

The Search For Healing

Ray Reid

***"From the psychological point of view, I have come to the conclusion that there are two major questions all of us are fundamentally seeking to find an answer to, as we live our lives. Our basic hope is that we can find fulfilling answers to these two questions. The first is: Who am I? or What is my true identity? The second is: How do I find love in my life?"
(from "The Need for Personal Hope")***

The Search For Healing

Ray Reid

Book 2

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CONTENTS BOOK 2

APPENDIX	462
Pain–hope–healing: the experience of faith community members when a church leader is guilty of sexual abuse	
Acknowledgements	463
Definitions	465
Executive Summary.....	471
Introduction	476
The Form of the Report.....	477
The Need for Healing in Situations of Church Leader	
Sexual Abuse.....	478
The Pain of Primary and Associate Victims	478
The Pain of Secondary Victims	479
The Pain of the Perpetrator.....	479
The Spirit of the Report	480
Section One: The Pain of Preparing the Context for Congregational Healing	482
Recommendation 1	
The Inevitability of Allegations	482
Recommendation 2	
Reactions of Religious Authorities.....	485
Immunisation Against Some Of The Effects Of The Secondary Victimization Of a Religious Authority.....	488

CONTENTS BOOK 2

Recommendation 3	
Seeking the Truth	491
Public Revelation	492
Publication of Policies and Procedures	493
Perceived “Cover-ups”.....	493
Vindication of Primary Victims.....	494
Opportunity for Other Victims to Come Forward	494
Recommendation 4	
Being Pastoral in Response.....	496
Recommendation 5	
Ecumenical Dialogue and Work.....	501
Section Two: Healing the Pain of Secondary Victims in Faith Communities - The Initial Disclosure to the Faith Community.....	504
Recommendation 6	
Reactions of Secondary Victims	505
Recommendation 7	
Systems Framework	510
Some Patterns in the Life of a Faith Community.....	511
Changing the Congregational Dynamics.....	517
Recommendation 8	
Needs of Traumatized Faith Communities	518
Composition of the Crisis Response Team.....	519

CONTENTS
BOOK 2

CONTENTS
BOOK 2

Recommendation 9

Aims of Congregational Healing..... 524

Informing the Local Faith Community..... 525

Meeting with the Leadership of the Traumatized Faith
Community..... 528

First Meeting of the Crisis Response Team..... 532

The Religious Authority's Preparation for Meeting with the
Faith Community..... 533

Strategies for Informing the Members of the Faith
Community..... 534

The First Faith Community Meeting 536

The Process of the Meeting 538

Other Points 544

**Section Three: Processes in the Longer Term Healing
of a Traumatized Faith Community**

Recommendation 10..... 546

Follow-up Meeting with Faith Community Leadership..... 546

Strategies in Long-Term Healing 546

Individual Members of the Faith Community..... 547

Small Group Grieving Work..... 547

Workshops Educating the Faith Community about the
Effects of Sexual Abuse in a Church..... 548

Workshops Educating the Faith Community about the

Prevention of Sexual Abuse in a Church 548

Workshops on Sexuality..... 550

Workshops Educating Local Leaders and Staff 551

Family of Origin Exploration..... 552

Developing a Congregation Genogram 552

Resource Material..... 553

Religious Service 553

Recommendation 11

Difficulties in Afterpastoring..... 554

Congregational Conflict..... 555

Other Processes in the Congregation..... 556

Current Behaviour by the Perpetrating Pastor..... 557

Sources of Personal Stress for the Afterpastor..... 557

Recommendation 12

Afterpastors 560

Non-Anxious Presence 561

Specific Skills Required by Afterpastors 562

Official Support 566

Recommendation 13

Length of Time for Congregational Healing..... 568

A Reorganised Healed Faith Community..... 569

Acceptance of the Past..... 569

CONTENTS **BOOK 2**

Measures to Maximise the Safety of the Faith Community
in Relation to Handling Any Future Incidents of Sexual
Abuse 570

Decrease in Sexual Abuse and Violence in the Faith
Community..... 570

Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities..... 570

Faith Development 571

Reaching Out to Others 572

Acceptance of Difference and Greater Personal Intimacy..... 572

Reconciliation and Forgiveness..... 573

Monitoring the Progress of the Faith Community..... 574

**Section Four: The Question of Re-assignment of
Church Leaders Who Have a History of Sexual Abuse
or Sexual Misconduct**

Recommendation 14..... 575

Emotional Responses to Re-Assignment Issues..... 575

The Principle of Safety for the Faith Community..... 577

Recommendation 15

Option of No Return to Ministry..... 578

Recommendation 16

The Context of Public Suspicion..... 581

The Context of Professional Debate..... 583

Recommendation 17

CONTENTS **BOOK 2**

Factors to Consider in Re-Assignment Decisions..... 585

Making the Decision 600

Conclusion..... 600

**Appendix: Auspice, Persons Interviewed and Major
Themes of Discussion**..... 602

Bibliography 614

APPENDIX

PAIN – HOPE - HEALING: THE EXPERIENCE OF FAITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHEN A CHURCH LEADER IS GUILTY OF SEXUAL ABUSE.



This is the 1996 Churchill Fellowship Report by Ray Reid, which was written as a manual for church leadership teams.

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The full Report is publicly available online on the Organisation's website, and can be downloaded from www.churchilltrust.com.au: choose 'Fellows and Reports' and enter 'Raymond Reid' into 'Fellow or Project' space, click on Search projects button, and choose option to Download Report.

NOTE: A summary of this report is included in this volume.
See 5.3, Congregational healing – assisting faith members when a pastor has been accused or found guilty of sexual abuse.

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Definitions

The literature and the church policies I have read are not consistent in the terms used to refer to the different types of behaviours encountered in church leader sexual abuse, although there is much commonality in the descriptions of those behaviours.

The following definitions will be used in this Report:

Church Leader

An ordained or officially recognised clergy person, or a member of a religious order.

Such persons are in roles which automatically place them in esteemed and trusted positions within a faith community.

The content of this Report discusses policies and procedures in relation to church leaders as so defined.

The policies and procedures may require some adaptation in cases where the sexual abuse or sexual misconduct is by others who have official roles in a faith community. In such cases the suffering experienced by members of a faith community may not be as intense or widespread as when a church leader is involved in sexual abuse or sexual misconduct.

Pastoral Relationship

A relationship between a church leader and another person in which:

- the trust of the person in the church leader as a church leader is fundamental to the establishment of the relationship, placing the person in a vulnerable position in relation to the church leader.

- the already greater power of the church leader is increased by the others vulnerability.

- the fundamental purpose of the relationship is the bringing of spiritual aid and comfort to the person. (Sacramental confession and pastoral counselling clearly fall under this heading).

and/or

- the fundamental purpose of the relationship is the education of the other person in spiritual and other matters. (Scripture study, formal schooling, youth work, supervision of church workers, including associate pastors, would fall under this heading).

Whether or not persons who define themselves as members of a particular church but

who have very irregular contact with the church and

who have had no contact with a church leader other than impersonally in liturgical settings

can be said to be in a pastoral relationship with the church leader is controversial

Child Sexual Assault

Any sexual touching of, or other sexual contact with, a legal minor that is defined in state or federal law in Australia as a criminal offence.

Sexual Assault

Any sexual touching of, or other sexual contact with an adult

without that persons consent that is defined in state or federal law in Australia as a criminal offence. This category includes contact with persons judged legally incompetent to consent.

Sexual Exploitation

A church leaders development of, or attempt to develop, a sexual relationship with a person who is in a pastoral relationship with that leader.

Any consent of the individual who is receiving the pastoral care is irrelevant to the determination of sexual exploitation.

Any physical or verbal behaviour intended by the church leader to arouse erotic feelings in the recipient of pastoral care is exploitative.

Sexual Harassment

Any unwelcome sexual conduct by a church leader which unreasonably interferes with a individuals job performance or crates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, sexuallyoriented humour or language, unwanted physical contact, inappropriate comments about physical appearance/clothing/sexual behaviour/sexual life-style and repeated unwelcome requests for social contact

Sexual Abuse

The general term which includes each of "child sexual assault", "sexual assault", "sexual exploitation" and "sexual harassment".

Each term refers to a situation in which the church leader has used power wrongfully. "Abuse" seems the appropriate word.

Sexual Misconduct

Sexual behaviour with another person by a church leader, where the behaviour.

- is in violation of the leaders publicly professed sexual commitment (marriage, vowed chastity as single person, promised celibacy),
- contravenes the moral teachings of the leaders church,

- is not definable as sexual abuse.

The behaviour is likely to give scandal and may attract ecclesiastical sanctions but is of no interest to the criminal or civil law.

Whether or not sexual relations with persons not in a pastoral relationship with the leader, and which do not involve any assault, would be classified as “sexual misconduct” depends upon the teachings of a particular church on sexual morality.

Sexual Problem

Sexual behaviour, (including thoughts and desires which have not been put into action), which the church leader defines as personally distressing.

Examples could be compulsive masturbation, compulsive viewing of pornography, confusion about sexual orientation, and being drawn to activities which might well result in sexual abuse or sexual misconduct.

Leaders with sexual problems, as defined, are in breach of no ecclesiastical, criminal or civil law.

Primary Victim

A person who:

- has been sexually assaulted as a child or adult

- or

- has been sexually exploited

- or

- has been sexually harassed by a church leader.

Associate Victim

A person who is closely related to the primary victim and has personally wounded by the victimisation of the primary victim.

A parent of an abused children or adolescent is the most clear example. The spouse or lover of an exploited adult is another.

Secondary Victim

A person who experienced emotional pain on learning of an incident of sexual abuse. Secondary victims are usually in a relationship of some kind with the perpetrator of the abuse, personal, pastoral, collegial or supervisory.

Victims

The generic term used to describe persons who have suffered emotional pain as a consequence of the sexual abuse of themselves or of another.

The term is used in this Report to describe an historical relationship to a perpetrator. It is not used to describe a psychological state of any person nor any person’s self-definition.

People healing from an experience of sexual abuse often describe themselves as “survivors”. It seems to me that this term, as a description of a psychological state or a self -definition, connotes too great an influence of the experience of abuse on current experience. There seems no alternative term in the literature for a healing or healed victim.

Religious Authority

A person whose role is to exercise pastoral care and pastoral authority, over a number of local churches or religious communities.

Bishops and Major Superiors of Religious Orders are clear examples. In denominations which are more congregational than hierarchical in structure, a number of people may share in the overall pastoral care of, and pastoral authority over, local churches or a particular local church. All such people are “religious authorities”.

Executive Summary

Ray Reid, Director
Centacare Catholic Family Services,
Diocese of Parramatta.

Project: To study ways to assist church members when their leaders are involved in sexual abuse - USA and Canada.

The 1980s saw the victims of child and adult sexual assault in the home breaking the silence and secrecy which surrounded these assaults and thus placing the issue on the public agenda. Victims of sexual assault, sexual exploitation and sexual harassment by church leaders found the courage necessary to come forward, telling their stories of being abused and seeking healing and justice from their faith communities.

Most Religious Authorities in faith communities struggled to come to terms with the revelations which reveal an aspect of faith community life which is very different from the image which faith communities have of themselves and wish others to have of them. The initial struggle was, and is, to find ways to deal justly and pastorally with the primary victims of church leader sexual abuse.

Only later did an awareness that the members of the faith community who are not directly abused also suffer when their leaders are accused of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct and need special assistance to move through a painful period of life in their faith community. Efforts at congregational healing in Australia have begun but the American and Canadian Churches have vastly more experience in the area and the study tour was undertaken to draw on their experience.

The Protestant traditions (I had contact with Episcopalians/Anglicans and Lutherans in the USA and Canada) were more advanced in

their understanding of the long term issues which are involved in the healing of faith communities wounded by sexual abuse. Those in the Catholic tradition were generally aware of the need for an initial crisis intervention but seemed to lack an appreciation of the long term issues which might face a traumatised congregation. The Franciscans of Santa Barbara Province and the Christian Brothers of the Canadian Province of St. Joseph, on the other hand, certainly used the crisis of public scandal as the beginning of a renewal of community life.

The Episcopalians in the USA are recognised as significant leaders in congregation healing. I was fortunate to meet with Chilton Knudsen of the Diocese of Chicago and then Nancy Myer Hopkins (and her husband, Bishop Harold Hopkins) of the Parish Consultation Service who have been very influential in guiding efforts at congregation healing in different parts of the USA. Both are significant contributors to the book **Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded** by Clergy Sexual Misconduct, published in 1995 by the Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. This book is highly recommended for those wanting to know more about congregation healing.

There appear to be no empirical studies which could lead to the construction of a more scientific model of the stages in the healing journey of a traumatised faith community. The knowledge which exists is in the form of the practice wisdom acquired by those who have consulted with such faith communities. The study of congregation healing is still in its pioneering phase.

Healing for a faith community involves that community feeling safe and being safe from sexual abuse by its leaders. The question of the re-assignment of leaders guilty of sexual abuse must be seen in this context and the question evokes many different and often highly emotional responses. There are no scientific norms

which provide empirical estimates of the risk to a faith community a re-assigned perpetrator would pose and little agreement on what would constitute an acceptable risk to a faith community. Judgments about re-assignment in the current state of knowledge have to be prudential rather than scientific. Nevertheless the possibility of rehabilitation and recovery for some perpetrators at least needs careful consideration from faith communities for whom redemption and forgiveness is an essential aspect of their belief.

The following recommendations summarise the essential findings of the study:

1. Religious Authorities acknowledge that true allegations of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by church leaders will inevitably occur in their particular churches and put in place policies and procedures reflecting this acknowledgement.
2. Religious Authorities as potential secondary victims of sexual abuse prepare themselves for the experience so that they will be better able to provide pastoral care when a situation of abuse is revealed.
3. The principle of truth-seeking and the telling of as much discovered truth as possible be fundamental in guiding the efforts of all involved the healing of and the seeking of justice for victims (primary, associate and secondary) of church leader sexual abuse.
4. Religious Authorities ensure that any policies and procedures to be followed when allegations of sexual abuse are made against a church leader are fully pastoral, promoting healing and justice, and are not written from within a framework which unduly emphasises the strictly legal aspects of the situation.

5. Religious Authorities seriously consider ecumenical dialogue and ecumenical work in framing and implementing their respective denominations policies and procedures in responding to situations of church leader sexual abuse.
6. Religious Authorities recognise that individual members of a faith community can suffer great emotional pain and spiritual distress when a church leader is found guilty of sexual abuse or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse.
7. Religious Authorities recognise that the degree of emotional pain and spiritual distress experienced by individuals in a faith community when a church leader is found guilty of sexual abuse (or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse) can be greatly influenced by the internal dynamics of that faith community.
8. Religious Authorities ensure that a Crisis Response Team is trained and is available at urgent notice to offer assistance to members of faith communities when one of their leaders is found guilty of sexual abuse (or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse).
9. Crisis Response Teams follow a systematic model when assisting in the planning of the revelation to a faith community that a church leader has been guilty of sexual abuse (or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse).
10. Members of Crisis Response Teams have knowledge of a number of strategies which can be used to assist members of local faith communities to heal over time from the trauma of learning that one of their leaders is guilty of sexual abuse or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse.

11. Religious Authorities acknowledge that the ministry of a church leader in a faith community which has been affected by a previous leaders sexual abuse or sexual misconduct can be particularly difficult.
12. Afterpastors be appointed on an interim basis only, receive special training for such assignments and receive official ongoing support during their period as an afterpastor.
13. Religious Authorities monitor the progress of a traumatised faith community towards healing for a period of five years after the disclosure of sexual abuse perpetrated by one of its leaders.
14. Religious Authorities have publicised policies about the conditions and procedures under which a church leader guilty of sexual abuse can return to any form of ministry with the safety of the community being the fundamental principle of such policies and procedures.
15. Religious Authorities have policies for the out-placement of church leaders, guilty of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, who are not able or willing to continue in any form of ministerial role, so that the safety of the wider community is maximised and appropriate pastoral care is shown to the perpetrator.
16. Religious Authorities in framing policies and procedures in relation to the reassignment of a church leader guilty of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct recognise the contexts of public suspicion and professional debate which surround the issue of reassignment.
17. The criteria used by Religious Authorities to judge whether or not a church leader who has been involved in sexual abuse or sexual misconduct can return to any form of ministry be

extensive and rigorous, with any significant doubt being resolved in the direction of non re-assignment.

Introduction

This Report is based on interviews I conducted in a nine week period in April-June 1996 with 56 people, experienced in the various aspects of the problem of church leader sexual abuse in the USA and Canada. I have also used the considerable written material the interviewees so generously gave me or told me about. The study was supported by Fellowship granted by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust in Australia.

The particular focus of the study was the ways in which churches can assist their members when a church leader has been found guilty of sexual abuse. Such efforts fall under the heading of **congregational healing**.

An allied focus of the study was on ways to assure church members that any sexual abuse perpetrator, whom a church permitted to exercise any kind of ministerial role, would not pose an unacceptable risk to them or their children.

Churches differ in their theologies and in their organisational structures. However, it is my belief that **no church can be true to itself if does not seek to heal pain and to correct injustice**. This is particularly so when pain and injustice are found within a church's own membership and structures. This belief underpins the whole Report.

Though the interviewees were working mainly within the Roman Catholic, Episcopalian/Anglican and Lutheran traditions, the problems occasioned by church leader sexual abuse seem to be common to all faith communities, including those which are not Christian. Hence it is my hope that all faith communities may find

some usefulness in this Report.

The Form of the Report

The Report is primarily addressed to:

denominational or religious leaders who are in a position to put in place policies and procedures which will apply when a church leader has been found guilty of sexual abuse or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse.

those whose responsibility it is to implement congregational healing programmes.

Given the sensitive nature of the issues discussed, it was agreed that no interviewee would be quoted directly. Any quotations would be from published works or public documents.

The Appendix gives the names of the interviewees and the topics discussed with them. The Bibliography includes the resource material supplied to me.

The Report is a synthesis of my previous knowledge and my learning over the nine week period of the study and I alone am responsible for that synthesis. I am grateful to the interviewees who were, without exception, generous in sharing their time, their knowledge and much of their resource material with me.

The Report takes the form of a series of recommendations and the reasoning behind them. Because the Report is more for church administrative purposes than for academic purposes, footnotes have been kept to a minimum.

The Need for Healing in Situations of Church Leader Sexual Abuse.

Pain and suffering are the inevitable consequences of sexual abuse perpetrated by a church leader.

The Pain of Primary and Associate Victims.

The pain of the person who has been abused, the primary victim, may be deep and complex.

There is the pain of the wound inflicted by the abuser. Feelings of betrayal of trust, shame, guilt, fear, powerlessness, anger, self-doubt, confusion, loss of religious faith and a sense of being used are common. Often these feelings show themselves in distressing bodily and psychological symptoms and in behaviours which make the living of a fruitful life more difficult.

Victims may have the pain of the journey to tell the story of their abuse, of overcoming shame and guilt, allowing another person to see the wound which has penetrated to the core of their being. Unfortunately, many victims also have the pain of the experience of rejection of them and their story. This pain is particularly acute, and may become chronic, when those rejecting the victim are those in the church to whom they have turned for justice and healing.

Members of the families of victims, associate victims, may experience many of the same feelings as do primary victims. Efforts to promote congregational healing are not likely to have any impact if primary and associate victims are not treated justly and in a way which truly facilitates and promotes their healing.

The Report assumes that churches have in place policies and procedures which address, in a just and healing way, the pain and the needs of primary and associate victims of church leader sexual

abuse.

This is a theoretical assumption for the purposes of the Report. The fact is that many churches are still struggling to put such policies and procedures in place.

The Pain of Secondary Victims

Many other people, secondary victims, within a church may suffer pain when a church leader has been found to have abused another person. Their pain will be described in the body of the Report. Secondary victims can include members of:

- the families of the perpetrator.
- the congregation or parish where the leader is currently ministering.
- congregations or parishes where the leader has ministered.
- the wider denominational church community, both clergy and lay.
- the denominational leadership, bishops and officials.

All of the above people can be in need of healing and can use the crisis of their being a secondary victim as an occasion for personal growth and a deeper faith. At the same time, the crisis can lead to the renewal of church structures so that they better facilitate the growth of the faith community.

The healing of secondary victims is the major concern of this Report.

The Pain of the Perpetrator

Perpetrators can suffer pain of varying types and degrees.

Some of their pain can have its origin in the inevitable changes in their circumstances following the revelation of their abuse e.g. loss of status, position, employment, of wife and family. A perpetrator may experience this pain whilst denying any sexually abusing activity.

Some pain can have its origin in a deep sense of guilt and shame over the sexual offences. Unfortunately, not all abusers experience guilt or shame and any pain they feel is only their response to external changes.

Whatever the origin of perpetrator pain, there are instances of abusers committing suicide once allegations have been brought forward. Church support of the perpetrator is clearly necessary.

This Report is concerned with perpetrators only from the point of view of their possible return to any form of ministry and the effect this would have on any congregation they were working within.

Nevertheless, the Report assumes that a church has in place policies and procedures which address the legitimate needs of the perpetrator, and offer the potential for healing.

A perpetrator does not forfeit membership of a particular denomination because of perpetrating sexual abuse. Membership of a particular local church community will almost inevitably be forfeited.

Healing for the denominational church involves assisting the perpetrator to find a legitimate place within that church if that is what the perpetrator wishes. This legitimate place will not mean a formal ministerial role if it is judged that the persons exercise of that role would place the safety of the community at an unacceptably high level of risk.

However, the question of the possibility of some formal ministerial role for some perpetrators is discussed in the Report.

The Spirit of the Report

I have attempted to write the Report with a realistic appreciation

of, and compassion with, the pain and suffering sexual abuse by a church leader brings to its many victims, primary, associate and secondary at all levels of a church.

At the same time, I have not wanted that appreciation and compassion to diminish the force of the challenge the phenomenon of church leader sexual abuse presents to churches as we know them. Any effective effort to heal the pain and correct the injustice of church leader sexual abuse will challenge a church's self-understanding and result in a more life promoting church.

Readers will decide how well I have balanced compassion and challenge.

Section One: The Pain of Preparing the Context for Congregational Healing

Recommendation 1

Religious Authorities acknowledge that true allegations of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by church leaders will inevitably occur in their particular churches and put in place policies and procedures reflecting this acknowledgement.

The Inevitability of Allegations

No one knows the actual number of church leaders who have perpetrated sexual abuse or have been involved in sexual misconduct in Australia in the past fifty years. However, current experience is that more and more people are coming forward with allegations which are true.

The offences which have attracted the most media attention, and are foremost in public awareness, are those of child sexual assault, reflecting the criminality of the assaults and the greater societal knowledge of the psychological damage such assaults can inflict on children and adolescents.

There is a growing awareness in the community of the psychological damage that can result in victims of sexual exploitation by church leaders and by professionals whose clients are, by definition, in vulnerable positions. It can be confidently expected that more victims of sexual exploitation will come forward as community awareness of sexual exploitation grows and the possibility of civil litigation is more widely understood.

Because the abuse of power and the abuse of it sexually is a universal human possibility, and because churches of their very nature create opportunities for that abuse, no church or religious

can consider itself as “safe” from revelations of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct involving its leaders.

In her annotated bibliographies on sexual abuse issues in faith communities Ann Wolf lists articles and resources involving (in no particular order) the following faith communities: Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Buddhist, Unitarian Universalist, Greek Orthodox, United Methodist, Zen, Baptist, United Church of Christ, Seventh Day Adventist, Mennonite, Judaic, Presbyterian and Episcopalian.¹

Allegations of sexual abuse by nuns are beginning to come forward in the USA. Some of these relate to sexual exploitation of novices and junior nuns by their superiors. Others relate to abuse, physical and sexual, by nuns of young children in their care. Ann Wolfs bibliography gives addresses for two support groups for people abused by nuns. These events and establishment of support groups reflect a growing professional and community awareness that sexual abuse is not exclusively perpetrated by males.²

Churches and Religious Orders in Australia will serve their faith communities best by assuming cases of sexual assault (child and adult), sexual exploitation, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct will continue to arise in those faith communities.

Religious Authorities can then be proactive in having policies and

¹ A Wolf, “Sexual Abuse Issues: an annotated bibliography” Part 1, *Theology Digest*, 41:3, 1994, pp 203-248; Part 2, *Theology Digest*, 41:4, 1994, pp 331-344.

² M Elliott (ed.), *Female Sexual Abuse of Children*, Guildford Press, New York, 1993. M Benowitz, “Comparing the Experience of Women Clients Sexually Exploited by Female versus Male Psychotherapists” in *Breach of Trust; Sexual Exploitation by Health Care Professionals and Clergy*, J.C. Gonsiorek (ed.) Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 1995.

procedures both to address the inevitable pain when the cases arise, and to minimise the likelihood of future incidents by educational programmes.

I had the clear impression that in the USA and Canada written policies of particular denominations in relation to church leader sexual abuse reflected the issues that the denominations were originally forced to face in public view.

Roman Catholic policies tended to concentrate on issues of child sexual assault except where State legislation regards sexual exploitation as criminal. The policies of Episcopalians/Anglicans and Lutherans tended to reflect their experience of mainly having cases of sexual exploitation coming into public awareness.

Therapists interviewed in the study who worked in Catholic settings tended to believe that the child and adolescent victims of Catholic clergy and religious were almost exclusively male. Therapists working outside of Catholic settings were not at all convinced of this. Certainly, the impression I gained was that the vast majority of victims of reported church leader sexual abuse of all kinds were female. Catholics could well find that the incidence of the assault on female children and adolescents is under-reported and be unprepared if the number of cases involving abuse of female children and adolescents increases.

It is difficult to make policies and procedures in the midst of a crisis. Healing at all levels will be easier if preparations are made for what, unfortunately, seems inevitable.

Recommendation 2

Religious Authorities as potential secondary victims of sexual abuse prepare themselves for the experience so that they will be better able to provide pastoral care when a situation of abuse is revealed.

It is not surprising that the literature and the public record are almost silent on the experiences of those religious authorities who have been through an experience of secondary victimisation. Bishops, and those in major church leadership positions are not known for being seen to be vulnerable.³

All those experienced in congregational healing stress the importance of the Religious Authority standing with congregations wounded by the revelation that one of their trusted leaders is guilty of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct (or even is under investigation, following allegations of sexual abuse).

A Religious Authority will find standing with a wounded congregation no easy task; it will be a near impossible task if the Religious Leader is personally traumatised by the experience of secondary victimisation.

Reactions of Religious Authorities

Given that becoming a Religious Authority does not take away a persons emotional life and emotional struggles, an unprepared

³ An exception is the paper "Care for Victims and Their Families" by Archbishop Harry J. Flynn of the Catholic Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in which he describes for his fellow bishops some of his experiences in meeting victims of clergy sexual abuse in the Diocese of Lafayette. The paper is included in *Restoring Trust: A Pastoral Response to Sexual Abuse*, Vol. 1, a set of resource materials prepared for Catholic American bishops by the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse, November 1994.

Religious Authority⁴ is very likely to be traumatised and experience many of the following when first placed in a situation of secondary victimisation:

In relation to the victims

- genuine empathy for the victim
- a desire to see justice prevail
- incomprehension at the expressed pain of primary victims
- a feeling of helplessness in attempting to respond to the victim
- confusion about the respective rights of victims and perpetrators
- uncomfortableness at victims anger personally directed at the Religious Authority
- a desire to blame the victim for the abusive situation
- anger at the victim for coming forward and highlighting that the church is not what it seems and not what it professes to be
- anger at the victim for forcing the diversion of resources of time and money from other projects.

In relation to the perpetrator

- shock at the identity of the perpetrator who may have been trusted and valued colleague or friend
- difficulty in believing in the truth of the allegations even when an investigation has shown that the allegations have substance
- feeling of being personally betrayed
- anger
- loyalty
- a desire to punish
- a desire to excuse
- a wish to support
- reluctance to apply church discipline against the perpetrator.

⁴Note in this Report a “Religious Authority” is always a person, never a Board or Council or some other collective body. Such bodies have individual persons as their members and it is their personal responses which can influence what the collective body does.

In relation to the church

- guilt over the failure of the church to protect the vulnerable in its midst.
- guilt over the failure of church training systems to identify and assist potential perpetrators or exclude them from ministry.
- anxiety about the effect on church finances.
- anxiety at the effect the revelation of the abuse will have on the reputation and credibility of the church.
- being expected to be a pastor and provide support to all victims, primary, associate and secondary, as well as for the perpetrator (and, at times, expected to do so in a way which denies the needs of either victims or perpetrators).
- fear of potential or actual media involvement.

Personal issues and feelings

- confusion about the best way to handle the situation
- a wish that it would all go away
- general demoralisation
- a feeling of loss of control over the situation
- felt threat to personal power and position
- uncomfortableness at recognising own potential for abusive behaviour
- a spiritual crisis, a struggle to maintain religious faith in the stress of dealing with the external crisis
- confrontation with any unresolved personal sexual issues.⁵

It is no wonder that the Alban Institute lists dealing with cases of clergy sexual exploitation as secondary in degree of stress only to

⁵ I am indebted to Bishop Harold Hopkins for many of the above suggestions made in our personal conversation and in his “The Effects of Clergy Sexual Misconduct in the Wider Church” in *Restoring the Soul of a Church: Healing congregations wounded by clergy sexual misconduct*, Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Laaser (eds.), Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1995, pp 116-139.

the death of a spouse.⁶

It is also not surprising that persons experiencing many of the feelings listed above would tend to go into psychological defence, into degrees of denial and minimisation of the tragic situation confronting them.

The problem is that Religious Authorities are very likely to be at the centre of an institutional system which will support and, perhaps solidify, these personal psychological defences. The result of the general defensive stance is that victims can find it very difficult to find healing and justice within their own faith community. A church ends up failing to be true to essential mission.

Clearly, Religious Authorities have to find ways to prevent their psychological defences and organisational defences determining their responses to victims of church leader sexual abuse. The books by Jason Berry,⁷ and Elinor Burkett and Frank Bruni,⁸ give graphic examples what can happen when defences are not overcome and church responses are based on those defences.

Immunisation against some of the effects of the secondary victimisation of a Religious Authority

When persons are immunised against a particular disease, typically they are minimally exposed to the disease so that their bodies are able to build up resistances to fight the agents of the real disease should they arrive. The metaphor of immunisation may be

⁶ Harold Hopkins, op.cit. p 133

⁷ J Berry, *Lead Us Not Into Temptation : Catholic Priests and the Sexual Abuse of Children*, Image, New York, 1994.

⁸ E Burkett and F.Bruni *A Gospel of Shame: Children Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church*, Viking (Penguin Books) New York, 1993.

useful as a way of understanding how Religious Authorities can prepare themselves and their faith communities for a revelation of sexual abuse in their midst.

No preparation will ever be totally successful in eliminating the painful aspects of the experience of secondary victimisation for a Religious Authority. It is like the anticipated death of a loved one. There is still a sense of shock when it happens.

“Immunisation” for Religious Authorities could be achieved by vicariously experiencing secondary victimisation by:

- talking with colleagues who have been through secondary victimisation, learning from their experience.

Many Religious Authorities in the USA and Canada have considerable experience and seem to be far less traumatised than previously by new cases of sexual abuse, not allowing a new case to dominate their time and their emotions. However, they seemed to learn the hard way by going through the pain as cases came to light. Perhaps, Australians can by-pass some of the pain of the journey.

- talking with primary, associate and secondary victims. It seems that it is very difficult for anyone to gain an understanding of the pain of victimisation without listening to victims stories, hearing their pain and truly being compassionate in the sense of suffering with them.

It seems to me that, for this purpose, a Religious Authority should not first meet with victims from faith communities directly in the pastoral care of the Religious Authority. Thus, there is not likely to be any essential conflict of interest for the Religious Authority and unimpeded listening is more likely.

Victim and Survivor Advocacy groups would no doubt be delighted to arrange meetings between some of their members and a Religious Authority.

- gaining intellectual information about the known effects of sexual abuse on all types of victims by reading, participation in seminars or by conversations with experts.
- finding a person who will act as a caring and knowledgeable support person in a situation of secondary victimisation. This will require the Religious Authority to be emotionally vulnerable in the presence of the support person. For some Religious Authorities this will require some practice.
- honestly confronting any unresolved personal issues about sexuality and the exercise of authority in difficult situations.

A Religious Authority who personally carried out the above action plan would experience some of the pain which comes with real secondary victimisation and thus to a certain extent be immunised and prepared for the actual experience when it arrives.

Further such a Religious Authority is more likely to commit resources to the preparation of the faith community for advent of revelations of sexual abuse and to insist that policies and procedures to assist victims and perpetrators are in place.

Recommendation 3

The principle of truth-seeking and the telling of as much discovered truth as possible be fundamental in guiding the efforts of all involved in the healing of and the seeking of justice for victims (primary, associate and secondary) of church leader sexual abuse.

Seeking the Truth

One of the interviewees remarked that in the matter of sexual abuse by church leaders “everyone has an agenda”. Examples of personal agendas in those involved in efforts to heal (including self-healing) and to promote justice for victims are:

- a desire to reform the church
- a desire to defend the church
- avoiding personal pain
- unresolved personal faith issues
- unresolved personal histories of being abused
- seeking of financial benefit (e.g. therapists and lawyers whose professional efforts will be compensated)
- seeking to minimise financial loss (e.g. insurance companies)
- promotion of a victim advocacy organisation.

It is very important that all who are closely involved in the work of healing and justice-making be committed to the search for truth and that they are aware of any personal agenda which might impede their discovery and acceptance of truth. A healing and vindication of victims that is not grounded in truth will not be complete.

This is not to say that the discovery of truth is easy, nor that at any one moment different people will agree on what the truth in a particular case is.

It is simply to say that the discovery of truth will be easier if all are committed to its discovery even if the truth in a particular instance

does not fit their personal agendas.

Public Revelation

All interviewees in the study stressed the need for as much information as possible to be revealed publicly to a congregation (and, if circumstances require, to the general public) when a church leader has been removed from a church position for being guilty of sexual abuse, or while allegations of sexual abuse are being investigated.

The 1992 General meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the USA recommended to its members that one of the principles guiding a diocesan response to allegations of sexual abuse be:

"Within the confines of respect for privacy of the individuals concerned, deal as openly as possible with members of the community."⁹

The protection of the primary and associate victims right to privacy is paramount. Civil and ecclesiastical laws give some rights to perpetrators, particular to alleged perpetrators under investigation, which need to be taken into account in the formulation of what is publicly said by Religious Authorities and others.

Nevertheless the principle has to be that whatever can be said by a Religious Authority has to be said. Some interviewees said the content of rumours is normally far worse than the actual truth.

The reasons why this principle is fundamental are all based on the need to heal pain and to promote justice in a wider sense than

⁹ Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse, "Diocesan Policies" in *Restoring Trust*.. op.cit.,

justice as determined by the decisions made within a legal system.

Publication of Policies and Procedures

An essential context for the truth seeking and the truth revelation by a church is the prior publication of policies and procedures which detail what steps the church will take when dealing with allegations of sexual abuse by one of its leaders.

Thus victims, including secondary victims, can gain some measure of confidence in the church's response as it unfolds if that response follows the previously stated policies and procedures. Lack of accountability in the church system is a typical context for church leader sexual abuse. Healing and justice is promoted by a church's willingness to be accountable to its members and the wider community.

Perceived "Cover-ups"

Any seeming reluctance by a Religious Authority to be less than forthright in public statements (even when the reticence is necessary to protect the privacy rights of victims) is seen by many in the media and the church to be an attempt to "cover up" the problem.

Stephen Rossetti in a survey of 1013 Catholic lay people in the USA and Canada, all of whom were active lay ministers in parishes found that their trust, support, satisfaction and confidence in the priesthood, and the Catholic Church in general, decreased significantly with the exposure of sexual abuse of children by clergy. The majority felt the Catholic Church's response was inadequate, felt they were not being given sufficient information and favoured a more direct and open confrontation of the problem.¹⁰ Simply,

¹⁰ S. J. Rossetti, "A Wounded Church; Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church", *Today's Parish*, October 1992, pp 9-13.

perceived “cover-ups” produce more secondary victims and make it more difficult for a church to promote healing among its members because of their eroded trust in their own church.

Hearing the “bad news” from the church starts the healing process for secondary victims.

One Catholic priest with considerable experience in dealing with sexual abuse matters in the church stated the following “rule of thumb”: **Determine whatever information could be brought into the public arena by an opposing lawyer and reveal it first.**

Vindication of Primary Victims

The revelation of truth promotes the vindication of primary victims and thus facilitates their personal healing.

Such victims are given clear public proof that their church has heard their pain, acknowledged the origin of that pain, and has taken action to bring the perpetrator to account and to protect the community from further offences.

Opportunity for Other Victims to Come Forward

It may take a considerable amount of courage for a primary victim to overcome a sense of personal shame and make an allegation of sexual abuse against a church leader. A belief that the allegation will be ignored or not properly investigated, and that appropriate action will not be taken certainly impedes a primary victims approach to a church.

A public statement about an occurrence of church leader sexual abuse signals to all that the particular church is willing to hear and act appropriately on allegations of sexual abuse against its leaders.

The Franciscans of Santa Barbara Province, through an Independent Board of Inquiry, made efforts to contact some

950 ex-students of a seminary where some friars were found to have abused students. The ex-students were invited to bring any concerns relating to their period in the seminary to the Board. The purpose clearly was to assist in any healing required by any victim who had not previously come forward. About a third of the exstudents replied and over 30 additional victims were identified.

Such a response by the Franciscans of Santa Barbara Province is surely courageous and exemplary. They acted out of the essence of their mission in the church and reached new depths in their self-understanding as a Franciscan community. Their Provincial Minister, Fr. Joseph Chinnici O.F.M., clearly believed that the community of the Province had grown through the pain of a very public scandal to a more authentic life.

Recommendation 4

Religious Authorities ensure that any policies and procedures to be followed when allegations of sexual abuse are made against a church leader are fully pastoral, promoting healing and justice, and are not written from within a framework which unduly emphasises the strictly legal aspects of the situation.

Being Pastoral in Response

All interviewees believed that historically in the USA and Canada the responses of Religious Authorities to matters of church leader sexual abuse were influenced too much by advice from lawyers, civil and church. This advice, even if correct in strict legal terms, tended to be narrow and, at times, resulted in further pain and suffering for victims.

The victims advocacy organisation LinkUp which has contact with over 5000 people identifying themselves as victims of church leader sexual abuse would argue that the strictly legal perspective still predominates in the way churches, in general, interact with victims. Responses from Religious Authorities are capable of re-victimising a person making an allegation of church leader sexual abuse.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago's self-understanding of its Gospel obligation can be expressed as follows: **Our first obligation is to be church. All legal advice in specific situations must be viewed in the light of that fundamental obligation.**

The legal perspective and the system it generates are by nature defensive. Legal systems are concerned with the definition and protection of rights and obligations. The legal system may be called into action when there is a question of the violation of rights of a failure to observe an obligation. In Anglo-Saxon legal traditions such

questions are typically resolved through an adversarial process, involving in psychological terms, attack and defence.

Another part of the legal perspective is that it is concerned with the minimum. What, for example, is the minimum way a person can behave to ensure that the law is not broken? What needs to be done to avoid a court requiring the payment of money? This emphasis on the minimum is the polar opposite of the normal stances of churches which are concerned with the promotion of life to the full within the framework of their particular theologies.¹¹

John O'Malley, Director of Legal Services, Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago makes the following points:

"People of good faith do not view their church to be an adversary and they feel confused and betrayed when it acts in that manner. They expect understanding and compassion, not confrontation".

"It seems to me that there is an important difference between the civil legal rights of the Church and the duty to exercise those rights responsibly. Certainly the Church has the right to place a claimant to his or her civil burden of proof, but in the face of credible evidence of misconduct- or an admission- is it just to do so? In my opinion it is never appropriate to use the litigation process as a tactical weapon. It is professionally irresponsible and devastating to the integrity of a Church institution".¹²

¹¹ J. A. Serritella, unpublished address to the Midwinter Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church, 1990.

¹² J.C. O'Malley, *Serious Misconduct on the Part of Clergy-Church Personnel: Church Credibility*, an address at De Paul University's Center for Church State Studies, November 1995. Text given to me by Mr. O'Malley.

There seems to be a consensus among those who work with victims who first approach a church with an allegation of church leader sexual abuse that such victims are not primarily seeking financial compensation. This may be part of what they justly seek.

Hence, adversarial and confrontational responses by Religious Authorities, and the systems which surround them, not only confuse and hurt victims but also intensifies their anger at the church which they feel has already abused them.

Often the only way that a victim then sees to obtain vindication is to pursue a maximum financial settlement. In the USA, where lawyers can receive contingency payments, there is no shortage of lawyers willing to assist in the pursuit of the maximum compensation dollar. Juries and others who determine compensation payments, believing that church responses have contributed to victim suffering, may well award higher compensation payments on the basis of such a belief.

It seems to me that the initial church responses were based on a belief or a hope that the number of people coming forward with allegations would be minimal and that there would be little to no publicity surrounding the matters. Thus legal advice initially did not take into account how the playing what the Americans call A legal hardball” would effect the public credibility of a church. It also did not take into account the effect the loss of credibility would have on the determination of other cases involving financial compensation.

Quite apart from any theological or religious belief considerations, a strictly legal response which is not pastoral may very well end up costing a church more money in compensation than it would have otherwise been obliged to pay.

Jack Hammel, (Legal Department of the Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco) believes that “an enhanced focus on the pastoral

aspects (**particularly at the investigatory phase**) would help restore the severely tarnished image and credibility of the Church (especially its clergy). Ironically, I believe it would also, in the **long run**, result in **fewer** suits being brought (and smaller settlements and jury awards).” (emphases in original).¹³

None of the above considerations is meant to deny the importance of the legal dimension, especially when there is serious doubt as to the truth of an allegation or when proposals for financial compensation would be judged by a reasonable person to be clearly excessive.

There was a well publicised and proved to be false allegation against Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago. In the USA there has been a very public and, at times, acrimonious debate about the accuracy of previously “repressed memories”. There is now a recognition that allegations need proper and speedy investigation.

The fact that an investigation is necessary does not preclude assistance in a pastoral way to the person making the allegation who, by definition, is suffering in some emotional way. The philosophy of the Office of Victim Assistance, set up by the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, is: **We respond to pain**. The truth or otherwise of the allegation is irrelevant to the offer of pastoral assistance, which usually includes payment for therapy for primary victims, and work with people in traumatised parishes.

In relation to any tendency of Religious Authorities to hand over the making of responses to their legal advisers, and in relation to any tendency of legal advisers to assume that their role is to direct the church response, the observations of Jack Hammel are pertinent:

¹³ J.C. Hammel, “The Role of the Diocesan In-House Attorney” in *Restoring Trust...* op.cit., p 3.

I believe I speak for many Diocesan Attorneys (certainly many whom I have spoken to in the western United States) when I say that our “starring role” in this great play should now rightfully be relegated to membership in the supporting cast. The legal crutches, often used in the past by the other actors, must be cast aside if the viability and credibility of the Church is to be restored.¹⁴

A perception that a Religious Authority is being pastoral rather than strictly legal in responding in a situation of church leader sexual abuse facilitates the healing of secondary as well as primary and associate victims, by demonstrating concern for all victims over concern for the strict legal rights of the church.

¹⁴ J.C. Hammel, op.cit., p 7.

Recommendation 5

Religious Authorities seriously consider ecumenical dialogue and ecumenical work in framing and implementing their respective denominations policies and procedures in responding to situations of church leader sexual abuse.

Ecumenical Dialogue and Work

The impact that church leader sexual abuse has upon a faith community does not seem to depend on the particular theology which underpins that community. Interviewees in the study had experience with a wide number of denominations experiencing church leader sexual abuse in their midst, non-Christian faith communities such as Buddhist and native American included. The congregation dynamics described in all faith communities were very similar.

What is common is the human experience of the betrayal of trust by a leader and individuals and communities reactions and responses to that betrayal.

From that perspective it would seem that Religious Authorities from all denominations could learn from each other in framing and implementing their respective denominations policies and procedures in responding to situations of church leader sexual abuse.

The Minneapolis-St.Paul Council of Churches in 1988 established a Committee on Sexual Exploitation within Religious Communities. Members of the Committee were denominationally appointed. They developed protocols which were useful to all denominations, only requiring modifications to take account of the different ways churches structure their internal administration.

I was told that the first Catholic protocol which came to the attention

of the Committee required extensive modification because of the obvious influence of lawyers in framing it. That the Catholic protocols now clearly reflect a pastoral approach is no doubt partly the result of the willingness of the Catholic Religious Authorities in Minneapolis and St. Paul to listen to the advice arising from the experience of other denominations.

The impressive training video **Understanding the Sexual Boundaries of the Pastoral Relationship**, produced by the Communications Office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul is useful across denominations.¹⁵ Representatives from churches (Catholic and Episcopalian), the academic sector (The Program in Human Sexuality, University of Minnesota) and the community sector (The Walk-in Center) were featured. The production of the video illustrates how joint ecumenical efforts can save time, energy and money as well as facilitating the transfer of valuable practice knowledge.

Churches in Minneapolis and St. Paul have profited in another way by their ecumenical efforts. Because they are open to victims coming forward with an advocate who is drawn from another denomination and who thus is perceived to be independent, churches are seen to be more willing to be accountable and more open to truth and justice.¹⁶

The Interfaith Sexual Trauma Institute, housed in St. Johns University and Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, is another example

¹⁵ I saw it being used in training by Episcopalians in Chicago.

¹⁶ For a discussion of advocacy work in Minnesota see : M.E Maris and K.M.McDonough "How Churches Respond to the Victims and Offenders of Clergy Misconduct"; N.Biele and E.Barnhill "The Art of Advocacy". Both articles are in *Breach of Trust...* op.cit.

of ecumenism arising in Minnesota. The Institute describes its basic mission as the prevention of sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment through research, education and publication. Many experts from different denominations serve on its Board Committees.

The Minnesota experience of ecumenism may not be typical in the USA. Many would see the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago and the Episcopalian Diocese of Chicago as being leaders in the effort to respond pastorally in situations of church leader sexual abuse. Key personnel in each institution seemed to be unaware of their counterparts.

I was told that in the USA major Catholic Religious Orders are somewhat reluctant to share with each other their experiences in any detail. Allowing vulnerability to be seen is not easy. Yet the benefits to all can be great.

Section Two: Healing the Pain of Secondary Victims in Faith Communities - The Initial Disclosure to the Faith Community

Recommendation 6

Religious Authorities recognise that individual members of a faith community can suffer great emotional pain and spiritual distress when a church leader is found guilty of sexual abuse or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse.

When a Religious Authority becomes aware that a church leader is guilty of sexual assault or sexual exploitation and thus has betrayed the essential trust of church members it is clear that the leader cannot continue to minister in the current assignment or call. A church protocol which does not require immediate withdrawal of the perpetrator from the assigned ministry or call is clearly defective.

Similarly, a church protocol is defective if it does not require a person alleged to have committed child sexual assault or sexual assault to stand aside from ministry while an investigation is conducted into the allegations. In such cases the current safety of the faith community cannot be accurately assessed, and what the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago calls “an over-abundance of caution and concern” is appropriate.

The gravity of any sexual harassment, and the scandal likely to accompany sexual misconduct, will determine if withdrawal from assignment or call is necessary.

If a church leader is no longer able to minister in the current assignment or call in any of the above circumstances, then the members of the congregation become secondary victims of the perpetrator. (In any instance where the allegation, after proper

investigation, is found to be without foundation and the church leader returns to the former assignment or call, the members will have had an experience of secondary victimisation in the period of investigation.)

Reactions of Secondary Victims

The intensity and precise nature of the emotional pain and spiritual distress experienced by an individual in a congregation or parish depends, in part, on factors in each individual.

Secondary victims in congregations and parishes can experience any of the following as a personal reaction:

In relation to the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator

- **shock**, an temporary immobilising numbness and inability to think rationally
- **total disbelief**. “There has to be some mistake”, I know our pastor would never do such a thing”
- **bewilderment**. “How could the minister do such a thing? How could anyone do such a thing?”
- **betrayal**. “I trusted the priest with some of my innermost secrets and now I find he is like this”
- **disillusionment**. “I thought the pastor was so holy”
- **anger**. “I could scratch his eyes out”
- **rage**. “If I see him I am afraid I wont be able to restrain myself. Ill physically attack him”
- **feeling generally exploited**. “I can see now that the pastor took advantage of our good will in a number of non sexual ways. We were just used”
- **blame**. “All this mess is his fault”
- **shame**. “I can’t tell anyone that he was my priest”
- **desire to punish**. “I hope he goes to gaol and can never minister again”

- **wanting to forgive.** “It is our Christian duty to forgive the sinner and forget the sin”
- **wish to support.** “We have to support the pastor”
- **desire to excuse.** “What the priest did was not really so bad and, besides, he was under a lot of pressure”
- **delight.** “I am glad he is gone. I never liked him and he was a hopeless pastor anyway”
- **concern for future.** “What will happen to the minister now”.

In relation to the victims

It must be remembered that, because of the need to protect victims privacy, members of congregations and parishes rarely know the identities of victims, the victims personal stories or any of the details of the alleged or substantiated abuse. Particular congregations and parishes may not even know if the primary victims are in their midst or belong to another congregation or parish.

Nevertheless, members of congregations and parishes can experience the following in relation to the victims, known or not.

- **empathy.** “I know what they are going through”.
- **thirst for justice.** “They have my support. The church must treat them justly”
- **desire for more knowledge.** “Who are these people and what really happened?”
- **anger.** “How dare they come forward and make all this trouble”
- **blame.** “It takes two to tango. Some women go out to seduce clergy”
- **suspicion.** “They are just after money”
- **bewilderment.** “Why did it take so long for them to come forward? Couldn't they let sleeping dogs lie?”
- **incomprehension.** “Does the experience of being abused really affect people so much? Aren't they just trying to get sympathy and play the victim role for all its worth?”
- **guilt.** “I had an idea that something was wrong but I did nothing”.

In relation to the church

- **betrayal of trust.** “The church has let me down. I had faith in the ministers and the leadership”
- **security threatened.** “I always believed that the church was a place of refuge and safety for me and my children. Now you tell me this has gone on”
- **loss of confidence in the teachings of the church.** “How can you believe what
- they tell you when they obviously do not believe it themselves?”
- **considering leaving.** “If that is what goes on I'm out of here. Maybe I'm finished
- with any church, not just this one”.
- **anger at perceived hypocrisy.** “They lay down all these rules about sex and then
- we find out they have don't keep the rules themselves”.
- **anger at leadership.** “They must have known about this earlier. Why didn't they do something? Why have they kept us in the dark until they were virtually forced to tell us?”
- **blaming of leadership.** “If they knew what they were doing they would never make mistakes like appointing or calling people like that”.
- **feeling abandoned.** “Where is the Bishop? The Bishop should be here with us. Don't they care?”
- **anxiety.** “What will become of us now? Can we survive as a congregation?”
- **concern about sacraments.** “The priest was our marriage celebrant. Are we really married as far as the church is concerned?”
- **awareness of limitations.** “We are a human community. Mistakes, even dreadful ones will be made”
- **acceptance of pain.** “We will all hurt but we can survive and grow”
- **hope.** “We can learn from this and we will have a stronger and

better faith community”.

In relation to God

- **Loss of faith.** “I cannot accept a God who would allow children to be abused by someone acting in the name of God and the church”
- **Loss of trust.** “I accepted Jesus as my personal saviour. I thought he was supposed to keep people from harm”
- **Sense of abandonment.** “I can’t get in touch with God any more. I can’t pray. It seems that God does not care about me”.¹⁷

Personal issues and feelings

- **anxiety about potential victims.** “Were any of my children or my friends victims and I don’t know about it? Did I unknowingly place my children or myself in a situation of potential danger?”
- **anxiety about explaining to children.** “How will I tell the children that the priest has gone? They loved him”
- **depression.** “I’ve got no energy for anything since I learned about this”.
- **feeling of being stigmatised.** “People look at me strangely when they find out I go to this church”
- **past hurts.** “I was abused in my past and this has brought all up for me”
- **a wish that it would all go away.** “Can’t we just put this behind and move on?”

Behavioural Reactions

The above feelings may manifest themselves in the following ways:

- **headaches**
- **stomach aches**
- **insomnia**

- **nightmares**
- **obsessive rumination about the events**
- **general emotional tension and irritability**
- **over reactions to minor provocations**¹⁸

An individual member of a congregation or parish may experience some or all the above reactions and feelings at different time. It is unlikely that one person could experience them all simultaneously.

However, it is likely that, at any given time in the immediate aftermath of a church leaders departure from a congregation or parish, each reaction and feeling will be being experienced by at least one member of the congregation or parish.

It is clear that any Religious Authority who did not attempt to assist people in such pain would be tragically failing in the responsibility of pastoral care.

¹⁸ See C. Cradock and J.R. Gardiner, “Psychological Interventions for Parishes Following Accusations of Child Sexual Abuse” in *Slayer of the Soul*, S.J. Rossetti, (ed.), Twenty Third Publications, Connecticut, 1990, pp 127-130.
W.H.Bera, “Betrayal: Clergy Abuse and Male Survivors” in *Breach of Trust.. op.cit.*, pp 99-102

Recommendation 7

Religious Authorities recognise that the degree of emotional pain and spiritual distress experienced by individuals in a faith community when a church leader is found guilty of sexual abuse(or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse) can be greatly influenced by the internal dynamics of that faith community.

Members of faith communities where a church leader is found guilty of sexual abuse (or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse) do not suffer individual pain and distress alone. They suffer together with others in their faith community. How the faith community deals collectively with its shared pain and distress makes an impact on the healing of the individual members.

Systems Framework

Both Nancy Myer Hopkins and Chilton Knudsen, who are recognised as expert congregational leaders in the USA, suggest a systems framework is useful in attempting to understand how faith communities attempt to resolve their collective and individual pain.¹⁹

A systems framework for thinking about the life within faith communities is, perhaps, not familiar to many Religious Authorities and to members of faith communities.²⁰

¹⁹ N. M. Hopkins, "Living Through the Crisis" in *Restoring the Soul...* op.cit., pp 201-231. C.Knudsen, "Understanding Congregational Dynamics" in *Restoring the Soul...*op.cit., pp 75-101.

²⁰ The Alban Institute in Maryland has published works promoting the systems way of thinking about life in faith communities. Examples are: N. M. Hopkins, *Clergy Sexual Misconduct: A Systems Perspective*, Alban Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, 1993. N. M. Hopkins, *The Congregation is also a Victim: Sexual Abuse and the Violation of Trust*, Alban Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, 1992. P.L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*, Alban Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, 1993.

A systems approach to the life of a faith community will regard the faith community as a whole made up of number of inter-related "parts" which interact and influence each other in ways which can be seen to be patterned and thus predictable. The "parts" may be individuals in formal and informal roles, or groups of individuals, formally constituted or informally gathered.

When a faith community is faced with the crisis of having one of its leaders found guilty of sexual abuse (or under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse) the patterns of interaction the community normally uses will continue and may even become exaggerated. These patterns may or may not facilitate the healing of the congregation.

Some Patterns in the Life of a Faith Community

Each of the patterns can be discussed in terms of a position on a continuum between two polar extremes.

The Location of Authority²¹

Authority is the ability to influence decision making in the congregation, formally or informally.

Authority can be **concentrated** in the hands of one or a few. It can be **dispersed** widely over many.

In many of the congregations where pastors had been removed for sexual abuse the authority in the congregation was almost totally held by the perpetrating pastor. Often he was a very charismatic

²¹ G. Parsons and S.B.Leas, *Understanding Your Congregation as a System*, Alban Institute, Bethesda, Maryland, 1993, pp 30-37.

personality who attracted followers who were quite dependent on him.²² Such charismatic pastors often used their spiritual authority to convince congregants that their particular congregation was special, either more progressive or more faithful to the teaching of the denomination than other congregations.

The shock experienced by members of such congregations when the pastor is revealed to be destructively different to his public persona can be easily imagined. The religious faith of many of the congregation is in fact emotionally concentrated on the pastor.

One after-pastor lamented that almost all of the potential leaders in the congregation had left because of the dominance of the previous pastor. The after-pastor was finding it difficult to form a strong leadership team to assist in the healing and restoration process. Too many needy and dependent personalities.

In another congregation the authority was too widely dispersed. There were many groups which were in conflict and jealously guarded their own power. The healing process in this congregation was severely retarded for about two years until a strong and determined afterpastor was appointed and managed to concentrate the authority in the congregation more appropriately.

The Processes of Decision-Making and Information Sharing²³

These processes can be **formalised**, with clear procedures outlined. They can be **flexible** allowing for maximum initiative.

²² The interviewees in the study when discussing particular cases all referred only to male perpetrators. Hence I will use masculine pronouns in referring to those perpetrators.

²³ Parsons and Leas, op.cit., pp 37-41

A congregation which was characterised by a very strong emphasis on formality and the use of the proper channels would have great difficulty in managing the intense and often conflicting emotions aroused when a church leader is removed as a result of sexual abuse. In such a situation the interactions in the community will never be neat and conform to established formal rules.

One consultant told me of her experience with a congregation which had no established rules for decision-making and information sharing or else had abandoned them in the crisis. The consultant had to lay down very basic rules such as the normal procedures for meetings before any healing processes could begin. Interestingly, this congregation had a high proportion of academics in it.

The Processes of Personal Relationships

Steinke believes that all individuals in their personal lives have to balance their needs to be separate from others and to be close to others.²⁴ Congregations can be described in terms of the patterns which promote **closeness** or **distance** among members.

There are congregations which are characterised by too great an emotional **closeness** among members. In these congregations there is a strong tendency for members to have a poorly developed sense of their own personal selves and to relate in a way which fuses the individuals together so that they seem to live the one emotional life rather than their individual lives.

Such congregations find it difficult to accept differences among their members. There is strong pressure to conform to the congregation's ways of behaving and thinking, resulting in a certain sameness among the members.

²⁴ Steinke, op.cit., pp 26-40.

There may not be much true intimacy among the members even though there appears to be much conversation which might even be described by the members as “sharing”. This is because individuals will not feel free to disclose what they really think and feel for fear of being seen to be different.

Nancy Myer Hopkins thinks that the emotional climate of such congregations makes sexual abuse and sexual exploitation more likely.²⁵ If the congregation is found to be emotionally fused with a perpetrating pastor, then the pain of the loss of the pastor is greater. It is also likely, however, that the emotional identification with the pastor will lead to denial or minimisation of his offence and a tendency to blame the victims and the church leadership for removal of the pastor. The journey to healing for such congregations is arduous.

On the other hand there can be congregations which are characterised by too great an emotional **distance** among members. Although members may have a strong sense of identification with the congregation and be very committed to it, they may in fact live in ways which emotionally isolate them from each other.

This can happen within the communities of religious orders. There was no doubt that the journey to healing for the Franciscans in Santa Barbara Province and the Christian Brothers of Canada involved the movement towards a form of community life which was characterised by more emotional closeness and true intimacy.

Congregations where members are unable to share their feelings with each other will find the healing process difficult. One after-pastor was working with a congregation whose cultural ethos included a strong element of stoicism. Her belief was that the

²⁵ N.M. Hopkins, *The Congregation...* op.cit., p 24

congregation had not fully healed from an incident of sexual exploitation by a previous pastor in the 1950s when another incident occurred some 40 years later. The stoicism of the congregation no doubt helped it survive but may also have prevented a complete healing from the hurt of 40 years ago.

Talk Rules²⁶

Nancy Myer Hopkins says that congregations have rules which regulate what can be publicly talked about within the congregation and what must be kept secret. There can be rules which regulate what can be revealed to those outside the congregation and what cannot be revealed. There can be rules about how things can be talked about. Specifically there will be rules about how conflict is to be managed. Communication patterns may be described as **closed** or **open**.

These rules are normally unwritten but are known to all in the congregation. They may not be immediately obvious to an outsider.

A “closed” congregation which has strongly binding rules about **secrecy** and not “displaying your dirty linen in public” will be resistant to any attempt by others outside their congregation to assist them. They also will have difficulty in their self-healing attempts because their own internal rules will prevent the open and frank discussions which are essential to the healing process.

It must be remembered that church leader sexual abuse can only occur in a context of secrecy. Perpetrators typically use their power to bind their victim to secrecy. Congregations can unknowingly collude with that secrecy or, when the secret is out, try to minimise the spread of the revealed information.

²⁶ N.M. Hopkins, *“Living Through the Crisis”* op.cit., p 205.

Chilton Knudsen lists some ways congregation can attempt to prevent the secret that a church leader is currently abusing or exploiting someone in the congregation from emerging into the awareness of the congregation. The processes all aim at fostering confusion and unclarity about roles and responsibilities in the congregation or distract the congregation by focusing its attention on peripheral and trivial matters.²⁷

When the secrecy is broken but is known to only a few, and the situation has been handled by the Religious Authority with “discretion”, there are a variety of ways congregations can attempt to cover the tracks which can be summarised as “pretending” on official and unofficial levels that the abuse did not happen and hence will have no consequences for the future.

Chilton Knudsen notes that there are signs which alert an observer to the possibility of a congregational history of church leader sexual abuse. Some of these are a reluctance to talk about the past, the mysterious absence of expected documentation from a specific period of the congregations history and the unexplained disappearance of a formerly vital programme, particularly one involving children.²⁸

Congregations which have patterns of avoiding open conflict or avoiding conflict about the real issues will also have difficulty in healing. Intense conflict among members of congregations is to be expected in the aftermath of the breakdown of trust which accompanies the disclosure of church leader sexual abuse as personal reactions and responses differ so widely.

²⁷ C. Knudsen, “*Understanding Congregational Dynamics*” op.cit., pp 83-84.

²⁸ C. Knudsen, “*Understanding Congregational Dynamics*” op.cit., pp 84-85.

On the other hand, an “open” congregation which does not have sufficient restrictions in its talk rules will not be able to understand primary victims need for privacy and the legal considerations which restrict the full disclosure of information to the congregation.

Changing the Congregational Dynamics

From what has just been highlighted it is clear that those attempting to assist a congregation to heal over a period of time must have some understanding of congregational dynamics and of ways to bring about change in the dynamics which retard healing. Some of these ways will be discussed later in the Report.

Recommendation 8

Religious Authorities ensure that a Crisis Response Team is trained and is available at urgent notice to offer assistance to members of faith communities when one of their leaders is found guilty of sexual abuse (or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse).

Needs of Traumatized Faith Communities

Members of a faith community where a church leader has been found guilty of sexual abuse, or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse, immediately need:

- leaders within the wider and local faith community who are not traumatized by the events
- as much information about the findings and allegations as can be publicly revealed without infringing the privacy rights of primary victims and any legal rights of the perpetrator or alleged perpetrator
- an opportunity to meet and have ongoing contact with the Religious Authority so that members have visible and tangible evidence of the denominational leaderships real appreciation of their pain and willingness to journey with them
- information about the procedures which the denomination normally follows in the situation where one of its leaders is accused of sexual abuse and how those procedures are being followed in relation to the primary victims and their own church leader
- information about the civil and criminal laws which must be obeyed in the current situation and which may limit the

information available to the congregation

- information about the range of normal experiences which members of congregations experience in such situations. This may give those who need it both a language to name their pain and permission to express it
- basic information about the effects of sexual abuse on primary victims
- an awareness that healing for all is possible
- opportunities to discuss with other members of the congregation their responses to the ongoing events and to process their feelings in a safe and accepting environment
- awareness of counselling resources available within the church or the general community
- opportunities for community prayer for all victims and the perpetrator
- power to begin the planning of their own healing processes

Composition of the Crisis Response Team

Given the immediate needs of a faith community which has suffered the loss of one of its leaders through sexual abuse the Crisis Response Team needs to include the following:

- a Religious Authority whose ongoing personal contact with them will be recognised by the faith community as a true sign of the denominational leaderships pastoral care for them. A token appearance by some representative of the Religious Authority is more likely to anger than console the faith community

- a person who is knowledgeable in trauma and grief counselling
- a person who is knowledgeable in crisis intervention with communities
- a person who can provide the necessary information to the congregation about the applicable church and legal procedures
- a person who is knowledgeable about the effects of sexual abuse on primary, associate and secondary victims
- a person who has an understanding of faith community dynamics
- (if available) a person from another congregation which has experienced healing following church leader sexual abuse. Such a person is a living sign of hope to the traumatised congregation. The Lutherans in Milwaukee call such a person a “sponsor”. It is vital that “sponsors” have worked through their own issues so as to be sufficiently objective about the newly traumatised congregation which may differ in significant aspects to their own
- if faith communities are likely to include schools, a person who can provide consultancy to school staff who will have to assist the children in the school process their feelings about the traumatic events, and who may have to answer parental enquiries about ways to talk with their distressed children
- a person who can advise the faith community leadership on ways of handling media enquiries.

The above list outlines the range of knowledge and skill which should be available to the faith community. One person may have a combination of skills so that the actual number of persons available

will depend on the personal skills of the members of the Crisis Response Team. On the other hand, the size of a congregation may require two or more members of the Crisis Response Team to possess the same set of skills.

The leaders of Crisis Response Teams are normally psychologists or therapists who have skills in dealing with traumatised people and communities.

Two interviewees in the study stressed from painful experience that there must be **a minimum of two persons** (preferably one of each gender) involved in attempts to heal congregations. The Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago has a pool of trained persons from which to draw so that it can be expected that sufficient persons will be immediately available to assist in particular crises.

Religious Authorities need to estimate the maximum number of people they may need in any potential crisis situation and plan accordingly. The overall gender balance of Crisis Response Teams needs to be considered. Most authorities on congregational healing advise equal numbers from each gender.

It is also probably wise to ensure that the lay members of Crisis Response Teams outnumber clergy members as a mistrust of clergy in general often is part of the experience of secondary victims in faith communities.

Members from other faith traditions should be considered as well as their presence would signal that the Religious Authority is not in any sense trying to “cover up” the problem.

No one with a history of having been a perpetrator should be allowed to work directly with traumatised congregations, no matter how advanced their recovery.²⁹

A failure of a Religious Authority to offer appropriate assistance to a traumatised faithcommunity may be interpreted as a second betrayal by the church. Some congregational members can focus great anger on a Religious Authority whom they feel has abandoned them in their time of need. Such people can feel victimised by the Religious Authority.

Finally, it must be noted that the Crisis Response Team advocated here should be part of a broader response team which has to handle the many different aspects of the situation at a denominational level. Bishop Harold Hopkins points out that the following people or systems are involved when allegations of sexual abuse against a church leader in the Episcopal Church are made:

- accuser
- accusers family
- diocese
- regional and national Episcopal bodies
- accused
- accused's family
- local congregation
- local community.³⁰

Included in the diocesan system are the dioceses insurance company, the diocesan legal advisers and, if the diocese has one, its public relations office. If the case involves abuse of a minor the relevant state authorities will also be involved.

²⁹ This is the policy of the Episcopal Parish Consultation Service Advisory Board as reported in N. Hopkins "The Congregation is also a Victim..." op.cit., p 26.

³⁰ H. Hopkins, "Primary Elements in a 'Systems Approach' to Prevention and Response to Clergy Sexual Misbehaviour" in *Clergy Sexual Misconduct...* op.cit., p 65.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago has a protocol which comes into immediate effect once an allegation of church leader sexual abuse of a minor is made. The protocol assigns responsibilities to a number of people and ensures that all systems with a role to play in the situation are notified and continually updated on developments. The response to an immediately affected congregation is part of an over-all systematic response.

Recommendation 9

Crisis Response Teams follow a systematic model when assisting in the planning of the revelation to a faith community that a church leader has been guilty of sexual abuse (or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse).

The situation of the removal from assignment or call of a priest or pastor because of sexual abuse is one of strong emotion and high drama. It is not a time for evolving general procedures about how to assist traumatised faith communities. A general model of proceeding must be in place beforehand. It can then be adapted to the specific and unique circumstances of a particular faith community.

The models of immediate congregational healing discussed with me were much more similar than different, particularly in relation to the immediate crisis intervention. Nancy Myer Hopkins and Chilton Knudsen have pioneered much of the work in congregational healing and the models seem to draw heavily from their work.

The model is presented here for the consideration of those involved in the direct healing of congregations and/or the training of those who will be so involved likewise draws on the pioneering work of Nancy Myer Hopkins and Chilton Knudsen.

Aims of Congregational Healing

The immediate aim of all efforts at congregational healing is to assist the members of the faith community to move through and beyond the painful experience of secondary victimisation.

Another aim is to assist members of the faith community, collectively and individually, to put in place systems of faith community life which will decrease the likelihood of further instances of church

leader sexual abuse.

These aims are conceived within the overall mission of a church which is to provide the best possible context for the passing on and living out of its essential religious message. Christians, for example, would say that the mission of the church is the passing on and living out of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Church leader sexual abuse places giant obstacles to that mission.

Informing the Local Faith Community

The precise time when members of a faith community are told that one of their leaders is under investigation, or has been removed from assignment, or has resigned following allegations of sexual abuse, depends on a number of factors, including a denominations policy about such matters.

Such policies, following the model of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, should require a church leader credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor to be placed on administrative leave while an investigation by church and state authorities takes place. Matters of criminal law are clearly involved in such cases and the faith community needs to feel safe while the investigation is conducted.³¹

Where the allegations are of sexual exploitation, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct are made, the criminal law may not be relevant. Primary victims may want the church to totally protect their

³¹ One interviewee believed that American faith communities are more aware than previously of the possibility of false allegations of sexual abuse. There is an increased awareness of the number of false allegations which have been made in what Australians would call "Family Law cases". There also has been extensive publicity given the "false memories" debate. Some members of faith communities in the USA may be able to suspend judgment in relation to an accused church leader while an investigation is conducted. Australian faith communities may not have the same degree of capacity to suspend judgment.

privacy. They may be satisfied if the church justly determines the outcome of their allegations entirely within church procedures. They may not be contemplating any civil action.

In such cases it seems that churches decide on the initial facts before them whether or not to require the accused church leader to take administrative leave while an investigation is conducted. The possibility of media attention is an important factor in making this decision.

Members of faith communities, where a leader has been placed on administrative leave following allegations of sexual abuse, must be told of the fact of the allegations and the subsequent events as soon as possible, preferably before there is any media coverage of the allegations. Healing work with the congregation begins at this point.

Where a decision has been made to investigate the allegations without informing the relevant faith communities at the time, those communities must be informed as soon as possible about any decision that the church leader will no longer continue to minister to them. The general reasons for this decision need to be given to the relevant faith communities³²

In many cases accused church leaders, when confronted with the allegations, choose to resign from their ministry. There has been vigorous debate in the USA about whether or not the faith community should be appropriately told of the events leading up to

³² If the church investigation has not resulted in a finding of sexual abuse it will be a matter of judgment as to whether or not the faith community is told that there has been an investigation which has cleared the church leader. The problem is that the good name and reputation of a person can be damaged by the publication of allegations even though these are competently judged to be without foundation.

the resignation. One of the justifications advanced for secrecy is the protection of the perpetrators immediate family from the inevitable painful social consequences of a disclosure. Cautious lawyers no doubt advocate silence as a protection against the church being sued by the perpetrator.³³

The Greater Milwaukee Synod of the Evangelical Church in America gives three compelling reasons for appropriate public disclosure:

The truth is better than lies or rumours. Allegations of sexual misconduct are particularly susceptible to rumours and distortions that, over a period of time, could destroy a congregation”.

The church’s mission is to reach out to all who need love, healing and reconciliation and to prevent future abuse.

Disclosure may be required “to help protect the Synod and the congregation from potential legal liability for the actions of a pastor involved in sexual misconduct”.³⁴

Healing work with a faith community in all cases begins with the first disclosure.

All faith communities where the church leader has ministered must be offered an opportunity to initiate healing processes for their members.

Their actual needs will vary, depending on factors like:

³³ In “*Understanding Congregational Dynamics*” op.cit., p 9, Chilton Knudsen says suits by perpetrators against the church are quite rare, although often threatened

³⁴ *Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Misconduct Against Members of the Clergy*, a “White Paper” issued by The Greater Milwaukee Synod of the Evangelical Church in America, 1993, p 16.

- the length of time since the accused ministered in a particular faith community
- whether or not identified victims come from a particular faith community
- changes in the membership of a particular faith community since the accused ministered in their midst.

Meeting with the Leadership of the Traumatized Faith Community

It is essential that the leaders of the Crisis Response Team meet with members of the leadership of the local faith community as soon as possible after the decision for public disclosure has been made. A number of meetings may be necessary over a short period of time for the following purposes:

- They provide a safe forum for leadership members to process their initial reactions and responses to the disclosure. The range of responses is potentially the same as in the wider faith community and the Crisis Response Team members may have to use their trauma counselling skills in the context of what, on the face of it, is a planning meeting.
- If this aspect of the meeting is handled well then the leaders have had a positive experience of what is proposed to be offered to the general membership. They are more likely to support the initiation of congregational healing processes.
- They demonstrate that the Crisis Response Team sees itself as providing a resource to the local faith community, rather than coming in and disempowering its leadership and members. I had the impression that the first attempts at congregational healing in the USA did not give sufficient scope for local faith

communities to organise and direct their own healing processes, drawing on outside assistance as required. The “outsiders”, perhaps, had assumed an unconsciously “rescuing” stance, implicitly assuming that they knew in some detail what was best for the local faith community. Certainly, the need to listen to and empower the faith community was stressed to me by a number of interviewees.

- They enable the Crisis Response Team leaders to begin to form an assessment about the how the leadership and the faith community functions. The strengths and weaknesses of the community are observed. A picture of the actual distribution and exercise of power and influence in the faith community may begin to emerge. The styles of relating will be in evidence. Any unspoken rules about conflict management will be operating. All this information is useful to Crisis Response Team in planning its strategies for being a resource to the particular faith community.
- They begin the planning for the implementation of the public healing processes. As far as possible, members of the leadership of the faith community should have roles at the very beginning of this public process. If they are to play a role in the facilitating of small group discussions within a larger faith community meeting, some training for this task will probably be necessary.
- However, it is possible, even likely, that some of the leaders may be so personally traumatised by what they have learned that they are psychologically incapable of playing a part in the initial public healing processes. Such members will need to be gently but authoritatively excluded from a public role at this stage.

The planning of the public healing processes needs to take account of the following:

- Whether or not there are identified victims within the local faith community. Allegations are often related to events in a previous assignment of the church leader. This does not mean there are no current victims and a context must be established which makes it easy for any such victims to come forward with appropriate privacy.

If there are identified victims within the current faith community, plans to protect any requested privacy need to be put in place.

Identified primary and associate victims may request to attend any public meeting of the faith community. Such people need to be cautioned that they cannot necessarily expect that all members of the faith community will be sympathetic to their suffering and some may turn on them with extreme anger. Even if their identities are not revealed they may hear many things which will wound them. Clearly they cannot be excluded from a faith community meeting and if they come it should be with a support person.

- Whether or not there is a church school within the faith community. If there is plans to assist school staff prepare for the responses of students and their parents need to be made.³⁵
- Whether or not a faith community meeting is likely to include a number of adolescents. If so, specific plans to assist them need to be put in place, particularly if the identified primary victims are adolescents.

³⁵ C.Cradock and J.R.Gardner, in "Psychological Interventions in Parishes...", op.cit., pp 131-135, discuss child and adolescent reactions when allegations of church leader sexual abuse arise in relation to a person they know.

The need for support for the perpetrator, spouse and children. In more hierarchical churches this responsibility is more properly exercised by the level above the local faith community. In all cases the healing of the local faith community requires that perpetrators and their families are treated with truthful and compassionate justice.³⁶

A decision must be made about the suitability of the spouse or any members of the perpetrators family being present at a faith community meeting. In most cases their presence is not advisable because they are either in total denial or are extremely angry at the perpetrator. It may be necessary to ask the spouse and family not to attend the faith community meeting at which the sexual abuse is first discussed. If so, the decision of the current leadership should be conveyed to them well beforehand.

It is interesting to note that the Chicago Catholic Archdiocese does not give an option about the presence of a Crisis Response Team in the parish when a public disclosure about the removal of priest from his assignment in the parish is to be made.

Such authoritative action is no doubt much easier to take the more hierarchically organised the denomination is. Such action, of course, says that the Archdiocese will not collude with any tendency in the local parish towards secrecy, minimisation or denial. In less hierarchical denominations Crisis Response Team leaders may have to struggle to overcome such tendencies in very influential leaders in the faith community who have the power to block the implementation of public healing processes.

³⁶ Ann Legg and Derek Legg in "The Offender's Family" in *Restoring the Soul...* op.cit. pp 140-154, list the following difficulties which may be experienced by members of the offender's family : betrayal, loss of status and role, economic problems, stress-induced illness, being blamed by families of origin and members of faith communities, anxiety about well-being of children, anger and grief.

First Meeting of the Crisis Response Team

The leaders of the Crisis Response Team need to meet with members of the team before they interact with the traumatised faith community. In such meetings:

- Team members will have an opportunity to process their own personal responses to the disclosure. No matter how experienced the team members are another incident of church leader sexual abuse will evoke some personal reaction, particularly if the (alleged) perpetrator has a high public profile or is known personally to a team member.
- Team members are informed of the initial healing strategies decided upon in the meetings of the faith community leadership and the Crisis Response Team leaders. Roles and responsibilities in relation to those strategies are assigned.
- Team members learn of the leaders initial assessments of the faith community so that they have some idea of the specific context within which they will be working.

I was told of one incident where a team intervened in a parish without having a prior team meeting. The pastor of the faith community (an associate pastor was the one accused) in his feedback to the Crisis Response Team bluntly told them in writing that they needed to “get their act together first” before dealing with the local faith community. The team’s effort was so unco-ordinated.

It is important that the Religious Authority who will be present in the public healing processes attend the meeting of the Crisis Response Team so that the role which the Religious Authority will play is integrated into the total healing effort.

The Religious Authority’s Preparation for Meeting with the Faith Community

A Religious Authority’s first experience of being present to a faith community traumatised by church leader sexual abuse can be predicted to be like no previous experience of pastoral visitation to a faith community.

Normally a Religious Authority can expect to be greeted with warmth and affection, and certainly with deference and respect. Faith communities can feel honoured to have the Religious Authority with them.

A Religious Authority visiting a traumatised faith community is almost certainly going to be the focus of intense anger from some members of the faith community.

For some the Religious Authority may be the living symbol of an institution which they believe has betrayed their trust and failed to protect them. For others the Religious Authority may be the person who has deprived them of their beloved pastor. They can believe that the Religious Authority was too sympathetic to people who either are grossly disturbed or maliciously out to destroy the reputation of the pastor.

Others may have deep and unspecified anger and the Religious Authority is a convenient dumping ground for such anger.

Thus the experience of meeting with such people is not one an Religious Authority can look forward to enjoying. It is essential that the Religious Authority be able to respond to such expressions of anger in an appropriately non-defensive way. This is not easy, particularly when all the anger feels like a direct personal attack and some of it is.

Bishop Harold Hopkins and Nancy Myer Hopkins suggest that a Religious Authority may benefit from some “coaching” about specific ways to respond in public to intense expression of anger by faith community members.

This coaching could take the form of role plays in which the Religious Authority is presented with an anticipated situation and frames a response. The response is discussed and, if necessary, a better one devised, taking into account any legal considerations which impinge on the situation. However, a really safe response from a legal point of view may be pastorally disastrous, being perceived as defensive and seeking to “cover up”.

Strategies for Informing the Members of the Faith Community

These strategies are discussed in the meetings of the faith community leadership and the Crisis Response Team leaders.

Three general strategies are suggested.

Letter to All Members of the Faith Community

This is the strategy favoured by Nancy Myer Hopkins. Her suggestion is that the letter:

be sent several days before the weekly liturgical services so that members of the faith community can be prepared to deal with their shock collectively when they gather for worship.

state the bare facts of the situation

invite people to a congregational meeting at which more information about the specific situation, and the general issues raised, will be available and at which there will be an opportunity to discuss their feelings together.

The advantage in this strategy is that it respects the need for faith community members to deal with any shock and grief in their own way and at their own pace. Their initial response is in private and they are free not to participate in public healing processes if they do not so choose.³⁷

The disadvantage is that people will receive information at different times and possibly will place too much of their own construction on it, not having any immediate possibility of asking clarifying questions.

Calling a Faith Community Meeting Without Revealing its Purpose

This is a strategy advanced by Chilton Knudsen.³⁸ Members of the faith community are contacted either by a phone tree or by mail and are invited to an urgent congregational meeting, preferably the next day. The invitation stresses the urgency but does not give any clue as to what has occasioned it. No doubt rumours abound. This strategy has the advantage that all present at the meeting hear the appropriate information at the same time, can seek immediate clarification of the information, if necessary, and have an immediate chance to process it together within the context of the meeting.

The disadvantage of the strategy is that there is considerable implicit pressure on members of the faith community to begin to process their hurt in a public forum. This pressure may not be sufficiently respectful of individuals needs for private grief.

Revelation Within the Context of Worship

This is a strategy used by the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago when allegations of child sexual assault have been made against a priest

³⁷ N.M. Hopkins, “Living Through the Crisis”, op.cit., p 206.

³⁸ C. Knudsen, “Understanding Congregational Dynamics”, op.cit., pp 75-78.

who, subsequently, has been placed on administrative leave while a full investigation is conducted.

A prepared statement is read to the congregation at the beginning of the weekly worship service and the service proceeds as usual. It includes prayer for all affected by the allegations - the complainant, the complainants family, the accused, the accused's family and the members of parish communities affected by the news of the allegations.

After the service, members of the Crisis Response Team, appropriately assisted by the parish leadership are available for private conversations with any members of the congregation who wish to discuss matters further.

This strategy clearly respects individuals' needs to choose their own initial method of dealing with the information presented to them. It needs to be combined with other strategies which address the process of healing on a group and community level.

The First Faith Community Meeting

Whatever the initial strategy for informing members about the sexual abuse situation involving one of their leaders it seems vital that there be an opportunity for the faith community to meet as a community and begin the process of healing, both community and individual.

The following is a model which such an initial meeting can follow.³⁹

³⁹ The model draws from C.Knudsen, "Trauma De-briefing: a Congregational Model", MCS Conciliation Quarterly, Spring 1991, pp 12-13, (A number of Episcopal Diocesan policies e.g. Chicago and Vermont, are strongly based on this article.) and N.M.Hopkins, "Living Through the Crisis", op.cit., pp 214-225.

The Venue

Some like Chilton Knudsen say that the meeting should be in the church, symbolising the church as a place for truth. Others like

Nancy Myer Hopkins prefer the parish hall as the venue. The local leadership will know what is best once they understand what the process involves.

The following considerations are relevant:

- The feelings the members of the faith community may have about the expression of strong emotion and possible open conflicts within the physical building of the church.
- The setting must be such that small group discussions can occur with physical ease. Fixed pews in a church are hardly suitable for this purpose.
- The venue must be one which the faith community sees as symbolic of church. The auditorium of the local sporting club would not be suitable. The auditorium of a parish school may be.
- The place from which the faith community is addressed by various speakers should convey a message that the leaders of the meeting are there to be with them in their experience of pain and to facilitate the beginning of the healing journey. Speaking from a highly placed pulpit, or even from a stage, may convey a message of "speaking down" to the faith community which they are likely to resent.

Leadership of the Meeting

It is important that the leader or leaders are experienced in managing the process of such potentially volatile meetings. I was told of meetings where there was screaming and shouting, with some people storming out of the meeting. In one meeting supporters

of an accused clergyman strategically placed themselves in positions in the parish hall from which they could disrupt the process of the meeting by a series of hostile questions.

Though extremely unpleasant, such events vividly demonstrate to the present faith community that there is a problem which they have to address. One experienced interviewee said she had never seen the anger become totally uncontrollable in a meeting.

Thus the leaders are normally members of the Crisis Response Team. The local leadership can welcome the Crisis Response Team and its leaders, making it clear that they are present at the invitation or, at least with the approval, of the local leadership.

The Religious Authority is not the person to lead the process, given that it can be anticipated that the Religious Authority will almost inevitably be drawn into emotion filled interactions with some members of the faith community. Nevertheless the Religious Authority has to be seen as participant in the process and not just a presider.

The Process of the Meeting

Local Leadership⁴⁰

1. Short opening prayer and/or scripture reading.
2. Welcome to all with special reference to the Religious Authority and to individual members of the Crisis Response Team.
3. Outline of the step by step process the faith community will experience in the meeting, including introduction of the Crisis

⁴⁰ This model assumes that the Crisis Response Team leaders have judged the local leadership competent to play a constructive role in the meeting. If the judgment is otherwise, the Crisis Response Team leaders, with the approval of Religious Authority, lead the process. If the Religious Authority does not have the

Response Team leader(s) who will lead the latter part of the meeting.

4. Request that members respect each others privacy, particularly in regard to what may be said in small group discussion.
5. Inform members that information given by the Religious Authority and the local leadership is considered to be on the public record and can be discussed freely with anyone. Any exclusion of media personnel from the meeting is to protect the members privacy and is not aimed at maintaining inappropriate secrecy about the allegations.
6. Introduction of the Religious Authority.
Steps 3-6 may need to be carried out by a member of the Crisis Response Team, if no one in the local leadership has the skill to carry them out in clear and non-anxious way. This will be decided at the meetings of the local leadership and the Crisis Response Team leaders.
7. Makes reference to the pain many have experienced in learning of the allegations and the subsequent events.
8. Gives factual information:
 - when the allegations were made
 - the general nature of the allegations e.g. sexual assault of a minor, male or female.
 - the number of people who made allegations.
 - the time of the alleged offences, recent or in a more remote

power to over-ride any objections to Crisis Response Team leadership, it may be better not to initiate a process which is likely to be destructive in the short and, possibly, long term. Marl Laaser in "Long Term Healing", Restoring the Soul..., op.cit., p 233 remarks on the futility of attempting to assist a congregation which does not want to heal or is not ready to begin the healing journey.

- past.
- the procedures, making reference to the denominational policy and procedures, which have been followed in investigating the allegations including the informing of relevant civil authorities.
 - whether or not the matter is under criminal investigation and charges have been laid.
 - whether or not victims are pursuing a claim for damages in a civil action.
 - any determination made by the church about the truth of the allegations and/or the accused church leaders fitness to continue to minister in the current assignment.
 - the general nature of the assistance which the church has offered to the primary victims, following denominational policy and procedures.
 - the general nature of the support which the church has offered to the accused church leader and any members of the accused's family.
 - reference to the civil and church laws which limit the amount of detail which can be shared with the faith community and a general acknowledgement that some will find it difficult to deal with the situation of less than full information.
9. Makes it clear that the church wishes to reach out to any person who has an allegation of sexual abuse against a church leader. The current meeting is not an appropriate context for making an allegation. Private appointments can be arranged and the allegation heard as soon as possible.

Crisis Response Team Leaders

10. Invite questions of clarification of the facts as told by the Religious Authority. It is made clear that responses to those facts are to be held until a later stage of the meeting. The clarifications are given by the Religious Authority. (Questions

seeking clarification may be asked with considerable feeling. It will be important to not only give the clarification but to also acknowledge the feeling which accompanies the question without entering into dialogue.)

11. Present a brief overview of the possible emotional reactions members might have.

The aim of this is three-fold:

to give a language which people can use to name aspects of their experience which they may be feeling as one giant undifferentiated hurt.

to give psychological permission for people to admit what they are feeling to themselves first, and possibly then to others, by defining any emotion as normal in the circumstances they find themselves in.

to introduce the idea that different emotional responses are all to be respected and accepted as valid initial reactions, warning against the divisiveness that can enter a community if those with a particular set of emotional reactions form cliques and join in subtle or open conflict with those whose emotional responses are different.

12. Invite members to form small groups in which they can express their reactions and responses to each other. The aim is simply to listen to each other and take note of the feelings expressed. The feelings could be written down on paper for reporting back to the total meeting or for display on the walls of the room so that people can walk around during the break and read them.

Members of the Crisis Response Team and local leaders can

either monitor progress by moving among groups, assisting if a group is having difficulty, or be the designated facilitators of groups. A prior decision will need to be made based on the local leaderships understanding of what would best suit the style of the particular local congregation.

Small groups of adolescents need a designated leader experienced in working with youth.

13. Break for Refreshments. Members are told that the Crisis Response Team and the Religious Authority will be available for private conversations during this break.

Crisis Response Team Leaders

14. Give brief summary of the major emotional themes which emerged from the small group discussions.

15. Give some information about the issues raised by church leader sexual abuse e.g.

- Abuse of power
- Types of power possessed by clergy and other church leaders
- Effects of sexual abuse on primary victims, including explanations of why some do not disclose the abuse for many years
- Reasons compelling respect for victim's privacy
- Effects on faith communities.

The type and extent of information given depends on the reasons for the removal of the church leader. It would not be appropriate to discuss sexual exploitation if the issue at hand is one of child sexual assault.

The purpose of the information giving is simply to provide some concepts for people to begin to structure their understanding

about the complex issues involved so that their total responses are not governed by their emotions.

I was told of some congregational healing which were largely not successful. My informants were not sure of the reasons. It may have been that there was too much intellectual information introduced before peoples emotional responses were processed.

The faith community is told that further intellectual exploration of issues can be arranged for another time.

16. Invites small group discussion on the following questions:

Where is God in all this? (a question challenging people to place the events in a spiritual context).

What do we as a faith community need to do to now? (a question challenging the faith community to plan for its healing).

A judgment will need to be made as to the amount of time to be allocated to this exercise. The processes of the meeting may have been so emotionally draining that a brief discussion and report back may be all that can be achieved. Another meeting to consider the questions in more detail can be scheduled.

17. Invite feed-back from the small group discussion and briefly summarise major ideas.

18. Inform meeting of the resources in the church and in the local community available to assist individuals e.g. the denominational social service agency, community based counsellors, in public agencies or in private practice, victim support and advocacy groups.. A handout listing these resources can be made

available.

Local Leader

19. Stresses that this is the beginning of a healing process. Thanks all for attending. Mentions that Religious Authority and Crisis Response Team.

20. Invites the Religious Authority to lead the faith community in a closing prayer for all affected by the sexual abuse of the church leader.

Religious Authority

21. Leads the faith community in prayer.

Other Points

Crisis Counselling

It is important that at least one member of the Crisis Response Team is available to provide crisis assistance to any person whose memory of a personal history of sexual abuse is activated by the processes in the meeting. This counsellor should not have a major responsibility for leadership in the meeting.

Availability of Denominational Policy and Procedures

Copies of the denominational policy and procedures for dealing with allegations of church leader sexual abuse are made available for perusal. Members of the faith community can check what has happened against the established policies and procedures.

Dealing with the Media

It seems that the usual practice is to exclude the media from attendance at the faith community meeting. As the facts the faith community has been told in the meeting become part of the public record, a press release is a way to ensure that the media does not

have to obtain the story second-hand by talking to faith community members who were at the meeting.⁴¹

It is advisable that only one official spokesperson, preferably from the denominational level above that of the local faith community, be appointed. If, however, a person is appointed from the local faith community that person may need advice about how to handle media enquiries.

Even if the church leadership advises members of the faith community against talking with media persons, as private citizens the members are free to do so.

⁴¹ The chapters by M.L.Lavalee (“Communicating with the Wider Community”) and R.M. Sinclair (“One Reporter’s Story”) in *Restoring the Soul... op.cit.*, provide information about establishing positive relationships with the media.

Section Three: Processes in the Longer Term Healing of a Traumatized Faith Community.

Recommendation 10

Members of Crisis Response Teams have knowledge of a number of strategies which can be used to assist members of local faith communities to heal over time from the trauma of learning that one of their leaders is guilty of sexual abuse or is under investigation following allegations of sexual abuse.

Follow-up Meeting with Faith Community Leadership

The local faith community leadership and the Crisis Response Team leaders meet very soon after the first faith community meeting to emotionally de-brief, share insights and develop plans on what has emerged from the faith community meeting.. A number of suggested way forward will have been advanced by members of the faith community.

Because the needs of particular faith communities will vary, it is impossible to be prescriptive about what is specifically required. At one extreme a faith community may have no grief at all about the removed church leader who, independently of any sexual abuse allegations, was not liked or respected. At the other extreme a faith community can be almost totally immobilised by their trauma.

Strategies in Long-Term Healing

The following is a list of strategies which have proved useful for some faith communities. They can form a framework for discussing the ideas put forward by faith community members. The sponsor from another faith community may be helpful in planning for the implementation of many of the strategies, particularly if the local faith community leadership is a little distrustful of the “experts” and “professionals” in the Crisis Response Team.

Individual Members of the Faith Community

Not all members of a faith community feel comfortable in being present at community meetings where the evidence of trauma is so clear. Such people may cease attending church services as well. They may be suffering alone but may well respond to private approaches.

A team of out-reachers from the local faith community could be trained to visit those who seem to have withdrawn from faith community life and simply invite them to talk about their experience. The general observations of the team could be fed into the faith community planning processes. People in extreme distress would be identified and referred for specialised assistance. Chilton Knudsen who suggested this strategy would use it proactively. People would be contacted and have to refuse a visit.

Members of the Franciscan Province of Santa Barbara, and of the Christian Brothers Province of St. Joseph in Canada were given individual opportunities to speak with trained counsellors and their religious superiors about the experience of being a member of an Order which, as one of them said, was subjected to a “global nakedness”. Much time, effort and, no doubt, expense was put into responding to the personal pain of the secondary victims in the Orders. The Superiors clearly believed the results, in terms of members personal healing and growth, justified the effort expended.

Small Group Grieving Work

The faith community may have formal groups in existence. A regular bible study group would be an example. Such established groups may benefit by being led through a workshop which enables them to process their grief together. Groups also could be formed specifically for grief workshops. Small group work could occur **in the** context of larger faith community meetings as outlined earlier.

Some faith communities were reported to have moved significantly forward after participating in grief workshops. "AHealing Wheel" developed by Chilton Knudsen and based on the stages of grief outlined by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross could be used as a framework for such workshops.⁴²

Workshops Educating the Faith Community about the Effects Sexual Abuse in a Church

The experience of being in faith community which has lost a leader following allegations of sexual abuse can be confusing and utterly bewildering. When the first shock and the first strong emotions have subsided a little, a workshop which helps members to name and understand some the processes they find themselves plunged into can be helpful.

The video **Not in My Church**, produced in Seattle by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, is an excellent resource for such a process. It is best used by a trained or experienced leader. The video which is in the form of a docudrama about sexual exploitation illustrates all the typical responses and processes found in a faith community when allegations of sexual abuse are made.⁴³ The sponsor from another faith community could make an important contribution in discussions about issues raised by the video.

Workshops Educating the Faith Community about the Prevention of Sexual Abuse in a Church

The book **Safe Connections: What Parishioners Can Do to Understand and Prevent Clergy Sexual Abuse**

⁴² Chilton Knudsen gave me a copy of the "Wheel" together with written suggestions about how it might be used.

⁴³ The address of the Center is 936 North 34th St., Suite 200, Seattle, Washington 98103. There is a Jewish version entitled **Not in my Congregation**.

by Rev. Jan Erickson-Pearson has been produced as resource for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Whilst in no way blaming faith community members for occurrences of church leader sexual abuse, the author suggests a number of ways in which faith communities can build a context which makes church leader sexual abuse far less likely.

Some of these suggestions are:

- Encourage the pastor to take care of his/her own personal needs
- Make sure your pastor is taking time off
- Provide adequate vacation time for the pastor
- Provide adequate time and funds for continuing education for the pastor
- Provide adequate and fair remuneration for the pastor
- Discourage the pastor from being a lone ranger. Be alert to isolation
- Clarify expectations of unmarried pastors
- Encourage the pastor to have some interests beyond pastoral duties
- Honour the pastor's need to have a family life whose boundaries are not invaded by parishioners.
- Help establish and respect healthy boundaries throughout the congregation
- Make sure job descriptions, schedules and guidelines are clear.

These suggestions, if implemented, will do much to make a faith community safe from a church leader who is only tempted to abuse when under stress. They make good sense for any faith community. If, however, the church leader has a pathological or compulsive sexual problem, members of the faith community will not necessarily be safe from attempts by the church leader to abuse, exploit or harass them even if the above suggestions are implemented. The book also discusses ways to ensure safety from such people.⁴⁴

A faith community working its way through this book would learn much about boundary and safety issues in faith communities.

If the faith community is specifically facing issues of child sexual assault, *Breach of Trust, Breach of Faith: Child Sexual Abuse in the Church and Society*, published in 1992 by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is an excellent resource. It is a structured group discussion programme of five sessions, covering all the major aspects of the sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church and society.⁴⁵

Workshops on Sexuality

Whilst there is no doubting that church leader sexual abuse involves an abuse of power and the betrayal of a sacred trust, it also raises issues about sexuality and, in particular, healthy sexual development and healthy personal and sexual relationships.

A faith community, particularly one in which open discussion about sexuality has not been encouraged, may benefit from an education programme about sexuality and sexual development. A faith community where sexual issues are discussed and their challenges faced is a safer community.

Members of the Franciscan Province of Santa Barbara, and of the Christian Brothers Province of St. Joseph in Canada were given opportunities to participate in programmes on psychosexual development and the establishment of intimate relationships with the context of a vowed celibate life. There appears to be much

⁴⁴ The book is available from the Division For Ministry, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, Il., 60631.

⁴⁵ The resource materials are available from the Catholic Conference of Canadian Bishops, 90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 7B1, Canada.

more open discussion about these issues in these two Provinces. Religious from other Provinces are reported to be somewhat surprised by such openness.

It is likely that some members of a faith community will have a history which includes being sexually abused in a family or other setting. It is quite possible that the faith community contains current perpetrators and victims. Education programmes may encourage such people to seek appropriate help.

Workshops Educating Local Leaders and Staff

Local leaders and staff may need explicit training in the applicable laws which relate to the issues of sexual assault, sexual exploitation and sexual harassment in state and federal jurisdictions.

The insurance company of the Episcopalian Church in the USA requires that all who have an official role in the church, paid staff and volunteers, have a minimum of four hours training in child abuse issues. A minimum of four hours training on sexual harassment and sexual exploitation issues is required for all staff (not including office workers and maintenance personnel for whom such training is highly recommended).⁴⁶

The impressive training video *Understanding the Sexual Boundaries of the Pastoral Relationship*, produced by the Communications Office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul and mentioned earlier is a good resource for such training.

Local leaders and staff may also require information about their pastoral responsibilities which extend beyond the requirements of

⁴⁶ The Church Insurance Company, *Sexual Misconduct Reference Materials*, July 1993, pp 8-9. law and insurance policies.

law and insurance policies. Participation in the workshops discussed above may be very beneficial, even necessary.

Family of Origin Exploration⁴⁷

Some faith community members may have a sense of personal identity which is very strongly bound up with their being a member of the particular faith community and perhaps with being very strongly associated with the perpetrator.

A series of workshops which enable such members to explore their own family history may help them to understand what it is in their own backgrounds which has pre-disposed them to invest so much of themselves in membership of the particular faith community and in the church leader in particular. Such people may be led to more personal autonomy and a sense of self-worth which is less dependent on a relationship to a leader or a faith community

Other faith community members might find family of origin exploration useful as away of understanding their responses to the disclosure of sexual abuse by the church leader, as well as coming to appreciate better why some others have different responses to their own. Such understanding may assist indirectly in the resolution of conflicts on wider and more current issues.

Developing a Congregation Genogram

A small group process which involves researching the history of the faith community and presenting the results to the entire faith community is being developed by Nancy Myer Hopkins.

The aim is to assist the faith community to gain an "outside" perspective on themselves as a faith community. They will then be able to situate their current trauma within their history, possibly

⁴⁷ M.Laaser, "Long Term Healing", op.cit. P 240.

being better able to identify the "strengths" which have been hidden by the current trauma and also identify long standing "weaknesses" which may have provided a context for the occurrence of the sexual abuse or which are currently retarding the healing process.

Resource Material

A faith community may find the inclusion of resource material on sexual abuse and the church in their library quite valuable.

Religious Service

Some faith communities have found it useful to hold a religious service which has as its theme for prayer and reflection the healing of all who have suffered as a consequence of a church leaders sexual abuse, including the perpetrator.

The book, **Take and Make Holy: Honoring the Sacred in the Healing Journey of Abuse Survivors** by Mari West Zinnerman, has a number of models for prayer services which are centred on the need of victims of sexual abuse, including the needs of congregations.⁴⁸

Once the faith community has a plan for its healing processes the work of the Crisis Response Team is basically completed. However, the healing work has just begun and the faith community leadership will almost certainly require ongoing contact with a consultant over the next one to two years.

⁴⁸ Published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, 1989. I also have copies of sermons preached by Bishops during congregational healing services.

Recommendation 11

Religious Authorities acknowledge that the ministry of a church leader in a faith community which has been affected by a previous leaders sexual abuse or sexual misconduct can be particularly difficult.

Difficulties in Afterpastoring

The term “afterpastor” has come to be used in many denominations to refer to a pastor who takes up a leadership role in faith community whose previous leader has left the community following substantiated allegations of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct.

“Afterpastor” is a term which seemed unknown to many within the Catholic tradition. I had the impression that the difficulties of “afterpastors” had received little attention within that tradition, perhaps reflecting a “crisis” approach to congregational healing. The assumption may well be that if the crisis intervention is handled well the congregation soon settles down to something like normal.

Other faith communities did not seem to experience so quick a healing. It is difficult to hypothesise that Catholic faith communities are fundamentally different to others. It seems more likely that there is something in the general Catholic consciousness which prevents the long term difficulties of Catholic congregations and their afterpastors from coming into view.⁴⁹

When a pastor, and particularly the senior or sole pastor, in a faith community has been found guilty of sexual abuse or sexual

⁴⁹ This could have its origin in an implicit “bad apple” theory of social systems: remove the bad apple and the rest are fine. Remove the sexual offender and the remaining church members will be fine because there is essentially nothing wrong with the church system as a whole or with any particular faith community. The general context has contributed nothing to the occurrence of the offence.

misconduct the experience of the members of the faith community can be summarised as a betrayal of fundamental trust.

This wound to the ability to trust can go very deep. A context of distrust of the church leadership, of any leadership or authority, of other members of the faith community, of husband or wife and other family members, of the very self can be established. Not only is the church no longer a sanctuary and safe, life itself can be seen as threatening.

The rupture in the ability to trust at all levels lies behind many of the difficulties which can be faced by afterpastors as they attempt to play their part in the healing of a wounded faith community. Some difficulties, of course, are directly connected with the afterpastors own behaviour. It would be convenient but not truthful if all troubles were able to be assigned a cause in the past.

The severity of afterpastoring difficulties may vary with whether or not the afterpastor knows the current role is one of afterpastoring. Historically, many pastors found themselves following sexual abusing pastors without anyone informing them of the immediate history.

The following are difficulties which afterpastors have **reported** facing. Some of the difficulties are more likely to be experienced in denominations which are less hierarchical in structure. Not all afterpastors faced all difficulties but the list gives a good idea of what an afterpastor must be prepared to face:

Congregational Conflict

- members of the faith community withdrawing from other members
- formation of cliques which are in open or covert conflict over major and peripheral matters
- total polarisation about the previous perpetrating pastor

- battles within the faith community over the use of church property, the placement of church furniture, who can have keys to what, any matter on which there can be legitimate differences of opinion which would in normal circumstances be resolved easily
- acrimonious debates about final payouts to resigning pastors
- inability of some members of the faith community to express any negative judgment about the previous pastor.
- members having conflicting views about what forgiveness in relation to the perpetrator really means.
- hostility of faith community members to and conflict with known victims
- hostility of one group of victims to another victim of the same perpetrator who was not of the same social class as the majority group of victims
- blaming members of the Search Committee for poor choice of the previous pastor of the current pastor
- new members of faith community not really concerned about the past and wanting to “get on with it”
- staff totally supportive of the previous perpetrating pastor
- congregations being sued by victims in its midst
- inability of some members of faith community, individually and collectively, to reconcile their positive experience of the perpetrators ministry with the revelation of sexual abuse.
- continuing conflicting rumours and conjecture about what “really happened”.

Other Processes in the Congregation

- expressions of anger far out of proportion to the event which occasioned it
- depression and loss of energy for faith community tasks
- hopelessness about the faith community’s future
- paralysis in decision-making even over routine matters
- hasty and ill considered decision-making

- inability to take risks or make commitments at a faith community level
- excessive concern for the perpetrator
- lack of concern for victims
- feeling of embarrassment and shame about belonging to the particular faith community, withdrawing from contact with the wider denominational life
- excessive concentration on discussion of sexual matters in general
- anxiety about faith community finances
- resistance to any new idea which might change faith community life
- a longing for the golden age of the past before the current troubles arose
- lack of a final public resolution of the allegations surrounding the previous pastor preventing a process of closure for the local faith community
- vandalism of property and/or repeated acts of arson occurring
- unresolved history of previous pastors and church leaders who are known to be sexual abusers or are suspected of being such.

Current Behaviour by the Perpetrating Pastor

- refusing to leave housing provided by the faith community.
- continuing to reside within the local community, sometimes starting up another church
- protesting their innocence and actively attempting to influence members of the faith community by personal contact
- ministering in another faith community, seemingly having escaped any church discipline
- threatening legal action against the faith community or members of it.

Sources of Personal Stress for the Afterpastor

- all of the above

- inappropriate anger and rage directed at the afterpastor.
- difficulty in separating out legitimate feedback from displaced anger at previous pastor
- being forbidden by the local leadership to talk about the sexual abuse
- a “honeymoon phase” of total acceptance followed by a phase of seemingly almost total rejection
- being expected to provide a “quick fix without the faith community’s going through the necessary processes of healing.
- general mistrust of the afterpastor
- lack of requests for pastoral care
- being continuously “tested out” by the faith community on even minute matters
- being blamed for the current situation eg drop in faith community finances, inability to attract new members
- faith community saying the afterpastor is not the right person for the job, is too inexperienced, too democratic, too authoritarian, too anything
- being pressured to take sides in conflicts between faith community groups
- being pressured to side with the perpetrating pastor against the primary and associate victims
- being pressured to side with the primary and associate victims against the perpetrating pastor
- not being able to find sufficient lay leaders in the faith community
- rumours about being a perpetrator
- doubt about calling to ministry
- disruption of sermons
- harassing phone calls
- bomb threats to the afterpastor and family
- threats against the lives of the afterpastor and family
- stress in marital and family relationships

The list of potential difficulties based on actual experiences of some

afterpastors is reasonably exhaustive, not to mention exhausting.⁵⁰ The extent to which any particular difficulty occurs would seem to depend upon, at least, the following:

- whether the offences occurred within the particular faith community or occurred elsewhere
- the dynamics of the particular faith community life at the time of the disclosure of the allegations of abuse
- the initial response of the Religious Authority to the faith community
- the ability of the afterpastor to play an effective part in the healing process

Nevertheless there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that the assumption of a return to normal business after an initial crisis intervention needs to be made with extreme caution and only after positive evidence supporting the assumption.

⁵⁰ The list draws on my conversations with afterpastors as well as on the following: N.M.Hopkins, “The Congregation is Also A Victim”, op.cit.; J.P. Stein, *Bridging the Gap...*, op.cit.; and C.Knudsen, “Pastoral Care for Congregations in the Aftermath of Sexual Misconduct”, unpublished notes.

Recommendation 12

Afterpastors be appointed on an interim basis only, receive special training for such assignments and receive official ongoing support during their period as an afterpastor

Appointment of Interim Afterpastors

There was a consensus among the interviewees that afterpastors should be appointed on an interim basis only. There are two main reasons.

The first is that the appointment of an interim pastor is a clear sign that all is not “normal” at this particular stage of the faith community’s history. The appointment of an afterpastor whose defined task is to assist the faith community heal from its experience of secondary victimisation creates a defined time-space and context for the return to health. Another pastor can then be assigned or called to more normal circumstances.

The second reason is simply that, as was described in the previous section, the experience of being an afterpastor can be extremely harrowing and emotionally draining. It is probably not advisable in terms of the personal wellbeing of an afterpastor to remain in the role for more than three years at the very most. Two years might well be the appropriate norm.

The essential role of the afterpastor is to journey with the faith community as they heal collectively and individually. This will entail working with the faith community leadership to implement the healing strategies which were first discussed in the period following the faith community meetings after the disclosure of the abuse or misconduct and which are constantly being monitored.

Nevertheless, the afterpastor will be seen in a very definite and

primary leadership role in the faith community. In a faith community the pastor can be seen as symbolising, in a special way, the presence of the divine in the community. It is the appropriate restoration of this symbol that many of the faith community are looking for. The afterpastors being and actions will be scrutinised by many in terms of how well they mediate the presence of the divine. The faith community’s recent experience is that what they took as an adequate symbol of the divine has been shown to be fundamentally flawed and, to a certain extent, a sham.

The planning of the faith community for its own healing can be seen as an attempt to bring some stability and structure into a situation which, in emotional terms, is chaotic. The afterpastor has to live and move constantly in the midst of that emotional chaos. Special skills and qualities are needed if the afterpastor is to survive.

Non-Anxious Presence

Several afterpastors stressed the need for the afterpastor to be a “non-anxious presence” in the faith community. This does not mean that the afterpastors experience no anxiety. This would be an inhuman demand, given what they may face.

Afterpastors must not allow any of their own anxiety to determine their responses. They need to remain calm and, as objective as possible, in the face of the inevitable conflict and tension which characterises a traumatised faith community.

It is impossible for an afterpastor to be a non-anxious presence in a traumatised faith community if the afterpastor does not have a strongly developed and differentiated sense of self. The afterpastor must be able to say, in effect, to the faith community, individually and collectively : AThis is me and this is my response. That is you and that is your response. I can respond to you but I will not allow your response to invade me so that I am caught up in your pain. I

will shield you from my pain". Accurate self-knowledge would seem to be an indispensable requirement for an afterpastor.

A strong need to have personal and immediate approval from the faith community is a definite hazard for an afterpastor and those with such needs should be shielded from the experience of being an afterpastor in traumatised communities. Some accurate discernment may be needed here. A popular and successful pastor who seems to get along well with people might seem an ideal choice. If the pastor in fact acts out of deep need to be liked, then the experience of afterpastoring may be disastrous for all concerned.

Specific Skills Required by Afterpastors

A person cannot be trained, by means of a short course, to be capable of being a nonanxious presence. It is quality of being which is built up over time, an expression of emotional maturity. A person with the fundamental capacity to be a non-anxious presence in troubled situation can learn some specifics about how to be a non-anxious presence in a specific type of situation.

The following skills would be useful to afterpastors.

Conflict Resolution Skills

The territory of afterpastoring is, almost by definition, one of conflict. A capacity to mediate conflicts to a successful resolution is a distinct advantage in an afterpastor.

Understanding of Faith Community Dynamics and Structures

It can be tempting for an afterpastor to see all dysfunctioning and conflict in a traumatised faith community as being the result of the trauma. A appreciation of what is the normal range of dysfunction and healthy conflict can assist the afterpastor to retain a realistic perspective.

Theoretical knowledge about the functioning of human organisations as social systems will assist an afterpastor to see the dynamics of the faith community in a way which is separate from the personalities which act within the system.

One afterpastor described his aim as assisting the congregation to become "clergy proof". He was working with a congregation which historically was very dependent on its rectors for every decision. This afterpastor had a clear vision of the role of lay leadership in the church and was working towards the creation of a lay leadership structure which would appropriately complement the clergy leadership.

Many faith communities with leaders who sexually abuse are actually unconsciously structured around the narcissistic personality of their leader who has encouraged their dependency. Often faith communities will need changes in their decision-making and information sharing processes, which may have been too formal, restricting the flow of information and hence restricting the power in decision-making to a few faith community members. On the other hand, a faith community may have no system for decision-making and information sharing.

The healing efforts of afterpastors in such faith communities aim at changing the dynamics and structures so that members are empowered. It has to be said that some faith communities resist the move to their empowerment.

Some who are used to and comfortable with a more authoritarian style of leadership may see the afterpastor as indecisive or lacking strength. Some who enjoy the de facto power they hold in the faith community system may resist an attempt to distribute the power more appropriately through the faith community system.

A vision of church community, informed by the denominations general theology of church, which guides the action of the afterpastor will be helpful. The afterpastor must be careful not to impose a vision but merely guide the way to its incarnation.

Capacity to Move At the Faith Communitys Pace

A delicate balance needs to be struck between allowing the faith community to heal at its own pace and preventing it from becoming "stuck" at any stage.

An afterpastor who has a need to hurry things along and put structures in place may attempt to push the faith community to a level of recovery for which they are not ready. On the other hand an afterpastor who is too tuned to the faith communitys pain may fail to issue sufficient challenge to move to another stage of integration.

Capacity to Communicate Openly and Honestly

Faith communities wounded by sexual abuse often are characterised by unhealthy communication patterns. There may be a norm of only saying what is known to be pleasing to the pastor. Encouraging and modelling open disagreement with respect can be very helpful.

On the other hand there may be not be sufficient respect for privacy. The ability of the afterpastor to model a form of communication which is self-disclosing whilst retaining appropriate personal privacy can be crucial. James Stein points out that wounded congregations need to gain some insight into the personal life of the afterpastor because of the previous pastors deceptions. He suggests that preaching can be a good context for selfdisclosure.⁵¹

Similarly, an afterpastors refusal to give undue credence to rumour

⁵¹ J.P.Stein, *Bridging the Gap...* op.cit., p 74.

and innuendo but dealing with direct communications fairly and justly also provides good modelling for the faith community. Confrontational skills are useful as well. There will be situations where unacceptable behaviour has to be challenged. There may be other situations where it might be necessary to tactfully suggest that all would be better off if a person found another faith community.

Other Specific Strategies

James Stein gives some strategies drawn from the experience of afterpastors which may be useful in specific situations⁵²:

- Implementing a form of liturgy which is faithful to the denominations traditions, particularly if the previous pastor had fostered a personality-focused and entertainment based liturgy
- preaching that relies on the authority of the denominations scriptures and follows the outline of the liturgical year if the denomination has one. In such ways the particular faith community is assisted to regain its links with the life of the wider denomination.
- behaving in ways which, while consonant with the afterpastors personality, differentiate the afterpastor from the previous pastor. An example would be dressing more formally if the previous pastor was an informal dresser
- maintaining regular office hours particularly if the previous pastor was very difficult to locate in times of need and for routine contact
- providing accountability for official work done away from the office. A diary which detailed all the official pastoral visits made to members of the faith community would assist others to trust that no secret contacts in the guise of pastoral care were being made.

⁵² J.P. Stein, *Bridging the Gap...* op.cit., pp 65-86

- Asking for resignation of all staff⁵³
These resignations would not necessarily be accepted but calling for them signals that, in an important sense, the future is going to be discontinuous with the past. Staff members whose personal identity is so enmeshed with the previous pastor and the previous regime will retard or block the healing processes within themselves and within the faith community. It is better for such people to find employment elsewhere. They may need to find another faith community as well.

Accepting Support From Outside the Faith Community

The need for emotional and intellectual support for an afterpastor is obvious. Any pastor not recognising this is not a good candidate for afterpastoring.

All the afterpastors interviewed in the study spoke of the appreciation of the support they received in their afterpastoring. Some were members of a group of afterpastors who met regularly with a more experienced facilitator to gain mutual support. Others were in ongoing contact with an experienced mentor or supervisor from the denominations central administration.

Afterpastors also need to have social networks which reach beyond the faith community in which they are working. They (and their families, if any) need to have experiences of life outside of the troubled context in which they live their everyday lives.

Official Support

It is clear from the above that Religious Authorities will be wise to

⁵³ In Australia an afterpastor would need to be mindful of laws relating to unfair dismissal. There would be no question of dismissing staff and, if it is judged that the continuing employment of a staff person is detrimental to that person and/or the faith community, I would argue that there is a strong moral obligation on the afterpastor and the church leadership to assist that staff person to find other employment before the resignation is effective.

ensure that clergy appointed to afterpastoring roles have adequate training for the tasks. It is also important that support structures, such as a support group and / or an experienced mentor be provided for the afterpastors as they carry out their demanding and emotionally draining roles.

My strongest memory of all the interviews I conducted is my meeting with the Lutheran afterpastors in Milwaukee. Their pain was obvious as they described to me their experiences of afterpastoring. And they had received much appreciated official support in their ministry.

Recommendation 13

Religious Authorities monitor the progress of a traumatised faith community towards healing for a period of five years after the disclosure of sexual abuse perpetrated by one of its leaders.

Length of Time for Congregational Healing

None of the interviewees in the study was able to direct me to any formal longitudinal studies of a number of faith communities moving from trauma to healing after the disclosure of sexual abuse by one of its church leaders. The knowledge which exists is in the form of the aggregated experience of those who have worked with traumatised faith community over a period of time.

Margo Maris and Kevin McDonough writing in 1995 state that at that time there were very few clearly healed congregations and that they estimate that, "Depending on the many circumstances of the degree and depth of betrayal, a congregation will *begin* to know its own healing in about three years" (emphasis added).⁵⁴

This is not to say that healing is not occurring within those three years but rather to say that the signs of that healing may not be strong until three years has passed. The processes which the faith community has put in place to promote healing are, of course, in clear view.

Mark Laaser offers a model of stages of healing based on the stages of grief.⁵⁵ He distinguishes four stages: shock, searching, disorientation and reorganisation. The first three stages outline from a slightly different perspective what was been discussed above in

⁵⁴ M.E.Maris and K.M.McDonough, *How Churches Respond....* op.cit., p 361.

⁵⁵ M.Laaser, "Long Term Healing" op.cit., pp 237-250.

the planning for the disclosure, the faith community meeting and the strategies which can promote healing over a period of time. It is the final stage of reorganisation which is of interest here.⁵⁶

A Reorganised Healed Faith Community

This model of some features of a healed faith community is an ideal type. Faith communities may aspire to, but never fully achieve, the characteristics outlined here.

Acceptance of the Past

A healed faith community will be characterised by a peaceful acceptance of what has occurred. There is a basic recognition that human reality in general, and the life and history of the faith community in particular, is a mixture of the good and the bad. In Christian terms there is evidence of grace and of sin in all aspects of life.

No longer will there be resistance by some to the fact of the abuse, showing itself in denial or minimisation. No longer will the perpetrator be seen by some entirely in condemnatory terms. The necessity and possibility of some form of rehabilitation for the perpetrator will be acknowledged.

Faith community members will understand and accept that each will remember the perpetrators time in their faith community differently. If some retain caring and supportive links with the perpetrator, others will understand.

⁵⁶ A reorganised a healed faith community will evidence the elements of justice making advanced by Marie Fortune in *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship*, Harper, San Francisco, 1989, pp 114-118. These elements are: truth-telling, acknowledging the violation, compassion, protecting the vulnerable, accountability, restitution and vindication.

Measures to Maximise the Safety of the Faith Community in Relation to Handling Any Future Incidents of Sexual Abuse by a Church Leader

The acceptance of the history of sexual abuse by a former church leader includes the recognition that such abuse remains a permanent possibility. A healed faith community will have done all within its power to place itself at absolute minimum risk for abuse ever occurring again.

Faith community members will have confidence that should any church leader make any type of sexual overture to them they can protect themselves in the immediate circumstances. They will also be confident that they will be heard when they report the incident to the relevant authorities in their denomination and that appropriate action will be taken.

Those on Search Committees will be aware of the need to do all that can be done to discover any history of sexual abuse by any person they are considering to call to ministry.

Decrease in Sexual Abuse and Violence in the Faith Community

Unfortunately, it is highly likely that there will be some perpetrators of sexual abuse and their victims among members of the faith community. A healed faith community will have in its healing journey sensitised its members to the damage which sexual abuse and violence within and outside of families can bring to victims. Those affected by such situations will have sought appropriate assistance and the faith community will be characterised by its lack of incidents of sexual abuse and violence.

Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities

Church leaders who are guilty of sexual abuse often have fostered systems within the faith community in which unclarity of roles and responsibilities are prevalent, making accountability difficult, if not

impossible.

A healed faith community will have clear lines of accountability established. The roles and responsibilities of all official position-holders, paid and voluntary will be detailed and publicised. All will know where they stand.

Faith Development

Stephen Rossetti uses the stages of faith first outlined by James Fowler in 1981⁵⁷ to illustrate how an individual stage of faith development influences the response to the disclosure of church sexual abuse.⁵⁸

Those in the earlier stages of faith development, which do not have any exact correspondence to chronological age, have a tendency to identify the church leader with the divine. Such people find it difficult to countenance the fact of the abuse when it is disclosed. Common responses for those at an early stage of faith community development are total denial of the abuse or the immediate leaving of the faith community, sometimes with an abandonment of faith altogether.

Laaser suggests that whole faith communities can be characterised by being "Aadolescent" in their faith development.⁵⁹ The perpetrating church leader may have fostered the maintenance of the "Aadolescent" stage of faith by implicitly focusing the faith community attention on himself and on their interaction with him.

⁵⁷ J.Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, Harper, San Francisco, 1995.

⁵⁸ S.J.Rossetti, *A Tragic Grace: The Catholic Church and Child Sexual Abuse*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. (in press).

⁵⁹ M.Laaser, "Long Term Healing" op.cit., p 246

The processes of healing aim at producing a more mature faith in members. A healed faith community will be characterised by a higher proportion of members who are able to see the presence of the divine in the midst of human weakness as they find it in the human institutions of their church, in the persons of their church leaders and in themselves. The faith of such communities will more clearly reach toward the transcendent whilst anchored in the human reality of community.

Reaching Out to Others

A traumatised faith community, like a grieving person, may need to spend a considerable amount of time and energy psychologically reorganising.

Thus one sign of a healing and healed faith community is an increasing focus on outreach. There is energy available to minister to others outside of the faith community and to truly welcome others to the faith community. Another sign is thus an increase in membership and the new members remaining with the faith community.

Acceptance of Difference and Greater Personal Intimacy

Healed faith communities will be able to accept difference among themselves. There may be lively debate about issues but all views will be respected. Those whose point of view does not prevail on a particular occasion will be able to live with a legitimately made decision.

Healed faith communities will also be characterised by emotionally differentiated members. People will have a greater sense of their personal self and their own boundaries. Truer more intimate relationships among faith community members are the more possible.

Interestingly, Laaser suggests that the local church might be better described as a “community” rather than as a “family” as is the practice with some local churches.⁶⁰ Though he does not give his reason for his suggestion, the context suggests he believes too many “church families” are characterised by too great an emotional entanglement and/or too great a rigidity about behavioural rules.

Reconciliation and Forgiveness

A healed faith community will evidence a spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness.

In the period immediately following the disclosure of sexual abuse by a former leader there may have been much conflict and division among the faith community members. Many things grounded in hurt, anger and misunderstanding may have been said. Friendships may have been broken or simply decayed. Members of a healed faith community will have forgiven themselves and each other for their human failings and the hurt they occasioned as they painfully passed from traumatised to healing.

If there are known victims in the faith community they will feel fully accepted and not blamed by the faith community for the perpetrators offences. Their pain will have been acknowledged and understood. They will have received apologies from those in the faith community whose words and/or actions have increased the suffering which originated in being abused by the former church leader.

If known victims have not found it possible, for whatever reason, to remain within the local faith community, their decision will be respected and the faith community will remain open to welcoming them back should they wish to return at any time in the future.

⁶⁰ M.Laaser, “Long Term Healing” op.cit., p 246

In situations where the interaction of the local faith community with those in higher levels in a denominational hierarchy have been characterised by misunderstanding, anger and hurt, there will have been mutual forgiveness. Procedures clarifying the relationship between the local faith community and those above in the denominational hierarchy will be in place.

There may have been some form of reconciliation with the perpetrator. This would only be possible if the perpetrator is genuinely repentant for the offences and truly seeks forgiveness from those wounded.

As will become clear in the next section of this Report, it ought not to be easily assumed that a perpetrator is personally at the point where repentance is genuine and the request for reconciliation and forgiveness not fundamentally self-seeking. For this reason any public and personal attempt at reconciliation of the faith community and the perpetrator ought to be undertaken with extreme caution.

Monitoring the Progress of the Faith Community

If the depth of the trauma is deep, and if the initial steps taken after the disclosure of the sexual abuse by the former church leader have hindered the healing rather than promoted it, the journey from traumatisation to healing may be long.

For this reason it would seem wise for Religious Authorities to assume that for at least five years after the disclosure of the abuse the local faith community is on a healing journey, and to provide the special supports for the interim and the more permanent pastors who minister to the local faith community during that time.

Section Four: The Question of Re-assignment of Church Leaders Who Have A History of Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct.

Recommendation 14

Religious Authorities have publicised policies about the conditions and procedures under which a church leader guilty of sexual abuse can return to any form of ministry with the safety of the community being the fundamental principle of such policies and procedures.
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Emotional Responses to Re-Assignment Issues

The question of the return of a church leader to any form of ministry after being found guilty of sexual abuse is extremely controversial. At one extreme there are those who say that the betrayal of the sacred trust which is involved in church leader sexual abuse is so great that a perpetrator should never be allowed to return to any form of ministry in a faith community.

At the other extreme there are those who would wish to give immediate forgiveness to the perpetrator, particularly if the known offences occurred in the more remote past, and who would wish the church and the faith community to continue on as if nothing has really happened.

Every person for whom church leader sexual abuse is a concern takes up an emotional position somewhere on the continuum between the two extremes. This emotional position seems to depend on factors such as:

- personal experience of being sexually abused
- the depth of the feeling of being betrayed by a church leader
- feeling closely identified with victims
- a belief that all perpetrators are the same

- feeling disillusioned by a church in general, and by its responses to church leader sexual abuse in particular
- feeling closely identified with the perpetrator
- lack of understanding of the depth of suffering victims can experience, leading to an underestimation or minimisation of the gravity of the offences.
- lack of understanding of the personal dynamics of perpetrators, leading to a belief that the perpetrator needs little or no rehabilitation.
- an understanding of forgiveness which does not realise that being forgiven of itself does not take away the strength of the tendency to repeat the offence.

Religious Authorities seeking to put in place public policies and procedures in relation to the possible reassignment or church leader guilty of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct will also find that they personally have an emotional position on the issue. They would be wise to recognise their emotional responses to the issue of reassignment.

Determining the most appropriate policies and procedures and applying them objectively is a very difficult task in the present state of knowledge about sex offenders and their rehabilitation. It is doubly difficult if strong unrecognised emotional factors intrude.

Given the high levels of emotion which surround the issue of reassignment, it is necessary for the Religious Authority to have in place, and available for public scrutiny, the policies and procedures which will be followed in making reassignment decisions.

Members of faith communities then can measure what they see as happening against the stated policies and procedures. Perceiving that the Religious Authority is willing to be accountable for such decisions is an essential part of the total healing process for the

faith community. The policies and procedures will need to make clear the limits on the disclosure of individual details.

The publication of the policies and procedures will assist those in the faith community who do not appreciate how complex the decision to re-assign can be. Such people can believe that "forgiveness" which involves a forgetting about the offences is what is required. They are unaware of the vigilance which is a necessary part of the forgiveness of a perpetrator of sexual abuse.

The Principle of Safety for the Faith Community

There is a general consensus that the safety of the members of the faith community is the paramount consideration in the question of the reassignment to ministry of a church leader guilty of sexual abuse, particularly if the offences involved minors. Members of the faith community must not be placed at risk by the future behaviour of church leader perpetrators.

The principle is clear in theory. It is not so clear in its application. The problem is that if the principle is interpreted to mean that no one who is potentially a risk to the faith community can ever be assigned a leadership role, then there will be no church leaders at all. Every church leader, every person, is capable of sexual abuse and positions of power of themselves create greater opportunities for abuse. The risk of sexual abuse by church leaders can never be eliminated entirely, only minimised.

If it is accepted that there is always some level of risk to the faith community in appointing a church leader, then the question becomes "what is the **acceptable** level of risk and how is it determined?" I shall return to this question.

Recommendation 15

Religious Authorities have policies for the out-placement of church leaders, guilty of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, who are not able or willing to continue in any form of ministerial role, so that the safety of the wider community is maximised and appropriate pastoral care is shown to the perpetrator.

Option of No Return to Ministry

If a church leader perpetrator has been judged to be unable to continue normal ministry because the risk to the members of the faith community is unacceptably high, then what is to become of such a person?

One solution is simply to dismiss the person and send them out into the wider community to fend for themselves. Ecclesiastical law may make the implementation of this solution difficult but not impossible. The solution has the advantage of removing the likelihood of the particular faith community or denomination being held legally responsible for any future offences by the perpetrator.

The solution has the disadvantage, particularly in cases where there have been multiple offences against minors, of possibly decreasing the safety of members of the wider community, particularly if the perpetrator is very disgruntled and has no support system. This possibility is what motivates Stephen Rossetti to argue that the general community is better off if some “priest child molesters” are allowed to return to a carefully supervised ministry.⁶¹

The question of the moral responsibility of a faith community to the wider community is one which is worth considering, particularly for

⁶¹ S.J.Rossetti, A The Mark of Cain: Re-integrating Pedophiles@, *America*, vol 73, no.6, pp 9-16. Needless to say there are many who do not agree with him.

organisations which hold themselves up as having things to say about moral responsibilities.

I was told of one Catholic Religious Order which allows members, guilty of sexual abuse of minors to continue as members but who are not able to live in the normal religious communities which are located near schools. The offenders live in smaller communities with other members, retired or on special duties, and are expected to support themselves by working in the wider community at jobs which do not put minors at unacceptable risk.

The Religious Order is exploring the option of having the past perpetrators cease membership of the Order but continue to live with them as described above. I assume that the option is aimed at eliminating or minimising any legal liability for any future offences by a known perpetrator.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago has a package available for younger priests who choose to resign from ministry rather than accept the limitations which they know will be imposed on them after treatment for sexual abuse or sexual misconduct. The package includes:

- Payment for continuing therapy for 2-3 years based on an assessment of need
- Payment of a salary for a period whilst they attempt to find employment
- Payment of health and car insurance
- Assistance with legal problems
- Encouragement to seek laicisation
- Monitor them in an “aftercare” programme for 3-5 years.

The package aims to find a balance between protection of the church and wider communities and the church responsibility and

pastoral concern for the perpetrator.

Such options may be more difficult to implement in small denominations because of limited financial resources. Certainly, I was told difficulties where pastors who were resigning after being subject to allegations of sexual abuse were in bitter disputes over the amount of “severance pay”.⁶² A policy which covers such circumstances would be helpful.

It may even be that an insurance company would cover the cost of the “out-placement” of future perpetrators, once the insurance company is satisfied that appropriate risk management strategies are in place.

The general healing of a faith community is assisted if it is aware that the perpetrator is being assisted by the Religious Authority to find a place within society within the context of a genuine repentance and effort toward recovery and rehabilitation.

Religious Authorities who affirm the importance of redemption and forgiveness as being fundamental to the message of their church lose some credibility if they treat church sexual abuse perpetrators as if they had committed the unforgivable sin.

⁶² It is worth noting that the appointment of an afterpastor has sometimes been delayed because the faith community had to use the money which would have been used to pay the afterpastor to pay the “severance pay” of the resigning pastor. Presumably there are legal problems in such cases which do not allow straight dismissal.

Recommendation 16

Religious Authorities in framing policies and procedures in relation to the reassignment of a church leader guilty of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct recognise the contexts of public suspicion and professional debate which surround the issue of reassignment.

The Context of Public Suspicion

The general public has been made aware of the occurrence of sexual abuse by church leaders mainly through the media attention which has been directed to incidents of the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests and members of Catholic religious orders.⁶³

⁶³ P. Jenkins in *Pedophiles and Priests: Anatomy of a contemporary crisis*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996. Jenkins, does not in any way discount the fact and the importance of incidents of sexual abuse in churches and in the Catholic Church in particular. However, from a social constructionist point of view, he highlights the following as influencing the public perception of the sexual abuse of minors in the Catholic Church in the USA and Canada:

- an anti-Catholic tradition in American society;
- changing media values about reporting sexual irregularities of public figures which gave the media opportunity to widely report the notorious cases of serial abuse over many years by priests such as Fr. Porter;
- the emergence of greater knowledge of the effects of sexual abuse on children and adults;
- groups within the Catholic Church using the incidents to further their own agenda in the Church- traditionalists blaming the events on homosexual clergy and progressives blaming the events on the autocratic and secretive ways of the hierarchy and church bureaucracy;
- the feminist critique of patriarchy, sexism and structures in the church which are said, by their very nature, to be abusive of power;
- the explosion of litigation in civil matters and the amount of money paid in settlements;
- therapists, defending against the charge that they had implanted false memories of abuse, seeking to emphasise the real and proven incidents within the church.

Less media attention has been given to sexual abuse of minors by church leaders in other denominations. Even less media attention has been given to sexual abuse of adults by church leaders in any denomination.

Unfortunately, it has to be said that churches would probably not give the necessary attention to dealing with church sexual abuse and sexual misconduct if the media had not given so great an emphasis to the question.

One result of the medias publicising of the history of churches dealings with known incidents of sexual abuse in the more remote past and in current circumstances is a perception in the general public and in members of faith communities that churches are primarily interested in “coverups” and “protecting their own” i.e. their clergy or official leaders.

This perception is both accurate and inaccurate. It is accurate when referring to actual incidents where primary victims have been treated by church officials in an excessively legalistic manner and with extreme lack of sensitivity.⁶⁴ It is inaccurate when referring to actions taken by churches in the more remote past when they knew no more about sexual abuse and its consequences than the psychological professions. Churches tended to believe that what was only seen as immoral sexual behaviour could easily be corrected by an act of contrition and a decision not to re-offend. Gary Schoener points out that some Religious Authorities received bad advice from the professionals they consulted at the time.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ See N. and T. Ormerod, *When Ministers Sin: Sexual abuse in the churches*, Millennium Books, Sydney, 1995, pp 75-84, for a discussion of survivors' experience of the responses of church leaders.

⁶⁵ G.R. Schoener, *Assessment, Rehabilitation and Supervision of Clergy Who have Engaged in Sexual Boundary Violations*, 1995, p 2. Copy provided by the author to me.

Thus there is an element of mistrust and suspicion in the wider community and in faith communities of Religious Authorities ability to assess accurately the risk a reassigned church leader would be to a faith community. Members of faith communities need to be confident past mistakes will not be repeated and that Religious Authorities “loyalty to their own” will not place faith communities at unacceptable risk.

The Context of Professional Debate

Religious Authorities would do well to remember that professionals, like everyone else, come to the issue of church leader sexual abuse with their own agenda. Not only do they come with whatever personal emotional responses they might have but they also come with their values and theoretical commitments in relation to activities and approaches to the issues within their professions. These values and commitments can influence how phenomena are defined and assessed.

Some examples of the differences among therapists are:

- those who operate from within a framework which is based on a “medical model” and those who say that such a framework is too restrictive and places too much emphasis on “pathology”.

The former may strongly value the categories of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Of Mental Disorders (ADSM IV)*⁶⁶ as ways to understand people and their behaviour. The latter may object to the assessment of people in terms of the categories which they say do not do justice to the internal reality and the meanings of personal experience.

The former may value the use of psychological testing as an aid in gaining a clinical understanding; the latter may not.

⁶⁶ Published by the American Psychiatric Association, Washington, D.C., 1994

The former may be more comfortable than the latter with the power dimensions which are inherent in the role of the psychological assessment of people.

- those whose approach is “scientific” and those whose approach is based on “clinical experience”

The former are more likely to reject a view about a specific phenomenon unless it has been extensively researched using the procedures which are regarded as normative in academic psychology and social science. They tend to regard all other evidence as “anecdotal” rather than “substantiated”.

The latter are more likely to accept as “substantiated” or “true” or “useful for practice” evidence gained from the experience of therapists and their clients. “Practice wisdom” may be valued to an extent which those of a more scientific bent find uncomfortable and unjustified.

Thus Religious Authorities who seek advice from experts in the psychological and social sciences about the formulation of policies and procedures in relation to the assessment of church leader perpetrators for rehabilitation and/or reassignment purposes need to gain some idea of the theoretical and personal approaches such experts will take.

Canvassing the views from a number of experts who have varying approaches is advisable before committing policy and procedures to paper.

Recommendation 17

The criteria used by Religious Authorities to judge whether or not a church leader who has been involved in sexual abuse or sexual misconduct can return to any form of ministry be extensive and rigorous, with any significant doubt being resolved in the direction of non re-assignment.

Factors to Consider in Re-Assignment Decisions

The problem facing a Religious Authority who has the task of deciding whether or not a specific person can be re-assigned to any ministry is very difficult.

There are currently no objective criteria established by extensive academic research which would specify exactly the risk to which a faith community would be exposed if different types of church leader perpetrators of sexual abuse returned to full or limited ministries.⁶⁷

On the other hand the clinicians who have treated a particular perpetrator may be quite confident that the person is sufficiently on the road to recovery to be able to undertake some form of ministry without there being an unacceptable risk to the faith community.

Objective criteria established by acceptable scientific research would assist faith communities to have confidence in Religious Authorities re-assignment decisions and feel safe. Insurance

⁶⁷ At the time of my visit to the USA the Catholic Bishops had established a working Committee to investigate the setting up of an independent national research project which would aim at constructing demographic and psychological descriptions of clergy “child molesters”, comparing the profiles of those with diagnoses of paedophilia, ephebophilia, non sexual diagnoses and normals, evaluating treatment outcomes and constructing profiles of those who are judged to respond successfully to treatment and those who do not.

companies would be better able to assess risks in insurance terms and might be more willing to provide cover in relation to the ministry of the reassigned church leader. If there were to a re-offence by the former perpetrator the Religious Authority would have a basis for a legal defence by arguing that the risk taken fell within acceptable limits as judged competently at the time of re-assignment.

In the absence of agreed standardised criteria the Religious Authority is going to have to make a judgment about the re-assignment of a specific person with full awareness of the limitations of scientific knowledge at the time of the making of the judgment. The church and social contexts within which such a decision will be implemented also need to be taken fully into account.

Based on my conversations with therapists during the study, on resource material they gave me and from my general reading in the area of re-assignment I offer the following as being necessary for a Religious Authority to take into account in re-assignment decisions after a perpetrator has been in treatment.⁶⁸

- **Whether or not there has been an assessment of the current fitness for any type of ministry by a person or institution independent of the person or treatment institution which provided the treatment.**⁶⁹

⁶⁸ It is not my intention to provide references for every single view advanced here as would be appropriate in an academic paper. The bibliography gives a number of references for those with a more detailed interest in these matters.

⁶⁹ I am assuming that the perpetrator has been involved in treatment which specifically addresses the behaviour of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct. The aim of treatment is assist the perpetrator to minimise the risk of re-offending. Rehabilitation plans and treatment which do not address specific behaviours but only address “underlying causes” or “related psychological problems” are inadequate and probably dangerous in the context under discussion.

The reason for this suggestion which some would find controversial is that treating professionals and even treating institutions have a natural investment in achieving success in their work. There could be a unconscious tendency to over-estimate the progress of a perpetrator. Assessment of treatment progress and fitness for ministry by an independent assessor is simply a safeguard for the Religious Authority. Professionals ought not find the “second opinion” process objectionable.

- **Whether or not the treatment programme for the perpetrator included intensive and extensive group work.**

All treatment centres I visited emphasised the importance of group work in the treatment of perpetrators. The University of Minnesota’s programme does not include individual therapy at all.

The reason for the emphasis on groups is the acknowledged difficulty that individual therapists have in being able to resist being drawn into the “world” of the person they are treating and thereby losing the degree of objectivity that working with sex offenders requires because of the need to protect members of the community.

Groups provide a counterbalance to the tendency for therapists to over-identify with the perpetrator. Not only do other members of treatment group have different perspectives on each other so also do other professionals who work with the groups. The mix of expressed views makes it more difficult for the perpetrator to hide behind defences of denial, minimisation and rationalisation. Any unconscious collusion of individual therapist and perpetrator in treatment is counteracted.

- **The clinical diagnosis or assessment of the perpetrator**

The view of the public, reinforced by general media reporting, tends to be that all sexual abusers are the same and equally a risk to the community. Clinicians make distinctions among types of perpetrators which are beginning to be examined by more rigorous research. These distinctions will be vital if they assist the assessment of rehabilitation potential. Many clinicians believe some distinctions are useful already. These include:

Paedophile vs. Ephebophile

Paedophiles experience a sexual attraction to pre-pubescent children. Ephebophiles experience a sexual attraction to adolescents. If either type allows the attraction to progress to sexual behaviour with a child or legal minor a criminal offence will be committed. However, the clinical profiles and the assessment of rehabilitation potential may be quite different.⁷⁰

Certainly there seems to be an acceptance of the distinction between “fixated” and “regressed” offenders. The “fixated” are those who have a primary attraction to children and/or adolescents. In the current state of knowledge the assumption is that these primary orientations are not susceptible to change, possibly grounded in some biological abnormality.⁷¹ I know of no one who would contemplate recommending that church leaders with a “fixated” diagnosis ever return to anything other than a very limited and closely supervised ministry.

The “regressed”, on the other hand, though they have acted on attractions to minors (usually adolescents), are assumed to have a primary attraction to age-appropriate partners. They are judged to have “regressed” under stress to an earlier stage of development. It

⁷⁰ This is of research interest to Tony Robinson and others at St.Luke’s Institute in Maryland.

is assumed that their prognosis and potential for rehabilitation can be positive. Some ephebophile offenders can be judged to be in a state of “arrested development”. Hence their sexual actions have a quality of being with their emotional peers even though there may be vast differences in chronological age. The prognosis in such cases is not necessarily negative.

Finally, some offenders against minors have simply and genuinely mistaken the age of the person with whom they were sexual. Such people may be found guilty of sexual assault but a diagnosis of paedophilia or ephebophilia would not seem to be indicated in such cases.

It must be remembered that church leader perpetrators of child sexual assault, like other perpetrators, have frequently been found to deny, minimise, distort or lie about their sexual behaviour. They can even have repressed memories of their offences. An accurate diagnosis is not necessarily easy to establish even for experienced clinicians.

The presence or absence of major organic brain disorder

A perpetrator with a major organic brain disorder would be a very great risk for return to ministry. It is advisable to carry out neuropsychological tests during the assessment of perpetrators for rehabilitation potential if there is the slightest sign of a possible impairment to the brain.

The presence or not of compulsivity

There are professional debates about whether or not persons who have many and frequent sexual experiences which are judged to be beyond the norm for a particular society can be said to be addicted

⁷¹ This possibility is of interest to Robert Camargo of Southdown in Canada and Fred Berlin in Baltimore.

to sexual experience, in the same way as some people are said to be addicted to alcohol or drugs.

Nevertheless, there appears to be an emerging consensus that some perpetrators can be judged as having a compulsive disorder.⁷² They have extreme difficulty in resisting impulses to engage in sexual behaviour which is outside the norm for their society or in the context under discussion outside the norm for their role of church leader.

Clearly, those assessed as having an element of compulsivity in their psychosexual profile are a great risk for a return to ministry unless it can be demonstrated that they have been able to control their impulses over a long period of time.

Many Offences vs. Few Offences

Those with multiple offences with a high number of victims over a long period of time are a very great risk for return to any ministry which might provide any opportunity for committing other offences.

The adage that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour is relevant.

Those with very few offences, even if they occur over a long period of time, are a lesser risk for return to ministry and have greater rehabilitation potential. Nevertheless, there would need to be very careful assessment as to whether or not the number of offences was truly small. The perpetrators word should not be taken at face value, particularly early in assessment and treatment, given the real possibility of perpetrators denying, minimising, repressing or straight

⁷² Eli Coleman of the University of Minnesota has particularly studied compulsive sexual behaviour and Gerardine Taylor of St. Luke's Institute in Maryland is interested in the profiles of clergy and religious sex offenders who have a compulsive element in their behaviour.

out lying about their behaviour. In situations of real doubt it would seem advisable to assume more offences rather than less. (Here is another reason why it would profit churches to really invite victims to come forward.)

Violence vs. NonViolence

A perpetrator who used violence in committing the offences would be a very great risk for a return to ministry.

Major Psychiatric Diagnosis vs. Less Serious Psychiatric Diagnosis

A serious ongoing psychotic or neurotic psychological disorder would indicate a high risk for return to ministry.⁷³

- **The nature of the offences.**
Criminal offences which involve assault are clearly more serious than a case of sexual harassment which only involved telling inappropriate sexual jokes. Not all sexual abuse as defined in this Report is equal in gravity. Nor is sexual misconduct. The more serious the offence the greater the risk in a return to ministry.
- **The extent to which the perpetrator is acknowledging the full scope of the sexual abuse or misconduct.**
As has been stated above perpetrators are not necessarily honest with themselves or others about the full extent of what

⁷³ J.C.Gonsiorek in "Assessment for Rehabilitation of Exploitative Health Care Professionals and Clergy@ in *Breach of Trust*...., op.cit. pp 147-154, offers the following as included in a tentative typology of professional perpetrators including clergy : Naive; Normal and/or mildly neurotic; Severely neurotic and/or socially isolated; Impulsive Character Disorders; Sociopathic or narcissistic character disorders; Psychotics; "Classic" sex offenders (classic repetitive paedophiles and physically aggressive sex offenders); Medically disabled; Masochistic/self-defeating individuals.

they have done. I was told of one perpetrator whose reporting of the number of his victims increased from 4 to 20 in the first six months of treatment. I was told by therapists that this would not be an unusual case.

Also perpetrators can in their own minds rationalise what happened as not really being abusive. They were just “showing affection” or just “having a little bit of rough and tumble play”. They can feel sorely misunderstood. They may see nothing wrong with what they did.

A perpetrator whose account of abuse is extensive would on this indicator be less of a risk for return to ministry.

- **The extent to which the perpetrator is accepting personal responsibility for the full scope of the sexual misconduct.**

A perpetrator who truly accepts personal responsibility for the offences and truly undergone a conversion of life as a result of that acceptance is less of a risk for return to ministry.

True repentance may be difficult to discern. An effort to make some personal restitution to victims could be an indicator.

- **The extent to which the perpetrator has demonstrated an understanding of the suffering the misconduct has brought into the lives of the victims and has expressed a true sorrow and contrition for being the cause of that suffering.**

This is what is called “victim empathy”. Some clinicians I spoke with believed a perpetrator could not really understand what the experience of his victims was until he had progressed in treatment to a point where he was able to be in touch with his own pain from whatever source.

Expressions of regret, based only on the consequences of the misconduct in the perpetrators life are not sufficient

to demonstrate contrition or regret. Many perpetrators are extremely narcissistic or self-centred and recognition of the pain of the consequences of being caught is easy for them. They may express this in language which seems to indicate victim empathy which may in fact be entirely self-referential e.g. “I am truly sorry for what I have done with X.”

- **The willingness to make some form of restitution to the victims**

A perpetrator who was not willing to make an appropriate form of restitution to the primary and associate victims is not likely to have degree of victim empathy required in the recovery process.

What is an appropriate form of restitution in a particular case will be determined by the victim’s current experience. The perpetrators readiness to offer a true personal apology (as distinct from an apologetic form of words) either in writing or within a meeting with the victim set up specifically for the purpose would seem a minimum indication of a desire to make restitution.⁷⁴

- **The extent to which the perpetrator can demonstrate relapse prevention techniques**

The fundamental aim of all treatment of perpetrators is to prevent as far as possible any future offence. This is called “relapse prevention” and all the treatment centres I visited included training in relapse prevention as an essential part of their programme. Any treatment which does not address the specific offences of the perpetrator is of extremely dubious quality.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of meetings between victims and perpetrators see M.E.Maris and K.M.McDonough, “How Churches Respond...” op.cit., pp 356-358.

- A perpetrator who can:
 - identify the type of situation and the pattern of internal (thoughts and feelings) and external events which in the past led to an instance of abuse
 - and who can demonstrate the strategies which he/she will use to deal with the urges, fantasies, “red flags”, triggers and high-risk situations

is less of a risk to return to ministry.

It is interesting to note that the Franciscans of Santa Barbara require that any of their friars, guilty of sexual offences against minors, who is seeking to return to a limited ministry, is required to make a videotape of himself addressing how he has completed his treatment goals. The videotape is viewed by the Provincial Minister and members of an independent board. Personal interviews with the Provincial Minister and some members of the board are also required before a judgment is made that the treatment has been satisfactorily completed.⁷⁵

- **The degree of commitment in the perpetrator to be involved in an ongoing after-care programme.**

No treatment centre I visited would consider that perpetrators of sexual abuse to be recovered after an initial intensive period of treatment. Nor could those guilty of sexual misconduct or with serious sexual problems be said to be completely recovered. All treatment centres would recommend an aftercare plan.

Stephen Rossetti suggests the following components of an aftercare programme for church leaders guilty of offences against minors:

⁷⁵ Franciscan Friars, Province of Santa Barbara, *Therapeutic Guidelines for Return to Limited Ministry in Cases of Child Sexual Abuse*. Copy given to me.

Multi-year.

Structured and comprehensive in relation to the individuals needs and life situation.

Ongoing individual and group therapy.

Regular meeting with a support group.

Periodic assessments of progress⁷⁶

The commitment of the former perpetrator to the components of the aftercare plan is best expressed in writing.⁷⁷ If a return to any form of ministry is permitted by the Religious Authority then the consequences of any non-compliance with the aftercare plan need to be spelt out in writing to the former perpetrator. These consequences could well include immediate withdrawal of the church leader from assignment or call.

- **The willingness of the perpetrator to be supervised by someone who has been fully briefed about the perpetrators history.**

Supervision is a usual part of a rehabilitation plan for a professional returning to practice after misconduct of any kind. The aim of supervision is to put in place another safeguard against further offences. Whilst the supervisor may well be supportive of the former perpetrators efforts to avoid re-offending the supervisor cannot be bound to confidentiality in relation to any matter which relates to the ongoing safety of the members of the faith community or the wider community.

⁷⁶ Stephen Rossetti A Reintegrating Paedophiles...@ op.cit., p 15

⁷⁷ I was told that in the return to ministry of a Catholic Chicago priest, who was guilty of some unspecified offences against adolescents, the liturgy which accompanied his return included his making public promises to adhere to the components of his aftercare plan. This return to ministry was controversial and was featured in the national US media.

Concern was expressed to me by some professionals that the quality of supervision provided by some churches in some aftercare situations was not good because the supervisor, often another church leader of the same denomination or faith community, was not seen to be in a position to be sufficiently objective about the behaviour of the former perpetrator and may miss or minimise signs of a possible return to offending.

Another problem was that the possible legal liability of the supervisor (and hence for the institution which appoints the supervisor) for any re-offence of the perpetrator was not always understood or made clear to supervisor or the former perpetrator.⁷⁸

Former perpetrators can be quite resentful of this aspect of supervision. A person who is well on the journey to recovery and who well understands the community's need to feel safe and his/her own need for constant self vigilance will appreciate the necessity of supervision.

- **The depth of the spiritual life of the perpetrator**

It is reasonable to assume that a church leader who is guilty of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct believes that the spiritual or religious is an important aspect of living. A church leader without faith surely has no business being the leader in a faith community.

The greater the depth of the spiritual life, the less risk is involved in a return to ministry.

⁷⁸ The principles discussed by L.M.Jorgenson, JD., in "Rehabilitating Sexually Exploitative Therapists: A Risk Management Perspective", *Psychiatric Annals*, Vol 25, No 2, Feb. 1995, pp 118-122 are worth considering by Religious Authority thinking of allowing a perpetrator to return to some form of ministry under supervision.

- I was told that during the spiritual assessment, which is part of the overall assessment for the planning of treatment in the Catholic treatment centres, some church leader perpetrators are found to be of little to no faith. They have been playing an occupational role with little to no interior commitment.

Others are found to be living with a very underdeveloped faith, often based on images and ideas of the divine which are far from the images and ideas of the divine as officially proclaimed by their church. These perpetrators may well have proclaimed and taught in a completely orthodox way but their underlying experience is very different. Such perpetrators need to be assisted to live in a way which is more authentic and more truly expressive of their deeper selves.

There has been an underlying concern among therapists that too great a concentration on the spiritual may provide a perpetrator with a ready made way to avoid the difficult work of coming to terms with the reality of the offences and their underlying causes. The offences can be "spiritualised" and discussed in a context which can effectively redefine the problems of the perpetrator in terms which avoid confronting the dark reality of the harm the perpetrator has caused.

For this reason the person who provides spiritual direction to a perpetrator needs to be in constant dialogue with the others involved in treatment, and needs to have a solid grasp of the principles which underpin the treatment of perpetrators. Only spiritual assessments from such spiritual directors should be considered in the consideration of church leader perpetrators return to any form of ministry.

- **The availability of a ministry which does not involve any direct and unsupervised contact with people similar to**

those who were victims of the perpetrator.

If the offenses have involved minors then the ministry cannot involve any work with minors. If the offences involved sexual exploitation of women in counselling or confessional situations then the ministerial assignment must exclude those contexts of possible offence.

It must be noted that a return to ministry will always involve potential contact with those similar to the previous victims. For example, a person who has offended against minors, and whose new and limited ministry is in adult faith development, might well be invited to dinner at a co-workers home where there are young children. Such contacts must be ruled out in the aftercare plan and the consequences for any violation applied.

Not every Religious Authority will have positions of limited ministry available for perpetrators in recovery. Larger institutions have less difficulty in finding such places. It would seem a matter of justice that a Religious Authority who knows that a limited ministry cannot be offered to a former perpetrator regardless of the degree of recovery, should inform the perpetrator as soon as possible so that planning for a future which does not include any form of ministry can commence.

- **The willingness of the perpetrator to allow, at least, the general history of abuse to be revealed to leaders in the work place or community where he/or she is to minister.** Whilst a perpetrator who is well on the road to recovery has a right to expect that people will not relate to him/her solely in terms of their past sex offending, it would seem vital that those who work closely in the new ministry know of the public facts of the history.

If they do not know, then some of the behaviours which are

necessarily part of the aftercare plan may be misinterpreted quite negatively which may lead to conflict or the isolating of the church leader. Such events may increase the possibility of a reoffence.

Disclosure of the history of abuse to those in the workplace and to leaders in the faith community provides a context for possible support for the perpetrator in recovery. An extremely negative and widespread response to the recovering perpetrators proposed ministry or assignment would indicate that alternate plans are needed.

- **The amount of media coverage which the offences attracted originally.** The greater the coverage by the media of the original offence, the more visible the reasons which have led to the allowing of any re-assignment or call need to be. The necessary limitations of privacy for both victims and perpetrator need to be respected.
- **The feeling of victims about re-assignment of the perpetrator.** It does not seem appropriate that the victims of the perpetrator have the **determining** say over the possible return of the perpetrator to a form of ministry. However, being consulted and knowing that their views about the matter are being seriously considered may assist their healing journey.

If a decision is made which is directly contrary to a victims express wish, then the reasons for the decision will need to be explained fully and personally to the victim.
- **Any knowledge or reasonable grounds for suspicion that there are other victims who have not as yet come forward and who might well be distressed by knowing that the**

perpetrator has returned to a ministry.

The healing of a traumatised faith community would be put at risk by new allegations being made which require the whole round of events (investigation by civil and/or church authorities) to start again. Different local faith communities may be traumatised.

It is also difficult to see how a church leader could provide effective leadership whilst being aware that true allegations from the past could be advanced at any moment.

Making the Decision

All of the above would seem to be necessary for consideration when the question of the reassignment of church leader perpetrator to any form of ministry arises. In the end it is going to be a matter of prudential judgment. It is clearly better to err on the side of caution and not place the safety of the community at risk where there is substantial doubt about return to ministry even of a limited form.

The publication of the type of considerations which the Religious Authority is taking into account in making re-assignment decisions would assist members of the faith community to have confidence that such decisions are not being made lightly. They might be more ready to accept such decisions, whatever the content in a particular case.

Conclusion

The title of this Report, Pain - Hope - Healing, summarises the essential message of the Report. Sexual Abuse by a church leader can bring with it an extraordinary amount of pain to many people at all different levels of a faith community. At the height of this pain it may seem that all is dark and there is no way ahead. The experience of faith communities in the USA and Canada shows that there is hope and healing at all levels is possible with patience and persistence.

Yet the healing is not possible without another type of pain, the pain of facing the challenge to the self-image of a faith community which sexual abuse by a church leader poses and taking the necessary action to make the self-image more of a living reality. The journey to healing for all probably has cyclical features : pain to hope to healing and back to pain and round and round again until healing is established.

Success in this endeavour will bring more humility into a faith community at all levels as all come to terms with the darker side of human nature in themselves and others.

It is my hope and the hope of all whose thoughts contributed to this Report that our work will assist in making the healing journey for traumatised faith communities as gentle as possible without putting aside the challenge the trauma places before all of us. May we all experience healing and a deeper faith as a result of undertaking the journey.

Appendix: Auspice, Persons Interviewed and Major Themes of Discussion

Franciscan Province of Santa Barbara, Oakland, California.

Rev. Joseph Chinnici

Provincial Minister.

Topics - the secrecy which surrounds sexual abuse

- programme of healing for the Province
- attempts to assist primary and associate victims
- decisions about re-assignment.

Servants of the Paraclete, Jemez Springs, New Mexico.

John Owen

Psychologist.

Topics - goals of treatment

- group treatment
- relapse prevention
- personal integrity necessary for abusers

Sarah Brennan

Clinical Director, Psychologist.

Topics - post-treatment options

- assessment of abusers
- integration of spiritual and psychological aspects of offenders
- team approach in treatment.

Nancy Rosborough

Art Therapist.

Topics - use and value of art therapy in treatment

- need for trust to develop before recovery can begin
- community responses to removal of Archbishop of Sante Fe
- church's way of dealing with offenders.

Sr. Pat Steffes

Spiritual Director.

Topics - offenders religious Arole-playing”

- offenders defective images of God
- lack of accountability in church systems
- integration of spiritual direction and treatment.

Robert Goodkind

Psychologist.

Topics - redivision of offenders treated in programme

- psychological profiles of offenders
- need for victim empathy in offenders
- assessment of risk to the community.

Rev. Ray Gunzel

Spiritual Director and Director of Programme.

Topics - structure of after-care programme

- importance of Ainner controls” in relapse prevention
- role of centering prayer and ascetical practice in recovery
- difficulties for Diocesan priest offenders in finding suitable ministry.

Rev. Liam Hoare

Servant General.

Topics - History of treatment centre in New Mexico

- Guidelines for counselling by priests of minors.

Archdiocese of Sante Fe, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Sr. Nancy Kazik

Vice-Chancellor and Case Manager.

Topics - Archdiocesan procedures to respond to allegations of clergy sexual abuse

- interventions in parishes

- therapy assistance to primary victims
- need for revelation of allegations to people before media publication.

Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Fr. Kevin McDonough

Vicar General.

- Topics - psychological assessment and treatment of offenders
- parish interventions
 - re-assignment of offenders
 - responses of parishioners to re-assigned clergy.

The Walk-In Counselling Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Gary Schoener

Director, Psychologist.

- Topics - assessment of offenders, past and present practices
- supervision of offenders after rehabilitation
 - differences between Catholic and Protestant clergy offenders
 - education programmes for prevention of abuse
 - viewing of video resource material.

Private Practice, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Walter Bera

Psychologist.

- Topics - meetings of victims and offenders
- need to reach out to all potential victims
 - faith journeys of community members in healing
 - paedophile offenders in Protestant clergy.

Program in Human Sexuality, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Simon Rosser

Psychologist.

- Topics - background factors in clergy which lead to abuse
- details of treatment programme
 - church context of abuse
 - model of psychological compulsivity.

Private Practice, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Nancy Biele

Victim Advocate.

- Topics - training of victim advocates
- training in congregational healing
 - processes of congregational healing
 - re-assignment questions.

Inter-Faith Sexual Trauma Institute, St. Johns Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minnesota.

Rev. Roman Paur

Executive Director.

- Topics - history and work of the Institute
- reaching of resource material
 - church responses to sexual abuse by clergy
 - systemic context of clergy sexual abuse.

Lutherans in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Rev. James Stein

Pastor.

- Topics - difficulties of after pastors
- comments on Milwaukee Synods policy on dealing with complaints
 - re-assignment issues
 - trust issues for after pastors and congregation.

Three Lutheran After-Pastors (two female, one male), Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Topic - detailed group discussion of the experience of after-pastoring.

Project Benjamin (Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee), Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Tom Schneider

Executive Director, Catholic Social Services.

Topics - history and work of Project Benjamin

- policies of the Archdiocese in relation to clergy sexual abuse
- re-assignment issues.

Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

Rev. Daniel Coughlin

Vicar for Priests.

Topics - identification of resource people in Chicago

- general discussion of issues of clergy abuse of minors.

Rev. Pat O'Malley

Vicar for Priests.

Topics - the Catholic Chicago history of dealing with allegations of sexual abuse of minors

- procedures when a new allegation is received
- role of church lawyers
- assessment of alleged and actual offenders
- assistance for those offenders who are not being re-assigned.

John OMalley

Director of Legal Services.

Topics - legal advice in the context of a pastoral response

- possibility of legal systems re-victimisation of victims
- legal adequacy of supervision arrangements for re-assigned clergy
- defending cases where allegations seems false or misguided.

Rev. Tom Paprocki

Chancellor.

Topics - role of the Chancellor in systematic response to allegations of clergy child sexual abuse

- responding to allegations of clergy sexual exploitation
- issues around re-assignment of offending clergy
- relationship of church with advocacy groups.

Ralph Boraccorsi

Director, Office of Victim Assistance.

Topics - principles underlying intervention with parishes

- role of parish assistance teams
- strategies of parish intervention
- assistance to individual victims.

Rev. Michael Bland

Clinical Co-Ordinator, Office of Victim Assistance.

Topic - relationship of Office of Victim Assistance with therapists of victims.

Private Practice, Chicago, Illinois.

Carroll Cradock

Psychologist, Consultant to Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago.

Topics - general processes of congregational healing

- assisting a congregation which wants to move on too quickly
- possibility of false allegations
- need for intervention to take account of congregations uniqueness.

The Link-Up, (Survivors of Clergy Sexual Abuse), Chicago, Illinois.

Rev. Tom Economus

Vice-President/Executive Director.

Topics - proportions of Catholics and others who contact Link-Up

- victims revictimisation experience in their contact with churches legal systems
- ways Link-Up attempts to assist victims
- financial settlements and justice for victims
- difficulties in relating to official church bodies.

The Episcopal Diocese of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

Rev. Chilton Knudsen

Director of Pastoral Care.

- Topics - need for long-term process of congregational healing
- training of parish "healing teams"
 - transference in relationship of parishioner and priest
 - re-assignment questions.

Three Episcopalian After-Pastors (Phone Interviews, 2 male, 1 female).

Topic - the experience of after-pastoring.

Jesuits of Upper Canada, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Mary Wells

Social Worker, Jesuit Information Bureau.

- Topics - specific examples of wounded congregations in Canada
- mediation of cash settlements with victims
 - differences between child sexual abuse and adult sexual exploitation
 - strategies for intervention in parishes and congregations
 - education and training of seminarians about abuse and exploitation.

Rev. Roger Yoworski

Provincial Adviser and Case Manager.

- Topics - church system responses to allegations of sexual abuse
- need for empirical research in relation to offenders and

- victims
- difficulties in handling sexual exploitation cases
- need for educative measures for clergy.

Southdown, Aurora, Ontario, Canada.

Sr. Donna Markham

Executive Director.

- Topics - general overview of work of Southdown
- developments on Australian scene
 - scheduling of interviews.

Robert Comargo

Psychologist, Research Co-Ordinator

- Topics - profiles of clergy offenders treated at Southdown
- possible biophysical factors in paedophilia
 - fixated and regressed paedophiles
 - differences between men and women at six month follow-ups (not specifically sex offenders).

Shona Corbin

Psychologist

- Topics - assessment of clergy offenders
- narcissistic and sociopathic offenders
 - compulsivity and sexual problems
 - difficulties of homosexual clergy.

Richard Gilmartin

Psychologist.

- Topics - assessment of clergy offenders
- intimacy needs and sex offending
 - issues involved in re-assignment
 - need for churches to have clear policy about re-assignment.

Leo Etienne

Addictions Counsellor.

Topics - relapse prevention model

- use of 12-step programme
- value of addictions approach in treating sexual problems.

Michael Haley

Spiritual Director.

Topics - spiritual aspects of treatment programme

- unlearning spiritual concepts which have not been liberating
- advantages of Southdowns not being an agent of the official Church
- timing of vocational discernment.

Rev. Sam Restivo

Social Worker.

Topics - details of post residential treatment programme

- offenders "self-covenants"
- relapse risk in initial post-residential period (for all, not just sex offenders)
- links with Religious Authorities.

Christian Brothers of the Province of St. Joseph, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Bro. J. Barry Lynch and Bro. Terry Holden

Provincial and Member of Provincial Council.

Topics - impact of allegations of sexual abuse at Mt. Cashel on staff and members of the Order of Christian Brothers schools

- programme for discussion of events surrounding the allegations
- programmes to assist numbers of the Order over a number of years
- future of offenders within the Order.

Anglicans, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Rev. Henry Hill

Bishop (retired).

Topic - general impact of sexual abuse by leaders in the Anglican Church.

After-Pastor (female)

Topic - experience of working as an advocate for victims in a Presbyterian community

Office of Pastoral Development of the House of Bishops, (Episcopalian), Yarmouth, Maine.

Bishop Harold Hopkins

Executive Director.

and

Parish Consultation Service, Cumberland, Maine

Nancy Myer Hopkins

Eastern Co-Ordinator.

Topics - moral and psychological aspects of the problem of sexual abuse in churches

- educational preventative work with clergy
- personal reactions of bishops when clergy are accused
- role of bishop in congregational healing
- model of congregational healing
- working with congregational leadership
- grief in congregation
- anger in meetings of the congregation.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Secretariat for Priestly Life and Ministry, Washington D.C.

Rev. Thomas Bevan (Phone Interview)

Executive Director.

Topics - general over-view of sexual abuse by clergy

- need for pastoral emphasis rather than legal
- issues of re-assignment of offenders
- abuse by women religious.

National Conference of Major Superiors (Male), Silver Springs, Maryland.

Rev. Stephen Henrick

Associate Director.

Topics - examples of specific Orders handling of sexual abuse among members

- work of the National Conference
- differences in responses across Orders
- accusations against women religious.

St. Luke's Institute, Suitland, Maryland.

Rev. Canice Connors

President.

Topics - general overview of work at St. Lukes

- discussion of sexual abuse by Australian Catholic clergy.

Frank Valcour

Medical Director.

Topics - concept and relevance of "Asexual addiction"

- differences between priest offenders and normal prison population of offenders
- strategies in treatment
- possibility of "Arecovery" and assignment to limited ministry.

Michael Forseca

Counsellor, Spiritual Director.

Topics - 12-step spiritually

- search for personal identity, not relying on idealised self-image
- under developed spiritual life

- intimacy needs and celibacy.

Rev. Stephen Rossetti

Vice-President/Chief Operating Officer.

Topics - need for change of heart in bishops and others who deal with sexual abuse in churches

- responses in traumatised congregations
- model of congregational healing
- re-assignment issues.

Gerardine Taylor

Psychologist.

Topics - research on intermittent and compulsive sexual abuse or sexual misconduct

- church systemic factors in sexual abuse
- models of sexual exploitation.

Tony Robinson

Psychologist.

Topics - research on profiles of paedophiles and ephobophiles

- after care programme
- re-assignment issues
- assessment issues
- available finance and treatment needs.

Rev. Phil Kelly

Half-Way House Manager.

Topics - assistance for offenders who cannot return to ministry

- differences in responses from dioceses and religious orders to offenders
- education for parishioners
- differences in United States and Canada in Catholic Church
- responses to issue of abuse.

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Photo of Ray Reid whilst visiting Williamstown, Massachusetts, USA with family in Oct 2011