

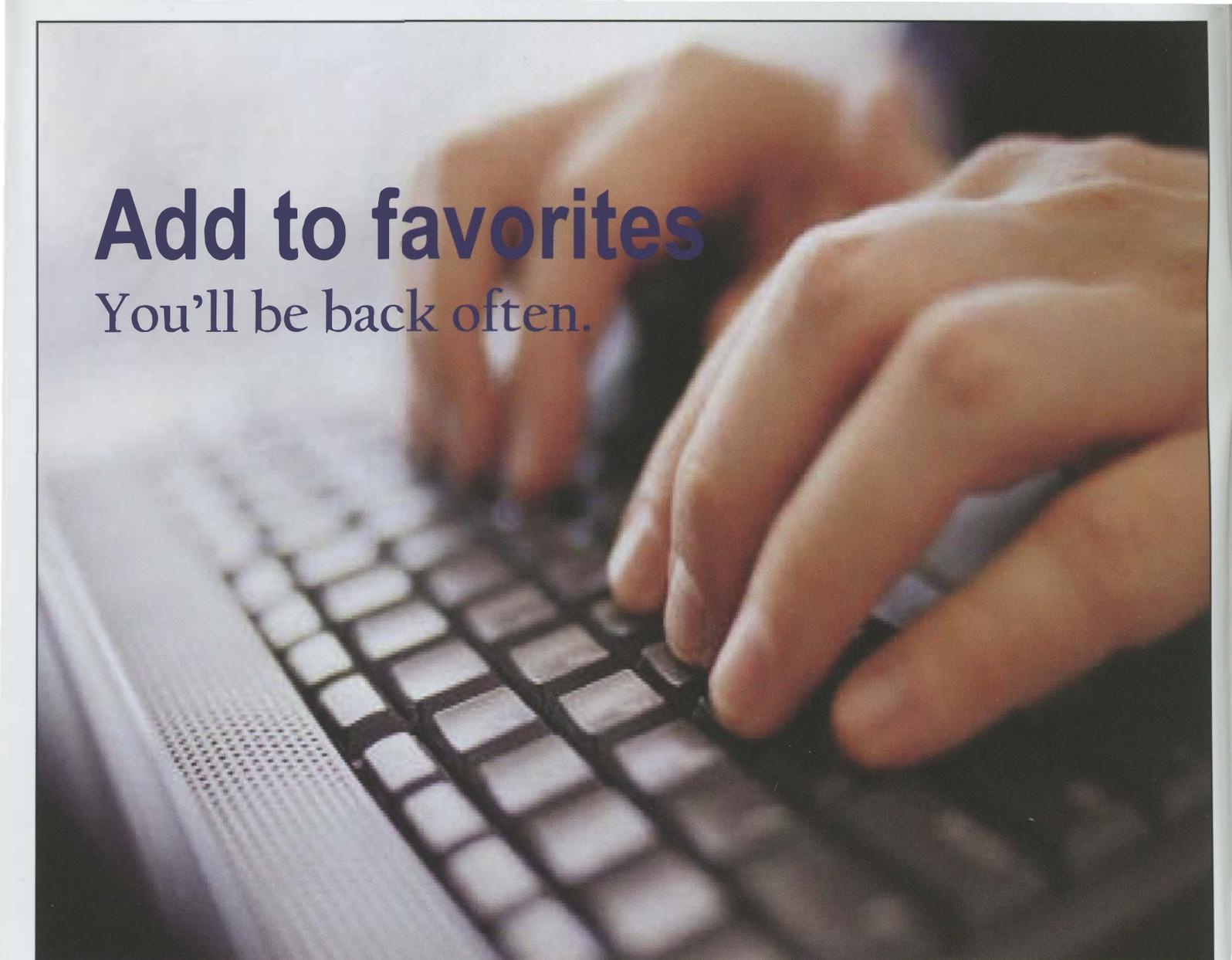
Congregations

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SPRING 2005

Emerging Models of Governance





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ILLUSTRATION BY TIMOTHY COOK

in Focus

A Congregation of Mystics

Rev. Graham Standish, author of *Becoming a Blessed Church*, explores how congregations can transform themselves by honoring the mystical in their midst

page 23

6 Leading from the Bottom Up

Pastor and consultant *Howard E. Friend* demonstrates how churches can streamline their bureaucracies while revitalizing and expanding their programs and lay ministries

12 The Synagogue Leadership Agenda

Alban senior consultant *Bob Leventhal* reveals the 12 guiding principles he has found most helpful for cultivating effective synagogue leadership

17 Calling all the Baptized

Professor *Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook* explores how several New England and Michigan churches are experimenting with innovative governance structures that call forth and support members' ministries

28 Borrowing from Business

Alban senior consultant *Dan Hotchkiss* demonstrates how churches can use Policy Governance, John Carver's board model for the secular world, to transform their own boards into "big picture" visionaries

34 Entering *The Twilight Zone*

Ministry in the Wake of Clergy Sexual Misconduct
Rev. *Matthew Linden* describes the trust and boundary rebuilding work an after-pastor must undertake in a church where clergy misconduct has occurred

COLUMNS

5 The Leading Edge

Alban Institute president *James P. Wind* shares the enlivening power of exploring literature with other leaders

44 Ask Alban

Alban Institute consultant *Patricia Hayes* suggests a wide variety of ways a congregation can increase its pool of lay leaders

DEPARTMENTS

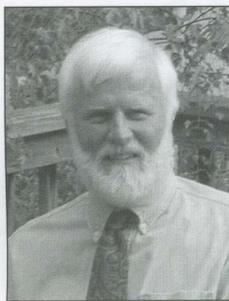
3 From the Editor

38 Reviews

42 New & Noteworthy

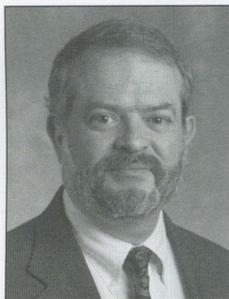
43 Learn More

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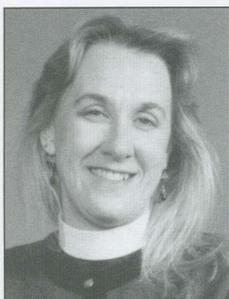
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Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

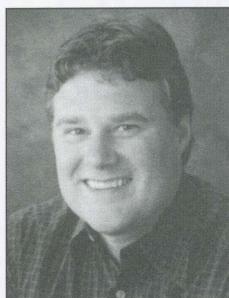
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Robert Leventhal is an Alban Institute seminar leader and senior consultant specializing in synagogues. He is currently working on a book project with Alban, *The Synagogue Agenda*, in which he provides planning, teamwork, change management, and business tools to show synagogues how to keep their congregational energy flowing from generation to generation. In 2001, Mr. Leventhal was the project consultant for the Synagogue Transformation and Renewal project at the Alban Institute. Previously, he worked as a marketing executive and management consultant. He was his synagogue's seventh-grade religious school teacher, so you know he loves a challenge.

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Toward a Truer Form of Governance



Congregations

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It has become so common for church boards to have as their primary focus issues of administration and budget that board members and congregations alike have come to define the role of church boards in this narrow way. Somewhere along the line, though, board members likely envisioned their role as something far more connected to the mission of the church, the vitality of the congregation, and the lives of individual church members. This, rather than the limited role that many board members have come to assume, is, I believe, a more appropriate way to think about the governance role. The fact is that a board that is intentionally engaged with the life of the congregation can have a renewing and revitalizing effect on that congregation.

In the business world, it is commonly known that the style, tone, and focus of those in charge of an organization set the style, tone, and focus for the organization as a whole. No less is true in our congregations. How can we expect our congregations to live their lives differently if we maintain the status quo when it comes to church boards? Given the desire among so many American congregations to deepen their spiritual experience, act from a place of discernment rather than one of practicality or analysis, and to play a transformative role in the larger community, it seems obvious that it is necessary for church boards to begin to create this experience within their own ranks.

In this issue of CONGREGATIONS, we offer the collective wisdom of pastors, authors, and consultants who have found ways to assist church boards in transforming themselves, or witnessed this process in churches where renewed vitality and a deepening of spiritual experience have been the result. Transformation is possible, they are here to tell us. It is not necessarily easy, but it is well worth the struggle. Through the content of this issue, we hope to help our readers find the courage—and the practical resources—to begin that struggle. As author Howard Friend tells us in his contribution to this issue, this requires us to leave behind the familiar and step out into the unknown. But, like the mysterious way in which the caterpillar is transformed into the butterfly, boards and congregations that embark on this journey can indeed emerge from this process transformed, with life renewed, and ready to fly.

Richard Bass
Director of Publishing



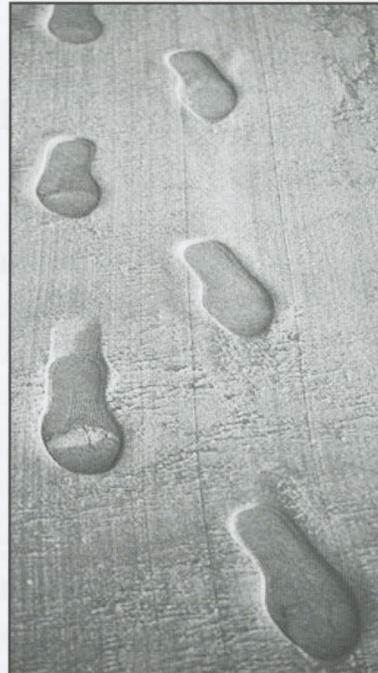
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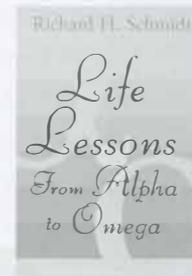
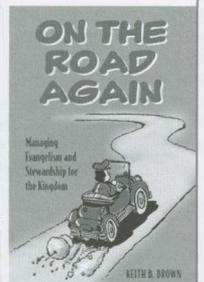
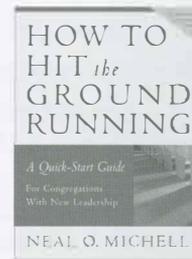
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Seeing the Drama of Leadership

For years the Alban Institute has encouraged clergy and other congregational leaders to build personal support systems. Over the years these systems have taken many forms, involving therapists, physicians, spiritual directors, financial advisors, mentors, friendship groups, peer learning groups, and the like. In recent years, major foundations and many denominations have also begun encouraging clergy to think creatively about their self care and to put some kind of supportive structure in place. New resources have emerged in the last decade that model and fund ways for clergy to step out of the day-to-day flow, to stop and think, to pray, to gain perspective, to learn about themselves and their callings, to practice healthy patterns of life, and to reflect on their practice.

At Alban we know that not everyone has such a system or structure, that many of America's clergy and congregational leaders still "go it alone." We also know there are many others who have been very intentional and creative about their need for reflective space and who participate in a wide range of activities that allow them room to grow, think, and be. We encourage both groups to keep working to create the space to learn, to change, and to go deeper into themselves and their callings—and to periodically take inventory of these spaces. As our ministries unfold, our needs and interests change and we need to regularly ask what kind of space and what kind of resources we need now, at this point in our lives and work.

Recently, I was provided with an opportunity to fill in a hole in my own personal structure of learning, reflection, and self care. It came from an unexpected source, the Aspen Institute, a national educational institution that focuses on the needs of leaders in our secular society. The structure of the offering is simple: a group of 25 of us read great literary texts, gather once a month with a facilitator, and have a conversation. This past month, for example, we read an excerpt from Plato's *Republic*, Martin Luther King's *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*, and Bernard Shaw's play, *Saint Joan*. We each brought to the session a question the readings had evoked in us, which we shared. Then off we went into two hours of conversation.

Lest this sound like a gathering of intellectuals with time on their hands, let

me be clear that the participants in this program are busy leaders who spend most of their days dealing with institutional issues, money, political causes, and making an impact on contemporary life in the U.S. and around the world. Few have lives of leisure that allow them time to read classic texts that raise the deepest questions about life. Instead, they are in a non-stop flow of meetings, report reading and writing, policy setting, and strategic planning.

As the only clergyperson in the group, I find it invigorating to reflect with influential leaders in the public arena, and to discover that my questions are also theirs. I learn immensely from these people who do not share the preoccupations of my work. A part of me comes alive in these gatherings, and I am renewed by discussion of the deep things that get pushed to the edge of my normal routine.

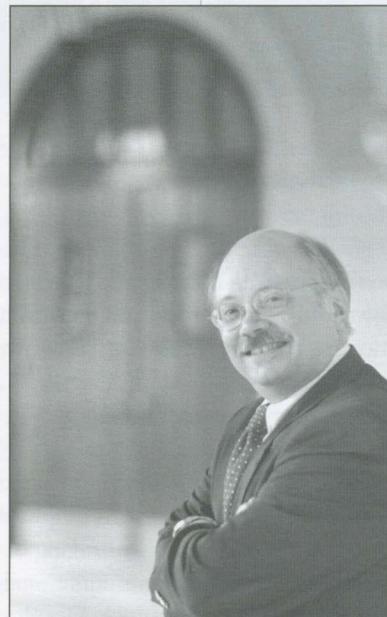
Saint Joan, for example, confronted me with fresh questions about leadership, a topic I work at every day. Shaw's play about Joan of Arc gave me a chance to think about and talk with other leaders about what makes a good leader, about the criteria by

which we judge leaders, about our expectations of leaders. We pondered this heretic-turned-martyr-turned-saint, this woman who challenged the rule of men, this fearless warrior who succeeded and failed, this leader who inspired many and was put to death by a conspiracy of all the powers of her age. Then we asked ourselves about the role of spirit and religion in human events, about the difference between short-term and long-term consequences, about the different kinds of leadership that are required as situations emerge and then change. As one might guess, this Washington, D.C. crowd could not resist the temptation to take the insights and questions raised by *Saint Joan* and test them against American political leaders. We disagreed, we challenged, and we went home troubled and awakened.

Saint Joan helped us see that leadership is always part of a larger drama. In Joan's case, the drama included the pretensions of the English empire, the emergence of French nationalism, the overreach of the Catholic Inquisition, the rise of Protestantism and individualism, and a prototypical expression of the power of feminism. We went home with fresh eyes for the larger dramas we are part of and with new awareness of the contending dynamics that make leadership so difficult. We also went away with

new insights about the work we have to do as leaders. Quite a return on a few hours of reading and a monthly two-hour conversation.

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."





Leading from the Bottom Up: Bureaucracy and Adhocracy

HOWARD FRIEND

I have worked with a number of churches who have revitalized themselves through a steady and consistent focus on lay vocation (see “Living from the Inside Out,” Fall 2004 issue). However, these promising episodes of energy and new life could remain just that—an ebb and flow of episodes. To maintain their vitality, these churches must become institutionalized in the best sense of that word. They must explore new forms of governance. Yet everywhere evident are the sad and discouraging stories of decline in a vast majority of mainline denominational churches, clinging to traditional modes of governance. Despite

their familiarity, these old forms of governance simply don't work as they once did. Heartening, however, are emerging new forms that, though less easily understood and still a-birthing, are potentially far more powerful in their ability to transform a congregation into what it discerns it is called to become.

An ocean voyage demands the courage to lose sight of the land of departure long before catching a first glimpse of one's destination. Centuries ago, such exploration could feel like “sailing off the map.” Today, our churches face a journey of similar uncertainty. Trustworthy maps of the new governance forms that will better support congregational life are yet to be fully and accurately drawn. But, carrying the old maps of tradi-

tional governance under one arm and the still sketchy and uncertain maps of the new under the other, we must journey forth into uncharted waters if our churches are to have any hope of discovering the new life they seek.

What we are facing is not the *developmental* type of change we see in a tadpole's gradual, orderly, incremental, and fully visible transformation into a full-grown frog but the much more mysterious *transformational* change we see in the transition from caterpillar to butterfly. Few people realize that inside the chrysalis the caterpillar has wound around itself is a bundle of formless cells, a puddle of protoplasm, neither a caterpillar sprouting wings nor a husk soon to drop away revealing a butterfly. All that the caterpillar was and all that the butterfly will be are contained in the chrysalis, but one form must relinquish itself that another might emerge. This kind of change is mysterious, hidden, and full of surprise—and a far less comfortable process of change than that exemplified by the tadpole. This kind of change is revolutionary. It is seemingly chaotic, disruptive, disorganized, and out of control—not likely our choice for how we'd like to experience change.¹ But it may well be that we need to affirm and even welcome this kind of change if we are to see life return to congregations in decline.

The Bible is crammed with verses and narratives that echo this theme. Indeed, the foundational event, the defining metaphor of our faith, is not resuscitation but *resurrection*, the ultimate transformation.

Building on Rock

Nevertheless, the old ways can provide support for such a resurrection, as the following story illustrates: A creative young pastor was called to a traditional but faltering small town church. He combined a passion for the creative and innovative with keen sensitivity and a pastor's heart. The church had a sturdy and devoted core of long-time members. Many of them were descendents of a few families who had loved and served the church for decades, and they were vigilant guardians of the traditions. But the engaging style and contagious energy of the new pastor soon attracted a growing number of newcomers. He began to make changes—gently, he hoped. Young adult programs sprang up. Different types of music were added to the worship service. A youth program grew, swelled by previously unchurched community teens. The lights were on in the church almost every night of the week! But from one longtime member came a candid and revealing complaint: "It feels like us old-timers are being pushed off the table." The young pastor's response was inspired: "Well, I guess we need to build a bigger table!"

That creative, bridging response became public. "Both/and" thinking dispelled the fears generated by "either/or" assumptions. The "new table" strategy was able to maintain and celebrate the old while still openly embracing the new. Too many first-call pastors roar into the church

Carrying the old maps of traditional governance under one arm and the still sketchy and uncertain maps of the new under the other, we must journey forth into uncharted waters if our churches are to have any hope of discovering the new life they seek.

armed with exciting but untried templates of congregational renewal, leaving members feeling under siege. Likewise, experienced pastors often return from a workshop on revitalization, their enthusiasm for sweeping changes overwhelming the congregation's startled leaders. Many of these ministers then react with surprise and resentment to the understandable and predictable resistance to their proposed changes. Recalling that Jesus came not to abolish but to fulfill, and that he advocated the building of houses on rock can help strengthen our faith that the new can rise on the solid foundation of the old. This wisdom can be seen in the following, similar stories of three different churches.

A Streamlined Infrastructure

A Methodist Church, among the larger of six congregations in a mid-sized east coast city, after two decades of steady decline experienced a sudden season of renewal under a new, energetic pastor with solid preaching credentials, a contagious enthusiasm, and an engaging vision. An ambitious building program was initiated, membership increased by a third in less than five years, and the church's newsletter constantly featured new opportunities to learn and serve. The organizational infrastructure, with its proliferation of new committees and endless additional meetings, was not only cumbersome and unwieldy but also out of alignment with both the content and spirit of all that was happening. More than just alteration and adjustment were needed; a complete overhaul seemed in order. Six months later, participation and ministry were still burgeoning and new programs were multiplying, but the total number of standing committees had been reduced from 29 to eight!

From a Pyramid to a Circle

A United Church of Christ church decided to stay at its center-city location in a deteriorating New England city even after the last of the other congregations in town had relocated to the suburbs. Their building a burden, their membership in decline, and once thriving programs dwindling, crisp vision and pesky determination persisted. A strategy of encouraging new groups and ministries to "bubble up" naturally proved immediately promising, but those tasked with maintaining an

administrative structure inherited from the congregation's glory years grew restless. Ultimately, they dared to jettison the whole bulky affair. They combined three boards into one, replaced the typical organizational pyramid with a circle, and reduced the number of committees and meetings by two-thirds—all as new programs, small groups, educational opportunities, and mission efforts flourished.

A Focus on Empowerment

In a stable, established suburban community, a small, liberal congregation in the shadow of several thriving tall-steeple churches wondered about its future. Facing discouraging demographics and unable to compete with the vast program offerings and large staffs of the big churches, it decided to re-invent itself, becoming, by intention, a niche-market congregation. Consciously shifting paradigms proved helpful. If the large churches were like supermarkets, with a product to meet every need, they'd become a farmer's market, providing space where programs and ministries emerging from member initiative could be offered. If the large churches were like catered banquets with endless buffets, they'd be like a covered dish supper. Leaders and standing committees began to encourage rather than sponsor new programs, and to empower rather than provide new ministries. In the process, they reinvented governance.

The organizational map of each of these churches emerged and evolved individually, but came to look something like the diagram shown at right. Each wanted to be intentionally and decisively Christ-centered and biblically grounded (thus the cross at the center of the diagram). Each had a circle of mission-focused and goal-oriented boards and standing ministry teams (the *bureaucracy*). And the vitality of the church—the ever-broadening number of groups, programs, and ministries—occurred in the outer circle of activity, the *adhocracy*.

Three Levels of Renewal

If we take a closer look at each congregation's journey, we will find common threads. Three levels of renewal serve as a foundation on which to build.

Renewing the Meaning of Membership

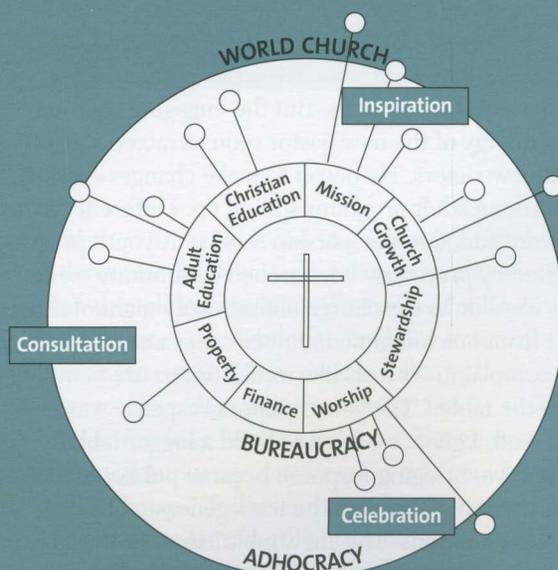
If you join a Rotary Club, a friend recently told me, you attend 80 percent of the weekly meetings and choose the project to which you will commit time, energy, and money. "No exceptions?" I asked. "No exceptions." I've been a volunteer fireman in two communities. You attend meetings, go to fire school, show up at drills, and fight fires. That's that. But ask an average member of a congregation what membership in the church means and it's a different story: "I guess I oughta go to church," they mumble, with "oughta" being the defining word—heavy with obligation, thin on joy. "I suppose I should send a check from time to time" likely follows, barely lifting the needle on the Richter scale of commitment. "I guess I should help out when I can" limps in third—and when a call comes, it's likely

not perceived as being the right time. Churches, it seems, have the lowest membership standards in town!

But churches seeking to revitalize themselves are changing that. The self-styled niche-market church described above decided to replace its legacy of casual, low-bar attitudes about joining with a six-month new member orientation process. Each participant, accompanied and encouraged by a "spiritual companion," now attends courses and classes, keeps a personal journal, and is introduced to the life and ministries of the church. This process culminates in the completion of the following three-part New Member Covenant:

- ♦ **Because I want to deepen my faith and my relationship to God, I will....** In response to this opening thought, each person crafts a "spiritual growth discipline," typically including commitment to regular worship, a daily devotional practice, joining a small group, and attending programs or workshops (or helping to initiate a new spiritual support group or program).
- ♦ **Discerning my calling and gifts, and knowing myself to be a part of the Body of Christ, I will serve this church by....** Guided in this discernment and introduced to the array of opportunities to serve, each new member finds his or her place or, as often as not, links with others in the class to create new opportunities for service.
- ♦ **Believing that a Christian is called to make love and a commitment to peace and justice visible and concrete in the world, I will....** By completing this thought, each person commits to a clear and specific plan for sharing his or her faith, living a vigorous personal and relational ethic, and advocating for peace, justice, and the poor. Almost every class has developed at least one new mission outreach effort.

A NEW MAP OF CHURCH GOVERNANCE



© Howard E. Friend

While there was resistance to this bold change at first, the fruits of the new approach included increased numbers of people desiring to join, appreciation for the process, and an infusion of hearty and sustained participation and serving by new members—and, it turned out, a renewal of commitment by longstanding members. Membership covenant writing became an annual ritual at the turn of the year. This church would likely affirm that its most important job description is its *member* job description.

Churches, it seems, have the lowest membership standards in town! But churches seeking to revitalize themselves are changing that.

Creating an Intentional Nominations Process

All too aware of the frustrations of board member recruitment, a nominating committee member may quietly muse, “How small do I have to make this job to get a yes?” Persuasion yields to pleading, the operative criteria being to *get this job done quickly*. But when discernment of calling and giftedness is the foundation for member responsibility-taking and serving, it is logical to approach nominations similarly. Imagine that same recruiter with a new script: “I am calling for the nominating committee. We have been pondering and praying, assessing our vision and goals for the year ahead, and sharing the names of those we sense are called, gifted, and ready to serve in leadership. I am calling to invite you to serve on our official board and to chair the Mission Committee. We have noticed your passion for outreach and your faithfulness in serving on several committees. I know, as an officer myself, that this task will demand significant time and energy. You may need to consider pruning your commitments in other areas to give this work full attention. It is a high calling. I do not ask you to give me an answer now. May I call back in about a week? In the meantime, feel free to call me with any questions. And please know, though we offer this invitation with full confidence and hope you will accept, that we want you to discern what feels truly good and right for you. Feel free to accept or decline, as you feel led.” Callers who take this approach find, to their surprise and delight, that they get heartier and more durable commitment and, yes, more yeses.

Developing an Effective and Efficient Bureaucracy

Each of the churches described earlier tightened, sharpened, and streamlined its *bureaucracy* in the positive and creative spirit of that word. Organizational units were typically eliminated or combined. Board, committee, and leader job descriptions were crafted to artfully combine autonomy and accountability. The congregational vision statement was

regularly revisited and renewed; each ministry team created a mission statement to guide its work, projected goals for the year, and formulated an action plan to carry them out; and leaders were trained in the skills necessary for effective leadership—all in a spirit of sharing and celebration. Bureaucracy is not a bad word.

Welcoming the Brand New—Adhocracy

In the process of streamlining their bureaucracies, these churches found themselves reinventing governance. They shed the all too prevalent and pervasive view of leaders as people “elected to do the work,” adopting instead a partnership vision of a leader: “a *person* who works with *people* to accomplish a *purpose*,” redefining leaders as people who work *with* rather than *for* the membership. They moved away from the typical “producer-consumer relationship” between leadership and membership, where leaders offer “products” (programs, groups, events, etc.) and hope members will “buy.” Rather than polling members about their needs so they could offer appropriate programs and opportunities to serve, leaders encouraged and equipped groups of members large and small to create their own opportunities for service. The familiar operational mantra, “*You come on in*,” where leaders beckon the membership to “come join our committee or ministry team, come out to support our programs, come and help us with our work,” becomes “*We’ll go out* into the membership, helping folks with creative ideas for programs and ministries mold and shape them, helping people with similar callings to link up, form a circle, and put wheels under those ideas.” This approach involves “self-directed people on self-managed teams,” as Stephen R. Covey, author of *Principle-Centered Leadership*, puts it. Top-down governance is replaced by bottom-up governance.

Notice that the largest space on the graphic shown on page 8 is beyond the bureaucracy—in the adhocracy. That’s where the action is. Even the church walls cannot contain it! As the *bureaucracy* shrinks, all the while becoming more effective, the *adhocracy* blossoms. Ultimately, in the three churches described earlier, three-quarters of the programs, events, and opportunities appearing on the churches’ monthly calendars and in their newsletters were member-initiated, autonomously structured grassroots programs and ministries. It’s important to note that this approach was not, for these churches, merely a strategy—an innovative and outside-the-box tactic—or some new governance technology carefully applied. It was, first and foremost, an expression of faith, a product of foundational convictions such as the following:

- ◆ Human beings naturally long for the divine.
- ◆ There’s a deep, inborn desire to deepen and grow in relationship to God.
- ◆ The church as the Body of Christ, a priesthood of all believers, compels everyone to find his or her place.

- ◆ The church belongs to the people.
- ◆ People are to be encouraged to discern their calling and giftedness for serving and then manifest these calls and gifts.
- ◆ Naming the vision, mission, and goals of the church is the work of corporate discernment.

New governance this may be—with all the prayerfulness, creativity, and courage it demands—but it is firmly rooted in faithful conviction.

The Two Hats of Leadership

Let's return for a moment to the aforementioned Methodist Church in the mid-sized city. A longtime, beloved but rather autocratic pastor had departed and the congregation found itself in a season of transition—perhaps toward the more partnership-based model of governance the new minister advocated. A new identity, a fresh vision, and a revitalized sense of mission seemed poised to emerge. The staff and key leaders went on a retreat. The exchanges were vigorous, but at times the differing visions for the church seemed competing, even colliding. “Who are we? What do we want to be?” the youth minister asked. “Are we a supermarket or a mega department store? Or a giant home center?” a lay leader added. “What if we are to become a *mall*?” the Christian educator mused. Something clicked! “A mall has two or three anchor stores, like worship and Christian education and pastoral care, then a whole lot of smaller stores,” the lay leader added, building the momentum.

The mall metaphor offered coherence and cohesiveness while affirming variety and multiplicity. The congregation's basic approach to church growth and its organizational map came to look like our graphic. The *bureaucracy* developed and managed the “anchor stores”—property, worship, finance, Christian education, and so on. The lay leaders donned “manager hats.” But that's only half of the job! A second hat is called for!

Developing and nurturing *adhocracy* demands an additional, different kind of leadership, which may be a truer form of leadership than what we typically see in churches. It's important to keep in mind that the *adhocracy* is an *approach* to expanding program and ministry; it does not directly create them. This is dramatic, sweeping, transformational, caterpillars-to-butterfly leadership. More than new thoughts or new ideas, this kind of leadership demands a *new way of thinking*.

Three Leadership Functions

So how can one best introduce this new approach? How can a congregation shift its initiative for programs and ministries to the membership? How can this energy and responsiveness be motivated from the bottom up? It may involve three basic roles and functions for leaders: inspiration, consultation, and celebration.²

Inspiration

How can congregational leaders create and nurture an environment of initiative and responsibility-taking by laity, an environment of inventiveness and creativity, of motivation and responsiveness among the membership? How can leaders “get the word out” that all can be co-creators of the ministry of the church? These questions begin to turn the soil in this region we are calling *adhocracy*. Inspired and inspiring leaders create and nurture a climate of expectancy, of responsibility-taking, of eager lay initiative. If you could read the congregational journal of that niche-market church, you'd see it unfold—slowly at first, haltingly, tentatively, almost imperceptibly. Indeed, let's use them as a model. Here are some illustrations of how the *adhocracy* of that church developed—with inspiring results:

- ◆ Sara met an Episcopal priest from Haiti, and wept as he spoke of the children in the most depressed part of Cite Soleil (City of the Sun). She heard how little money it took to sponsor a child's primary education, and compassion was transformed into action. *Scholarship Soleil* began when three families each pledged the \$200 yearly tuition and uniform costs for a student, another committed the \$950 salary for a teacher, and yet another wrote a check for \$1,500, which built a simple cinder block school.
- ◆ Jeff, the part-time youth and outreach minister, practiced his Spanish as he talked with the Galo family from Nicaragua during their residency for a week at the church. He learned that owning a bicycle could be the key for high school graduates to begin their university education, and coaxed the congregation's teens into rounding up old bikes and coming to youth group an hour early to repair them. This, in turn, infected the congregation with the dream. The church sent its 1,000th bike to Nicaragua not long ago!
- ◆ Bill didn't find any of the church's existing adult education options appealing. Challenged to start his own, he invited others to join him in “praying over the news” as he spread out the Sunday paper in the church's kitchen after worship each week. His circle became a steady, dedicated half dozen.
- ◆ Jay didn't want to join the property committee but said he'd plant and tend the gardens by the entrance. The idea caught hold and soon every garden on the church's property had a sponsoring family.

Three years later, the church's programs, groups, and ministries had tripled in number and participation. Three-quarters of them had been initiated in the *adhocracy*. Other churches have adopted a similar approach with similar exciting results!

Consultation

People with fresh ideas and a readiness to carry them forward need assistance: guidance, encouragement, coaching, and access to resources, including budget. People leading a hands-on mission might seek out the Outreach Committee chair. Someone with an adult education idea might connect with the Christian Education Committee. These leaders know how to

“get beside” the people who can best assist them *while keeping the ball in their own hands*. In the transformation of the New England congregation described earlier, the annual budget included “undesignated funds” for both education and mission outreach so that programs could birth anytime during the church year. Mini-courses or one-on-one consultations were available to teach the skills needed to birth a new ministry: convening and empowering a group, setting an agenda and leading a meeting, focusing vision and setting goals, and making appropriate contacts outside the church. Sometimes it was as simple as “Here are keys to the church. This is how you turn on the lights and adjust the heat, and there are the folding chairs and coffee supplies.” St. Paul would call it “equipping the saints.”

Celebration

Leaders of empowered congregations are “liturgists of celebration.” People need, want, and have a right to recognition, affirmation, and celebration, so write newsletter articles about your church’s lay leaders, feature a ministry or program each Sunday, use them as sermon illustrations, or create a photo collage of church leaders and their ministries on the bulletin board. Create a climate of appreciation not just for the “successes” but also for devotion, commitment, and hard work, even for initiatives that didn’t work so well. Celebrate faithfulness; it is a way to remember that it is God who “works it all together for good.”

Making the Crossing

New governance is a work in progress. It’s emerging and evolving. Moses and Isaiah remind us “to watch for the new thing God is doing among you.” Martin Luther invites us to love God and fail boldly. A two-week walk from the Red Sea crossing to the Jordan crossing took 40 years! But in that Jordan crossing is an inspirational metaphor for new governance. In that story, Moses had made his last speech and climbed Mount Nebo to die. Less formidable than the Red Sea, the Jordan was still a body of water to be crossed. Joshua called the people to the bank of the river, asking that the leaders stand in the front. “Just begin walking into the water,” he instructed. The narrative suggests that the waters toward the future parted “as they walked.” No dramatic parting after a single step, yet slowly, steadily parting with each step that was taken.

Those who would be church leaders, dare to stand in front . . . and start walking! ♦

NOTES

1. This metaphor builds on the work of Harrison Owen, *Spirit: Transformation and Development in Organizations* (Potomac, MD: Abbott Publishing, 1987), 7–9.
2. See Howard E. Friend, *Recovering the Sacred Center* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1998), 143–149.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Think about your congregation’s history: In what ways does it animate and encourage healthy and vibrant church life, and vision and commitment for the future? In what ways does it discourage and impede faithfulness?
2. What do you think Jesus had in mind when he envisioned “church”? In what ways is your church’s life and ministry “what Jesus had in mind”? If Jesus returned to “see how it was going” with the church, and included your congregation on his tour, what might he have to say?
3. What is the prevailing “member job description” in your congregation? What does the average member of your church expect of himself or herself, and of others? What does “membership” mean to the members of your congregation?
4. Imagine your church as if it were a *person*, then develop a description of that person. This might include the individual’s gender, age, strengths and weaknesses of character, appealing and not so appealing qualities of personality, typical attitudes and behavior patterns, and perhaps even a name. What changes might be appropriate to help that person become healthier, more effective, and more faithful?
5. Develop a *metaphor* world that might represent your congregation. For example, perhaps your congregation could be represented by one of the following:
 - *transportation* (an airport, a rail system, a bus line, a highway system, a particular vehicle or mode of transportation, a train station, a bus station, etc.)
 - *sports* (a team, a stadium, a court or field, a league, etc.)
 - *entertainment* (a band or orchestra, a concert, a movie or play, a circus, a zoo, a television program, etc.)
 - *shopping* (a store, a market, a mall, a product line, a television channel, etc.)

Now choose a different metaphor world, or a different metaphor in the same world, that might image an alternative future for your congregation.



The Synagogue Leadership Agenda: Redesigning Boards to Unleash Congregational Energy

ROBERT LEVENTHAL

My clients know I was a business executive before I was a congregational consultant, so when I arrive at a synagogue to teach a workshop it is not uncommon for the treasurer to corner me in the hall and say, “Thank God you’re here. I’ve been trying to convince this group that the synagogue needs to be run like a business, and I know you understand how important business is.” Later, in the workshop, this same treasurer often appears crestfallen when I announce that the synagogue is not, in fact, a business. However, I quickly offer a clarification that relieves that disappointment. “The synagogue is not a business,” I say, “but it is in great need of the skills and tools that many business leaders have. It is in great need of leadership and management. It is in great need of financial planning, operational procedures, human resource development, and marketing. It must work with these tools in the context of the congregation’s tradition to create a unique synagogue leadership agenda. Synagogues may not have the time, skills, or resources to do exhaustive strategic planning, but they will find it helpful to develop some basic strategic working ideas.”

The way I help synagogues to do this developed out of my own experiences in both lay leadership and family business. As a lay leader, I had an idealistic vision that synagogues could be very transformational. My own experiences, however, had been disappointing. Using what is known as “action research,” I tested out a number of different theories about why. I learned a great deal from my experimentation—much of it coming as a surprise.

Synagogues, I came to discover, are substantially less equipped to vision than we were in my family's business. For all of our conflicts, we were usually on the same page. We knew each other and our history. We had shared incentives to do well. When I began to look at the synagogue, however, I realized that people in this setting often did not share the same history. They were not on the same page. For instance, interviews with groups of congregational leaders revealed that few of their congregations were doing any ongoing leadership development. Even fewer were doing visioning and planning. As a practical matter, some congregations would not have the time or energy for extensive planning. They would be able to manage a program of no more than two or three sessions. Others would be at a critical stage where they needed to invest 12 to 18 months in building a consensus about the future. They would need a process that could hold a visioning group together through the extensive planning steps.

These and other insights gained through my work with synagogues over the last four years ultimately led to the development of the following 12 "guiding principles," which provide the foundation for a book I am writing called *The Synagogue Leadership Agenda*.

Guiding Principles: The Synagogue Leadership Agenda

1. Leaders can develop shared meaning about their changing synagogue environment. A number of trends, factors, and forces are affecting Jewish life in general and synagogue life in particular, so an awareness of these trends—as well as the challenges and opportunities they represent—is essential for effective synagogue leadership.

When the Israelites were planning to enter the land of Canaan, Moses was instructed to send spies to "see what the land is, whether the land is rich or poor" (Num. 13:18-20). There is a lesson here: leaders must be aware of the "lay of the land." In *Bowling Alone*, Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam describes the

current social landscape. He traces the decline of many once popular social institutions, from the bowling league to the PTA. We see this same decline in the Jewish community, which has changed dramatically in the last 50 years. In 1970 the intermarriage rate was about 17 percent. By 2000 it had risen to close to 49 percent, according to the Jewish Population Survey from that year. In the 1950s and 1960s, affiliation was at about 50 percent; today it is at about 40 percent overall, and the percentages fall into the 20s in the new Sunbelt areas of California and Florida.

Jewish life has been affected in other ways as well. In many Jewish families, both spouses are working longer hours on the job and under greater pressures. Job security is a significant concern for many of these couples because the loss of one of their incomes can place the family at risk. In addition, because Jewish families value education, they often must compete with others for homes in desirable school districts. This inflates the cost of homes and raises the percentage of family income devoted to housing costs. The cost of full Jewish "citizenship" (day schools, Jewish camps, synagogue memberships, JCC memberships, etc.) adds to Jewish families' stress. Family discretionary time has eroded and traditional volunteerism has been impacted. There is a greater array of consumer choices for leisure time, but less time is available.

These are the well-known forces that synagogue leaders discuss in my workshops. What is rarely mentioned, however, is that the Jewish community has been extraordinarily successful. Jewish immigrants came to America for economic opportunity and political freedom. They have achieved both. Jews have prospered and gained respected positions in government, the professions, and business, and anti-Semitism has substantially declined in the 60 years since World War II.

While Jewish leaders are concerned about intermarriage, one of the reasons it is so prevalent is that non-Jews are far more accepting of Jews than they once were. Some Jews may look with nostalgia

at the old pre-emancipation Jewish world of the 18th century. That was a time when Jews were more frequently on the same page, but, on the other hand, they had never been allowed to freely choose what page they wanted to be on. Today, Jews have greater access to resources of Western knowledge and commerce than they ever have before, but must relearn the skills of Jewish community building.

In recent years, Jewish knowledge has expanded exponentially. Few cities are without significant adult study opportunities, and anyone with an Internet connection can quickly access a host of Jewish Web sites offering everything from commentaries on the week's Torah portion to essays on Jewish communal issues.

Regardless of whether a trend is positive or negative ("rich or poor"), it needs to be understood and managed. Even strengths like the Internet create challenges: How do we use this tool? How do we leverage it? How do we avoid some of the negative side effects associated with it—its impersonality and intemperate e-mail, for instance? In times of change, managing the environment takes work.

2. Synagogues can better understand the talents, interests, and needs of members. Synagogue leaders consistently tell me that they do not have a method for identifying the skills, talents, and interests of their members, nor to make appropriate leadership opportunities available to them. These assertions are supported by the findings of a 2004 Brandeis University study on the congregations of Westchester, New York, and have been echoed in other studies of volunteerism. A 2003 Urban Institute survey of volunteer management capacity among charities and congregations found that more than 40 percent of those who were no longer volunteering had withdrawn their efforts because of poor experiences they had had as volunteers. Not only has there been a decline in association, but those who have tried to "make the connection" have often been disappointed. In the Urban Institute study, volunteers reported that their volunteer tasks were often poorly designed and were inadequately supervised or

A five-minute dvar Torah

(text commentary), however well-intended, does not transform board workers into a dynamic leadership community. The whole design of the board's work needs to be reviewed.

supported. In addition, volunteers with little discretionary time often found the work did not meet their expectations.

The Jewish Federation in Baltimore did extensive interviews with prospective leaders between the ages of 25 and 35. The following is a composite portrait of the members' discussions:¹

Interviewer: Would you consider volunteering with the federation?

Prospect: I don't really have the time.

Interviewer: Would you consider making time for this?

Prospect: I might if the work was really important.

Interviewer: What would it mean for the work to be important?

Prospect: I would want to know that this work will make a difference. I would also want to know that the work would be a good match for my talents.

Interviewer: What else would make you consider volunteering?

Prospect: I want to have staff support so that I can be confident that the project will be a success. On the other hand, I don't want the staff person to try to control everything. I'd want to have some autonomy.

As a former leader, my first instinct upon hearing this demanding agenda was to mutter (rather grumpily), "Is that *all* they want?" But if we utilize our active listening skills—and a little patience—we can gain some insights about these potential volunteers. And by listening to their thoughts we can better manage their conflicting desires, such as the need for both support and autonomy, or the desire to do important work while not spending a great deal of time on it.

3. A focus on the future can increase hope and motivation for leaders.

Most planning processes identify strengths and weaknesses. They look at the gap between the leader's expectations and congregational performance. Most congregations that agree to embark on planning feel some pressing need to invest the time and money to do so. Rob Weinberg, director of the Experiment in Congregational Education, one of several pioneering synagogue transformation projects, has discovered that the elements that create a "readiness for change" are dissatisfaction with the present, a vision of the future, a belief that change is possible, and practical first steps.

I believe a positive vision of the future is instrumental in increasing the belief that change is possible. The belief that change is possible reinforces and energizes the ability to vision. For this reason, when leaders are overly focused on "gaps and deficits," congregational planning will be weakened. Most congregational leaderships excel in certain areas (sermons, social action, facility, board, etc.). Part of the art of planning is to review the congregational landscape and to bring these various strengths into focus and inspire hope. The biblical spies who were sent to do reconnaissance of the promised land of Canaan were encouraged to "take pains to bring back some of the fruit of the land" (Num. 13:17). God knew that leaders needed to promise a sweet future to help sustain the people's hopes.

4. Synagogue leaders can be more strategic by doing leadership tasks.

Alban Institute research has shown that most clergy and lay leaders are tactical and managerial rather than strategic or transformational thinkers. Although strategic skills are not common, they are critical in times of change, according to

leadership expert and Harvard professor John Kotter. Strategic planning skills help leaders overcome their internal focus, learn from the changing environment, and manage the inefficiencies of the synagogue organization.

A successful planning model must simplify the process enough to ensure that the volunteer organization can be successful with strategic work. (Remember our volunteer prospects' desire to be certain their projects would succeed).

While it is clear that strategic thinking is important today, the history of strategic and long-range planning in congregations is mixed. It is not uncommon for congregations to do facility planning with a fundraising consultant in preparation for a capital campaign. In this case, planning is tied to a very concrete goal. But when congregations face size transitions, changes in demographics, cultural changes, increased diversity, or generational changes, they are less likely to see these as planning opportunities. Elite and relatively small leadership groups have sometimes gone through reflection and written plans only to find that their plans are never implemented. Sometimes this is because of the way in which the plans were written; a new synagogue visioning and planning process must be able to translate abstract ideas about values and strategic goals into specific actions that can be tracked and implemented.

Judaism argues that we get major insights about God, holiness, and righteousness by "doing" things. At Mount Sinai, the Jewish people answer God's challenge by saying "All that the Lord spoke we will do and we will hear [understand]" (Exodus 24:7). We comprehend the abstract by doing the concrete—observing mitzvot (commandments). One of the ways leaders can attain such qualities as credibility, integrity, authenticity, and foresight is by "doing leadership tasks." When leaders look at their environments, convene important conversations with volunteers, and encourage them to think about the future, these individuals begin to shift to a strategic leadership mind-set.

5. Consultants and facilitators can help increase the perceived value of volunteerism. Consultants and facilitators can be helpful (okay, I'm a little biased) in creating a sense of urgency by identifying areas of concern. They can help maintain momentum and energy by helping planning leaders imagine a promising future. They can also overcome the disruption in the process when certain events take center stage, or when leadership changes leave the board with a short-term deficit of energy.

In my work with synagogues I may have a group of 50 planners working for a minimum of 25 volunteer hours over a 12- to 15-month initial planning process. In such situations I have found it helpful to build a model of the cost of their effort. If we figure an average cost of \$50 per hour, we are talking about a personal investment of about \$1,250 per volunteer, or more than \$62,500 in collective volunteer time. What is going to make such a significant contribution worthwhile to the volunteers involved in the effort? As we learned earlier, volunteers want to make a difference, do important work, and use some of their higher-order professional skills. When synagogues use facilitators to help institute effective volunteer processes, they can increase volunteer satisfaction in leadership work and increase expectations for volunteer effectiveness.

6. Teamwork is an essential synagogue skill. Contemporary organizational experts emphasize the importance of building more effective teams. The Center for Creative Leadership called teamwork "the most frequently valued managerial competence," and, according to John Seely Brown, head of Xerox's Research Park, "If you ask successful people, they will tell you that they learned the most from and with each other."³

Synagogues have diverse members, so their leadership needs to reflect this diversity. Members can learn from each other if their talents are meshed with a worthwhile mission and team-building processes. Teamwork reduces the barriers to volunteer effectiveness.

7. Synagogue change requires a guiding coalition to ensure a "critical mass" for action. One of the problems with strategic planning efforts by long-range planning groups is that they may create a document that has little "buy in." In an era of declining volunteerism, planning efforts need to create new energy and momentum. If only eight people go into the board room and "knock the plan out," who will implement it? How will this work engage new leadership prospects? The top complaints of core leaders are "we cannot engage new leaders" and "we feel burned out." How does the work of a small elite planning group change that dynamic? Effective leadership development and change management will involve a wide array of current and potential leadership to build a critical mass for change.

8. Leadership approaches need to be experiential to engage and value the adult learner. How do adults learn something new? It helps if they enter a learning process that is well-structured, with a clear overview of the work ahead. Adults are energized, according to Malcolm S. Knowles, author of *The Adult Learner*, when they are able to apply their life experiences and professional expertise to their new congregational work. Leaders need to assure adult learners that their experience will be valued.

Successful leadership development processes involve the creation of small groups where individuals can bounce ideas off each other and gain an appreciation for one another's contributions. These processes create spaces for volunteers to be heard and help them learn to hear others better.

9. Jewish values can inspire new leaders. When boards are too tactical they often fail to define and communicate the board's essential mission, values, and strategies. They may fail to get the clergy and other staff involved in designing a synagogue leadership agenda. It is popular today to remind board members that their tactical managerial efforts are sacred work because they serve a sacred purpose. Unfortunately, if

the board's culture and processes look like any other secular task, the idea of the management of the sacred can look... well... quite secular. A five-minute dvar Torah (text commentary), however well-intended, does not transform board workers into a dynamic leadership community. The whole design of the board's work needs to be reviewed.

Hildy Gottlieb, president of Help4Nonprofits & Tribes, writes in her online article "10 'Stop' Signs on the Road to Board Recruitment"⁴ that too many boards try to get out of trouble by recruiting new members. She argues that organizations need to have a good product before they can promote it. When boards lack a vision, shared values, and goals, it's hard to convince prospects that sitting on the board is a great—let alone sacred—volunteer opportunity.

When a board has dysfunctional conflicts, poor lay staff relationships, and few policies, it is simply not ready to recruit the kind of talent it needs. Clarifying Jewish values and behavioral expectations for leaders can help reduce board conflict and inspire volunteerism.

10. Volunteer management systems can help recruit, assign, and assess talent. Some observers emphasize the importance of recruiting people with natural leadership qualities. I agree that talent matters, but the synagogue is not like corporate America. Some leadership positions will be occupied by major givers, longstanding past leaders, and loyal workers of modest ability, many of whom may lack a capacity for change.

Leaders sometimes survey their memberships to "find out what programs they want," then initiate the most commonly mentioned ideas. To their surprise, few members respond. How can this be? What makes a program compelling? Yes, content matters, but people matter more. Megachurch leader Rick Warren has argued that he looks for leaders first and ministries second. If he has a leader, the leader will drive a ministry. He or she will find a way. This sentiment is echoed by management scholar Jim Collins, who contends that if one has the right people on the bus "it matters less if

the bus has to change directions.”⁵

I start leadership development groups by asking participants why they have agreed to participate. They seldom site philosophical or intellectual (content) reasons. They come because someone they respect has volunteered in the past or asked them to help now. The right people asked.

The synagogue will often need to work with people who are not natural leaders. Ronald Heifetz, co-founder and director of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University, has argued that leaders can be developed by doing leadership tasks. Among the most important of these tasks are recruiting talented people and finding the right work for them. Sometimes, Collins says, leaders must stop trying to put a square block into a round hole. Part of creating a great team is working to make sure people have the right assignments, ones that utilize their gifts.

Finding the right assignment for volunteers is a core Jewish value. In his “Eight-Step Ladder” of Tzedekah (righteous deeds), 12th-century Jewish philosopher, scholar, and leader Maimonides offers a spiritual hierarchy of acts that move up a ladder (sulam) to the most selfless of deeds. One of the highest forms is to empower others to take care of their own needs. The Gallup Organization, which had undertaken an extensive 25-year research project involving more than 80,000 managers, reported in 1999 that their research indicated that one of the qualities of great supervisors was that they focused on supporting and developing their employees’ strengths. They made this a priority rather than always trying to “fix” employees’ weaknesses. Most adults, they found, have a limited potential to change their weaknesses. Leaders can strive to make a “good shittac” (match) between a prospect’s strengths and the volunteer work available.

11. Synagogues can be more efficient. They can learn from business and other nonprofit organizations. Susan Shevitz, associate professor and director of Brandeis University’s

Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, has described synagogues as pluralistic, diverse, voluntary, and loosely coupled. All of these qualities make it harder to be “on the same page.”⁶ Shevitz also notes that synagogues keep poor records and have few written agreements. Even when they try to get people on the same page, they often fail to record the agreements, communicate them to others, or ensure a transition of their agreements from one president to another, let alone from generation to generation.

Synagogues operate in the fast-changing world of American culture. As organizations, they must compete for the hearts and minds of their members in a world of dizzying choices and constant innovation. Facing these challenges requires an external orientation and focus, one that looks for successful practices in other organizations. Organizations with this kind of focus look to benchmark or compare their own practices with the best practices of others.

12. Leadership development programs can reinforce and integrate leadership learning. Boards often allocate training to a half-day workshop every two or three years. In these settings they learn a few new ideas and do a little planning, and there are usually some exhortations to take a fresh look at the “sacred work” of congregational governance. Though well-intended, these workshops are usually too limited to make much of an impact on the synagogue culture. Church consultant Thomas Holland argues that exhortations to improve board attitudes and performance are largely unsuccessful. What he believes works is changing what board members do.

Synagogue leadership is an ongoing challenge. New leaders must be oriented every year. Boards need to do major teambuilding every three to five years. Even if they have an exciting vision or a charismatic period of leadership, they must keep reviewing and integrating that vision. In our tradition, Isaac follows his charismatic father Abraham (Gen. 26) and finds that he has to re-dig

the wells his father dug before. In order to unleash the life-giving energy from the wells, they must be reworked. The agenda outlined in this article helps remind congregational leaders to redig those wells. ♦

NOTES

1. Based on the author’s review of the focus group’s comments.
2. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), 202.
3. Hildy Gottlieb, “10 ‘Stop’ Signs on the Road to Board Recruitment,” Help4NonProfits and Tribes, (Resolve, Inc., 2003; www.help4nonprofits.com).
4. Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001).
5. Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, *First, Break All the Rules: What the World’s Greatest Managers Do Differently* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999).
6. Shevitz, Susan, “An Organizational Perspective on Changing Congregational Education: What the Literature Reveals” from *A Congregation of Learners*, ed. Isa Aron, Sarah Lee, and Seymour Rossel (New York: UAHC Press, 1995).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How could you increase the shared meaning about the congregation within your leadership group?
2. How are you “throwing out the net” to identify new leadership prospects?
3. What kinds of learning activities could you plan to help your leadership be more strategic this year?
4. Who are the people with the right talent and commitment that you could recruit to help build the congregational leadership agenda?
5. What resources are available to help facilitate these activities?



Calling All the Baptized

Innovative Governance Structures Cultivate Members' Ministries

SHERYL A. KUJAWA-HOLBROOK

Washington County, a rural region in the state of Maine, is the first area in the United States to see the sunrise every morning. The small towns that inhabit the Atlantic coastline were traditionally supported by seasonal industries and the sea, but this way of life is disappearing as the families who have been there for generations grow older and the Maine coast grows more gentrified by people from “away.” Despite the financial means of some of its more recent residents, Washington County remains one of the four poorest counties in the United States. Mainline denominations, such as the Episcopal Diocese of Maine, are struggling to adapt models of church and ministry that respond to the realities of this remote area.

“The people who are here have been in Washington County for generations,” says Linton Studdiford, a diocesan staff member and one of the Diocese of Maine’s two pastoral enrichment

coordinators assigned to Washington County. "To respond to the people in the region, we have had to raise up for ministry local people who are an integral part of their larger community."

Of the three Episcopal congregations in the county—St. Aidan's, Machias; St. Anne's, Calais; and Christ Church, Eastport—two are supported by the interwoven ministries of laity and a deacon. The one congregation that has a priest assigned to it has been growing and maintains its presence in the community even though the priest is currently on active duty in Iraq. Rather than duplicating church structures and committee systems more characteristic of larger and more affluent congregations, the heart of the gospel in these historic churches in Washington County lies in enhancing the ministry of all the baptized, and strengthening the role of the church within the larger community.

Affirming the People's Ministry

"The raising up of local deacons here is not so much a clerical model as a way to affirm the ministry of people who were already central to their congregation," says Studdiford. Currently, the Diocese of Maine recognizes the importance of affirming local authority by treating all parishes and missions equally, regardless of their size or status.

Nancy Moore, the vicar of three small congregations in central Maine and the diocese's other pastoral enrichment coordinator, says the congregations she serves need models of decision making that are flexible and include "the whole body" on Sunday morning—models consisting of something other than committee or vestry meetings. "I want people to claim their own authority, which starts by making them aware of it," Moore says. She contends that the congregations she serves were, to varying degrees, capable of self-governance when she arrived. Her role has been to support the laity in making decisions as a group. "The pattern they had grown up with was that the priest or one or two very strong-willed parishioners made all the deci-

sions. People would want to be in leadership so that they could be decision makers, but they didn't have a sense of cooperation with each other. We have made great strides... it is very encouraging to see this change in action."

The Church as People of God

The Pastoral Excellence Program (PEP) of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, sees its primary purpose with the three dioceses of northern New England—Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire—as being to strengthen the ministry of the baptized in rural and isolated areas, and to develop differing perspectives on the church and ministry to respond to these contexts. In addition to programs, the project funds four pastoral enrichment coordinators—two in Maine and one each in New Hampshire and Vermont. The assignment of these pastoral enrichment coordinators has been made in an effort to directly respond to the needs of congregations and regions where the church is viewed primarily as the "people of God" rather than as only an institution.

A key emphasis throughout the Pastoral Excellence Program is that the authority for ministry comes with baptism. The program focuses on an image of the church that is always changing and is mission-centered and world-centered rather than focused on preserving a self-centered institution. The congregations and judicatories of the Episcopal Church in northern New England do not have the luxury of surplus seminary-trained clergy, extensive committee structures, or corporate programs, nor could such models of church and ministry be sustained in the region now or in the foreseeable future. Rather, pastoral excellence in northern New England depends on models of church and ministry that support the formation and education of all the baptized as the ministers of God's saving love in their families and communities. "Early Christian communities were often creative in their accommodation of movement and change," says Fredrica Harris Thompsett, a member of the Episcopal Divinity School faculty and co-director of the Pastoral

Excellence Program. "We cannot do less if we today wish to survive and thrive in challenging settings. If the church, as the people of God, is to thrive and grow, our structures of governance need considerable reshaping to accommodate and value corporate witness." (See the box on page 19 for a look at the assumptions that frame a church when it is seen as an institution versus the assumptions underlying a church viewed as a community of people of God.)

Countering Consumerist Attitudes

Certainly, changes in our image of the church and ministry must also impact theological education. "For years seminaries have been talking about working more directly on the local level. The question was always how," says Bishop Steven Charleston, dean and president of the Episcopal Divinity School. "If the role of theological education is to *empower* ministers to carry out the gospel, and the mission of the church is to *embody* that gospel in the world, then with programs like PEP we unite these two dynamics. The gospel is both empowered and embodied like never before."

A collaborative partner with the Episcopal Divinity School, its Pastoral Excellence Program, and the dioceses of northern New England is the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan, a judicatory that has been deliberately engaged in changing perceptions of the church and ministry since the mid-1980s. At that time, the diocese simply could no longer financially sustain conventional judicatory or congregational models. In addition, the *1979 Book of Common Prayer*, with its renewed emphasis on the ministry of the baptized and the centrality of the Eucharist as the primary expression of the gathered community, evoked a theology that nurtured and sustained a visionary movement within the diocese. Further, diocesan leaders became aware of the negative effects of consumer-oriented culture on the church's understanding of community.

"We had become people gathered around a minister, with the expectation of

paying to receive a divine service,” says Kevin Thew Forrester, canon for ministry development for the Diocese of Northern Michigan. That recognition led to action among diocesan leaders. “We were convinced that the counter-cultural movement of Jesus invited us into becoming adults gathered into ministering communities.” The primary question became, says Thew Forrester, “How do we set a table in the wilderness, for that is precisely what we are being invited to do.” Specifically, “the question was how do *we* set the table, and not how does someone else set the table for us.” Thus, new models of the church and ministry in the wilderness go beyond the need to help small, rural, isolated congregations survive; they also offer ways to identify, call forth, and form indigenous leadership. “Economics should not dictate sound theology and way of life,” says Thew Forrester. “Rather, sound theology and ecclesiology invite us to rework our economic structure so that it can support the gifts for ministry with which the Spirit has endowed us.”¹

Shifts at the Judicatory Level

In addition to changing perspectives on the church and ministry in northern New England congregations, the Pastoral Excellence Program has also witnessed changes in governance on the judicatory level. Beginning in January 2004, Bishop Gene Robinson of the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire launched an ambitious “re-imagining” of the diocese using Appreciative Inquiry as a tool to discern what ministries are needed in the diocese, as well as who has the skills for those ministries. Importantly, Appreciative Inquiry is a departure from traditional mission studies and judicatory evaluations that focus on past problems or the negative. Rather, the purpose is to recreate and foster the growth of life-giving organizations. As Mark Lau Branson explains in *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*, “The thesis of Appreciative Inquiry is that an organi-

DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY

Assumptions about the Church Viewed only as Institution

Church refers to a building or an organization.

Clergy are usually “set apart” from laity.

The Church is institutionally self-centered.

Members have a deep-rooted pessimism about humanity.

People worry about working out their salvation.

The laity are *objects* of religious care and consumers of sacramental products.

The ethos is that of an individualistic *Greek* world, which must be preserved and kept in order.

Officials legitimate and parcel out activities.

The Church consists of priest-centered ministries to troubled laity.

Emphasis is on learned clergy and “professional” ministry.

Assumptions about the Church Viewed Primarily as People of God

Church means Christians, the people of God.

Christians are clergy and laity assembled for the purposes of worship and mission.

The Church is mission-centered and world-centered.

Members believe God’s grace perfects nature.

God has already acted for us in Christ Jesus.

Christians are *agents*, the sign and bearers of God’s saving love.

The ethos is that of a corporate *Hebraic* world accustomed to movement and change.

Members experience spontaneous expansion and corporate witness.

The Church consists of Christ-centered people at work in a troubled world.

Emphasis is on educated Christians and baptismal ministry.

A version of this chart by Fredrica Harris Thompsett originally appeared in *Ministry Development Journal*, No. 8, 1985.

zation, such as a church [or judicatory], can be recreated by its conversations. And if that new creation is to feature the most life-giving forces and forms possible, then the conversations must be shaped by appreciative questions.”²

The focus of the re-imagining process for the Diocese of New Hampshire is on listening to God’s call and for diocesan leaders and members to begin to embody it in their actions. In a facilitated and collaborative 22-member committee of laity and clergy, members of the diocese were invited to explore the aspects of the church and ministry for which they felt the most passion. This “Dream Process” was one of discovering “What in God’s name is going on here?” and designing the church structures that would best enable dreams to become realities. Through this process, the diocese revealed the importance of furthering connections between people and congregations; building congrega-

tional partnerships; and enhancing evangelism, outreach, education, and ministries with young people. It also made concrete recommendations for staffing, support, and structure. Overall, the diocese said in a report on the re-imagining process issued last fall, the use of the Appreciative Inquiry process sparked “fresh fire in the work and ministry” of the diocese, congregations, people, commissions, and schools of the Episcopal Church in New Hampshire.³

Supporting Ministry with Teams

John T. LeSueur, the pastoral enrichment coordinator for the Diocese of New Hampshire, has seen a significant increase in the number of congregational discernment groups throughout the diocese, as well as in the depth of theological reflection among participants. A challenge, says LeSueur, is

convincing people that accomplishing what is in their hearts can be done at little or no cost. Instead, he says, people often see additional programs as something that will mean “that they will have to spend some of their scarce resources from the parish budget.”

Since 2001, the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont has also developed models of church and ministry that are supportive of the region and its emphasis on the importance of baptismal ministry. When Bishop Thomas C. Ely came to the diocese that year, he put in place a decentralized diocesan staffing model called the Ministry Support Team, which focuses on supporting congregations. Three part-time ministry developers work out of their homes in different parts of the state. The ministry developers have different and complementary gifts and skills, and they minister in different congregations depending on the need, although it is often the case that they are more closely relating to congregations in their proximity. Ely meets with the ministry developers every other week for a full day of team building and conversation related to their mutual ministry in the congregations of the diocese. The canon to the ordinary and the pastoral enrichment coordinator of the diocese are also part of the Ministry Support Team, as are members with specific programmatic responsibilities, such as youth ministry and communication. The members of the Ministry Support Team who work out of the traditional diocesan offices in Burlington are limited to a part-time receptionist, an administrative assistant (whose services are shared by all team members), the financial administrator, and the canon to the ordinary. Ely says that although it has been hard to shake people’s notion of a need for traditional diocesan staff rather than ministry developers focused on supporting congregations, he believes that “gradually people are growing to appreciate the concept of a support team.” The full team meets every six weeks.

“We are definitely organizing around a diocesan-wide, regional, and local plan for ministry,” says Thaddeus Bennett, canon for ministry development and

deployment for the Diocese of Vermont and part-time rector of the small, rural congregation of St. Mary’s, Wilmington. “The ‘Episcopal See’ is no longer the center. We are clear that the center is the people of God where they are, and that we diocesan folk need to go where they are. Programs and systems are adapted to meet the needs there. For instance, our deployment process for 23 congregations in the last three years probably used nine different models of working with lay leaders... The exciting work is fitting the ‘basics’ of deployment—which everyone really does need to pay attention to—to the size and circumstances of the congregation.”

Susan Ohlidal, pastoral enrichment coordinator for the Diocese of Vermont, affirms that the new clergy calling process is a sign of a new level of partnership between the diocese and congregations, as opposed to the older “the bishop sent us a clergyperson” model. “I cannot imagine a diocese opening up their clergy search process to this kind of review unless the governance systems and struc-

tures within the diocese are authentically and genuinely committed to all the ministries of the baptized: to hearing, valuing, and then implementing the changes brought forth by the wisdom of experience of pastoral leaders in parishes; and to take the risk that ‘the way we have always done this’ may no longer apply nor even be good enough any longer.” A surprising result from the evaluation and review of the new clergy calling process in the Diocese of Vermont was a widened perspective among members of the rural congregations involved, as well as a sense of greater connection with the diocese. “We heard favorable things as well as what we need to do better and what demands continued refinement or total trashing and creating anew,” says Ohlidal. “Hearing others’ stories of their experience with the process led to feeling less isolated in this very rural diocese and as if no one has done it before.” Ohlidal believes the review and revision of the ministry development processes of the diocese will be continuous, “reflecting the changing ministries and needs of the

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE MINISTRY TEAMS

- ◆ They have a clear sense of their work as ministry.
- ◆ They focus on “doing” rather than “meeting.”
- ◆ The team is both responsible and accountable—that is, it has the authority to make decisions, spend allocated money, communicate with the congregation, and develop and recommend budgets, plans, strategies, etc.
- ◆ Laity and clergy trust and support the team, rather than second-guessing; the focus is on “results” rather than who has the power to make certain decisions.
- ◆ Decisions are made in practical ways (“We do this because it works right now.”) without expectation that the decision is perfect and will become immutable policy.
- ◆ Major decisions are made using discernment rather than politics.
- ◆ Team members move in and out of leadership roles regularly, recruit and train new members to prevent burnout, and share ministry. Leadership is shared between two or more people and cliques are avoided.
- ◆ Team members are called into ministry rather than relying on volunteers. Volunteers need to come through the same discernment process and be open to various ministries depending on what they and the discernment team sense is God’s leading.
- ◆ Clergy exercise the roles of ministry developer (trainer, equipper, encourager, supporter, etc.) and see ministry team members as valuable peers in the congregation.

Developed by Linda L. Grenz, Founder and CEO of LeaderResources, www.leaderresources.org.

parishes as they, in partnership with the bishop and the diocese, discern and call new clergy leaders.”

Thad Bennett asserts that the keys to nurturing the diocesan structures of the Diocese of Vermont are time and energy. “I’d say the most important things are the intentional team building [Bishop Ely] and we have done with the Ministry Support Team that works the most closely with congregations. We meet every other week for six hours to connect, build our faith community, discuss what we are working on, come up with ways to move forward, etc. That is a lot of time!”

Ely notes that the Diocese of Vermont already has several examples of the Ministry Support Team model operating in congregations, and various conversations going on with other faith communities about how to move in this direction. On the congregational level, the Ministry Support Team works in concert with the vestry, who maintain their canonical responsibilities. The Ministry Support Teams tend to focus on responsibility for pastoral care, liturgy, and education. The concept of a team, rather than an individual, helps foster a deeper sense of community among members of the team, but also among members of the congregation as a whole. The team approach also helps reinforce “the understanding of the variety of gifts present in the community, as well as each person’s participation in the life and well-being of the community,” says Ely.

Ely believes that current Episcopal canons continue to be fairly restrictive in terms of the roles of laity and clergy, and would like to see them open up, allowing for more possibilities in terms of judicatory and congregational structures, including Ministry Support Teams. “I think less restrictive language on organizational models for faith communities might open up some creative thinking about structures for ministry. I think we still need some clarity and structure for congregations, but opening up (canonically) the possibility of other ways might help.” Ely also sees the need for a more expansive vision that would encourage the start of new congregations that might not fit the status quo.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. As you reflect on your entire experience of your congregation (or judicatory), what do you value the most about this experience? What makes you the most hopeful? What are the valuable ways your congregation (or judicatory) contributes to the wider church and/or community?
2. How would you characterize the relationships among the people of your congregation (or judicatory)? For you, what are the most valuable aspects of your common life? When you think about church (or judicatory) governance, what aspects of structures, decision-making processes, the exercise of authority, and communication patterns do you find the healthiest?
3. Make three wishes for the future of your church (or judicatory). What would it look like if these wishes came true?

Adapted from Mark Lau Branson’s *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004).

From Committees to Ministries

LeaderResources of Leeds, Massachusetts, is a collaborative partner of the Pastoral Excellence Program of the Episcopal Divinity School and the dioceses of northern New England. Linda L. Grenz, founder and CEO of the organization, has worked with many congregations and judicatories interested in changing perspectives on church and ministry. “My work with congregations has been focused around moving from *committees to ministries*,” she says. “You need a few—but only a few—committees, such as finance and property. But the rest need to be ministry teams: education, communication, pastoral care, liturgy, etc.” Grenz believes ministry teams address the changing roles between clergy and laity—“a move from the priest or pastor as the primary leader who does all (or most) of the ministry (or at least the most important parts) to a shared ministry with lots of people involved in a fairly quickly changing environment which provides lots of entry points for people entering the community.” (See the box on page 20 for Grenz’s list of what she believes are the characteristics of effective ministry teams.)

Overall, moving into new perspectives on church and ministry is most renewing in organizations that are flexible

and committed to making changes. Grenz believes the congregations and judicatories who most successfully adapt church structures to emergent theology and ministry are those that successfully develop an attitude that says “we’ll try it, and if it doesn’t work, we’ll try something else” instead of “but we’ve always done it this way.” Adopting practices of making decisions fairly quickly, trying things out, and being willing to jettison whatever doesn’t work without blaming or complaining are important qualities, she says. Perhaps most important, at all levels of the church and ministry, is the authenticity of the spiritual life of the organization. “Making God’s presence more obvious and expressing gratitude for all God has given us,” she says, as well as having a “sense of thankfulness for abundance” rather than complaining about what is lacking makes a huge difference! ♦

NOTES

1. Kevin Thew Forrester, *I Have Called You Friends: An Invitation to Ministry* (New York: Church Publishing, 2003), 90.
2. Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004), xiii.
3. “Re-Imagining Report, Convention Draft,” Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire, October 12, 2004; also, www.dnhdream.org.



A Congregation of Mystics

Re-igniting Our Passion for Encountering and Experiencing God

I've always felt something has been lacking from our modern churches, something essential. Growing up I acutely felt this lack, which drove me to leave the church at 15. People like me thirsted for spiritual water, an oasis in the midst of life's desert. Our thirst was expressed in our questions, questions that the church didn't seem to hear, let alone address: "Where is God in the midst of suffering? How can we experience God personally? How do I hear God?" Like so many other spiritual nomads of my generation, I wandered and sought God elsewhere. I returned only when I found that the new age philosophies and spiritual movements of the day offered only mirages.

Author Graham Standish invites leaders to explore a more spiritual way of "doing church."

In the early 1980s I went to seminary, hoping to find spiritual water, but everything I studied seemed so dry and lifeless. It wasn't until after seminary that I finally discovered the spiritual water I had been seeking. I discovered it in the upper balcony of a little bookstore in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where I found the writings of Christian mystics from throughout the ages, writings I explored more deeply a few years later during my doctoral studies in spiritual formation.

The writings of these mystics helped me digest the dry, creedal, and systematic theology of the mainline church. Reading the writings of mystics like Dorotheos of Gaza, Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Genoa, Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, George Fox, John Wesley, Horace Bushnell, Hannah Whitall Smith, Thomas Kelly,

Catherine Marshall, C. S. Lewis, and Henri Nouwen offered answers to so many of my questions, for they rooted their theology and answers in an experience of, rather than speculation about, God. They saw church as the place of a living encounter with God rather than a place ruled by an ethical, moral, theological equation: *Live according to the Bible and the Golden Rule, study the*

confessions of Augustine, the medieval musings of Bernard of Clairvaux or Meister Eckhart, the theological explorations of Martin Luther, or the stories of C. S. Lewis, mystics have continually pointed out that God can be encountered, experienced, and united with through love, prayer, and the cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).

How do the experiences and writ-

ting rather than as a body incarnating and opening people to God's presence. Ministry in these churches is dominated by functional concerns over organization, programming and adhering to tradition for tradition's sake. They forget that ministry has to have a spiritual aim to be truly transforming and lead people to Christ.

The people of today yearn for much more than just a functional, routine set of rituals and practices. They want to encounter the Trinity in deeply spiritual ways, but their churches and denominations seem blind to their yearning. A 2003 survey conducted by the Presbyterian Church (USA) Research Services reveals this blindness.¹ The survey found that spiritual formation was an integral part to a "very great extent" (42

percent) of church members' lives, which suggests a deep spiritual hunger among our laity. Yet only 6 percent reported that spiritual formation was to a very great extent an integral part of their congregational life. Less than 2 percent reported that it was to a very great extent an integral part of the life of the larger judicatory bodies or the denomination as a whole. This survey certainly has its flaws, and represents only one mainline denomination. Still, the findings suggest that there is a serious disconnect between the spiritual lives of individuals and the openness of congregations and denominations as a whole to a more spiritual approach.

Why do so many mainline churches persist in emphasizing functionality and the routine when members are hungry for spiritual nourishment? Part of the answer lies in the leadership of our congregations. When leaders, both pastoral and lay, are called forth at every level of the denomination, they generally are called based on their functional abilities: Does he have experience in management? Is she organized? Does he have the technical skills for this committee's work? Does she have the ability to get things done? We rarely ask where these leaders are spiritually. We rarely ask



The transformation of our congregations requires that we call forth leaders, both pastoral and lay, who are open to the mystical and the spiritual.

Bible, say that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, and win a free trip to heaven. What the mystics spoke of was an encounter and experience of the Trinity that transforms life.

The Christian Mystical Tradition

What is a mystic? Theologians have tried to define mystics for centuries. Unfortunately, most mistakenly define mystics according to their ascetic lifestyles, prayer practices, or mystical experiences and visions. These are not what define mystics. They are a by-product of what mystics seek in their lives, which is to live according to Luke 10:27 by seeking to love God with everything they have and to love others as themselves. Their pursuit of a loving relationship with God defines them. They devote their lives to the quest for God and God's love, and this quest leads them to uniquely live, pray, and experience God. It is a mistake to think of a mystic only as a person living a cloistered, contemplative life, for many mystics live busy, active lives, but in a way that is centered in God. Whether we are talking about the teachings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, the

ings of the mystics intersect the life of the church? Mystics reside at the center of every major Christian movement. Point to any true renewal movement within any denomination, a movement that actually leads people to encounter and experience the triune God, and you will discover mystics at their core, proclaiming their message that God can be tangibly and passionately sensed, discerned, and embraced throughout life. Mystics have always led people to follow their example of surrender to, uniting with, and serving the Trinity. Unfortunately, the church hasn't always listened. In fact, many of these mystics were criticized and sometimes even persecuted (like John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, Martin Luther, and George Fox) for preaching this message of a personal experience of God.

Church Resistance to Mystical Tradition

Too many of our modern churches have lost a passion for God. They have become functional rather than spiritual. They function like organizations whose main task is offering religious program-

whether they pray and believe in prayer, how much they believe that God can be encountered and experienced, or the extent to which they have faith that God will bless the church and cause great things to happen. In effect, we don't generally call mystics to lead mystics.

The Quaker spiritual theologian Thomas Kelly says that at the core of every church lies a "blessed community,"² a community

made up of mystics centered in prayer, who sense God's presence throughout the church, and whose faith sustains those around them, even though they may be largely unnoticed by the larger congregation. They are generally not the people we call to lead the church, yet they are the ones sought out by the members when they are struggling, in pain, and need to sense God's presence in their lives.

So many churches resist calling these people to lead precisely because these mystics emphasize the experience of and service to God over everyday functioning. Their primary orientation is living in the kingdom of God in the here and now, while the primary orientation of many of our functional leaders is the "real" world—the world of business, political, and organizational life in which God seems to have little role to play. It is difficult to ask people whose everyday milieu is a world without God to lead a church into the kingdom of God. This does not mean that only mystics should be called into leadership, for not every mystic has leadership qualities, but spiritual openness should be a primary quality we look for in leadership. The best alternative, of course, is always to call leaders who have their feet firmly planted in both camps, people who are mystics operating in the "real" world.

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Fanning the Mystical Embers of a Church

So how do we lead a church to become a community of mystics living in the kingdom and the real world? There are specific practices and techniques churches can adopt, such as offering spiritual retreats, classes on prayer, and programs on the spiritual disciplines. Adding these to a church's program may promote greater spiritual awareness, but they can also become more of the same—functional programs that now have a spiritual bent. Congregational transformation requires more. It requires a new way, a more spiritual way, of doing church. The following are specific ideas that can help transform the church, some of which are expounded upon in greater depth in my book *Becoming a Blessed Church*.³

A. Mystical Leadership: To expand on what was said in the previous section, the transformation of our congregations requires that we call forth leaders, both pastoral and lay, who are open to the mystical and the spiritual. This means that the pastors of a church must have a passion for encountering and experiencing God the Creator, Son, and Holy



Ministry needs to be a faithful response to God's calling, not activity based on our own plans for God.

Spirit in everything. When the pastors of a church have this passion, it allows them to lead a church to move in a more spiritual direction.

Still, the pastor cannot do it all. A pastor can set a course, but lay leaders must move the congregation toward its destination. What the pastor can do is lead the church to seek lay leaders who share a passion for God and prayer, are willing to listen for God's guidance, are aware of Christ's continual presence all around them, and can walk in faith, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to bless their work and the congregation. Pastors can also train lay leaders to connect their faith with their leadership. While there are resources available to help with this, many of which are available through the Alban Institute, much of this work is also new to the life of congregations, and requires that pastors and leaders be creative in designing new programs.

B. Inviting Leaders and Members to Seek God's Will Rather than Their Own: One of the biggest impediments to creating a congregation of mystics has to do with how we decide issues within most mainline churches and denominations. *Robert's Rules of Order* has been a tremendous blessing to the life of most congregations and denominations, but with *Robert's Rules* has come spiritual dilemma. While they have brought order to the pandemonium that used to characterize church meetings prior to the 19th century, they have simultaneously diminished God's role in decision-making. These guidelines have pushed God to the margins precisely by ensuring a fair democratic process in which the majority rules. Is majority rule the same as God's rule?

There is nothing in scripture that suggests that God's will is inherently found in the majority. What scripture

does say is that the will of Christ is to be our aim. Unfortunately, our system of bringing forth issues for discussion, debate, and vote emphasizes the will of the people rather than the will of Christ.

An alternative way of leading a church supplements *Robert's Rules* by emphasizing discernment and seeking God's will over our own. As Charles Olsen and Danny Morris have demonstrated in their book *Discerning God's Will*, there is another way that entails framing issues in terms of what Christ is calling us to do.⁴ It encourages leaders and church boards to discuss issues, ask questions, and then prayerfully seek God's will for the church. In voting on an issue, it entails asking the board to vote on what they sense God's will is for the church. Simply by leading a vote with, "All who sense this may be God's will say yes," rather than "All in favor say yes" (which is a vote based on the majority, not God) dramatically changes the church because it emphasizes the pursuit and discernment of God's will rather than our own.

C. From Reactive to Proactive to Spirit-Active Ministry: Throughout my ministry I have read many books and attended many conferences with a compelling message: we need to move from reactive to proactive ministry. I believe this wholeheartedly. Too many churches spin their wheels trying to react to the whirlwind of life around them. It's much better to be proactive, to gain a sense of what is coming, to plan ahead, and be prepared. The problem with proactivity is that it is rooted in rational analysis and careful planning based on reasonable future projections. What's so bad about that? Who can complain about leaders who coolly analyze a church's needs and cautiously plan for the future? The problem is that it is leadership rooted in human analysis and planning rather than in discernment, faith, and service.

When rationally analyzing needs and problems becomes more important than discerning God's will, God gets left out of the decision making. When careful planning becomes more important than faith and service, people end up relying

on their own judgment rather than on seeking God's will. They become more interested in following "the faith" than in following God "in faith."

Claude King tells a wonderful story demonstrating how human analysis and planning can actually inhibit God's work.⁵ In 1984, King set out to make his mark in the world by serving God. A recent seminary graduate, he felt called to be a tent-making pastor planting new churches. He read every book he could on church planting, analyzed likely areas to plant churches, and made careful plans for building a congregation. He spent 18 months putting together his "business" plan. Then nothing happened. For six years he waited for a chance to start a church and put his plans into action, but all he encountered were obstacles and disinterest from others.

Then he met Henry Blackaby, a popular teacher in the area of faith and service. Blackaby taught him that we can't serve God unless we are first rooted in prayer and faith. Ministry needs to be a faithful response to God's calling, not activity based on our own plans for God. So King rooted his plans in prayer. He joined a local organization devoted to grounding church plantings in prayer. An amazing thing happened. They visited local churches and asked people to join them in prayerfully seeking God's will. After just three months, they had a list of fourteen towns or groups that wanted to start churches. They had become "Spirit-active" rather than merely reactive or proactive.

To be Spirit-active means to act on a foundation of prayer in a way that trusts the Holy Spirit to work through us. A mystical congregation understands this. No matter what ministries they attempt, they resist the temptation to program for program's sake. They don't look at the needs around them and say, "Let's start a

program to deal with this need.” They see the world around them and ask, “God, how are you calling us to respond?” They then let the Spirit guide them to develop and form unique ministries.

Being Spirit-active means growing organically as a church, responding to opportunities as the Spirit presents them to us. This is a much easier way of doing ministry because it means doing things when the time is ripe. It doesn’t force ministry or mission, but lets it grow according to God’s timetable. It is a way of doing ministry and leading a church that is much more relaxed because it resists the temptation to do for doing’s sake that afflicts so many churches.

D. Openness to Mystical

Experience: Some members, and especially leaders, of many churches distrust and fear mystical experiences. As a result, they are skeptical of people who have numinous experiences—experiences of God that transcend normal human experience—such as discernments, visions, near death experiences, or supernatural events. Often, when people share their experiences among church members, they are treated as though they are a bit weird, and their experiences are dismissed as being “just their imagination.” What’s ironic is that most sermons are based on either the mystical experiences of biblical figures or spiritual teachings on how we can encounter and experience God.

The truth is that many church members have had mystical experiences, and it is a mystical experience of God’s call that led most pastors to become pastors. Encouraging members and leaders to share their mystical experiences opens the church spiritually by making spiritual seeking and experience the norm rather than the exception. For instance, last year our church published a small booklet as a Lenten resource called “Calvin Stories,” which contained self-written stories by members of the church about their mystical experiences of God. As pastor, I also tell stories in my sermons of mystical experiences, both my own and those of others (with permission) in order to help people

recognize that it is normal for Christians to have these experiences.

Becoming a mystical congregation means becoming a place where mystical experiences are both accepted and expected. To nurture this kind of acceptance, leaders have to create a culture and ethos of church in which stories of God experiences are valued and shared by encouraging pastoral and lay leaders who share their own experiences of God through sermons, newsletters, Web sites, groups, and conversations. Ultimately, creating a congregation of mystics means creating a culture of mystical experience.

To Become a Congregation of Mystics

The path to becoming a congregation of mystics is not necessarily an easy path because it requires that we overcome resistance from members and leaders who are skeptical of the mystical. How do we make this transition? It all begins in prayer by asking God to lead us.

Leaders also must become gentle guides, recognizing that this path is a scary one for people who are used to believing that God is distant. This kind of transformation takes years of gentle guidance that

continually calls people deeper into the mystical life.

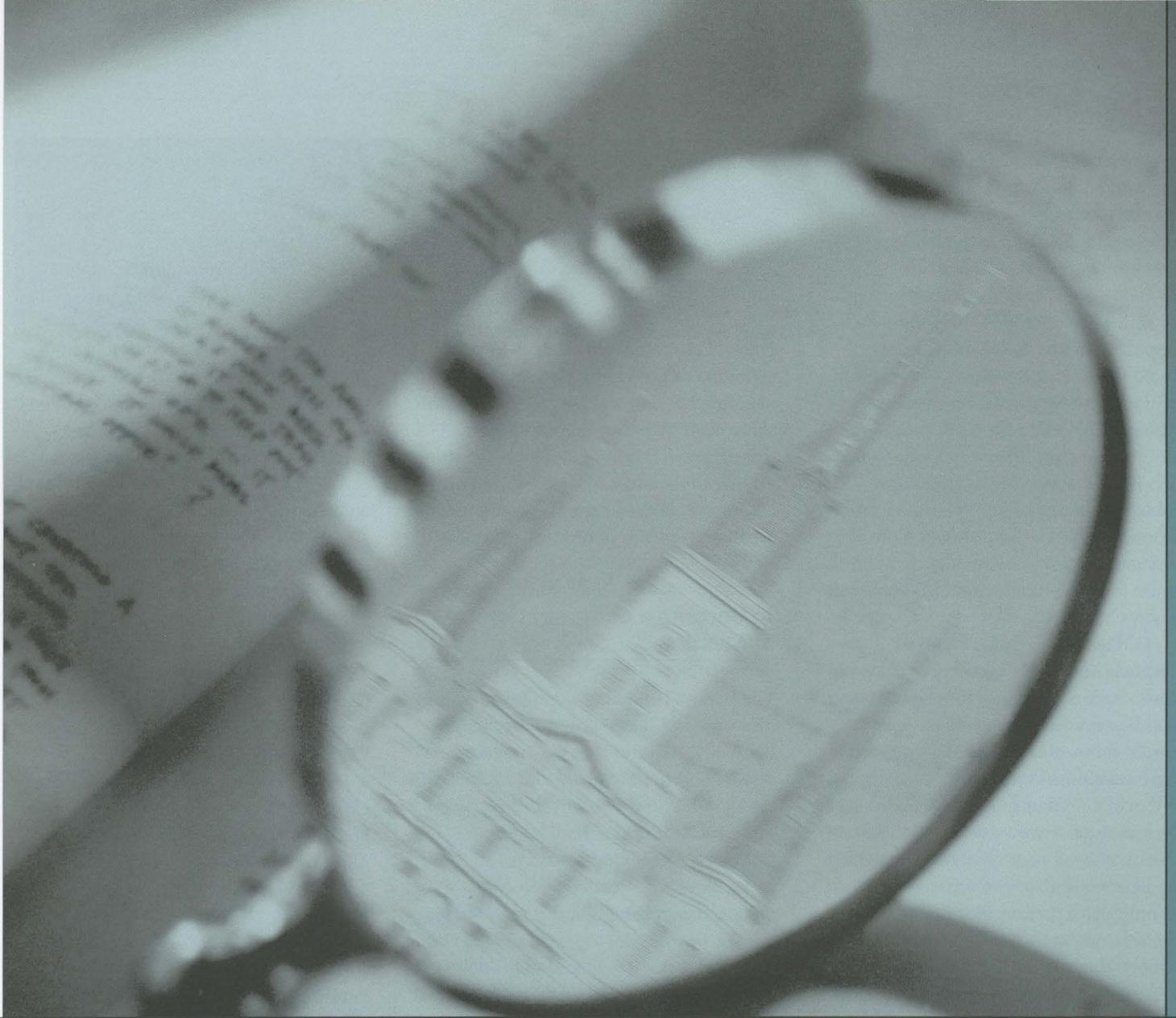
Finally, we leaders have to be sure that in creating a congregation of mystics we don’t try to create God or the church in our own image. We must look for opportunities to move the church in God’s direction, even when it is different from our direction. Ultimately, to be a congregation of mystics means to be a congregation that grows in Christ to become Christ’s body in our own unique places. ♦

NOTES

1. *Hungryhearts*, Winter 2004, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (Louisville, KY: Office of Spiritual Formation of the Presbyterian Church (USA)).
2. Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 54.
3. N. Graham Standish, *Becoming a Blessed Church: Forming a Church of Spiritual Purpose, Presence, and Power* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2005).
4. Danny E. Morris and Charles M. Olsen, *Discerning God’s Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1997).
5. Henry Blackaby and Claude King, *Experiencing God: How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), x–xii.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Reflect on the life of your own congregation. Where do you sense it is in terms of helping people encounter and experience the Trinity: is it a place in which God is sensed easily, or a place in which it seems as though God is missing?
2. What normally comes to mind when you hear the word “mystic,” and how comfortable are you with mystical experiences and the possibility of creating a culture in the church that makes it the norm for people to have mystical experiences?
3. In your congregation, what nurtures the mystical life among your members, and what acts as an obstacle? In other words, what keeps your church at the functional level, and what opens the church spiritually?
4. To what extent are leaders in your church called forth based on their openness to prayer and seeking God’s will?
5. To what extent is your church reactive, proactive, or Spirit-active?



Borrowing from Business

How Church Boards Can Benefit from Secular Practices

DAN HOTCHKISS

The board meeting has already been underway for two and a half hours when the chairperson stifles a yawn and glances at her watch: 9:30 p.m. “Does anyone have any new business?” she asks.

“I have something,” says one board member. “Several church school teachers have complained to me about the back door. Without a key, you can’t set it so it opens from the outside. We ought to fix that, and while we’re at it we should consider a glass door to reduce the risk of hitting a child when we open it.”

“Is this really a board issue?” asks another board member. “Shouldn’t we leave it to the building committee, or the church school staff, or the custodian?”

“I think it is the board’s responsibility for several reasons: First, a glass door can easily cost \$2,000. Second, this year’s building budget is already spent or committed. Third, as board members we’re all personally responsible for children’s safety. And fourth, the Building Committee reports to us, the church school is under the authority of the Religious Education Department, and the custodian reports to the administrator. Only the board is over them all, so only we can choose to delegate this to one of them.”

And they’re off. Someone knows a contractor. Someone has a funny story about doors. Someone read somewhere that glass doors are vulnerable to burglaries. At 10:15, a member moves to refer the question to the Building Committee with instructions to come back if the cost would add more than \$2,000 to the building budget. After much debate and one amendment the board approves the motion, 8 to 2.

What is wrong here? From the point of view of bylaws and legality, probably nothing. The law gives governing boards total power over business matters large and small, which gives them the right to “micromanage” to their heart’s content.

Effects of Micromanagement

Most board members know micromanaging is bad. Boards criticize themselves all the time for long meetings, trivial agenda items, and an inability to delegate: “We should be making policy, not managing the operation.” Staff and volunteers chafe at the need to bring projects back to the board at each point along the way. A seemingly innocuous report can be a red flag in the board’s face, provoking it to meddle.

Board members don’t like it, either: A year or two of late-night meetings about door latches, complaints from members, reports from staff and committees, and “policy” decisions that address one-time events will drain most board members of the passion that caused them to say yes in the first place.

Board-member burnout is one effect of board micromanagement. Even worse is that boards mired in micromanagement miss the chance to do really important work. Most people who join a congregation’s board hope

A Bold Proposal

What is the best use of the board’s time? All nonprofit boards struggle with this problem. The literature on nonprofit management abounds with good advice, but good advice and good intentions are not enough. To police themselves, boards need clear boundaries, definitions, and instructions.

Enter John Carver, governance guru of the nonprofit world and author of *Boards that Make a Difference*. Carver is not content to help boards improve; he challenges them to quit most of their

Too few boards have clear, shared criteria for choosing which issues to spend valuable board time on.

to contribute to the spiritual lives of others, to help discern God’s will for the congregation, and to make a lasting difference in the congregation’s life. In frustration at the triviality of their agendas, boards adjust budget items, second-guess staff decisions, and receive an endless stream of supplicants. But the sense of power this activity creates is mostly illusory.

Why do boards slip into micromanaging even when they know they shouldn’t? One reason, of course, is that they can. A second is that the line between “micro” and “macro” is subjective. Too few boards have clear, shared criteria for choosing which issues to spend valuable board time on. Many simply deal with every issue anybody brings to them, but even those that try to discriminate have difficulty drawing a clear line.

current work and start “making a difference.” The key difference boards can make is not to direct or help the staff but to represent and connect the institution to its “owners,” articulate its basic rationale for being, and set limits for its staff and volunteers. A Carver board spends most of its time thinking not about what the organization is doing but about why it should exist at all.

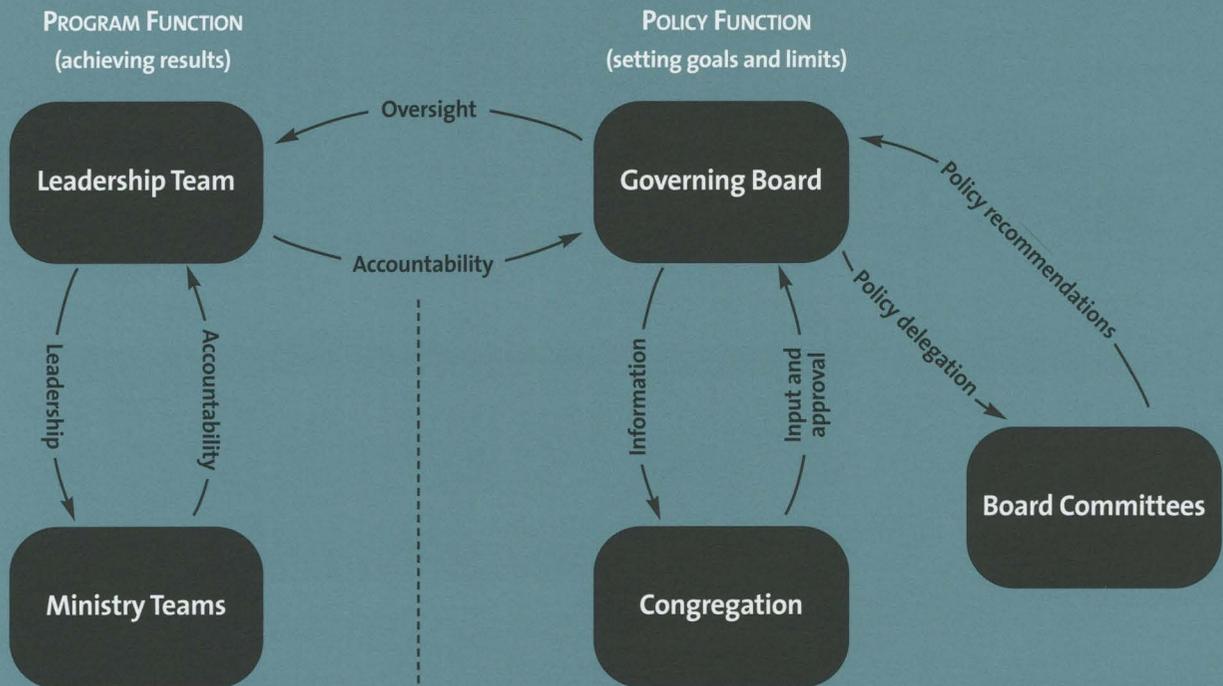
Carver’s “Policy Governance” model is widely read and debated, and sometimes even adopted by leaders in secular nonprofits, school boards, and city councils throughout the English-speaking world. Among leaders of most congregations, Carver’s model is still little known. A dozen or so Unitarian Universalist congregations have adopted Policy Governance over the last decade, and this article is based in part on their experiences.

Means and Ends

At the heart of Carver’s model is the distinction between means and ends. *Ends*, as Carver uses the word, are the basic purposes for which the congregation (or other organization) exists. In one congregation, an ends policy might be

John Carver challenges boards to quit most of their current work and start “making a difference.”

MODEL OF MID-SIZED AND LARGE CHURCH ORGANIZATION



© Dan Hotchkiss, senior consultant, the Alban Institute

“that the hungry will be fed.” Another congregation might embrace the end that the children of members will “understand and identify with Jewish tradition and pass it on to their own children.”

Unlike many congregational mission statements, ends policies do not say what the congregation plans to do. They do not talk about Sunday school, buildings, or even worship. Ends say how lives will be changed as a result of congregational activity. If ends policies refer to members of the congregation, it is to discuss their roles as customers, clients, or beneficiaries—not as volunteers, decision-makers, or voters.

In Carver’s words, ends policies specify “what benefit to which people at what cost.”

Means include all organizational choices that are not ends. Hiring, supervising, and dismissing staff are means decisions. Budgeting, investing, raising and spending money are means activities.

Decisions about programs, building maintenance, baptisms, weddings, worship style, and how to vote on national church resolutions are all means issues—not because they are unimportant, but because they talk about what we are going to do, not about how people’s lives will change.

A means issue does not become an ends issue because it is expensive or important. (Choosing a minister, for example, is a means issue.) Means issues are still means issues even if they require a long sequence of steps to accomplish, such as the construction of a building. An ends issue is about those who benefit from the congregation’s work, not those who do it.

What Policy Boards Do and Don’t Do

At this point, many people expect to hear that the board deals with ends policies and the staff with means issues. The Carver

model is not quite so simple. Defining and prescribing ends is the board’s main preoccupation (Carver calls it the board’s “obsession”). The staff—a term that includes volunteers who act as staff—spend most of their time selecting and applying means. But means and ends are not so neatly separable. Within the large ends set by the board, staff members make ends choices every day. Which hungry shall we feed? Which Jewish traditions shall we emphasize with nine-year-olds? The board, in turn, sets limits on the means that are permitted.

In every area, the board enacts the largest policies and leaves the smaller ones to others. Carver compares this to a set of nested mixing bowls. You can control the whole set if you grab hold of the outmost bowl; the others can still slosh back and forth, but only within fixed boundaries. If the board wants to control events more closely, it adopts policies at the next-smaller level, and

so on. Using this discipline, boards often are surprised by how much latitude they are willing to leave to staff.

Several rules govern how a Carver board makes policy:

- ◆ Policies are always made from the outside in. The largest policies must be complete before moving in to the next level.
- ◆ Policies never are adopted to control specific events. A board would never vote to change the locks on the church's doors; it would vote only to define the level of risk it forbids staff to accept. Events may, at most, raise the question, "Do we need a policy on this?" Until we do, the staff are free—and required—to deal with all events within existing policies.
- ◆ Policies are all addressed to the chief executive officer (CEO), not to individual staff members. It is not fair for a board to hold the CEO accountable for staff performance when it directs, rewards, or punishes staff members directly at all levels. Who plays the role of chief executive in a church setting is an interesting question. Most, but not all, of the Unitarian Universalist churches that have adopted Carver have assigned the CEO role to a team (e.g., the minister, the administrator, and one lay leader). A CEO team requires more complicated policies to deal with intra-team conflicts and succession planning, but reportedly has worked quite well in many cases.
- ◆ When defining ends policies, the board speaks *positively*, prescribing what good the congregation will do for what people at what cost: The city will become more just, the poor will live in better houses, and so on.
- ◆ The board also speaks positively when it writes *its own means policies*: We will meet monthly, keep minutes, and speak with one voice.
- ◆ Means policies for staff are worded *negatively*, prohibiting those means the board will not accept. "The staff may not steal money, engage in race

discrimination, abuse church members, or buy real estate without a vote of the congregation" are examples of means policies for staff.

The last rule is the oddest. Negatively worded staff means policies often resort to convoluted double negatives like "...shall not operate without a policy prohibiting discrimination..." Such words can be confusing, and the proscriptive "thou shalt not" form puts some people off.

Where the negative becomes a positive is in the lives of those who lead and manage programs. Having been told clearly what the boundaries are, leaders know that they are free to innovate and respond flexibly to changing opportunities.

The board, meanwhile, while it has relinquished its old habit of controlling every item that captures its attention, gains a more important power. Many boards try to feel powerful by adjusting a budget item or saying yes or no to a proposal, but such actions usually make little difference in the long run. A board that articulates in written policies the ends to be achieved and the means to be avoided controls many decisions at once. By articulating principles, a board guides many independent choices that together move the congregation closer to its ends.

Congregations are Different

By now it may be obvious that congregations find the Carver model (and perhaps good governance in general) harder to implement success-

fully than other nonprofits do. Clear role definitions are hard to achieve when everyone plays multiple roles. In a mental health clinic, staff and trustees are rarely also clients. But in churches and synagogues, role confusion is the rule, not the exception. Most board members who sing in the choir know better than to pull rank on the choir director, but not all remember to set aside personal preferences in board meetings. Most board members are active volunteers and program leaders. When confronted with a problem, they naturally offer ways to solve it rather than composing words to guide the people who will solve such problems over time.

Another difficulty congregations have in accepting Carver is that his Policy Governance model runs against so much tradition and, in some denominations, law. Carver assumes that all staff report to a CEO who is hired and fired by the board. Many larger synagogues have an executive director who functions this

Clergy Spiritual Life and Leadership: Going Deeper

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way—but who does not supervise the rabbi or cantor. In many congregations, the most obvious candidate for the Carver CEO role is the senior clergy person, who may be selected by the congregation, bishop, presbytery, or some combination rather than the board alone.

Some congregations have a long list of committees that are in charge of program areas. The ambiguous relation between such committees and the staff members they relate to is a source of ineffectiveness and conflict. In place of a boss, staff members have a political constituency. The committees sometimes are there to help the staff person, but at other times must “represent the board.” Who is in charge? Such ambiguity discourages creativity and favors rigid adherence to familiar ways—as too many congregations demonstrate.

In Carver’s model the board appoints only a few committees to help it to do the board’s job. A “committee” whose job is to lead, design, or provide input to a program is part of the staff structure—and might better be called a team, ministry, or task force. The staff, and ultimately the CEO, are judged by how well programs fulfill the ends and adhere to the means set by the board. For this accountability to be both real and fair, the staff must be at liberty to accept or decline advice from committees.

Evaluation

The Carver model requires that the board evaluate the performance of the CEO only on the basis of how well the congregation achieves its ends and adheres to its means limitations. But in congregations, all leaders (and especially clergy) are evaluated based on a bewildering jumble of factors: personal attractiveness, performance skills, political finesse, theological compatibility, and on and on. It is one thing to say that evaluation will be based only on stated goals and institutional performance, but another to make it so.

Carver suggests boards considering his model first decide definitely that they will

SIX CORE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Not every board will want to adopt Carver’s Policy Governance model. But under any system of governance, certain core principles should apply:

1. **Don’t invite people to participate on a work crew and trap them into a deliberative body, or vice versa.** Democracy is fine, but it defeats itself if every group that gathers reconsiders what has already been voted. Policy bodies should include a variety of members; task groups should include only those who are in favor of the task. Once the direction has been set through proper process, someone should be charged with getting the job done.
2. **When delegating responsibility, clearly state the goals to be achieved and the scope of the authority granted.** This principle applies to staff and volunteers as well as boards. Too often, congregations plug people into generic positions or point them in vague directions, then expect them to come back repeatedly to let the board rehash every decision and vote every dollar. No wonder it is sometimes hard to find volunteers! It is not fair to hold someone accountable for results when the results have not been specified, or to blame someone for violating an unstated rule. Minutes spent clarifying expectations can save hours of hesitation, duplication, and conflict in the long run.
3. **Boards speak as a body, not as individuals.** Carver rightly emphasizes that individual board members have no special authority outside board meetings. Board members often play program leadership roles as well, but need to always remember which hat they are wearing.
4. **Boards speak through written policies.** Like any human gathering, a board meeting is a cauldron of informal, nonverbal, and emotional communication. People come away from meetings with a “sense of the board” on any number of topics. Good boards make it clear that staff and others will not be expected to read the board’s mind, but must treat actions in the minutes as the final word.
5. **Staff and volunteers need clear direction, clear limits, and maximum flexibility in choosing means.** Whether or not a board decides to adopt Carver’s precise system for board policy-making, his idea of the mixing bowls is useful. The concept is similar to *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers* author William Easum’s “permission-giving” style of congregational life. If the board articulates a clear ministry vision and sets limits, it will feel safe allowing staff to make the smaller choices.
6. **The staff and volunteers should be responsible for managing their own work.** The larger the congregation, the more important it is that the staff be unified and that boards and committees avoid triangulating themselves into staff work. This does not mean that the staff needs to be strongly hierarchical, or that others cannot be included in goal-setting, evaluation, conflict resolution, and decision-making, but these things should be done under the direction of the staff member who will be held responsible for the results.

adopt it fully. This is a challenge because Policy Governance requires a great deal of study to understand. It conflicts with so much formal and informal teaching about how boards ought to operate that, in my experience, many months of reading and discussion are required to fully understand it. It is only after many repetitions of the basic concepts that the whole board

begins to grasp them reliably. It is also helpful to review completed policies from similar organizations.

The board needs several copies of Carver’s book, *Reinventing Your Board*, which contains a basic set of policies. If possible, it is a good idea for the board to work with a consultant who is familiar with the model. Carver trains and certi-

fies consultants, some of whom have church experience, and many other consultants work with boards using the model with varying levels of purity.

After learning the model, the first step toward adopting it is to craft means policies—the “thou shalt nots” that limit staff. Starting from the largest policies—the outer mixing bowls—the board moves inward until it is ready to say, “The CEO and staff can make all the smaller decisions that do not violate these limits.”

When the staff limitations policies are complete, the board moves on to create policies for itself, both for the conduct of its business and for its relationship to the CEO. The same mixing-bowl principle applies here, except that the smaller governance decisions are made by the board chair rather than the CEO. When the board is ready to leave all such decisions to the board chair, it is ready to start operating under the model.

What? We have no ends policies! Given the importance Carver gives to ends, it may seem odd to begin operating without them. But remember that creating and refining ends policies is the board’s main work from this point on forever. Some boards adopt the existing mission or vision statement to stand in for ends policies until they can be adopted, perhaps in a year-long rotation that will bring the board’s attention to each major ends area annually.

Board meetings now are quite different from the one we eavesdropped on at the beginning of this article. The CEO would be empowered to take action on the door lock issue on his or her own, without coming to the board at all. The building committee might well be involved, but as a work group rather than a board committee; it would work under the supervision of the CEO.

The board might, if it felt there was a need, consider adopting a new policy limiting the risks the staff may expose children to. Or it might note a concern about the staff’s protection of church property—not for immediate action, but as a flag for the annual evaluation of the CEO. The custodian’s evaluation would be handled by his or her imme-

diately supervisor, with whatever participation the staff thinks will help it to measure the achievement of the ends and compliance with the means.

But the main part of the board’s work would not be about doors at all. It might spend most of its meeting

adjusting the statement of how the congregation hopes to transform lives. In the best case, this is not an academic exercise but an effort to discern what God is calling this congregation to do and to be today and in the years to come. ♦

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How does your congregation’s governing board spend its time? Take three months’ worth of minutes from a year ago or earlier (long ago enough that most of the issues discussed will have become moot). Divide your board into three teams. For each set of minutes, identify the major issues discussed, the approximate time spent, and the action or other outcome produced. When the teams re-gather, list all of the agenda items on whiteboard or newsprint. Then answer the following questions:

1. How much of the board’s time was spent helping the staff (paid and volunteer) to select means? (Include all discussions of individual budget items, approvals of proposed programs, and decisions about particular events.)
2. How much of the board’s time was spent setting limits for the staff ahead of time? How much was spent criticizing staff for violating limits the board had not articulated in advance?
3. How much of the board’s time was spent refining and improving its own process, including the process for communicating and evaluating the head of staff?
4. How much time did the board spend stating whose lives it intended to change and in what way? (Too many boards will find that they spent little or no time on this.)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

John Carver, *Boards that Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations* (Jossey-Bass, 1990). Carver’s original book sets forth the theory and practice of Policy Governance.*

John Carver and Miriam Mayhew Carver, *Reinventing Your Board: A Step-by-Step Guide to Implementing Policy Governance* (Jossey-Bass, 1997). This practical guide provides a roadmap for boards that are exploring or adopting Policy Governance. It includes a complete set of sample policies on staff limitation, governance, and board-CEO linkage, and several examples of ends policies.

John Carver, *Empowering Boards for Leadership: Redefining Excellence in Governance* (Jossey-Bass, 1992). On this two-hour audiotape, John Carver makes a persuasive case for Policy Governance. The tape is an excellent resource for orienting new board members to the practice.

*Policy Governance is a registered service mark of John Carver.



Entering *The Twilight Zone* Ministry in the Wake of Clergy Sexual Misconduct

MATTHEW LINDEN

“**Y**ou are going to have to deal with their troubled history,” the district superintendent told me in what would become a familiar litany during my four years of ministry as an “after-pastor.” I was about to become the minister of a church that had had six ministers in 16 years, four of whom had left under allegations of sexual misconduct. Though the congregation had more than 160 members, weekly worship attendance rarely exceeded 35. Congregational giving was sporadic, necessitating that a portion of my salary be paid by the judicatory.

“This won’t be an easy church to pastor,” the district superintendent said.

It is never easy leading a congregation in the wake of any ethical misconduct by a predecessor. This is true whether the misconduct took the form of financial malfeasance or a congregational split orchestrated by the minister. But sexual

misconduct has an added dimension in that it usually happens within the context of the minister-congregant relationship. Eliminating the systemic factors that allow it to occur involves much more than establishing “safe sanctuary” guidelines, judicatory sexual harassment policies, and other safeguards, such as a window on the door to the pastor’s study. Congregations where sexual misconduct has happened once are at far greater risk of reoccurrence than those faith communities who have never experienced it.

Clergy entering these congregations are often ill-prepared for what they will encounter. Many assume that strong pastoral care skills, experience in helping a congregation work through a crisis like a devastating fire, or a history of advocacy on behalf of survivors of sexual abuse will provide a sufficient foundation for ministry in such a setting. Judicatories may provide counseling services and due process for direct victims of abuse but have few resources for the affected congregation. One reason is the high burnout rate among after-pastors. The stress involved

often drives them away from parish ministry, leaving judicatories with little institutional knowledge on how to minister effectively in such a setting.

● One colleague with more than 30 years experience as an after-pastor describes ministry in such congregations as entering the “twilight zone”; things are never as they seem. The relationship between the clergy and the congregation may appear to be going smoothly, with worship attendance rising and board meetings that are remarkably conflict free. Then one Sunday there is significantly lower attendance than usual. The following morning the minister receives a call from a judicatory official concerning a letter listing half a dozen grievances that leave her wondering if the judicatory had mistakenly telephoned the wrong church. This “twilight zone” phenomenon and other dynamics unique to congregations where sexual abuse has occurred baffles clergy and contributes greatly to the high level of stress.

The twilight zone is the result of several factors within the congregational system, which are both the result of and a contributing factor to sexual misconduct on the part of clergy. A clear understanding of these dynamics will go a long way in restoring congregational health and preventing future episodes.

A Breach of Boundaries

In Tobias Wolff’s novel *Old School*, the main character describes a scene where Robert Frost reads his poem “Mending Wall.”

*“I had read the poem and thought I understood it: All walls should come down. But in Frost’s voice the scene became newly vivid, and I caught something I’d missed; that for all the narrator’s ironic superiority, the neighbor had his truth too. The image of him moving in the shadows like an old-stone savage armed—he himself was a good reason to have a wall, the living proof of his own argument that good fences make good neighbors. Maybe something doesn’t like a wall, but take it down at your own peril.”*¹

There is something in every clergy person that doesn’t like a wall. We question certain aspects of the ministerial relationship that reinforce our “set-apartness.” Still, even when transparency on the part of the spiritual leader enhances ministerial effectiveness, appropriate professional boundaries are necessary to preserve the health of the congregational system. These boundaries protect both the integrity of the relationship itself and the spiritual leader’s place in the system that provides the context for that relationship.

In congregations where sexual misconduct has occurred, nonsexual boundaries characteristic of any professional relationship have long since been breached. They fall away slowly and subtly, their erosion a mutual effort on the part of the minister and congregation. Sometimes the nonsexual boundaries fall during a pastorate prior to the one where the misconduct occurs. Simply removing the offending pastor will not restore them.

Congregations where sexual misconduct has happened once are at far greater risk of reoccurrence than those faith communities who have never experienced it.

An after-pastor encounters a congregation that is extremely resistant to reestablishing appropriate professional boundaries, even in situations where the relationship between their absence and sexual misconduct is obvious. In my own situation, the presence of the church office in the parsonage was a major factor in at least half the pastorates where sexual misconduct occurred, yet any suggestion on my part that we move the church office to the church building was treated as an affront by the administrative council. It wasn’t until after I had been serving for a couple of years that I grew used to the convenience of having the office in my house and—against my better judgment—stopped pressing the issue. Nevertheless, I recognized that in exchange for being able to run off copies of the church bulletin while I watched a basketball game on Saturday night, members of the congregation had access to my home.

Reestablishing appropriate professional boundaries requires persistence and often involves crossing what have become cultural norms in the common life of a congregation. Because the congregation has grown so accustomed to clergy with poor boundaries, ministers with healthy boundaries may be perceived as distant, aloof, or uncaring. Still, it is better to err on the side of caution when reestablishing professional boundaries. In some congregational cultures it may be appropriate for the minister to share a cocktail or glass of wine with members of the community, but in a congregation where sexual misconduct has occurred it might be wise for a pastor to abstain in the presence of parishioners, especially when an inappropriate relationship involved alcohol.

Symbolic actions on the part of the pastor can go a long way toward helping restore appropriate professional boundaries. Sometimes wearing a clerical collar or jacket and tie when performing pastoral duties will reinforce—in the minds of both the parishioner and the minister—the professional nature of the relationship. A minister might also request that he or she be addressed by title and last name, even if the minister has always gone by Pastor Pat or Reverend Ralph.

Lack of Lay Leadership

Peter Steinke refers to mature leaders as “the immune cells” of any church or family system. It is their capacity to respond in a nonanxious manner that encourages the congregation to maintain its integrity in the midst of internal and external

In congregations where sexual misconduct has occurred, nonsexual boundaries have long since been breached... . Sometimes they fall during a pastorate prior to the one where the misconduct occurs. Simply removing the offending pastor will not restore them.

threats. A congregation needs effective lay leadership to preserve its identity, mission, and core values in the face of a traumatic experience that has the potential to rip apart its very soul. Their nonreactive stance enables the congregation to respond in ways that will do no further damage to the already fragile community.² Also, it is far more difficult for a clergy leader to engage in sexual misconduct in an environment where strong lay leaders partner with the ordained leader for effective ministry, reinforcing and defining the responsibilities and expectations of each leader, team member, or committee. A clergy person is more likely to behave inappropriately in a congregation where the roles and boundaries are undefined, or where the minister wields an unusual amount of power or is given sole responsibility for charting the course of a congregation's identity, mission, and ministry.

One of the insidious effects of ministerial sexual misconduct is what it does to lay leadership. Often, the most mature members of the church family become fed up when the spiritual leader's misconduct is disclosed. Even if they remain a part of the congregation they may withdraw from leadership, especially when others resort to blaming the victim, or the judiciary fails to discipline the perpetrator.

Any congregation that has survived sexual misconduct on the part of its spiritual leader will regress to some degree. The disclosure of sexual misconduct is usually followed by several families transferring their membership or becoming inactive. As attendance and contributions fall, those left behind band together to "save the church at all costs." They will be quick to assess blame, often focusing on the victim who came forward with the allegation, or the judiciary official who processed the complaint. The minister who follows will likely be treated as an outsider whose very presence is a reminder of the painful episode that has yet to be fully processed.

The after-pastor is left with a dilemma. He or she will not automatically be granted the trust necessary to lead. At the same time, there will be an absence of mature, self-differentiated

lay leadership capable of providing vision and direction. The church board may lack the motivation to engage in ministry or outreach and sabotage attempts by the minister to exert leadership. One of the most frustrating aspects of being an after-pastor is that congregational blowups are likely to occur when the pastor's initiatives are bearing the most fruit.

My own turning point as an after-pastor came when I gained some degree of understanding and acceptance that my church was a pastor-centered congregation that didn't trust pastors. I would need to identify potential lay leaders, develop spiritually focused one-to-one relationships with them, and encourage them to faithfully develop the skills needed to answer the call God had placed on their lives. I also had to accept that these persons, not I, would get the credit for returning the congregation to vital ministry. My role was neither star nor coach. Instead, I functioned as the mentor behind the scenes who encouraged capable and gifted people on the margins of congregational leadership to become lay preachers, *Disciple Bible Study* leaders, Stephen Ministers, and conflict resolution specialists. It was important that they lead the effort at restoring the congregation to health and helping it claim its vision. Any attempt on my part to assume center stage could derail this process.

Identifying and equipping mature lay leadership is an essential task for any after-pastor seeking to restore congregational vitality. Often, the best people for this will be found among those who attend regularly, but shy away from congregational leadership. According to Edwin Friedman, one of the characteristics of any system in regression is that those most capable of pulling the system out of regression do not seek leadership. This is true whether the system is a family, church, or nation.³ These people are often present somewhere in the congregation and, despite their reluctance to get involved, care deeply about the future of their church or synagogue. The after-pastor needs to figure out who these individuals are and motivate them to claim their rightful place as leaders.

Informal Networks Replace Official Structures

Parking lot meetings and telephone grapevines are a fact of life in congregations. There is always a meeting after the meeting. Difficult decisions made by the board will be second-guessed by those who turn down every invitation to serve in leadership. Such is the nature of congregational life just about everywhere. The difference in a congregation affected by clergy sexual misconduct is that these informal networks replace official boards and committees, both in terms of disseminating information and overturning decisions made during official meetings in the presence of the pastor.

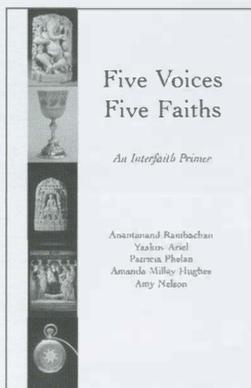
While this aspect of being an after-pastor is maddening, it begins to make sense when looked at from the perspective of

the congregation. First, when a scandal involving the minister breaks, only a handful of leaders knows the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the situation. They may feel it is better for the congregation to disclose as little information as possible. The majority of the congregation is kept in the dark, their requests for information denied. As pieces of the story begin to surface or are leaked, a grapevine is established. This network remains in place long after the offending pastor is removed and may still be perceived as the only reliable source of information concerning the congregation. Second, congregants may have attempted to address the behavior of the offending minister through the official committee structure only to be met with denials, accusations, and threats. They have learned through painful experience that confronting a clergy person directly is not worth the effort. Appeals to judicatories bring even greater frustration when bishops, superintendents, or presbyteries are perceived as more concerned with protecting the offending minister's career than addressing the interests of the local church. Consequently, after-pastors often find appeals to denominational polity or congregational bylaws ineffective when trying to sustain decisions made by administrative boards, sessions, or vestries.

Though this behavior is understandable, it ultimately works against the congregation's best interests, creating a web of "triangles," where direct communication between people in conflict is avoided. This pattern of indirect communication may begin as a way of adapting to a recalcitrant pastor or stonewalling vestry, but soon becomes standard practice for any conflict within the congregation, including situations that do not involve the pastor at all. The result is a congregational environment where anxiety is ever present and seemingly minor disagreements become major flare-ups in no short time.

The after-pastor is in a position of having to "de-triangle" the system, but this is almost impossible to accomplish when the congregation has lost all confidence in the pastoral office. Judicatory officials may be even less effective in working directly with the congregation due to lingering mistrust. The best person to handle the task of reestablishing open communication is somebody outside both the congregational and judicatory system. A consultant retained by the governing board is probably the best option. If a congregation lacks the financial resources for this, they might consider asking the judicatory if grants or funds are available. When funding is

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**Anantanand Rambachan, Yaakov Ariel,
Patricia Phelan, Amanda Millay Hughes,
and Amy Nelson**

Five Voices Five Faiths

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In this unique book about the major religious traditions of the world, a practitioner from each tradition—Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam—introduces the basics of his or her faith and participates in a conversation about the challenges of being faithful in the modern world. Each essay and conversation is followed by a list of suggestions for further reading. Written for the non-specialist, *Five Voices Five Faiths* is an accessible book in which neighbors honor both our differences and our common bonds.

ANANTANAND RAMBACHAN is Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Saint Olaf College in Minnesota. YAAKOV ARIEL grew up in Jerusalem and teaches at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. PATRICIA PHELAN, Taitaku Sensei, is Abbess of the Chapel Hill Zen Center, a Buddhist temple and Zen meditation center in North Carolina. AMANDA MILLAY HUGHES is Director of Special Projects at the Ackland Art Museum at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. AMY NELSON is a nationally recognized freelance radio journalist who lives in Durham, North Carolina.

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not available it is probably better for the congregation to contact an experienced clergy- or layperson from another denomination than to use someone from the judicatory staff. Another option might be selecting a mature and capable layperson who is currently on the margins of the congregation and consequently not part of any existing triangles. In our own case, we selected a nonmember who had been attending regularly for several years to be trained in conflict resolution. He led the effort in establishing listening groups and training the congregation to communicate openly with the pastor and one another.

A Few Cautions

Most people with experience in working with congregations affected by ministerial sexual misconduct say it takes 10 years for a motivated congregation to recover its vitality. There are no shortcuts. An after-pastor must understand this and resist the siren calls of the latest church growth theorists. I am not discounting the importance of visionary pastoral leadership. For after-pastors, however, the vision needs to be modified. For at least five years, the goals should be achieving congregational stability by reestablishing appropriate professional boundaries, developing spiritually mature lay leadership, and establishing patterns of open communication. Once this is accomplished, the congregation may begin to claim its own vision. Members might even trust the minister enough to allow him or her to be an active participant in this process.

The after-pastor must never underestimate the difficulty of serving in such a setting. The potential for burnout, health problems, divorce, or another episode of sexual misconduct is tremendous. It is helpful for the after-pastor, at times, to ignore the content of the previous pastorate (acting out sexually) and focus instead on the process that resulted in an underperforming or unhealthy minister. A pastor may not face public embarrassment or loss of credentials for gaining 40 pounds, but if the result is a debilitating illness, is he or she really better off? Taking care of oneself physically, spiritually, and emotionally is of primary importance. If the after-pastor is not healthy there is little chance that he or she will lead the congregation to a restoration of health. ♦

NOTES

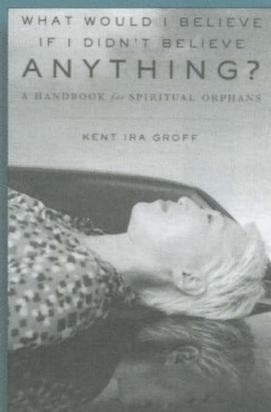
1. Tobias Wolff, *Old School* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 2003), 49.
2. Peter Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 1993), 106.
3. Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (The Edwin Friedman Estate, 1999), 115.

What Would I Believe If I Didn't Believe Anything?

A HANDBOOK FOR
SPIRITUAL ORPHANS

Kent Ira Groff

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004



review book

In this book, Kent Ira Groff attempts to guide spiritual orphans onto a spiritual journey of discovery based on the premise that God is evident everywhere if only we have the eyes to see and are open to the graceful workings of God in life.

To his credit, Groff recognizes that spiritual orphans are turned off by traditional religious approaches to spirituality that have little room for questioning belief. Rather than leaving these orphans directionless, he invites them on a journey in which they “look at life from below, exploring experiences and questions themselves rather than doctrines from above.” Groff describes this journey as one that “has to do with believing God is speaking through life; it is not belief in a doctrine about God. The God we have come to know (rather than merely think about) is in the matrix of human interactions, in the doubting and believing, the worldly struggles and holy dreams.” Groff invites those questioning, seeking, and doubting to journey through a fourfold process, and provides

reflection exercises to guide readers through each of its phases.

Indeed, there is a deep richness in what Groff offers. Persons whose eyes are opened will begin to readily see grace permeating all of life. I affirm Groff in presenting spirituality in such a way, but I am cautious about embracing this process fully because spirituality, I believe, is more than a state of mind, more than an openness to that which is beyond us, more than a generic referencing of God, where God may signify Life or Universe. As Walter Brueggemann relates in *Spirituality of the Psalms*, being human necessitates God being at the core of our being, the center of our living, the center of all that gives meaning, the center of our purposing. As human beings striving to be whole, true spirituality orients us to God so that we are oriented by God. God alone is the one who fills our humanity with life that is full.

Nevertheless, I value Groff's approach as providing a beginning. It is a guide I would give to those who are seeking in order to guide their beginning awareness of the presence of God in all of life. After all, Groff's claim is to point persons in the direction toward “home.” There indeed is value in beginning from below, with a generic and ambiguous sense of spirituality. However, as people develop an awareness of the presence of God, they will still remain orphans until they respond to God's encountering through a worshipful and covenantal response. We truly come home only when the locus of our spirituality shifts from being centered in the human spirit to being centered in the Spirit of God.

REV. DR. ROLAND G. KUHL

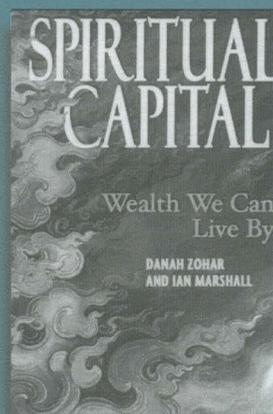
Northern Baptist Theological Seminary
Lombard, Illinois

Spiritual Capital

WEALTH WE CAN LIVE BY

Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall

San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers



review book

From the corporate world comes an intriguing proposal to redefine and renew our social values and institutions. This book advocates a major paradigm shift, having far-reaching implications within and beyond the world of business.

Danah Zohar, a corporate governance specialist with a background in philosophy, religion, and psychology, and Ian Marshall, a Jungian psychotherapist, begin and end their book by quoting psychologist Carl Jung, who said, "(We) are not only the passive witnesses of our age, its sufferers, but also its makers." In democracies, the authors suggest, social institutions assume the forms and reflect the roles espoused by popular values. Periodically, they say, it is important to critique our institutions to determine how helpful they really are.

The authors argue that global capitalism as we know it is no longer sustainable, and that those who continue to toil within the systems that support it are finding the meaning of life progressively diminished. Capitalism itself is worth saving, they

say, but for it to have any future viability it must shift at all levels from being a system that promotes the accumulation of material wealth to one that encourages the increase of spiritual wealth. We are at a historical crossroads: We can continue down a road of mass production and conspicuous consumption—at the end of which chaos awaits—or we can shift gears and begin investing in spiritual capital. We can create a values-based business culture, where the motivation for acquiring wealth is not bottom-line expediency but the meeting of fundamental human needs. We can still work to generate a decent profit from our labor but, in the process, we can also act to raise the common good.

The goal is to turn the culture around through understanding the motivation that drives it in the first place, the authors continue. To that end, Marshall introduces the concept of the "Spiritual Intelligence Quotient" (SQ), identified by neurological research on the brain as the capacity to diagnose the spiritually and emotionally impoverished state of our affairs and apply a set of values to help us alter and improve things. Marshall describes how SQ can be used to shift individuals and our culture, helping us to move beyond lower motivations (of fear, greed, anger, and self-absorption) to loftier ones (exploration, cooperation, mastery, and higher service).

Throughout the book are stories of individuals who have come to a point where they needed something more than things. Value questions began to surface for them. Naming and claiming their Spiritual Intelligence assumed a significant part of their refocused lives. Those who master Spiritual Intelligence and understand the value of spiritual

capital in human experience will lead the process of corporate structural transformation, the authors contend.

Spiritual Capital is a book reflecting the best of contemporary corporate thinking. It recognizes the value of spiritual intelligence for individual human life and corporate governance. Spirituality was totally missing from organizational development theory when it first appeared some decades ago. It was frequently missing when this theory was adapted to renew the structural life of social institutions like the churches. With this book, a whole new dimension is being added to our understanding of organizations and governance.

Western free enterprise has had significant influence on the way we have come to understand church life in North America and elsewhere. Now that the paradigm may be shifting as a result of the appearance of books like this one, churches can be positively influenced by a reframing of capitalistic theory. At the same time, churches, the repositories of deeply held spiritual/cultural values, can help to influence and bring about needed change.

WAYNE A. HOLST coordinates adult Christian education at St. David's United Church, Calgary, Alberta, and has taught religion and culture at the University of Calgary

A GREAT PLACE



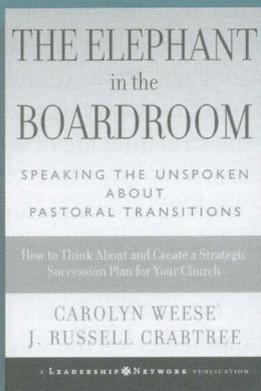
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The Elephant in the Boardroom

SPEAKING THE UNSPOKEN ABOUT PASTORAL TRANSITIONS

Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004



review book

The closest thing most churches have to a “pastoral transition plan” is the phone number of the denominational clergy placement officer. No one, especially the pastor, wants to talk about transition until the crisis comes and the placement person arrives to bandage the wounds and begin the healing process.

This portrait is a bit unfair, but it contains some truth. Clergy and congregations often do ignore pastoral transition until the last minute. As an ex-denominational placement officer, I confess I rather liked the images of illness, injury, and healing that cast me in the role of rescuer-in-chief. It may be, though, that some of the conventional wisdom about pastoral transition is not wise. In *The Elephant in the Boardroom*, Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree criticize the “illness-based” approach in favor of a “health-based” philosophy. In the process, they question many norms of pastoral transition that are widely accepted in mainline Protestant denominations: the long transition process, the use of grieving as a metaphor for pastoral departure, strict separation of the departing pastor from the search process and candidates, and the

de facto freeze on planning and innovation until the new pastor arrives.

While some congregations really are ill and in need of a remedial approach, Weese and Crabtree suggest that church renewal “requires a focus on congregations that have discovered how to be strong and resilient.” Such congregations can and should develop their own transition strategies, they say.

To help tailor a plan, Weese and Crabtree describe four types of congregations. They ask whether the pastor leads primarily through *personality* or *knowledge*, and whether the congregation measures its success by *style* or *effectiveness*. For each combination, they suggest appropriate approaches to transition planning. For instance, in a *personality-driven* church where *effectiveness* is the measure of success, which the authors refer to as an “icon” culture, the pastor is a “living logo” who personifies a vigorous, creative, entrepreneurial congregation. Often, such pastors have groomed their own successor, who, when it is time to pass the torch, will know the unique culture of the icon church and benefit from the retiring pastor’s blessing. Most denominational systems condemn such practices, but Weese and Crabtree endorse them as appropriate, at least in icon churches. At the opposite extreme, in a *knowledge-driven* church where *style* is the measure of success—or “archival” culture church—the pastor is more curator than entrepreneur. In such churches, Weese and Crabtree recommend that lay leaders communicate regularly with regional appointing authorities, plan for the new and old pastor to co-lead a worship service to dramatize the universal aspects of church life while addressing loss, and planning for a “pastor-to-pastor debrief after appointments have been made.” In this way, the church can take advantage of the continuity of the archival style while attending to the personal relationships that are affected by a change of pastors.

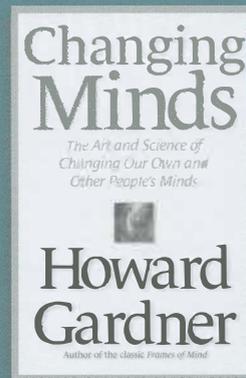
Whether or not this schema finds a lasting place in the clergy transition toolbox, the authors have raised important, if uncomfortable, questions that deserve attention at the boardroom tables of both congregations and denominational offices.

REV. DAN HOTCHKISS
Senior Consultant
The Alban Institute

Changing Minds

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF CHANGING OUR OWN AND OTHER PEOPLE'S MINDS

Howard Gardner
Boston: Harvard Business School Press,
2004



review book

How often is a new pastor told by the search committee, “We want to grow.” Grow, yes—change, not so much. Therein lies a primary paradox of congregational ministry: How do we lead change? Howard Gardner’s latest book, *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People’s Minds*, offers some interesting insights into this topic. While not written for a “church audience,” Gardner’s numerous examples and case studies are readily transferable to parish life. More than one of us, longing to break open a closed system and initiate new ministries and attract new people, has argued (frequently in vain) for an alteration in our congregation’s standard operating procedures—hoping to change people’s minds.

“The human mind,” Gardner writes, “is a human creation, and all human creations can be changed. We need not be a passive reflector of our biological heritage or our cultural and historical traditions. We can change our minds and the minds of others around us” (p. 212). In the first section of the book, Gardner describes the seven “levers” he believes assist or deter the process of mind change: reason, research, resonance,

redescriptions, resources and rewards, real world events, and resistances. In the second section of the book he provides case studies of how the seven levers contribute to or prevent significant mind changes. His examples range from James Freedman's revitalization of Dartmouth to Charles Darwin's revolution of biological science. In each case, Gardner clearly traces how various "levers" became "tipping points" for or against change.

I was particularly intrigued by his analysis of the confrontation between Professor Cornell West and the newly inaugurated president of Harvard University, Lawrence Summers. In this description, Gardner offers my favorite quote in the book: "The job requirement for a college president [is that she/he] needs to be able to 'listen charismatically.' Individuals who have a reservoir of goodwill, who can make colleagues (and potential donors and potential adversaries) feel that they matter, are most likely to bring about changes that they desire." These words are equally applicable to parish clergy. The better we know someone—what an individual cares for and about—the more likely we are to find common ground and thus the more likely we are to articulate our hopes for change in a manner that that person can understand and perhaps eventually embrace.

Gardner also repeatedly articulates that the primary way to effect large-scale change in a diverse population is for the leader to articulate, clearly and authentically, the group's story and the reason she or he desires change. In addition, the more ways in which a leader can make the case for change—what Gardner calls "redescriptions"—the more apt change is to occur. Finally, the leader's life and values must embody the story of change that he or she seeks to implement.

I have both succeeded and failed in bringing about change at different times in my own ministry. Gardner's book offers a framework for analyzing those past projects and determining which of the seven levers were facilitating change and which ones were obstructing it. I recommend *Changing Minds* to any church leader who is interested in dissecting past failures and triumphs and to those preparing for future efforts to transform the communities in which they worship and live.

REV. BONNIE A. PERRY

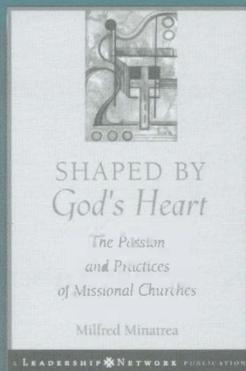
All Saints' Episcopal Church
Chicago, Illinois

Shaped by God's Heart

THE PASSION AND PRACTICES OF
MISSIONAL CHURCHES

Milfred Minatrea

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004



review book

Many congregations throughout America struggle with the reality of declining membership. The pastors and lay leaders of these congregations are the audience for Milfred Minatrea's book on missional churches.

Missional churches, a new term in Evangelical settings, refers to congregations for whom creating new disciples of Jesus is not just one program among many but the focusing work of the whole community. *Shaped by God's Heart* explores the life and work of these congregations primarily by discussing nine core practices the author finds in several emblematic churches.

Each chapter ends with a set of study questions and recommendations for further reading, suggesting that this book could well be used by a small group for reflection. Perhaps that is the best use of this book, as a prod for pastors and lay leaders of a congregation to consider if God is calling them to grow and to imagine what developing new disciples might look like for them.

Early on, Minatrea suggests that his work focuses first on spirituality, then on

strategy, and finally on structure. It is clear that Minatrea's passion for mission comes from a profound intersection of the Great Commission and the Greatest Commandment, yet he leaves too much unsaid when it comes to the spirituality of mission. Mainline audiences, who may not share his Evangelical views on non-Christians, will particularly miss a more nuanced discussion of missional spirituality. By the end of the book one rightly wonders, "Do we need to think all non-Christians are going to hell to have a thriving church?" Minatrea never answers this question, nor many others about the spiritual passion that drives missional churches.

The strength of the book is the self-awareness it can evoke. Minatrea develops a typology of "maintenance" and "missional" congregations that was instantly familiar to me as a mainline pastor. Here maintenance churches seek to reclaim their former glory; often that means engaging in new member outreach to cover the cost of their aging facilities. "Come to my church to pay my bills" is not the rallying cry of missional churches. Instead, the missional congregations are ones with a profound sense of call to serve the needs of their neighbors, especially their need for a relationship with God.

The description of practices that mark missional congregations may also occasion significant reflection. These chapters flow with a sensitivity to our modern moment, such as when Minatrea introduces the word "glocal" to describe the unique way our congregations live in a global/local community. The practices he outlines press one to consider the life of a congregation, and the ways in which it makes outreach and disciple development a priority. I found his urging to consider growth by how many members one releases to start new churches, instead of the members retained in the congregation, challenged some of the assumptions I have held about thriving congregations. Even readers who do not share Minatrea's evangelical spirituality can positively reflect on the practices of their congregations; certainly I will be praying in the months ahead about the questions he raises in *Shaped by God's Heart*.

REV. ANDREW WARNER

Plymouth Church UCC
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

New & Noteworthy

FROM THE ALBAN INSTITUTE

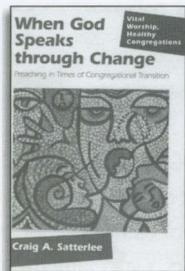


Your Brain Goes to Church: Neuroscience and Congregational Life

BOB SITZE

AL289; \$18.00

Provocative author Bob Sitze brings a congregational perspective to the conversation sparked by exciting discoveries in brain science. Sitze ponders what the human brain has to do with the beliefs, practices, and structures of congregations, and he offers clear, accessible explanations (including an extensive glossary) showing how the way the human brain works affects a congregation's identity and behavior.



When God Speaks through Change: Preaching in Times of Congregational Transition

CRAIG A. SATTERLEE

AL287; \$18.00

Homiletics professor Craig Satterlee offers guidance to pastors, seminarians, and other congregational leaders as they negotiate the challenging task of preaching at moments of congregational change. In this accessible book, Satterlee draws on his experience in parish ministry to reflect on how wise preaching can address significant events in a congregation's life and use them to enrich the wider ministry of the church.

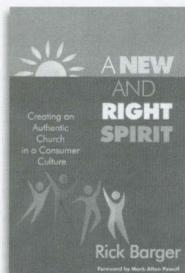


Be Not Afraid! Building Your Church on Faith and Knowledge

FREDRIC M. ROBERTS

AL305; \$18.00

Anthropologist and churchgoer Fredric Roberts writes that congregational leaders have no reason to fear when they consider the current state of the mainline church. Roberts and his team of field researchers studied eight diverse congregations and found that misplaced anxieties based on fundamentally wrong diagnoses of church problems have often caused leaders to overlook the real challenges facing their churches. Roberts recommends that congregations build upon the strengths that already exist among their members and work to rediscover their own unique purpose.



A New and Right Spirit: Creating an Authentic Church in a Consumer Culture

RICK BARGER

AL296; \$18.00

This book is a passionate argument for congregations to reexamine what it means to be an authentic church in a culture where authenticity is hard to come by. Pastor Rick Barger demonstrates the pitfalls of technical solutions to congregational problems and instead boldly calls on the church to reclaim its calling as a "witness to the resurrection." He exhorts leaders to turn away from the dominant story of our success-oriented society and to return to the story of the church that is grounded in Christ. Driven by that authentic purpose, the church becomes a powerful witness to God's love for all and an effective minister to the needs of the world.

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.

RESOURCES ON GOVERNANCE FROM THE CONGREGATIONAL RESOURCE GUIDE

Carver, John. **Boards That Make a Difference: A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990). John Carver outlines the principles and practices of his model for boards. He explains the four types of policies that need to be set by boards: “ends” policies, “limitation” policies, “process” policies, and “relationship” policies. He also emphasizes the need for high ethical standards, clear missions, long-term goals, and strong leadership commitments.

Carver, John and Mariam Mayhew Carver. **Reinventing Your Board: A Step-by-Step Guide to Implementing Policy Governance** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997). Following up on *Boards That Make a Difference*, the Carvers offer practical guidelines for defining board roles, making decisions, developing policies, and monitoring leadership performance. Step-by-step instructions, sample policies, and hands-on exercises are included. This book is an essential tool for congregational boards that are serious about implementing John Carver's model.

Goleman, Daniel, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee. **Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence** (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002). The authors argue that organizations led by people who develop and practice emotional intelligence thrive and grow in ways that other organizations do not. Daniel Goleman and his colleagues explain the four domains of emotional intelligence, describe emotionally intelligent leadership styles, and offer advice for leaders seeking to develop skills in emotional intelligence.

Holland, Thomas P. and David C. Hester, Eds. **Building Effective Boards for Religious Organizations: A Handbook for Trustees, Presidents, and Church Leaders** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000). Asserting that church boards increasingly see their work as discerning God's call and allocating resources in response, this handbook offers ideas and practices drawn from boards the authors have encountered. It features evaluation tools; a theological reflection model; a chart of priorities, objectives, and actions for mergers; and examples of reporting.

Houle, Cyril O. **Governing Boards: Their Nature and Nurture** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997). Cyril Houle contends that all governing boards operate around a tripartite system: the work to be done, the administration of that work, and the establishment of policies to guide it. Beyond these parts, the quality of a board's work depends on a clear understanding of its mission, its relationships, and on regular evaluation.

Olsen, Charles M. **Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders** (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1995). Based on extensive experiences with church boards, Charles Olsen presents a vision of—and practical suggestions for—transforming boards into spiritual communities and developing board membership into a rewarding ministry. At the heart of his vision is the proposal that board meetings should more closely resemble a worship service than a business council.

Scott, Katherine Tyler. **Creating Caring and Capable Boards: Reclaiming the Passion for Active Trusteeship** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000). Katherine Tyler Scott proposes that boards take time for discovery, reflection, and analysis about ends and means—not only for the institution but also for board members' own lives. She believes ongoing vitality is to be found in board members attending to relevant questions about an organization's history, future, mission, and publics.

Standish, N. Graham. **Becoming a Blessed Church: Forming a Church of Spiritual Purpose, Presence, and Power** (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2005). This is the story of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Zelienople, Pennsylvania, which discovered that by being open to God in everything they did—from worship and administrative meetings to the creation of budgets and sermons—blessings flowed through their church in ways they had never experienced before. This book offers a guide and toolkit that will help other congregations create a church that is open at its foundations to God's purpose, presence, and power.

Yust, Karen Marie. **Attentive to God: Spirituality in the Church Committee** (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001). Karen Marie Yust presents a new model of decision-making that focuses attention on God and God's role in a committee's work. This book balances theory and practice by discussing the spiritual and theological aspects of the new model and by offering resources for specific groups within a congregation.

Lay Leadership: Expanding the Circle

Q: How can we expand our leadership circle? We keep seeing the same people volunteer.

A: Most congregations dramatically underutilize their leadership gifts. Stagnation of the leadership pool is neither healthy nor inevitable, and it does little to move the congregation toward the fullness of creativity that moves us toward God. Here are some ideas for increasing your leadership pool:

Reflect on the Current Leadership

Reflection on church leadership is often left to a nominating committee, but there is work that precedes recruitment. Take your current lay leaders on a one-day retreat built around the following inquiries:

1. First, ask the leaders to reflect on what serving as a congregation leader has meant to them. Why do they do it? What skills did they come with? What skills did they need? How would being a congregation leader enrich someone else's spiritual journey? How can current leaders share what their service means to them with the congregation, and let members of the congregation know what they need from them?

2. Next, consider the leadership pool. Who is included? Who is missing? Look to see how well the sexes and various age groups, viewpoints, and ethnicities are represented among the current leadership, as well as length of membership and ways of living one's faith.

3. Lastly, use your findings to create a plan to expand the leadership pool. Consider, for instance, what avenues the congregation provides for education and

enrollment into leadership roles, and who is best positioned to do this work.

Make Leadership Visible

Keep in mind that people will not volunteer for what is invisible to them. When clergy speak about what is sustaining in ministry, others consider their call. When congregation leaders make visible ways to be engaged in congregational life, people step up to leadership. So take some steps to increase the visibility of the congregation's leadership: Publish testimony in the church's newsletter about what it means to be a congregation leader, and include these testimonials and "how-to-get-involved" information in your newcomer packet. Ask congregation leaders to speak at new member classes, at church dinners, and at other gatherings; and encourage them to share the value of their leadership experiences in conversations with other members.

Clarify Your Invitation

Before inviting members to serve as leaders, clarify what it is you are asking of them. Why is this an important activity for them to be involved in? What is the vision or possibility for this leadership task? What will be different if there are excellent people leading? What important change will it make? Keep in mind that potential leaders will respond more positively if you provide them with a clear description of what the job has been in the past, how much of the leader's time it took, and what the current goals are.

They may choose to do it all differently, but without some framework it is hard to say yes to a request to lead.

Support the New Leadership

Once you've found new leaders, take care of them. Provide them with a firm foundation through written guidelines and an orientation session, which provides a chance for leaders to meet one another, get a sense of who might partner on particular projects, and to share their hopes for their service. It's also an opportunity to share the goals and focuses of the congregation as a whole.

In your written guidelines, consider covering topics such as how to monitor committee budget expenditures, how to keep the staff and the congregation in the loop, how to manage differences, and how to advertise a program for maximum participation.

Excellent leadership teams do not just happen, but with intention, coaching, support, and gratitude they can soar!



Patricia Hayes is a field consultant with the Alban Institute. She works with congregations, clergy, and middle judicatory/regional bodies on issues of discernment, transition, planning, and working with differences. Prior to working with Alban, Ms. Hayes had more than two decades of experience as a parish minister and middle judicatory executive.

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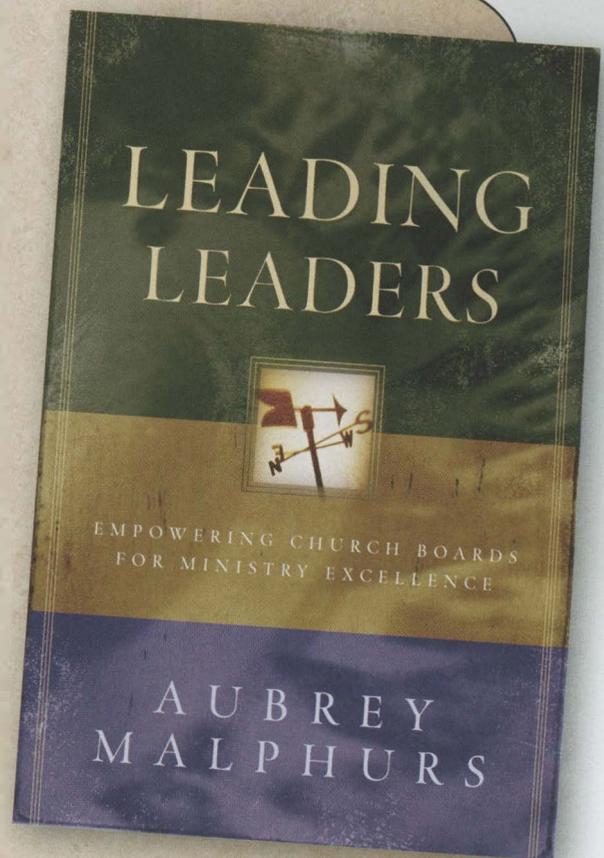
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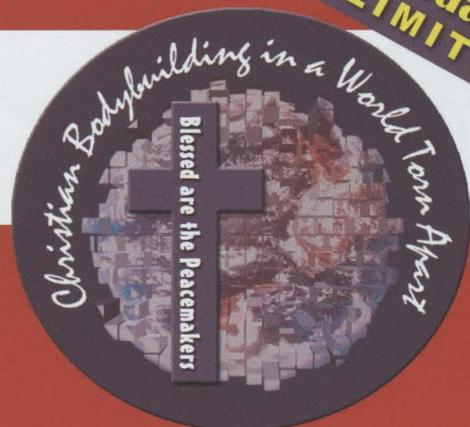
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The Alban Institute serves leaders – both ordained and lay – across the denominational spectrum through consulting services, education events, book and periodical publishing, and research. Our work is supported by membership revenue, grant funding,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