Workshop 2E
Is It Me? Stress, Mental Health Outlook and Sustaining Relationships through Separation, Chronic or Terminal Disease

Moderator/Panelists: Larry Leflore, Ph.D., Chair and Professor, Dept. of Family Services, Texas Woman’s University, Denton, TX

Presenters: Dr. Sharon Rabb, CEO and Founder, Center for the Empowerment of Families, Inc., Los Angeles, CA
Rev. Dr. Ken Walden, Pastor, Wilshire United Methodist Church, Los Angeles, CA

Dr. Sharon Rabb stated that stress is an advantageous heightened physical and/or emotional response to a threatening situation. Grief is a normal, appropriate response to a recognizable loss. She discussed secondary loses: loss of a companion, provider, protector, or lover. She also talked about other losses like losing your faith, finances, wishes, and dreams for the marriage.

Dr. Rabb explained how she sustained her marriage through a second bout with cancer. She expressed her feelings to her spouse about her care taking and the support she would need. She worked with her spouse and shared doctor/other appointments, outings, and schedules. She and her husband focused on time together, talked about their relationship and discussed intimacy details in whatever form. They worked on how to receive help from others. They placed financial and legal affairs in order and were assertive in discussions with doctors and other service providers. They recalled good times together and enlisted others to help them. Through this process, Dr. Rabb was made whole.

Chaplain Captain Rev Dr. Ken J. Walden shared insights on how to manage stress, create a healthy mental outlook, and sustain relationships through separation and chronic or terminal disease. Rev. Walden explained that good stress lends itself to productive outcomes. Bad stress is pressure that negatively affects a person’s mental or physical well being. In a marriage, you might give 50% sometimes and 100% at other times. He advised learning a hobby that you and your spouse can enjoy together; discussing problems and stressors; and working hard on communicating.