or respected. The restoration team will be essential in helping the afterpastor manage the emotional pitfalls and frustration that make it difficult to lead a healing process. Together the afterpastor and the restoration team can determine priorities, outsource to professionals as needed, and focus on building trust and restoring the office of the pastor. Moreover, if the congregation accepts the restoration team which will include members from the congregation, they will benefit from a team approach providing greater resources and ideas to transform the church beyond its present state. It is far more likely with the support of the restoration team that the afterpastor will practice better self-care and that the post-traumatic congregation will be restored to a healthy congregation.

4.1.5 Education and Healthy Boundaries

The congregation will need to accept that while clergy sexual misconduct was the event that triggered the trauma, there were unhealthy patterns that supported this breach. The congregation will need to bear some responsibility so that patterns can be broken and healthier dynamics become more normative. Grenz and Bell note, “A wise congregation
hears an accusation of sexual misconduct as a wakeup call.” While the congregation is likely to be heartbroken, facing the reality of clergy sexual misconduct provides a rich opportunity for reflection. Most region teams have both experience and expertise in diffusing conflict and unpacking hidden trauma. This is an area that the restoration team will really shine as they will prayerfully and confidently identify unhealthy patterns in leadership, such as triangulation, manipulation, transference and control. Once unhealthy patterns and harmful systemic behaviors are identified the afterpastor and restoration team can help plan a comprehensive response.

Healthy conflict should push a group to best practices by creating space for different ideas and facilitating discussion to refine solutions. Unhealthy conflict is paralyzing, conversations are accusatory and personally attacking. Dialogue is often dominated by a bully, someone whose self-worth is tied to a particular outcome, not to the success of the project or ministry initiative. This conflict needs to be addressed as it thwarts positive progress and limits participation.

Congregants need to know that it is not just a nice thing or great idea to have boundaries but essential to the congregation’s well-being and its ability to be a genuine fellowship of believers. After the information has been shared in a disclosure statement it may seem that everyone should be clear. However, there will be people that simply cannot accept the betrayal and will not grasp the magnitude of the problem. Honest

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3 Stanley J. Grenz and Roy D. Bell, *Betrayal of Trust, Sexual Misconduct in the Pastorate* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 155. Collaborative leadership offered through the afterpastor and restoration team is at the crux of these answers. Education is also essential to healing.
dialog will need to be facilitated so the leaders and the congregation understand what healthy relationships look like. Leaders will need to discuss the fallen clergy’s breach but also clergy sexual misconduct in more general terms so that hindsight wisdom can be shared. The restoration team should be helpful in guiding a discussion about the clues or hints of abuse of both power and access that the congregation missed. Pooler notes,

> Christians need to work to be intentional, deliberate, and nuanced in describing what is healthy and what is not. Health must be juxtaposed against the lack of it; therefore, churches need to know what constitutes abuse and call it to abuse in order to create a healthy environment.4

The restoration team and the afterpastor must model healthy boundaries. In healthy churches, people are not bullied but feel free to speak in church family conferences and other meetings. In healing churches, people challenge each other and work well in groups. Committees disagree well, and there is a mutual admiration between clergy and congregants. The pastor is not grumbling. The restoration team which includes the afterpastor will need to assess the spiritual maturity and boundary awareness of the congregation along the way to healing and restoration. One way to see growth is to look at and assess the communication patterns in meetings, workshops, and church family conferences. With the support of the restoration team, it will be easier to monitor participation, equity in discussions, and diverse opinions. Assessing healthier dialogue

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amongst the leaders and information trustees should be noticeably improved about twenty-four months after the restoration team and an afterpastor are in place.

4.1.6 The Restoration Team and Governance

In some congregations, albeit rare, a restoration team could serve at the onset of the crisis. Leaders could reach out to the regional executive minister sharing the accusation and inviting the region’s support. The region’s response could include a restoration team to assist the leaders with the processes to verify accusations and support the accuser. A restoration team can facilitate a prompt and thorough response to credible claims and prevent the church from ignoring the situation.6

The most likely scenario, the restoration team is engaged after the perpetrator is confirmed and has resigned, been fired or release is imminent. In this case, the region will first assist the church with pulpit supply then set up a restoration team. Ideally, the restoration team is the search committee that hires the afterpastor and then journeys with the afterpastor for a set period of time. Some restoration teams serve like a co-pastor with the afterpastor. They meet with the afterpastor on a regular basis to discuss congregational joys, concerns, events, the church calendar, and budgets. While the restoration team is ideal for the post-traumatic congregation because of the depth and breadth of the issues. However, they could assist leadership with any traumatic event that violates the sacred fellowship between clergy and congregant. Moreover, a restoration

5 Pooler.
6 Pooler.
team can be highly effective when any event challenges and limits the congregation’s faith and the normal operations of a church.

The restoration team like the afterpastor has access to the church’s financial records, bylaws, minutes and all the tools needed to assist the afterpastor and the church leaders as they set strategic goals and triage priorities. Churches are often in need of triage as they face financial issues, declining and aging membership, disconnected and alienated members. Each of these dynamics is fairly common to church life. Moreover, the church is always reacting to changing demographics and the desire to sustain a relevant mission. Yet they most often do it within the confines of the same leadership or similar mindsets. The restoration team offers outside inside ideas to best serve the congregation and its community. They are outside the church membership and the culture of this church. They are inside the ABC world. So they can bring in new ideas or new ways to consider things. They can challenge the status quo and maintain the integrity and respect for Baptist doctrine. Robert Greenleaf notes,

Churches are needed to serve the large numbers of people who need meditative help if their alienation is to be healed and wholeness of life achieved, but I regret that, for the most part, churches do not seem to be serving in this way.7

While Greenleaf to refers to the church in general, the idea certainly applies to the post-traumatic congregation that is recovering from clergy sexual misconduct. If they are not careful, all of their resources and energy will be turned inward and those outside the walls of the church will be ignored. The post-traumatic church is alienated from God,

7 Greenleaf, loc. 3650.
each other, and the fellowship of other churches. Their healing is contingent upon reconnecting with each other and the broader community. Greenleaf’s statement begins with “churches” but all too often, practically and theoretically, it could begin with “pastors.” Silo leadership is not effective and contributes to clergy sexual misconduct and other breaches. Pastors are often overwhelmed but are also unwilling to seek the support that is needed. The restoration team will help the afterpastor implement a life work balance of responsibility, accountability, and boundaries.

Here is an example of the ways the region and restoration team can be useful to afterpastors and post-traumatic congregations. For several years, First Baptist USA, had experienced internal battles for power. One such conflict within the congregation appeared in an article in the local newspaper. The region negotiated conflict and mediated problems between the pastor and the boards.

The church had a reputation for being a closed congregation. They had limited interaction with the community. However, a long-term pastor had decided to rent space to community organization based on their mission, connection to the church and to provide a stable location. In recent years there was limited interaction between the church and the congregation. Just before the afterpastor arrived another local church donated Bibles to the community group. Some First Baptist -USA leaders were annoyed when they discovered another church donated Bibles to this community group, while very few leaders asked, “Why didn’t we do that?” Within the local association the church was characterized as a church in turmoil.
Now in the midst of declining membership and financial uncertainty, the senior pastor was accused of clergy sexual misconduct. The chair of the deacon board reached out to the region to discuss the allegations and next steps. The region provided support, practical advice and worked with the church’s leadership to address the allegations. After meeting with the victim that shared the claim, it was determined by the region and the church’s leadership that it was in the best interest of everyone for the pastor to leave. On Easter Sunday a disclosure letter was read sharing that the senior pastor resigned effective immediately.

The region provided pulpit support and helped the search committee find an afterpastor. The afterpastor served another church that experienced a similar clergy breach and was persuaded by the regional executive minister to accept the call. She began to peel back the layers of hurt by listening to the stories of the people. Old wounds and potential issues about mismanaged church assets soon surfaced. Clergy sexual misconduct unearthed extreme emotions, turf battle amongst leaders and other dormant conflicts. The afterpastor began to pull the region into church life. They were invited to church family conferences and council meetings. After several months the afterpastor arranged a meeting with the region’s executive minister and the staff. The purpose was to discuss the financial condition of the church and capital improvement loan provided by the region to the church. Other leadership issues and a lack of checks and balances surfaced at the meeting. This meeting laid the foundation for the restoration team and region team engagement.
Clergy sexual misconduct bought the afterpastor to the church, but it was just the tip of the iceberg. Financial management of funds and other issues that were concealed soon surfaced. Just as Pope-Lance noted, there are clusters of breaches, and clergy sexual misconduct is just one of the unhealthy behaviors.

The disclosure statement read on Easter Sunday did not provide a reason or next steps (Wow, Happy Resurrection Sunday). The reading of the disclosure statement left the wounded congregation unattended. Those that were close to the fallen clergy were angry and felt abandoned. Friendships were fractured. Those that knew the reasons the pastor resigned were silent. Silence turned into not mentioning his name but blaming everything that was a problem on the fallen clergy. The climate was toxic. Mark Laaser notes that after clergy sexual misconduct the reality of difficulties and confused faith the congregation is disoriented which produces a congregational depression.8 A few of the leaders became verbally hostile to members of the other churches that rented space at the church. These other churches were growing, and developing wonderful outreach in the community and great attendance at their worship services.

With the region’s assistance, pulpit coverage was arranged. The chair of the deacon board helped to plan and oversee the worship services and other pastoral duties like visiting the sick and calendaring church events. The regional executives shared that the previous pastor was released due to sexual misconduct and that leadership was

8 Hopkins and Laaser, 243. Mark Laaser is a lecturer and leads seminars on clergy sexual misconduct. He self-identifies as a perpetrator of sexual misconduct.
underprepared for the crisis. They did not disclose the many years of working with this congregation to settle conflicts.

Many of the congregants were devastated by the loss of the pastor. They were in the early phases of trauma. People stopped coming to church. Many folks lingered in the naming phase, reliving the pain they experienced when the disclosure letter was read on Easter Sunday. Some members were in the othering phase and they began to blame the deacon board, the afterpastor for accepting the call and the victim that accused the fallen pastor of the sexual breach (even though it was supposed to be confidential people knew the identity of the victim).

The deacons did not understand their duties as the co-spiritual caregivers of the congregation along with the pastor. Over the years the pastor was the sole decision maker. Moreover as is the tradition in many churches, the deacons were never consecrated or presented to the congregation as deacons. They had the title but did not have a distinct purpose until the pastor was removed.

The afterpastor began to have regular prayer with the deacons and to pray weekly with the prayer warriors in the congregation. Speakers were invited to lead workshops about leadership, spiritual gifts, and hospitality. The afterpastor taught a bible study series on topics such as forgiveness, and victory in Christ. She invited a talented musician to help form a praise team and they began to sing on most Sunday mornings. She worked with the pastors of the other churches to have a few joint services. The congregation was beginning to settle and joy was returning to the worship services. The afterpastor began to integrate the region team into the life of the church. The staff of the region team was
invited to preach on special Sundays. Members of the national leadership team were invited to preach. The church finally made it to the shedding phase and they began to think beyond the clergy sexual misconduct. They were reconnected to the region and the afterpastor started to attend the association meetings. Even though the region team had worked with the congregation to settle disputes and prior conflicts they did not have a relationship with the boards or the congregation until the afterpastor arrived. The foundation was laid for the restoration team.

The afterpastor led the deacon board in a bible study about the sacred role of the diaconate. At the conclusion, the diaconate was consecrated along with the licensed ministers. The diaconate and the ministerial staff was acknowledged by other clergy, and the congregation. The afterpastor facilitated an ordination of an associate pastor. Many good things were happening in the congregation.

A new challenge became obvious. Members of the leadership team had a personal dilemma that might require them to step down from leadership to focus on their family life. Some members were aware of the dilemma and did not know the best way to support them. Initially, the region recommended that the leaders take a leave. The afterpastor kept the region in the loop. The region provided support and helped her to prioritize the church’s response and adhere to appropriate protocols applicable to the issue. The region and certain clergy, informally a restoration team, worked through options and next steps with the afterpastor. The region also supported the afterpastor as she was able to convince the leaders to step down from leadership, and to reconsider leadership at another time.

After several years and once the leadership was more stable, they accepted the
afterpastor’s resignation. The region team was well entrenched into the local church at this time.

At this juncture, the region offered to establish a recovery plan which included a full restoration team. However, the region suggested that the congregation suspend their bylaws and remove the current leadership. The congregation agreed and the church placed their assets in the region’s custody. The restoration team consisted of region team members, local clergy, association members and laity selected by the church. The restoration team via congregational vote was elected to serve and to be the governing body of the church in lieu of past leadership. The church had a cluster of systemic power and control issues, weak financial condition, and it was a post-traumatic church.

The restoration team hired a new afterpastor and began to develop new leadership practices. The restoration team and the congregation completed a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis. They identified growth areas and hope for the future. They used the SWOT findings to help select the next afterpastor. They began a dialogue about being good stewards of God's resources: people, ministries, buildings, and other assets. The restoration team reviewed the financial condition of the church, served as the search committee for the afterpastor, and agreed to work with the afterpastor for one year. However, the team stayed together and worked with the afterpastor for nearly 2 years. The afterpastor joined the restoration team after 1 year. The regional executives invested time and care into this community by meeting monthly and engaging in hundreds of hours of dialog. This congregation was layered with problems that were
escalated by the clergy sexual misconduct. However, the collaborative work of the region, the restoration team, and the afterpastors yielded a healing church.

New ministries, new communication patterns, and renewed outreach to the community began. The restoration team’s commitment and deep experience enabled them to tackle the myriad of issues that were keeping this church in bondage to brokenness. The congregation and the team made the necessary changes to be a viable and relevant congregation. They constantly discussed the ministries and the operations of the church. The restoration team also supported the afterpastor as she reshaped worship, lead Bible studies, and began to change the church’s expectations about church life and God’s love. The restoration team, along with the afterpastor reclaimed the role of the pastor. It is a community that trusts each other and has true fellowship. The church is healing and reimagining their future.

In summary, the region, restoration team along with the afterpastors delved into church life, assessing and addressing leadership issues, ministry effectiveness, financial concerns, and of course clergy sexual misconduct. The region and the restoration team stayed focus on their purpose of restoring the congregation and the office of the pastor. They journeyed with the congregation through the phases of trauma. They supported both afterpastors and the congregation during the post-traumatic season. The region and the restoration team held the congregation’s hope and trusted God’s promises until the leaders and the congregation could embrace healing.

The region could not do this work alone. The afterpastors could not do this work alone. The restoration team built a bridge between the church and the denomination.
They reconnected the church to resources and care of the region. The restoration team provided more flexibility for the afterpastor to focus on spiritual growth, leadership development, and biblical literacy. It allowed the afterpastor and information trustees to change the conversation from despair to prayerful hope. This partnership was a wonderful witness for the post-traumatic congregation. They experienced the commitment of the region, local clergy, and congregants; each group dedicated to the post-traumatic congregation’s healing. These three distinct groups united as an intentionally collaborative team. The region and restoration team was a consistent presence in the life of this church during their struggles.

The laity on the restoration team and other members flourished and began to see their ability to be part of the solution. They began to participate in regional workshops and national events like the Biennial. The restoration team was nimble enough to respond to the needs of the congregation as they were presented. Unhealthy patterns were replaced with healthy patterns. The restoration team pulled back as the settled pastor fully assumed the pastoral office. The journey continues for this post-traumatic church as it may take ten years or more to fully recover. The collaborative work of the restoration team set them on a path of renewal and reimagining their future.

### 4.2 Collaborative Leadership

Most pastors fulfill their day to day obligations of running the church in a silo. The tasks of visiting the sick, meetings with congregants, counseling, and sermon preparation can take place without self-reflection or a sounding board. They represent the church on local community boards and clergy groups often independent of congregants
and true fellowship in these groups. Many pastors are bi-vocational which means they are squeezing in visits and meetings into an overpacked daily calendar. Communication is often done on the fly, phone calls made in the car, the mobile office. Pastors may respond to situations and issues without considering the full impact on the church calendar, budget or the additional time he or she may have to commit. Although the boards, which include the deacons and trustees, support the pastor and may travel with him or her to other churches. Pastors attend church events, regional meetings and then leave and reenter their silos. Restoration teams, mentors, bridge pastors, clergy accountability groups can break the silo syndrome and enable pastors to engage in healthy work-life balance and facilitate transparent discussions. Rarely but sometimes within ABC, we see co-pastors serving a church and recently co-regional executive ministers. There is the possibility that this model for leadership allows for better symmetry, accountability, refined problem solving and may lessen feelings of uncertainty and isolation. This type of pastorate certainly requires trust and balance. It also provides the congregation with a role model for collaboration and inclusiveness. While a restoration team is not quite a co-pastorate it has the potential to model these same ideals. Standing alone is not the Christian way. However, Baptist polity of autonomy and independence provides a logic that leads to isolation and spiritually crippled churches.

9 A pastor speaking at American Baptist Churches of the South (ABCOTS) regional conference 10/18/19; Greenville, North Carolina.
5 Reshaping Church Culture

5.1 Reshaping Church Culture

Changing church culture is deliberate and slow work. The afterpastor and especially the information trustees must lead the transformation. The information trustees are essential because they will be instrumental in continuing positive momentum when the afterpastor hands the baton to the settled pastor. They are also important because they are the insiders with the longest relationships with other congregants. One aspect of changing the culture is to be educated about clergy sexual misconduct so that the pattern is not repeated. Mark Lasser suggests that periodically, perhaps on the anniversary of the disclosure, churches need consider discussing the loss of a pastor in small groups. He notes, certain dates and events will trigger the emotions associated with the loss. It is an opportunity to continue healthy discussion and to remain diligent about staying healthy.

5.1.1 Safe Church Ministry

It is most likely that prior to clergy sexual misconduct the church did not have a safe church ministry. This ministry educates church leaders and congregants about all types of abuse, physical safety, and health issues. Many churches have health ministries that focus on high blood pressure screenings, first aid, and fire drill safety. Each of these areas is important to the physical safety of the congregation. But a safe church ministry should illuminate other issues that may compromise or threaten the emotional and spiritual well-being of church life. A Safe Ministry should invite experts to lead workshops and seminars on bullying, teen dating, domestic violence, clergy
breaches which includes clergy sexual misconduct. A safe church ministry should be
establish protocols and practices to follow when there is a breach. The afterpastor and the
restoration should define the areas of concern and empower the congregation to do
research to develop a safe church ministry. Resources may be gathered from child
welfare agencies, local domestic violence centers, and other denominational practices and
protocols.

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) and Baptist Women in Ministry
(BWIM), Clergy Sexual Misconduct Task Force developed educational videos about
clergy sexual misconduct English and Spanish. This resource can be accessed on both of
their websites. CBF and BWIM also developed a Policy and Prevention Guide (The
Guide). The Guide has sample documents to help guide a church from the disclosure to
reference checks for future clergy. Some of the of the most pivotal documents include
“Sample Reference Contact Form,” “Clergy Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy,” and
“Clergy Sexual Code of Ethics.”1 The reference form is an agreement signed by a
prospective hire that enables references to share information about any subject including
sexual misconduct without fear of liability. This sample release form is especially helpful
to the post-traumatic church as they seek a settled pastor. Often churches find out after an
event that clergy had other similar breaches that references did not initially share. The
release creates the possibility of reducing the number of perpetrators that bounce from

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1 These documents can be found at the CBF and BWIM website for the Safe Church Policy and
church to church. It might free churches that have kept secrets for years. The Clergy Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy also defines terms like clergy sexual misconduct and sexual activity so that congregants can identify the actions. These resources materials make a difficult subject easier to understand. The videos are especially powerful because victims and perpetrators share their story, their mindset and their rationale. It might surprise some to hear a perpetrator refer to himself as the victim but it shares insight that is not easily attained. The Guide provides language to express this difficult subject of clergy sexual misconduct and a common understanding of the event.

Each incident is different but there is some consistency in clergy misconduct regardless of the congregation and denomination. CBF’s guide will not address every incident but it is a great resource. CBF’s guide is a great start and while The Guide cannot be enforced uniformly due to ABC polity, the tools, policies, and practices are accessible and applicable. A church culture that acknowledges the reality of abuse and takes visible steps to prevent it, however, is critically important. This Guide is a catalyst for changing the congregational culture of silence, secrecy and viewing clergy sexual misconduct through a narrow lens of sin. However, it leaves the responsibility of responding to clergy sexual misconduct with the local church. The denomination remains free from responsibility and accountability. All denominations need to do the right thing and begin to shoulder some of the responsibility of denial, forced secrecy and oppressive

actions that have enabled clergy sexual misconduct to cast a shadow over every denomination.

A congregation has to be educated and all leaders and especially clergy should be offered regular training regarding sexual misconduct and sexual abuse. It is essential for leaders, especially the board of deacons and trustees, and congregants to have a firm understanding of terms so that they do not think sexual misconduct is less serious and harmful to a victim. Pam Durso, notes

Sexual misconduct should never be viewed as a lesser offense than sexual abuse. Rather, sexual misconduct is broader than sexual abuse, so sexual abuse is a subset of sexual misconduct.3

Just as important, leaders need to become competent in recognizing imbalance and misuse of power and authority as well as the importance of healthy boundaries. Staying informed through regular training and engaged in healthy boundary practices is essential for healing and healthy pastorates and congregation.

Moreover, reshaped church culture is evident when clergy sexual misconduct is discussed openly and leaders have a basic awareness of its impact on the victim and the congregation. The ability to respond and prevent future clergy breaches is hindered by the lack of education, discussion and support.

The restoration team can lead workshops, lead reflective conversation to help a congregation process clergy sexual misconduct and their reaction to the event. In addition they can initiate a ministry assessment to help leaders see the connection between this

3 Safe Church Policy and Prevention Guide.

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event and other systemic issues within the congregation. A ministry assessment should highlight existing ministries that are consistent or inconsistent with a healing culture and strategy.

5.1.2 Worship and Communication

Transforming the culture of the post traumatic church requires intentional use of the church calendar and better communication. Bible study, healing services, prayer services, and fellowship with local churches should also be strategic and calendared. If the church does not have a culture of prayer the afterpastor should consider praying with the deacons and clergy before worship services, and select consistent weekly evenings for prayer. There should be a sense of order and direction in the church calendar so that the spirit of transformation and renewal is evident. The collaborative work of the restoration team will help to connect themes of healing, theologically and practically.

The sermon and music in the worship services are integral in changing the culture. Praise and worship songs and hymns must echo themes of God's love, faithfulness, forgiveness, reconciliation, unity, and strength. Similarly, the afterpastor’s communication must convey these themes and be shared regularly. The communication should include emails, memos, newsletters. A uniform and persistent messaging is also part of rebranding the church from the inside out. There should be a consistent thread (hope, unity, reconciliation, joy) evident in newsletters or monthly/quarterly pastor correspondence, church bulletins, and social media.

As a congregation becomes a healthy church the church culture is being transformed and it will impact external communication and interaction with the media.
All written communication should have a similar thread, which should consistently include unity, hope, God’s faithfulness, and joy. Continued disclosure about the clergy misconduct should be timely and concise. The communication should reflect the changing mindset and healing of the church, and also function as a way of “rebranding” the church. There should be a communications ministry that works with the afterpastor to maintain the integrity and consistency, especially as updates need to be shared internally and externally. This communications ministry should review and update all content on the church website and social media platforms. The leaders must also address more traditional external communication like phone message recordings and bulk email to ensure that information about the prior pastor is removed. The same internal themes should be communicated to the public as the external image is also being rebranded.

When dealing with the media, churches need to be proactive, especially when bad news is likely to become public. Therefore, church members need to select someone who is knowledgeable and experienced in working with the press or has contacts in the press. The afterpastor does not need to be the spokesperson. The church should be able to share policy on misconduct, positive things that are taking place to ensure the safety and well-being of church members; and finally have access to legal advice, if needed.

5.1.3 Transformative Gatherings

The afterpastor must connect with congregants in various settings so that they can engage and test the afterpastor’s authenticity. For example, meal-sharing, small group meetings, and ministry assessment are opportunities for different levels of interaction. Reshaping the church culture is influenced by both the individual and collective
engagement with afterpastor. Each connection is a chance to redefine church life beyond
the trauma of clergy sexual misconduct.

The congregation needs to trust each other again. Mark Laaser asserts that there
are ways to model healthy boundaries and rules applicable to any congregation but
especially a post traumatic congregation\(^4\). He notes that the truth without harming others
must be shared and discussed and the emotions connected to these truths should be
honored. A local therapist that is part of the restoration team may need to facilitate
discussion and model for the congregation ways to have respectful and supportive dialog.

Finally, the congregation must acknowledge that othering took place and stop
blaming others. Healthy congregations are aware of individual and collective acts that
may have contributed to the event of clergy sexual misconduct. These new behaviors will
evidence a changing and healing church culture. There are events that will reshape the
church culture while enabling congregants to see each other as friend and neighbor.
These events when staggered intentionally throughout the church calendar can rebuild
fractured relationships experienced during the phases of trauma. However, an afterpastor
must also be a realist and know that people heal differently and some chose to never heal,
living with wounds is also a choice.

\(^4\) Hopkins and Laaser, 244.
\(^5\) Hopkins and Laaser, 244.
5.1.3.1 Community Meals

Community meals shift the focus from internal concerns to outreach and can generate hope. Church meals after worship are inclusive. If such meals are new to the church, then facilitating participation will take time. Other community meals may entail the church participating in serving meals at another church, food pantry, or serving at a soup kitchen at a local not-for-profit. People may need to be encouraged to mingle beyond their group. Shared and serving meals will also enable the congregation to meet a need in the community. The pastor, restoration team and congregation leaders should participate in these shared meals events. This interaction provides a deeper connection to the word of God, and shifts the thinking and feelings from “lack” to “sufficiency” to “abundance.”

5.1.3.2 Small Group Meetings

Small group meetings with the afterpastor is great for becoming better acquainted with the afterpastor or settled pastor. Small groups provide intimacy and may encourage people to be more open and participate in conversation. The intimacy can also rebuild connections between members of the church and result in greater trust within the congregation. Here are some examples of small group meetings:

- Talk-back Sunday: Sermon discussions after the worship to discuss the sermon and ask questions (30-45 minutes)
- Chew and chats: small group meetings with no agenda; other staff and clergy are welcomed to attend (1 hour)
- Tea/coffee with the pastor: early morning meetings before work after kids are dropped off at school (1 hour). These meetings can be centered on a
topic that is relevant to the participants. Each month a new topic, i.e. bullying and widowed life.

- Quarterly or monthly Bible study after worship service led by the afterpastor initially and then other qualified information trustees. (1 hour)

- Local congregants bring lunch once a month for noontime Bible study.

- Host local pastors to breakfast/coffee to better understand the community and to fellowship.

- Morning prayer before church once a week at church. Leaders can lead these prayer times on a rotating basis.

5.1.4 Assessing Ministries

Looking at the effectiveness of ministries is necessary for all churches but especially for the post-traumatic congregation that looks to build ministries that support the mission and vitality of the church. Many regions have tools that will assess a church’s ministries. Lee Spitzer retired General Secretary for ABC-USA created an assessment tool to help churches stay faithful and healthy. As churches and circumstances vary, the ministries that support the church (like the deacon and trustee boards) can vary wildly in terms of spiritual maturity, experience, and effectiveness. It is a good practice to assess ministries every 3 years. It is also necessary to terminate ministries that do not bear fruit or become funded social clubs for members.

5.2 Transition to a Settled Pastor

Apart from addressing the immediate and ongoing issues of the church, the restoration team and afterpastor together will discern when the church is ready for a settled pastor. The region members who are part of this team should engage in prayer and fasting with the congregation to discern the congregation’s readiness to move forward.
There should be some evidence that the church is healing and ready to embrace the additional changes that will come with a settled pastor.

Restored churches exhibit certain traits. These traits include the ability to support the afterpastor as shepherd and pastor and the mediation of conflict in a way that it can be used to refine projects and ministries. There is renewed interest in the mission of the church, both broadly and specifically within its context. Restored and healing churches create a place for people to be safe and real, to share authentically without fear of exclusion; they respect diverse opinions.6 Godly judgment is administered (I Cor. 5:12-13).7 Being a safe place does not mean that sin is ignored or kept a secret, especially when it impacts church life. Sin is dealt with reasonably [(Gal. 6:1). Healthy church exhibits hospitality and fellowship. Grace is extended (Jn 8:11) and discipline shared according to the word of God (Heb. 12:1-13).8 Amongst the leaders and clergy there is accountability. Finally, thriving churches welcome truth-telling (Eph. 4:25).9 A new culture has zero tolerance for abuse but also recognizes that abusers can be restored to ministry.10

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7 Wilson, Sandy, Friesen and Paulson, 129.

8 Wilson, Sandy, Friesen and Paulson, 130.

9 Wilson, Sandy, Friesen and Paulson, 131.

10 Wilson, Sandy, Friesen and Paulson, 132. It should be noted, however, that this is not always possible and certainly not for the abuser continuing to serve the same church.
In summary, changing church culture is a continuous process. The collaboration of the restoration team and the afterpastor models the volunteer associational interdependence that represents the best of ABC heritage. The evolved response of this collaboration should be standardized in American Baptist Churches. Implementing collaborative leadership along with protocols will lead to healthy places of worship that can provide space for conversation and growth. Combining a safe church ministry with intentional gatherings focused on congregational fellowship and healing readies the post-traumatic congregation for the settled pastor.

**5.3 Concluding Observations and Recommendations**

At the heart of this paper is an assumption that clergy sexual misconduct is a catalyst for intentional and strategic changes for the denomination’s ownership and response to this crisis. Church culture needs to be radically reimagined so as to enable all people to thrive in communities where justice and reconciliation are the hallmarks of church life. Churches should actually be a fellowship of believers living as recommended in Micah 6:8, “No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” The newly transformed church offers an evolved response to clergy sexual misconduct, a response that believes the victim and investigates the allegations with integrity and sensitivity. The response includes standard protocols and processes executed through the interaction of the local church, association, region and national organizations and is lived in the local church through collaborative leadership.
Baptist polity, which emphasizes the independence of the denominational entities and therefore does not enable a judicatory body to oversee the local church’s response to clergy sexual misconduct, must have an equally strong emphasis on another Baptist distinctive, that of interdependence. Equal emphasis on independence and interdependence of the associational volunteer structure inherent in ABC-USA can facilitate a cohesive and comprehensive denominational response to clergy sexual misconduct. Such a response can facilitate both education and prevention and can acknowledge that Baptist polity has been used as an excuse for a lack of denominational accountability in regard to clergy sexual misconduct. This lack of denominational (national, regional, and associational) accountability has created systems of oppression that have implicitly endorsed the abuse of pastoral authority and access. The denomination must respond by owning the truth that all too often churches protected the perpetrator and punished the victim.

Now is the time to stop hiding behind polity and begin to do the right thing. Brenda Salter McNeil, asserts that every organization has a catalytic event which results in “often painful but necessary experiences that happen to individuals and organizations and serve to jumpstart the reconciliation process.11” Moreover she posits that a catalytic event “has the potential to lead to a break through into a new reality introducing us to something we have never experienced.12” Such a breakthrough is possible, I argue, as

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12 McNeil, 45.
long as the organization is open to change and chooses to set aside habits of resistance. The ABC family has rested in resistance as no entity within the family owned the problem of clergy sexual misconduct despite the pain and unnecessary suffering of the victim, congregation, and community. Sexual misconduct is a catalytic event, evident in the persistent cries of victims in churches and unfortunately echoed in the halls of the academy to the stages of Hollywood. Witnesses sharing the truth through the #MeToo and #Church Too movements demand a just response and so we must wonder aloud, How can the church be silent? The response to a catalytic event defines an organization. What will our response be?

This paper examines the problem of clergy sexual misconduct, its impact on the entire congregation, and the role of specialized interim pastors, the afterpastor, within the context of the American Baptist Churches-USA. It examines the post-traumatic impact of this kind of breach on the local church and the community. Church trauma is an overwhelming and disruptive event that breaks the relationship between the congregation and God. Clergy sexual misconduct is church trauma that breaks the relationship between clergy and God and congregant and God. This kind of trauma destroys the trust between the shepherd and the church causing congregants to disregard the sacred call of pastors and thereby diminishing their respect and reverence for the office of pastor. Trauma caused by clergy sexual misconduct, especially perpetrated by the senior pastor, is unlike other trauma caused by a conflict in which mediation or reconciliation is a goal. Churches will go to great lengths and expense to reconcile a beloved fallen pastor to their pastorate. However, the fallen clergy’s aberrant behaviors due to unhealthy habits and boundaries
take years to correct. It does not mean that the person cannot be reconciled and restored to a pastorate at another church in time. The fallen clergy may serve again, but demons need to be wrestled with and they need to participate in meaningful counseling. They must own their misuse of power and repent. There is a dysfunction that settles into churches and communities that have experienced clergy misconduct that can become systemic, establishing an unhealthy norm. Patterns evolve that foster confusion.”

Due to this breach, the church is not well spiritually, emotionally and physically; its soul is sick. Oftentimes the congregation is unaware of the depth of the wound, due to shock and inability to process, like an undiagnosed cancer, the sickness, continues to spread. Ralph Elliott likens broken fellowship to murder: "to murder our relationship with God results in murdering our relationship with our brother as depicted in the Cain and Abel narrative. The vertical and horizontal relationships always go together.” When a congregation is traumatized, complicated and intense feelings abound. There is an emotional loss when a pastor or significant clergy relationship has abruptly ended due to the clergy sexual misconduct. Congregants find it extremely difficult to reconcile the fallen clergy’s actions with the person they trusted. Their emotions encompass mourning the loss of the pastor, feelings of shame, guilt, anger, and blaming the victim and abuser for betrayal.

13 Hopkins and Laaser, 83.
14 Elliott, 15.
The American Baptist family steps into a crisis such as a natural disaster believing it has both the responsibility and the means to provide comprehensive support to those in need. Similar to a tornado or tsunami, clergy sexual misconduct destroys everything in its path, leaving communities devastated and left to pick up the pieces and bury the dead. This same connectedness and sense of urgency needs to be present in dealing with the crisis of clergy sexual misconduct. It is time for the ABC family to deal with the crisis of clergy sexual misconduct that is destroying generations of believers, alienating seekers, and affirming the atheist. There must be greater emphasis from region and national partners on developing and sustaining healing and healthy churches. The well-being of local churches is directly connected to the well-being of the associations, the regions and the denomination.

The ordination process is fairly uniform region to region; the process is intricate and often lengthy. It is a collaborative process with established standards and protocols. The process demands an investment of time, financial resources, and dedicated volunteers from the local church, association and staff from the region. Unfortunately, this kind of collaborative effort is not duplicated in any other area of the life of most ministers or regions. This kind of procedural collaboration guided by standard and processes is atypical in Baptist life. Thus, some ordained clergy are not prepared for the lack of collaborative opportunities that will characterize their pastorate or ministry journey.

However, to care for the post-traumatic church and the afterpastor a coordinated and collaborative response is required for the well-being of the denomination. Baptist
polity does not include a judicatory body that executes processes and procedures across churches, associations, regions or throughout the denomination. At times ethical standards are not uniformly followed and cannot be enforced. Therefore, broadly within the denomination and specifically within ABC, there are no formal and enforceable standards, rulings, or covenants that require reporting, dismissal, or processes for disclosure, discussion, communication, and theological reflection. The limits of the association relationships within ABC are most striking when churches face the reality of clergy sexual misconduct because the associational framework lacks accountability and responsibility for clergy sexual misconduct. Moreover, the traditional structure of most churches supports an imbalance of power and the opportunities for abuse.

Afterpastors are especially valuable within ABC given its polity and loose organizational structure which is associational and therefore is a network of cooperative volunteers. Each church is independently governed and the congregational response to clergy sexual misconduct does not follow established standards or protocols. The afterpastor ministry is essential to the health and wellness of the local church and the denomination.

Even when ABC’s associations and regions witness the post-traumatic church struggling, pastors falling and victims stacking up, it wrongly justifies the lack of denominational culpability and response. There is a standard code of ethics ministers are expected to sign and live by when they are called, ordained, and employed. Yet there are no standards or immediate consequences to hold them accountable to ABC’s code of
ethics. Education, prevention, and resources made available through the associations, regions and national leadership are all crucial parts of the solution.

ABC’s region’s Professional Ministries and Relations Committee is a good place to initiate reform and new standards. This committee should develop more probing questions about sexual and ethical behavior during the ordination interview and especially during the psychological assessments. Regions should encourage churches to complete more thorough background checks when hiring and create resources that support more fact-finding background checks.

The American Baptist Profile System (ABPS) a source used by clergy to create an employment profile should be considered as a source for flagging convicted abusers and those that have been successfully sued. The American Baptist Home Mission Societies provides this employment profile resource.

Regions and associations should provide workshops about clergy sexual misconduct, safe and healthy boundaries and collaborate with national organizations to establish standards and protocols. They should also assist local churches establish safe space ministries. Workshops for church leaders about clergy breaches should include topics such as sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, self-care, and healthy conflict vs destructive conflict. A cycle of these regular workshops should be included throughout the ordination process, in new pastor orientation, and in every annual meeting.

To date, CBF, SBC, and ABC, has not connected the associational nature of the denomination beyond the common missional goals to definitively include clergy sexual misconduct as a problem that rests equally with all related and associated entities within
the Baptist family. This structure leans into a patriarchal system that ignores the offenses of clergy in which the perpetrators are primarily male and the victims, primarily women. There is an unethical, unspiritual, and unholy justification to leave the issue of clergy sexual misconduct unaddressed with formal protocols and processes because of Baptist polity.

Overhauling systemic processes, like ordination and new pastor orientation, to address clergy sexual misconduct is needed, as is the need to rethink the traditional pastoral model for the afterpastor, so that collaborative leadership is implemented through a restoration team. Processes and standards are needed to help local churches, especially those with limited resources, to properly vet clergy candidates and volunteers, specifically when region teams have witnessed and negotiated clergy sexual misconduct within the local churches. Educating congregations so that they understand how to balance boundaries and healthy leadership to prevent consolidation of power. Tapping into underutilized resources that include retired clergy, underemployed clergy, professionals, and others in the community in order to build a collaborative pastoral response is critical to local churches. While afterpastors are called to this specialized ministry they need to be supported. Finally, ABC needs processes that allow for redemption of the abuser and new life for the victim with an equipped church in the center.

Changing church culture is a continuous process and a response to the needs of the people within the culture. The collaboration of the restoration team and the afterpastor models the volunteer associational interdependence that represents the best of ABC.
heritage. Implementing collaborative leadership along with protocols will lead to healthy places of worship that can provide space for conversation and growth. Combining a safe church ministry with intentional gatherings focused on congregational fellowship and healing readies the post-traumatic congregation for the settled pastor.

ABC has an interim ministry team to train and send interims to serve in local churches. Their training does not include a module for the pastor who is called to serve the post-traumatic congregation. However, it must be prepared to train clergy and leaders to serve in all settings and especially those that are called to serve as afterpastors.

The region could not do this work alone. The afterpastors could not do this work alone. The restoration team builds a bridge between the church and the denomination. They reconnect the church to both the resources and the care of the region. The restoration team provides the flexibility for the afterpastor to focus on spiritual growth, leadership development, and biblical literacy. In short, this team allows the afterpastor and information trustees to change the conversation from despair to prayerful hope.

These three distinct groups—the restoration team, the afterpastor, and the information trustees—unite as an intentionally collaborative team. This partnership can be a wonderful witness for the post-traumatic congregation. The congregation benefits from the commitment of the region, local clergy, and congregants. They see that each group is dedicated to the post-traumatic congregation’s healing.
Appendix A: Questions Addressing Conflict

The following list of questions can help the afterpastor understand the ways in which the post-traumatic congregation has addressed conflict.

- What was the last conflict/issue?
- How did the leaders help mediate that conflict and historical conflict?
- Was the congregation prepared with the tools needed to have constructive conflict and healthy conversations that valued all voices in the congregation?
- Was there equity and equality in the discussions about the conflict? (look at church minutes)
- What deliberate efforts were made to include all voices?
- What community norms were shared so that everyone understood the accepted ways to share opinions and ideas within church family discussions?
- Did the congregation vote and then follow up with actions to implement the will of the majority?
- Are matters routinely re-voted, as the minority vote or the abstentions create barriers for successful implementation?
- Did the leaders retain outside resources to educate the congregation (industry experts, professional facilitators, denominational/region support, local educators)?
- Did member engage in fight and flight?
- Did members leave because respectful discussion was replaced with emotionally fueled conversations that wounded people too deeply to stay?
- What was the effort around building consensus? Who led the effort?
- Was the conflict resolved and what was the result? How is it evidenced in the life of the church?
Appendix B: Ground Rules for Productive Post-Traumatic Congregation Discussions

- Provide notice consistent with the bylaws and church practices so that leaders and congregants may attend training, workshops, etc.

- Determine the best location within the church building (i.e. sanctuary, choir rehearsal room). Location can make a difference in the tone of the meeting.

- If the budget allows, determine if a discussion might be best if the meeting was in another location like a restaurant, retreat center, or local Baptist camp.

- Consider childcare or teen activities, if needed.

- Inform the group that each person has the opportunity and responsibility to speak for her/himself, using I or me, not we or us. Each person may only share her/his story.

- Set time limits for each person’s remarks, questions and expressions of concern.

- Determine the time for meeting and honor it.

- Provide multiple ways of speaking, sharing in a group, writing on a flip chart, small group discussion and 1-1 discussion with the afterpastor or facilitator.

- Limit the number of times a person can speak in order to facilitate conversation and to limit dominant voices.

- Use creative ways to discuss potentially charged issues: music, movies, cartoons, drama, spoken word, and songs. Invite a psalmist to set the tone of the meeting.
Appendix C: A Job Description for an Afterpastor

The following job description for an afterpastor is not exhaustive but provides a framework to understand one called to this ministry. This description highlights the need for the afterpastor to be spiritually mature person. He or she must be anointed and gifted in healing. The description also shows the practical need for the resources of the region and a restoration team. The skills are divided into two primary areas of focus: congregational/pastoral care and community interaction.

**Congregational/Pastoral Care**

- Restore the office of pastor and the role of the minister
- Be a vessel of healing for all that are impacted
- Strategically move the congregation through the stages of renewal toward healing in an intentional and planned manner
- Make space to listen and hear the stories that need to be told
- Understand systemic and unspoken conflict inherent in the church before the breach
- Understand the informal practices, ethics, and ethos of the church community
- Discern the traditions, formal and informal rules that shape congregational life
- Address people’s (victim, community, colleagues, congregants, and leadership) feelings of anger, betrayal, and disappointment
- Minimize poor publicity while restoring community outreach and relationships
- Connect with local churches
- Reduce and stop congregation flight
• Replace ineffective leaders
• Restore or implement organizational processes
• Reverse financial downturn or create positive cash flow for the first time in many years
• Refocus the congregation to its mission; discern a new mission
• Strengthen viable ministries and eliminate ineffective ministries
• Preach every Sunday
• Lead and shape spiritual formation
• Perform the sacred ordinances
• Shore up Christian Education so that it includes healing, forgiveness and restoration
• Be a worship leader
• Update and maintain social media presence
• Excellent administrator
• Other duties as assigned

**Community Interaction**

• Interact with the media
• Update and engage social media
• Connect with local churches
• Interface with the region staff
• Work with restoration team to develop a strategic plan for healing
• Restore or create ecumenical relationships
• Minimize poor publicity while restoring community outreach and relationships
• Other duties as assigned by the situation
Appendix D: A Resource Guide for Afterpastors and Restoration Teams

Table of Contents for the Resource Guide

The Restoration Team
- Purpose and Composition
- Assessing Ministries
- Preparing The Afterpastor for Church Meetings
- Afterpastor Self-Care

Church Life
- Preliminary Considerations
- Community Meals (meal sharing)
- Theme Sundays/Worship
- Written Communication
- Other activities that connect the congregation

Worship
- Hymns and Praise Songs
- Litanies
- Sermons

Bible Study Ideas
- Sample Bible Studies on Leadership
- Two Additional Sample Bible Studies
- Practical and Reflective Assignments for Bible Study

Congregational Surveys and Analysis
- Observation Survey
- Church Fellowship Survey
- Consider a SWOT analysis
- Photo essay
- Workshops

Church Family Conferences

Definition of Terms

Disclosure

Resources
- Denominational Guides
- SWOT Analysis
- Articles
- Recommended Reading
The Restoration Team

Purpose and Composition

The restoration team is a link to the region, denomination, and community resources. The team consists of a group of clergy and laity that covenant to prayerfully collaborate with the afterpastor for the purpose of restoring a post-traumatic church recovering from clergy sexual misconduct. It will be necessary to find suitable and committed clergy that have an affinity and ability to work well in highly emotionally charged chaotic environments. The restoration team agrees to journey with the afterpastor for at least 1 year but ideally 18-24 months. This team would also stay in place and provide support for the settled pastor once the transition from afterpastor to settled pastor takes place. It should consist of 7-9 individuals that include region team members (2) local clergy (2), retired clergy (1) laity chosen by the congregation (3) and professionals from the community as needed. The region executive minister should take the lead in forming the committee.

They increase flexibility for the afterpastor to focus on spiritual growth, leadership development, and biblical literacy. It allows the afterpastor and information trustees to change the conversation from despair to prayerful hope. This partnership is a wonderful witness for the post-traumatic congregation as they experience the commitment of the region, local clergy, and congregants. Each group dedicated to the post-traumatic congregation’s healing. These three distinct groups unite as an
intentionally collaborative and interdependent. The restoration team can be a consistent presence in the life of church during their struggles.

**Assessing Ministries**

The restoration team will be able to implement strategic analysis to help form and implement a plan for healing. One tool is a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. They will review the financial condition of the church, by-laws and all legal and governing documents, providing an independent viewpoint.

This team should work with the afterpastor and the leaders to develop a safe church ministry, assess ministries and gaps in leadership. It will be very useful for the church’s operations and future hiring to update or create an employee/personnel handbook that delineates drug testing policies, standardize background and reference checks, establish code of ethics and sexual code of ethics.

**Preparing The Afterpastor for Church Meetings**

In the beginning the afterpastor is being judged and expected to know things he could not know and to repair things he did not break. The restoration team’s expertise in church matters may facilitate the afterpastor’s preparation for church family conferences and leadership meetings. It can facilitate his leadership and help avoid some missteps. They can anticipate issues for the post-traumatic church. Together they should discern the most transparent way to share recent developments with the church and media. These questions are not exhaustive and the afterpastor will need to understand these issues when interacting with leaders, 1-1 and small groups of congregants.
• What happened that caused the pastor to be dismissed? Some people may need additional clarity especially if the disclosure statement did not properly frame the problem and suggest next steps.

• May I have a copy of the disclosure statement that was shared with the congregation?

• What are the expressed feelings and attitudes present around the event? Who is vocal and who is silent in the congregation? Is there a dominant view or feeling about the loss of the pastor?

• How are people reacting to each other after the loss of the pastor?

• Is there grieving? Who is grieving about the loss of the pastor, grieving for the victim?

• Is the victim being blamed?

• How was the congregation informed of the events?

• How much does the congregation know?

• Who was part of the pastor’s inner circle? (they may be more deeply wounded or more polarizing in the healing process)

• Were the leadership and the congregation given the same information at the same time?

• Are there groups of people that know very little and groups that know most details?

• How has the church reacted to the pastor, pastor’s family, victim and victim’s family?

• What communication was shared in the denomination, local clergy, community relationships?

• What is on social media?

• What commitments does the church need to consider?

• Are there events on the church calendar that need clergy support or events that need to reschedule?
Afterpastor Self-Care

The restoration team can support the afterpastor by being a sounding board to ensure that the afterpastor is sustaining healthy boundaries. There should be a subset of the restoration team or a member of the region team assigned to be an accountability partner for the afterpastor. Often, churches that have experienced clergy misconduct also have many other boundary and triangulation issues within the congregation. Supporting afterpastors is essential for the church to recover. They will bear the brunt the anger and blame at the outset of the pastorate. Without the respect and care normally given the office of pastor they will work to earn the congregation’s.

Afterpastors should routinely ask these questions and be willing to honestly share the answers with accountability partners or a life coach.

a. Do you find yourself explaining or justifying changes in your routine?

b. Has your day included any activity that you cannot tell others about or share with your spouse?

c. Are you, in your role as clergy, friend, mother, father, sister, brother, making decisions followed by actions that are exceptions to your normal routines?

d. Are you exhilarated by keeping secrets from those that are closest to you?

e. Do secrets make you feel powerful and closer to God?

f. Have you entered a space that violates your personal covenant with God as a believer and as one that is called and set apart? If yes, when and what measures have helped to resolve this breach and prevent it from continuing?

g. How do you realize that you have to set new healthier priorities?

h. Who is in your accountability group/who is your partner?
Church Life

Preliminary Considerations

Stories to Hear

Gaining insight and knowledge about the congregation is necessary for the afterpastor and the restoration team. Clergy sexual misconduct can overshadow everything, yet every person and experience cannot be seen through lens or connected to the fallen clergy. Church life consist of many experiences over many generations impacting many people. Baptisms, weddings, Sunday school classes, revivals, family vacation Bible school, youth services, christenings, funerals, community events, disasters and celebrations and so much more must be discovered to understand this church’s culture and values. Church milestones and special occasions in the life of the church will form a more complete picture of church life. Getting to know the people, even and especially, those may seem unlovable because they may be the most deeply wounded. Investing the time for individual and collective stories beyond this crisis has the potential to build genuine relationships. The afterpastor needs to get the inside joke, know which steps in the sanctuary are creaky and the drafty places to sit in the church building. The post-traumatic church is so much more than the obvious pain. The congregants must learn to tell the whole story, not hide the bad things or forget their individual and collective joys. The information trustees and leaders of the church can begin to push through to their dreams but the congregation must claim its future. Through their stories the
afterpastor can find God’s faithfulness and help the post-traumatic congregation expect God to show up in new and wonderful stories.

**Rules of Operation**

It is important to understand the rules of operation. Formal rules are written, like bylaws, personnel policies and denomination doctrine and practices. Informal rules are not written but everyone knows these rules. These rules set the framework for interaction and communication. For example, deacons sit in the front row of some churches, it is not a written rule yet no one other than deacons sit in the front row. Finally implicit rules passed on from dominant member families and so they become habits often outliving the original purpose. People are not aware why they do certain things in a certain way, it simply is. As a fuller picture of the church is being developed the afterpastor should be able to answer these questions.

- Is the church in fellowship with local churches within the denomination?
- Does the church participate in community events? Intercultural activities? Ecumenical Ministries?
- Do they host events related to the above?
- Did the prior pastor speak or participate in community events, like community Lenten services? Is the afterpastor expected to participate in these events or other community celebrations?
- Do local officials’ partner with the church on community events? Does the church connect to the local school, school superintendent or mayor, etc. on annual projects, advocacy, community issues?
- How has the church celebrated special occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays, and revivals?
- What is the purpose of the church family conference?
• How is the annual budget prepared?

• How are officers selected? Do deacon and trustees walk for a year before assuming the full responsibilities of these ministries?

• Who teaches a new members’ class? What is the curriculum for new members?

• What have members of the church studied in recent Bible study classes?

• Where do the congregants live?

• What are the demographics of the church?

• What are the demographics of the community in which the church is located?

**Community Meals (meal sharing)**

Community meals after worship for the congregation are important to build fellowship and communication. If this activity is new to the church it will take time. The church should schedule regular meals with members, initially quarterly then monthly. All should be invited to participate. No two meals need to be the same. For some churches that have a designated cooking ministry and limited menus the leaders need to be flexible and sensitive to dietary needs, preferences, and especially food allergies. Consider variety in meals: vegan, vegetarian, full meals, or just coffee and dessert.

Meals with local churches, perhaps after a combined service is also another opportunity to build fellowship in the church and with sister churches. The church may invite the community to a meal and participate in serving a meal at another church, food pantry or local Not for Profit (NFP). Meals can both build community and help a church to reconnect with the community. Serving and sharing generates hope, provides a deeper
connection to the word of God, shifts the focus from “lack” to “sufficiency” and ultimately to “God’s abundance.”

Other opportunities for the congregation and the afterpastor to connect monthly or quarterly may include. Frequency determined by afterpastor and leadership.

- Chew and chats: small group meetings, no agenda (1 hour)
- Tea/coffee with the pastor, early mornings before work, after kids are dropped off at school.
- Local congregants bring lunch for an afternoon study Bible study

**Theme Sundays/Worship**

Theme Sundays are a way to use the calendar so that people are praying, planning, working together and reaching out to the community. It is also allows the church to own its church mission by claiming an identity that is bigger than clergy misconduct. Theme Sundays should take place as the congregation is embracing restoration. A spirit of hospitality should be evident. Initially, theme Sundays can be focused on events for the membership like everyone wearing school colors or wear something that is pink in honor of breast cancer. The afterpastor and the restoration team will prayerfully discern the right time for Theme Sundays that engage the community. These Sundays may include themes such as, Family and Friends Sunday, (everyone brings a friend, every fifth Sunday); Education Sunday (invite local educators, administrators, encourage students to invite their teachers, honor them with a special prayer and recognition, and share a special litany); Christian Education Sunday (celebrate Bible Study teachers and invite a guest preacher); and Youth Sunday, invite a youth speaker. Empower young people to lead the worship service.
Revival services is another type of theme event that can be organized around an annual theme or a particular scripture selected by the leadership as a guidepost for the year. Leadership should engage an anointed and skilled revivalist. It should be 2-3 evenings. The afterpastor and leadership should provide a theme and scripture.

**Prayer Service**

Congregants meet at church and pray together then dispatch and pray over all areas of the church, inside and outside. Prayer for current issues, challenges connected to the clergy sexual misconduct, but also prayers for renewal and dreams for the future. Everyone should have a prayer partner or be part of a small group. At inception, these prayer services may only include a few prayer warriors, information trustees, leadership, afterpastor and possibly members of the restoration team. Written prayers may be provided to keep people on track and to include those that are not accustomed to praying aloud. Participants should agree to meet several times for this purpose. It is important to reinforce a culture of prayer and the expectation that God hears, sees and answers prayer.

**Prayer Walks**

People meet at church and pray together then dispatch and pray for and over all areas of the church, inside but a prayer walk is mostly focused in the local neighborhood. Everyone should have a prayer partner. This should involve the deacons, trustees and leadership. The primary focus of a prayer walk is to pray for the community outside the church. Initially using guided prayers. It may take a couple of hours depending upon how far people walk and how much they engage their neighbors as they walk. Once the church is refocused on mission and outreach they can employ the same process by praying
throughout the neighborhood and leaving door hangers inviting neighbors to church and to special celebrations or events. Walking 2-3 blocks from the church is a good start; some can ride bikes, and some can drive. A prayer walk can be adjusted to accommodate varied modes of transportation and the area that is covered. It is important to begin and close the prayer walk with prayer.

**Healing Services**

This service is for healing. A Palmist, clergy or laity that has the spiritual gift of laying on of hands and the gift of healing. The service has two components, singing and praying. It can be one of two nights.

**Written Communication**

The afterpastor should generate regular communication to the church family, using: a newsletter or monthly/quarterly correspondence, email, bulletins, etc. All social media resources should carry the same messages of hope and renewal. Websites and social media should be updated regularly. The afterpastor may need to engage a professional marketing or communication person to assist with this effort to ensure consistency.
Other activities that connect the congregation

- Game Night (congregational jeopardy, Pictionary, Connect 4, Jenga): People can rotate and play a new game every 20-30 minutes.
- Baking Pizza (cooking any meal that allows all generations to participate)
- Baking and giving baked goods to a local food pantry
- Movie night/afternoon followed by a discussion
- Movie night may also enable the congregation to discuss relevant issues that impact the community: i.e., education trends, preparing for college, internet safety, cyber-bullying, addiction, domestic violence, and sex trafficking.
- Speaker Series, with and/or without the community about social action and advocacy.
- Community Fairs—the church should have a booth and share info about the church.
- Book Club: Christian and popular books; read local books and invite the author.

Worship

Hymns and Praise Songs

These songs bring congregants into God’s presence and remind them of the joy that comes from knowing God. It helps them release their fears. These songs are prays to God prayed together as a community of believers. Suggested hymns and praise songs:
Hymns

- Great is thy Faithfulness (#43)
- Revive Us Again (#348)
- Sweet, Sweet, Spirit (#127)
- Love Lifted Me (#385)
- Holy, Holy, Holy (#1)
- Joyful, Joyful (#40)
- What a Friend We Have in Jesus (#61)
- Jesus Is All The World To Me (#283)
- I Will Trust in The Lord (#285)
- We’ve Come This Far By Faith (#529)
- Jesus the Light of the World (#81)
- Blessed Quietness (#130)

Praise and Worship Songs:

- Every Praise (Hezekiah Walker)
- Just Want to Praise You (Maurette Brown Clark)
- Nobody Greater (VaShawn Mitchell)
- You’re Good Good Father (Chris Tomlin)
- You Deserve It (JJ Hariston)
- Lord I Lift Your Name on High (Donnie McClurkin)

Litanies

Topics should include: hope, trust, God’s faithfulness, unity, restoration, and forgiveness. Gifted writers within the congregation could be invited to write litanies.

Sermons

Below are recommended sermons from The Christian Reformed Church to help afterpastors who are serving post-traumatic congregations grappling with the aftermath of clergy sexual misconduct.²

- “The Abuse Jesus Took”: This is a sermon that was preached at Lombard CRC on Sept. 17, 2017, about the abuse that Jesus, our Lord, experienced, and how he has born our sin and pain.³
- “A Safe Church Message from Psalm 10”: This Psalm of lament speaks to the reason for the Safe Church Ministry.⁴
- Rev. Andrew Beunk, “Sin in the Community,” based on Ezra 9 and 10 (selected verses). Abuse in its various forms - emotional, physical and sexual - is a secret sin, so secret that sometimes we think "this never happens in my family or my church or my community.”⁵
- Rev. Sean Baker, “You Are the Man,” a sermon based on 2 Samuel 11-12. This sermon focuses on David's crime against Bathsheba as sexual assault and urges us to recognize the seriousness of such abuse in our congregations.⁶
- Rev. Robert A Arbogast, “Abuse: Still Not Getting It”: This is another sermon based on the story of David’s crime against Bathsheba, with a focus on the way the church has never understood or identified abuse as such.⁷

² The Christian Reformed Church Recommended Sermons are from The Christian Reformed Church, Safe Church Ministry Worship Resources.
³ http://www.lombardcrc.org/resources/sermons/the-abuse-jesus-took/.
⁵ https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/Sin%20in%20the%20Community.pdf.
Bible Study Ideas

Biblical examples of effective leadership can help a community heal and show the leaders how to lead utilizing biblical principles. In a post-traumatic church recovering from abuse of power and position it is critical to reinforce exemplary leadership qualities. Bible study builds connections and fellowship as people study and learn together. In this period of healing, bible studies may also focus on developing spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, meditating, and service to others. The afterpastor should consider short term Bible studies that last 4-6 weeks. These topics could include Sabbath, spiritual gifts, forgiveness, faithfulness, leadership, unity, and healthy conflict. Bible studies should reclaim sacred language and help people reclaim their connection to God and to each other. The environment must be welcoming. Bible study has the ability to change the conversation so that it is life affirming and encouraging. Moreover, these topics should be a thread that is evident in worship, music, correspondence, press, and social media. Consistent messaging will aid healing and lead to restorative relationships within the congregation.

The facilitator must be prepared to keep the discussion focused on the study and to keep equity in the voices and opinions that are shared. In a small church, the afterpastor or a facilitator may need to teach the Bible study to be sure the conversation stays on the topic. Even in a large multi-staff church, the afterpastor or gifted teacher should teach the Bible study classes. Existing clergy-staff may still be recovering from the loss of a colleague. They may also be shouldering guilt, shame, and blame from the
congregants. In the early phases of restoration the congregation may be easily distracted and so Bible study can be derailed as people share their grief and anger. The following questions can help the Bible study leader keep the study on track.

- What is God doing?
- What are the people doing (look for verbs)? Is everyone in the story aware of the other people’s actions in the story?
- Who has the most information? Does it matter? Does it impact the outcome?
- Who has power or is a person with authority and are they the same person?
- In what ways has progress been made and celebrated?
- Who is being used by God?
- Who is unavailable to God?
- What have been the setbacks and how have they been addressed?
- What are the community standards?
- How could the process for decision making and conflict resolution be utilized in our daily lives?
- What did you learn from this text that can be applied to a modern problem in our society?

Topics for transitioning from afterpastor to settled pastor could include obvious “passing the baton stories” of the transitions of Jesus to the Holy Spirit, Moses to Joshua and Paul to Timothy.
Sample Bible Studies on Leadership

I Samuel 25:14-28

This text highlights Abigail’s decisive making, problem-solving skills, willingness to solve a problem that she did not create and the collaborative efforts of a community executing a plan.

Abigail’s other leadership qualities include:

- Creative leadership
- Willing to negotiate and assume responsibility for the outcome
- Willingness to take protect the innocent
- Act quickly and decisively after assessing the risks.
- She acted responsibly and quickly
- She evidenced a willingness to solve a problem she did not create
- Others were willing to follow her even though in a traditional sense she did not have authority or power
- Seeing an opportunity during a crisis
- Using available resources to solve a problem
- Willingness to put oneself on the line for others
- Working outside the traditions to solve the problem
- Critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills

Esther 4:15-16

This study highlights Esther’s inclusive leadership and the assumption that everyone in her community had a part (a gift to share) in solving a problem that impacted a subset of the community. It also shows leadership can be without
praise or recognition. Esther takes the risk, but Mordechai gets the reward and recognition. In the end, the goal was achieved. Leaders sometimes have to sacrifice recognition and praise for the good of others. On the other hand leaders should give credit to others when appropriate.

The text can also be used to discuss the abuse of power and leaders being under the influence of others that have immoral and unjust motives (a drunk king summons his wife and when she refuses to come to his drunk friends convince him to banish her so that she cannot ignite the precursor of the #Me Too movement).

Leadership skills in this text include:

- Assessing the risks of the situation
- Accepting the wisdom of someone that is trusted
- Building ecumenical support to resolve a problem
- Valuing all people equally
- Not limiting the contributions of those that are different and do not have the same faith tradition
- Using prayer to build a coalition
- Taking on responsibility and risks associated with the responsibility
- Working for the good of others
- Working without power and with good motives
Two Additional Sample Bible Studies

Below are two sample Bible studies (on 1 Samuel 30 and on Numbers 27, 36), each which provides an opportunity to review leadership skills.

1 Samuel 30

*Facilitator Instructions:* Set the text so that everyone understands the context of the story. Review chapter 29, David and Saul’s relationship, and David’s connection to the Philistines.

1 Samuel 30:4

David is transparent and vulnerable. He shared the grief of the men and he grieved for his loss. David does not try to justify a potential strategic error by leaving his family/the army's families unprotected/defenseless. He does not justify his mistake. He looks for a solution.

**Leadership Skills and Abilities:** vulnerability, transparency, honesty about emotions and strategic uncertainty.

1 Samuel 30:6

Leadership is challenging and fleeting, people may follow as long as their interests are being met, but in a crisis, your leadership may be questioned; try not to become foolishly confident in the position. Maintain integrity in your work. When things are difficult, spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and meditation are important.

David goes to God; if he is offended or feels wrongly accused, he does not say. There are no long speeches; he does not attempt to regain their trust or move the angry men from their position. He does not try to rally a small group to be on his side.

**Leadership Skills and Abilities:** Spiritual practice of prayer for discernment, restraint, and balanced response.

1 Samuel 30:8 –

David does not decide his course of action until God answers.

**Leadership Skills and Abilities:** David did not become flustered or allow himself to be triangulated.
I Samuel 30:10
David goes with the men that are willing; he does not try to convince others to go. Here we see David’s faith; 400 or 600, who and the number of men that go with David does not make him doubt God’s promise; God is with him and as assured his victory. David is counting on God. David asked a question, listened for the answer, got the answer and then followed through with God’s blessing. He also went with those that were about to stone him. He knew that in leadership sometimes you have to include naysayers for victory and for personal growth.

Leadership Skills and Abilities: Lead with those that are willing to follow and don’t assume that late adopters are not with you. Believe God. Trust the vision and promises of God. Realize that victory is not contingent upon the people but contingent upon the way God uses the people to accomplish God’s goal.

I Samuel 30:11
David values the input of all, even those not on his side, remember that for a while when he is on the run from Saul, it is the Philistines, who are normally his enemy, who gives him shelter and support. He is part of their army.

Leadership Skills and Abilities: Value everyone’s input and their stories.

I Samuel 30:16
David trusted that someone other than himself would know the way. He opened his circle; he had a goal, but he did not have all the answers. “He led David” (the Egyptian slave)—a good leader also a good follower and is inclusive, making space for new knowledge and new voices in order to achieve the goal.

Leadership Skills and Abilities: Be open to new knowledge, new voices, and be willing to follow. Every great idea does not have to originate with the same person and never from one person.

I Samuel 30:21
The men that stayed behind came to greet him and David asked them, how are you? (NIV). He expressed care for their wellbeing. He did not outwardly hold it against them that they did not go with him.

Leadership Skills and Abilities: Practicing equity and equality; wanting the best for all. Do not allow your disappointment to make
you respond inappropriately or to disregard people that have historically been helpful to you.

I Samuel 30:22
Avoid triangulation. The same troublemakers that wanted to stone him, said we will not share. Give the 200 men that did not go to war their families and send them away. Don’t assume that late adopters are not with you or that everyone that is with you is thinking like you.

Leadership Skills and Abilities: Avoid triangulation, build consensus, and don’t assume that everyone will not be supportive of common goals. Recognize that building consensus takes time. (Even though the 400 went with him, not all of the 400 men were truly with him; not all of them shared his vision or his goals.) Keep this in mind the next time the church votes; there is a yes in the no, a no in a yes, and maybe in an abstention.

I Samuel 30:23
No, my brothers all will share equally. David reminds all the men that the victory is from God. He is not puffed up, does not take credit. Know that he is blessed by God and must share the blessing. We may say we want healthcare for all but if it costs us our position and requires sacrifice we may not want it so much, even if it is the right thing. We want to choose, but it is good that God does the choosing, and David knew that.

Leadership Skills and Abilities: Always praise God and be grateful for the success God has provided. Sometimes leading requires the right decision even though it is unpopular.

I Samuel 30:25
New statute


I Samuel 30:26
David recognized others and shared the plunder.

Leadership Skills and Abilities: Shared success and shared reward. Acknowledge all that contributed and participated in the success. Realizing that their success came from God just as promised.
**Numbers 27, 36**

**Numbers 27:1**
A petition was presented, which should signal an immediate question: why do they need a petition? What are they seeking? Why now, look at who is assembled to receive the petition?

**Leadership Skills:** Leaders need to be organized, strategic, unified and prepared. Determine the needed audience and buy-in.

**Numbers 27:3-4**
Historical information provided the necessary background information needed to consider the request. Why are we asking this now?

**Leadership Skills:** Balanced approach, concise explanation. Share background/research and criteria by providing historical information needed to consider the request, especially when you are seeking to change something. Change is never easy but especially difficult if people do not understand the context and reasons for the change.

**Numbers 27: 5-6**
Moses prays. God answers.

**Leadership Skills and Abilities:** God always has a better answer and it is best to consult God before deciding.

**Numbers 36:1**
An addendum to the petition offered.

**Leadership Skills and Abilities:** Flexible; Moses considers the addendum to the petition. Do not be defensive when people counter your position by presenting a well-organized idea that may be different or refining. Recognize the idea and that there will always be other options that appeal to the interests of others. Be flexible, consider options and be respectful. Moses modified the plan; compromise and collaboration are signs of strong leadership. However, leaders should consider the reasons for modifying a plan; the new information that causes him/her to rethink and the current and future implications of changes. Leaders should be mindful that compromise does not mean everyone is appeased.
**Numbers 36:5**
Moses shares a decision.

**Leadership Skills and Abilities:** Moses provides an answer in the midst of the community so that the community that heard the initial question now hears the answer. This is an example of good disclosure. It is concise, shares critical information, and the impact for the Zelophepad’s daughters and the future. It mitigates triangulation and problematic communication (chapter 2).

**Practical and Reflective Assignments for Bible Study**

Another way to engage the congregation in Bible study is through a practical and reflective assignments. When it is clear that a core group is ready to return to the mission work of the church and to dreaming new dreams for the future, this type of Bible study may spark imagination and be fun. For example, ask the class to collect articles about good deeds and innovative products for 2-3 weeks before these items will be shared in class. They should also bring to class slogans, company tag lines that are positive as well as clips from movies and animated YouTube clips about teamwork (if you have access to computers during the Bible Study). Pair people into teams to discuss the reasons they selected the things they collected. Have each group share a summary of their discussion and a few of the things they collected. Allow 15 minutes for each group. This activity may take a few meetings depending upon the size of the group and the time allocated for Bible study. After all the groups have presented compile a list of common attributes.

Now the class is ready to write an advertisement, letter, song, tagline, commercial, Facebook post, Instagram post to invite family, friends, neighbors and past members to worship services. People may need a few classes to work on this task.
Divide the class into groups where people can use their gifts and skills. There would be Facebook, YouTube, Letter writing group, etc. They should find scriptures about evangelism, grace and hospitality to guide them. However, the content that is shared will not include scripture.

The goal of this exercise is to get people to share in their own words the reasons someone should attend their church for fellowship. It is also a way to answer the question, how do we welcome folks to be part of our community? If possible video the presentations and final products (letters, Facebook etc.). It can be shared during coffee hour after a worship service. It will be a good catalyst to encourage people to invite others to church and to Bible study.

The facilitator/teacher can be the afterpastor, clergy, laity, or a member of the restoration team. It should be a seasoned Bible study teacher who is skilled in introducing topics that evoke the imagination and make the participants think creatively. This example may take 2-3 weeks depending on the size of the class and time allocated for Bible study. length of the add.

Start the Bible Study with a question. For example, why should I go to church?

Some scriptures to Explore for these assignments: Acts 1& 2; I Cor. 12:1-31; Romans 12:3-16; I Cor. 12:27-28.

In-class exercise: Write an advertisement for new members. It should share the skills needed for new members and the process to become a new member. The next week, using the same scripture and added scripture from the participants. Write a
reflection, poem, invitation to encourage people in the community to join you for worship service.

**Congregational Surveys and Analysis**

**Observation Survey**

Consider an Observation Survey. This can include initial observations and questions to be considered by the afterpastor. Some of this information can be gathered from attending leadership meeting, any of the small group and 1-1 events that were suggested earlier.

- Are the members attached to the identity of the church? To the past pastor? Both?
- Is the church identity the same as the pastor’s reputation?
- What is the church’s historical significance in the community?
- What are their traditions and celebrations?
- How has healing been addressed before the afterpastor arrived?
- Are the leaders attached to the identity of the church? The pastor?
- What is their historical significance in the community?
- How many families are part of the church?
- What is the role of the historical families?
- What is the average number of years of membership?
- Are members and leaders emotionally weakened, still in early phases of trauma?
- Is this the time for outside facilitator to lead a discussion about clergy sexual misconduct and its impact on this community?
- Is it time for a healing service?
• Who does this congregation desire to be, connected to each other, silent, connected to the community? Closed or open community?

• What is their reputation in the community, association, and ecumenical?

• What is their desired reputation?

**Church Fellowship Survey**

This survey or any survey should be administered when the largest number of people are present. As with any survey, share the purpose of the survey and when the results will be shared with the congregation.

• How does your faith in God impact your relationships at home, work, sports, social events?

• How often do you attend Bible study at this church? or another church?

• How often do you attend Bible study at another church?

• Would you come to revival?

• Did you attend the last revival? If yes, please share why you enjoyed it, if not please share the reason you did not attend. (i.e. schedule conflict, work in the evenings, need childcare)

• Have you served on a church committee, if yes would you do it again? If no, why not?

• What church committee would you like to participate?

• What do you enjoy most about church?

• What do you do with your friends at church?

• Do you have family members that attend this church?

• Do you invite family, friends, and neighbors to join you at worship, special events, workshops, Bible study? Please circle all that apply and add others that may be missing.

• Are interested in learning about pray and fasting?
• How often do you pray?

• How often do you fast?

• How do you resolve conflict? Do you pray about it, do you discuss it with a mentor, trusted friend? Do you discuss it with the others that are in involved in the conflict?

• Are you interested in learning more about spiritual practices?

• Are you interested in learning more about your spiritual gifts?

• How often do you read your Bible? Daily, weekly, monthly, seldom, never. Please circle the answer that is most characteristic. and foe how long?

• Share the ministries that interest you.

• Share the ministries that you participate in and ministries that you would like to start?

• How are you welcomed and included in church life?

**Consider a SWOT analysis**

This exercise could be led by the regional executive minister or a member of the restoration team. Before the SWOT analysis, leaders should discuss questions like these to see where the discussion could be difficult.

• How was the information about the pastor’s exit explained? Who shared it and when?

• How does the church do outreach? Is it through church-wide events, certain ministries, the pastor, selected leaders?

• What milestones has the church celebrated and how do they celebrate milestones, births, new members?

• How does the church support church members who are sick, shut-in, and in mourning?

• What is the church’s historical relationship with the region and other denominational organizations, if dually aligned?
• Who is being blamed for the power assigned to the clergy?
• Who holds the power?
• Who needs power?
• What are some of the happiest moments or memories connected to being a member of this church? of this community?

**Photo essay**

Intergenerational teams agree to answer three questions with photos and share their findings with the church.

• Where is God in the community?
• Where is God needed in the community?
• Where is our church evident in the community?

After the photos are shared and viewed the congregation can determine where this church is needed and begin to develop a plan. This is a project that is great if many people sign up but a small group of volunteers (10-12) will still be a good start. The church should be prepared to provide disposable cameras if needed and then pay to have the film developed. Likewise, the church would cover printing and display costs.

**Timeline:** Church leaders' buy-in is necessary before the idea is introduced.

• Groups formed via signup sheet; the church secretary keeps info.
• Groups have 3 weeks to take pictures
• All photos are placed in a common drobox or given to the church secretary.
• In 5 weeks a display is created gallery style; photos are categorized by the question
• The church should have a date on the church calendar that is 6 weeks out from the start date.

• The photos should be shared via all modes of communication with all members, friends, region partners, and local churches.

• Light refreshments served.

The congregants view the photos and place a green sticker on any photo they evidences an immediate need for the ministry gifts of this church. The congregants place a purple sticker for something they want to do in the next 18 months to 3 years. A video or PowerPoint of all photos should be available for those that are unable to walk or stand for long periods. Someone in the congregation will be asked to place their stickers on the photos.

This is an intergenerational activity, has reasonably low cost and can be executed fairly simply. Teens may show seniors how to use their smartphones to take pictures. It takes the church outside the walls of the church into the local communities. The photos provide a visual of a successful project and a visual of work to do. It also allows everyone to participate even if they do not take pictures. If people chose not to take pictures they can help create the display, create the video, prepare food and help calculate the numbers of stickers on each picture.
Workshops

Workshops should be led by outside facilitators, possibly a member of the Restoration Team. Some suggested workshops are as follows:

- Spiritual Gifts Assessment, Part I
- Application of Spiritual Gifts: Part Two (Connecting Gifts to Ministry (professional, clergy, laity))
- Usher Training: biblical role of the usher, practical aspects of being an usher. The importance of hospitality and safety.
- Deacon and Trustee training
- Leadership training
- Baptist Polity

Church Family Conferences

The purpose of the church family conference is to discuss the church’s financial condition, ministry updates and to prepare for significant events in the life of the church. It is the time when the annual budget is considered, bylaws reviewed, building renovations discussed, and emergency repairs considered; the congregation expects to share joys, concerns and to be heard through their votes. It is also the time when the restoration team will provide regular updates on the SWOT analysis and the forming of a search committee for the settled pastor. It is an opportunity for a member of the restoration team to share updates on any matters connected to clergy sexual misconduct such as legal proceedings, media coverage, new relevant confirmed information. The church family conference is a chance for the afterpastor to witness the strength, wisdom,
communication style of the congregation, the power brokers and the collaborative spirit of the congregation. It is also the place where controversy and strong feelings for or against a plan or idea can be shared.

The church family conference should resemble a worship service. There should be an opening prayer, scripture, and a hymn to set the tone. The hymn should be joyful (such as “Revive Us Again”). If prior meetings have been in a church conference room or a multipurpose room it might be a good idea to have it in the sanctuary to reinforce their connection as a community of faith and that the business of the church should honor God.

In the case of a church recovering from clergy sexual misconduct, the afterpastor should consider a pre-church family conference meeting to discuss any significant matters and to encourage questions. A panel of presenters/experts could be invited to share information about a building renovation or repair or any significant matter so that people have time to carefully consider options and feel prepared to vote. Even though the agenda may not include the prior pastor’s removal it may be an issue of concern; a pre-church family conference enables the restoration team to strategically address issues related to clergy misconduct so that unresolved issues/questions do not prevent the church from healthy and constructive discussion needed for healing and moving forward and do not derail the real purpose of the meeting. In this pre-church family conference, the afterpastor and the restoration team should focus on building consensus and creating an environment for healthy and inclusive dialog.
Definition of Terms

Afterpastor
A person that is anointed and gifted in healing and restoring people’s faith and relationship in God. He/she works well in the chaotic environment of a post-traumatic church that is grappling with clergy sexual misconduct. He/she specializes in guiding churches back to their mission by strategically coordinating all of the resources that are needed to heal and recover from this kind of trauma. They curate hope until the congregants can begin to reimagine a new future. The afterpastor must reestablish the office of the pastor, the balance of power and transition to the settled pastor.

Congregational trauma
A disruptive event in the life of the church that breaks the relationship between the congregation and God and the clergy and congregant.

Clergy sexual misconduct
An act/event that is an abuse of power, access and the sacred relationship between clergy and congregant. It is a breach of the clergy’s fiduciary and ethical responsibility to care for the spiritual, emotional wellbeing of all congregants. It breaks the relationship between clergy and congregation and between the congregation and God. It renders the victim powerless and devastates their faith.

Clergy sexual abuses
The misuse of power by the perpetrator and the inability of the victim to provide or deny consent because of that power differential. Clergy sexual abuse happens when a person with religious authority uses his/her role, position and power to sexually harass, exploit or engage in sexual activity with a person in his/her care. Even if an individual nominally agrees to some form of sexual interaction, contact or relationship, that agreement DOES NOT constitute consent.

This includes but is not limited to:
- sexualizing conversations (including via telephone, social media or email)
- asking for or transmitting unwanted sexual images or using unwanted sexual language
- touching or hugging people who do not want to be touched

8 Clergy Prevention Guide, https://cbf.net/safechurches, 7. Also, info is on both of these websites www.bwim.info/safechurches and www.cbf.info/safechurches.
• pushing for sexual involvement
• creating hostility when the person being targeted attempts to set boundaries
• using sexual language and jokes
• pressing or rubbing against a person, or
• invading personal space.

**Sexual activity**
This can include but is not limited to: touching sexual organs (over or under clothing), kissing, oral sex, masturbation, intercourse, or rape.

**Settled Pastor**
The pastor that serves as the senior pastor of a local ABC church.

**Disclosure**

In other denominations, like the Episcopal Church, uniform policies and actions are inherent in their polity and structure. The bishop, along with the parish leaders, follows dismissal processes and disclosures policies and practices. However, processes and protocols cannot mitigate the emotional upheaval caused when sharing information about clergy—especially a senior pastor or a beloved associate—that had to be fired, forced to resign, or placed on leave. Ultimately the news is shared by a single person and the manner (timing, location and who tells the story) that it is communicated is almost as important as the information. It is never an easy assignment to inform a congregation of clergy sexual misconduct. Rumors will likely have already started especially if the pastor

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
or clergy was removed immediately and now the congregation needs to catch up with the leaders. Hopefully the region staff is available to help craft the statement and present it. If possible members of the region team and the restoration team should be present when the statement is read. While this is difficult and some people may initially react harshly to the leaders and the person that shares the news, it is always best for the “congregation to learn about misconduct from the bishop or parish leaders than the press” 10 as it compounds the betrayal when heard from outsiders.” 11

Steps to be considered:

- Start by letting the congregation know that there will be a church meeting for members only. Send the notice by email, regular mail and all the ways the church normally communicates with the members about meetings.
- Select a person who is reputable and will share the disclosure statement with integrity and care.
- Open with prayer, a hymn or a song. Set the environment so that it is clear that all are gathered in God’s house even and especially when they are about to face something that will impact almost every person in the room.
- Tell the truth, the nature of the misconduct, when it occurred and if it involved a minor. Share facts that are part of public record, such as an arrest or police report filed for domestic violence. 12
- Share the church’s plan for continued updates about this situation.
- Do not share personal details about the clergy or the victim, other than that they were a member or nonmember.

11 Hammeal-Urban.
12 Hammeal-Urban, loc., 1167, 1219.
• Access public records and use that information to shape the statement.\textsuperscript{13}

• Do not share any details about the primary victim.\textsuperscript{14} Sharing the identity of the primary victim revictimizes the person. The church must care for its members, create a safe space and not add to the victim’s plight.

• Be brief and read a written statement limited to a few sentences.\textsuperscript{15} Extemporaneous speaking may not yield the best results.

• Allow a brief time for questions.

• Ask local therapists to be available at the meeting just in case they are needed.

• Ask region members and restoration team member to be present but not answer questions outside of the larger group setting.

The following sample disclosure statements are from the Episcopal Church. These statements are shared by the bishop and need to be modified to reflect the leadership structure of Baptist churches. Each statement provides a starting point and demonstrates communication that is efficient and does not revictimize the victim. Each statement also indicates support for the local parish and a commitment to support the congregants. All three ideas are essential elements in a good disclosure statement.

Bishop’s statement regarding misconduct by an ordained leader in a parish.

This past week I learned that Rev Z had an inappropriate relationship outside his marriage with an adult woman who received pastoral care from Rev. Z. This behavior on the part of any priest is not acceptable. As a result, I met with Rev. Z on Wednesday morning. I informed him of the seriousness of this matter and Rev. Z resigned as the priest of this parish at that meeting. This week I met with your wardens and officers to begin the work of looking forward to the future, as well as healing from this loss. The Rev. Y will be performing services at your church through [date]. Please know that my staff is working to provide care and

\textsuperscript{13} Hammeal-Urban, loc., 1190
\textsuperscript{14} Hammeal-Urban, loc., 1204
\textsuperscript{15} Hammeal-Urban.
support to all those affected by this situation. I am holding this parish, Rev. Z and Y, and all other individuals affected by this situation in my prayers. 16

**Bishop’s statement regarding misconduct by an ordained leader in a parish:**

It has come to my attention that the Rev. Z, your interim rector, violated safe church protocols as set in place by our diocese. The violations I am aware of do not involve children or minors. I asked for and have received Rev. Z’s resignation as interim rector of St. B’s. I and [name of judicatory staff member] will meet again with the leadership of St. B’s on Tuesday evening and then return on Thursday to meet with the staff to assist in determining how best to move forward at this time. 17

**Rector and wardens’ statement regarding allegations of sexual abuse of minor by lay member/leader:**

It is our responsibility to advise parish members that allegations of sexual misconduct have been received against Y, a member of our church. These allegations stem from a time about ten years ago and involve a person who was a minor that time. Y denies these allegations. These allegations have been reported to the appropriate civil authorities. 18

16 Hammeal-Urban, loc., 2536-2543.
17 Hammeal-Urban, loc., 2543-2548
18 Hammeal-Urban, Loc., 2545-2553.
Resources

Denominational Guides

The Presbyterian Church Guide for peaceful discussions during a disagreement. This guide is a useful tool to help prepare leaders and congregants for future difficult discussions. “Seeking to Be Faithful Together: Guidelines for Presbyterians in Times of Disagreement.” This guide provides an outline based on Scripture for discussion during conflict.

Baptist Women in Ministry (BWIM) and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) as part of a Sexual Misconduct Task Force Formed in 2016, developed a series of educational and instructional videos which include stories from victims, helpful vocabulary to deepen one’s understanding of the issues of clergy misconduct. The videos are easily accessed from their website and are available in both English and Spanish. BWIM and CBF also created a guidebook that is very helpful which includes sample documents. There are a few documents that are essential for the leadership and search committee, which are the Sample Sexual Conduct Code of Ethics and the Sample Release Form. These documents need to be modified to meet the particular details of each church but are especially helpful because they frame expectations and may prevent hiring an

afterpastor that may repeat patterns of clergy sexual misconduct behavior of the 

dismissed clergy.

The Sample Sexual Conduct Code of Ethics document clearly defines appropriate 
and acceptable behavior and should provide the opportunity for discussion about the 
sacred role of the afterpastor and the settled pastor. The Release allows those that are 
checking references to ask direct questions about sexual conduct, and it frees the referral 
sources to provide complete and detailed answers. Often sexual conduct questions are not 
specifically addressed during an interview or reference check. Yet these questions are 
essential to deter abusers and possibly prevent some from reentering the sacred office of 
the pastor. It is also essential for the sake of victims, survivors, and leaders that have 
suffered through clergy sexual misconduct. While ABC-USA has a database for 
participating clergy that are seeking clergy positions it not does act as a clearinghouse 
flagging pastors that have been dismissed due to sexual misconduct. Moreover, even 
when references are checked for legal reasons leaders within a church do not disclose 
clergy sexual misconduct. CBF and BWIM websites have useful tools for education and 
prevention.20

The Christian Reform Church has a tool kit that includes resources to respond to 
clergy misconduct. The tools include music, hymns, prayers, and sermon topics.21

20 See crcna.org/safechurch/respondingtoabusetoolkit. This link can be found on either website, 
www.bwim.info/safechurches and www cbf.info/safechurches.

21 See crcna.org/safechurch/respondingtoabusetoolkit.
ABC- USA has a standard code of ethics. All pastors should sign a code of ethics and it should be reviewed as part of the pastoral relations committee’s performance review at the local church. It should also be required for all clergy that are serving in a congregation and camos to have background checks.
SWOT Analysis

Here is a sample SWOT analysis chart that can be used to shape priorities for the post-traumatic church:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNAL FACTORS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES (-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRENGTHS (+)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about what you're good at, your unique assets and resources, and how your positive attributes are perceived by others.</td>
<td>Talk about improvements you need to make, any resources you lack, and how these negative attributes might be perceived by others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTERNAL FACTORS</th>
<th>THREATS (-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPPORTUNITIES (+)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List doors that are currently open to you, opportunities you can capitalize on, and how your strengths can create new connections.</td>
<td>List any harmful hazards, competitors, and how known weaknesses can open the door to threats.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: SWOT CHART

Articles

Below is a list of articles about clergy sexual misconduct from various religious leaders.

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship


The Reformed Christian Church

Lament for a Broken Community: This is an article from Reformed Worship that shares a prayer of lament - along with a testimony of acceptance and hope as a community journeys through incredible grief., https://www.reformedworship.org/blog/lament-broken-community


The United Methodist Church


Sexual Misconduct: What Every Member Should Knowwww.umc.org/./sexual-misconduct-at-church-what-every-member-should-know

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23 Many of the following references come from The Reformed Christian Church, Safe Church Ministry, Responding to Abuse Toolkit. Safe Church Ministry Worship Resources, crcna.org/safechurch/respondingtoabusetoolkit.

24 The Reformed Christian Church, Safe Church Ministry, Responding to Abuse Toolkit.

25 The Reformed Christian Church, Safe Church Ministry, Responding to Abuse Toolkit.
The Reformed Christian Church, Worship Services Incorporating Issues of Abuse

How Long Will You Forget Me, O Lord?: A service of lament based on Psalm 13,

What a Friend We Have in Jesus: A service of prayer for healing,
https://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-2004/what-friend-we-have-jesus-service-prayer-healing#.Xb8Sul8JRmk.email.27

Praying Our Emotions: The psalms urge us to pray the mess of our emotions as an act of faith; their ancient voices offer wise guides for worship,
https://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-2010/praying-our-emotions#.Xb8TVTj7tdM.email.28

Recommended Reading


26 The Reformed Christian Church, Safe Church Ministry, Responding to Abuse Toolkit.
27 The Reformed Christian Church, Safe Church Ministry, Responding to Abuse Toolkit.
28 The Reformed Christian Church, Safe Church Ministry, Responding to Abuse Toolkit.
Bibliography


Reverend Gina C. Jacobs-Strain loves the Lord and gave her life to Christ when she was in elementary school. She presently serves as the Executive Director for American Baptist Women’s Ministries (ABWM) and is a member of the National Executive Council for American Baptist Churches, USA. American Baptist Women’s Ministries is a Christ centered ministry which encourages and empowers women, young women and girls to serve God and to lead in their churches, communities and beyond addressing immigration, cross cultural relationships, intergenerational mentoring, economic empowerment, and education and prevention of domestic violence, and sex trafficking. Under her leadership, ABWM has recently launched a new AB GIRLS program, Hei-STEAM which connects AB GIRLS Christian Curriculum and local STEAM providers, helping girls understand God’s creative power in them. They have also expanded their Building Beloved Community ministry and seminars for young adult women. In 2019, ABWM launched a new webinar series, Avenues to Wholeness and in 2020 Courageous Conversation, in response to COVID-19. ABWM is forging new partnerships and expanding its reach through collaboration with regions, national organizations like American Baptist Churches - USA and American Baptist Home Societies as well as not-for-profits like New Baptist Covenant and New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking.

She served as the Transitional Pastor for First Baptist Church - New Market, (Piscataway, NJ); Interim Pastor of St. Paul Baptist Church, (Atlantic Highlands, NJ); Associate Regional Pastor for Women in Ministry for American Baptist Churches of New
Jersey (ABCNJ) and is an Associate Minister of Christian Education at St. Paul Baptist Church (Montclair, NJ). In her role as teacher she especially enjoys facilitating and inspiring Christian Educators to share the Word of God in collaborative and interactive studies and helping teacher and student discover immediate application of the God’s word to their everyday lives. Rev. Jacobs-Strain has served as a guest preacher/lecturer at Drew University Theological School, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, ABC-NJ Academy and the Wellness Lounge Webcast. She contributed to “Testify: ABC-NJ Devotional” book released in 2015. In 2016 she co-launched a Christian Education Workshop Series, “Leading Interactive and Engaging Bible Studies (L.I.B.S. TM)” at the ABCNJ annual Church Officers and Leaders Conference (COAL) conference and in 2017 created a conversation series, “The Intersection of Leadership and Healing.” She is deeply grateful for every opportunity to share the word of God and to be in fellowship with those that know and those that are seeking the witness of Jesus Christ’s redemptive love.

Reverend Jacobs-Strain earned a BA in Psychology from Rutgers University and graduated from Drew University’s Theological School *Magna Cum Laude* with a Master of Divinity degree. She also received the Old Testament Studies Scholar Award from the Biblical Studies Department. In 2015 she received a Certificate of Excellence from Palmer Theological Seminary & ABC-NJ Academy and graduated from the Nehemiah-Leadership Program in 2017. She is currently pursuing her Doctor of Ministry at Duke Divinity School. She is married to Cliff Strain; they have three sons and reside in West Orange, NJ.