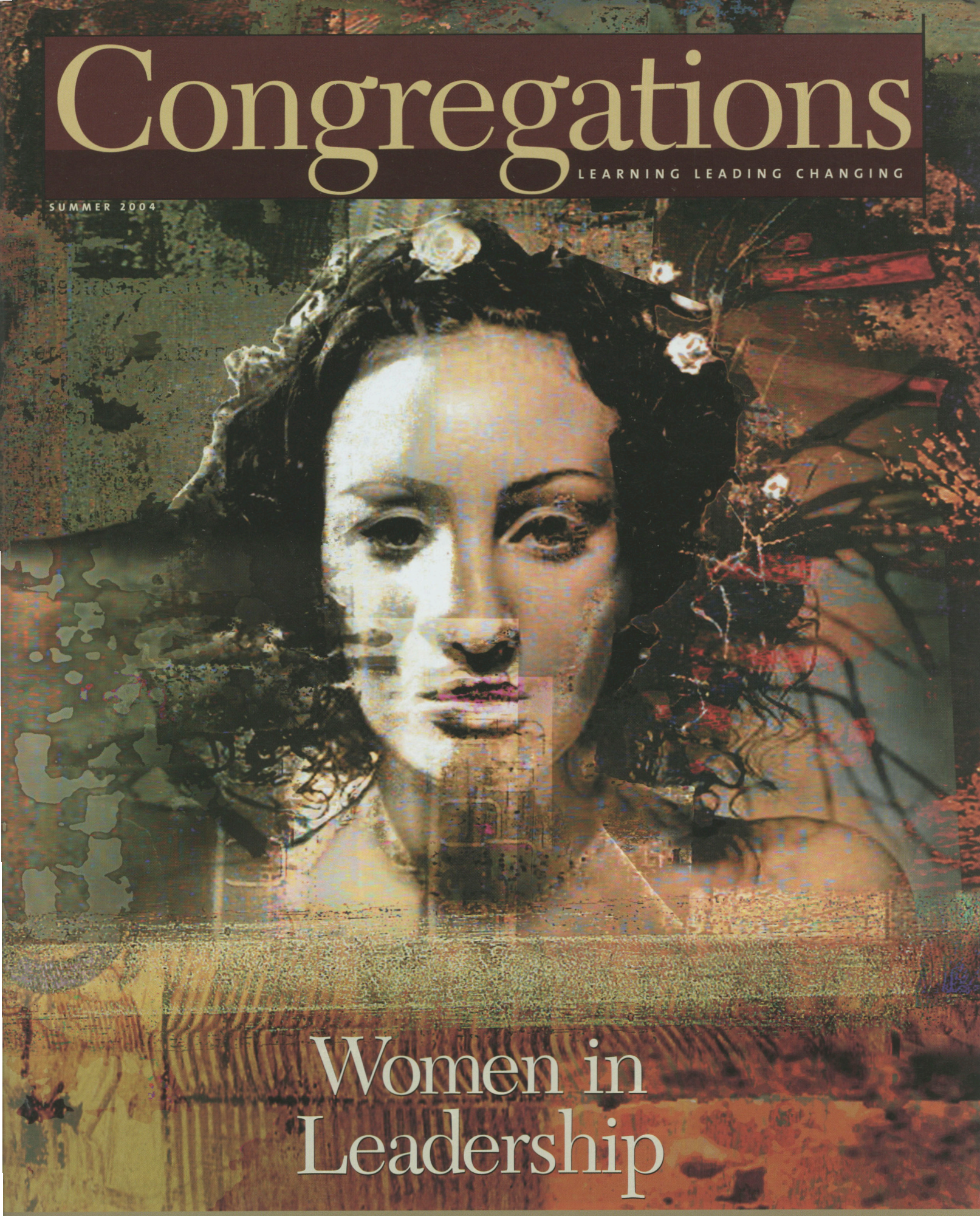
Congregations

LEARNING LEADING CHANGING

SUMMER 2004

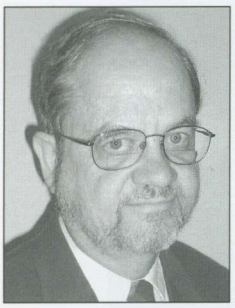


Women in Leadership

ALBAN INSTITUTE REPORT TO OUR MEMBERS INSIDE

Pamela Cooper-White

Rev. Dr. Pamela Cooper-White, an Episcopal priest and pastoral therapist, is professor of pastoral theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. She also is the author of several books—including *Shared Wisdom: Use of the Self in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Fortress, 2004) and *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response* (Fortress, 1995), which won the 1995 Top Ten Books award from the Academy of Parish Clergy—as well as numerous chapters and articles on aspects of pastoral theology, women's development, and pastoral care of post-traumatic stress. She is the former director of the Center for Women and Religion at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. **Page 14**


Roger Kruger

Rev. Dr. Roger Kruger is a Lutheran minister, pastoral counselor, and consultant who currently serves as the director of Partners in Caring for Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, a program of clergy support and congregational services. The Sabbatical Facilitation process he administers was begun with a grant from Wheat Ridge Ministries. **Page 6**

Robert Leventhal is an Alban Institute seminar leader and senior consultant specializing in synagogues. In 2001 he was the project consultant for the Synagogue Transformation and Renewal project at Alban. Previously, Mr. Leventhal worked as a marketing executive and management consultant. An active communal lay leader in Dayton, Ohio, he has also served on the Federation Community Planning Committee, as president of the Hillel Academy Jewish Day School board, and as leadership chair of his synagogue. He currently serves on the regional council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). **Page 29**

Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

Sandy Eisenberg Sasso is rabbi of Congregation Beth-El Zedeck in Indianapolis, Indiana. She is the second woman to be ordained as a rabbi (1974) and the first rabbi to become a mother. Rabbi Sasso is active in the interfaith community and has written and lectured on the renewal of spirituality and the discovery of religious imagination in children of all faiths. Her books include *God's Paintbrush, In God's Name, But God Remembered, Noah's Wife, Cain & Abel, Finding the Fruits of Peace,* and *Adam & Eve's First Sunset* (Jewish Lights Publishing). **Page 10**

Melissa Bane Sevier

Rev. Melissa Bane Sevier has been pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Aurora, Indiana, since 1992. She also is the author of *Journeying toward Renewal: A Spiritual Companion for Pastoral Sabbaticals* (Alban Institute, 2002). She received her Doctor of Ministry degree from McCormick Theological Seminary, her Master of Divinity from Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and a Master of Christian Education from Reformed Theological Seminary. She worked as a Christian educator for 10 years before being ordained. **Page 25**

Ann Svennungsen

Rev. Ann Svennungsen is president of the Fund for Theological Education, established in 1954 to attract gifted and diverse young people to the ministries of the church. A member of the Alban Institute board of directors, she served as a Lutheran pastor for 22 years, most recently as senior pastor of the 3,700-member Trinity Lutheran Church in Moorhead, Minnesota. **Page 21**

Powerful Gifts

It seems fitting that, in my last column for CONGREGATIONS as an employee of the Alban Institute, I honor my late dear friend and mentor, Rev. Gigi Holliday. Gigi, a gifted Unity minister and teacher, was a beacon in the darkness for me as I struggled to set my feet on the path of faith years ago. By her example, she demonstrated that women spiritual leaders can be powerful in their faith and works; by her very existence, she showed me what I also was capable of.

In her book *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness,* Sharon Salzberg says that extraordinary teachers like Gigi remind us who we really are. Upon encountering such a person, she says, "I feel a deep recognition of the innate and inviolate power of love within me as well. . . . I awaken for a moment and can say, 'Oh, right, that's who I really am. That's what's right and possible for all beings.' These encounters disprove my seeming limitations, and I walk free for a while from the prison I once fabricated for myself" (page 14). This is the essence of what Gigi taught me, and it has been my highest hope for my own ministry in the world.

One of the objects of the Buddhist concept of "metta," or lovingkindness, is "to reteach a thing its loveliness" (Salzberg, page 18), and it is this idea I hold in mind when I reread Sandy Eisenberg Sasso's "Affixing Our Name to the Holy Narrative" (page 10) in this issue of CONGREGATIONS. Rabbi Sasso reveals how women have reclaimed and reshaped Jewish tradition and ritual to honor all people, both female and male. In one particularly moving passage, she describes how a woman who gave birth to a stillborn child 18 years before was still grieving and angry because Judaism had no ritual for her loss. When Rabbi Sasso offered her a new prayer and ritual, the woman was able to turn toward her faith once again. This woman learned that she had a place at the table after all.

There are so many other gifts that women bring to ministry. For example, Ann Svennungsen ("When Women Lead the Flock," page 21) says that women are well versed in many areas of emotional intelligence, including understanding the importance of consulting all stakeholders when a decision needs to be made. She says, "Occasionally, this attention to relationships has been frustrating to those who wish to move with greater expediency. However, in the long run, it has served the organization well." And Pamela Cooper-White's study of clergy mothers ("Becoming a Clergy Mother," page 14) reveals that these women also bring gifts in the areas of compassion, self-reflection, clear priorities, and a deeper awareness of the presence of God.

Yet, as we all know, women in ministry often fight an uphill battle, both within their congregations and their denominations. In her article, "Support and Solidarity" (page 25), Melissa Bane Sevier says that clergywomen support groups are one way many women are finding both camaraderie and nurturance.

Above all, I hope that you receive the gift of appreciation for your female colleagues in ministry as you read this issue. I literally would not be where I am today if I had not been so powerfully inspired, challenged, and loved by one of their number. And as I move on to new endeavors, I am thankful for all that I have received.

Thank you, dear readers, for being part of the journey.

With gratitude,

Lisa

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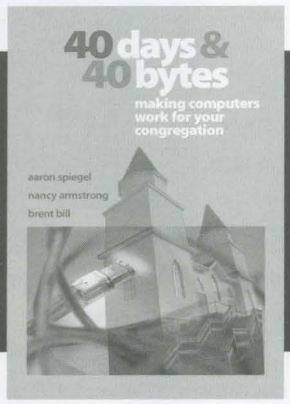

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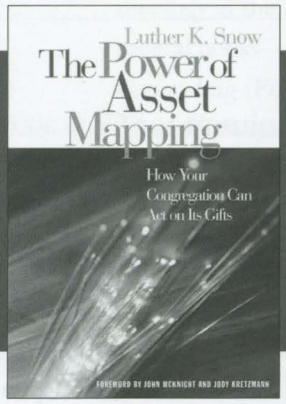

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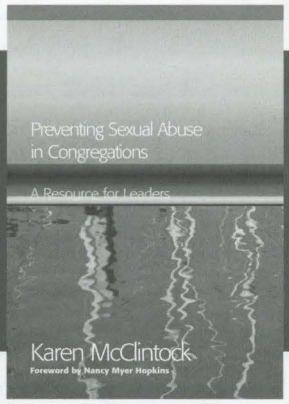

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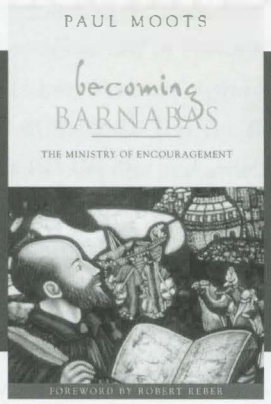

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What Were They Thinking?

For those who seek to persuade the rest of us that the world is falling apart, the past few weeks have provided substantial ammunition. The situation in Iraq by itself provides mounting evidence that things are getting worse. The head of the U.S.-appointed Governing Council was recently assassinated, disturbing images of abuse by American soldiers have come out of Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison, Iraqi resistance continues to grow, and our relationships with the nations of the Middle East have soured. Meanwhile, the work of nation-building proves to be much more difficult than our national leaders anticipated, and the list of lives lost gets longer and longer.

As these tragic stories unfold, one question seems to be asked with greater frequency and urgency: What were they thinking? What were U.S. intelligence community leaders thinking that allowed them to be so unprepared for 9/11? What were Pentagon and White House leaders thinking as they led the nation into a carefully scripted video-game war that was followed by the chaos of occupation and military rule? What were the leaders of the military intelligence agencies thinking as they set aside the Geneva Conventions as passé and created the circumstances that have led to an international humiliation?

These "what were they thinking" questions indicate a genuine desire to know the logic, assumptions, and ideologies that led to such disappointing outcomes. They also signal disapproval, challenge, and mounting pressure to move beyond those rationales and assumptions to new ways of thinking and acting.

"What were they thinking?" questions cut both ways, of course. They curve back on the questioners and ask, "Okay, Mr. or Ms. Skeptic, what were you thinking (and doing) while all this was going on? Were you making your opinions and questions known? Were you challenging those in leadership positions, or were you part of the deafening national silence about these decisions that was finally broken in the last few months?"

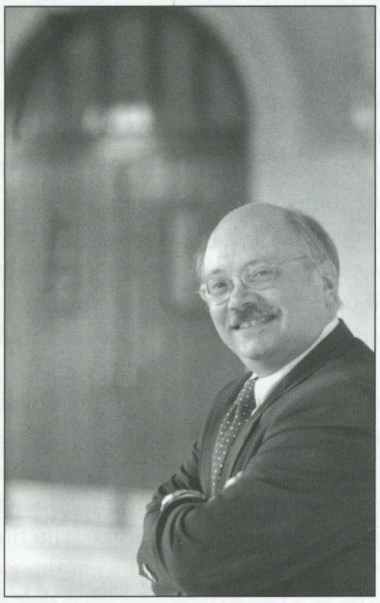
Transcending Separation

The good news is that there are some people who are thinking in fresh ways about other topics, as evidenced by Virgilio Elizondo's beautiful new book on Jesus of Galilee and his mother, Mary. For decades, Fr. Elizondo, a professor at the University of Notre Dame, has lived on the border between the Latino culture of Mexico and the Anglo culture of the United States. Firmly rooted in the soil of the barrios of the Latino world, Elizondo has worked to help these two cultures understand and value each other. Now, in *A God of Incredible Surprises* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003), he has gathered a lifetime of reflections.

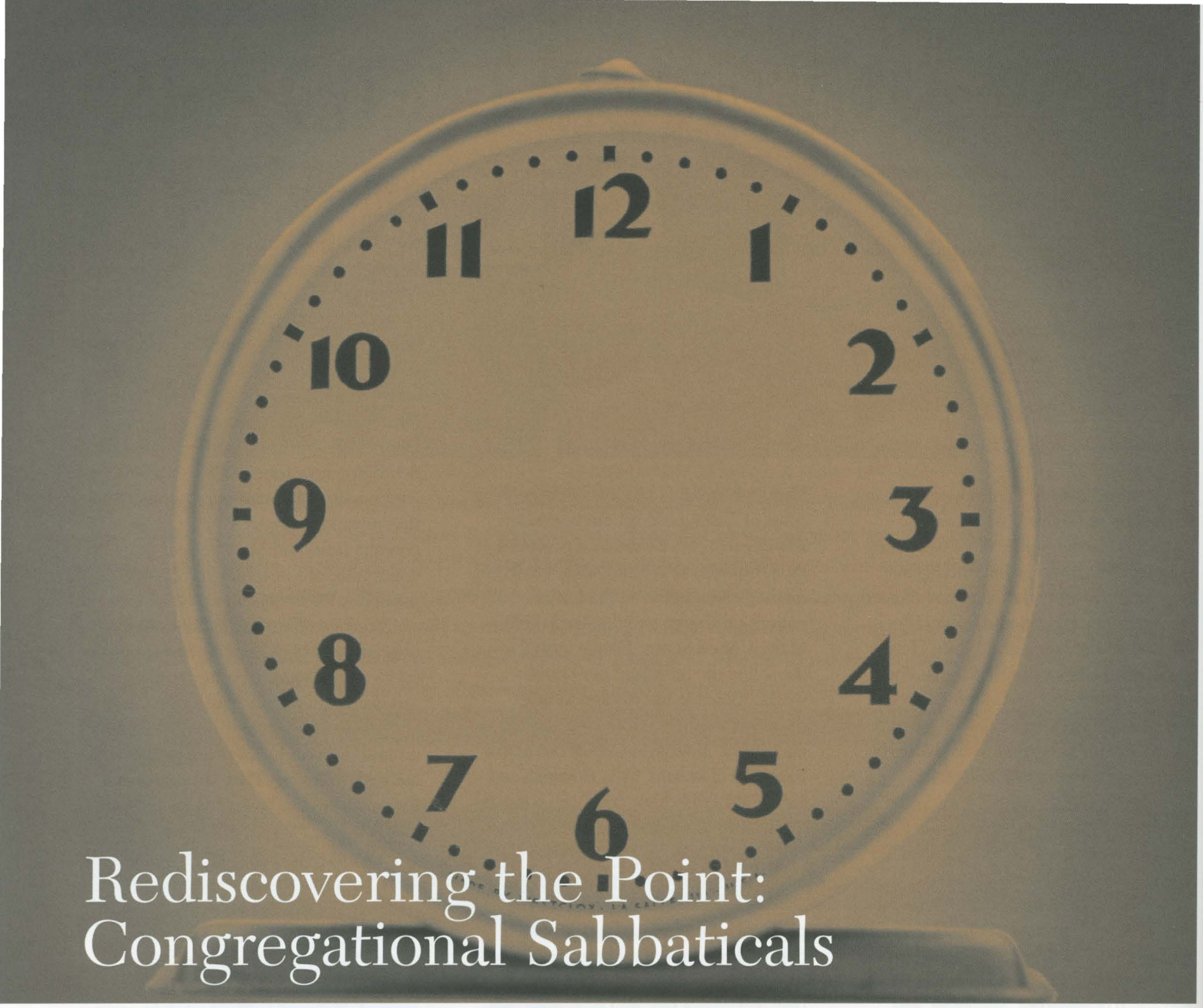
Drawing upon the best biblical scholarship available today, reaching deep into his own Catholic tradition and his personal experience as a priest within that tradition, and meditating carefully on the biblical Gospels, Elizondo demonstrates a rare and extremely valuable kind of pastoral thinking that brings human experience (contemporary and historical, everyday local and worldwide international) into a renewed relationship with the core of the Christian tradition. As he does so he illumines the lives of his readers, he gives us a fresh reading of God's ways of working in personal and world history (including the clash of civilizations that is so vexing to all of us), and he offers new angles of vision on the Scriptures themselves.

What was Elizondo thinking as the current story of the U.S. involvement with Iraq unfolded? He was thinking about the genuine contrasts offered by the Gospels to the ways of thinking that so dominate our consciousness today and that lead us into quagmires. Elizondo was probing the meaning of the fact of Jesus' utter marginality, lifting up the ways that Jesus reached beyond the boundaries of culture, class, religion, and pedigree, and describing how Jesus fashioned a new community of humans that transcends all that separates people. When Elizondo ponders Jesus and Mary he sees the emergence of a new humanity, a new possibility for human community.

Thank goodness Elizondo is not the only person who is thinking and acting in such creative ways. In congregations, seminaries, university classrooms, homes, and offices around this country—and around the world—there are people who are really thinking. They are ransacking their religious traditions for resources to illumine the global darkness that shrouds our personal, institutional, and national lives. They are giving us fresh vantage points and opportunities to think about and bring to life the healing of a torn world. They give us hope and free us to think in new ways about what really matters. We need to treasure these voices and places so that they can continue to have a hearing in a troubled world that all too often is not listening.



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 Alban Institute special report on leadership.



Rediscovering the Point: Congregational Sabbaticals

ROGER KRUGER

In bestselling British author Terry Pratchett's book *Monstrous Regiment*, a magic sword admits to a longing to become a plowshare. "I don't know what that is," the sword confesses, "but it sounds like an existence with some point to it." That could well describe the sentiments of congregations, especially those that are 20 years old or more or located in communities that have experienced significant change. Frequently in such congregations there is an accumulation of activities and customs that have taken on a life of their own. Like the blades of a fan that continue to spin long after the electricity has been turned off, so does the very busy-ness of congregations sometimes create a false sense of momentum long after the meaning and purpose of that activity has been blunted. Some who find themselves in such congregations recognize that something is missing, though they may be at a loss to describe what that is or how to regain it, except to say that now they would like to be engaged in something "with a point to it."

A remedy for this situation may come in the form of a congregational sabbatical—a solution not typically obvious to the pastor, the congregation, or even consultants like myself who work with congregations as they plan pastoral sabbaticals.

During the process of planning a sabbatical for a church pastor, a member of the congregation will often remark, "So, does this mean we won't have to go to church while our pastor is on sabbatical?" It's a comment intended to invoke a laugh, and it usually does, but it also may be evidence of a misunderstanding about sabbaticals. The assumption is that a pastor on a sabbatical is getting away with something. Regardless of the terminology one uses to describe it, to many parishioners a sabbatical seems like a glorious vacation. While it is true that sabbaticals involve rest and a release from the 24/7 demands under which pastors frequently work, sabbaticals are also intended to provide an

If it is important for the pastor to occasionally be freed from duties that have become burdensome so that he or she can take some time for prayer, reflection, and renewal, why wouldn't the members of a congregation also benefit from such a sabbatical?

opportunity for faith-building activities such as prayer and worship and reflection. They are not about "vacating," which implies getting rid of or relinquishing something. They are about "filling" and renewal.

Seriously, Though . . .

Perhaps it is merely a failure to grasp this concept that leads to the question about taking a break from church attendance, but I have recently begun to wonder whether the question of the congregational sabbatical shouldn't be taken seriously. If it is important for the pastor to occasionally be freed from duties that have become burdensome so that he or she can take some time for prayer, reflection, and renewal, why wouldn't the members of a congregation also benefit from such a sabbatical?

Originally, I came to the role of advocating for pastoral sabbaticals from the perspective of the church worker. An abundance of surveys indicate that ministry today is a high-stress occupation. In some denominations, more ministers leave the ministry each year than retire from it. This steady drain has contributed significantly to the clergy shortage that many denominations are facing today. Sabbaticals are a potentially effective tool to confront issues of burnout and stress. Additionally, sabbaticals can serve as a useful tool to foster long-term ministry by heading off the decline in hopes and expectations that frequently occurs after a pastor has remained in one place for a number of years. They also can be used as an initial stage in a strategic planning process where both pastor and congregational leaders engage in a time of spiritual discernment before coming together to plan the direction God is leading them in the coming years. In my experience, sabbaticals do all this and more.

But are we missing the boat by designing a process that helps ministers cope with the high stress of ministry while not at the same time addressing the congregational systems that create such high stress?

Several authors in recent years, including Jan Linn in *Reclaiming Evangelism: A Practical Guide for Mainline Churches* and Anthony Robinson in *Transforming Congregational Culture,* have recognized that the issues facing many congregations today cannot be solved solely by equipping pastors to become better leaders. Changes have taken place in American society during the last 20 to 30 years that have had a significant impact upon the function of congregations in communities. As Robinson writes, congregations have experienced "loss of numbers, loss of clout, loss of role, loss of certainty. All this loss and its attendant grief have spawned an era of conflict and uncertainty."[1] For a while it was believed that these problems could be addressed with a dose of good leadership. Congregations were encouraged to write mission statements. Evangelism classes were offered. Worship styles were changed in an effort to attract a different population, and attention was given to signage and the way visitors were welcomed. All of these "solutions," which in their own way seemed to make sense, were occasionally helpful, but in many cases the problems remained. There was a failure to understand the nature of a congregation's culture, the system dynamics that assure that nothing much will change no matter how hard you try. What is required is a transformation of congregations themselves.

A Congregation is Like a Marriage

A parallel can be drawn between this congregational situation and the following scenario, which I have frequently seen played out in my work as a pastoral counselor: A couple comes in for marriage counseling. It is clear that both spouses are disillusioned with some aspects of their relationship. They spend very little time talking with each other and when they do the conversation frequently degenerates into angry words, which create more unresolved hurt. I recommend a series of communication activities for them to do jointly and encourage them to set aside a weekly time to do something fun together. This is not brain surgery. Undoubtedly, the couple could have made this diagnosis for themselves. Yet when the couple returns for the next appointment, no improvement appears to have taken place. When they are asked about the communication exercises or the commitment to a weekly "couple time," they offer excuses. Why does this happen? Because the couple didn't really agree with the solutions the counselor recommended? No, the solutions made good sense to them and they really did intend to do them. Because they really don't want to change? No, they have committed to counseling and are paying good money for it. Is it

But are we missing the boat by designing a process that helps ministers cope with the high stress of ministry while not at the same time addressing the congregational systems that create such high stress?

A congregational sabbatical could be a time when—by inviting members to ask questions rather than providing them with solutions—the congregation is led to reflect upon what God is calling them to do.

perhaps that they don't know how to change, that they have created a system that sustains itself, that creates the roles each of them in the system is made to play, and—whether they want to or not—they find themselves continuing to play those roles? A wise therapist at this point will shift from offering solutions to asking questions, questions that will help the couple begin to reflect on their patterns of conduct and on how these patterns serve to protect them from issues they don't want to face. Until they get to a deeper level of the "culture" of their relationship, change is not likely.

Congregations are not unlike couples. Again, diagnosis is relatively simple: "We are not growing." "We are not serving our community." The solutions are relatively straightforward: "We need a mission statement." "We need to do evangelism." "We need to be more friendly to visitors." Yet, despite these efforts, the same problems persist.

A congregational sabbatical offers an alternative to these ineffective approaches. I first encountered the idea of a congregational sabbatical in Jan Linn's book.[2] A congregational sabbatical was, for him, a first step (in a series of 11) in a strategy to reclaim the authentic identity of a faith community. He envisioned a congregational sabbatical as a yearlong period during which all of a congregation's normal and customary "activities" would cease. A core group of leaders would respond to any emergency that should occur. Meanwhile, members would participate in "Spiritual Life Groups" that would focus on prayer, study, community-building, and "dreaming great dreams." These groups would include 5 to 10 minutes of silence as well as the opportunity for participants to relate their spiritual autobiographies.

The idea of congregational sabbaticals seems to me to incorporate several important elements useful to the task of transforming congregational culture. These include evaluating the effectiveness of current activities, learning to question and to listen, preventing burnout of lay leaders, and valuing the importance of sacred time.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Current Activities

If you are like me, you may wonder how a congregation decides what are the "essential" functions that should continue during a congregational sabbatical. I presume there is no set answer. Each congregation needs to find this out for itself. Worship, for example, is an essential function of the church, as is the task of spiritual formation. But should worship continue in its accustomed format during the sabbatical period or should it become something far more basic? Should some/none/all current discipleship endeavors continue or is this the time to try a different approach, as Jan Linn suggests? What management activities really are essential? Though these questions are difficult ones to wrestle with, by having to address them a congregation is made to face basic questions about its purpose and identity. And once a congregation has operated for a period of time without some of its traditional activities, it will be important to discover which of them were actually missed. Were there any negative consequences? Experience followed by reflection provides an opportunity for evaluation.

Learning to Question and to Listen

A congregational sabbatical could be a time when—by inviting members to ask questions rather than providing them with solutions—the congregation is led to reflect upon what God is calling them to do. Pastors with whom I have worked in the process of facilitating an individual sabbatical leave often remark on the significance of what occurs. Frequently there are several days, even weeks, at the beginning of a sabbatical when there are feelings of anxiety and guilt. The sense of "ought" lies heavily. It is difficult to adapt to a day that is unstructured by demands and expectations. But, once freed from the demands of obligations, the mind develops wings and takes delight in wandering, in reflecting, and in dreaming. Breaking the regular cycle of congregational activities will undoubtedly create discomfort for some, but ultimately it creates a situation where members can begin to question the previously unquestioned.

Questioning leads also to listening. Members learn from one another as they share their own experiences and their expectations for the congregation. Members also can be asked to search the Scriptures as the ultimate guidebook for discovering what a congregation is to be and to do. As members read and reflect on biblical passages that describe the nature of the church, they can be invited to reflect upon the question, "Is this an accurate description of who we are and what we do?"

Preventing Burnout

Lay leaders, no less than clergy, experience burnout. Many congregations experience a reoccurring cycle of lay leadership that goes something like this:

- Individuals become excited and highly motivated to serve.
- Because they are willing, they are asked to participate in many additional activities.

- Rather than experiencing reward and appreciation for their service, lay leaders are often surprised by the harshness of the criticism they sometimes receive.
- They also experience increased stress from their spouses and families because of the amount of time and energy the congregation expects from them.
- The leader drops out, refusing all further assignments, and is replaced by a new recruit with whom the cycle is repeated.

A congregational sabbatical, which quiets for a time the almost insatiable demand for the volunteers necessary to complete the tasks that maintain the current structure of an organization, offers the possibility of relief and renewal to overworked lay leaders.

Reaffirming the Significance of Sacred Time

One of the most significant ways a church culture ought to be different from a secular culture is in the understanding and experience of time. Though congregations today have almost completely lost sight of it, there is something sacred about the very nature of time. After all, the very first thing God created was not matter but time—the "evening" and "morning" of the first day. One of the commandments leads us to recognize the importance of "Sabbath"—to learn how to make time "holy." Ancient religions certainly recognized this. Most of what we know about them stems from monuments that in some way were related to the observation of time. Ancient gods still wink at us from the names of the months of the year and the days of the week. The English word "hour" comes from the monastic practice of dividing the day into periods of prayer times.

Yet today we have often capitulated to the secular concept of time, where "time is money," where one "spends" and "wastes" time. Even "time out" is associated more with punishment than with renewal. If, however, by the use of congregational sabbaticals members could experience the importance of rest as sacred time, a step would be taken toward creating a community that is clearly distinct from the world. In contrast to the busy-ness of the world, filled with its relentless list of things to do, places to go, and people to see, where success is measured by the accumulation of things and the accomplishment of tasks, a congregation could offer a place that validates a way of life different from the culture around it.

Whether a congregation is more aptly described as a sword or a plowshare, it is clearly intended to be something with a point to it. Congregational sabbaticals could serve to sharpen that point. ◆

Notes

1. Anthony B. Robinson, *Transforming Congregational Culture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 18.
2. Jan G. Linn, *Reclaiming Evangelism: A Practical Guide for Mainline Churches* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1998).

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Affixing Our Name to the Holy Narrative

SANDY EISENBERG SASSO

Over two thousand years ago, 70 men cloistered in separate rooms, tradition tells us, wrote the Greek Septuagint, the first translation of the Bible. On March 21, 1992, 70 women joined to speak out together to honor Judith Kaplan Eisenstein, who in 1922 became the first Bat Mitzvah. Over two thousand years ago, 70 men wrote a translation out of their experience, a translation that influenced generations of those who read the Bible. During the last three decades, Jewish women have translated their experience into ritual, liturgy, and sacred narrative, and are influencing generations yet to come.

Seventy years ago, Judith Kaplan, a young girl of twelve and a half, stood in front of her congregation, as no woman had done before, to recite the Torah blessings and read Torah as a Bat Mitzvah. What began that day with the determination of a young girl and the wisdom of her father, Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, became a revolution in religious creativity. We are still unwrapping that gift.

From birth to death, the ritual life of the religious community has been renewed. From welcoming girls into the covenant, from menarche to menopause, through infertility and miscarriage, through marriage and divorce, new landscapes are being sculpted from the soil of tradition.

Simple Decision, Difficult Choice

When I decided that I would be a rabbi I was 16 years old. It was 1963 and there were no female rabbis then, though I was aware that Sally Priesand was studying at Hebrew Union College. In many ways it was a simple decision: I was in love with Judaism and wanted to teach and serve the community just as my rabbi did. But in other ways it was a difficult choice. For many years I told no one of my secret ambition except the rabbi of my congregation, my beloved teacher and mentor. Who knew, I told myself, maybe this desire would pass and I would find another passion, another career goal. Throughout college I tried, but nothing else satisfied me. Finally, when I was about to graduate from college, I applied to the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia.

I joined the second entering class of the seminary in 1969. I did not consider that being a woman would make any difference in my studies or my rabbinate. It did not take me long to learn differently.

What struck me most was the absence of female voices, of women's thoughts and stories in the text. I read of men's struggles with God, but not of women's. What I read either excluded women or did not understand who I was as a woman. No one was answering my questions; in fact, no one was asking them. I felt ill at ease in the emerging feminist culture that did not address my Jewish soul. I felt marginalized in the Jewish community I sought to serve because it did not embrace my woman's soul.

At the same time, there were those who sought to discourage me from my goal of becoming a rabbi. A few months into my first year at seminary I received a letter from a woman I had never met who had read that I was studying to become a rabbi. "I don't know what gives you the chutzpah to want to become a rabbi," she wrote. "In my letters I usually wish people success, but in your case I won't. I hope you don't make it, for your sake and for Judaism's sake."

These were not the only discouraging words I heard. Just before I was to be ordained I was asked to speak at a large synagogue in my community about women and Judaism. After the presentation, when the rabbi would typically thank the speaker, he instead said, "When you grow up you'll change your mind." Clearly I didn't, but he did. He eventually voted for the ordination of women in the Conservative movement.

I came to realize over time—as have other female rabbis—that my goal was not just to fit in, but to bring who I was to the rabbinate. Our being women is not the only point, but neither is it beside the point. A woman minister in Indianapolis once told me that at the beginning of her career she tried to be neither male nor female, just a good minister. "Then I heard God say, 'I call you because you are a woman. You bring the pain and healing of your life.'" She was right. For more than three decades, women rabbis have brought the pain and healing of their lives and, in the process, renewed the Jewish community.

Is Women's Spirituality Different?

Most sacred pilgrimages had led up a mountain. Abraham on Moriah, Moses on Sinai, and Elijah on Carmel. There were steep climbs and dizzying descents, but mountains and ladders with angels coming up and down did not find a resting place in a woman's soul. For the last three decades, Jewish women have begun to wonder what a pilgrimage to Sarah's tent and Miriam's well might feel like—whether women's spirituality was different. They have wrestled with God and tradition and they have not let go until the tradition has blessed them. In the process they have renewed Jewish ritual, prayer, theology, and history.

Because women have been traditionally denied a place in the public square, they have often experienced the sacred as it moves through interior space, through the interpersonal. Having been excluded from the religious center, women's spirituality and leadership style is especially marked by inclusivity—a sensitivity to those on the periphery, a belief that difference doesn't mean superiority or inferiority.

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Women have a propensity for simultaneous attentiveness. They can watch a baby, answer the phone, keep the soup from boiling over, and edit a sermon all at the same time. Today we call that multitasking. It's a mark of women's spirituality and a skill women bring to their leadership.

I remember when, as a young mother, I watched with my toddlers a program of Mr. Rogers. He built a tower of blocks and said, "This is the way boys build." Then he took the same blocks and made a circle and said, "This is the way girls build." And that is exactly how women rabbis have helped to change the way we build Jewish communities—constructing networks, not hierarchies, bringing together diverse voices, building consensus. Studies have shown that women leaders are less concerned with

rank, listen more, and interrupt less. Their reaction to stress is not "flight or fight" but "tend and befriend."

The spirituality of the tent and the well is, after all, different from that of the mountain. We ascend the mountain alone and feel all-powerful. From the top, the vision is of superiority. We draw water from the well and express gratitude. We find shelter with others in the tent. The vision is of the shared good.

Ritual Renewed

Women have made themselves a seat at tradition's table and poured their souls into Torah, prayer, and ritual. They have blown a woman's breath through the hallowed vessels of sacred texts and forms and renewed them.

Some years ago a woman came to my office. Her first child was stillborn 18 years before. She was still grieving. She was angry with Judaism because it gave her no prayer, no ritual, no comfort. I told her things had changed. I offered her a new prayer and ritual for her loss. She returned home, went to the unmarked grave of her stillborn child and, for the first time in 18 years, said Kaddish.

It has been the unwritten narratives of women's lives that have shaped the contours of a religious ritual renewal. Women's questions have helped to sanctify these unmarked passages of time, the spaces left empty by the generations. Throughout the life cycle new landscapes are being sculpted from the soil of tradition.

In rabbinical school, when a fellow student's wife had a baby girl, I asked, "What should we do?" In response to the answer, "Nothing much," my husband and I helped to create a covenantal ritual for girls. Today, 30 years later, it is tradition.

I remember the questions we first asked: In a tradition that dictates ritual from awakening until preparing for sleep, can there be symbolic acts and holy words to sanctify the moment of learning of pregnancy? In a faith that celebrates escape from danger with a prayer, can there be a prayer for the healing of a battered woman? In a tradition that counts hundreds of blessings, can there be one upon the birth of a daughter? For a community that counsels an intricate ritual of mourning, can there be a ceremony to carry a family through the sorrow of miscarriage and stillbirth? Now the answers to each of these questions is yes. Yes, there can and there is!

> Women have helped not only to create new ritual, but to reshape its enactment.

Women have helped not only to create new ritual, but to reshape its enactment. Ritual is not something acted out upon us but something we enact. One member of my congregation said after being asked to speak at the birth ceremony of her child, "Thank you for giving me a voice. Last time I was silent."

Most striking have been the ways in which women have added their voices not only to life cycle ritual but to holy day celebrations. For 15 years I have conducted a women's seder in Indianapolis. Women have come to see themselves as active participants in the seder, to hear how women played a role in redemption, to go back and see themselves as having made the journey out of Egypt, and this time to leave footprints. They have brought new rituals like Miriam's cup, which celebrates the well that accompanied the Israelites in the journey through the desert. They have added stories that narrate the role women played in redemption. Now women are no longer silent servers; they have speaking parts. They have helped us read our history in a way that pays attention to power that is informal and not publicly acknowledged.

Our responsibility, according to Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionism, is to "look upon ourselves not merely as descendents but as ancestors of posterity, responsible for preserving and creating symbols and rituals for future generations." Women have done just that and enriched Jewish life.

Understanding Torah

As women have transformed the ritual landscape, so they have begun to be narrators of sacred stories. In reading Torah women no longer accept their absence from text, but stand as full members of the community of Israel and reestablish their relationship to Torah.

Women have become interpreters of Torah—writing commentary, creating midrash. In the process, they have given voices, names, and stories to women who had none.

As the renowned Israeli author Amos Oz taught, "Fundamentalists live their lives with an exclamation point. I prefer to live my life with a question mark." That is how women have been reading biblical texts—with question marks.

Just as women asked questions of ritual, so they asked new questions of the Torah text: Whose story is told? Who is excluded? Who is other? Who is Lot's wife, the wife of Noah, the daughter of Pharaoh? Now, through new commentary and midrash, we are finding answers. We know Lot's wife as a woman named Idit who turns not out of disobedience to God but out of compassion for her daughters, who are following her. The pillar of salt is her tears. Now we know the loving arms of Pharaoh's daughter, Bityah, daughter of God, who saves Moses from the Nile. We know Noah's wife is called Naamah, because her deeds are *ne'emim,* pleasing. We know women's names, hear their voices and their stories, and we better understand ourselves and Torah.

New Names for God

Women have also begun to bring their experience to understanding God and to prayer. The rabbis gave new names to God. One of them is "HaMakom," the

place. We call God out of our place, and the place where we stand is holy. Each calling, each name, is a partial apprehension of the spirit of divinity. As the divine moves through the interior world of women, God has become known by names other than Father and King. Women call God Mother, Friend, Womb of Life, Healer. And as the names for God change, so does the way a woman views herself as a valuable partner with the Divine, and so does our understanding of God.

Through women we have come to know God not as one who has power over us, but as one who empowers us. What is important is not what God can do to us or for us, but what we can do because of God.

That understanding of God has also found its way into prayer. The only women's prayer recorded in the Hebrew Bible is Hannah's prayer for her son, a prayer of the heart. It is silent. Women's prayers of the heart are no longer all silent. They are finding their ways not only into alternative readings or collections, but into the Siddur, a book that we kiss when it falls.

By adding their voices and valuing their perspectives, questions, and insights, women rabbis and other female Jewish leaders and teachers have helped to renew and enlarge Jewish tradition. To the comment, "Well, it doesn't all look like tradition," I offer the following story of Picasso: When someone saw Picasso's drawing of Gertrude Stein, he said, "That doesn't look like Gertrude Stein," to which Picasso responded, "It will."

We create ceremonies, we tell stories, we make and enliven rituals in the tradition of Sarah and Abraham, who celebrated Isaac's weaning; in the tradition of our ancestors, who taught a new generation not to sit in darkness but to light Sabbath candles; in the tradition of the rabbis, who told the Hanukkah story for generations. In their name, in the name of all those who went before them, and in the name of all those generations yet to come, we light candles, we preserve, and we create. We marvel at how much remains the same in our cycles of time, what ancient words still move us, and yet how different we are, what silences must still be broken. What really matters is not just that we are descendants, but that we are ancestors who bequeath our spiritual quest to the next generation.

We accept this awe-filled responsibility with a deep sense of humility. After all, who are we, tied as we are to our own time and place, to fashion the sacred words and create the holy drama to carry us through the passages of our years? We accept this responsibility with a strong sense of duty. After all, who are we, bearers of the image of God, not to pour our souls into the crucible of time, to affix our name to the holy narrative of our people? ◆

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Becoming a Clergy Mother

A Study of How Motherhood Changes Ministry

PAMELA COOPER-WHITE

Images of birth have long held power and meaning in Christian theology. Indeed, the sacrament of baptism has birth as its central metaphor. What more powerful image of the flowering of human sexuality into birth than the ritual in the Great Vigil of Easter, plunging the Paschal candle into the baptismal font, from which the catechumens will then arise newly born of water and the spirit?

A parental role has also figured prominently in ancient paradigms of ministry—albeit only as "Father" and not "Mother," until the recent ordinations of women in some branches of the Anglican Communion.

And yet, both the sacramental image of birth in baptism and the parental title "Father" have remained at the level of metaphor for two thousand years. With the exclusion of women from ordained ministry until very recently, birth-as-symbol has but rarely been brought together with actual birthing experiences of the church's ministers.

This separation is not accidental. A longstanding bias in western civilization has elevated culture over nature, mind over body, and creation over procreation. The mind-body dualism inherent in Christian theology from its sources in Greek philosophy has been a vehicle for the subordination of women, whose experience largely has been—consciously and unconsciously—fused in patriarchal imagination with the bloodier realities of life, nature, the body, and mortality, and therefore to be subdued, denied, isolated, or excluded.[1] Thus, the *symbol* of birth was appropriated into Christian theology, but the actual *lived experience* of giving birth was quarantined from the church's rituals while women were excluded from the ministerial hierarchy.

Women's advent into ordained leadership has the potential for shifting more than just ecclesial power structures. The relatively sudden juxtaposition of *metaphors* of birth with the *actual enfleshed experiences* of birthing in the persons of the church's ministers may well impact some of the church's deepest rituals and the ways in which Christianity's deepest symbols may now be received by believers.

As an ordained woman, having experienced many inner and outer shifts after giving birth to my own daughter, I began to wonder how either the church, or women in ordained ministry, could move unchanged through such an enormous encounter between life and symbol. So this study was born: How do clergywomen who have given birth experience the transition to motherhood in relation to their vocations as women and as ministers? What happens to women's ministry as they become mothers for the first time, and what are the responses of those they serve?

Recognizing the richness and uniqueness of individual women's stories, the method I chose was a form of qualitative, ethnographic research, using open-ended questions with the goal of inductively achieving an understanding of these clergy mothers' experience in depth, detail, and nuance. The study included lengthy face-to-face interviews with three clergywomen, plus an online discussion among 28 clergywomen on "Ecunet," an ecumenical communications network. Participants represented the full spectrum of mainline Protestant clergy: full- and part-time, in parish, in campus ministry, and in agency and church administration settings. Their responses suggest common threads in the experience of birth and motherhood, by both clergywomen and their constituents in ministry.

At the core of the study's findings is the recognition that becoming a clergy mother, like all major life passages, is not an *event* but a *process*, impacting both the clergywoman and those she serves. The respondents identified six phases or dimensions to this process: annunciation, nativity, sacrifice, redefining, the "mommy track" in ministry, and a new experience of God.

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Annunciation

Congregations or constituencies that were receptive to the announcement of the minister's pregnancy tended to be supportive of the clergywoman in preparing a space for the newborn arriving in their midst. Congregations that were less receptive were generally not described as hostile but as "clueless" or in denial. Such congregations typically did not include many children.

This often paralleled the clergywomen's own inexperience and denial. Some women, with a first pregnancy, had been unrealistic about how much a baby would change things. One woman was planning an overseas church-to-church delegation and could not fathom how being pregnant would affect her involvement in this demanding project. Friends were crucial for many women in helping them to see reality: "My friend came over and was just stunned to the point that she had to sit down. It just took her breath away, because I had taken all the stuff out of the room and I had transformed my study into a nursery. Symbolically, for her, that was just so powerful that she needed to sit and regroup," said one study participant. Clergywomen support groups often helped mark this transition through conversation and ritual.

Many women reported being nervous about breaking the news to the congregation: "'New Woman Minister Arrives Pregnant!' While I'm sure there were concerns, no one said a negative word to me. In fact, the women of the church were much more concerned with planning a baby shower than an installation service!" Another woman reported how the community's prayers became incorporated as support for all pregnant women.

Pregnancy had a unique way of highlighting the fact that "Pastor is a woman": "[When] I was in hospital chaplaincy, the Roman Catholic sisters would ask what I was called, and I said, 'I'd really prefer to be called by my name.' 'Well, no, no, we need a title. . . Why wouldn't you just be called

Father?' 'Well, notice any difference?' They said, 'We don't think of our priests as men!'. . . I periodically chuckle when I think you might be able to sort of get away with pretending that this person up there [was] genderless. . .but when you have a pregnant woman standing up there it's very different. . .You can't pretend I'm not female!"

Nativity

A greater adjustment occurred after the birth. Initially, most women experienced positive responses: "It was like it was *our* baby almost. For the first few months it was just this honeymoon." Most women took their babies to work soon after the birth, had them in meetings, and chose to nurse, even publicly, with little resistance. The more experience the parishioners had with children of their own, the easier the transition went: "Having child on hip or stuffed dog over the shoulder with the clericals and the whole thing, I think I've been blessed to be in places that saw that as a gift and . . . a strength." More than one congregation supported their clergy through tragedy, as when one pastor's baby died of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Pregnancy and birth forged new bonds between clergywomen and women parishioners. As one minister explained, "When I first went there, there was a *huge* gap—I was an urban professional who hadn't taken her husband's name. They were small town, rural folks who really saw me as 'other.' Then I got pregnant. The women came together for the first time in years to throw me a shower. They excitedly awaited our first child's birth." Another clergywoman described a similar experience: "The first time I staggered into the pulpit bleary-eyed and sleep-deprived after being up all night with a colicky baby, a barrier between them and me was broken down. Finally, we had a truly common experience."

A Reasonable, Holy, and Living Sacrifice

Following an initial adjustment period in which they attempted to "do it all," clergywomen who had become mothers almost universally came up against the reality that something had to give. They began to examine the ways in which they were being called to pour themselves out for their children, their congregations, and their intimate relationships, and they began to make choices—often sacrificial, but necessary for health and good ministry.

Facing Limits

Most women attempted to resume work at the same pace and availability they had managed before: "I went back to work after eight weeks and nearly collapsed from exhaustion," said one clergywoman. Most reported that the absence of maternity policies for clergy forced them to return much sooner than they felt was appropriate. "I was chronically tired," said another.

As with all mothers working outside the home, juggling became a major preoccupation: "Whatever the situation of the call, the demands of the congregation, family, and friends create a tension." As one single mother wrote, "Sunday morning, 2:00 a.m.: child wakes with a 104-degree fever and earache. Do I leave this tiny person with a sitter and go to the churches I serve, or do I get an emergency replacement?" A clergywoman married to another pastor, both "PKs" ("preachers' kids") wrote, "We have resolutely stuck with 50 hours or less a week as full-time. Because of our experience as PKs, and because one of the parishes we served had experienced a sexual boundary violation by a previous pastor, we have come to believe that working any more than this is a recipe for trouble. How can you do a decent job of parenting or 'spous-ing' if you are working more than six eight-hour days a week? We don't know our fathers because they were always at church. We don't want to do that to our kids."

Clergywomen had few role models for coping. Mentoring was rarely available, and existing models were often experimental and problematic: "Literally three or four days after the birth, [my seminary professor] was at home having a class in her house, nursing her new baby. . . It made such an impression—'what a great model!!'. . . I don't know her well enough to have ever heard her say, 'It was the dumbest thing I ever did,' I don't know if she thinks that. But. . . that was one of the only models out there." The same pastor realized "having a baby was the most wonderful thing in the world in terms of forcing me to slow down. . . I began to realize that I needed some boundaries."

Another clergywoman described this same notion in terms of ethical responsibility: "Pastor-moms have an opportunity to model ways of parenting that are healthier. . .We have a duty not to try to be superwoman, but to be honest and open about what a struggle it is to combine these roles well. . . Corporate America. . .has had no mandate to put families first, whereas the church should have a harder time justifying a failure to do so."

"It Takes a Village"

Family, friends, and others were crucial in helping clergy mothers to manage, especially during the early years of their children's lives. Often, helpers came from outside the clergywomen's congregations: "As soon as [my son] was weaned, he started attending my husband's church. . .which had a regular nursery attendant, an elderly Catholic

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grandma who had been there forever. I believe she was for some time the face of God for my son!"

Crashing

Women who attempted to ignore new constraints on their lives simply crashed. Tending a baby's needs caused women to realize, often for the first time, that they did not have endless amounts of time, energy, and money. This was frustrating, even painful: "I had so much that I wanted to do and accomplish professionally and personally. . .it was just crushing to realize that I couldn't do it all. . . And I crashed. . . I actually called in sick on Mother's Day. It just seemed totally symbolic."

Redefining Ministry

The limits clergy moms faced after giving birth caused them to look carefully at roles and priorities. In almost every case, clergywomen reported some *redefining* after they became mothers—of boundaries, leadership, and church policies designed only with male clergy in mind. New paradigms for ministry emerged.

Who's Really My Child?

Like the little bird in the children's book who runs frantically from the kitten to the cow, to the big backhoe, asking "Are you my mother?"[2] many clergy mothers began to look at their parishioners and ask themselves, "Who's really my child here?" They began to recognize that old patterns of ministerial caretaking no longer made sense once they had an actual child to care for: "I knew that my baby daughter needed me in a constant and dependent way that adults in my ministry settings did not. I became much clearer and more natural about setting limits and boundaries, and much less likely to fall into traps of codependency."

With this new clarity came realism: "It's not going to be perfect, it's not going to be great. It usually is always good enough. But I know that I could do better if I had the single-minded kind of concentration that other people have,"

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commented one study participant. Balance and self-care were frequently mentioned. As another participant reported, "It has forced me to try to achieve some sense of balance in my life and to re-evaluate my priorities. I am also more aware and attentive to the need to take care of myself in all areas of my life so that I will be more effective in my relationships not only with my kids, but with others." Some women found it easier to claim time away from church duties once they had children: "People would much more readily tolerate my saying, 'No, I have to go pick up my daughter from daycare now'. . .where they would not have understood if I simply wanted time with my husband or just alone-time for myself." When a partner could share a full 50 percent of the load, women reported much greater ability to manage all their areas of responsibility.

Sorting Roles: Mother and Pastor

Clergy mothers also felt they frequently had to clarify their roles: "If I felt any conflict, it was between my role as mother and my role as priest. I would call up the Sunday school person and say, 'I'm speaking as E's mother now. I have a concern. . . I found myself constantly having to define which role I was speaking out of, literally to get some kind of understanding."

Especially for Episcopal clergywomen—who frequently struggle with the problem of "What shall we call you?"—having a baby helped settle the question of whether or not to accept the title "Mother" where male colleagues were "Father." One woman commented, "It's an adventure to be both a biological mother and a priest Mother. . . Most people do call me 'Mother Pat.'" But many women priests find the idea of any parental title problematic. Noting the psychological transference inherent in such titles, one wrote, "This transference stuff is a common experience. If Church = Mother-Church = Pastor Mom, then the parishioners are jealous siblings who resent sharing Mom with the new baby. Somehow this doesn't seem to happen to male pastors so much."

Enhanced Relationships and Capacity for Compassion

Many of the clergywomen who participated in the study felt their ministry had been directly enhanced by experiencing motherhood. Many said their compassion and capacity for empathy was enlarged. One pastor, whose baby was born prematurely, stated, "I learned more from the ICU [intensive care unit] social worker on how to be a pastor. . .than I have learned from some pastors." Becoming a mom also allowed clergywomen access to some of the most tender feelings and experiences of some parishioners: "I had. . . visits from women who told me about their pregnancy stories that *only* their doctors and husbands knew. . . Several 70- and 80 year-old women told me about miscarriages and problem pregnancies that they have never spoken about with anyone."

Becoming a mother also facilitated relating with children: "I've been much more sensitized to the needs of children as full-fledged members of the Body of Christ." This new responsiveness sometimes led to new energy, even evangelism: "The churches are growing and indeed there is new vitality. . . Having young children has opened up many relationships with people already in the church as well as folks outside the

church. The pregnant priest and the 'lady priest with the baby' have. . .been a real magnet for children, youth, and families."

More Shared Leadership

Changes in traditional assumptions about the caretaking role of clergy further opened avenues to increase the relative power of the laity and mutuality in leadership: "We were experimenting with some real new, and I think important, forms of conceptualizing and doing ministry in partnership with laity and pastor. . .having some really neat conversations about what are our unique roles in this community."

Flexibility and trust became lived realities as some women shared parenting with their parishes. "Rolling with things definitely has to do with being a mom: The flexibility of being able to pick up and do what needs to be done in the moment," said one clergywoman. "People are also responding to our trust in literally handing over our son. He is teaching us what church *community* is about—caring for one another," commented another.

Creating Policy

Motherhood sensitized clergywomen to advocate for policy changes that helped many church families. Clergy mothers had to lobby for maternity/parental leave: "The presbytery didn't have any parental leave policies, so I was the test case. Fortunately, the presbytery as a whole was supportive after the initial 'what do we do now?' reaction. . . But [the personnel committee chair's] partially kidding response was, 'Don't you women know how to prevent these things?'"

Many women initiated or upgraded childcare at parish, regional, and national levels: "Following the birth, we did have a few Sundays where I threatened to take the baby into the pulpit with me, since the childcare people didn't show up. I noticed an increase in the timeliness and regularity of the childcare people following my delivery! This had a positive effect on many who needed [childcare] to participate."

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Childcare also was linked with evangelism: "We can't wait for people to ask—they'll go somewhere where it's already happening."

Sacrificing the Relationship

Most women's greatest regrets concerned leaving the ministry setting in which they had had their babies. Some, though not all, departures hinged on clergywomen's realization that they could no longer keep up the pace they had been managing prior to becoming a mother. This sometimes caused sadness, even guilt. Women also wondered whether the positive changes they had initiated as part of the mutual process of adjustment would last after they left.

One woman in particular grieved leaving a parish where the responsibilities had simply become too overwhelming, and part-time ministry was not an option. Her passion for parenting, however, surprised her: "It was just an amazing revelation to me that I was willing to give it all up. . . My child's a lot more interesting. The people I [was] spending my days with were really fascinating, and. . .it's every pastor's dream of a job. . . It was perfect, and yet I was ready to walk away from it."

This may have implications for why more women than men leave ministry altogether.[3] All the respondents in my study were still in ministry, but many had left the parish for other settings.

A "Mommy Track" in Ministry?

Some women felt the shift from a more demanding ministry role as a sacrifice, and some felt marginalized by a perceived preferential status for full-time senior pastors working overtime in large congregations. Is there a slower-paced, if sometimes prejudicial, "mommy track" in ministry? As one clergywoman explained, "I made some real calculated decisions about giving up stuff. But it's hard. . . I don't think less of myself as a human being, but I sure pay for it professionally." Several women warned that leaves of absence could be detrimental: "I have never served in a permanent pastoral position . . . since then (our daughter is almost 10 now). . . I can't prove it, but I think taking the leave of absence nixed my career." "It was so hard to get off leave of absence that I would encourage anyone *not* to try it."

More generally, many women perceived that there is reluctance among large, thriving churches to call clergy moms. Some identified a double standard around parenting and gender: "I sometimes feel envy towards men who may also be parents but who don't seem to go through quite the same emotional stress about it, and who don't seem to sacrifice as much."

Single mothers tended to have more positive views: "In some ways there was more understanding when I was a single mom. . .an understanding well, of course, no, I can't do that at 5:00, I need to pick up my son from daycare. . ." This woman also believed being single had enhanced mobility and therefore career options. Another conceded, however, "Whether I have been as good a mom as I could have been if I had had a spouse, and hadn't had to work as hard as I have, is another story. My daughters have no idea of the obstacles that I have overcome, of the cost of what I have achieved to me personally and physically—and perhaps intellectually, too.'"

Other women felt that the shifts occasioned by the "mommy track" enhanced their ministry: "Maybe the mommy track has 'held me back,' but I don't think so. I

think it has helped me be a more effective and compassionate minister."

A Deeper Experience of God

Finally, relational and organizational changes were accompanied by new or deepened theological perspectives, in which the mothering and nurturing aspects of God were more fully experienced by both the ministers and their congregations. The incarnational aspect of God's presence was often perceived more readily, as pregnant women and women with babies on their hips were seen publicly celebrating the church's rituals.

Sacramental Experiences

Many clergy moms had rich experiences doing liturgy. A woman who was pregnant in Advent wrote, "I imagined some of the things Mary must have kept in her heart to ponder. And I understood incarnation in a whole new way when I gazed at each of my infant sons." On Christmas Eve, another woman was touched when a parishioner said, 'This is great, it's Christmas Eve and there's a diaper bag in the sacristy!'"

Celebrating the Eucharist while pregnant was powerful, joyful, and at times humorous: "Having another life inside me while I'm celebrating the Eucharist is really amazing. It's quite an experience being in front of a whole congregation of people of all ages, with a baby jumping. This is a very active child!"

One of the most moving remembrances involved officiating at a funeral while pregnant: "I was really struck by standing at the graveside pronouncing the final words over the body and at the same time feeling my child kicking inside me."

God as Holy Lap

"I began to think of God as Holy Lap/hospitality/comfort/nurture and definitely more truly female. There was a completeness in the nursing relationships, both with my first child and with my twins. . .that informed my imagining about God. Yet the babies grew and began to pull away, as each of us strives for independence while longing for oneness with our Creator. My sermons became full of womb and breast imagery, because those were the images that had meaning for me, and the ways in which God had been revealed to me." Wrote another woman, "It was a wonderful, rich time because it was one of those congregations that was very open to reconceptualizing who God is and how God relates to us."

Several women commented how seeing God through their children's eyes enhanced their theology: "Just watching a child grow. . .and his faith and how he sees things has helped *me* to see things." This seeing also intensified many women's awareness of sexism in the church, and their commitment to change this for their children: "When my daughter was two, she insisted that God was a boy and that boys were better. At two, she had already heard this loud and clear. I struggle with biblical stories and the tradition, which, frankly, supports this notion. How can I help them unhook from this idolatry so they can see themselves as made in God's image, too?!"

Parenting also brought women closer to God in their own spirituality. As one clergywoman explained, "Theologically, having my children has opened worlds for me. I have come to understand the power of El Shaddai (the great breasted one), the God Naomi appealed to when she felt most bereft. The interdependence of a nursing mother and her child is a profound way to understand how God needs to love us as much as we need to be loved. I understand Isaiah's references better now—can a mother forget her sucking child? No way—those breasts need to feed!" Another clergywoman described her experience this way: "I have come to appreciate the parental imagery for our relationship with God so much more. I know now how God could be both fiercely protective and exasperated with us at the same time."

One woman's theological reflections sum up many themes in this study: "Being a parent has tempered my ministry and encouraged a wonder for the world which surrounds us. . . I cannot imagine how being a co-creator in a very active sense cannot but change your life, and that of those around you!" ◆

Notes

1. This theme is elaborated further in Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church's Response* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 43–60.
2. P.D. Eastman, *Are You My Mother?* (New York: Random House Books for Young Readers, 1960).
3. 13 percent of clergy women vs. 8 percent of clergy men. Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair T. Lummis, and Patricia Mei Yin Chang, *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998).

Milk (For Clare)

Rev. Penelope Duckworth

Pulled by your cry, it surged out.
Welling from the nipple's pores, it was thin,
bluish, sprayed in tiny streams,
caused a slow, dull, homesick pain.

We laughed in astonishment as it kept coming
until your shining mouth let go
and you drowsed in sunlit bliss.

You, at seven months, nurse and pedal
rhythmically, your hands explore the air.
I fill to meet your whitest need,
The hind milk now, grown thick and creamy,
will hold you sleeping with its weight.

Dame Julian, in her mystic state,
perceived Lord Jesus as her mother
offering to nurse us all,
milk flowing from his giving breasts.

It is a glory, this feeding from the body:
Take and eat this simple meal.
This is my body given for you.

Take and be full, my daughter,
from this white vein of sharing.
Take nourishment in all its forms
as it comes generously down the years,
from this first food to banquet fare,
in memory of me.

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ALBAN INSTITUTE REPORT TO OUR MEMBERS

Celebrating the Alban Way

The Alban Institute was created 30 years ago as American congregations searched for answers to divisive issues, dwindling numbers, and an erosion of faith. From Alban's groundbreaking consulting practice to original research, publications, and seminars on leadership, conflict, planning, and transitions, the Alban Institute has earned a reputation for being first on the path of discovery. We know what it takes to build vital, enduring communities of faith.

Alban understands that vibrant congregations shape America and the world, that inquiring leadership is the key to congregation-building, and that wise leadership is nurtured by discoveries and expert advice. In practice, the Alban Institute

- **Explores** the architecture of strong communities of faith through research and analysis
- **Distributes** worldwide an expanding body of knowledge through books, magazines, www.alban.org, and the Congregational Resource Guide
- **Applies** research and insight through counsel to congregational and denominational leaders
- **Designs** educational seminars advancing congregational and judicatory best practices

The Alban Institute is the largest independent congregational resource and advocacy membership organization in the United States, reaching hundreds of thousands of congregants across all faith traditions with our singular approach to congregation-building known as the Alban Way.

The Alban Way is a learning tradition—open to new ideas and innovation while caring for and respecting congregations. The Alban learning environment taps the spiritual resources of faith traditions while drawing on a vast reservoir of congregational know-how and wisdom born on the firing line. Clergy and lay leaders seek guidance from the most respected problem-solvers, strategists, and teachers in the business.

Today, for a variety of reasons (and we believe the work of the Alban Institute is one of them), growing numbers of people are turning to religion for answers and to Alban with questions about leadership, strategic planning, transitions, conflict resolution, and growth. Clearly, the work of the Alban Institute is more important now than ever before. Thirty years is a good beginning. We believe the best is yet to come.

Celebrating 30 Years
1974-2004
THE ALBAN INSTITUTE

James P. Wind

Rev. Dr. James P. Wind
President

A Year of Transition

Congregations Makes the "Top 12" List

There are 12 journals that the nation's clergy regard as most influential. This is the list, from the *Christian Century,* August 23, 2003:

Christian Century	Leadership
Christianity Today	Net Results
Clergy Journal	Newsweek
Congregations	Pulpit Resource
Homiletics	Time
Interpretation	Weavings

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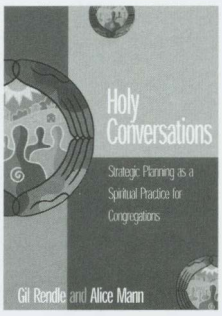
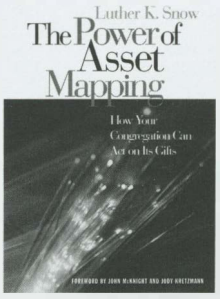
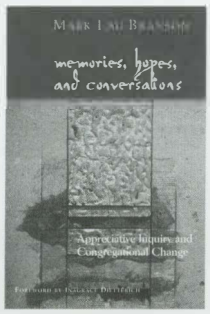
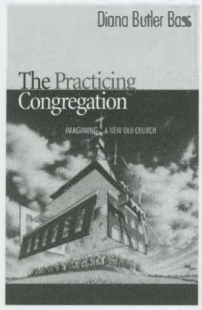
To better serve members, clergy, and congregational leaders, Alban moved into new offices and a conference center in Herndon, Virginia. The modern facilities accommodate groups of many sizes and feature technology enabling Webcasting and distance learning. Other highlights of 2003 include:

- *Alban In Progress*, a new monthly newsletter, was launched to help members connect to Alban research and thought leaders.
- *Congregations*, Alban's award-winning quarterly magazine, was expanded to 44 pages. The magazine provided in-depth coverage of issues such as leadership, sacred space, and cultural boundaries.
- *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as Spiritual Practice for Congregations* was published. Written by Alban senior consultants Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, this book is the first of several that address "Conversations That Matter."







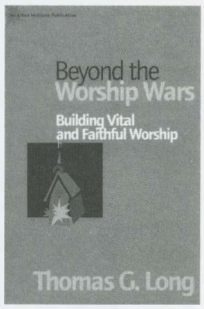


- www.alban.org recorded over 400,000 visits in 2003 as the site won recognition as a major congregational portal.
- The Congregational Resource Guide expanded listings, improved navigation, and nearly doubled—to more than 200,000—the number of visits to www. congregationalresources.org. *(Produced in partnership with the Indianapolis Center for Congregations.)*

and Achievement

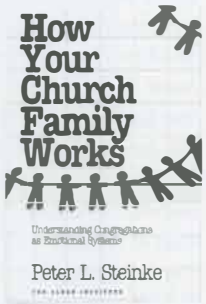
PUBLISHING

Top Five Bestsellers in 2003

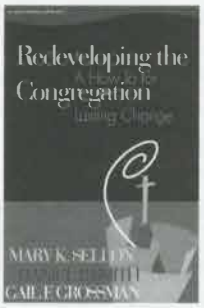


Beyond the Worship Wars: Building Vital and Faithful Worship
BY THOMAS G. LONG

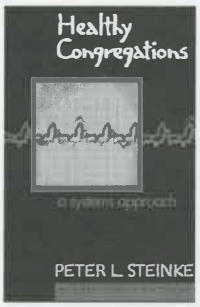
Discover Your Conflict Management Style
BY SPEED B. LEAS



How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems
BY PETER L. STEINKE



Redeveloping the Congregation: A How To for Lasting Change
BY MARY K. SELLON, DANIEL P. SMITH, AND GAIL F. GROSSMAN



Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach
BY PETER L. STEINKE

Rave Reviews for Alban Books

"*Getting the Word Out* is jam packed with solid information that will be invaluable to anyone attempting to communicate effectively in a congregation and its ministries."
—*Episcopal News Service*

"At a time when many . . . are struggling to reverse downward trends in membership and to understand how they can best serve God in our rapidly changing society, the ideas presented in *Find a Niche and Scratch It* may be an answer to prayer."
—*Quaker Life*

"*Ministry and Money* reminds us that how we use our money, in affluence or poverty, matters to God and shapes God's church."
—*The Christian Century*

EDUCATION

2003's Five Most Popular Seminars

Waltzing with the Gorilla: Leading the Corporate-Size Church

Leading on the New Religious Frontier: Building Racially and Culturally Diverse Communities

A Passion for Lay Ministry: How to Motivate, Cultivate, and Support Volunteers

New Visions for the Long Pastorate

Conflict Management in Congregational Life

Seminar Participants Speak Out

"Your work has really made a difference for our church."
—*Jennifer Dawson, Sheboygan Falls, WI*

"This workshop was, if not the best I have ever attended, better than any I can remember attending . . . I'm very glad I was there, and I have recommended it to others."
—*Gordon Gibson, Elkhart, IN*

"Today, as I was trying to soak in all your sage offerings, I wondered if you feel very often how God is calling you to this healing, hopeful work as you assist members of the body of Christ improve, mend, and make whole their congregational life together. I do believe and feel that this is/will be the single most helpful day of continuing education that I have ever attended. Thank you."
—*Marya DeCarlen, Groveland, MA*

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A FINAL WORD

"I know of no other organization that matches the level of quality assistance, insight, and challenge that you provide to the churches of this country. You have repeatedly stimulated my thinking about and my practice of the arts of ministry in the parish setting."

—Rev. Ross B. Jackson, Salem, OH

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W Women the Flock

For over 30 years I have thought about the pioneering role of women as leaders. It began in 1972 when I lost to a boy in the vote for student body president of my high school in Shelby, Montana. It continued when I successfully won a similar election in college, becoming the first woman student association president in the school's 85-year history. Then, for 22 years, I served as a pastoral leader. In each congregation, I had a pioneering role: the first woman *pastor,* the first woman *co-pastor,* the first woman *senior pastor.*

What difference did it make that I was a woman? Do women lead differently from men? Are girls socialized to lead in certain ways? How do women incorporate what is good for leadership from their socialization, and how do they overcome what is bad? There are several studies on women in ministry, such as those described in the Pulpit & Pew report "Women's Path into Ministry: Six Major Studies." These studies compare the ministry styles of men and women in various areas: preaching, presiding at worship, teaching, pastoral care, placement, and loneliness.

Ann Svennungsen explores women's leadership styles

My focus is on women as pastoral *leaders.* Leadership is a timely topic in both church and society. Not long ago, my alma mater changed its mission statement to read "Luther Seminary educates *leaders* for Christian communities" [emphasis added], and the *New York Times* regularly includes books about leadership on its bestseller list. In my work as a woman in pastoral leadership, two such books have been particularly significant: *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman, Annie McKee, and Richard Boyatzis; and *Leadership without Easy Answers* by Ronald Heifetz.

Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

In *Primal Leadership,* the authors focus on emotional intelligence, arguing that "the best leaders have found effective ways to understand and improve the way they handle their own and other people's emotions....This emotional task of the leader is primal...in two senses: It is both the original and the most important act of leadership."[1] The book suggests 18 competencies of emotional intelligence, including emotional self-awareness, emotional self-control, empathy, and relationship management. Throughout the book, I was struck by a sense that women and girls were socialized to do just what the authors were asking—to pay close attention to emotions and to relationships. I often caught myself thinking, "Well, duh, of course you need empathy and relational skills to lead!" This is not big news for a woman.

Indeed, as I reflect on my leadership style, these intelligences are some of the best gifts I bring. When critical decision-making is needed, my first step is to gather people together, bringing wisdom and owner-

ILLUSTRATION BY LYNN FOSTER

Though women may be well equipped for empathy and relationship management, these strengths may also become stumbling blocks. Clearly there is a tension—attention to relationships on the one hand and self-differentiation on the other.

ship to the table. When a change is suggested "on the fly," I take time to ensure that other stakeholders are consulted. Occasionally, this attention to relationships has been frustrating to those who wish to move with greater expediency. However, in the long run, it has served the organization well. There is a deeper sense of trust within the group—a confidence that each participant will be respected and included—and a belief that better decisions will result from attention to process.

However, attention to relationships can sometimes become an impediment for leadership. In her book *Odd Girl Out,* Rachel Simmons studies the development of girls ages 10 to 14. She notes earlier studies that discovered that, while boys fear smothering, girls fear isolation.[2] This socialization affects adulthood roles, as Simmons notes in her reference to CNN Executive Vice President Gail Evans' book, *Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman:*

> After decades of watching women hit the glass ceiling, Evans concludes that a misguided focus on personal relationships is partly to blame....Women struggle when hearing the word no from colleagues or superiors, construing it as a sign of interpersonal conflict. Because of this, women will avoid asking questions they anticipate will end in a no, hearing it as 'a sign the relationship between us and our superiors has failed.'...Where Evans has watched men buy each other a beer after a conflict at work, a woman often takes it personally. She may storm away angry, reflecting a lifetime association of conflict with relational loss. Women who, as girls, never learned to be comfortable with conflict now as adults have trouble distinguishing normal day-to-day disagreements from personal attacks.[3]

I recall such an experience from my tenth year of ministry. To highlight our annual stewardship program, I suggested that each council committee prepare a brief dramatic presentation to present between worship services. The idea was quickly and soundly rejected. As one lay leader said, "Unlike you, Ann, most of us would be pretty uncomfortable at the thought of doing some sort of Bible camp skit." I was devastated—embarrassed for even suggesting such an idea. I came home with a sense of personal rejection, and it took a while before I felt confident enough to offer another creative idea.

By my twentieth year of ministry, I had become more comfortable with the leader's vocation of suggesting ideas and casting vision. When my congregation considered a new program for Wednesday worship and education, I brought a rough proposal to the staff. By the end of the meeting, the final proposal looked nothing like my original, but I was not embarrassed. I did not feel rejected. I had come to see that the leader's vocation includes casting the initial vision—setting forth ideas that will be changed and improved through a process of critique and discussion. Indeed, when I think back to that stewardship program several years earlier, I realize that the final outcome was actually shaped by my original idea—the one that was soundly rejected. It has been significant to recognize that the leader's vocation includes casting a vision, making initial proposals, and knowing that corporate critique and

Men come into the pastoral office with greater external authority as a result of "habitual deference" to clergy—who have been consistently male. Such authority is not immediately conferred upon women, who do not "look like" the clergy to whom deference was given in the past.

improvement is not sign of rejection but rather a cause for celebration.

Yes, though women may be well equipped for empathy and relationship management, these strengths may also become stumbling blocks. Clearly there is a tension—attention to relationships on the one hand and self-differentiation on the other. And, perhaps, gender socialization has something to say about the side of the horse off which one is apt to fall. In the words of feminist theologian Daphne Hampson, of Scotland's St. Andrews University, "The task for men is...to learn to find themselves *in relationship;* the task for women is to find *themselves* in relationship."[4]

Leadership and Authority

Just as gender socialization affects a leader's development with respect to Goleman's key emotional intelligences of empathy and relationship management, so also gender socialization plays a role in the relationship between leadership and authority.

At a recent gathering of seasoned pastors, there was consensus that pastoral authority is both granted and earned, and that gender plays a role in the relationship and balance between the two.

In his book *Leadership without Easy Answers,* Ronald Heifetz defines authority as "conferred power to perform a service"—"Given your know-how, I give you the power to make decisions to accomplish a service, and I'll follow those decisions as long as it appears to me that they serve my purposes." He continues with this caveat: "Not all authority relationships are the product of a conscious and deliberate conferring of power. Often, they are produced by habitual deference."[5]

One might argue that men come into the pastoral office with greater external authority as a result of "habitual deference" to clergy—who have been consistently male. Such authority is not immediately conferred upon women, who do not "look like" the clergy to whom deference was given in the past. There is a greater need to earn authority—authority conferred once a parishioner comes to learn that the woman pastor has the know-how, the wisdom, and the gifts to provide the service the parishioner expects.

As a Lutheran, my first pastoral assignment was a year of internship, serving full-time as "student pastor." Eager for the experience, I was deeply troubled to learn that the seminary placement office received two rejections before finding me an assignment. I had excellent grades, good recommendations—all was in order, except that it was 1979 and I was a woman.

Such experiences of rejection slowed the development of my inner authority. I thought to myself, "If all those Christians are unwilling to consider me as their pastor, what actually gives me the authority to minister?" Even when I could intellectually debunk such thinking, the feelings remained. It is not surprising that women struggle to establish a strong sense of inner authority.

Clearly, one has to be careful about raising the gender question. There are essentially two pitfalls: raising the gender question too often and failing to raise the question at all.

In her article "Weaving Garments of Grace: En-gendering a Theology of the Call to Ordained Ministry for Women Today," Joy McDougall also discovers the truth of this. In her conversation with eight gifted women seminary students, she tells how they expressed frustration with external impediments to ordination. But, what "stunned" the author was the women's "self-doubts, ambivalence, and even guilt about (their) call to ordained ministry: 'Did I really want to set myself apart within my church community?' 'I was petrified about standing in the pulpit for the first time to preach. I didn't think I could do it.' 'I think I felt guilty about wanting to be a priest, as if I thought that I was somehow better than others or spiritually elite.'"[6]

Leadership and Improvisation

In addition to the relationship between leadership and authority, Heifetz suggests that leadership requires a willingness to improvise: "Leadership... requires an experimental mindset, the willingness to work by trial and error—where the community's reactions at each stage provide the basis for planning future actions."[7] Pastors practice that improvisation in the context of a very complex community—replete with a host of different constituencies—lay and pastoral staff, elected leaders, appointed leaders, self-appointed leaders, and so on.

Clearly, in such a complex community, issues of gender will play a part in the leader's work of improvisation. The community's reactions may and will be influenced by the leader's gender. Both women *and* men need to acknowledge and understand this. However, women may need to be especially aware. In my most recent call as senior pastor of a 3,700-member congregation, I occasionally would suggest that conflicts I encountered might be based, in part, on gender. One day, the male council president looked at me and said, "Why do you bring up the gender thing?" I was reminded of my work in race rela-

tions—where, if you are a person of color, race is *always* an issue. In the same way, if you are a woman working in patriarchal culture, gender is *always* an issue.

However, gender is not always *the* issue. Actually, one of the challenges facing women leaders is the need to discern the cause of a particular struggle. On the one hand, we, ourselves, are sometimes the cause—our personality, our ministry style, a mistake we've made. On the other hand, struggles sometimes arise from within the congregation—dysfunctional lay leadership, an unresolved issue in the congregation's history, staff conflict. However, for women in pioneering roles, there is also a third possibility—the issue of gender. We find ourselves asking, "Is this struggle in any way related to the fact that I am a woman in leadership?"

Clearly, one has to be careful about raising the gender question. There are essentially two pitfalls: raising the gender question too often and failing to raise the question at all. To blame every problem on sexism is to deny reality and inhibit one's own personal growth as a woman in leadership. On the other hand, to deny that sexism potentially could be a factor is also to deny reality. Still, the subtleties for this discernment can be enormous.

Occasionally, I have had the experience of suggesting an idea to which no one takes notice. Some moments later, however, a man makes a similar suggestion, and the whole room responds. Then, one must ask, "Is this a function of group process, where an idea becomes more favorable as the discussion continues, or is this an issue of gender discrimination, whereby an idea expressed by a man is given more credibility than the same idea expressed by a woman?" Clearly there are many layers. The work of leading a congregation is always an adventure with myriad dynamics, some of which are neither fair nor just. Still, that is the real world in which we are called to serve.

Leadership and Faith

Yes, the relationship between gender socialization and leadership development is complicated. And sometimes, like my friends who resist the Myers-Briggs test because they do not want their multifaceted personalities reduced to a list of four mere letters, so I also resist being reduced to a particular leadership style because I am a woman. We are much more than our gender. Nevertheless, there is important learning to be gained through the appropriate study of these issues.

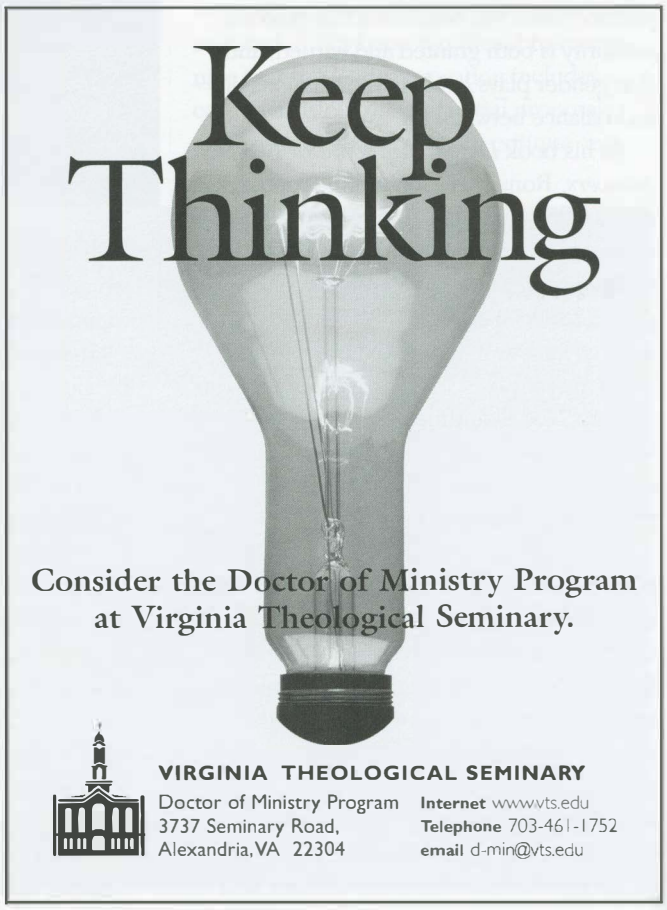
Indeed, some wonder why the issue is not being studied more fully. "Why is the issue of gender largely absent from contemporary discussions about the crisis of pastoral leadership? This seems especially surprising, since most sociologists and theological educators agree that women's entry into the ordained ministry represents the most significant transformation in pastoral leadership in the twentieth century, if not since the Reformation."[8] Yes, faithful and honest conversation about women in pastoral leadership is important. Through study and awareness, growth, and change, the church can become better equipped to lead and to serve in faithfulness. There are important strides to be made and a great deal to explore as we move toward a roster of pastors that better reflects the rich diversity of God's people.

One of the best stories from my ministry comes from a four-year-old parishioner, Elizabeth. Though Erik Strand and I had been her pastors since she was baptized as an infant, I had just announced that I was leaving the congregation and moving to Iowa. Sometime after she heard the news, she turned to her mother and said, "Mommy, isn't it sad that God is moving to Iowa? But," she said, "at least Jesus is staying here."

Though her theology was a bit suspect, Elizabeth pointed to the best leadership example: Follow Jesus. Seek the ways of God. Pray hard. And most important, lead and live by grace. ◆

Notes

1. Daniel Goleman, Annie McKee, and Richard Boyatzis. *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002): 4–5.
2. Rachel Simmons, *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* (Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt, 2002): 30.
3. Ibid., 265–266.
4. Daphne Hampson, "Reinhold Niebuhr on Sin: A Critique" in Richard Harries, ed., *Reinhold Niebuhr and the Issues of Our Time* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986): 55.
5. Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998): 57–58.
6. Joy McDougall, "Weaving Garments of Grace: En-gendering a Theology of the Call to Ordained Ministry for Women Today," *Theological Education,* Vol. 39, No. 2 (Pittsburgh, Pa.: The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, 2003): 150.
7. Ronald Heifetz, 242.
8. Joy McDougall, 151.



Support and Solidarity

How Clergywomen Create Healthy Connections

MELISSA BANE SEVIER

In Knoxville, Tennessee, several women meet in a restaurant and open gifts of candles in spring colors. They look like any other group of women friends having lunch together, but their day jobs separate them from the rest of the tables in that establishment. These are clergywomen, working in positions as church staff, chaplains, and university professors. The reason they gather for monthly lunches is to provide and receive support from each other in a profession that can sometimes be lonely and isolating, perhaps especially for women.

In Edward Lehman's 2002 review of major studies on clergywomen for Pulpit & Pew he concludes that, while both female and male clergy struggle with issues surrounding call, loneliness in the pastorate, and the conflicting roles of personal and professional life, these issues seem to be exacerbated for clergywomen.[1] Women tend to find the loneliness more painful and the roles more complicated or difficult to negotiate. Most clergy (at least those who are in congregations) know what it is like to have

to choose between personal or family needs and the needs of the congregation. In one study, the majority of women said they encountered problems navigating the conflicting stresses that arose from their various roles.[2] Single women without children found they had little time for any sort of social life because their congregations assumed that, since there was no family, the women would have no competing interests. Married women and women with children often worried about how to prioritize important claims on their time.[3]

A conversation with nearly any woman who is employed will reveal many of the same stresses mentioned above, but it may be that clergywomen are possessed by a unique stressor: both they and their congregations believe their work is a calling. Though it could easily be argued that all work is vocation, or calling, we live in a society that does not generally have that vision. Pastors are often expected to be on call 24/7, to cancel their vacations if something important arises in the parish, and to order their lives so that the calling of congregational life is always the supreme priority. These expectations, as often as not, come from the pastor as well as the parish.

A complicating factor is that in many denominations more clergywomen than men serve in small, rural settings, where isolation and loneliness can be an even greater problem than it is in cities. Colleagues in ministry may be few and far between, and one's personal life is sometimes more public than desired.

Building Support Systems

How do women clergy cope with all the stressors that uniquely affect them? They cope in as many ways as there are situations. Some go out of their way to find other women like themselves, to discuss their common issues and joys. Others appreciate the perspectives they gain by connecting through mixed-gender clergy groups. Some find support and balance through friends who have no connection to the world of sermons, liturgies, and prayers. And a great many women have a supportive spouse who encourages them, or a family of origin who confirmed their gifts early and often.

In addition to all these important types of support, many women build their support systems by leaning on other clergywomen, either informally or in organized groups. Of the groups that are organized, some are arranged by national or regional structures. Others arise locally, and some are a combination, like the Tennessee group mentioned at the beginning of this article. Tammy Abee Blom is the associate coordinator for leadership development in the Tennessee Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF). Part of Blom's job description is encouraging women in ministry, and she has found that what works, at least for her group of CBF women in Knoxville, is simply lunch once a month. The women she talked to did not want another "meeting" to attend, especially one that involves work. They gave three criteria for the ideal group: it would be composed of professional women in ministry, would require no homework, and members would not be made to feel guilty if they did not attend. This concept has evolved into a collection of women that is not large (a membership of about a dozen, with six in average attendance), but is effective in meeting the individual members' criteria and serving their needs, particularly their expressed need—to know each other.

For these women, as for many, the relationship aspect of any support group is key. They are not looking for another place to study together, but a place to be themselves, share experiences, and encourage each other in their daily work and living. This encouragement takes many forms, from celebrating life's joys to sharing each other's concerns. One of the women in the group recently told of her distress over a university student from Europe who was struggling with more than one job to pay tuition and did not have enough money left over for living expenses. Before lunch was over, the women around the table had collected sufficient funds for the woman to make ends meet. Their relationship brought them into solidarity with each other, even when the need was outside the group.

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Forging Relationships

It is impossible to say how many support groups of two or more clergywomen exist. Nor do we have any data to indicate their effectiveness. But, if you know a clergywoman, the chances are good that she has at least one collegial friend, nearby or far away, with whom she connects around common issues. Sometimes these connections are denomination-oriented. Sometimes they are ecumenical or interfaith. But wherever clergywomen gather they seem to draw support from each other. Their conversation drifts from fundraising to raising children, from cooking to preaching, from what to wear for the church picnic to what to wear in the pulpit.

One person who has had a wide view of clergywomen's groups this past

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year is Susan Andrews, the moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Andrews is the first clergy woman serving as a pastor to be elected to the office. In her travels around the country during her one-year term she has visited with more than 10 groups of clergywomen in various regions. A few of the groups gathered for the first time to meet with Andrews, but several had a long history of coming together for nurture and support. Andrews often opened the discussion with, "Tell me your stories," and heard wonderful tales of joy and also the struggles of being a pastor. There was lots of laughter, much good food, and at least one tea party. Sometimes women who had not gathered before found they had more in common than they had previously thought.

Andrews has good personal reasons for supporting clergywomen's groups. In her nearly 30 years of ordained ministry she has been involved in clergy support groups in every place she has lived and worked. Some of the groups have been designed for study, some for support, and one for spiritual direction. Not all the groups were for women only but, in her view, even in the mixed-gender groups it was the women who tended to want to develop deeper relationships. Women are, she believes, more interested in the whole person—body, mind, and spirit—and are more open to the help of the group. "Building relationships is what we're about," she says. "A support system is essential. Otherwise we start 'living in the role' and lose touch with ourselves."

Andrews' view is a common one. Women all over the country are building support systems for themselves and each other because they sense a need to build relationships and because they need the "reality check" offered by others in similar circumstances. Sometimes it takes real effort.

Joanne Sizoo, a Presbyterian minister, remembers being a pastor in Oklahoma when she was one of only two clergywomen in the region. They lived four hours apart, but still made an effort to see each other on a regular basis because they found support in that contact. Sizoo has now lived in several states—not an uncommon reality for pastors—and, like Andrews, she has been in support groups in each location. She recently moved to North Carolina and finds that she still stays in touch with several women from those support systems by e-mail. Internet connections allow many women to give and receive support across the miles through low-cost, almost immediate contact.

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Getting a Head Start

Even when a denomination or other national or regional structure coordinates ways for clergywomen to connect, it is those individual connections that women seem to find most helpful. Sometimes those connections begin as women are in training for their vocation.

At Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, Ohio, women rabbinical students gather once a month to celebrate what is traditionally a women's holiday, Rosh Hodesh, or the celebration of the new moon. Usually a half dozen or so women meet in members' homes. Nearly always they share food (Rosh Hodesh features foods that are round, symbolic of the moon). Sometimes they invite speakers, but more commonly they share in rituals for the holiday, including prayers. On one occasion they made and painted ceramic dishes that they subsequently have used for their gatherings. Even though the same women do not always attend, Debra Dressler, a fourth-year student at the school, says the women have found a place where they can find companionship, share what is going on in their personal lives, and talk about their work. Though the rabbinate is not an overt focus of the group, conversation naturally drifts to their work as student rabbis or teachers in religious schools. They offer each other suggestions for their varied settings, run through thoughts about an upcoming funeral, and learn to be companions in the parts of life they share as students.

Rabbi Ruth Alpers, the Stein director of human relations at HUC, says that in addition to groups like the Rosh Hodesh gathering, support for both female and male rabbinical students occurs through a formal mentoring process at the school. Each fourth-year student is assigned a mentor through the fifth (final) year of school and the first two years of the rabbinate. Once a month for three years, the student and mentor talk by phone about issues that arise in the rabbinate. The program is only three years old, but the hope is that the difficulties of those early years may be eased by regular contact with a seasoned rabbi.

Finding Mentors and Friends

Many clergywomen talk of the value of mentors. There are not many formal mentoring programs like the one still in its infancy at HUC, but women in ministry often seek out those who have served ably (both men and women) to gather advice and learning beyond their own experience. Sometimes good mentoring relationships arise at theological institutions or among staff members in the same congregation, or they may grow out of other contacts. In any case, they can be valuable assets to successful ministry situations. Mentoring occurs informally when experienced pastors and newly ordained women listen to each other talk about their lives.

Susan Andrews' mentor was a male chaplain at the women's college she attended. In a day when there were few women ministers, this Lutheran pastor mentored at least eight young women who, in Andrews' opinion, would not have become ministers without his influence and encouragement. She also credits lay women in congregations she served who were "mother figures" for her. They emotionally nurtured her, and were strong examples of people she could lean on.

Though some women are reluctant to admit it, many, if not most, clergywomen do find support from lay women in their congregations. Perhaps the reluctance stems from an appropriate concern over "boundaries" in religious life. But, as Joanne Sizoo suggests, clergywomen with healthy boundaries can benefit greatly (and offer great benefit in return) by having caring relationships with women in the congregation.

Sizoo's recent personal experiences bear witness to the importance of all types of support systems for clergywomen. As sometimes happens with pastors who are accustomed to being in the position of offering care, she now finds herself on the side of needing care. Soon after moving to North Carolina she was busy settling her family in their new home and working in a church staff position when she was diagnosed with a serious form of breast cancer. A strong, self-reliant person, Sizoo underwent surgery and chemotherapy, which left her tired and sick. E-mails poured in from friends around the country; clergywomen and men from former places of ministry kept in touch with cards; her family rallied to help. Though some long-distance friends visited for short periods, she had not had time to make new friendships outside the large church she served. As Sizoo's condition and needs became known in the congregation, she was flooded with cards and other expressions of support. Twice a week her family received meals from anonymous church members. When Sizoo's hair fell out, she decided wigs were too uncomfortable and chose to wear hats instead. The first Sunday she wore a hat with her robe to lead worship, she was a bit nervous about possible responses to a big "church lady" hat on one of the ministers. The following Sunday she entered the chancel and looked out to see hundreds of women in hats! Unbeknownst to her, an e-mail had circulated among members to wear hats in support of Joanne. Worshipers who weren't wearing hats had been given pink ribbons to wear. As she stood in the pulpit to offer the prayers of the people, she said, "You have taken a situation that could have been met with criticism and isolation and instead met me with solidarity. I am very grateful."

Support and solidarity. If clergywomen are to be successful in overcoming the things that hinder their best living and working, they do best to seek the support and solidarity that will make them healthy and that will encourage healthy congregations around them. ◆

Notes

1. Edward C. Lehman, "Women's Path Into Ministry: Six Major Studies," Pulpit & Pew Research on Pastoral Leadership (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 2002), 22.
2. Idem.
3. Ibid., 23.

Five Tips for Starting a Clergy Group

1. There are at least two ways to begin a clergy group:

- **Decide what type of group you want to form (support, recreational, study, or a combination) and then invite people to join; or**
- **Think of people you would like to have in a group, then gather together and discuss what type the group should be.**

2. To get names of local clergywomen, check with the offices of your denomination's judicatory or those of other denominations. They also may know of groups already meeting that have an opening.

3. If you are starting a new group, spend the first few meetings simply getting to know each other. Members may want to take turns leading worship or discussion as you explore various styles of leadership and group activity.

4. Plan to share meals regularly as another way of being together.

5. After several meetings, decide what the future of the group will be. Will you set norms for attendance, beginning and ending times, and/or confidentiality rules? Will you allow sufficient time for each member to share? Will there be work or prayer between meetings? What form will leadership of the group take? Some groups will bring in an outside facilitator to lead the group or for other purposes. Each group is different and should strive to design itself in whatever way best serves its members' expressed desires and needs.

Reimagining the Rabbi–Lay Leader Partnership

ROBERT LEVENTHAL

While attending a rabbinic conference, I joined a group discussion on what lay leaders expect of rabbis. The rabbis described various stories of unfair one-sided reviews that had injured their self-esteem and weakened their relationship with the congregation. When they expressed concerns about many lay leaders' lack of understanding, I began to feel pangs of guilt. Were we lay leaders really *that* insensitive?

Americans are familiar with evaluation. Schools give grades. Employees undergo performance reviews. Products are evaluated in consumer magazines. Critics rate restaurants, movies, and CDs. In our era of extraordinary information, the customer is king, according to consultant Michael Hammer.[1] In such an environment, no one is above review.

Denominational executives cited the rabbi–lay leader partnership as the number-one factor correlated with congregational success.[2] These partnerships can be productive, but they require that conflict be managed. Feedback is a critical part of coping with conflict. What kind of feedback should leaders encourage? "Evaluate" is defined by Webster's as "to judge or determine the worth" of something. In contrast, "review" is defined (from the Latin *revisidere,* to see again) as a re-examination. Review suggests a commitment to reflect and reconsider, but it is not as judgmental and quantitative in tone. Rabbi David Wolfman argues that mutual review and reflection are critical because mutuality supports the development of "sacred partnerships.[3]

Assumptions

I encourage partners to state their assumptions, and so I will note some of mine. I assume that most of the forces affecting the congregation (e.g., demographics, economics, lifestyles, family structure) are beyond the control of congregational leadership. I assume that many of the stress factors reported in the

Much of the conflict in the synagogue world comes from a lack of communication about roles and responsibilities.

Alban Special Report, *The Leadership Situation Facing American Congregations,* apply to rabbis and their congregations as well as to Protestant clergy.[4] While Alban has determined that a majority of Protestant clergy had received an evaluation in the past two years, my assumption in regard to synagogues is that *very little formal written review of rabbinic lay leadership was occurring.*[5]

When evaluation does occur, it is often associated with rabbinic contract negotiations. Regional executives report that they get requests from lay leaders in February or March for evaluation surveys. The timing of these reviews usually coincides with discussions about the renewal of contracts in July and also parallels discussions about next year's budget. Issues of review are thus mixed with anxieties about financial resources and contract negotiations.

The Partnership Process

As I reflected on the current state of the rabbinic–lay leader partnership I began to feel that a stronger foundation needed to be formed. The Partnership Process (PP) described below is a model that provides four stepping stones toward better partnerships. Each stage helps create the conditions for success in the next. The model attempts to build *shared meaning,* clarify *assumptions,* encourage *shared values,* and lead to *mutual review* and feedback between partners. The process requires the kind of deliberate planning that was a core element in our Jewish agricultural past. The tradition asks, "[I]f one does not plant in the summer, what will one eat in the winter? (Midrash Misle 6). Like crops, relationships need to be planned and nurtured.

In *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989), Steven R. Covey suggests that effective leaders "think with the end in mind." In this case one would start the Partnership Process. If we think about mutual review as the desired ending, then we might work backward to define the foundational steps needed to support it. Rabbi Paul Menitoff, executive director of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, has written that "when partners have clear expectations, empowerment, processes to recognize contributions, and opportunities for personal bonding and trust," then partnerships can endure and prosper.[6]

The Partnership Avoidance Model

The "Partnership Avoidance Model," in contrast, does not build a foundation of trust. It is described by the following characteristics:

1. Partners are overwhelmed by the forces of change around them.
2. Poor communications weaken the potential for empathy.
3. Values to ensure a shared culture of civility are few (lack of *derech eretz,* or manners).
4. Without a solid foundation for the relationship, a tendency grows to avoid mutual review and ongoing dialogue. Issues are allowed to "build up," a process that leads eventually to *confrontation.*

We will look at how the PP model can overcome the dangers of the Avoidance model and help create a strong foundation for partnerships.

1. From Overwhelmed Thinking to Shared Meaning. If congregations cannot agree about their current situations, how will they ever be able to develop shared values or create mutual goals? We believe that shared meaning lays the foundation for all the other stepping stones in the reframing process. Jeff Woods argues that Protestant congregations cannot assume a "one-room schoolhouse" where everyone is on the "same page."[7] Woods argues that we need to educate and assimilate diverse members.

We believe this same diversity is affecting the synagogue. Dr. Arnold Eisen and Dr. Stephen Cohen talk about the "exercise of autonomy" among moderately affiliated Jews in their study. Three-quarters of the Jews that participated in their survey agreed with the statement, "I have the right to reject those Jewish observances that I don't find meaningful."[8]

When budgets are strained, lay leaders often focus on concrete elements of their relationships, such as the rising costs of the rabbi's total compensation or administrative support costs. This focus on finances feeds a desire to gain more control in the relationship and to hold the rabbi accountable.

2. From Low Empathy to Shared Assumptions. Much of the conflict in the synagogue world comes from a lack of communication about roles and responsibilities. Both rabbis and lay leaders have their narratives and often try to sell their partners on their view. Rabbi Paul Menitoff (CCAR) argues that rabbis should help lay leaders understand the rabbi's strengths and weaknesses, work preferences, professional growth needs, and the kind of congregational support necessary to compensate for areas of weakness. The Gallup Organization has published

a study based on interviews with more than 80,00 supervisors in an effort to identify the characteristics of successful managers. The researchers determined that one important quality of successful managers was that "they focused on people's strengths rather than trying to fix them."[9]

Menitoff suggests that these candid conversations about strengths and weaknesses would ideally occur in the placement-process interviews. Unfortunately this type of mutual and candid exchange often fails to develop. The PP seeks to create the kind of candid conversations that may be difficult in the placement process when both parties are trying to put the best possible face on their roles as applicant or recruiter.

Lay leaders are anxious about the survival of their congregations during these times of change. According to one denominational leader, many presidents are just trying to "get through" their two years of office without a crisis.[10] Many have not made the investments in leadership development and synagogue envisioning that would provide them with a stronger background for the partnership. Thus when budgets are strained, lay leaders often focus on concrete elements of their relationships, such as the rising costs of the rabbi's total compensation or administrative support costs. This focus on finances feeds a

Case Study: Synagogue Leadership Initiative
Rivers Edge, New Jersey

We sought to test out the Partnership Process by designing a series of partnership dialogues. I had seen elements of this type of dialogue in a workshop at a Union of Hebrew Congregations (Now URJ) Regional Biennial in 2001 led by Rabbi David Wolfman. A regional director in New England, Wolfman staffs the National Commission on Rabbinic Congregational Relations (NCRCR). He worked with rabbis and their presidents to look at the assumptions each had about the others' roles and responsibilities. Both partners seemed to be positively engaged by this form of active listening. This experience led me to explore the Partnership Process in more detail. I would soon get the opportunity to test the model.

Judy Beck, director of the Synagogue Leadership Institute (SLI) of the United Jewish Appeal in Bergen (N.J.) and North Hudson (N.Y.) Jewish Federation, suggested that we test the model with a group of interested synagogues. She supported our plan to recruit the partners. Ultimately a group of seven rabbis and their synagogue presidents were recruited, and the workshops began in September 2001.

Workshop 1: Assumptions

In workshop 1 a lay leader and rabbi group was formed. The rabbis worked together and listed on a chart what they considered to be their key job requirements, and lay leaders listed what they considered to be the key requirements for a rabbi. Then the roles were reversed and both sides reviewed the key elements for lay leaders. The rabbis realized that because of their common training they used more Judaic language to describe their roles. They emphasized concepts that lay leaders didn't, such as rabbinic authority (*marah d'atrah*). The rabbis noted that their list of rabbinic responsibilities was much longer than the lay leaders' list for them. Lay leaders described the rabbis' role as a more public, extroverted one involving congregational communications and education, while the rabbis emphasized a more introverted role with an internal focus on study and prayer.

Workshop 2: Systems

We administered the Congregational Systems Inventory (CSI) questionnaire to the professional staffs and the lay leaders of each participating synagogue. The CSI provides a portrait of the congregation's leadership preferences across seven leadership dimensions. The Alban polarity management approach encourages leaders to become more aware of the tensions between opposite poles, such as a centralized authority versus dispersed authority. The assessment gives partners a vocabulary to talk about lay and rabbinic leadership styles in the congregation. Rabbis and presidents saw that their leadership styles had an impact on one another. When they thought of their relationship, they tended to focus less on blaming their partners and chose to address areas of weakness.

Workshop 3: Values and Norms

To begin this discussion we needed to understand the formal and informal norms in the congregational organizations. We explored how study of Jewish values can create *derech eretz* (community manners) that could support healthy partnerships. Each group looked at examples of uncivil behavior in the general community and in their congregations. Each identified five Jewish values that could help improve their culture. Each group identified the behaviors that they would monitor if the value had been accepted and embraced in the congregation.

Workshop 4: Mutual Review

We looked at the role evaluation plays in most nonprofit organizations and the fiduciary responsibilities for volunteer leadership. We recognized the complexity of synagogue evaluation and worked to present a range of feedback processes that could support an incremental and ongoing dialogue. Once the participants had explored their assumptions about each other's roles, reflected on the leadership system, and accepted the challenge of proactively creating a healthy culture based on Jewish values (i.e. "the stepping-stones"), they were ready to look at mutual review. We presented the partners with a range of mutual feedback approaches—from simple letters of appreciation to more formal feedback such as a mutual review of job priorities.

desire to gain more control in the relationship and to hold the rabbi accountable, as lay leaders hold accountable the other professionals with whom they contract.

The challenges of the rabbinic role must be better understood. While management consultants encourage today's business managers to specialize, the rabbi's role runs against this current management trend. Rabbis are challenged to be true generalists. They function as spiritual leaders, counselors, educators, managers, marketers, administrators, and community organizers. Is it any wonder that the Alban Special Report found so many clergy who felt overwhelmed by their jobs?

For lay leaders and rabbis to find common ground, they must find Jewish principles they can agree on to support their mission; that is, "for the sake of heaven."

3. From Incivility to Shared Values. Alban field research experience suggests that most of what clergy do is invisible to congregants most of the time. Rabbis are often out of their offices managing community roles, life-cycle events, and counseling. Some members complain in frustration that they did not find the rabbi in his office at 11 a.m. or that they did not see the rabbi on the day they were in the hospital. Others may feel that the rabbi is not adequately invested in their favorite synagogue program. The Reconstructionist Denominational Movement studied the relationship between rabbis and their lay leaders and found that members were often passing judgment on the rabbi without a complete holistic understanding of the rabbi's roles and responsibilities.[11] This "rush to judgment" sometimes created an environment of incivility that became a major barrier to "sacred partnerships."

Once the rabbi and the lay leader have begun to understand each other, they can move beyond their personal positions and look at their relationship on the current "congregational stage." When partners can look at these issues from a distance (what Alban Consultant Gil Rendle calls "the balcony"), they can look beyond the specific points of contention and see the larger relationship.[12] For lay leaders and rabbis to find common ground, they must find Jewish principles they can agree on to support their mission; that is, "for the sake of heaven."

4. From Avoidance and Confrontation to Mutual Review. In many Protestant denominations a bishop can remove a minister. In the Jewish world a denominational placement system is a resource to lay leaders, but the ultimate choice to engage a rabbi or sever a relationships lies with the congregation's lay board. Given this fiduciary relationship, lay leaders must consider evaluation as a serious responsibility.

Mutual Ministry Review (MMR) is a process whereby both lay and professional staffs accept the responsibility to review their ministry. Research shows that clergy feel the process is far more successful if it is mutual.[13]

Lay leaders are anxious about review. If they are to develop literacy about building sacred Jewish communities, they need to work in partnership with their rabbis. Rabbis should advocate for synagogue leadership training because, as the tradition says, community leadership "is too heavy for anyone to carry alone" (Deut. Rabbah 1:10). Rabbis need a well-educated partner. We discussed creating a rabbinic relations committee to help provide feedback from the rabbi to lay leader, and from lay leaders to the rabbi. We also considered a trustees committee concept, which strengthens lay leader performance by coordinating nominations, board process, and leadership development. We reviewed a process in which the board and the rabbi would both rank their priorities for the rabbi and then compare notes.

The four-step Partnership Process works to address shared meaning, assumptions, expectations, shared values, and mutual review. The Avoidance model leads to a reactive relationship in which evaluations are rushed to meet deadlines. The Partnership Process can take from two to three years to develop. It can't be rushed. The preliminary evidence suggests that if the partners commit to a plan, they may create the foundation for relationships that can endure and prosper.

Notes

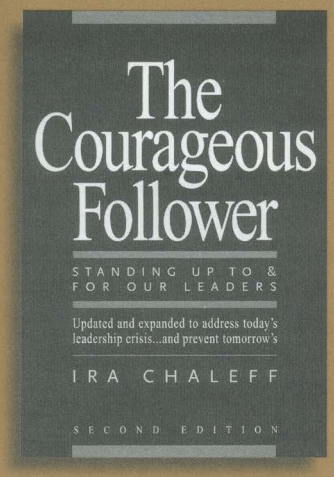
1. Michael Hammer, *The Agenda* (New York: Crown Business, 2001), 6–7.
2. Interviews with 13 regional executives, January–April 2001.
3. Rabbi David Wolfman, UAHC regional director, interview, May 15, 2002.
4. James Wind and Gilbert Rendle, *The Leadership Situation Facing American Congregations* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2001).
5. "Refocusing Evaluation," *Congregations,* Alban Institute, March–April 2002, 24.
6. Paul Menitoff, *A Formula For Successful Rabbinical Congregational Relationships* (New York: *CCAR Journal,* 1993).
7. Jeff C. Woods, *Congregational Megatrends* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1999).
8. Arnold M. Eisen and Steven M. Cohen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family and Community in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
9. Marcus Buckingham, *First Break All of the Rules* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 144.
10. Rabbi Moshe Edelman, interview, May 5, 2001.
11. *The Role of the Rabbi in the Congregation* (Wyncote, Pa.: Reconstructionist Commission, 2001).
12. Gilbert R. Rendle, *Behavioral Covenants* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1999).
13. Jill Hudson, *Evaluating Ministry* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1988), 64–68.

The Courageous Follower

STANDING UP TO & FOR OUR LEADERS

Ira Chaleff

San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2003



review book

The Courageous Follower is far too good a book to be read just by those Ira Chaleff calls "followers." It is a book that will provide everyone with key insights into the relationship of leaders and followers.

Chaleff is the president of Executive Coaching and Consulting Associates in Washington, D.C., and chairman of the board of the Congressional Management Foundation, which provides management training and consulting to political leaders and their staffs. And while the book is pitched primarily to the world of politics and business, the principles and insights will apply to the realms of church and social activism. Three chapters in particular hold relevance for the church.

Chapter 1—called "The Dynamics of the Leader-Follower Relationship"—includes an excellent section on power in the leade r-follower relationship. After noting that power for the leader will fall somewhere on the "spectrum from hierarchical to shared leadership," the author lists 12 sources of power a follower may have, such as:

- the power of knowledge, skills, and resources
- the power to speak the truth
- the power to choose how to react in a situation regardless of what is done or threatened by others
- the power to withdraw support if the leadership actions violate our values

If we are to be effective partners with leaders, it is important to remember that as followers we possess our own power "quite apart from the reflected power of the leader" (p. 17ff).

Chapter 5—"The Courage To Participate In Transformation"—begins:

> I find it tragic that able leaders who fall dramatically from grace often share a common experience: Their closet followers have long been aware of their fatal flaw . . . . Revelation of the flaw often comes as an unexpected shock to the broader group because it has been carefully managed and kept from public view. But those closest to the leader have usually spent long hours dealing with the fallout from the leader's behavior and discussing among themselves what to do about it (p. 117).

Chaleff offers several insights and suggestions for dealing with the defensive resistance and denial of the leader's shortcomings that can arise when followers try to help the leader away from the self-destructive behavior and toward healthy transactions. He then offers a list of possible transformation resources and sections on "creating a supportive environment," "modeling change," "containing abusive behavior," "coping with recurring behavior," and "validation."

In chapter 6—"The Courage To Take Moral Action"—Chaleff defines moral action as one "taken with the intention of bringing the actions of the leadership and organization into line with the fundamental values that govern decent organizational behavior while preserving the capacity of the organization to fulfill its purpose" (p. 157). As such, a moral act may involve "the decision of whether to appeal to higher levels of authority within the organization, whether to stay in or leave an organization, how to frame conversations and actions around these decision-making processes, and how to conduct oneself in the face of different potential outcomes" (p. 157).

The interesting section on how to do a "Values Review" seemed too brief and might have been expanded to give some real examples from his experience. However, he does give some useful and practical information in sections titled "The Decision To Withdraw Support," which warns that before taking such a stance, one must carefully assess the consequences for the leader, the organization, and oneself. Indeed, it is not a decision one reaches easily, and "When Leaders Must Be Opposed" explores the possible outcome. Here the author outlines the risks of such drastic action, but maintains that they should not dissuade courageous followers from the duty to stand against immoral and unethical acts.

Throughout the book, the author provides lists of key questions and key points of the chapters. And for those who like the study of polarities the author provides a model of twin poles of low and high challenge and low and high support, which lends itself to the familiar box of quadrants of boxes, which he names The Partner, The Implementer, The Individualist, and The Resource (p. 40ff).

In all, *The Courageous Follower* is a good read for serious leaders who want effective followers and for serious followers who want effective leaders. That should include all pastors and lay leaders desire better pastor-laity relations.

Rev. Terry E. Foland
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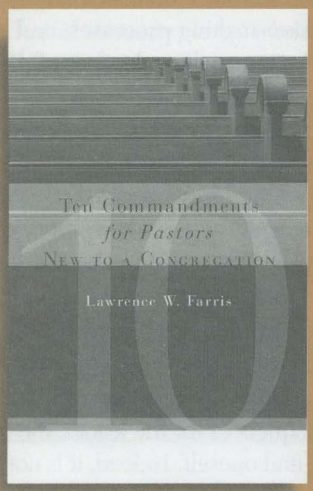
Ten Commandments for Pastors New to a Congregation

Lawrence W. Farris

Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003



review book

I am a sucker for books in the things-I-wish-I-learned-in-seminary genre. But most such books are so trite, petty, and superficial that they leave me feeling like, well . . . a sucker. Yet I approached this new one by Lawrence Farris, a veteran of three Presbyterian congregations, with the hope that it might prove an exception. Happily, it did.

Farris notes that the early days of a new pastorate are key and deserve special care and attention because they greatly affect the rest of one's tenure. Even if one is a seasoned pastor, it is insufficient—and possibly harmful—to replicate what seemed to work at a previous congregation. Beginning a new pastorate is a complex and stressful endeavor even in healthy congregations, let alone where there is conflict or stagnation. Farris offers some very helpful advice about issues that are likely to arise, such as working for change that matters, prioritizing preaching, paying attention to finances, needing to please members, generating reasonable expectations, taking a day off, and dealing with chronic problem behavior.

The first "commandment" for a new pastor is paying attention to a church's social and cultural context and history. In addition to giving stories that show both successes and failures, Farris recommends helpful exercises for working with the congregation in eliciting members' cultural and historical understanding. It is only upon such a foundation that one can work faithfully toward any future change.

There are several reasons why this book succeeds where many do not. It is filled with stories from his substantial experience as a pastor and as mentor to other pastors. Further, Farris' ideas are theologically grounded. His Calvinist underpinnings stand him in good stead as he calls preaching a primary aspect of pastoral ministry and a spiritual discipline in itself:

> What contemporary people lack is a place to gather with others before the mystery of God's self-disclosure as conveyed to them by a preacher who has accepted the task of faithful proclamation and all the demands it brings (p. 30).

In other words, he goes beyond merely listing effective how-to techniques and suggests that faithfulness brings fruitfulness.

In addition to the primacy of preaching, he stresses two other responsibilities: being a "resident theologian" and equipping "people to carry out those ministries suited to their gifts, individually and corporately" (p. 76). I liked this, even if I would frame it a little differently to pay more attention to spiritual direction and Christian formation. Also, he could have expanded what it means to be a "resident theologian"; he has barely a page of mostly hypothetical examples. Perhaps Farris was trying to keep the book slim enough (it's 94 pages at 5.25 x 8.25 inches) that virtually anyone has time to read it. That's fine, but I wish he had included suggestions for further reading; there are neither footnotes nor a bibliography.

In all, *Commandments* is both practical and wise and I gladly recommend it to pastors, both new and seasoned, and seminary students as they prepare to enter a first pastoral charge. While a book is no replacement for having a mentor—a practice Farris commends for all pastors—it is full of wise and trustworthy counsel.

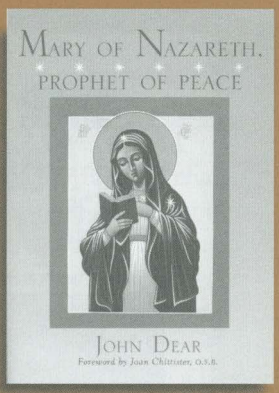
Rev. Dr. Arthur Paul Boers
Author, *Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior*
Elkhart, Indiana

Mary of Nazareth

PROPHET OF PEACE

John Dear

Notre Dame, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 2003



review book

Growing up Nazarene on the east coast, I never saw much of Mary. She was minimally present in our home around Christmas, and around our predominantly European neighborhood in Pittsburgh, my Roman Catholic friends would talk about praying the rosary and praying to Mary. But otherwise I spent most of my youth in a religious tradition without any connection to her, and I was left with more questions than answers about her significance.

It was not until my son Daniel was diagnosed with cancer that I felt God nudge me into silence and contemplation about Mary. Around that time, during my first silent retreat, I had a personal encounter with Mary in a Russian icon of the Black Madonna. Soon I became aware of the fact that I had missed out on a deeper meaning for the Christian life because of fear—because of a patriarchal fear of the feminine. I believe Mary caused in my spiritual mentors a fear of recognizing a woman in a position of prominence before Christ. Not knowing what to do with her, they honored those fears by pushing her almost out of sight and mind. These well-intentioned people completely left her out of any conversation that would have been helpful in deepening my understanding of Jesus and my intimacy with God, as this book does.

Mary of Nazareth begins with a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins:

> O thou dear Mother,
> my atmosphere
> above me, round me lie,
> fronting my forward eye
> Stir in my ears, speak of God's love,
> of patience, penance, prayer

With this poem, Dear draws us into a deeper encounter with Mary and calls us—as she was called—to welcome God into our lives and the world. The book's message of "moving with peace" encourages us to reach out to people in need, to love our neighbor, and to become people of nonviolence. Dear focuses his purpose on page 21, where he starts to examine the "three aspects of Mary's life on the road to peace and hope that we too will take up that journey, deepening our nonviolence, worship the God of peace, love our neighbors and our enemies, and proclaim God's reign of peace and justice." The book's three chapters focus on these three movements of Mary's life—the Annunciation, the Visitation, and the Magnificat—and models from them three movements of the spiritual life—contemplative nonviolence, active nonviolence, and prophetic nonviolence.

For Dear, the journey to peace is a movement in prayer, in learning to be still and waiting until our inner turmoil is handed over to God. Prayer rooted in solitude sharpens our ears to God and in confession allows God to disarm the violence of our hearts. Hearing clearly, we will be called into this war-making world as peacemakers. The goal of prayer, then, is not the spiritual life; the goal is hearing God. By this message, Dear challenges us to acknowledge an aspect of God that creates fear and anxiety in all of us: God's willingness to startle us, as he did Mary, by meeting us face-to-face—but also to strengthen us then by saying, "Do not be afraid." The book has raised in me several challenging questions in my own spiritual journey:

- How can I work for peace more radically in my life?
- Does my resistance to work for peace indicate my own personal disconnect with God?
- What is the price of our collective disconnect for this generation and beyond?

Throughout the book, Dear shares several prayer experiences that will challenge any reader. They have challenged me to become a peacemaker, although working for 33 years as a hospital chaplain has taught me that advocating for peace can be a costly adventure. But the simple truth is that whatever does not propel us toward peace is an unhealthy spirituality that is not rooted in God. Quoting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dear says we as a nation are "the greatest purveyors of violence in the world," followed by many examples of the reality of his statement.

This small (128-page) book will disturb the reader's false sense of security. It will create storms in our perceived peace, drown out the sounds of our denial, and open our senses to the voice of God calling us to justice, disarmament, peace, a counter-culture revolution of love, action, and nonviolence.

REV. DR. ALDEN E. SPROULL
Redlands Community Hospital
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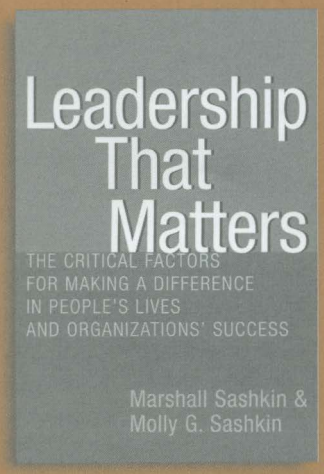
Leadership That Matters

THE CRITICAL FACTORS FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES AND ORGANIZATIONS' SUCCESS

Marshall Sashkin and Molly G. Sashkin
San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2003



review book

As I was reading *Leadership That Matters,* I found myself scribbling on the back cover of the book long-term and short-term goals for my congregation. This was not my intention at all; I had intended to read the book, write a review for it, and move on with the remainder of my week. Instead, I found myself immersed in the theory of leadership and, better yet, actively planning how I would implement the ideals presented in Marshall and Molly Sashkin's book.

Leadership That Matters is clearly, succinctly, and compellingly written, for use by religious and nonreligious leaders. It is a book that can be marked up and digested in two or three extended readings. Or if the reader wishes, she can skim for topics: the index and table of contents are quite detailed and let the reader easily pick out a certain aspects of leadership—such as vision or charisma—and concentrate on just those topics.

According to Sashkin and Sashkin, most theories on leadership concentrate only on the personality traits of a leader *or* the context in which she or he leads *or* the specific set of behavioral skills that a successful leader may display. A few theories may examine one or two of these aspects, but in the authors' opinion no work thus far has integrated all three into a discussion of leadership. By contrast, Sashkin and Sashkin bring all three aspects into a vision of transformative leadership that intertwines the leader's context, personality, and skills. Specifically, I found the authors' description of how a leader can begin to transform his or her context a particularly helpful piece, since most successful congregational redevelopment projects necessitate an alteration in congregational culture.

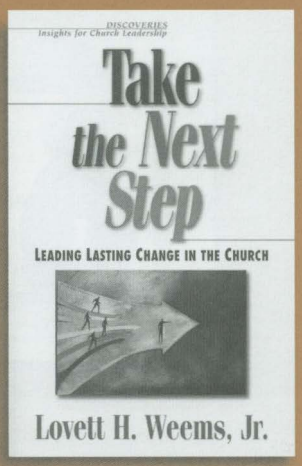
The central focus of *Leadership That Matters* is that leadership *does* matter. An effective leader can enable other people to "define and construct meaning" in congregational life (p. 186). Leadership can enable members of congregations to come to a deeper understanding of their talents. And leadership can help create faith communities where individuals take risks and help initiate ministries that test their gifts and develop their skills. Sashkin and Sashkin believe that transformational leaders can alter organizations and change people's lives. Now imagine what we can do if we couple their belief with our faith in God.

Rev. Bonnie A. Perry
All Saints' Episcopal Church
Chicago, Illinois

Take the Next Step

LEADING LASTING CHANGE IN THE CHURCH

Lovett H. Weems, Jr.
Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003



review book

Take the Next Step is the first in a series on insights for church leadership authored by Lovet H. Weems, Jr., distinguished professor of Church Leadership and director of the G. Douglass Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. In this volume written for those who would lead change in congregations, Weems explores the aspects of leadership and theories of change that can inform congregational planning.

I disliked several aspects of the book. Weems brings together key teachings from both the business world and the church world, providing an overview of the existing literature, but sometimes moves too quickly to illuminate connections for those new to the topic. At the same time, experienced clergy will have heard much of it before, and planning teams will miss details and insights offered in volumes dedicated to leading planning processes, or *Holy Conversations* by Gil Rendle and Alice Mann

(Alban Institute, 2003). In short, I could not imagine to whom I would recommend this book.

That being said, *Take the Next Step* does have strengths. As in his book *Church Leadership,* Weems does an excellent job of connecting the faith journey of a people with their need for change and planning. That is, Weems understands that change should occur not for the sake of change, but rather for the sake of nearing toward God.

Weems spends his first full chapter on the importance of developing trusting relationships, an issue that is commonly overlooked in congregational life and the first thing to debilitate leadership. Nearly every church conflict in which I have intervened suffered from a lack of trust in congregational relationships.

Weems then walks the reader through the purpose of clarifying identity, vision, mission, and goals in congregational life, and provides methods for unearthing and articulating them. He considers more options than the average congregation would need in any single planning cycle, which makes the section a useful reference over time.

Finally, the book offers some practical suggestions on how to guide a congregation through the pain of change, to frame their experience in the larger picture of faithful progress. Weems does not recommend a simple "majority rules" approach toward guiding change, but a strong pastoral approach for understanding those who must accept change they did not want.

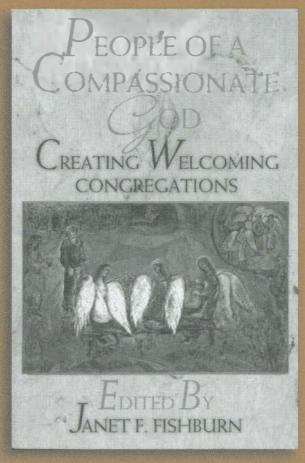
Take the Next Step is not the best book I have read on change and planning. But it is a good-enough resource that can point to other good resources for leaders trying to guide their congregations through change.

Patricia Hayes
Consultant
The Alban Institute

People of a Compassionate God

CREATING WELCOMING CONGREGATIONS

Janet F. Fishburn, ed.
Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003



review book

A learning, risking community of faith remembers its history, is clear about its present identity, and calls forth . . . a vision of hope. . . . They are willing to risk naming and examining their own assumptions and to consider whether or not they need to be altered. Such congregations regard the hard work of open, ongoing dialogue—even when it is painful—as integral to their ongoing life and mission as Christians" (p. 184).

People of a Compassionate God explores the ways in which five very different faith communities confronted and struggled with a particularly difficult issue. Methodist affiliated, they were all aware of the UMC's Reconciling Congregation Program and its commitment to "welcome persons of any age, gender, race, ethnic background, sexual orientation, economic condition, physical or mental ability as full participants in tour community of faith" (p. 20). But the sticking point for these five congregations, as for so many faith-based communities, was welcoming homosexuals—as individuals, as couples, and in families. The diversity of ways in which the congregations worked and grew in response to this challenge is presented by Janet Fishburn as a template for reconciling other life-threatening problems in congregations. Homosexuality—like any issue that threatens to divert a congregation from its mission and ministry in the world—must be faced openly and in the spirit of learning.

The five congregations studied varied in many significant ways, from an ethnically diverse inner-city church, to a liberally committed congregation in a college town, to a para-church ministry to marginalized people. Each approached the problem of acceptance and inclusion from a different perspective. Each responded in unique ways, but also exhibited meaningful similarities from which the reader may draw inspiration, direction, and strength.

For example, in each "history," the power of dialogue and learning played a major role in the congregation's resolution. All histories showed deep communal commitments to discerning God's grace, to giving prophetic public witness, and to acting courageously. Furthermore, the openness of a congregation to accept change was closely linked to leadership. Education, whether from the pulpit, in meetings, or in formal study, was a major force for creating an environment where participants could feel safe to share and debate.

Symbols also played a powerful role in each history. These included wall decorations, music, candles, windows, and the shape of the Eucharist table. Events such as birthdays and other celebrations that invite nontraditional families to partake in traditional family events also were effective in stimulating reflection and forging an inclusive atmosphere. The interpretation of symbols taught them that a willingness to enter and re-enter into dialogue and to approach issues from many angles "transforms lives and congregations [and] not only confronts brokenness but also moves toward wholeness" (p. 183).

While each study is fascinating in itself, it is in the aggregate that they have real force. Fishburn has distilled the lessons from these studies to create guidelines that would be useful to any faith community faced with difficult change.

Barbara Wies
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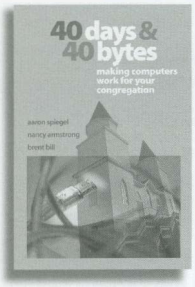
Carson City, Nevada

New & Noteworthy

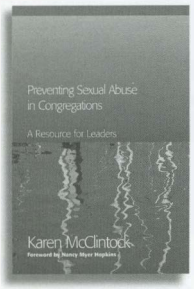
FROM THE ALBAN INSTITUTE



40 Days and 40 Bytes: Making Computers Work for Your Congregation

AARON SPIEGEL, NANCY ARMSTRONG, AND BRENT BILL — AL288; $16.00

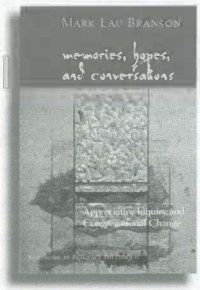
In 1998 the Indianapolis Center for Congregations (a supporting organization to the Alban Institute) began offering a series of seminars on "Computers and Ministry," focused on helping congregations to assess their technological needs and to build plans for equipping themselves. *40 Days and 40 Bytes* assembles the knowledge that the authors garnered in resourcing the more than 100 congregations that participated in this program. Writing with a touch of humor, Spiegel, Armstrong, and Bill present an accessible, nonintimidating approach to technology that will profit the Luddites, technonerds, and everyone in between who hold a stake in your congregation's organizational life.



Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations: A Resource for Leaders

KAREN A. MCCLINTOCK — AL285; $18.00

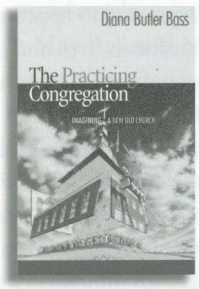
As sexual abuse scandals have overwhelmed churches in recent years, conversation has more often focused on how to deal with perpetrators rather than how such incidents might have been avoided in the first place. Karen McClintock, a licensed psychologist and ordained pastor, targets the shame mechanisms that are often prevalent in congregational life and shows how they can lead to all sorts of inappropriate behaviors, including sexual harassment, stalking, and other forms of malfeasance by both pastors and parishioners. Speaking with unusual frankness and honesty, she envisions congregations that can properly celebrate human sexuality and be safe places for all.



Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change

MARK LAU BRANSON — AL278; $18.00

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) has become a popular approach for organizations to get beyond conflict situations and move into a useful, forward-looking self-understanding based on the best practices of its past. *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations* is the first book to examine how AI may be profitably employed in mainline congregations that are facing change. Focusing on the experience of a Japanese American congregation in California, Branson demonstrates the "4-I Steps"—Initiate, Inquire, Imagine, Innovate—that any faith community may easily implement to transform old stories into new possibilities. This is an essential addition to the growing literature on "narrative leadership."



The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church

DIANA BUTLER BASS — AL295; $17.00

Observers of the American religious scene have long predicted the demise of the Protestant mainline as believers join up with more conservative, evangelical congregations, often of the "megachurch" variety. Drawing on her skills as a historian, an active layperson, and a religious observer in her own right, Diana Butler Bass has identified a new type of mainline congregation that she has named "the practicing congregation"—mainline Protestant congregations that are flourishing as they intentionally and innovatively employ ancient religious practices. *The Practicing Congregation* will give new hope to discouraged religious leaders and provide them with a path beyond hackneyed "liberal" or "conservative" dead ends.

To order these or other Alban titles, please visit us online at www.alban.org or call us toll-free at 1-800-486-1318, ext. 244.

Learn More

RESOURCES ON WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCE GUIDE

Becker, Carol E. **Leading Women: How Church Women Can Avoid Leadership Traps and Negotiate the Gender Maze** (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995). Having interviewed female and male clergy, lay professionals, and volunteers in 13 Protestant denominations, Carol Becker asserts that although female leadership styles are now acceptable, women still must compromise with patriarchal theology, invisibility, and sexism. Cases from the interviews illustrate these problems and suggest approaches to solving them.

Goleman, Daniel, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee. **Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence** (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002). *Primal Leadership* outlines the abilities of the emotionally intelligent person who leads with resonance rather than dissonance. The authors highlight four competencies of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. With these competencies, leaders can determine the best leadership style to use in a variety of situations.

Heifetz, Ronald A. **Leadership Without Easy Answers** (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994). Ronald Heifetz makes two key distinctions regarding leadership: that between technical and adaptive problems, and that between leadership and authority. The bulk of the book works through these distinctions in both theoretical and practical ways. Although not aimed at religious leaders, this book's focus on adaptive leadership will be useful to them.

Lehman, Edward C., Jr. **Women's Path into Ministry: Six Major Studies,** Pulpit & Pew Research Reports, No. 1 (Durham, N.C.: Duke Divinity School, 2002). Edward Lehman draws upon extensive research to explain the history, status, and experience of ordained women. Optimistic reports about women's success in seminary education and collegial relationships with male pastors are balanced by pessimistic reports on the difficulty of obtaining good placements and the negative attitudes of laity. Available online at www.pulpitandpew.duke.edu/women.html.

McKenzie, Vashti M. **Not Without a Struggle: Leadership Development for African American Women in Ministry** (Berea, Ohio: United Church Press, 1996). With historical and theological insight, Vashti McKenzie explores African American women's leadership in the church. *Not Without a Struggle* connects the past and the present by honoring the legacy of women who have struggled for inclusion in ministry and providing contemporary leadership strategies used by African American women.

Melander, Rochelle and Harold Eppley. **The Spiritual Leader's Guide to Self-Care** (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 2002). This 52-week book invites readers to (1) explore their own attitudes toward their life vision, work habits, and relationships; and (2) take a serious look at how they treat themselves physically, spiritually, and intellectually. Each week explores a different theme and gives readers a chance to connect with themselves, others, and God.

WITNESS: Transforming the Church through the Witness of Women (www.witnesschange.org). As a nonprofit charitable organization that promotes gender parity in faith communities, WITNESS offers resources for and on behalf of women—particularly those who are in or seeking leadership roles. Resources include educational programs and study materials, counseling and referrals, consulting, networking, liturgical aids, spirituality retreats, and the WITNESS newsletter.

Zikmund, Barbara Brown, Adair T. Lummis, and Patricia M. Y. Chang. **Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling** (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998). The authors review and discuss a 1993–94 survey of male and female clergy in 15 Protestant denominations. Statistical analyses address topics such as clergy couples, clergy spouses and children, age and health, leadership styles, and career paths. The authors conclude that clergy women are reinventing ministry. In the process, they are guiding the whole church to rethink its leadership.

www.congregationalresources.org

The Spiritual Challenge of Clergy Transition

Q: I'm the spiritual formation intern at a medium-sized Episcopal church whose rector is about to retire. Do you have recommendations for what I can do to support the congregation as the rector prepares to leave? Most of the resources I know about seem to focus more on the practical and business aspects of this critical time rather than on what it means about relationship to God and each other.

A: Clergy help us to know the love and faithfulness of God. Through words and actions and the conduct of their lives, they teach us to trust (or sometimes, sadly, not to trust) God's promises. Everything about our spiritual lives depends on whether we develop basic, fundamentally nonrational trust. Spiritual maturity is not belief that all will go well, but faith that, when things go badly, we can count on the companionship of God and that which is of God in others.

Representing God is perilous work, in part because people are so prone to confuse the representative with what he or she represents. Healthy clergy gently shrug off excessive praise or admiration and remind people that clergy, too, are human beings striving to be good, not gods accountable for being perfect.

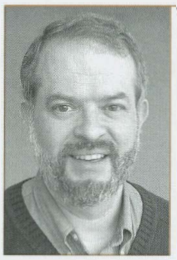
Despite such efforts, the minister gets more than one person's share of praise and blame, especially when the ministry is long in one place. Some say, "Our church is wonderful because of our wonderful rector." Others say, "If only we could find a different rector, this could be a better church." Both statements may have truth in them, but both assign too much responsibility to clergy and too little to the congregation and its members.

When a clergyperson retires or resigns, especially after a long, eventful, or conflicted ministry, members of the congregation face a spiritual challenge. As their coach and guide, you might encourage them to ask, "What part of my experience of the Holy depends on this representative of God who's leaving? What part of my anger and disappointment belong to the departing rector, and what part reflects my own unfinished business with my God?"

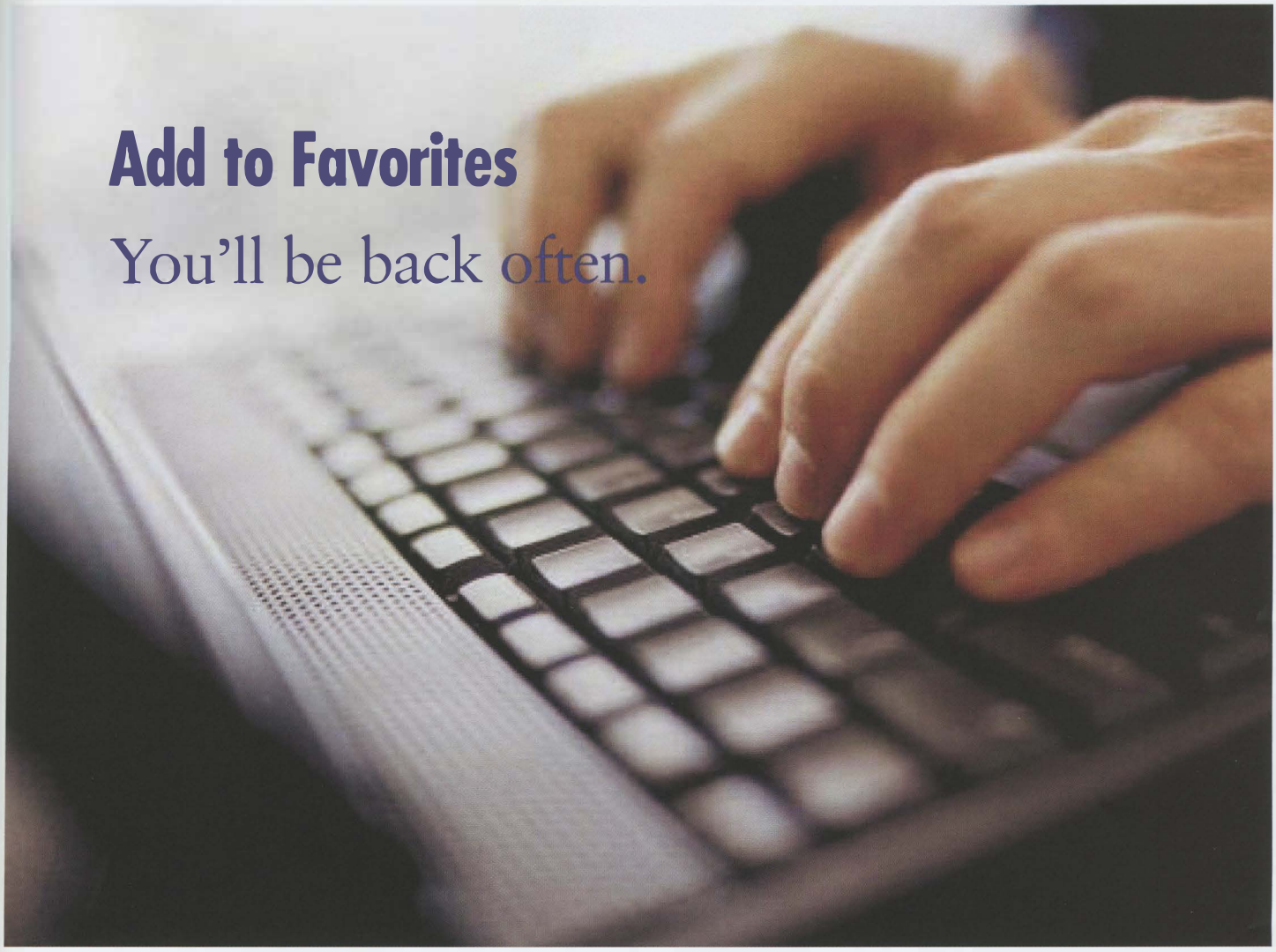
Many people have unfinished business about separation. Part of growing up is learning, one by one, that people we depend on have lives of their own and things they must do—or that they'd rather do—than meet our needs. Those of us with siblings learn this early; we all eventually learn it from our parents. Friends, lovers, spouses—at first all seem to live to fill our empty places, but all of them disappoint us, some betray us, and we are parted, soon or late, from all by death. For a few members of your congregation, the rector's retirement will feel as though a parent said, "Goodbye, I'm off to Florida. I'm sure you'll find another parent you'll like just as well."

The retirement of a rector is a chance to practice healthy separation. By telling the congregation early, your colleague has given the members of the congregation time to part with him deliberately. There will be public opportunities to express gratitude. You can provide also private settings where people can express fear, disappointment, loss, and anger.

By helping people move beyond their infantile reactions you will help them to be ready for a more mature relation to the new rector. This is not your work alone. In every congregation there are older people who have seen ministers come and go and have learned to accept with gratitude the gifts of each. Lift up these saints and let their generous, forgiving spirits shape the space your congregation's heart makes for its new leader.



Rev. Dan Hotchkiss is a Unitarian Universalist minister and an Alban Institute senior consultant who speaks, writes, and consults widely on clergy transition, conflict management, fundraising, and financial and strategic planning. He is also the author of *Ministry and Money: A Guide for Clergy and Their Friends* (Alban Institute, 2002).



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About the Alban Institute

CONGREGATIONS is a quarterly 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 703-964-2700 or send an e-mail to membership@alban.org.

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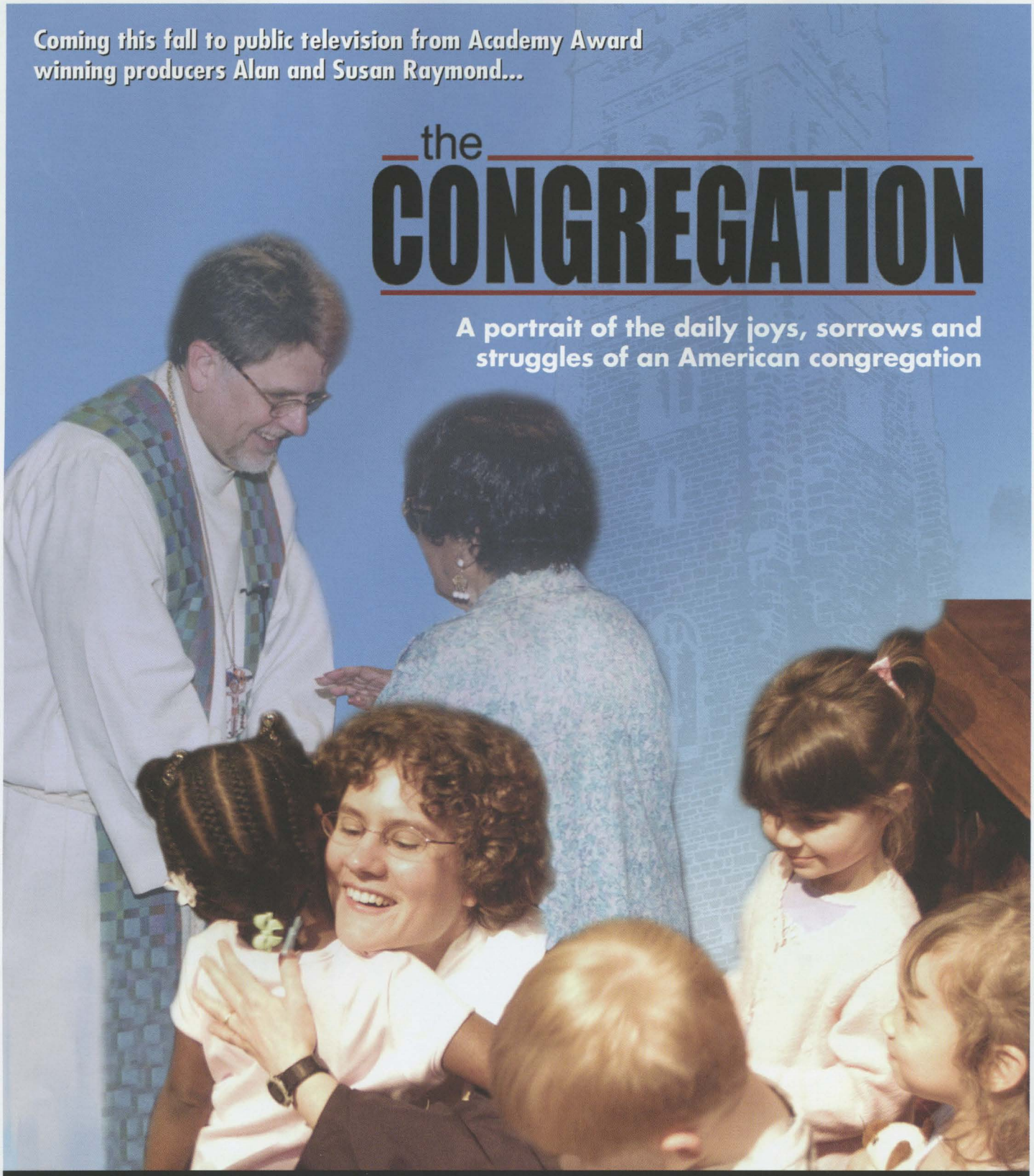

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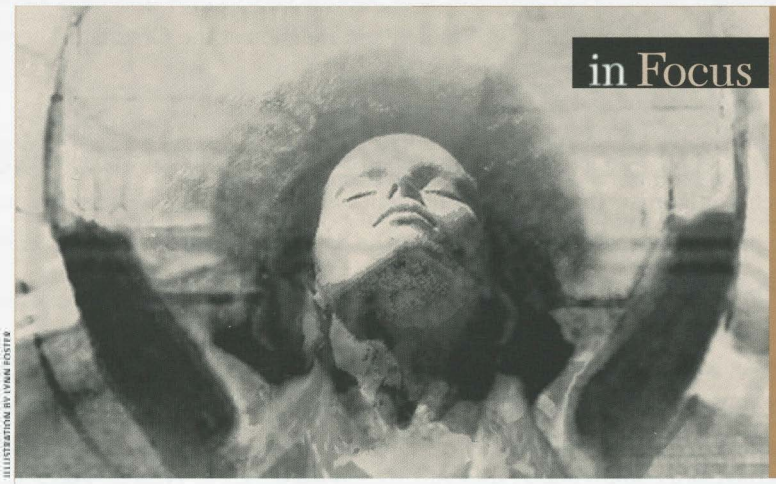
SUMMER 2004

Women in Leadership



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