

Scenario with Answers

After a Deacon in a city church is convicted of sexual offenses against a relative who is a member of the church, he is sentenced to a New York prison. Subsequently, the church pastor desires to explore ministry with criminal offenders. He attends a program for released offenders, and meets a man who was convicted of sexual abuse in the first degree for actions against an 8 – year old boy committed in the man's pediatric practice in Monroe County. He surrendered his medical license, served a prison sentence and was released on parole. He still attends his home church in the area. In the summer, he comes to worship once at the pastor's church because it is close to his residence. In early fall, he informs the pastor that he is leaving his home-church due to conflicts in the congregation over his presence.

With the pastor's consent, he starts to attend church weekly. (The pastor bases his decision on the church's mission statement: it pledges the church as a place of acceptance for those unwelcome elsewhere.) When the stewardship drive begins, the man asks for a pledge card. A month later, he is recognized at worship by a church member who as a child was his patient. Aware of his criminal history, the member reports his presence and her fears to the pastor. She feels responsible for knowing significant information that she has not told the rest of the congregation. The pastor informs the man that he has been recognized. The man withdraws from worship while he decides what his next steps are. The pastor approaches Presbytery leadership and asks what to do.

Questions:

1. Who are the parties that are, will be or could be affected by this situation?
2. What are the key issues?
3. What guidance would you give?

Answers:

1. Who:

- Former Dr.
- Former patient
- Session
- Pastor
- Parents
- Children

2. Key Issues:

- Who to inform?
- Relationship between issue and mission statement
- What is the responsibility of pastor to inform Session? Congregation?
- Terms of Parole
 - i. Documentation
 - ii. Proximity to children

- Responsibilities of one church to inform another as an individual moves from church to church.

3. Guidance:

- How to be Pastor to the Dr?
- How to address with the church, can the church be true to its mission statement?
- Pastoral to congregation?
- How to be aware of new member's background?