

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PASTORAL CALLERS MEETING RE: DIVORCE
FIRST PARISH CHURCH IN WESTON

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These suggestions are based on my own experience more than 20 years ago, reinforced through my work with clients in my practice of negotiating and mediating divorce cases, as well as from discussions with divorced friends.

WHAT HELPS

WHAT DOESN'T HELP

INITIAL TIME PERIOD:

When learn of pending divorce, express sympathy; say, "I'm sorry to hear . . ." either directly or by sending note if difficult to talk in person (Sometimes it is difficult to talk to person, perhaps too frightening due to one's own situation. In that case, send a note.)

Don't avoid mentioning divorce.
-- avoiding topic is harder on person than addressing it directly. Think of the pending divorce as "the elephant in the room" – it's hard to ignore

Listen – let person talk and vent. Be a good listener. Say, "That must be hard for you." Be sympathetic. Know that the person is grieving the end of a long, close relationship.

Avoid taking sides.
Do not denigrate the other party. This just adds fuel to the flames and makes settlement more difficult.

DURING DIVORCE PROCESS:

Be a friend!

Include person in social life as did previously, especially including in co-ed events; invite to dinner, parties, and don't need to ask another single. It's okay to be unbalanced gender-wise.

Women, don't just ask person to join you for dinner when your husband is out of town.

Know that most women like men and miss being in company with men.

Don't assume single women will try to steal someone's husband.

Only provide information or advice for which you are qualified.

Don't offer solutions or legal advice, unless party requests specific help.

Know that each case is unique and the settlement involves all facts and issues.

WHAT HELPS

Keep any information you receive confidential!

On Court dates and especially final hearing date – Be available. Try to be nearby. Meet person right after for coffee or lunch. Perhaps drive person to Court and meet outside after hearing or ask to come to your home. (Know that the final hearing day can be particularly sad for some.)

LATER, AFTER THE DIVORCE

Continue to be a good friend and listener. Know that it takes a long while to recover and to move forward – usually much longer than a year.

Be an extra parent to children of divorce. Children will benefit from some time with, or attention from an “other father”, especially if father is at a distance or has limited time with the children.

Be aware and sensitive to the fact that life is lonely for single adults in the suburbs.

Once divorce is final, consider introducing single adult to any other single friends of the same or opposite gender.

WHAT DOESN'T HELP

Don't say, “Susie got \$___ in alimony. You should try for more.”

Don't share information with others, unless and **only if** harm is likely, and then tell only an appropriate person and only the specific concern.

Don't gossip. Don't ask for details. Leave details and settlement to the professionals, i.e. attorneys, therapists, minister.

Probably better not to come to Court or into Courtroom

Don't try to learn the details of settlement. (Although divorce records are public, it is wise to respect someone's divorce information.)

If you hear of settlement terms, don't pass judgment (i.e., don't say, “You should get more!”)

Remember – don't gossip! Don't share any details with others.

Don't tell divorce person of news or sightings of former spouse or ask about former spouse. Know and respect that the marriage is over.

3.

WHAT HELPS

Continue to include divorced person in mixed company events.

Be especially mindful of holidays when a single parent may be left alone. Include single adult in your family celebration if possible and comfortable.

FOR CHURCH TO CONSIDER:

A short-term singles support group or a social/learning group for singles established with other Weston religious organizations might be helpful.

WHAT DOESN'T HELP

Don't invite divorced woman over only when your husband is away.