



Here is information that has been gleaned from the books, "Mad Church Disease", "Ill Intentioned Dragons" Conflict in the Church

When a pastor is in conflict with a member, the member is called an antagonist.

### **Antagonist's Personalities**

- May have been vocal about not wanting this pastor in their church and when it was decided to bring him, enjoys proving he/she was right, that pastor will not work out.
- The antagonist may be a moody and unhappy person. They seem threatened if others seem to be happy with the pastor. (They may lack nurture and enjoy seeing people hurt or in pain).
- They have had a pattern of unhappy relationships with others in their past. They have had problems with anger, envy and jealousy. They are usually known by their family members as extremely controlling personalities.
- These people enjoy using power and control over others, as it makes them feel more important.
- This person may enjoy drama and find it enjoyable to see others be critical and stoke fires against the pastor.
- Their need to be "right" is so important they may manipulate or twist facts to get a positive response to their opinion. So desperate to get their way, they may use bluster, threats and accusations to get their way. Very self-oriented-not servant oriented.
- They may have some underlying mental health issues or personality disorders.
- They believe they are the **authority** in the church affairs despite not having training or experience in them. They may believe themselves to be more concerned than others about how the church business is conducted. (Kenneth C. Haugk "Antagonists in the Church").
- They have issues with unforgiveness and will accumulate grievances against the pastor and others.
- They have difficulty acknowledging their limitations and are slow to apologize ("Well Intentioned Dragons")
- They have an insatiable appetite for more stroking and come up with more demands, attacking the person or their performance. If a pastor tries to do change as the person wishes, they do not give him credit. Meeting their needs is a full time job and never able to meet their needs.

- But usually their problems are so complex, they need more in-depth counseling than a pastor can appoint in his time. (Well Intentioned Dragons”). When he pulls back or suggests counseling with a professional, they may accuse him of abandonment.
- Entitled-their issues are more important than anyone else. They want to be given an audience immediately. They think their demands are to be met immediately. They would totally disregard those who do not agree with them and not spend time with them.
- They have addictive personality traits. They possess such high standards for other people but not for themselves (double standards). When not dealing with their own shortcomings, it is easy to become fixated on the pastor or other people’s problems to avoid their own.
- Can be obsessive, unable to let go and move on.
- Easily jumps to conclusions without clarifying problems.
- May display Narcissistic Personality Disorder. They are about lifting themselves up and lack nurture or kindness for others. They may have little conscience, can be arrogant and usually are self-centered. They can be exploitive, inconsiderate, and unrealistic and attempt to control others for their own gain, while disguising themselves as devout members working for the good of the church.
- There are differing degrees of antagonists who don’t persevere but never the less, sew discord quietly.
- May be upset at God because of disappointments or hardship but attack the minister instead.
- May be about a need for power.

### **Antagonists Behavior**

- They persevere until they get what they want.
- May start asking if others are unhappy with the pastor and supply others with information about why they themselves are not happy with the pastor. May also phone or email other members
- May share assumptions or make innuendos about the pastor’s behaviors or style.
- May start writing letters and some may be unsigned. Then when their directives are not followed, they say, “He has been informed about that!”
- May jump to conclusions about the parent’s behaviors or plans. Such as, “the pastor doesn’t smile much, I believe they are struggling with depression”. Or if he doesn’t do as this person wishes, “he just doesn’t seem to care about his members feelings.”
- Secretly plots plans and then attacks.
- The actual goal, conscious or unconscious, is to hurt, humiliate, destroy and remove the pastor from their responsibilities. They may use manipulation or bullying techniques to accomplish this.
- Antagonists seem to have lots of time to build their case against the pastor. Most often they will accuse pastors of being lazy, inefficient, disorganized,

unfriendly, have poor leadership, questionable moral behavior or an arrogant, unchristian attitude.

- Can be harsh to the pastor, but charming to members. This is how they win approval and support for their agendas and people may say, “Why I don’t think Betty has a mean bone in her body”.
- Antagonists are persistent and tenacious, hoping to wear a pastor down.
- They often ask for meetings, unconcerned with the pastor’s schedule and wanting a meeting right away. Often are in a hurry to discuss their demands and opinions.
- Angry when a person refuses to submit to their demands or take time to process their concerns. Want immediate changes and results.
- May make threats to the pastor’s reputation, family or to tell others what they know if they don’t get what they want.
- Attempt to get themselves on the board or on other committees and are vocal in business meetings.
- If they cannot get enough people to reflect their opinions, they may bring in others family members or non-attending members to vote for their recommendations.
- Triangulation- tries to get the conference against the pastor, or the wife against her husband’s opinions, or the board to have an agenda before the pastor arrives. Enjoys talking to people in “secret”.
- Verbalize their opinions to everyone but those responsible or a part of the solution.
- Enjoy the problems more than resolving them and are disappointed when the problem is rectified.
- Makes accusations based on own faulty beliefs and opinions, not facts. Does not clarify an issue before judging.
- May try to divide pastor from church based on his stands on specific issues.
- Try to twist what the person says and quote it incorrectly to prove their assumption that the person is bad. Exaggeration may be part of this.
- Attempt to make the pastor fear they may be plotting something against him, keeping the pastor in the dark while they plan secretly.
- Actively recruit other members to be a part of the plan to get rid of the minister.
- It has been found that antagonists rarely give much of their money to the church and yet have so many opinions on how the money should be used.
- They often seek out people who are easily intimidated to be their followers.

### **A Pastor Or Member That Most Vulnerable to Attacks**

Pastor’s may or may not invite problems also. There are some specific characteristics that researchers have established with pastors that are attacked.

- Type B personalities: Patient, laid back, easy-going, has difficulty saying “no”, may get burn-out, allows others to run over boundaries, doesn’t want to hurt people so doesn’t take a stand, may be depressed.

- Being naïve and inexperienced, wanting to meet all needs all the time.
- Doing too much counseling. Not only does he know your problems, they think you use the info to make decisions about them and they resent you know so much. May be envious. Discussing inappropriate subjects with members.
- Neediness. Empty, bored, no passion with job. Low self-esteem, wants people to compliment him all the time, needs stroking. Always focused on self. Chronic pain, burnout or other issues get in the way of doing his job.
- Paranoid about people and suspicious all the time.
- Poor administrator. Impulsive, unable to finish projects, poor decision making. Disorganized and unscheduled.
- Egotistical and only surrounds self with a select few to reflect only his own opinions and ideas and ignore others.
- Poor communicator or immature way of handling anger like getting mad and giving people the silent treatment. Martyr behaviors.
- Fearful to reach out to their superiors for help and support, which could have helped with making a plan and accountability.
- Asking for help from the conference or colleague but not persisting when it isn't going well, and more help is needed.
- Thinking that all criticism is an attack when there could be easy ways to adjust or change the way a situation is handled. Seen as controlling in conversations and meetings. Seen as rigid and not open. Authoritarian and not democratic.
- Did not set boundaries with their critics and allow them to attack regularly, in board meetings, public or scheduling continuous meetings with them.
- Afraid to deal with conflict. Just wants peace and lets problems continue without a plan. This allows the antagonists to gain control and influence.
- Jealousy with elders or others in the church.
- Not being pro-active on helping members to conduct themselves with integrity when antagonists start to stir up conflict.
- Demeanor encourages issues. When bullies attack, crying, being defensive, angry or avoiding conflict. Losing your temper is losing the entire war in the church and your respect.
- Seen as administrative only, arrogant or judgmental, but not loving and concerned about his congregation. Unrealistic expectations of volunteers in the church. Treating people like slaves. Bullies others to do what he wishes.
- Doesn't take care of self (mental health issues, emotional issues, weight gain, etc.)
- Wounded from the past and has many issues from past get into his way to minister to others.
- Wife appears indifferent to the members or children run without supervision.
- Allows self to get triangulated.
- Do not have friends they are connected with outside their church and do not develop friendships with other men in the church.
- Thinking mental health help would be a sign of weakness.

## **Comments About Good Leaders**

The people who influence us the most are not those who detain us with their continual talk, but those who live like the stars in the sky, simply and unaffectedly. Those are the lives that mold and shape us.

If you want to be of use to God, maintain the proper relationship with Jesus Christ-staying focused on him and he will make use of you every minute you live-yet you will be unaware on the conscious level of your life that you are being used of him.

Oswald Chambers

## **Good Leaders**

- A good leader understands the hopes, dreams and aspirations of his people.
- A good leader believes in transparent honesty and accountability.
- A good leader works towards the greater good of his people.
- A good leader shares in the power of the people to choose.
- A good leader is tactful, frugal, responsible and responsive.
- A good leader does today what others are thinking of tomorrow.
- Not afraid of mistakes, no matter how minute they are.
- Paves the way for future generations.
- Advocates for the people.
- Is a good follower.

## **Social Skills of Successful Ministers**

- Smiles
- Doesn't ignore people even when he/she doesn't want to talk. Says "hello" to everyone they pass.
- Makes people feel they are worthy or important.
- Doesn't brag.
- Has a sense of humor. Laughs occasionally.
- Don't discuss his/her problems with members.
- Encourages people and looks for positive behaviors to comment on.
- Doesn't criticize people or put them down, personally, or when he/she talks to others.
- Diverse and not narrow in interests.
- Initiates meeting with all strangers at church.
- Helps others as possible.
- Always looks clean and groomed.
- Keeps confidences.
- Doesn't act cool. Cool is never popular on an older person.
- Listens and is an encourager.
- Remembers names.
- Thanks people and shows appreciation.

- Has the fruits of the spirit.

### **Negative Effects on the Minister/Minister's Spouse and Family**

Prolonged, negative stress can cause: anxiety, fatigue, trauma, social phobia, poor concentration, anger, irritability, loss of self-confidence, self-esteem, depression, family breakdown, isolation, loss of faith, church phobia, frequent illness, prolonged absence from work, and in severe cases, an end to ministry altogether. **Recovery can take years.**

### **Safeguarding the Clergy**

- Ask your board to enter into an agreement not to side but to settle issues as they arise.
- Take steps to take care of yourself physically, emotionally and spiritually. Get plenty of rest.
- Insist on facts not opinions or innuendos.
- Contact the conference for help.
- Advise antagonists they are not to talk to your children or your wife. Let them know you will contact an attorney if this happens.
- Keep leaders advised about antagonists and how to address them.
- Settle issues as they arise.
- Be firm with antagonists and set boundaries.
- Need to take their time off.
- They need to go on Sabbatical if they are exhausted or burned out.
- Remain calm, rational, objective and not involved in the anxiety.
- Continuing Education is necessary for additional study and skills to deal with everyday issues and problems they face.
- There should be a ministry review to see how goals are going, what issues still need to be resolved and to evaluate if there are any changes that are needed.
- Consulting- with a ministerial person to get new ideas, mentoring, resolution or support.
- Train the people in conflict resolution.
- Good record keeping and transparency for finances, etc. is very helpful and good proof of activities.
- Conference needs to be taught conflict resolution skills.
- Don't allow people to call and complain anonymously. Ask if they have talked to the pastor first. Let them know you will be sharing with the pastor what they have said to you about him.
- Realize conflict is inevitable but mean spiritedness is unbiblical.
- Don't allow staff or officers to be mouthpieces for the discontented.
- It may be too damaging for a person to continue in the same church where they are being bullied.

- We need to be healthy. 71% of ministers are overweight by 35 lbs. 2/3 say they skip meals 3 or more days per week. 50 percent say they do not get regular exercise. 87% say they don't get enough sleep at least one day per week and 52 have experienced a physical symptom of stress. (Ellison Research)
- Consider a new district and re-invent yourself.
- Wounded pastors will heal better if they reach out to other wounded pastors.
- Ministers need to protect their children.
- Watch who you share information with about your personal life. It may be a person who wants to use it to hurt you. (Mad Church Disease 166)
- Recognize the feelings that come up when you are hurt. You will experience anger, sadness, loneliness, doubt and fear. (Mad Church Disease 167)
- It isn't easy not spewing all the hurt about someone and what they have done for you. But a pastor's feelings are usually shared with others. Find a mature, neutral person who can help you with the situation objectively. Counselors are by law, unable to share information. We need human perspective and empathy when we are going through difficult times. (MCD 168)
- Pray for those who hurt you. (MCD 168)
- Find strength to forgive those who hurt. (MCD 169)
- Jesus found time to be alone to re-coup from His duties. When spending time with God is replaced by spending time doing things for God, our spiritual tanks can be sucked dry. The average pastor prays less than 39 minutes a day and 21% less than 15 minutes per day. (Ellison Research)
- All ministers need rest.
- We need friendship to be balanced. That is not about being weak.
- Pursue Integrity-don't make empty promises or deny things planning to fix them later. Many ministers don't like conflict and people will think they are dishonest when they minimize things.
- Avoid all appearance of misconduct with the opposite sex. (WAGP 17)

#### Healthy Churches that Neutralize Problems Well

- Plan and encourage their pastor to have a long and healthy ministry.
- Invest in their pastor- ask for help; send him to trainings on leadership or anger management, marriage retreats.
- Leadership is firm with the antagonists that they are not going to allow people to be destroyed. If it is in their power or awareness, they are not to allow antagonists to talk to anyone in the church about their dissatisfaction, and encourage the member to pray for their pastor.
- When an antagonist starts to complain about the church or pastor, members need to say something like, "I am not a part of that problem, so please don't tell me something that could negatively impact my worship experience here.
- Churches cannot be enablers for those who enjoy bullying.
- Determine who are those who are seeking to destroy the pastor or the church and evaluate their spiritual and financial contributions to the church.

- Address concerns and keep strong boundaries in a meeting together.
- Support and encourage your pastor.
- The leadership of the church should meet with the antagonists and insist they stop attacks and gossip.
- The church needs to be more concerned with outreach, evangelism, ministry and missions and the spiritual health of the members than in taking care of only it's members and their needs. When it is others focused, people don't self-destruct as much.
- Make sure the officers are not into control but outreach.
- Protect the members and the pastor. Do not passively watch harm being caused by culprits and do nothing.
- Be patient, loving and understanding of your minister's actions. They are human beings and we need to always practice the golden rule.
- If churches do not stop the abuse of a pastor, they members are not likely to keep attending church.
- No antagonists should be on committees or boards. Their behavior should be called into question. Supportive, problem-resolving people need to be officers.
- Ask people to step down if they start intimidating the church members or pastor.
- Have suggestion boxes in the church and allow people to express ideas and suggestions.
- If someone makes an untrue accusation, have church staff deal with it and ask for reconciliation.

## Helping a Pastor

1. Have an accountability team to address issues and keep the pastor accountable to the mission of the church.
2. *Encourage them.* Most of what they hear in a week is problems, complaints, & life's difficulties. It is refreshing to have someone call just to encourage & be built up. Send them a card & smile when you see them. Do this particularly when times are tumultuous. Especially his wife!!!
3. *Affirm them.* When they do something good... tell them! When they get it right... pat them on the back. A positive word of affirmation goes a long way.
4. Listen closely and take notes from the sermon. Look your pastor straight in the eye, and occasionally nod your head and say, "Amen!" Begin to make serious efforts to apply the life lessons you learn from the sermons. In six months, he'll preach himself to death.
5. Pat your pastor on the back and brag on his good points two or three times a

month. Make a bunch of phone calls to your friends and neighbors and tell them all the good things about your pastor. In a little while, so many more people will start coming to your church, you'll have to hire an associate pastor, and your senior pastor will be free to leave.

6. Re-dedicate your life to Christ. Then make an appointment with the pastor sometime next week. Ask him to give you some job you could do for the church, preferably some lost people you could go visit with a view to winning them to Christ. He'll likely die of heart failure on the spot.
7. Organize a ministry to call on the shut-ins and elderly members of the church, and encourage the pastor, as the early church did (see Acts 6:1-7), to devote more of his time to prayer, the study of God's Word and sermon preparation. Tell him you'll take care of the widows if he'll take care of the preaching. He'll think the whole congregation has gone completely crazy and start looking for another church immediately.
8. Get a whole bunch of the church members to unite in earnest intercessory prayer for the pastor, his ministry and his family. Organize prayer meetings in which you pray for the growth of the church and the blessing of the pastor. The pastor may become so effective in ministry that some larger church will gladly take him off your hands.
9. *Be determined to help them be successful.* I get frustrated w/ critics who sit back & wait for something to go wrong. They look for ways to undercut the minister, then pounce & criticize him to anyone who'll listen. If you're not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.
10. *Constructive Criticism.* This is preventative medicine. Yet it should be done properly & in order. Sadly, churches wait until too much damage is done to be corrected OR they pressure him until he leaves. From Mt 18:15-18. A person who loves the minister, and *the minister KNOWS he is loved by this person*, should go to him in private and talk with him (Mt 18). This person MUST go with humility & brokenness... in love for the minister in keeping with Galatians 6:1-2. He must be honest with the minister about the gravity of the situation and the issues at hand. However... if he won't listen or continues improper behavior, then another person *who loves the minister* should go with the first person to talk to him again. If he still won't listen or change his behavior, then bring him before a body of men *who love him and want him be successful where he is now*. Have a plan to aid and assist him for his good... which will also be good for the church. This is God's will and is called... REDEMPTION.
11. GETTING OUT OF THE SITUATION, AT LEAST FOR A SHORT TIME, CAN HELP GIVE YOU PERSPECTIVE

## Conference Involvement

- Strong intervention by the ministerial director or a conference official
- Support for the pastor (not perfect support if he does wrong) and keeping people focused on solving conflicts biblically.
- Minister's support group
- Have pastor get involved in anger management if needed.
- Not triangulating and listening to a church person then judging. Finding out information and evaluating what the pastor says as well.
- When the antagonists are in and out of the conference office, it puts the pastor on the offensive.
- Quick response when a pastor calls for help.
- Ministerial director or conference person needs to follow through on what they say they will do to help them with the problem.
- Conference official should not verbally attack the pastor in front of his congregation or members making the antagonists victorious.
- Listen to the pastor.
- Allow them to be moved if they are becoming damaged by the members.
- Have a joint venture to keep the churches healthy.
- Teach conflict resolution from a Biblical perspective.
- The conference needs to be clear publicly they will not tolerate triangulation, secrets about church staff or anonymous rumors.
- Don't agree something should be done but not do anything about it.
- Pastors need a job description to help them understand what is expected.
- Clear chain of command on who the pastor calls for help. Call District supervisor?
- If there is a problem with the pastor, what do they do? Talk to the pastor or call the office? Even if there are problems, no pastor should be abused.
- Work to get problems resolved as soon as possible.
- Ask a pastor with forgiveness problems to read about forgiveness and make a book report.

## Conference May Need to Require Extra Help for a Wounded Pastor

- May need to be diagnosed and tested.
- May need therapy.
- Help with getting them vocational counseling for a career change.
- Help with resume
- Give p 210 and 211 from The Wounded Minister.

## Things not to do

- **BLAME:** It cannot be said too frequently - responsibility for abuse and bullying, and the damage it causes, rests *solely* with the abuser(s).
- **PRESCRIBE:** Telling a bullied minister what to do to solve his/her problems

is unlikely to go down well! They will almost certainly already have tried everything and anything to stop what is happening. And, what may seem easy and obvious to you may be impossible for them. Never underestimate the power of a bully, or the extent of the damage which bullying can cause.

- **DENY:** You may find it hard to accept that churches can bully their ministers, or to believe that a particular person is the bullying type, but to deny the experiences of a person who is being bullied achieves nothing positive - and may, in fact, prove more damaging than the bullying itself. People who are being bullied are likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and *reactive* depression and anxiety. These are injuries caused by the abuse and bullying and should not be confused with mental illness. Many GPs, and even some psychiatrists, will not recognize PTSD and will simply diagnose depression. This can lead to the confusion that the person is mentally ill, and that it was their illness, which led to their problems in the first place.
- Forgiveness should not be confused with healing. Whilst forgiveness may be an essential part of eventual recovery from bullying, it will not in itself provide instant healing. And insisting that an abused minister must forgive an abuser before he/she is ready and able to do so can be a further abuse. Equally, an inability to cope with bullying and its after effects should never be attributed to a failure to forgive, or to any kind of spiritual inadequacy. Emotional injuries are no different from physical injuries - prayer can help, but simply applying spiritual solutions will not normally cure them.
- Take stress reactions seriously and provide worry-free rest before the damage becomes more serious or permanent. The golden rule when a person is suffering the effects of too much stress is "remove the stress from the person, or the person from the stress". Most stressed people will ignore the body's warning signs and continue to struggle on, which can cause long term health problems. Clergy, who are generally highly committed people, are particularly susceptible to this, especially since seeking help is too often regarded as an admission of failure or spiritual inadequacy. Stressed people often need a "rescuer" who will remove the burdens and enable them to rest. It is important not to assume that congregations will provide all the practical support necessary for over-stressed clergy to rest. Many congregations find it difficult to minister to their clergy, and where the stress is due to bullying, there may be little willingness to do so anyway. However, it is important when dealing with stressed people to respect their dignity and not to simply take over control of their lives (eg. by making decisions about them, or assessments of them, behind their backs), as loss of control is of itself very stressful, and may replicate the experience of being bullied (see above).
- Enable more effective measures to be taken against lay officers who repeatedly abuse power and/or bully the clergy, and reduce the likelihood of

such power abuse by (for example) limiting the length of time that any one person can hold office. At present there is nothing that clergy can do to prevent lay officers who are bullying them from holding office. And in smaller parishes churchwardens and other officers may be chosen for their willingness to take on a job that no one else will do, rather than for their suitability to hold that position, and for this reason the congregation may tolerate any bullying behavior. In these circumstances, it is all too easy for unscrupulous people over a period of many years to set themselves up to be indispensable, and then to hold the congregation to ransom by threatening to resign unless they get their own way. The growth of a more collaborative style of ministry may be sound in principle, and has undoubtedly reduced the possibilities for clergy to bully their congregations; however, over recent years the lines of authority within a congregation have become increasingly blurred, creating the opportunities for greater power abuse by lay members and officers. Responsibility without a corresponding authority is recognized as being a significant cause of stress in the workplace, and this is the position that many clergy find themselves in. *(See also Supplementary Questions below)*

- Address the problems of excessive expectations on clergy, long working hours and "living over the shop" Expectations of clergy are often far too high, and most clergy work far too many hours each week. Some clergy place too many expectations on themselves, but many congregations object to their clergy taking a regular weekly day off and expect them to work from early morning to late evening on their working days. Resisting these expectations can in it be very stressful. Bringing clergy under employment legislation may help in addressing some of these problems, but further steps will be needed to educate and change attitudes if the expectations on clergy are to become more realistic. In addition to reducing expectations and working hours, the boundaries between work and home can be improved by ensuring that *all* clergy houses have separate living and working areas, with separate entrances to each, and separate phone lines for work and family.
- Consider the whole family when responding to stressed or bullied clergy One of the things that can make the clergy particularly vulnerable to bullying and stress is that they "live on the job" in tied houses. Under stress it can become very difficult to maintain boundaries between work and family, and the whole family may suffer the effects of stress caused by the working environment. With bullying in particular, the spouse and the children may themselves be targeted in attempts to undermine the clergy. Even if the family is not particularly affected by the stress, they will be affected by a move, resignation and/or retirement, and their needs must be taken into account. If they are not this will simply increase the stress and sense of failure on the part of the clergy person, and will therefore do little to resolve the problem in the longer term.

- Too few church councils dare to admit their own shortcomings and do not take the time to review what went wrong and to shoulder at least some of the blame for that 'failed marriage'. We all know of church council members who are strong-headed, stubborn and need to be in control of their pastors. Sadly, they are never held accountable by fellow council members and certainly never disciplined for their lack of grace.
- So, before a council looks for ways to 'get rid of their minister', they need to begin by asking: "Is it me?" I have experienced both sides of the coin; when a pastor had serious issues and also where a council had serious issues. May both parties find the grace to accept their own inadequacies.

When wounded, pastors should make their primary focus, recovery from burnout. We are charged to take care of others and cannot do this when we are neglecting ourselves. This causes neglect to our churches and community.

We have the power through God to survive circumstances; it is the same power given Jesus through his most difficult trials and times. Relying on ourselves will only cause us unnecessary pain and mess up potentially divinely appointed experience for those whom we come into contact. God can help us work through our circumstances.

Know that:

Pastor's can be the loneliest person in the congregations because they have no personal friends, can't show partiality and can't share personal info.

Wife can be isolated. He needs to spend time with her.

Children are in glass houses and need understanding, as they are only children.

Their marriage is the role model for the congregation. Wife should be #1 priority. They can experience spiritual growth when they are able to participate in evangelism. She is not to coordinate the church activities or be the hostess all the time.