

## [Staff | Pastor Parish Relations Committee Training Series](#)



### **Illustrative story transcript for Video 3 - “A Future with Hope”**

In video 3, each of our panelists read a story about a clergy situation in a local congregation. These four scenarios, while not representing specific persons or churches, were developed from the experiences of Kansas pastors, as discussed in focus groups and through multiple individual conversations.

### **Transcript**

#### **Moderator:**

Now, for the final phase of our video, each panelist will read a story about a clergy situation in a local congregation. Please listen carefully to the facts of the case as you will have the opportunity for discussion at the conclusion of the readings.

#### **Pastor “Absent A. Lot”:**

In a six-month period, Pastor *Absent A. Lot* was sick for 2½ weeks and consequently missed 2 Sundays. He was out of the office on two occasions during the week—first, to attend a mandatory clergy called session and second, to attend annual conference. He was also out of town for a week of continuing education and combined that with a couple extra days off to visit family. The church celebrated UMW Sunday during that time and the entire service, including the sermon, was conducted by the women of the church. When Pastor Lot informed the SPPR committee of his upcoming 2 week vacation, they were quite surprised, and a little disturbed, that he was taking more time off since he had already been gone so much.

#### **Pastor “Nada Vailable”:**

Pastor *Nada Vailable* was accustomed to taking her devotional time first thing in the morning when she got to church, after she had dropped her kids off at school and her baby at daycare. Often, she would sit quietly in her office and look out the window, read, or close her eyes in prayer. Frequently, parishioners would walk by her office and “assume” she was not busy and interrupt. To remedy this and preserve her quiet time, she found it necessary to close her door. She usually spent the afternoons making hospital calls and visiting shut-ins. As this pattern continued, parishioners began to complain to the SPPR committee that she was “never in the office” and “not available to the people of the church.”

### **Pastor “Atmy Witsend”:**

Pastor *Atmy Witsend* was dealing with a particularly stressful time at church and home. A church family had lost their teenage daughter in an auto accident and the pastor had spent many hours counseling with the family. A long-time member and key leader in the church was diagnosed with terminal cancer which was devastating to the church as well as the family. A church staff member was accused of sexual misconduct, which had put the entire church in turmoil. The pastor’s son was having discipline issues at school and at home, and his wife was struggling to deal with the situations that repeatedly came up. He found himself running on empty, feeling very alone with no place to turn. He was unable to discuss the issues of his feelings with anyone in the church so he arranged to see a counselor outside the church. Because the weekly counseling appointments took him away from his church responsibilities, people began to question his activity. He didn’t feel he could explain because he felt people wouldn’t understand or accept his need to seek counseling. Due to the sensitive nature of the issue, he wanted it to remain confidential and was uncomfortable sharing with his secretary, the SPPR committee, or parishioners. This further added to his stress and tension at church.

### **Pastor “Lil Short”:**

Pastor *Lil Short* was appointed to her first church in rural Kansas. Moving to the small community necessitated her husband, who had been the primary wage-earner for the family, to leave his high-paying job. Their debt load after seminary was substantial. Her husband continued to look but was unable to find employment in their new home town. With only her salary, their income was substantially less but they were getting by, as long as they didn’t incur any catastrophic expenses. They were happy with their new life and squeaked by financially. When their only vehicle broke down and they could not afford to get it fixed, their financial struggle became apparent to the SPPR committee and the church. One of the parishioners owned the local auto shop and arranged to fix the car for free. Others began to help out in other ways: extra monetary gifts for pastor appreciation, gift certificates for special occasions, even covered dishes for meals.

### **Moderator:**

These four scenarios were developed from experiences of Kansas pastors, as discussed in focus groups and through multiple individual conversations. Situations strikingly similar to these happen to our Kansas pastors and in our local congregations. We invite you to take a moment and pause this video to consider what you think a local congregation should do to prevent or minimize harm to the pastor and the congregation in situations such as those facing *Pastor Absent A. Lot*, *Pastor Nada Vailable*, *Pastor Atmy Witsend*, and *Pastor Lil Short*. When you have finished your conversation, please re-start the video.

