

Stages in a Congregation's Healing Process

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Shock-Chaos

The central issue is **information**

Planning what/how much to tell and when
Congregational Meeting/Information Session
Disbelieving/denial of information
Policy/procedures/process information also
How did this information emerge? (No names!)
Congregation is - *traumatized*

Polarization-Processing

The central issue here is **feelings (a whole range of them)**

Need for ventilating (safe, structured setting)
Accepting and validating different feelings
Feelings in a context (grief)
The "echo" effect (rekindling other abuse)
Small groups, one-on-one, calling program
Congregation is - *frightened*

Integration

The central issues here are **meaning, theology, learning**

Issues like power differentials, forgiveness, accountability
Understandings of polity and discipline
Reflection about roles of the ordained or other leader
What can we learn from this?
What will further our healing process?
Dealing with the larger impact of the situation
Spiritual questions - paradoxical grace
Congregation is - *reflective and teachable*

Obviously, these stages overlap, blend and are untidy at best . . . but there will be a consistent sequence which closely resembles the outline above.