

Preconvention Institute—Thursday, November 12, 2015 (3.0 CEUs)—Half-day Session
9:00am-12:00pm

Dr. Terry Wolfer

"Congregational Social Work in 2015"

Abstract: The institute will begin with an orientation to congregational social work. We will explore a diversity of job descriptions in congregational practice. Participants will have opportunity to present for feedback and consultation their own job descriptions or to write a job description if they are working without one in a congregation currently. Those social workers not in a congregational setting will have opportunity to write a description of their current work as it does or could relate to congregations, or a description for a future such position in their home congregation. Everyone will have opportunity to explore their own professional paths in congregational social work. We will discuss the challenges and opportunities of this practice setting and what makes it unique in social work practice.

Outline: Topics to be addressed and timeline.

- Describing the context (75 minutes)
 - Describing the research on congregational social work
 - Situating congregational social work in the broader context of practice in religious settings – Definitions
 - The functions of congregations and how social workers lead in those functions
- Break (15 minutes)
- Congregations as both organizations and communities – and the place of social work (75 minutes)
 - Specific roles and job descriptions of congregational social workers
 - Our own paths – writing out and receiving consultation on your own path in congregational social work
 - Q & A (10 minutes)

Learning Objectives: *As a result of this presentation participants will be able to:*

1. Describe the diverse roles of social workers in leading congregations and the preparation needed for this field of practice.
2. Assess the opportunities social workers have to influence the spiritual, social, and economic health of people in congregations, of congregations as a whole, and of the neighborhoods around congregations.
3. Describe one's individual professional experience with congregational social work, whether in a congregation or an agency context.

Primary Audience: Social workers, social work students, congregational leaders

Content Level: Beginning and intermediate

Number of Continuing Education Contact Hours: 3.0

Bio Information:

Dr. Terry Wolfer is Professor and PhD Program Coordinator in the College of Social Work, University of South Carolina, Columbia. He and Dr. Mackenzi Huyser co-authored *Grappling with Faith: Decision Cases for Christians in Social Work* (NACSW, 2010), a casebook that includes several cases involving congregational social work. With John A. Hartford Foundation funding, he directed the Geriatric Social Work in Congregations project which placed MSW students in religious congregations for work with older adults. He and Dr. Dennis Myers co-led a symposium, Research on Congregational Social Work Practice with Persons 55+. He is a current board member of NACSW.