

CLERGY COUPLES AND THE DOUBLE RELATIONSHIP:
ISSUES AT THE HEART OF CLERGY COUPLE MINISTRY

A PROJECT/DISSERTATION

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For my clergy partner and my wife

Doreen Keet Moffat

who supported me and was an active partner in the project

ABSTRACT

This project/dissertation focuses on the following research question: “How does the intensity of the professional relationship impact upon the personal relationship of the clergy couple in team ministry?”. Six couples were interviewed by a clergy couple using an interview guide. Themes were addressed that the interviewing couple experienced in their five year team ministry together. The researcher claims that his bracketed experience opened up insights that an interview team without such experience may miss.

The researcher highlights the observation that clergy couples in team ministry together live a “double relationship”. They attempt to work together as team ministers and to live a personal private family life as husband and wife. The couple participants offered evidence that it is nearly impossible to separate these two modes of being. This factor is shown to have tremendous impact because it is a major source of stress for clergy couple teams.

Other themes that are addressed include issues of power and control, competition, conflict, issues of gender and the necessity of clear boundaries. The author focuses on the shadow side of clergy couple ministry accepting as a given that there is adequate research to show the benefits of such teams.

Because of the tensions inherent to the double relationship, clergy couples participants demonstrated the need for a plan to deal with the inevitable stress. Couples who failed to take this need seriously saw their the team relationship threatened and their marriage put at risk.

The final chapter is written in the genre of “towards a theology” that is “credible enough” for clergy couples in the team setting. As they face personal challenges and professional demands, couples seek a theology that permits compromise with integrity.

Acknowledgements

I suppose that there are projects that one can claim as a lonely endeavour. This was not one of them. This project/dissertation could not have happened without my clergy spouse the Reverend Doreen Keet Moffat. From its budding moments as an idea through to the analysis of the data, Doreen was there. The reality checks were not always appreciated, but her patient support is valued as a gift of grace.

The six couple participants who shared their reality are the anonymous heroes on the boundary where ministry and personality find vitality. I thank them for their honesty and for risking in the unveiling of their truth.

I also thank Dr William Close and the Doctor of Ministry Committee of St. Stephen's College of The University of Alberta, for encouraging, and sometimes redirecting me. My gratefulness is likewise expressed to my friends at the Montreal Pastoral Institute for their challenging and invaluable support.

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INTRODUCTION

Married couples share things together. They often share expenses. They usually share a bed. Sometimes they share deep and intimate things. They have always found ways to barter responsibilities. Nowadays, couples are experimenting with challenging and creative ways of sharing their lives. Couples, who have been ordained in the church, sometimes choose to share a pulpit together. This manner of sharing is called "clergy couple team ministry". This dissertation is an inquiry into that experience.

The ordination of women (and other forms of recognising women as professional ministers) has made significant changes in the church. All those things that traditionalists warned us about are happening. God is good! New doors are being opened up because women now share in leadership roles. Of course, women have always offered leadership, but their role has been largely unacknowledged, almost clandestine. In some circles, this legacy from the past is now being cast aside. Some Protestant churches ordain women. As a result, it is now possible for women and men to share in team ministry as husband and wife. It is one thing to share the same profession, to have "dual careers", as some refer to it,¹ but it is quite another for a married couple to work together as professionals on the same team.

Clergy couples in team ministry share a unique relationship. Their relationship is both professional and intimately personal. It is an intense relationship that is sometimes satisfying and often stressful. Clergy couples in team ministry not only share the same profession, but they also carry out their profession within the same context, that is, within the same congregation or pastoral setting. They work together and then they spend their

¹ Carol C. Nadelson and Malkah T. Notman, "The Woman Physician's Marriage," Medical Marriages, eds. Glen O. Gabbard and Roy W. Menninger (Washington: American Psychiatric Press, 1988)

personal and intimate time living together.

Given the reality that many elements are present to make the clergy couple relationship very intense, one may be led to ask some crucial questions. We may wish to know how clergy couples are doing emotionally. We may want to inquire to see if and how clergy couples in team ministry are coping with the inevitable stress. How happy are they? We frequently hear of the positive benefits of the clergy team, both for the couple and the congregation, but what about the liabilities? I believe that the time has come to listen to the stories that clergy couples in team ministry have to tell. Listening to these stories may help us to hear the concerns that are somewhat unique to couples in ministry who live and work together.

This project/dissertation is an attempt to do some of the above, especially to listen to the stories of clergy couples in team ministry. In the process, it is my hope that this descriptive study will shed light on the reality of the joys as well as the conflicts that are at the heart of clergy couple team ministry.

Team ministry, as a form of organising and sharing ministerial responsibilities, is no new thing. The Acts of the Apostles records some notable clergy teams. One would wonder where the church would be if these committed evangelical teams had not been so active. The clergy team continues to be an effective way to enrich the ministry of many congregations. This is particularly so in larger churches. Frequently, such clergy teams have had a senior minister with assistants who carry out specific functions. On rare occasions, instead of the usual hierarchical model, there have been attempts to organise team ministries on an equal footing. This approach is finding more support and is currently referred to by some as a collegial model of ministry.

It was not so long ago that it was something of a novelty to see married couples serving the church as team ministers. Today, couples in team ministry are no longer a rarity. Actually, this modern trend in couple team ministry may not be a truly new

development. In the eighteenth chapter of The Acts of the Apostles, there is the story of the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla.² Were they the "clergy couple team" of the first Christian century? That certainly is one possible interpretation. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible³ hints that there is a tradition that suggests that Priscilla was considerably more capable than her husband. This same source claims that "various authorities" have nominated Priscilla as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews. (What a wonderful piece of speculation!)

There are many clergy couple teams all across the land. In The United Church of Canada, there were approximately 120 couples⁴ now serving together in 1995. The Anglican Church of Canada claimed forty-five married couples, but not all of these serve in the same parish.⁵ The Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec reported there were two couples in team ministry and expected to have two more by the end of 1995.⁶ The Presbyterian Church in Canada reported that they had nine couples who were in team ministry together.⁷

In 1984, E.M. Rallings and David Pratto estimated that there were about 1200

² Acts 18:2-3, 25-27)

³ "Aquila and Priscilla," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 1962 ed. 176.

⁴ Rev. Ron. Coughlin, Ministry Personnel and Education, The United Church of Canada, telephone interview, Feb. 16, 1995. According to Rev. Coughlin, there were 240 married ministers in The United Church of Canada in team ministry in 1995. There are more in Theological Colleges who plan to enter team ministry.

⁵ Archdeacon Jim Boyles, General Secretary, The Anglican Church of Canada, letter to the author, 8 March 1995.

⁶ Shirley Burhoe, Administrative Assistant to the General Secretary, Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, letter to the author, 28, February 1995.

⁷ Margaret Henderson, Office of Ministry and Church Vocations, Presbyterian Church in Canada, memo to the author, 12, May 1995.

clergy couples in the mainline Protestant churches in The United States.⁸ There was no effort to determine if these couples were in team ministry together. There is evidence in the literature, however, that many of these were in team ministry with their clergy spouse. At the outset of the trend, clergy couple teams were predominantly found in liberal settings. Even this is changing. We now find them serving in quite traditional and conservative congregations too.

Whatever the realities regarding clergy couples in the past, such clergy teams are part of the scene in churches to-day. Many couples meet in seminary and for practical reasons and possibly romantic notions, choose to share their gifts in ministry together. Other couples, who have been married for years, choose to enter team ministry later in life. The team concept is viewed as a practical solution that supplies both personal and professional requirements. A stated goal that couples often share is a desire to work in a collegial model in meaningful and exciting ministry.

One of the practical factors that has led couples to view the clergy team as a viable option is a desire to share family responsibilities while being equally involved in the professional role.⁹ I suggest, however that there are a number of other conscious and unconscious factors. Couples simply want to work together. This is a frequent dream. All the reasons for the dream may not have been consciously identified.

One of the factors of importance that does enter the equation is the struggle for women to gain acceptance as ministers. As I have already noted, women have long been involved in ministry, but their contribution has been faintly acknowledged. Patriarchal

⁸ E.M. Rallings, and David J. Prato, Two-Clergy Marriages: A Special Case of Dual Careers (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984) 78.

⁹ John P. von Lackum, III and Nancy Jo Kemper von Lackum, A Report on Clergy Couples and the Ecumenical Clergy Couple Consultation in Mason, Ohio, Oct 30 - Nov. 2, 1978. Prepared for Professional Church Leadership, National Council of Churches, 1979.

perspectives within the church have negated the authenticity of women in ministry. Even now, it is frequently difficult for women to find acceptance in the ordained ministry of the church. Even when they are ordained, it is sometimes a frustrating experience because they are not invited to serve in a challenging pastoral setting. Writing for the Women in Ministry Committee of the United Church of Canada, Joan McConnell writes that "Overall, in every conference women see themselves as having a more difficult time than men in this [call / appointment] process".¹⁰ Women are still pioneering new territory. It is a fact: clergy couple teaming is one possible strategy to gain entry. Team ministry is an avenue for some women to establish themselves in an area that has long been male dominated. Such a reality confronts the self-worth of some women in team ministry. Resentment is real.

The clergy couple team relationship addresses another old injustice that has been part of the Protestant heritage. The unpaid expectations placed on the traditional minister's wife are somewhat corrected in this model of ministry. I say "somewhat corrected", for as will be revealed in the results of this research, women are still devalued and unfairly treated even in churches where rules have been established to prevent it.

As I have noted, many married couples describe their style of ministry as collegial. However, the nature of the married relationship adds a dimension to team ministry that must to be taken into account. Not enough attention has been paid to the critical issues that have impact on that special relationship. When the issues have had some focus, such as the von Lackum's report cited earlier, there has been more concern about the quality of ministry in which couples are involved, rather than the psychological and emotional well-being of the couples themselves. Indeed, concern about the well-

¹⁰ Joan McConnell, "Women's Voices: stories shared by women in ministry within the United Church of Canada," Women in Ministry Committee, Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, 1994, 12.

being of clergy couples has been somewhat a closed subject. One of the reasons for this is that couples have felt the need to protect themselves. The persona of a clergy couple team can be quite developed. Truth is hidden behind the mask that has been refined to safeguard privacy and position.

Acknowledging the fact that clergy couple team ministry appears to be increasing in frequency, this study seeks to explore some of the issues embedded in such a form of ministry. The reality is that couples are involved in a double relationship. There is the married relationship and there is the professional relationship. I call this way of relating, "the dynamic of the double relationship".

The term *double relationship* is inspired by the concept of "dual relationship" in the research of Barbara Herlihy and Gerald Corey in their book entitled Dual Relationships in Counselling.¹¹ The term describes the dynamic of a relationship when a professional gets involved in a personal relationship with a "client". There is an imbalance of power because the "client" is in the weaker position. An example of a "dual relationship" would be a pastoral counsellor who becomes personally involved with a counsellee. The dangers are manifold. There is great potential for serious abuse. There is the certainty of role confusion.

The term "double relationship" is meant to describe a married couple's professional and personal relationship. This relationship is imprinted with its own problems. The most difficult problem is this: it is nearly impossible to separate the professional role from the personal one. That is why the term "double relationship" is used.

Another significant distinction between the double relationship and the dual relationship is that the former is the result of a decision by couple who are already in a

¹¹ Barbara Herlihy, and Gerald Corey, Dual Relationships in Counseling (Alexandria, VA: The American Association for Counseling and Development, 1992) 3.

personal relationship to also associate professionally. The technical meaning of “dual relationship” implies that the personal relationship was established by way of a professional relationship. By its nature, a relationship with this prior experience of dependence is in jeopardy of becoming an unequal partnership. Nevertheless, some of the same issues that cloud the dual relationship may be found in the double relationship. An imbalance of power may make one of the parties vulnerable to being abused or feeling abused.

Some very important questions must be asked about the dynamic of the double relationship. We are tempted to ask, "How effective is the ministry that clergy couples share together?." We may want to know, "Have these married couples actually brought a different dimension to ministry?" or, "By the nature of the relationship, is the very dynamic of ministry significantly changed?". As interesting as those questions are, they are ancillary to a more critical question which constitutes the research question of this study:

"How does the intensity of the professional relationship impact upon the personal relationship of the clergy couple in team ministry?".

This question focuses on the well-being of the clergy couple. It is about how they feel about themselves and the double relationship in which they have invested so much of their lives. Answers to this question may help those who are called upon to support clergy couples to understand the context. Counsellors might be more aware of the intensity of the double relationship. The church may better understand the nature of clergy couple issues. Clergy couples themselves may bring to consciousness some of the unconscious realities of their own relationship. The result may generally be an increased sense of well-being not only for clergy couples but also for the whole church.

My own experience has led me to this research and has given me a unique perspective on the question for my research. For the past five and a half years, my clergy

spouse and I have been in a team ministry relationship. We have attempted to function in a collegial manner. The lively suburban congregation which called us did so on the understanding that their new ministers would work out their own team relationship. The first three years was a critical time for us. I have, on occasion, described the experience as a rollercoaster of highs and lows. Even though we had been in a team relationship in business for fifteen years, team ministry was quite a different venture. We experienced, first hand, the stress as well as the satisfaction of ministry together. In order to research the clergy couple team relationship, I have had to bracket my preconceptions and have had to become conscious of my own bias. I must also declare that at times I questioned the viability of clergy couple team ministry. The idealistic visions and dreams that we as a clergy couple shared at the debut of our team ministry experiment became quite tarnished. We, as a couple, began looking at ways to relate to one another that were much more realistic. Still, it must be stated, we had no shared ideas that would suggest the termination of our team relationship, neither the professional nor the personal one. Thus, the motivation to research the clergy couple team ministry experience was not to determine if this was a recommendable way to relate in ministry. It was mainly to gain more understanding of the experience itself. This dissertation will be a disappointment to the reader who is hoping to find some pronouncement in the results about the viability of the clergy couple team ministry. There are very few clues about how to avoid trouble, or for that matter, how to fix things. I am primarily interested in gaining insights about the realities of this very unique way of sharing in ministry. An invitation to clergy couples in teams to tell their stories seemed the most credible way to do that.

Active research into the clergy couple team ministry began by investigating my (our) own experience. This was a shared experience. My clergy spouse has been a participant with me all through this process. Many of the insights came out of our living laboratory. The interview schedule arose out of our own questioning. I am convinced

that our experience offered perceptive avenues of inquiry into the life experience of clergy couples who work in teams.

In brief, the findings of this research project are as follows. First, the couple participants appreciated the opportunity to talk about their experience in team ministry. Their open responses allowed the interview team to hear that team ministry has both positive benefits and negative liabilities. Second, it is nearly impossible to separate the professional life from the personal experience of being husband and wife. This has profound implications on the marriage relationship. Third, the experience of power from outside the marriage and from within the marriage weighs significantly on the couples' relationships. Fourth, power is given to the couples and the women or the men by the community. The couples also experience power as control. Fifth, competition between members of the clergy team is real. Women were usually disadvantaged when the competition was either consciously or unconsciously about gender issues. Sixth, conflict was part of clergy couple life. Among other factors, conflict arose because of role confusion and different perspectives about important issues that touched the couple's life and shared ministry. Seventh, the collegial vision of equally shared ministry by clergy couples confronts patriarchal values. Eighth, boundaries were difficult to maintain. Couples with soft boundaries which did not protect free time, the residence, and the family, experienced added stress. Ninth, a great deal of energy may be expended protecting the persona of the clergy couple's relationship. The congregation and the couple collude in this practice. Tenth, couples have a deep respect for one another and the gifts that each one of them brings to ministry. Both males and females protect their partner. Eleventh, couples who share in team ministry encounter serious tensions in their relationship. The need for a support person or a support group was commonly acknowledged. Twelfth, couples in teams value their marriage. Some choose to end the professional team relationship in order to preserve their primary relationship.

This dissertation is an attempt to be faithful to the stories that clergy couples shared. In order to present the findings with some clarity, I have chosen the following outline. Chapter one is a literature review. Little of the literature focused directly on the research question, but there are important bits and pieces that contribute to the full picture.

Chapter two is about methodology. The choice that led to the use of an interview schedule is described in detail.

Chapter three is a summary of the findings that are discussed in more detail in each of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter four describes the dynamic of the double relationship that marks the clergy couple experience. This chapter is an attempt to explain the significance of being married and also being team ministers in the same pastoral setting. Understanding this dynamic is important because much of this dissertation hinges on the thesis that the double relationship of clergy couples has profound impact on marriage and ministry in this context.

Chapters five through fourteen address various questions that were raised through the use of the interview schedule. The data is primarily in the form of stories as told by the participants. There is an attempt to interpret and analyse the data while remaining faithful to the what couples freely shared.

Chapter fifteen is an endeavour to wrestle with a theology of ministry for clergy couples. It is written in the genre of a "Towards a Theology for Clergy Couples in Team Ministry". There is no presumption that there are answers to the problem. Some of the themes that influence clergy couples in team ministry are reflected upon theologically while recognising the nature of paradox.

Finally, some readers may think that this dissertation presents a bleak picture of the clergy couple experience. This is not the intention. This project simply focused on

the shadow side of the clergy couple experience. One cannot walk in the light without also noticing the shadow.

In the first letter of John the writer states, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."¹² Carl Jung viewed this Biblical observation psychologically. He was conscious of the shadow as an integral part of the human psyche. He suggested that the attempt to "whitewash" the dark side was a natural impulse. Nevertheless, "the black shadow which everybody carries" will always remain even if it is hidden. Jung writes:

The realisation of this fact is naturally coupled with the danger of falling victim to the shadow, but the danger also brings with it the possibility of consciously deciding not to become its victim. A visible enemy is always better than an invisible one.¹³

This research project was an attempt to probe and to make visible some powerful realities that are part of the clergy couple experience.

¹² I John 1:8

¹³ C.G.Jung, The Psychology of the Transference, trans. R.F.C. Hull, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) 57

CHAPTER 1

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

There is not an extensive body of current literature on the subject of clergy couples in team ministry. Much of the written material approaches this theme from the perspective of women in ministry. A considerable amount of sifting has to be done to get at the substance at the heart of this particular topic. However, there have been useful preliminary studies. In the USA there was A Report on Clergy Couples and Ecumenical Clergy Couple Consultation in 1978.¹⁴ This consultation is frequently cited in the literature. The report defined some of the issues that are significant to clergy couples, and asked some questions that are still current. There is however, a critical problem. The report came out of a consultation that fails, in my estimation, to get at feeling. There is a glowing perception that everything is fine in clergy couple territory. Couples, the report claims, have this wonderful "built-in support system" which eliminates problems. That assertion is called into question in this research.

Much of the above consultation was aimed at naming issues in a quantitative way and finding practical solutions. There is an acknowledgement that a study ought to be done to determine "...the long range consequences and effects on marriage and ministry."¹⁵ The results as reported from the consultation are so general that the actual experiences of clergy couple teams are glossed over.

¹⁴ John P. von Lackum, III and Nancy Jo Kemper von Lackum, A Report on Clergy Couples and the Ecumenical Clergy Couple Consultation in Mason, Ohio, Oct 30 - Nov. 2, 1978.

¹⁵ John P. von Lackum, III and Nancy Jo Kemper von Lackum, 12.

The Women in Ministry committee of the United Church of Canada has a study entitled How Will We Team? Making the Most of Multiple Staff Ministry.¹⁶ There is an attempt in this study to emphasise the most effective use of gifts and to acknowledge the struggle of women in ministry. Issues of clergy couples in team ministry were only briefly addressed.

A critical concern facing clergy couples is sexism, that is, a male supremacist ideology. Women are frequently undervalued and paid less than their male counterparts. They often have more difficulty finding a place to serve in the church. These are issues addressed by Grace Anderson and Juanne Clarke in God Calls: Man Chooses. The authors point out that a third of women in ministry are married to a man who works in the church. The female partner is frequently short-changed by not receiving certain benefits that are traditionally part of the clergy person salary, for example, housing allowance.¹⁷

In a brief article in The Christian Ministry, Phyllis Tyler Wayman, a clergy person in team ministry with her husband, writes about the "fruitful" ministry that she and her husband share as a clergy couple. While the article is uplifting in its tone, some wonderful honesty is displayed with these words:

The ministry for which we are ordained is with us twenty-four hours a day. It is a covenantal ministry because we agree to be in mutual service to the church.....

We endure with laughter and rage at its foolishness....¹⁸

¹⁶ Carol Stevenson Seller and Catherine Barnsley, How We Team? Making The Most of Multiple Staff Ministry, Commissioned by the Women in Ministry Committee of the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, (The United Church of Canada, 1990).

¹⁷ Grace M. Anderson and Juanne Nancarrow Clarke, God Calls: Man Chooses: A Study of Women in Ministry. (Burlington, Ontario: Trinity Press, 1990) 79.

¹⁸ Phyllis Tyler Wayman, "Building on Noah's Ark: Clergy Couples in Ministry." The Christiana Ministry 13:3 (1983) 32.

Some of the foolishness that the above writer reports can be summed up as follows: She was admonished that she ought not to breast-feed her child because such activity is unbecoming of a clergywoman. She has been told that if she really loved the church, she would not accept a salary. Attempts have been made to divide the couple by luring one or the other to take sides. This article is an honest appraisal.

There are several other short, but important articles in The Christian Ministry. Gaylord Noyce¹⁹ writes of the temptation for clergy people to be married to the church to the detriment of their marriage. In another article, Tandy Gilliland Taylor²⁰ focuses on the need for clergy couples to have clear and separate identities from one another. She notes that this is particularly important because it is inevitable that comparisons will creep into the relationship. Self-confidence will be assailed unless each party is secure. The author makes other important observations.

In another brief article, Nancy and John Rohde tell of their experience as a clergy couple. With some depth of understanding of the pitfalls, they explain the strategy that helped them to work together as clergy team members. Theirs was a simple plan of alternating responsibilities. One of the key comments is found at the end of their story. Their conclusion is an expression of the reality of the potential tensions that clergy couples face. They write:²¹

We had bonded together to survive the conflict and to work toward healing in our congregation. Then the time came to move in different directions, for the sake of our health and our congregation's.

¹⁹ Gaylord Noyce, "The Tensions of Our Calling." The Christian Ministry 11:5 (1980): 18-21.

²⁰ Tandy Gilliland Taylor, "Equality in the Church and in Marriage." The Christian Ministry 19:4 (1988): 7-8.

²¹ Nancy and John Rohde, "An Adventure in Co-Ministry: Conflict and Affirmation." The Christian Ministry 21 (1990): 16 - 17.

The Division of Ministry, Personnel and Education of the United Church of Canada has a booklet entitled Ministry Couples in the United Church of Canada.²² Like other such studies and reports available, there is an attempt to offer rationalistic and practical solutions in order to prevent problems. It is an important piece of work and some of the guidelines related to team ministry are sound. The booklet may be criticised, however, for its numerous unsubstantiated assumptions. Indeed, there was apparently no attempt to research the experience of clergy couple teams in a systematic way.

E.M. Rallings and David Pratto in their book Two-Clergy Marriages²³ focus a good deal of attention on the issue of competition. The authors suggest that couples in team ministry usually have similar vocational goals, and as a result, may have difficulty in establishing separate identities. This leads to competition for status and acknowledgement. Another significant factor, suggest Rallings and Pratto, is that competitiveness is largely unrecognised by the couples themselves. This unconscious drive (from time to time) leads to "some waves of discontent".²⁴ The authors make several other important observations. One of these observations is that clergy couples often envision a life style in which children are a significant factor. They are attracted to the possibility of combining and sharing both professional and family responsibilities. The researchers emphasise that this choice comes with costs that couples must be prepared to pay. Combining marriage and ministry is as a result, frequently stressful.

In an article entitled "Marriage Enrichment for Clergy Couples",²⁵ David and

²² Ministry Couples in The United Church of Canada (Toronto: Division of Ministry Personnel and Education, The United Church of Canada, 1991).

²³ E.M. Rallings, and David J. Prato, Two-Clergy Marriages: A Special Case of Dual Careers (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).

²⁴ Rallings and Prato, 76.

²⁵ David R. Mace and Vera C. Mace, "Marriage Enrichment for Clergy Couples." Pastoral Psychology 30 (1982): 151-159.

Vera Mace present an inside story into various aspects of clergy couple life. This 1982 article reports that fifty percent of husbands and sixty-nine percent of wives needed help in the management of their anger and negative emotions. The authors make a significant comment when they summarise as follows:²⁶

What emerges from this inside investigation is a rather sad picture of highly idealistic men and women struggling unsuccessfully to achieve the kind of marriage they should enjoy, and feeling frustrated and guilty about it.

In spite of what the Maces write, Ralph and Mary Detrick²⁷ assert that clergy couples are a growing phenomenon in the church. While their data are dated, this article offers some insights into the clergy couple relationship. Of particular interest is their concern that couples who decide on team ministry ought to be people who are autonomous and have their own personal identity well defined. Such couples need to be reminded that the combined roles of ministry and marriage skirt the ever-present pitfall of enmeshment.

Carol Nadelson and Malkah Notman have researched the experience of female physicians and physician couples. Their results are of interest to this clergy couple inquiry. Gender issues, stress, isolation and many other themes seem familiar to the data that clergy couples have offered. The authors write:

In two-physician families, the daily business of life may be "on hold," especially early in the partners' careers. Career priorities may preclude attention to personal needs. All dual-career couples have trouble finding time to be with each other, but physician couples have special problems. One couple found that they had to

²⁶ David R. Mace, and Vera C. Mace, 151-159.

²⁷ Ralph L. Detrick and Mary Cline Detrick. "Marriage of Two Clergy Persons," Pastoral Psychology 30 (1982): 170-178

take separate vacations....²⁸

Current literature shows that clergy couples complain about a lack of support and a failure to prioritise time for one another.²⁹ There seem to be common themes that are shared by professionals who are married.

The literature indicates another important factor. Clergy couple marriages are continually "on show". Some couples see their marriages as a form of spiritual sharing, formed in the image of God, an important model to their community. Great energy is expended in the protection of the ideal.³⁰

Alice Brasfield's dissertation entitled Religion and Gender: A Study of Presbyterian Women Clergy argues that women in ministry are entrapped in the "androcentric web" that artificially sets women at a disadvantage.³¹ She describes a female psychology of dependency that is difficult to overcome. Her research has relevance in the clergy couple relationship dynamic. Her conclusions highlight the complexity of the deeply seated attitudes of gender and religion.

I wish to make note that at the very time of the writing of this chapter, Pope John Paul issued a nineteen page Angelus addressed to the United Nations in preparation for the UN sponsored conference on women to be held in Beijing, China in September of 1995.³² It is reported that the letter calls for an end to the "systematic marginalization" of

²⁸ Carol C. Nadelson and Malkah T. Notman, "The Woman Physician's Marriage," Medical Marriages, eds. Glen O. Gabbard and Roy W. Menninger (Washington: American Psychiatric Press, 1988). 81

²⁹ Dianne K. Kieren and Brenda Munro, "The Support Gap for Dual Clergy Couples," Pastoral Psychology 37 (1989): 165-171.

³⁰ Sue Saunders, "Married Couples in Clergy Partnerships: Opportunities and Problems," Evangelical Review of Theology 15 (1991): 361-368.

³¹ Alice Brasfield, "Religion and Gender: A Study of Presbyterian Women Clergy," diss., U of New Mexico, 1990, 8.

³² "Pope Calls For An End To Sexual Inequity," The Gazette 07 Aug. 1995, B1

women in society. It contains an apology for the Roman Catholic Church's past role in the oppression of women. However, as Brasfield states, attitudes of gender and religion are very complex. The Pope, even after asserting a hope that the systematic marginalization of women will come to an end, upheld the stand against the ordination of women as priests because such a ban is "justified by the Gospel".³³ Women in ministry face tremendous obstacles.

Human relationships are complex with unconscious dimensions. Kenneth Mitchell, in Psychological and Theological Relationships in the Multiple Staff Ministry makes an important observation. He suggests that "rank" is a reality. He insists that, even if a team asserts that their relationship is collegial, with rare exceptions, congregations will attempt to destroy the concept by covertly naming one of the team as the senior pastor.³⁴ The implication of this for the clergy couple who have a vision of collegiality as a goal is quite obvious. If this is put into the context of Brasfield's "androcentric web", the female partner starts off with tremendous disadvantage.

There is other work that can be mined for analytical purposes that may assist in understanding the data that I have gleaned. These studies focus predominately on women in ministry. In her dissertation entitled The Mutuality of Women and Men in Ministry Alison Stewart -Patterson³⁵ insists that gender is learned. The author argues that the world view which allows patriarchy to maintain its power must be dismantled. She calls for a new style of leadership in the church which would foster such an outcome. However, few clues are offered that would assist the process.

³³ "Pope Calls For An End To Sexual Inequity," B 1

³⁴ Kenneth R. Mitchell, Psychological and Theological Relationships in the Multiple Staff Ministry (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966) 35.

³⁵ Alison Stewart-Patterson, "The Mutuality of Women and Men in Ministry," diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990.

Lynn Rhodes' book entitled Co-Creating: A Feminist Vision of Ministry, grapples with patriarchy and the systematic subordination of women throughout history by the Christian Church.³⁶ She makes the point that salvation cannot be excluded from the context of people's lives. The feminist vision holds firmly to the hope that lives can be lived out in mutual love and respect. Clergy couples in teams live this relationship, she suggests, and as such are signs of hope. The author presents an idealistic perception of the clergy couple team, but she is presenting what many clergy couples hope the world believes about them.

It can be seen that feminist studies have bearing on the research into the clergy couple team relationship. Feminist goals centre on the hope of fostering a different way of relating to one another. Traditional structures of church leadership have historically limited and controlled women. Writers such as Letty Russell³⁷ and Catherine Keller³⁸ struggle with an alternative view of leadership. Their perspective is important to consider in the analysis of the clergy couple double relationship. Clergy couple teams in conflict may find enlightenment, for example, in Keller's description of women's experience and the meaning of connection. The model that the male clergy partner thinks is mutual and collegial may indeed miss the mark from the perspective of the female partner.

Jungian studies offer another important analytical approach. In The Invisible Partners, popular writer John Sanford describes how unconscious images are part of every relationship. These images, (anima/animus projections) complicate any

³⁶ Lynn N. Rhodes, Co-Creating: A Feminist Vision of Ministry (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987) 25.

³⁷ Letty M. Russell, Church in the Round. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

³⁸ Catherine Keller, From a Broken Web. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

male/female relationship³⁹ Clergy couples may be overwhelmed by such projections. Jungian thought acknowledges the power of both the individual and collective unconscious. This perspective offers some clues that may lead towards understanding the dynamic of the double relationship which is at the centre of the present inquiry.

As can be seen by this survey, very little of the literature actually enters into the space that is at the core of the clergy couple double relationship. Research results in related areas constantly need to be interpreted. The extant literature can only be used to compare experience or simply as an analytical tool.

³⁹ John A. Sanford, The Invisible Partners. (New York: Paulist Press, 1980) 13.

CHAPTER II

THE METHODOLOGY

An interview process

The Participants

Six couples who are presently in team ministry, or who had recently been in team ministry, were chosen for this project. They were from mainline Protestant churches in Canada and differed in terms of their age and the type of community they served. The criteria for selection were that they were ordained (or otherwise recognised in professional ministry by their denomination), married to each other, and are presently in (or have recently experienced) a pastoral team relationship together.

The Interview Team and The Data Gathering Process

This was a qualitative research project. The gathered data are primarily anecdotal and descriptive and were collected through the use of in-depth interviews. My clergy spouse and I formed the interview team. I conducted the interview, but my spouse frequently asked clarifying questions. The data that were gathered consists essentially of the stories of couples in team ministry, their triumphs and their struggles together. The interview team invited couples to give accounts of their experiences and feelings. Most of the data were verbal, but there was also non-verbal information in the sense that we attempted to record signs of affect and to pay attention to the setting. All data were admitted except for those occasions where there appeared to be an ethical reason for

excluding them. Such ethical reasons included a concern for anonymity and the protection of privacy. Field notes were kept by both interviewers. Interviews were also recorded electronically with the permission of the participants. The data will be kept by this researcher in a secure location for five years, that is, until June 1, 2001. In the event that I am unable to carry out this responsibility myself, the executor of my estate has been instructed regarding the procedure for retaining and the eventual destruction of the data.

The selection procedure for the candidates included an inquiry into the availability of clergy couples within a commutable radius. Concern about selection bias was reduced because the number of available candidates was limited and because of the nature of the qualitative research envisioned. Candidates that were selected for interview were first contacted by telephone. The general concept of the research project was explained to them. The interview question was asked as follow: "How does the intensity of the professional relationship impact upon the personal relationship of the clergy couple in team ministry?". I further defined the project as an inquiry into the clergy couple experience, their feelings about the well-being of their relationship, and their sense of personal value in the team ministry enterprise.

Whenever possible, the interviews took place in the home environment of the participants. The choice of the home setting was motivated by two factors. The first was a desire to meet couples on their own terms and in familiar territory. The goal was to allow them to be as comfortable and as uninhibited as possible. This seemed to be a worthwhile decision because these couples were very candid in the interviews.

The second reason for the choice of location was to assist the interviewers by actually seeing the setting. The plan to interview couples in their place of ministry resulted in a considerable amount of travelling, but it was worthwhile because the home scene was a form of non-verbal communication. The location and the guarantee of anonymity invited genuine sharing that illustrated the clergy couple team experience. On

the two occasions when this did not happen, the interview team was already familiar with the setting.

When the couples committed themselves to participate in the research project, they were asked to keep a large block of undisturbed time. Most interviews took place over a span of three or four hours, including lunch. The format was a conscious decision. I was aware that the interview would address some sensitive issues. I wanted couples to feel relaxed in order to facilitate an atmosphere where sharing could easily occur. The plan included the decision to use an interview schedule.⁴⁰ I made it clear that the issues we were raising with them were issues with which we (my clergy partner and I) have struggled as a clergy couple in team ministry. (I comment later on the implications of this decision.) Much of the information that was gathered was very personal. Many questions of clarification were asked such as, "What was it like?", "What do you think was happening?". The intensity of the interviews brought out all kinds of emotion, sometimes tears.

Prior to actually beginning the interview process, we tested the interview schedule with a clergy couple in team ministry. The original intention was to exclude this interview from the body of the data. The test case confirmed that the interview schedule was a useful instrument. In the evaluation of that interview, it was agreed by the interviewers and by the participants that the data were so significant that they ought to be used. The interview schedule was used in its original format for each clergy team couple.

When the interviews were conducted, there was, by design, a limited amount of personal information about the research team that was shared with the candidates. We admitted that the questions we were planning to ask during the interview arose from our own experience. There are some important implications of this decision to allow our

⁴⁰ Appendix I

personal experience to touch the interview space. Primarily, we felt that it was important that couples realise that we were not attempting to judge them. The interview team members themselves were vulnerable. We were convinced that this approach would not bias the data, but instead, enhance their reliability. Our hope was that the participants would feel less resistance and allow themselves to get in touch with their own feelings. Bogdon and Biklen described an example of the value of this approach when a researcher shared her personal feelings about a cafeteria experience.⁴¹ By doing so, the researcher helped the participants to get in touch with their own emotions. By sharing our experience, couples in team ministry were given permission to allow themselves to think about and to share their experiences about some of the more uncomfortable themes that play out in their lives. The interview team became the catalyst that induced responses that may otherwise never have been stimulated because they were so private.

The Interview Schedule

The development of the interview schedule came about from personal experience. My clergy spouse and I considered ourselves as early participants in this research project. Our participation began when we were asked to make a thirty minute presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Montreal and Ottawa Conference of the United Church. The theme of the Conference was "Women and Men in Dialogue". This topic was an attempt to bring the theme "Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women" into context. We chose to be as open as we could possibly be about our own husband and wife team ministry relationship. We reflected together on issues that challenged us. These issues became the core of the interview schedule that was later to be part of the

⁴¹ Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen. Qualitative Research for Education (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1992) 93.

interview process. Our experience as a couple in a clergy team helped me begin to understand the themes that needed to be considered in order to explore the clergy couple experience.

After that Conference event, we had many couples express appreciation for our frankness. Being frank does not negate the reality that there is much that is positive about our team relationship. We simply acknowledged that we also needed to focus on our struggle. When I decided to research the clergy team couple experience, I felt certain that the issues that we experienced, both struggle and blessing, ought to be addressed in the interview format. However, I wanted to make certain that there was space and invitation to look at the negative elements. The schedule also arises out of my perception (and experience) that when the clergy couple relationship has been discussed, usually the more positive elements have been disproportionately highlighted. The literature review clearly shows that there has been adequate observation of the benefits of the clergy couple team ministry. This project was an attempt to take into account the shadow side of that same reality.

The interview schedule opened the door to let couples talk frankly about their reality. The aim was not to control the participants. Quite to the contrary, the inquiry was designed to encourage the participants to reflect on their own experiences with honesty. The interview schedule has questions that are of a leading nature, in that they select the topic that is to be probed. However, the approach was prudent in this case because it offered a way to get beneath the surface to the level of consciousness that is usually protected from external observation.

The questions in the interview schedule were designed to initiate thinking about the possibilities and the nature of the dynamic of the double relationship. These personal and professional modes of being were presented as a given that is at the core of clergy couples' couple experience. These elements of the dynamic of the double relationship

are obvious and yet their effects are frequently overlooked. So, the interview schedule made the important assumption that there is potential conflict between the personal and the professional relationships which couples hold in common. It is a well known fact that people will avoid disclosure of personal issues that they deem to be negative. In fact, it is a healthy person that maintains an element of self-protection. People try to forget unhappy memories. Some scholars call this phenomenon "motivated forgetting".⁴² The phenomenon needed to be probed from different directions, and I was certain that, unless the door was opened, the deeper issues that are at the heart of the clergy couple team relationship would simply not be touched.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were completed, the transcripts became the data. I began to code the data using an "inductive open coding method".⁴³ I was looking for common words and themes, constantly comparing the stories. The interview schedule had already begun the task of setting up broad categories, but new themes began to arise out of the data. Analysis of the data took into consideration not only central tendencies but also the divergent responses made by individual couples. Each story was considered to be an unique expression of the reality of the experience. For example, couples were asked if they were able "to separate the professional relationship from the personal married relationship". This is a challenging question (with a significant assumption) that gets to the heart of the matter. The couple participants responded freely. Common themes began to appear in their responses. Sometimes the themes were raised by key words, but

⁴² David G. Elmes, Barry H. Kantowitz, and Henry L. Roediger III, Research Methods in Psychology (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1989) 220.

⁴³ Pamela Maykut and Richard Morehouse, Beginning Qualitative Research (London: The Falmer Press, 1994) 134 - 143.

more frequently, it was at the feeling level. The evaluated data began to form a body of its own telling the story of the effort required for clergy couples to be both personal and professional together.

One question in the interview schedule invited couples to be involved in the analysis themselves. This was a chance for them to look at their team relationship through the lens of Transactional Analysis.⁴⁴ This proved to be an effective question. While Transactional Analysis is not a currently popular analytical device, it was understood by all the couples with little explanation. A simple structural diagram such as Eric Berne utilised was offered as a discussion stimulus.⁴⁵ The participants were able to clarify some of their own feelings and identify critical issues at the heart of their double relationship.

Direct knowledge of the broader issues by the researchers allowed the eye and ear to see and hear beyond the niceties of the clergy couple image. Some of the themes that were touched may have been missed by an observer without any awareness of this lived experience. The final written project is an attempt to describe the experiences as couples expressed them.

Trustworthiness

Because of the nature of this project, I have been constantly concerned about the question of bias. Consultation with my clergy spouse has been essential in order to share some perceptions and to check for biases. This was a limited check because her perspective was not substantially different from my own. As a result, bracketing my own experience and judgements to reduce my own subjective responses has been a continual

⁴⁴ Eric Berne, Games People Play (New York: Grove Press, 1964).

⁴⁵ Appendix II

effort. As van Manen suggests, any attempt to forget or ignore what is known by the researcher is nothing more than an invitation for these realities to creep in to flaw the results.⁴⁶ The fact is that subjectivity was an underlying given in this project. Themes very close to our own clergy couple team ministry experience were examined. Indeed, some of them cut close to the quick. The question was not, "Is this subjective?". It was instead, "How should I deal with the reality of subjectivity?". The answer was that I had to be certain that I was not simply asking questions and listening for answers that would confirm my own perceptions.

Qualitative researchers suggest that rather than calling material that is being researched "subjective", it should instead be termed "perspectival".⁴⁷ I acknowledge my intimate experience in the dynamic into which I have inquired. I have had to bracket my significant experience. This experience includes five years as a member of clergy couple team in ministry. Those years have led to considerable understanding of the dynamic of the couple team relationship. The journey into this understanding has included personal counselling, four units of Pastoral Counselling Education (P.C.E.), a great deal of reading, and considerable personal reflection. This was not a lonely venture as my spouse and I learned and debated and matured together. Our personal knowledge and experience increases the credibility of the study. The data collection and analysis have been done from a unique perspective. David Silverman points out that such observation is usually done in the field.⁴⁸ I am insisting that I lived in the field for five years. It is from this unique perspective that I have carried out this research.

Feminist researcher, Virginia Olsen argues that "bias" is a misplaced term. She

⁴⁶ Max van Manen, Researching Lived Experience (London, Ontario: The Athlone Press, 1990) 47.

⁴⁷ Pamela Maykut and Richard Morehouse, 124.

⁴⁸ Davis Silverman, Interpreting the Data (London: Sage Publications, 1993) 106.

reports that feminist researchers claim to have "sufficient reflexivity to uncover what may be deep-seated but poorly recognised views on issues central to the research...."⁴⁹ In a similar fashion, my own experience in a clergy couple team relationship has sensitised me to some possibilities that may be present in the uniqueness of sharing in this personal and professional double relationship. In reporting on research done by Conroy (1987), Michael Patton shows how the researcher used a "sensitising concept" to analyse the data.⁵⁰ For me, the starting point of "the dynamic of the double relationship" was both the "sensitising concept" and the introduction of "reflexivity" that allowed couples to feel free enough to allow me to inquire into the very nature of their personal and professional relationship.

As can be seen, concern for authenticity and validity has remained a significant issue. The participants themselves have also participated in trustworthiness checks. I have invited them to verify the raw data that they offered. A transcript of the respective interview was sent to each participant and there has been substantial feedback and comments. Participants have also received a chapter of the dissertation showing results of the analysis of the first question about the dynamic of the double relationship. These checks have been designed to reduce the effects of my own bias and to assure validity. There have been numerous telephone conversations with the participants to clarify specific questions that arose from the data.

The most critical validity check was in the nature of data collecting at the outset. Couples offered their stories and we asked clarifying questions. Their statements

⁴⁹ Virginia Olesen, "Feminisms and Models of Qualitative Research," Handbook of Qualitative Research eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. (London: Sage Publications, 1994) 165.

⁵⁰ Micheal Quinn Patton, Patton, Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods (London: Sage Publications, 1990) 391.

have been quoted where applicable in the dissertation, sometimes at length. There was an effort to assure that this inquiry allowed participants a wide birth. With the exception of the interview schedule as a guide, there was as little intervention as possible in the interview process.

My clergy spouse has also shared in the analysis of the data. This has been an important factor. I have attempted to be sensitive to the reality that my analysis may be prejudiced by my own masculine perspectives. There has been considerable exchange of views and alternative possibilities have been considered about almost every area of the research project.

This research has opened up important insights into the world of clergy couple team ministry. Ultimate validation will come through the couples who have risked and shared in this inquiry as they comment on the faithfulness of the presentation of the facts. Other clergy couples, who read these findings, may find themselves in these stories.

CHAPTER III

A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The goal of this research project was to gain an increased understanding of the living experience of clergy couples who have chosen to exercise their ministry as a husband and wife clergy team. In order to gain an understanding of this relationship, the participants were invited to articulate their perceptions about the spirit of their “double relationship”. The term “double relationship” was used to describe the simultaneous relationships that clergy couples experience when they are both husband and wife and members of the same clergy team.

One of the most significant findings is this: all the participant couples said that the double relationship had a profound impact on their lives. This impact was both positive and negative. The positive elements included such benefits as being able to model a different way of sharing family responsibilities and the ability to organise their time in order to “do things together”. Couples also explained that they enjoyed the freedom to be more personal and intimate with each other in their professional roles.

Clergy couples in team ministry obviously work hard and they are motivated by a desire to work together. They want to succeed. My analysis is that the congregations are the biggest winners. There is enhanced life, but frequently at a cost to the couple’s relationship.

The benefits of Clergy couples in team ministry have actually been well researched. The negative impact of the double relationship is less well understood. The most significant issue is this: it is nearly impossible to separate the professional

relationship from the personal one. Couples explained that this was tremendously stressful to them. They spoke of the church “permeating everything”, even to the point of coming into the bedroom. Vacations were not immune to this encroachment. One couple commented that when they went on vacation, it seemed as if the whole congregation came with them in the back seat. The inability to separate the professional role from the personal one was a significant source of stress that led three out of the six couples that we interviewed to decide to terminate their team relationship. They made this decision in order to preserve their marriage.

Couples explained that they entered into team ministry with idealistic dreams. They envisioned a team ministry that would be collegial, that is, equal. This objective, which was the common objective of every couple we interviewed, was nearly impossible to achieve. Even in the cases where couples reported a measure of success in meeting this goal, stories were also told of attempts to sabotage that vision. Furthermore, a statement declaring collegiality does not mean that it exists *de facto*. Research actually shows that some males did not want to share power and privilege equally. They wanted to have a traditional relationship with their spouse, albeit with some shared professional responsibilities. Collegiality did not mean equal. Two of the male participants acknowledged this fact in an outright way. They explained that they were unconscious of it at the outset, but they now know that traditional values were controlling their view of their early relationship. There is another significant reality. We discovered a difference in perception between the female and male members of clergy teams. The issue of equality was seen differently by them. The males frequently failed to perceive the problems with the same intensity that the females experienced them. The interviews gave the women an opportunity to clearly express an alternate point of view.

Power and control has many dimensions in the clergy couple relationship. The question, “Who is in power in the clergy couple team relationship?” is only part of the

question. It is also, “Who feels powerless?” Amongst the participants that we interviewed, it was the women who consistently felt disadvantaged. One of the factors that hampered women was the employment contract. They were handicapped because they were frequently engaged (officially) for a lesser time commitment than their male partner. The male partner, by contract, was given more authority by the community.

Our research lifted up many stories of women feeling devalued. Contracts with congregations frequently failed to guarantee women benefits that men would expect, or even the benefits that their clergy partner enjoyed. Even though the rules have been set up to prevent such discrimination, the reality was quite different. None of the women participants escaped the feeling of being valued less than their clergy husbands.

We were also surprised to discover the route that some women, currently in team ministry, felt that they had to take in order to be accepted in the team. Two of the women we interviewed were hired to do another job. Their position was an appendix to their husband’s contract. They were promised a position as a member of the team at a later date. In both cases, the females were not yet ordained, but they were well into the process. The males simply held an important advantage because of timing. There is another facet to this issue. It became evident that some women used team ministry with their husbands as a way of breaking into the ministry in the church which has long been dominated by males.

My analysis is that couples experience power from sources both external and internal to the relationship. The husband and/or wife get power from the community but it appears to depend on many factors beyond the employment contracts. Ordination status, the kind of committee work that the team member does, the age of the congregation, and the personality of each member of the team, all had an impact on how couples received power.

The couple also experiences power in the form of control from the congregation.

Besides withholding benefits, congregations set up monitoring teams, passed petitions, and found various fora to express criticism. The female party in each case I cited felt that she was the reason of such attempts by the congregation to control her or the couple. There were a number of covert pressures placed on women to maintain traditional values. When women appeared to threaten the status quo, they experienced the tremendous power of a patriarchal church.

Couples also experienced attempts by congregational members to divide them on issues. This was sometimes accomplished by demanding confidentiality so that the other member of the team remained uninformed. People sometimes used the seal of the confessional in such attempts. Most married couples try not to keep secrets that may affect the other party. However, the dynamic of the double relationship in ministry creates a dilemma. Should secrets be kept from the partner when given in confidence? This became a problem for at least one couple, but all of the couples were aware of the potential. They felt that the demand of confidentiality could be used as a wedge to separate the team and render them less effective.

The need to keep a common front in the face of conflict was another power issue. If the couple failed to do so, the fear was that some members of the congregation would use the situation. Indeed, one couple took the risk of supporting opposite sides on an important issue and found that the congregation lined up behind the party whose position they preferred. Pressure was brought to bear that almost divided the couple permanently.

Women frequently felt like victims of external power. The organisational structure of the church disadvantaged them. It appears that Regional church authorities were not organised to deal with couples in teams. The variations that couples often demanded led them up against, what seemed to them to be, hostile powers. Couples became aware that church structures and patriarchal attitudes were not in their favour. Half the couples we interviewed experienced great stress because of this important

factor.

Competition was another important factor between couples. While most of the competition was gentle rivalry, experiences such as rushing to be the first to answer the phone were commonly reported. Competition was also felt when one party was selected over the other by members of the congregation. There were frequent examples of this. Women often felt that they lost in this competitive game. It was experienced as a negative aspect of the team relationship. The effects of competition must not be overlooked. Three women felt so over-shadowed by their husbands that they expressed feelings of being powerless and invisible. The pain of experiencing this exclusion was devastating.

There is a factor of critical importance that must be emphasised. The effects of competition were considerably lessened when couples defined their space and boundaries and insisted on their equality. When this plan was not respected, the couples, particularly the women, found themselves disadvantaged.

Conflict was experienced by couples in all its variety. Conflict is part of living in relationship. However what couples in team ministry reported is this: when they were experiencing a time of serious conflict, all their energy was sapped. The team spirit was destroyed as their personal conflicts coloured their professional lives. There were couples who seemed to be able to handle conflict more creatively. These were couples who insisted on solving their problems before the day had ended. This is not to say that they did not have problems. They had resolved to solve them. The other couples who were more successful with conflict were those who successfully established clear boundaries and job descriptions. This lessened the reason for conflict.

Couples explained that their most serious encounters with conflict were not issues where they were directly implicated, but issues that were divisive within their congregations. These were occasions when they felt things were out of their control.

This was particularly obvious with the sexuality debate within the United Church of Canada. Fundamental questions were addressed that rocked the very foundations of some teams. The debate infected the team experience which resulted in division of the couple. Using this as an example, one can see how teams are affected by external powers which become internal conflicts. Several of the couples said that these conflicts interfered with their personal lives and their professional performance too. They reported going to the office “strung out and feeling ineffective”. They also said that there were times when they really needed time to “cool down”.

Gender is a critical issue. Women complained that their male partners had a built-in advantage. Men were traditionally preferred. One woman explained that it was in this context that she understood the meaning of the term “penis envy”. The women said that they added fuel to the problem when they fell into the trap of years of programming by referring people with questions to their husbands or by asking their spouses for advice. Their action had the effect of giving power to their partner, which they later resented. This is a typical example of what Alice Brasfield calls the androcentric web.⁵¹ The men also expressed their dissatisfaction with their own actions because they kept falling into the familiar pattern of living the dominate role. This came at high cost to them. This gender bias was a grim contradiction to the whole enterprise.

Women were devalued in numerous other ways. I have already mentioned that women felt discounted when a request was made for the male to be the minister for special services. The struggle increased when the male partner accepted such invitations, or when the female partner tried to shrug off the implications. One couple refused to accept such insensitivity by clearly rejecting demands based on gender. While their team was not without strain, this issue seemed to be a minor one.

⁵¹ Alice Brasfield, Religion and Gender: A Study of Presbyterian Women Clergy. .diss., University of New Mexico, (Albuquerque: 1990) 8

Boundary issues were significant for some participant couples. The lack of clear boundaries increased stress. Clergy couple teams generally seemed to have difficulty establishing boundaries. There seemed to be several factors involved in this failure. The first one was the lack of will to set boundaries and stick to them. Clergy couples wanted to succeed and to please. They worked hard and at first the need for boundaries was outweighed by the need to make a mark. The pastorate took over everything. It was later that the need for new ground rules was felt. At this later hour, too many precedents had been made. Boundary setting then needed assertiveness.

The second factor is that couples often described their teams as experiments where they were learning, not just about team work, but about ministry and their identity. They did not know about the need to protect themselves with boundaries. Several couples commented that they wished that they had learned some of the implications of team work at seminary.

Finally (and this factor must not be undervalued) couples experienced pressure from congregations to keep soft boundaries. There seemed to be a number of reasons for this. In one case the couple occasionally felt as if they were the adopted children of older members of the congregation. These surrogate parents were valued at first and then seen as interlopers. Boundaries not only define physical space, but also psychological space. Couples reported an elevated level of congregational pressure in an attempt to make the couple conform to the expectations of the status quo. For example, one woman explained that the congregation colluded with the husband in an attempt to coerce her into the role of a more traditional wife. When couples failed to define themselves and set boundaries to protect their personal needs, this resulted in tremendous stress and unhappiness. The negative results of unconscious triangulation were significant with several couples.

A second manifestation of triangulation was seen in the anger that some couple

teams expressed towards their congregations. The congregations became scapegoats for the couples. The power dynamics between the team members went unresolved as the congregations were blamed for the unhappiness and the ineffectiveness that clergy couples described.

Team members expressed a high level of respect for the gifts that their partner offered. In spite of this, there was varying levels of discomfort with the partner's style of ministry. There was candid honesty about this. Even so, this did not seem to be a critical issue. Statements were made that suggested that it all balanced out in the end.

The perceived need to protect the partner was much more critical. Protecting and defending the partner was shown to be an enterprise in which both genders engaged. The women protected their men. One important example cited was the case where the female partner urged her partner to be more involved in traditional ministry in order to reduce dissatisfaction in the congregation. There was an element of self-protection, but also of shielding her partner from the growing anger that she perceived was being directed his way.

Men protected their women. It was revealed that this was a common knee jerk reaction. It frequently angered the women. But, there was also a rather surprising discovery. Sometimes the women were rather upset that their partner/husbands did not rise to their protection at certain times when they expected it. This was a recurrent paradox.

One of the most important observations that we made was this: in a crunch, the male partner/spouse was the best ally that the women could rely on. Three of them went to the defence of their spouses when they were in a conflict with the church authorities about recognising their credentials as ministers. This was not always appreciated, but that support which men gave to their wives helped women make dents in the patriarchal perspectives that define many of our church structures.

The positive intention of the above comment is considerably diminished by the fact that protecting and defending the partner has a price. It is devaluing to be put in a position where one's credibility must be defended by one's spouse. Women in team ministry are frequently confronted with attitudes that devalue them. It does little for the team spirit, as attested to by nearly all the couples who were interviewed.

Envy was a consistent factor in every team relationship. There was little envy of the other's gifts. As a matter of fact we usually heard that diverse gifts were appreciated. The women, however, were easily able to identify what they envied about their clergy partner. They envied "male privilege". We discovered that there was a good deal of frustration expressed by women who experienced gender prejudice. The clergy couple team relationship magnified this prejudice. While some of the couples laughed it off or rationalised its importance, all the couples acknowledged this to be part of their experience.

While these external pressures were a tremendous challenge to clergy couple teams, the internal pressures on the team relationship also turned out to be very significant. All the couples reported that it was difficult to be open and frank with one another. Some of the couples worked out ways to be more evaluative about their team work, but it was not an easy task. Several couples told us that, because they were married, their negative reactions to evaluations by the partner lead to very unprofessional responses. For two couples, it became impossible to be open on a professional level. One woman explained that there developed a "fortress mentality". Her frustration about her ministry could not be shared with her spouse. She had to protect him from her anger which she turned in on herself. This led to depression and a clear recognition that the team was not working.

Couples in team ministry acknowledged that they were still on the cutting edge of change. The world view of many of their parishioners was being challenged by the

presence of a clergy couple team. Indeed, the interview team noted that while there was considerable stress being reported, there were also reports of a good deal of excitement and positive feeling in the congregations. Some of the very issues that were the cause of stress were also the areas where there was growth.

The prevailing observation made was this: all the couples in team ministry that were interviewed occasionally found their relationship stressful. This was because of how they interacted as they lived out their double relationship. This stress was managed in various ways. Sometimes the choice of a method of dealing with the tensions was quite effective. At other times the parties found their well-being further jeopardised.

The second observation is this: team couples rarely had a strategy in place that might help them in the event of a rift. None of the couples offered the suggestion that they had come into team ministry with an understanding that they might need external support. In fact, it was suggested by several participants that there ought to be a basic course offered for people who plan to team. The content of the course would include the need for support people who can be trusted.

Even though there were no plans for a support group or for a trusted person or persons to whom they could turn in a crisis, we discovered that couples were quite resourceful. They found support people. In several instances, the establishment of a relationship with a support person happened very late in an extremely tense time. Before taking appropriate steps towards solving the tensions, they felt the crunch of painful disruption of their shared experience.

The choice of support people is important. When a serendipity approach was taken towards this issue, it became a recipe for making trouble. There is much evidence to show that couples ought to establish the mode of dealing with conflict, including the naming of a support person or group. Three of the couples interviewed continue to be in team ministry together. They have all developed a strategy for support. They have come

to agreements about how to deal with any crises that may arise. All of them have chosen to find support people outside their congregation and some outside of the church altogether. Two of the couples know a professional counsellor with whom they arrange appointments as needed.

It is significant to note that the female participants in this project were the ones most determined to find a support group. This is easily understood, given the added stress that gender issues place on women in ministry. It should never be forgotten that women are still pioneering in this field. Breaking old established tradition and challenging patriarchal perspectives can be unsettling. As a result, women frequently felt the brunt of anger that was engendered because they challenged the status quo. They reported that they felt unappreciated and even disliked. They also said that their male partners escaped the intensity of the criticism that they experienced.

This leads us to another facet of the same question. Several couples found themselves addressing an even deeper and more critical issue for them. Patriarchal values are sometimes unconsciously held. This was commented on at the beginning of this summary. Couples discovered these patriarchal values to be within their own marriages. Women told how their male partners expected them to be prepared to disrupt their careers and to bear children, or how the men expected to spend extensive time in their study but were not prepared to offer the same benefit to them. There was not equal treatment. The younger couples explained how they consciously planned a different kind of marriage than what they experienced in their family of origin. At the outset, couples covenanted to each other that they would develop a new model based on equality. This is a goal that appears easier to set than to achieve. The evidence shows that, in some cases, the women felt betrayed. Unconscious interactions led to an unequal partnership and a diminished sense of self-esteem for the women. In fairness, I must add that this viewpoint was not universal. One of the younger couples demonstrated that they had

been quite successful in creating an acceptable model based on equality. That was a pleasant discovery. For others, this was a goal yet to be realised.

There is another observation that I wish to note. Both the male and female participants in this study saw the need for people who could be supportive and caring for them. In particularly stressful times they sought out help. What we noticed was an increased intensity for the women to find help that was appropriate to them. In reality the help sought was more than supportive. It was a search for someone who could counsel in such a way as to help clarify the uncertainties and confusion. It was not that the men refused to seek help, just that they were less intense about it, less determined to invite a helper into their lives. It was in sifting through the data (and in the analysing of it) that I began to wonder about the meaning of this. I offer two suggestions as a way to understand this phenomenon.

First, a number of feminist writers point out the need for women to be connected. Men, it is suggested, usually function more individually than women who instead seek out a "network of connections".⁵² Deborah Tannen suggests that women foster these connections in order to preserve intimacy and to avoid isolation. We noted that many of the women felt quite isolated. The men were isolated too, but they seemed to be able to cope with this reality better.

In her book, From A Broken Web, Catherine Keller struggles with the contrast between separateness and connectedness. Her well sustained argument is that males have traditionally defined selfhood as being secure in one's own separate identity. However, women's self-definition has been in terms of relationships. This has caused problems for women in our patriarchal world with respect to empowering women in a way that they are seen as autonomous. Some feminists urge women to claim their own

⁵² Deborah Tannen, You Just Don't Understand (New York: Ballentine Books, 1990) 25.

separate authority. However, Keller writes:⁵³

...a woman will not long find herself energized by the path of separation, requisite though it remains in any male-defined workplace.

What I am suggesting is this: the males were more inclined to struggle by themselves with the problems they faced. This has been their conditioned expectation. The women, conversely, sought out quality relationships where they not only were able to talk out the issues, but also to address the issue of isolation. For our participants, isolation was a geographical reality in some cases. The stress of the double relationship also made it a psychological reality for many of the women.

The second theory that may answer the intensity of the women's search for a support person is the following: some of the women participants were thrown off balance by the nature of the distress that developed in the team relationship. They were confronting a patriarchal church. We heard comments like this: "Some of the rebuffs were subtle, but many were explicit...." or, "It didn't matter, I could just be blowing in the wind..." and, "They were blackmailing us." Added to this, many of the women said that their husbands still fostered some traditional values and put subtle pressures on them that made them feel uncertain. I suggest that the women needed to find support. They were the ones who were left isolated by the subtle and not so subtle pressures of patriarchal perspectives. The men were simply less motivated to seek support. They already had it. It was only when they realised the depth of stress that their partner was experiencing that males tended to understand the gravity of the situation.

Listening to the stories of clergy couples in team ministry has left me with an awareness that these couples represent an exciting evolution in ministry. Couples who share ministry together are people who are part of the process of the church becoming

⁵³ Catherine Keller, *From A Broken Web* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986) 3.

something that is new. We are at the end of the patriarchal age and clergy couples (along with many women and men ministers) are on the frontier between the old and the new. An analysis of this aspect of the study is the subject of the final chapter which discusses the theological implications in some detail.

CHAPTER IV

THE DYNAMIC OF THE DOUBLE RELATIONSHIP

Married couples who are in team ministry together are in a double relationship. I have explained the nature of the double relationship in more detail in the introduction. In brief, married couples in team ministry together relate to each other in two distinctly different ways. There is the professional relationship and there is the personal married relationship. Both of these ways of relating to one another are intense. Marriage is intensely intimate. It is about love and passion and family and home. It is about a couple sharing together. Team ministry is also about sharing. It is intensely personal too. It is about a two or more people, in this case a married couple, sharing the challenges of the ministry of pastoral care, sacrament, and Word, together. The dynamic of the double relationship is a significant reality for clergy couples in team ministry together.

The Experience of a Double Relationship

It was no surprise to find that all the couples who were interviewed understood very well the concept of the double relationship in clergy couple team ministry. When asked, "Have you been able to separate your activity as team ministers from your marriage effectively?", all the couples acknowledged that this was *the issue*. Below are some parts of their stories.

Alana And Bob:

Alana and Bob were married while still at university. They were excited about

coming to their first congregation. Bob was engaged as the minister but it was understood that Alana was also part of the team. Alana was ordained several years after their arrival, but she never really felt accepted as a minister. They worked hard. Alana said that at first, "It was all church, ten to twelve hours a day, seven days a week." They talked church so much that finally it became a crisis. They did not seem to have any other life. Even their sexual intimacy stopped. They went for marriage counselling. It helped. After seven years as a clergy team, the couple moved. They felt that they had to move. They also terminated any desire to be in a team relationship together. There was much residual anger as the couple remembered the tension that almost tore them apart. Both are ministering in separate settings now.

When the couple were asked if they had been able to find a way to nurture their marriage while at the same time honour the ministerial covenant, they responded that they did try to take a regular day off. They took on a very strenuous sporting activity. It was something they could do together that was fun. It helped, but it was not the answer.

In the meantime, all the issues at the church continued to be carried into the home. At first the manse was too close to the church. They were just not able to keep from talking church. Bob said, "We were flying by the seat of our pants, by trial and error." "We were absorbed with no life outside the congregation." Alana said that it got so bad that she was concerned with mere survival. She went back to university part time and was involved in several C.P.E. units which became part of her survival plan. She began to take on regional church work to take her outside the congregation.

The couple was never consciously able to develop a model that would help them co-operate together in their ministry and marriage. Division of responsibilities worked best, but eventually Alana chose to do things that made her ministry distinct from Bob's ministry. She said that she was not conscious of this action at first but eventually it became a goal.

What effect has the professional relationship had on the marriage? The couple described a state of unhappiness. Their roles were unclear. Alana said, "We drove each other crazy."

The couple reported that the congregation had traditional views about the minister and *his* wife. Alana refused to be traditional. She said with sadness, "I hear they hate me." Bob said that he was sad and angry too. He also wanted more understanding and support from the congregation. He would have also appreciated a more traditional response from Alana. Both are still trying to come to terms with unrealised expectations.

Cecilia and Don:

Cecilia and Don, a couple who have celebrated thirty-five years of marriage, have been in team ministry only two years. They said that they were now working on this issue of the double relationship all the time. Cecilia said that there has been a whole new learning for her. She spent many years with the identity of minister's wife. Now she is in team ministry with her husband. They have trouble escaping the professional mode. They both explained how they talked in a prayerful way about the congregation almost all the time - - even when they are on vacation. They would get well into their holidays before they stopped doing it. Cecilia said, "We do that on our day off too...", until one of them would call it to the attention of the other. She said, "I may say, today we are together, just the two of us, not with the whole church in the back seat."

In spite of this, Cecilia insisted that she and Don have more fun time together than ever before. They used to be in separate parishes, but now they are able to organise their time and do things together. She says, "I think that our relationship has become closer in a sense." Don spoke of the struggle to come to terms with some of the adjustments that he had to make as the couple changed their way of being together. He

introduced the subject by saying, "Before we were together ...we had a fairly traditional kind of home life ...for a number of years..." Cecilia added, " For the first 25 years of our marriage, I was home being wife, mother, minister's wife, (that is a different role than just wife) ...so that was my career."

Don continued,

Well, as Cecilia began to explore other possibilities for a career, after the kids were away from home ...a career in the church seemed to be the right way to go.... Nevertheless, emotionally, I had some real struggles. Even before we came here, ...(I was dealing with) my sense of abandonment. I put it into words at one point when we were having some real struggles about this. This was a really intense period. I was wondering if there was any place left for me.

I asked Don to explain more. He said,

At the same time Cecilia was preparing for her ministry.... I was having a crisis about my own ministry, and my ministry within this denomination. She was going in a direction that seemed very clear to her and at one point I was not sure whether we could walk together... That was an extremely difficult time. When I got more settled about that ...then it brought us closer together.

Cecilia added,

And also the possibility of working together. When he was struggling with that I said, 'You can leave, but I can't'. That was really the first time in our married life that I said, 'I won't go with you'.

Don said with deep seriousness,

I guess with my particular theological outlook, I found myself increasingly wondering whether there was a place for me.

This struggle was uniquely theirs as a clergy couple. Cecilia said that she was faithful to him as the minister's wife, but there was a profound change in their lifestyle. She said,

"With his mouth, he said 'Go for it', [he was talking about her call to ministry] but

in his heart, he felt deserted."

They agreed that it was turmoil; their life was turned upside down. How did the couple deal with the stress? Fortunately for them they found an offering of a career and life seminar. They claim that it was critical for them. It helped them sort out their skills, weaknesses, and strengths. After the seminar, they began to see that clergy team ministry might work.

The couple have worked out a model to assist them in co-operating in their ministerial setting. They are in a Multi-point pastoral charge. Each relates to a particular congregation. Sometimes they do pastoral visits together. Cecilia said, "I'm the half-time person so Don does more visiting than I do." (Don had a good chuckle here. He did not agree). "Part of the mix," Don said, "is that we realise that our gifts are similar, so we overlap and we are comfortable." There are times when they both share in services, (for example, funerals) but they say that they realise that they have to teach the congregations that when one minister is there, the other one does not need to be there too. Don suggested that if they fail to do this, it defeats the purpose of two ministers. He added, "We are still trying to get that worked out."

So what effect does the professional relationship have on their marriage? They both agreed it is significant. Almost in unison they said, "We practically live the job."

Eva and Frank:

Eva and Frank have been married twenty years. They have been in team ministry for three years. They acknowledged that separating the professional relationship from the marriage is very difficult. Eva said, "This is *the issue*." Frank said, "I think its one of the things we wrestle with the most." Eva added, "...there is not a whole lot of time to develop a hobby. Our hobby is the church."

When I asked the couple if they have found ways to nurture the marriage, the

answer was, " Yes, or we would not have survived. We have gone through so much negativity and nonsense that we would not have been able to get to square one."

What kind of negativity and nonsense was this couple speaking about? Eva and Frank were called as a team, before Eva was ordained, to a mid-sized congregation. There was no written contract but it was agreed, by the regional church body and by a congregational vote, that she would be associate minister after she completed certain studies. She did these studies, including some extra graduate work. Then, other roadblocks were put in the way. There were attempts to prevent their dream of team ministry from ever being fulfilled. Eventually, when she was ordained, the congregation set up a committee to monitor them. This was a tremendous source of stress. The couple recounted attempts to divide them. The resulting stress was painful, but they credit the strength of their married relationship for carrying them through. Still, they said that they would not ever under-emphasise the challenge that the double relationship played on their marriage.

The couple have developed a model for their ministry. This model is a kind of a division of responsibilities. But, it depends to a large extent on the circumstances. Eva handles liturgy and drama and music. Frank said, "I am more responsible for the pastoral things. I think I do more hospital visits and home visiting and so on". They share teaching and preaching. When it comes to the sacraments and rites, such as baptisms and weddings, the one responsible tends to be just whoever happens to answer the phone. It would appear that there is a comfortable division of responsibilities, but there is another side. Both insist that they must keep one another informed and that confidentiality must include the two of them. This need to be informed, even in confidential pastoral matters, seemed to add a dimension of stress to the relationship. Nevertheless, this is how this couple worked their individual need as they shared team ministry responsibilities together.

There is a very creative element to their shared ministry. Eva said that if something new is developed,

...It seems to me the rule is ... we never discussed this with anybody.... but there was enough to do to keep Frank hopping before I came, so when new things come up we certainly talk about it... but if its a new thing, I invariably do it.

To the question, "What effect does the professional relationship have on your married relationship?", the couple had some important things to say. Frank said:

We have been working together for so long that the shift for Eva into the full time professional where she was identified as ordained clergy was really not all that extreme for us as a couple. It really has not made that much difference. We each honor the other. We don't always agree.

Eva said,

We are in agreement about how God works. We worked that out at the beginning of our marriage. When we are really mad at each other, our belief in God is the same.

Frank and Eva added this note. At the outset, the pastorate took all their time. The Lord's work was everything. Frank said,

Finally a friend observed and sat me down and said that our priorities are all wrong. He laid out a list of priorities based on Ephesians. That has been a touchstone for us every since. We come first and our family are ahead of all those other things. That was an important learning ..

Gail and Harold:

Gail and Harold have been married for twelve years and in clergy team ministry for ten years. They share one full time position as equals. They immediately understood the question raised with them regarding the double relationship. Harold said,

No! I don't think we have been able to separate the two. It is not like a nine to five job. It just becomes a way of life. And it is not like other professions because we share all the same clients. It has no comparison...

The couple said that they feel somewhat trapped. With both of them in the ministry there is little chance or hope of change. They have a family of several children and they share in the parenting. Gail said, "I do not see us soon having the time to expand beyond one full time position."

The couple agree that they have put an emphasis on their family and have made sacrifices around that. They have decided that they must share one position in ministry in order for one of them to be available for the family. This has been their compromise.

This clergy couple developed a clear model to assist them in their setting. They call the model a separation of powers and a strict alternating of weeks of responsibilities. The couple rarely do anything together. While they do many of the same things, there is only one meeting a month that they attend together. Each minister is responsible to and for particular committees with specific areas of responsibility. They do not interfere with one another. The couple began their ministry with this model and have stuck with it. It is a model that works for them. Harold said, "Possibly it works because we have known no other way."

How has the professional relationship affected the marriage? Gail and Harold place a great deal of emphasis on the family. They heard the question as "How does the professional relationship affect the family?" Gail said, "I think it has been positive for our kids. It created what I wanted to instil in them. This was not the role model of our upbringing." The couple expressed pleasure that they could both fully share equally in the role of parenting their children.

When I attempted to redirect the question asking if their professional relationship affects the way they relate as husband and wife, they both agreed. Gail said, "Sure, it is

inevitable. It would be a lot easier to have separate jobs." Harold added, "But I think it is just the stress of the job, sometimes almost indescribable stress." Then, he showed us clearly, the unique stress of the double relationship. "Last spring," he said, "I felt on the skids". He said he knew "If we don't have a good vacation this year, this is going to be the end of us." Gail affirmed the feeling.

Irene And John:

Irene and John have been in team ministry for six years and married for eleven years. There were stressful tears shed during this interview. Irene said, "It's hard because our whole gift of our relationship is tied up in our call to ministry." The couple met as students in University and they admit that their common calling was very much a part of the attraction they had for one another. They struggle to separate their marriage from ministry, but the tell-tale comment was made by John when he said, "At ten o'clock we sort of made an agreement that we will not talk about church business." Then Irene added to this by explaining how their first meeting of the day starts in the shower. "It has become a bit of a joke", she said. The Bible Study group suggested that she attach her schedule for the day on the shower curtain.

The spiritual nature of their relationship was an important element for this couple. Irene said, "If anything.... we are on the cutting edge where spirituality and sexuality are being brought together." John went on to say that their relationship was spiritually intimate from the beginning. He said:

I would say that...it is spirituality and marriage. My ministry and spirituality are not exactly identical. My ministry is my work. I don't identify my total life or our life together as ministry, but with spirituality, I would. We both struggle with trying to separate our ministry from our marriage.

I asked if they had been able to nurture the marriage covenant and the ministerial

one simultaneously. John responded, "I would say that the ministerial covenant has received more time than the marriage covenant." Irene said " ...I would agree. I feel John is a typical male of his generation, work comes first." She said that this was a source of frustration to her, but she allows it to happen, because if she didn't he would be so frustrated that he would be impossible to live with. "Like most women you just lay off the demands and do it yourself."

How successful were they at keeping the church and pastoral problems out of the house? John said, "Not all of them." Irene said,

How could you possibly do that? It is impossible because John's main office is in the house. I have an office at the church. (It took two or three years to get an office at the church.) His office being here makes it just always there, and the phone rings itself off the hook some days so you always have interruptions and it is part of your life. It is hard to have a life separate from it.

The couple attempt to work in a collegial model. They have some distinct areas of responsibility. They say they try to schedule a formal sit down meeting every two weeks, but it easily gets bumped and then they discuss things in the shower. They both agreed that it takes the pressure off when they have had that planning meeting, because it helps keep the work separate from the marriage.

Kate and Len:

Kate and Len were in a clergy couple team for seven years. They are now in separate, but nearby pastoral charges. They have been married for twelve years. The experience of clergy team ministry was a painful one particularly for Kate. She said,

My perception, looking back... is, I was forming my identity as a wife and particularly as a mother. We came to our first church with a small child and a five month old baby. I think I was depressed when we came. Part of the

depression was from the amount of stress we went through those last five or six months...you know... ordination interviews, baby and all that stuff. I don't think I had a particularly strong identity as a minister or as a wife and it was very fuzzy for a long time. We talked about boundaries between work and family but we had different goals at that. It was not an issue that went away. We kept talking about it and trying different things. My experience was that I was more of a team partner than a spouse. I was a parent but as far as a wife it was hard because Len was giving a lot in other places. I did not have other people [for support].

Len concurred with Kate. They had little success at separating the professional role from the marriage. He said that he now sees that he was absorbed in trying to find his identity as a minister. "I was aware that I was a parent but it was the minister stuff that took over".

Kate described how overwhelmed she felt and how difficult it was to nurture the marriage. She said that part of her struggle was around the question "What are we going to do as a couple?". Both parties said that they knew consciously that they had to have time for family things. They scheduled picnics and they went out for dinner, but they could not escape the church. Len called attention to the rural nature of their first appointment and said, "In some ways, we were quite isolated in those early years."

The couple both agreed that they were "completely unsuccessful" at keeping the church and pastoral problems out of their home life. One of them said with considerable emotion, " It was in the kitchen, in the dining room, in the living room, in the bedroom, and there while we were going to sleep. It permeated everything."

Was the clergy team able to develop a model to assist them in the professional setting? They reported that they were left to develop their own plan. The church in that rural area had the idea of a circuit style of ministry, and so at first, they opted for that model. There were five points to serve. They rotated week by week believing that it was better for both of them to get to know all the people.

After three years, there was a shift. The couple decided to split the pastoral charge with one of them responsible for worship in specific congregations. Pastoral visits continued to be across the charge. This change came with some resistance from Kate. Len said he urged it to happen because he wanted to redefine what it meant to be a team and he needed some space. This attempt to carefully define roles and responsibilities resulted in a tension with one of the congregations. They were unhappy and a secret petition was circulated to oppose the plan. This created even more stress within the marriage.

There were other uncomfortable team issues for Kate. In the interest of personnel efficiency, Len insisted that the couple avoid doing things together that one of them could do alone. Kate expressed sadness about this, and said that there were some events, such as certain funerals, where she would have preferred to share with Len. She said that she would have been nurtured by more sharing. "It would have fit my idea of team." Len said,

We didn't plan well together. It was awful. We would sit to plan worship together sometimes. To me it was the worst experience. I would plan with anyone else but Kate.

How did the professional relationship affect the marriage? Kate said, "There were times when I was ready to leave the relationship." The couple saw a counsellor and the telling of this story was painful. Both agreed that their clergy team relationship was a tremendous strain on the marriage. Serious health issues developed. They were convinced that the enormous stress of team ministry was too much for them mentally and physically.

CHAPTER V

POWER AND CONTROL

What is power? There is no easy answer to this question. We instinctively know that power has to do with the potential to claim one's own authority. To have power is to have the ability to exercise control, at least over one's own life. To have power is to be important enough so that one's presence influences the outcome of certain events. Still, it is far easier to express what power is not. It is easier to talk about powerlessness. Possibly that is because for most of us, powerlessness is a feeling with which we can most easily identify. This is true for both women and men. It is frustrating to feel powerless. It makes people angry when they are ignored and when they sense that their input and presence is not valued.

Control is one way to use power. Control is when one exercises power over someone else and their actions. There is a reason for doing this. Jean Bolen⁵⁴ suggests that when we feel vulnerable and have concern for our security or our survival, we attempt to exercise our power in the form of control. She suggests that control is a substitute for the acceptance and security that love freely provides. "Thus we seek to be needed, or be indispensable or in control."⁵⁵

Power and control are constant factors in relationships. In subtle ways, words and actions often depict who is the one in the up or the one down position. In Not Counting

⁵⁴ Jean Shinoda Bolen, Ring of Power (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992) 10.

⁵⁵ Bolen 10

Women and Children, Megan McKenna artfully shows how Bible stories do that.⁵⁶ The Bible stories were written (and have long been read) in a way that discounts a large portion of the world's population; the "not-counted", she calls them. Women in ministry are people who have decided that they are no longer to be numbered among the "not-counted".

In her contribution to The Power We Celebrate: Women's Stories of Faith and Power, Christina Berger begins with a quote from Mark Twain. The quote is as follows:⁵⁷

I believe that one day it will be discovered that women are human beings. Yes, in many senses equal to us. I believe that one day they themselves will discover that. And... then... Well, I think that then they will rise and ask to be considered part of the human race and that, as a consequence, there will be difficulties.

Well, there are difficulties. Women are claiming an equal place alongside their clergy spouses. These married couples in team ministry are making their mark, but it comes with struggle. Berger reminds us that women have a history of the experience of discrimination. Women, who are demanding their status as equals, are the ones who will re-shape the very church that has long oppressed them. This is the context in which this inquiry into clergy couple teams was conducted.

Questions about power and control sparked considerable emotion amongst the clergy couple participants in the present research. I asked this question: "Have you worked out the issue of power?". Frequently, the male partner seemed unaware of the importance of this question to his spouse. In the very first interview, Bob answered,

⁵⁶ Megan McKenna, Not Counting Women and Children (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994) 3.

⁵⁷ Christina Berger, "The Power to Communicate," The power We Celebrate eds. Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro and Wendy S. Robins. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1992. 83.

"Yes!", meaning they had worked out the issue. Alana was quick to counter, saying:

No! We never worked it out. In the congregation he was seen as the authority. I received a lot of flak. If I took on authority or power, I was reprimanded.

Alana went on to explain the various actions taken by the power brokers in the church to stop her from exercising power. She explained that members of the congregation would frequently go to Bob to discuss issues while completely ignoring her. She said, "Some of the rebuffs were subtle, but many were explicit. Men were usually the ones who played the power games, but women did it too".

Alana described how she experienced negative emotional feelings because of the attempts of congregational members to control her by ignoring her. This is only one source of power and control. I classify it as power and control as experienced from an external source. The second classification is of power and control as experience within the clergy couple team, that is, an internal source.

Alana experienced this too. As a newly married couple, they were trying to find their identity. While this was happening, they experienced massive attempts by the congregation to control them and to tell them who they ought to be. While Alana experienced this as painful, the evidence suggests that there was some complicity in this by Bob. In this way he exercised subtle control. He admitted that he would have preferred Alana to be a more traditional minister's wife. But she wanted to be an individual. She wanted to exercise her ministry. It was because Alana was afraid of losing control of her own life, of her own survival, that she began to seek out life experience outside the congregation. Her clinical pastoral education program (C.P.E.) and personal counselling were attempts to regain control.

Bob and Alana experienced considerable external forces on them as a team. The emphasis of their ministry was not appreciated by many in their congregation. There was a growing black component to their congregation. These people were attracted by the

energetic outreach program which recognised the changing realities in the community. Tensions grew. The clergy couple team was on the same side of the issue, but the congregation became polarised. The team became frustrated and angry with the closed attitudes of members of the congregation who tried to get them to change the focus of their ministry. These legitimisers in the congregation wanted them to visit the traditional white members. Bob said,

There was a lot of stress and we did not know what to do with it. We were forced into counseling by the conditions we were living.

Towards the end of their pastorate, both agreed that the criticism of their ministry became "slanderous". Finally, Alana felt that she had little credibility. Bob began to fear that the pressure was destroying her.

Eventually, the couple understood that they needed to terminate their team relationship. Both carry a considerable amount of anger directed at the congregation because of their experience with power that tried to control them. This is evidenced by Bob's comments. He said,

There should be more preparation to deal with power structures in the church. Group dynamics should be taught so that pastors have more of a chance. Tell us about burn out. Tell us how to deal with (difficult members) in the congregation.

Alana added, "If we wanted to preserve anything, we had to fight for it."

When Cecilia and Don thought about the question of power, they said together, "Oh, yes, we will always be working at it." Don admitted, "I want to work at this equally, but because of my prior experience in ministry, I tend to take charge." Cecilia affirmed this. She said that it was not the problem it used to be. She noted, however that Don has a lifetime of programming and that the major problem is that when Don takes control, she tends to let him. Cecilia spent many years as a traditional minister's wife before she

was recognised as a professional clergyperson. She said, "So, there's a tendency on my part to revert back to the minister's wife role and that's not his fault."

Cecilia and Don seem to be having fun in their team ministry. This is so despite some factors that have threatened their shared vision together. The first factor is that Cecilia is not ordained. She is otherwise recognised as a member of the order of ministry within her denomination. While her accreditation was not questioned by the congregation, it has caused her some problems with the regional church structures. But, prior to discussing this, the question that one might ask is, "Why was Cecilia not ordained?". The answer is complex. Cecilia chose to be recognised as a licensed lay minister. She is a well-educated woman with a sound theological foundation. Her choice to be a lay minister is a clear decision based on her perception of her "call". Nevertheless, this puts her in a "one down" position even though she carries out the same ministerial functions as her ordained husband. Cecilia is not unhappy with her decision. But, because she is not ordained and because she is a woman, people have difficulty deciding what to call her. The older ones introduce her as the minister's wife. She said, "I don't take offence at that because of who he is..." However, Cecilia says she really feels accepted by the majority, especially by the folks who call her "the most irreverent".

The couple reported that the greatest difficulty that they had with power, was not between themselves, or even with members of the congregations that they serve. The tension was with the church hierarchy, which at the outset of their team ministry together, attempted to place controls on the team relationship. This external attempt to control was a common complaint made by clergy couple teams that we interviewed. Three out of the six couples experienced this kind stress. The basic common problem is this: when negotiations take place in order to engage a clergy team, details of the agreement or contract are left incomplete. After the couple is in place, some outstanding assumptions that were made during the negotiation period get closer scrutiny. Often, the

clergy couple combination dictates that special conditions be met. The guidelines that are used for calling and settling a minister were not designed for the realities of this new situation. As a result, the challenge is to reinterpret the guidelines. This requires some flexibility. Some people seem to be unable to cope with flexible guidelines. This usually causes considerable stress, particularly when there is a power imbalance, and there certainly is a power imbalance when the clergy couple comes up against the authority of the regional governing bodies of the particular church.

In this case, when Don and Cecilia were interviewed for the team position, both the congregation and the representative of the regional authorities of the church agreed that the couple ought to be able to carry out their ministry as equals. Even though Cecilia was not ordained, it was agreed that she ought to be licensed to offer the sacraments. This would be necessary for the couple to be collegial. There were similar team ministry situations within the denomination that could be viewed as precedents. The question was researched and the ministers and the congregations in this multi-point parish believed that everything was secure. However, when the issue was raised in the appropriate council so that Cecilia would be licensed, higher authorities questioned the need for the license. After all, they reasoned, Don was ordained. He could do the sacramental things. After considerable effort on the part of the couple and their supporters, the license was granted with a very slim majority. However, a month later, when the couple were absent from the regional meeting, on a motion to reconsider, the license was rescinded. The manoeuvres lasted several months. In the end the license was granted. The power play, however, left deep wounds in the memory.

Cecilia and Don recognise that there were some traditional theological perspectives that were being challenged. However, it was not theology that was energising the debate. The couple had come up against patriarchal standards that were being threatened by their view of shared ministry. Cecilia said:

[They said] things like, "You're trying to get into the ministry by the back door." and "You are circumventing the system." A lot of these kinds of things were said that were really difficult for me because as much as anybody I know, I go by the book in this church... I've learned that this is the best way. And I had gone through the right steps, I had done all the right things and had been accepted all along the way, and suddenly we come up against this bunch of people who seemed to be saying, "because you are not ordained, you can't do anything." "You don't have any education." They weren't about to look at what education I did have that was not the same.

The couple have worked through the issue but they confess that this was a difficult time for them. The struggle helped them to further define their goals as ministers. Their understanding of their ministry seems hardly nonconformist to them. They are sharing responsibilities in a multi-point rural parish in an effective way. The congregations want a sound pastoral ministry, and this they provide. However, they came up against external powers that almost short-circuited their goals.

Eva and Frank have experienced power from both internal and external sources too. They felt that the one who controlled the communication lines had power. Eva said,

Well, the trouble is the phone... we struggle with that. One thing that I insist on is, if he's on the phone and there is something sounding really difficult, I reserve the right to say 'Who is it?' or 'What's going on?'

Eva expressed a determination to be informed. To not be informed is to be left powerless. Frank said that they shared this view which had considerable impact on their team relationship. There have been a couple of incidents that he described as "horrendous". Being informed goes far beyond a phone conversation. They interpret their team relationship as including the privilege of being informed about every significant aspect of their ministry. This includes information given under the seal of the confessional. Secrecy leaves one or the other uninformed, powerless, divided, no longer a

team.. When information is shared, they are both empowered. The couple experienced this as a tremendously important issue. In order to show the energy around this concern, I have included some of the interview dialogue. (edited for privacy)

Frank: ...I guess the proof of the pudding is that we've survived those things, [that is, attempts to exclude one or the other from information] that's about it. We survived.

Interviewer: Without breaking confidentiality, is it possible to give us an example?

Eva: O.K.. I'll give you the latest one. ... all somebody would have to say is, "I'm telling you this thing under the seal of the confessional, don't tell your spouse. [Eva talked about the tensions this created and the way she they worked it out. They sought assistance from an external source. He asked the following question: "Is there a rule that says the sanctity of the confessional is more important than marriage?". Eva's conclusions to that question follows.] Well, no because the sanctity of the confessional is a Roman Catholic system where there isn't a marriage. so it couldn't have come up. So, therefore, we get to make our rules, and our rules are, nobody can bind us to that anymore. That was the last time that will ever happen. That is a little intimidating because you think "Gee, do I get to make up rules?" But, yeah, this is a new ball game and yeah, you do.

Frank: We honor the sanctity of the confessional... we wouldn't share anything outside of our relationship, but people have used that to divide us, or to try. It has been extremely difficult, and that was tough to come to.... to this realization that it was O.K. to shift [the meaning of confidentiality] in terms of our relationship. It is O.K., and it works.

There are several ways that one could understand the context of the above dialogue. For the couple, however, this was a power struggle. It is about their need to stay on an even plane. They both felt that if one party in the team held information as privileged, the other part was weakened. This was horrendous to them. It also felt as

though someone outside of their marriage relationship had the power to divide them. That was experienced as an affront to the fullness of the terms of their relationship.

The experience of power from a source outside the couple's relationship is a theme frequently repeated. Frank told about a woman who was power hungry in their church. She sometimes attacked him. She sometimes bought expensive gifts for their children. She wanted a particular position within the larger church, but Frank blocked her, believing that she was not an appropriate candidate. She threatened to leave the church unless she got her way. Eva said, "She was blackmailing us. She said 'You know we will take all our money with us.' and the church was pretty scared. It was a tremendous amount of money." The couple described the stress this caused them. Her power was real because, when the woman appealed to regional authorities, she got support. The team ministers' objections were overruled. There is residual stress within the congregation over this issue.

When congregations feel threatened, they sometimes take action to protect their interests. In Eva and Frank's case, the congregation set up a committee to monitor them. They were not allowed to attend the meetings. Eva said that she thinks that some of the members were afraid of her. She has heard the complaint, "You are just so strong, you're going to roll over people." Frank seemed almost uncertain about what to do. He said, "They wanted a forum to express their dissatisfaction with us." This was likely true, but it was not the team that they distrusted. It was Eva. Both members of the team understood that, and said so. Frank, however, remained quite supportive of Eva, even encouraged her to "hang in". Against this adversary, this congregational power to control them, the couple united in mutual support.

I have already shown how clergy couple teams frequently get into problems because the terms of their contracts are too open ended. This was the third couple we interviewed and we encountered the problem for the third time. Briefly, Eva and Frank

were called as a team, before Eva was ordained, to a mid-sized big city congregation. There was no written contract. It was agreed that after she completed certain studies she would be ordained. In the meantime, she did specific work in ministry within the congregation. Several years passed and she had more than completed the requirements. The ordination kept being put off. Finally, when she was ordained, a distrustful group in the congregation set up a monitoring group. There was a deep fear of the power that Eva may hold as an ordained priest. The couple view this group as illegal. They have successfully ignored the group in order to render them powerless. This was their own power strategy.

Gail and Harold have worked very hard to keep their authority and power in balance. Indeed, they seem to exercise a collegial model of ministry consciously. They relate to different committees and they alternate weeks of responsibility. They do very little together. When one is on duty, the other is at home with the children. When people call, the couple insist that the callers have no choice of minister. They take whoever is on duty. They talk about sharing power, and they are conscious about not taking too much on for themselves. Harold said,

We just keep reminding ourselves not to get too involved in the issues...we have to back up and say, 'Well, they'll do it.' Sometimes we have to tell each other that.

This brief dialogue followed:

Interviewer: "The question of 'who is in charge?', does that become an issue ever?"

Harold: "You mean in the Pastorate?"

Interviewer: "Yes."

Harold: "No."

Gail: "I think it is a major issue for us. I sometimes feel that people look more to Harold for direction because he relates to the Property and Finance committee. He did more work with the building fund, putting up the new building which was a major event, of course, and because people had more contact with him over that issue, for a while I felt like I was not being looked to for direction, but, it could just as well have been me if it had related to my committee."

Harold: "Well you made the curtains, dear...."

Gail: (rather acidly) " mmmmm thanks, dear."

The issue of power was real in spite of the couple's best effort to control it. The struggle to rationally contain power impulses came to a head (with an element of competition) when Gail wondered if Harold was receiving too much recognition. His gender stereotype response, while in jest, revealed his discomfort. Furthermore, as in the case of Alana and Bob, the perspectives of the male clash with the female perspectives. Harold did not see a problem with power, but Gail pointed out that it was "a major issue". The female partner had to name it and identify the source.

Gail and Harold are conscious of the issues of power and how it can affect their relationship. When they considered a "call" to their present church, they encountered a woman at the interview session who seemed to question Gail's role as a minister. This was a gender issue, but it was also a power issue. Gail said, "If this is a problem for you people, then this is as far as we go." Gail was able to be assertive and clearly spelled out the parameters. The couple commented that when the "call" was issued to them, the woman in question left the church. This was a good solution from the couple's perspective. The congregation was aligned with the viewpoint of their new ministers, giving them power.

Does the position of one minister get more authentication than the other? Gail admitted that sometimes she feels that to be so. Some of the senior citizens would rather

have Harold. She said, "...there are a few people who wish that the real minister was on." Then she chuckled. Harold said, "But I don't think that there is any malice in these people... They just can't get it through their heads that she's an ordained minister."

Gail noted that she is more involved with younger women than she believed any male minister could be. It balances things off. They have discovered something new about ministry that they have not had before. She said, "Because I get a lot of positive feedback from other people, it doesn't hurt as much as it would otherwise."

Irene and John were in the midst of a crisis when we arrived for the interview. A church committee had just chastised them for not visiting enough. This was a sad moment for them. They had spent a great deal of time training a pastoral care team. Irene said in frustration,

They are still back there where they were thirty years ago.... We're the paid Christians here.... They wanted a top-notch Sunday School, they wanted youth group, elderly visitation... and I told John we're nuts to come here... and I told it to (the chair of the committee) and they are not willing to do any homework.... I said I will drop all those other things that I do and concentrate on visiting... part of me feels that he's (pointing to her clergy partner) the full time and I'm the half-time sidekick assistant and if that's what they need, so I'll do that... and it ends up the younger group against the senior....and I'm, starting to feel paralyzed... they have no sense of talking to us as a team... our ministry is not understood. To me it feels like a crisis and it affects the marriage. it makes me feel angry and it upsets John and then the kids act up... and I wonder if the Lord is saying 'Shake the dust off your feet', or, is this one of those crucifying things where we should wait around for the resurrection....

As you can see from the above account, Irene was incensed. She felt devalued and rather powerless. She said at one point' "...it makes me feel like I'm a real basket case." She perceived that she had to yield to the demands of a committee. She also felt

an imbalance with respect to John. He is the full time minister and she is the "half-time side-kick assistant". Is there a better description of the feeling of being devalued by power outside the self?

While the couple attempted to be collegial, and while John tried to express this, Irene was unwilling to grant that it really was that way. She said that because John is full time and she is half time, John has more authority and is expected to respond. There is a built-in imbalance of power because of the contract.

Because this couple felt that they were in the throes of a crisis at the very time we conducted the interview with them, a good deal of energy was released. The interview team got a close view of the impact of feeling powerless and what it does to couples in team ministry. They were disappointed. They were angry. They began to wonder if it was worth the effort. Irene said, "If you were forever bouncing off people's expectations of who you were supposed to be, you could be nuts." There was considerable hostility and anger towards the congregation, an emotion which the couple shared. They simply felt that there had been too much intervention into their lives. At one point she said that she felt as though they wanted to "Keep their thumb on (her)".

Because of Irene's perspective, the couple felt that the problem of control was more an external factor than an internal one. Irene explained that she looks to John for encouragement and affirmation. Here is how she expressed this:

I think, in fact for me, John has been more encouraging me to take things and run with them. I'd be more likely to seek out his encouragement or affirmation... whether that's a female thing in order to survive.... So control is not the issue. It's the opposite thing.

Kate and Len had no trouble identifying the issue of power. They are one of the two couples who were interviewed who are no longer in team ministry. Len said, "Kate

would say I have lots of power, and it's true in many ways, because of being male." He went on to describe the situation. Even when they consciously separated areas of responsibility, people would prefer him. In the congregations where Kate was responsible, people would come to Len about business related to the Board. Len tried to hand the power back to Kate, but the congregations refused to co-operate. He was preferred at funerals and seemed more popular. Kate honestly expressed how this made her feel. The following interview dialogue highlights her emotion because Len was preferred at funerals:

Kate. And that (funeral) I refused to let her (chose Len instead of me) because I had been his pastor and I was right up until his death and I wasn't going to let his chauvinism (a sigh of exasperation)... but at another funeral.... That one hurt me.

Len: (with insistence as he mentioned a name) I saw her all the time.

Kate: Then I ended up doing the burial, the committal, because Len was not available and I felt really angry that I wasn't good enough to do the funeral but they had me do the committal.... I was really angry....

Kate's anger was debilitating. She felt ineffective and became depressed. She felt like a victim of power from various sources. The couple eventually sought the help of a counsellor.

A very hot issue was being discussed during the time of their team pastorate that became extremely divisive for the couple. The United Church was discussing what has commonly come to be known as "The Issue". This sexuality debate focused on the question of the ordination of homosexual women and men. Len was strongly opposed to the document under discussion.⁵⁸ Kate was in favour of the report and its

⁵⁸ The United Church of Canada, Recommendations and Report to the 32nd General Council from the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education and the Division of Mission in Canada, Toward a Christian Understanding of Sexual Orientation, Lifestyles and Ministry (Toronto: 1988).

recommendations. Their disagreement was obvious to the congregations they served. The vast majority of the congregations stood opposed to the sexuality report and its proposals. So, Len was encouraged and supported. Kate felt further excluded. Some people grew concerned for her and began to protect her. Kate said,

We did a lot of theological debating between the two of us. I can remember being in the hospital (for the birth of a child) and Len talking about this report and I just ended up crying because I could not cope with this stuff and for the next year, it was constant between the two of us.

Len: I was really upset.

Kate: Yeah, and me trying to hold my own position against this constant....

Len: Can I say, that would be more at home. Out in the charge ... it was carefully worded.

Kate: In the charge it was respectful.

Respectful or not, the conflict that developed became a challenge for the couple. They experienced powerful forces from the congregation. The most significant power play came when a secret petition was circulated. The events that led up to the petition came after Len proposed the re-structuring of pastoral responsibilities. The couple was in a multi-point pastoral charge. Len felt that each minister needed space of his or her own. They had been unsuccessful in team ministry using the rotation model. He felt that it would be better if they divided the churches geographically. Each minister would be responsible for a particular church. Kate reluctantly agreed. Her reluctance was based on a fear that she would no longer know what was happening in the multi-point parish. Distrust of each other's "technique" was an important element at this point. Len would check up on Kate to see if she had followed up on people, and if it was not done to his satisfaction, he would get angry and say, "Why don't you go and do that?" Kate resented

the attempts to control her.

The plan to divide the congregations was discussed appropriately and won agreement. However, there was a group who disapproved. They were unhappy that Kate was to be their minister exclusively. They began to circulate a secret petition. It was started by several older men. When it was explained to them that all the proper procedures were taken, they responded with, "Oh, We never heard of this." Len said, "They had (heard of it)." " It was just something that they did not want to hear or it was a way of getting at people; Kate in particular."

The result of the secret petition is that Kate discovered that she had a great deal of support, especially among the women of the congregations. She also experienced tremendous negative power from congregational members attempting to control the situation. Kate had this to say about the crisis,

I think that there were people in the congregation who authenticated [us] and there were some who played us off one against the other.... It happened to be ones who could wield some power (that started the petition) but the majority appreciated what we both had....

The experience of being threatened by powers external to the relationship, really shook Kate's confidence, but the issue of power was also a factor within their relationship. As they discussed their experience, Kate explained that she felt that Len's extroversion gave him more power. When they went places, such as when they went to church suppers, Len would, as Kate described it, "put on his ministerial persona and he changes with that" and he would work the crowd. She felt disabled and powerless. More than this, she felt abandoned. So, within the relationship there was an uncomfortable feeling of a power disadvantage that became a source of conflict.

The couple experienced another form of subtle external controlling intervention in their lives. They felt like surrogate children to the congregational members that were

predominantly older people. Kate said, “I think there was a certain kind of interest... because for so many, (in this remote rural area) their children our age were not there. Len said, “Yeah, I think we were surrogate children. I think that was a large part of the role.” Len explained that this projection led to a sense of feeling devalued as ministers.

The question, “Who is in power in the couple team relationship?”, is complicated by the many elements that influence how power is experienced. My analysis is that power is experienced from sources that are external to the team relationship and also by internal forces. The interviews shows that the church community gives the couple power and that this same community also limits or controls how the power is to be used. Indeed, one party in the clergy couple team may be given more power than the other. The male usually gains the advantage. This power balance is further exacerbated by internal attempts by the couple to control one another. These are commonly subtle controls.

Conflicts, because of the experience of power, were common in clergy couple team settings. Would the tensions that developed have been absent in more traditional forms of ministry? Would the events have occurred in the same way if the minister was not in team with a spouse? This is an important question. We can only speculate. The evidence in this research suggests that the dynamic of the double relationship makes the experience of external and internal control problematic.

CHAPTER VI

COMPETITION

My clergy spouse and I visited a senior couple who had recently celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. This pastoral visit was intended to be a brief one in which we would offer our best wishes. When we arrived in their cosy home, we discovered the couple playing cards together. We were warmly welcomed and invited to join in the card game. We agreed and were swept away in a game of "Threes Are Wild". I noticed a lively competition between the couple and I made a comment on it. Fred, the groom of fifty years, looked as his mate and said, "There's no competition here. I don't care who wins, as long as it's not Connie." There was a wink and a chuckle, but the competition was real. Their fifty years of marriage seemed only to spice the will to win. They loved playing together, and the competition made a card game a memorable event.

When we visited clergy couples as an interview team, we asked about similar elements of competition. We wondered if couples experienced competition and how it effected their double relationship. All the couples talked about their experiences of being in competition with their spouse. Sometimes they laughed about it. In two cases, recalling the sense of competition was painful.

Susan Heitler explains that competition is essentially a selfish behaviour. She writes:

People with a competitive orientation feel that they have won in an interaction if they have done better than someone else, rather than by whether or not they have

gained what they personally sought.⁵⁹

Heitler contrasts competition with co-operation. She emphasises that the goal of co-operation is to enhance the advantage of every player in the game, even at personal cost. There is a winner and a loser from the perspective of competition. In contrast, the goal of co-operation is to make all members of the team feel like winners.

When we went into the field to interview couples in team ministry, we wondered if there were conditions present that fostered feelings of competition. We discovered much more co-operation than elements of competition. Couples joined together in team ministry with a co-operative vision in mind. Nevertheless, just as the couple who were married for fifty years found that their competitive nature remained a reality in their relationship, so we discovered the same in the team ministry settings.

Alana and Bob said that they tried to avert most competition by not doing the same things. But they were ready to admit with a smile that they were quite "habitually involved in one-upmanship". There were no single incidents to which the couple could point, but their story was about their experience of being in competition with one another. The game focused on the tension between the ideal of a traditional husband and wife living in the manse, and the ideal of a more contemporary clergy team where Alana was an equal partner. Their struggle was not competition in the sense that one had to be better than the other. It was competition of ideals. Alana felt that she lost the game. There were all the elements of power and control as she felt outdone by Bob with the complicity of the congregation. But, Alana did not give in. She decided to leave the game, by seeking other places to exercise her ministry. It was nearly a tragedy for both of them. Bob recognised that he too had lost the game when he understood that their marriage was in trouble. Their decision to seek counselling was critical. In the end, they

⁵⁹ Susan M. Heitler, From Conflict to Resolution (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990) 12.

had to leave the team pastorate for their own health.

Cecilia and Don said that they were competitive all the time; in table tennis, on the golf course, and in scrabble games. Cecilia said that they would both "kill to win". They did not think that they were competitive at work. Then Don, thinking about the subject said that there were times when Cecilia asked him, "Well, are you going to do it all?" The telephone was a problem. Cecilia said that she had to tell Don that he does not have to be the one to answer the phone every time it rings. She said that she has to remind Don regularly that he is not the sole minister. The couple felt that competition was not a critical issue with them. They believe that it is a matter of sensitivity to each other as members of a team.

At first Eva and Frank said that they were rarely in competition with each other. There are only a few things that they do together in the parish. They have a clear division of responsibilities. They see one another as complementary. They admitted that they were in competition regarding the telephone. This appears to be a common challenge to clergy couples. They compete for the phone. This is a sign of one being wanted or in demand more than the other. In talking about it more, Frank said that he is bothered when Eva is chosen over him to respond to a pastoral concern by members of the congregation. Eva understood, and she explained that she occasionally felt the same way. Frank said, "But when I sit back and look at it, in most of those situations, if I were there, I would prefer her too in that particular situation." Rationalisation is an important defence. There is an effort to rationalise the strong feeling that competition engenders.

Frank and Eva keep score in a subtle way. This was also a common feature with the couples we interviewed. They know the score. In this case it was said that he gets more funerals than she does. He is more involved in pastoral care. It was when Eva began to focus on funerals, the real feelings about competition came out. She said that sometimes Frank would be asked to take the funeral and she would be asked to sing the

Lord's Prayer. She said, "Is that what priests do? Yes, we do that, I guess, because that is what they want." This is another example of how the community gives power to males and controls the female.

Eva attempted to down play her feelings around this issue. This turned out to be the second time that the female member of the clergy team told how she was invited to sing at a funeral while the male spouse officiated. Cecilia told a similar story. Both seemed to feel that if singing was how they were to be most helpful, then so be it. I am not sure that their male partners would feel so gracious. The women have been told that their voices are beautiful, and we might grant that this is meant to be a genuine compliment, but it still is experienced as a slight. The male partner won out in the demand to actualise himself professionally. But, both parties insisted that they are able to contain their feelings and that these slights did not disable their team spirit.

Gail and Harold said that competition was a non-issue for them. Harold said,

I think we keep separate interests so that we don't put ourselves or go and find ourselves put in a position where we're competing with one another. All my interests outside church are completely foreign to her. She's got no interest in them at all... And I don't bore her with any of the details about it so there's nothing there in which to compete. It's my interests and I do it and we don't even talk about it. And work is often the same way. We have different interests.

Gail added:

And even things like preaching, you know I've heard of couples where one is obviously the better preacher and they don't like to rub it in but it gives them a good feeling. I get the sense that we each have our own gifts and that we're both fairly adequate at most things we do so there's no area where someone says "Ah! Geeze you know like I wish it was her, I wish it was him." I think we both have had to work hard at being competent in most areas. So I don't feel when I hear him preach, that the next week I have to be better. People appreciate us for what we are, pretty well.

When couples identify that they are in competition with one another, it is our experience that the female partner feels that she is on the losing side. In fact, in the clergy couple teams we interviewed, we did not encounter one case where the male partner truly felt put at a disadvantage. Men have noted isolated cases when the female clergy person was chosen instead of them, but they were not able to show any sustained preference. This is not so for the women, however. Irene, for example, really understood her feeling of competition with John. This was so despite John's comments that the couple made an effort to prevent people from dividing them. Irene said that she felt that she could easily be overlooked if she allowed it to happen. John would make all the contacts with the community if she ceased to be intentional. The couple consciously divided up the weddings so that she would get some exposure. She said, "I was starting to feel that I was not getting any sort of time to be public... and that's where we got intentional... I wanted to be seen publicly in that way."

Competition can be mysterious. Irene is really in touch with her feelings. She told the story about how she felt when John was criticised at a Board meeting. John was supervising a student minister and he was attempting to give the student as much exposure as possible. Irene felt that the Board members were treating John as though he was lazy, as though he was avoiding responsibility and was letting the student do his work. Irene said:

... you never know who makes these comments... that we didn't need a student minister. After all, (they said) when he [the student] was there he [John] hardly did any preaching. So, [they] really want to hear John preach and he's the main minister being paid to do that. [Someone asked, if they appreciated when Irene preached.] They said, "Oh, yes! That's really wonderful." But its like they are sitting there counting their money and counting every move that John is doing or not doing. ... So I'm not sure what is really happening or not. But it's becoming clear to me that everything really is on John [She looked exasperated here] it

sounds like I could go to Timbuktu and they would be happy.

Irene really sensed that she was unimportant, that she was powerless. She was there only because they loved John so much and because they loved what he had to say. She said that she sometimes felt "totally invisible". She could just be "blowing in the wind" because it would not matter. With some emotion she blurted out:

What mattered was whether the main minister was there and it didn't matter even if they liked the main minister and you could probably stick up a scarecrow, put a robe on HIM and they would be quite happy.

John was sad to hear Irene express this. He said that he believed she misinterpreted what had happened. He pointed out that he heard the feedback from the Board from another point of view. They thought that he gave the student too much pulpit time and that, when he was supervising, he was not doing what they really appreciated. Irene said, "Yes, that is how you heard it. But how I heard it is this: I was visible during that time but that did not count. You were still goofing off. So what that does to me... it makes me feel invisible..."

As can be seen from the above exchange, competition comes in many disguises. John was not able to see the issue in the same terms that Irene was able to see it. He saw the problem as a group in the church that misunderstood what he was doing as a supervisor of a student. Irene saw it as one more time when she did not count. He won the game again, without even trying. What is worse, try as she did to be visible when he was absent, all they noticed was his absence. She felt out of control.

Kate and Len recognised competition as a significant factor. When the couple began their team, competition was at the level of conflict. Len was busy as a pastor and Kate was growing more angry every day. Len said,

Partly, that was a technique thing. you go around and try to visit as many people as you can, you're not probably going to manage everybody and some are

just going to get dropped and whatever, but you try and I remember really clearly Kate's not so outgoing or she didn't think she was. I remember coming home and saying, "Gee I had a great day and I visited this many people." and stuff and her saying, [being mad at me] "because you're getting known and they're going to like you better cause you saw them and I haven't had a chance." So then I felt like I'm not supposed to do this.

Kate said that she was probably doing as much visiting as Len, but she talked about it less. Until she was able to put it into perspective, she felt very threatened by what was happening. Len said that the issue grew into a problem for both of them. He was not sure what to do. He wondered if it was a personality problem, that is, if it was because he was an extrovert and she an introvert. He wondered if it was a gender issue. In this case, he reminded us, the woman was quieter than the man. He wondered what he should do. Kate, on the other hand, grew ever more angry with Len. As they talked about it they told this story:

Kate: I think my discomfort with Len's style was his extrovertness, because I would see a different person out in public and I had to get use to it... and now I see it as a style, that it's a way of operating.

Len: You used to get grumpy. I remember being at dinners in (names of congregations they served). I would eat my dinner and then I would go around and speak to everybody.... I remember you getting mad at me for doing it...

Kate: I felt abandoned sometimes.

Len: Well, I'd say this is work.

Kate: Working the crowd ... (with sadness) just her husband working the crowd which is politically a very good thing to do.

Kate was a competent minister, but she began to feel uncertain about herself. She kept track to see how much more Len was in demand. She noticed he had more funerals

and weddings. He was usually the one wanted on the telephone. Kate wanted to change the model, to share equally, to prevent people from selecting their minister of preference. She was not successful in convincing Len of the model she had in mind. The stress was so significant that there were times that she was ready to leave the marriage.

Gender seems to be an acute issue in competition. A significant factor that needs to be stated is this: in the small group of participants that we interviewed, the dominant partner (usually the male) frequently failed to recognise the competitive nature of certain actions. There were examples in the interviews where the male reasoned that the experiences shared were not competition, but simply the way they do ministry. For example, when Len was “working the crowd”, he saw it as creative ministry. Kate saw it as Len playing the game where he successfully put on his minister’s mask. She could not play that game, so he was the winner. He was the popular one. She found herself, once again, in the shadow of her clergy partner. Such feelings destroy collegiality.

Even though team members failed to interpret certain actions as competitive acts, couples understood competition as a significant factor in the clergy couple relationship. The couple participants attempted to develop a model of ministry, tailored to their particular needs, which would limit the opportunities for competition. Nevertheless, competition was among the issues that contributed enough stress to threaten the viability of relationships.

It is clear that competition is part of the clergy couple experience. In the competition to be the one most desired and in demand by the congregation, the women frequently felt disadvantaged. One woman reported not only feeling less desired but, more seriously, invisible and powerless. Women felt that if they ceased to be intentional, that the men would completely take over.

The interviews revealed another form of competition. There was a competition of ideals. This sometimes was unconscious but couples played a “tug of war” between the

prominence of feminist values and the more traditional patriarchal values. This was sometimes in evidence when men questioned their partner's perception that the issues had something to do with gender. The men were inclined to believe that conflicting views had more to do with personality differences.

Finally, couples offered solutions to limit conflict. The solution proposed was separate responsibilities on the job and separate free time activities too.

CHAPTER VII

CONFLICT

In the pre-marital educational program which is offered by the Montreal Pastoral Institute, the theme "conflict" is one of the most important subjects of discussion. Couples are taught that conflict is a given in any relationship. Marriage is an intense relationship where conflict is bound to happen. The way in which conflict is managed can strengthen a marriage, or it can destroy it. One of the exercises that is used to teach couples to cope with conflict is entitled, "Four Methods of Dealing with Difference".⁶⁰ These four include avoidance, shouting, manipulation and other power games, all four of which only foster more conflict. Couples are invited to learn ways to communicate so that conflict is managed and that relationships are strengthened. The main goal however, is to bring to consciousness that conflict will be a part of any married relationship.

All six couples spoke of their struggle with conflict in their double relationship. We learned that conflict was viewed by couples as most disheartening and destructive to their team spirit. It was in the area of conflict that the reality of the double relationship was the most problematic. Couples reported that they were unable, especially in times of conflict, to separate their professional lives from their married ones. The personal flowed into the professional and vice versa. It was a universal complaint.

All the couples said that they were dealing better with conflict than they used to. Yet, they emphasised that it was an ongoing struggle. Couples shared the perception that the women were more aggressive in conflict than their male partners. For example, it

⁶⁰ Living Together in Marriage (Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1985) 38.

was reported by one couple that she "natters" and he "disappears". Another said that she gets "aggressive" and he "clams up and broods". One couple added that "It is a recent thing that we meet in the middle..." With frankness, one spouse described their conflict exchange in this way: "I yell, he listens." Another couple reported that she "raises the issues" and he "responds with avoidance".

This way of dealing with conflict seems to be a common pattern. It is confirmed by current literature on the subject. I cite, as an example, the work of Harriet Goldhor Lerner. Lerner compares the perspectives of husbands and wives by quoting various statements they make when they complain about their spouses. Among the statements are: "My husband withdraws from confrontation and cannot share his feelings." By contrast, the husband's statement is: "I wish she would back off and stop nagging and bitching."⁶¹

Deborah Tannen has contributed to this discussion by offering the observation that women are more likely to share their problems more freely.⁶² She suggests that women (generally) are more conditioned to talk things out, while men feel threatened by the idea of actually getting involved in negotiations. Men are conditioned not to talk things over. They tend to distrust the other for fear of losing status. According to Tannen, men understand important conversations as hierarchical, that one is up and one is down. It is a power issue. Women on the other hand, approach conversation as "a network of connections".⁶³ Important conversation about potential conflict is seen from different perspectives and with a different purpose by men and women.

The above observations are important to understanding the dynamic of the clergy couple relationship. This research with clergy couples shows that the woman wanted to

⁶¹ Harriet Goldhor Lerner, *The Dance of Anger* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985) 49.

⁶² Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990) 24-25.

⁶³ Tannen 25

talk, while men wanted to retreat and mull it over. Cecilia explained it this way, "...I tend to natter, Don tends to disappear for a few moments until we get our thoughts into gear...". During another interview, Irene turned to John and said, "You usually clam up." He responded with, "No I don't. I struggle with it." In commenting on their conflict patterns, Kate said, "I was the one who tended to raise the issues...[and his response was] avoidance withdrawal." I suggest that because of the nature of the double relationship, that is, because they were both professionally and personally involved, discussing conflict was even more problematic for the males. If we follow Tannen's thesis, the men in the team would have difficulty seeing the conflict as being on a level plane. They were in danger of ending up in the uncomfortable position of being inferior. This would be bad enough in the privacy of marriage but I suspect that, for most men, it would be a terrible affront in the public domain of the professional world.

Nonetheless, conflict was an important factor, and it was frankly discussed by every clergy couple team that we interviewed. Because of its importance, I repeat what I have previously reported, that is, in two cases, the experience of conflict was serious enough to lead the couples to end to their team relationship.

Alana and Bob said that their professional tensions sapped all their energy. They said that it was disastrous to their marriage. Their sexual energy reduced and they were exhausted most of the time. Alana said that she had the most fun when Bob was absent. Bob said that, "a good argument killed many a sermon preparation. The tensions would be so intense that after three hours the paper was still empty."

Cecilia and Don explained that they have experienced considerable stress too. They said that they have learned to deal constructively with it. When I asked them if they experienced conflict between them that was strong enough to affect their personal relationship, Cecilia responded:

No, not really...I don't recall ever taking issues to bed with us. We usually get them settled in some way, pieces done before we go to bed anyway.

Now, this is not to say that the couple have not experienced conflict that was serious. They explained that even though they were on the same side of most issues, even this was sometimes difficult. They told us of a time when the church secretary broke a confidence in such a way that the couple felt compromised. Some congregational members, who were affected by the issue, made life difficult for the couple. Don said that he felt like a leper just before one particular service, like he was being shunned. He tried to explain how their marriage was affected by this. He said,

Well, we tend to go over and over and over it and Cecilia would tend to say, "It's done! Forget about the thing! It's happened, we've done our best." and I am still churning over about this thing and feeling, well, is there something else we can do to kind of....

Don talked about the issue for some time indicating how serious it was for him. He was explaining that their effectiveness as ministers was compromised by the conflict. Cecilia said,

Well, I worry about things too, but I think that what happens to me is I get mad. I just think, look, you hired us to do a job and we're doing it. If they don't like the way we do it, we'll go somewhere else and do it. I just get to the point of saying this is ridiculous...

Don: Somebody once described marriage... it doesn't suffer fools gladly.

Interviewer: How different would that had been if you had been alone, Don, in making the decision?

Don: In that particular case, I don't think it would have been different.

Cecilia: I would have still known about it, I would have still got mad and said, you've got to make a decision go ahead and make it and then live with it. I would

have been hollering that from the kitchen sink and he would have been saying, it's easy for you to say.

The couple admitted that they are hardest on themselves. However, they felt strongly that they were better together than apart. Looking at Don, Cecilia said, "Quite often when you are down about something or upset... I'm am up.". This dynamic is the way individual members of the team shift roles

Eva and Frank appreciate their team relationship too. Eva enjoys talking things over. Frank tends to do things on his own. When Frank comes up with an important decision and Eva has not been part of the process, that is when there is bound to be conflict. Eva said, "I'll accuse him of being unilateral about something because he has already done all the homework and the analysis, so he is ready to roll but it's the first time that I have heard of it." Eva added that she does team work and she expects Frank to do the same. She said that maybe it is because she is a woman, or maybe it is just her experience, but "I do team work with everyone".

The couple have an active ministry together and they do have one major source of conflict. They double book. In fact, on the day we interviewed them this was an issue. Frank was to receive an award that night for a civic ministry. Eva would have liked to have been there. Unfortunately, she had an engagement. Their daughter will be his date. Eva wondered out loud, "OK, 'Did he really want me?', 'Is this a problem?', 'What do we do?', 'Why didn't I know this before so we could have discussed it?', that kind of thing."

Eva and Frank were candid about their emotions. This following exchange tells a great deal. This is an example how conflict can affect the professional relationship.

Eva: I could go stomping into a service because we've just had a fight about something, like double booking or something like that, but I guess one of the great advantages of this congregation, is that people would say, 'What's the

matter?' They are just right there and you just say, 'I'd better get myself straightened out.' It's not really possible to carry a thing on for a long time.

Interviewer: So are you able to deal with these things quite quickly?

Eva: Yeah, things don't go smoldering....

Frank: Anything along those lines that we've experienced, certainly all the time that we've been here (ten years now), it's been episodic, ... where the pressure has got to a point and there's been a break or something, but then one of the wonderful things about (our church) is you can be in 47 pieces, and go in and do that service and it's not affected that much by where you are. By the time you get through with the service you're pretty well put together yourself and you can go back and make love...

Eva: Come time for that confession and if you're really split into all these pieces because of a conflict, boy then, that's right up there. The sacramental part of that comes shining though.

In spite of the tensions that are part of their relationship, the couple insist that they are more than coping. They have worked in separate settings and they say this situation is superior. They do not envision changing anything.

Gail and Harold are deliberate about their relationship. They too have an active congregation. They have some conflicts. On the day we arrived for the interview, they were in disagreement about the appropriateness of a forthcoming baptism. It came into the interview this way:

Harold: Yeah, we do conflict at times, and we shouldn't even be deciding this (the baptism). Let's not throw it back and forth.

Gail: Yeah!

Harold: Let them do the job. That's where we conflict.

Gail: Yeah, I think that's exactly where we've been conflicting if anywhere; it's in

trying to make decisions ourselves that we really shouldn't have to make. So what we say to each other now is look don't you get into that, send it back to them [congregational committee] to decide so that it doesn't have to affect us. Whether it is a difficult baptism that we have to make, or a decision over a situation with the caretaker or whatever, we just remind the other person to send it back to the committee and let them make the decision so it doesn't put our personal relationship in jeopardy. If we conflict, it's over these kinds of issues, it's not decision making, but who should be making the decisions.

Interviewer: How do you deal with disagreements then as a couple, as a professional couple?

Harold: After we get through arguing about it, I suppose, we take the time to take the decision the next day or the next week. Can't say we resolve stuff on the spot. The problem is that we are both very impulsive about getting things done ...

Gail: We are both pretty analytical and we are both very organized and deliberate about getting tasks done, which is good because we keep things moving, but on the other hand if we both want to get something done quickly and we don't agree on it, we sometimes meet head on.

Interviewer: Do your professional conflicts interfere with your personal life?

Gail: Sure I think it's inevitable, I mean that is the one time when I think it would be a lot easier to have separate jobs, so when you come home at the end of the day, you're not still steamed because he did this or he did that or you had an argument over whether or not to baptize this baby. That's when it would be a lot easier to go in our separate ways in the morning and come home at night and be able to blow off steam without the other person having a personal investment in it.

Harold: I think what's more stressful, is the general stress of the job, it's not always specific that creates tension between us. Just the stress of both having the same job, working too long and not taking a break or being involved with the same people all the time and being in the same place.

Gail explained that the stress is so serious at times that it is difficult to have a positive sermon. Still, because they alternate weeks, they do have some breathing space. Gail called it time away from one another in order to "cool down".

It is important to note that the couple have taken this area of conflict very seriously. They understood the need to take care of each other. They understand the destructive danger. They admitted that the year before, they needed a break. They did not have much fun for a very long while. It was taking its toll. It was well into the vacation before they felt better. Now that their children are all in school, they say that there seems to be less pressure. It is the pressure that seems to invite conflict.

When I asked Irene and John if their professional conflicts interfered with their personal life, I struck a nerve. They said that they cannot leave their professional struggles at church. Irene said that she sometimes feels guilty about it. Both members of the team get involved in church and bring it home and the family gets leftovers. This has been the major source of tension. They suggested that their children seem to be able to remind their parents that they are not there for them. Irene expressed her feeling of guilt by saying: "It's more on my part dealing with the rotten mother." She feels that they pay a high price for their busyness.

How busy are the couple? Both team members said that they found it hard to find time to care for themselves. Irene expressed their busyness in this story. She wanted to have a child. John was not committed to the idea. She wanted to talk to him about it, to convince him. She said,

So, it takes a long time to get an appointment where we can talk for two hours.

That's the thing... just to sit and talk about your own agenda. I think we ended up talking one night from about 12:30 to close to two.

There is another side to this question. How do the personal conflicts impact on their team ministry? John said that personal conflicts were significant. He explained that

he had gone off to do a service and felt "strung-out" because of some unresolved conflict. Irene described the dynamic as a "difficult patch" when the couple would communicate less and would work more or less independently.

When the interview team began looking into conflict as experienced by clergy couples, we thought that we needed to be alert to two forms. We were vigilant to stay attuned to conflict that might arise from personal relationships as they impact upon the professional enterprise. We found many examples. We were attentive to professional conflicts that may spill over into and affect the marriage. These were obvious. We were surprised to discover another form of conflict. This conflict can be described as the pain that couples experienced as they found themselves embroiled in debates between one another that were sparked by influences of an external nature. It seemed to us that the couples were explaining that the particulars of external issues as facts receded into the background as emotion took over and fed the conflict. The real source of the conflict was almost hidden by rage. Alana and Bob experienced this when the congregation did not accept Alana. Their arguments tore at the fabric of their marriage as the disputes, as they described it, "sapped all our energy". Cecilia and Don experienced it when they wrestled about what to do when confidential material was leaked by the secretary. Their marriage bliss was challenged by arguments and indecision.

The United Church couples experienced conflict energised by an external source in a extreme way. They recently found themselves in turmoil over the sexuality debate that took place in that church. In brief, the debate focused on the question of the ordination of self-declared homosexual men and women.. A study and report encouraged a policy of inclusiveness for the United Church.⁶⁴ It is significant to note that among the couples that we interviewed, it was apparent that the female partners were frequently

⁶⁴ Toward a Christian Understanding of Sexual Orientation, Lifestyles and Ministry (Toronto: 1988).

more sympathetic to the report and its recommendations than were the males. This was a particularly difficult time for couples where the parties were on different sides of the issue. Couples found themselves attacking one another. In describing the purpose of one couple attacking the other, Heitler writes:

The attacker considers himself as having little or no responsibility for, or power to improve, the problem. The other is at fault. The attacker also assumes that improvement will come only if s/he can somehow force the other to change. Demands, accusations, blame and criticism feel like the only ways in which leverage over the other, and therefore over the problem, can be exercised.⁶⁵

Kate and Len are a United Church clergy couple. Their stress was exacerbated by feelings that the sexuality debate engendered. They reported that they barely coped. The couple argued about the issue constantly for more than a year. Kate shared her position with her congregations explaining to the parishioners that she was in favour of the report and its recommendations. This was an unpopular position within the congregations. Len was clearly on the other side of the issue. While Kate had some support, it was apparent the majority were unappreciative of her perspective. The conflict reached the level where the couple's relationship was in jeopardy. Here is how the couple saw their conflict impacting on their personal lives:

Kate: Well, I think the sexuality issue was more than difference of opinion or a difference of theological position. It affected our personal life in that we spend a lot of time talking about it and we were angry about it.

Len: I was very angry about it.

Kate: And I felt that I was taking the brunt of a lot because I disagreed with him.

Len: So I wanted argue to about it.

⁶⁵ Heitler 111

Interviewer: You wanted to convince her you were right?

Len: Yeah, probably. I think there was a great frustration because it seemed to me that the church as a whole had not made up its mind But, yes convinced that we have something to say here. Those of us who are unsure. Anyway... and it did affect us and I was very angry.

Their conflict was so severe that Kate began to feel that she was becoming quite ineffective as a minister. She explained this experience as follows:

Kate: I know that there was a time, I can't even remember ... when I was under a lot of stress and it felt to me like it was a marriage problem, marriage breakdown, and I found myself consistent, probably subconscious stuff too, consistently forgetting to let the choir sing so I had everyone behind me on my back because I would go through the service and I would skip over the anthem and go into the sermon or whatever ... but I was also under a lot of stress and so it kept happening and happening ...so I think that was a situation when there was a lot of stuff going on in our personal life that was affecting my ability to function.

As has been shown, this couple was in deep distress. The conflict they experienced tainted their lives. In the end, the only healthy response was for the couple to terminate the professional team relationship in order to preserve their marriage.

Participant couples in this research explained that they experienced a number of situations where they found themselves in conflict with people outside the team which led them to feeling sad. Technically, they were not in conflict with one another, but nevertheless they felt that they were in a situation of conflict. Irene and John explained this to the interview team. Irene is a sensitive person. The following story was not seen as a trivial event to her. This incident happened on one particular Sunday when people were exchanging hugs at the back of the church. An older man came up to her and they exchanged hugs. In a playful way she said, "Gee, that's the best hug I've had all day. Even John did not hug me this morning." What came back to her was a criticism that she

had put her husband down. She was asked how she would dare publicly accuse her husband of not being affectionate. Irene concluded,

There is this constant thing, little petty things of being misunderstood and misinterpreted. Somehow people took offense at my sense of humor and that was historically one of my gifts for ministry and I've lost it when I think of it.

The couple kept listing off the things that made them unhappy that arose out of conflicts external to their relationship: the letter of complaint from the funeral parlour, the complaint about their children being at a church meeting for women, the complaint about going over the sacred hour at Sunday worship. These were not things that destroy the marriage relationship. They were events, however, that destroyed the joy that the couple hoped to share in their team relationship. Irene put it this way:

I guess this sort of comes up periodically where you wonder 'Is this really the heart and soul of this place?' and if it is, gee, who wants to be here?

In the final analysis, it is apparent that conflict is experienced in various forms. Power and control is central to understanding the nature of conflict. On the one hand, emotion that is stirred up in conflict between the couple inhibits their professional relationship. On the other hand professional conflicts assail the joy of the personal relationship. Then, there is another face to conflict. It is conflict that is energised by an external force. The couple see themselves as powerless. They experience friction that brings disharmony to the relationship they value most, that is their marriage.

CHAPTER VIII

PERSONAL NEEDS AND PRIVATE STORIES

When I designed the interview guide, I wanted to give the participants an opportunity to be involved in analysing their own relationships. I needed a model that would help create an acceptable exercise. I chose the Transactional Analysis because I believed that couples would be more or less familiar with it.⁶⁶ Its simple structure offered analytical possibilities even to those unfamiliar with this method of analysing relationships.

When we conducted the interviews, the interview team briefly described Transactional Analysis, in a simplified form, to each participant couple. We used a chart, such as Eric Berne used, as a graphic aid to assist in the description.⁶⁷ I explained that they may be able to identify some of the powerful sources of conflict in their double relationship using Transactional Analysis. I pointed out that the professional relationship calls on the couple to respond to each other predominantly from the adult ego states. On the other hand, the marriage relationship is quite different. Married couples enjoy each other in a more intimate way. They play together. They have private (secret) stories that entwine each other. These playful transactions may come from the child ego state. When these two states get mixed up in the church office, inappropriate actions may occur that may short-circuit ministry. I emphasised that this explanation was over-simplified, but that this was a starting point. The participant couples used this structure quite

⁶⁶ Eric Berne, Games People Play (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967).

⁶⁷ Berne 30 (Note appendix II)

effectively as a model to help them focus on the way they relate to one another.

I acknowledge at the outset that many of the topics that couples addressed through the use of this exercise are not necessarily unique to clergy couples in team ministry. They are common experiences that are part of any couple's life, especially if they have a family, and are both employed, and are juggling an intensive agenda. The content of these exchanges are included in this chapter in order to convey the intensity of clergy couple life. The connection that these stories have with the research question is contextual. The professional life impacts on the personal relationship and vice versa in profound ways. Transactional analysis was simply a device to help them identify significant issues.

After studying the contrasting ways that people relate from different ego states, one woman said that they just never held hands or did anything intimate on the job. She said, "That just didn't feel right there." The congregation has as much as told them so too. Her spouse told of an occasion when he was attempting to give a sermon on the subject of modern Biblical discoveries. He was trying to emphasise the importance of some of the documents that have been discovered, and the surprise of some of the contents. By way of illustration, he commented that he would not write a love note to his spouse on such an important document. After the service, he was chastised for making such a comment in his sermon.

Another couple, in contrast, said that they "fool around at work". This freedom has been one of the joys of working together. The female partner said that there are times when I have asked him "Is this appropriate?" She indicated that she (and he) would not want this playfulness to stop. She said that they have been learning to appreciate their freedom to be spontaneous and they have extended this to taking a day off occasionally together.

Another couple pointed out that while they seldom think in categories of

Transactional Analysis, they both have trouble getting out of the professional mode. They tend to relate to each other professionally even in their home. If they are not relating professionally, they seem to be relating co-operatively as parents with parental concern for the family. This became a problem recently for them. The female partner got sick. She said that she wanted understanding. He continued to relate professionally to her. She turned to him during the interview and said:

I wanted [you] to initiate understanding ... and I want your sympathy. We really have this issue [her illness]. Whatever is going on in the church, that needs to be dealt with, but I want to drop that and I want to talk about me....

It is obvious from the above statement that Celine wanted to talk about her Self and issues important to her. She used Transactional Analysis to analyse the exchange. She demanded that the "child" in her be heard. She did not want this all the time. However, she needed it right then and there. The professional or adult mode was in conflict with the need she had when she was sick and it was impacting negatively on their personal and intimate relationship. This is one of the dilemmas of the dynamic of the double relationship.

There were some surprises that came out of this transactional analysis exercise. As an interview team, we were expecting to hear stories of how the couples found that they were not professional enough because of their personal relationships. From the perspective of Transactional Analysis, we thought we would hear stories about the inappropriate child ego state in the work place where one would expect the adult ego state. We heard that sort of thing, but we heard much more. Many couples felt much more concern that the professional relationship stymied the intimacy they needed in their personal relationship. One party said this:

Gail: I think that our problem might almost be ... that when we're at home, sometimes we have difficulty letting go of the tension and the stress from work

and relating as children, so to speak. You know that sort of adult relationship tends to carry on.

Gail and Harold continued to describe their relationship. They expressed a sense of being overwhelmed by responsibility, both work and family.

That experience was not unique to them. Another couple broke out into an argument during the interview in their attempt to use the transactional analysis model. It happened when he said that he could be in his fun-loving mood, but that she would not play. She said, "You are not in your fun-loving mood too often. My perception is that you are in your adult most of the time." He responded with, "The reason I held off is because she is too much in her adult." She responded that he was wrong because she thought, if anything, she was too often in her parent. She said, "After a while you forget how to play." It is important to understand the context of the above exchange. The wife was unhappy with the fact that her spouse spent too much time in the study while she was left parenting the children. She felt that because his study was in the home, that he was in his "working mode on most days".

The couple talked at length about the issues that touched them. They both agreed that they would not expect each other to be in their "child". There were too many things on the agenda, and they felt that they were often confused about the subtle messages that they gave each other. They decided that the "needy child" in each of them usually found support from one another, but they wondered if the time had come when they should find a "professional listener". They wondered if they needed a care giver for them because they were frequently "too tired or too burned out to respond." Because of this feeling of being overwhelmed, it was said by one of them that the "playful child gets lost in all of this".

Is this experience of being overwhelmed by the absence of fun in the clergy couple relationship rare? Our research shows that this is a quite common complaint.

The couples usually found ways to cope, but not always. One couple described their experience as "frightening". They very nearly came apart as a couple. The fact that they did not crumble speaks of their personal strength. A traumatic family crisis and an unhappy pastoral relationship pushed Kate into her "needy child". She said that the word "nervous breakdown" was a strong word, but she could not get back into "adult operation". Her clergy spouse became parental at that point and his pressure to put her back into operation ended successfully. Len said that he was acting out of fear. He said,

I think we had different patterns for coping and in some ways a family pattern for me is that we are 'copers'. we are survivors, we do not fall apart, we don't. Nobody falls apart. Other people fall apart, we don't.

As she thought back at the event, Kate felt quite resentful about what had happened. She made other connections using the Transactional Analysis model. She saw how she had gone into her "child" not only in her relationship with Len but also with respect to the congregation that was critical of her. She said.

I have a really strong parent tape already in my mind. So what I discovered later was that once someone is critical, you lock in on the parent tapes you already have and you continually beat yourself up afterwards even though what they say was finished being said.

This is a powerful statement. Kate points to the depth of emotion that is involved in the dynamic of the double relationship. Experience that is incorporated unconsciously into the Self can make rather surprising impact on the way that crises are confronted.

There were some significant things that we learned from couples as they struggled with the Transactional Analysis exercise. The first thing is that it was not all negative. Some couples told about the fun they had together on the job. They agreed that some of their private actions (when they were in the work place) were inappropriate. Still, this was one of the benefits of couple team ministry. Nevertheless, there were many

problems shared. Couples talked about how difficult it was for them because they had become almost inflexible. They had become too professionally oriented even with respect to their families. The dream of sharing completely together was in danger because the adult mode of being took precedence. Even when they became conscious of the need to escape the entrapment of the professional way of being, couples frequently complained that they really did not have enough money to solve the problem. This was a factor with the younger couples with families. Baby sitting was expensive. One couple described the experience of raising children as a “Long haul”, “about ten years”. The interviewers heard it almost in terms of a ten year sentence. Too much of a good thing wears heavily.

Couples were aware of the issues and the pressure on their personal relationship. They spoke in terms of needing a caregiver for them. They shared their reality which included a sense of confusion about their roles. One man said that he was not sure how to respond to his wife in certain instances. He was not always sure if she was in the role as his wife with whom he could be more casual, or in the role of his professional partner. The two modes of being, the professional and personal, seemed to blend together. This is the issue at the heart of the struggle for clergy couples in team ministry.

It needs to be noted that the couples we interviewed were all well educated people. They had successfully completed the steps required by their respective congregations, including psychological testing, which confirmed the belief that they were well-balanced candidates for the ministry. Nevertheless, the stress of team ministry sometimes levied a heavy toll. The experience accentuated certain needs for some people. For example, lower self-esteem or self-confidence requires positive feed-back to counteract it. When this was not forthcoming over a long period of time, tensions already present in the relationship were exacerbated. Given the limited scope of this research project, little more can be added except to suggest, from the perspective of Self

Psychology,⁶⁸ that these unmet needs reach back into childhood. The trauma of unmet needs was accentuated by the team ministry experience. The Transactional Analysis model allowed couples to reflect on unmet needs.

Couples acknowledged, through the Transactional Analysis exercise, that they attempted to relate differently when they were “at work” and when they were “at home”. They were not always successful. They found it difficult letting go of the adult states to simply enjoy their intimate or family time together. This took some of the joy out of the married relationship.

They also shared another perspective. Their married relationship brought a valued benefit. That benefit was a certain amount of intimacy while being professional. Couples did not view this with any serious negative potential. However, one couple noted that congregations expected a clear separation of roles. This expectation was an element of control.

⁶⁸ Ernest S. Wolf, Treating the Self (New York: The Guilford Press, 1988)

CHAPTER IX

GENDER AND TRADITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

In her dissertation entitled The Mutuality of Women and Men in Ministry,⁶⁹ Alison Stewart-Patterson calls attention to the reality of the struggle that women experience within the church. She demands change to correct the injustice that women have endured over the centuries and continue to face today. She maintains that some of the following issues invalidate women and women's experience: an historical bias towards males; a Bible written, interpreted, and translated by males; a theology based on male values; and the invisibility and silence of women and their experience in the church. In further fleshing out the problem she argues that gender is learned and that our attitudes are influenced and moulded by the norms we experience. She writes,⁷⁰

Gender is breathed and felt, seen and experienced, modeled and drawn. It saturates our social habits and culture. ...we are all trapped in a creation of our own or our forebears making.

Many feminist writers have called attention to the problem that Stewart-Patterson sketches. The growing awareness has fostered significant change within the church. Clergy couples are one of the catalysts for change. Nevertheless, the clergy couples in team ministry we interviewed frequently come up against obstacles that seem immovable. Gender roles and traditional attitudes are regularly being challenged by clergy couples. This is especially so where the couple team has deliberately fostered a

⁶⁹ Alison Stewart-Patterson, The Mutuality of Women and Men in Ministry, diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990, 62.

⁷⁰ Stewart-Patterson 103

vision of collegiality. The pressure to conform to more traditional norms can sometimes be tremendous and frequently subtle. Couples came to recognise that such confrontation of the status quo challenges the identity and the perceptions that women and men have of themselves. Such challenges can lead to a feeling of being devalued. Being so threatened can result in the entrenchment of congregational members as they use defences available to them to maintain and legitimise long held perspectives.

The women in our clergy couple teams reported that they were continually having to address gender attitudes. Some of them went about this very quietly, trying not to upset people, to educate gently and offer another experience. There was an awareness that couples were still pioneering new territory. Some of the female ministers said that they had been prepared for negative experiences. They talked about the slights they encountered with humour as a shield. Other women found some of their experiences so painful that they felt discredited and that their ministry was compromised.

Another factor that is critical to understanding the dynamic is this: we discovered that the idea of collegiality, while often stated as a goal by both members of the team, was sometimes not really being lived out. Frequently, the males actually saw themselves with the ultimate responsibility of senior minister. The female partners were upset by this but even they acted in ways that fostered such a view. It appeared that congregations favoured such a perception. While the task of researching congregational attitude was beyond the scope of this investigation, the stories that couples told indicated that the congregations seemed to collude with the unstated intention of advancing the notion that the male was the senior pastor. According to sources used by Kenneth Mitchell who researched multiple staff teams, such a development is to be expected. He writes:⁷¹

⁷¹ Kenneth R. Mitchell, Psychological and Theological Relationships in the Multiple Staff Ministry (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966) 25.

... the congregation definitely but covertly names one of the co-pastors as the actual senior pastor. With rare exceptions... the congregation will destroy any attempt at a collegiate ministry.

Mitchell does not make a gender distinction in his reporting. He simply argues that one of the co-pastors (even with two men) would be unconsciously viewed as the senior pastor.

It was with some of this background in mind that we questioned clergy couple teams about gender and tradition. One couple was very frank. Bob said that, at the outset, he was of little support to Alana. He really did not want her to continue her career. He wanted her to be traditional. He wanted a one career family. His expectations were that Alana would drop her ideas about team ministry and be a mother. An equal sharing was not part of Bob's vision. He added, "I have to admit that I put Alana through the wringer." When the couple came to the congregation, Alana had not yet been ordained. It was a stated goal but the issue became a problem for the couple at a personal level and then for the congregation. Alana said that the pressure placed on her was quite subtle. She often felt slighted and hurt. She persisted. After she was ordained, some people stopped coming to church.

The experience left Alana carrying a great deal of anger. She said that she never really confronted anyone. She felt devalued by the congregation and unsupported by her husband. The subtle message was that she had rejected a time honoured role. She had done the unacceptable.

Even with all this adversity, the couple insisted throughout the interview that their team ministry was important to the vitality of the congregation. Alana found a group in the church that supported her. She had an energetic ministry amongst the youth and with the younger women. When their pastorate terminated, Alana was surprised by the tributes. It was the older established members that "caused tension and grief". Gender

issues prevented the possibility of new things happening.

Cecilia and Don did not seem to be able specifically to identify gender issues as a problem in their pastoral relationship. The interview team made several attempts to open the subject. At one point, Cecilia said, "I don't know what they think of us." Frank confirmed this by saying, "We don't know!" Our visual perception was that they were quite comfortable in their setting of ministry as a husband and wife team. There may be an answer for that. They were preceded by several successful clergy couple team pastorates. They also attribute their level of comfort to their model of ministry which clearly defines areas of responsibility. Besides this, the low level of stress may be somewhat attributed to Cecilia's attitude. She feels rather comfortable and able to defer things to Don. She is the half-time person. He is full-time. She feels that it is right for him to carry most of the responsibility. Possibly this shared expectation, rooted in traditional values, reduced stress.

The couple were able to identify one important area of concern for them. Cecilia is not paid for the actual amount of time she works. She exceeds her half-time work load commitment by a substantial amount of time. She intends to re-negotiate this with the Board. She also receives half a travel allowance. She pointed out that this is highly unfair. She felt that she was "nickel and dimed" on her car allowance. Her responsibilities require her to have a car. She told the congregation "I may only work half-time, but I have to drive a full car. You can not drive half a car." She noted that the congregation would have difficulty meeting the full budget to really pay her what she is worth. While this may be an accurate assessment, this also appears to be a gender issue. It speaks of a perception that the female team member is of less value. Would the congregation reverse the balance? Would the male team member be so accommodating?

Paying the woman less, or failing to pay the normal benefits that the male would expect, turns out to be a common phenomenon. There are ways of getting around this

even when church structures have been set up to prevent abuse. For example, when Eva was finally ordained after a long wait, she received the stated salary, (which is low) but few of the customary added benefits. She said,

In the years that I was in the other parish, and in the years here, I had no housing allowance whatsoever. It is just like a whole part of what happens is not paid for, which is a concern when it comes time for retirement.”

Housing allowance is part of a minister's salary. It is a form of equity or an income adjustment. The Income Tax Act of Canada recognises the lower income level of ministers and exempts housing as non-taxable income. In the United Church of Canada, it is national policy that each minister receive a housing allowance.

Nevertheless, there are those in congregations who believe that a clergy couples ought to share a housing allowance because they live together. Both male and female participants in this research project rejected this premise. They saw this as unfair treatment. For example, Kate and Len discovered that they had to fight for what they believed they were rightly due. Here is what they said:

Len: ...the housing stuff wasn't sorted out when we arrived. What do you get paid and stuff? We began with a fight about how much housing we were owed.

Kate: The Presbytery didn't think that we should have more than one housing allowance.

Len: No! And we had talked to them before we went. Anyway that's another thing.(with very intense feeling)

Interviewer: No, this is really important, this is the kind of stuff that has to be dealt with.

Len: In that first meeting I remember one member saying "Well if we'd known you were going to get that (two housing allowances) we wouldn't have asked for you to come." We were just new out of college.

Kate: So they found a place (to rent) and it was depressing. It was a duplex.

Len: We arrived and there was nothing. We had talked to them before we arrived and said, 'now we aren't moving appliances'. We had to turn around and buy stuff. We weren't even getting a full housing allowance at that point so that became a minor issue

As can be seen in the above exchange, this is an area of potential serious conflict. What is of significance is this: If two unmarried people had been hired in team ministry, both would have received housing allowance without question. The attitude that clergy couples should share a housing allowance arises out of a patriarchal perspective. The patriarchal perspective devalues women. The husband would have received housing allowance whether the wife was in the professional relationship or not. So, in fact, they do not share one housing allowance; she receives nothing. This is an injustice especially when a housing allowance is interpreted as a salary adjustment. While none of the couples specifically addressed this from the gender perspective, my analysis is that the patriarchal perspective is informing the logic that couples are worth less. The unconscious communication is that the women can be dependent on their husbands. This cannot be missed.

There is another factor that should be noted: it is the way some women come into the professional ministry. Some of the women we interviewed were first hired by their respective congregations to do another job. It was either secretarial work, or youth work, or choir leader or musician. Their husbands were engaged as the ministers, but their wives came with them with the promise that when they completed the requirements, they too would be hired as ministers. It is more difficult for women to get an acceptable position after they have been ordained. Tradition values the males more. This has to have an effect on one's perception of self-worth. In fact, the interview team was able to capture the rage that was being contained by the women as they told their story. Eva, for

example, had to wait several years before she was ordained. She said, "I ended up with a couple extra masters degrees. Every step of the process,... we asked, is it now?" In spite of the commitment made when Frank was engaged, they felt that the non-verbal message was "No! and it never will be." So, thinking that they were completely out of luck, they decided to seek a change of pastoral relations. An unforeseen change in the regional personnel suddenly brought the question to a climax. Eva was accepted and inducted as a full team member.

The example of Eva's struggle for acceptance is illustrative of the sort of difficulty that women occasionally experienced. They received subtle messages that they were valued less than their clergy spouse. While this was not a universal experience, it was stunning to hear women in clergy teams express their sense of lower worth. One woman said, "I'm acceptable because I'm the minister's wife." Among other statements that were shared were these: "I felt that I had little credibility." and "I felt abused at times." and "He is seen as the authority." Furthermore, one woman felt that it was the fellow clergy who were amongst the most difficult. She said, "The devaluation happened with the clergy class, not with the people of the congregation."

Not all women reported that they felt devalued. Indeed one couple laid things on the line when they came for the initial interview. They set the ground rules by saying that they would work as a collegial team, equally in all respects, including remuneration. Gail affirmed her position in this way: "If this is a problem for you people, then this is as far as we go." The congregation called them. Because they were clear, they believe that issues of power related to gender was diminished for them. That is not to say that it is non-existent. Some of the older women in senior homes are still quite open about their preference. Gail said, "They prefer Harold." Gail understands. This has not diminished her enthusiasm for ministry. Generally, she feels quite appreciated and has claimed her place.

One could speculate that the place of ministry has great bearing on how gender issues may be perceived. While this question is beyond the scope of this research, it is worthy to note that Gail and Harold share their ministry in a modern upper middle class community. The values of gender equality may be more achievable in such a community that in a more traditional rural area. Irene and John wondered about this. Irene said, "I still think they have a problem with (the idea of) a woman minister." They refer to her as the minister's wife. She added, "And I'm quite happy. I just go around being myself...." John said that he did not let them get away with it. When he heard Irene being introduced as the minister's wife, he reminded people that she was one of the ministers, to which Irene responded, "I don't bother. There's no point." She concluded that nothing out there is going to change.

Irene, as I noted earlier, described herself as the "side-kick assistant" and John as the "main minister". She is half-time; John is full time. The inequality is played out in numbers. She, like many other women in clergy couple team ministry, is not playing the game on a level playing field with her clergy partner. This inequality is a flaw in the design of the professional relationship at its very foundation. This imbalance was established in the beginning by the terms of their contract. It is likely that the congregation which called the couple as their ministers were happy with that imbalance. The couple may have been too, at the beginning. They were successful in finding a congregation in which to minister together. It opened the way to raise a family and have time to do it. The shape of things to be was cast back in the beginning of the team relationship. This comes with a cost. It left her feeling that nothing can be done. Irene suggested that she was "happy" but the feeling she conveyed to the interview team was "resigned" and "accepting" rather than "happy". Still, in spite of the adversity that they perceived in their team relationship, it was obvious that the couple team has brought a vitality to the congregations they serve that has not been seen in years. John expressed it

this way:

I think that the vitality comes through. I think most people see us as very vital people, in terms of our own energy output. ...We put a lot of effort into what we do. I don't think we come through as sort of sad sacks....

Some of the women in clergy couple teams told of events that we, as the interview team, found almost unbelievable. Several of the women told us that they had received informal visits from members of the congregation to inform them of expectations. This blatant interference into their personal lives was quite rightly resented. They were told, for example, what day was wash day, whether they could bring their children to certain gatherings at the church, and how they ought to conduct their personal lives. One woman clergy person responded to such a delegation with, "What!" and clearly told the delegation to "butt out". It seems that it is of critical importance for clergy couples to define their boundaries with respect to the congregation and each other and to firmly maintain them. Those couples who have not done so tell of experiences that could well be described as "harassment". I have commented more fully on the issue of boundaries in chapter ten.

Apparently such intervention in the lives of clergy couples has precedence. In an article which describes her clergy couple experience, Phyllis Tyler Wayman tells a story of offensive proportions. She writes:

During that time (their team ministry) we experienced a district superintendent who admonished me not to breast-feed my second child because breast-feeding is unbecoming to a clergywoman ... (that) if I really loved the church I would not accept a salary. ...We have experienced a congregation that would come to me to speak against my husband's work....⁷²

⁷² Phyllis Tyler Wayman, "Building on Noah's Ark: Clergy Couples in Ministry," The Christian Ministry 13:3 (1983) 31.

Still, in spite of the negative events, clergy couples were convinced that their ministry was creative and that the congregations became more active because of them. Several teams reported that it was their perception that younger women in the congregations experienced ministry in ways that they would not have otherwise known. There was stress, but new and different ministry happened. As one clergywoman said, "Even while the worst of it was happening, we'd say this is only happening because they are having a reaction to [change]." In further clarification, she explained that big changes were happening that effected the clergy couple and the congregation. Everyone was feeling the affect. There is a reaction to change, especially changing roles and the fact that power was changing hands.

Nevertheless, one of the teams we visited commented that they believed that the church does not appreciate the significance of clergy couple teams in ministry. They talked of their perception of their shared ministry, of their visible communion as they did baptisms, eucharist, funerals and weddings together. They saw their ministry as more than a husband and wife sharing the tasks. They viewed themselves on the cutting edge where they were male and female together serving in Christ's church. Their Catholic friends were overwhelmed by their freedom. But, said the couple, the congregations they served really did not share the vision. They said with sadness, "They just think we're paying the minister's wife a little bit of money."

Clergy couples frequently view themselves as offering another way of being men and women who share life together. Their vision of equality and collegiality stands out as a possible model for a more just way for men and women to be together. But all too often the vision is a disappointment. It looks more like an impotent idol perched on feet of clay. The vision can get knocked down and so can the dreams that went with it. This can be devastating. Near the beginning of this chapter, I quoted Alison Stewart-Patterson who suggested that "we are all trapped in a creation of our own or our forebears'

making". Clergy couples in team ministry seem to prove how difficult it is to get free of the trap. There seems to be a stated willingness to do something new, but the "fall" is real.

Kate and Len were truly wanting to share in a new way. Their contract (including remuneration) was equal. They began alternating and sharing family and pastoral responsibilities. Still, Len had power she did not have. It got played out in ways that were disturbing to Kate. One of the most disturbing dynamics was seen at Board meetings. Kate would defer to Len and he would take charge. Here is how the couple described it:

Len: You know one place where I really saw that [gender and traditional expectations] was in terms of meetings and if the Official Board met, it was an awful meeting ... there would be times I would think that Kate should speak and she wouldn't and so I would speak. I felt myself very much on the center which would be the traditional male role. I'm going to be the speaker in this forum because it is a male forum and all the women keep quiet.

Interviewer: You just had to do it?

Len: Get it going. Let's get this straight...

Kate: And I think for me... I think I have a certain fear of individuation, of taking a position publicly and sticking to that position and being made clear about myself. So I could hide by being quiet and not have to take that risk.

As can be seen from the above exchange, gender played powerfully. While there are likely other factors involved, such as the fact that Kate described herself as more introverted than Len, it would appear that Kate (rather uncomfortably) fit into the expectations that "all the women keep silent". Len's acceptance of his patriarchal role played into the expectations of the forum. Len explained that he wanted to change this dynamic and sometime he'd say to himself, "I'm not going to [take charge] and I

couldn't help myself because somebody needed to."

If this was the only case when Kate felt devalued as a female minister, the team might have survived. I have already mentioned instances where Kate felt that gender bias was the reason that Len was chosen over her. There were many incidents that Kate found unacceptable. Kate turned much of her anger inward or at Len and the team faltered. This was so in spite of a very important factor that should be noted. Through prior experience, the interview team perceived Kate to be a capable and effective minister. Some of the negative reaction to her was because she chose to take an unpopular stand in the sexuality debate that raged wildly in their rural setting. She confronted gender attitudes in a way that threatened people by raising questions that challenged their sexual identification. One can only speculate what might have happened if the couple had taken a common position on the issue.

The reality is that couples in team ministry are playing a new game. Unless there is a conscious game plan, the game will be lost. This proved to be a crucial reality for the couples that we interviewed. When the parameters were not clearly defined and then adhered to, the vision of collegiality dissipated.

CHAPTER X

BOUNDARIES

What are boundaries? In describing family structure, Salvador Minuchin and H. Charles Fishman suggest that boundaries define and satisfy family needs. Boundaries are a protection for family members "giving them an area for the satisfaction of their own psychological needs without intrusion...". The authors add, "The adequacy of these boundaries is one of the most important aspects to the viability of the family structure."⁷³ In commenting on the same subject, Pauline Boss states, "... the greater the boundary ambiguity in the marital relationship ... the higher the marital and individual stress and the greater risk for marital dysfunction."⁷⁴ What importance do these statements hold for the clergy couple relationship? We discovered that it was significant. Because of the nature of the double relationship, clergy couple teams had difficulty establishing boundaries that would meet their basic needs.

We asked couples about their boundaries. Our inquiry asked them if they were able to set clear boundaries that defined their personal relationship as separate from their ministry. For example, were they able to protect their free time? Did they feel at home in their residence without intrusion?

Couples unanimously said that this was a difficult area of their relationship. They had to plan things away from the home on their days off or else they may not get a day

⁷³ Salvador Minuchin and H. Charles Fishman, Family Therapy Techniques (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981) 17.

⁷⁴ Pauline G. Boss, "The Marital Relationship: Boundaries and Ambiguities." Stress and the Family, ed. C. Figley and H. McCubbin (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1983) 33.

off. One couple had the opportunity to move their residence further away from their church. They seized the opportunity. Some members of the congregation acknowledged this move as a need and supported it. Others did not. Many couples noted that some members of the congregation went out of their way to protect their private time, while others blatantly disregarded it.

Alana and Bob said that boundaries were a critical issue for them. Some people would call late at night or during meal time without apology. They began to take steps towards protecting themselves. They preserved their day off and they began to spend less time in the church. Ten to twelve hours a day, seven days a week was reduced to five days with fewer hours, but still with Sunday responsibilities added. This seemed responsible to them. As the couple demanded more protected time, they found that they were more frequently in conflict with members of the congregation. They understood that they were not meeting the expectations of the congregation. The answering machine was resented and Alana was resented for demanding space for the couple. The attempt to maintain boundaries in order to protect the personal relationship began to backfire. The stress increased. There were other factors, but things seemed to be crumbling around them.

Cecilia and Don also preserved Monday as their day off. This became an issue at the debut of their team relationship. Someone at their first Board meeting asked, "Now, would you say you are safe to see yourself taking off Mondays?" There was some intense discussion about the resentment that the last ministers created because they put an announcement in the bulletin that they were not available on Mondays. Don and Cecilia were quite firm that they too would take Mondays off, but that they would check their answering machine and if there was a crisis that they certainly would respond. This, of course is part of the pastoral scene, that is, many clergy people remark that days off are frequently pre-empted by crises in the parish. However, there is more to it when the

couple share the pastorate. Both are so involved that home does not feel like home. The boundaries are completely blurred. Cecilia described it this way:

How can I put this....I think we are doing O.K. when we are away but sometimes when I'm here I have trouble not answering the phone or trouble to some degree, relaxing around home. The fact that our home and office is here and the feeling that we should be on the job, that's something that I still find difficult some. So, for example, in summer holidays, we usually go away.

Eva and Frank have a great deal of difficulty with boundaries, that is, boundaries between their ministry and their personal life. They are one of the couples who were forthright about their reality. They live their ministry. They schedule a regular day off and they protect the evening meal time, but they refuse to be rigidly constrained. They described their double relationship as "fluid". They are highly motivated. There is a lot of pressure to "succeed". Frank explained it this way:

I think we've suffered a certain amount over these three years of working together. It's because we want this to succeed, we tended to over-extend ourselves towards the job.

The couple possibly have over-extended themselves. Their days off have been study time to make their ministry more effective. By all accounts they have been successful pastors, but at some personal cost. One of them has developed a health problem that could be attributed to stress.

Gail and Harold, on the other hand, have kept very firm boundaries. This has not been difficult for them to do. This has been one of the hallmarks of their ministry. They say that the congregation usually respects their private life. They seldom receive calls at home except in times of crisis. This they feel is appropriate. They made a noteworthy comment: their previous parish had been in a rural area. The story was not the same. It was not unusual for people to drive into their yard at any time. They (members of the

parish) were "just that kind of people". They suggested that there is a difference of expectations in different regions. The congregation they now serve is predominantly composed of professionals who value their own privacy. They felt that boundary expectations were more of a social issue. In their present parish it was a rare event to be "rudely interrupted". On the odd occasion that it did happen, and if it was not an emergency, they simply informed the individual about their office hours and invited them to call back then.

Irene and John minister in a rural pastoral setting. Irene said, "I just walk out the door, and you never know, at the drug store or the post office, and all of a sudden, you're on call." Irene said that her biggest struggle is due to the fact that the church office is in the house. John likes it in the house. She did not like it there because it spilled over into their private life. On occasion John had demanded that she keep the children quiet. This caused major stress. She felt that the congregation should have attempted to respect their boundaries, such as, their day off and their holidays. The problem was the lack of boundaries that they were ready to establish for themselves.

Lack of will to set boundaries was a common complaint. Kate and Len had this to say about it:

Kate: My perception is that it is really hard for Len to set boundaries; that it's hard for him to take days off and it's hard for him to use the answering machine. There has been some changes. But he resisted using an answering machine for a long time.

Len: That's true.

Kate: (looking intensely at Len) You don't just let the phone ring. Once in a while now you do. But it's hard. It would be meals, it would be evenings and days off, and it was never clear if it was a day off or not a day off, and it continues to be true.

Len: That's right....

Interviewer: Was this an issue, if you told them that X was a day-off?

Len: No, because we kept changing it.

Kate: Before the kids started school, Monday was supposed to be a day-off.

Interviewer: And then what happened?

Len: I don't remember...clearly.

Kate: My memory was we didn't have anywhere to go so that even if we had a day-off it was easier to work than not work. It seemed like it took more energy to plan to go away or to do something together than to just stay home and take the phone calls.

The double relationship and the lack of boundaries became so oppressive that the couple's effectiveness as a team broke down. Even a year or so after the termination of their professional team relationship, the energy around the issue of lack of boundaries could still be felt. The couple were quite animated as they described their experience. They simply could not work together.

We discovered that it was difficult for couples to set firm boundaries and to maintain them. This was to their detriment. Failure to establish boundaries created stress. Out of the six couples that we interviewed, one couple was able to fix firm boundaries. While they experienced other areas of stress, this was a positive factor in their personal and professional relationship. They had both agreed on the boundaries they set and the preserved them.

Several couples displayed what I would describe as enmeshment. The boundary between their personal lives and their professional lives was so fuzzy that it was difficult for the interview team to decide where one person left off and the other began. The couples' description of their lives indicated that they were so absorbed in their ministry

that it permeated everything. The residence was the work place. Even free time was something that might get pre-empted. Personal re-creative time was a low priority.

My analysis is that the failure to establish boundaries and to maintain them was costly to team couples. There are several reasons why clear boundaries were not established. First, it was apparent that couples were not aware of the need to establish clear boundaries both for them and for the benefit of the congregations they served. Once they were aware of it was almost too late. The patterns of relationships had already been established. Second, there was a lack of will to establish clear boundaries. This lack of will was superseded by the will to succeed. In an interest to please and to fulfil the calling of their ministry, couples sometimes sacrificed themselves. Third, it seemed evident that the congregations discouraged firm boundaries. There were several motivations mentioned by couples for this, including the suggestion that members wanted to treat the family in the ministers' residence as an extended family. Couples gave the congregations tremendous power when they failed to assert clear boundaries.

A further analysis leads me to address the question of triangulation. In discussing chronic boundary problems, Salvador Minuchin points out that in family relationships triangulation occurs when a parent (or both parents) demand(s) that the child to side with one parent against the other.⁷⁵ There is evidence that this dynamic was unconsciously recreated in several pastoral settings. As I previously reported, in one setting, triangulation occurred when the male partner unconsciously elicited the support of the congregation to put pressure on the spouse to be more traditional. This created conflict when the wife resisted.

Another form of triangulation occurred when couples blamed the congregation for their troubles. The congregation became the child with the deviant behaviour, the

⁷⁵ Salvador Minuchin, Families and Family Therapy (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974) 102.

problem child that created stress in the parents' relationship. The unconscious purpose of this triangulation is to create the illusion of harmony between the couple.⁷⁶ The imbalance of power that ought to be worked out within the boundaries of the clergy couple's relationship is covered up by stress that is perceived to be provoked by the congregation. This problem child (congregation) becomes the scapegoat.

Some couples expressed a great deal of anger at their congregation and did so with emotion that left the interview team with the impression that their pastoral setting was a dark place. Without a doubt, some of the anger was legitimate. However, triangulation has the purpose of focusing the problem outside the couple's relationship. In this way the couple's personal relationship is able to survive at the expense of an effective professional relationship with the congregation.

⁷⁶ Minuchin 102

CHAPTER XI

PERSONA: PROTECTING THE IMAGE

Do clergy couples in team ministry have an image to protect? The literature review seems to suggest this to be true. Many of the current articles about the clergy couple experience place much emphasis on the benefits of this venture. Little energy is focused on the negative. This positive portrayal of the clergy couple team has documentation that is factual, but it is not the whole story. Clergy couples seem to have colluded (sometimes unconsciously) in the development of a collective persona.

The persona is the mask that we use to protect ourselves. According to Jung everyone has a persona.⁷⁷ It is the view of ourselves that we want the world to see. This persona is how we would wish to be identified. We consciously allow only those who we really trust to see behind the mask.

Besides there being an individual persona, there is also a collective persona. For example, Canadians, as a people, have a collective persona. We want to be seen as different from Americans. We present ourselves as a more peaceful or as a more just society. We know that there is a deeper reality behind the mask.

There is evidence from this research that the clergy couple team also develops a persona. This persona is the way in which they want their marriage to be seen and their professional relationship to be viewed. Each team shares a different perception of their persona. Indeed, individual members of the team hold a different view in mind. Jungian perspectives suggest that the persona may be well developed consciously, or it may be an

⁷⁷ James A. Hall, Jungian Dream Interpretation. (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1983) 18.

unconscious factor that weaves in and out adding a dimension to all the relationships that are touched by it.

As a clergy couple team, we, the interviewing team, became aware of our own persona. This awareness came slowly at first, and then burst into view for both of us to see. We began to see the magnitude of it not only as we protected our own persona but also as we began to recognise that congregational members protect it too. The persona was an idealistic perception of us as a couple who are just perfect and who can work together without conflict. This was a mighty big challenge to maintain alive. This raised a question: "How much energy is put into maintaining the persona?" The question was not "Is this an experience that other couples have in their ministry?" We made the assumption that the presence of this dynamic is a given. Couples and congregations participate in the development and protection of the persona at some level. We invited couples to comment on their awareness of how their persona had a part in their ministry. We suggested that the myth of the team relationship may sometimes need protection. We wondered if that was of any consequence to their ministry together.

The very first couple that we interviewed found this a fascinating thought. Indeed, they said that the protection of their persona was more important to some members of the congregation than it was to them. They felt that the younger couples in the congregation wanted a model in their ministers of a couple that never fought. They were "elevated beyond belief". This was not the reality that the clergy couple experienced in their relationship. This demand for an idealistic model placed added stress on their relationship. They could not be real. Alana said, "I did not like living these two roles." Bob said, "They would not say and expect things from other couples that they say and expect from us." The persona became an unwelcome burden to them.

Cecilia and Don talked about their persona too. They were not so clear about the concept of persona, but they were quite clear on the process they used to protect their

perception of their competency. It was also clear that the need was stronger for Cecilia to protect this perception. This is the dialogue that developed:

Cecilia:one of the things I would want to present to our congregation is that whatever Don and I are doing out there, we are agreed, that if we have got to thrash something out about how we're going to do something or what we believe, we are going to do it here and not in front of people, either out of the personal life or our theology or our understanding of the business or whatever. We don't fight in public. I say that with a smile but I think that's really important.

Don: On the other hand, I think we would also like people to know that we are real people, and in sharing from sermons and so on, we will from time to time give personal illustrations of things we are working through

Cecilia: Usually they are things we have sort of worked through, aren't they? And maybe we'll share the process as to how that came out...

Don: ...the importance of forgiveness in family relationships in the church. First of all there has to be something to forgive. Wouldn't you agree with that? We are trying to be real, we're not trying to say that we do not have any problems...

Cecilia: Although that is a problem for me. I tend to want to give the impression that we don't, often. I find myself wanting to present a face to the world that says that "I've got it all together or we've got it all together." Especially me, that's always been a thing with me since I was knee high...things are great, ha ha, so as a couple I tend to want to do the same thing and yet, at the same time I do share things that we've come through.

The importance of being able to demonstrate complete competency and stability became not only a personal need but the collective necessity for the team. This theme was quite common among the couples we interviewed. Some couples were not really able to identify their persona or how it may have affected their relationship. They simply understood that they needed to be seen standing together, united on issues.

The couples with younger families expressed a sense of satisfaction that the community could see them as a family. There was a need to protect this view of the family. One couple explained that they needed to tell the kids to watch their language. They said, "We do polish up a bit." They worried sometimes about how they were seen when they yell at the kids. As they thought this over, they suggested that probably that was a good thing. People would be able to relate to them because they were the same as them.

Many of the couples suggested that they were not really sure if they had a persona. They were not used to very much privacy and people would only need to look at them and see that there were no secrets. This perception of openness is a persona. While it may be the truth, it is also the picture that the couples wished to present.

Being conscious of the persona does not necessarily lessen its power. Kate and Len understood the concept very well. They did not share the same perception of their collective persona. Len wanted to be open about most things, even the couple's disagreements were discretely shared with people Len trusted. Kate, on the other hand, wanted privacy. She felt that the couple's personal life should be shielded from any member of the congregation. This became a point of conflict as Kate felt a sense of betrayal. From her perspective, they were not standing together in order to present the right image.

Kate and Len found that their individual personae were also in conflict. Kate was quiet and reserved. She remained the same whether in private or in public. Len changed however. He put on his "ministerial persona". This was what Kate called his "professional mode". It made her angry, partly because the change made him a different person and partly because it made her feel less effective. She became uncomfortable with her own persona and somewhat envious of Len's ability to change his whole personality. It created a collective persona that she disliked.

While some of the clergy team couples were unaware of their own persona, we nevertheless found that couples had individual and collective personae. One couple reported the pressure they felt from congregational members to conform to a certain persona. This was a vision of perfection. Attempting to meet this expectation that was placed on them caused considerable anxiety.

All six couples that we interviewed shared some notion of their own need to be seen in a particular way. Most wanted to be seen as competent and caring. Some did not want to be seen as perfect at all, but as ordinary approachable people with some of the same problems that everyone experiences from time to time. Some wanted to be seen as model families.

The need to be seen as being on the same side was important. Couples mentioned that they tried to avert situations that would threaten their mutuality. They commonly used this phrase: "never fight in public".

In one case, a couple found that they were in conflict over the question of the persona. The wife felt that the "professional mode" that the male partner put on, made her look and feel less effective. This threatened the team and was a factor that led to its termination.

Another couple who had quite different personae felt less threatened. He was described as flamboyant, she as quite conservative. They both felt that they brought a balance to one another.

The reality is that the issue of persona was significant for couples. It had both positive benefits and negative liabilities for the couples we interviewed. There was a need to protect the perception that couples had of themselves and, when there was a breakdown in this, there was increased stress.

My analysis is that the individuals in the clergy team found it important to develop a persona and to fostered a collective persona. While there was some

disagreement about the look of the collective persona, couples still tried to find a commonly acceptable public image to present to the community. It was also evident in the stories told by the participants that congregational members also spent some energy and pleasure supporting an idealised view.

CHAPTER XII

BLENDING GIFTS AND STYLE OF MINISTRY

Couples in team ministry usually have a considerable variety of gifts to offer to the church. This is one of the factors that makes clergy couple teams attractive to congregations. Couples blend differing gifts in ministry. They also bring differing ways of sharing their gifts, that is, each individual has a different style of ministry. We wondered if clergy couples in teams were relatively comfortable with the way their partner functioned in team ministry.

It is important to note that the couples that we interviewed were attracted to team ministry after having been involved in an intimate relationship together. We did not select such a group by design, this was coincidental. Nevertheless, none of the couples that we interviewed were first in professional ministry and then subsequently married to a clergy person. The results of the study may have been quite different in such a case. In these cases, these couples courted and got married and later came into professional ministry. Even those who met in seminary, got married because of their personal and intimate needs. They entertained the idea that they could blend marriage and ministry so that they, and the congregations they served, would reap mutual advantages.

John P. von Lackum and Nancy Jo Kemper von Lackum report that one of the main attractions of clergy couple team ministry proved to be the hope that couples would be able to share the responsibilities of raising the family.⁷⁸ Our research showed that while this is still an important rational motivation, it is not the only one. Two of the

⁷⁸ John P. von Lackum, III and Nancy Jo Kemper von, Lackum, 30

couples that we interviewed had grown up children when they came into team ministry. One couple had no children. Yet, even these couples were motivated to enter into a team ministry relationship.

In a previous chapter, I emphasised that one of the common motivations for establishing a clergy team is to provide a route for women to enter into professional ministry. This motivation cannot be overlooked; it turns out to be a significant fact. In the final analysis, however, we found that clergy couples simply wanted to work together. They envisioned working together because they enjoyed being with one another. There is a romantic element beyond the practical; a dream of mutual sharing. Among the couples we interviewed, we discovered that this dream of mutual sharing was the key motivating factor that made clergy couple team ministry attractive. One participant said that he was a "spiritual seeker" and that his spouse was his "soul mate". Blending marriage and ministry was seen as a way to share one's spirituality with intensity. This was not an uncommon theme amongst clergy couples. The intensity sought was sometimes overwhelming. Conflict and disappointment to a lesser or greater degree was also a common feature.

On a personal note, when my spouse and I entertained the idea of sharing ministry as team players, we thought it would be a breeze. We had shared together as a team for fifteen years in the business world. We administered the business we owned together. My spouse had an area of responsibility and I had another. We worked well together. Soon after I was ordained, my spouse decided to take the same route. She was ordained and after four years in her own pastorate, we chose to seek a congregation where we could share our skills and be together professionally as well as personally. We admit that there was a romantic element in the desire to share in that way. We also admit that we soon found ourselves in conflict, partly because we differed in our approach to ministry. We had different styles and different gifts. On the one hand, it was easy to appreciate

these differences. On the other hand, there were other emotions that impacted that ranged from envy to distrust.

While this experience had to be bracketed both during the interviews of clergy couples and in the analysis process, it nevertheless helped us to focus on the important questions that ought to be asked. As a result we couched the question in terms of "comfort". I asked, "Are you always comfortable with your partner's style and gifts?" That question was followed with an inquiry about whether there was a need to protect one's partner, and if that need ever presented a problem. We then asked the participants if they were able to be open with their partner on a professional level and if they envied their partner's gifts. This theme sparked a great deal of discussion.

One couple we interviewed said that they really were quite comfortable with each other. It was not envy of the partner's gifts that was the problem, but there was another problem. Alana said that she wished that she had been accepted as easily as Bob was accepted. She envied Bob for that. Even so, as a couple they felt quite sure of the abilities of the other. They also accepted each other's critique of their work, albeit with some defensiveness. They both felt that it was not their professional attitude towards each other that was a problem. It was the pressure under which they were living that made them feel uncertain. Bob said that he became even more protective of Alana because he thought that she would crack under the constant pressure. Alana, on the other hand, became protective of Bob, urging him to do more visiting and traditional ministry so that congregational dissatisfaction would lessen. Alana said that most of the problem seemed to come because she felt unwanted. She said, "I just wish that we were accepted on the same level."

Cecilia and Don became quite animated about this issue. At first they both said that they trusted each other and respected, even admired, the other's gifts. When asked if they ever felt the need to protect the other, Don seemed to have trouble understanding the

question. I clarified it by restating the question. Without waiting for Don to answer, Cecilia interjected:

And sometimes that drives me nuts, because when I was in ministry for three years without you,(looking directly at Don)... when the phone rang, I answered it and whatever came up I handled it, and here I sometimes feel you are protecting me.

I asked what it meant when she said "that drives me nuts". She responded:

Occasionally I think I get angry but most of the time I realize that when Don grew up it was the brother's position to protect his sisters, it was the husband's position to protect his wife, and in our job he is still doing it. I mean it just comes naturally to him, and occasionally (she looked at him) I do say to you, "quit, back off and let me handle this one". And sometimes, horror of horrors, what I find myself doing is backing off and letting him protect me, and that's even worse.

Cecilia then told of her accident and her head injury. She said that during her recuperation she accepted Don's protectiveness. She said,

It still annoyed me though, that I let him do it, but I was sometimes too tired to fight it. I feel protective of him, and always have, as a minister's wife and as a team minister, when there is any criticism towards him.

Being somewhat protective of one's spouse seems natural. It is part of the given in the double relationship. One clergy spouse admitted defending her husband with the chairperson of a church committee. He complained that her husband wanted things done yesterday. Gail told him that if Harold was not that way, they would not have the new church building and they would not have closets and she listed other achievements. Harold looked on a little amused as Gail told her story. He apparently was appreciative of hearing of his clergy spouse's intervention on his behalf.

Harold said during the interview that he believed that it is important to never take sides against your own family. He said, "... just remember that outsiders are outsiders, it

is the family unit that is most important." Gail affirmed that she shared the belief.

Even though they would faithfully protect one another, Gail and Harold were up front in saying that they were not always comfortable with each other's style. They agreed that they "clash" on this issue from time to time. Nevertheless, both parties agreed that they "keep reminding" themselves that they "balance in the end" and so "in the big scheme it probably turned out all right".

Gail and Harold showed a high degree of respect for one another during the interview. There is a healthy degree of competition, but there is also admiration, which I should note, is a common thread through all the interviews. Gail admires Harold's ability to confront and deal with conflict. She said that her preferred method was to avoid conflict. She admired her partner for handling this much more effectively. She wondered if this was another gender related issue where men are simply more comfortable with conflict.

Irene and John were quite open about their feelings about each other's style. They are quite opposite. He is more formal and she described herself as an "extrovert". She said, (looking at John) "I sense that sometimes you might be more jealous at my comfort level at being extrovert." John responded by saying that he was not always comfortable with her style but he believed that they both had different and legitimate gifts. This tended to be a common theme. Couples tended to highly respect one another's gifts for ministry. This was so even when they had trouble blending and appreciating these gifts.

When I asked Irene and John if they were able to be honest and open on a professional level, the couple responded by admitting that it was not easy. This was an issue in the early part of their ministry. They both got defensive when they felt criticised by the other. Irene said, "You learn how not to be honest immediately; (with a chuckle) maybe the next day."

Most of the couples easily agreed that it was difficult to be critical of one another.

One team member explained that he just “kept stuff inside”. He said, “I have trouble confronting in a helpful way.” To this his wife responded that they bring up things in rather inappropriate places or times, like when she is getting dinner. She reacts loudly to the criticism and he goes out the door. “The whole thing is rather unprofessional”, she said. She explained that if this exchange happened in the church office with another team person, one would probably act quite differently. She added this, “That’s where our married life and professional life overlaps.”

Some of the women in ministry described a high level of frustration. Irene is a good example. She works hard, very hard, but is frequently disappointed. She expressed how she felt unsupported by traditional congregational members. She said, “The bottom line is that we both need affirmation, and if we don’t get it from the congregation, we turn to our partner.” John admitted that he responded in rather traditional ways to Irene’s sense of vulnerability. He said that he felt that he needed to protect her. In his masculine attempt to be concrete about his need to protect his wife, John found that he intervened on her behalf. He said, “Around salaries and things of that nature I sometimes have to be an advocate for her.” He described how Irene gets short changed in both housing and travel allowance. Irene said that she “hated talking about money” and that she was quite thankful that John spoke on her behalf.

In fact, John has been a faithful supporter of Irene. Early on, he supported her against the powers of the regional government of the church. Irene is a commissioned minister, and as such, was not licensed to celebrate the sacraments. This is another case where the authorities felt that since one of the team was ordained, there was no need for a license. John successfully argued that without full authority to minister in every way, Irene would never be seen as real minister. Whatever the motivations, this was an act of protection. We found that such interventions on behalf of the female partner were not uncommon. The reverse was also occasionally true as I noted in two examples above,

but it needs to be said that, in a rather paradoxical way, when traditional values are confronted in the clergy team setting, the male appears to be vulnerable to the belief that the female must be protected. Of course, this can be explained. Women are still trying to get established in a male dominated field. Their male partners have been their best allies. There are consequences and other negative side effects that exact a price at a later date.

Irene noted that she did not feel protected in other ways by John. On an honest emotional level, she rather wished he would occasionally turn up as a "knight in shining armour". She recounted a "horrible conflict" when she was "beside herself" and John refused to go to battle for her. She said, "It drives me crazy, like I'm a little child and I would dearly love to have my daddy there...". She went on to admit, however, that she deeply respected John for not involving himself, for letting her work it out.

There are numerous examples of how ministry style impacted on the marriage. A common complaint was that it was difficult to really be open and to evaluate actions or events. Kate said, "I used to internalise everything, personalise everything..." Len added that he could not comment on certain things. He was afraid to be critical or to evaluate. He said, "There would be fear that there would be tears eventually, or just real anger directed back at me." This is the constant struggle that goes on in the dynamic of the double relationship.

The effort that saps energy in the dynamic of the double relationship is the attempt to be professional and to be personal and intimate all at the same moment. When I asked Kate if the need to protect the partner was ever a problem, she recounted how she would come home hoping to unwind with Len after a day of visiting. She would tell of disappointments and of particular individuals who seemed "to cause her grief." She was talking professionally to Len. Len had trouble just listening professionally at this point. He went into his protective mode and wanted to be the knight. Len said, "Poor Kate

would try to unwind with me and I would be wound up tighter than a top and I would be spitting nails and wanting to go and see them and set so-in-so straight." He said he wanted to tell them, "I'm not putting up with this." On one occasion, Len did confront one of the men who seemed to be the biggest problem. On this occasion he felt that the man in question was being verbally abusive to one of his children. So he confronted the man. There was a repercussion from this. Kate began to realise that she could not be open to Len about these feelings and so she directed her problems inwardly and got quite depressed. Defending the female seemed to be quite a common phenomenon but it was a costly instinct.

Envy seemed to take a particular shape as couples discussed the issue. When Kate and Len talked about envy they both agreed that they did not really envy gifts. Their gifts were different and that was acceptable. However, Kate said that she did envy her husband's extroversion. She envied his ability to be so easily outgoing. But there was another observation she made that was common to many of the women in clergy teams. She felt that it was his male position that she envied. She began talking psychologically about penis envy and this exchange followed:

Kate: I think part of that for me was you (she looked at Len) just walk in and they give him his stuff on his plate and for me I have to work, work, work. Or, at least that's how I was feeling then.

Len: I don't know where it works out in other teams but some women also would be given stuff because they are especially beautiful. I mean lets face it... people who are particularly good looking and stuff, certain women, X for example. People fall all over her and their reaction is a combination, and that's not a penis thing.

Kate: A woman's beauty doesn't give her the same kind of authority. You are treated as an object of beauty and you still have to work to earn the respect and

authority that will be given a man.

Len: I can see that. But still think there is a kind of authority there.

Kate: And I think that for women there is a temptation to become seductive then in that situation.

John and Irene shared similar thoughts. John said that he really appreciated Irene's gifts. Irene on the other hand envied John, not for his gifts, but for the privileges that seems to come with his maleness. She especially envies all the hours that he is able to lock himself away in his office while she is left with the family duties. She said, "The reality is that it is easier to be a working male than a working female. I get a lot of anger around that."

To conclude, the goal of blending their gifts and their lives together brought couples into team ministry. It was evident that this was a challenge to them. While they experienced the joys of team ministry, they also experienced other emotions. Envy, the need to protect one another, the difficulty to be openly critical of each other, and the need for affirmation, took some of the joy out of the experience. While some of the couples were able to find enough positive experiences to tip the balance towards effective team ministry, about half of our participants found the experience unrewarding. Blending gifts and living the double relationship can be stressful.

CHAPTER XIII

WHERE DO CLERGY COUPLES GO FOR SUPPORT?

This brief chapter really should be subtitled: "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen". Interviews revealed that clergy couples in team ministry frequently feel quite alone. They are together but alone. The stress of the double relationship can be overwhelming and debilitating. We learned that some couples experienced occasions when they feared that they were at the brink of self-destruction. The anticipated joy in the personal relationship had disappeared. The call to ministry was severely threatened. Desperate feelings were being experienced. Is there a place, or are there people, to support clergy couples in such a crisis?

Several couples gave a negative answer to the above question. They pointed out that there is no "ready-made" support structure for clergy couples in ministry. They had to find support people or develop their own strategy for survival. We discovered that some couples really were at wits end before they worked out a place to go for help and support. Very rough times almost destroyed the relationship that brought couples together in the first place. Even so, it is important to note that all the couples were able to find resources when it was obvious that the need for help was imperative.

My analysis shows that these six clergy couples sought support from at least five different sources. These sources of support have been more or less helpful. I list them as follows:

1. Support from the congregation and community
2. Support from the denomination

3. Support through educational programming
4. Support through friends and other peers
5. Support through professional counselling

There is a definition that needs to be clarified. There is a distinction between a person who offers support and one who offers counselling or crisis intervention. In a crisis, an individual or couple may be seeking the latter. Some couples we interviewed saw this need. The level of disruption in the team relationship had reached a point where describing the need as "support" hardly describes the reality. It was counselling. On the other hand, we interviewed couples who understood much of the dynamics of their team relationship. They appreciated a support person or support group. In attempting to describe the need for support in this chapter, I understand that there is a continuum. Therefore, I use the term "support" in a generic way to describe the need ranging from support to crisis intervention.

Support from the congregation and community:

Couples seek congregational and community support in formal and in informal ways. One couple explained that they have a "little lectionary group" which has become a "supportive fellowship". The male partner is also involved in the men's fellowship. This kind of support is quite common among the participant couples. One woman explained that she went out with friends in the community at least once a week. But, she emphasised that this was "not a formal support group".

While couples want to have the support of members of the congregation, they usually keep their personal lives to themselves. As one man said, "The relationships tend to be more casual, ...I don't have any real bosom buddies around here in the parish or in town."

One couple was thinking about improving the effectiveness of the congregational

personnel committee. The male wondered if this would meet the needs for a formal support group. There was a lively discussion about this during the interview. The female partner said, "Why should we? We don't have any problems." The male partner commented in response, "We have a concern about trust.... We aren't sure we can trust anybody on the committee yet."

When individuals have turned to congregational members for support, the results have not always been positive. Kate and Len were a newly married couple, filled with anticipation and hope, when they came to their first pastorate. Before long they were in trouble. Kate was particularly unhappy and was at a loss for someone with whom to talk. "I did not have other people in the beginning to count on," Kate said. Meanwhile, Len found people in the congregation as support people. This exacerbated the situation for Kate. Note this exchange:

Kate: He sometimes talked to people in the congregation - sort of a triangle thing.

Len: Well, I was working stuff out with some other people I might talk to.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel when he did that?

Kate: Not good.

Interviewer: So this would complicate it?

Len: Angry!

Kate: Like I would be surprised that he talked to those people and then I would feel outside. Instead of feeling closer to him, I would feel more distant from him and also on the outside of this other relationship where he could go and talk about his problems with someone.

Kate further emphasised that Len's decision to turn to members of the

congregation only made things worse. It simply compounded the trauma. She added that "people in the congregation could support us in material ways but not in guidance counselling - not in that kind of supportive way."

There are three important points to be made. First, couples were not sure if they should trust congregational members with information of a personal nature. Second, when one party in the team did establish a supportive relationship with a member of the congregation, the other saw this as triangulation. It became a negative influence. Third, individual members of the team established friendship relationships successfully if these relationships were seen as supportive friendships and not as "the support group". The following exchange with Gail illustrates this:

Interviewer: Do you have a private structure for support?

Gail: Not a support group, no.

Interviewer: Unstructured?

Gail: Well, fairly structured that on a regular basis. I go out for dinner with friends or out for an evening or whatever.

Support from the denomination

Finding a source of support seemed to be very important to clergy couples in teams we interviewed. They frequently reported feeling lonely and excluded by the community in which they lived. Friendships were difficult to nurture. One woman said, "Sometimes it just feels really lonely... and [looking at her spouse] I notice that there are no male friends for you." They reported a level of stress that led to increased anxiety. Distrust was a significant issue. Professionals within their own denomination were generally distrusted. The main issue was confidentiality. One couple said, "Our denominational ministerial was oppressive." Another man explained that he now felt

able to trust his peers in the region but that “it took longer for me to build trust with them....” Most couples simply did not seek support from the denominational system. The impression that was left is that they felt most secure if the people they counted on were outside their own denomination.

Support through educational programming

Couples found an important source of support through educational programming. Alana and Bob are a significant example of this model. Things just were not going well for them. They were in distress with nowhere to turn. Bob said, “There was no built-in support.” They could not trust denominational authorities. They were not certain of finding understanding congregational support. As reported elsewhere, tensions in the congregation left the couple, and particularly Alana, uncertain of her place. Bob said that they felt “cut adrift”. Nevertheless, they understood the need to find a place of support and acceptance. So, both Alana and Bob enrolled in separate C.P.E. programs. They were searching for a support group. These programs offered them an opportunity to be more open and to confront their own reality. Bob said, “We were driven to find support.” With both marriage and ministry in trouble, Alana said, “We needed some cues and lessons on how to change the rules.” Bob added, “If it were not for C.P.E. I would not understand how group dynamics work.” With a considerable degree of anger, Bob said, “Seminaries ought to have a course on where to go to get or develop support.”

Eva and Frank are a good example of the need to find a support group which is truly impartial. They travel about two hours to another city. They are graduate students in a counselling program. Their supervisors are the people they trust. They are also part of a monthly peer support group in that same distant city. They testify that this decision has made a great difference to them. With honesty they explained how much they enjoy working together, but that they keep all their resources at hand to make it succeed. They

have not gone to counselling in recent years, but do not discount it as a resource that they might call on if needed. Eva explained it this way: "It is a great comfort to me that there are people who are so good and so professional".

There is an important observation that I highlight. Couples carefully chose educational programs when they were seeking support. Both of the examples cited above were programs that were designed to help them understand themselves and the relationship in which they were involved. The educational peer group became their support group.

Support through friends and other peers

The participants in this study frequently said words such as this: "I would say that before a couple should ever consider team ministry, their marriage should be fairly solid." Don has been quoted here. Don and Cecilia have been married more than thirty years. They have a good marriage, but they are fully aware of the pressures that their professional relationship places on their personal life. They take seriously the need for support. Though there is no structure for support within the pastoral setting, they do have valued friends at a distance with whom they share.

Valued friends living at a distance are a common source of support. One man explained that the friends that he really trusted were ministers. He added, "We used to have a lot of friends who were outside our flock. But, now they are starting to come to church." The spouse added, "That is really hampering our friendships."

When Kate found herself in great difficulty, she approached one of her peers. This neighbouring female minister was a great support. Her friend encouraged her to find the professional help she needed at that time. By contrast, Len felt less support from his peers. As I pointed out, Len sought the support of trusted congregational members. The difference in perspective led to conflict.

While some members of the team may turn to their peers for support, one woman expressed serious reservations. She said,

In my last pastorate there was a women's support group which had some clergy and people from other walks of life. I have been part of various women's support groups and I really desire that here. That has been a big disappointment. [she discussed various places where she sought out support] There is such a variety of women in our church and some real hostility. You use to assume that women were all in the same place. But there is such a broad range now. Some women I would not trust as far as I could throw a stick. So I have gone through this [search for a support group with peers] and it has collapsed.

Support through professional counselling

Five of the six couples that we interviewed had experience with a professional counselling service. Kate and Len are a good example. Kate struggled with a growing sense of unhappiness and a feeling of being overwhelmed by the team ministry experience. The intensity of their stress was further exacerbated with the occurrence of an extremely traumatic experience with one of their children. She said, "I was feeling pretty awful and I think I was feeling pretty overwhelmed by it and nervous...." As I have previously noted, with the encouragement of a friend, she found the strength to contact a professional counsellor. Both Kate and Len were involved in counselling and they said that counselling was of "some help". This was a "frightening time" for them. The solution to their stress, however, was to terminate their team relationship. In spite of tremendous stress and some unfortunate and heart-wrenching events that confronted their reality, this couple decided that their marriage was more important to them than their professional relationship. Termination was a courageous act.

Alana and Bob also decided to terminate their professional team relationship, but not before they sought personal and individual counselling. They went this route when

they began to fear for their very survival. Bob said, "I thought that I was going to die in that situation." He also said that he feared that Alana was in danger of being "destroyed". They both said that counselling helped them. They were trying so hard to mark things perfect, but it all seemed to backfire on them. Bob said that they had to go to counselling in order "to come to terms with what was and what wasn't working."

In years gone by, long before Don and Cecilia went into team ministry, they were involved in intensive individual and marriage counselling. This was a positive experience for them. As a result, they are quite disposed to the idea of going to a counsellor together again, should the need arise. They keep this idea as a team support resource. In the meantime, Cecilia maintains contact with a trusted counsellor. When the couple first began their team ministry, the pressure was so intense that she sought out this counsellor. She said she did this "just so I'd stay sane". She views her professional counsellor as a personal resource. Cecilia found that she was able to work through many of her feelings so that they did not negatively affect her ability to minister. She said: "I find that I can unload a lot of stuff there which keeps me from having to unload it on Don. It's a very, very good defuser."

As can be seen, couples found help through a trusted counsellor, but this experience was not universal. One party had a bad experience with a secular counsellor and as a result, the couple discounts this as a resource. Here is how they expressed this:

Irene: We have had various crises in our marriage where we would benefit from outside help.

John: I was part of a therapeutic community that was very intense, and there were a lot of bad experiences that came out of that.

Irene: He has experience that counseling and therapy tears apart rather than builds up. No-one seems to know anybody who is a good therapist.

Interviewer: Do you have a support person or group?

Irene: I have a real good doctor.

Besides the “real good doctor”, the couple have found other important support that meets their need. Spiritual direction has been an important resource for John. Irene has found a support group for herself too. She was just about in despair of ever making such a discovery when it just happened. She had tried, on several occasions, to establish a women's support group, but to no avail. She explained that she experienced many women in ministry as not supportive. Then she attended a women's gathering at a retreat house. While there she found that she was unable to control her emotions. She said, "I ended up in my room crying the whole day." Other women also aired their own frustrations. Out of that experience, a women in ministry support group began.

The stories that couples told revealed important information. The first is this: that couples in team relationships occasionally find their relationships so stressful that one or both of them must search for a person or persons for support. Usually this search for such a support person is done during a time of stress. There is seldom an intentional plan in place as a back-up. Nevertheless, we discovered that couples were very resourceful and were able to find appropriate help. The choice of support people was significant. If the choice that one party made was not acceptable to the team partner, the stress increased. The situation only worsened. Women were more likely to find a support person than were the men, though both male and females sought and found support that was helpful. However, we observed a greater intensity on the part of the women to find appropriate help. (I comment on this more fully in the summary of findings in chapter three.) Finally, we note that the couples who planned to continue in team ministry have a system of support in place.

One other comment needs to be made. Some of the couples began their team ministry as young married people. They were not planning for a crisis. It was only when

they became aware of the growing tensions that thoughts of a strategy to deal with the issues at hand became important to them. Participants suggested that, when couples contemplate a team relationship together, they ought to be informed that a support plan is an essential element.

CHAPTER XIV

AN EVALUATION OF TEAM MINISTRY BY THE PARTICIPANTS

What do couples think of their experience in team ministry? We invited them to share their perceptions. By using our interview guide we were able to help them unwrap their own points of view. First, we invited them to share a positive reason why they are in a team relationship. Then we asked them if they might describe a negative reason why they might question the idea. Finally we asked them if they intended to stay in the team.

Two of the couples we interviewed had already left the team relationship at the time of the interviews. Alana and Bob were still hurting. They had just terminated brief weeks before the interview. When I invited them to participate, they made sure that I was aware of this news. I could see no reason to exclude them. Right up to the time of the interview they had been in a team. The interview was an intense time where the couple shared freely. They trusted us enough to make it plain that they began their team ministry with joyful anticipation. They believed that they had a whole horizon of possibilities before them. They loved and enjoyed one another. How could anything stop them? But, things changed. They had a mountain of pain.

In spite of all the negative things that they experienced, they were determined to attempt to begin again in separate ministries. There was a sense of failure that deeply hurt them. Bob talked about an evaluation of their ministry which was very frank. He said, "It was like a stake in the heart."

Kate and Len were also out of their team relationship when they were interviewed. They were already engaged in new and separate congregations in another

city. They also shared a tremendous amount of pain. This was balanced by quite tender expressions of caring during the interview.

What is it that had attracted them to team ministry at the outset? They were quite frank about the answer. It was their children. "We could take part-time positions and do some trade-offs looking after the kids and tending the home." Kate added that she was attracted to team ministry because, as she said, "I think I liked Len."

The bright light of anticipation was soon darkened by the interactions that marked the realities of the double relationship. A significant amount of their team experience was negative. The most serious problem was that Kate lost a sense of her identity. Both her personal life as wife and mother, and her professional life as minister, seemed insecure to her. She had allowed herself to become dependent. Len responded to Kate as he felt he must respond. He wanted to protect his wife and family and relationships which he saw being threatened. He was frightened by a growing sense of uncertainty. His protective response, while truly well-meaning, contributed to Kate's sense of feeling dysfunctional. Kate was caught in a paradoxical bind. On the one hand, because of the tremendous anxiety that she felt, she accepted Len's support. On the other hand, the parent/child quality of the relationship alienated Kate.

Meanwhile, Len was able to be quite effective as a minister. He stoically faced life's problems. Len pointed out that this was a family trait. He said,

I think we had different patterns for coping... and I think its a family pattern for me. We are 'copers'. We are survivors. We do not fall apart; we don't. You can die. Are you dying? If you are dying, that's fine. Then we know how to bury you. But, we don't fall apart.

Len appeared to be coping well and seemed to be a competent minister. Kate felt that much of it was at her expense. She became quite depressed. The only way out of the predicament was to get out of the team relationship. In commenting on the need to

terminate the professional relationship, Kate said, "...I needed to go for myself... to deactivate the parent-child relationship and to try to find the adult in myself again." This was something she had to do to save herself.

The team relationship was a discouraging experience for the above two couples. Neither couple planned to try team ministry again in the foreseeable future. At the time of writing this chapter, I learned that a third couple that we had interviewed decided to terminate their relationship. At the time of the interview, Irene and John gave rather unclear or paradoxical comments to us. They both agreed that their team ministry was a good experience. Later, Irene admitted that she frequently questioned the idea of team ministry. "You kind of lose your way after a while," she said. Irene felt as though the couple had failed in communicating their style of ministry to the people. All the work they had put into a lay visitation team had failed and she felt that her ministry did not really count either. She said,

They want a little personal Jesus coming to their house... You don't really know if I have visited. It only really counts if John has been there.

It was not surprising to receive the news that this couple had decided to terminate their team. Irene intimated so at the end of the interview. This, in part, was the exchange:

Irene: Part of me would like to quit the whole thing. I'm getting so much more out of my music. ... its the same brick walls that have always been there.

John: Whenever I come up against it I keep thinking of Jesus' ministry.

Irene: We have to face it. It is more difficult for me than John.

John: It may be that we are on an historical path.

So now, three out of the six couples who agreed to participate in this research have terminated. The personal costs of the double relationship were too high. The

negative reasons that lead couples to question the wisdom of the whole idea weigh heavily.

Three other couples remain in team ministry together. Cecilia and Don, Eva and Frank, and Gail and Harold have no plans to make changes anytime soon. Gail and Harold plan to "branch out" at some indefinite future date, after the children become more independent. It was their family plans that brought them into team ministry in the first place. This was a conscious decision. They now worry about the future. The financial squeeze is being felt by the congregation. Will they be able to continue to support them? Harold pointed out that they, as a couple, are trained to do little else. They have been too busy to get further training. They came into ministry straight out of University. So they hope that their team relationship is able to stand the test of time. In spite of the stress of the double relationship, the couple remain quite happy and healthy. They are not actively seeking change.

There appears to be one fact of significance that ought to be noted. Team ministry is a risky venture. Three of the participant couples found this to be a painful reality.

CHAPTER XV

CLERGY COUPLES IN TEAM MINISTRY AND THEIR QUEST FOR THEOLOGICAL CREDIBILITY

If you were travelling south on any of the major highways in the Province of Quebec, eventually you would approach a sign pointing straight ahead with these words: "FRONTIÈRE E.U." The sign indicates that the driver is approaching a border crossing point with the United States. A border marks a boundary, in this case the frontier between Canada and the United States. People who live in communities along that boundary know that they live on the edge of one nation or the other. They commute back and forth and speak in terms of "going across the line". They live on the boundary, but have lost the sense of living on the frontier.

In the Canadian edition of Funk and Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary, the word "frontier" is given several lines of description. The first citation is: "The part of a nation's territory lying along the border of another country". A subsequent citation is, "A new and unexplored area of thought or knowledge." This chapter is of the type described in this latter citation. It is also influenced by the image of living on the border and being able to commute to either side. It is about clergy couples and their quest for theological credibility as they share marriage and ministry together in a team relationship. In the tradition of Paul Tillich, they are living on the boundary.

Like those border citizens who have forgotten that they live on the frontier, we are prone to forget that ministry is always on the frontier. Creative ministry is at the edge of life where women and men are challenged with the task of either making sense out of life or out of life's endings. Living at the edge, and knowing it, raises many questions about ultimate things. This is what theologians do. This is what ministers of the church do as they struggle alongside beloved parishioners. Theology takes on life as belief mingles with doubt and existence is experienced.

There are many questions that challenge married couples on the new frontier of ministry. Paul Tillich once wrote, "The boundary is the best place for acquiring knowledge."⁷⁹ Couples learn the truth of this opinion. Clergy couple teams are not just exploring a new frontier. They are on the boundary of possibility where new learning is accompanied by the dangers that experiencing such learning may bring. They discover that the context of their shared ministry is not a skill that they learned in seminary. Instead, their relationship is like an experiment in a laboratory beaker where new truth is to be discovered.

What kind of discoveries are being made as the couple team ministry bubbles away in the beaker heated by the Bunsen Burner fires of the pastoral setting? In the past, it may have been presumed that the only significant difference between any clergy team and a married clergy team was the fact that the latter team were married to each other. For example, in the report offered by Nancy and John von Lackum, a positive, though not completely one sided, view is put forth. A sample of this positive posture is found as follows in a section entitled, "Life Style Experimentation and Commitments":

Most clergy couples delight in the time and energies made available by part time work patterns. Such patterns allow for a richer, broader, and more diversified

⁷⁹ Paul Tillich, On The Boundary (London: Collins, 1967) 13.

style of life—one which both energises and deepens the personal lives of clergy couples as well as refreshing and rejuvenating the strength and creativity required on the job.⁸⁰

While the truth of the above statement is not challenged, the total story is barely told. Deep theological and psychological questions are being posed by clergy couples as they explore the frontier. In the beaker of the double relationship experience, a theology of ministry for clergy couples is being formulated.

This chapter arises out of deep reflection on the results of this descriptive research. It is written in the genre of a “Towards a Theology of Ministry for Clergy Couples in Team Ministry”. It is very much the theology of the writer, but it includes views offered by the participants. The context of this theology is found in the struggle that clergy couple teams encounter as they share ministry. Couples who choose ministry together face a tremendous challenge. They wish to experience an exciting creative ministry together, but congregations are not there simply to fill the pastoral ambitions of married ministers who desire to share personal and professional intimacy. Quite to the contrary, ministers are called to meet the pastoral needs of congregations.

The theology of ministry that is being proposed in this chapter will be found by some readers as inadequate. I describe it as a theology that is “credible enough” for clergy couples in teams. It is a theology that emphasises the power of relationships. It is a theology that accepts people and loves them. It is an evolving theology with applications beyond the clergy couple team ministry venture, but which responds to the realities of that unique experience. This theological perspective may be perceived as a corrective to the experience that led some clergy couples participants in this project to view their congregations as a source of trouble.

⁸⁰ John P. von Lackum, III and Nancy Jo Kemper von Lackum 19.

The Problem

When people decide to enter into the ministry of the church, there is a very intensive time of learning. There are checks to discern one's "call to ministry" all along the way. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the development of a theology of ministry. It is recognised that each individual needs to form his or her own understanding of ministry in the context of the gifts and talents that she or he may offer. There is a great effort to encourage candidates to know themselves and to be able to clearly express what they believe.⁸¹ There is an assumption that people who enter ministry will continue to grow in their effectiveness in ministry after they have been formally recognised by their faith community and have celebrated their achievement. In my own denomination, there is a built-in clause in the contract with the minister that demands an annual three week study leave. A financial support plan makes the clause a reality. Ordination, or commissioning, or other forms of recognition of one's readiness for ministry is but a marker on a lifelong journey of learning.

It is historically obvious that colleges trained men, and more recently women and men, to fill the personnel needs of the church. Traditionally, ministers were placed, or otherwise located in solo positions serving congregations. Little energy has been turned towards training people for team work. It was not necessary. The demand was small. Even when such courses were offered, the context of the course seldom took into account the psychological dynamics of a married team. For example, when Dody Donnelly writes about the theory and practice of team ministry, the writer is not thinking of a married team when she offers this advice:

Instead of being afraid of disagreement, the team will welcome it and use it

⁸¹ United Theological College / Le Seminaire Uni. Program Committee Report. (Montreal: Board Meeting, Feb. 14, 1994) 7.

constructively: to build feeling expression, and more trust, and more risk taking
IN the team meeting and not after.⁸²

Such good advice seems naïve in the context of a clergy couple team . They do not go their separate ways at the end of the day, nor do they, by their own accounts, have much success in separating their professional lives from their personal lives. This is an ever constant dynamic central to the clergy couple relationship. I suggest that one of the reasons that there are few courses being offered to clergy couples is because very few people understand the context of clergy couple team ministry or, for that matter, the sort of content that ought to be included in such a course. In fact, theological questions and psychological themes that are unique to clergy couples in team ministry are only now being learned. This is because their living laboratory is yielding important information. The learning that has been made these past decades will need to be taken into account if there is to be any hope of more appropriate preparation for couples who contemplate team ministry in the future.

Theological Compatibility

Whenever people share life intensely, different perspectives must be understood and accommodated. It is a given that clergy couples must come to terms with the same issues that any couple must reconcile. There is, however, a certain reality that must be taken into the equation. Couples in team ministry do not just have to deal with issues around the particularities of their psyche (for example, sexuality and unresolved issues from their families of origin). They also have to accommodate their theological perspectives. Clergy couples must sort out theological questions because they work together in this realm. No two people conceive things in exactly the same way. As a

⁸² Dody Donnelly, Team: Theory and Practice of Team Ministry. (New York: Paulist Press, 1977) 73.

result, there is a professional dilemma that couples experience. The dilemma arises out of the need for compromise. No matter how close couples may be in their attitudes about their shared ministry, if there is an effort to maintain a sense of democracy in the team relationship, (that is, a concerted effort to foster equal sharing where both points of view are to be considered and respected) there has to be compromise. But, compromise challenges one's credibility on important issues.

The participants in our research described times when they were deeply challenged with theological questions that were raised when they were not in accord. One couple was struggling with a question concerning baptism. One party was in favour of baptising the children of all parents who made such a request. This perspective was in stark contrast with the position of the other team member. He felt (deeply) that only the children of people who were in regular attendance should be considered candidates for baptism. This issue was a serious one for them. This profoundly theological question led them into conflict. On the surface, the issue was about the meaning of infant baptism. If left unresolved, the team would face an indefinite period of conflict. However, there is a more profound theological question for the couple. It is this: "What is meaning of our ministry together?" This question addresses the very reason for teaming together as a clergy couple.

By way of explaining the intense nature of this question, I cite an example from the life of Paul Tillich. As a young chaplain on the front lines during the First World War, Tillich was ordered to pray for the success of the troops on the battlefield against the enemy.⁸³ Popular theology demanded that God take sides. Tillich refused to accept that point of view. He believed that the idea of a God who would make everything turn out for the best was not a credible theological stance. Faced with the conflict between

⁸³ Willaim and Marion Pauck, Paul Tillich: His Life and Thought (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) 53.

his own faith stance and that of the church and of the state, Tillich ended up in despair about the validity of his calling.

The theological issues raised for this couple with respect to baptism were just as dramatic. Was their practice of ministry to be sort of social affirmation meeting the superstitious needs of a popular theology held by folks who want God on their side? This was the challenge implicit in the questioning of one member of the team. While it is an exaggeration of the contrasting theological positions of the team, the tension was between a view of the ministers as dispensers of grace, or, as ministers who are committed to an understanding of community of faith. The first expresses an ecclesiology of the institutional church which gives the ministers the power to dispense sacramental mercy. The second sees the church as Communion or the Body of Christ.⁸⁴ Baptism in this context is entrance into the community of faith with all its uncertainties but with its promise of God's presence in whatever life may bring. There really is a chasm between the two points of view. How was a bridge to be built between these two solitudes? As a point of fact, the clergy couple in this case were able to settle their contrasting theological perspectives quite creatively. They shared the notion that they were not the church, but that it is the people who are church. They shared a common understanding that they were called to minister to the people. So, the solution was simple. They did not make a decision. The lay leadership was invited to grapple with the dilemma. Because the couple both agreed that the decision belonged with the membership, they resolved that they would abide by whatever ruling came out of the congregational deliberations on the subject. Hence, the couple were freed of the conflict. They were able to get on with ministry by making the above compromise.

Whatever one thinks about the way the problem was resolved, compromise is an

⁸⁴ Avery Dulles, Models of the Church (New York: Image Books, 1978) 95.

important element on the frontier where clergy couples work out a theology that is credible for them. Almost every important question is first addressed at a council meeting of two. There, the couple struggles to come to a point where their theological perspectives can comfortably embrace. To do otherwise destroys a precious value that most couples cherish and guard; that is, the value of collegiality. As a result, couples live with a professional dilemma in the sense that compromise dictates the granting of concessions. This professional dilemma poses a radical theological question. What really is more important, team harmony or personal integrity? The context of ministry keeps this tension alive. They experience life on the boundary between the separate Self and the Self in relationship with others. The separate Self demands individual credibility. A solo minister may be able to clarify a theological question and stand firmly by it. Not so with the clergy couple. The Self in relationship with others seeks out togetherness, with a trust that the process will give a new and different experience of life. Catherine Keller suggests the above opposites in her book, From a Broken Web. The Self in relationship with others promises creative potentiality. Keller writes,

Selves are unconscious and sometimes also conscious acts of self-composition, composing themselves of their relations. Relation in the process scheme holds everything together.⁸⁵

This is certainly true for clergy couples. They are, consciously or unconsciously, working on the nature of their relationship as team ministers. This highly influences how they see themselves and their world and the ministry they share. As a result, an intense ontological question is constantly alive. The context of the clergy couple double relationship forces the question. It is struggle with the meaning of existence itself, that is, in terms of what it means to share in the context of a team with the conditions such a

⁸⁵ Catherine Keller, From a Broken Web (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986) 185.

relationship demands. The intellectual questions that theology can bring to birth are challenged by the experience of life. Ontological questions are no more about how existence ought to be, but instead, about how being is experienced. Baptism, for example, is no more about how or why God gives grace. It is an experience of grace itself as the couple struggles with meaning. On the frontier of the team ministry experience, perspectives are held in polarity. There are no easy answers. The desire to team demands that dogma be tempered by living experience. Truth is not an either/or but is about how meaning is found in existence.

The struggle to be credible as a clergy couple is simply a different venture than, and can be contrasted with, the quest for individual credibility. The inherent tensions are part of the definition of what it means to be a clergy couple in team ministry. Effective ministry occurs in proportion to the couple's ability to accept the polarities that are presented to them. Inability to accept the professional dilemma through creative compromise kills the spirit and makes sharing the challenges of team ministry impossible. There has not been much guidance to help couples meet the challenges before them, but perhaps the following extract from the letter to the Ephesians offers some sage advice:

I urge you ... Be always humble and gentle and patient. Show your love by being tolerant of one another. Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together..(Eph.4: 1a,2,3)⁸⁶

Unconscious Modelling

Clergy couples are a living model for all to observe. They are typologically the Adam and Eve couple in the pulpit, all around the church, and in the community too.

⁸⁶ Ephesians 4: 1a,2,3

This is a rather romantic notion but it is acknowledged by clergy couples themselves that many folks in the congregations like this image. They may have unconsciously, or even consciously, had the idea in mind when they engaged the couple as their ministers. If the couple do not live up to expectations, or if there is an experience that threatens the vision of Eden, then count on considerable anxiety. The anxiety will not just be with the members of the congregation. It will be experienced by the couple too.

Here is a potent example of this anxiety. This last decade has been a tremendously stressful time within the United Church of Canada. The issue of human sexuality was explored in depth. As a point of fact, the reason for the study and the resulting debate, was to gain acceptance for the ordination of self-disclosed homosexual men and women. While it can be said that the debate fractured the church as a whole, my research suggest that the issue produced tremendous anxiety within clergy couple team relationships. There are some observable reasons. Clergy couples quite obviously portray a heterosexual relationship. This is so at a conscious and unconscious level. Couples say that they do not “flaunt” their heterosexuality, but they do. Much of it is at an unconscious level. Everything that they do, including bringing their children to church, exhibits their heterosexuality. Their relationship in the public realm is an advertisement for this life-style. This is the context of what it means to be a clergy couple.

The idea of a homosexual lifestyle conflicts with the very model being portrayed. Some couples supported one another as they came to understand what the sexuality debate meant for them. It really did not matter on which side of the question they found themselves. As long as they shared a similar view, they were better able to cope with the stress. They had each other for support. However, when they found themselves on opposite sides of the issue, there was tremendous strain on their relationship. The debate (for the couple) did not end with the benediction at church council meetings. It

permeated everything. It infected the relationship.

It is worth taking a closer look at the source of some of the energy that fed the conflict that arose from the stress felt by couples. It frequently came from external sources. The idea of ordaining a homosexual persons was a controversial issue. The pressure was on, subtly and not so subtly, for the ministers to stand opposed to the recommendations of the General Council Report. The legitimisers in the congregation, those who officially or unofficially hold power, made it clear that theological debates on this issue had better be contained. While it cannot be confirmed statistically, it would appear that for a great majority, there was no desire for change in the status quo .

As the debate unfolded, the focus was directed to the concept of justice. Oppression experienced by homosexual people within the patriarchal church was disclosed. In some cases, it was the women partners in a clergy team relationship who became sympathetic to the issues raised by the debate. They came out on the side of the debate which led them to support the recommendation and report to the General Council of the United Church of Canada entitled "Toward a Christian Understanding of Sexual Orientation, Lifestyles and Ministry".⁸⁷ The compromise that was finally reached at the thirty-second meeting of General Council in 1988 was that it was inappropriate to inquire about one's sexual orientation. This was interpreted by the membership at large as a carte blanche for the ordination of homosexual people.

I interject a personal note at this point. It was during this period that my clergy spouse and I entered our name on the availability list indicating to the church at large that we were seeking a team setting to minister to-together. We received numerous inquiries. We stopped counting at fifty. We understood the reason for the tremendous interest. If

⁸⁷ The United Church of Canada, Recommendations and Report to the 32nd General Council from the Division of Ministry Personnel and Education and the Division of Mission in Canada, Toward a Christian Understanding of Sexual Orientation, Lifestyles and Ministry (Toronto: 1988).

the search committees were prohibited to ask questions about the candidates' sexuality, they decided to hedge their bets on a clergy couple team. They were ready to pay more for the security of getting what they wanted irrespective of the General Council resolution. This is a highly charged emotional issue filled with unconscious motivations. The reason why I include it here is to show the power of unconscious modelling.

Clergy couple teams revealed the tremendous amount of stress that they experienced during this period of time in the United Church. The debate was waged at many levels. There was a theological debate. There was a call for justice. Church members began to see the oppressive nature of the way gays and lesbians were being treated. In reaction, people who could not tolerate the inclusive view, reverted to a legalistic theology, dusting off the scripture passages which apparently condemned homosexuality. This was countered by emotional allusions to Jesus' ministry of love and compassion. There was the rational debate and the emotional one. It was at the emotional level that there were no winners. Human sexuality raises questions at the core of the Self. Psychological questions were raised that touched all involved.

Some clergy spouses found themselves on opposite sides of the issue. This happened with two of the participant couples in this research project. It was the women who decided to support the conclusions of the report which was sympathetic to the issue. The split caused considerable unhappiness. In one case, the female partner found it almost too much to cope. Not only did she lose the support of her clergy partner but, because of her stand, she was marginalized by many members of the congregation.

I make the following three important observations. The first is that the unconscious modelling by clergy couples is in itself a powerful image. Clergy couples model the ideals found in the Biblical Creation Stories. They confront or encourage people depending on their perceptions of what is happening in the relationship. Clergy couples who are comfortable with a high level of equal sharing are modelling a way of

relating that openly proclaims a view of life grounded in feminist theology. This is a theological statement. Conversely, an unequal sharing also declares one's theology. Either way, not every member of the congregation will approve. This is the cost of living on the frontier and it ought to be noted that ministers with less visible relationships simply would not have this same impact on the congregation or community.

The second observation is that sexuality is an issue of the individual identity and the collective identity of a couple. When couples encountered the human sexuality issue, they had to come to terms with what they were modelling. If they were comfortable with themselves but were also confident that sameness was not an essential, this allowed the potential of living creatively on the boundary between uniformity and diversity. This is, after all, the reality of clergy couple experience. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the ability to be open and accepting does not bring comfort to those who are, for what ever reason, uncomfortable with such openness. For some, this is not just a question of openness. It threatens their identity and values.

The third observation is that the women were more disposed to the idea of coming out in support of gays and lesbians than were the men. I offer this hypothesis: The women understood the issue of homosexual people as a problem of injustice. They experienced injustice in their own lives as a obstacle They frequently experienced gender bias. This can be understood in terms of W. Paul Jones' Theological Worlds. Women intimately understood the "obsessio" and the "epiphania". The terms "obsessio" and "epiphania" are critical to understanding how Jones' views the dynamic of how functional theology is developed. The "obsessio" is the deep question or concern in life. Jones describes the obsessio as "... whatever functions deeply and pervasively in one's life as a defining quandary, a conundrum, a boggling of the mind, a haemorrhaging of the

soul...".⁸⁸ Jones emphasises that the obsessio is something that will not go away. It is, for example, the theme or issue that therapy attempts to address as the counsellee agonises with intense emotion. It will never simply disappear if one ignores it. One has to make one's peace with it.

The "epiphania" is the polarity in opposition to the obsessio. The "epiphania" is the answer (or hoped for answer) to the obsessio. Jones writes, "Until an epiphania occurs, the obsessio remains insatiable."⁸⁹ So, the epiphania is the conversion experience, the gift of grace, the miracle, the answer to prayer. Seeing the epiphania, or holding out hope for it, changes everything. It is salvation. The world is shaped with vision and possibility rather than being clouded by primal darkness.

The hoped for epiphania that gays and lesbians sought was similar to the theological quest for some of the women. It is important not to miss that this is a theological issue. It is about one's place in creation. This is a perspective that middle class men may not appreciate.

There is another slightly different slant on the question. Homosexual women and men simply demand to be respected and to be given equal treatment. At the level of human compassion, women clergy seem to be able to understand this goal. This, at a very profound level, is the simple request of the women's movement. In an age when we say that there is equality between the sexes, and where this proves to be an unrealised hope, one can understand the empathy women may feel.

Gender on the Boundary

Feminists argue that gender bias is at the root of patriarchal power which continues to oppress half the population of the world. Gloria Steinem, founder of Ms

⁸⁸ Jones, Theological Worlds 27.

⁸⁹ Jones, Theological Worlds 37.

Magazine, writes “Gender is the remaining caste system that still cuts deep enough, and spreads wide enough, to be confused with the laws of nature.”⁹⁰ She invites her readers to see the truth. Being male denotes privilege and this is so at a conscious and at an unconscious level. She asks, tongue in cheek, “If men could get pregnant, would abortion be a sacrament?”⁹¹

Gender bias is an ever present factor in the church. Clergy couples in team ministry face this fact almost daily. It confronts their reality as they share ministry together. This was a common lament of clergy couple participants in this study. While most couples dealt with this obstacle with maturity and with sensitivity, this factor was a common challenge to the image of collegiality that most couples hoped to foster. The ideal of an equal authority and shared responsibility without prejudice contradicts the traditional standards of our culture and the archetypal images that give meaning to existence. So, for some people, the idea of an equal sharing between a man and a woman in the pulpit is an affront to their world-view and the patriarchal foundations of their faith. As a result, married clergy teams are forced to be on the boundary between Patriarchy and Mutuality. They are forced there, that is, if they strive to keep their collegial vision alive and, at the same time, to minister effectively to people who have not yet glimpsed the possibilities. This is the frontier where a theology (credible enough for effective ministry) is developed by men and women who are compelled by their daily experience to struggle with the prevailing realities of life in their pastoral settings.

Patriarchy may be defined as a system of rule by male authority. Many writers have brought to our attention the fact that the church is a patriarchal legacy. Etymologically, the word “patriarchy” is composed of “patri”(father) and “archein”(to rule). So, Patriarchy describes a structure and a way of relating in which male authority

⁹⁰ Gloria Steinem, Moving Beyond Words (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994) 25.

⁹¹ Steinem 25.

is supreme. There are other ways to relate and in which to organise effective ministry, but this was not evident in the first centuries of the Christian era. The historic development of the church which addressed living questions, both conscious and unconscious ones, reflected the world-view of that earlier time. We still live with deeply entrenched perspectives that reside in the personal unconscious of individuals and in the collective unconscious of our society. These archetypal images and perspectives resist attempts at transformation. The Reformation and subsequent modifications in the church were attempts to dispense with visual vestiges of Patriarchy. However, there really has been little fundamental change. Patriarchy sets rules for the conduct of life and makes assumptions about values. Carl Jung commented on this reality when he noted that western values are based on the “heritage of Roman law, and the treasures of Judaeo-Christian ethics grounded on metaphysics, and its ideal of the inalienable rights of man”.⁹² Jung meant “man” in the masculine sense when he wrote the word. Later, in his critique on the role of the church and its power, Jung adds this analysis:

The disadvantage of the creed as a public institution is that it serves two masters: on the one hand, it derives its existence from the relationship of man to God, and on the other hand, it owes a duty to the state, i.e., to the world, in which connection it can appeal to the saying “Render unto Caesar...” and various other admonitions in the New Testament. In early times until comparatively recently there was, therefore, talk of “powers ordained by God” (Romans 13:1). Today this conception is antiquated. The churches stand for tradition and collective convictions which in the case of many of their adherents are no longer based on their inner experience but on *unreflecting belief...*⁹³

In the years intervening since Jung wrote this, there has been a shift in the church.

⁹² C.G.Jung, The Undiscovered Self, trans. R.F.C. Hull (New York: New American Library, 1957) 43.

⁹³ Jung The Undiscovered Self 47.

Many people are demanding credibility between faith and experience. Change is occurring and the momentum for transformation is increasing. Nevertheless, there is a large number of people within the church, possibly still the majority, who find meaning in holding onto old truths. There are many reasons for this. As Jung suggests, connection to tradition gives meaning. This is why, for example, Scottish people feel more comfortable in a church that has Presbyterian roots. To attempt to change world-view too quickly will only result in negative effects. Furthermore, if what was once proclaimed as truth is no longer true, is it not legitimate to question everything? It raises the possibility that the whole proclamation is a lie. People who have lived with assumptions about life that they have accepted for years simply resist change. They do so with some legitimacy, because extreme change can be interpreted as meaning that one's view of life is in error. Women and men who have accepted, even promoted Patriarchal perspectives, experience the urging for change as an affront to their understanding of themselves. So there is a reaction, sometimes an angry reaction, to the drive for change.

To illustrate, I use the following example. In a recent article in Legion, a magazine designed for the readership of Canadian veterans, an article appeared entitled, Not on the Same Page. The point of the story was to describe the change that is happening in the hymnology of mainline churches and to decry the elimination of some "old favourites". The tone of the article ridicules the changes. The author of the feature interviewed Colonel William Fairlie, director of Protestant Pastoral Activities for the Canadian Forces Chaplaincy. The following is an excerpt from the article:

[Fairlie] prefers the hymns as they have become known. "People who would be interested in changing the Melita are terribly misguided. It's good secular theology."⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Tom MacGregor, "Not On The Same Page," Legion March 1996: 10,11.

The tone of the article is further heightened by a cartoon in full colour. It shows a man and a woman singing at a church service. Their faces show utter bewilderment. He holds a red hymn book. She clutches a green one. They are obviously not singing the same words. I would guess that the artist fully knew what he was conveying. At a deep level, the status quo is being confronted by a demand for change. There is a reactionary movement resisting the shift. Changes in the music in the church are only symptomatic of a quiet revolution of great proportions that is taking place. The patriarchal standard is being challenged by a more inclusive way of relating that reflects, more accurately, the experience of women and men as we approach the second millennium.

There are alternatives to Patriarchy. Matriarchy and Anarchy stand out as obvious choices. These designations do not, however, meet the needs of clergy couples in team ministry. They usually envision a church which is more inclusive and where they can share leadership and express their faith creatively. They envision their leadership more in terms of the concepts expressed by Nancy and John Rohde who offer the idea of "co-ministry". The Rohdes depict a non-hierarchical partnership.⁹⁵ Clergy couples conceive a church where they can share leadership energised by some of the elements that Letty Russell proposes when she speaks of "leadership in the round". Using a model developed by Joan Campbell, she describes this style of leadership by such terms as relational, connectional, flexible, intimate and passionate.⁹⁶ Alison Stewart-Patterson characterises such a way of relating as mutual. She defines "Mutuality" as:

A working relationship of two or more ministers, male or female, ordained or lay, who do not have official or implied authority over each other, but who respect

⁹⁵ Nancy and John Rohde, "An Adventure in Co-Ministry: Conflict and Affirmation," The Christian Ministry 21 (1990): 16.

⁹⁶ Letty M. Russell, Church in the Round (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993) 46-74.

each other as mature partners, recognizing each other's gifts and talents and feeling responsibility for each other's growth and development in the Lord.⁹⁷

This is a good description for the model of ministry that most clergy couples seek. This, however, is a hard goal to achieve because of the realities in the church. Confronted with gender bias and patriarchal values, couples describe many disappointments. They sometimes speak of their experience with much pain. They tell of pressure that has been brought to bear in an effort to control them and to assure the preservation of the status quo. It is as couples experience both the fears and the aspirations of members of their congregations, that they are confronted with reality. They are truly on the boundary between the old and the new. They find that their theology has to accommodate the fact that new things are happening but that there is an old thing that is still alive. The scripture passage that refers to the futility of attempting to put new wine into old wine skins takes on new meaning.⁹⁸ Here on the boundary between the old and the new, the challenge is to make sense out of their ministry. It is here that couples have discovered the need for patient love. It is here, where women and men are questioning the meaning of life in these quite uncertain times, that clergy couples work out a theology of the boundaries.

Lynn Rhodes asserts that the "essence of ministry" is found in "relationship". It is not skill development or structure, but the ability to respond to other humans out of our own humanity.⁹⁹ This is a critical lesson for clergy couples living on the frontier. The gulf between the attitudes expressed by patriarchy and those expressed by feminist perspectives is quite pronounced. Tensions are found amongst members of

⁹⁷ Alison Stewart-Patterson, "The Mutuality of Women and Men in Ministry," diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990, 62.

⁹⁸ Matthew 9: 17

⁹⁹ Lynn N. Rhodes, Co-Creating: A Feminist Vision Of Ministry (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987) 17.

congregations as they struggle with these current issues. Sometimes the tensions are there between the husband and wife clergy team as they are influenced by these themes. They can also be between the clergy team and some members of the congregation. Some of the couples we interviewed told painful stories. In some cases, the tensions contributed to a decision to terminate the team ministry. Countering patriarchal perspectives without first establishing a good relationship is courting disaster. The issues that touch life in the church are tremendously complex. There are unconscious projections and transferences that must be interpreted and understood.

Transference and projection are terms that every pastor, in a team or out of the team should understand. Projection is easier to understand. It is where an individual projects unconscious contents on another person.¹⁰⁰ A minister is a prime subject to receive projection from a parishioner. Elements of the projection appear to be of someone else, such as a parent. Sometimes instances of projection take on the character of infantile relationships. Unresolved issues in relationships are important contents in projection. A common projection in ministry is the projection of perfection and goodness on the minister. The persistence of this idealistic projection is likely to come to a painful conclusion.

Transference is projection which is of an emotional and compulsory nature.¹⁰¹ A bond is made which cannot be broken. Jung describes it in terms of a chemical combination. Just as two substances combine and both are altered, so it is with transference.¹⁰² Transferences are powerful in the pastorate. They are particularly potent

¹⁰⁰ C.G.Jung, Analytical Psychology, Its Theory and Practice (New York: Vintage Books, 1968) 153.

¹⁰¹ C.G.Jung, Analytical Psychology, Its Theory and Practice 154.

¹⁰² C.G.Jung, The Psychology of the Transference, trans. R.F.C. Hull, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) 7.

when a clergy couple shares pastoral responsibilities. The unconscious projection of feelings, relative to authority and conflict from the family of origin, on the clergy couple (that is, the good or bad parents) is a constant reality.

If all this is forgotten, opposition is provoked in the pastoral setting without realising what triggered it. It can end up in open hostility, in the setting up of monitoring teams, the passing of petitions, and a tremendous amount of destructive gossip. These negative experiences were reported by the couples that we interviewed. It shattered the joy of ministry and eroded the self-confidence of some very capable ministers.

Attempts to introduce change to the power structure triggered negative encounters. I have repeatedly noted that clergy couples come into ministry with a vision of equality in their team relationship. This is a vision that is difficult to realise. The pastoral setting usually has a long established model that has worked for decades. (Actually, it is a humble idea to suggest that such models have been in place for decades. In reality, the roots of Patriarchal power in the church reach back in history to the birth of the church and beyond.) In fact, those who are experienced in congregational ministry realise that it is only the naïve who think that critical decisions are made within the context of boards and committees within the church. Besides having a formal structure where questions are debated and decisions are formally made, there is also an informal structure. These are the unofficial power people. These people are the legitimisers. They, whether elected to official positions or not, hold important power. They legitimise decisions. Depending on whether they are in agreement or not, they can make all the difference as to whether any change may occur. It is here that idealism is confronted by reality. Couples may speak of shared power between themselves and with the congregation, but they are led to conclude that real power lies in the hands of the congregational members who will share it only to the extent that they experience trust.

Couples experience power daily from identifiable and unidentifiable sources.

The people of the status quo do not want to lose power. This group is made up of both men and women. Patriarchy is quite pervasive. Women are frequently some of the most eloquent adversaries to change. Women members of the clergy team are often shocked by this observation. One can only conclude that some women are quite happy with the current state of affairs. They do not want their haven to be disturbed. Their identification is through their men. Catherine Keller addresses this way of feeling connected and of having meaning in her book From a Broken Web. She defines this way of knowing one's self as the "soluble self".¹⁰³ Soluble selves are known through their relationships with men. The implications are tremendous because access to power and self understanding is through men who appear to be in control. There is a great deal of work required in order to bring this relational pattern into consciousness before change can occur.

Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza suggests that the early church was much more disposed to the idea of equality of leadership between men and women than is commonly thought. Nevertheless, she points out that there was an "androcentric mind-set" in the early writers and leaders in the church.¹⁰⁴ She calls this "androcentric projection". By this she means that males projected their world-view on the nature of things. She describes the development of these concepts and shows that much of the writings are an interpretation of the world through male experience. She emphasises that most of these documents are an expression of what should be, from the Patriarchal perspective, and not how they actually were, in fact. There is a significant point that we must notice. This historical perspective established that "...Women have access to the sacred only in and through the patriarchal family."¹⁰⁵ Such a thought is of significant importance today. Even though we have been ordaining women in many Protestant churches for several

¹⁰³ Catherine Keller, From a Broken Web (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986) 13.

¹⁰⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her (New York: Crossroad, 1983) 61.

¹⁰⁵ Fiorenza 57.

decades now, and within my own denomination (The United Church of Canada) since the “1930’s”, there is an unconscious and sometime not so unconscious reality. In team ministry, the male partner may be viewed as the real minister. This, of course, causes (or can cause) considerable stress. Faced with this bias, idealistic theological principles held by the team, based on the equality of women and men, are of little help. Deep psychological and theological perspectives held by the members of the congregation have tremendous power.

There is another significant point to ponder. It is not only the dependence of women on men that has implications in the pastoral setting. Men are dependent on women. This critical observation has been researched by Ellyn Kaschak. She emphasises that the cultural context of our existence gives meaning to our lives. She argues that men’s dependence on women brings balance to the patriarchal realm. Her perspective is important in order to come to an understanding that begins to shed light on the unconscious level of congregational experience. She writes:

...if we consider that men’s independence and separateness viewed contextually emerge as emotional and physical dependence on women - wives, lovers, secretaries, graduate assistants, nurses, and so on - then men are certainly as relational as women, if not more so. If we consider that competition depends on relationship as much as does nurturance, that even dominion is a complex interpersonal act, one facet of which is extreme dependency, then it becomes evident that compared to women, men are not less, but differently, relational in different situations.¹⁰⁶

This is an extremely important observation. It needs to be interpreted in the pastoral setting. The exercise of control through the use of power is an expression of dependency. Alliances with women and other dependent relationships are needed to

¹⁰⁶ Ellyn Kaschak, *Engendered Lives* (New York: BasicBooks, 1992) 115.

fulfil the need for connection, to feel in relationship. The church is needed in the same way. At a very profound level, team ministers (particularly a female partner) who seek to change the foundation of this relationship, threaten the understanding of existence for some people, both male and female. I suspect that many women in the church understand this at a very intuitive level. They are ready to exercise their protective nature and fight for their men (and ultimately for themselves).

Between those holding onto power and those who do not want change even if they are powerless because they find power through others, couples in ministry teams experience what it is to be impotent. Power can begin to feel demonic. This can become critical for the female partner in the clergy couples team. Our research shows that she is the one most affected by the maintenance of the status quo. She is the person who really has a vested interest in changing things. In desperation, one can begin to wonder if anything will ever change.

Living on the boundary between Patriarchy and Mutuality, couples can not miss seeing the need to develop a theology that is accepting of congregational members with contrasting points of views. Couples are aware of the feminist critique and they are also conscious of the tensions that some congregational members experience in the church because of patriarchal prejudice. They are also aware of their own varying positions on the subject. It should be emphasised that in our research, we did not encounter a universal opinion regarding the correctness of feminist perspective or the feminist analysis amongst clergy couples that we interviewed. Clergy couples emphasised that they were ordained to serve congregations and the needs of individuals in the congregation. The congregation was not there to fulfil their ego needs. So, when Letty Russell makes the statement that "...feminist interpreters are no longer willing to allow talk about God, about ourselves, or about the church to continue in its patriarchal framework of understanding and interpretation", clergy couples in team have to evaluate

with care the meaning of such statements.¹⁰⁷ Do they (that is, clergy couples) have the right to be “no longer willing to allow” anything? Such arrogant talk has been shown to have a negative impact. But, feminist concepts are important to ministry as we enter the twenty-first century. There is a great change occurring in our society and the church must not just reflect the facts of society; it must lead it. Being made aware of the injustice that is at the root of patriarchy has expanded the consciousness of a large number of people. The question is this: “How may we foster the coming of a new way of being?”.

There is no shortage of social analysis to assist clergy couples as they address the issues. They can be both inspired and depressed by insights such as offered by Letty Russell. Inspired by Simone de Beauvoir, she describes the domination-subjugation relationship. The salient point that she makes is that when people are controlled and exploited, they become objects. Objects can be manipulated by the oppressor. In order to continue to control these objects, they are seen as “Others”, that is different and of lesser value.¹⁰⁸ Letty Russell insists that the dominant-subjugation relationship must be “challenged at its root”.¹⁰⁹ It is here that clergy couples find themselves in a serious problem. How can they do so without losing the very support that they need in order to minister and maintain a congregation. Russell offers a hint. It is, “Servanthood, not sexuality, that is the primary bearer of God’s image.”¹¹⁰ This is an important theological principle for clergy couples. In the sharing of the responsibilities of ministry in an equal and balanced way, clergy couple team are bearers of God’s grace. Experiencing this

¹⁰⁷ Letty M. Russell Church in the Round 35.

¹⁰⁸ Letty M. Russell, Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective - A Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974) 145.

¹⁰⁹ Russell, Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective 146.

¹¹⁰ Russell, Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective 152.

model will shape a new archetype for ministry and for relationships in general.

In the book Megatrends for Women, the authors point to the emergence of a “new archetype” in the business world. An increasing number of women and men are working together sharing their talent in creative ways. These “collaborative couples” (so the authors refer to them) are reaping the tremendous rewards. Among the considerations listed are these: greater satisfaction, autonomy, flexibility and increased profit.¹¹¹ The writers claim that there is a new co-operative era dawning. This explanation of trends in the secular world is of importance in analysing the development in the church with respect to clergy couple teams. Of a particular interest is the assertion by the authors that the appearance of collaborative couples in the business world is an “evolutionary process” and not a “revolutionary event”. Aburdene and Naisbitt make an important point that has bearing on the clergy couple team enterprise. The recognition of women as ministers and the development of clergy couple teams are evolutionary developments in the church and not a revolution. However, there is a feminist revolution in process now. This is exactly where clergy couples find themselves on the boundary. It is the boundary between long held values that have been fostered by male clergy and the feminist values that are more likely to be encouraged by female clergy. Clergy couples are on the boundary between the ones who are threatened by feminist concepts which could well leave too many people abandoned (because they cannot accept such values) and those who are ready to make the claim of justice (too long in coming) which would set free half the population of the world if a new vision could be embraced. The point being made is that it is not just clergy couples that are part of the evolutionary process. It is the whole church. The theology that is developing is evolutionary in nature. The goals are the same as feminist goals, that is to usher in a new era of sharing, but the process seems

¹¹¹ Patricia Aburdene & John Naisbitt, Megatrends for Women (New York: Villard Books, 1992) xxi.

a little more gentle and caring. Revolutions have the character of creating displaced people. Evolution embraces and adapts. It is only the species that refuse to adapt that become extinct.

Clergy couples understand that they are on the boundary where a new thing is happening. They are living in a time of “kairos” in the profound sense of the word. Tillich addresses the meaning of kairos in his Systematic Theology.¹¹² He points out that in the New Testament, the word “kairos” was used to mean “the fulfilment of time” when the “Kingdom of God” would be manifested in the world. The time is at hand on the frontier of ministry for a new era of justice to enter the western world. This new era is gender blind and inclusive in all its facets. This era stands in the wings as the feminist prophets unveil the reality of the injustice of our times and await the moment to enter the stage. It awaits the cue, but the time is not quite yet, at least, not for many congregations. As the history of the church in the western world unfolds, at least in mainline Protestant churches, women and men who are team partners in ministry, are living on the frontier where the strategy is being worked out to usher in a more inclusive way of being.

Tillich notes that the original Greek meaning of the word “kairos” meant the right time when something can be done and that this concept must be contrasted with “chronos”, which is quantitative time as measured by the clock. Kairos is qualitative in character. Tillich writes, “In ordinary Greek language, the word is used for any practical purpose in which a good occasion for some action is given.”¹¹³ Jesus used the word to declare that his time had not yet come.¹¹⁴

It is on the kairos boundary that clergy couples find themselves in deep internal

¹¹² Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol. 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963) 369-372.

¹¹³ Tillich, Systematic Theology 369.

¹¹⁴ The Gospel according to John 16:6,8

conflict. The conflict is accentuated by the desire of couples to be collegial and mutual. The mutuality envisioned is not just between themselves. It is enlarged to envision mutual sharing in all aspects of life. This vision of mutuality, as I have already shown, is not a universal passion. For a tremendous number of people in the church, it is seen as foolishness or perceived as a threat. So the kairos moment is not quite yet, in terms of fulfilment. Clergy couples learn that the way of (or even the hope of) achievement of their vision is like walking gently on a pathway through a field of endangered flora. The feminist prophet is able to challenge by showing the manifestation of cultural and gender bias, and the theologian may cry out for God's justice, but it is the pastoral team that must strategize ways to minister in gentle caring ways. In the setting of ministry where people live with all their gifts, and all their fears, the clergy couple are on the living boundary between a new way which is yet to be and the old way which still holds great power.

Tillich called attention to a significant paradox that has a bearing on the present subject. He noted that the hope of establishing the realm of justice and peace, while being an important goal for Christians, is always elusive. This is so because of the reality of the estranged nature of humanity. He writes, "The kingdom of God will always remain transcendent, but it appears as a judgement on a given form of society and as a norm for a coming one."¹¹⁵ The goal we seek, the realm of God on earth, can be only crudely replicated by humans. Indeed, what is the realm of God like? We look through the glass dimly. Even as we do so, we begin to conceive a world that would approximate more closely what we believe God envisioned at Creation's birth. But is our vision coloured by our own prejudice? Our prejudice, by its very nature, is held predominantly in the unconscious. Do we attempt to re-create God and the whole of creation in the

¹¹⁵ Tillich, *On the Boundary* 79.

proud imagination of our hearts?

It is here that clergy couples see that they are living on the boundary between idealism and reality. There are those who see the church as separate from the world. The church, in such a view, stands out as different from the world. This view of the church, as a model distinct from, but impacting on society, can strive for perfection that is not a current reality in the world. Such a prophetic view of the church might, as Letty Russell advises, “no longer permit injustice”. Clergy couples learn quickly, by their experience in the setting of ministry, that the church is not a place of perfection. It fails as a model, that is, as an ideal model. The church is only an acceptable model from the perspective that it is composed of people in the world who seek God’s realm of promise. So the idealistic values are dropped in favour of reality. The challenge to reject injustice becomes more gentle and loving when the ministerial team loves the people to whom they minister. This is particularly so as one begins to see that the very people to whom we minister are also the ones who, by their actions and perceptions of reality, perpetuate a view of the status quo.

Faced with the realities I have just outlined, clergy couples in teams learn a theology of gentle patience. If they do not do so, they get involved in strategies that lead to non-productive outcomes. Anger is a common factor. Couples learn to deal with their anger constructively or, if they do not, they fail in all their attempts. The theology of gentle patience has a payoff. There is the discovery that power cannot legitimately be taken. Power can not be grasped and then reassigned not if one intends to be pastoral at the same time. An interim minister who will be leaving the pastorate at the end of a specific term may have success in this kind of strategy but not incumbents. Power can be shared. With a theology of gentle patience which, after all, has Biblical precedence in many of the healing stories, trust can build so that couples (both the male and female) are given power. It is shared from the power base because it is earned.

In her interviews of female ministers, Lynn Rhodes quotes one woman as saying, “It’s pretty painful not to have power. Look at the faces of battered women, the poor, refugees, minorities - there is pain because of their lack of power. It is shared power that I seek.”¹¹⁶ There is a critical discovery that clergy couples in teams learn on the frontier where they are engaged in ministry. Shared power is earned through trust experienced through caring relationships. Women clergy often resent that their male partner seems to be given what she must earn. It takes much patience and understanding to be part of the creation of a fulfilled vision.

The theology that is developing on the frontier where clergy couple teams minister is a theology that arises from the recognition of the depth of the problem. The issues must be addressed with maturity. There cannot be a continuation of the status quo. There have to be selected times of confrontation. There must be a strategy in place about how to deal with the issues. In fact, one of the discoveries that we made is that some couples, especially those who got into considerable conflict, had no strategy at all. They explained it this way: “We were flying by the seat of our pants.” This was a critical failure for them because they found themselves on the defensive, always reactive rather than proactive. It is important not only to articulate one’s theology but also to be able to articulate a way to turn theory into practice.

The problem that clergy couples confront is multi-faceted. They must minister to people who are already in the congregations. This includes those who resist change and those who are crying out for change. Then there remains the challenge to evangelise, that is to welcome new Christians into the church. This second group is significant. The growth of the church, or even the goal of maintaining the critical number required to be a viable church, is dependent on getting new members. So there is a critical problem.

¹¹⁶ Lynn N. Rhodes, *Co-Creating: A Feminist Vision Of Ministry* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987) 29.

How do the pastors walk the boundary between the claims of the older members and the needs of the new? This is a challenge that requires the skill of good management if ministry is to be effective.

The question that Patriarchy so skilfully answered in the past was this: “Where do I belong?”. This question is still being asked, but the sought for answer is different for many people. Being part of an unequal structure is no longer satisfying. It is here that clergy couples are developing a theology in solidarity with church members struggling to find meaning and life.

A Theology That Is Credible Enough

The practice of ministry is going through many significant changes. These changes reflect the reality of the times in which we are living. There are new hymns and new words to old hymns. There are inventive liturgies that reflect current theological thought. Practical training has been tailored to the task of turning out very competent people who are prepared to minister in a changing world. There is, however, one factor that has made an immense impact on the practice of ministry. Very qualified and able women are now in the pulpit and offering effective ministry in the pastoral setting. Even though they have been confronted with considerable resistance, enrolment of women in seminaries has increased tremendously over the past two decades. In studying the attitudes that people in the church have about women in the ministry, Carol Norén argues that most people view the call of women to ministry as a necessary and fair thing to do. She writes that the contemporary sense of fairness carries the sense that “women ought to have the same opportunities as men” and that gender “does not matter as long as the job gets done”. Furthermore, she asserts that women in professional ministry are

“transforming the way people think about women and the church”.¹¹⁷

One of the most significant points that Norén makes is the following. Most women see their call to ministry as an “on going process” as opposed to a single and momentous conversion experience.¹¹⁸ This is a significant observation. It has implications for the role of ministry. A decision to respond to the call for ministry from that perspective means that the definition of ministry in the historical context will not necessarily be honoured. The call to ministry is seen as process and so are the actions of ministry. The people who, at the outset, had great doubts about the ordination of women had considerable intuition and good reasons to be afraid. Some values long held in the patriarchal church have been challenged. The theological perspectives that women have advanced are as powerful as the example I used when Tillich refused to pray for the success of German soldiers on the battlefield. Why would a chaplain refuse to do this? There are many examples in the scriptures that argue that God takes the side of the righteous. However Tillich felt that this belittled God. His idea of God had developed into something much more real for him. This led to an articulation of a tremendously effective theology. So it is with women in ministry. They are articulating a theology that is transforming, not only them and how they are seen but also how the church is seen.

It is only because women are now being recognised as professional ministers that there is the possibility of clergy couple teams. The perspectives that women bring to the clergy team makes such teams unique. This uniqueness is not always appreciated. Long held values find their roots in collective and individual identification. People do not easily discard these foundation stones. To do so means to rebuild the whole structure that informs oneself of his or her space. When these values are confronted without sensitivity, full reactive power is experienced.

¹¹⁷ Carol M. Norén, The Woman in the Pulpit (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991) 25.

¹¹⁸ Norén 24.

On the frontier where perspectives are changing quickly, clergy couples are developing a theology that is credible enough for them. I use the term “credible enough” because this theology is always in flux. It is not the firm theological perspective of sound Biblical standards where the law prevails. It is not the feminist theology as proposed by some of the notable personages who demand justice. However, it is a feminist theology that emphasises relationships. Clergy couples discover that changes occur through relationships.

The frontier where clergy couples carry out their ministry is an uncertain place. For some, the theology that is developing will be seen as quite inadequate. It is a theology that recognises that the church is composed of people. These people are the people of God. They are the healthy and the not so healthy. They are the flexible and the not so flexible. They are the secure and the not so secure. The fact that there is a husband and wife team as ministers seems comfortable for some and not so comfortable for others.

There is no other theological principle more important than loving the people. Even with tensions from both ends of the spectrum, couple teams still are able to carry out effective ministry. They are not hoodwinking the people by making some think that this is a progressive couple willing to change with the times and by fooling others into thinking that the couple is prepared to leave well enough alone. It is based on the principle that the couple are willing to meet people where they are. It is based on loving people. The people of God, the church, respond as they experience the gospel alive. Of course, those who understand sound counselling principles will recognise the theme of unconditional positive regard¹¹⁹. Such an approach will not bring about a revolution in the church, but it will bring about a slow evolution towards acceptance. Is this not a

¹¹⁹ Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961) 47.

sound Biblical principle?. Is this not the theme raised in stories such as eating with the tax collectors and consorting with the Pharisees?

As one can see, a theology of ministry for clergy couples is based on the acceptance of people where they are found. This is the most important principle. If one attempts to force people into line, even if the outcome seems justified, people will experience it as demonic. In the setting where clergy couples carry out ministry, this is a deadly strategy. This may be true for any pastoral relationship, but the marital dimension of the clergy couple setting may well unleash unconscious insecurities that may (and have in past experience) embroil the congregation in destructive controversy.

Ministers who have been in the pastorate long enough, begin to realise that, besides having a relationship with God, people seek a deep relationship with their pastors. They wish to trust them and to come to know them. In coming to know the pastor, people can slowly change. They can be moved gently towards wishing to honour others with the same unconditional acceptance they have felt through the pastoral relationship. It has to be remembered that the deepest attitudes that we hold are not rational ones. They are emotional and deeply feeling issues. They are spiritual issues. There are those who believe that people can be shamed out of their attitudes. Some presume that if unconscious motivation is brought to the surface where it can be rationally evaluated, change will occur.

The theology that is developed on the frontier where clergy couples minister is somewhat different. It is the theology of relationship. In relationship, one may not even be conscious of changing attitudes. Even more, the theology of the boundary comes to the conclusion that it is only in experiencing another in relationship that genuine change can occur.

Change about one's belief in fundamental values in life is a spiritual experience. John Cobb Jr. addresses the nature of spiritual life in counselling when he writes:

Spiritual life is not always healthy. The ability to transcend oneself and to take responsibility for oneself can lead to paralyzing guilt or to preoccupation with one's own virtue or salvation. The question of meaning can be asked without finding an answer, or with an answer that distorts the aspirations and commitments that follow from it. ... For spiritual life the stakes are higher, the need for mutual support is greater, the dangers of perversion are more serious. **Above all, the spiritual life can be healthy only as it is grounded in the assurance of an acceptance that no human being can give, the ultimate acceptance that is God's.** (my emphasis)¹²⁰

Accepting relationships convey ultimate acceptance. It is in relationship that that change happens. Clergy couples, on the boundary between the old and the new, model a theology of creative potential.

¹²⁰ John B. Cobb, Jr., Theology and Pastoral Care (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) 17.

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APPENDIX I

THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

CLERGY COUPLES AND THE DOUBLE RELATIONSHIP

DATE OF INTERVIEW:.....

NAME:

.....
.....

ADDRESS:

.....
.....
.....

PHONE # OFFICE

RESIDENCE

PLACE OF INTERVIEW

.....

INTERVIEWED

BY:

.....

STATS: Length of time married

.....
Length of time in clergy

team.....
Presently in team Y N

.....
How long out of team

.....
Contract
made.....

Other Data:

Clergy Couples and the Double Relationship:

Investigating the experience that clergy couples have in ministry and shedding some light on the question of the impact of marriage and ministry on the clergy couple and their relationship.

1. Double Relationships: Couples in team ministry are in what could be described as a double relationship. They have a relationship as husband and wife and then they have a professional relationship. Both team ministry and marriage call for a deep and sometimes emotional commitment. There is a profound investment when one shares life as husband and wife.

- a) Have you been able to effectively separate the two?
- b) Have you been able to nurture your marriage covenant and simultaneously honour the ministerial covenant?
- c) How successful have you been at keeping the pastoral charge and pastoral problems out of your home life?
- d) Have you developed a model to assist you in co-operating together in your ministerial setting?.
- e) What effect does the professional relationship have on your marriage relationship?

2. Power:

- a) Have you worked out this issue?
- b) How have you worked it out?

c) Who is in charge? Has your model in ministry been an attempt to be collegial?

b) What influence and impact has the congregation been on your relationship both professionally and personally?

c) How has your relationship affected the congregation?

d) Have congregational members authenticated the position of power of one person and denied the same to the other in the team?

3. Control:

This is not exactly the power issue. Is there one of you that has difficulty to simply let go and trust the other to carry out ministry? If so, could you tell the story?

4. Competition:

Could you tell us about times when you have experienced being in competition with each other?

5. Conflict:

a) How do you deal with disagreements?

b) Do your professional conflicts interfere with your personal life? Can you share an experience?

c) How does your married relationship conflicts effect your ability to share ministry? Can you tell of an incident where you felt quite ineffectual because of personal conflict with your clergy partner?.

d) Transactional Analysis. P-A-C ego states:

Using Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis as a tool, one can easily see a powerful source of conflict in a clergy couple relationship. The professional relationship calls on the couple to respond to each other predominantly from the adult ego states. However, the marriage relationship is quite different. Married couples enjoy each other in a more intimate way. They play together. They have private (secret) stories that entwine each other. These come from the child ego state. When these two states get mixed up in the church office, sometimes inappropriate actions occur that may short-circuit ministry.

Have you had experiences that may be analysed from this perspective? Would you share an anecdote?

6. Traditional Male/Female Roles:

a) How has gender and traditional attitudes affected your professional team relationship?

b) How have gender issues that have arisen out of the team relationship influenced your personal relationship?

c) Has one or the other partner felt devalued? Has this issue been confronted? How?

d) Do you think that because there are two of you sharing ministry that there is an increased or decreased effect on the vitality of the congregation? Explain..

e) What is the best experience that you have had where being in a team made the difference?

f) Can you recount a painful experience?

7. Boundaries:

a) Have you set clear boundaries that define your personal relationship? (Examples: Free Time, The Residence, Expectations.)

b) Are these boundaries respected by the congregation?

c) How do you think these boundaries negatively or positively affect the work of the congregation?

8. Persona (masks):

Everyone has a persona. This is what the world sees. To a great extent, the persona is an important protection for an individual. There is a collective persona that the clergy team develops too. Sometimes protecting it is very stressful. This protection may have something to do with how the couple want their marriage to be seen. The view of the team relationship may also be perceived in need of protection. Congregations may also feel the need to protect the couple's marriage and conspire in the protection.

Would you comment on the above statement and if it fits could you share an example?

9. Comfort with the style and gifts of the partner:

a) Are you always comfortable with your partners style and gifts?.

b) Do you sometime attempt to protect your clergy partner?

c) Is the need to protect your partner a problem?

d) Is it easy to be open with your spouse on a professional level?

e) Do you envy your partner's gifts in ministry?

f) Could you offer an anecdotal account?

10. Support People:

Where do you go for support? Is it effective?

11. Positive and Negative Dynamics:

a) Could you describe some of the positive reasons why you are in a clergy couple relationship?

b) Could you describe some negative reasons that lead you to question the whole idea?

c) Do you intend to continue in a team relationship?

12. Theological Worlds and Understanding the Self:

Each couple will be asked to complete Jones' Theological Worlds survey to determine which theological world they inhabit. The purpose is to determine how closely each party's obsessio and epiphania relate. It may be shown that couples with a similar theological perspective are more compatible. The results may assist in analysing how clergy couples dialogue and deal with the issues that mark the clergy couple relationship.

13. Is there an area of concern, either positive or negative, upon which you wish to comment?

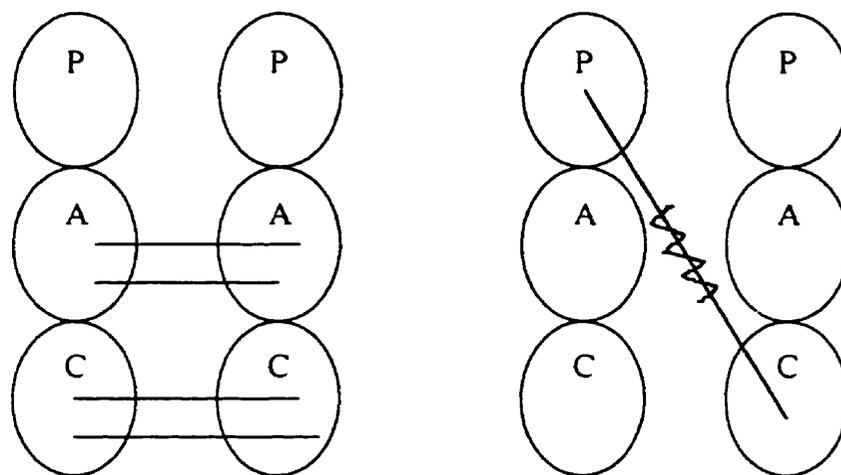
APPENDIX II

Figure A

Figure B

Transactional Analysis

Figure A: The graph represents a simplistic visual description of clergy couple exchanges. The exchanges in Figure A are complimentary. They represent the husband and wife relating appropriately. For example, the Adult-Adult transaction may happen in the office. The Child-Child transaction may happen in the home during personal or fun time.

Figure B: This graph shows a transaction that is not equal. One party is relating to the other as a child. In the professional team relationship experience this would leave one member feeling devalued.

There are many other transactional possibilities. Couples noted that one party may appeal to the other as Child who was in the Adult ego state. This short-circuited communication may lead to conflict.

APPENDIX III

CONSENT FORM

SUBJECT: CLERGY COUPLES IN TEAM MINISTRY

1. Purpose of the Research:

This research project is an inquiry into issues that are at the heart of the relationship of clergy couples in team ministry.

2. Benefits from the Research:

First, this research may open up insights into clergy couple ministry that may be helpful to couples. The second anticipated outcome of this research is that the yielding up of information will help the church at large. There is no reason to believe that the phenomena of married clergy will diminish. It will likely remain a growing trend in the church. The information could be the first step to a plan to train people in effective clergy couple team ministry. There is one other most important anticipated outcome that may have an impact on ministry. Couples who are experiencing stress may get insights from this research that will help them. Counsellors may get a glimpse of clergy couple team ministry reality. Increased awareness of the dynamic ought to have spin off benefits that will touch couples and congregations and the church as a whole.

3. Task of Participants:

Participants are requested to participate in an in-depth interview. The interview will be recorded electronically and in written notes. Participants may also be asked to take part in the verification of the data that they offer.

4. Ethical Issues:

(a) The researcher (Deane Moffat) agrees to maintain the anonymity of the participants. All attempts will be made to remove any data that only serves to identify the participants.

(b) All personal information will be held confidential.

(c) Participants have the right to withdraw from the project without prejudice.

5. Results:

Participants will receive a copy of the final results of the project.

Researcher:

I agree to conduct this research project in an ethical manner as approved by the D. Min Committee of St. Stephen's College, University of Alberta.

NAME _____

R. Deane Moffat

Date: _____

place: _____

Participants:

I agree to participate in this research project and give consent to R. Deane Moffat to use and interpret the data within the confines of the above ethical agreement.

NAME _____

NAME _____

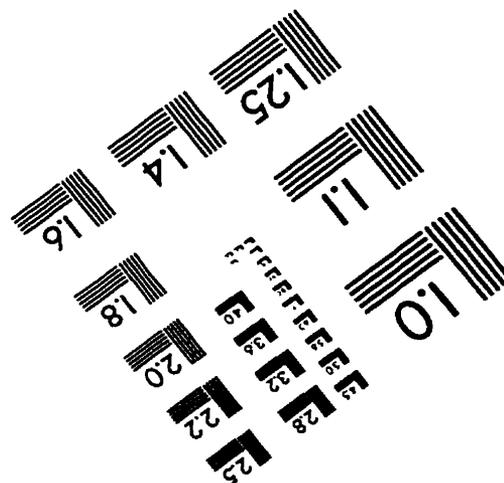
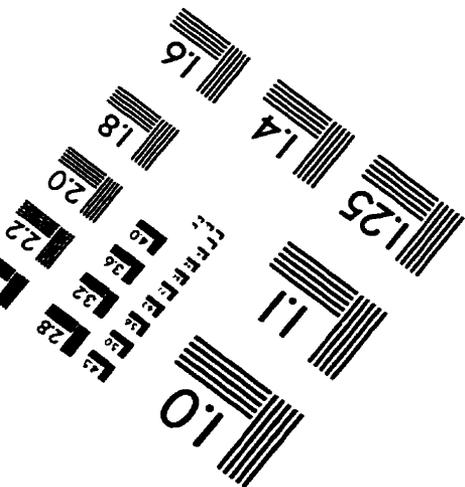
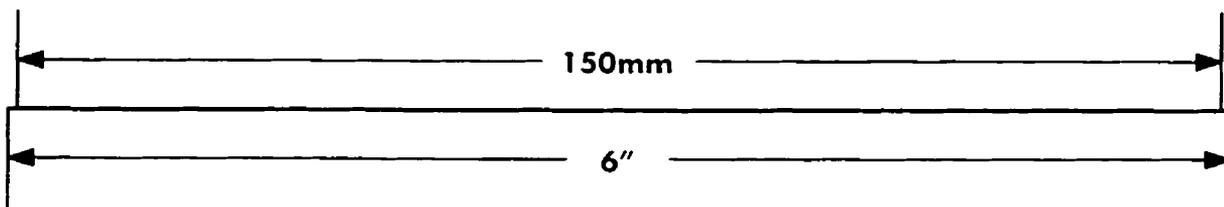
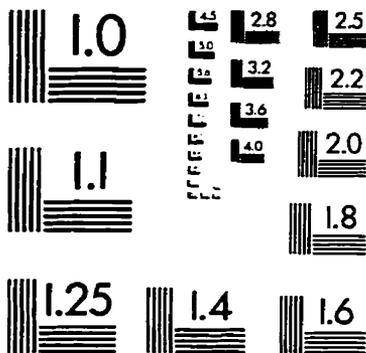
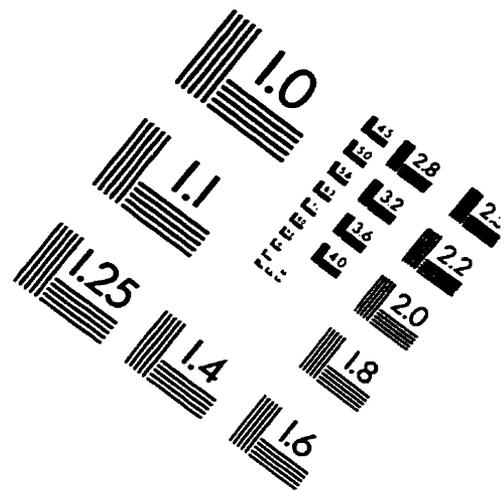
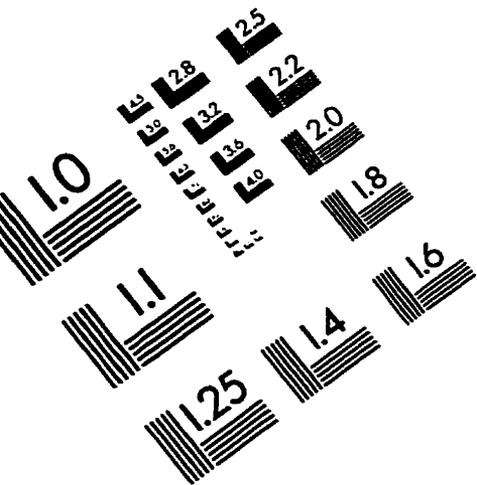
DATE _____

DATE _____

PLACE _____

PLACE _____

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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