

**Congregational
Social Work**
Christian Perspectives

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Congregational Social Work

Instructor Resources

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Introduction

The purpose of *Instructor's Resources for Congregational Social Work* is to provide a variety of tools and resources to assist instructors or trainers who use the *Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives* (Garland and Yancey, 2014) as a text in one or more of their classes or training sessions. Each chapter of *Instructor's Resources* corresponds to the chapter in *Congregational Social Work*.

Each chapter in Instructor's Resources includes the following sections:

- 1. Chapter Outline** – This section provides a detailed outline of the corresponding chapter in *Congregational Social Work* that instructors can use to overview basic chapter content.
- 2. Discussion Questions** – This section is designed to help instructors pose questions related to the corresponding chapter in *Congregational Social Work* that provoke critical thinking, personal reflection, and application to practice. The questions can be used for exams, assignments, or for class discussion.
- 3. Assignment Possibilities** – This section suggests possible activities and assignments related to the corresponding chapter in *Congregational Social Work* that can be used to enrich student learning and help students apply what they've learned to other contexts. The activities and assignments encourage the application of creativity and imagination to help address the kinds of issues that arise when integrating Christian faith and social work practice. Activities are designed for both in-class and out-of-class assignments. Some activities are for individual work and others for group projects.

Chapter 1 – Church Social Work

Chapter Outline

- I. Church Social Work
 - A. Agency settings for congregational social work
 - B. Denominations and agencies as congregational social work settings
 - C. Post-denominational church as setting
 - D. Parachurch organizations as setting
 - E. Religiously-affiliated organizations as setting
 - F. Public and non-religious agencies as settings
 - G. Congregational social work in an agency setting

Discussion Questions

1. What distinction do the authors make between church social work and congregational social work? Does the term “congregational social work” effectively capture the range of possibilities for social work practice that engages religious entities? Are there other terms or other language that capture this unique field of practice?
2. The authors state on page 19 that “congregations provide a unique shape to social work practice.” Without having read the entire book about congregational social work, how do you think this unique shape could relate to the NASW Code of Ethics? What are your thoughts and expectations about what research might indicate about congregational social work based on your experiences?
3. From a personal perspective, how has your experience with a congregation(s) shaped your view of social work? How has social work shaped your view of congregations?
4. How might your past experience with specific congregations or denominations influence your view of social work and your practice of social work? How might a practitioner’s past experience with congregations influence his or her ability to serve specific groups?

Assignment Possibilities

1. Interview professional social workers and clergy about the place of social work in congregational settings. The interviews could be focused around the general topic of congregational social work as a specialization of social work practice or ministry OR the interviews could be focused on specific aspects of the text (e.g. evangelism, role of faith/spirituality/religion in well-being, or the purpose of the congregation).

Research classes: The interviews could be conducted as a class research project (or individual research) to ascertain the degree to which congregational social work is recognized locally and/or the extent of engagement in social ministry within

congregations by social workers. Multiple other research questions could be addressed through such interviews depending on the needs/requirements of the class.

Human Behavior classes: The interviews could be focused around the congregation as both an organization and a community; faith/religious development through the life span; diversity-related issues; or mission/ministry projects that address various life crises or stages.

Practice classes: The interviews could address questions related to practice such as how to engage the congregation in missions; how the congregation decides or assesses what missions efforts to pursue; how the congregation determines what the content and methods of missions efforts will include; or how the congregation evaluates its missions programs. These practice questions could then compare and contrast the responses of clergy with the professional social workers.

2. Analyze and assess your own congregation for its readiness for a congregational social worker. The assessment could include:
 - A study of the current ministries or programs, their goals and objectives, the number of people involved in these ministries, and the level of satisfaction and growth that participants would describe as a result of participating the ministry;
 - Interviews with key congregational leaders, volunteers in the various ministries, and congregational staff;
 - Analysis of data, e.g. participation numbers, costs, demographics of congregation and community; and
 - Survey of congregation membership

Based on the analysis that has been completed, prepare a job description for your congregation for a congregational social worker. Be sensitive to the culture and language of your congregation/denomination. What title would you give to this position? Why this title?

3. Without completing the entire congregational analysis in #2 above, students could simply write a job description for a congregational social worker. These job descriptions could then be used in class with discussion groups to compare and contrast how different congregations may reflect various religious cultures and language; the contexts of rural and urban; job titles assigned; and multiple other aspects of difference among religious groups. This assignment can also be used with chapters toward the end of the book after students have learned more about congregational social work as it has been described.
4. Conduct a survey or asset map of congregations and faith-based organizations in the local area. Identify examples of the various contexts that the authors describe in Chapter 1 that would include congregational social work as an arena of practice (e.g. congregations, denominational agencies, parachurch organizations, religiously-affiliated organizations, public and non-religious entities that employ congregational social workers). Alternatively, the instructor could bring a list of organizations in the community and have an activity in the class with small groups to determine what kinds of organizations they are. Students could perhaps look at websites of the various organizations in this process.

Chapter 2 – Congregations as Context for Social Work

Chapter Outline

- II. Congregations as Context for Social Work
 - A. Defining terms
 - 1. Congregation
 - 2. Congregant
 - 3. Service and ministry
 - B. Congregational social work as a field of practice: A history
 - 1. Education for church social work
 - a. Methodists
 - b. Roman Catholic
 - c. Baptists
 - C. The accreditation of social work for the church
 - D. African American social workers for the church-A history apart
 - E. North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW)
 - F. The literature of congregational social work
 - G. Purposes of congregations
 - 1. Worship
 - 2. Christian education
 - 3. Community
 - 4. Missions
 - H. An illustration- Riverside Church
 - I. Congregations as primary social work settings

Discussion Questions

1. The authors describe congregations as both community and organization (page 22). How does this create complexity for congregational social workers?
2. What are some key elements in the history of social work as a profession and its relationship to Christian faith? In what ways has race and ethnicity had an impact in this history? In what ways has gender had an impact?
3. The authors describe some indifferences, and even hostility at times, toward religiously-affiliated social services by the profession of social work. Congregational leadership and religiously-affiliated groups have also reflected at times indifference or hostility to the

- profession of social work. What factors have contributed to this? How would you describe the current relationship between the social work profession and religiously-affiliated groups?
4. What role has the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) had in the history of congregational social work?
 5. The authors offer a literature review of congregational social work that reveals a “slender thread” (p. 39) of attention to this context for practice. What explanations can you give for the paucity of attention to this arena of practice? What impact has the lack of attention had on congregational social work?
 6. What are the primary functions or purposes of congregations according to the authors? Does social work practice comport with each of these purposes? If so, how? If not, why not? In which function(s) of congregations did the authors’ research find the work of social workers in congregational settings?
 7. How does a congregational mission statement help a social worker and the congregation focus its attention?
 8. Discuss the value of intercultural competence in a congregational setting. How is a congregation influenced by its cultural demography?

Assignment Possibilities

1. Explore the website of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (www.nacsw.org). What resources does this group offer to social workers and congregations? What additional resources might be helpful to a person in congregational social work?
2. This chapter offers a brief historical background on congregational social work in several denominations. Research the historical background on congregational social work in other denominations or in other nations. Discuss the similarities and differences.
3. Explore the website of the Council on Social Work Education (www.cswe.org). What did you discover about its relationship or perspective on congregational social work or on religion/spirituality?
4. Describe the ways in which your congregation is an organization and the ways in which it is a community, based on the reading of this chapter. Discuss with congregational leaders the idea of congregation as organization AND community. How does this idea of congregation as both organization and community affect leadership for the congregation?
5. Identify your congregation’s mission statement. Which of the four congregational functions can you locate in this mission statement? Or alternatively, identify a program or activity of the congregation and identify the ways the program or activity currently fulfills these functions. How could you imagine that it might address one or more of these functions more fully? Select one of the four functions listed as a primary purpose of a congregation and build a social service or program centered in that entity. Be sure to consider the demographics of those to be served, the needs to be met, the location, and any additional resources needed as you develop your program.

Chapter 3 – Social Workers as Congregational Leaders

Chapter Outline

- III. Social Workers as Congregational Leaders
 - A. The research for this book
 - 1. Who they are
 - a. Gender, age, ethnicity
 - b. Geography and denomination
 - c. Professional preparation
 - d. Their careers
 - e. Their current positions
 - 2. What they do
 - a. Leading in core functions of the congregation
 - b. Their roles in congregational life
 - c. Roles particular to congregational setting
 - i. Religious leader
 - ii. Community member/friend
 - 3. Professional identity
 - a. Social worker
 - b. Pastor or minister
 - c. Dual identities
 - d. An integrated identity
 - B. Summary: Who is a social worker?

Discussion Questions

1. How do the authors describe the work of the congregational social workers in their research? What did these social workers do? How did they lead in the core functions of congregations?
2. What roles are particular to congregational settings? How do these roles impact the professional identity of congregational social workers? What are the advantages and limitations of dual identities (e.g. social worker and minister)?
3. The authors raise the question, “Who is a social worker?” They describe the ambiguities to the definition of social worker and raise questions about the boundaries for identity. What factors do they note that best defines who is a social worker? How would you answer this question? Are there other settings besides congregations in which professionally trained social workers may encounter these ambiguities?

4. In the text, the authors discuss the idea of dual identities. When reflecting on multiple roles/identities, should those roles co-exist or should the social worker aim to delineate roles/identities more specifically? Discuss the ethical challenges inherent in dual roles and identities.
5. How can congregations provide support to congregational social workers (and other staff)?
6. Discuss the role of formal education in theology or ministry for congregational social workers. How important is it?

Assignment Possibilities

1. Prepare a “white paper” of how schools of social work could talk with pastoral/ congregational leadership about having a social worker on staff or a social work student intern in their congregation for a year. Practice using this white paper in discussions with local congregational leaders.
2. Write your own professional autobiography. As you read about the professional identities of the social workers interviewed by the authors, note what you agree with based on your own experience so far, particularly with regard to a singular, dual, or integrated professional identity. How have your experiences contributed to your developing professional identity? What influenced your decision toward social work education and practice? How did your faith/spirituality influence you? How do you imagine your own professional identity growing and changing?
3. Review all of the descriptions of congregational social workers listed in Appendix 1 (p. 241). Select two descriptions and identify characteristics of possible “dual identities” as discussed in the text. Note those characteristics that overlap and those that might be in conflict.
4. Find four examples of congregational social workers currently in practice in your community or online. Write a brief summary of each similar to the summaries included in the Appendix 1 of the book. This assignment could include more in-depth interviews with these congregational social workers with a focus on the idea of identity.
5. This chapter described the work and sense of identity of congregational social workers who participated in the author’s research. Use the NASW Code of Ethics as a template for considering the work of congregational social workers as it was outlined in this chapter. Link the activities to principles in the NASW Code of Ethics and explain how they are connected. The activities may have more than one ethical principle.

Chapter 4 – Leading in Worship and Christian Education

Chapter Outline

IV. Leading in Worship and Christian Education

A. Leading in worship

1. What worship is
2. How congregations worship
3. The role of leader
4. Social workers in the pulpit
5. Or not in the pulpit
6. Processes of worship
7. Content of worship

B. Leading in Christian education

1. Content of Christian education
2. Social workers in Christian education
3. Christian discipleship
4. Life skills training
5. Relationship education

C. Social workers as worshippers and learners

D. Ethical opportunities and challenges

Discussion Questions

1. The authors assert that worship and Christian education functions distinguish congregational social workers from other professional social work settings. How did the authors' research reveal ways that congregational social workers are providing leadership in these functions? How do they bring their professional values and knowledge to leadership in these areas? How is leadership ability influenced by their professional values and knowledge?
2. What are the varieties of ways that worship and Christian education are experienced in congregations?
3. Describe various content possibilities for Christian education. What are the benefits that social work education brings to Christian education? Describe the challenges or limitations?
4. What are the ethical opportunities and challenges for social workers who are leading in congregational contexts?
5. How might worship and Christian education alongside congregational members

influence the professional relationship that the social worker has with those who might be considered clients? How would these relationships differ depending on the particular roles or responsibilities that the congregational social worker undertakes, e.g. counselling congregational members or leading in Christian education? How might the professional relationships impact one's own personal worship and study?

6. Consider the role of leading in Christian education within congregational contexts as it relates more broadly to education policy and practice. Do congregational leaders, such as congregational social workers, have a role in influencing congregations in thinking about education policy more generally? Discuss how congregational social workers could or should have a role/impact on education policy in his or her local community. How might a congregation's non-profit status affect the work that a congregation could do?

Assignment Possibilities

1. Prepare a Bible study/Christian education class for a congregation about worship or Christian education. Use specific social work theory or practice concepts as an organizing framework for this study. Some examples of social work theories or concepts that could be emphasized include the strengths perspective, the ecological perspective, trauma-informed care, or life span development.
2. Inform the class that they represent a congregation who is planning to employ a congregational social worker. The congregation currently has a music minister and a minister for Christian education. Distribute the following list of possibilities to be included on the job description for this congregational social worker.
 - After school care for school age children
 - Preschool program for the community
 - Counseling families and individuals in the congregation
 - Services for elderly members
 - Assisting members with access to health and legal services
 - Programs to address addictions
 - Programs to address needs for families affected by chronic or terminal illness
 - Wellness programs
 - Stress management programs
 - Bible study/Christian education services, especially about missions and community ministry
 - Leading or facilitating support groups
 - Emergency assistance
 - Evangelistic outreach programs
 - Programs for families affected by intellectual disabilities/developmental disabilities
 - Youth programs
 - Teaching/preaching ministries

- Development of programs/services with immigrants/refugees
- Engagement in reconciliation efforts around ethnic/racial diversity

Ask the class to form groups of about 4-5 students to discuss and arrive at a recommendation regarding what they think a congregation's priorities should be for this new position, keeping in mind that one new staff member cannot promise everything. After each group has determined their top five priorities, have a class discussion about the differences in the priorities identified by the groups. Is there a consensus about any of the priorities?

3. Compare and contrast Christian education and psychoeducation presented by a congregational social worker. List and describe when these two might co-exist. When might they diverge and why?
4. Plan a group that could be offered in a congregational context. Include the topic, activities/plans for each session, ground rules, and logistics for this group. Consider how this group might be different from a group offered in a secular mental health agency and how it is similar.
5. Research two articles that support the idea of education as a form of therapeutic intervention. Write a brief summary of the articles and how they do or do not relate to congregational social work and Christian education.
6. You are a congregational social worker for a congregation that is not culturally diverse. It is the desire of leadership in the congregation to see more diversity. You have been asked to help facilitate that change. Outline the steps you would take to introduce and influence this change. What are the primary obstacles that you might encounter? What resources and values do you bring as a social worker to this assignment in the congregation?

Chapter 5 – Weaving Nets

Chapter Outline

- V. Weaving Nets
 - A. On being a community
 - 1. Networks of kinship and friendship
 - a. Defining family
 - i. Attachment-comfort and protection
 - ii. Belonging-identity
 - iii. Entitlement-rights and responsibilities
 - b. Defining friendship
 - c. Family of God
 - d. Koinonia-Greek word for community
 - 2. Voluntary
 - 3. Congregational culture
 - 4. Mission driven
 - A. Social workers as community builders
 - 1. Weaving nets of relationships
 - a. Weaving self into community
 - b. Connecting others
 - c. Weaving congregation into community
 - d. Using humor to strengthen relationships
 - 2. Repairing frayed nets
 - a. Use of resources
 - b. Worship styles
 - c. Limits of hospitality
 - d. Organizational practices
 - e. Role of mediator
 - 3. Casting the net
 - B. Social workers as community members
 - 1. Counselor in the community
 - 2. Beyond 40 hours
 - 3. Setting boundaries

- a. Boundaries for congregants
- b. Boundaries for community
- c. Boundaries for personal and family life

Discussion Questions

1. What are the characteristics of congregations as communities?
2. How do concepts and definitions of family and community and congregation relate? What are the similarities and differences between families and congregations?
3. How does the voluntary nature of congregations influence the work of the congregation and the congregational social worker?
4. How do congregations help to conserve mainstream culture? How might they challenge mainstream culture?
5. How do congregational social workers engage in community building and development? How is the congregational context different from other communities?
6. The authors use the image of weaving nets to describe congregational practice. What do they mean by this image? Discuss how you would describe congregational practice.
7. What are the ethical challenges for congregational social workers in the efforts to build and develop communities?
8. How can the congregational social worker attend to self-care?
9. How are issues of boundaries unique in congregational contexts? What can congregational social workers do to ensure ethical practice in this context?
10. Social workers often discuss the importance and value of networking. Are there any particular challenges for congregational social workers? What are the advantages for congregational social workers?

Assignment Possibilities

1. The NASW Code of Ethics addresses the ethical challenges in dual relationships. Interview two professional social workers about their experiences with dual relationships. Then interview two clergy about their thoughts about dual relationships. Compare and contrast the results of these findings in class discussion or small groups.
2. Assign to different students (or student groups) a different sector of social work practice (e.g. child welfare, health care, school social work, military social work, criminal justice, etc.). Each group should contact 2-3 social workers who are employed in the practice sphere that they are assigned with questions about engagement with congregations and/or faith-based organizations. What is the current status of engagement between the sectors of the faith community and their social work practice? What possibilities do these social workers envision? What limitations or barriers exist from their perspective? What opportunities exist?

Have a class discussion around the findings from these interviews. What are the ways that congregational social workers could “weave nets” as described by the authors?

3. Visit the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>) and review the topic of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS). Consider the issue of STS from a congregational social worker’s perspective. Give examples of trauma a social worker might encounter in a congregation. List signs that he or she might be suffering from STS. What is recommended for prevention and treatment of STS?
4. Form the class into small groups of 4-6. Assign each group a congregation from the table below. (Alternatively, the groups could choose congregations from their own town or city.) Select one need to address in the congregation and work collaboratively to develop a plan of action to address the need. Outline steps to be taken, the population served, and why that population was selected. Include how service to one population might affect others not receiving services.

	Number of Members	Predominant social class of membership	Location	Availability of resources	Outstanding needs	Receptiveness to social services
Congregation A	150	Middle class	Rural	None	1. Elder care 2. Youth activities 3. Poverty	Moderate
Congregation B	500	Middle to upper class	City	Moderate	1. Drug and alcohol use 2. Family discord 3. Unplanned pregnancy	Low
Congregation C	100	Middle to lower class	City	Moderate	1. Drug and alcohol use 2. Substandard housing 3. Elder care	High

Chapter 6 – Leading in Missions

Chapter Outline

VI. Leading in Missions

- A. Missions-responding to God's call to serve
 - 1. Neighbor and neighborhood
 - 2. Worship, Christian education, fellowship
- B. Desire for mission engagement
 - 1. What is learned from congregations
 - 2. What is learned from Christians serving in missions
- C. Evangelism
 - 1. Social work practice and evangelism
 - 2. Evangelism as a congregational goal
 - 3. Congregational social workers and evangelism
 - a. A personal challenge
 - b. A challenge in relating to congregations
 - c. A challenge in relating to clients
 - d. How social workers address challenges
- D. Leading congregational missions
 - 1. Developing culture of mission engagement
 - 2. Launching mission activities
 - a. A catalyst proposed involvement
 - b. The congregation determined fit with the community
 - c. The congregation assessed its capacity
 - d. The congregation decided whether or not to support
 - e. The congregation launched and sustained
 - i. Direct involvement of leader
 - ii. Affirmation of those serving
 - iii. Financial support
 - iv. Social networking
 - v. Training for service
 - vi. Opportunities to share stories
 - vii. Opportunities to reflect on relationship of service to others
 - viii. Prayer
 - ix. Welcoming culture
 - x. Ongoing planning
 - f. Impact of missions on congregational life

3. Volunteers
4. Evaluating mission engagement
 - a. Not motivation, but outcome
 - b. Not just busy, but effective
 - c. Thy Kingdom come

Discussion Questions

1. How do the authors define “missions”? What is the focus for missions? How does the work of “missions” in a congregation relate to the other core functions of congregations, such as worship or Bible study?
2. Based on their research, the authors state that “active engagement in service to others had a more profound relationship with Christian faith than any other faith activity, even attending congregational worship” (p. 140). What does this statement suggest about strategies for congregational leadership, especially for congregational social workers?
3. What motivations for service did the authors discover in their research that would help congregational social workers serve well? Why is it important for social workers to understand motivations for service, both their own motivations and the motivations of others?
4. Discuss evangelism from the teachings of your faith tradition. How do you personally define evangelism?
5. What is the relationship of evangelism and the provision of social services as described by the authors? What has been your own personal experience with the relationship of evangelism and social services? What do you think should be the role of evangelism in congregational ministries? How do you think congregational social workers can help a congregation accomplish its goals of evangelism in appropriate ways?
6. The authors state, “It is not as though service and evangelism are different activities, but they are one cloth with two sides” (p. 145). What do they mean by this? Discuss whether you agree or disagree with this assertion?
7. How do the authors suggest that congregations can develop a “culture of mission engagement” (p. 153)? What are the processes through which new mission activities might be developed within congregations?
8. What factors do the authors identify that contribute to sustained involvement by congregations in missions efforts? How do these factors contribute to a congregational culture that supports missions?
9. What are some of the overall results of doing missions on congregational life? What has been your own experience within a congregation?
10. How does the notion of “volunteering” relate to the work of Christian service? What has been your experience as a volunteer in congregational or faith-based ministries? As a volunteer in other settings? What are the differences and similarities?

11. What do the authors suggest about the evaluation of mission engagement and activity in a congregational setting? How do you think congregations can best evaluate what they are doing? What should be the aim for mission activities?
12. The authors discuss the difference in “needs-driven” services like an agency might offer to those that a congregation might offer due to a particular passion or belief. What differences might exist in the two? What are the benefits and/or challenges in the two approaches to deciding on services?

Assignment Possibilities

1. Ask students to read David Sherwood’s article, “Ethical integration of faith and social work practice: evangelism” in T. L. Scales & M. Kelly (Eds.), *Christianity and Social Work: Readings on the integration of faith and social work practice*, (4th ed., pp. 171-188). Botsford, CT: NACSW.

Use the questions in the discussion section of the instructor resources to guide a classroom conversation using this supplemental reading.

Ask students to write a short paper on their own philosophy about evangelism and how it relates to ethical social work practice from their own faith perspective and experience. The text and this supplemental reading can offer a framework for the paper.

2. Prepare a Bible study/Christian education class for a congregation about missions. Use specific social work theory or practice concepts and social work values that will serve to equip the congregation for effective missions. Some examples of social work theories or concepts that could be emphasized include the strengths perspective, the ecological perspective, trauma-informed care, treating people with dignity and worth, or entering/engaging communities.
3. Consider immigrant populations. Draft a proposal for congregational leaders to address the issue of immigrants and needs in your local area. Be careful to include research to support your proposal, such as census data and evidence-based practice examples.
4. Some social services might appear to be in conflict with some Christian approaches to ministry. An example might be a needle exchange program. Drug users can exchange used needles for clean ones, reducing the risk of disease. Research harm reduction models and write a one-page essay explaining what this model is and what the implications might be for a congregation if they embraced the model around the service that you selected.
5. How might technology be used in congregational social work? Select one of the following activities using technology:
 - Write an article for a congregation’s blog site around an issue that a congregational social worker might address;
 - Develop a set of promising practice methods for congregational social workers when using social media in their setting; and
 - Explain how social media or technology can benefit at-risk populations in a congregational setting.

Chapter 7 – From Charity to Justice

Chapter Outline

VII. From Charity to Justice

- A. People groups served
- B. The continuum of engagement
 - 1. Responding to need
 - 2. Equipping for life's tasks
 - a. Counseling, tutoring, mentoring
 - b. Group educational services
 - c. Empowerment
 - d. Reciprocity in the helping relationship
 - e. Seeking justice
 - f. One congregation's journey from charity to justice
 - g. Congregational social workers' experiences in justice seeking
 - 3. Proclaiming jubilee
 - 4. Local and global missions
 - 5. Evaluation in a congregational setting
 - a. An American example-Rosa Parks
 - b. A biblical story- Moses
 - c. Faithfulness, not effectiveness
 - d. Evaluating congregational social work
 - i. Congregational faithfulness in service
 - ii. Ministry becoming reciprocal
 - iii. Personal faithfulness

Discussion Questions

1. What are the possibilities of groups to be served through mission activities? What are examples of possible mission activities with each of these groups?
2. What do the authors mean by the continuum of mission engagement? Where on this continuum would you place the examples of possible mission activities from question #1 above? What is the most common form of mission activity for most congregations using this continuum? Why do you think this is the most common form of mission activity?
3. What are examples of ministries that equip people for life tasks and challenges? What are the challenges and opportunities in these ministries related to empowerment and reciprocity?

4. How would you define social justice? What role does it have in congregational ministry? What is the meaning of the Catholic terms “subsidiarity” and “the preferential option for the poor?” How can congregations work toward these goals in their ministries? What are some Protestant examples of ministries working toward social justice?
5. How can congregational social workers integrate charity and social justice in their ministry efforts?
6. What does the Bible teach about social justice?
7. How does location and geography affect what social ministries a congregation might embrace? How can short term missions in global contexts be most effective?
8. What do you think is important in evaluating ministry efforts in a congregational setting? What are the challenges? What should be measured? How can these measurements be done?
9. What does intentional neighboring mean? How can this be used to bring change to congregations?

Assignment Possibilities

1. Consider one missions project in a local congregation. Develop an evaluation plan to measure the effectiveness of this project. Be sure to consider the goals of the missions project for both those who are served and those who volunteer. Refer to the text (p. 205) for discussions about factors to consider.
2. The authors relate one congregation’s journey from charity to justice, the North Avenue Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, when it became challenged by the problem of trafficking young people in their city and on their street corner. Conduct research in your community about congregations that may have become involved in both organizing and providing services around a social problem and also working to change the legislative focus to address the issue. What are the particular challenges for congregations that may want to pursue similar journeys?
3. Conduct a survey of the ministries of your local congregation. Use the continuum of engagement that the authors present on page 176 in Figure 7.2 to locate these ministries on this continuum.
4. Working with a partner, find examples of at least two congregations that are leading advocates for social justice in your community. What are the common strengths or themes found in these congregations? What do you think distinguishes them from other congregations?
5. In groups of 2-3 review the following scenario: You are a social worker that has just joined a congregation. The congregants are excited about reaching the community. One member comes to you and asks that you join them in picketing outside an abortion clinic. You know that many in the congregation do not agree with the clinic’s practices but you are not certain that picketing is the answer. Why or why not do you think picketing a clinic is a good way to address the issues of legalized abortion? Does it matter that you would be doing so as a congregant and not a professional social worker? What options do you have? What would you do?

Chapter 8 – The Path

Chapter Outline

VIII. The Path

- A. Called to congregational social work
 - 1. A spiritual “sense” of call
 - 2. Called through life experiences
 - 3. Calling confirmed by evidence
- B. Unfolding paths into congregational social work
 - 1. Social worker in other settings
 - 2. From congregational leadership
 - 3. From congregational membership
 - 4. Congregational path to readiness for congregational social work
- C. Professional preparation
 - 1. Social work education
 - 2. On-going education
 - 3. Mentoring and consultation
 - 4. Preparation not received
- D. Resources for congregational social work
 - 1. Congregation’s mission of serving
 - 2. Trust of the congregation
 - 3. Financial support
 - 4. Network of colleagues in religious leadership
 - 5. Flexibility
 - 6. Opportunity to integrate personal faith and professional practice
- E. Challenges of congregational social work
 - 1. Professional isolation
 - 2. Lack of safety measures
 - 3. Devaluing by professional social work community
 - 4. Time constraints
 - 5. Managing multiple roles
 - 6. Maintaining confidentiality
 - 7. Disagreement about policies and practices
 - 8. Deciding when to attempt change
- F. On being a congregational social worker

1. Shapes beliefs and values
 2. Provides community
 3. Offers fulfillment
- G. Next steps
1. Limitations of this book
 2. Future research

Discussion Questions

1. How have you experienced the saying, “We make the path by walking it?” Have you experienced anything like a “calling” to a particular work? How did your own faith/spirituality influence this sense of calling? What are the various ways that the research subjects of this book experienced “calling?”
2. According to the authors, congregational social work is “virtually unrecognized as a social work specialization both by congregational leaders and by the profession of social work” (p. 218). Has your own experience brought you to the same conclusion? What could or should be done to increase the recognition of this specialization in congregations and in the profession of social work?
3. What are the various ways that the research subjects in this book were prepared, or not, for congregational social work? What resources are available to professionals who may want to specialize in congregational settings?
4. What are the challenges of congregational social work? Which of these challenges seem most insurmountable? How has congregational social work affected the professionals studied in this research?
5. What steps could you personally take to enhance this particular field of practice? What could the profession do? What could congregational leaders do?
6. Do you think that professional growth as a social worker could be a challenge in a congregational setting? What steps can be taken to ensure continued professional growth?

Assignment Possibilities

1. Prepare a “white paper” for the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) or the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) about congregational social work as a legitimate context for practice that should be acknowledged and supported by the profession.
2. The authors identify a number of challenges for congregational social workers. Imagine that you are a congregational social worker and write a plan for self-care that would address these particular challenges.
3. The authors list several challenges of the profession (p. 231). Select two of these challenges and give suggestions for addressing them.

4. You have been asked to give a talk to a group of students interested in congregational social work. Prepare a presentation that would introduce congregational social work to this group. What would be your key points? How would you represent the diversity within the practice of congregational social work?
5. A. The year is 2026. You graduated 10 years ago with an MDiv and MSW degree and your home congregation was so impressed with your new leadership skills that they hired you and you have been on staff ever since. Knowing your congregation's culture and style, imagine what your role would be and what you would want to have done during this decade. Write a paragraph about you, like the ones that begin Chapter 1 that could be used in the updated 3rd edition of this book.
6. Based on what you know of your home community, list at least three agencies with whom you might collaborate over the next 10 years in your role on congregational staff. Using the terms in the book, what kind of agencies are they, e.g. Denominational? Para church? Public with a focus on work with congregations? You may need to look them up on the web or call to find out about their affiliation and characteristics if you do not know. Describe each in a very short (2-3 sentence) paragraph, using the definitions and discussion of your readings.

Mary Anne Poe, MSSW, LAPSW

Mary Anne Poe, teaching for over 20 years, draws on her experience as a social work professor to create practical teaching resources for *Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives* (Garland and Yancey, 2014). In consultation with book authors, Poe suggests for each of the 8 chapters outlines, discussion questions, and assignments annotated for course or training preparation. Rachel Hill, MSW student at Union University, assisted in the development of these resources for instructors.

These new resources make the text user-friendly for social work teachers and students exploring the integration of Christianity and social work.

