

# **A Study of PCA Church Planter Spouse Stress and Satisfaction Levels**

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## Abstract

The unique and challenging nature of church planting causes the spouses of church planters to face quite different challenges compared to those of clergy spouses. Though stress levels can be high, some CPSes (church planting spouses) have learned to successfully navigate these challenges and experience a high level of satisfaction. At the same time, many CPSes face daunting levels of stress and consistently low levels of satisfaction. There is an urgent need to build a support system to reduce these stress levels. There is also an urgent need to develop training for all women who partner in church planting efforts. This study has two parts: the first part develops a CPS profile (this research was completed in 2003, see Appendix C). The second part engages in additional research to explore the current state of the CPS and discover her perceived needs.

This study uses a survey (quantitative research) to first identify the concerns, and then it uses interviews (qualitative research) as the basis for the data collection.

The population consists of thirty-four CPSes in the PCA from diverse regions of North America, from both suburban and urban centers, both with and without children.

The research identified six primary factors and eight secondary factors which determine the level of stress and satisfaction experienced by a CPS. The correlation between stress and satisfaction forms a significant component to the overall sense of well being of a CPS. The most important factor affecting levels of stress and satisfaction for the spouse is the person and work of her husband since he serves as her primary source of support. Not only does his ministry affect her, but his involvement with her and the family, or lack thereof, greatly affects her.

Other primary factors include:

- the presence/lack of a healthy support system
- her participation/non-participation in other recreation
- her ability/inability to rely on Christ
- boundary clarity/ambiguity
- balanced/unbalanced physical health.

The implications of the presence or lack of each of these is discussed.

In conclusion, recommendations are made for a formal support structure, with a financial package included, to aid spouses in the first three years of church planting. Options are available for the CPS to continue with the same support group once the church is established.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
List of Abbreviations	4
Acknowledgements	5
Chapter 1: Research Concern	6
Chapter 2: Precedents in Literature	8
Chapter 3: Methodology	14
Chapter 4: Analysis of Data	16
Chapter 5: Conclusion	31
Reference List	35
Appendix A	36
Table 1: Biggest Challenge	36
Table 2: Greatest Disappointment	38
Table 3: Sense of Satisfaction	40
Table 4: Most Helpful	42
Table 5: Causes of Exhaustion and Stress	44
Table 6: Prevention of Exhaustion and Stress	46
Table 7: Spiritual and Emotional Health	48
Table 8: Maintain Marriage	50
Table 9: Healthy Family Life	52
Table 10: Primary Emotional Support	54
Table 11: Critical Issues Not Addressed	56
Table 12: Reported Spousal Ministries	59
Table 13: Demographics	60
Appendix B	61
Appendix C	64

## **List of Abbreviations**

CP	Church Planter
CPS	Church Planter Spouse
PCA	Presbyterian Church in America
MNA	Mission to North America

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## Chapter 1: Research Concern

Because of an interest in the welfare of their church planters, Mission to North America commissioned this study in 2003. The first goal was to conduct an updated profile of the CPS. The second goal was to inquire into the inner dynamics of CPS situations.

### Research Purpose

CPSes face exceptional challenges due to the unique nature of church planting. This study seeks to help clarify the common stresses faced by spouses of church planters in North America and, as a result of the inquiry, to design a system of support and training for them.

This study is not intended to fault any denomination, presbytery, or church planting organization that is seeking to proclaim the freedom of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The difficulties encountered in church planting are not surprising when considering St. Paul's descriptions of Christian ministry in the New Testament. Acknowledging this reality, Mission to North America commissioned this study to understand the unique situation of the CPS. It has become increasingly obvious that CPSes face unnecessary stress due to lack of support and training by their sending agencies. The spouse may be an integral part of the church planting effort, yet she may go largely unnoticed and uncared for by sending agencies, primarily due to their lack of understanding her role. This reality in turn may be negatively affecting the church planter, the marriage, and ultimately the church planting effort itself. For research purposes this study focused on the PCA denomination in North America and thus on female spouses.

### Research Assumptions

The following assumptions under gird this study:

1. The perceptions of CPSes is valuable because their observations reflect experience over theory. By learning the perspectives of the participants, qualitative research illuminates the inner dynamics of situations faced by a CPS.
2. It is assumed that the questionnaires used to gather *initial* data were clear and that participants answered honestly and to the best of their ability.
3. It is assumed that the protocol used in the interviews was consistent and led to open-ended interviewing. The researcher did not assume that enough

was known to recognize important concerns before undertaking the research; rather, the researcher planned to use interviews to learn what the important questions were.

4. It is assumed that qualitative research rather than quantitative research is best suited for this study. Our primary goal is to generate theory, description, and understanding rather than trying to support specific research questions or to test a hypothesis.

### **Design, Population, and Aims**

“Design” refers to the researcher’s plan of how to proceed. Like all qualitative research, the design used here is flexible, using structured and open-ended interviewing, participant observation, and data analysis. Technically, the procedure is called *analytic induction* (Bogdan and Biklen 1982, 66). This procedure is used when some specific problem, question, or issue becomes the focus of research. A small population, called *purposeful sampling*, is used to include particular subjects that are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory.

This study intends to identify and explore the following emerging themes:

- the shared causes of stress in the CPS’s life
- the shared causes of satisfaction in the CPS’s life
- the spouse’s perception of being a valued partner in the church plant
- the presence or absence of church planting partnership support by the sending agencies
- the degree that church planting is a shared life-mission between the spouses
- the relative extent that church planting may be negatively affecting the marriage

### **Results of the study for Mission to North America**

This study has two parts: The first part develops a CPS profile. This research was completed in 2003 (see Appendix C). The second part engages in additional research to explore the current state of the CPS and discover her perceived needs in the light of current efforts supporting her role. Findings from this research lead to possible elements of a support system that could be implemented in order to address the concerns highlighted. The final support system flows directly out of the research done in both of these studies.

## Chapter 2: Precedents in Literature

For the sake of brevity and clarity I have chosen to summarize the major research done in the field of clergy spouses. However, a review of the literature turns up little substantive material. The scarcity of these findings further underscore the contention that the needs of the clergy spouse have gone largely unreported.

A paper presented in March 2004, by a leading researcher in this field, Mark McMinn et.al. from Wheaton College, gave an excellent review of the research which has been conducted in this field to date. I am indebted to Dr. McMinn for introducing me to many of the works I am citing. As of March 2005, no studies on the church planter and spouse (published or unpublished) have surfaced and therefore this review covers the broader area of the clergy spouse.

There are six prevalent themes suggested by the precedent literature which include: the lack of a sufficient clergy spouse support system, the importance of a healthy marriage and family life, boundary ambiguity between family and work, isolation and loneliness, the spouses commitment/sense of call to ministry, and the possibility of emotional and spiritual abuse in clergy marriages.

### Support Systems

A study conducted by Baker in 1989, finds that the major factor which restricts clergy spouses from experiencing the support they need is that their primary support system comes from their husbands—men who tend to be absent from the home evenings and weekends. The study also indicates that wives do not talk about their husband since this could jeopardize his career. In a later study by Baker and Scott (1992), the lack of a sufficient social support system was a significant stressor for the wife. However, this factor was reduced for the women who were employed. Those who had high loneliness and high depression scores did not work outside the home.

A significant number of clergy wives surveyed (56%) reported having no close friends (McMinn et.al. 2004, 7.). Further, a surprising 45% gave unsolicited comments indicating a lack of care from their denomination or no meaningful denominational affiliation (McMinn et.al. 2004, 17). Along with that, 48% of pastors wives surveyed listed a lack of in-depth sharing with other church couples as a disadvantage of the clergy marriage (Warner and Carter, 1984).

Obviously, a key factor for successful clergy and their spouses is developing an intentional support system and developing a safe group where they can be known (Meek, McMinn, et.al. 2003).

## **Marriage**

The lack of a support system not only increases loneliness and isolation for the wife, it puts added pressure on the marriage. If a clergy couple is relying primarily on each other for support, the marriage may function well most of the time, yet a narrow support system will become a problem when either one is not able to fulfill that role (McMinn et.al, 2004, 21). Added to this, the demands of ministerial work and the boundary intrusions clergy families experience often allow little time to develop the intimacy needed and thus inhibit close marriage relationships (Warner and Carter 1984).

A notable conclusion from a study done by Orstrander, Henry, and Fournier (1994) showed that ministers' families who experience high stress levels related to church work will be in need of increased support systems beyond those normally available in their church, family, or networks. The interrelated aspect of the lack of a support system for the wife, and the increased importance this places on the relationship with the husband, adds further pressure to the marriage.

## **Family life**

Families are also impacted by the unique level of stress found in the ministry. Cameron Lee (1988) noted that those who are concerned for the well being of the minister have recognized that the family is of intrinsic interest. The quality of his or her ministry cannot be separated from the family. Family problems complicate the ministry just as ministry difficulties can affect the family adversely. However, this interaction is not only true in the negative sense, it has positive ramifications as well.

Minister's children report that adults in the congregation, as well as their own peers, put unfair expectations on them. "Unfortunately ministers and their spouses themselves often put undue pressure on their children. Minister's children experience some of the same difficulty as their parents: lack of privacy, lack of time together, and insufficient finances." (Moy and Maloney 1987, 55).

Moy and Maloney (1987) studied the dimensions of family cohesion and family adaptability in minister's families. An analysis of these families indicates

that they clearly tend toward chaotic levels of adaptability as opposed to rigid levels, which was significantly different from the normative group which was studied. This study stressed the importance of considering whether the extremely high scores on adaptability by the family were healthy or pathological adjustments to the level of stress, intrusions, and boundary ambiguity which seems inevitable for the family in the ministry. Families are unavoidably involved in ministry and it would seem a healthy response that the family was extremely flexible. In support of such an argument, this study found that both parents and children describe their ideal family as having chaotic levels of adaptation. This would suggest that for ministerial families this high level of adaptation is desirable. At the same time, the indication from the current study shows that there is a need for ministers' families to focus more time and energy on the family and to try to insulate their family as much as possible from the multiple pressures and problems of their vocation.

The stress with which clergy children struggle also implies an added stress on the wife. In traditional settings she may often be the primary caregiver of the family. Often this will be out of necessity as the husband becomes heavily committed and involved with his work (Warner and Carter 1984). The wife thus finds herself not only carrying the majority of care for the family, but also carrying the additional emotional weight of children who are under stress. Thus, it is no surprise that clergy spouse scores on the emotional exhaustion scale were high. (Warner and Carter 1984)

### **Boundary Ambiguity**

Ambiguity is endemic to ministry. For the spouse this ambiguity takes on three major forms which I term role ambiguity, emotional ambiguity, and physical ambiguity.

Lee (1988) presents the ministers' family as an "ecological system." He insists that the family must be studied as a whole, which would include the individual members, as well as their patterns and the quality of relationships between them. Further, the ecological systems approach does not end with the family system. "The assumption is that the family is embedded within a larger network of systems" (Lee 1988, 251). These systems also must be studied to understand the family itself. One notable result of his study was a unique characteristic he labeled "boundary ambiguity." He found that the clarity of system boundaries is crucial to the healthy functioning of the whole system (or in this

case, family).

It was noted in studies of families of POW's that there was an isolated variable of "boundary ambiguity" as a factor in family stress. In other words, the unknown prevented the family from obtaining closure and reorganizing itself. Therefore, not knowing who is "in" and who is "out" of the system creates stress for the family. In ecological terms, the boundary of the family is usually clearly delineated. The father and mother have their respective places of work, the children their school, and so on. One member of the family does not participate in the others' system. The father may visit the child's school but he does not attend with his child. This creates clear boundaries within each system.

In the clergy family, however, the system is not clear. All members of the family participate either directly or indirectly in the church. There is some role expectation of the congregation which must be fulfilled by the minister, his spouse, and even his children. Hence, we see *role ambiguity*. Lee quotes Denton:

To marry the minister of a church is a decision to marry more than a man. It is a decision to become part of a role with a long tradition....(The minister's wife) can extricate herself from this role only at a risk to herself and her husband's ministry. Lee 1988, 256

This boundary ambiguity seeps into all aspects of the clergy family. And if it seeps into the clergy family, then it must be magnified in the church planter family. Living in a church-owned parsonage raises the issue of *physical ambiguity*. To whom does the home belong? Can there be privacy for the family? Again, these are issues of ambiguity which add stress to clergy families. In the current study, church planters often use their home for office as well as worship space while the church is getting started.

*Emotional ambiguity* occurs for both spouses when there exists a lack of clarity in handling stressful situations. Wives often watch their husbands struggle with the pressure of ministry and feel there is nothing they can do (London and Wiseman 1993). The issue of emotional boundaries is raised when both spouses are involved in the church and there are not clear guidelines of when to share stressful situations with one another. This also affects the children as they are often in relationships with these same people. When someone is fired or leaves the church even in the most positive situations, questions of boundaries are raised which affect the family system.

For the clergy spouse, role ambiguity has been recognized as a source of stress. As stated earlier, other professions do not demand the same level of involvement that the Christian ministry demands of the minister's spouse and family. The lack of clear expectations for the spouse, combined with a lack of friendship and community support (Zoba 1997), causes extremely high levels of stress.

In the area of role ambiguity, the wife often struggles with her own internal expectations, ("How much service is enough? Should I do more or less?"), those of her husband, ("Can't you be my secretary / children's church director?" "I need you to lead this until we get staff.") and the congregation ("Why doesn't the pastor do this?" "Why don't they have us for dinner?" "Don't they care?"). This lack of clearly defined boundaries for her and her family causes much of the stress she experiences. Is it any wonder that wives report high levels of emotional exhaustion? Their scores on the emotional exhaustion scale were considered high (Warner and Carter 1984).

### **Commitment/"Call" to ministry**

Commitment and call to ministry is also a key factor when looking at clergy spouses. The reason many wives will take on the extra familial responsibility and work load is because of their own sense of call to the ministry. Out of a list of advantages that wives mentioned of being married to a minister were the opportunities for service, for growth, and for living out ones' ideals. Although others did not see this as an advantage (Baker 1989), it would seem that the wives who view their partnership with their husbands as their own personal commitment to ministry fare better than those that do not.

In a survey taken from the Alban Institute (London and Wiseman 1993), 60% of pastors' wives desired more training to serve better. So it would seem that a larger percentage of clergy wives are wanting to know how to be more effective in ministry. This sense of commitment and purpose in life greatly effects her level of satisfaction.

### **Spiritual Mistreatment**

Finally the literature mentions an area that is particularly disturbing, that of mistreatment. Kroeger and Beck, in Women, Abuse, and the Bible (1996), argue that much of the problem of abuse within the church and home lies with the misuse and misunderstanding of the Bible's teaching on headship and sub-

mission. Although focusing primarily on sexual abuse, this book does raise the topic of spiritual mistreatment. "There is a notable gap in the evangelical church in what it promises women and what women actually experience in hierarchical marriage. Evangelical women surveyed reported loss of identity, loss of vision for one's own ministry, loss of potential for growth and development of talents and an all-consuming responsibility for others (spouse and children)" (Kroeger and Beck 1996, 102).

The current study does not set out to determine if this is happening in church planter marriages; however, the question is raised as to what constitutes abuse. "Many people don't exactly know what to think about society's broadened concept of abuse. But if abuse actually means emotional or spiritual mistreatment, then it may be epidemic in many clergy marriages. Any pastor can abuse his marriage by giving so much of himself to the church that he hasn't any energy left for the most important people in his life. He flies under the motive of giving first priority to the church, but it causes him to neglect and harm his family" (London and Wiseman 1993, 139).

### Chapter 3: Methodology

The research was conducted in two parts: a quantitative technique (survey) and open-ended interviews (qualitative tool). A quantitative approach is helpful for eliciting and comparing numerical data of a reality that has already been identified. However, in developing theory, a researcher's primary goal is to add to knowledge, not to pass judgments on previous analysis. The worth of a qualitative study is determined by the degree to which it generates theory, description, or understanding. As Merriam states, "often qualitative studies are undertaken because there is a lack of theory, or existing theory fails to adequately explain a phenomenon" (Merriam 1998, 7). Thus, the qualitative researcher plans to use part of the study to learn what the important questions are.

The first part of the research design contains a quantitative survey using a five point Likert scale with fifty-five questions designed to pinpoint areas believed to impact the major issues with which CPSes struggle. These statements were influenced by studies already conducted on clergy spouses. Although the primary source of this research project relies on the interviews, which use descriptive analysis, the Likert scale was used to identify and then corroborate themes found in the interviews.

The fifty-five questions of the Likert scale were grouped under five categories. Each category contains three areas of concern.

**Commitment to Church Planting:** call, support system, ministry involvement.

**Telos:** employment, fulfillment, life mission.

**Family Care:** division of labor, family priority, family boundaries.

**Marriage:** marital interdependency, marital stress, spousal support.

**Spiritual and Emotional Health:** stress inducers, stress relievers, spiritual life.

The survey (see Appendix B) was sent to fifty CPSes in May 2004 and thirty-four women responded.

The second part of the research design involves qualitative research using a set of questions leading to open ended responses. In qualitative research, we are interested in understanding how people have constructed meaning, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in their world. What they have lived, felt, and experienced is of direct concern (Merriam 1998, 6).

Eleven open questions were designed for the interviews. With the goal of revealing what spouses experience and what meaning they attribute to these experiences, they were asked the following:

What is the biggest challenge you have faced in church planting?

What was the biggest surprise/disappointment in church planting?

What most affects your sense of satisfaction in church planting?

What would be most helpful to you as a church planter's wife?

What causes the highest levels of exhaustion and stress?

What do you do to prevent high levels of exhaustion and stress?

To what do you attribute your spiritual and emotional health?

What do you do to maintain your marriage?

What is the most important thing you or your husband do to promote a healthy family life?

Who provides your primary emotional support?

Is there a major area you believe is a critical issue for church planter wives that has not been addressed in this interview?

## Chapter 4: Analysis of Data

The present study endeavored to ascertain the most critical issues for CPSEs which determine their stress or satisfaction level. Fourteen areas were identified, six of which were deemed primary. The list of findings will be presented, followed by a discussion of the top six *primary* issues which should be addressed in developing a care and training system for spouses. (See appendix A, tables 1-11 for examples of what respondents reported.) The primary issues reported by thirty-four spouses of church planters are listed in *Figure 1*.

*Figure 1.* Primary sources of stress and satisfaction in CPSEs

<b>Rank Order</b>	<b>Number of Mentions</b>	<b>Number of times per respondent</b>	<b>Issue</b>
1	110	3.23	Person and Work of Husband
2	103	3.02	Support System
3	81	2.38	Recreation
4	64	1.88	Reliance on Christ
5	45	1.32	Boundary ambiguity
6	35	1.02	Physical Exhaustion

The following eight areas were also significant (but less critical) and influenced the CPS's sense of stress and satisfaction.

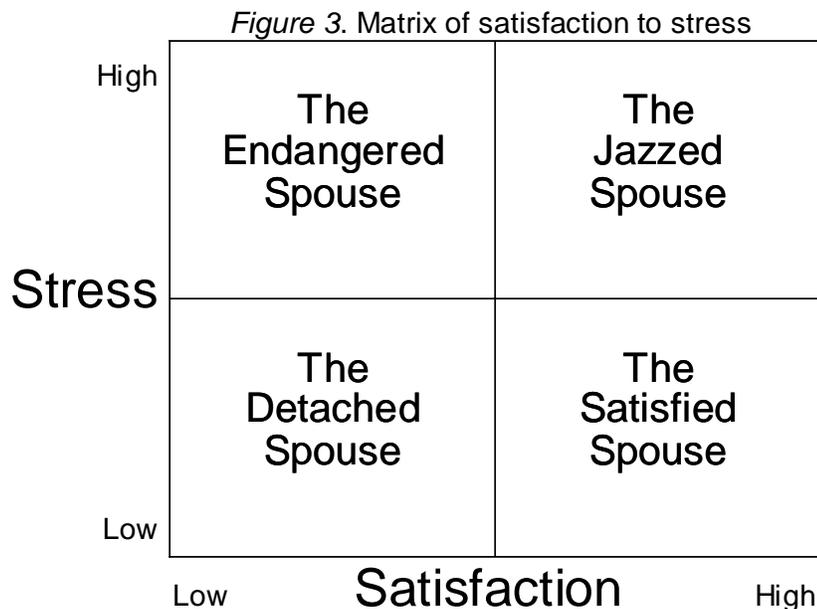
*Figure 2.* Secondary sources of stress and satisfaction in CPSEs

<b>Rank Order</b>	<b>Number of Mentions</b>	<b>Number of times per respondent</b>	<b>Issue</b>
1	29	.85	Changed Lives
2	27	.79	Commitment and Call
2	27	.79	Positive Family Time
3	22	.64	Raising Kids (alone)
4	19	.55	Slow Church Growth
5	12	.35	Expectations
6	11	.32	Lack of Finances
7	8	.23	Lack of Outlet for Using Gifts

In the context of a ministry which by nature is stressful, the purpose of this study is not aimed at alleviating stress as much as it is at identifying the areas of stress and satisfaction. Identification is half the battle. Since it is understood that this type of ministry is intense, there should be no surprise that the stresses were mentioned more than the areas of satisfaction. Also notice that the

*primary sources* will cause satisfaction for some and stress for others. A couple who sets boundaries yet is flexible with ministry demands will have less stress in the area of boundary ambiguity than the couple who does not. The purpose of this study is to discover these areas so that future training and support can address these issues.

In *Figure 3*, we see the correlation between the levels of stress and satisfaction. These two things must be looked at simultaneously as each directly affects the other. Obviously, the interplay of these two factors can create numerous matrices of a CPS. In order to look at them more closely, we have chosen to label the four major divisions.



**Explanation of terms:**

**1. The Endangered Spouse** (*High Stress/Low Satisfaction*)

This spouse may be experiencing high stress in any of the critical areas mentioned, and at the same time, her level of satisfaction is low. This may be due to lack of support, negative effects of the ministry on her family, or the lack of a meaningful outlet. The Endangered Spouse is the one most likely to quit the church plant.

**2. The Jazzed Spouse** (*High Stress/High Satisfaction*)

This spouse may be experiencing high stress in any of the critical areas

mentioned and may feel that her life is chaotic and exhausting. Yet, because she is also experiencing high satisfaction (perhaps she is seeing lives changed, feels she is part of an effective ministry, or she has other meaningful outlets) she will be excited about sticking with the plant. The danger is that she will not be able to maintain this pace or rhythm for the long haul.

### **3. The Satisfied Spouse** (*Low Stress/High Satisfaction*)

It is not that this spouse does not have stress in her life, but for any number of reasons, perhaps a strong support group, her ability to rely on Christ, or a meaningful career or ministry, this spouse is able to maintain a low stress level and at the same time experience a high level of satisfaction. She is more likely to stick with the ministry, whether it be church planting or the pastorate.

### **4. The Detached Spouse** (*Low Stress/Low Satisfaction*)

This spouse may be less affected by the stresses of church planting, but nonetheless she is experiencing a low level of satisfaction. She is more likely to be uninvolved emotionally, and although this allows her to experience less stress, her low satisfaction and detachment should give cause for concern.

More than likely, most CPSEs have found themselves in each of these quadrants at one time or another. The key is in identifying the current quadrant the spouse finds herself in and then addressing the concerns raised.

A note on the Likert Survey: In reviewing the results from the survey, the prior assumption was made that the questions were addressing the correct issues. In analyzing the data it was discovered that some of the questions raised uncertainty as to the spouses' values, assumptions, and what their lives are really like. The response to the statement, "I am satisfied with my husband's participation in the raising of our children" sparked a flurry of notes in the margin which at times conflicted with their scores. It raised further questions as to the level of the husband's involvement, what exactly constitutes "satisfaction," and was his absence part of the "cost" of ministry. Several wives felt they *should* be satisfied, yet further questioning revealed they were not. The interviews, on the other hand, began to deal with the reality which the survey did not resolve. This particular exercise of using a Likert survey confirmed the need for qualitative research as it pointed to the possibility of a phenomenon which had not yet been identified. Therefore, the major findings of this paper were built mainly on the interviews.

### ***The Person and Work of the Husband***

The impact of the husband's person and work is so influential in the life of the spouse and family that this becomes the most important category for the sense of satisfaction in church planting for the spouse. This category includes three items: the husband as the wife's primary support, his relation to the family, and the effects of his work on the spouse.

#### ***Her primary support***

Noting the prior research on clergy spouses where clergy couples report each other as being their primary support, it is not surprising that CPSEs rated this as the number one factor which determines their satisfaction in the plant. Seeing that many clergy spouses do not have an outside support system and rely solely on their mate for support, ( McMinn 2004), it is no surprise that this is also the most important factor for CPSEs.

However, though the marital relationship is important for all clergy couples, it should not be viewed as the same in importance. Due to the experimental nature of the church plant, the lack of existing structure, the extra stress placed on the family, the lack of staff, elders, or even warm bodies to rely on, the importance of the spouse is greatly magnified, especially in the first years of the plant. The new MNA Church Planter Spousal profile (Thomas 2003) also rated the relationship with the husband as of primary importance for the wife, even above her maturity as a Christian, and her relationship to friends and family.

CPSEs are not entirely negative on church planting. They reported the advantages of church planting on their marriages in the following ways: it provides the opportunity of working closely with their husbands, seeing him often throughout the day, sharing in prayer and Bible study together, and counseling and teaching with him. Many who listed these advantages also noted that they enjoyed their husbands, enjoyed working with them, and that they were best friends.

Conversely, however, church planting does put pressure on the marriage relationship. Sixty-five percent of respondents said that their husbands provided their primary emotional support. The second most-listed provider was God and third were friends or extended family, even if they lived far away.

The weight this places on the marriage relationship poses a problem for church planters and their sending agencies. Since this is the primary source of support for the wife, then if the marriage is not a positive support, or if the mar-

riage is struggling due to the pressures of church planting, or if the husband and wife are pulling apart from each other, then the wife's sense of isolation is greatly increased. This also affects the church planter as the quality of his ministry cannot be separated from his family. Family problems complicate the ministry just as ministry difficulties can adversely affect the family (Lee 1984).

For spouses entering this type of ministry, expecting this close, nurturing relationship, it can be a rude awakening when the marriage begins to hemorrhage. As one wife said, the most disappointing part of church planting is "finding that my husband is hard for me to work with." It is even harder when she finds she does not have a support system apart from her husband.

### ***The Effects of Ministry On Her***

Another notable aspect of the husband's effect on the wife relates to the toll ministry exacts from them. The work affects the planter, and thus, it affects the spouse as well. In church planting, wives reported that this phenomenon had a deeper affect on them than when they worked in previous church positions. "The biggest challenge I have faced is how emotionally drained my husband gets and helping him deal with the question of whether he is to personally (lead every ministry) in a church plant." Another said, "The men my husband trained did not take on the role of shepherding the souls of the congregation. They are more content to serve as board members of this fast growing flock...in this difficult part of the country....It has been a struggle to see how drained my husband became after the first couple of years. He became 'peopled-out' which led to an intensified sense of isolation for me...."

As wives help their husbands cope, they often take on more responsibility at home and at church to help lessen the pressure on him. Over a prolonged period, this affects the wife. "The biggest disappointment I have faced is how much energy my husband puts into the plant and [how little] energy he has left over for much else...It was fine to put those things on hold for a while, but not for the long haul." In order to get a perspective of the type of lives these women lead, 59% reported heavy involvement in the church, as well as family, community, and personal commitments (see appendix a, chart 12 and 13). Another reported, "When the church is struggling, the less my husband does for and with the family and the more he wants me to focus on helping him with the ministry." This sense of overwork, coupled with the emotional burden of church planting, was common among wives.

### ***His Relationship To The Family***

Due to the complexity of the family system in relationship to the ministry (Lee 1988), it is not surprising that the planter's relationship to the family deeply affects his wife's sense of satisfaction. The most notable stress for the wife in this category was a sense of raising the kids alone. This was mentioned twenty-two times in the interviews.

Some examples of what respondents said:

"I feel trapped and alone as I carry the weight of child-rearing and home responsibilities."

"I think we really suffer here. We work to get time together....often my husband is not a part of what we do as a family."

"I don't show the kids my unhappiness with their Dad's lack of participation in our family life. I feel like he spiritually takes care of the church and I take care of the family."

However, this isn't the whole picture. Thankfully, there are husbands who are seriously taking responsibility for their families while they also plant a church. As they do, this greatly enhances the wife's satisfaction and, indirectly, his own sense of satisfaction. Twenty-seven times CPSes mentioned the stress reliever that positive family time created for them.

Some examples:

"My husband keeps his day off and is intentional about building a relationship with our boys. We have worked hard to build in a family focus, identity, and history."

"He says 'no' to people. He screens phone calls and draws boundaries without feeling guilty."

"He helps us apply the Word to our lives as we go...in devotional time, in the car, around the table."

The **key** is the husband's participation. This can not be stated enough. This raises questions of the husband's understanding of the impact this dynamic has on his spouse, family, and eventually on himself. The debate is ongoing as to how much time he must spend to successfully plant a church and how much time he must spend to maintain a healthy family life. The research suggests that by understanding how family life and ministry mutually reinforce each other, for better or worse, the church planter can have the long-range salutary effect of increasing his effectiveness, both in the church and in his family (Lee 1988).

All this being said, a surprising number of CPSEs report having a high sense of marital satisfaction. Much of this may be because they work so closely with their husbands in the plant, and thus they spend more time together than they would in a traditional setting.

Another finding which supports the perceived satisfaction of these wives is sharing in a mutual commitment with their husbands. Twenty-nine times they mentioned the joy of seeing lives changed, and twenty-seven times they mentioned the satisfaction of sharing a mutual “life mission” with their husband.

In both clergy spouse research as well as the findings in the current research, the husband deeply affects the wife. The trend seems to be that the marital issues in traditional pastoral ministry are even more intensified in church planting.

### ***Formal Support System***

The lack of a formal support structure for clergy spouses is a recognized fact from the research. By support structure I refer to any setting or group where spouses can share freely, be relaxed, and receive encouragement and support.

In previous studies, 45% of spouses gave unsolicited comments indicating a lack of care from their denomination or no meaningful denominational affiliation (McMinn 2004).

The results of the Likert survey confirmed that PCA wives, like their counterparts in other denominations, receive little denominational support and training.

Here are some samples of respondents’ opinions:

In response to the statement: “The denomination has provided training in my role as a church planter’s wife,” received the lowest mean score of 2.1 (out of 5). This represents a score of 84 out of 100.

In response to the statement: “The care and supervision offered by the denomination makes me feel like a valued partner,” received another relatively low mean score of 2.5.

Of the five categories represented in the Likert scale survey, the category of “Formal Support System” received the lowest score with a mean average of 2.4.

The need for a formal support system for regular clergy spouses is evident

from the earlier research literature. No one doubts this. But given the increased stress of ministry for CPSEs, the importance of a formal support system is staggering. On the Likert scale, the response to the statement, "I feel called to plant a church along with my husband," received the highest score (4.5) in the Likert survey. This theme was prevalent in the personal interviews as well. Twenty-seven times the women mentioned sharing a life mission with their husbands.

In follow up questions, these women reported seeing church planting ministry as a joint ministry calling with their husbands. Most women did not view this calling as only the domain of their husband—they also saw it as their own.

The manner in which the women spoke revealed this. In speaking of church planting, they referred to this as "our" church, "our" ministry, "our" calling. One woman spoke of "our" previous job as assistant pastor, even though he was the one who was hired, not her. Another said, "We would not do this if we were not both called to this type of work." In speaking of ministry, respondents said, "I love seeing people come to Christ".... "I love processing the vision and strategy".... "I love seeing the steady progression of the church." These responses show a mutual commitment regardless of who holds what role. At the same time, it could be argued that the ambiguity this creates is unhealthy. When a spouse who is working with deep commitment and faithfulness finds she is not viewed as an equal partner, she can be deeply wounded. One spouse not in the research group shared the feelings of betrayal when asked to sign unemployment papers by her agency after her husband died.

This is critically important since these women view themselves as full partners in planting the church, and it is deeply wounding when their sending agencies do not. Thus, they want and need the training and support that goes with this calling. They find themselves in the awkward world of having some training in ministry, being committed to church planting, giving large amounts of time to it's success, but not being viewed as full partners. This was also mentioned under the "role ambiguity" section of the literature review. CPSEs who had their own careers as well as assisting in the church plant also expressed their need and desire for training and support in their role as a CPS.

Although stated in various ways, one wife summed up her biggest challenge as simply "the total lack of support from the denomination...."

Another respondent stated, "The toll on our family, mainly on our chil-

dren [has been our biggest challenge]. There has not been a support system here for us and this has greatly affected our overall sense of well-being to such an extent that I would advise couples not be sent alone to un-churched areas.”

An interesting unsolicited comment by several was the training they received in the assessment center prior to church planting. They referred to this as the only training they received, but said it was very encouraging and made them feel like a valued partner at least at the beginning.

### ***Recreation***

Although I’ve divided recreation and reliance on Christ into two separate categories, it could be argued that Sabbath rest, and the rejuvenation of the body and soul are so closely linked that this could be the same grouping. If so, that would put this category as the most often mentioned. As it stands now, I have separated these two because recreation was sometimes mentioned because it was lacking, and at other times because it was a regular practice. “Reliance on Christ” was most mentioned in a positive aspect.

Recreation was mentioned eighty-one times in reference to taking or not taking regular vacations, a consistent day off, positive family time, date nights with spouse or children, reserving “talk” time for the couple, and finding forms of relaxation and exercise.

This is especially challenging for the young church planter couple who have the care of young children. Church planting requires tremendous flexibility for both partners, especially until the church has other trained leaders in place. Mothering also requires tremendous flexibility especially while the children are young. The combination of simultaneously birthing children and the church puts tremendous stress on the spouse and therefore, on the marriage. Both jobs are exhausting and both partners need regular times and ways to reenergize.

In response to the question, “What would be most helpful to you as a CPS?” the mothers of young children responded enthusiastically with a plea for “help with the kids,” whereas the rest of the women requested, “a support network or support group.”

### ***Reliance on Christ***

The importance of a woman’s spiritual life and her appropriation of Christ’s power in her life must never be underestimated. These women didn’t speak so much of *trying* to have daily prayer and Bible reading as they spoke of a

*living* dependence on Christ, of how He pours out grace for His work to be done, of throwing themselves down in prayer and tears before Jesus, of living off the Word of Jesus. They spoke of Jesus' miraculous work on their behalf in very specific ways, of Jesus' care for them and their children and the church, of learning to live in repentance, and of learning to laugh at themselves.

CPSes talked about their husbands taking them to Jesus. And when they spoke of their husband's neglect to take them to Jesus, they shared how that too drove them to Jesus.

They also spoke of suffering, some of deep physical suffering (cancer, the death of a child), others of their children's suffering, and others of the suffering of loneliness. But in the process they spoke of learning to wrestle on their knees before Jesus. This undoubtedly is both the secret to their spiritual effectiveness and a window on the secret purposes of God in their own lives. God works in the church planting couple as much as he works through them.

### ***Boundary Ambiguity***

A key phenomenon discovered in this research was the stress caused by boundary ambiguity. The clarity of boundaries is crucial to the healthy functioning of a system (Lee 1988). Couples enter church planting knowing there is a high level of ambiguity. However, it is doubtful that we have understood the extent of stress and frustration this is placing on the spouse and most likely the children.

For the sake of understanding the extent of boundary ambiguity, I have divided the concept into three categories, though I do not doubt there are others:

1. Role Ambiguity
2. Emotional Ambiguity
3. Physical Ambiguity

In the research, there were nineteen unsolicited mentions of the need for boundaries and the desire for training in this area. Twenty-six times women mentioned the confusing aspect of ambiguity in church planting.

#### ***Role ambiguity***

The normal questions of what is expected from others, what the wife expects, and what she desires are intensified in a church planting situation. Confusion was expressed in relation to internal expectations, spousal expectations, and theological questions. Women who were initially excited with the freedom that church planting allows for the expression of

gifts, expressed disappointment because they didn't have the time to do what they had hoped. She was often busy attending to needs that she had not anticipated, with little time left over for areas she deemed as important.

For instance, child care is usually considered vital for a new church. Although they did not all desire to work in this area, at least 41% started children and nursery ministries. Others reported prolonged non-attendance at worship due to filling nursery and childcare needs. When there are no other workers, the weight often falls on the wife. As one woman stated, "In church planting, the wife is the staff, the elder board, and the janitorial service." The ambiguity of what roles to fill and how long to fill them, combined with the vagueness of how this may affect church growth, is often daunting for many women.

And then there are the professional wives of church planters. They expressed concern as to the effects of their profession, and hence their absence, on the church plant. Regardless of a women's involvement level, it must be noted that the excessive stress comes from the *ambiguity* rather than her *level of involvement*.

*Emotional Ambiguity.* The emotional weight of carrying heavy concerns is complicated by the vagueness of what to do with these concerns. Questions were raised as to how much they should know, how to deal with resentment towards those who have caused hurt, and how to encourage their husbands when he is carrying the weight alone.

*Physical Ambiguity.* The home is often used in clergy ministry and especially in the early stages of church planting. It is common for home to be an office, a nursery, a Sunday school room, a worship center, and a boarding house. The statements that came from the interviews were: "When can I say, STOP?" "I don't feel like I have any private space." "I even have to hide my bras when doing laundry as our home is a constant flow of people." "Do my kids always have to share their toys with all the children who are in our home?"

In previous studies it was found that both the parents and children in clergy families describe their ideal family as having chaotic levels of adaptation vs. rigid levels (Moy and Maloney 1987). Given the special requirements of Christian ministry, this response would seem to be a healthy one.

At the same time, the indication from this study shows that there is a need for church planter families to focus more time and energy on the family and to try to insulate their family as much as possible from the multiple pressures and problems of their vocation. However, this finding would also indicate the need for a more clearly defined role for the spouse. This should be something that she and her husband work through together and come to mutual agreement on throughout each stage of church planting and into the pastorate. It would also seem wise for her to move into areas of ministry she enjoys as quickly as possible.

### ***Physical exhaustion***

In light of what has been presented to this point, it is not surprising that church planter wives reported being physically drained. This was mentioned thirty-five times by thirty-four women. Only one CPS reported church planting to not be as difficult as she had expected. Most reported difficulty in keeping balance between church, home, and work (if they worked outside the home).

One CPS reported that maintaining the balance between church and family was the biggest challenge she has faced. She also holds down a fifty-hour a week job, is involved in four ministry positions and has four young children.

In other literature, clergy spouses reported emotional exhaustion, but not the physical exhaustion found in church planting. While women expected church planting to be hard, albeit rewarding, much of the exhaustion is caused by the combined effect of the amount of work, the fact that they carry most of the child-rearing responsibilities, and the stress of boundary ambiguity. Several women reported disappointment with core group members not helping or sharing the work load. One woman said it was a great lesson for her to realize that not everyone had the same calling of seeing churches planted that she had.

On the other hand, those who have had strong core groups have reported the exhilaration and excitement of working alongside committed and faithful workers.

In regard to the work load carried by these women, 60% reported leading more than one major ministry in the church plant, such as worship or children's

ministry. Under 1% reported being paid. Of the 26% who reported outside employment, 14% of that group reported leading a major ministry. (See Appendix A.)

As each spouse and couple have different energy levels, family dynamics, and church needs, it would be unwise to make uniform prescriptions for handling this stress. However, it would be highly beneficial to alert church planter couples to this dynamic prior to their placement, and for coaches to habitually address this concern with the couple.

Although suggestions have been offered of paying those who regularly work over fifteen hours a week for the church, of hiring the spouse if she fills a position which would otherwise be hired out, further study would be required to determine the advantages and disadvantages of such a strategy. Regardless of the methods that may be used to address this issue, it would be highly advantageous for some church plants to seriously consider monetary benefits for spouses. This could potentially offer clearer role boundaries and alleviate the financial burden on the spouse. If this method is used, it would be prudent to re-evaluate its effectiveness once full time staff are hired and elders are ordained.

### **Unexpected Finding: *Spiritual Mistreatment***

One concern which initially inspired this paper was the emotional and spiritual health of spouses of failed church plants and marriages. After repeated attempts, the raw feelings were such that I was still unable to gain interviews with any in that group. And yet, I found that even among the successful church plants there were a number of women who experienced such suffering and alienation that they were reluctant to speak with me. After repeated attempts, I finally won a hearing. They emphasized the reason they did not want to initially participate was because they believed the system of church planting was too broken to be fixed. Others did not want to malign the denomination or damage the cause of church planting.

And yet, as I listened to their stories, I repeatedly heard descriptions of hurt coupled with a concern for the lack of care for their families, and lack of a support and training system for themselves. The feelings were strong enough to foster a vociferous diatribe against the current system of church planting at MNA from some.

Fifteen percent of the total research group gave unsolicited comments regarding their “deep” concern as to the current method of church planting in

the PCA, making reference to the effects on the planter, his wife, and the family. It was disconcerting that three professional women used the term “pathological” when referring to the current system of sending a lone couple out to a frontier church planting situation. All were careful to not place blame on any person, but were deeply concerned as to the long term effects on the family. It is recognized that 15% of respondents is a small number, but it should be noted that the research group only included successful church plants. Taking this into account gives added weight to the concern of care for the planter’s spouse and family. Had the spouses of failed church plants and marriages been included, this percentage would undoubtedly have been higher.

Although stated in various ways, one wife’s response is telling: The biggest challenge she has faced is “the total lack of support from the denomination. Although God provided in the most miraculous ways, I do not think the PCA’s approach to church planting is biblical. Couples should not be sent out alone especially to un-churched areas where there is no support system.”

This view was intensified in regions where there is little Christian influence and thus lack of human resources for developing church leaders. This dynamic prolongs the time the church planter’s family goes without support. Those who plant in areas where they are able to begin with a strong core group of believers, or who have another strong source of support, do not report this need as being as severe, although it is still definitely a need.

Thus, the question arises, is the current system of church planting at MNA opening the door for unintended mistreatment of spouses and families? The intense stressful conditions which put pressure on the wife to take on more responsibility in the home and in the church combined with a lack of financial resources often pressure the wife to find a paying job apart from the work load she is already caring. Add the lack of a support and training system to this mix, and we are forced to question the health of the system. Respondents raised important questions such as where a spouse could “unload” when she disagreed with her husband’s leadership and/or the direction of the church, and where she should go when her husband wouldn’t listen to her. CPSes are concerned that they not jeopardize their husband’s job, and yet they are also aware that their marriages and families need nurturing attention.

Another unexpected finding were women without a history of depression who had begun taking anti-depressants to deal with the stress of church planting. Further research would be required to find if this percentage is significant.

Thus, as the quality of the minister's family and personal life directly affect the ministry (Lee), it is incumbent upon church planting agencies to develop a new structure of care for both church planters, their spouses, and their families. To seriously consider heightened efforts of church planting in North America, the family system must be taken into serious consideration.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter provides conclusions and recommendations which emerge from the findings of this study. The purpose of the inquiry was to distinguish the common stresses faced by CPSEs in North America and to design a system of support and training for them. In keeping with that stated purpose, the conclusions will be summarized under these headings: (a) the six factors which determine or alleviate stress for the spouse, and (b) recommendations based on the findings. The detailed proposed spousal support system is included in a separate document.

Before looking at the individual categories, we must first highlight a major concern that has emerged from this study: *Church planting can engender an environment which could lead to the mistreatment of the church planter's spouse and family.* If emotional or spiritual mistreatment could be epidemic in clergy marriages (London and Wiseman 1993), this begs the question as to what is happening in church planter marriages. Although church planting has a definite beginning with the excitement of starting, the concern is that it does not have a definite end. Once the church is organized, and the church planter assumes the role of pastor, there are still years of training and development to bring the adolescent church to maturity. The concern is for spouses who may continue indefinitely in an exhausting lifestyle and not feel free to make healthy changes. As many spouses mentioned, "We can put other areas of our lives on hold for a while, but not indefinitely." The concern is that the church planting years have established poor patterns for the marriage and the family and that these patterns continue. It would seem obvious that major transformation is required. Not only do both spouse **and** church planter need guidance in managing family and marriage in relationship to the stresses of ministry, but the church planting system may need reform. Special attention must be given to the unique dynamic in the life of the CPS and thus the effect on the marriage. It is my hope that this study will spark further thought, consideration, and action which will benefit the church planter, his spouse, his family, and eventually the church itself.

## The Most Critical Issues Affecting Stress and Satisfaction For The Spouse

### 1. The person and work of the husband

As was seen in previous literature on the clergy spouse, the husband is the pivotal factor in the multiplicity of stresses encountered by the CPS. The three dimensions noted in this study (the husband as her primary support, the effects of his ministry on her, and his relationship to the family) combine to make him the most important factor which determine her satisfaction in church planting.

Obviously the importance of this finding means that the responsibility of training church planter couples in the dynamics of family and ministry must be a shared load. While a formal support structure will be recommended for the spouse, in part to lessen the weight this places on the marriage, it would be in the best interest of the church planting endeavor to train and coach men in this essential role. As these dynamics surface after the plant has begun, it is strongly urged that this be an ongoing part of coaching. Little good, if any, will come from a spousal support system unless there is mutuality in training both husband and wife in marriage and ministry dynamics.

While the assessment process has taken vast strides in identifying marital struggles, the findings of this study would strongly suggest further attention be given to developing care for marriages beyond assessment.

#### Recommendations:

- (a) A commitment to develop training on marriage and family in relation to ministry for *both* husband and wife.
- (b) A continued commitment to include the wife in church planting training. Although conferences may design tracks specifically for women, this study indicates her need to understand the church planting process and be an included partner.
- (c) That MNA coaches strongly encourage the church planting couple to attend a marriage enhancer designed for couples in ministry *after* the couple has begun planting.
- (d) That the church Planting coach's manual include a section on marriage and family.

## **2. A structured support system**

Previous research combined with the findings of this study suggest that a support system for the spouse would be highly beneficial. However, combined with child rearing, the physical exhaustion of planting, and other employment, it will be difficult to add this to an already full schedule. If this is “required” it may not be viewed as “support.” Yet if it is not “required,” she may never find the time to do it. Due to the extreme pressures that church planting demands of her, I believe it will be in her best interest, upon being accepted into church planting at the time of assessment, to **highly** recommend that she contract a mentor for a period of three years (see separate document on detailed plan). The mentoring system is designed to connect her with other CPSes, to provide training in heart issues as well as the primary and secondary factors identified in this study, and to provide care.

### **Recommendations:**

(a) Implement a CPS Support Structure (separate document) which includes the following:

1. a financial package for the spouse
2. a three year mentoring plan
  - on the spousal profile
  - on heart issues
  - on the dynamics in each stage of church planting
  - that will connect her to other cp spouses
  - that provides a yearly retreat
3. the development of a mentor manual with mentor training

## **3. Recreation/ Boundary Ambiguity/Physical exhaustion**

The very nature of church planting is one that requires hard work, perseverance, sacrifice, and high commitment. This is not being questioned. However, the reality of living with a lack of boundaries, constant physical exhaustion, and lack of rejuvenating activity is of serious concern.

The dilemma for the church planter is that the nature of his job keeps him “on call” twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week—at least until reliable staff or elders are trained. Regular restorative time is hard to find. Parenting young children carries similar requirements and often the planter is out on weekends and evenings when mothers would receive support and aid from

fathers. Between the demands of the church and the demands of young children, often neither adult gets rejuvenated. The stress for the church planter couple is heightened because they know is unhealthy, yet they do not see a solution. This stress is especially heightened for couples who are planting in regions where they do not have the support of family or a strong core group. While there are families who have found creative solutions, most young CP couples have to discover these on their own.

While boundary ambiguity is a concern repeatedly raised for clergy spouses in previous research, it seems this factor is causing a higher level of stress for CPSEs than even this study reveals. In listening to countless stories, I found women struggling to identify this unknown component. Some women reference it in relation to their role, others in relation to lack of control over the use of their home or their schedules, others in relation to the emotional concerns they carry.

Physical exhaustion was a finding unique to church planting which clergy spouses did not mention.

While the nature of church planting will not change, I do believe we can take significant strides forward in first recognizing the need, and then in directing resources and training to address this need that is so critical for the health of CPSEs. This in turn will affect the church planter and eventually the churches that are being established.

## **Recommendation**

**(a)** Develop training designed to address these unique stresses of church planting. Both partners will benefit from learning types of boundaries for each stage and context of church planting and family life.

**(b)** Consider creative alternatives to our current methods of church planting which deliberately support church planting couples: sending couples in teams, paying the spouse for her work, sending church planting couples with hired staff, sending on-site mentors to difficult church planting areas and plant several smaller churches at the same time, etc.

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## Appendix A

**Table 1: Biggest Challenge**

What is the biggest challenge you have faced in church planting?	Examples of What Respondents said
Ambiguity	<p>“Not having clearly defined roles and responsibilities.”</p> <p>“The constant unknowns of facility and where we will be located coupled with the constant unknowns of who will stay and who will leave the church plant.”</p>
Isolation	<p>“Feeling alone and trapped in our ‘calling’.”</p> <p>“The loneliness and sense of isolation that I face here where the presbytery is so spread out.</p> <p>“Feeling alone in the process both on the field and in the presbytery.”</p> <p>“The loneliness at the top.”</p>
Lack of Support	<p>“There has not been a support system here for us and this has greatly effected our overall sense of well being to such an extent that I would advise that couples not be sent alone to un-churched areas.”</p> <p>“The total lack of support from the denomination. Although God has provided in the most miraculous ways, I do not think the PCA’s approach to church planting is biblical. Couples should not be sent out alone especially to un-churched areas where there is not support system.</p>
Raising Kids	<p>“The toll on our family and mainly on our children.”</p> <p>“That I carry the weight of children rearing and home responsibilities.”</p>

## Hard Work

“Being in.....an un churched and pagan area of North America You don't have people around whom you can hire that you can count on. Its very draining on the church planter couple and (we) feel we have to do all the work.. Here there was no one else to take it.”

“How emotionally drained my husband can get and helping him deal with the question of whether he is supposed to staff everything.

“Balancing a church plant, full time work, and family life.”

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**Table 2: Greatest Disappointment**

What is the greatest surprise/ disappointment you have faced in church planting?	Examples of what respondents said
Expectations	<p>“My own expectation in realizing that not everyone has the same sense of calling in life that I have to see the gospel preached and lives changed. This has been a tremendous lesson for me in future ministry.”</p> <p>“I am disappointed in the lack of loyalty or sense of responsibility of some people.”</p> <p>“That the men my husband trained for the session did not take on the role of shepherding the souls of our congregation.”</p> <p>“People, especially friends of ours, who are willing to leave a gospel centered church to go to a law centered church....for it’s amenities.”</p>
Ambiguity	<p>“How the ambiguous role of the church planter spouse would affect me. The struggle of knowing this was my passion, being trained in ministry and yet not knowing how to interface this without having a defined position. I often functionally operated as an assistant minister yet without the title, pay, or decision making power.”</p>
Hard Work	<p>“How much I would be doing that I had never done before in our previous job as associate pastor, and yet how God’s grace was there enabling me.”</p> <p>“I was disappointed with the extreme weariness.”</p> <p>“Church planting is harder than I had expected.”</p>
Growth	<p>“The slow growth in church planting. After serving in large churches (4500 members), the slow growth in planting can cause you to wrestle with feelings of failure”</p>

“Not seeing people come to know Christ.”

“The slow growth.”

Husband

“It has been a struggle to see how drained my husband became after the first couple of years. He became people-out which led to an intensified sense of isolation for me.”

“How much energy my husband puts into the plant and doesn’t have energy left over for much else such as working on the house. It was fine to put those things on hold for a while but not for the long haul. We tried hiring out (for household jobs) but don’t have the money for it.”

Lack of Support

“I can’t really say I was disappointed by the lack of support. There is no blame in it. The problem is that the paradigm of church planting in the PCA is broken. We need to have a vision for the missional church: the church that serves God’s purposes in a post Christian environment. You have to apply the same principles of missions to church planting in North America. There is intense spiritual warfare and the need for emotional support is a must. Sending churches and presbyteries need to know this and embrace this vision and send out 3-4 couples to a new sight.”

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**Table 3: Sense of Satisfaction**

What most affects your sense of satisfaction in church planting?	Examples of what Respondents Said:
Growth	<p>“Seeing people come to Christ for the first time or watching people who love him understand him better and love him all the more.”</p> <p>“Transformed lives of my own and others. I feel satisfied when people come to faith and when Christians and unbelievers understand the gospel of grace.”</p> <p>“Its also very satisfying to see a growing vibrant congregation where people are serving and worshipping Christ where before there wasn’t one.”</p> <p>“Changed lives. Seeing people come to Christ and grow in their faith.”</p> <p>“I’m most satisfied when I see people who have never gone to church before, come: their lives change and because of it they have a different story and a different future.”</p> <p>“It still amazes me to see the diversity of groups of people become a loving community.”</p>
Husband	<p>“What most affects my sense of satisfaction is if my husband and I are doing well [our relationship].</p> <p>“Connecting with my husband and seeing changed lives and using my gifts.”</p> <p>“I feel satisfied when there has been a balance of how much time my husband spends with the family as with the church.”</p> <p>“I’m satisfied when I see my husband encouraged.”</p>

Shared vision

"I'm most satisfied when we (husband and core team) are able to talk about the process of church planting, steps that need to be taken, and processing the vision."

"-Opening my home to seekers and believers so I have a pulse on the cultural climate.

-Using my gifts in this unique culture.

-Weekly reflective time (with husband and core team) for planning and monthly reflective time for vision casting."

Reliance on Christ.

"My relationship with Christ, my husband, and my family. Satisfaction comes in trusting God to do it all his way and in his timing."

"My relationship with God, clear understanding of my role and healthy boundaries. My sense of satisfaction is most affected by my daily repentance over idols of church growth."

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**Table 4: Most Helpful**

What would be most helpful to you as a church planter spouse?	Examples of what respondents said
Support System	<p data-bbox="711 430 1385 478">“Connecting with other church planter wives”</p> <p data-bbox="711 510 1385 625">“Time with other church planter wives for encouragement and support so we don’t feel alone. However, time is hard to find.”</p> <p data-bbox="711 657 1385 972">“Mentors, mentors, mentors. We need to develop a network of mentors in every part of the country so every wife will have access to and involvement with another cp spouse who can mentor her. Further, to include a mandatory amount of money in the cp’s initial budget to be used for the church planter’s wife for her training and encouragement.”</p> <p data-bbox="711 1003 1385 1203">“Connection with others early on. A new move, a new baby, a new church, and an ambiguous role make it hard for the CP wife. These same issues can also be true for a pastors wife only it’s magnified for CPses.”</p> <p data-bbox="711 1234 1385 1276">“A mentor who understands church planting.”</p> <p data-bbox="711 1308 1385 1392">“To have regular fellowship and interaction with other church planter/pastor wives.”</p> <p data-bbox="711 1423 1385 1507">“To have someone who can support you emotionally and spiritually.”</p> <p data-bbox="711 1539 1385 1623">“Church planter spouses must be mentored but there is not time for it.”</p> <p data-bbox="711 1654 1385 1728">“To have some kind of support system/ training offered by our denomination.”</p>

Help with the kids

“ I wish I had more help with the kids. If we had planted closer to extended family, I think I would have managed better. I could benefit from having someone to talk to about a realistic role as a church planter wife in my circumstances.” (four young children.)

“It was most helpful when I received help with the young children from an older woman in the congregation.”

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**Table 5: Causes of Exhaustion and Stress**

What causes the highest levels of exhaustion and stress?	Examples of what respondents said
Hard Work	“Overextending ourselves, perceived expectations that we fear we are not meeting. Overall not trusting the Lord.”
	“Over commitment, no balance in life.”
	“All the details church planting entails. Very hard to keep up with it all.”
	“The physical pace and the difficult ministry cases that are very demanding.”
	“Special events where my husband and I do all or the majority of the work.”
	“Exhaustion from being with people. I will tend to act extroverted but really I’m more of an introvert.”
	“The constant needs of people, huge hospitality ministry, bearing the emotional needs of people in the church, doing everything in the church the first year, supporting my husband with his ups and downs and his absence from the home.”
	“My outside job and raising children outside of a familiar comfort zone. All of our families live far away. We don’t have a support system to fall back on. As we are in an un-churched area, there are not other Christians around.”
	“When I over involve myself in ministry and still take care of four small children.”
Husband	“My husband’s stress, bad sermon, his exhaustion.”
	“Seeing my husband attacked.”

“Receiving critique about my husband especially nitpicky ones of pure and sincere efforts on his part.”  
“My husband is a strong support for me. When there

is lack of support and encouragement from him, it causes lots of stress and exhaustion.”

“When my husband is discouraged. Last year he was really exhausted. Trying to encourage him without the reciprocal help and encouragement was hard. But it also directed me to trust in God and his provision for my needs.”

“Criticism of husband.”

Lack of recreation

“The non-stop relational giving without enough retreating.”

“Infrequent breaks from parenting three small children.”

Boundaries

“Learning boundaries for the church and for the family.”

“When you don’t have healthy boundaries for your relationship with your spouse and family, unhealthy people tend to zap your energy and cause stress.

“When I over involve myself in ministry and still take care of four small children.”

Other

“Suffering”

“An un-unified session. I daily have to choose to forgive certain members of the session. Also being far away from extended family and not having that support for companionship or network to help with the children. That divergence from ministry would be helpful.”



Recreation	<p>“We try to find divergence from the things that make us angry and sad. Biking with our children, getting coffee or drinks together. My husband said I should mention the cigars and beer.”</p> <p>“Run, scrapbook, get away from the kids.”</p>
Husband	<p>“My husband and I spend a lot of time together working and playing. We have regular date times and family times.”</p> <p>“Open communication with my husband.”</p>
Support system	<p>“I have a few good girlfriends that I can talk to/pray with. I also love a date, specific time with my husband.”</p> <p>“Praying with a close group of women. This took time to develop. Reconnecting with my husband every day.”</p> <p>“We have a huge and close extended family that are a great support and encouragement.”</p>
Other	<p>“I don’t do it well”</p> <p>“To often I don’t do anything. I play Tim Keller’s sermons and listen to music throughout the day for encouragement. I read more fiction now.”</p> <p>“I try to focus only on my areas of responsibilities. Also I usually have a couple days a week where I don’t think about church at all.”</p>

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**Table 7: Spiritual and Emotional Health**

To what do you attribute your spiritual and emotional health?	Examples of what respondents said
Reliance on Christ	<p data-bbox="698 472 1390 630">“God’s grace! Truly he pours out grace for his work to be done. Plus being in worship, studying his word with other believers, and praying consistently.”</p> <p data-bbox="698 661 1390 745">“God’s grace. My husband is also very nurturing to me spiritually.”</p> <p data-bbox="698 777 1390 1239">‘The gospel! Our first year of the church plant we were performance driven... Grace changed everything. As a result, spiritual and emotional despair has a cure: running back to who I am in Christ! Resources that have helped me are: Sonship, Gospel transformation, Tim Keller sermons and articles. Age of opportunity, Instruments of change, The person of Jesus Study, The seeking Hearth by Fenelon, Intimate Issues by Linda Dillow, The Church Planting manual by Keller and Thompson, several fiction works.”</p> <p data-bbox="698 1270 1390 1354">“God alone, salvation, prayer, his goodness, his very presence in the Spirit.”</p> <p data-bbox="698 1386 1390 1470">“Without a doubt, consistent time in the word and prayer. Without it all is lost.”</p> <p data-bbox="698 1501 1390 1585">“My time praying, journaling, and reading the word.”</p> <p data-bbox="698 1617 1390 1768">“God’s grace and mercy, time in the Word and in Prayer. Sonship, Prayers of family members and close friends on our behalf; my husband’s preaching and teaching.”</p>

Reliance on Christ

“Daily repentance, the great bible study, “Gospel Transformation”, understanding how great my sin is, ability to laugh a lot, balancing my heart for the church with the fact that the church is not my life or significance.”

“God’s grace. Highly valuing a biblically functioning community. Loving because Jesus loves me, not because the people I love, love me.”

Husband

“The mercy of God, loving husband and friends.”

“My supportive and loving husband. He has grown over the years in his ability to be sensitive to the trials and stress I face here. My devotional life and the grace of God.”

“Time with God, scripture memory and a very supportive husband.”

Other

“Zoloft!”

“The deep intimate relationships we have developed on our leadership team. This didn’t begin until after the church particularized. Going outside of our church for spiritual direction and counsel. Finding a hobby we enjoy together.”

“I’m not really sure I’m healthy”.

**Table 8: Maintain Marriage**

What do you do to maintain Your marriage?	Examples of what respondents said
Communication	<p data-bbox="698 436 1385 548">“We talk a lot. My husband is even more extroverted than I am so we burn the midnight oil.”</p> <p data-bbox="698 590 1385 814">“We call it porch time. We do our best talking/ communicating after the kids are in bed. Sitting outside away from the flurry of activities that happen inside. We try to always assume the best about each other and give continual reminders that we are on the same team.”</p> <p data-bbox="698 856 1385 1077">“We try to set aside a certain time each day or several times a week when we discuss issues rather than doing it all through out the day. This insures I do not verbally sabotage his day and also insures I will have a time when I am heard.”</p>
Shared life mission	<p data-bbox="698 1119 1385 1276">“Share a common mission in life. My husband includes me in our denomination’s assemblies and conferences, so that I can stay passionate about church planting and learn from others.”</p> <p data-bbox="698 1318 1385 1612">“We play tennis together, entertain together and do projects in the home. We also have covenanted to pray together daily although we need discipline. We pray on most occasions and with the church leadership. We also meet for one and a half hours each week for prayer with staff and leaders. The secret is accountability to PRAY for our marriages.”</p>
Shared life mission	<p data-bbox="698 1654 1385 1917">“We have a strong marriage and I know my husband is committed to me. If I weren’t called to do this type of work, he would quit. If I felt I couldn’t go on and I wanted to quit, he would. We both have a profound respect that God has called us together as one flesh and HE will not pull us in different directions. My husband</p>

practices the scripture of laying down his life for me as Christ laid down his life for the church. I can submit to this kind of a husband."

## Recreation

"Have sex frequently, date regularly. We work at remaining best friends, talking about heart issues with foot rubs and talks each evening"

"We talk a lot and are very intentional about being intimate."

"Between ministry and children, it's very hard. We get away on a trip, date nights, talk and do projects together."

"I like my husband. I want to do things with him and we set aside time together. Since we have four kids and we are busy, we get up early to pray together and we lunch on Mondays together."

"Sex, time to talk, escapes away for 2-3 days, taking seriously my role to encourage my husband, loving him, trying to remember and keep alive our couple-ness apart from our persona as church planter and wife."

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**Table 9: Healthy Family Life**

What is the most important thing you or your husband do to promote a healthy family life?	Examples of what respondents said
Recreation	<p>“Take vacations, family days, and have morning devotion times with the kids.”</p> <p>“Two weeks at the beach every year. Although this goes against most teaching on finances, we will even go into debt to have a vacation. It’s a non-negotiable for being in ministry.”</p> <p>“We did not take regular vacations or days off. Nor did we even know about keeping boundaries. So a lot has been learned over the years and has changed.”</p>
Keep Boundaries	<p>“We also practice boundaries with how many nights he is out each week.”</p> <p>“Restrict the number of evening church activities.”</p> <p>“He says ‘no’ to people. He screens phone calls and draws boundaries without feeling guilty.”</p> <p>“Talking about our kids to others, the session or from the pulpit is off limits.”</p> <p>“We limit talk about the church around our kids.”</p>
Family Time	<p>“My husband takes out one child a week for a date.”</p> <p>“He helps us apply the word to our lives as we go...in devotional time, in the car, around the table.”</p>

“Teaching our young children basic bible truths. Playing, laughing, and singing with them.”

“It’s not as regular as I would like but we spend time together in the word and prayer. We have fun activities we do together. We have ‘talk’ times with the kids”

“Letting the children know they come before ministry. I stayed home a lot when the children needed me because Dad couldn’t be there. I did not want them to resent the church.”

“One week of my husband’s vacation is spent on the kids doing what they would enjoy with out any church business unless there is a crisis...when my husband has evening meetings, he comes home early to spend time with the kids and I.”

Husband’s involvement

“ My husband and I picked some of the hardest moments for me as a young mom and he is at home for me during those times. We did this most when the babies were young.”

“I don’t show the kids my unhappiness with their dad’s lack of participation in our family life. I feel like he spiritually takes care of the church and I take care of the family.”

“I think we really suffer here...Often my husband is not apart of what we do as a family. When the church is struggling, the less my husband does for and with the family and the more he wants me to focus on helping him with the ministry.”

Other

“How can you answer this question when all your time is spent just surviving.”

**Table 10. Primary Emotional Support**

Who provides your primary Emotional support?	Examples of what respondents said
Husband	<p>“My husband” (mentioned by 22 out of 34 wives)</p>
God	<p>“The Lord through prayer.”</p> <p>“God.”</p> <p>“Living and planting in a very un-reached part of North America, there has not been human support around. God has sent ministering angels again and again into my life.”</p> <p>“God has sent his angels to help me.”</p>
Female Friends	<p>“I have friends in different circles that I have remained very close to. I’m still close with several girlfriends from my hometown. The Lord also provided a young women...who comes to my house weekly and prays with me....I’m careful what I share regarding the church and my husband but I share freely my own struggles.”</p> <p>“A wife of a church planter in another city.”</p> <p>“Friends outside the church.”</p> <p>“A group of women whom I meet with to talk about issues and pray together.....it’s difficult to develop women whom you trust and often its because we are afraid to be vulnerable, to be the first to confess our needs.”</p> <p>“Now, two wonderful women in our church who I pray with twice a month. Any detail I share about myself is appropriate as long as I’m confessing my sins and not my husbands. Before I had them, I called women around the</p>

country when I needed advice in crisis which was often.”

## Family

“Extended family in another State.”

“My mother-in-law.”

“My mother.”

“I have a huge wealth in my family and I know many ministry couples do not have that resource.”

“Faraway family.”

## Boundaries

“Teaching on boundaries and responsibilities of church planting families.”

“When planting in an expensive part of the country and in an urban plant, space is often limited. Our church office is in our home and it feels very suffocating. My life is not my own. Others work in our church office so that means, ‘my home!’”

## Calling

“I don’t really feel called. We have been at this for 5 years. There is a good chance we will not make it here.”

“What is our major calling...if we have strong passions? How do we balance this with the demands church planting places on our time?”

“What about those nagging feelings of wanting to quit the whole church plant and what is it that makes us keep going.”

“I believe a pastors wife is a partner in ministry even if she doesn’t feel like it. By accepting this role she will be able to affect the church plant, her family and herself.”

“Both husband and wife must be together on

**Table 11: Critical Issues Not Addressed**

Is there an area you believe is a critical issue for wives that has not been addressed in this interview?	Examples of what respondents said
Training	<p data-bbox="711 520 1385 751">“I found I had no training to start up.....ministry. I’m aware not every planter’s wife heads up these things...but I have met many that began ...ministries in the church and then passed the baton to a member. I was clueless as to how to help the church plant...”</p> <p data-bbox="711 793 1385 982">“I think the assessment center was very important and accurately predicted what our struggles would be. I feel though there should be follow-up from assessment during the early years of the plant for sake of accountability.”</p> <p data-bbox="711 1024 1385 1213">“After assessment I had hoped there would be follow up. I wanted an older woman to give me direction. Now I am looked on as someone who should mentor other women but never have had someone do it with me.”</p> <p data-bbox="711 1255 1385 1675">“If someone would have followed up on us as a part of the structure of the assessment it would have made the learning process so much stronger. The assessment touched on many needed areas in our marriage but without follow up nothing was done with those issues since. It would have been great to just have gotten calls asking how it was going and following through on the first 3 years of the plant. This structure needs to be put into the entire process.”</p> <p data-bbox="711 1717 1385 1818">“I think helping the cp spouse determine her specific role at each stage of the church planting process is crucial to her success.”</p>

## Boundaries

“Teaching on boundaries and responsibilities of church planting families.”

“When planting in an expensive part of the country and in an urban plant, space is often limited. Our church office is in our home and it feels very suffocating. My life is not my own. Others work in our church office so that means, ‘my home!’”

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“What is our major calling...if we have strong passions? How do we balance this with the demands church planting places on our time?”

“What about those nagging feelings of wanting to quit the whole church plant and what is it that makes us keep going.”

“I believe a pastors wife is a partner in ministry even if she doesn’t feel like it. By accepting this role she will be able to affect the church plant, her family and herself.”

“Both husband and wife must be together on this. We are together on the decisions we make. If the wife is not behind the plant, don’t do it. It will take everything she has to help make the church go. There is no balance in church planting and don’t expect it. It’s like birthing and raising a baby, you can’t determine when the work is too hard. There is no negotiation. Once the baby comes you can’t decide to take off. It won’t survive without you.”

## Support

“The critical issues for me are emotional and spiritual support. People are antagonistic. Our marriages and our families are under attack. Our sending agencies need to be aware of this type of spiritual warfare. We need to be sent out in teams.”

Marriage/husband

“I feel strongly that we need to develop seminars and mentoring relationships and a strong sense of under girding for the cp spouse.”

“He can give out so much (to the church plant) that he is too tired to give to his own family or care for himself.”

“When is it appropriate to critique our husbands? Or better said, whom can we go to if our husbands don’t hear us?”

“Our husbands are very desired and wanted people. Where does this leave us as their wives?”

“I would love to understand my role in helping my husband identify when he is giving out of himself more than he can bear. When should he be seeking outside advice for major church and staff decisions. And how much should I know about? I want to support him without knowing so much about the conflict that in my sin, I take up the offense...”

“We see our husbands under large amounts of emotional stress or even suffer from emotional abuse...My husband feels because of peoples broken pasts they often target the pastor. It’s a challenge for a wife to pray for that person and not choose anger.”

“The loneliness and pressures of church planting are a climate for marital affairs. We must address openly this temptation.”

**Table 12: Reported Spousal ministries**

Category	Number of ministry positions held by 34 respondents
Design and lead Women's ministry	16
Design and lead Children's ministry	14
Teach Adult classes	10
Lead a community group	8
Co-teach with husband	2
New member assimilation	8
Lead Worship team	3
On worship team	2
Mentoring women/ ministry interns	5
Lead outreach development (develop community pregnancy center, open sports camps etc)	3
Pastoral Counseling	4
Strategic leadership development	3
Prayer teams	3
Arts Coordinator	1
Communications coordinator	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>

*Note:* This list is not exhaustive. Other involvements with the church plant which were reported but not listed under "ministry" include: errands for husband, proof reading worship guides, hospitality in the home, screening calls, ministering to draining people, hospital visits, jail visits, attending funerals and weddings, meeting community leaders, support raising and hours listening to and counseling the pastor.

**Table 13: Demographics**

Category	Number
Mean age of children-	6.2
Mean number of children-	2.9
Reported involvement level in church planting ministry:	
Heavy-	59%
Moderate-	32%
Light-	less than 1%
Paid staff position	less than 1%
Employed outside the home	29%
Urban Church Plants represented	35%
Suburban Church Plants represented	61%

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Heavy involvement defined as, *Overseeing one to three major ministries and involved in but not leading 2-3 others. For example: Director of children's ministry, lead new member lunches and teach children's classes*

Moderate involvement defined as, *involved in 4-8 ministries at a time, but not directing a major ministry. This includes leading a bible study or Sunday school class but not overseeing the ministry. For example. Co-teach small group, lead women's bible study, on the prayer team.*

Light involvement defined as, *involved in 2-3 weekly ministries but not leading. For example: Weekly set up/tear down for worship, nursery volunteer, hospitality in home.*

**Appendix B**  
**Church Planter Wife**  
**Research Inquiry**  
**Part I**

*Instructions:* Please respond to each **statement** by circling the number from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) that best corresponds to your situation. If a statement does not apply (e.g. work outside the home, etc.) mark it with an NA (not applicable). Invert answers 33,34,39,45,54

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I feel called to plant a church along with my husband.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel supported by the denomination in care that they give me.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My husband and I discuss our expectations for my involvement in the church plant.	1	2	3	4	5
4. In order for us to survive economically, I work outside the home.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Partnering with my husband in church work fulfills me.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My calling in life is highly valued by my husband.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My husband and I successfully negotiate the division of labor in the home.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am the one who primarily takes care of the physical needs of the family.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My husband has a healthy awareness of the stresses church planting places on our family.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My husband agrees that I effectively support/encourage him.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Church planting has placed heavy stress on our marriage.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My husband frees me to pursue my sense of calling.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I have close friends who know and understand me.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I have an intimate and vibrant prayer life.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I sensed anticipation and excitement as we started church planting.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The denomination has provided training in my role as a church planter's wife.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I have successfully negotiated the expectations placed on me by the church.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I receive emotional satisfaction from employment outside the home.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am fulfilled in other work not related to the church.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
20. My calling in life is highly valued by our congregation.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I am satisfied with my husband's contribution to household responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I am satisfied with my husband's participation in the raising of our children.	1	2	3	4	5
23. We practice healthy boundaries to guard our family life.	1	2	3	4	5
24. My husband effectively supports/encourages me.	1	2	3	4	5
25. We have benefited from having strong mentors/friends in our life to help us with our marriage and family.	1	2	3	4	5
26. My husband supports me by giving me regular time away from responsibilities and work to be refreshed.	1	2	3	4	5
27. We regularly take vacations.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I routinely nourish my soul with the truths of scripture.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Though church planting requires hard work, family, and career sacrifices, I feel it is worth the cost.	1	2	3	4	5
30. The care and supervision offered by the denomination makes me feel like a valued partner.	1	2	3	4	5
31. My husband respects my involvement in the church.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Though I participate in some church ministry, I am satisfied by mainly serving my husband and family.	1	2	3	4	5
33. My life and dreams are on hold due to our involvement in church planting.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I am confused about my calling in life and what it should be.	1	2	3	4	5
35. As the church matures, we have successfully renegotiated our division of labor of home responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I enjoy caring for my family, but I look forward to the day when I can be involved with career or ministry.	1	2	3	4	5
37. My husband strikes a good balance between ministry and family.	1	2	3	4	5
38. My husband and I practice healthy boundaries/patterns for protecting our marriage.	1	2	3	4	5
39. The stress of church planting has tempted me to withdraw emotionally from my husband.	1	2	3	4	5
40. The pursuit of my life calling should be a primary concern whether or not it ties directly to church ministry.	1	2	3	4	5
41. My husband and I take a day off once a week.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
42. I practice a life of daily repentance and trusting Jesus for my righteousness.	1	2	3	4	5
43. I have successfully created my own support system.	1	2	3	4	5
44. The leadership of the church respects my involvement in the church.	1	2	3	4	5
45. My husband and I are heavily involved in the church plant to the detriment of our family life.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Though ministry is demanding, my husband places a high priority on our marriage.	1	2	3	4	5
47. I am satisfied with the level of mentoring I receive.	1	2	3	4	5
48. I had eagerly anticipated involvement in the church, but due to my husband's heavy load, I dedicate my time to the care of the family.	1	2	3	4	5
49. My husband and I have a mutually satisfying sex life.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Church planting is my passion and calling.	1	2	3	4	5
51. I support my husband in getting time away from responsibilities and work to be refreshed.	1	2	3	4	5
52. I would welcome a more active mentoring relationship in my role as a church planter wife.	1	2	3	4	5
53. I have been tempted to withdraw from people in the church.	1	2	3	4	5
54. I am able to emotionally release people who leave our church.	1	2	3	4	5
55. To the best of my ability, I have answered this survey based on how I truly feel.	1	2	3	4	5

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## **Appendix C**

### **Church Planter Spouse Profile**

**Role Summary:** Task requires entry into a context that is ambiguous as to spiritual needs/expectations and requires the couple to design and implement a ministry that fits the situation using their giftedness and God's enablement. The church planter spouse is an integral part of the team. The profile is time sensitive; designed specifically for the church planting years and is not intended to determine choices a couple makes regarding spousal career paths

#### **PERSONAL COMPETENCIES**

##### **1. Healthy Marriage**

Committed to a vital, growing marriage in light of starting a church. Spouse lovingly pursues her husband understanding the demands church planting places on him.

###### *Positive indicators*

- Committed to and supportive of her husband.
- Trusts her husband's leadership in the church and the home demonstrated by respect of him.
- Growing intimacy in church planter's marriage expressed in a healthy sex life

###### *Negative indicators*

- May verbally undermine her spouse.
- Tends to live a parallel life from her husband.
- Exhibits signs of emotional and physical distance from her spouse.

##### **2. Family Management**

Demonstrates love and care for her family in relationship to the demands of church planting.

###### *Positive indicators*

- Aware of family dynamics/needs in the context of church planting.
- Prioritizes her family in light of public ministry.
- Demonstrates ability to lead her family in her husband's absence.

###### *Negative indicators*

- Neglects to set boundaries with her husband to protect family life
- Serves the church to the detriment of her family.
- May place unrealistic demands on her husband's time.

##### **3. Spiritual Vitality**

Exhibits a compelling walk with God demonstrated in a humble reliance on Christ and his Word.

###### *Positive indicators*

- Lives a life of repentance and faith in Christ's work on the cross.
- Uses Scripture as a source of spiritual nourishment
- Views prayer as a lifeline which under girds her family and ministry.

###### *Negative indicators*

- Perceives spiritual disciplines as optional
- Tends to base her worth on her performance.
- Views spirituality as a list of duties rather than a vibrant relationship with Jesus.

#### 4. Resilient Self-view

Possesses emotional strength based on accurate view of self, her gifts and calling.

##### *Positive indicators*

- Exhibits emotional strength demonstrated by growing ability to minister with undeveloped church leaders.
- Is growing in her ability to rely on Christ for her identity in spite of ambiguous contexts.
- Committed to persistent personal development

##### *Negative indicators*

- Unable to work with difficult church struggles/leaders
- Tends to look to others or the success of the church plant for her self-esteem.
- Places the responsibility for her spiritual and personal growth on others.

#### 5. Honesty

Shows integrity in her relationships in private and public life.

##### *Positive indicators*

- Open to admit her faults.
- Authentic: what you see is what she is
- Maintains personal convictions despite pressures to compromise

##### *Negative indicators*

- Makes excuses when unprepared for a given task
- Behaves differently in public than in private
- Gives partial account of events when a full account would put her in bad light

#### 6. Humility

Readily gives credit to God and others for the good in her life.

##### *Positive indicators*

- Full of hope that God will work
- Believes Christ will plant his church demonstrated by recognizing limits of what she or her husband is able to achieve
- Gives credit to God and others

##### *Negative indicators*

- Easily discouraged by her circumstances
- Tends to rely on human effort to plant the church demonstrated by lack of prayer.
- Is upset by unexpected demands on her time

### INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES

7. **Relational Maturity** Is other-centered demonstrating love, warmth and kindness in her relationships.

##### *Positive indicators*

- Heart for people; is genuinely interested in others.
- Laughs easily at herself; does not take herself too seriously.
- Is vulnerable and open with others.

##### *Negative indicators*

- In a public way may express impatience or irritation with people
- Tendency to carry her husband's or children's offenses
- May be confrontational or defensive in her relations with those who differ with her.

## 8. **Spiritual Discernment (Wisdom)**

Is able to judge what is needed in a given situation; keen perception and common sense led by the Holy Spirit.

### *Positive indicators*

- Insightful; able to perceive and understand heart issues
- Graciously able to pinpoint the underlying issue of a personal concern
- Distinguishes between issues of major and minor consequence

### *Negative indicators*

- Unaware of the realities of spiritual warfare
- Deals mainly with surface issues and may settle for superficial fixes
- Unwilling to compromise on issues of minor importance

## **PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES**

### 9. **Dynamic Networker**

Warmly includes others in her life and wisely links people to others and opportunities.

#### *Positive indicators*

- Values those inside and outside the community of faith as image bearers.
- Able to empower and release others to serve.
- Uses wisdom in communicating with church leaders regarding the strengths and weaknesses of others.

#### *Negative indicators*

- Gravitates towards exclusivity in relationships.
- Unwilling to delegate or release ministries.
- Unwise with what should remain confidential.

### 10. **Resourceful Ministry Partner**

Spouse agrees upon and shares the ministry call bringing unique vision and abilities to the church planting partnership.

#### *Positive indicators*

- Senses a desire to be in church planting with her husband as a call from God.
- Exhibits a willingness to serve using her gifts and abilities.
- Serves without regard for acclaim

#### *Negative indicators*

- May be indifferent to the type of ministry her husband is called to do.
- Tends to make impulsive decisions without thinking of consequences to others.
- May minister out of a sense of need for personal fulfillment.

### 11. Faithful Collaborator

Serves Christ authentically in light of the family/church/career God has given her.

#### Positive indicators

- Loyal to the church affirming its mission and values
- Makes commitments she has the capacity to fulfill. Is walking towards a joyful dependence on Christ in spite of setbacks.

#### Negative indicators

- May be overly critical regarding the church, denomination, or leadership
- Slow to follow through on commitments
- Easily discouraged by the demands ministry or family places on her.

### 12. Contextual Adapter

Is willing to adapt to the many changes church planting requires.

#### Positive indicators

- Comes to accept the risks involved in change, relinquishing ministry as church grows.
- Demonstrates an appreciation for the culture to which she is called.
- Is willing to adapt her plans and schedule if reasonable change is required.

#### Negative indicators

- May withdraw emotionally from the church when change seems too disorienting.
- Hesitant to adapt to changes and new situations.
- Slow to change opinions or routines.

## Church Planter Spouse Competencies\*

