

Rev. Joyce Shin: I'm very happy to welcome you both. It's also a joy for me to see some of the strands of what I remember you all working on in our M.Div program on your senior ministry projects. It's a joy to see the fruition of those early inquiries. So I'm looking forward to a time of learning from you both.

Elizabeth Marquardt: Thank you so much.

Shin: I wanted to let you know Elizabeth Marquardt is director of the Center for Marriage and Families at the Institute for American Values in New York City. She is Editor of <http://www.familyscholars.org>. She has written extensively on the inner lives of young people. She has one book called *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*, which I recommend to you. She is the principal investigator of this project of Does the Shape of Families Shape Faith?

Amy Zietlow was, I guess, incorporated into this project very smartly. She is an affiliate scholar at the Institute for American Values. She's an ordained pastor in the mainline Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. She contributes to *Huffington Post* and *The Atlantic* online at <http://www.familyscholars.org> also. Amy writes often about faith and families and death and dance. I remember her senior project being on dance and watching her dance her way through the project. That was fabulous.

Marquardt: She may dance her way through the presentation today so just be warned. *[Laughter]*

Shin: Welcome both of you.

Rev. Amy Zietlow: Welcome. We are very excited to be here. First we do want to thank Joyce and Ann for all of their work in putting this together. _____ thank you for the _____ and the beautiful Gratz Center. Thank you. We really were grateful. They believed in this project and the vision of being able to bring people together to look at both the research and also resources, sort of balancing the head and heart to be able to best serve through a divorce in our places: congregations, our communities.

We really thank you for seeing that vision and helping us make that come to be.

We also want to thank the Lilly Endowment, which is the funding source for this project as well as the reports that culminated from that project. You will hear from Professor Mary Ellen Konieczny

later, who is one of the many scholars who came together. There were social scientist, practical theologians, psychologists that all came together to conduct new research. And at the front of the report (and we'll also show you in the web site) lists all of the papers that were published from that research that delves into different facets of both the experience of children of divorce, their religiosity, their faith formation.

This report tries to take from that and lift up the highlights and high points for that and then give us tools to think about that. You'll hear from Mary Ellen later. We also want to thank the Center for Marriage and Families at the Intuition for American Values that helped shepherd this whole this project and release this report. I think those are all of the thank yous. We are recording all this which is why I'm sharing all of that. When folks listen to the podcast they're wondering, "Who is this? What are they doing? Where is this coming from?" They'll be able to hear a little bit of that.

For folks who know want to know how this program is going to work – I like to know where we're going in a program. So you're going to hear from several voices today. First we're going to hear from Elizabeth Marquardt. She is going to give us a little overview, some of the highlights from the research of the report. We'll then to move to Mary Ellen and I'll introduce her more fully when it's her time to share. She will speak more from her particular area, from her research perspective both looking at the report but also looking more specifically at the research that she did.

That on my mind is the head part of this section, this program. And then we're going to move more into the heart section. We're really grateful to Leah Misch who has come from Wisconsin today to be able to share some of her reflections on this report. Leah is one of our respondents for an online symposium we're having Thursday and Friday bringing together pastors and seminary professors and lay people who have read the report and bringing their reactions and their responses to the report.

Leah brings her personal reactions to how she hears this research and how it impacts her life. And then in the end I'm going to try to marry the two from my perspective.

Marquardt:

She's going to make it all sing, yes.

Zietlow: Trying to make it come together. *[Laughter]* My perspective as both a pastor and also a youth leader who has really never known my ministry without youth and leading youth in confirmation or a baptism class or youth group meetings, and mission trips. How does this research help me? So what? How do I actually make this have teeth in the real world. At the end we'll have time for questions and we'll also bring down the lovely screen and we'll be able to look at the web site so that you can see some of the different resources.

We have a sign-up sheet. You can share your e-mail because there will be more resources, study guides, that will come out. We'll share that. I think that's the overview. Did I forget -?

Marquardt: That sounds good to me so I guess, thank you Amy.

Zietlow: Great. I would just like to begin – I believe these conversations are sacred so I think it would be nice for us to begin with an opening prayer. Let us pray. Gracious God, you name all of creation holy and good. As we reflect this morning on the gift of family may we be mindful of and open to learning more about all the expressions of family in our communities and our congregations. May we as people of faith listen and speak with care and compassion, creating sacred space for the stories of all your children. Amen. I'll now turn it over to Elizabeth.

Marquardt: Thank you Pastor Amy. It's wonderful to be here with you all today. There are some familiar faces and some new faces and I'm very grateful to both for making the journey here. As Amy said I'm just going to share a little bit about some of the main findings, kind of the main argument you might say that is in support. The report we're talking about is called Does the Shape of Families Shape Faith? Everybody has a copy today. This is an early print version. The fully-designed PDF version is available now on our website, which we'll be showing you.

The authors of the report are myself and Amy and Chuck Stokes who is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, Sociology Program, and is a currently a fellow at our institute. He's in Alabama and not with us here today. We have a respondent, Mary Ellen Konieczny who was an author of one of the papers that this report was based on. You'll be hearing more from the scholarly point of view from her as well.

Just to set the stage it was puzzling to me (it has been for quite some time) that given that about 1,000,000 children each year in

the U.S. experience their parents' divorce and that more than half of children born to women under age 30 are now born outside of marriage, it seems like the religious lives of young persons who are growing up for one reason or another without their married parents has gotten surprisingly little attention in our churches. And I would suggest that this is a pressing concern, certainly for people directly impacted and their families, but also for congregations, for reasons that I'll get into.

Up until recent years most of the research on children of divorce has tended to focus on the social and economic consequences of divorce showing links typically between divorce and childhood problems such as poverty or dropping out of school or delinquency or early sexual activity or teen pregnancy or other very troubling outcomes. A major study by E. Mavis Hetherington at the University of Virginia examined more than 1,000 divorced families over three decades.

She found that 20 to 25 percent of young adults from divorced families experience what she called long-term damage, that is serious social and emotional problems compared to about 10 percent of young people from intact families. So two to two and a half times more likely to experience serious problems, the kinds of problems that might make it hard for someone experiencing those problems to be joining us here today – kind of the people that we may end up not seeing unless they're in our family and we know what they're struggling with.

But some have argued that there is much more to learn beyond what we might call symptoms lists. Judith Wallerstein who passed away only last year was a pioneer in examining the more subtle, psychological effects of divorce in children and young people. By getting to know a sample of children of divorce extremely well and returning to them again and again over the years she painted a sensitive portrait of the way divorce shapes the inner lives of many children whether or not they end up with diagnosable symptoms.

One of her books, for instance showed that childhood divorce has a sleeper effect, that its worst symptoms often appear when children of divorce leave home and attempt to form intimate relationships and families of their own, but do so with less ability to trust and little idea of what a lasting marriage looks like. I would say that in the churches this proliferation of family structures in recent years means that church leaders can – All that they thought they knew about families can no longer be taken for granted.

And at the same time, because divorce has been widespread for decades divorce is something that we are now learning a great deal about, including how it shapes the religious identities and faith formation of young people from divorced families, which is the topic of this report. So this report particularly drills down on the new research on how divorce impacts faith identities of young people and I would suggest that there's a lot more that we need to learn of how, for instance, non-marriage or being born to parents who were not married in the first place; how those pathways might look.

I think we're only just now beginning to ask those questions. In this report, based on 13 commissioned papers from leading scholars on religion and families, including one who graciously joined us today, we find that even amid decades of widespread divorce and family change America's churches have still largely not addressed how family change is impacting those who are in the pews. One in four of today's young adults are grown children of divorce. And out of wedlock childbearing has shot up dramatically since the 1980's.

So we now have several younger generations who are growing up without married parents for one reason or another. How they approach questions of moral and spiritual meaning and what choices they make for themselves and their families as they grow up with regard to religious identity and involvement will influence broader trends in the churches for years to come. We brought together scholars and consultations hosted by our organization, the Institute for American Values, as well as the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Chicago Divinity School.

We wanted to reflect together on the finding that when children of divorce reach adulthood, compared to those who grew up in intact families, they feel less religious on the whole and are less likely to be involved in the regular practice of a faith. Specifically two-thirds of young adults who grow up in married parent families, compared to just over half who grew up in divorced families, say that they are very or fairly religious. And more than a third of people from married parent families currently attend religious services almost every week, compared to just a quarter of those from divorced families.

After looking at the most recent available evidence it appeared to us that today's grown children of divorce form what we might call a broken leading edge of the trend of more Americans considering themselves spiritual but not religious. So the spiritual but not

religious trend that we've heard a lot of discussion of in public square in recent years describes many of the children of divorce quite well. They're as likely to feel spiritual as their peers from intact families. But they're less likely to be identified with a religious institution in some way.

So when you're looking at the trends in the churches, particularly in the mainline, it seems like you really need to factor in how changes in family structure might be shaping religious identity and things like attendance. New findings, which we share here, also challenge the idea that teaching congregants how to have what some call a good divorce, that is a divorce in which the parents stay involved in the child's life and minimize their conflict with one another –

New finding challenge the idea that this alone will offer much panacea. Certainly a good divorce is better than a bad divorce. But it still seems to be – when you look at the faith lives of children – not as good a predictor of them having an active life of faith later on. We found striking differences in religious experience when comparing those raised in good divorces with those raised in happy marriages. For example, those raised in happy marriages were more than twice as likely when they grow up to attend religious services compared to those raised in good divorces.

Those raised in happy marriages were more likely to report an absence of negative experiences of God compared to those raised in good divorces. Those raised in happy marriages have the lowest levels of religious disinterest compared to those raised in good divorces. So while I certainly do agree that some bad marriages much end, it's important to recognize that researchers have found that about two-thirds of marriages that end in divorce were low conflict marriages. The children, on average, do worse after those marriages end. And even if the parents can manage to achieve something that looks like a good divorce we have intriguing, suggestive findings showing that that alone still poses challenges to raising children who have a full life of faith connected to a faith community.

So one option might be that if these couples who are considering divorce can instead be supported and their marriages can be saved and strengthened it appears that the faith lives of their children could stand to benefit. We also find that scholars continue to find that the greatest predictor of the religious lives of youth remains the religious lives of their parents. Parents play a vital role in

influencing children's religious lives after divorce, particularly in a culture in which congregational involvement or other forms of civic involvement are no longer as normative as they once might've been.

It used to might have been that maybe you would be the divorced family on the block but all the other kids were walking to church and your kid could still kind of take part in these community rituals of institutional involvement. And of course we can't count on that as much anymore. Research also shows that divorced fathers are particularly influential in whether their children will continue to have a life in the church.

This was intriguing because a lot of research and a lot of assumptions have really focused on mothers' roles in socializing their children into a life of faith – which are important. But we found some interesting indications that after divorce, whether the father continues to support the child's faith life can be a determining factor in whether the child will continue to have a life in the world of faith. Some of the discomfort that grown children of divorce may feel in faith communities, which could part of why they're not showing up as much, could lie in their earlier experiences in congregations.

One study found that young adults who were regularly attending a church at the parents' divorce; of those young adults say that no one from the clergy or congregation reached out to them at that time while only one quarter remembered someone doing so. But if we dig deeper into the inner lives of children of divorce we learn more. There are obviously some ways in which we could say, "If they're not being reached to even at the crisis point around the time of their parents' divorce that could explain why they're not showing up later."

But it's also interesting and in this report we go deeper in the inner world experiences and how children of divorce respond to the stories of the faith as ways to also help us understand perhaps where they're not being met. Scholars observe that children of divorce can experience a disruption of the domestic church of their home. If they become alienated from formal religious practice they can experience what one scholar called a second silent schism – the first being the rupture of their parents' marriage and the second being the rupture of the child's connection to a congregation and even to a life of faith itself.

So there's a very poignant pathway there where the child loses their intact family. And as the intact family loses its connection to the faith community the child then loses connection to that faith community as well. Come in and join us. This is the Does the Shape of Families Shape Faith talk. It's also intriguing to look at how divorce may shape children's images of God. A body of scholarship supports the idea that children's early images of God arrives at least in part from their lived experience with their own parents, a kind of spiritualization of attachment is what scholars have called it.

So when religious traditions teach that God is like a father or mother they reinforce early God images that children might develop. Some scholars in this report asked, "Well what happens to a child's perception of a protective father God if they do not know their fathers?" Or, "How is a belief in a mother-like God shaped when a mother goes through a difficult divorce and may be unable to be a stable force for her children?"

Overall it appears that experiences of children of divorce can shape how they approach the stories of faith traditions. Some of my own earlier work looked at how children of divorce reflect to the parable of the prodigal son or the commandment to honor your father and mother. And these reactions and reflections that they have have implications for their own religious practice.

In this report we suggest, as my colleague Amy Zietlow will share in much more depth that if we can authentically meet young people and families where they are we can show them that the churches have something to offer when it comes to the most consequential experiences of their lives. In other words I would suggest that if we are real about what is happening in families they will come. And that would be, I think, good for them. And it will also be good for our faith communities which will be strengthened by having their wisdom and stories present among us as congregants and as potential leaders in the future.

I wanted to thank you and with that I'll turn it over to my lovely Amy.

Zietlow:

We have a general overview from Elizabeth. We're now going to dig a bit deeper with Professor Mary Ellen Konieczny. She is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Notre Dame. Her research interests revolve around broad themes of religion and family life and religion and American democracy. She's particularly interested in exploring how cultural and social

processes in local context intersect with discourse and politics in the public sphere.

Her current work includes transforming her dissertation study: *An Ethnography of Liberal and Conservative Catholic Parishes* into a book tentatively entitled *The Spirit's Tether: Family, Work, and Religion among American Catholics*. I know she'll say more about where you are and what you're thinking about. But we welcome you and thank you for coming.

ME Konieczny: Thank you. Thank you to Elizabeth for inviting me to be a part of this. I want to start by just saying that I'm really happy to be a part of this event. I think this is a really important topic for society and the churches. And I think that a lot of what Elizabeth has just said illustrates that. What I want to talk about with you today is what we've newly learned, how we might use the results of the study, and what we still need to know. As Amy said – Amy gave me an introduction and I realized that was off our web site and the Sociology Department at Notre Dame.

The work on the book is done.

Zietlow: Well good.

Konieczny: I guess I've got to – I think I've got to update that. *[Laughter]*

Konieczny: But the title is the title. And it's being published by Oxford University Press. It will be out this year. It's a comparative ethnographic study of parishes and really that explores not only the role of religion and family life but what that has to do with moral polarization in the churches and specifically in Catholicism. I want to add thought that previous to my academic career (and Frank Hannigan knows this) I worked in pastoral ministry in administration for the Arch Diocese of Chicago. And I did that for nine years.

I have a Ph.D. in Sociology also from the University of Chicago but not from the Divinity School, and also a Master of Divinity. So my response today – I think it's important to let you know that because my response today reflects both academic and pastoral points of view. I've kind of seen this project from both those perspectives. I have to tell you it's been a privilege to be involved in this project. Two aspects of the project particularly stand out for me. Part of what I want to do is I want to give you a feel for what it was like to be a part of the working group because I think it's an

important part of the results that it figured into the kind of product that this report and that the papers are.

Two things. First of all it gave participants – Some of us work in the area of congregational life, some in family studies, some specifically in theology - so social scientist and practical theologians really. It gave us an opportunity to contribute to a neglected but important issue. And in so doing Elizabeth and her colleagues gathered a diverse, accomplished, and dedicated group of colleagues. It really was a genuine privilege to work with them. Our group for this was remarkably broad. But it was one whose members were passionate about and sensitive to the issues faced by children of divorce.

Members of the group, in fact, despite their diverse disciplines and methods often yielded contributions around which everyone could unite. This happened not just because of the intellectual power with the papers presented, although there certainly was that. But because many of the papers dealt with some highly emotional issues surrounding children of divorce in a way that had the capacity to draw others in. Let me give you a couple of brief examples. I'm going to see 'cause I'm going to talk a little bit –

Marquardt: There's a list –

Konieczny: If there is a list of papers – And are these available on the web site then?

Marquardt: Yeah the published ones are.

Konieczny: Okay, but not the ones that aren't published?

Marquardt: But there's a link.

Konieczny: There's a link to them. Okay. On page four of what you have – there are two pages there that list the papers that were written for this project. So page four and five.

Marquardt: And on the web site there are links to all of the papers. You can go there and actually go and read them.

Konieczny: The first one that I want to talk about just a little bit is Christian Green's paper. So you can see *Christian Green: 'There but for the Grace': The Ethics of Bystanders to Divorce*. I have to tell you that in the – Everyone wrote a paper, brought it, and presented it for feedback. Many of the papers were highly emotional. I don't

know if it's just a personal experience but I actually think it wasn't just personal. Out of all of the papers this one was, I think – had so much immediate impact for all of us who read it.

Christians and ethicists – it was coming from the point of view of how do I deal with divorce among my friends? And feeling that I have feelings about this – so I how do I deal with this as someone who does moral theology? What she's identifying is both sort of the communal aspects of marriages and institution and the pain that her friends experience and of being at loss as to know what to do with that because that produces emotions in all of us or can right? For us, as a group, there was this intellectual issue.

We're dealing with the ethics of what it means to be a bystander, because we are. But what do we do with that? But then also it's not just intellectual but emotional. This is a good example of a paper, that despite the fact we came from different disciplines, often came from different points of view, implicated all of us – especially as scholars because we were bystanders not just because we know friends and family that have been divorced or been affected by divorced, but that we're intellectual bystanders too. This is something that we work on.

That gives you one example of the kinds of interactions of the group. A second different example is Melinda Denton's paper. This is the first one. Now this is different. Melinda is a quantitative sociologist. The paper that she wrote, which is published, categorized the varied ways in which young people identify with their faith tradition as a way of starting to think about, how do children affected by divorce deal with faith? And in this she gave us an important tool for thinking about faith responses that we see in teens generally.

She's focused on adolescents.

Zietlow: I might just say (I'm sorry) on page 33 you can see the chart that she's talking about.

Konieczny: Oh the table, yes.

Zietlow: This is Melinda's chart that Professor Konieczny is talking about.

Konieczny: It's excellent and it's clever because all of the categorizations begin with A. So there are Abiders, Adapters, Assenters, Avoiders, and Atheists. It's excellent work, excellent research. But the thing is what she does is she helps us to appreciate the diversity an possible

contradictions in the faith live of young people and particularly in those young people affected by divorced. It's a wonderful too.

Contributions like Melinda's and Christian's helped us identify common interests in research commitments despite our different social locations. They built us into a community and I believe that our research benefitted from this aspect of our work together. Now a second aspect of our work that stood out for me is rooted in the fact, again, of the composition of the group of scholars. We were not only from diverse disciplines but also different theologies and different normative perspectives on divorce, single parenting, feminism, politics, and other issues that are associated with the objectives of our working group.

Now I think that this was a great strength of the project. I think it was maybe its greatest strength. I think this because of the polarization of American society it can be difficult to dialog effectively around issues surrounding the family. They're frequently emotionally and politically charged. But Elizabeth, I think, had the courage and the good judgment to bring together a group of scholars that was open and diverse and also had the skills to facilitate our work effectively.

We didn't always agree. And our disagreements were sometimes about emotionally charged issues. She laughs. *[Laughter]* But even in the midst of disagreement and intellectual debate the group was unfailingly respectful. People listened to one another. They found themselves not only intellectually challenged but also sometimes personally and morally challenged. The diversity of viewpoints, the openness to disagreement and debate; these greatly improved our work.

In fact the group's organization and process was a model for effective scholarship, and I might add effective citizenship as well. For this I'd like to offer on behalf of my colleagues, my profound thanks. It doesn't always happen, especially around an issue like this. Work is much more effective when all of – It really is what good scholarship is all about.

What I'd like to do is offer a few more comments about how the products of the group suggest a continuing agenda this time for research on religious faith, divorce, and children of divorce. Let me just characterize these papers. Let me see what I can do to characterize these papers a little bit more for you. What I would do is classify the papers. And I would say that they operate at three different levels of analysis. They do come from diverse

disciplines but they deal with discreet levels of analysis - sometimes one related to another.

These are the three that I would put them in. The first level is that of the individual self. This would be, in some cases, the child of divorce. A lot of Elizabeth's presentation was about that kind of research. It's also those of us – all of us maybe – who negotiate the divorce culture of the larger society – that some scholars – Karla Kackstaff is the person that coined that term. But often that's the idea that divorce is prevalent in society. But that first level of that of the individual.

The second level is that of the family. And here, while the central figure is the child of divorce, we think of that as the person embedded in family relationships. And often in that case, here we have children who experience directly the plurality of family forms we see in society today in their own family structure. So the family is really an institutional level – second level. The third is also an institutional level but larger. And that's the arena, the level of the church and congregations.

This is where we see how those who are connected to or embedded in churches experience support or the lack of it in their experiences of transition, disconnection, difficulty, and pain involved in divorce. There are really three – Our research pays attention to three discreet levels. Just to point to a few of the papers, individual level papers might be Andrew Root actually. He presented part of his book on *Children of Divorce*.

Elizabeth's *Between Two Worlds* is that kind of research. So are Melinda Denton's and Chris Ellison's to a certain extent, the second one. The issue of families – Annette Mahoney's article which is on divorce's sacred loss; even though she deals with the individual level data she's thinking about the family as a unit. Hers would be a good example of research at that second level. I think Julie Rubio's article is another one. She's a Catholic ethicist. I think Sorcha Warren's paper: *Narrating Divorce in Protestant America* is also a paper that tends in that direction. That's the second level.

The third level is the level of the churches. Here for instance my work, Richard Osmer's work; those two stand out for me. Those are the two I think. What I want to say is I think all three levels are important. And certainly for me, as a sociologist – I am especially a sociologist who studies congregational cultures. I desperately need other people to do these other two levels. But what I want to

do is emphasis the importance and argue for the importance of the work where one looks explicitly at congregations.

Partly it's because it's what I study. But the reason why I study it is because I think that it's important. Let me suggest a couple of further questions then about the effects of divorce that I believe to be critically important for individuals and for the work of churches and how researchers and congregations might begin to go about answering them. I think that actually – I didn't think about this beforehand but I think that out of all of the –

While people would kind of think about the churches and think about theology there really were only two papers that specifically addressed the congregational aspect of it. I could be wrong about that.

Marquardt: I think you're right. Sorcha's somewhat too, but yeah.

Konieczny: But generally speaking. So let me go back to talk a little bit more about something that Elizabeth talked about in her data that shows that pastors and members of congregation don't reach out often or maybe effectively to families of divorce, but at a rate of about 25 percent. Now she found that from individual level data. My own data, which is a purposive sample of 25 congregations from a population of congregations in a Midwestern city and I sampled them on specific characteristics.

But interestingly I did interviews with pastors and then with congregants. I'm going to be speaking on the interviews I did with pastors and pastoral staffs to characterize the congregations. Interestingly I found the same number – and it's not a – Unlike Elizabeth's data it's not a generalizable sample in the sense of nationally representative. But what I found was the same incidence of congregations that said they did a lot of reaching out, either had programmatic responses to children of divorce or dealt with couples in marital counseling situations frequently.

And I found that it was the same rate. So we know, and we know from Elizabeth's data in particular, that this happens only a quarter of the time. We know that, but why is this the case? The answer is complex but I think we really know very little that helps to answer the question. We have Elizabeth's data. We also know from an interview study by K. Jenkins, Kathleen E. Jenkins (she's also a sociologist, qualitative study, 2010) that the experience of divorced people in congregations is one that can include opportunities for

healing but that also frequently includes an experience of congregational silence.

This is what her respondents told her. Silence about divorce and feelings of aloneness in congregations among divorced people. Jenkins reports that those who are dealing with divorce conclude that their healing is ultimately something they must do privately, even as members of religious congregations. And yet religious congregations are most often deeply invested in the marriages and family lives of their congregants. Religious faith and family life are intertwined historically, presently. Congregations have a stake in their families' well-being.

So then why is it that they appear to be so much less present to those whose marriages fail? Family scholars who think about this question and related ones usually point toward social trends that have over time emphasized the individualization and privatization of marriage in Western societies. And I think we're probably all familiar with this reality. In other words marriage is understood to be much more a relationship for the psychological satisfaction of spouses' desire for intimacy, companionship, and family.

And the public commitment and institutional basis of marriage is much less emphasized, say than it was 50 years ago. So as we know, one consequence of this, among others, is the relatively high incidence of divorce in the West. That's been going up since the 1920's and it's stabilized now at about 40 percent. We know all of that but then we need to ask exactly how does this larger social climate affect churches – not just individuals – and in particular the way in which they respond to families affected by divorce?

This is a question we don't know much about presently. Now Amy Zietlow knows something about it and I think you're going to talk about it right?

Marquardt: Mm-hmm.

Konieczny: She's going to talk about some pastoral strategies that she has found helpful in dealing with specifically teens who have been affected by divorce. I want to add to this by talking briefly about the research that I developed out of my initial contribution to this project. I mentioned what the sample looks like. It was an interview-based sample. What I was looking at were two sets of congregations; ones that had what I would call effective ministries to people experiencing marital conflict and divorce, and those that did not.

It was 25 percent that did, 75 percent that didn't. I found that across the board, congregations with effective outreach weren't necessarily, by the way, the largest or wealthiest congregations. Resources did help but that was not what explained what I was seeing in terms of the differences. There were three characteristics of congregations with active ministries to families affected by marital conflict and divorce that weren't present in the other 75 percent of congregations.

I'm going to tell you what they are. The first is these congregations – What I would say is that the three together did not appear in the other congregations. And that would be true specifically of this first one. The first is that these congregations had a lay membership that was oriented towards the service of others, either within the congregations, without the congregations, or both. This didn't have to be a membership that was particularly worried about marriage ministries. Sometimes it was.

This elements – This was also true in other congregations but this was also universally among the congregations that had effective ministries to families of divorce. I saw it in every congregation.

Marquardt: Say that again. Among those ministries, what did you see?

Konieczny: Among the 25 percent group I saw this first characteristic in all of those congregations.

Marquardt: What is that characteristic?

Konieczny: That they have service-oriented lay memberships. Does that help?

Marquardt: Service-oriented lay memberships.

Konieczny: So these would be – For instance they might – Like in some cases they did actually have – I'll give you an example. One congregation actually had a radio show that they would do weekly on a local radio station. And they would talk about religious topics. This was actually a Catholic church. I know this because through one of the interviews somebody talked about how when their marriage ministry talked on the radio show they would get people coming to them with marital problems.

But this was lay-oriented. Lay people actually were the people that were in charge of it. But it could also be a place like this one, like

Fourth **Pres** where there's a large active ministry that is related to several areas of urban life. Does that make sense?

Marquardt: Mm-hmm.

Konieczny: Thank you. Okay so that's the first characteristic. The second is that in these congregations they talked about marriage and divorce. They weren't silent. This sounds simple. And we think congregations generally seek to support marriage. And we also know that denomination's rules vary about the acceptability of divorce. There are differences in the way congregations deal with it. But regardless of the specific rules followed by a particular congregation of the denomination, those with effective ministries to people affected by divorce were also explicit about the value of marriage.

They encouraged couples to work to stay together. They promoted the value and effectiveness of counseling for those experiencing marital problems. Often they had in-house counseling. Not always, but they were effective about it and they believed in it in the sense that they believed in its effectiveness. Now they did this at the same time as they acknowledged the reality and heartbreak of failed marriages.

And they offered a place of healing. They did both. And the other congregations; there was a lot of powerlessness – feelings of powerlessness – among pastors who did not have effective ministries. And again there was more silence as opposed to people talking about this.

The last characteristic, cultural characteristic, would be in making sense of what the good marriages, together with the reality of divorce in our culture. These congregations do not just accept societal definitions and norms about marriage. But they don't reject them either completely. Instead, congregations with engaged ministries to married and divorced persons work with and religiously transform societal understandings of individualized or soul mate ideals of marriage.

That is they translate the important and positive cultural meanings of contemporary ideals about marriage in religious terms. And they change them subtly with religious ideals and in ways that provide greater support for couples negotiating the shoals of marriage than is often available in society broadly. At the same time they acknowledge that family tragedies that can result from human frailty. It's a kind of both/and, but it's a very purposeful

integration of societal norms of marriage with – Actually my sample is all Christian – Christian theologies of marriage.

Not all congregations did that. In fact some would just reject societal definitions of marriage. That's a third characteristic. These comparative findings have both scholarly and practical potential to move our knowledge forward. From a scholarly perspective they pave the way for better understanding of how religious groups respond to, are shaped by, and have the capacity to shape societal norms about marriage and divorce.

Practically I believe that they can help congregations to reflect upon the cultural underpinnings and motivations of their responses to marital conduct and divorce. My research is kind of a small start but what I want to emphasize is that much more research is needed to answer questions about the most effective congregational practices and strategies from ministries to families and children of divorce.

Finally, in advancing this agenda and others related to the results of our working group I'd recommend that future projects like my small study don't circumscribe the topic too narrowly, but allow the relationships between the self, the family, religious, and society to be studied in their complexity. It's my hope that the results of our working group and the dissemination of our results and recommendations will encourage further work on questions like these. Thanks for your attention.

Marquardt: Thank you so much. That was rich.

Zietlow: Amen, huh? It's wonderful to be able to hear a more deep look from one of the contributors so this project. I was just sitting there in awe just knowing – I mean Mary Ellen is just one snapshot of the incredible minds and hearts that came together for this.

Marquardt: They were amazing.

Zietlow: Today is a very surface look. There's a lot to dig in and really learn. I learned a lot just hearing again –

Marquardt: Just now. *[Laughter]* Me too.

Zietlow: Mary Ellen walks through her thought process and her research. Thank you. Next I would like to introduce you to Ms. Leah Misch. She came from Wisconsin today. Leah is a nurse and she has volunteered extensively with the American Red Cross disaster

relief as a National Health Service volunteer. She's also served as a spokesperson on the Houston County Divorce Panel. She met Elizabeth at Viterbo University. Am I pronouncing that correctly?

Marquardt: Viterbo, yes. I was told it was Viterbo.

Zietlow: We will be trying more personal work with them. And as I mentioned earlier she's one of the voices in our Family Scholars Symposium that brings together pastors and different lay people to bring more of a personal response and practical response. We'd love to invite you to come forward. You're welcome to sit or stand. I'm going to stand, so whatever is most comfortable.

Marquardt: Her last name please.

Zietlow: Leah Misch. M-I-S-C-H.

Leah Misch: I first want to say thank you guys for putting this all together. When I first came into contact with Elizabeth I had seen her coming to speak at my school. This is a topic that I never really saw a whole lot of light shed on – talking about children and their experience through divorce. I was like, "Oh my gosh. This is really exciting to go see." Listening to her speech I was like, "This is so cool." I shared some of my own experiences with her and then she asked if I would respond to the report.

In doing the response to the report it was really cool because I did a lot of self-reflection on some of my own experiences. And in writing my own response I was literally brought to tears a few times in writing it because it really touched deep – in reading the report and then also in writing the response. What you guys did was really truly cool and I feel like explains everything I went through in divorce and how it relates to faith. Thank you for your work Amy.

I'm not very good at public speaking so I'm a little bit nervous. With my own experience it's kind of – It'll be interesting.
[Laughter] Bear with me. I haven't done public speaking for a while.

Marquardt: You're amongst good people.

Misch: My piece was titled *Finding Faith in the Voiceless Child*. Though I grew up church every Sunday I was never centered in my faith. I felt distant from the church after my parents divorced; questioning God's existence and feeling what the report: Does the

Shape of Families Shape Faith? It refers to it as the second silent schism. My biggest question was how could the church question that it was wrong for my mother to leave an abusive relationship? Why was the divorce wrong if it was a bad relationship?

In my parental battles and trying to find social acceptance among my peers at 13 I felt isolated and alone. I don't recall the church reaching out to me at that time. But even so I would've been reluctant in accepting help, not feeling open to confiding to anybody really in the church. There is truth in: "What does not kill you makes you stronger." Adversity and the lack of crutch the weak become strong and learn to stand on their own. That was probably the greatest gifts that my parents could've given me.

Through their financial instability and the result of a bad divorce and core battles for 13 years and conflict I learned at an early age what the value of a dollar was and what hard work to succeed took to be successful in life. I desired to better my life. I decided to go to college. I juggled working three jobs to support myself through school to become a nurse. Because of the chaotic work schedule I didn't really feel like there was a lot of time to go to church on Sunday.

I was always busy between work and school and studying. I never really felt like I had time to go to church, which I really wish I did because I think it would've helped me later in life to better cope with the days ahead. After graduating slowly my days became dark and I found myself in an abusive relationship, the same in which my mother had been, which kind of shows the patten of how I grew up and how it carried over. It's just crazy. I swore that I would never walk down that same path.

But with little experience in dating and no true relationship role model I subconsciously felt like it was normal to be in an abusive relationship – like that's just how it was. Slowly my light was being put out but in the struggle of darkness I saw light. In the report it states grown children of divorce might turn to the congregational life from a place of loneliness and suffering. I was losing everything and I didn't know myself if I would survive.

Through positive role models and a deep self-reflection I took a terrifying risk to break away. I looked at life and how lost I was and I started to form my Bucket List. I wanted a better life for myself and I wanted that light to shine back. I really didn't know what else to do and it was really scary but I broke away and did a lot of the deep self-reflection. It was in the time of despair that I

began to hear the voice through a voiceless child. And literally it was through a voiceless child that all this kind of came together.

By the course of unexplainable events I was brought into a family's life to work with a special needs child who cannot speak. I learned through the family's journey of their faith. They were brought to their faith through the child and they were brought to their knees in the grace of the child. It was here I found God's word with the family, who had become my faith mentor. You guys talked a lot in the report about the faith mentors and how they reach out to people. That was one of the biggest things of finding a relationship more with God – through the faith mentors.

I discovered God in a new light and I was able to questions, search, struggle, and find my own grace in God; and not just knowing God but having a relationship with God in everyday life. Having a faith role model filled with words of God helped me through the darkness and was vital in making it through more dark days ahead. Within the next year and a half I would encounter two life-threatening accidents with a multitude of critical injuries. I had broken my back and punctured my lung and broke my ribs and had some whiplash. I hurt my hip and had some nice artistic road rash.

In these two accidents it was like, "Wow this is a lot to handle. *[Laughter]* How am I going to get through?" I'm really glad that I had started to find God in that because had I not had that peace during that time I think I would've been a lot harder off and to be where I'm at today and to be at peace with how crazy life has been in the last few years. But I had a strengthening spirit inside. Even though my body hurt I had the spirit of God in me. And it was through the comforting words and prayers and peace that I was able to get through some of this hard time.

My faith mentors could've given up on me so many times, which emphasizes the vital role that they play in the congregation – and not just only in the congregation but in everyday life to reach out to people through everyday life. I wasn't in church to have met them. It was in everyday life that I had met them. So in addition to the importance of faith role models tasks to create a safe environment for children of divorce, to doubt, question, search, pray, struggle, and find hope, grace, and truth in their own terms, if you cannot listen openly and entertain the question of a young person then you will mostly likely fail.

But equally important, just know the only time you fail is the last time that you try. So don't give up on the people, even though they

may struggle through some of it. Don't stop reaching out to them. Keep going. And it really was through them to continue reaching out to me that not having given up on me was really important for me to really believe. Through the concept of not giving up I have come to learn from my faith mentors. Though both coming from previous marriages they found faith and centered their lives within it.

In their marriage I have seen what it's like to struggle. But I've also seen what it's like if faith is kept in the center of it that they can make it through anything, which gives me hope someday that I might find the same in marriage. In terms of giving voice to children of divorce I found my own voice as a speaker on the Houston County Divorce Panel. I've heard insight to parents of the tribulations in my experience growing up in a broken home. I always brought forth the notion to place themselves in my shoes by questioning.

Instead of children's lives being divided between two homes why don't you guys divide your homes centered around the children? So instead of me going back and forth between moms and dads why don't you guys now come back and forth in my home, which offers insight into the stability that is really important for children of divorce to have? And I think that a lot of that is overlooked in some of the parents. They don't think of some of the stability that is really important for children.

And destructing a young child's normal environment it leaves children with a sense of emptiness and loss that can be traumatizing. In my first-hand experience of working with children traumatized by natural disasters it was vital to engage stability through familiar activities such as art and play which is a really awesome experience of being able to work with some of the kids in situations and times that are going to impact their lives forever. Likewise, art and play can also be used as a form of therapy by counselors to gain insight into the children by opening windows to express feelings after experiencing a significant loss such as divorce.

In my experience with teenage children it is important for children who have experienced loss to engage in civil society. Stability and that sense of belonging for children who are statistically now more at risk for emotional and social problems can be found in civil society by surrounding oneself in a positive social environment with role models to instill positive moral values and faith for those

coping with divorce. While volunteering in civil society I began to see the world in a whole new color after my parents' divorce.

By engaging in volunteer organizations in civil society I learned that giving the gift of grace I was able to receive the gift of grace putting a faith-based value "Love thy neighbor as thyself" into action. Through stewardship in civil society I began to say a ripple effect of positive social change in reaching out to those who had struggled with loss themselves. I felt like I was able to relate to some of the people experiencing in some of the loss that I had experienced as a child.

While incorporating faith into the children's lives is important, equally so are the people set to do the task. If instilling faith back into the lives of people is important take note. Never underestimate the power of listening and actively listening as a faith mentor within civil society. Really I don't think had my faith mentors not listened to me and some of the things I had would I have been – that I would be as engaged as just anybody. They had to really hear my story in order for it to touch their own hearts.

They were able to listen to my story. And I also came across – in working with the Disaster Relief – that listening to somebody going through it is sometimes the only thing that helps for people to get through some of it. Some of it you just have to sit there and listen and listen with an open, compassionate, caring heart in order for them to feel like they're comfortable to tell you about everything.

So in my experience volunteering as a nurse in the Disaster Relief Operation for the Red Cross, in the depths of despair sometimes the most important thing anyone can do is listen. Just listen. But listen with a gentle, compassionate understanding of feeling their pain. It is when you can relate to somebody that trust can be built in their unique story. And everybody does have a unique story. Nobody's story is the same and it's important to hear. It was through a compassionate listener I found my faith after one of my deepest times of struggle.

Children of divorce may search for a deeper meaning in faith through their struggle but it may need to be heard by the right compassionate listener. One will never know when that time may be so live your life in faith. Thank you for listening. *[Applause]*

Ziattlow:

Amen. You can tell as we put together the program today – as Leah and I were working this last week on her reflections it just

became so vitally important when we knew that you were going to be able to be here to include your voice because as you can tell – All of us here think about families. We think theologically about them. We try to connect Bible study, connect our minds to this. But although there are so many compelling statistics and information in this report we don't live with statistics. We live with Leah's.

We live with real people, with real stories. I know from my perspective as a pastor and also a youth leader – I think Joyce, today they quoted you in the Trib. Your words resonated with me as a pastor to say, "I know in my congregations when families are going through hard times, when there's conflict." Mary Ellen you point out in your paper the couples often wouldn't come to me, but the wife would. And then I'd get a call from the husband. I'd get a call from the aunt who's like, "Do you know what's happening with _____ and Bob because they're -."

Then I have their 13-year-old son in youth group and all of a sudden he can't always get there. They have a child in Sunday school. "Well I'm not coming to church anymore." You know but you sort of feel – How do I give words? I'm imagining that what you're going through is an experience of grief and loss and frustration and stress, but I don't always have the words to be able to talk about that. So I as I came to this project – As mentioned earlier I'm a pastor in the Lutheran church.

I've spent all of my ordained ministry, although I've served in congregations, but served in hospice care. So I've served in homes all over both as a chaplain but also as a chief operating officer, so looking and working with our team about how do we respond and pre-care plans and including that spiritual element and how we respond. That brought me to the current project Elizabeth and I are working on, which is on grief and loss in this era of high family fragmentation.

But as we looked at this report to say I'm coming here thinking about the congregations I've served in southern Illinois and now I'm serving in central Illinois. I've served congregations in Baton Rouge and New Orleans and am thankful for those volunteers who came down after Katrina and Rita and Gustav and all the hurricanes we've had of last. So what? There is compelling research here but how do I use this?

How would I take some of this and actually apply this in congregational ministry. I offer a lot of great stuff in here but I'm

going to focus on three things today. It in some ways follows what Mary Ellen focused on: individual families and congregational. So thank you for that because the first of those three is on more of a personal level as a pastor. How would I engage this report? For me personally I tell some of my personal story in the report that I really had not thought about divorce in any substantive way until I met Elizabeth in divinity school.

I can just remember clearly where I was – fourth floor, Swift Hall, cloistered up around this big, long, ancient table that you could feel the good thoughts sort of emanating off at you. It was late in the day. The steam heat – trying to drink coffee. One of our classmates was opining about the text for the day. He was one of our classmates who just sort of routinely used male language for God: he, his, father, father. I've very strong feminist research based and I've got my hackles up.

As he closed Elizabeth just very calmly – She's a very calm, very tactful person. She said, "I don't want to be rude but I just was wondering when you use the word father who you're wanting me to think of. Is it my father who was married to my mother when until I was three or my step-father who died when I was a teenager, or my second step-father?" My parents were married when they were 18 and 19 and are still married. In my sheltered little – I'm peeking out going, "Who is that? What is she talking about?"
[Laughter]

It completely opened up a world and started giving me vocabulary to realize that as I'm going out into a congregation one in four, not only youth and children, but adults that I serve – Couples thinking about getting married, couples thinking about having children, raising their children are carrying with them this shadow of divorce that follows them their whole life. It behooves me – I care deeply about the people that I'm serving with in our congregations to be mindful and to try to find words to talk about this.

So I found the first way I could use this report would be with my fellow colleagues. I know I go to tech study every week trying to figure out, "What are we preaching on this Sunday? Wedding in Cana. Oh my Lord we've preached on this every year I'm afraid." How do we preach on this? These are my colleagues. I know their families. I know what they're going through. And I know I could use it with them. I could also use it with some of our youth sponsors, some of the adults who have gone through boundary trainings and are committing themselves to being Sunday school teachers or youth sponsors.

But to use this as a way to talk about both our own stories – What are our stories of our families of origin? How do we talk that through? And being mindful that that's going to affect - How did this affect our call into the ministry? How did that shape that? I think some of the nuance of this is yes sometimes that means people pull away after a divorce. But it also means they sometimes move a lot closer. Or it's nuanced. In some ways their thoughts about God move closer but their worship attendance grows farther away.

How did they define that for themselves? So to be able to use the research here to give some vocabulary as more of a closed group of colleagues to talk very personally about our own journeys, but then to begin analyzing and assessing our congregations. Some of the work that Mary Ellen is doing; are we some of the 75 percent that are not articulating this in any programmatic way or informal way?

What lay people can be involved in these ministries? But then to begin to talk as colleagues about how we can help being leaders and that service – I cannot imagine a pastor alive who would not say, "Yes we would like to be service oriented." I just can't imagine – *[inaudible comment]*. *[Laughter]* Go into the world. Whatever. No I can imagine them saying, "Yes I want to have some tools."

So then the second thing in terms of families: how could I use this in a practical way to talk with families? Because I would know when a husband would come into talk about things aren't going well – or a wife, or in the very rare instances a couple would come in. I knew I'm not a licensed marriage and family counselor. In one way I'm not equipped with those skills, let alone do I have the time to say, "Let's meet every week for an hour." There's just physically not that time.

In those moments I would be an active listener. "I hear you saying -." Feedback. I'd offer prayer. I'd offer support. But I also felt ill-equipped. I knew they were coming to me, that their faith did matter to this journey, that they were experiencing stress. So they did want some tools from their faith to apply to this. I'm glad. If you still have page 33 open Professor Melinda Lundquist Denton in her paper created this typology because she found in studying adolescence that this is sort of expressions of their religiosity – looking at different ways we express our faith from worship attendance, faith, how we talk about if we feel close to God. What language do we use for that?

I would also as a pastor throw in stewardship, which she doesn't throw in here. Where is the stewardship in here? How do we think about what we're giving, both stewardship of our time, talent, resources, and so forth? But then she focuses on when we go through a time of stress, especially for children of divorce there is going to be movement here. For me as a pastor I thought, "Ooh I'm a visual learning." I know that in talking with a father, a mother, a couple, I can use this as a tool to say, "First let's talk about you? Where are you?"

How about during pre-marital counseling? Amen? We've got the photographer. We've got the flowers. Where are you here? Right? *[Laughter]* This is what matters. Pictures are great but come on. _____, let's talk about this too. So where are you as a couple? And are you in different places? How are you -? I think in between two worlds Elizabeth sort of ferrets this out. Once you're married you are rubbing up against each other defining how you as a family are going to express your religiosity.

And that's part of your role as being married. It lasts your whole life. Amen? All of us married ladies. You are constantly, throughout your different developments as a family, figuring out how we express ourselves. So being able to use that as a tool for people to look and say, "Oh I think I'm here and maybe a little bit there." But then the care plan person in me – hospice comes up. Where would you like to be?

What are your goals for care? Are you where you would want to be? And if you're not why aren't you there right now? What's going on – the stresses in your life? So then how can we as your faith community help equip you? Let's come up with a care plan. Where would you like to be in three months or a year for yourself? The other place – 'cause Professor Denton says using this with couples to talk about their kids. I also found – Sometimes the emotions around what was going on in a family breakup – we could talk somewhat about this but a lot of times they just needed comfort.

It was a nice way to reframe or redirect to say – I know going through a divorce is all-consuming for those going through it. But to say, "But you have a son. You have a daughter and a son. Research shows that when you're going through the stress of this divorce and living with it – let's talk about their faith. Where do you see your 13-year-old son in here? Let's impact some of this. He can't drive and he's not going to –

He's still developing in his brain and his heart. So your role as his parent is to be thinking through where are they and where would I like him to be? And how am I going to help do this. And even talk with him about this." To me in terms of the family level this could be a great tool to use in that pastoral care visiting setting.

Now the third thing that I thought of was also in terms of the individual – well and it's more of a church level – in terms of the youth. I've spent most of my time being a youth group leader and most recently in Baton Rouge with high school youth. We would meet every Sunday night. We'd have worship and games and goofy snacks and things. But then we'd always have Bible study. When I came across this last spring I was like, "I'm going to use it with our high school youth because high school youth love thinking about themselves."

"Oh where am I?" They just love thinking about who they are. I thought okay let's try it out. We had several members of the group who were seniors. I knew being able to frame it as you're getting ready to graduate; it's going to be a time of stress; let's talk about where you are. For them we had to unpack a lot of these more scholarly terms and help define the terms for folks.

But it was so empowering for them to say, "Oh I think I'm here." This is in terms of service to others. "Oh am I more of an atheist when it comes to service for others? How am I doing that in my daily life? I would only say I've done that once this last year. What does that mean? Is that who I want to be?" So then we were able to think through. I copied it out. I said, "Stick it in the back of your Bible. There's going to be a lot of change: freshman year, sophomore year." So they'll have it back there to be able to refer back and say, "Oh where was I when I was 18? Where am I now? Why am I where I am and where do I want to be now?"

Now the other fun thing they loved doing was assessing their parents. *[Laughter]* They loved that even more than themselves. So then I said, "Okay let's get really juicy and where are your parents?" Of course National Youth Survey showed across the board again and again what parents are is what you are going to get from your kids most likely in terms of your religiosity and religious expression. So where do you see your parents.

And I think in walking through with those numbers, and of course in our group, about half came from divorced families, joint custody situations. The other half were from parents more like mine that

have been married forever and seem like one melded person to those kids. It raised again for me some of the power of the language in this report, that as we started analyzing our parents, for those kids from intact families they often used they, their. "They" come to church all the time. "They're" always working in the kitchen. "They're" always here picking weeds and mowing the lawn.

"We" always have to pray before dinner. "We" always have to say this prayer. "We" do this. They saw some nuances. Mom likes doing more this or dad. But for the most part they talked as a "we" or a "they." But quickly for the children of divorce they're like – It's so much – They had all of their mom world to analyze and then all of their dad life to analyze. It quickly became obvious they're like, "Okay am I more this one or am I more that one," and already negotiating loyalties that I really –

Especially in Louisiana there were a lot of Catholics. We were in a Christian Church Disciples of Christ. There were a lot of divorces that the mom is Catholic and the dad is Christian Church Disciples of Christ which has different views of sacraments, different views of theology, different how do we pray? Who do we pray to? They were already feeling, "Well I resonate more with this practice but I feel bad. I feel like I'm hurting my dad. I'm not here." Or, "I come to youth group 'cause mom really wants me to but I really like my Sunday school class at the Catholic church."

Or, "I'm getting confirmed in the Catholic church. But I'm not really sure. Should I still take communion here?" Or, "I've taken communion in the Disciples for a long time and now I'm not sure what that means over here in my Catholic faith. Can I be both? Can I be neither?" How do I make sense of that? And I think it just raised my awareness, again, as a pastor a person who cares about those who are going through divorce that these questions never really end.

My heart really at that moment was with our teenagers, but just a reminder that that question of feeling, "I'm between two worlds, and sometimes I'm a mom version of myself. Sometimes I'm a dad version of myself. Sometimes I'm like a weird mix. And then when they come together, these two versions of myself are – I'm not sure. Am I the oldest sister that I became in my dad's family when he had two more kids with my step-mom or am I the baby in the family because my mom married a man who had two older sons? Can I be a baby and a big sister at the same time?"

I'm not sure what that looks like.

[End of Audio]