

Written by a member of one of our United Methodist Congregations in West Ohio.

This letter is written in personal testimony of living with a gambling addict. Addictions all have similar things in common: they take over your life, your financial security, your common sense, your relations with family and friends, your emotions, your personality. I could go on, but you get the picture.

My husband is a retired professional and I am still working at a wonderful job, and hopefully looking forward to being able to retire in the not too distant future.

Bob (not real name) loved to start his day with coffee and a rub off at local gas stations on his way to work throughout his working life. It progressed to buying more lottery tickets at the lunch hour. Then there were the weekly, then bi-weekly drawings---at least 5 dollars per purchase. The lottery tickets grew from \$1 to \$5 to eventually \$20. This progressed to multiple buys at one stop; then multiple trips per day, especially after he retired.

Since Bob wanted to pay the bills and not let me take on that “worry”, it was not immediately evident what was snowballing without my knowing. However, never catching up on credit card payments (which we should have easily done!), more and more rub-off tickets in the trash cans throughout the house, and cash always quickly disappearing from our designated area in the house gave me enough to call Bob on the carpet! His reactions: denial, anger, guilt and sulking on Bob’s part—even attempts at making ME feel guilty for calling a halt to his practices. (Talk about feeling alone in a never-ending battle. And having to use tough love to boot.)

That was a couple of years ago. Thinking (or maybe HOPING) that this addiction was leaving our family alone, I allowed myself to trust Bob over time to make bill payments since he had the time to do things for me, being retired. To make a long story short, I discovered at the beginning of September 2009 while Bob was away, that our credit cards were maxed, checks I had written were bouncing, we were getting slapped left and right with bank overdraft charges, and it seemed the fines and fees ball couldn’t stop!!! To make matters worse, he had withdrawn hundreds and hundreds of dollars to gamble at a nearby (out of state) casino!! I was LIVID and wanted to leave this marriage.

In the past, going to casinos was quite the draw for Bob, because he would always want to spend at LEAST \$200 each stop. I can’t tell you how many times I would ask him to walk away from a machine (slots) if he was winning, and he would get ANGRY with me, like I was taking away candy from a kid!! I would not gamble because I knew he would spend enough for an entire family, and when I would ask him to stop, he would literally criticize me for taking away his “fun”, pout, and not talk to me for hours. I have to “make” him NOT go to a casino!! Good grief, if they are in our own backyard in Ohio, I don’t know how I will control him—especially when I’m working!! I told him he loved gambling more than me. He got angry with me for saying that. But he does!

We had quite the conversation upon his return a week later, and Bob acted like there wasn't anything at all wrong with the way our finances were going. I totally couldn't understand (and still don't!) why he was not looking out for our security. I will never let him pay bills again, credit cards are shredded, and we are digging out. There are also Bob's health issues and extended family issues blended into the mix, and I am on the brink. Currently I attend counseling to be able to cope. I would like Bob to go with me, but he doesn't see the need and doesn't want to.

Unfortunately, this is as far as this story has gotten. I don't have a "happy ending" although I am trying to live life in the most positive manner I am able. Please say some prayers for us. Most people would be totally surprised who I am if I let the "cat out of the bag." (It's not always who you think it would be having addictions, and which families it strikes!!)

Please vote NO on the Casino Issue #3!!