

BY STEPHEN MCCUTCHAN

In recent years, the church has been confronted with many media stories about inappropriate sexual behavior on the part of clergy. Because of such inappropriate behavior, not only have there been expensive lawsuits but the public trust of clergy has been seriously damaged. Most presbyteries have offered training sessions for clergy in appropriate pastoral boundaries as a healthy response to this problem.

Most of us realize that this is a good beginning but more needs to be done. While we are all aware of the damage of inappropriate sexual behavior in many areas of public life, when it happens in the church, there seems to be an even deeper sense of betrayal. While such incidents tend to reinforce the cynicism of the public about churches, our own members are often left confused about issues of trust and belief that seriously damage their personal journey of faith.

I want to offer one other resource for clergy and church members to assist them in discussing this volatile issue. At the risk of sounding self-serving, I want to tell you about my mystery novel, *A Star and a Tear*, which has just been published on Amazon. While I hope that people will enjoy the novel as a good mystery story, I also think that it might provide both an enjoyable and significant resource for discussing the mysterious symbiotic relationship of sexuality and spirituality that is part of our faith journey. The story is about a pastor who emerges out of a period of personal grief to assist the police in tracking down a serial rapist who has a religious fixation.

The novel, together with appropriate questions attached to each chapter, provides a foundation for discussing various aspects of sexuality and our faith. It especially provides examples of how such issues are a challenge for clergy. My hope is that both study groups in churches and, maybe even more importantly, small groups of clergy might form discussion groups around the book.

The book is available both in print form and on Kindle. I have deliberately kept the price low in order to make such group discussions possible. The Kindle price will be \$3.99. A possible group leader can get a copy and review it to see if it provides the basis for a good discussion group. While the print price is \$12, if someone is interested in forming a group discussion and will contact me, steve@smccutchan.com, I will provide them a discount code that will enable them to purchase five or more copies at a significant discount. I have also included at the back of the book other opportunities for interaction around the themes of the book. Look for the book on Amazon. [amzn.to/1aTDdgs](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B081TDDGGS)