

Gregory A. Stoddard, D.Min

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire
Eau Claire, WI
B.A. Art and Education

Hanna School of Theology
Wittenberg University
Springfield, OH
M.Div.

Andover-Newton Theological School
Newton, MA
D. Min Counseling and Clinical Studies

CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION

University of Michigan Hospital
Ann Arbor, MI
Robert Weikert, Supervisor

Westboro State Hospital
Westborough, MA
Jeri D. Babinsky, D.Min, Supervisor

Danvers State Hospital
Danvers, MA
Kenneth Arne Larson, D.Min, Supervisor

ORDINATION

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Northeast Pennsylvania Synod

ENDORSEMENT

Ecclesiastical Endorsement for Chaplaincy, Clinical Pastoral Education,
Pastoral Counseling
LCUSA, ILCC

CERTIFICATION

ACPE Supervisor 1985
Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc.

Biography

Chaplain Stoddard is a native of Iowa. He enjoys art, golf, home improvement projects and travel. He served for five years following ordination as an Assistant Pastor in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, then moved with his family to Worcester, MA to pursue a Doctoral degree and training in Pastoral Counseling. Along the way he was bitten by a passion for Clinical Pastoral Education which, along with Chaplaincy has defined his career. Following his Certification he established the CPE program at Mount Carmel Health in Columbus, OH. He and his family came to The Reading Hospital and Medical Center in 1990 and is the founding Director of the Clinical Pastoral Education program and creative mind behind our model of Chaplaincy.

Chaplain Stoddard is married to Teri, who is a Consultant in Human Resources Technology. They have three children, Nathan, Joel, and Elisabeth, all are grown and on their own. Nathan and Joel are married and between them have blessed the family with 5 grandchildren.

Some thoughts on Individual Supervision in Clinical Pastoral Education

At its best, CPE supervision is a mutual exploration of pastoral care dilemmas brought by the student to the supervisory hour. Pastoral care dilemmas are both mundane and interpersonally difficult issues encountered when meeting people at the point of spiritual need and conflict. Key is that the issues explored rise from the student's clinical work and constitutes, for them, a dilemma concerning response. This means the supervisor is as much a student as teacher; and the student as much a teacher as student. They are mutually dependent on the other to openly enter the exploration, learn from it and teach the other what they know about the experience.

Optimally, students bring these dilemmas to supervision. Alternatively, the supervisor asks, "What shall we discuss today?" The quality of exploration that follows is a function of growing trust in the supervisory relationship. The student increasingly trusts the supervisor as a non-judgmental partner capable of understanding the dilemma and connecting empathetically with the student in the experience. The supervisor increasingly trusts the student to bring important issues and to enter the dialogue openly, not holding back what may embarrass or reflect badly on the student.

The supervisor uses a framework of inquiry to guide the exploration. Though held by the supervisor, this framework gradually, over time, is incorporated by the student as a framework for reflecting on their pastoral care. The framework a minimum consists of three lenses through which the supervisor views the exploration. These are, the event as an "experience," "theory" that may inform an understanding of the event, and "theology," a perspective on the big questions surfacing in the event.

The supervisory conversation begins with the student's experience of the dilemma (this frequently involves some discussion of the dilemmas antecedents in the student's personal experience). Here, the supervisor depends on the student to teach about their experience

of the event. This is not simply recounting events, or telling a story. Early in supervision (when students are invested in demonstrating competence, avoiding their experience, or the supervisor's judgment) students may seem stuck in the story. Persistent story telling may be an avoidance of the supervisor's inquiry into their experience. Student and supervisor may even collude in avoiding difficult experiences by staying in the story. The challenge is to enter the experience together, fresh.

One weakness of beginning supervisors can be a lack of theoretical perspective. We (supervisors) often start supervisory education fresh out of own clinical education, loving the educational process, even finding it life giving but lacking seasoning in own practice. The theoretical lens required in CPE is not about explaining or reducing experience to a set of principles. Rather, theory in CPE supervision serves the purpose of deepening understanding and suggesting creative alternatives to help us get unstuck when caught on shaky ground. What is typically untenable in pastoral care is mistaking our limited personal perspective for truth. That is, in the absence of a good theory we tend to believe ourselves implicitly. A good theory can help us question our experience and look at it in a completely different ways.

The third lens of the framework looks at theological questions rooted in the dilemma. The exploration through the lens of theology means paying attention the "big questions" arising from the experience. This third lens differentiates good clinical pastoral supervision from good clinical supervision. The student's experience of the pastoral dilemma explicitly and implicitly raises questions, "Where is God in this?" "Whom I am I to help the person?" "Why do we suffer so?" Supervision as mutual exploration, held in the lens of theology, means the student and supervisor might together experience something new and powerful of the divine through the event or find creative ways to think of the divine in relation to the dilemma. They may feel greater latitude and flexibility relating to the even and, unexpectedly, see something new and alive rather than rote and well worn.

Gregory A. Stoddard, D.Min, BCC is an ACPE Supervisor and Director of the Department of Chaplaincy Services at The Reading Hospital and Medical Center in Reading, PA