About the presenter

Dr. Melissa Hofstetter is a licensed clinical psychologist (Lic. #4125; Arizona), with an M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA, where she currently supervises the clinical work of psychology graduate students. She has served as a consultant on ministerial ethics to the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference for several years. She is an active member of Pasadena (Calif.) Mennonite Church.

Disclaimer: Dr. Hofstetter is not an attorney in church law, and therefore cannot offer legal advice of any kind. This seminar is not a substitute for legal advice from an attorney. For ethical and privacy reasons, refrain from disclosing specific, identifying, or confidential information from your ministry setting. Referrals for church law may be made.

Legal & Ethical Issues for Clergy “Caught in the Middle”

Where: Laurelville Mennonite Church Center Meetinghouse

When: Friday, August 3, 2012
Just before the weekend Celebration of Congregations and Conference

Time: 10:00 – 4:00

Cost: $50.00

What does $50 buy you?
~ a day’s seminar filled with valuable information
~ materials Melissa will prepare for your use
~ .5 Continuing Education Units
~ lunch

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Chances are, you can’t count the number of times you’ve thought to yourself: “They never taught me about this in seminary!” over the course of your ministry. For instance, what do you do when you have reason to believe a child is being abused or neglected, inside—or outside—your church? Moreover, what if you learn about the suspected abuse/neglect through a kind of “penitential communication”? Seminary didn’t teach you what to do, because there are different legal requirements from state-to-state—even within Allegheny Mennonite Conference! How do you manage “boundary-pushing” parishioners? How can you respond if you suspect a parishioner may have a serious mental illness, or may be suicidal/homicidal? How can you safeguard your own mental and spiritual health when congregational crises occur? If you’ve ever asked yourself any of these questions, this seminar may be valuable to you.

Objectives:
1. Better educate pastors on mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect, including different states’ laws within Allegheny Mennonite Conference (e.g., each state’s legal definitions of “abuse” and “neglect”; clergy-penitent privilege; penalties for failing to report, etc).
2. Inform pastors on how to recognize potential signs of child abuse or neglect that they would be expected to recognize, within the scope of their ministries.
3. Provide resources that specifically guide pastors on when, how, and to whom they should make a report, in their state or county.
4. Discuss ethical issues relevant to keeping you sane, and keeping your congregations safe, including: sexual ethics; boundary maintenance; power dynamics and differentials; mental illness in the congregation; dilemmas and resources in pastoral care/counseling; development of congregational child safety precautions.