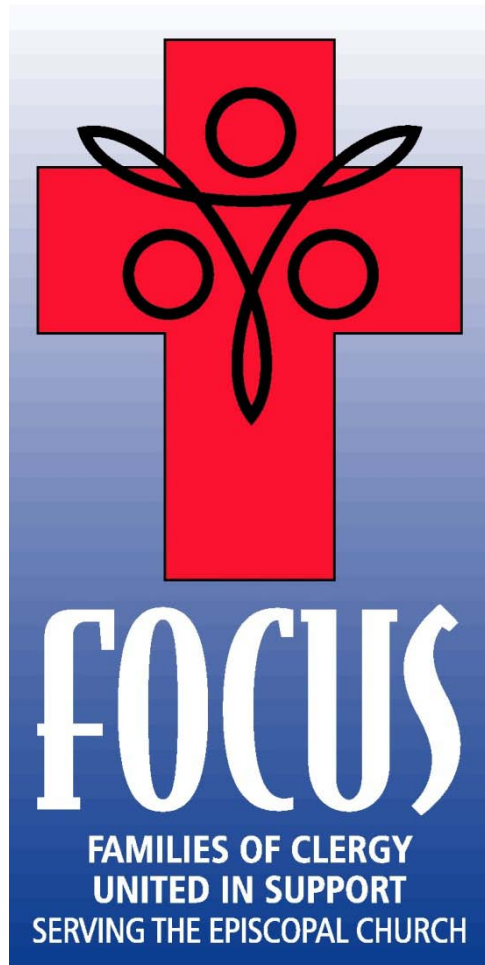
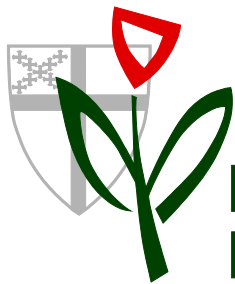


Seminarians



Prepared in partnership

with:



National Episcopal
Health Ministries

Seminarians

Table of Contents

What is the responsibility of the Seminary for student families?	2
Discernment/Seminary/Education	3
Helping Seminarians recognize the effects of seminary and ordination on their family life	4
The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Family of Clergy-dom:	8
Support of Spouses of Nominees During the Discernment Process:	10
I. Purpose	10
II. Anticipated outcomes for the participants	10
III. Preparation of the clergy spouse team	10
IV. Suggested discussion questions/activities	11
V. Conclusion	12
“Preparing for Life in the Parish”	13
Survey (Evaluation) Spouses of the Seminary: “Preparing for Life in the Parish”	16
Seminary groups to support significant others of seminary students	18
What’s so Special about Families of People in the Ordination Process?	19

What is the responsibility of the Seminary for student families?

The seminary experience is a life-enhancing or life-changing event for the student. For the family, this initial immersion in following the call can be stressful for many reasons. If the student has been a wage earner, that income is diminished or gone while seminary expenses add a burden to the family budget. Unless the family lives near the seminary, either the student member must spend large amounts of time away, or the family must move. If the family has little opportunity for spiritual sustenance and growth, the family members may feel the student moving away from them spiritually and intellectually.

Seminary offices of pastoral development need to include within their purview the needs of the students' families, such as orientation programs that include the family, or courses in pastoral theology that include a focus on the families of clergy. Too often Christ's teaching "to love thy neighbor as thyself" is shortened to love thy neighbor. This abbreviation of thought has brought trouble and stress to many clergy and their families. Seminarians and clergy can become so busy tending others that they often neglect themselves and their families. The supply line of love must be attached to an adequate source, which is God's love for us. One must acknowledge and accept that love before ministering to others in God's name. Otherwise one will run dry and seek love from unhealthy sources. Attention to this theology and how it impacts the clergy and their family relationships is critical to a healthy ministry.

Because of the transformation that frequently happens as part of the clergy's embrace of their new vocation, it is imperative that seminaries prepare clergy families for what many experience to be a radical diminution of the family being a priority for the clergy person. One part of facilitating this is to highlight the incredible importance of effective time management skills, particularly as they relate to clergy with their families.

For a module on training seminarians and their families about time management, see Appendix.

It is imperative that seminaries prepare spouses and families of clergy people for the variety of issues they will confront in being "married to the ministry." For three potential workshops and programs, see Appendix.

Ordinary stresses in marriage are morphed when one of the partners is ordained. For an introduction to some of the topics family might confront, see Appendix.

For an overview of the start to finish of care of seminarians and families from their perspective, see Appendix.

Discernment/Seminary/Education

This section comes from a FOCUS pilot project in the Diocese of Nebraska. Included is the overall diocesan mission to care for families of clergy, and the specific goals for families while in seminary.

Mission/Vision:

The goal of the Diocese of Nebraska is to provide a continuum of care for families of clergy and establish a system of support extending from the beginning “call,” into the transitions of ordination and ministry, and through retirement. The hope is that an attitude of “wellness,” which integrates body, mind and spirit, will permeate all areas of church life in Nebraska.

Goals for family members of clergy in seminary:

The Diocese of Nebraska has been selected to pilot a new program called FOCUS, Families Of Clergy United in Support. It is a national organization that began at the 2000 General Convention and was created to help families of clergy cope with their unique situation in the faith community. Families of clergy often deal with stress without acknowledgment or support, and find that they often feel “invisible.” The plan will be implemented in the summer of 2006 and continue to be developed until 2009.

- The local parish will begin to pray for the family of the nominee at the very beginning of discernment, through the education phase and into new ministry.
- The local Rector will interview the family of the nominee at the second interview in order to determine commitment to the nominee’s “call”, expectations and concerns. Financial expectations and obligations will be discussed at this time.
- The parish discernment committee and the Commission on Ministry will include family members in their interview process. An advocate or lay missioner from the parish will be assigned to the family to “touch base” periodically and to assess the family’s needs (physical, emotional or spiritual).
- The deanery or region will have resource material/referral material available for families, i.e., confidential referral to spiritual directors, counselors, etc.
- The diocese will host gatherings for families of clergy in the discernment phase before they move to a seminary location, or when a family transitions to a new parish/ministry. These gatherings will provide networking opportunities, education and fellowship, depending on the need.

- The local parish, deanery and diocese will support the family of seminarians or students through active and ongoing communication via e-mail, birthday cards, gifts and news.
- Families of nominees/postulants/candidates will be invited and encouraged to attend Annual Council. Funding and child care may be necessary.
- The diocese will explore health insurance needs and options for the families of students.

Helping Seminarians recognize the effects of seminary and ordination on their family life

Mentored practice class: Sample of Discussion held with seminarians about the dynamics of themselves and their families during the period of study – Time: approximately 30 minutes including discussion

Introductory Discussions:

Describe why proactive attention to family needs is a vital responsibility for seminarians, and why the seminary values it. Family wellness is a life-long discipline that needs to begin in seminary.

Definitions:

- Family – spouse/partner/children (PKs or Priest’s kids)/extended family
- Clergy - ordained deacons or priests
- 4 stages - formation/practice/transitioning/retirement
- Family systems theory - Including attention to how the family of clergy, the clergy, and the congregation interact gives a more holistic understanding of dynamics

Some Questions for the class:

► Education and professional experience

- How are you engaged in seminary education: e.g. Part-time or full-time, residential or commuting, family on campus or not?
- Is this a first, second, or more career for you? How have you and your family lived through other career changes together?
- Do you have a mentor?

▶ Denomination

- In what denomination were you reared?
- Is this the one in which you will be ordained?
- Are there specific expectations or patterns for family of clergy in your 'denomination of origin'? Your current denomination (if you've changed)?
- Are there clergy members in your current family or your family of origin?

▶ Family at home

- Is your current family involved in the same denomination as you?
- How involved do they want to be in your process towards ordination? In your career as an ordained clergy person? In congregations?
- What support systems do they have, or could they access, to help them with the pressures and joys of being a family member of clergy?

▶ The church of today is different from even 5 years ago

- Secular society has respect for clergy
- Non-traditional
 - Study – three year residential seminary experience is not necessarily the norm
 - Ministry has many alternative forms in addition to the traditional liturgical expressions
 - Family is no longer just female spouses
 - Dual careers (“I’m my wife’s hobby”)
 - Gender issues
- 6 issues of family of seminarians
 - Time
 - Money
 - Involvement in process
 - Self-care
 - Difference between family of clergy and family of other professions
 - Support

▶ How can you be proactive as seminarians with your families?

- Communicate with your family – ask to have them involved
- Local church setting

- Judicatory – need for family support/ chaplain
- Discuss options – to be proactive
- Mentor for families of seminarians
- If a person asks clergy and families about wellness, allow family equal time
- Encourage self-differentiation and being part of a relationship
- Interviewing for church call
 - Insist whole family be invited and paid for when visiting a new parish
 - If the church refuses to have everyone, it tells you something about finances and the parish's view of family
 - It should be the family's choice whether or not to visit
 - Learn how to share the excitement of the interview with the family
- Career options – for family members
- Schools – for family members
- Expectations of spouse/partner/children
- Other questions?

▶ The Call

- Seminarian and the family should be aware of the need for boundaries; this is a topic that should be discussed from the moment of the call
- Family needs to be aware of compensation package
- Family needs to be aware of whom to contact on the Judicatory staff
- Contact for family should not be an elected leader within the home congregation
- Mentor/transition group for family
- Housing options:
 - Church owned – boundaries, fair rental value
 - Own – know tax situation
 - Housing Allowance
 - Social Security Taxes
- Other topics or questions?

▶ Four concerns for the family:

1. They are paradoxically both invisible and visible in the congregation
2. They have no pastor; the clergy should not attempt to be a pastor to their own family
3. They need a safe place where they can find trust and confidentiality when stress mounts

4. They need choices as to where they can express their baptismal ministry

▶ **A Lutheran study conducted in 2002** revealed devastating statistics about clergy and their families on disabilities due to mental health/substance abuse showing the need to have families integrated into the system of family, clergy, and congregation.

▶ What would your families like to see?

▶ What would improve the process?

The above information was based on research done on families of postulants and candidates in New England by Bonnie Studdiford, Executive Director of FOCUS, and presented at Bangor Theological Seminary, in May 6, 2004. The event was sponsored by The Rev. Dr. Ron Beard, Associate Professor of Mentored Practice at Bangor Theological Seminary.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to Family of Clergy-dom:

A Day-Long or Overnight Workshop for Seminarians and Their Families

Time frame: 10am to 3pm Saturday or overnight noon to noon

Audience: Seminarians and their spouses/partners or newly graduated seminarians and their families

Methodology: Appreciative Inquiry

Facilitators: Family member of clergy or family member of clergy and clergy counterpart

Cost: Suggested nominal fee for Participant (\$10)

Support and sponsorship by seminary and other interested hosts

Areas to be covered:

1. To get on board or not? (FORMATION)
 - Nurture relationships to maintain mental and physical health
 - Communication
 - Involvement
 - Supportive of vocation
 - Consideration of children of the seminarian
 - Companion for family of seminarian
 - Other factors that need discussion

2. The roadmap (SEMINARY EXPERIENCE)
 - What is involved?
 - Time
 - Money
 - Spiritual Journeys
 - Companions for families of seminarians
 - Effect on family
 - Involvement with the process
 - Local church
 - Diocesan level

3. Shifting from Park to Drive - Together! (BEYOND SEMINARY)
 - Transitioning from seminary to parish

- Reiterate #1 and #2 briefly
- Communication
- Involvement (always a choice)
- What to look for in a welcoming church
- Knowledge of money implications
- Understanding of benefits
- Spirituality/no pastor
- Boundaries
- Expectations
- History of church/previous pastor(s) and their family
- Knowledge of who are the “Big guns”
- Mentoring program for the first 12-18 months
- Difference between clergy families and families of other professionals

Created by Bonnie Studdiford, Coordinator of FOCUS: Families of Clergy United in Support, in conjunction with The Reverend Dr. Ron Beard, Associate Professor of Mentored Practice at Bangor Theological Seminary.

Support of Spouses of Nominees During the Discernment Process:

Pilot Project, Diocese of West Virginia

Provocative Proposal:

The Diocese of West Virginia supports spouses of nominees through their discernment and/or preparation for Holy Orders *knowing that family of clergy wellness promotes health in clergy and congregations.*

I. Purpose

The purpose of the activity, developed by the Diocese of West Virginia, is to support spouses of nominees through their discernment and preparation for Holy Orders. Spouses attend the discernment weekend with the nominee, but take part in separate discussions with a team of two clergy spouses from the Diocese who act as discussion facilitators. More spouses could be added to this team; a ratio of one diocesan spouse to every three participants is recommended.

The following section includes suggested activities that will evolve over time. Further adjustments may be needed to suit individual diocesan policies and procedures.

II. Anticipated outcomes for the participants

- Become acquainted with the discernment process
- Ask questions
- Share experiences
- Consider changes
- Be aware of expectations
- Feel supported

III. Preparation of the clergy spouse team

Criteria for clergy spouse discussion leaders

- Interested in the diocesan community
- Some years of experience and growth as a clergy spouse
- Follows through on responsibilities
- Able to make a three-year commitment
- Attend training with the Commission on Ministry for team building and developing listening skills

Responsibilities of the spouse team

- Plan and implement three one-hour discussion sessions
- Assist chaplains in welcoming and registering participants
- Ensure that participants are acquainted with the process their partners are undergoing
- Give participants ample opportunities to ask questions
- Share some of their own experiences and go over some of the changes that will occur in the lives of the participants because of this process
- Help identify some of the expectations that participants may encounter once their spouse is ordained, and suggest how to handle them
- Make sure that each participant knows that he/she will have plenty of support from the other WV spouses as they go through this experience
- Give the participants the opportunity to share their own life experiences

IV. Suggested discussion questions/activities

Session 1 – Personal formation

- In-depth introductions – initiated by facilitators
- Ask participants what subjects they would like to discuss – list and discuss as time allows
- Additional suggested questions that will be asked of the nominees. Spouses choose one or two to answer
 - What experiences and people in your life have helped you become the person you are today?
 - Describe some major crisis in your life and how you dealt with it.
 - When you look in the mirror, what do you see?
 - What was the best day in your life so far, and why?
 - What excites and motivates you? What do you avoid?
 - How and with whom do you express your emotions?
 - What do you read? Give a recent example.
 - What does “honesty” mean in today’s society?

Session 2 – Anticipated changes

- Ask participants to consider possible changes that may occur if their spouse is ordained. What are the effects on the participants, their marriage and their families?
- What are some potential positives and negatives of being a clergy family? List and compare.

Session 3 – Vocation

- What do you see as your ministry as a clergy spouse?
- What do you see as some of your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in accomplishing this goal?
- Additional suggested questions for the nominees as time permits. Spouses choose one or two to answer.
 - Who is Jesus to you?
 - What is vocation to you? How does it differ from profession?
 - What is stewardship to you?
 - What is your favorite scripture verse or passage? Explain.
 - With whom do you share your spiritual journey?
 - What were you planning for your life before this came up?
 - When did you realize you had a call to offer yourself for ordained ministry?
 - In what ways do you participate in the life of your congregation?
 - How has your participation in your congregation changed?
 - What need(s) of church and society will your ministry help to address?

V. Conclusion

- Participate in an evaluation of the weekend with the Commission on Ministry
- Consider necessary adjustments/changes to schedule and discussion topics
- Make recommendations to the Commission on Ministry for inclusion of spouses in future discernment weekends.

Developed by:

Linda Vinson and Roselind Wood, Clergy Spouses of the Diocese of WV
 The Rev. Donald Vinson, President of the WV Standing Committee
 The Rev. Karl Ruttan, Chair of the WV Commission on Ministry

With additional clergy spouse support from:

Christine Kelly, Marsha Klusmeyer
 Edna Thomas
 The Rt. Rev. W. Michie Klusmeyer, Bishop of the Diocese of West Virginia

“Preparing for Life in the Parish”

Presented by The Spouses of the Seminary at Sewanee

An Informational panel discussion to help us with the transition from seminary life to clergy parish life.

Guest Panelists:

The Reverend Canon Whayne and Dana Hougland

The Reverend H. Hunter and Prestine Huckabay

The Reverend Annwn and Dixon Myers

The Reverend Polk and Mary Jo Van Zandt

Facilitator: The Reverend Rusty Goldsmith

An Outline of Discussion Topics “Preparing for Life as a Clergy Family”

Session I – Friday Evening, 6:00 – 7:45pm

Welcome and Prayer

Objectives of Event

Brief self-introduction by panelists (limited 5 minutes per couple)

Married (children) during discernment process/seminary?

Joint decision; surprise; supportive?

Diocesan support of family?

Seminary experience, positive or negative regarding family?

Transition from Seminary to Parish

What did you miss the most/least?

Moving and settling in Transition Committee?

History of predecessors in parish

Pitfalls and angels

Compline – 7:45pm

Session II – Saturday Morning, 9:00 – 10:30am

Morning Prayers – 9:00am

Roles and Expectations

- Priest's expectation of spouse and vice versa
- How to support one another and remain yourself?
- Who is the spouse's priest?
- Who is the priest's priest?
- Parish's expectations of family/children
- Living in a fishbowl
- Spouse's involvement in parish – how much is just right?

Dr. Larry DePalma will do a 3 minute lead into February topic, Transference, just before the break.

Break – 10:30 – 10:45am

Session III – Saturday Morning, 10:45am – noon

Sources of Stress

- Saturday/Holiday stress
- Family finances being an open book
- Dealing with parish issues at home
- Parishioner criticism of clergy and/or spouse
- Parish issue raised with spouse
- Weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc.
- Spouse attendance?
- Gifts?
- Time management

Sources of Peace

- Friends – inside and outside the Parish
- Self-Care
- Vacations
- Continuing education

- Sabbaticals
- Daily routine
- Rewards of the vocation for clergy and significant others

Noonday Prayers – Noon

Lunch in refectory

Thank you for agreeing to participate. We welcome your suggestions as to topics for discussion. There will also be a question and answer period with the “congregation” during these sessions.

Survey (Evaluation) Spouses of the Seminary: “Preparing for Life in the Parish”

Part 1:

Please respond to the following questions, rating your answers 5-1, (5) being very helpful and (1) being not helpful.

Session I – Transition from seminary to parish

How helpful were the panelists in addressing your concerns about the transition from seminary to parish life?

Very helpful 5 4 3 2 1 Not helpful

How helpful do you believe the discussion of the transition from seminary to parish life will be to you following graduation?

Very helpful 5 4 3 2 1 Not helpful

Session II – Roles and Expectations

How helpful were the panelists in addressing your concerns about roles and expectations?

Very helpful 5 4 3 2 1 Not helpful

How helpful do you believe the discussion on roles and expectations will be to you following graduation?

Very helpful 5 4 3 2 1 Not helpful

Session III – Sources of Stress/Sources of Peace

How helpful were the panelists in addressing your concerns about stress and sources of peace?

Very helpful 5 4 3 2 1 Not helpful

How helpful do you believe the discussion on stress and sources of peace will be to you following graduation?

Very helpful 5 4 3 2 1 Not helpful

Part 2:

Rate the length of the program:

Too long

Too short

Just right

Was the panel format a good method for providing this type of information?

Yes

No

Was the date and time of the program convenient?

Friday evening

Yes

No

Saturday morning

Yes

No

Was Hargrove Hall ("the Pit") a comfortable and convenient setting for the program?

Yes

No

Would you attend future SOS events of the subject of Clergy life?

Yes

No

Which of the following topics would you like to see covered in more depth? Rank the topics from 1-5, (1) being your 1st choice.

_____ Clergy children (PKs)

_____ Clergy finances

_____ Time management and boundary setting with the congregation

_____ Clergy marital stresses

_____ Friendships in the parish

What would you like to see done differently and/or other comments?

Seminary groups to support significant others of seminary students

Editor's note: This letter, sent to significant others of seminarians at Church Divinity School of the Pacific in September 2005, describes two groups that could be useful at other seminaries. This can be a model for diocesan spouse/partner groups on a less frequent (and more geographically dispersed) basis.

Dear Incoming Spouses, Partners, and Family Members,

CDSP's Family Life Committee and Koinonia Group would like to welcome you officially to the CDSP community.

You and your family are invited to an Ice Cream Social on the Friday evening of Orientation, September 2nd at 7:00pm in St. Margaret's Courtyard. Please come and join the spouses, partners, families and students of CDSP for some ice cream, fun and games.

The Family Life Committee meets regularly to identify and address various issues and needs of seminary families. For the purpose of this committee, "family" is defined as anyone who is connected to a student, staff or faculty member who is an integral part of their seminary experience. Goals of the Family Life Committee include supporting the emotional well-being of families, supporting the social needs of families, addressing the needs of children, addressing the needs of partnerships and encouraging and empowering families to be involved in CDSP governance.

Koinonia provides emotional support for spouses/partners at CDSP. Koinonia meets twice a month to provide a forum to discuss the joys and challenges of being a spouse/partner of a seminarian (and/or future priest). Conversations are candid, and confidential. For those who are less inclined to participate in "support groups," please know that active participation is not necessary; you are welcome to attend as an observer.

Should you have any questions or concerns, or would like to talk about being a spouse, partner or family member at CDSP please feel free to contact us. We hope to see you at the Ice Cream Social on September 2nd.

What's so Special about Families of People in the Ordination Process?

In most employment situations, questions about family life are off limits: family and work are hermetically sealed from each other. But discernment of a call is different from employment. Suitability of an aspirant for employment as an ordained person is one criterion among many about whether a call should be affirmed. Ordination is part of a larger network of commitments to spouse/partner, children, aging parents, adult siblings, etc., all of which have something to do with God. The felt call to ordination is also usually intertwined with psychological traits, strengths, and issues that will only be resolved when Jesus returns—something true for all clergy! Being as aware as possible of vulnerabilities, however, is essential. Most members of COM are not clinicians, which is why they often recommend both therapy and spiritual direction and also why clinicians are involved at some points in the process.

Here are some issues that potential ordinands should discuss with appropriate family members very early in the process of deciding to pursue ordination.

Why does the discernment/ordination process include families?

1. Because the church system ought to look at potential ordinands as whole people with vows and commitments made to family members that the church should uphold.
2. Unlike most other professions, congregations usually have implicit and explicit expectations of family members of clergy—the more these expectations are made explicit, and spouse/partner and potential ordinand discuss these expectations, the healthier everyone remains. It is not unusual for family members of clergy to be very present in the clergy person's work place.
3. Clergy are seen as models of how to participate in family life, as is made explicit in ordination vows, and this perception will impact family members of clergy.

How will one person's shift from lay to ordained person change the spirituality or church practice of the family?

There are small changes such as not sharing the same pew, or possible limits on what family member can do (e.g. vestry participation). Bigger changes can include the shift in authority as the potential ordinand becomes a leader in the parish, changes in parishioner's perceptions of those seeking ordination, changes in dynamics between partners as the potential ordinand expresses spirituality differently, and as relation to larger church system emerges, etc. The

family often loses a pastor, post ordination, if the clergy person and family worship in the same congregation; a safe place for spiritual support for the clergy's family will need to be found.

Boundaries:

A. Between the time and energy spent on home and work: Church work often happens on evenings and weekends, which can impact family members' expectations about honoring family commitments and church commitments. What constitutes a pastoral emergency? When liturgical and/or pastoral and/or capital campaign/program duties take up more time and energy than usual, how will family members express their feelings about this? What can clergy member do to compensate/repair strained relationships/restore balance?

B. Between church and home: How will the partner want to be involved in the church system? Will it be at either congregation or diocesan level? This includes logistical questions as to where or whether to worship with a congregation, in what capacity, with what limits, etc. But for family members involved in the church, a host of new issues emerges: What information gets shared between clergy and family? Will there be confidentiality? Prepare for the possibility of family members to be asked to influence clergy by congregation members. Prepare for the possibility of family members becoming targets for anger or other emotions congregants feel toward clergy, etc.

Change in career: This includes the logistics of time and money needed for discernment, for study, and eventually, new positions. Included are the accompanying emotions: how strong are the communication skills between spouse/partner and clergy person, and what support do, or will, each person and the couple and/or children need along the way?