

From: MTM Foundation [charleschandler@mtmfoundation.ccsend.com] on behalf of MTM Foundation [mtmfoundation@verizon.net]
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To: mtmfoundation@verizon.net
Subject: The Ambush Came Following an Illness



Ministering to Ministers Foundation, Inc. Newsletter
April 20, 2011

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Topics on Your Mind

Click this link to let us know the kind of articles we could provide that you would find enlightening and interesting.

The Ambush Came at the Moment He Felt Most Affirmed

-Vulnerability in illness, a sign for some to move in-

After 20 years, his enthusiasm had ebbed and his ministry was coasting toward retirement when the first chest pains struck. Heart catheterization and blood work led to by-pass surgery followed by days in the hospital and weeks of recovery at home. Church members who had seemed more and more indifferent called, sent cards, prayed, and visited. His return to the pulpit was greeted with a warm welcome and a larger than normal crowd.

He told a group of peers about the loving support and response that his congregation had provided during his illness. He had been surprised by their warmth. His sense of place and affirmation for the congregation were constant in the days after his return to the pulpit. Things seemed brighter until a deacon's meeting around 3 months after his return to the pulpit. Someone in the group suggested that it was time to consider a change in ministerial leadership.

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MTM Website

Future Wellness Retreats

July 11-15, 2011
Carson-Newman College
Jefferson City, TN

July 25-29, 2011
Samford University
Birmingham, AL

For additional information go to the
MTM Website:

[MTM WEBSITE](#)

What's MTM all about?

Our Mission:

The Ministering to Ministers (MTM) Foundation seeks to be advocates for clergy and their families in all faith groups who are experiencing personal or

The ambush came at the moment that he had felt the most affirmed and sure of the loving affirmation of the people whom had visited during their sickness, comforted in their grief, celebrated their anniversaries, officiated at children's wedding, and baptized their children. Some of these people seemed to be turning on him at the very moment that he had thought that they were returning his care to him and at a moment that his own vulnerability made him even more sensitive to the rejection.

In hind sight, one can see that he missed the big change. He had gone from the provider of care to the recipient. The church's unspoken contract expected him to care for them and not for them to care for him. They felt that they were doing what is "best" for the congregation when he seemed less able to lead and provide.

His plight proved not that unusual. Congregations minister to one another. They will offer prayers, visit, bring casseroles, and send cards to members and non-members in times of sickness, grief, and trouble. For all their compassion, they can also be less sensitive and aware that not all within are willing to be that responsive. Vulnerability in illness can be the sign for some people to move and do what they may have wanted to do for some time. They feel emboldened when the illness strikes the leader. They act when the congregation knows that the pastor missed making visits and worship during an illness.

The pastor mentioned was given some time to make the move, but his feeling of betrayal and hurt abided. He faced the need to find another place when his vigor had ebbed and the church call committees were more interested in younger and "more vital" seeming pastors. He found himself moving to an earlier retirement than he had hoped and needing to find supplementary income to care for his family.

The church was left with many feeling the guilt of hitting a person when he was down and vulnerable. Many of the members wanted to blame a few who voiced displeasure with the former pastor's leadership. The forced early retirement sowed seeds of discord for future pastors and for the church. They moved forward with an open wound that would not heal that easily.

That pastor was one of many pastors whom I have known that faced a challenge within months of illness. In the immediate crisis the people rally with loving support. At the same time the illness seems to offer a time for "seeds for change" to germinate. The moment when the minister seems to be back on his or her feet

professional crisis due to deteriorating employment or congregation-clergy relationships.

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can prove to be his or her most vulnerable time. Old disputes and concerns can re-emerge and even have a life that they may have lacked if illness had not occurred.

As those involved in Ministering to Ministers Foundation know, the relationship between the minister and a congregation can be warm and supportive but also filled with uncertainty that can erupt at surprising times.

These kinds of actions have caused many to ask "Have you noticed that the military strives to leave no soldier behind, but churches seem to have a tendency to shoot their wounded?"

Roy Ford
Trustee, MTM Foundation



Past Issues of *MTM Messenger* on Line

Click this link, [MTM Messenger](#), if you would like to read past issues of the MTM Messenger. Interesting articles, personal testimonies and other information are found in each issue.

Recent Retreat Participants Respond

"This is one of the greatest experiences of my life. Had I known MTM existed earlier, I might have been able to avoid some of the trauma that my family and I experienced. I just want to thank everyone who helped make it possible for us to participate in the retreat."

"Why was I not taught some of this information in seminary? I believe if our denominations would provide the kind of insight and resources which MTM provides it could make a big difference for both ministers and congregations."

The ten participants in the Greenlake, Wisconsin, retreat came from Massachusetts, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee and Virginia. They represented six denominational affiliations.

Will you consider making a contribution to help underwrite the next Wellness Retreat by [clicking here](#)? Every contribution does make a difference.

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