



## A conversation was all it took...

A year ago, at our 2010 Annual Dinner Celebration, I shared with the audience some statistics that provided a perspective on the state of pastoral ministry.

About a week after that dinner, **I had a conversation** with one of the people who attended (Karen Luce) and she shared with me that after seeing those statistics, she felt an incredible sense of burden for the families of pastors, and most specifically for their spouses.

This began a series of research activities by Karen, as well as additional conversations, related to the possibility of Vision New England providing some kind of ministry support for pastors' spouses.



As we began looking into what research had already been done, and what resources were already available, we were surprised to find

how limited the research about, and the resourcing for, pastors' spouses really was.

Here are a few statistics that we came across, early on, about pastors' spouses:

- 80% of pastors' wives feel unappreciated and unaccepted by their husband's congregation (Global Pastors Wives Network — GPWN)

- 80% of pastors' spouses wish their spouse would choose another profession (GPWN)
- #1 problem facing pastors' wives—**loneliness** (L. Dugan, Heart to Heart with Pastors' Wives)

While we recognized that these statistics were 'national' in scope, and were selective based on a certain criteria, the high percentages reported by this research surprised us. And so, as part of her research, Karen contacted pastors' wives in New England to get their perspectives on their role and their lives in ministry.

The major areas of concern that were expressed to her by these wives included:

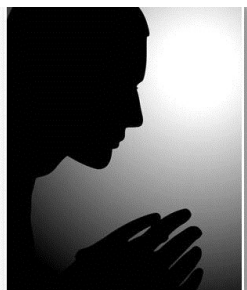
- *The desire for, but difficulty in finding, safe friendships,*
- *A fear of judgment, ridicule and gossip within the congregation,*
- *Difficulty finding "life" balance, and maintaining healthy boundaries within the demands of ministry,*
- *A need/desire for encouragement,*
- *A feeling of isolation and loneliness.*

When Karen asked, **what kind of help would be of value** to them, they said:

- *Being able to get together with other pastors' wives (in-person, via social media, and/or in safe small group gatherings)*

- Having someone “who has been through this” come alongside of them to provide “mentoring” support, encouragement, and practical wisdom.
- Having access to resources that spoke to the uniqueness of the role and ministry of pastors’ spouses

Being convinced that there is a critical need, and being convinced that Vision New England is uniquely positioned to address that need, we have...



**OFFICIALLY  
LAUNCHED**  
our new  
**Pastors’ Spouses’  
Ministry.**

This is a ministry that will help bring about spiritual health and healing, relational caring and connection, rejuvenation, revival and vibrancy to pastors’ spouses all across our Region!

This new ministry, led by Dr. Karen Luce, will provide pastors’ spouses with encouragement, resources and support through things like:

- “Mentor” training and relational connections
- Small group, peer-to-peer communities
- Larger group “retreat” gatherings
- Web-based resourcing and connecting

**The need is there, the time is now,  
and we’re moving forward...**

**OUR FIRST EVENT**

On Saturday, October, 15, 2011, we held our first Pastors’ Spouses’ Ministry event, at Manchester Christian Church, in Manchester, NH. This event was a luncheon “retreat” for pastors’ wives, and it featured Gail MacDonald as our guest speaker/facilitator.

Our hope was that we would see 25-30 pastors’ wives attend this inaugural event, from the Manchester/Concord/Nashua area of New Hampshire. Much to our surprise and delight, 60 wives actually participated, from all across New England!

Here are just a few of the many testimonies that we have received from some of the participants in this “launch” event:

- “Thanks so much for a wonderful luncheon! I got so much from it and have often since found myself contemplating some of the things Gail shared with us.”
- “Thanks for all you did. It was a blessing to me. Oh, yes! We need it... we need friends... we need to share... we need to be able to be transparent with someone who will listen, understand, not judge... just pray for us and give a word of wisdom ... just to help to clarify our hearts ... thanks...”
- “Many thanks to you and all people that are helping you... what a great and needed ministry...”
- “The “Pastors’ Wives” Luncheon was wonderful and you did a TERRIFIC job at getting it organized. It was very well received by all who attended and Gail McDonald did a splendid job.”
- “Thank you Karen! Your team “hit it out of the park!” It was a beautiful gathering! The planning was meticulous. I loved the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the tables, and gathering around the gifts the LORD has given us. My time with one woman was such an amazing grace gift to me from Jesus! And when we were all singing, oh my goodness!--It was gorgeous--I know angels joined us in the choir, and I felt the delight of the LORD Jesus over us.”

We are praising God for His many blessings and His unmistakable presence at this retreat!

**GOING FORWARD...**

Our approach to the launch of this new ministry is to take the necessary time to build a solid understanding of the need, to identify and equip a team of mentors who will help meet the need, and to implement a ministry structure that will help facilitate pursuing the vision that we have for this ministry.

If you would like more information on this important new ministry, please feel free to contact me directly at [ktolley@visionnewengland.org](mailto:ktolley@visionnewengland.org)

God’s blessings,

Keith Tolley  
President, Vision New England