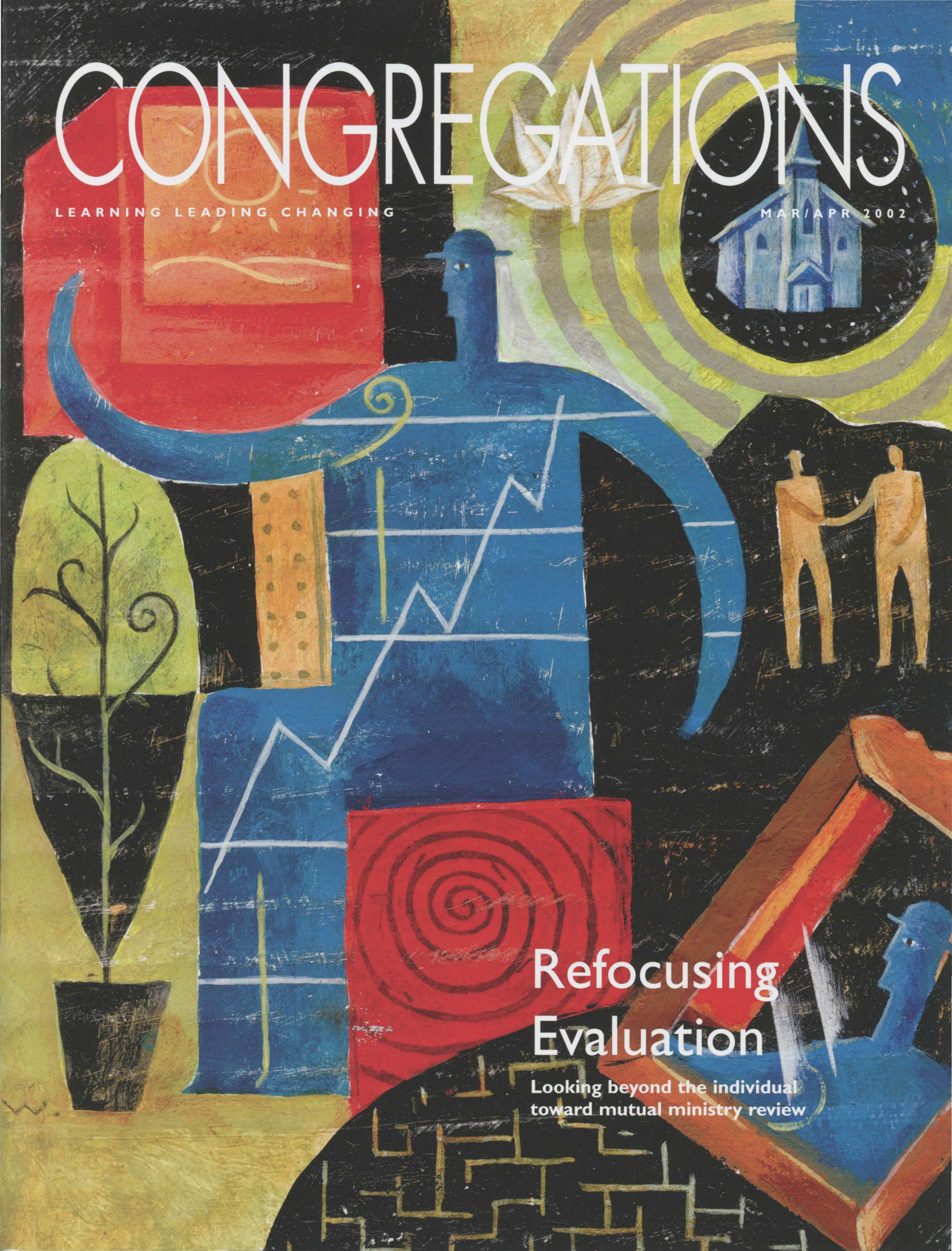
CONGREGATIONS

LEARNING LEADING CHANGING

MAR/APR 2002



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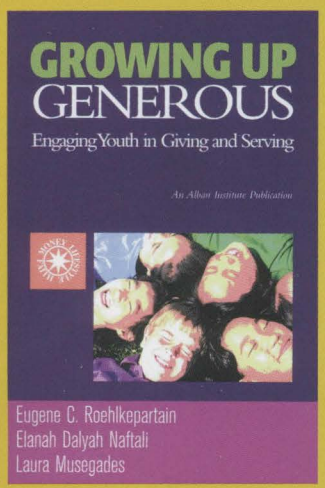

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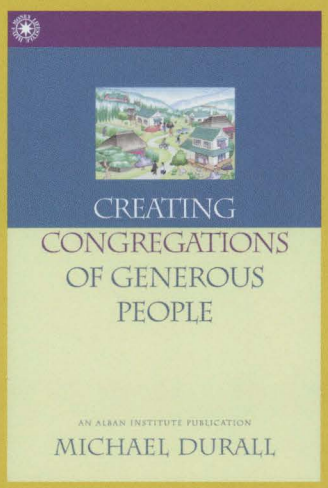

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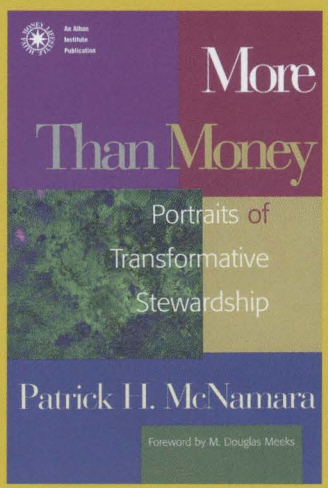

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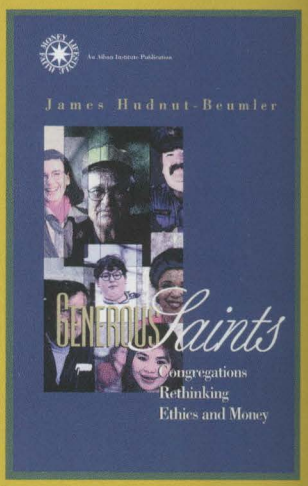

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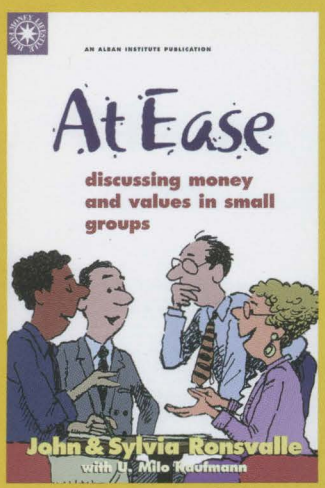

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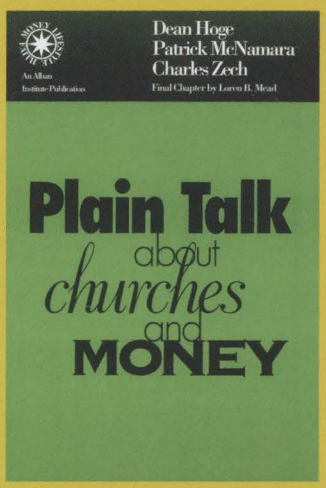

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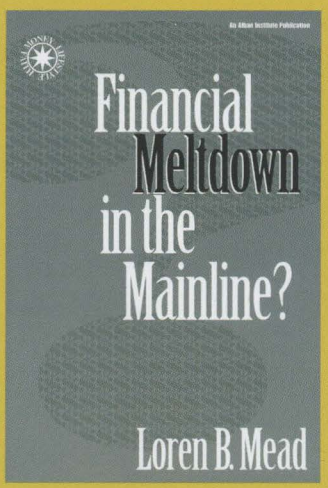

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Refocusing Evaluation

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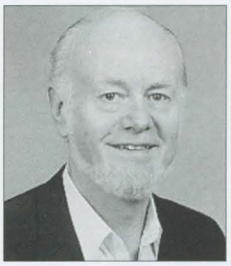
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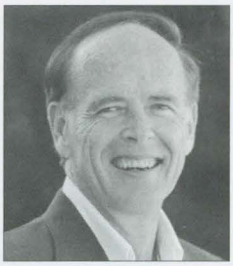
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Rev. John Janka is an ordained United Methodist pastor and the director of consulting at the Alban Institute. Prior to joining Alban in 2000, he was employed as a member of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference staff, responsible for resourcing congregations, and as district superintendent, responsible for deploying and supervising clergy. Rev. Janka's experience includes designing and implementing pilot training models for clergy and congregations. He also assisted congregations in redevelopment, advocated for new roles for laity in ministry, and developed resources for clergy and congregations in times of transition.

Rev. Roy Oswald is an Alban Institute senior consultant who has been consulting with congregations and judicatories for nearly 30 years. He has led hundreds of conferences and training events on topics such as new member assimilation, clergy and ministry assessment, spiritual development, self-care, and transition skills. Rev. Oswald is the author of many articles and books, as well as several videos. His latest video, *Why You Should Develop a Pastor-Parish Relations Committee,* was recently released by the Alban Institute. Rev. Oswald also is the author of *Transforming Regional Bodies* (Life Structure Resources, 2001).

Rev. Dr. Bonnie Perry is the rector of All Saints' Episcopal Church on the north side of Chicago. She is a graduate of Union Theological Seminary and she has a D.Min. in congregational development from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. In her spare time Dr. Perry teaches sea kayaking.

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Dr. Tom Sine is a consultant in futures research and planning for Christian organizations. He works together with his wife, **Christine**, to help organizations evaluate how their world, nation, and communities are changing so they can adapt to the challenges of the 21st century. The Sines speak widely at colleges, churches, and missions conferences and lead creativity seminars for a variety of Christian groups in the United States and abroad. Dr. Sine is also an adjunct professor for Fuller Theological Seminary in Seattle. He and his wife have just published *Living on Purpose: Finding God's Best for Your Life* (Baker, 2002).

Hillary Wicai is a freelance writer and television reporter in St. Louis, Missouri. She has been reporting and writing about religion since 1994, when she became one of the few religion reporters in the country to work in local television news. Ms. Wicai currently works for KMOV-TV in St. Louis.

CONGREGATIONS
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Evaluation = Opportunity?

Mention the word "evaluation" and most people will wince, associating it with some unpleasant experience of the past or some present anxiety about one's work situation. Many people have experienced evaluation—particularly performance evaluation—as an unfair or seemingly arbitrary assessment of one's worth measured against fuzzy or unknown criteria. When this dynamic enters the congregational setting it is exacerbated, primarily because congregational leaders tend to personalize their work to a degree not usually found in the secular world. When one is "called" to service, it is only natural that this should occur.

Here at the Alban Institute we have noticed that many people who contact us struggle with doing evaluation. Unfortunately, when someone calls our consulting or research departments concerning this topic it is often too late to help them evaluate effectively because they already have a problem: the issue of evaluation has been raised only because of perceived shortcomings or controversy about the pastor's leadership. This is not the time to bring it up.

We decided to devote an entire issue of CONGREGATIONS to evaluation because we wanted to provide congregational leaders with a framework for thinking about it and some tools to adapt to their own situations. There is no single right way to do evaluation, and the articles reflect this. As several of the writers in this issue indicate, evaluation is fundamentally a neutral process whose prime focus should be the institution, not the individual. Alban Institute director of consulting John Janka says that evaluation, as a vehicle for mutual reflection between the congregation and the clergy, is a powerful tool for growth and change ("A Pathway to Learning," page 19). Hillary Wicai, in her interviews with a number of researchers, consultants, and congregational leaders, explores what the goals of evaluation should be and how evaluation can be done better (page 4). And Alban Institute senior consultant Roy Oswald describes three ways pastors can get feedback on their ministry (page 24).

From a practical standpoint on performance evaluations, pastor Bonnie A. Perry describes using an outside facilitator for her annual evaluation (page 8) and pastor Donna Schaper describes the process of 360-degree assessment (page 12). But not only performance evaluation is addressed: consultants Tom and Christine Sine describe how to do an audit of lay involvement in your congregation (page 14).

I'm excited about this issue because it is responding to a direct need expressed by so many people who have contacted the Alban Institute for help. I hope it provides you with some new ways to think about evaluation as well as some fresh ideas on how to implement it.

Blessings in your work,

Lisa

Lisa Kinney
lkinney@alban.org

Beyond the Church Parking Lot

FINDING BETTER WAYS TO EVALUATE CLERGY

Hillary Wicai

How many churches regularly evaluate their ministers? The answer, according to those who know churches, is "*all* of them."

"There's an awful lot of evaluation that goes on in parking lots," said Jackson Carroll, Williams professor emeritus of religion and society at Duke Divinity School. "It's informal and can be devastating," he added.

"Roast preacher for lunch—that's standard Sunday fare for many folks," said the Rev. Lawrence Wohlrabe, synod minister for the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

A better question might be: How many churches are engaged in a thoughtful, formal, faithful, and fair feedback process with their ministers? That answer is more difficult to tease out.

Research on Pastoral Leadership

Carroll offers the beginning of an answer. He is directing a major four-year project on pastoral leadership that will result in a number of publications over the coming months. *Pulpit & Pew: Research on Pastoral Leadership* was funded by the Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment (see www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu). Carroll's goal was to examine the current state of ordained ministry and to analyze what constitutes good ministry. The project included a survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The statistically random sample of 900 clergy cuts across all denominations and faith groups (see box on page 6).

Carroll noted that congregation size, combined with the minister's salary level, is a good predictor of whether regular evaluation is performed. "The larger the salary and the larger the congregation, the more likely it is to follow more managerial and professional norms," he said. "[I]n the late 1960s . . . mainline Protestant denominations began using organizational development tools and techniques that included performance evaluations." He explained the trend as part of a push to view ministers in professional terms.

But the survey did not measure the quality of the evaluation. It's impossible to know how many churches are engaged in the sort of formal, fair, and positive process that Carroll, Wohlrabe, and other advisors encourage.

"Evaluation will take place one way or another," Wohlrabe pointed out. "Do you want to help shape how it happens? It's better to get it out in the open and work with it."

But that's easier said than done. The challenges are many to setting up an evaluation process that's a positive experience for both minister and congregational lay leaders.

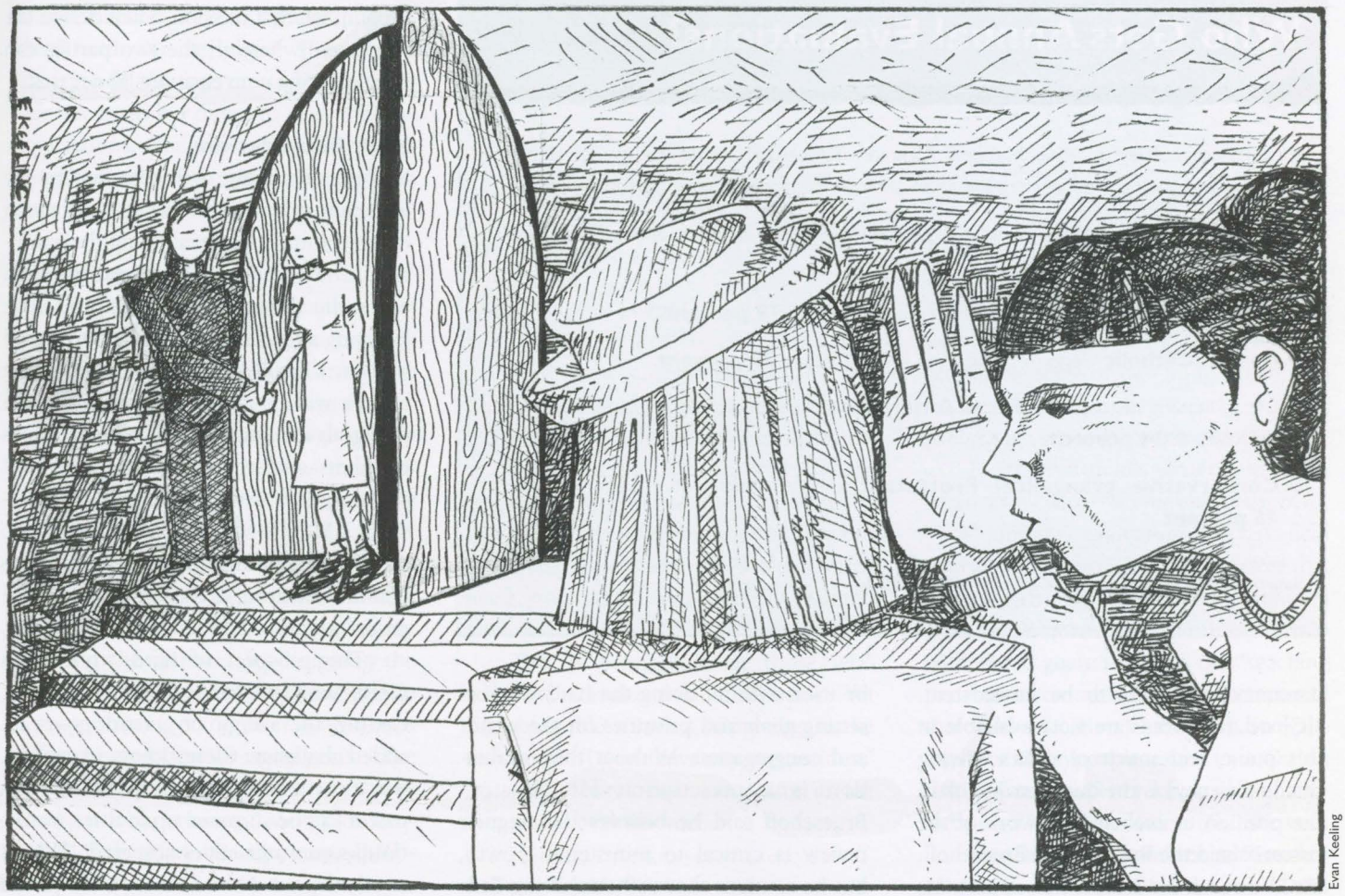
As part of a doctor of ministry project, Wohlrabe conducted a survey of almost 300 ELCA clergy and lay leaders in Minnesota in 1998–99. According to his findings, both groups identified "'how formal evaluation of the minister takes place' as one of the personnel issues that most concerned them."

Avoiding Negative Outcomes

"Ministerial evaluation is . . . a critical area of church life with which congregations have struggled," said Julieanne Hallman, director of field education and associate professor of supervised ministry at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. Hallman said she believes clergy and communities, because of their individual histories, often bring along old baggage, associating painful memories and negative emotions with the word evaluation.

"I have confessed to having a lot of debris about evaluation in my own psychic attic," she said. "But I've discovered that painful memories are healed and injured relationships reconciled as we learn to engage in mutual evaluation with a different set of assumptions."

"Evaluation has a negative connota-



Evan Keeling

tion," said Suzanne Stier, who consults with synagogues, their congregations, and their rabbis. "You're looking over my shoulder to tell me if I've done a good job," she said. She advises her client congregations to think about the process as a performance review and not connect the review with contract or salary negotiations. Performance reviews are designed to be reflective times, not times for negotiation, she said.

Also to be considered is the hurdle presented by the relationship between clergy and congregation. "Pastors have a different relationship to the congregation than, say, an employee to a company or a teacher to a school," said Carroll, noting two venues where regular performance reviews are standard. "Pastors represent a sacred calling, and . . . people . . . feel reluctant to evaluate a pastor on that ground. Somehow they feel it's inappropriate."

"Congregations respect their ministers," Wohlrabe said. "Ministers represent God, and you don't go around evaluating God."

Now add the tricky issue of training. Sometimes lay leaders just don't feel up to the job. Stier said she often hears the comment, "I didn't go to seminary. Who am I to evaluate you?"

Congregations don't have departments of human resources. Laypeople may bring little experience to the process, and frequent turnover may occur in lay positions. If a new board president or personnel committee is elected every year, the discontinuity creates a lack of corporate memory.

Tools for Performance Review

"We've got to do a better job of documenting what we do both in terms of the procedures we choose to use and the results of the process," Wohlrabe said. He suggested that congregations develop their own parish personnel handbook.

The idea of a handbook brings to mind the lack of tools readily available to congregations. Guidelines published by

Who Gets Annual Evaluations?

In a recent survey by the National Opinion Research Center, clergy were asked, "Do you and your lay leaders engage in an annual evaluation of your performance?"

- Of the 900 survey respondents, **58 percent** said they have an annual performance evaluation.
- **Mainline Protestants** reported the highest rate at **79 percent**.
- **Roman Catholic** clergy reported the lowest rate at **32 percent**.
- Clergy serving historically **African American** congregations were slightly higher than Catholics at **34 percent**.
- **Conservative evangelical Protestant** clergy came out in the middle at **46 percent**.

Source: National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago.

denominations seem to be nonexistent. "[G]ood resources [are not] available at this point, and much of what's driving this [deficiency] is the question 'Who's in the position to evaluate the work of the pastor?'" said the Rev. Richard Bruesehoff, ELCA director for leadership support. He points out that the ELCA, the largest U.S. Lutheran denomination with more than 5 million members, does not have its own resources for clergy evaluations. "And this is the same conversation I have with my counterparts in half a dozen other mainline denominations," he added.

But sound reasons are put forth for decisions not to publish a "how to" sheet or a sample evaluation process. "Some materials I've seen are simply modified corporate surveys, and that doesn't always work for rural churches, like those in my synod," said Wohlrabe. "It has to speak in the language the people speak in."

Bruesehoff explained, "I resist the idea of putting together what many churches want—a one-page evaluation to be used without doing the hard work of setting goals and priorities for the pastor and congregation. Without that, evaluation is a prescription for disaster." Bruesehoff said he believes that regular review is critical to ministerial growth, but he cautions that without having definite criteria from which to evaluate, the process can become subjective rather than aimed at improving a congregation's ministry.

Bruesehoff suggested relying on peers or denominational staff for reviews. However, others believe that only the congregation to which a minister is accountable can offer the feedback needed.

"Lay leaders want quick answers," Wohlrabe said. He's reluctant to send prefabricated surveys to congregations. "I just think it becomes too easy for them not to do the hard work of identifying the work or ministry of the church," he explained. "I really think the way to develop materials is to sit down together, define the mission of the congregation, and then define the leadership needed to accomplish that mission. Then design the processes [whereby] the two parties can have ongoing conversations about that."

High Expectations

Without a clearly defined mission, lay leaders may make the mistake of looking only at numbers in evaluating their minister. Churches in areas hard hit by tough economic times obviously need to look beyond attendance, membership, and budget, Carroll said. "It's not likely the church will be growing. . . . [I]t may be doing an effective job of ministry to its members and the community but still showing decline in finances and membership. [Members] may not take into account that things have changed in the community around them—and then the pastor gets blamed."

The prospect of hard work often meets with resistance from both sides. Getting the clergy on board poses an added challenge. Clergy know, in general, that most congregations' expectations of a pastor can be summed up in three words: "Walks on water." Stier observed: "What I say is, the last one we knew who walked on water got crucified. . . . Congregations really need to understand that one person can't fulfill all the multiple roles they want filled."

The Rev. Jerry Handspicker, professor of pastoral theology emeritus at Andover Newton and moderator of Second Congregational Church in Bennington, Vermont, works with churches as a conflict-management consultant. He says that most of the churches he knows use a formal process for regular ministerial evaluations. Handspicker used his own congregation as an example of one that gets explicit about its mission. "After the attacks of September 11 our church cabinet met, and we agreed we needed to do things differently. We met

with our pastor and asked for leadership in social action and . . . [help in grappling] with our feelings." The cabinet offered to fill the gaps created as the minister refocused her duties to meet the new expectations. The new goals were published so that the entire congregation knew what to expect from the minister.

> Clergy know, in general, that most congregations' expectations of a pastor can be summed up in three words: "Walks on water."

Designing the Process

"The goals have to be made explicit, not just to the pastor but to the congregation as well," Handspicker emphasized. The pastor will then participate in an evaluation based on these goals, developed by the lay leaders as they refocus the ministry in response to needs articulated by members.

To help clergy understand that a congregation is not "out to get them" through an evaluation process, many advocate involving the minister in designing the process from the outset. It is possible to begin evaluating a minister who's been with a congregation for many years. "The only bad time to start it is when there's already trouble brewing," Wohlrabe cautioned. If there are already serious problems, then an evaluation can just be an excuse to fire a minister.

Stier helped create an evaluation process at Congregation B'Nai Jacob in Woodbridge, Connecticut, a congregation in which she served as president in the early 1990s. Having moved away, she wondered whether the congregation was still regularly evaluating the rabbi.

"I'm in my eighth year, and I've had one evaluation," said Rabbi Rick Eisenberg. While Eisenberg admitted he'd like more feedback from lay leadership, he resisted the idea of regular evaluations or performance reviews. "In practical terms in the real world, evaluations are very often negative and people come out of [the process] feeling wounded, unappreciated, and not helped," he explained. "The only way I could see it [happening] is if it's done in a careful and supportive and positive way." Eisenberg added that he'd like to see the process accompanied by plenty of dialogue and constructive discussion. "If they tell the rabbi that she needs growth in a particular area, the rabbi has to be able to say, 'Look, I'm not as capable in this area as I'd like to be; I need your help.' And [the lay leaders] have to be willing to follow through."

This is precisely what those who advocate evaluation propose. Yet Eisenberg doesn't see it happening in the real world. "I don't have any suggestions," he said. "There's just something in me that resists evaluations."

A Two-Track System

To foster ongoing positive feedback, many call for both a formal and an informal system that work in tandem. The formal evaluation would be conducted annually by lay leaders as they evaluate well-understood goals of the ministry. The informal communication could be handled by what United Methodists call the "pastor-parish relations committee." This group can meet with the pastor quarterly, if not more often. The conversations are less evaluative and more feedback-oriented.

When the whole process works, growth is tangible. "Evaluation . . . is about learning and becoming," Hallman said. "It is about hope, embracing possibilities that [lie] hidden in the present to improve ministerial leadership and to develop congregational life. This requires setting the stage by designing a plan with explicit assumptions, clearly defined goals, and agreed-upon procedures."

In the churches that help form Andover Newton theological students for parish ministry, evaluation is key. As field education director, Hallman oversees that process. The group that defines church goals and how the student minister fits in with those goals is called the "teaching parish site committee." Hallman reported that field-education churches have waiting lists of laypeople eager to serve on that committee. "They know it's a chance to be on a reflective committee," she said.

That student-committee relationship can serve as a model for the rest of the congregation. "The beauty is when you see the pastor begin to covet this relationship that the student has with the teaching committee," Hallman said. "The pastor then has the opportunity to build [a] . . . covenant relationship that opens the door through trust-building to engage in mutual evaluation.

"Just as the teaching parish site committee opens doors for seminarians to become gifted leaders in the church," Hallman concluded, "churches and clergy can open doors to deeper, more meaningful relationships through practicing evaluation based on the foundations of our faith heritage. Such practice promises to strengthen the church's ministry for our mission in the world." ❁

Dean Gardei

Stepping Off the High Dive

HOW USING A FACILITATOR IMPROVES THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Bonnie A. Perry

Performance evaluations are an essential part of our seasonal life at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Chicago. This was not always so. Nine years ago, when I began my tenure as priest-in-charge, the church had $23,000 in pledge income, $78,000 in debt, and 30 people at an average Sunday morning service. *Existence* was the name of the game, and evaluation sounded as exotic as an island in the South Pacific. When the bishop extended my appointment and made me congregational development vicar, the covenant I entered into with the congregation and diocese stressed the importance of regular evaluations to ensure that all parties were on board with the redeveloping ministry and emerging vision.

An Olympian Evaluation

I invited the canon to the ordinary (the bishop's assistant) to lead my first performance evaluation. I was unclear what process he would use—and when I inquired, he harrumphed and said, "Don't worry about it—it'll be fine." When he arrived at the vestry meeting, he asked me to leave the room and then pulled out a copy of my job description, calling out the categories one at a time. Each vestry member was invited to rate my performance from 1 (bad) to 6 (excellent). The bishop's assistant called out, "Preaching." Each vestry member took time to consider my sermons, then wrote the number on a sheet of paper. Around the table, people lifted up scores—5.0, 5.5, 4.5, 4.0, and so on.

When vestry members recounted the meeting afterward, I felt sad not to have witnessed this Greg Louganis approach to performance evaluation. Emerging 30 minutes after the process began, the bishop's assistant told me, "They like you—keep it up." After this experience, vestry members took delight in reenacting their favorite moments of this "high-dive" evaluation. Overall, they agreed with the

bishop's assistant and said I was doing well, but . . . "Perhaps you could work on your entry into the water to reduce the splash." One member remarked, "You consistently received low marks from the 'Russian judge,' but that was to be expected." After this entertaining but unhelpful process, I decided to read up on the subject and design a better format.

The Value of a Consultant

For the past eight years the vestry, a consultant, and I have met at least yearly to reflect on my ministry and leadership in the congregation, the community, and the larger church. The evaluation system we use is based on *The Performance Evaluation Kit,* by Charles R. Wilson (Arvada, Colo.: Jethro Publications, 1978). Wilson views performance evaluations as an opportunity for individuals to articulate what they are doing well, to receive feedback from others familiar with their ministry, and for the group to determine what is needed to assist continued professional growth and development.

Wilson underlines the importance of inviting a consultant or process assistant to help conduct the evaluation. Ideally the consultant should be familiar with the ministry, yet outside the immediate circle of evaluation; someone respected and trusted by all participants; one able to pay attention to the process and keep it on target.

Wilson maintains that performance evaluations should not be used as compensation reviews, or to discipline an ineffective employee. Rather, they are occasions for self-reflection and guided conversation, directed toward helping the individual to enhance his or her professional performance.

Over the years, for better or worse, our evaluation process has evolved from Wilson's practices. We once followed his blueprint verbatim; now we use a hybrid approach. Some facets, however, have not changed.

From my perspective, an outside consultant is essential. Nothing is more awkward and difficult than a pastor's presiding over his or her own evaluation—one person is playing too many roles. It is equally awkward for the wardens (top vestry officers) to lead the process. I have found that bringing in a clergy colleague whom I trust enables me, the wardens, and the vestry members to focus solely on the evaluation. With such a consultant, all participants are relieved of having to monitor the dynamics at work when a vestry or other governing body evaluates the priest or pastor who is simultaneously an employee, a spiritual leader, and a close associate.

Finding the Ideal Facilitator

In eight years we have used two facilitators. One was a pastor at a neighboring United Church of Christ congregation, the Rev. Dr. Sharon Thornton, and the other, our current consultant, is the Very Rev. Linda Packard, rector of a nearby Episcopal parish. Each is someone with whom I have a close collegial relationship. I seek out people whom I trust, so that I will feel as comfortable as possible. Performance evaluations are anxiety-provoking. Anything I can do to decrease my stress level increases the effectiveness of the process. If I believe that a colleague respects my work and has my best interests in mind, I am more likely to hear and integrate compliments and less likely to bristle at criticisms.

Also integral to our approach is the conviction that this is a clergy self-evaluation. Neither wardens nor vestry members set the tone for the evaluation. I write a detailed reflection on the year's events, highlighting what I perceive to be of particular importance. In some years I may focus more on our outreach ministries; in others on our staff, our stewardship, or our growth patterns. Or I may emphasize my preaching, administration, or pastoral care. Each year is slightly different, depending upon happenings in the church and aspects of ministry that have grabbed my interest. For the past three years, my self-evaluation has included questions inviting the vestry to consider what I regard as pressing issues for the coming year. Ideally the vestry members, the wardens, and the facilitator receive my self-evaluation several days before the meeting and thus have time to read it closely and to formulate comments or questions.

Three weeks before the evaluation, a notice appears in the Sunday bulletin and the church newsletter announcing the upcoming evaluation and inviting any who have thoughts about my preaching, pastoral care, and overall congregational leadership to submit their reflections in writing to either of the wardens. The wardens make the same announcement at worship services several weeks in advance of the evaluation and invite those interested to attend. This openness makes the evaluation process as inclusive as possible.

Key Elements of the Process

During a typical evaluation session Linda will invite me to lead the group through my self-evaluation, asking me to elaborate on key points and encouraging me to talk about areas where I have difficulties. She solicits comments from the wardens, then from the vestry members and others present. This conversation usually leads us into a more encompassing consideration of our congregation's mission and possible goals for the coming year. At the end of two hours Linda sums up the discussion and reiterates steps that the vestry and I should take to ensure that

I cannot overemphasize the point that nothing is more powerful than a respected outsider lobbying for constructive change.

my ministry continues to grow.

One key aspect of the process: I spend an hour or more with the facilitator before the vestry meeting. This is an invaluable step, one whose omission—experience has shown—can derail the entire venture. At this pre-evaluation meeting, the facilitator and I go over my self-evaluation. I offer my perspective on current vestry dynamics, voice my fears, and most important, discuss the tangible changes I hope will result from the evaluation.

Before my first facilitated review I talked to Sharon about how hard it was to do parish ministry without a photocopier on site. I was wasting countless hours at "Kinko's: Your Home Office" and rapidly burning out. What I wanted more than anything was a functioning copier at the church. Somehow, during the myriad of vestry meetings, finance meetings, and budget-planning sessions, I had never articulated my desperate need to stop spending Saturday nights at the printer's. At the end of the evaluation, with the help of Sharon's thoughtful questions and skilled guidance, it was wildly apparent to all present that what we needed to further our ministry was an on-site copier.

The next year I told Sharon that I needed some secretarial help. The year after that, Linda made sure that our secretary's hours were increased. The next year I hoped for some time during the week to finish writing my doctor of ministry thesis. And the following year, by the end of the evening everyone agreed that a four-month sabbatical would be immensely beneficial for both the congregation and me. Last year the vestry agreed to hire an additional priest. I cannot overemphasize the point that nothing is more powerful than a respected outsider lobbying for constructive change.

In the case of the sabbatical Linda graciously pointed out how much had happened in my eight years of ministry. She said she was exhausted just reading about all the accomplishments; then she wondered aloud whether some time away might be a helpful way of rewarding me as well as a way for the congregation to see how well they could cope without me. She gazed in my direction and remarked, "She's not going to be here forever." As looks of panic began to appear around the table, Linda added, "Of course, if she's had a time to rest and recharge, she's probably much more likely to stay." Looking at me, she inquired, "Does that sound accurate?" What could I say? I just lowered my eyes and said, "Wow, that would be great—four months to read and think—wow." Then Linda said to the vestry, "Four months would really give you all a chance to see what you can do with Bridget [our associate rector] and without Bonnie." One by one, to my delight, the vestry members rose to the challenge and nodded in agreement.

Defeating Defensiveness

Working with a trusted consultant has also enabled me to hear criticisms without becoming too defensive. Early in my tenure vestry members gently invited me to examine my tendency, in my passion and excitement, to blow past people who were less than enthusiastic about a new plan or direction I was advocating. As a

vestry member began to offer this observation (or for that matter, any observation that I found threatening), I automatically shot back with my perspective and the rationale for my actions. Rather than sitting back, listening, and absorbing the content and the context from which the person spoke, I immediately mounted a defense of how hard I was working.

The morning after this evaluation, Sharon tactfully pointed out my habit of responding and defending before I'd really listened. To which I immediately sputtered, "Yes, but they didn't know the whole story."

"Bonnie, the story doesn't matter—what matters is your ability to hear people. They want to know that you're listening—they want to know that their opinion matters."

"Well, of course it matters—why else would I work so hard? I love this place."

"They all know how hard you work. They want to know that you know how hard they work and how much they love this place."

"Oh—you mean they don't want to hear more about why I do what I do—they want to know that I'm listening to them?"

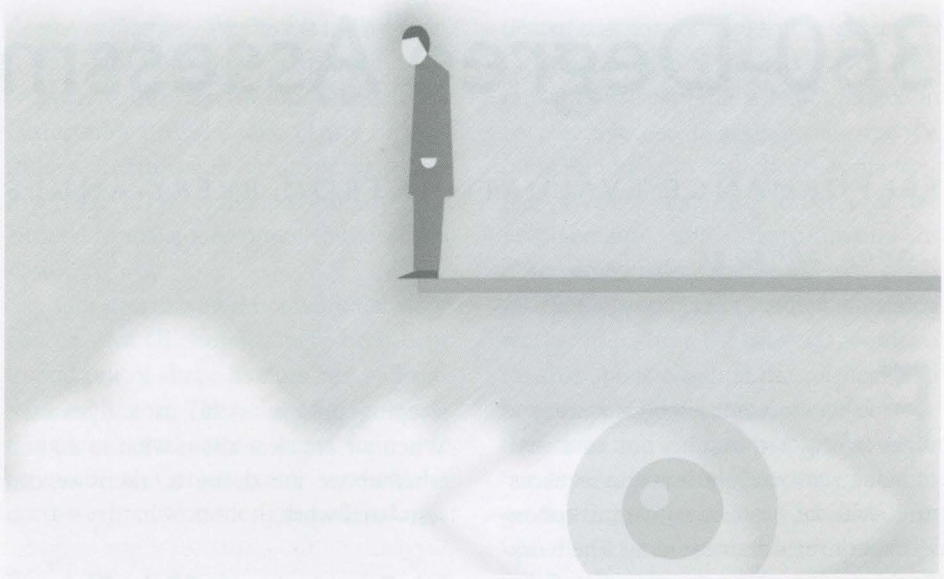
Nodding, Sharon said, "It not what they're saying that's really important—what's important is that they know that you'll slow down and listen."

"Oh."

Without Sharon's firsthand observations of my defensive behavior, I'm not sure how long it would have taken me to wise up, slow down, and listen. This insight has enabled me to be twice as effective as I was when I relied solely on my passion and enthusiasm to bring projects to fruition.

Avoiding Pitfalls

Annual clergy performance evaluations, led by insightful colleagues, can be the steam in the engine of creative, dynamic congregations. However, this past year's evaluation taught us that even a well-oiled, smoothly running machine can jump the track if proper advance work is not done. This past year Linda and I failed to meet before the evaluation. Moreover, two new wardens had been elected since the last evaluation, and neither was particularly familiar with previous evaluations. On top of that, I mistakenly said to the wardens, "It's OK—you don't have to meet with Linda beforehand—she's done this a lot. It'll be fine."



It was not fine. From my perspective, it was a belly flop. From Linda's perspective it was rough going. The wardens left the meeting with a sense that what they had hoped for had not happened. Instead of reflecting on my ministry of the past year, the group became mired in the muck of our inadequate administrative infrastructure. The copier (when it works) is inadequate. We have no centralized data base. The church staff spends so much time on the phone that most people who call are automatically routed into voice mail. These were important concerns, but not the issues we had gathered to discuss.

By the end of the evening we had established a new office administration committee to wrestle with these topics, but we had spent little time on the items I had highlighted in my self-evaluation. I left the meeting feeling discouraged over the administrative morass and resentful that the gathered group had not participated in an effective performance evaluation. When Linda and I debriefed the next day, we realized, 24 hours late, just how important the pre-evaluation meetings can be. Next year we won't make the same mistake.

Living into the Gospel

Annual clergy performance evaluations are a singular opportunity to reflect on individual and corporate ministry, to receive well-earned thanks from our parishioners, to listen to constructive critiques, to contemplate how we might deepen and enhance our ministerial gifts, and to invite interested outsiders into the workings of the congregation. It has been my experience that by means of this process year by year we live into the gospel in deeper and more profound ways—which is much more satisfying than jumping off the high dive. ❁

360-Degree Assessment

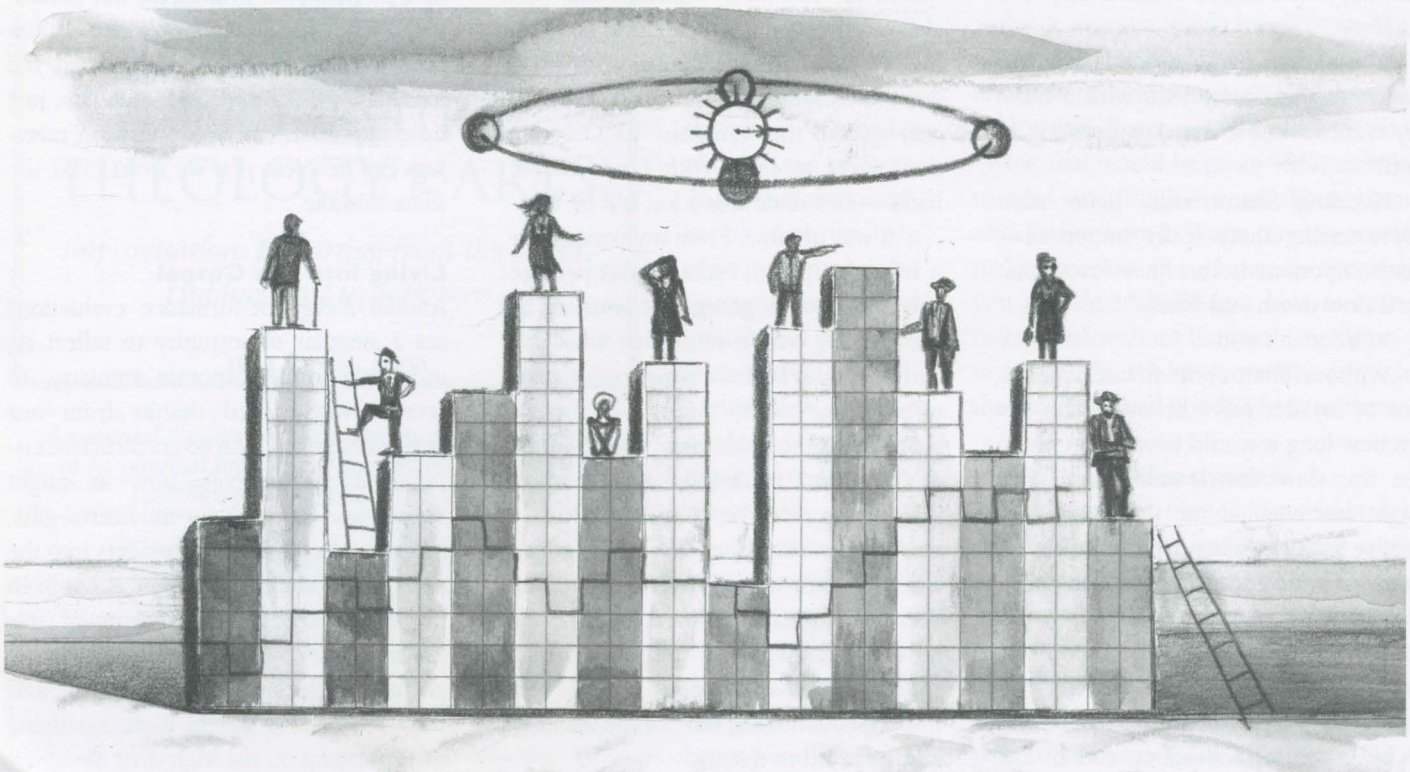
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION FROM EVERY ANGLE

Donna Schaper

Evaluating work is about as easy as getting a mosquito out of a bedroom at 3 A.M. in July. It is also as necessary. Without evaluation, we institutionalize performance uncertainty. The worker, the work, and the church suffer. Call it "fuzziness"—the fog of imprecise and abundant expectations that keep us awake at night. We who work lose as much sleep to that fog as we do to bugs. We don't know how we're being judged. We feel pulled by a thousand masters. Clarity about our work is as good as a sleeping pill, as useful as a flyswatter. When we are clear about what to do and whether we are doing it, then we can rest—and work.

Job Description as Flight Plan

Stephen Covey, in his books and tapes about purpose, uses the flight plan as a metaphor for a good family or individual mission statement. A job description is nothing but a mission statement: it states what we are to do. When we evaluate, we need a simple, clear job description in hand. No pilot would head for Seattle without a flight plan, or expect a long flight with no adjustments en route. Evaluations are adjustments to a flight plan. In churches, we often prefer "flying by the seat of the pants" to filing a flight plan. That keeps us free—and in some strange way makes us feel holier. Flight plans give us a clear intention. They feel more profane than sacred. But I daresay flight plans are holier than spur-of-the-moment take-offs. Flight plans get people where they're going. God intends to get



Eric Dever

the world to justice and peace by way of love and mercy. Without a flight plan, we won't get there. Not getting where God intends is sin in churches detoured by meetings, paperwork, internal fussiness, and confusion.

Fuzziness, or imprecision, is lack of clarity about which ten of today's hundred chores take priority. The fog and clouds keep us free but bind us to chaos. Once we agree that the holy way is a defined way, we face the mosquito buzzing straight into our ear. How do we evaluate church professionals, each of them unique in personality, situation, community, and denomination; each differently trained and compensated? Some are church members, others not. Some are believers, some not. Diversity, not uniformity, is the stuff of congregations.

Custom-Designed Evaluations

There is no one way to evaluate staff. We must custom-design evaluations—design and redesign—catering to the local reality and experimenting to find our way. At Coral Gables (Florida) Congregational Church, we cut 54 paychecks a month. Fifteen people work full time; others are small and large contractors, singers, artists, babysitters, caterers, light board technicians, and nursery school teachers, part-time. Four are clergy. We have one evaluation design for clergy, another for lay professionals and support staff. These evaluations share a certain simplicity. They are a quick diagnostic tool, not a complete CT scan.

The senior pastor coordinates evaluations submitted by all full-time staff about each full-timer. Staff people are evaluated concretely by how many new volunteers they have recruited, equipped, and deployed for Christian mission. The criterion is not committee work but mission. This measurable aspect of the job description is a key to what we call 360-degree evaluation. We have standard face-to-face half-hour annual evaluations of "regular" job descriptions—and then evaluate for precision and clarity on volunteer recruitment, equipping, and involving. The evaluated employee is entitled to make a response to the senior pastor.

Our design would not work for every church. Not all churches have been bent in and out of shape as ours has by location and history. The boldness to custom-design our evaluations stems from our uniqueness. Cookie-cutter evaluations don't work; custom-designed ones do.

From Every Angle

One member insists that we did not hire staff as the church grew rapidly in the 1990s. We "picked up stray cats." He advocates a complete housecleaning and a rational reorganization of staff. Another member joins me in thinking that God has a sense of humor—because these cats have done a great job of running the church. The Christian education director had no training; she runs a program for nearly 100 children that is the rival of many. The wedding coordinator is agnostic and funny; we have 300 weddings a year. She has a minor degree in the taming of bridal mothers—"bridezillas," she calls them. Our membership coordinator is an executive recruiter by day. At night she does the ministry of bringing in 90 new members a year.

To evaluate these cats, I rely on a custom design. The "360-degree assessment" is the latest buzz-word in personnel work—but we are just beginning to imagine it in the church. What it means is a "full" look, a view of the employee from every angle. Both the superior and the secretary make comments, and the person evaluated responds. Likewise, laypeople attached to the staff person's work fill out a questionnaire. A 360-degree assessment looks at a person in motion (as church workers mostly are), rather than snapping a "still" photo. In corporations, such assessments may be quite thorough; in churches they are simple. We use only the criteria of lay involvement and recruitment, as observed by fellow staff workers.

For example, the Christian education worker hears from the calendar coordinator that she is clogging the calendar and how they might communicate better. The musicians and the pastors plan for major Sundays—and review how they failed to get the luminarias lit last Christmas Eve. Specific items are shared—but instead of one person sharing, nearly 14 people tell the worker how they see him or her.

The 360-degree assessment is useful precisely because it provides for diverse views. Because it is moving and changing, it is not problem-free. It can add its own chaos to the system—people viewing pastors or lay workers from various angles tend to disagree on what they see. Still, 360-degree assessment offers a common starting point. That advantage makes it suitable to church life, which is marked by changing, complex, energy-producing give-and-take.

A 360-degree assessment gives us starting and stopping points. Once everyone has "weighed in"—lay leaders and co-workers—the feedback is complete. Once the staff person responds, the evaluation is done. Thus we must begin with a clear sense of who needs to be involved in this employee's circle.

Evaluating the evaluation is essential: How can we improve on this year's process? Given what we learned, what steps should we take? Those steps will shape next year's job description.

Often an employee has not done every task listed—and for good reason. It is hard for clergy or church staff to avoid

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Evaluating Lay Participation

MONITORING AND REVERSING TROUBLING TRENDS

Tom Sine and Christine Sine

Most Christians in mainline denominations know that attendance and giving patterns are in trouble. But they are less mindful that churches are also experiencing declining levels of lay participation in spiritual practices. Why are these trends significant—and worth keeping an eye on?

The church Tom's parents attended, First Baptist in Burlingame, California, failed to monitor these trends and paid a high price. In about a seven-year window, First Baptist went from being a wealthy church to one that could scarcely pay the pastor's salary, as a consequence of deaths among its most affluent members.

Troubling Trends

Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney in *American Mainline Religion* state, "The churches of the Protestant establishment, long in a state of relative decline, will continue to lose ground in numbers and in social power and influence."[1] Since that book was published in 1987, the prediction has remained on target. The drop is likely to become more precipitous in coming years, with a double whammy—the graying of mainline churches and the declining participation of young people. For example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has double the proportion of members over 75 as the population at large.[2] The "youth" in many mainline churches are the 40- and 50-year-olds. Between 2010 and 2030 the baby boomers in our churches will retire, contributing to the plummeting attendance and the drop in giving.

Research by Empty Tomb, Inc., indicates that from 1968 to 1998 U.S. per capita income increased 91 percent, but in the same period per capita giving declined 19 percent.[3] Most disturbing are data showing benevolence giving to be in free fall: "If the giving patterns of the past 28 years continue in an uninterrupted fashion, then per member giving as a portion of income to the category of Benevolence will reach 0% [of] income . . . in 2045."[4] Our current recession is likely to exacerbate this trend.

Documenting Spiritual Practices

Significantly less research has been conducted on levels of lay involvement in spiritual practices. But the available information is not encouraging. The American Bible Society documents a steady decline in Christians' use of Scripture in daily life. Barna Research reports decreasing use of Scripture as well as downward trends in regular prayer and volunteer work. Barna says that Christians "spend an average of seven times more hours each week watching television than participating in spiritual pursuits such as Bible reading, prayer, and worship."[5]

Since these trends will directly determine the size, influence, and vitality of tomorrow's church, doesn't it make sense for congregations to monitor these trends so we'll have the ammunition to reverse them? For 30 years I have urged the church to take the future seriously and to monitor trends in both society and church. But most churches live as though the future will hold a continuation of past attendance and giving patterns. Even those who see their denomination in decline make little effort to discover the trends in their own congregation.

We propose the construction and use of both lay and congregational audits that monitor not only the direction of these trends but also the rate of growth or decline. This practice will enable local-church leaders not only to understand the urgency with which a response is needed, but also help them to target areas that require immediate attention. It is especially important that congregations working with restricted resources be able to make informed decisions to focus resources on efforts to increase growth in spiritual practices and lay involvement.

Two Ways to Monitor Trends

These proposed questions are offered not for immediate use but for discussion. They are intended to provide a beginning model of an audit, so that leaders can design their own questions to monitor trends in lay and congregational priorities and investment. I believe that if we create thoughtful ways to monitor these trends, we will have a clearer sense of how effectively we are stewarding the resources God has entrusted to us. If we diligently gather this kind of information, we will have lead time to create ways to increase lay involvement or to refocus the use of congregational resources to revitalize our lives and communities of faith.

The following questions will not answer all concerns about the quality of congregational life. But they may provide important information about levels of lay participation and the focus and use of congregational resources. Discuss these questions with your church's leadership team, and devise your own questions to monitor patterns of involvement. These questions will have a higher value if the audit is administered every year so that, over time, patterns emerge.

Questionnaire for Lay Involvement

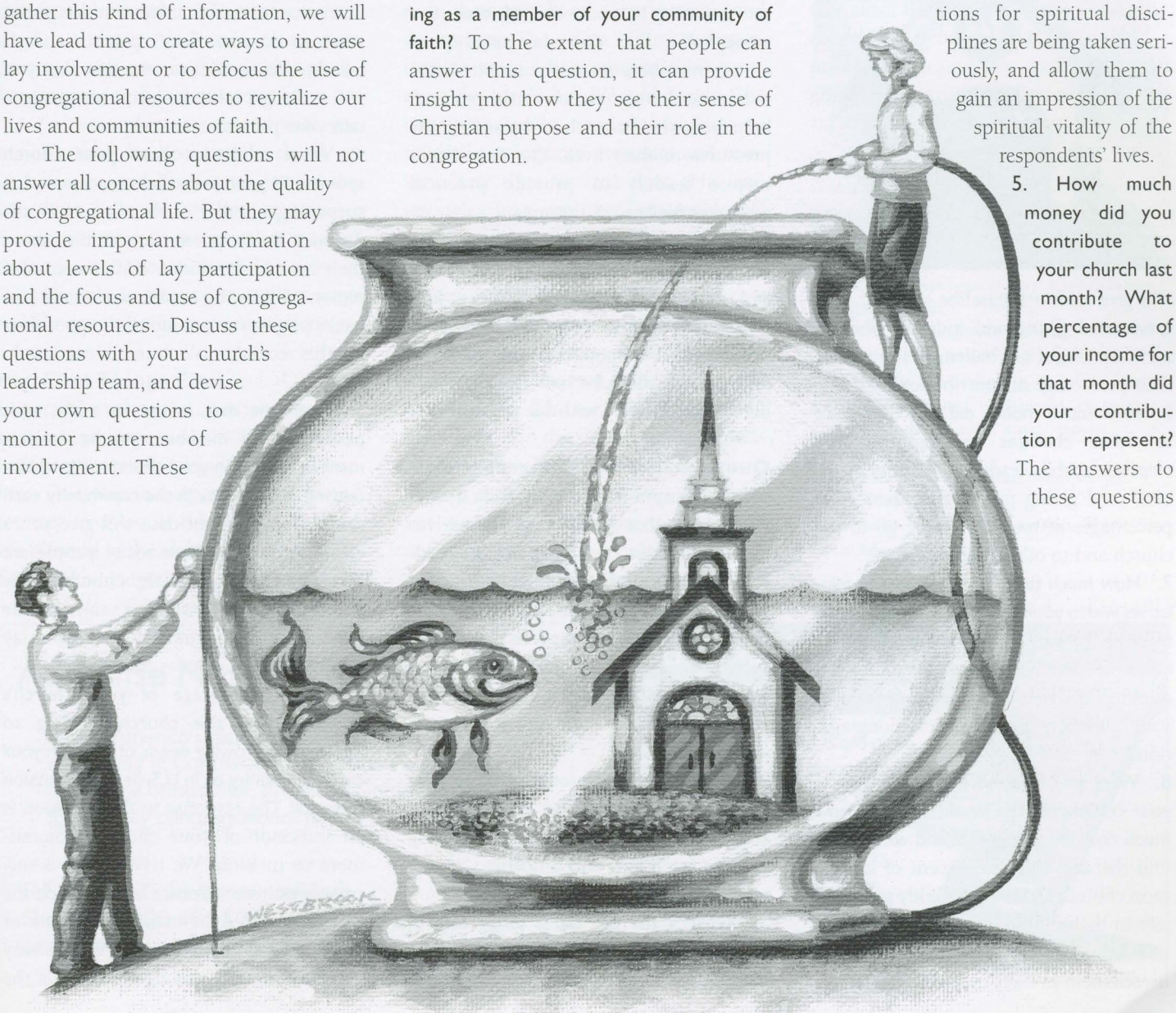
1. **Where would you place yourself in the following age ranges? 21–30, 31–40, 41–50, 51–60, 61–70, 71–80, 81+?** It is important to respect the anonymity of the respondent, but defining the age profile is critical to the research.

2. **What is your sense of vocation or calling as a member of your community of faith?** To the extent that people can answer this question, it can provide insight into how they see their sense of Christian purpose and their role in the congregation.

3. **How many times did you attend worship at your church last month?** This question helps to begin to monitor regular attendance patterns.

4. **How much time did you spend in prayer, Bible reading, or spiritual exercises on average each day last week?** This question can help leaders determine whether members have time for spiritual practices and, if so, how much time they invest in an average week. It can help clergy determine whether their encouragement and instructions for spiritual disciplines are being taken seriously, and allow them to gain an impression of the spiritual vitality of the respondents' lives.

5. **How much money did you contribute to your church last month? What percentage of your income for that month did your contribution represent?** The answers to these questions



It isn't enough to monitor congregational trends. The information needs to inspire leaders to create new strategies and resources to enable members to reorder their private worlds.

will give leaders a baseline sense of congregational giving and indicate whether members might be challenged to increase their percentage of contribution.

6. How much money did you contribute to other charities last month? This response enables leaders to identify members' total giving profile and learn what percentages of member giving go to the church and to other charities.

7. How much time did you invest in ministries within your church last week, such as teaching Sunday school or serving on a board or committee? Responses to this question will help you learn how broadly your members participate in congregational life.

8. Were you involved in any ministry in your community last week? If "yes," how much time did you spend, and where? We find that less that 10 percent of laity in most churches take time weekly to volunteer in their communities. This information can indicate members' levels of involvement in their own community.

9. Where are you experiencing the greatest pressure in your use of time and money? We find that the majority of church members are overcommitted and overbooked; they receive little practical help from their church in balancing the pressures in their lives. The data might inspire leaders to provide practical resources for laity in this area.

10. In what practical ways might your church help you deal with these pressures and develop priorities that more fully reflect the ways you want to focus your Christian life? Responses to this question may provide ideas for how to help members deal creatively with life pressures.

Questions for the Congregation

Using the input from the lay audit above, we suggest that leaders ask themselves questions about congregational stewardship similar to those outlined below:

1. How many people attended your church last month, as reported by the lay audit? By asking this question annually, you will be able to determine over time if your congregation is growing or declining and at what rate.

2. What is the age profile of those who attend? The response to the lay audit should make clear the urgency of finding ways to reach new and probably younger members.

3. What is the per capita giving rate of members in your church by age, according to feedback on the lay audit? If you examine this information in the context of insurance actuarial tables on longevity, you can do what Tom's parents' church failed to do—anticipate the date that you will no longer have the resources to maintain your present operation.

4. What ministries does your church sponsor in your immediate community? A surprising number of churches in North America don't sponsor any ministries in their own communities. With the combination of growing social needs and cutbacks in government aid to the poor during this recession, all churches need to do more.

5. From the data in the lay audit, what percentage of members report involvement in serving in your church or in volunteering in ministries in the community each week? The lay audit data will give you a clearer picture of how many people are involved in serving in the church or the community so that you can decide whether to call members to a greater lay involvement in witness and service.

6. What percentage of your church's budget leaves the church building to address the growing needs of those in your own community or in U.S. or world mission projects? The response to this question is an indicator of your church's commitment to mission. We have found a surprising number of churches in which the money invested in mission at home or abroad is below 10 percent. Once many churches identify this figure, they set the

goal to increase their investment in mission by a specific percentage each year.

Again, these two audits are offered not for immediate implementation but for discussion, to help you develop questionnaires that fit the needs of your congregation. Those who adopt the annual discipline of asking questions like these of congregation members will have a clearer idea of how to focus congregational ministries, education, and limited resources. It isn't enough to monitor congregational trends. The information needs to inspire leaders to create new strategies and resources to enable members to reorder their private worlds.

For example, we contend that one major reason for declining levels of lay involvement and investment is that the laity have little idea of how to connect Sunday morning to the way they steward their time and money seven days a week. We believe it is essential to explore ways to help people make that connection.

Put First Things First

In parallel track to the questionnaires, we recommend steps to help church members begin to work on putting first things first. One way to help people begin the journey to a less harried, more focused life is found in the eight-week curriculum for *Living on Purpose.*[6] Week 1 of this curriculum provides an opportunity for people to explore why they are suffering from high-pressure lives so that they can begin moving toward a liturgy of life that more directly reflects the impulses of faith instead of the addictions of culture. Week 2 is devoted to reawakening our biblical imagination to the creator God's purposes for a people and a world. The material for weeks 3 and 4 encourages participants to discern, in community with others, how they feel called to work for God's purposes in their own lives, congregations, and community. The intent is that each participant write a beginning mission statement for his or her life and family. The remaining weeks are an invitation to unleash participants' creativity and reinvent how they steward their time and resources in a way that genuinely puts wings on their mission statement.

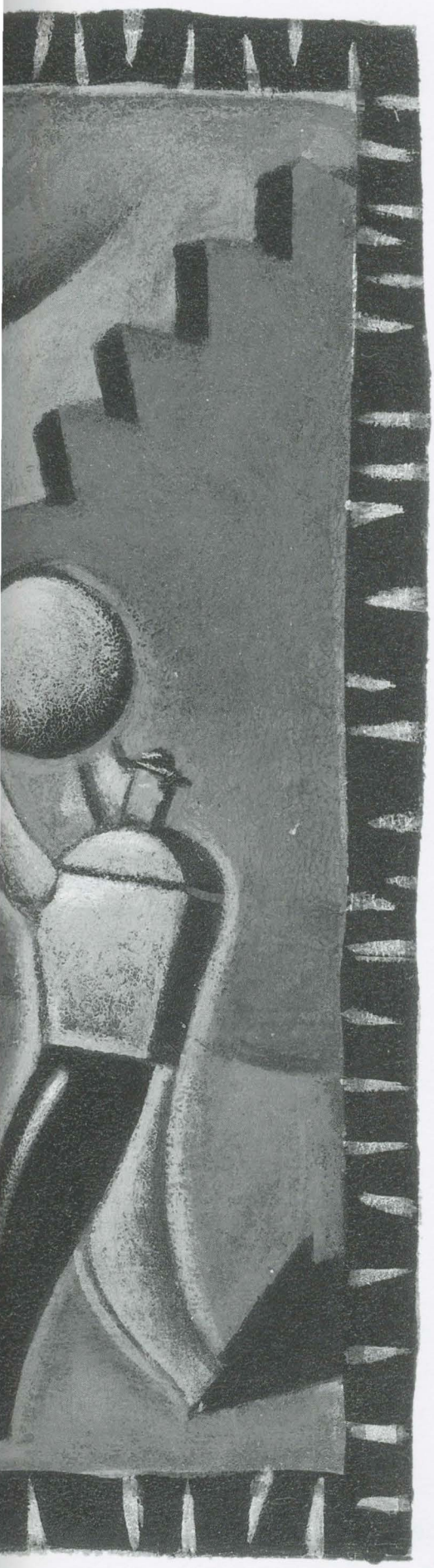
Since we have introduced this process in churches, we have seen a number of people who not only have discovered a clearer sense of vocation, but also have created a way of life that is more jubilant and less harried. Numbers of them have also discovered the enormous gift whereby God can use their lives to make a difference in the lives of others. For example, a layman named Paul attending one of our seminars drafted a mission statement that read, "To be God's jubilee in both our home and community." He and his family implemented this mission statement, hosting an annual neighborhood block party and starting a modest credit union through their church to help the poor in their community start small businesses.

In light of the events of September 11, 2001, a resurgent interest in vital faith and a desire to put first things first have surfaced all over the country. We can't imagine a better time to monitor trends that affect the vitality and witness of the church and to help the laity reorder their priorities in a way that enables them to give greater expression to their faith. ❁

Notes

1. Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 233.
2. "Trends Affecting the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," ELCA Department of Research and Evaluation (December 27, 1996), 1.
3. John L. Ronsvalle and Sylvia Ronsvalle, "The State of Church Giving through 1998," Empty Tomb, Inc., November 2000, 7.
4. John L. Ronsvalle and Sylvia Ronsvalle, "The State of Church Giving through 1995," Empty Tomb, Inc., November 1997, 42-45.
5. "Christians Embrace Technology," Barna Research, 2001, www.barna.org.
6. Tom and Christine Sine, *Living on Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2002).

Nicholas Wilton



A Pathway for Learning

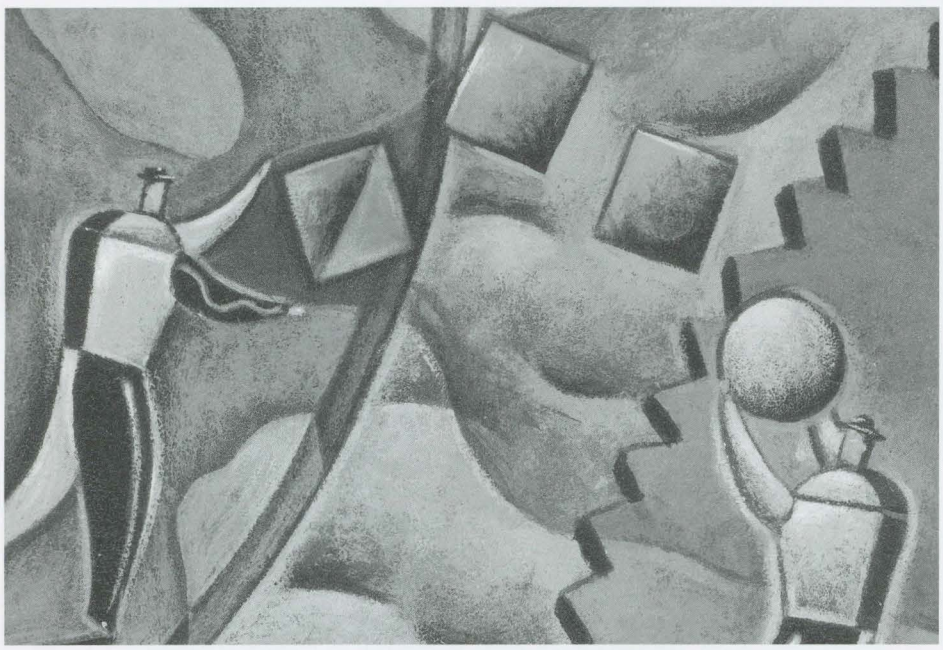
ALBAN INSTITUTE DIRECTOR OF CONSULTING **JOHN JANKA** OFFERS A RATIONALE FOR MINISTRY EVALUATION

Picture a group of clergy chatting in a church parking lot after a regional meeting. The conversation is laced with humor, pastoral "war stories," and genuine accounts of spiritual vitality in the congregations they serve. Then one pastor mentions that she will meet this week with her personnel committee to work out the details of a clergy evaluation process. Suddenly the banter subsides, and an awkward silence ensues. "Why would you want to do that?" asks one colleague. "Why would you make yourself vulnerable to criticism by insensitive people who have an ax to grind?" adds another. Are these clergy overreacting?

Clergy, whether they acknowledge it or not, often believe that evaluation only opens the door to disaster. Indeed, many clergy have been wounded by careless or uninvited feedback.

Although evaluation can have a shadow side, its creative potential for improving the effectiveness of clergy leaders and strengthening a congregation's ministry is significant. In fact, I would assert that a thoughtfully conducted evaluation is a sign of health and vitality and a key element in any process of congregational transformation.

When evaluation is part of a congregation's culture, it is an indicator of strength and openness. Evaluation can offer an opportunity for learning and growth, for deepening communication and understanding, and for establishing new norms of ministry for both clergy leader and congregation. It can open a window on how we are perceived by others, as well as on how we perceive ourselves. It can help develop competence and expand capacity. Evaluation can spark dialogue about what is truly important in the life



and ministry of the congregation and what members expect of leaders. It can lead to theological reflection about the congregation's identity and purpose, and provide a time to revisit the values that have helped shape the congregation's story.

When I served as a United Methodist district superintendent, I noticed that many congregations gave scant attention to conversations with their pastor about lay and clergy roles and responsibilities. Unclear, competing, and unresolved expectations coexisted about the pastor's role. In time, this lack of attention became a lack of communication. Clergy found themselves isolated, and the laity had few channels through which to express concerns or raise questions. Issues without an outlet became grist for parking-lot conversations, and goodwill deteriorated. Unexamined assumptions about roles and expectations often precipitated conflict early in a clergy leader's tenure. Faced with such stress, the pastor or pastor-parish relations committee would often suggest evaluation as a way to "sort things out," usually compounding the problems. The lesson learned is that evaluation should not be used as a tool for resolving conflict.

Evaluation Is Constant

In part because of their highly public role, clergy are being evaluated all the time, receiving and processing feedback almost constantly. Often this feedback is unsolicited, contradictory, and second-hand. The pastor is advised to ignore the unattributed "sound bites," but in time they can take a significant spiritual toll. When this pattern becomes established in the congregational culture, it can result in dysfunction or a series of short-term pastorates.

The broad purpose of any evaluation is to improve ministry and to strengthen the community of faith—*not* to "fix" the clergy. At its best, evaluation serves to nurture that elusive, mysterious, wondrous collaboration between the Holy and the human, and between the people of God and the purpose of God, and to test ourselves against our best understanding of what it means to be faithful in a particular time and place. At its best, evaluation is characterized by mutuality; that is, the congregation reflects on its vision and mission with the clergy leader, and the leader reflects on his or her work with the congregation. In each case, the most helpful question is "What can be done to improve or advance our mission?" This focus is quite different from that expressed in the question "Is the clergy leader fulfilling his responsibilities?"

When the evaluation of the pastor, priest, or rabbi is detached from the congregation's ministry, the result is often a collection of isolated perceptions and opinions, personal preferences, and criticisms of personality. Healthy evaluation is a dialogue that is conducted within the framework of covenant community. Healthy evaluation is also focused on learning and growth to fulfill shared values and a shared vision.

If evaluation is to achieve its potential for assisting the pastor and congregation in advancing the mission, the concept and process of evaluation must be initiated by the pastor. When evaluation is initiated as a function of pastoral leadership, it can be mutually owned and shaped; the sense that it is imposed on and weighted toward the minister can be avoided. It is he or she who can "teach" evaluation as a tool for strengthening the life and ministry of the congregation as well as the pastor's own capacity for leadership.

Read this article, as well as John Janka's advice for scheduling evaluations, online at www.alban.org/periodicals.

Consider the Context

The larger context for thinking about evaluation includes not only congregational but also cultural and personal dimensions. The Alban Institute's special report "The Leadership Situation Facing American Congregations" asserts that we are in a time of crisis and ferment. Expectations for clergy leadership are changing and often unclear; growing cultural diversity has created stresses on traditional leadership patterns. The accelerated pace of change has aggravated the complexity of ministry and confused the standards by which we measure effectiveness.

The report states, "[T]he conversation about quality or competence of leadership oscillates between the exploration of the quality of the person, along with his or her preparation for the role of leader, and the lack of clarity or reasonableness of the role of leader itself."[1] It is not surprising that, amid shifting values and competing expectations, we may be skeptical of any call for evaluation, especially if we sense that this call may be born of frustration or the search for a quick remedy for congregational stress. Although the special report was crafted before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the events of that day have confirmed and extended our sense that we are living a new and more complex reality. In such an environment, structured and thoughtful evaluation is more important than ever.

Considering the context also engages us in thinking about the interior life of the clergy. In any highly public role, especially one entered out of a "sense of calling," a strong connection will link that role and the personal identity of the leader. A close identification with one's role can be an asset, but it can also be problematic. In this case feedback is often received as a deeply personal critique, even as a challenge to one's sense of identity and well being. Such a reaction can result in the leader's "shutting down" or the laity's withholding important information. Clergy can find themselves balancing their sense of vulnerability with their own needs and others' expectations for authenticity and intimacy.

Change and Resistance

Along with a heightened sense of vulnerability that can accompany evaluation, another powerful and often hidden factor is at play. Evaluation offers possibilities and creates expectations for change, sometimes dramatic change. It may have implications for subtle shifts in focus, or it may highlight the need for fundamental and profound reinvention or redirection of institutional life and resources over time. When we realize that a thoughtful evaluation may surface such outcomes, we may understandably resist even beginning the process. This resistance to change is often the hidden factor in evaluation of any kind. The higher the possible degree of change, the higher the resistance may be. Resistance may come from congregation members asked to engage in self-assessment, or from the

Guiding Principles for Evaluation

1. **Initiate** and **define** evaluation as a function of clergy leadership, and set an agenda for your own learning.
2. The evaluation process must be jointly "owned" by the congregation and the clergy leader. State clearly the **purpose** of the evaluation.
3. Remember that evaluation is learning. Determine what you and others hope will be learned from the process.
4. Determine what is, and is not, to be evaluated. **Identify** information to be gathered and how it will be used. Be **sensitive** to the need for appropriate confidentiality.
5. Evaluation is an essential element in congregational transformation. Make use of the data gathered to **reflect** on ways to advance the mission.
6. **Normalize** evaluation as a function of leadership, **organize** to create pathways for learning, and **contextualize** to tie clergy evaluation to the vision and mission of the congregation.
7. Be alert for how the results of evaluation suggest new norms for clergy leadership and congregational life. Affirm and **celebrate** accomplishments.
8. Expect evaluation to introduce possible **change**. Discuss openly how change will be considered and how decisions will be made about proposed changes.
9. Explore how you will **connect** the evaluation process to both the personal and corporate faith experience.
10. Consider using an outside resource person to **facilitate** the process, especially if evaluation is new territory for the congregation or pastor.

The broad purpose of any evaluation is to improve ministry and to strengthen the community of faith—*not* to "fix" the clergy.

clergy leader. Or parish and pastor may practice mutual avoidance. When some congregants resist evaluation, strong voices may advocate that the evaluation be focused on the clergy leader alone. Resistance from the pastor may signal a desire to avoid examining long-established and comfortable leadership patterns. Faced with suggestions for change, both congregation and leader may hear those suggestions as devaluing past efforts and making an affront to the congregation's traditions or a judgment on clergy integrity.

What can we say about the best-case scenario for clergy evaluation? In the accompanying box on page 21 are a few principles to help shape and guide an evaluation process.

In her book *Evaluating Ministry,* Jill Hudson, a presbytery executive in Indianapolis, notes that "evaluation is one of God's ways of bringing the history of the past into dialogue with the hope for the future."[2] The congregation's mission can be advanced when evaluation seeks to learn from the past and when that learning is applied to improving the future. Innovation, rather than being at odds with tradition, can be a natural outcome of a thoughtful evaluation process. ❁

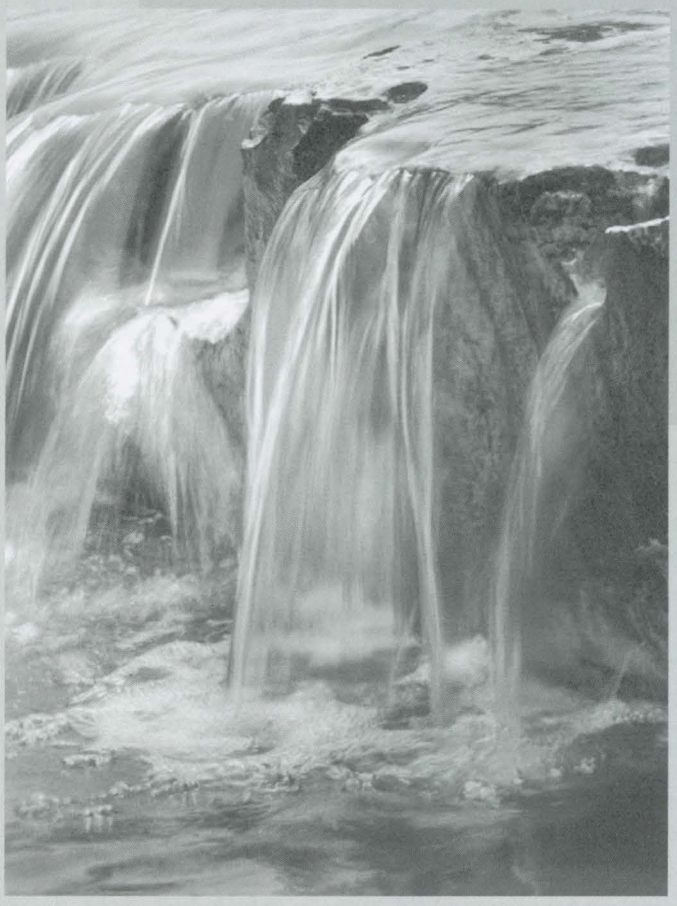
Notes

1. "The Leadership Situation Facing American Congregations" (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2001), 8; an Alban online publication (www.alban.org, "What's New" section).
2. Jill Hudson, *Evaluating Ministry: Principles and Processes for Clergy and Congregations* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1998), 7.

Lilly Endowment Inc.

National Clergy Renewal Program /2002

"As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God."
— PSALM 42:1



At the center of the congregation is the pastor. Spiritual guide, scholar, counselor, preacher, administrator, confidant, teacher, pastoral visitor, and friend, a pastor has a privileged position and performs many roles. In season and out, a pastor is called upon to lead communities to the life-giving waters of God.

The National Clergy Renewal Program, offered by Lilly Endowment Inc., is intended to strengthen Christian congregations by providing an opportunity for pastors to step away briefly from the demands of daily parish life and to engage in a period of renewal and reflection. The Endowment will provide as many as 100 grants of up to $30,000 each directly to congregations for support of a renewal program for their pastor.

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For information: Send an e-mail to clergyrenewal@yahoo.com, contact the program s Web site: www.clergyrenewal.org, call 317/916-7302, or write Lilly Endowment Inc., Religion Division, 2801 North Meridian Street, Post Office Box 88068, Indianapolis, Indiana 46208. Indiana clergy should apply only to the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations.

Getting Feedback on Your Ministry

THREE WAYS TO DO EVALUATION WITHOUT RISKING A PUBLIC FLOGGING

Roy Oswald

To maintain competence, a parish pastor needs accurate feedback on how his or her ministry is perceived in the congregation. It matters little what I intend to do and be if members view the results of my ministry negatively—hence the importance of feedback. The trick is to get feedback without being beaten up from time to time. I offer three ways that pastors and congregations can evaluate their ministries together.

1. Total Ministry Evaluation

First, clergy can learn of their impact on a congregation by engaging the entire membership in a ministry evaluation once every four years. In this process everyone is evaluated, not only the clergy. Each congregant is invited to a small meeting in a member's home and asked, with others, to reflect on the congregation as a spiritual community. What do we like about the way we conduct our ministry to members and outsiders? What gives cause for concern? Small meetings can be valuable as an aid to devising a four-year strategic congregational vision.[1]

For this type of evaluation I like to engage the group in a study of Revelation 1–3. In these biblical passages seven letters are written to seven congregations. The format of all seven is similar. God is saying:

"This I commend you for."

"This I hold against you."

After the seven letters are read aloud by group members, everyone is handed writing materials and invited to "write a letter to our congregation. What do you think God would commend us for? What do you think God would hold against us?" Give participants 15 to 20 minutes for writing. This approach seeks to move people beyond petty grievances so that they see the congregation as they imagine God might see it.

After each person reads his or her letter aloud, group members discuss the similarities and differences in how they view the congregation. Before the session ends, the leader collects the letters. Leaders of all small groups meet to collate the responses; a summary of results is sent to congregation members. This summary tends to get people talking and working to remedy the dysfunctional aspects of their congregational life. Goals can then be set to address the findings.

The advantage of such a ministry assessment is that all are evaluated, not just the clergy. In the process, pastors gain insight into their role and may as a result alter the way they conduct ministry.

But such a major intervention in congregational life should not be an annual rite. Once every four years suffices. Other methods can be used in intervening years to help gain feedback.

2. Annual Role Renegotiation

At least once a year, the pastor and the congregation's chief decision-making body should spend a couple of hours reviewing the relationship between pastor and members. The pastor and vestry/session/council/board might begin the evening with prayers for guidance, followed by solitary time for board members to write their responses to three questions posed by the pastor:

1. What would you like more of from me?
2. What would you like less of from me?
3. What would you like me to keep the same?

Meanwhile, the pastor writes answers to similar questions asked by the board:

1. What would you like more of from us?
2. What would you like less of from us?
3. What would you like us to keep the same?

Once again, a public flogging must be avoided. The session may well turn into a free-for-all if the number of people involved exceeds nine to twelve.

The pastor should share first. She should expect that board members will be as candid with her as she is with them. Her can-

Carla Daly

dor elicits theirs. Do not expect to blow off the board with innocuous compliments about how wonderful its members are, and that nothing about them needs to change. Such comments are a cop-out, and the pastor can expect equally insipid remarks from the board. People should enter this serious pastor-parish relationship with the intent to keep it healthy or to restore it to health.

After the pastor speaks, all at the table should share their lists. Once these responses are on the table, the pastor and the group may renegotiate roles. Do the shared comments suggest that the pastor's working relationship with the congregation needs work? The board can learn much about the complexity of the pastoral role. Should it want more from the pastor (such as more frequent home calling), she can explore what parts of her role may have to be given up to make time for home visits. In this case, the pastor doesn't accept all requests at face value. Should the board urge her to make more home visits, she might share her experience of driving around town trying to find a member at home, mostly leaving her card in the mailbox. When she does find someone at home, they sit, drink coffee, and make small talk. The pastor may pronounce such visits an unproductive use of her time.

Yet the board may offer ideas for the pastor to shift priorities to meet at least some of its expectations, raised on behalf of the congregation. The board may modify the way it works with the pastor, its members having learned what she needs more or less of. Both may agree to change the way they carry out their roles for a stated period, later evaluating how well the alteration has worked.

Objectives at Odds

Any clergy evaluation has two long-term objectives, and they can be at odds with each other: administrative effectiveness and personal growth. Leaders charged with running an organization need accurate information on employees. Without it, running an effective system is difficult. Leaders may lack the knowledge to decide whether an employee should be given a pay raise, additional responsibility, a change in job description, or a termination notice. Thus an evaluation may be geared toward operating more effectively. Such a performance review is top-down; employees

are subject to it whether they like it or not.

The other sort of appraisal seeks to assist the individual's personal growth and job-related learning. Literature on performance appraisal generally advises that these two aims (administrative and growth-oriented) not be combined—a common error of those who conduct reviews. As we look closely at an employee's experience of evaluation, we can understand why combining the two is a mistake. For one to learn to do a job better, she needs to explore her pain, her sense of vulnerability, and her confusion. If we want to learn to improve our performance, we need to identify where we hurt and where we are perplexed, and head in that direction. But if our future within a system depends on a good rating, we would be crazy to explore our pain and confusion. When an evaluation is top-down, we must give our most positive response to every question. We need to look good if we want a raise or a promotion. In a congregation, when the chief decision-making body evaluates the pastor, you can bet that she will do everything in her power to make a positive impression. Too much is at stake to do otherwise.

The difference between administrative and personal-growth reviews can be summarized using two basic questions: "Who owns the data?" and "Who controls the process?" If the answer to both questions is "Someone other than the pastor," it is an administrative evaluation, and the group that evaluates needs to know that the pastor is not going to learn much. What pastors learn from administrative evaluations is how to protect themselves from humiliation in the presence of key congregational leaders.

3. Pastor-Initiated Evaluation

In a "personal-growth" evaluation the pastor can both control the process and own the data. It is collected for his eyes only. He may wish to identify one or two lay leaders he can trust implicitly, and ask them to assist. Those asked must be able to maintain confidentiality.

For example, suppose that the pastor is getting "negative vibes" about his sermons. Most people like and appreciate the sermons, but some have difficulty staying with them. The pastor may ask these trusted lay leaders to interview six people after one sermon a month. They will ask what people value about the pastor's sermons and what gives them difficulty. After this data-gathering, the pastor meets with the lay leaders to receive and discuss the feedback from the interviews. Using what he has learned, the pastor may try preaching a sermon to address some of the issues raised by members. The same congregants interviewed previously are then asked whether they got more out of the new sermon.

In a similar pastor-initiated approach, the two chosen lay leaders work with him to develop a questionnaire to send out to a cross-section of the congregation. The two leaders collate the responses and assist the pastor in interpreting the results. At the next vestry or session meeting, some members of that body might ask the pastor, "Hey, we'd like to know what you're learning from that questionnaire." One possible response from the pastor could be: "I'm sorry. I initiated this process for my own learning, and therefore the results belong to me. I may choose to tell you about what I'm learning—in fact I probably will—but I'll decide just what will be shared."

The pastor-initiated process of getting feedback builds in enough safety that a pastor can explore aspects of ministry without defensiveness or risk of public humiliation. However, it does require that the pastor take the lead in finding out what impact he or she is having on members. Without such knowledge it is hard to gain competence in his complex pastoral role.

The Common Ingredient

None of the three methods of gaining feedback is easy, and all involve some degree of tension. Each requires that the pastor take some initiative, stating clearly that feedback is desirable; each demands the pastor's candor. The process controlled and initiated by the pastor offers the advantage of enabling him or her to face tough feedback without suffering embarrassment in front of lay decision-makers. The one ingredient common to all three processes is a pastor motivated to make a greater impact on the congregation for the sake of the gospel. ❁

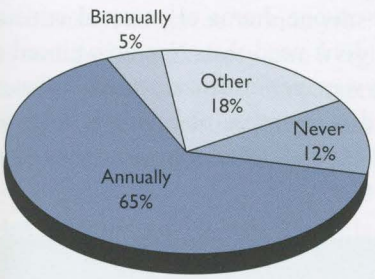
Note

1. For more information on developing a strategic vision, see Roy M. Oswald and Robert E. Friedrich, Jr., *Discerning Your Congregation's Future: A Strategic and Spiritual Approach* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1996).

What Our Members Say About Evaluation

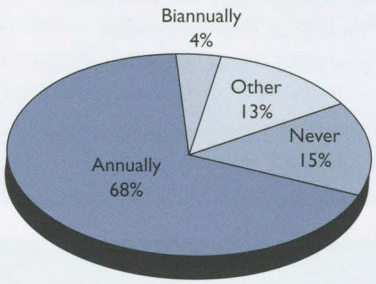
We sent an e-mail in early January to 4,122 Alban Institute members to ask about how frequently both they and their congregation's program of ministry were evaluated and how helpful this was. 628 members currently employed as clergy or lay staff responded, a survey response rate of approximately 15%. Of those responding, 92% were clergy and 8% were lay. Frequencies of evaluation are shown below.

How often are you evaluated?



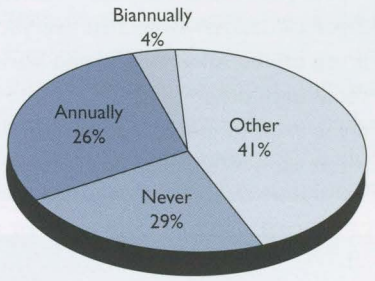
Total responses

How often are others on staff (clergy or lay) evaluated?



Total responses

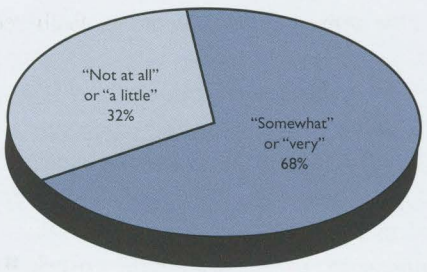
How often does your congregation conduct an evaluation of its program of ministry?



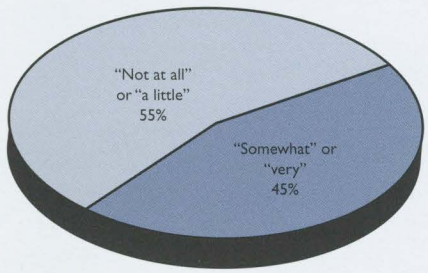
Total responses

While this represents a "straw poll" only, its findings are revealing. Almost half of the respondents indicated that they experience their personal evaluation process as either "a little" or "not at all" helpful to their development as a leader. The survey also demonstrated that those who find their evaluation most useful are those whose evaluation is conducted as a mutual ministry review, where the leader(s) and the congregation jointly review their ministry. This would seem to support Alban's preference that any evaluation of clergy be tied to the congregation's assessment of its mission.

How helpful is this evaluation to your development as a leader?



Mutual Ministry Review



Not Mutual Ministry Review

To see the original survey, the complete tabulation of results, and additional charts, please visit us on the Web at www.alban.org/periodicals and go to "Current Issue."

Schaper

continued from page 13

getting involved in the "interruptions" of the job. Sometimes the interruptions are the job. Our lack of focus is not necessarily wrong: we may be doing the right thing when we cancel our well-planned day for an unexpected human need that walks in the door. Nevertheless, people who work in parishes need a focus, a home of clarity, to which they can return after interruptions.

Having a Stake

In 360-degree evaluation, we participate in a plan that makes the church purposeful. That is what we have needed—not a sense of being governed from above or of being undermined by other staff, but a sense of having a stake in the system. This process gives staff members that stake, a sense of investment and ownership—and that is its key benefit.

Staff members who have a stake in their work are valuable to a church. If we cannot claim a stake in the mission, we won't give ourselves fully to our work. Having a stake is participation backed by investment: we own our work and our evaluations, and we come to own the system that employs us.

Missing from these evaluations is the one-on-one drama of personal criticism. We don't need that. Nor do we need the one-way performance review. What we need is the sense of having a stake, and that is what 360-degree assessment gives us.

360-DEGREE ASSESSMENT CAN WORK FOR YOU:

- If you want clarity in your work.
- If you have a sense that your parish is a unique organism, unlike anything else.
- If you want a simple, comprehensive method to evaluate yourself and your staff.
- If you can acknowledge that everybody is already looking at everybody else.
- If you can be vulnerable to and learn from what "everybody" sees about you and about each other.
- If you want to create a parish working environment that is both safe and exciting.
- If you want to enhance both performance and participation.

Beyond the Heroic

We love our heroes. In every age people have longed for them and, when they found one, lifted the heroic one up in celebration. Whether we think of Moses or King David, Hercules or Odysseus, Napoleon or George Washington, Michael Jordan or Serena Williams, we like our heroes.

Some, like the late scholar of world religions Joseph Campbell, whose works remain popular, believe that something at the deepest level of the human psyche relentlessly seeks the heroic. More than 50 years ago, Campbell asserted that all our human stories, despite their seemingly endless variety, are really variations on one great "monomyth." "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."[1]

The Default to Heroic Models

I thought about Campbell on a recent evening as the National Symphony Orchestra performed Richard Strauss' last great tone poem, *A Hero's Life (Ein Heldenleben)*. The stirring music drew a series of portraits of the hero, the hero's adversaries, the hero's helpmate, the hero's battlefield, the hero's works of peace, and the hero's withdrawal from the world. During the second section, as Strauss introduced his adversaries—the carpers, the vituperators, the whiners, and the hairsplitters—my mind jumped to the everyday leadership realities of congregations and their clergy.

Although few of us will become the stuff of legends, most of us operate—as do most of our congregations—with heroic models of leadership. Consciously or not, we default to heroic self-understandings. We become would-be heroes who journey into dangerous circumstances; meet helpers; confront adversaries; undergo ordeals of testing, conflict, and battle; and seek a promised land of peace, prosperity, fame, and happiness. While some parts of the "monomyth" may seem far-fetched, all of us can identify our versions of Strauss' carpers, vituperators, whiners, and hairsplitters.

The quest for the heroic gets us into trouble—whether we search for a hero to follow or seek to become one ourselves. The composer's heroic pretensions caused him great personal agony, eventually allowing him, some 30 years after he wrote the tone poem, to collaborate with Adolf Hitler. Both the heroes we seek and the heroes we attempt to be will, sooner or later, reveal feet of clay and topple from their pedestals. In the quest to become a hero, bad judgment and illusion find room to blossom. As the hero goes it alone, great damage can be done to the world.

Evaluation and Mutuality

Congregations can be communities in which we go beyond heroism. The topic of this issue of CONGREGATIONS—evaluation—carries with it a different model of leadership, one I find much more congruent than the heroic with the best of the Jewish and Christian traditions. Evaluation implies mutuality. It admits imperfections. It builds in safeguards to keep strong individuals from running away with their fantasies or obsessing about their demons.

Because the heroic seems to be "hard-wired" into our understandings of leadership, we can expect that models of mutuality will constantly be challenged. Old canards about the inefficiency of committees ("a camel is a horse designed by a committee") will be resurrected to return us to heroic patterns that seem more effective and efficient. All of us seek strong, decisive leaders upon whom we can depend. But as we transfer our agency and responsibility to someone else, we set that person and ourselves up for a fall.

Thus the topic of evaluation, though sounding technical and procedural, is about something radical. When a group of people sit down to assess how a program works (rather than leaving it on autopilot), or when a leader participates in an honest, constructive performance review, declarations of independence are being made from the old heroic pattern. When we seek information that we may find uncomfortable, when we listen to other viewpoints, when we let the data reveal unsettling truths, when we probe resistance for its important messages, then we are recognizing that leadership is not primarily heroic work. It is the work of a community joined in commitment and accountability.

NOTE

1. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), 30.

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.

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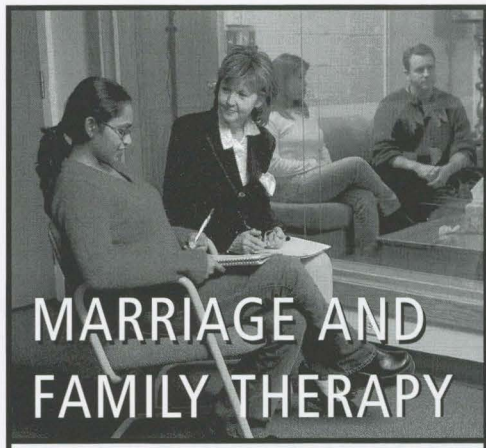

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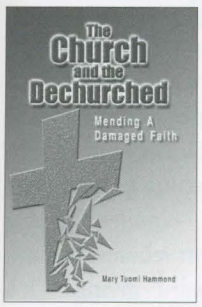
BOOK REVIEW

The Church and the Dechurched

MENDING A DAMAGED FAITH

Mary Tuomi Hammond
St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2001

"It seems a lot easier to reach the unchurched than the dechurched" (p. 137), writes Mary Tuomi Hammond in her new book, *The Church and the Dechurched.* Unchurched people are those who have never heard or received the good news of Jesus Christ, while the dechurched have lost a faith they once valued or have left a body of believers with whom they may have once been deeply engaged. Just as the stories of the dechurched are different from those of the unchurched, so are their needs for ministry and pastoral care.



The dechurched are all around us, Hammond says. Some have left quietly, and some are still within our local congregations, regularly sitting beside us in the pew but withdrawn emotionally in profound yet unspoken ways. Too frequently, these absences and withdrawals are never addressed. Too easily, dechurched people silently slip off the church rolls after a season as "inactive members." Others are openly hostile to Christianity and have lost all interest in matters of faith and personal spirituality.

One way we can stem the exodus is to create safe places within our Christian communities for those who face crises of faith or periods of disbelief. We will benefit from hearing their stories. We can create intentional sanctuaries for the wounded and way stations for the lost among us. The basic question being asked by at least some of the dechurched is, "How can I restore a damaged faith?"

Hammond is copastor, with her husband, of Peace Community Church (formerly First Baptist, American Baptist Convention) in Oberlin, Ohio. The author has an evangelical Christian background, but a number of the positions she takes place her somewhat on the fringe of evangelical Christianity. The book represents the compilation of much of her cutting-edge work over the past 20 years.

Jesus had a special love for those who found themselves on the boundaries of institutional religious practice. The author studies several of Jesus' "parables of the lost" to provide a solid biblical foundation for her presentation. These parable pieces introduce the stories of dechurched people that are interspersed throughout the book.

Hammond loves the church not so much in its institutional expression but in the biblical vision of what it could and should be. Ministry among the dechurched has kept her connected to institutional religion; she feels these people are an essential part of Peace Community Church's reason for being.

After defining what for her are the dechurched, the author uses the remainder of the book to answer the following three key questions:

Why do people become dechurched? Many leave the church because it fails to provide a safe place for those who care for as well as those who suffer from stigmatized diseases such as AIDS. Not only do dechurched people experience institutional rejection, some face personal abuse at the hands of professing Christians who live exemplary public lives. All abuse, whether sexual, physical, emotional, or intellectual (such as mind control) has consequences of a profoundly spiritual nature. When an abuser claims to follow Christ, the abused receive destructive messages regarding God, the church, and the life of faith itself.

How can the dechurched come to believe again? There are no guarantees of reclamation. New trust takes a long time to build. Cries for healing and help often go unheeded. Many professional counselors are not skilled in dealing with spiritual issues and may intentionally steer their clients away from further involvement in organized religion. The effort to rebuild faith cannot merely address the obvious. It must plumb the depths of much personal hurt. A reconstructed faith takes much time, patience, and attentiveness to personal healing, systemic social issues, and biblical and theological understandings.

How can the church minister to the dechurched? In the first place, the dechurched must never be treated as the objects of evangelism. The focus must be on their personal narrative rather than on our witnessing technique. Friendship-building and the process of coming to believe again can take a long time; great patience is required. Good intentions may often be rebuffed. "The dechurched are our teachers," says Hammond. "[But] we don't change lives. That is the work of God" (pp. 164–65).

This book is obviously the result of considerable experience and careful assessment. Its greater value lies in the stories, rather than in the theories presented. At times, the reader may feel quite overwhelmed by the cumulative effect of so many narratives of pain and dislocation. More liberal readers may find some of the concerns somewhat foreign to their particular spiritual ethos. The overall impression, however, is both positive and hopeful. A key learning is that we can

never erase the pain of the dechurched, but that pain, for some at least, can certainly be redeemed.

Pastors and their staffs would do well to study this book as part of professional and team development. It is grounded in biblical faith, supported but unencumbered by psychological and sociological theory, and centered in the lives of real people and parishes.

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BOOK REVIEW

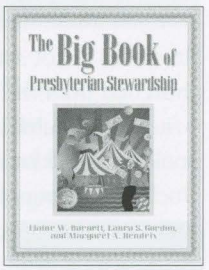
The Big Book of Presbyterian Stewardship

Elaine W. Barnett, Laura S. Gordon, and Margaret A. Hendrix
Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001

Many people ordering *The Big Book of Presbyterian Stewardship* will expect it to be bigger than it is. The book is small by any reasonable measure: 59 pages of text plus 33 pages of blank forms and other extras is about the minimum requirement to be a book at all. Nonetheless, it contains many resources that leaders of Christian congregations, Presbyterian or not, can use to promote giving to the church.

The book begins with a brief survey of the history of Christian attitudes toward money. While readable and interesting, it probably overstates the case for the Protestant origins of the "Protestant work ethic." Is it really true that the Reformation "sanctified all work and destroyed past negative views of work" (p. 2)? Still, this chapter will broaden the perspectives of most readers by contrasting the pro-capitalist teachings of the majority of Protestant churches with the prior Christian disapproval of profit-making and by calling attention to the secular sources of church people's economic attitudes.

The authors conclude the first chapter by calling for a "new American work ethic" that values "personal creativity, self-expression, personal relationship, harmony with nature, the search for the sacred, and the satisfaction that comes from exploring the full richness of human experience" (pp. 9–10). If these goals sound familiar, the second chapter explains why: these are the priorities of Baby Boomers. In a useful summary of Strauss and Howe's book *Generations*, the authors compare the attitudes of members of the GI, Silent, Boomer, X, and Millennial generations in relation to their different attitudes toward giving. This analysis deserves consideration by the great many congregations whose survival will depend on their appeal to younger people.



Less successful are the too-brief chapters "Giving Styles" and "Money Personalities." These are important subjects, and one would have hoped for more than six pages based heavily on other books.

The last half of *The Big Book* treats practical aspects of stewardship, including annual and capital campaigns, special offerings, and planned giving. The advice given in these chapters is sound (though much more conventional than the first chapters seem to promise), but too sketchy to help inexperienced leaders put it into practice. A major omission in each chapter is an adequate discussion of the need to pay special attention to big givers. This is an area of sensitivity in many con-

gregations—one that probably accounts for more lost opportunity in dollar terms than any other. It is disappointing that a book on stewardship almost entirely avoids the issue.

A "toolbox" in the back of the book contains blank forms, which are fine as far as they go, but readers new to stewardship receive too little guidance in their use. For example, "Tool #2" gives space to analyze past annual giving by amount per unit, but the chapter on annual campaigns says nothing about how to use this information or how to estimate future amounts.

Much that *The Big Book of Presbyterian Stewardship* says is good; one wishes that it said a little more.

Rev. Dan Hotchkiss
Field Consultant
The Alban Institute

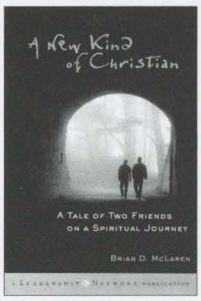
BOOK REVIEW

A New Kind of Christian

A TALE OF TWO FRIENDS ON A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Brian D. McLaren
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001

Although "postmodernity" is a popular word, its meaning and implications are still not very clear. *A New Kind of Christian,* written by nondenominational pastor Brian D. McLaren, tries to address both uncertainties.



McLaren does a good job of showing how our worldview is shifting and why this calls for new understandings and practices. He writes particularly for a conservative evangelical Christian audience, dwelling extensively on doctrines of Biblical inerrancy, the salvation of other religions, evangelism, heaven, and friendship evangelism, among others.

I found much in this book to like and learn: for example, the author's attempt to find a dynamic equivalent for the notion of the kingdom of God and his explanation of why we know old models of belief and theology are inadequate even though we cannot yet imagine a viable alternative. I agree with his devastating criticism of much of what passes for Christianity in North America. I also appreciate that it is time to move beyond the virtually meaningless—and deeply destructive—labels of liberal and evangelical. I concur that most Christians have no idea of what the gospel is and no sense of joining into the larger vision and dream of God (rather than calling on God to defend or perpetuate their own individual well being). I look forward to a "post-Protestant" Christianity that values ancient traditions, liturgy, mystery, and the holy.

In an effort to address a subject not addressed elsewhere, McLaren tells a story of an imaginary pastor on the verge of burnout who seeks out a postmodern mentor to help him through his crisis. I understand that this story is semi-autobiographical. Unfortunately, the technique does not work well. As fiction, it is lame, wordy, contrived, and not particularly convincing. As theology, alas, it lacks substance. Ironically, as the author argues for "dethroning theoretical knowledge" and moving beyond an overly cerebral approach, he suggests that pastoral burnout can be addressed simply by reworking one's theology.

Perhaps it is too early in the postmodernity discussion to have any classics, and thus maybe I am being too hard on McLaren's attempt. I gleaned much from it, however, and appreciate discoveries I have not yet made elsewhere. For that alone I am more than grateful.

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

BOOK REVIEW

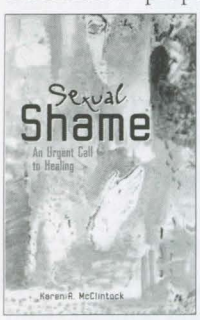
Sexual Shame

AN URGENT CALL TO HEALING

Karen A. McClintock

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000

With *Sexual Shame*, author, minister, and therapist Karen McClintock joins the fervent group of pioneering religious leaders intent on bringing the issue of sexuality to the attention of Christian congregations. Consistent with the pioneer spirit, McClintock proposes a place to begin rather than proclaiming an end point. Her book, like an encyclopedia, briefly touches many sexual subjects, including teen pregnancy, premarital sex, child sexual abuse, rape, adultery, dating after divorce, clergy sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, homosexuality, sexual pleasure in marriage, and sexual addiction. McClintock, however, does not explore any of these topics in depth. Rather than quenching the reader's thirst, *Sexual Shame* whets the appetite, encouraging readers to begin here and seek additional information and deeper understanding elsewhere.



For example, in chapter 2, "Defining Sexual Shame," the author devotes only one page to the definition of shame and one page to the difference between shame and guilt. A few sentences about sexuality and spirituality elsewhere in the book may disappoint readers who crave an integration of these powerful human drives. However, additional resources—some noted in the author's bibliography—and well-established organizations such as SIECUS (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States) are available to provide information and support to readers who seek more.

Like a pioneer, McClintock is bold. She directly challenges the church's perpetration of sexual abuse by exposing the relationship of this abuse to the theological articulation of patriarchy. She is also courageous. Although some professionals in the sexuality field might disagree with her opinions and object to her methods, she dares to publicly state her position and begin the discussion. If *Sexual Shame* sparks passionate discourse of any kind, then McClintock has accomplished her goal of launching a conversation about sexuality and shame among religious adults.

In chapter 5, "Sexual Sin," the author reminds us that our congregations, church leaders, and pastors have the potential to heal or further harm victims of sexual abuse or sexual shame. She encourages us to learn how to heal. This chapter also provides a guideline for developing our own sexual ethic based on the "Study on Human Sexuality" published by the United Church of Christ in 1977. If readers take only one suggestion from *Sexual Shame*, let this be it.

I found two gems in this book which will enrich my life evermore. In the preface (p. xi), McClintock uses the phrase "tender exchange" as a description of what sexual intercourse "should" be about. In a culture where seduction, performance, and orgasmic outcomes are emphasized, it was a relief to be reminded of the potential—no, the longing—for the expression of sexuality to be tender. The second gem came to me in chapter 15 in the section titled "Looking for Jesus." The author cites John 8:4, in which a woman is to be stoned for adultery. McClintock proposes that Jesus' words, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her," released the woman from shame. But the author's comment is what enriched me: "I wonder, too, what happened to the man she had been with. I seethe with the injustice of his escape from shame and persecution at the hands of an angry crowd. But I do know one thing more. The man who wasn't brought before them never heard Jesus' redemptive voice. He carried his shame onward . . ." (p. 143). With this perspective, McClintock shows us that one way to heal our shame is to humble ourselves before God and our peers, reveal our wounds and our wrongdoings, seek and receive forgiveness—and repent. McClintock does not stress repentance as a necessary ingredient for healing sexual shame, so I add that point to the discussion as my opinion.

In chapter 13, "Methods for Healing," and chapter 14, "Ground Rules for Conversations," McClintock admittedly moves into an area of potential danger and what the author herself termed wild ideas about healing sexual shame. I encourage religious leaders and congregations to receive these ideas with caution and to evaluate their potential effectiveness with the clear understanding that opening conversations about sexual shame in a congregation without appropriate knowledge, training, and facilitation will be like walking through a mine field.

The author suggests that the congregation might become like an Alcoholics Anonymous group where people have learned to safely reveal their shame and recover from it. As an initial step toward healing congregational sexual shame in safety, I recommend that interested individuals first begin this work on their own in therapy or in an already existing 12-step program, such as Sex and Love

Addicts Anonymous. Following that, they can return to the congregation and help religious leaders safely integrate the healing of sexual shame into the community. This is a worthy—albeit challenging—endeavor.

Rev. Jade C. Angelica
Director, The Child Abuse Ministry
Scarborough, Maine

Learn More

RESOURCES ON **EVALUATION** FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCE GUIDE

❖ Clark, Catherine Holmes. **Annual Church Review Procedure.** Bethesda, Md.: The Alban Institute, 1986. This publication provides questionnaire templates that congregations can use to evaluate their ministers, their committees, and their entire communities. Most templates include sections for noting accomplishments, rating performance, documenting strengths and weaknesses, and planning and prioritizing future initiatives.

❖ Clergy Leadership Institute. **Mutual Ministry Valuations.** Available online at www.clergyleadership.com/clergy/mmv.html. Using the learnings of appreciative inquiry, the model for Mutual Ministry Valuations presented here seeks to "discover and build on the things that give value to a congregation's ministry" and "put the dagger of constructive criticism back in its scabbard." Congregations experienced at Mutual Ministry Review may want to explore this innovative approach.

❖ Episcopal Diocese of Maine. **Mutual Study of Ministry.** Available online at www.diomaine.org/msm.htm. These diocesan guidelines provide a process for engaging a congregation and its leadership in "mutual discernment concerning the ministry that they are doing together in God's name." The philosophy of mutual study is explained, and a timeline, a discussion of objectives, and sample questions are included.

❖ Hudson, Jill. **Evaluating Ministry: Principles and Processes for Clergy and Congregations.** Bethesda, Md.: The Alban Institute, 1992. To evaluate the ministry only of clergy is to deprive both clergy and congregation of the full opportunity for growth and development. For Hudson, evaluation has no connection to problem resolution or conflict management; its purpose centers on growth.

❖ Oswald, Roy M. **Getting a Fix on Your Ministry: A Practical Guide to Clergy Performance Appraisal.** Bethesda, Md.: The Alban Institute. This report, while warning about the difficulties of evaluating clergy performance, presents the essential ingredients for making the appraisal a worthwhile experience for the pastor and the congregation.

❖ Simcox, Lynne M. **"Don't Evaluate Your Pastor as an Employee."** *United Church News,* April 2001. United Church of Christ. Available online at www.ucc.org/ucnews/apr01/pastor.htm. A UCC conference minister shares her thoughts about clergy evaluation, such as "Ministry is a dialog between pastor and parishioners" and "Pastors cannot be evaluated as 'employees'."

❖ Woods, C. Jeff. **User Friendly Evaluation: Improving the Work of Pastors, Programs and Laity.** Bethesda, Md.: The Alban Institute, 1995. Woods explores evaluation models and presents practical guidelines for engaging in mutual ministry evaluation. Readers with specific questions—when to engage a consultant, how to evaluate church growth, working with volunteers—will find guidance in this book.

www.congregationalresources.org

Church Growth: Shifting Your Leadership Style

Q I am pastor of a growing 200-member congregation—more than a full-time job! Our governing board is pressing for even more emphasis on "church growth." As we outgrow our present "cozy" size, what changes should we anticipate? Will I have to retool my leadership approach?

A If you are sole pastor and your congregation's average attendance is 150 or more, you probably already feel pretty stretched by competing expectations.

Although you may be excited by the prospect of continued growth, ministry may become more stressful and less satisfying. How should you respond? First, explore your own gifts and sense of call. Not every pastor will be effective or find satisfaction in a program-size church. But if you discern a call to shift your approach to ministry in response to growth, here are some changes to make.

1. Change your priorities. In a pastoral-size church (51 to 150 people at worship), building one-to-one pastoral relationships usually comes first. At program size (151 to 400 people), your priorities will be high-quality Sunday worship, lay leadership development, and reliable systems of member care and involvement (including strong lay teams for pastoral care and new-member ministry).

2. Negotiate expectations. Not all members will accept this shift. Some will feel abandoned, or accuse you of being uncaring, ambitious, and unspiritual. You will have to gain skills for negotiating expectations with your board (and with the denominational officials to whom dissatisfied members may appeal).

3. Clarify your vision. The advantage of a program-size church (significant programs targeted to different kinds of people) also creates its challenge (managing multiple styles, expectations, and projects). You must take more initiative to ensure that:

- Your board can articulate what the church is primarily here for (purpose/mission) and where it is called to go (vision). Typically, boards become nervous during a transition, realizing they can't keep everybody happy. Your board probably needs help to develop for itself better processes of recruitment, orientation, and meeting design.
- Key subgroups stay in face-to-face communication with each other. Liaisons tend not to work well. In worship planning, for example, key music leaders, ushers, church school teachers, and clergy may need to meet quarterly to work out seasonal worship plans. You might organize a semiannual "leadership forum" where leaders of groups and programs share goals, negotiate calendars, and solve problems. By sharing aspirations, program leaders can support each other's efforts and minimize unhealthy competition for time, space, and money.

This description may sound daunting. But consider the satisfactions of effective clergy in program-size churches:

1. Creating durable structures of ministry. Like an architect, you may encounter the imaginative challenge of design and the practical adventure of installing new systems to sustain effective ministry.

2. Developing a leadership cadre. Like a coach, you can take pride in the growth of the leaders you mentor and the teams you guide.

3. Building consensus. Like a politician, you come to know people's aspirations, interests, and "hot spots," and help forge coalitions to accomplish important work.

If these prospective satisfactions leave you cold, you may want to search for another setting that better fits your gifts and aspirations. If you feel energized by the possibilities, then make a plan for your professional development and find a mentor who can help you fulfill your call to a new style of ministry.

Rev. Alice Mann is an Alban Institute senior consultant who specializes in helping congregations with growth strategies, leadership skills, strategic planning, and spirituality. She is the author of several books, including *The In-Between Church: Navigating Size Transitions in Congregations* (Alban Institute, 1998), *Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Congregations in Decline* (Alban Institute, 1999), and *Raising the Roof: The Pastoral-to Program Size Transition* (Alban Institute, 2001).

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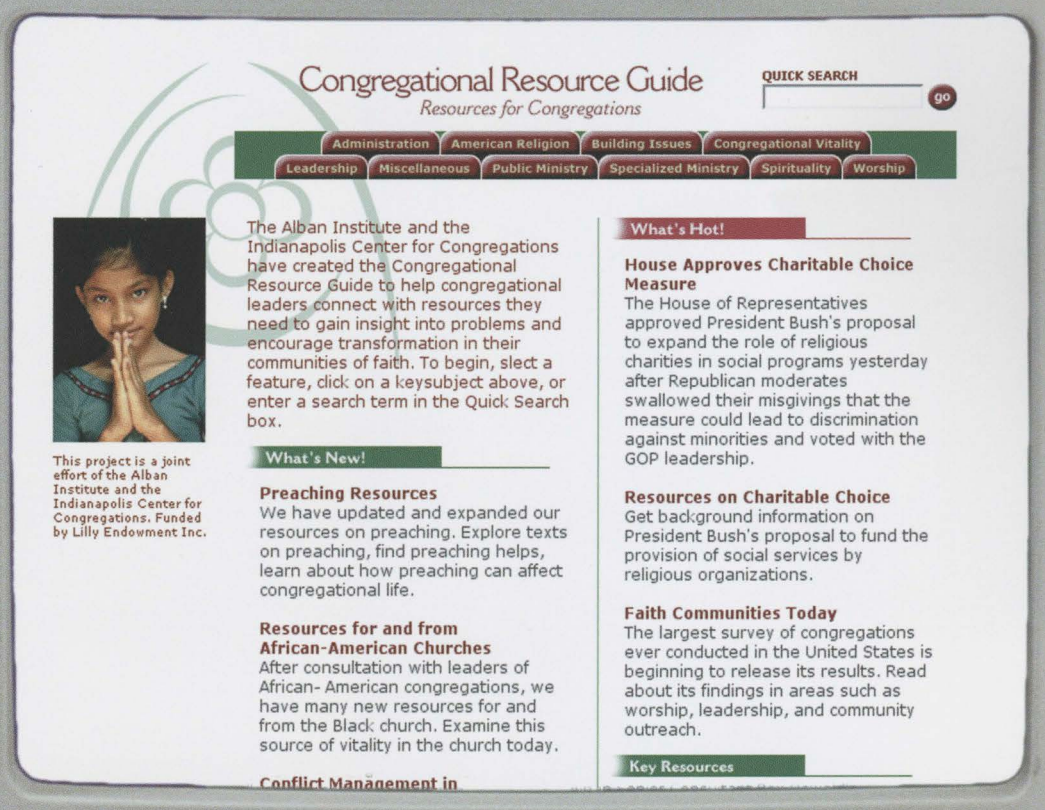

THE ALBAN INSTITUTE

Indianapolis Center for Congregations

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About the Alban Institute

CONGREGATIONS is a bimonthly publication of the Alban Institute, a nonprofit, interfaith **membership organization** founded in 1974 to provide a comprehensive range of resources to Christian and Jewish congregations. **Our mission** is to provide clergy and lay leaders with practical, research-based information and ideas for effective ministry as they grapple with an ever-changing environment.

The Alban Institute serves leaders—both ordained and lay—across the denominational spectrum through **consulting services, education events, book and periodical publishing,** and **research**. Our work is supported by membership revenue, grant funding, and the sale of programs, services, and publications.

The Alban Institute **encourages dialogue** with many faith traditions, people of diverse ethnicity, men and women, large and small congregations, and urban and rural congregations. We invite you to join in conversation with us by becoming a member or writing an article for CONGREGATIONS—or both! Please call us at 301-718-4407 or send an e-mail to pwalker@alban.org.

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