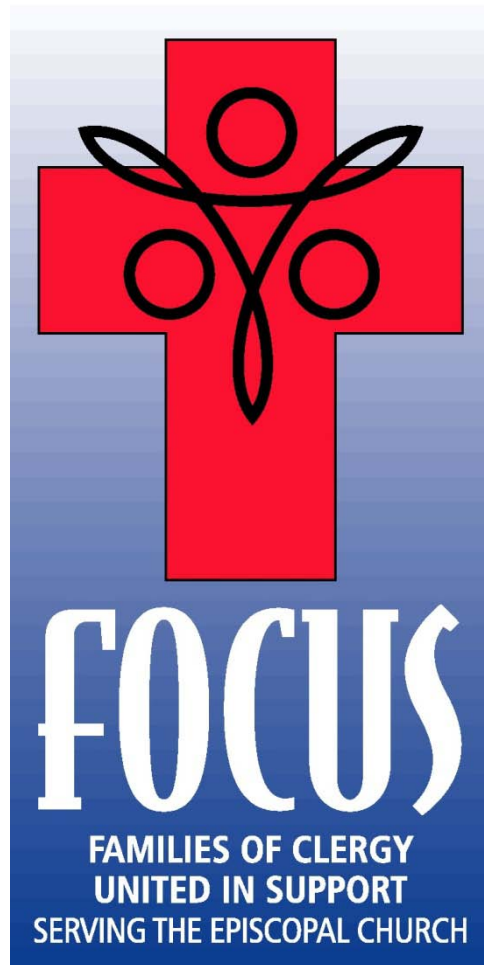
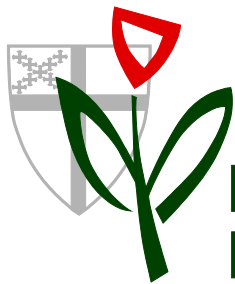


Children of Clergy



Prepared in partnership

with:



National Episcopal
Health Ministries

Children of Clergy

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Children of Clergy Introduction

Child to parent: “Do I have to come to church/be an acolyte/go to youth group/give money to church today?”

Parent to child: “Honey, I’m really sorry I won’t be at your class Halloween party; Mrs. Smith died and I have to be with that family.”

Child to parent: “Dad, can you please not wear your collar when you pick me up from school?”

Parishioner to teenager, *pinching his cheek*: “Oh, you’ve grown so much, I remember when you were just a little boy, and you would take off all your clothes and run around the church.”

Sometimes, being a “PK” (Preacher’s Kid) stinks. Sometimes it’s great—access to the copier or the dark room, or a mission trip; being genuinely proud of one’s parent; getting scholarships when needed. However, having some perspective, finding ways to communicate some of what one might feel as a PK, and finding other kids in similar situations can be very helpful.

Finding someone to talk with about a problem in your family?

Sometimes finding the right person can be hard. Here are some ideas:

- Diocesan youth missionary
- Adults worthy of respect at school
- Another clergy person
- Counselor/Therapist

Specific programs/support for family members of clergy:

- Is there a listserv or some other way for children of clergy to connect with each other?
- Is there contact information for spouses/partners/children of clergy in the diocese?
- Are there gatherings/workshops or any regularly scheduled activities for family members of clergy?
- Is there a local CFLAG chapter (Family of Lesbian and Gay Clergy)?

Clergy Family Wellness Written Needs Assessment Survey

Check all that apply. Are you:

An adult (18 and above) who is a "PK" (Preacher's kid, or child of clergy)

Married to a clergy person

A partner of a clergy person in a same sex relationship

A member of a family where both adults are ordained

A clergy person

A child currently living at home with clergy

What are the 3-5 best things about being part of a clergy family?

What are the 3-5 greatest challenges about being part of a clergy family?

Where do you go for support and discernment when needs of ministry and needs of family are in acute tension (when you have a problem in your family in part because of the church, or you're afraid to tell anyone about a family problem because someone in church might find out or tell another family member)?

In an ideal world, what resources could the diocese provide to help sort through these questions safely?

Here are some of the issues that have surfaced in discussions with clergy families. Please check those that resonate with you and that you might be interested in seeing addressed in some:

Time to share funny stories, horror stories, things that work and don't work to keep your family connected.

Family involvement in initial discernment process when a parent starts talking about becoming ordained

Juggling competing needs of ordained ministry with the careers, school and/or special programs of other family members

Housing issues

Juggling work time and family time

Parental leave policies

- Juggling family and parish expectations of clergy children
- Juggling family and parish expectations of clergy spouse/partner
- Family changes (birth, adoption, dating, new committed relationship, etc.) that become known in the parish
- Family crises that “can’t” become known in the parish (e.g. alcoholism, domestic violence), but often do
- Juggling fear of exposure with fear of harm
- Family crises in general (e.g. serious illness, special family needs)
- Need for a chaplain for families of clergy
- Support for families in transition, such as leaving a parish or starting in a new one
- Parish conflicts taken out on family members
- Statistics about effect of ordained ministry on clergy family life
- Other:

Would you attend an event focused on the needs of family members of clergy (check all that apply)?

- A half day workshop near someplace fun
- A full day workshop near someplace fun
- An overnight at some attractive place, with time for recreation
- Other

Events would probably include some plenary time, some break out time for clergy and/or clergy spouse/partners and/or children of clergy to meet, childcare and food and fun. We will research funding opportunities to keep costs low.

Other comments or suggestions?

Programs for Children within Families of Clergy (PKs)

“Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.’” Matt. 19:14 and parallels

It has long been noted and a topic of jokes that “preacher’s kids,” or “PKs” are a special breed of child. To be a “wholesome example” often means that parents expect the children to follow a stricter set of rules than their peers. Often they must go to church and Sunday school every Sunday, and they must behave. If the child conforms to these expectations, he or she may be seen by their peers as too “goodie-goodie.” If they participate in more worship services or church activities because of their parent’s involvement, they can be perceived as getting special favors, such as a solo in the chorus, when the real reason may be she had no choice but to attend all the events in which her parent took part.

If they rebel against the role, their parents are judged more harshly because they, of all people, should be able to maintain a Christian household in which children are loving and obedient. To be seen as a loving Christian child often requires that the child reject the culture in which they are immersed, especially during the teen years. The tension between culture and peers on one side and home and church on the other can be intense. Children of clergy need help and support from adults and peers who understand the difficulties of this unique life.

Being a PK influences children’s theology as well. How do children equate “Jesus Loves Me” with the sacrifices a clergy family often makes to accommodate the mission of the ordained member? How can children find meaning and love in the season of Christmas and Easter when in reality those seasons mean the absence and preoccupation of the ordained parent? Children of clergy are exposed to the illnesses, crises, death, and suffering of others more frequently than many other children, for better and for worse. Who helps them process their grief, or questions, or anger at the intrusion of the needs of people Jesus tells us to love into their family life? When the clergy person takes a controversial public stand, their children often feel the effects from teachers, students, and others outside the church. They learn early about the costs of taking a stand for Christ.

Diocesan programs that attend to the needs of clergy with children at home are the most logical way to address some of the needs of PK’s. Even a list of all the families who have children living at home would help families or children connect with each other however they please. Because this information is currently unavailable in any of the national church data bases, it needs to be compiled and maintained by diocesan staff.

The goals of programs for children of clergy include:

- Provide a “safe place,” literally and metaphorically, for children of clergy to find support and understanding.
- Provide children in families of clergy a peer context in which to have a voice.
- Provide affordable fun and recreation of children in families of clergy.
- Provide support for children in families of clergy as they struggle to be a “wholesome example.”
- Provide support for parents of PKs, ordained and lay, and increase awareness of pressures, resources, and coping strategies.

To further these goals this section of the resource guide includes a study unit to be used with families of clergy, reflections from several PKs, and outlines of programs for children of clergy developed by a few dioceses. Dioceses that have programs for clergy families and children are also listed under the Diocese in the survey section of this guide.

History & Intent of the Program for Children of Clergy in the Diocese of Ohio

The Diocese of Ohio began sponsoring events for children of clergy in the winter of 2001. The first event was a Saturday overnight at a resort hotel for the 7-12th grade children of clergy. Mary Carson, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry Development, and Susan McDonald, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry to Young People, both children of clergy, worked with several high school age young people to plan the overnight. Twenty-two young people were invited and seven attended for little agenda, fun in the pool and game room, and a meal at a restaurant where they could order anything they wanted. A detailed report of that event follows this summary of activities for PKs in the Diocese of Ohio.

Busy schedules and routines put children of clergy events on standby until the fall of 2002 when The Clergy Children Committee became a committee of the Commission on Ministry.

During the summer of 2003, the Clergy Children Committee sponsored a Clergy Kid Luau. The Luau was held at a state park central to the diocese. Food, games, and prizes were part of the day. All families of clergy who have children were invited. The day was planned as a full family function with the aim of creating personal connections among the children. Approximately 25 people attended the Luau, and all had positive comments about the event that were collected in a survey at the end of the day. In addition to planning the Luau, the Committee sends birthday cards to all children of clergy. Each card includes a \$5 gift certificate to Dairy Queen.

In 2004 the Committee had experienced some budgetary reductions. A fun get away weekend at an indoor water park with the middle and high school age children of clergy was planned, but due to the reduced budget, this was modified to hosting three separate small evening functions in three different areas of the diocese. The Committee hopes to be able to plan and fund the Luau as the major event of the year, bringing all the families together in one location for fun and fellowship.

The initial goals of the Committee are to build understanding and community so that eventually resources can be allocated and provide support for the children of clergy in the diocese.

Heather Hale

Clergy Children Committee, Diocese of Ohio

The Reverend Mary C. Carson

Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry Development and Deployment Officer

Pilot Program for Clergy Children in the Diocese of Ohio

Report to the Office for Ministry Development

April 3, 2001

Background:

Susan McDonald and Mary Carson, both clergy children, began discussing their experiences of growing up in clergy families several years ago. Susan and Mary dreamed about doing something to bring the clergy children (PKs) in the Diocese of Ohio together so that they could share the unique experiences clergy children have in the fishbowl called the Church. In September 1999 when Mary joined the staff of the Bishop of Ohio where Susan already served as Assistant to the Bishop for Children and Youth Ministry, it became much easier and therefore more realistic that they could do something together.

Rather than reinventing the wheel unnecessarily, Mary sent an e-mail in February 2000, to deployment officers throughout the country, asking about other programs with clergy children. From that unscientific inquiry, it appeared that nothing else substantive was happening in any other diocese. A few dioceses have scholarships for clergy children and a few have tied unsuccessfully to bring PKs together in the past. Based on this information, Bud Holland, from the Office for Ministry Development, offered a grant of \$1000 for initial programming for PKs in the Diocese of Ohio.

Planning:

Susan, her husband Sam, who is also a youth minister, and Mary had an initial brainstorming meeting in May with two PKs currently in high school. They were very enthusiastic about the idea of something just for them. An overnight with very little agenda seemed to be the way to go, based on that meeting. It was also important to those involved in the planning that there not be any charge for anything since the church so often expects so much from PKs already. This would be a gift from the church to them. There was another planning meeting later in the fall with the same two youths (two other youths who had been invited were unable to attend.)

Twenty-one youths, between seventh and twelfth grades, were invited to attend an overnight retreat on February 24-25, 2001. They received a personal letter from Mary as well as the "Top Ten Reasons to Come to the Clergy Kid Retreat." The top ten reasons were taken, for the most part, from a list created at the previous planning meeting.

The Overnight:

Shortly before the overnight, seven of the twenty-one invited who planned on attending, plus one young adult PK, arrived. Sam and Susan McDonald and Mary Carson were the adults in charge.

The overnight took place in the Lodge at Sawmill Creek in Huron, Ohio, a resort-type hotel with important amenities for young people such as a game room and a swimming pool. Thanks to the generosity of the management, two hospitality rooms were reserved, as well as two Jacuzzi rooms for the same price as the regular rooms. The hospitality rooms had plenty of space for everyone to spread out, as well as refrigerators and a VCR. The group gathered at Sawmill Creek between 12 and 1 p.m. on Saturday and left around 3 p.m. on Sunday. The departure time was chosen to give sufficient time for parents to go to church and still pick up their children.

Because the group was small, and Sam and Susan knew all the young people already, it was not necessary to provide a lot of structure for the overnight. Time was devoted to swimming, watching videos, going to the game room, playing cards, and eating. The chief goal was to let the youth “hang out”, be themselves, and get to know each other.

Pizza was served for lunch on Saturday, as well as lots of snacks, and dinner was in the hotel restaurant. Everyone ordered from the menu, which was expensive but worth it because, due to constraints on clergy family budgets, they do not often get to do extravagant things. A high school senior, amazed that he was allowed to order an appetizer, said to the server, “I would like the \$10 shrimp cocktail.” On Sunday morning, everyone had bagels in their rooms, and then went to the buffet in the restaurant at noontime.

Everyone got to sleep in on Sunday morning, a rarity for PKs. Later in the morning everyone gathered for a very informal Eucharist in one of the rooms. Because it was the last Sunday after the Epiphany, Mary read the story of the Transfiguration as the gospel and invited everyone to share the transforming moments or “high points” of their lives as PKs. Several young people spoke about the significance of taking communion to shut-ins with his or her father. Diocesan youth events also were identified as the place where several were finally able to discover their own faith apart from their parents. Naturally, some of the less pleasant sides of life as a PK were mentioned, including having vacations shortened due to deaths, parents being away frequently, and having meals interrupted by parishioners.

Another significant challenge discussed by the PKs was the difficulty of parental transitions. The young adult present spoke about having to adapt, in recent months, to life in a new parish a half hour away from her father’s previous parish. This was especially difficult since there are virtually no young adults in that parish. Because she is an adult, she was told that she did not necessarily have to leave the previous parish, yet she knew that it would be uncomfortable for her to remain there after her father left. Another PK spoke of how father began commuting five hours to seminary when she was six; something that was confusing and stressful for her.

While only about 25% of the PKs in the diocese were present, the overnight was a tremendous success. All of those who attended wanted to do a similar overnight again, including some of whom wanted to do so on a monthly basis. They were genuinely surprised that the diocese thought enough of them to plan the event. The parents were also grateful for the event because they are well aware of the stresses on their children because of their parents' vocations.

The intention is to have other events in the future that can begin to address some of the needs of the PKs that were articulated at the overnight. Other events are being considered, such as a day at the zoo or something to which younger PKs could be invited, as well as another overnight for junior high and senior high PKs next year. Possibly coordinating efforts with the two Lutheran synods in northern Ohio is also being considered.

The participants and attendees are grateful for the encouragement and financial support from the Office for Ministry Development; all would be delighted to share the experience with others throughout the Episcopal Church.

Report prepared by the Reverend Mary C. Carson, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry Development, Diocese of Ohio. E-mail: mcarson@dohio.org

Outline of Children's Day – Diocese of Washington, D.C.

To: Diocesan Clergy and their Children (up to Grade 12)

From: The Rt. Rev. John Bryson Chane and Mrs. Karen Albright Chane

Re: A Picnic and Program on the Water for Clergy Families with Children

We write today to invite your clergy family, with children from infant to Grade 12, to join us on the water at Trinity Church, in St. Mary's City, Maryland. The Rev. John Ball, Trinity's rector, welcomes us to this stunningly beautiful setting to picnic, play and share a program at this parish, one of the oldest (founded in 1638) and most scenic in the Diocese of Washington.

Our date is Saturday, June 26, 2004, from noon to approximately 5 p.m. Directions are enclosed.

Our schedule for the day will look something like this:

12:00 p.m. Gather and check in at Trinity's parish hall

12:30 p.m. Lunch on the lawn overlooking the water

1:30 p.m. Ice breakers for all ages

2:15 p.m. Games on the lawn for all ages

3:15 p.m. Program for children will break into age appropriate groupings for discussion and Q and A. *What does it feel like to be a son/daughter of a clergy person?*

4:45 p.m. Regroup for Evening Prayer and departure.

Our youth leaders will be Ms Patty Ames, Director of Children's Ministry at St. Columba's Parish, and Mr. Paul Canady, Diocesan Deputy for Youth Ministry. Our purpose is to begin the formation of a supportive network for the children of diocesan clergy. While the children talk, there will be a parenting program for adults with Dr. Jennifer A. Crumlish of the Washington Psychological Center.

Bring your children, your blankets to throw down on the lawn, your lawn chairs and chaises, equipment for any outdoor games you especially enjoy playing, and join us for a beautiful afternoon in St. Mary's City. Should it rain, we will move our event indoors. Please RSVP by Friday, June 18th to our receptionist, Ms. Keely Thrall, at 202-537-6555 or kthrall@edow.org. Please give Keely the names and ages of the children you will be bringing, and the number of adults who will accompany them.

Preparing a Vestry for the Arrival of a New Clergy Family

Brochure from the Diocese of Maine – October 2003

Prepared by the Committee for Family of Clergy Wellness for the Diocese of Maine and FOCUS: Families of Clergy United in Support

This program is used in the Diocese of Maine at the time of transition for clergy and their families. A specially trained liaison visits with the vestry after a call has been made and accepted, but before the arrival of the new clergy person and their family. This is done at the request of the deployment office and with the approval of the vestry.

The liaisons are themselves members of clergy families who have been trained by the deployment staff about the search process and practical “Do’s and Don’ts”. The liaisons are in various geographical areas of the diocese to simplify communication and travel. They are all lay people connected to clergy and therefore they can speak from direct personal experience.

The following outline can be used as a checklist for the clergy family liaison to adapt for their particular style of communicating and for the particular vestry. Liaisons can also use this information in discussion with Diocesan Interims and Consultants on an annual basis.

Introduction:

- Explain that the local church system includes the clergy, their family, and congregation.
- Encourage wellness from the beginning for a family of clergy.
- Explain that wellness in families of clergy will promote health in clergy and congregations.
- Family, clergy, and the parish are independent entities, but each impacts the other, leading either to wholeness or to unease.
- If family feels unease, it will affect clergy and congregations and as well as vice versa.
- Transition is a time of very high stress for every member of the family.
- Clergy and congregation are very busy at transition time.
- Move for family is very often different than for clergy. Examples:
 - Children may enter new schools.
 - Spouse and children must find new friends.
 - Often spouse must find a new job.
 - Family must find new doctors, dentists, etc.
 - All have left old friends behind.
- Vestry can model healthy behavior and respect for clergy and their families. This can be a teaching moment for all involved.

2. Search and Call Tips:

It should be a joint decision between clergy and family to enter into a search process.

3. After the call and before family's arrival the vestry should discuss the following issues:

Physical, emotional, social and spiritual boundaries: clarify and respect them.

Examples:

Physical

- Home/rectory
- If rectory: involve clergy family in preparation (e.g. painting, remodeling), so the new occupants can have some input
- Clean rectory
- Make list of rectory systems (heating, plumbing, etc) and their quirks, and reliable repair/service people
- Provide guidelines about vestry permission for expenses

Emotional

- Pledge to avoid gossip about clergy and family, especially speaking to a family member to get to the clergy - triangulation

Social

- Clear day off for clergy when time can be spent with family or as wished; allow for family time

Spiritual

- Note that family does not have pastor
- Family may not be same denomination
- Respect for the right to express baptismal ministry the way they wish
- Role Expectations for family
- Most seminary training does not include this issue
- Many unwritten roles for family; they spend significant time trying to figure them out
- Behavior – family members should be seen as own person not just an extension of clergy
- Availability and involvement expectations for spouse and children

4. Suggestions for a smooth transition after the call has been accepted:

As the family arrives:

- Provide subscription to local paper
- Stock basics in refrigerator and cupboards
- Coupons: restaurants, car wash
- Resource packet: Babysitters, doctors, vets, mechanics, hardware store, grocery store, cleaners
- A list of the church's key people, places and things
- Diocesan information such as key phone numbers, who does what, and community contacts such as library, continuing education, etc.
- Diocesan events such as annual spouse/partner retreats
- Picture directory of parish members
- Compensation, Social Security impact, health insurance info
- Vestry should appoint senior warden, or someone with authority and respect from among their members, to be a contact person for the family, as well as be in consultation with family and clergy
- Parish should plan a suitable welcoming service
- Make sure that a family member does not sit alone
- Pot luck

Transition group:

- For at least the first 12-18 months
- Give them space but make sure their needs are met
- People that will be a resource for family; suitable for family makeup, i.e., include a teenager if a teen is a family member
- Not necessarily all church people – can be from community, too
- If practical, include entire parish membership bit by bit
- Possible opportunities:
 - Coffee for new family with small groups from the church and community
 - Welcome basket
 - Greet and talk to at coffee hour; name tags are always used
 - Small gathering for meals, different times, days: give family list of attendees ahead of time
 - Specific invitation to family of clergy to do local special things, such as fairs, theater, concerts, etc, as well as church activities
 - Invite to your home, if appropriate

Publicity:

- Newsletter articles
- Letter to parish
- Bulletin board pictures
- Family should always be given the opportunity to say, “No”

5. Leaving

- Leaving a current situation often sets the tone for the arrival at the new call, especially for the family. Parish needs to say a “good” goodbye to all the household, even pets, if any
- Usually have a special “goodbye” service (see Book of Occasional Services)
- Saying ‘thank you’ is important
- Have a special occasion with church community and key people in the community
- Individual goodbyes; choir, church school, etc.
- Offer an exit interview with senior warden for spouse and family members
- Offer assistance and support for family on moving day, such as meals, overnight accommodations, child and/or pet care
- If the family has been living in a rectory
- Have list of items that were in the building before family arrived
- Ask family to leave suggestions for future building repairs/improvements

6. Family’s responsibility to care for themselves.

- Seek support at home base during the search process, be aware of the need for trust and confidentiality
- Clergy and their family stay in close communication
- Keep previous supports through completion of search
- Compensation issues
- Know impact of social security taxes when moving to a rectory
- Know impact of health insurance
- Do research on the community
- Seek advice about schools in the area
- Explore youth activities in the community
- Explore medical services available, especially if special needs
- Seek out continuing education possibilities
- Find out what is best for your situation and time in life
- Be aware of how move will impact careers of family members