

WE CLERGY ARE COMMUNITY

It is important for our own health and the health of our ministry, that clergy find ways to build community with other clergy. They are one of the few people who understand what you are experiencing.

A good place to begin in finding companionship with other clergy is to seek out those opportunities in which you can have fun together. It can both provide a break from the intensity of the ministry and is often an easier path to building relationships. One of the sad realities of many people's lives is they have forgotten how to play and just have fun.

Not all clergy are going to seek out companions in among other clergy for an experience of fun. This is where a judicatory can play an important role in support of all clergy.

THE PRESBYTERY TAKES FIRST STEP

The first step is to affirm the value of fun activities in interrupting the intensity of ministry and building collegueship. By merely announcing that the presbytery is going to engage in helping to connect people with some fun activities, you lend legitimacy to the project. You might even take ten minutes in the agenda of your meeting to brainstorm some possibilities.

GATHER POSSIBILITIES

The second step is to advertise several possibilities and invite clergy to identify the types of possibilities that would interest them. Not everyone would enjoy going on a hike, but some would. Moreover, if you added a trail cleaning project and promised a nice bag lunch, you might encourage others. The same might be true of going to a movie, taking a dance class with their spouses, forming a book club, etc. Then once they had had an enjoyable experience, you could explore with them the possibility of having a more continual date for fun.

BRIDGING DENOMINATIONAL LINES

It is clear that the problem of clergy isolation is not specific to any one denomination. Consider the benefits and witness that it would make if some denominational heads considered an ecumenical fun day for clergy. In many cases, it is actually easier for clergy to relate across denominational lines than within their denomination. When this is done within a small geographical location, there would also be the possibility that once the clergy became better acquainted, some ecumenical mission work might be done within the community. The health of the clergy can be enhanced through such activities and the health of the Christian witness within a community is also strengthened.

As Jesus made clear, we declare to the world that we are Jesus' disciples when we demonstrate our ability to love each other.