

# Speaking Out...

## NACSW MEMBERS AND FRIENDS SHARE THEIR VIEWS

... the conference <Convention 2009 in Indianapolis> was fantastic. I learned so much from each workshop and could hardly wait to get to the next one!!!! I am like the kid in the candy shop at nearly 70!!! Anyway, I am sure you will hear longer time for the workshops, but I cannot imagine anyone not being happy with the overall program.

Lana  
Walla Walla, WA

Thank you for all your hard work and effort. For me, this was the best conference <Convention 2009 in Indianapolis>. Now that I am a student in a secular MSW program, I was completely refreshed to learn about social work issues from a Christian perspective. Thank you.

Karin  
Richmond, Indiana

Greetings:  
I am enjoying your articles. The scripture references are very helpful.

Carolyn  
Saugerties, NY

Loved the convention <Convention 2009 in Indianapolis>. Totally sold on the organization and its mission.

Ronda  
Churubusco, Indiana

*NACSW welcomes letters to the editor for the "Speaking Out" section of Catalyst. Please submit your comments, ideas, and feedback as members of NACSW to Rick Chamiec-Case at [rick@nacsw.org](mailto:rick@nacsw.org).*

## DIANA GARLAND CONDUCTS NATIONAL STUDY OF CLERGY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT WITH ADULTS

NACSW member Diana Garland, Dean of the School of Social Work at Baylor University, conducted a nationwide study of the prevalence of Clergy Sexual Misconduct (CSM) with adults in the United States. This study was based on responses to questions included in the 2008 General Social Survey (GSS), a widely-used and highly-respected survey of a random sample of more than 3,500 American adults conducted by the National Opinion Research Center. Respondents were asked if, since turning 18, they had ever been the object of a sexual advance from a religious leader. The responses were used to establish a statistically reliable baseline for discussions about CSM with adults.

The findings suggest that the prevalence of Clergy Sexual Misconduct with adults is higher than many people realize and that it occurs across denominations and religions. "Because many people are familiar with some of the high-profile cases of sexual misconduct, most people assume that it is just a matter of a few charismatic leaders preying on vulnerable followers," explained Dr. Garland, who was the lead researcher in the study. "What this research tells us, however, is that Clergy Sexual Misconduct with adults is a widespread problem in congregations of all sizes and occurs across denominations. Now that we have a better understanding of the problem, we can start looking at prevention strategies."

The study found that 3.1 percent of adult women who attend religious services at least once a month have been the victims of clergy sexual misconduct since turning 18. To explain this another way, in the average U.S. congregation of 400 adult members, seven women, on average, have been victimized at some point in their adult lives.

"This is the largest scientific study into Clergy Sexual Misconduct with adults. We hope these findings will prompt congregations to consider adopting policies and procedures designed to protect their

members from leaders who abuse their power," said Dr. Garland. "Many people – including the victims themselves – often label incidences of Clergy Sexual Misconduct with adults as 'affairs'. In reality, they are an abuse of spiritual power by the religious leader."

Using this data as a foundation, Dr. Garland and her research team have been working to outline possible initiatives designed to identify and prevent CSM, and draft model legislation to make CSM illegal in the same way that relationships with patients and clients are illegal for other "helping professionals" including doctors, lawyers and mental health practitioners. At present only two states – Texas and Minnesota – have legal statutes in place to guard against CSM.

Dr. Garland also studied Clergy Sexual Misconduct with adults from first-hand accounts. She interviewed more than 80 women and men including victims of CSM, family members or spouses of victims, religious leaders who have committed CSM, and helping professionals who have provided care for offenders and survivors. With this information, Garland and her team have begun to identify characteristics of the social context of congregations in which misconduct occurs, as well as the behavioral identifiers of offenders and the situations of those they victimize.

Based on this qualitative research, Garland and a colleague have developed a second paper, "How Clergy Sexual Misconduct Happens: A Qualitative Study of First-Hand Accounts." This article has been accepted for publication in *Social Work & Christianity* in an upcoming issue.

For more information on the full research project, visit the study web site at <http://www.baylor.edu/clergysexual-misconduct/>, which includes a project overview, case studies of clergy sexual misconduct survivors, and other information.



Diana Garland