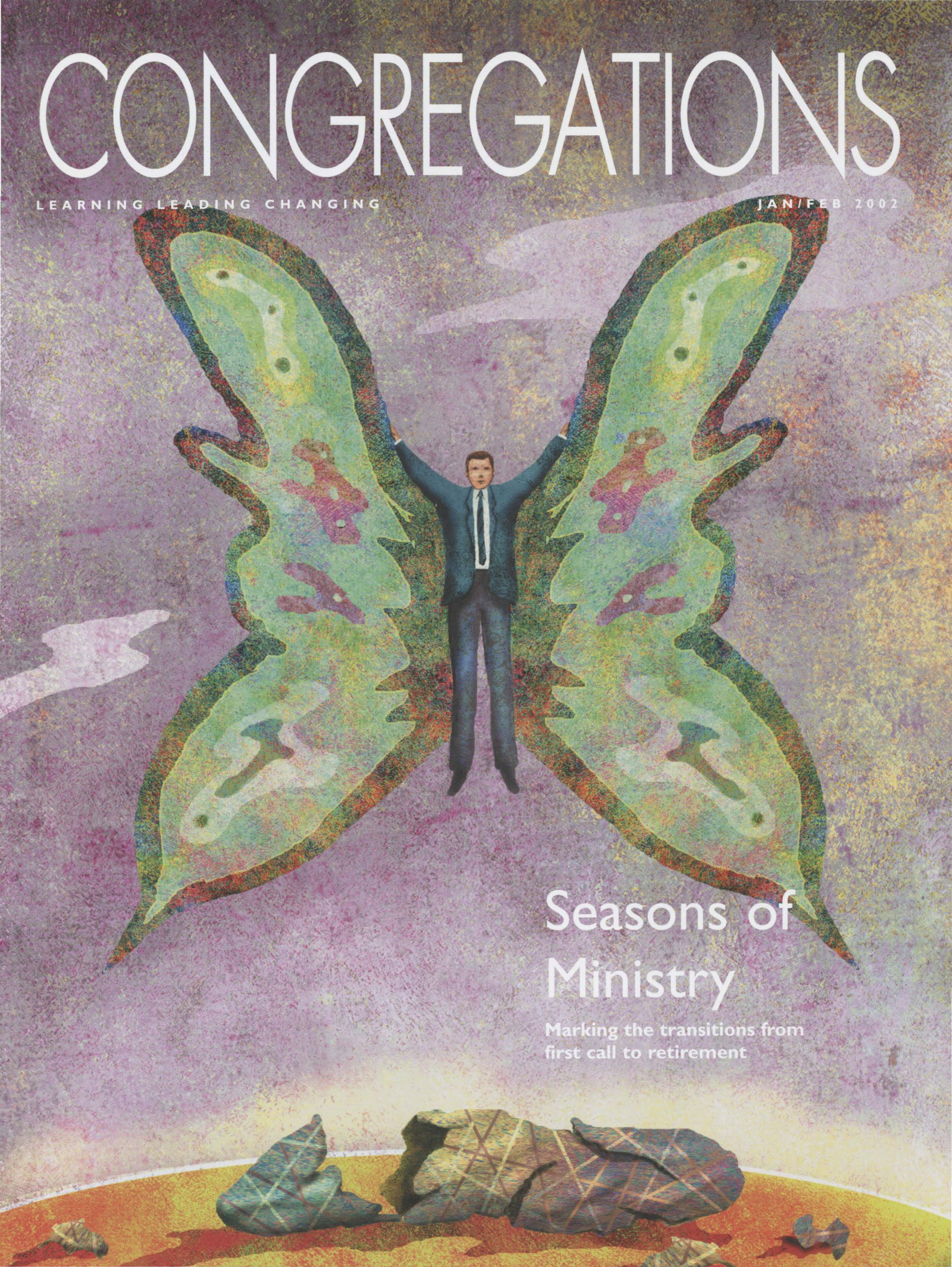
CONGREGATIONS

LEARNING LEADING CHANGING

JAN/FEB 2002



Seasons of Ministry

Marking the transitions from first call to retirement

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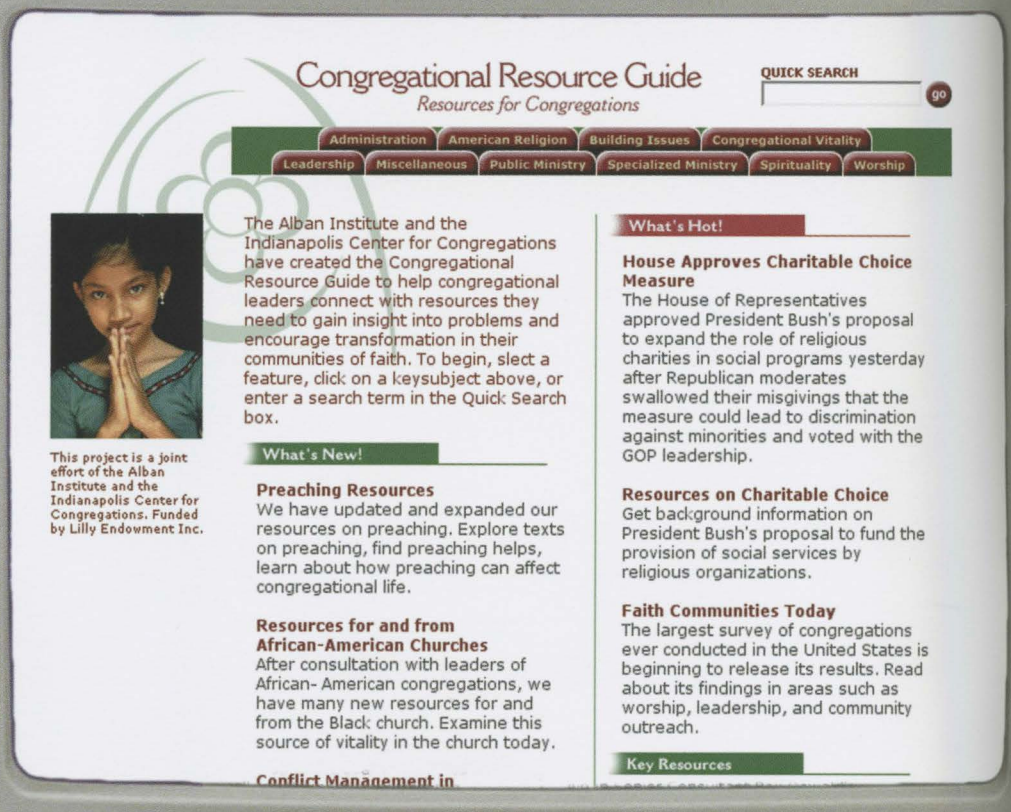

THE ALBAN INSTITUTE

Indianapolis Center for Congregations

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Seasons of Ministry

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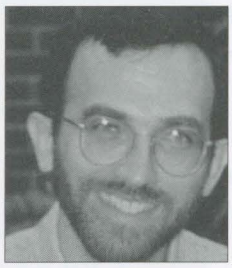
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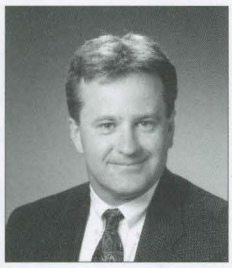
WOOD

Rev. Lynne M. Baab is an associate pastor at Bethany Presbyterian Church in Seattle. Rev. Baab is the author of several books, including *Personality Type in Congregations* (Alban Institute, 1998) and *Embracing Midlife* (Alban Institute, 1999). Rev. Baab has been teaching courses on personality type and spiritual gifts in congregations since 1990.

Rev. Al Bamsey is an Alban Institute field consultant specializing in conflict management, strategic planning, redevelopment, and assessment of judicatory structures. He has served four congregations (the last of which was a 1,300-member church in a university city), has been a district superintendent, and has served as the head of a conference staff. He recently led a retreat for men using Robert Quinn's book *Change the World.* In February he will be leading two roundtables on "risk-taking" for clergy in the metropolitan Detroit area.

Dr. Diana Butler Bass is the director of faith formation at Christ Church (Episcopal) and an adjunct professor at Virginia Theological Seminary, both in Alexandria, Virginia. She is the author of *Standing against the Whirlwind: Evangelical Episcopalians in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford, 1995) and *Strength for the Journey: A Pilgrimage of Faith in Community* (Jossey-Bass, 2002).

After serving congregations for twelve years, Rabbi Jim Bleiberg earned a doctorate in clinical psychology with a dissertation tracing the development of emotional intelligence in rabbis across the life span. Dr. Bleiberg now directs a research project exploring religious leadership styles; he also conducts workshops and leads retreats across the country as part of his private practice in clinical psychology.

Holly G. Miller is an Indianapolis-based writer and editor with *The Saturday Evening Post*. She teaches advanced writing classes at Anderson University and is a frequent guest lecturer at writers' conferences across the country. She is the author of 13 books.

Rev. Paul Sangree is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. Prior to joining Bethany Congregational Church in Foxboro, Massachusetts, as senior pastor in January 2001, he served as pastor of Middleton Congregational Church for 11 years. He has been an adjunct professor of theology at Andover-Newton Theological School since 1998.

Rev. David J. Wood is the former associate director of the Louisville Institute in Louisville, Kentucky. Before joining the Louisville Institute, he was the associate pastor of the American Church in Paris, France. Rev. Wood also has served congregations in Kentucky, Maine, Connecticut, and Kansas. A native of Australia, he is an ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches, USA.

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LEARNING LEADING CHANGING

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Seekers Needed

I FELT DRAWN TO WRITE TO YOU in response to your recent articles on leadership, particularly Gil Rendle's article, "The Leadership We Need" (September/October 2001, page 4).

I am a pastor in a Presbyterian church, and I would have to say that I agree with almost everything written in the article. However, I feel that there is an important issue at which the author only barely hinted: in order for pastors to be spiritual leaders, the members of the congregation have to be spiritual seekers, and this is not something that can be said about most American Christians.

I have recently come to the pastorate from a background of contemplative practice and study. I have been fortunate enough to have studied with many of the great spiritual teachers of the world, and I can tell you that these people would not have spent their time in your average parish church in America—and why not? Because they spend their time in communities where people are interested in their spiritual gifts—that is, they surround themselves with people who are students of the spiritual life.

One of the most notable aspects of the population of the church I serve (and, I feel, of most mainline churches) is that only a tiny percentage of the lay people in the church are actually interested in spiritual growth. The vast majority are there for reasons that have nothing to do with a relationship with God. They are there out of a sense of obligation or habit, or to socialize, or to make a good showing among their peer group. Thus, the majority of the people who I am supposed to lead have no interest in my spiritual gifts, they have no interest in my being a "deep generalist," and they couldn't care less about how Jesus might change their lives.

In this environment someone who wants to be the type of leader envisioned by the article encounters constant frustration as his or her gifts are ignored or politely refused. Such a person will inevitably decrease his or her own expectations and will begin to "dumb down," falling into the role of institutional custodian.

I feel that churches should not only expect more of their leaders, they should expect more of their followers. In the Rule of St. Benedict, people who want to join the monastery are required to wait outside the gates for three days so that they might consider whether they really want to follow the Rule. In today's church climate we treat prospective new members like a golden treasure, and we cannot wait to sign them up, even if they have no real interest in the spiritual life.

What would happen to our churches if we actually asked everyone who wasn't interested in spiritual growth to leave the congregation? There are many days when I feel that our church would be much stronger if we had 10 truly serious members instead of the 264 members we now have, most of whom have so little interest in their faith lives.

I think that this question of the mutual expectations of leaders and followers is an important one. Maybe one of the jobs of this new breed of spiritual leaders is to point out that everyone has to up the ante and risk that all of our lives might be changed by our experience in the community of faith.

Rev. Daniel Wolpert
First Presbyterian Church
Crookston, Minnesota

Wrestling with Leadership

As someone who is facing the challenges of under-employment in parish ministry, I really appreciated Gil Rendle's article, "The Leadership We Need," in the September/October 2001 issue (page 4). I have experienced a trivialization of spiritual leadership from both the congregation and denominational structures, which are confused and confusing.

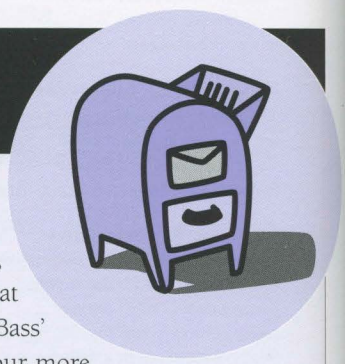
Both Rendle and Copenhaver ("The Good Life," page 10) suggest that pastors are inherently generalists. But, in a society that values specialization, we have no clear measure for what makes a good generalist. Rendle's suggestion that we look for depth within our spiritual leaders is helpful, but seems too vague to be used in more than a very subjective way. While we often experience leadership issues subjectively, most of the articles—which reflect the Alban Institute's approach—seek to identify the structural or systemic problems underlying these experiences.

To use James Wind's metaphor ("A Leadership Story," page 17) we need a Plan B. I need a Plan B! By this I don't mean a revision of Plan A. My understanding of why many clergy are leaving congregational leadership is not that we have lost our sense of its vitality and blessing. We find ourselves, much like Shackleton, needing to abandon the icebound *Endurance*. If we are to fulfill our calling and journey we need other vehicles than those we started out in. Perhaps we might call them the *Awakening*, but I am still looking for them—the structures that will carry us, and the gospel, into the uncharted waters of this new millennium.

I look forward to your initiatives in addressing the challenges outlined in the Alban Institute's special leadership report. They are certainly issues with which many colleagues and I are wrestling.

Rev. David Griffin
St. Mary's and St. Aidan's Anglican Churches
Kelowna, British Columbia

Write to Us!



A REQUEST FROM THE EDITOR

It has now been a year since the Alban Institute rolled out our redesigned Congregations magazine, and we have been pleased with how well it has been received. Many of you have written to tell us what you like about it or have contacted us about articles you would like to read or write. Diana Butler Bass' article on page 24 ("Lift High the Flag . . . Oops, the Cross!") appears in this issue because one of our more involved readers called us to say he is wrestling with the conflation of faith and nationalism in his church and would like some help from us in thinking through the issues. So your letters and calls do make a difference in what appears on these pages!

Here are several ways you can get involved:

- ❖ Write a letter to the editor about articles you have read in previous issues.
- ❖ Call or write to us with ideas about what you would like to read in future issues.
- ❖ Contact us about writing articles or book reviews. Guidelines appear on our Web site at www.alban.org/periodicals.

For all of the above, you can write to lkinney@alban.org or send a letter the old-fashioned way to:

Lisa Kinney
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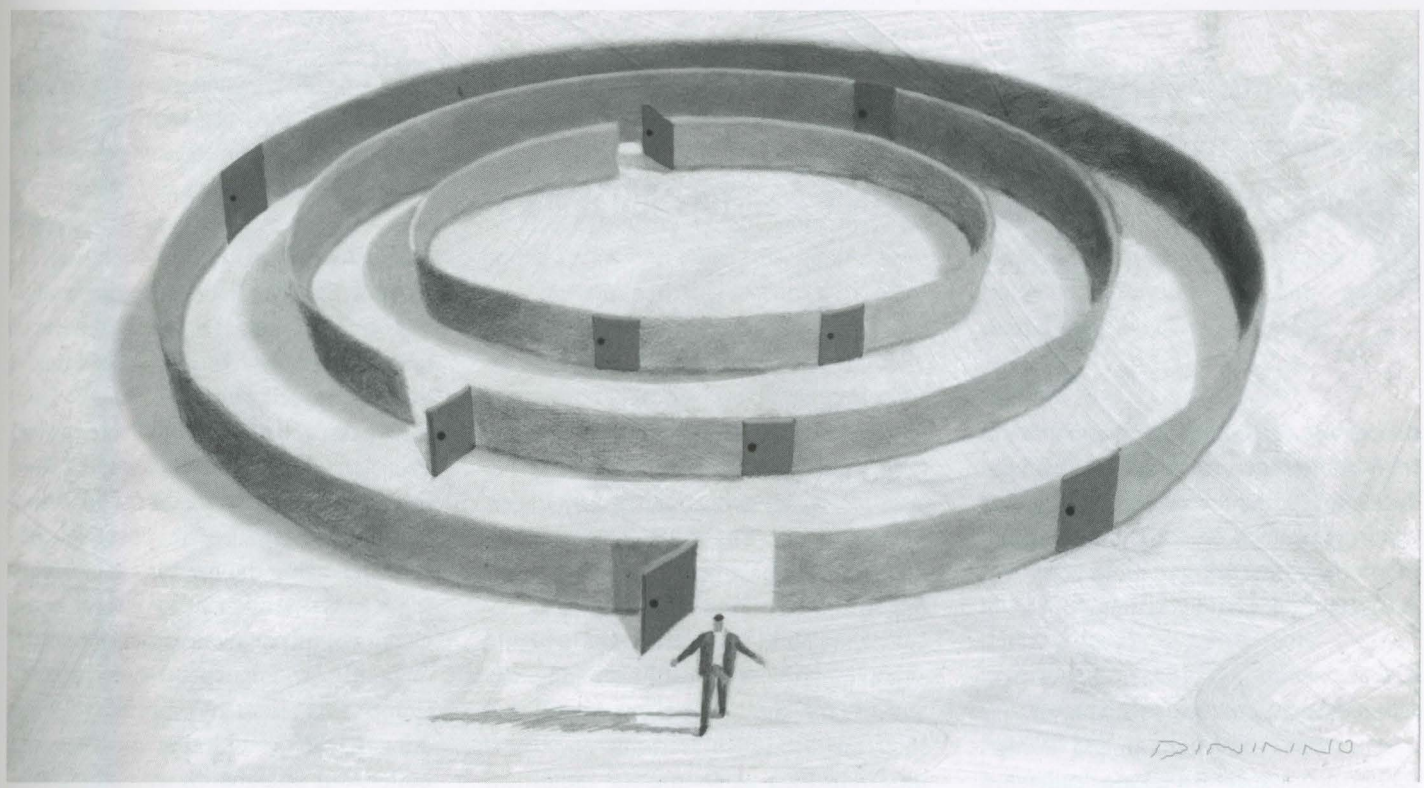
Bethesda, MD 20814

Please include all of your contact information—mailing and e-mail addresses, telephone, and church affiliation—when you write. We look forward to hearing from you in 2002!



A Pathway to Wisdom

THREE STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLERGY

Jim Bleiberg

As a teenager, at the height of the so-called "youth culture," I accepted the notion that the older you get, the more inauthentic you become. A cautious and conventional kid, I might not have been the one you would expect to embrace primal authenticity quite so fervently. Yet precisely because I was such a Goody Two-Shoes, I knew all about hiding unseemly truths. From my teenage perspective, affectation and artifice worsened with age, so it was easy to buy into the claims of the youth culture. Today, at age 48, I don't feel nearly as phony and decrepit as members of the youth culture would have predicted. In many ways, I feel less inhibited and more open than at any time in the past.

You don't have to be a member of the clergy, as I am, to experience this shift of attitude. Nevertheless, research suggests that clergy have a characteristic developmental path. It is not inevitable, and it does not follow a single script. Yet broadly speaking, clergy lurch toward maturity driven by a deep hunger for connection with others. This movement is balanced by a strong aversion to uncomfortable intimacies rooted in our earliest experiences. The tension between these two eventually finds expression in our attraction to a clergy career that requires an enormous capacity for intimacy as well as a tolerance for being different and set apart. At the start of midlife the contradiction between these impulses grows especially burdensome. Then a shift occurs, and we achieve a new balance. We find ourselves open to more direct, gratifying, and authentic relationships.

To illustrate the terrain that many clergy negotiate, I offer here some of the

Although many clergy complain about the relentless job demands, at some point they probably found this element appealing. We're attracted to a role that mediates and buffers our interactions with others.

themes and tensions of my own transition from adolescence to midlife. While the details are particular to me, I hope that the story of my work as a rabbi and my personal life will bring to mind your own struggles, hopes, and yearnings.

Adolescence

As a teenager I built my social life around a synagogue youth group and a high school newspaper. By taking leadership roles in these activities, I felt more at ease in handling social situations and making friends. One summer night I felt incredibly happy as these friends crowded into my backyard for a party. True, we weren't part of the "in-group," but I imagined that we were far more interesting and fun than the jocks and cheerleaders of the high school's elite.

Despite the pleasure and comfort I took in my circle of friends, I also felt somewhat wary of them. Many of my friendships followed a formula. From the safety of a leadership role, I reached out, careful to remain self-contained, avoiding the appearance of needing others too much.

I had a couple of girlfriends during my high school years, but I enjoyed their company far more after we had broken up and could be "just friends." Self-sufficiency and a bit of distance from my peers were the keys to my comfort level.

I also took comfort in the approval of "important" adults. When I was 17, attending a summer camp for youth group leaders, I met a rabbi and a rabbinic student who fit the bill. The appearance of these two couldn't have been more different. The rabbi, a southerner, dressed in clothes appropriate for a round of golf at the country club. He was clean-cut, young, and handsome. The rabbinic student, on the other hand, had long hair and a beard, and he wore ratty jeans—the signature of student radicals and "hippies." His long hair—and the radicalism and sexual freedom it signaled in those days—accounted for a large part of his appeal.

I vividly remember discussions led by the student rabbi in which he managed to make Sabbath observance sound like a revolutionary activity. What really caught my eye, however, was this detail: When he was at his charismatic best, his partner, the clean-cut rabbi, stood in a corner beaming. The rabbi's smile registered somewhere deep in my consciousness. It told me that if it was OK for the rabbinic student to be less uptight, more emotionally expressive, and even more sexual, then it was OK for me too.

Although in my fantasies this hippie type was at the opposite end of the sexual-liberation continuum from me, it is possible that he shared some of my wariness. Perhaps instead of capitulating to caution as I did, he rebelled against it. He performed an emotional tour de force, captivating his audience. His charisma drove others into the role of spectator.

Onlookers felt the illusion of intimacy as a result of his intensity, but in reality they remained at a distance. His was only one of many ways to express the underlying clergy dynamic.

Early Adulthood

As I entered adulthood and began exploring career options, I couldn't conceive of taking a nine-to-five job. What would I do with myself after five o'clock? From this perspective the rabbinate looked ideal to me, an opportunity to immerse myself totally in a role. Clergy are always on the job, whether shopping for groceries, mowing the front lawn, or attending a kids' soccer game. Although many clergy complain about the relentless job demands, at some point they probably found this element appealing. We're attracted to a role that mediates and buffers our interactions with others. Bear in mind that this impulse can take surprising forms. Shortly after ordination, I told my congregants to call me "Jim" instead of "Rabbi." I thought this step demonstrated that I wasn't hiding behind my role. But my informality, at least in my own mind, also identified me as a really "cool" rabbi.

Our role imposes itself in all our relationships, even with a spouse. For example, I was delighted to be the rabbi at my own wedding. Here is how I pulled off this feat: The synagogue to which my fiancée's family belonged was literally across the street from the one where I served as an assistant rabbi. After we had announced our engagement, the president of my congregation asked if the wedding ceremony could be performed at "our" synagogue rather than at the one across the street. He wanted the congregation to send out printed invitations to the entire membership and host a fancy reception. I persuaded my future in-laws to accept this generous offer because it would be "good for my career." But career

advancement was hardly a factor in my decision. Far more important to me were the personal validation and acceptance that I would feel as my entire congregation celebrated my wedding.

As a newly minted rabbi, I often felt like an imposter. A sense of inadequacy rudely disturbed the composure I tried to project as I bluffed my way through hospital visits, weddings, and funerals. My rabbinic identity was still a work in progress, although I hated having this truth pointed out. To take the edge off the stress, I soothed myself with a sort of fantasy. I told myself that if I worked hard at caring for my congregants, they would shower me with love in return. This thought process, which usually took place just outside my conscious awareness, calmed me down and got me through the most stressful times. An inner voice told me:

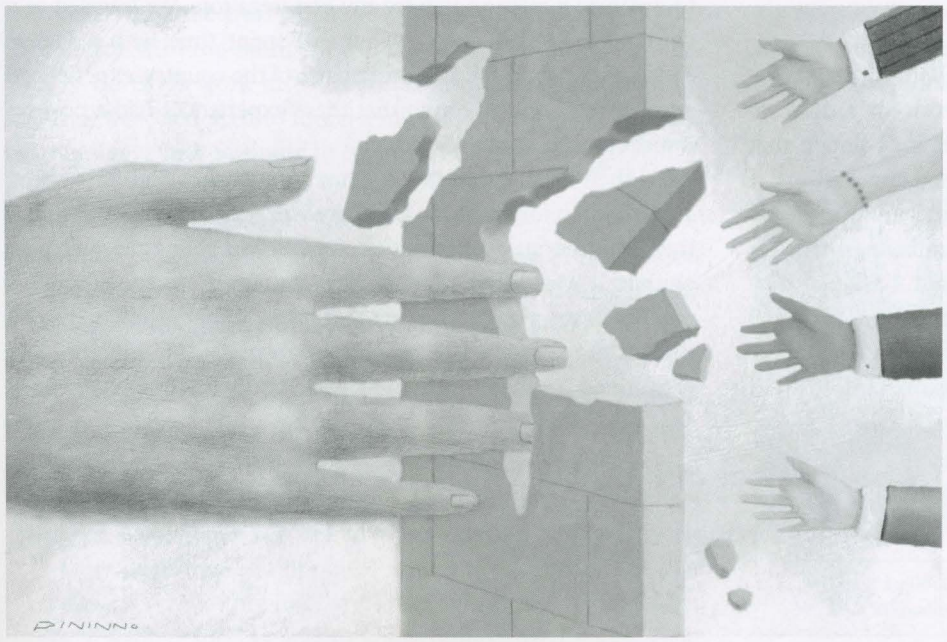
I can make them love me with this eulogy.

I can make them love me with this hospital visit.

I can make them love me with this youth program.

Our congregants sometimes feel gratitude and even a form of love for us. But implicit in my fantasy was a sense of entitlement: They had to love me, no matter what. Of course, congregants may respond to us with anger, disappointment, and hurt. When this occurred, I often became engrossed with my own feelings of disillusionment and distress. I rarely considered whether I might help my congregants with their disenchantment.

Our assumption that congregants will nourish and replenish us through their love makes self-care seem superfluous or even gluttonous. At times such thinking kept me bouncing back and forth between two poles. First, I would overextend myself, trying to make everyone happy, neglecting myself and clandestinely waiting for others to take care of me. Then, exhausted or confronted by congregants' dissatisfaction, I would perform my work halfheartedly and look for every opportunity to stay out of the office. Later, guilt-stricken for letting my congregants down, I would throw myself back into the fray, determined to win their love again. Over time, this pattern became demoralizing.



Parts of my work continued to give me pleasure or a sense of accomplishment, but increasingly these gratifying activities were remote islands that I rarely visited. I knew I couldn't continue in this fashion for long, but I couldn't find an escape from the cycle.

Midlife

With the help of a good clinical psychologist and the support of my wife, I began easing some of the emotional distance that I had imposed in my relationships. My wife and I attended marriage-enrichment retreats and joined a marriage support group. At the synagogue, I began experimenting with innovative worship services and small-group activities that fostered greater intimacy. I became more available as a pastoral counselor—an aspect of the rabbinate that I had previously avoided.

Important as these steps were, burnout was still licking at my heels. I felt trapped in the role that had formerly been my refuge. Things came to a head one sleepless night about 10 years ago. Although I usually fall asleep within seconds of putting my head on the pillow, that night I wrestled with decisions about my future and got no sleep at all. Early in the morning, I woke up my wife. We began a conversation that led me eventually to leave congregational work to pursue a doctorate in clinical psychology. I wanted to find a new way to be a rabbi, and graduate school became my means to this end.

Perhaps the scariest part of this move was that it raised doubts as to whether I would remain a rabbi at all. When I allowed myself to think about it, stepping off my pedestal to become a graduate student was terrifying. I didn't know what parts of my rabbinic identity would sur-

continued on page 23

Seasons of Joy and Sacrifice

REDISCOVERING A CALL TO MINISTRY

Paul Sangree

For the past few years I have taught a course on the theology and meaning of call at Andover-Newton Theological School. I always emphasize to my students that a healthy call involves both joy and sacrifice—something I have learned from my own ministry.

My interest in this area gradually emerged as I encountered a series of painful events after about 10 years as an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ (UCC). Several of the projects I pursued were failing, and the church I was serving was in decline. It was no longer exciting to hear people call me "reverend." And my limitations as a minister seemed increasingly apparent.

I knew that I wasn't as gifted as the "successful" ministers I read about in professional publications, and I grew depressed and uncertain about both my future and my calling. As I prayed about what to do, I felt led to interview other clergy about how they had sustained their calls to ministry over time.

Taking Stock

When I initially contacted other pastors about interviewing them, they assumed that I was completing work for a doctoral project. But I explained that I needed their help. I hoped that their experiences could help me as I struggled for answers. I asked all of the pastors to share with me how they knew their call was from God, what they most enjoyed about ministry, and what made ministry difficult for them. Most important, I asked if they had ever questioned their call to ministry—and how they had renewed or rekindled the call when it seemed uncertain.

I soon discovered that several of the 15 pastors I interviewed had struggled with these issues. Some had struggled with difficult personalities in their congregations or with understanding what a "pastor" is expected to be like. In their own ways they had sought to rediscover their call.

But others said that their call was alive and healthy—despite tough times in their personal lives and ministries. They said that negative aspects of ministry had no effect on the sense of hope and mission they found in their work. I noted that these clergy had sought out mentors to encourage them at various points in their ministries and that they regularly set aside time to share laughter and other experiences with clergy colleagues in a variety of settings. They also set aside time for their families and other interests outside the church. They did not let their work at church consume them. I was particularly struck by the pastor who said that "our calling to ministry is to be as happy as we can" –which means knowing who we are and taking pleasure in that. I decided that I needed to make some adjustments in how I viewed my own calling.

Finding the Joy

First, I decided to have more fun. I had previously viewed ministry primarily as sacrifice, so it was interesting to ask myself what I most enjoyed about ministry. I love to travel, so I decided to organize a mission trip for my congregation. We traveled as a church to North Dakota, where we spent time with a Native American church. We saw other parts of the country, experienced another culture, and found that these experiences had a positive impact on our church.

I then decided to ask my church for a sabbatical. I had been at the church for six years, but there was no sabbatical in my contract. And because I had always focused on giving myself to the church, it was difficult for me to ask them to do something for me. But I was pleased to learn that it made them feel good to do this for me. I enjoyed planning the sabbatical—and intentionally planned a schedule that left periods of time for reflection. I

I believe that maintaining a healthy call means asking ourselves tough questions and finding that the answer is still "yes."

José Ortega/Images.com

scheduled in time to walk the beach, think, and write. But by the end of my time away, I found that I missed my ministry and wanted to return to it. During that time away from the church I also realized that it brings me joy to explain the Christian faith to people in a simple way and then see how it transforms their lives. After returning from the sabbatical I developed a course for my congregation called "Discipleship 101." In this course we reviewed the basics of Christian life and belief. It was exciting for me to see how the lives of those who took the course became more filled with the Spirit over time—and how they grew anxious to do God's work in the world. I also developed a healing ministry that God used to touch a number of lives. Each of these ventures gave new meaning to my life in the church.

New Meaning through Sacrifice

These new aspects of my ministry demanded new sacrifices on my part. And each new experience required that I assume risk by stepping out into places where I had never been before. I attended conferences and seminars so that I could be challenged and learn new things—and I sacrificed my time, energy, and political capital in order to lead the church in new directions. But each new sacrifice left me feeling both joy and fulfillment. I discovered that sacrifice and fulfillment are interdependent in a healthy call. The joy I experienced was linked to my sacrifice.

From a spiritual standpoint, I also came to understand that in the early years of my ministry I had considered it mine—not God's. I wanted success and to show others that I was a great minister. Acknowledging that my ministry was God's instead—and turning it over to him—was a freeing experience that I now carry forward in my work. I strive to be faithful rather than successful, and that has made all the difference in my life and ministry.

I believe that maintaining a healthy call in the many seasons of ministry means asking ourselves tough questions and finding that the answer is still "yes." Is my ministry sacrificial? Am I taking risks and venturing out to new places and experiencing new things? Am I experiencing joy? When we can truly answer "yes" to these questions, we will know that God's call is alive within us. ✤

Easing the Transition

FROM SEMINARY TO PARISH MINISTRY

Holly G. Miller

Ten days into his first pastorate in rural upstate New York, the Rev. Jim Gertmenian faced the challenge of conducting a funeral for a member of the two-point parish that he served. He had recently earned a master of divinity degree at a large urban seminary, but his theological education hadn't included instruction in how to prepare such a service. What's more, he had attended only two funerals in his life. Geographically removed from professors and peers, he resorted to the telephone for long-distance guidance. He survived the experience, and 30 years later admits he was an "extreme example" of a young pastor who entered professional ministry with a gap in his hands-on skills.

"I have tremendous respect for what seminaries do," assures Gertmenian, now senior pastor at Plymouth Congregational Church, a 2,100-member congregation in Minneapolis. "But for all their good efforts, they aren't able to replicate the range of situations that prepare students for the 'daily-ness' of parish ministry. There are certain skills that a pastor acquires only by working in a church setting."

To bridge the skills gap and ease the transition from seminary to parish ministry, several churches across the country—Plymouth Congregational Church among them—are introducing two-year residency programs aimed at clergy who are new to the profession. The pilot projects are loosely modeled after medical residencies and offer seminary graduates the opportunity to work under the tutelage of veteran pastors in vibrant congregational settings. Not to be confused with the field-education component of a seminary's curriculum, these residencies are full-time salaried positions with long hours, demanding duties, and a rotation schedule that exposes participants to all aspects of parish ministry.

"I see this as a gentle introduction to ministry," says Baron Mullis, a Princeton Theological Seminary graduate who is one of two senior residents at Second Presbyterian Church, a 4,000-member "teaching" congregation in Indianapolis. "There's an ethos around here that as residents we are doing a lot of things for the first time, and it's not the end of the world if we fail."

When Mullis and his colleague, Christina Starace, enter the job market in July, they will take with them months of valuable experience in administration, Christian education, urban outreach, pastoral care, and preaching. They will have performed weddings, funerals, and baptism services, as well as planned Sunday worship and delivered sermons that were carefully critiqued by the senior pastor and selected members of the congregation. "This isn't a classroom; it's the real thing," says Starace, whose career aspirations have changed because of the residency experience. Once interested in joining the staff of a large church where her ministry would be specialized, she now anticipates a position at a smaller church that would enable her to assume a variety of responsibilities. "I think I have the skills required for such a setting," she says.

Securing the Future

With nine "alumni" to its credit, Second Presbyterian's residency program serves as a model for a number of pilot projects launched this year. Funding for the church's program came in 1996 from a congregation member who was aware that mainline denominations face a shortage of young clergy and that too many seminary graduates drop out of parish ministry within five years of entering the profession. Senior pastor Dr. William Enright accepted the challenge of his generous parishioner to create a residency program that would address these concerns.

"There were no models for this, so I spent three months picking some of the best brains in the field," recalls Enright. He talked with his governing board, visited seminary presidents, and exchanged ideas with friends in the Religion Division at Lilly Endowment, also located in Indianapolis. The program that emerged is multi-faceted and requires the enthusiastic support of church members who agree to act as encouragers, faith mentors, and host families. In addition to sharing

It's an experience-reflection model . . . in seminary the balance is tipped heavily in favor of reflection; in a residency program the balance moves in the other direction.

occasional meals with the young pastors, designated members meet one-on-one to discuss their individual spiritual journeys and offer feedback on the residents' sermons.

"Our church made a commitment to look for the best and brightest young people who wanted to enter parish ministry," says Enright. "We crafted a program that has four rotations, with each resident spending four to five months working in each rotation. We also wanted to train 'scholar pastors' because we believe that education doesn't cease with the master of divinity degree. We have seminars every Wednesday night, and once a month we bring in top theologians and scholars to lead colloquiums."

Enright maintains a "covenant of confidentiality" with the residents. No topic is off limits, and the young pastors are free to question the decisions or actions of senior staff members. "They can ask me about anything they see," says Enright. "They can say, 'Why in the world did you do this?' I walk them behind the scenes and explain the factors that folded into a decision." The exercise becomes a learning process for everyone involved. "These young people bring us energy, insights, and the world view of their peers. It's exciting to see what they've done for my colleagues and the congregation. As someone said recently, 'What we don't like about this program is that we have to say goodbye to them.'"

Endowing a Worthy Idea

The success of the Second Presbyterian initiative did not go unnoticed by Lilly Endowment's Religion Division, longtime supporter of efforts to strengthen pastoral leadership. Curious to see the effects of residency programs on new clergy, the Endowment launched an invitational grants program in 1999 and 2000 to encourage selected churches and judicatories to experiment with ways to guide seminary graduates into ministry. The initiative is called the Transition-into-Ministry Program, and is all about new pastors "getting off to a good start," says Chris Coble, a program director at the Endowment.

"Ministry is a little different from other professions," explains Coble. "Often the youngest or least experienced ministers are sent to the most isolated place to serve the smallest congregations. They may be miles from their colleagues, and they may feel a profound sense of professional and personal isolation."

To compound the situation, many new seminary graduates lack substantial experience in congregational life, having felt the call to ministry while participating in parachurch organizations or campus ministries. Anxious to put into practice all that they've learned in theology school, they attempt to make sweeping changes shortly after they accept their first pastorate.

"Then they run into a buzz saw when members of the congregations say, 'We've always done things this way and we're not going to change,'" explains Dr. Jackson Carroll, faculty member at Duke Divinity School and director of a multipronged research study of pastoral ministry. "They don't take time first to learn about the congregation, develop a sense of trust with the laity, and then use that trust and experience as leverage to make changes."

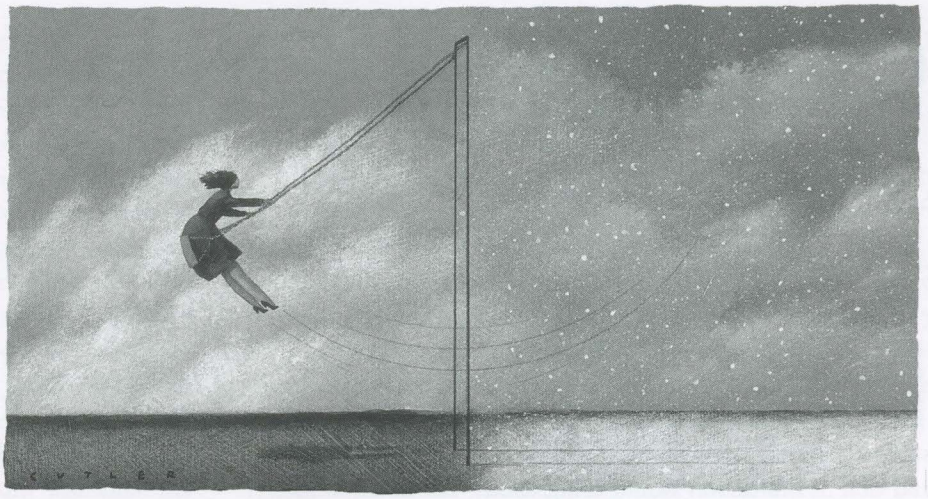
Exploring New Ground

Each Endowment-funded program is unique, with characteristics determined in part by the size of the congregation and the setting of the church. In Minneapolis, Jim Gertmenian of Plymouth Congregational Church is working in partnership with the Rev. Eric Nelson of First Congregational Church of Minnesota to enable their three residents—called Lilly associates—to experience ministry in both a large and a small congregation. The program combines the pragmatic tasks of leading worship and attending board meetings with less-structured opportunities of reflecting on various practices of ministry. The associates meet one-on-one with each senior minister and as a group in half-day retreats.

"It's an experience-reflection model," explains Gertmenian. "Maybe the best way to typify it is to say that in seminary the balance is tipped heavily in favor of reflection; in a residency program the balance moves in the other direction."

All of the churches involved in the Endowment-supported initiatives are feeling their way as they go, constantly

evaluating and fine-tuning their programs as they learn what works best. Because the grants are for five years, the churches will host two "classes" of residents. At some point in the grant period—probably two or three years from now—the Endowment will gather the principal players together for a conversation to determine the lessons that the participants can learn from their collective experiences.



Making an Impact

Success stories are already surfacing. At Hyde Park Union Church in Chicago, the arrival of two residents has enabled senior pastor Susan Johnson to begin a chaplaincy program at nearby Jackson Park Hospital. "The hospital couldn't afford to hire a chaplain, and we never had the resources to develop a mission there," says Johnson. Since July 15th, pastoral resident Jamie Washam has been at the facility daily, visiting patients, praying with families, rocking babies, setting up clothing drives and working with the staff.

"My time there has been immeasurably beneficial," says Washam, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School. "In many ways, my hospital experiences seem more tangible—more like sermon fodder—perhaps because of their immediacy or simply as a result of meeting and serving people in times of profound vulnerability, hope, and pain. I leave there at the end of the day feeling exhausted, blessed, and filled. Plus, since I pray with patients routinely, my capacity for public prayer has increased eight-fold."

After she completes her rotation at the hospital, Washam will trade places with the church's second resident, Jocelyn Emerson, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary. She then will be based at the church and will be involved in Christian education as well as worship leadership. Emerson will make the transition to the hospital, an experience that she hopes will help her "gain a greater ease" in a medical setting.

Both Washam and Emerson were attracted to the residency program because of the diversity of duties that it promised. Fresh out of divinity school, Washam knew she wanted to enter parish ministry but wasn't ready to narrow her work to a single area of specialization. "This program enables me to try my hand at a number of different types of church work: outreach, preaching, worship leading, youth and child ministries, and so on," she says. "I feel that after my time here I'll be able to make a more informed choice regarding where I should direct myself."

Emerson, who had had some worship-leadership experience during seminary, looked forward to the opportunity to gain exposure to the behind-the-scenes aspects of ministry. "Field education doesn't give you the total pastoral experience," she says. "You don't get to meet with the church board and learn how budgeting works. The residency program makes me a pastor at Hyde Park Union Church, and with that comes all the stuff of the church."

Some of the differences between field education and the residency program have sparked adjustments on the part of congregation members. Because Hyde Park Church is located in a university community, it has a 40-year tradition of welcoming student interns who do part-time church work for a few weeks and then return to their classrooms. The residency program goes far beyond such brief assignments and offers church members an opportunity to actively participate in the education of the next generation of pastors.

"In some ways it's hard for our members to treat Jamie and Jocelyn as full-fledged ministers, because the dominant model is that they are 'just students' and will be gone in nine months," says Susan Johnson. "But I would love to see a deepening sense in our congregation that the local church still calls forth gifts of ministry. Too often we think that people go to college and make up their own minds as to what they want to do for a living. Some decide to go to seminary, and then the seminary is responsible for culling out those people who aren't going to be any good at this job. I see it as a much more spiritual and community-bound process of calling. I'm hoping that through this residency program, our congregation will feel as though they've made a lasting contribution to professional church leadership." ❁

Coming Full Circle

STARTING OVER AT RETIREMENT

Al Bamsey

For a number of months I wondered how I would know when it was time to retire. I took a couple of months off two summers before I did retire, hoping that an extended vacation and time for reflection would bring clarity. But no such luck. I went back to work refreshed, with my question unanswered.

Then one day the following spring, I awoke knowing that it was time. I had only a couple of clues. One was the recognition that I had become restless about meetings. There is a gestation period for new ideas to take hold in churches, and my patience was wearing thin at the long wait from conception to acceptance. I also found myself feeling angry at small things that happened or did not—something so unlike me that I knew it was time.

But then retirement angst set in. What would I do with all the unstructured time? And what would I do for the daily interaction that was a staple of church life? Wouldn't I miss the joy of preparing sermons and preaching them? There were also other big questions: Where would we live? How would we buy a house? And would my retirement income be adequate for the lifestyle that we had created for ourselves?

Dave Cutler/Images.com

Finding My Way

Because I gave myself 15 months until retirement was to begin, I approached the process in a way that is typical for me. I addressed issues that could be dealt with ahead of time. My wife and I decided to buy a house in the town where I had pastored for 10 years, even though it would mean having to find a new place to worship. Then I called my friends at the Alban Institute, which has for many years provided consulting and educational services for pastors and local churches. I had once done some consulting for them—and wondered if they might be interested in having me do some part-time work again. Fortunately, Alban was glad to have me back. That settled two of my worries: I would have remuneration to supplement my retirement benefits, and I now had some structured time.

But I wasn't prepared for the changes that were related to my personal identity. Who would I be if not a pastor? With retirement I no longer had a meaningful title. Outside church circles it made no difference that I was a clergyperson. In retirement there were no daily reminders that my words and behavior counted in any venue beyond my family and friends.

Even attending church brought unexpected reactions. Early on I found myself crying as I sang one of the great hymns. When I heard others preach I found myself wishing that I could preach again. I even had feelings of surprise as I observed from the pew. I would marvel at the importance of some rituals and say to myself, "So that's why people attend church."

I sometimes had notions of serving as a pastor again, but not in a church. I imagined starting a small congregation in my own living room when I heard pastors peddling what I consid-

ered to be shallow or wrong. I reminded myself that other pastors were doing their best, but it has been tough to endure what I have perceived as mediocrity and emptiness in some churches

My first year of retirement was full of new discoveries as well. I spent time in hardware and home maintenance stores learning how to care for a new home. I took an art class to reclaim an interest that had lagged after college, and I attended free afternoon lectures and made impromptu trips to the movies. I discovered that I really liked grandchildren—and that I still had a zest for golf. And I could read all of *The New York Times* every day, a treat for a newspaper junkie like me.

In the fall the practice of consulting took hold. I liked the slow feel of it, which was akin to walking gingerly into a spring-fed lake on a nippy morning. I reluctantly said yes when my bishop called to ask if I would take on the job of interim conference director for five months. I knew that this would structure too much of my time, but it would be for a short period, and then my life could return to its new, slower pace.

That interim period has passed, and life has slowed somewhat. But the consulting has grown, and much of it is in areas that were not central to my prior expertise—requiring more "prep" time than I had anticipated. As I write this I am still sorting through how much I want to work or explore other venues. I question how well I am using my free time as I continue to search for meaningful "work" and an adequate number of friends to share time with. And I have not yet made the fundamental choices that will define the next 5, 10, or 20 years of my life. Recently I noted inwardly that not until the tragedies of September 11 did I, for the first time since retiring, feel that I should be serving as pastor of a church. For a week I felt intensely that I should—but the urgency lasted for only a week.

Other Pathways to Retirement

I recently spoke with three colleagues, who retired a year or two ahead of me, to compare our experiences. None of them has sought out formal ministry in retirement, though one briefly served as an interim district superintendent. All three cut their professional ties, and only one is now exploring options in that arena by looking at publishing a book that he wrote while working as a staffer for an annual conference.

These three pastors retired for common reasons. Each sensed that he was physically tired of full-time pastoring. Two retired, in part, because they felt that their churches needed leadership styles that were different from the ones they knew. None of them regrets his years of ministry. All three are financially secure. They miss regular interaction with the people that pastoral ministry afforded—but they do not miss the interminable meetings. And like my wife and I, two of them continue to struggle in their search for a meaningful faith community. All three rejoice in the freedom to shape their daily lives, and all now pay more attention to health concerns than ever before.

Finding One's Pace—or God's Grace?

These three retirees' lack of interest in doing ministry caused me to wonder if I was odd and insecure in the freedom that retirement brings. Unlike them, did I have a need to hold on to some kind of structured ministry? I do fear that if I give up work my mind will atrophy and I will become irrelevant. By turns I feel glad to have some schedule and focus for my life—but then feel anxious about my unwillingness to allow God's grace to direct my life.

I am glad not to be pastoring any more. But I want to share in the wisdom that comes from interacting with pastors and church leaders who are striving to lead meaningful lives in local congregations. I also relish time with my children and grandchildren, look forward to more travel when my spouse retires, and hope to deepen friendships that have developed along the way.

Retirement is a season that differs from all others. In this season we are free to determine both the pace of life and many of its dimensions. And for now I feel a bit like I did when I first started out as a pastor. I am a novice with a lot to learn. But I needed the change—and I am glad I retired. ❁

What's After Full-Time Employment?

The Alban Institute Research and Resource Development Department is soliciting stories about the creative activities in which ministers engage after they have given up full-time employment. Stories can be from ministers who have already retired or from those who are planning to retire.

Please send your stories to lkinney@alban.org with "Retirement Stories" in the subject line. When submitting your stories, please remember to include your church affiliation (present or former) and contact information, including telephone and e-mail address.

Choosing the Pastoral Life

LEAVING PASTORAL MINISTRY BEHIND—AND FINDING IT AGAIN

David J. Wood

A year or so ago, I came across a description of the pastoral life that rang as true for me as any I have read or heard. It comes from Garret Keizer's *A Dresser of Sycamore Trees: The Finding of a Ministry,* an engaging memoir of the early years of his ministry in Island Pond, Vermont:

> Often my sense of my own ministry is nothing more than an awareness of missed opportunities, of gains that might have been won but for my being too blind, timid, forgetful, or otherwise employed to seize the moment. In spite of all the friends I've made here, I often wish that I had never come to Island Pond. The thought that I shall one day be called to account for what I have done in this place often seizes me like the realization that I've failed to turn off an iron or stove, and that it was hours and miles ago. I can smell the smoke.[1]

After 15 years of pastoral ministry in three settings, I could smell the smoke, and it was getting to me. Was I not a good fit for ministry and its demands? Or was it that the places and people of my ministry did not provide a setting in which I could flourish? I vacillated between those two interpretations, often believing both simultaneously. On most days I could not imagine myself doing anything else. At the same time, I yearned for a life in which I could have a less tenuous sense of how I was doing.

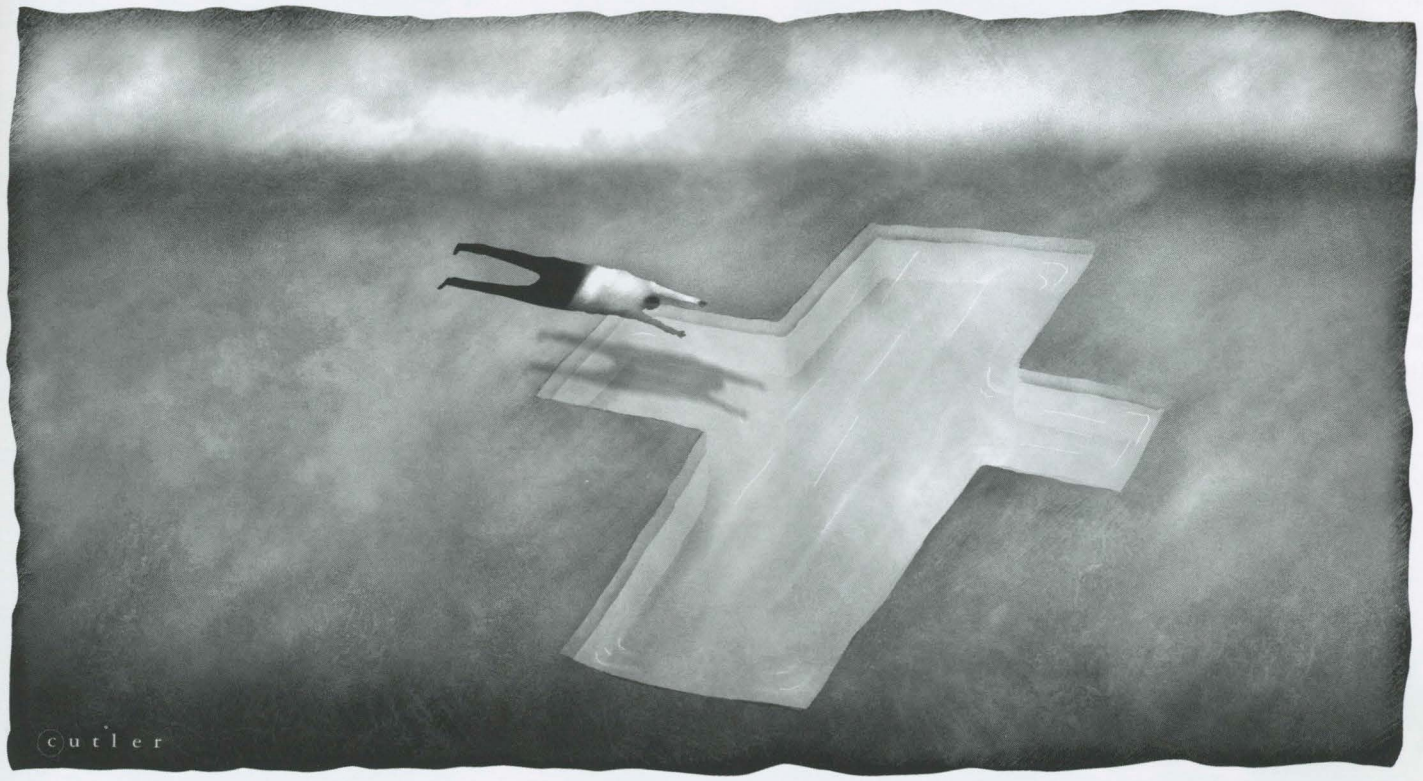
A little over three years ago the opportunity came along that would get me out from under the burden of the pastoral life. It was not a move to abandon the pastoral life—but to engage it from a distance, from within a seminary community, as an administrator of grant programs focused on the practice of pastoral leadership. At age 41, for the first time in my adult life, I would be in the pastoral world but not of the pastoral life. Away with night meetings. No longer would I be constantly tethered to a particular place and people and the cumulative and weighty burdens of locality. It was time for relief from the demands of needy people, reluctant volunteers, relentless sermon preparation, underfunded budgets, and subprofessional wages. I had stood in the pulpit long enough—it was time to sit in the pew with my family and have a job that fit more squarely into the template of this late modern time.

A Rekindled Capacity to Choose

Professionally, this life beyond the parish ministry has been a rich and rewarding experience. And yet, as I approach my 45th birthday, the life to which I am inexorably drawn is the pastoral life. When I stepped out of the pastorate and into this work, I was not at all sure that I would return. Now, as I plot my movement from here, there is nowhere else I can imagine going. This time apart from the pastoral life has rekindled my capacity to choose it. At the same time, my appreciation of life lived beyond the pastoral life has never been greater.

I now understand the perspective of the family that comes to a new city in search of a church home. I now know the difficulties families face in juggling demands of work, home, and family to participate regularly in congregational life. Now I can see, in a way I couldn't before, why folks so often come to church meetings tired and hassled, and why those meetings need to be occasions that minister communion and not just administer a community. I understand why people spend little or no time in prayer or with the Scriptures when their day-to-day world expects so little of them in this regard. I now know why so many in the pew consider the lives of pastors alien to their own. The pastor's life is in fact very different from the lives of most of those to whom he or she preaches every Sunday. This distinction ought to be cause for gratitude and not for defensiveness.

The pastoral life is mediated by a set of practices that connect one to time, place, people, and a spiritual tradition in a way that is distinctly premodern. The dividing lines between work and family, private and public, the personal and the social have become pronounced in late-



modern life, yet they remain highly ambiguous in the pastoral life. Many of us pastors kick against the goad of the pre-modern shape of our lives by proving that we can be just as hassled, harried, and busy—and in the same ways—as the next person. We readily complain of the unique demands we face. It is all too rare to hear a pastor speaking of his or her way of life as one that is intrinsically good. I do not underestimate the demanding character of the pastoral life. However, my time apart from it has cultivated in me a recognition of the goods that are part of that way of life.

The Fragmented Life of Privacy

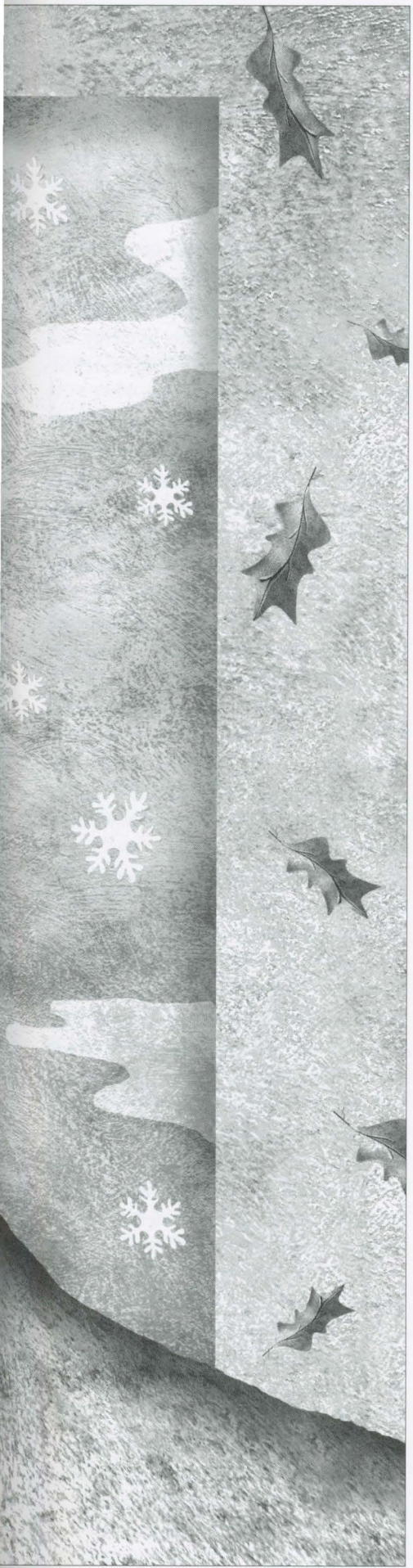
I had never realized how private and fragmented life could be in American society. Prior to my life as an administrator, people coming and going had animated our home—receptions, Bible studies, meetings, and dinner parties from season to season. Our children loved the connections they made with a whole string of adults and not a few children as well. Now we had our home to ourselves. The phone rarely rang. We had very few people in, and we were invited into very few homes. The whole engagement with a wider network of shared friends and acquaintances that was so much a part of the pastoral life was largely gone. We were now the typical American family whose life is lived in relatively uninterrupted privacy. Now our lives reflected the common divides separating work, school, home, and church. I would leave for the office every morning and reappear late in the afternoon, with my kids knowing or understanding very little of what I did all day. Weekends were no longer the culmination of the week, but the time when we stepped back even further from the daily routines of work and school and retreated into the private realm for rest and leisure. We attended church—but that experience had now become a relatively brief engagement on Sunday morning before we retreated once again to the haven of our private world.

My kids had grown up knowing my professional life in a way I soon came to realize was extremely rare in the "real world." They knew the staff I worked with, and my staff knew them by name. They visited me often in my place of work and, on their own terms, came to know intimately the context and content of my work. We shared in that work together. A unique, almost pre-modern, coherence prevailed, linking work, family, and leisure in a way that I had never really noticed before—or worse, had complained and railed against.

My twin sons have just entered middle school, and my daughter has begun her first year of high school. As we approach this stage in our family life, my wife and I are settled in our conviction that we want our life together as a family

continued on page 30

Warren Gebert



Unpredictable Seasons

PASTOR **LYNNE M. BAAB** EXPLORES THE SOMETIMES ROCKY TRANSITIONS THAT MARK THE SEASONS OF OUR LIVES AND MINISTRIES

In some years winter, spring, summer, and fall flow seamlessly. In other years the seasons are punctuated by devastating droughts, paralyzing snowstorms, and overwhelming floods.

Seasons of ministry for rabbis and ministers are equally unpredictable. Sometimes the life stages flow easily from one to the next: ordination in young adulthood, a midlife transition punctuated by significant and life-giving changes, a smooth path to retirement. More often, though, unexpected changes and transitions make the seasons of ministry unsettling.

And during the years spent with a single congregation, clergy experience predictable seasons: the "honeymoon" stage; then a period of disillusionment, followed by the formation of a clergy-congregation relationship based more firmly in reality and mutual respect; then the long haul of ministry together. But predictable seasons can be significantly disrupted by unexpected changes and transitions. Church conflicts, building programs, racial or economic change in the neighborhood, the deaths of major donors—all these can change congregations in fundamental ways.

Other changes are linked to ministers' and rabbis' personal lives. We don't function in a vacuum as we serve our congregations—and most clergy have family members and friends whose lives are likewise marked by transition. We marry and have children, or remain childless. Or we don't marry and wonder whether we have taken the right path. Our children make the transition from affectionate elementary school kids to rebellious adolescents. They leave the nest. Our parents grow older, become frail, and die. Our siblings and friends suffer devastating health and family problems. While caring for our

congregations, we also nurture our family and friends.

My Personal Seasons

My brief career as a pastor has been marked by constant change. I made a midlife career move into ordained ministry after staying home with my children for a decade and then working for seven years as a writer/editor for denominational publications. Four years ago, just before my 45th birthday, I was called by a vibrant 500-member congregation as an associate pastor. Two weeks later, the senior pastor resigned to become a university provost.

I had been ordained for only two months when an interim senior pastor came to the church. Eighteen months later, our current pastor arrived. Midway through the interim period, another of the associate pastors left for a mission post in China; and shortly after the arrival of the new senior pastor, the youth pastor left to make a midlife career change after 19 years in youth ministry. At 45—the age when I was ordained—he is learning to design Web sites.

Amid these staff changes, I definitely experienced a honeymoon stage, followed by a time of viewing the parish more realistically and putting down deeper roots in the congregation. I experience great joy in some parts of my work, but already I have become bored with some aspects of a job that once excited me. I feel as though I have weathered numerous seasons in my four short years with this church.

Meanwhile, huge changes have taken place at home. A year after my ordination, our first son started college. During my third year as a pastor, our second son followed suit. Neither son was too far away, and they came home often. We had an on-again, off-again empty nest, with constant shifts as the boys came and went. But several months ago one son left for work in Japan, and the other went off to study in Australia, leaving my husband and me to rattle around in our house—surprised at how much things change when the kids really leave home.

My inner journey of the past four years has also influenced my seasons of ministry. As a first-born daughter, I was deeply influenced by my mother's model as housewife, mom, and community volunteer. I was not raised to be a professional woman. I am certain that God called me to this congregation and to this role as associate pastor, yet there are moments of intense discomfort as I realize that I am breaking the family rules. I am sometimes uneasy in my public roles of preaching and leading worship, even though I know I do them well. I am growing up at midlife, growing into a role and a life that reflects my own values rather than my mother's.

Why Talk about Seasons?

Ministers and rabbis are exposed to the passages of life more routinely than people in most other professions. In one week we may visit a parishioner in the hospital, see him hooked up to life support, pray for his healing, and watch him die. We may conduct his funeral service that week, but we may also perform a baptism or wedding, or both. It is obvious that standing alongside people in sorrow can be draining, but sharing in people's joy takes its toll as well.

Often we are more aware of the seasons of other people's lives than of our own. If our parishioners need love, care, and nurture as they negotiate significant passages, isn't it true that we as clergy also need such care as we make our own transitions? We may recommend to parishioners that amid significant life events they take time to nurture themselves, reflect, and pray. But do we, as clergy, not need the same sort of self-nurture, reflection, and prayer?

Yet we are often unaware of the challenges involved in confronting predictable life transitions, not to mention the storms that can unexpectedly devastate our lives. Twelve years ago, at about age 40, a pastor named Sam was asked to leave the small congregation he had served for six years. Older members felt that he was pushing them to change too fast, and baby-boom members believed that he needed to be more bold and innovative. Looking back, Sam is still unsure what went wrong. He knows he was doing the best job he could—and he doesn't know what he could have done differently.

After leaving that congregation, Sam spent several years driving airport shuttles while diligently applying for pastoral jobs. He finally secured an interim position. Five interim posts later, he has found his groove. Interim ministry suits him well and uses his gifts effectively. A wrenching situation brought unexpected and painful change to him and his family, precipitating a season of financial insecurity and career uncertainty. Today he can see how God has brought good out of the situation, but he does not deny the pain of those turbulent years.

Seasons of Life

The predictable life stages that affect congregation members also affect the leaders of congregations. Midlife provides a salient example.

A presbytery executive told me that he has never seen an incident of clergy burnout that was not connected to

midlife issues. Whether or not we experience a midlife crisis, midlife is a time of unsettling transition for almost everyone. We discover unexpected health problems. Our kids grow up, and our parents grow older and slip into declining health. Midlife is often a time of re-evaluation and questioning. Did I do what I wanted to do in the first two decades of adulthood? Am I living by the values that I hold most dear? Does my life have meaning in the way I expected?

Answering those questions requires time, a commodity that is rare at midlife. Often the questions make us uneasy, so we work harder, hoping that our accomplishments will make us feel better. Hard work fills the time that we might otherwise have used for reflection and prayer; busy schedules keep us from the in-depth conversations with friends that might help us gain perspective. Many of us do our best to avoid facing the transitions of midlife.

Overlapping Seasons

We can map out the seasons of our lives in many areas: our career in ministry, a particular pastorate, our family life, and our inner journey of personal development. It is worth taking time to reflect on the seasons of our lives in those areas, taking special note of the overlap of seasons in two or more areas. This exercise will help raise our awareness of what we experience, helping us to react to unexpected storms with more wisdom and maturity.

We often wish that things would not change so fast—and that life could have more tranquillity and stability. But we must not forget that God is an agent of change and that some of the transitions we experience come straight from God's hand. We affirm that God never changes, yet we know that we are called to growth, to freshness. "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isa. 43:19).

We must nurture ourselves through the transitions that come to us either from outside events or from inner awareness, so that we can remain open to what God is doing in our lives. We must give ourselves space and time to reflect, so that amid change and fatigue we do not miss the new things that God is bringing forth. ❁

Weathering the Seasons of Ministry

The pastors and rabbis I interviewed for a book on midlife were virtually unanimous in their suggestions for a healthy midlife passage.[1] Their recommendations are appropriate for all ages because they form a foundation for coping effectively with change.

Personal spiritual life. Each of the ministers and rabbis I interviewed said that the most significant occupational hazard they face is neglect of their own personal spiritual disciplines. Whether we engage in contemplative prayer, journal writing, meditation, in-depth Bible study, or something else, it is essential for clergy to nurture a personal spirituality that is separate from preparation for sermons and classes. Without that grounding, transitions shake the earth for us in uncomfortable ways.

Friends outside the congregation. Under stress, most clergy work harder and increasingly narrow their focus to the congregation. Nurturing friendships outside the congregation is essential for balance and perspective.

Rigorous honesty with oneself. Some of the most famous Christians who "fell" were involved in accountability groups. While it is wise to have people in our lives who support us and hold us accountable, nothing substitutes for honesty before God and self. No one else really knows when a certain congenial person in the congregation is beginning to look too attractive to us, or when a seemingly innocent habit is creeping toward addiction. We need to heighten our awareness that we stand naked before God. No one can do it for us, and a busy schedule will not compensate for lack of honesty with ourselves.

Effective use of study leave and sabbaticals. Most ministers and rabbis are blessed with one or two weeks each year designated for study, and some of us are able to take sabbaticals. It is easy to use this precious time in ways that do not provide the quietness and growth time we need. For both study leave and sabbaticals, we need to consider carefully what will contribute to our own personal spirituality and what will help us grow in coping with the transitions at hand. Incorporating significant time for "journaling," reflection, and quiet prayer into both study leave and sabbaticals can give us some of the perspective we need as we move from one season to the next in ministry and personal life.

The seasons will come and go. We will enjoy some of them and will be frustrated or devastated by the flotsam and jetsam left behind by the storms. But God is the author of nature's seasons, and God accompanies us through the seasons of our lives. We are not alone as we face the expected and the unexpected.

Note

1. Lynne M. Baab, *Embracing Midlife: Congregations as Support Systems* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1999), 139-146.

This manual presents an overview of gift planning ministry, the tools needed to get started and sample resolutions, policies, bequest forms, newsletter articles, among others.

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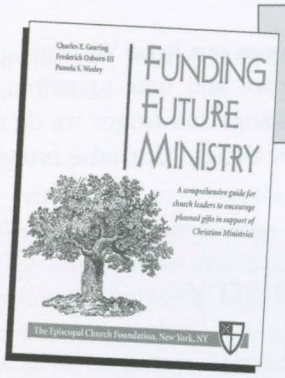

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continued from page 7

vive and how to get along without my old role.

But fear was not all that I felt. The word ecstasy originally denoted a state in which you are flung out of your usual self. Telling my congregants how much I wanted to make these changes, I felt an ecstatic relief. To my surprise, some congregants responded by telling me about similar upheavals in their lives. They talked about career changes, financial risks, breakups, and reconciliations. I listened in my role as their rabbi, recognizing how much they wanted me to understand the meaning of their decisions. But I also responded as their peer, deeply affected by the intimate and perceptive ways in which they reacted to my self-disclosure. I felt deeply understood and took comfort in the fact that I was not alone.

In many ways, I was already a different kind of rabbi, although I was less clear about the shift then than I am now. I served that congregation for eight more months before entering a graduate program. During that time, I gave the best sermons I had ever written, developed the programs of which I am most proud, and became a better pastor than ever before. I tapped an inner wellspring that left me feeling full of initiative, less guarded, and more creative.

Another version of the clergy midlife crisis is far more extreme than my own. These clergy also feel drawn to more authentic relationships, but a fear of intimacy overpowers this impulse. To guard against the allure of closeness, some retreat into aloofness and rigidity. Others become doormats, yielding to every demand. Both strategies serve the same purpose—to avoid engaging others directly and personally. With time, the burden of isolation becomes intolerable. In a desperate attempt to salve their pain, they impulsively become sexually involved with congregants. They may abandon the field or find themselves forced out. For the most part, clergy who transgress sexual boundaries are not sociopaths. Rather, they are lonely and lost individuals who do not know how to get the help they need. Clergy have a special responsibility to curb such colleagues and to protect congregants from their misconduct. But we kid ourselves if we think that there are no circumstances in which we would go down that same road. A lifetime of isolation can become a black hole. With sufficient stress, we are sucked in by its powerful gravity, and our sense of right and wrong is overwhelmed until it is too late.

For the majority of colleagues, however, the restiveness of midlife is far less tumultuous. Many become disenchanted with aspects of their work that formerly gave them satisfaction. They may feel an inexplicable fatigue and become bored, irritable, or depressed. They may brood on their failures or simply clarify the direction they want to take. For some, this time is an ordeal; for others, it is far less painful. Ultimately, however, clergy in midlife come to see the big picture more easily. As a result, they discover increased energy, patience, and humor. They feel less vulnerable to criticism and therefore become more open to others.

For many this shift grows out of a willingness to see themselves as one part of the congregation rather than the center. These clergy collaborate rather than operate as lone cowboys. At the same time, they see more clearly their own unique gifts and become more effective in offering them. Instead of their gritting their teeth and muddling through day after day, they become more willing to engage in routine self-care. They settle in for the long haul, invigorated and revitalized.

Memory and Wisdom

As a teenager I failed to appreciate the enormous value of memories that accumulate over the years. With the passage of time, I have a new relationship with my past, especially my memories of adolescence and early adulthood. Sometimes they sting or embarrass. But more often they are a comfort, a source of entertainment, and the storehouse of any wisdom I have acquired. Increasingly, I am able to accept—buried within the fair measure of heartache I have experienced—a meaning and value that I never anticipated. Jewish mystics labeled this idea "the sweetness in evil," a concept that I once considered a travesty but that now stirs me deeply. If offered the choice between a pain-free life and the life I have led, I would take the painless option. But given that we all suffer and cannot trade suffering away, I would rather try to redeem my pain with the wisdom it can teach me.

As a rabbi and a clinical psychologist, I think of myself as a "wounded healer." Given the advantages I have enjoyed and the love I have known, I wonder if I've suffered enough to deserve this appellation. In any case, my history of isolation and pain provides valuable reference points when I try to help others who are suffering. My own injuries help me to understand the anomie and isolation that afflict so many today. My history allows me to be more respectful and less condescending.

I used to fear that my awkwardness with others disqualified me from being a rabbi. Now I see it as a resource. I still feel a familiar urge to retreat from intimacy, even when it benefits me to remain connected. Such a fundamental aspect of personality never disappears entirely, no matter how well we learn to redirect it. It stays with us forever, tripping us up and offering us a pathway to wisdom. ❁

Lift High the Flag . . . Oops, the Cross!

SORTING OUT ISSUES OF FAITH AND FLAG IN A TIME OF WAR

Diana Butler Bass

A week after the September 11 terrorist attacks, I had lunch with some of my students at Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria. As part of their program, first-year students are required to visit churches in the area. Over lunch that day, they were discussing what they had witnessed in northern Virginia congregations on the Sunday after the attacks.

"At the church I visited, the congregation sang 'America the Beautiful' as a prayer on their knees," one student reported.

"We sang nothing but patriotic songs," another remarked, "It was disturbing. There was no mention of Christ."

"The flag came in the procession before the cross," another groaned.

"That's nothing," one young man said. "At the church I visited the priest carried in the flag, put it next to the altar and announced that it would stay there 'until this whole thing is over.' Then he said, 'If you don't like it, you are in the wrong church.'"

I listened with sympathetic interest to their observations and anxieties about the mixture of church and nationalism that surfaced in the wake of the September 11 horrors. I, too, had stories. As a member of the senior staff at Christ Church, a large Episcopal parish in Alexandria that is five miles from the Pentagon, I knew what it was like on the inside. Within hours of the attacks, well-meaning parishioners had called the church requesting that Sunday worship be changed to include such elements as a full military color guard, the singing of the national anthem, the playing of taps, and patriotic bunting draped about the church.

While the senior staff agreed that it was theologically and spiritually inappropriate to turn Sunday Eucharist into a patriotic requiem, we found it difficult to resist the tide of nationalism—and even militarism—rolling through our congregation. After much soul-searching, we compromised and chose "My Country, 'Tis Of Thee" to be sung at the offertory. And the flag was carried in as part of the procession. However, even that nod toward patriotic fervor disturbed me. September 11 did not cause me to flee to the flag; I found myself on my knees before the cross. I could not understand what the church members wanted—or why they wanted it. When I heard my students' reports, I at least understood that I was not alone with my fears that the church was wrapping the suffering and bleeding Christ in a flag.

Whatever personal comfort I found around the refectory table that day, many disturbing theological and pastoral questions remained. How was I, as a leader in a congregation, to address questions of faith and nation, of church and state, of reconciliation and military action? How to be both pastoral and prophetic? Was I called to be both comforter and transformer at the same time? What is the role of congregational leadership during terrorism and war? The task was overwhelming—I had never felt more inadequate in ministry. September 11 was calling me to be a better leader, to maintain theological clarity, and to rise to the spiritual challenge ahead.

Know Where You Stand

The first aspect of effective leadership in a crisis is understanding where you, as a leader, stand theologically amid the questions. The priest who planted the flag next to the altar knew his mind on these issues. I may think he is wrong, but it is clear what he thinks.

Many midlife and younger churchgoers and leaders have spent little time thinking about their theologies of Christ and culture. It has been 30 or 40 years since many congregations and denominations have seriously addressed issues of church and

Rex Bohn/Images.com

state. When I was a girl growing up in a Methodist church, the conflict between flag and cross created intense debates as we grappled with both the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war. As a baby boomer, as a leader in my congregation and my denomination, I have found that those debates were formative in my theology and my spiritual life.

Today's religious leaders—a host of people like me—were children or teenagers during the last major historical point of crisis over faith and nationalism. The answers—or nonanswers—to questions of church and state drove many of us away from traditional churches. Or at least, the issues and arguments caused us to wonder about the relevance of religious belief in the public arena. Could the gospel reconcile racial divisions? Did the Christian story truly proclaim peace? Was the institutional church committed to Jesus' message of transformation?

Because of the church's inability to lead during a time of cultural crisis and violence, I suspect that many of today's lay leaders and clergy feel ambivalent or angry about the current outburst of religious nationalism. For weeks, I felt a deep hostility toward my congregation and at odds with the conflation of flag and faith that I witnessed. At times, I wondered if I was suffering theological insanity as I realized how much my feelings and ideals diverged from those of others. My confusion drove me back to theological reflection—asking myself what I believed about the relationship between Christ and culture, what the Bible says, and what my life experience has taught me. As I thought, prayed, and studied, my sense of call and vocation became clearer.

Although I am an Episcopalian, I am deeply influenced by the Lutheran doctrine of two kingdoms and the profoundly paradoxical relationship between God's reign and earthly political states. I confess that a "wannabe" Quaker lurks within the recesses of my soul. After rereading Reinhold Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture,* bits of St. Augustine's *City of God,* the Gospel of Luke, and the book of Romans, I found myself spiritually steadied and "in line" with historic Christian tradition. Knowing my heart and theological passions helped me over the feelings of anger, ambivalence, and doubt. This confidence enabled me to see bet-

When conflated with faith, patriotism becomes religious nationalism—a danger to both the secular state and the church.

ter what I might teach and preach to those whom I am called to serve. My views, feelings, and beliefs were not wrong—they were simply different from those held by the most vocal segment of the congregation. And I needed to recognize that, because of years of theological training and reflection, I as a leader had something to say and teach at a time of crisis that could serve as a loving corrective to some of the misunderstandings of flag and cross.

Know Where Your Tradition Stands

Knowing I was not crazy helped. But being reminded that I am a Lutheran-Quaker-Episcopalian did not solve all my ministry problems. The second aspect of effective leadership is to understand where your tradition stands. In this sense, "tradition" means both the grand narrative of the denomination and its local expression in a particular congregation.

Some denominations have better theological resources than others to sort out issues of faith and the flag. Baptists, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, and Anabaptists have well-developed and clear theologies of church and state. For those groups, September 11 provided an opportunity to return to tradition and to understand fundamental aspects of denominational or congregational identity.

But much of American religion—especially Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, and Methodism—is not so clear about religious nationalism. Part of my anxiety arose from the realization that I belong to a denomination that has no unified theology of church and state. The Episcopal Church in the United States speaks with two conflicting voices: one declaring that the church should never address any political concern from its pulpits; the other contending that the church serves as a kind of national temple where people of all faiths can pray with dignity and decorum.

Thus, my denomination vacillates between complete avoidance and total embrace of nationalist piety. On any given day, the Episcopal Church might eschew addressing justice issues as inappropriate; or it might surrender a major pulpit to the president of the United States. Although this inconsistency might seem an incomprehensible theological mishmash to others, it makes a modicum of sense to Episcopalians. Our tradition is that of comprehension, the church of irreconcilable opposites, both Protestant and Catholic. Contradictions are part of our identity—the church of the via media. Part of our strength is our willingness to live with our dizzying diversity.

In my parish, however, the grand denominational narrative of the "middle way" has often given way to one side of the debate. Founded in 1767, Christ Church was the home parish of George Washington and, later, of Robert E. Lee. For most of its history, it has functioned as a faithful congregation worshiping in a chapel of American civil religion. As long as "faithful congregation" and "American civil religion" did not conflict, things went along

swimmingly—that is, up until the 1960s and 1970s. At that point, Christ Church began to lose members—as did thousands of other mainline congregations—when the flag seemed at odds with racial justice and international peace.

Christ Church waved the American flag against civil rights and conscientious objection to war. Historically, we have a miserable record of race relations. In one infamous incident during the Vietnam war, an Alexandria judge, who also served as senior warden of the vestry (governing board) at Christ Church, threw the book at some Episcopal seminarians arrested for conducting a "peace Eucharist" and blocking an entrance to the Pentagon. Members of the younger generation left in droves. The only congregants who stayed around were their World War II parents and grandparents, many of whom were war veterans, whose theological perspectives and life experience kept faith and flag together in a way reminiscent of the 1950s.

When baby boomers started returning to church in the 1980s and 1990s, they generally turned a blind eye to our forebears George and "Bobby" (as the boomers and genXers irreverently call them), whose memorial plaques and portraits grace our walls. They also ignored the flag-waving of the senior generation. In short, the congregation had a polite generational cease-fire regarding church and state during the last two decades of the 20th century. After September 11, 2001, however, polite silence became difficult to maintain. And both sides of the generational divide struggle to understand what has happened in a way that is consonant with their life experience.

Thus, the local expression of my tradition is one of civil religion, a tradition ignored, rejected, or scorned by the largest and most rapidly growing segment of the congregation—but a tradition still celebrated by the building's architecture and tourist brochures. In short, the congregation's church-and-state tradition is changing (and has changed), and congregants are confused, hurt, and at a theological loss to know where to turn. The only people with clarity are the "flag and faith" members—or the few Lutheran-Quaker-Episcopalians like me.

Some of the congregation wanted to sing the national anthem. After all, one of our celebrated 18th century parishioners—Francis Scott Key—wrote it! The tide of American history, profoundly confusing the New Israel and the United States, is our history too.

But it is not our only history. Our congregation's history is also that of the returning baby boomers and generation X members who fill our pews. Their theological story—the way in which they respond to this crisis—will become part of local tradition and the larger story of our denomination. The faithfulness of the September 11 generation will be knit into the 225-year history of a congregation—as was their parents' and grandparents' theological interpretation of America.

And that is where good leadership matters.

Why Leadership Matters

Why not simply wave the flag and sing "God Bless America"? After all, patriotism seems to be helping millions of Americans to hold on to sanity and summon courage. Why not enlist the church in this moral defense of the homeland?

The issue for American congregations is confusion. As some thoughtful Christians—including C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton—pointed out during the 20th century, patriotism elicits feelings akin to religious ecstasy. Love of country can easily be confused with love of God. This confusion leads to profoundly negative outcomes.

Patriotism in churches fuels religious nationalism. Patriotism is so emotionally powerful that it can marshal masses to any cause, whether noble or misguided. Although our side believes its cause to be blessed by God, every side in every conflict and war has always believed that to be the case. When conflated with faith, patriotism becomes religious nationalism—a danger to both the secular state and the church. During the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln plumbed the painful paradoxes of religious nationalism in his Second Inaugural Address: "Both [North and South] read the same Bible and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. . . . The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes."

Some people may protest that the current conflict is different from the one about which President Lincoln wrote so eloquently—Christians and Muslims do not read the same book or

pray to the same God. But most mainline Protestants reject theological exclusivity in favor of recognizing the commonalities of Christian, Islamic, and Jewish monotheism and have expressed hopes for the universal reach of God's mysterious love. Religious nationalism is dangerous because it establishes American Christianity as normative by claiming (however subtly) that God is on our side.

Thus, patriotism enrolls the church as a soldier of the political order—the source of the very "evil" that President Bush decries. When the cross is draped with the flag, we become crusaders ourselves and give our enemies more reason to hate us. The echoes of Pope Urban II's call to destroy the infidel, "God wills it!" ring down through the ages to our own day. Unless we live into our best theological nature, the present conflict may teach us how little Christians have learned from history. Sadly enough, we could become a mirror image of what we seek to resist.

Patriotism, with its corresponding religious nationalism, also distracts from God's primary mission for the church: to love all peoples, to tear down walls of hatred and division, to reconcile those at war, and to serve the least among us. As an Episcopal bishop of Ohio, Charles P. McIlvaine, reminded his denomination in 1862, "Let not love of Country make your love to God . . . the less fervent. Immense as is this present earthly interest, it is only earthly. The infinitely greater interests of the soul and of the kingdom of God remain as paramount as ever."

It matters because, in the words of Bishop McIlvaine, "the soul and the kingdom of God" are at stake. Congregations are not chapels of the state or the military. They are outposts of God's mission. Our call at this moment is to serve grieving families, to give hope and courage to the fearful, and to pray, speak, and work for peace and its corresponding blessings of liberty and freedom. Our job is not to proclaim or seem to imply that our nation is blameless, morally pure, and God's righteous empire. In the wake of September 11, congregations must remember their fundamental vocation of healing souls and spreading God's reign of love.

What to Do

With the stakes so high, preaching and teaching take on new gravity. Congregations need to understand that this is not the time to "play church," as the senior minister at Christ Church said in his sermon September 16. Bunting, taps, and the national anthem are important—but they are not churchly. They are appropriate in the civic arena. Patriotism provides deeply meaningful, but theologically distracting, symbols. This is no time for theological confusion. The "infinitely greater interests" of soul and God's kingdom call our congregations to move beyond emotive symbols to faithful discipleship, peacemaking, and service to the poor, the outcast, and the oppressed.

As in the 1960s, what we do now will determine the faith we pass to our children and grandchildren. Will they see, believe, respond to God, and embrace a way of life that matters? Our response to terrorism and war tests our theological character, our spiritual integrity, and our moral commitments. This is not only a battle for freedom; it is also an old-fashioned war for our souls. Winning may be important; how we win is even more so. The next generation is watching.

So is the world. The response of our congregations leavens American politics and policies. With patience, we may emerge from this time of troubles a wiser and more compassionate nation—something, I suspect, for which many of our brothers and sisters across the globe have long prayed. Chastened and strengthened by God's mercy and grace, we may help create a world where terrorism and violence no longer threaten the universal human hope to raise families, make decent and honorable livings, enjoy the world's beauties, worship and know God, and love our neighbors. ❖

Leadership for a New Religious America

People lead in many ways. Harvard Professor Diana L. Eck leads by teaching and writing great books. In *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (Harper, 2001), Eck leads readers into an unfamiliar world of radical religious pluralism—where Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs now live next door to us. Will we remain strangers, or become neighbors?

With uncanny timing, Professor Eck's new book was published just months before the September 11, 2001 attacks on America. I doubt she could have foreseen that her book would be relevant to us so soon. But the realities and challenges presented here are of life-and-death importance. We now know how dangerous hatred and violence fueled by religious extremism can be.

A New Religious Landscape

Eck reports that Muslims in the United States now outnumber Episcopalians, Jews, or Presbyterians. The era of a dominant Judeo-Christian culture has passed. Yet we live as though it has not. Up to 10 percent of the 281 million Americans counted in the 2000 census are new immigrants who arrived after President Lyndon Johnson signed the Immigration and Naturalization Act on July 4, 1965. Yet we live our lives as though they are not here. This new wave of immigrants is from China, Southeast Asia, India, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Iran—and these people represent a religious diversity that both affirms and tests our principles.

Eck shows that "we the people" are more diverse than we think. Her story moves from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to Detroit, Michigan, to Fairfax County, Virginia, to Houston, Texas, where a stunning religious reality comes into view. Through Eck's eyes we see the Sri Lakshmi Temple in Ashland, Massachusetts, where piles of Reebok and Nike sneakers are placed reverently at the door near new images of Hindu gods. She takes us to Los Angeles, where we find 300 Buddhist temples and "the most complex Buddhist city in the world."

The new immigrants have plunged into America's congregational waters by building temples, mosques, wats, gurdwaras, and other places of worship—some invisible in suburban homes, others prominent at major intersections in our towns and cities. The institutions established by these religious communities (monasteries, libraries, day schools, advocacy groups) allow them to thrive in voluntary America.

Confronting the Past

Good leaders tell new stories and recount the older ones that we suppress. Eck confronts us with the painful history of fear and prejudice in America: Japanese Buddhists interned in America during World War II, African slaves whose Muslim identities were erased during slavery, and the Chinese Exclusion Act enacted by Congress (1882). Can we avoid repeating intolerance in the American story? We must.

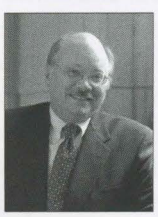
Buddhist and Hindu temples, black churches, Jewish synagogues, and Muslim mosques in America have been burned, defaced, and shot at in recent years. Zoning committees have become battlegrounds between those who seek freedom of religion for all and those who would exclude believers of different faiths. And since September 11, new evidence of ignorance and intolerance has been all too visible.

Facing the Future

Leaders help us confront reality. Eck insists that we abandon stereotypes by getting to know our neighbors and ourselves. Leaders mobilize people. Eck invites us to join the work of fashioning a diverse new nation—something no longer optional.

And leaders disclose new possibilities. Eck does this by presenting a helpful example: St. Paul's United Methodist Church and the Islamic Society of the East Bay in Fremont, California, each sought to purchase the same piece of land. But rather than compete "American style," they became bidding partners. The resulting new church and new mosque are built side by side—with shared parking, landscaping, and outdoor lighting.

This type of leadership must be imitated. Eck is alarmed (so am I) that so few of our religious communities know one another, visit each other, or stand up for neighbors when hatred arises. But if we are to live as a peaceful and vibrant society, the kind of tolerance and leadership Eck found in Fremont must arise across America. ❖



Rev. Dr. James P. Wind is the president of the Alban Institute. Prior to joining the Institute in 1995, he served as program director at the Lilly Endowment's religion division. Dr. Wind is the author of three books and numerous articles, including the new Alban Institute Special Report on Leadership.

continued from page 17

to be centered in and by our vocation as a pastoral family. For me, this desire is a revelation of sorts. Granted, this revelation has come at a relatively safe distance from the complex dynamics of congregational life. However, experiencing the pastoral life as a pathway that is paved with goodness depends not so much upon a particular form of congregational life so much as upon a pastor's capacity to perceive and to embrace that way of life as good. Such recognition by pastors is essential if congregational life is to be shaped in a way that encourages the flourishing of pastors and their families. I will no longer hold a congregation responsible for my failure to experience the goodness of the pastoral life—a rich texture that I consistently failed to comprehend in the first place. I do not imagine that the experience of the goodness inherent in the pastoral life is inevitable. It is as much achievement as gift. It is a disciplined undertaking. For me and for my family, it is the life to which we are called and to which we are suited.

I will no longer hold a congregation responsible for my failure to experience the goodness of the pastoral life—a rich texture that I consistently failed to comprehend in the first place.

New Perceptions

I anticipate that many of my pastoral peers will have concluded by now that my capacity to articulate a positive reading of the pastoral life is directly proportional to my distance from the parish. They must think that when once again I wade into the muddy waters of congregational life, I will then recall with clarity the water in which pastors swim, and I will recover a more realistic appraisal of the slow-burning downsides of the pastoral life. Perhaps. However, to my skeptical pastoral colleagues, I would say this: I will accept that my reading sees too much goodness if you will confess the possibility that your reading sees too little. In relation to this life we share, let us heed the apostle Paul's admonition: "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil. 4:8). At least in my own case, I feel that my inability to recognize, let alone realize, the good things intrinsic to the pastoral life was due in no small part to a failure of the imagination.

I recently read an account by the essayist and poet Wendell Berry of a significant turning episode in his life. As a young graduate of Stanford University, he had settled into the literary community of New York. His writing career was off to a strong and promising start. Then he upped and moved to Port Royal, Kentucky, where he had been born and raised, and where he still lives today. In his essay "A Native Hill"[2] Berry tells of the dire warnings he received from his Manhattan literary peers: his work and career would wither in the culturally and intellectually barren wasteland of backwoods Kentucky. To his delight and surprise, Berry discovered an engagement with time, place, and people that would empower him as a writer in a way that Manhattan never did. Upon his return to Port Royal, Berry found a new awareness of his surroundings opening up inside him. He goes on to describe his new engagement with that familiar place: "I walked over it, looking, listening, smelling, touching, alive to it as never before. I listened to the talk of my kinsmen and neighbors as I had never done, alert to their knowledge of the place, and to the qualities and energies of their speech." Describing this movement in his life, he writes, "Before it had been mine by coincidence or accident; now it was mine by choice."

The pastoral life is now mine by choice—again, for the first time. My senses are tuned by new perceptions of enduring realities.

Let me end where I began: with Garret Keizer's narrative. His account probes the uniquely demanding and rewarding engagement with time, people, place, and faith that ministry requires of us. His narrative reminded me that at the center of a well-lived pastoral life is the capacity to live and interpret the gospel over time, with real people, in a particular place. Further down the page from the quotation with which I opened this article, Keizer writes, "The best that most of us manage is a lopsided vacillation in favor of belief—but oh, in those moments of belief, one knows what it is to fly, to positively scream for joy in the ecstasy of 'the love that moves the sun and other stars.'"[3] ❖

Notes

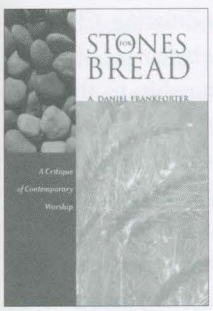
1. Garret Keizer, *A Dresser of Sycamore Trees: The Finding of a Ministry* (New York: Viking, 1991), 66-67.
2. Wendell Berry, "A Native Hill," in *Recollected Essays: 1965-1980.* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981), 79.
3. Keizer, *A Dresser of Sycamore Trees,* 67.

BOOK REVIEW

Stones for Bread

A CRITIQUE OF CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP

A. Daniel Frankforter
Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001



If your church's numbers are dwindling, its worship lackluster, and the congregation complacent, this book proffers a cure. But the remedy requires faith and fortitude, and may at first seem a bitter pill.

Frankforter alleges that when churches substitute entertainment for awe, allow the unconverted to determine the "menu," and adopt a style of worship that focuses on congregations rather than God, they offer stones for bread. It's easy to be tempted by these "stones," but this book offers help in resisting them.

Frankforter is a professor of medieval history at Penn State-Behrend College. Although I think he sometimes paints with too broad a brush—his references to the history and worship of several specific Christian groups lack nuance—Frankforter's work as a historian deepens his critique of the church in the present.

Stones for Bread makes a helpful counterpart to Marva Dawn's works on worship, especially *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), and indeed Frankforter quotes Dawn. He ties together his 13 chapters with the Bible's various stone/rock and bread metaphors. The chapter on music, that most contentious of elements in contemporary worship, is itself worth the book's price.

As a long-time church musician and worship leader in a variety of denominations, and as an observer of attempts at church renewal, I firmly endorse Frankforter's forceful critique of modern worship. He argues that we must turn from promoting feel-good, egocentric church *attendance* fueled by marketing strategy and a business mentality, and instead seek awe-filled, God-centered, life-changing *worship* and the discipleship that results—which he acknowledges may be costly.

Frankforter doesn't present a strategy list for rejuvenation so much as guidance in how to rethink what we're about, so that a church may forge its own biblically informed path to renewal. This quote gives a taste of Frankforter's style and critique:

> The bread of life is no simple substance like a stone. It has a complex recipe compounded of the awe Peter felt at the Transfiguration, the terror that accompanied Isaiah's vision, the anger of Job's protests, the psalmist's despairing plea for mercy, Paul's maddening paradoxes of grace, and Jesus' promise of a Spirit that brings a mysterious peace beyond understanding. Little wonder if God's loaf is an acquired taste (p. 31).

Marian Van Til
St. John's Episcopal Church
Youngstown, New York

BOOK REVIEW

Behold I Do a New Thing

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

C. Kirk Hadaway
Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001

"Churches are blamed for being oriented to the past. But they really are not. They are oriented to a past ideal, which they can never recreate" (p. 5). That's just one of the provocative statements made by Kirk Hadaway in his new book on congregational transformation. Hadaway has a way of challenging our concepts about congregational renewal. "I hope you do not find this book particularly enjoyable or agreeable" (p. xi), he writes in the preface. I hate to disappoint him, but I did find it enjoyable. His writing is clear and direct; his ideas made me think.

Hadaway, minister for research and evaluation at the United Church of Christ's Office of General Ministries, starts by posing the conundrum, "To change or stay the same?" In the chapter so titled he says, "In North America there are more than enough good social clubs, but not nearly enough good churches" (p. 8). He then goes on to say that a good church is one that changes people. This idea of changing people drives the book. It leads into the second chapter, "Visions, Vows and Purpose," which asks, "What is a church?" and "Why is our church here?" (p. 18).

Hadaway presents a number of congregational typologies, including club or clan, charismatic leader and followers, company or corporation, and (his highest level and what he feels each congregation should aspire to) the incarnational community. An incarnational community is

one that involves "giving up control and remembering why churches exist" (p. 65).

He offers what he calls a dynamic model, as well as a description, of what it means to provide leadership for transformation. There are also thoughts on sermons ("words for liberation"), a discussion of transforming worship ("it should always have integrity"), and views on formation and transformation in a community of faith.

Hadaway ends with "an optimistic orientation" that proclaims, "an incarnational community is fully alive and living things grow" (p. 133). Becoming fully alive and growing, Hadaway maintains, will lead the church out of its obsession with a "past ideal" and into the real work of changing people. That would be both enjoyable and agreeable.

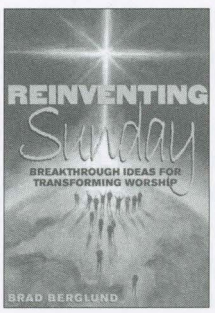
J. Brent Bill
Indianapolis Center for Congregations
Indianapolis, Indiana

BOOK REVIEW

Reinventing Sunday

BREAKTHROUGH IDEAS FOR TRANSFORMING WORSHIP

Brad Berglund
Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 2001



This new entry on the expanding shelf of books on worship seeks to provide inspiration and practical resources for those who regularly lead worship. Drawing on a wide range of traditions and practices, author Berglund hopes to support readers "in breathing life into your weekly ritual" (p. xvii).

He brings seven assumptions to the subject at hand (pp. xvii-xviii):

1. Worship should be offered to God as worship, not as evangelism or Christian education.
2. Worship is what worshipers do for God.
3. Worship leaders are not performers but prompters of those in the pew.
4. Worship can transform our lives and make us more faithful.
5. Worship should activate our whole self, including our bodies.
6. God-centered worship expands our souls.
7. Worship is a weekly mini-pilgrimage, an adventure into the unknown.

Robert Webber's emphasis on the fourfold movement of worship (gathering of the people, service of the Word, responding in gratitude, going out to serve) gives Berglund's handbook its structure, augmented by prelude and postlude.

Each section expands on one of the assumptions and offers practical suggestions for worshipers and worship leaders alike. Berglund's years of experience as a pastor and worship leader, supported by an undergraduate degree in music and training for spiritual direction, contribute depth and breadth to his understanding. He addresses the stresses and storms surrounding worship today.

In one of the most valuable portions of the book, "The Modulating Church," the author tackles the challenges of bringing a key change in worship to the congregation. His well-considered suggestions correct some of the market-mentality aberrations that afflict churches today. "Is the motto of the church 'The customer is always right'? Worshipers are not clients. Churches are in the business of creating a new heaven and a new earth, not satisfying shareholders" (p. 91).

For a brief but current and comprehensive guide for those leading worship, one would be hard put to find anything more accessible and usable than this book. It has, in this reviewer's mind, only a couple of relatively minor flaws. An index would add to its usefulness. On page 8, the author employs a highly dubious etymology for the word *innovate*. To relate it to *ovary/ovum*—and therefore to fertility and birth—rather than to *novum* is a bit of a stretch.

Rev. Joseph I. Mortensen
American Baptist Churches of Michigan
Midland, Michigan

BOOK REVIEW

Transforming Regional Bodies

Roy M. Oswald and Claire S. Burkat
Boonsboro, Md.: Life Structure Resources, 2001

Few leaders of the church today have worked with as many dioceses, districts, presbyteries, and synods in all kinds of denominations as Roy Oswald and Claire Burkat have. The enduring question they have brought to that work is this: How can such regional bodies support creative growth in their congregations? In this book Oswald and Burkat share what they have learned. Their words are worth reading and pondering.

These authors go where no one has answers; when they get there, they work with people to bring out the experience of church leaders working on difficult problems. The answers they find have the feel of genuine grassroots wisdom. When you open this book, prepare for a feast of that wisdom, gathered for you by two of the giants of congregational development.

"Judicatories" are those regional entities each denomination has developed according to its own polity—they are the expressions that link congregations to each other, provide help when needed, and undergird the individual congregation with support and services. I have found that healthy judicatories can do much to generate healthy congregations. Oswald and Burkat have worked with dozens of church executives, bishops, and superintendents to learn how to help judicatories transform themselves into healthier models.

Both authors are Lutheran from their boots up, and proud of it, but they genuinely love and appreciate the richness of other religious traditions. In this book you will breathe that appreciation as they share with you the wonder and wisdom they have discovered in many of our church bodies—where dedicated people of various traditions work to support and develop strong, healthy, faith-filled congregations.

Rev. Loren B. Mead
President Emeritus
The Alban Institute

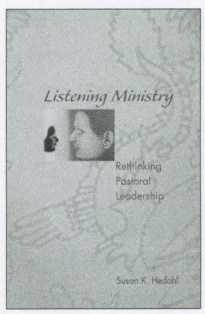
To order this book, call 1-800-723-0625 or send an e-mail to BoyerMKB@aol.com.

BOOK REVIEW

Listening Ministry

RETHINKING PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Susan K. Hedahl
Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001



When people leave a church in anger, a common complaint is the bitter lament, "I wasn't heard." As any church leader can tell you today, there are those who confuse "hearing" with agreeing to or complying with what is said. Even so, such incidents remind us of the critical importance of listening.

Susan K. Hedahl, homiletics professor at Lutheran Theological Seminary, has been struck by "the critical role of listening . . . in all aspects of pastoral leadership and ministry" (p.1), not just in counseling. The minister is in a prime position to listen to others, God, and the world.

Yet there are many challenges. For one, good listening is hard and even costly. For another, some pastors feel it incumbent on them primarily to proclaim, preach, and teach. And for another, surprisingly little attention is paid to training ministers for in-depth listening in all aspects of ministry. Hedahl is concerned that while listening is emphasized in pastoral care and counseling training, it is overlooked "in biblical studies, historical studies, doctrinal studies, and administrative training" (p. 95). Obviously, one book cannot redress such a huge gap. But Hedahl and others at her seminary have begun to train prospective ministers in a broader understanding of listening.

I especially appreciated the way this approach reflects biblical and theological themes. There is an intriguing chapter on listening in the Scriptures. Listening is not just about therapy or civility or being nice. Rather, listening is crucial because Christians find the Word sacred. In the Biblical tradition, refusing to listen is death. Sinfulness has to do with refusal or inability to listen to God or one another.

Hedahl also considers recent theological examples. She sees feminist attention to gender issues and the shift from patriarchal paradigms as key to deepened understanding of the importance and priority of listening.

She also surveyed a dozen classic writers in pastoral theology (including Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Seward Hiltner, Howard Clinebell, Wayne Oates, and Thomas Oden) and found that while about half mention listening (and fewer define it), only one pays serious attention to the actual skills involved. Her fascinating survey shows how theologizing about listening has changed in the last century.

Hedahl is not just talking therapy, as we see in her discussion of listening in the contemplative tradition. She reflects as well on corporate discernment. Lest we be confused, she shows that faithful listening is not neutral but pays particular attention to those who are overlooked, misunderstood, or oppressed. Listening is a matter of justice.

While I am not yet prepared to make listening my primary metaphor for ministry, I was sufficiently challenged by this concept to begin thinking about listening with much more breadth and depth. Hedahl launches us in a promising and important direction.

Rev. Dr. Arthur Paul Boers
Author, *Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior*
Waterloo, Ontario

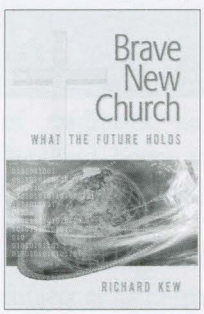
BOOK REVIEW

Brave New Church

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Richard Kew
Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse Publishing, 2001

In *Brave New Church*, Episcopal priest Richard Kew presents 10 trends that he believes will significantly affect Christian lives and ministries during the next 10 to 20 years. Some of them—globalization and the Internet, changing demographics and an aging population, new moral dilemmas, and the rising popularity of spirituality—cut across societal institutions. Others pertain more specifically to churches: radical ecclesial reconfiguration, massive theological rethinking, fiscal challenges, and mission-driven ministries. Devoting a full chapter to each trend, Kew invites readers to carefully consider his predictions and develop strategic responses.



Most exciting are those trends that present positive challenges for churches. The Internet, for example, can support global mission, Christian education, pastoral care, and fellowship. An aging population may encourage churches to develop a "Christian elder corps," where skills, resources, and energies can be used in a meaningful way. The upsurge of popular interest in spirituality could give parishes a chance to use retreats, spiritual disciplines, prayer, and other tools for reaching those spiritual travelers who "want to put flesh on the bones of believing."

Some trends appear more ominous, both for churches and society: the financial shortfalls that will result from churches relying disproportionately on the generosity of elderly members; the moral dilemmas that will be posed by advances in biotechnology, cloning, and cybernetic implants; and the materialistic and secularizing "McWorld" consciousness that could degrade communal structures and our planetary environment.

Kew views certain trends through the lens of his orthodox Anglicanism. In his chapter on theological rethinking, he despairs over mainline teaching institutions. Here, "anthropology has replaced theology, 'class action' legalism has replaced the grace of the gospel, and positive hermeneutics has been replaced by one of suspicion and even total alienation from the biblical text." The author believes that "this is having a cumulatively deleterious effect on the churches and congregations that are led by clergy formed in this tradition" (p. 130). Because Kew doesn't really substantiate such assertions, one is left wondering which mainline teaching institutions are responsible for the trends he describes. And even if they exist, do they warrant the conclusion that their effect on clergy and congregations is "deleterious?" If so, how?

Similar claims pepper *Brave New Church*. Congregations seeking to discern God's will as they envision possible and probable futures will find the chapter study questions thought provoking. But readers should understand that Kew sometimes predicts and explains from a skewed perspective.

Claudia Greer
St. John's Episcopal Church
Chevy Chase, Maryland

BOOK REVIEW

Bridging the Generations

Katie Funk Wiebe
Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001

By the year 2030 there will be about 70 million older persons in the United States. Worldwide, the proportion of people age 65 and older has been steadily increasing; this poses significant challenges to health care and social services systems, but also presents significant opportunities for churches.

Katie Wiebe, herself an elder (a term she employs fruitfully throughout this book to refer to all older persons), argues that the time has come for church communities to bridge the generations in purposeful and meaningful ways. Drawing from the rich resources of her Anabaptist heritage, the book is a compendium of carefully crafted arguments, well-chosen historical and contemporary anecdotes, thought-provoking questions for discussion and debate, and references to a large and growing literature about this topic. Elders have many experiences to share with the young and Wiebe suggests concrete ways in which this can occur with frequency, passion, and spiritual impact. She makes a compelling case for rethinking our traditional way of organizing church life by age cohorts and instead proposes grouping people in ways that heighten interchanges across the generations.

This is an excellent book for individual churches, groups of caregivers, and even social organizations to read, debate, and implement in whole or in part.

Rev. Dr. Dennis W. Cheek
New Beginnings Christian Fellowship
Mansfield, Massachusetts

Learn More

RESOURCES ON **SEASONS OF MINISTRY** FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCE GUIDE

❖ Antal, James M. **Considering a New Call: Ethical and Spiritual Challenges for Clergy.** Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2000. Clergy face many challenges when contemplating a move, including how even considering a new call changes the relationship with the current congregation. This book offers much help in working through the ambiguities of change.

❖ Baab, Lynne M. **Embracing Midlife: Congregations as Support Systems.** Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1999. Midlife can be a time of renewal and growth, and the congregation can help. This book tells how.

❖ Bullock, A. Richard, and Richard J. Bruesehoff. **Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning.** Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2000. This book examines the importance of sabbatical leaves for both clergy and congregation and offers advice on planning and implementing them.

❖ Clayton, Paul C. **Letters to Lee: Mentoring the New Minister.** Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1999. This wise series of letters from an experienced pastor to a young minister provide advice on the many challenges of congregational leadership.

❖ Dittes, James E. **Re-Calling Ministry.** St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999. This book explores the hard work of ordained ministry—the daily and decisive grief it brings forth—finding that what makes it so hard is what makes it so necessary. "Ministry," Dittes says, "is the art of making space for others to grow."

❖ Guenther, Margaret. **Toward Holy Ground: Spiritual Directions for the Second Half of Life.** Boston: Cowley Publications, 1995. This book explores the practices that can sustain a mature faith for those who "are finally grown up" and "know they are mortal," including intercessory prayer, crafting a rule of life, and preparing for and helping others achieve a "good death."

❖ Hightower, James E., and W. Craig Gilliam. **A Time for Change? Revisioning Your Call.** Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2000. A book to help those who are considering leaving professional ministry in the institutional church examine their call and decide on a future in a healthy and empowering way.

❖ Kaizer, Garrett. **A Dresser of Sycamore Trees: The Finding of a Ministry.** Boston: David R. Godine, 1991. This well-written account of a teacher's bivocational position as a lay vicar in a small Vermont town provides insights into the meaning of ministry and finding one's vocation.

❖ Lischer, Richard. **Open Secrets: A Spiritual Journey through a Country Church.** New York: Doubleday, 2001. This wonderfully written memoir of the author's first call to a small church in southern Illinois is a candid and compassionate look at life in a community of faith.

❖ Peterson, Eugene H. **Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness.** Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992. Using the story of Jonah to frame the struggles of a pastoral vocation, Peterson tells his story and explores the challenges of keeping faith and ministry aligned.

www.congregationalresources.org

Following a Beloved Pastor

Q **I recently accepted a call to serve a congregation that is losing its much-loved minister of many years. How should I approach my new pastorate in the wake of this pastor?**

A There are several things that you can consider doing as you begin your new ministry:

1. Help the church achieve closure. I suggest that you get acquainted with the previous pastor and work out a friendly relationship that can demonstrate or serve as a model of the pastor's new role as a friend of the church. Be sure that information about the previous pastor is made public so that the congregants will know where the pastor now lives, what the pastor is now doing, and how they can send greetings and best wishes for that new endeavor, whatever it may be.

2. Help the congregation understand its new relationship with the former pastor. You may want to work with a pastor-parish relations committee or some other group that can help the congregation understand how its relationship with the previous pastor has changed. That new relationship will include ongoing friendship and support, but this person is no longer the pastor! Congregations usually need to be educated about why it is not healthy for them to continue to expect their previous pastor to perform pastoral responsibilities or duties.

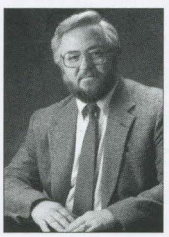
Make sure the members understand that not letting go of its bonds with the previous pastor will mean sacrificing opportunities to bond with the new pastor. This important work of educating the congregation needs to be done not by you, but by the pastor-parish relations committee. If you do that work yourself, it may sound like a self-serving interest.

3. Make sure that the previous pastor has a similar understanding about the new relationship. If your conversations with the previous pastor—or his or her actions—indicate that there could be an unhealthy ongoing relationship with the congregation, then I recommend that you take action. Bring into the conversation a third party, perhaps an appropriate denominational official, who can hold the previous pastor to ethical and collegial standards related to ongoing involvement with the church. If this type of intervention is needed, make sure to initiate it as soon as the previous pastor's actions indicate that there may be a problem.

4. Be intentional about defining who you are and how you intend to engage in ministry with this congregation. Build on the stated goals and priorities of the church as communicated to you by the search/call committee. And be clear about how you plan to help the congregation carry out the strategies needed to reach those goals and implement those priorities.

5. Be patient. Don't expect the congregation to break its old patterns and ways of doing things—how it worked with the previous pastor—until you have had time to establish new patterns and ways of doing things.

The key to your new congregation's successful transition from its relationship with its former pastor to your ministry will be clarity: on new relationships, on your own definition of who you are and how you will do ministry, and on how you will fulfill the negotiated goals and priorities of ministry with this new congregation.



Rev. Terry Foland has been a senior consultant for the Alban Institute since 1992. He is an experienced trainer and administrator who advises congregations and religious organizations in the areas of conflict management, clergy transition, and congregational revitalization. Prior to joining Alban, he served as an area minister for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Do you have a question you would like us to answer in this column?

Please send e-mail inquiries to Lisa Kinney at lkinney@alban.org.

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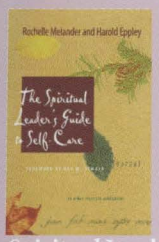

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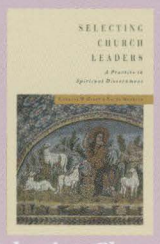

Selecting Church Leaders
A Practice in Spiritual Discernment
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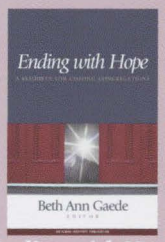

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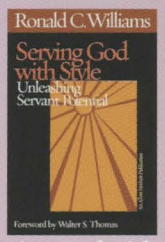

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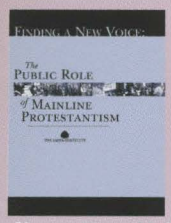

Finding a New Voice
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David Devlin-Foltz, Editor
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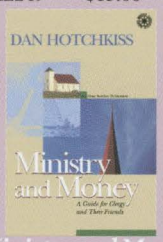

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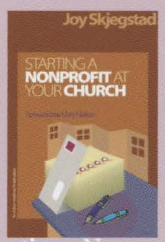

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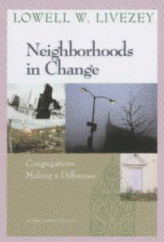

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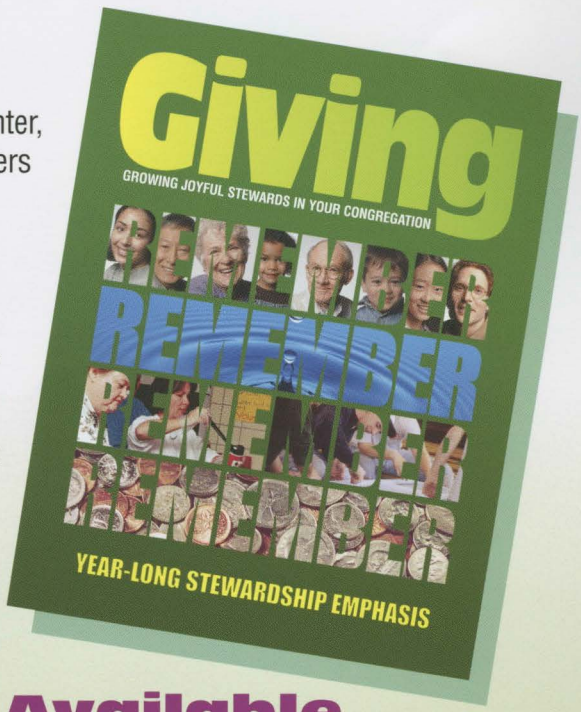

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