

A scenic view of a forest with green and yellow trees reflected in a calm lake. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

# MINISTERIAL RESTORATION

“RESTORE...IN A SPIRIT  
OF GENTLENESS.”

(GALATIANS 6:1)



## SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES OF RESTORATION

IN SCRIPTURE the church is likened to a family (1 Corinthians 12). It is to function in unity, diversity, and respect. It is to be sensitive to the needs of other members. When one suffers, all suffer; when one is honored, all are to rejoice (1 Corinthians 12: 25, 26). The apostle Paul further instructs believers to rejoice with those who rejoice, and mourn with those who mourn (Romans 12:15). In this manner, members of the body of Christ affirm each other and minister to each other.

In biblical usage, the concept of *restoration* carries the connotation of putting back together that which is broken, mending torn fishing nets, setting a broken limb, and equipping completely one who has fallen (Galatians 6:1). From the beginnings of mankind (Genesis 3:15) and throughout biblical history (Revelation 3:19-22), the theme of the Bible is God's love for all people even when they have disappointed themselves and turned from their relationship with Him.

The message of the Bible is a redemptive one. Salvation is promised to all who repent (John 3:16, I John 1:9). This truth is demonstrated in the stories of Adam and Eve, Israel, David, the Prodigal Son, Peter, and many others. Restoration to a right relationship with God was and is possible because of the grace and mercy of God (2 Peter 3:9).

Perhaps John 15 is the most poignant chapter in the entire Bible showing God's interest in restoration. In this chapter the importance of even one person in need of restoration is emphasized. That which has wandered away (vs. 3-7), that which has been lost (vs. 8-10), and that which has fallen into shame (vs. 11-32) receives undivided attention until found and returned. The message is



clear: God is a God who restores. And the church is to be a body of restoration (Galatians 6:1) and reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). It is in keeping with this pattern that the Center for Ministerial Care (CMC) initiates a shepherding approach to those in need of restoration.

The signal identifying characteristic of Christianity is love expressed in attitude and action to those within the Body and those without. In fact, the shepherding metaphor is used throughout the Bible to explain and model this essential mark of God's people. The Psalmist declared that "the Lord is my shepherd" (Psalms 23:1). Ministers are described as shepherds of the flock of God and are judged when not fulfilling their calling (Ezekiel 34). Jesus embraced the calling and work of the shepherd (John 10:11) and is described as the "great shepherd" (Hebrews 13:20). He was grieved when the people had no shepherd to care for them (Mark 6:34). Caring for and shepherding others in a loving manner is a central lesson of the New Testament (I Corinthians 13). It is the motif of shepherding that underlies the ministry of restoration.





## THE MINISTER AND RESTORATION

THE PRIVILEGE OF MINISTRY is a high and holy calling (Romans 11:29, 1 Timothy 1:9). The call to ministry demands a walk “worthy of this calling” (1 Thessalonians 1:11). As stewards of the mysteries of God, it is required “that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:1,2). Shepherds are to have a good conscience and live honestly (Hebrews 13: 19-19). They are to give no offense in anything, be blameless in ministry, approve themselves, and not be unequally yoked (2 Corinthians 6). Further, ministers are to “have a good report of them which are without” (1 Timothy 3:1-7). These requirements of ministers are toward the goal of being presented “holy and unblameable and unreprieveable” in the sight of God (Colossians 1:22).



When moral failure is experienced, the loftiness of the call is violated. Yet, when this happens, the church is charged with the responsibility to restore to health and spirituality, to bear one another's burdens, and to do good unto all men so that every man may prove his own work (Galatians 6:1-10). And therein lies the challenge of restoration. How do forgiveness and restoration fit together? Does one cancel out the need for the other? Erring ministers are to be restored to what and to whom?

Biblically, ministerial failure bears consequences even in the face of repentance. Examples abound that while the grace of forgiveness is available to each person who crosses ethical boundaries, violations of the calling to minister and the public trust are not winked at (Aaron and Miriam, Numbers 12; Eli's sons, 1 Samuel 2; David, 2 Samuel 12; Shepherds, Ezekiel 34; Priests, Malachi 2; Judas, Matthew 26,27; Peter, Luke 22). However, such violations are redeemable as judgment has grace as its medium and goal.

Theologically, the erring minister should be restored as a ministry of the church by the grace of God. The individual's forgiveness begins in genuine godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:9,10), is experienced in a life-turning repentance (Acts 26:20), is evidenced by restitution (Matthew 3:8; Luke 19:8,9), and is sealed through reconciliation (Matthew 5:24). Restoration is a process involving accountability and responsibility on the part of both the restorer and the restored. Care and compassion are to guide the restoration process.

Practically, the complexities of moral failure require a sequential process that takes into account familial, theological, ecclesiastical, therapeutic, and legal issues. First, a restoration process for such behavior calls for much more than a casual long-term relationship with a local pastor who may be untrained and unprepared for such critical interventions. Second, an effective restoration process involves a team approach over time with several levels of account-



ability. Third, fundamental to any restoration process is an admission of wrong and a request for help. Fourth, an essential element is a mentor appointed with whom the erring minister will have close ties during the process. Fifth, the restoration process is contracted with the erring minister with a clear understanding of the expectations of the church. Finally, the process is two-pronged: personal restoration and vocational restoration. The goal is personal restoration to God, self, and others (family) and vocational restoration to a place of readiness to resume ministry responsibilities. There could be cases in which one may be personally restored but not vocationally restored.

## THE PAIN OF MINISTERIAL FAILURE

MOST BELIEVERS do fairly well with the admonition to “mourn with those who mourn” when it involves another brother or sister in Christ. However, there are occasions when the person who mourns is the minister. Sometimes events occur which impact the ministerial family in such a manner that the pain is intense and the wounds are deep. Ministerial failure is such an experience. It is of such a nature that its rippling effects spread in all directions, touching even innocent onlookers. Often, the erring minister and his family suffer alone because believers do not know what to say or do. The devastation of ministerial failure usually includes the following immediate fallout:

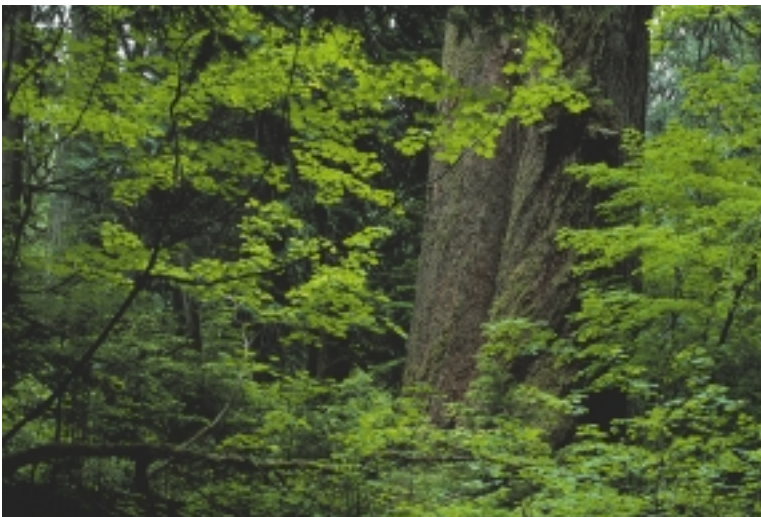
**Personal and familial emotional pain-** Moral failure violates not only the ministry covenant but the marriage and family covenants as well. Often intense emotional pain results in the minister when he/she recognizes the seriousness of his/her betrayal. The same can be said for the spouse and children as they come to realize the personal realities of the moral failure.

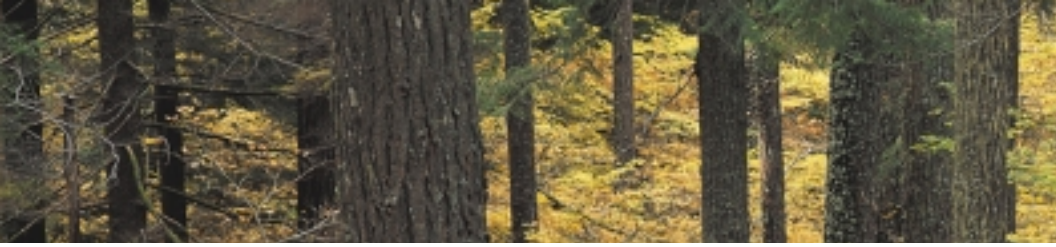


**Loss of ministerial position-** Moral failure eventually results in the loss of ministerial credentials and one's ministry position once the judicatory process is completed. This can impact the family with a traumatic sense of loss of purpose and identity as well.

**Restriction of ministerial function-** Moral failure leads to a restriction of ministerial activity in part because of the loss of position, but also because it is difficult, if not impossible, to rebuild lives and character without intense focus. This restriction also aids the erring minister's family in helping them rebuild family relationships. An unexpected fallout of ministerial failure is that often if the spouse has been active in ministry his/her activities are curtailed as well.

**Economic hardship-** Moral failure brings economic hardship simply because with the loss of position and ministerial activity the accustomed income is forfeited. In many cases both spouses must find jobs and even then the family income may not match the previous ministerial salary and benefits.





**Private and public embarrassment-** Moral failure usually results in waves of shame and guilt. Betrayal of personal standards and the public trust thrusts the erring minister into the depths of embarrassment unless there is a character disorder which essentially allows the person to act as if nothing has happened. Family members and the church congregation also experience embarrassment because of the actions of the minister.



**Stress within the family unit-** Moral failure devastates the essentials of marriage and family living. Issues of trust and fidelity, not to mention the economic hardship and displacement, cause stress within the family unit, which at times seems unbearable.

**Alienation from friends and colleagues-** Moral failure fractures casual and long-term relationships. Most friends find they do not know what to say. Many ministerial colleagues feel betrayed and do not want to get too close lest they be judged as being supportive of the erring minister's behavior. The result is alienation, imagined and real.

**Defamed reputation-** Moral failure injures one's personal reputation to such a degree that it takes months and years to rebuild, rather than days and weeks. Ministers are usually afforded unquestioned trust and loyalty. When a minister errs, that trust and loyalty suffer greatly.

## THE RESPONSE TO MINISTERIAL FAILURE

THE CENTER FOR MINISTERIAL CARE (CMC) has been charged by the General Assembly with designing or approving a program of restoration in cases of moral failure. In fulfilling this responsibility, CMC has developed a detailed ministry strategy to accomplish the admonition "to restore such an one" (Galatians 6:1). This plan of restoration entails certain specified steps implemented by a team approach and facilitated by CMC. Given the devastating nature of moral failure by a minister, this plan embraces the resources of the church toward the goal of nurturing each hurting minister and family member back to health within the body. Efforts are also made to minister to the local church, which has experienced such a trauma.



Specifically, CMC's initial response to ministerial failure generally includes the following:

- 1. Possible Personal Visit**
- 2. Phone Counseling and Support**
- 3. Initial Written Support**
- 4. Counseling Referral**
- 5. Development, Implementation and Follow-up of Restoration Plan**

In this manner, CMC reaches out to the erring minister and his/her family with efforts to shepherd them through this traumatic period. Also, attempts are made to offer assistance to the local church because often members are hurt and confused as well. Corporately, the general church is ministered to in that through CMC it is fulfilling the biblical mandate to restore the fallen and, at the same time, upholding the standard of ministerial integrity.





## PRACTICAL STEPS TO RESTORATION

SINCE THE CENTER FOR MINISTERIAL CARE is commissioned to serve as a pastoral care agency to ministers and their families during times of crisis, one of CMC's primary responsibilities lies in pastoral support to ministers whose ministerial licenses have been terminated. In this special role, CMC works closely with the Ministerial Advocate's office and the respective overseer responsible for the termination process. CMC's involvement in this process is cited in the 1998 Supplement to the *General Assembly Minutes*:

*“A minister who is found guilty of unbecoming conduct with the opposite sex and/or other moral failures shall be disciplined for the purpose of restoration. He shall submit to a program of restoration designed or approved by the Center for Ministerial Care, in conjunction with a pastoral mentor, for a minimum period of one year, after which he shall be reinstated, provided his life shows evidence of renewed spiritual health” (S64, #4, p215).*

The following statement is made concerning ministers whose license has been terminated for the cause of adultery or fornication:

*“The license of a minister must be revoked when found guilty of adultery or fornication. He shall not be permitted to conduct revivals, preach, or teach for a period of at least three years from the date found guilty. [In the case of a male minister] he shall never be ordained in the Church of God” (S64, #1, p215).*

The following information details the process of restoration and possible reinstatement step-by-step as outlined by the Center for Ministerial Care in accordance with the *General Assembly Minutes*.



**STEP 1**—Upon receiving the termination notice from the General Overseer’s office, CMC corresponds with the former minister extending the resources of CMC during the period of restoration. The purpose of this action is to encourage and support the former minister and his/her family during the transition which ensues and to offer assistance in the restoration process.

In this correspondence is a very important document, the Information Form. This form, once completed, advises CMC as to the wishes of the former minister. A restoration plan cannot begin until this form is filled out and returned. CMC responds to the former minister’s family in accordance with the information provided. If this card is not returned within the designated period, another contact will be made with the former minister. If there is still no reply, this would indicate that the former minister is not yet ready to begin the restoration process. Of course, the former minister can notify CMC at a later time. However, the restoration period cannot begin until CMC receives notice of the former minister’s intent.

**STEP 2**—Once the Information Form is received and a desire for reinstatement is noted, CMC will develop a restoration plan with consultation from the state/territorial overseer. This plan will outline the involvement of the restoration team. The former minister will sign the restoration agreement and initiate the plan. This agreement will detail all requirements necessary for reinstatement.

This plan involves several components and a team approach in order to ensure that the former minister and family receive the ultimate good from it. An explanation of the participation of each person on the team is included with the plan. A counseling relationship is provided in order to help process the events which led to the loss of credentials, as well as to help deal with the transition the family will experience.



**STEP 3**—The former minister will be expected to implement the plan and follow through with its specifics. There are certain checkpoints included in the restoration plan in order for the former minister to update the overseer as to his/her progress. CMC may be contacted at any time for guidance. Periodically, CMC will call the former minister and family to see how things are progressing. CMC will contact each minister in restoration at least quarterly to give support and encouragement.

**STEP 4**—At least two months before the end of the restoration period, the former minister should contact the state/territorial overseer to make sure everything is in order to complete the reinstatement process. A letter is required from the mentoring pastor attesting to the faithfulness of the former minister during the period of restoration. Also, the state/territorial overseer will have to recommend reinstatement after he has reviewed all aspects of the process.





**STEP 5**—The former minister will be asked to appear before the Executive Council Reinstatement Committee convening in Cleveland, Tennessee (usually during the months of January, April, or September). The Reinstatement Committee will review the case and make a recommendation to the Executive Council. The former minister will be notified of the Council’s decision by telephone and by letter. The office of the Ministerial Advocate will notify the former minister and the state overseer of the procedures necessary to complete the reinstatement process.

## THE TEAM APPROACH

CMC WORKS CLOSELY with the others involved in the restoration process as their primary consultant. A team of participants is vital to a successful restoration process. The following summarizes the responsibilities of each team member:

### **Office of the Ministerial Advocate**

The Ministerial Advocate is a member of the General Executive Committee. The Advocate’s office, through the General Overseer, will notify the Center for Ministerial Care when a minister’s credentials have been terminated and will maintain records of those ministers who are in the process of fulfilling the restoration agreement. The Advocate’s office consults with CMC and the state/territorial office in seeing that the restoration program is implemented and completed.

### **State/Territorial Office**

The state/territorial office provides guidance and support in enabling the former minister toward an attitude of repentance.



Should a former minister express a desire for restoration of his/her ministerial credentials, CMC works with this office to design a program of restoration. In working with CMC, the state/territorial office approves the plan developed for the former minister. When possible, some states/territories may make funds available for assisting the former minister in his/her counseling program.

### **Former Minister**

The former minister shows evidence of genuine repentance and a willingness to receive proper counseling according to the Minutes of the General Assembly. He/she signs and follows through with the Restoration Agreement initiated by CMC and the state/territorial office. The former minister assumes responsibility for all fees incurred for counseling; however, financial resources are generally available to assist with unusual expenses. In addition, he/she works with CMC and the state/territorial office in choosing an appropriate pastoral mentor for the specified period of time. He/she completes quarterly reports to CMC and notifies CMC in writing when the restoration agreement has been completed or prematurely terminated. He/she can expect ready access to the staff and resources of CMC, including a staff counselor on call 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

### **Local Church**

The former minister is required to be a “faithful lay member of the Church of God” (S64, #2) as part of the restoration process. This includes regular attendance and financial support at a designated local church agreed upon by the state overseer, former minister and CMC. Involvement in local church ministry, not otherwise prohibited by the General Assembly, is encouraged.



### **Pastoral Mentor**

The former minister is encouraged to maintain a mentoring relationship with a local church pastor. The pastor of the designated local church generally serves as the mentoring pastor unless otherwise specified. He/she meets with the pastor at least bi-monthly for purposes of accountability, instruction, devotions, and fellowship. The spouse is encouraged to participate as directed by the pastor.

### **Counselor**

The former minister is to initiate a counseling relationship with an approved counselor. CMC will recommend a list of several counselors. The former minister selects the counselor with whom he/she will work and makes arrangements (in consultation with CMC) to pay whatever fees are incurred. The spouse and children are strongly encouraged to participate in the counseling process.

### **Accountability Group**

Where feasible, a group of two or three couples is appointed to work with the former minister and spouse for the purpose of ongoing support and accountability during the restoration period. These are couples with whom the former minister and spouse can feel free to share in an informal, yet confidential, manner. The interaction with this group is directed by a specific set of facilitative guidelines.

### **Center for Ministerial Care**

CMC makes an initial contact with the former minister to determine if reinstatement is desired. If so, CMC structures a program to meet the requirements for restoration and assists the former minister in locating a qualified counselor and a mentoring pastor. CMC continues to serve the state/territorial office through the restoration period, giving guidance as to its implementation or its need for



revision. CMC provides quarterly updates to the overseer. Upon completion of the restoration period, CMC sends the state/territorial overseer and the Ministerial Advocate's office a written report concerning the former minister's progress. This report will be considered at the time the overseer and the Executive Council determine the former minister's eligibility for reinstatement. CMC also maintains contact with the former minister and family as the need arises or at least quarterly.

### **Church of Refuge**

In some cases there is a need at the outset of the restoration period for a ministerial family to be taken in, sheltered and protected by a local church. More than a mentoring church, this would be what is termed a "church of refuge." The need for a church of refuge would be determined by the circumstances facing the ministerial family and in consultation with the state/territory overseer and CMC. Details of the church of refuge concept are available in booklet form.

### **Reinstatement Committee**

The Reinstatement Committee is made up of members from the Executive Council. They meet with the Ministerial Advocate to consider reinstatement cases and to interview former ministers wishing to be reinstated. The recommendation of this committee is forwarded to the Executive Council for resolution of each case.

### **Executive Council**

The Executive Council reviews each case and acts upon the recommendation of the Reinstatement Committee. This Council makes the final decision concerning reinstatement. The decision is then communicated through the Ministerial Advocate's office to the former minister.



# RECONCILIATION

## THE GOAL OF RESTORATION

ULTIMATELY, THE RESTORATION PROCESS is envisioned to accomplish three fundamental goals. First, it should offer hope and compassion to those in need of restoration, to the local church, and to any others affected. Second, it should provide guidance and resources for those ministering in the restoration process. And third, it should help rebuild the trust and confidence of those impacted both in the church and the community. Ultimately, the goal is reconciliation of the former minister to God, family, church and self. Hopefully, these goals lead to a healing ministry of care by restoring former ministers and by equipping caregivers to intervene in such a manner that the name and ministry of the church has integrity. This fulfills the call to shepherd those in need.

Study results show that restoration works. CMC conducted a survey of terminated ministers over a five-year period. Of those electing to go through the restoration process, seventy-nine percent (79%) stated they were active in ministry at the time of the survey. The other twenty-one percent (21%) comprised a group listed as either inactive or retired. A significant number of those in the active group were back in the pastorate.

The call to shepherd those who have erred is a high and holy calling. Compassion and care are the watchwords of such a ministry. The Church of God has instituted this special ministry to former ministers and their families through the CMC. Hurting individuals and families are being assisted and restored to health through the caring efforts of a team that values those who are wounded. In the Church of God, restoration is not simply a theological idea, but it is a practical ministry which has proven positive results.



For further information concerning the restoration process, please contact the Center for Ministerial Care at 1-800-762-5656 or E-mail our office at [CMCare2460@aol.com](mailto:CMCare2460@aol.com). CMC office hours are 8:00 a.m. -5:00 p.m. (ET), Monday through Friday.





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