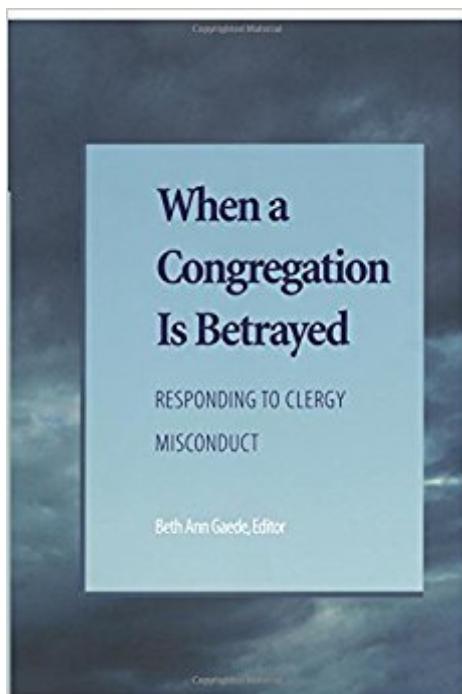


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# When A Congregation Is Betrayed: Responding To Clergy Misconduct



## **Synopsis**

When a Congregation Is Betrayed offers strategic resources to help clergy and lay leaders ultimately to survive and serve well in congregations where clergy misconduct has occurred. Many books, videos, curricula, and organizations address clergy misconduct and its effects on congregations, and the resource section at the end of this volume lists a number of valuable tools recommended by the contributors. In the earliest conversations that led to the development of this book, however, we asked ourselves, "What is missing? What do congregation leaders need to know that no one else has covered?" During many hours of telephone conference calls held over the course of about a year, it became clear we were being called to write a book that focuses on misconduct by clergy involving adult victims. offers strategic resources to help clergy and lay leaders ultimately to survive and serve well in congregations where clergy misconduct has occurred. Many books, videos, curricula, and organizations address clergy misconduct and its effects on congregations, and the resource section at the end of this volume lists a number of valuable tools recommended by the contributors. In the earliest conversations that led to the development of this book, however, we asked ourselves, "What is missing? What do congregation leaders need to know that no one else has covered?" During many hours of telephone conference calls held over the course of about a year, it became clear we were being called to write a book that focuses on misconduct by involving victims. Table of Contents includes: Part 1 The First Response Part 2 Models for Understanding What Happened Part 3 Roles and Responsibilities Part 4 What Do We Do Now? Part 5 Looking Toward the Future Appendices: A. Resources B. The Critical Incident Stress Management Method for Debriefing a Trauma Copyright: 2005

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

"This book is so well done that I predict it will be in every denominational official's and church consultant's briefcase for years to come." -- Speed B. Leas

The Alban Institute again turns out a book that is required reading for clergy and laity alike. This is a hands-on, how-to book. It is about prevention of clergy abuse and even more helpful, a step-by-step primer on what to say and do when all hell breaks loose in a religious organization.

This book is a must-read for clergy serving as 'after-pastor'.

Deborah Pope-Lance in her introduction to *When a Congregation is Betrayed* clearly defined afterpastors as "clergy who serve a congregation or organization after a predecessor's misconduct". She then listed a wide range of misconduct including sexual exploitation, abuse of authority and financial malfeasance. Her discussion of the impact of secrets on the afterpastor and his/her congregation was consistent with my own experience as a survivor of spiritual abuse and as a psychologist who has worked with trauma survivors for many years. Nevertheless, I was surprised to learn that afterpastors are at increased risk for misconduct. That raised the question in my mind about how much stress contributes to misbehavior and reminded me of the point Andrew Sung Park made in *The Wounded Heart of God* how unhealed pain can lead to sin. Nancy Myer Hopkins provided clear concrete steps to take after the disclosure of abuse. Her discussion of old, unreported cases raised the hope in me that someday congregants from my former church may be willing to finally sit down and talk about the events documented in *Not My Making*. The contributors to *When a Congregation is Betrayed* are to be commended for insisting on full disclosure of clergy abuse and recognizing the institutional evil that exists in all denominations. This book consists of thirty chapters written by twelve contributors, mostly clergy. A few also have degrees in psychology or counseling. The chapters divided into five sections cover the first response after abuse has been disclosed, various models for understanding abuse, the role and responsibilities of the afterpastor and response team, what steps to take after the initial crisis and setting up policy and procedures to help prevent a reoccurrence of abuse. Of the six chapters that covered various models for understanding clergy abuse I identified most with those that focused on sin and justice.

Unfortunately, there wasn't a seventh chapter integrating the different models nor a discussion when one was better to use than another. When a Congregation is Betrayed is meant to be a guide for afterpastors. Perhaps if the clergy at my church had read it they might have held the recommended disclosure meeting instead of trying to suppress the conflict. Such a meeting may have resolved the conflict sooner and I would not have been forced out of my congregation. I certainly agree with the authors that a rush to forgiveness only results in cheap grace without real behavioral reform. Survivors need their abusers to recognize their sin, repent, make restitution and reform their behavior. I had some difficulty believing all adult victims of clergy abuse/sexual misconduct are totally without blame. While I agree clergy as professionals bear almost all of the blame adults have the responsibility not to covet another's spouse and, if married, to keep their vow to forsake all others and be faithful to their spouse. While it is reasonable to hold clergy to a higher standard, I believe it is also reasonable to ask why some individuals rebuff their pastor's extramarital advances while others do not. To insist they had no responsibility infantilizes them and dis-empowers them. I also found Glenndy Sculley's statement that spouses of offending clergy "must be encouraged... to leave the congregation where the pastor served" disturbing. Whether one believes the victim has any responsibility or not, the offending clergy's spouse is the one clear innocent party in the triangle. He or she has been betrayed. He or she has as much right as the victim to seek the support of her faith community. Whether you call it clergy abuse or an affair, an affair is never just an affair. Spouses are betrayed. Families are disrupted. Such liaisons involve deception and often false promises. I wish there was more hard, scientific evidence to draw on. I fault my own profession here. Psychologists have often been disinterested and sometimes even hostile to religion and have not considered it a subject worthy of study. When a Congregation is Betrayed helps expose the problem of abuse within faith communities and offers some helpful suggestions about what to do about it.

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