

Contents

Section 1: Leadership and Administration	1
Facilitator’s Guide	1
Purposes	1
Learning Goals	1
Module Plan	1
Participant’s Guide	2
Leadership with the People of God	2
The Leadership Spectrum	3
The Center of Leadership	4
Be Who God Created You to Be	6
Called to Serve	9
Leadership Behaviors	11
Administration Is Ministry	12
Organizing for Ministry	15
Committees That Work	17
Ministry N.O.W.	19
Meetings That Matter	19
Section 2: Understanding Congregational Culture	22
Next Faithful Step	24
Transforming Ministry Planning	27
Positive Change—Healthy Conflict	30
A High and Holy Calling	34
Biblical Reflections: Organization for Ministry	36
Biblical Reflections: Organization for Ministry	38

Module Three: Organization for Ministry

Section 1: Leadership and Administration

Facilitator's Guide

Purposes

The purposes of this module are:

- To provide a basic understanding of leadership, administration, and congregational development, and
- To explain how to maximize leadership, organization, and resources to bring about faithful and fruitful ministry in various kinds of congregations.

Learning Goals

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Describe and demonstrate pastoral-leadership principles;
- Discuss the ways that size, history, and context influence the style of ministry in a congregation,
- Demonstrate pastoral leadership in the administration of a local church by visioning and planning, assessing ministry effectiveness, understanding the purpose of various areas of ministry, and leading meetings;
- Demonstrate an ability to handle conflict and criticism;
- Describe and discuss the nature of change and transition; and
- Develop a personal ministry plan.

Module Plan

This module can be divided into two six-hour sessions. A suggested total of twelve hours could be divided in other ways, condensed, or expanded, depending on the circumstances.

Participant's Guide

Leadership within the People of God

What would you call a person who leads a worship service, a prayer time in a hospital room, a budget meeting, a Bible study, a visioning team meeting, and a person to a relationship with Jesus Christ—all in a week? Many words might come to mind, but the most obvious is the word *leader*.

It might be tempting to use words like *pastor* or *minister*, thinking of these functions as the work of ordained clergy. These, however, would not be completely accurate. It is true that ordained clergy play key roles in developing and transmitting the Apostolic Faith. They serve leadership roles in the ministry of the Word, administering the sacraments, and overseeing the church's ministry. They do not, however, have a monopoly on the gifts needed to fulfill ministry. Rather, properly understood, ordained clergy play leadership roles in multiplying these gifts in others.

In the Greek language, there are two words for laity. The first, *laikos*, depicts one who doesn't understand a particular academic discipline or process. This is the most common usage of the word even today. For example, we say things like, "Give it to me in lay terms," or "She is sharing a lay perspective." The assumption is that the lay perspective is second-rate; it is not the real thing. Needless to say, this definition does not fit well with the role of certified lay minister. It is not, however, the only definition.

The second Greek term, *laos*, is more positive. It connotes the "whole people of God," describing the whole body of Christ (the *laos*, including clergy and laity) as gifted and chosen to be God's witness in the world. We have been chosen as a whole to "proclaim the mighty acts of him who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). This mission is fulfilled as we connect together, with each one working to build up the whole body (Ephesians 4:11-16). The mission is too big to be accomplished by individuals alone. It takes a team.

The interesting fact here is that the first Greek word never appears in the Bible. It is a crippling term. This second term, however, is empowering. It is this second understanding that guides our process and provides a theological foundation for the belief that God is calling many to share in a pastoral leadership role. The work of

ministry is not exclusively for the professional—it is the work of the people of God.

In this module, we will explore the gift of leadership that God has given to the church. We will provide some foundational equipping for this role. Our prayerful hope is that persons using this module will discern more clearly how they can play leadership roles in the life of the church.

The Leadership Spectrum

There are many ways to talk about leadership. Here are two “big picture” perspectives.

On one end of the spectrum, we engage in functional leadership. This type of leadership involves specific tasks and responsibilities. It occurs when we lead an event or a prayer or play a lead role in providing pastoral care. This type of leadership usually has a short-term focus and involves making something happen in a specified time frame. For example, we lead in this way when we call a meeting to order, lead a group through an agenda, and then bring the meeting to a conclusion.

At the other end of this spectrum is missional leadership. This type of leadership is about moving from Point A to Point B. It is directional and strategic. It asks the questions: Where are we? Where is God calling us to be? How are we going to get there?

The forest-and-trees illustration is helpful. Missional leadership is about seeing the forest. It serves an overseeing function. It involves being aware of the whole and noticing how all the parts are related and connected together.

Both of these types of leadership are important. Some of the values associated with functional leadership might be the importance of preparation and a desire for excellence. The values of missional leadership might include vision, discernment, growth, and a desire to be all that God is calling us to be. Functional leadership is about doing things right; missional leadership is about doing the right things. To fulfill our calling as a church, both are needed.

Functional leadership is important because it gives direction to the various activities within the life of the church. It is this type of lead-

ership that allows us to gather for worship, engage in learning and spiritual formation, make decisions about ministry, and receive the blessings of care. We are called to engage in all of these activities to the glory of God. Thus, prayerful preparation and a desire for excellence are needed.

There is a danger, however, in focusing too much of our leadership efforts on leading functions and events. With this as the sole focus, it is easy for ministry to degenerate into a “to do” list. We can find ourselves engaging in a variety of activities, but we lack clarity about why we are doing them and how they fit within a larger purpose. We begin to do things just for the sake of activity or because we’ve always done them. The activities become ends in themselves, rather than means to a larger end or purpose. We get lost in the proverbial trees.

In our fast-paced, consumer-oriented world full of options and possibilities, this temptation is very real. Activity is prized. But activity without direction can be more frantic than faithful, more draining than renewing, and empty rather than fruitful. Pastoral leadership involves more than being able to check things off of a long list.

Thus, pastoral leaders need to make quality time for missional leadership. It is missional leadership that helps answer the questions, “Why are we doing this?” and “What do we need to be doing to fulfill our mission?” Knowing the larger purpose of our activities provides motivation and meaning. It is missional leadership that empowers us to engage in activities that are strategic and purposeful. This is why members of a pastoral leadership team need to pay attention to the rhythm of moving from one type of leadership to the other—and make time for both.

Regarding functional and missional types of leadership, which one is most easily neglected by you? Why is this? Why is balance important?

The Center of Leadership

At the center of this spectrum is the one who has been called and is being equipped for leadership: you! Or, to put it more precisely, the center of your leadership is your relationship with God.

Leaders must engage in leading themselves if they are to faithfully and fruitfully lead others. Leaders work to align themselves to the vision that God has for them. They spend time reflecting on the will of God for them and the church. They engage in the spiritual disciplines needed to stay strong in faith. The old saying is true: you can't share what you don't have. Thus, self-leadership is critical to leading others.

John Wesley taught us, by word and example, the importance of disciplined self-reflection. He regularly engaged in spiritual self-examination, reflecting on questions such as: "Have I acted for only one purpose in everything I have done? Have I done anything without believing it is God's will? Have I asked for God's help in all that I do?" These are just a few of his many questions. With regular self-reflection, Wesley was able to stay on track and lead with faithfulness and fruitfulness. This is one example of self-leadership.

Many examples come from the Scriptures. Think of David, who found himself in the midst of great trouble. Before he tried to take matters in his own hands, he first spent time "strengthening himself in the Lord" (I Samuel 30:6). Jesus, our supreme example, models this over and over again. He lived in a rhythm of prayer and work, regularly spending time with God and renewing his spiritual strength. (See Luke 6:12.) Likewise, Paul gives us many exhortations for leadership, saying things like, "Set your mind on the things that are above" (See Colossians 3:1-17; Romans 12; and I Timothy 6:11-16.) Faithful and fruitful leadership is centered in one's relationship with God.

Spending time with God is more than a prerequisite to leadership; it is perhaps the most crucial ingredient of the spiritual-leadership recipe. It is not what we do before we engage in leadership; it *is* leadership. Perhaps the first task of leadership is attentiveness to God. It is the leader's job to notice what God is doing. We cannot call attention to God's will for the church unless we have been prayerfully attentive and discerning ourselves.

This awareness can come through many avenues, not the least of which is through what Wesley called the means of grace. These are disciplines and methods that God has given us for growing in faith. In various lists, Wesley included:

- Worship, which for Wesley involved regular Communion;

- Prayer, which can also involve fasting;
- Bible study or, as Wesley called it, “searching the Scriptures;”
- Conferencing, which is intentional Christian dialogue and fellowship; and
- Service, which is sometimes called “acts of mercy.”

Spiritual leaders model these disciplines of faith with and for others. Through discipline, they are able to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). This kind of leadership requires that we be “rooted and grounded in love” (Ephesians 3:17). That’s what the means of grace help us to do.

To draw upon another biblical image, Jesus tells us that we are the light of the world, and then he calls us to “let our light shine” (Matthew 5:14f). He doesn’t say that we “can be” light or “should be” light. He says that we *are* light. Our choice is to shine or to not shine, to reveal God gifts or hide them, to connect to the power source or to sit like a bulb in a pantry. We can’t generate our own light. Thus, leaders must connect to God. Without this connection, we lead in darkness—and perhaps spread darkness in the world.

Exercise

Reflecting on Wesley’s questions and the other examples, what questions do you need to ask yourself on a regular basis? Make a list. Be prepared to share your list and what you think about this exercise with your team.

What is the relationship between the means of grace and leadership? Write each means of grace on a separate sheet of newsprint, and place them on the walls. As a group, go around the room, and complete this sentence: “This means of grace will help me provide better leadership because...”

Be Who God Created You To Be

A popular term in leadership circles today is “self-differentiation.” In brief, self-differentiation is about knowing who you are as a child of God—your values, vision, gifts, and purpose. It is about understanding your unique contribution to building up the whole body.

Biblically speaking, it is about letting your light shine. It is about living into the truth that we are “wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:13). Self-differentiated leaders are aware of their core values. They are passionately connected to a purpose and find ways to stay on course. By knowing who they are and sharing their unique God-given gifts, they bring vitality to relationships. They are able to avoid being absorbed into the emotional issues of the group, which can block out the light of God that shines through us.

This is important, because without this kind of leadership system, even churches tend to get stuck and become anxious. The Latin root of the word *anxiety* is instructive. It means “to choke” or “to narrow.” Anxiety constricts and limits life. It blocks the light. In this state, it is hard to see new possibilities. Our capacity to think creatively is diminished.

Self-differentiated leadership is the key that opens the door to a more life-giving way. Such leaders are able to get outside of the anxiety and begin to see things from a new perspective. They are able to think things through and respond, rather than react and jump to immediate conclusions. By modeling this practice, we also give permission to others to dream new dreams and discover what God is calling them to be and do. In short, such leaders show the way to a more faithful and fruitful way of living. This ability to point to a new way is perhaps at the very heart of leadership.

Be aware that self-differentiation does not mean separation. It is not about isolating or distancing oneself. Good leaders stay connected to others. Rather than being absorbed into group anxiety, however, they are “connected selves.” They are distinct and gifted selves connected to others, who are seen as distinct and gifted selves as well. As Paul says, “You are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (I Corinthians 12:27).

Self-differentiated leaders see their places in the whole body. They are able to remain true to their own identities and thus have something to contribute to the whole. Self-differentiated leaders give their attention to others, but they do not get lost in the issues of others. They affirm people and their ministries, but they do not get drawn into narrow agendas. They love others, but they do not necessarily seek to rescue, control, or solve problems for others. Doing so might rob others of opportunities for health and discovery. This rescuing, controlling kind of love has been called “sloppy *agape*.” (*Agape* is a key Greek word for love in the Bible).

Instead, good leaders practice healthy *agape*. This type of love is more than a feeling—it is a commitment to give what is best for others, regardless of who they are or what they have done. It is a love that seeks what is good and right in accordance with God’s will. Thus, it is much more than making people happy or meeting their perceived needs. It is sharing with others in ways that lead to what is “good, and right, and true” (Philippians 1:9; 5:8-10).

This kind of love requires both self-differentiation and the ability to stay connected in relationships. If we are too differentiated, we lose the relational aspect that is central to faithful and fruitful leadership. We become disconnected and have no influence. If we are too close, on the other hand, we can lose ourselves and be swallowed up in the issues of the group. In this state, we find ourselves striving only to maintain the status quo and keep everybody happy. Balance is the goal.

Leadership is always relational. From a Christian perspective, it is never a gift given as a private possession to an individual, to be manifested only as personal prestige, position, or power. Rather, this gift develops and bears fruit in community. We cannot simply say that one is the leader and others are mere followers. The call to be faithful and fruitful as the body of Christ can never rest on the shoulders of one. All leaders are followers, and all followers participate in the relational dynamic associated with leadership. Relationships of love and trust are the good soil needed for leadership to grow. Or, to quote an old saying, people don’t care what you know until they know that you care.

This means that leadership has more to do with collaboration than with coercion. The gifts of leadership grow more through mutual influence than through manipulation. The fruits of leadership are found more in engagement than in entitlement. As Christians, we are partners bound together by a common commission, a shared purpose, under the same Lord. It is only in this partnership that we are able to faithfully and fruitfully be the church that God has called us to be. (See Philippians 1:5, Galatians 2:9; Romans 1:11-12; and Luke 5:1-11.)

Exercise

Self-care for the sake of the kingdom can include many things, including prayer, exercise, spiritual direction, and quality Sabbath time. Write or draw three things that represent self-care for you. In the group, talk about what you do and/or what you need to do in order to take care of yourself. What is the relationship between self-care and faithful and fruitful ministry? Why is it important for leadership?

What is the difference between sloppy *agape* and healthy *agape*? Role-play situations where one person comes to you with a problem, and you immediately try to fix it using advice or rescue. Then talk about the importance of listening and helping people discover their own solutions. What is the relationship between love and self-differentiation?

Reflect on this question: "If people come to church and find you as anxious as they are, what hope do they have?" How can you be a less-anxious presence? Describe what this looks like.

Called to Serve

The biblical concept of service is valuable for planting leadership in a Christian context. It is a qualifier that helps us discern whether a person's leadership is of Christ. It is a value that nurtures leadership and shapes it into a particular form that differs from other forms of leadership.

As Christians, we are called to serve. Service describes the way we are called to stay connected with and for others. It is the way to the abundant, love-filled, eternal life that God wants for us (John 10:10; Mark 8:35).

There are many variations on the theme of service that need to be explored. Associated with the concept are several words, including *servant*, *servitude*, *slave*, and *steward*. It is important that we make some distinctions between these various definitions.

As Christian leaders, we are certainly called to serve. Sometimes, however, we have to distinguish between serving God and serving people. (See Galatians 1:10.) Is our service to people aligned

with God's will for them, or are we simply trying to please? Are we doing the things that lead to what is good and right, or are we serving the status quo and keeping people comfortable? Reflecting on these kinds of questions is important for leaders.

While there is a place for being a servant, this does not necessarily mean that we simply give in to the demands of others. First and foremost, Christian leaders are servants of Christ. (See Romans 1:1; Ephesians 3:7; and Colossians 1:7.) In serving Christ, we are called to love others as Christ loves us. We worship one who modeled taking time for others, healing others, touching others, giving to others, and even washing their feet. He did this for his companions and disciples, but he didn't stop there. He also provided godly service for the least, last, and the lost. For Jesus, it was not just about serving the disciples, but more about teaching the disciples to be servants of God to and for the world.

Another related concept is that of stewardship. To be a steward means to be entrusted with something. As Christians, we are entrusted with the Gospel and the passing on of the faith from one generation to the next. We are entrusted with the mission to share the love of Christ with all the world. The word *stewardship* helps us to see that our calling is not menial or demeaning, as is sometimes suggested by the word *servant*. This is a high and holy calling. It is a great honor and a huge responsibility. Paul encourages us to think of ourselves "as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries" (I Corinthians 4:1). The apostle Peter calls us to "be good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serving one another with the gifts we have received" (I Peter 4:10). Leadership questions for the church might be: Are we being good stewards? What are we doing with all that God has entrusted to our care?

As the church, we have been entrusted with a type of leadership that runs counter to the understanding of much of our culture. It is not about privilege, power, position, or prestige. It is about stewardship and service. This is the only way to lead the church to be all that God calls it to be. Our hope is that we will someday be able to hear our savior say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21f).

Exercise

Look up Scriptures that use the words *serve*, *servant*, and *stewardship*. Share one passage, and talk about the relationship between service and leadership. Note that the word *ministry* means service. As a group, explore the difference between this type of leadership and other understandings of leadership in our culture.

Leadership Behaviors

In the past, many studies of leadership have focused on personality traits and styles. While such studies are interesting, it is possible to conclude that leadership has little to do with personality or style. There are great leaders who are introverted, as well as those who are extroverted. There are great leaders who thrive on motivating large groups, as well as those who feel more comfortable working behind the scenes. There are those who plan well, and others who are action-oriented. Likewise, some good leaders are more authoritative, where others are more democratic. The point is that good leaders come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Leadership is not about personality.

Recently, studies have shifted to an emphasis on specific behaviors displayed by effective leaders. For example, a leader is one who challenges the present process. Leaders focus on the future and create a context for change. A leader is one who inspires a shared vision, a vision that emerges as he or she listens carefully, responds empathetically, utilizes consensus, and inspires ownership. A leader empowers others to lead as he or she encourages, fosters, and nurtures leadership.

Leadership might be defined as connecting people to a purpose and a purpose to a plan of action. By this definition, leaders are attentive to all three dimensions of leadership—people, purpose, and plan—and work to make connections between all three. Another way to say it is that leaders V.I.S.I.O.N.

- **V**ision—Leaders see a picture of a preferred future. They are attentive to what can be.
- **I**nspire—Leaders motivate, influence, encourage, and inspire others. This happens through staying connected in relationships.
- **S**trategize—Leaders ask: How are we going to get there? What is the plan to fulfill the purpose, the method to fulfill the mission?
- **I**ncorporate—Leaders develop, cultivate, empower, and equip others to use their God-given gifts.
- **O**rganize—Leaders align persons, activities, and resources.
- **N**avigate—Leaders guide, direct, and monitor, so that the ship can stay on course.

This is a big—perhaps overwhelming—job description. If all of these functions are important to leadership, then it becomes clear that no one person can do it all. It takes a team. It requires that people with complementary strengths and different gifts come together under the banner of a common purpose. It requires us to be the body of Christ, complete with a variety of gifts.

Exercise

In the church, as in society, we use the word *leader* often, but perhaps we don't take time to help people understand what it means. Pretend that you asked someone to lead a particular event or committee and he or she asked you, "What does it mean to be a leader?" How would you answer?

In addition to leadership behaviors, reflect on leadership virtues, such as integrity, honesty, courage, compassion, patience, and initiative. Consider this statement: "Before people can trust the vision of the leader, they must trust the leader." What are the implications of this for your leadership?

Administration Is Ministry

The work of administration is an important part of pastoral leadership. It is also an area of ministry that sometimes gets a bad rap.

Administration can be seen as boring, mundane, bureaucratic—or even a necessary evil in order to perform real ministry. This is not, however, the only way to view it.

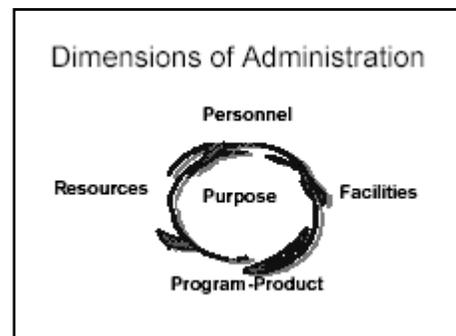
It is worth noting that the concept of ministry is found in the word *administration*. Administration is ministry. The word *ministry* simply means service. Seen in this light, administration is about the faithful and fruitful service of the church as a whole—not just the various parts, tasks, or programs. It is about tying all the parts together to fulfill a common purpose.

The prefix *ad-* at the beginning of the word provides some illumination. It denotes “over” or “above.” It reminds us that administration is the ministry of connecting components together and organizing parts to contribute to the overall purpose. One might think of the work of addition, where we add 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 together. Administration is connecting all of the dimensions of ministry together and making decisions that affect the whole, not just the parts.

A popular term today is *synergy*. It is a word that describes how the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The whole body is more than just the activities of the various parts. Together, the parts make something new.

One creative definition of synergy is this: $1 + 1 = 3$. The whole body (organization or church) is able to accomplish much more than just the work of each part. When administration is done well, visions are fulfilled. The whole church is able to move forward.

The key dimensions of administration might be described as personnel, program or product, resources, and facilities, with all of these revolving around purpose. (See diagram.) Administration involves aligning the various dimensions in such a way that the whole wheel turns, moving along the path and in the direction of God’s will for the church as a whole.



Using this definition, administration is an essential ingredient in

the recipe of good leadership. Like leadership, administration serves an overseeing function. There was once a football coach who was trying to teach his quarterback how to play his role more successfully. This particular quarterback had a tendency to take off down the field and try to make something happen on his own. The coach told him that his primary job was to stay in the pocket and look down field. As the leader of a team, the quarterback has to look at the whole field, see the goal line, and strategize about how to get there. This is a central function of administrative leadership.

Administrative leadership also serves a connecting function. The concept of compartmentalized, isolated ministry departments is not bearing the fruit that is needed from the church today. This popular way of conceiving ministry leads to some negative results, including turf battles, competition for resources, and fragmented directions. Focusing on the parts of ministry, rather than the whole, leads to narrow visions of what the church is about.

For example, one might be so focused on the youth that he or she begins to narrowly see the whole church through this lens. Another might be focused exclusively on the choir. Still another might be solely invested in what happens to a particular Sunday school class. And another might be devoted only to a certain style of worship and assume that this style is for everybody.

Rather than just having a bunch of things going on, administrative leadership helps each ministry see itself as part of a larger purpose. It is this larger purpose that provides motivation, inspiration, direction, and meaning.

Finally, administrative leadership serves an equipping function. It is about equipping each part for the building up of the whole body (Ephesians 4:11-16). This does not mean that the pastoral leader has to do all of the teaching and training. Rather, it is about the church providing for this need. For the body of Christ to function fully, it is important to spend time identifying and encouraging leaders in various areas of ministry.

Since no one person can fulfill all of the demands of ministry, leadership formation is crucial to the health of the body of Christ. If we do not do this, we rob people of the opportunity to serve and the ability to participate in the abundant life that God wants for us. Some key resources for this include spiritual gift inventories, utiliz-

ing the wealth of training materials for various positions and committees, and simply giving personal support and appreciation. It always helps to let people know that what they are doing contributes to the vitality and missional fulfillment of the body of Christ.

Biblically, this kind of equipping is more than teaching someone how to do a particular job; it also involves sharing the connection to other jobs and how each fits within the larger purpose. This is important because of the interrelatedness of all the various ministries within the church. What happens in children's ministry has an affect on adult ministry. Worship and education ministries mutually influence one another. Evangelism is greatly affected by how the church engages in fellowship together. As Paul says, if one part suffers, all suffer with it; if one part is honored, all rejoice together with it (1 Corinthians 4:26). All functions not only need to be strong, they also need to see how they relate to each other and work together. This kind of equipping creates synergy.

In the following section, we will look more directly at how the church can be organized for ministry. Our primary resource will be the *Book of Discipline*. Within it there are many guidelines for helping us be the church that God is calling us to be.

Exercise

What is administration? Why is it important?

Role-play situations where one person is narrowly focused on one area of ministry and is trying to get you to devote your time and energies to this single focus. How do you affirm this person and his or her ministry without getting sucked into his or her agenda? How can you get the person to see his or her ministry as a vital part of a larger whole?

Organizing for Ministry

Organizing for ministry is a variation on the theme of administration. It is a similar concept, differing in the level of details. Here we begin to explore specific structures and areas of ministry needed within a faithful and fruitful congregation. Since purpose drives ministry, we start with a big question: What is the church?

The Book of Discipline offers many great insights. Here we learn

that the church, as an inherent part of the Holy Catholic Church, is a connectional society of persons who have professed their faith in Christ, have been baptized, and have assumed the vows of membership. It exists for faithful worship, for the edification of believers, and for the redemption of the world. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the function of the local church is to help people know Jesus Christ personally and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Its biblical mandate and mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. In fulfilling this mission, it is seen as a strategic base from which Christians move out into the world. (See Paragraphs 201-203, *2016 Discipline*.)

Administration is a means to fulfilling this end. This means that all we do needs to be done in light of this vision of the church. Keeping this picture of the church in mind helps us to determine how we organize, use resources, and program for ministry. *The Book of Discipline* makes it clear that the church is to be organized to pursue its primary purpose in its own context: reaching out and receiving with joy all who will respond, encouraging them in their relationship with God, inviting them to commitment to God's love in Jesus Christ, providing them with opportunities for spiritual growth, and supporting them to live as faithful disciples. (See Paragraph 243, *2016 Discipline*.)

Exercise

Look through *The Book of Discipline* for statements about the nature and purpose of the church. Do a sampling of interviews, asking people for definitions of the church and why the church exists. Compare these answers to the official statements. Are there differences? What kind of training is needed? How do these statements help us understand your role in the church?

To make a bold statement, we could say that the church exists for those who are not yet there. This does not mean that the members who are there don't matter. Rather, it means that, as Christians, we find true life as we share it with others (Matthew 10:39). The church—not understood as the *building* but as the *body* of Christ—exists to serve Christ's mission. It is within



this mission that members experience the abundant, love-filled, grace-full, eternal life that God wants for all within the community of faith.

As a biblical principle, if we try to hold it to ourselves, we lose it. By moving outward with the Gospel, we find true life. It is important that we keep this purpose in mind as we organize for ministry.

Committees That Work

To fulfill this end, several committees are required for all local churches. First, there is the church council, the group charged with envisioning, planning, implementing, and evaluating the mission and ministry of the church on a regular basis. Under the council, there are four administrative committees: the Trustees, the Finance, the Pastor-Parish, and the Nominations/Leadership Development Committees. When functioning properly, each of these committees plays a vital role in the health of the church and the vitality of its mission. To give an idea of the purposes of these committees, we will briefly look at each area of ministry.

The **Nominations/Leadership Development Committee** is meant to be much more than a nominating committee, trying to fill spots with warm bodies. It is charged with identifying, developing, deploying, and evaluating Christian spiritual leadership for the congregation.

This committee is called upon to engage in biblical and theological reflection, study on the mission of the church, provide for the identification of spiritual gifts, guide the development and training of spiritual leaders, and assist in assessing the changing leadership needs of the congregation. There are many resources available to help this team fulfill its enormous responsibility.

The **Pastor-Parish Relations Committee** is meant to be much more than a group that sets salaries and deals with crises as they surface. This group can be much more proactive by identifying and clarifying the congregation's values for ministry, engaging in biblical and theological reflections on the roles of the pastor(s) and staff, and assisting the pastor(s) and staff in setting priorities for leadership.

The **Trustees Committee** is meant to be much more than a group that maintains and protects the building. It is charged with

providing facilities for the work of God. This group might need to struggle with the issues of identity. Is the church seen as a building or as the people of God? Are the facilities more like a resource or a museum? How might we respond to children who run in the halls and write on the walls?

The **Finance Committee** is meant to do more than go over the budget and account for funds. It is also charged with developing and implementing plans that will raise sufficient income to meet the budget adopted by the church council. This group is responsible for faithful budgeting, making sure all funds are collected and counted properly, and for managing all financial resources. Beyond these important details, stewardship formation is central to this area of ministry. Some congregations form separate stewardship committees, and others form a task force from the Finance Committee. There are multiple ways to fulfill this need.

Stewardship is more than raising money. It is central to being a disciple of Jesus Christ. The primary reason we give is not so the church can meet its budget; we give because we are created to give.

Stewardship is a spiritual matter. It is about the need of the giver to give for his or her own spiritual health. This is why Jesus talked more about this topic than any other. We might say that God doesn't really care a whole lot whether or not a church balances its budget. God does care infinitely, however, whether or not we balance our lives. Our giving says a lot about whether or not our lives are in order and aligned to God's will.

When the church asks us to promise our prayers, presence, gifts, and services, it is not just because the church needs these things. It is also because we need to do these things. Concerning "gifts," we can say that giving is part of Christian discipleship and spiritual growth. When we give, we open a place in our lives for God to come in and fill us with God's blessings.

Stewardship formation is needed in the church. As pastoral leaders, we need to be attentive to this area and utilize the wealth of resources to help us. It is important that every church have a planned time of stewardship emphasis. In doing so, we need to practice the three commandments of stewardship: 1) Keep it positive. 2) Keep it biblical. 3) Stress the mission.

Remember that people are most motivated when they are giving to people, needs, and ministry, not to the budget or to pay bills. Beyond a time of emphasis, it is important to promote stewardship throughout the year. Possibilities include weekly ministry highlights, stewardship studies that help people manage their money in a Christian way, and studies on tithing. Emphasize the offering as an act of worship, rather than a time-out in the worship service.

Ministry N.O.W.

Beyond these administrative functions, the local church is free to organize in the way that best helps it fulfill its mission within its own context. As a general guideline, we are charged with implementing a program of nurture, outreach, and witness.

Many churches have organized around these key dimensions of ministry, called the N.O.W. model. The area of nurture might include the areas of education, formation, care, small groups, and stewardship. Outreach might include ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy. Witness involves areas of evangelism, communications, lay servant ministries, etc. This is, however, just one suggested option for organization. Each church needs to reflect on how it can best fulfill the mission we have been given: to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Exercise

Do an assessment of how your congregation is fulfilling the areas of nurture, outreach, and witness. What is the current structure? How would you evaluate it?

Meetings That Matter

There may be a reason why we use the word *board* to describe committees or decision-making bodies: meetings can be boring. Many times, people leave meetings with a variety of negative feelings; they may feel confused, drained, angry, or wonder why they just wasted their time. There is a lot that leaders can do to turn this around. Meetings do matter. They are the way we come together to set direction, fulfill goals, and accomplish what is needed to be faithful and fruitful as the body of Christ. In the church, such gatherings need to be intentional “meetings” between God and God’s

people to bring about God's work in the world. Here are a few suggestions for making this possible:

1. **Prepare!** It is counterproductive for a leader to show up wondering why the group is meeting. Being prepared suggests that the meeting is important and worth the participant's time. Preparation involves gathering all needed materials beforehand and taking care of details such as location and time. It also involves developing an agenda, so that participants know the purpose of and plan for the meeting. An agenda should include time for worship, statement of purpose, ground rules, agenda items, and desired outcome.
2. **Meet with God.** At such meetings, prayer needs to be more than bookends at the beginning and end. It is about God's work and thus needs to be a time of growing and discernment. Devotions, briefs studies, and worship can help make meetings an experience of spiritual formation and Christian conferencing. Among other resources, the orders of morning and evening prayer in the *Hymnal* can easily be adapted.
3. **Define the two purposes.** First, define the specific purpose of the meeting. This can be done before the meeting occurs, giving people the opportunity to do some thinking and praying in advance. Second, work to align this specific purpose with the big purpose of the church. How will our work together help us move forward in God's will?
4. **Communicate!** Communication is important before, during, and after the meeting. Make sure people are free to participate with ideas, questions, and dialogue. Some communication ground rules can assist in this process. Ground rules might include statements on respect, listening, and focusing on purpose rather than people.

Exercise

Utilizing *The Book of Discipline* and other resources, design an agenda for a meeting with one of the administrative committees, providing training on their purpose, role, expectations, and work for the year.

For a regular meeting of a ministry area, design an agenda for the meeting that includes a spiritual dimension, a section on purpose, agenda items, and desired outcomes.

Section 2: Understanding Congregational Culture

There are many ways to assess the nature of a congregation and develop a ministry that fits. For example, we can look at denominational affiliation, theological identity, history, and the predominantly accepted leadership style. Being aware of these dynamics helps us to understand the congregational culture.

A culture is the sum of accepted values, beliefs, styles, and norms of behavior. Every congregation has made choices that have formed a unique culture out of infinite possibilities. Understanding the current dynamics helps us to discover strengths, see opportunities, be aware of threats, discern new possibilities, and make more faithful and fruitful choices that increase health, bring about healing, and help a congregation move forward in faith.

From a sociological perspective, church size is an important indicator for understanding the organizational, relational, leadership, and missional dynamics within the congregation. Various models have been used with differing categories. It is not an exact science—it is possible for one church to be in one category but act like another. Nevertheless, this type of study can be helpful to the process of getting a handle on the congregational culture.

One relatively simple model divides congregations into four categories. The first is called the family church, with three to fifty in average attendance. A church of this size tends to function like a family, with patriarchs and matriarchs who serve as gatekeepers. A few set the tone.

The family church is characterized by intimacy and fellowship. The pastor is usually seen more as a chaplain or caregiver. Pastoral care and relational skills are prized above leadership and administrative skills.

Family churches tend to incorporate new members the way a family does, through birth, marriage, and adoption. Members might say things like, “I like the family feel.”

It has been said that a church of this size is like a cat. The pastor feeds the cat and does things for the cat, but the cat, true to its nature, does not belong to the pastor and can manage without one. The church is independent and self-sufficient. In the family

church, the certified lay minister can serve a vital role, providing leadership and helping the church move forward in faithful and fruitful ministry.

The next category is the pastoral church, with fifty to one hundred and fifty in attendance. In this church, the pastor becomes the gatekeeper. The pastor plays the role of shepherd, knowing everybody by name, providing spiritual care, and incorporating new members into the flock. The pastor leads by “doing” ministry and managing the church. New members might say, “I was looking for a church where the pastor would be available and know me.” Belonging and fellowship are important. People tend to matter more than performance.

For another animal comparison, a pastoral church is like a collie, characterized by love. It wants love and will respond to and love those who love it.

At the larger end of the category, the church becomes more and more like a garden, where the work is never done. It requires a lot of nurturing, cultivating, and tending to its many needs. If neglected for long, the weeds will grow and hinder good fruit. In a church of this size, it is possible for a certified lay minister to serve the role of assistant to the pastor, helping with various pastoral duties.

The third category is the program church, with roughly one hundred and fifty to three hundred and fifty in attendance. Here, the pastor becomes the chief administrator, and organizational skills become more important. Recruiting and equipping others to do ministry become priorities. The elected leadership plays a more prominent role in developing ministries and setting the direction for the congregation. Programs attract new members. People might say, “We are interested in finding activities for our children.”

The program church might be characterized as a house with many rooms serving different functions and needs. Many specialized skills are needed to keep it running and in repair. Without a unifying vision, ministries can become so compartmentalized that turf battles, competition for resources, and a narrowly focused agenda become the norm. The challenges for leadership are magnified.

Of course, houses can range from small cottages to very large estates. The larger the house, the more need there is for polished

administrative and leadership skills. In a church of this size, a certified lay minister could fill the need for leadership in specific areas of the church.

The final category is the corporate church, with three hundred and fifty one and up in attendance. In this church, a collection of many groups come together in large worship celebrations, where there is a sense of participation in something big, important, and meaningful. Quality worship programs, well-organized activities, and trained leadership become more and more important. The pastor becomes more of a symbolic presence.

The corporate church can be compared to a ranch. The pastor is more like a rancher than a shepherd, overseeing a big operation. The pastor works more directly with the shepherds or staff, rather than the flock. The role is one of setting the vision and holding all ministries accountable to alignment with the vision. Thus, the pastor serves a unifying role. In a church of this size, a certified lay minister could be valuable in serving as a lay pastor to a small group within the larger body.

Exercise

Using this analysis and any other resources that are presented, write brief descriptions of the leadership, organizational, and missional dynamics of your congregation. How do size and history influence the style and culture of the congregation?

In a group, compare and contrast the congregations represented. Help each other understand the differing leadership needs.

The Next Faithful Step

Often, we use phrases like “grow a church” or “move a church forward.” Phrases like this can carry the connotation of moving the same church to another level, when in fact it must become a different kind of church. The best words to describe such growth are *transition* and *transformation*. A transition in size is not just a matter of increasing membership or starting a new program, but of changing the culture of the congregation. Leadership styles, organizational structures, decision-making processes, relational orientations, and understanding of mission must be transformed. The

challenge is great, which is why many congregations tend to plateau or hit an attendance ceiling.

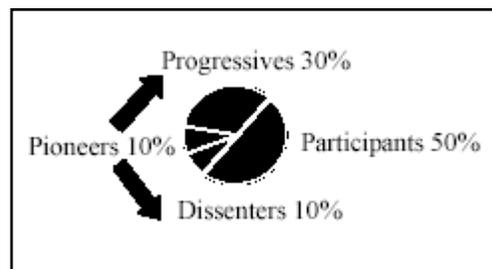
It is unlikely that a congregation will make a giant leap in size. Transformation takes time. Anyone who has ever made a commitment to physical health knows that there is no quick fix. The ads that promise immediate results by taking a pill are very misleading. It takes time, dedication, and effort to restore health and get in shape.

For congregations, the key is to take the next faithful step. We need a vision of what God is calling us to be, and then work toward it day by day and step by step. Some important building blocks include prayer, discernment of a clear mission (Why are we here?), development of indigenous worship, cultivation of groups, and creation of a shared vision. We begin with others who have a desire to be all that God is calling them to be.

Leadership is important to the transformation process. Leadership is needed to create a sense of urgency, cultivate an attitude of adventure, and share the vision. One thing leaders can do is learn the dynamics of the next-sized church and move toward living in those dynamics. Next, leaders can begin to help others see the importance of living in the dynamics.

In making such a transition, it is unlikely that everyone will grasp the vision at the same time. Even the growth of the vision tends to be a process of transformation that takes time.

On any given issue, goal, or vision, a small percentage (10 percent, as an example) of the congregation could be called pioneers. They see it quickly and are motivated by it.



Next, there is another percentage of the congregation (say 30 percent) who could be called progressives. When they see the pioneers on board, they are likely to follow.

The next group, which is the largest, could be called participants. They will follow the progressives, but not until they see them on board.

Finally we have the dissenters—they always seem to be there. They can cause trouble, or they can go along quietly. They can eventually get involved, or they might leave. How we communicate to and work with them is important. (See diagram.)

A great temptation within this process is to focus on the dissenters—to appease them and try to keep everyone happy. The problem with this approach is that we can lose the other 90 percent. At best, the wheel stays in neutral; at worst, it starts moving in reverse.

The famous bus illustration is helpful. The bus is ready to depart from Stop A and go to Stop B. Many are on the bus, but someone says, “Oh, the Smiths are not here. Let me go get them.” They eventually get on board, the bus starts forward, and someone says, “Oh we forgot. . . .” The bus turns around and goes back. This keeps happening in the hopes of getting everyone on board.

This kind of compassion is good; the problem, however, is that there are people waiting at Stop B, Stop C, and so on. There comes a point when we might have to say, “We love you. We want you on board, but with or without you, this bus is moving forward.”

As a spiritual warning, it is important to note that dissenters are not necessarily evil because they disagree. God works in many and mysterious ways. Those who are not sure about a particular direction serve a purpose. They provide energy for others to explore and refine their commitment. They help keep us humble and focused on God, not ourselves.

We cannot lock people into one of these categories. The same person may be a pioneer on one issue and a dissenter on another. It is important that the spiritual leader stay connected to all in a spirit of love.

As we think about growth and transformation, we remember that all living organisms must change in order to stay healthy and vital. The same is true of the body of Christ. Leaders, by definition, challenge the present process and focus on the future. Leadership is always about moving from A to B.

Good leaders, however, balance continuity with change. If we only promote change, we create chaos and disconnectedness. If we just try to stay the same and keep everybody comfortable, we

become like a body of water with no flow through it—stagnant and stale, unable to support life. Good leaders see the importance of both continuity and change for the vitality of the living organism called the church. As Christians, we live in a past-present-future continuum. We build on and honor the sacrifices and commitments of the past, while at the same time striving to become all that God is calling us to be.

Exercise

Reflect on the various dimensions of a congregation, including leadership, organization, relationships, and mission. Write an analysis of the “next faithful step.”

- What are some small things you can do that can lead to big results?
- How can you cultivate leadership in the life of the congregation?

Transformational Ministry Planning

“We did these five things and grew dramatically.” It is inspiring to hear such stories; we can learn much from them. Unfortunately, sometimes a crucial mistake is made during such presentations. Sometimes we hear, “If you just do these same five things, you will experience the same results.” It rarely works that way. All mission is contextual. You cannot simply cut a mission statement from another church, paste it into yours, and expect it to bear much fruit.

There are few cookie-cutter models for ministry that work everywhere. While many common themes exist for ministry, each congregation must discern what God is calling it to be in its particular time and place. This requires a constant process of assessing, discerning, strategizing, implementing, and evaluating.



There are many ways to engage in this process. Some of them will be reviewed with your team and in the context of training events. In brief, it is important to engage in both external and internal assessments.

External assessment can involve formal demographic information that will tell you about your mission field. It can also include community surveys, interviews, and guided discussions with leaders. There is also the idea of “leadership by walking around.” Being visible in the community and developing relationships with people outside of the church can be beneficial to you and to them.

For example, by talking to leaders in the community, you will be able to learn about the population, the lifestyle, the needs, and the hopes of the community. You can also learn about how your congregation is perceived. By making these connections, you will be in a better position to align your ministry with real needs in the community.

Internal assessment is much the same, only it takes place within the congregation. By looking at the internal demographic information—average age, income, lifestyle, etc.—you can begin to compare the congregation to the community. In surveys, interviews, and discussion groups, some initial questions might address hopes, concerns, and needs. From here you may begin to ask: What is God calling us to be? What are the greatest opportunities for growth? What are the obstacles that keep us from taking advantage of these opportunities? What ministries need to be in place to move us in the right direction? What do we need to change in order to move in this direction?

As you begin to address these kinds of questions, you are engaging in the process of ministry planning. The kind of ministry planning that we are advocating is more than devising a list of things to do. It is about aligning ministry to mission. It is about aligning our activities to God’s will. The particular process is centered in developing a shared vision, a common mission, and foundational core values. This could be called the “core.”

As with a wheel, the power for ministry comes through the core or the hub. When connected to the Holy Spirit, the core provides focus, direction, motivation, and meaning. It helps us to know why we engage in ministry and empowers ministry that strategically fulfills the core. From here, we begin to set goals and establish

ministry initiatives that will help the wheel move forward. As the saying goes, if we fail to plan, we plan to fail.” Purposeful planning is one of the keys that helps us stay on the right track.

As leaders, it is important that we work to begin with the end in mind. Our ministry needs to move us toward this greater end or purpose. One thing that we can do to discern this purpose is to ask, “What would a spiritually mature congregation look like?” Desirable characteristics might include things such as committed leadership, inspiring worship, intentional evangelism, transformative discipleship systems, loving fellowship, missional outreach, and cheerful stewardship, to name a few. If you were making a list, what would be on it? What would be the signs of faithful and fruitful ministry? What are our strengths? What areas need work? There are resources available to help a congregation work through this kind of process.

The process is not only for congregations; it is also of great merit to individuals. You are encouraged to work on a personal ministry plan. Start by discerning and naming God’s vision for your life and ministry. What is God calling you to be? How do you want to be known? After developing a personal “core,” proceed to personal goals and initiatives that align your life to the core.

Personal ministry plans include things such as reading commitments; personal disciplines; activities for spiritual, physical, and emotional health; areas of ministry that you want to emphasize; planning for intentional family time; and more. The question is, what do you personally want to accomplish as a child of God and as a leader in the church? This process helps us begin with the purpose in mind. It helps us work and move toward the greater end.

It is unlikely that we would spend time planning a trip unless we had the prospect of going. We would not be motivated to plan for the future unless we had a vision of what our lives could be. The same is true for the church. It is the anticipated future that makes planning meaningful and even enjoyable. As a popular proverb states, without a vision, people perish.

Without a God-given vision, we tend to turn inward toward ourselves and stray from God’s will. This is why the Holy Spirit empowers us to dream dreams and see visions, not of what we want, but of what God wants for us and from us. (See Acts 2:17.)

Planning in relationship with God is one of the ways we “press on toward the goal of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14).

Exercise

Without a strong core in a congregation, the focus tends to be on activities and programs. They can become “sacred cows,” even if they are no longer bearing the fruit that is needed. Without this core, we tend to turn inward toward ourselves and our needs. On the other hand, with the focus on a vital and shared core, programs can be more flexible and fluid, adapting to fulfill the core. Ministries can be more outwardly focused. Talk about this from your experience.

Write a brief assessment, looking at both external and internal dimensions. Utilize the resources available.

What is your personal ministry plan? Your personal vision? Your core values? Begin the process of formulating this type of plan, starting with your personal core. The goal is not necessarily to end up with a finished product, but to begin to develop something that will help you gain some clarity and focus for your life. What does this look like for you at this point in your life?

Positive Change—Healthy Conflict

Since leadership is about movement, it always involves change. We do not make changes for change’s sake, and certainly not for ego reasons. Positive change is always a process of prayer, visioning, and team-building in and for the community of faith.

Positive change requires laying some groundwork. We can do this by identifying leaders and “show stoppers,” cultivating relationships, and educating and calling forth leaders. A lot can happen at the beginning without obvious external changes. Preparing the soil is important.

From the beginning, we can set the tone for change by talking about issues of vision and establishing a sense of urgency and importance. We can proclaim that with Christ, the best is always yet to be. In love and with enthusiasm we can inspire others to

begin to “dream dreams and see visions” (Acts 2:17). This kind of preparation will lead to greater fruit in the end.

In promoting change, the mature leader goes in knowing that change involves conflict. This is especially true when there are multiple people involved. Conflict is never easy, but this does not mean it is bad. Conflict can be a good and healthy thing. It can lead to new perspectives and possibilities. In a spirit of mutual dialogue, it can lead to clarity of mission and vision.

Conflict can be creative or combative. It can lead to blessing and new life or to brokenness and strife. Like so many things, it depends on how it is used. Here are eight things a leader can do to help minimize negative conflict, encourage creativity, and promote positive change:

- 1. Preserve history with an eye to the future.** Be sensitive to the significant events of the past that have shaped the current identity of the congregation, including both high and low points. Many people have given so much to make the current ministry possible. Focusing only on present failures can be hurtful and cause defensiveness.

Instead, build on the values of the past as you move toward the future. The goal is not to change for change’s sake. Often, the hope is to preserve historic values in a new form.

On one level, we are not changing so much as preserving. This is especially true when we think of the Gospel message. We preserve it by making it more relevant in the world today. We don’t accommodate it or water it down. Rather, we adapt it to speak to different people and generations. (See Acts 2 and I Corinthians 9:19-23.)

- 2. Look behind the comments.** In many debates, it is possible to assume that everybody is giving the right answer—to different questions. What’s the question or the issue behind the opinion or proposal? By moving beyond the surface, it may be possible to find common ground.

When dealing with conflict, try to determine the real value at the root of the problem. For example, is the real value people or a particular model? Is it seeing people worship God or a particular style of worship? God’s will is often found as we move beyond the surface and get to the core of who we are.

3. **Be aware of the emotional roots of conflict.** We cannot always reason our way out of conflict. Most conflict has an emotional dimension involving hurt, anger, disappointment, grief, anxiety, a sense of failure, or a feeling of loss. Discover it. Acknowledge it. Respond to it in love. This goes a long way in building relationships that can lead to health for the whole body.
4. **Practice the Three P's of Conflict Resolution: personal, process, and product satisfaction.** Personal satisfaction involves equal treatment and the perception of being heard. Process satisfaction deals with fairness, having enough time to work through issues, and opportunities to express opinions and feelings. Product satisfaction entails either acceptance or delight in the result. By paying attention to the first two, we generally find greater satisfaction in the third. Even if people don't like the final solution, they are more likely to accept it if they have received personal and process satisfaction.
5. **Seek general consensus.** This kind of consensus does not necessarily mean unanimous agreement. General consensus means that most are willing to participate for the good of the whole. Those who are not completely sure can make a decision to trust the consensus and thus not block it or work against it. Even if some do not desire to be directly involved, they still can give their support. Everyone does not necessarily have to be directly involved in everything. This kind of consensus involves giving permission for God to work in many different ways under the umbrella of a common purpose.
6. **Appeal to God for guidance and inspiration.** The process needs to be bathed in prayer and a sincere desire for God's will. We need to continuously ask, "Is this of God?"

In addition, it can be appropriate to challenge others with this question. We might say something like, "I want you to pray about this. If you can come back and tell me that God does not want us to do this and convince the leadership that it is not God's will, then we won't do it." This type of leadership question can help some people open up to new possibilities.

7. **Focus on purpose, not people or position.** At some point, this should be established as a rule of engagement. Avoid personal attacks or even the perception of putting someone

down. This harkens back to the concept of self-differentiation, where we work to define ourselves and our views *to* each other, rather than *against* each other.

One practical way to do this is to use “I statements,” rather than “you statements.” It is generally better to say, “I believe...” than it is to say, “You should believe... .” It is better to say, “I need...” than it is to say, “You need to do... .” “I statements” build bridges; “you statements” build walls. “You statements” can be perceived as devaluing and critical. “I statements” open a path through which the Holy Spirit can work.

8. **Be realistic.** Sometimes even our best intentions cannot keep conflict from becoming combative and destructive. There are times when spiritual leaders have to make hard decisions. Sometimes it means slowing down or postponing decisions. Sometimes it means dealing with our own sins. Sometimes it means pressing on and not allowing the whole body to be held captive by a few. Sometimes it means confounding those who are intent on causing pain and division, either through immaturity or malice.

Spiritual leadership is not a popularity contest. Because we are not all in the same place spiritually (and this does not mean higher or lower, just different), and because doing God’s will requires deep, continuous conversion, there will be conflict. This does not mean it is bad. Many times, different perspectives are exactly what are needed for something creative and good to emerge. In fact, this kind of creative conflict is one of the ways we grow, both personally and as a congregation. Through it, we learn to trust in God and love others.

Exercise

In many situations and congregations, people are hungry for a challenge, a vision, some direction, a renewed sense of purpose. From your perspective:

- What changes need to be made?
- How can you prepare the soil?
- What is your role?

Reflecting on change and conflict:

- What is the relationship between change and conflict?
- When is conflict healthy and creative, and what makes it dysfunctional and destructive?
- What is your “growing edge” when it comes to conflict? Which of these eight suggestions appeal to you? Which ones are easiest for you, and which are the most difficult?

A High and Holy Calling

As a certified lay minister, you may find yourself in a situation that is new, both to you and to the congregation. You and the congregation might be living in a new paradigm and a new understanding of the pastoral role. If so, take heart, and know that you are not alone.

There are many who have gone before you and paved new paths for ministry by the grace of God. You have a team to support and help you interpret this new way of ministry for your congregation. You have a God who is with you and who will enable you to say with the apostle Paul, “Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart” (I Corinthians 4:1).

As it did with Paul, the journey may get rough at times. It may be overwhelming. Obstacles will need to be overcome. That’s all part of it. Through it all, however, God will remain faithful, and you will

grow in faith and fruitfulness. Remember, you don't have to do it all at once or know it all at once. Keep the vision before you, and take the next faithful step.

By serving in a lay pastoral role, whether as a leader of a congregation as part of a ministry team, or on staff in another, you are entering a high and holy calling. First, it is high—sometimes beyond our comprehension. Sometimes we can only catch glimpses of it or see it dimly in a mirror (I Corinthians 13:12). This is a symbolic role; you become a symbol or model of faith.

Sometimes pastors complain about being put on pedestals. While there are problems with this, it comes with the territory. People want to know that it is possible to live a life of faith. This is part of your role. One problem with this perception is that it gets mixed up with moralism—a list of don'ts generally dealing with surface things. While living a moral life is important, it does not have to be defined legally or in terms of what you can't do. Rather, you are becoming a symbol of love, forgiveness, and grace.

Here is where morality takes on a positive understanding. In this role, you have the privilege of representing the possibility of loving your enemies, showing mercy to those who hate you, placing your hope in God and not just things, and receiving forgiveness for sin. This is the higher calling.

Sometimes, people might try to use you as their scapegoat, expecting you to be good so that they don't have to. This is not the purpose of your calling. Your calling is to represent the higher way of life that God wants for everyone. The pedestal is meant for all.

Don't get discouraged if you fall short. This is part of the journey for us all. Work on taking the next faithful step. Remember the words of Paul: "Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own" (Philippians 3:12).

Secondly, your calling is about holiness. The word *holy* literally means "to be set apart, distinguished, or devoted to a higher way of life in relationship with God." It is also translated as "saint" or "sanctify."

You might note a connection with the concept of self-differentiation that we explored earlier. Being set apart is one way to under-

stand self-differentiation in a Christian context. Again, this is not a state reserved for the few; it is for all. Being in this role does not mean that you are better than other Christians. It is not that you are becoming a professional or “first class” Christian. Your role is to lead others to this same kind of holiness.

There is the story of the child looking at stained-glass windows in a cathedral. The parent asks, “Do you see the saints?” And the child says, “Yes, they are the ones who let the light shine through.” This is the kind of holiness to which we are all called.

This role involves a calling. We can’t do it alone. We fulfill this calling as we receive and develop gifts from God. Trust in God is key to faithfully and fruitfully living into this role.

Part of the calling is to take on the yoke of Christ (Matthew 11:29-30). A yoke allows one to bear more weight than he or she could ever bear alone. A yoke makes a heavy burden more manageable. It enables us to move forward. In this role, we must put on Christ. This is the only way we can carry the load. With a strong relationship with Christ, we will be more faithful in leading others “to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:18). This is our prayer for you as you embark on this journey.

Exercise

Reflecting on this description of the pastoral role:

- How do you understand your role as a certified lay minister?
- What do you need to help you enter into this calling?
- What is needed to help your congregation or ministry setting understand this role?

Suggested Resources

The Myth of the 200 Barrier--How to Lead Through Transitional Growth, Kevin E. Martin, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 2005. (available at Cokesbury.com)

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Biblical Reflections: Organization for Ministry

John 13: 12-17

After **he had washed their feet**, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. **So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.** Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. **If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.**

Reflection Questions

1. As a disciple, how would you feel as Jesus washed your feet? How do you respond when someone in authority over you serves you in some way? Think of someone who is a leader. How do they model servant leadership? What are some ways that you can be an example of servanthood in your leadership role?
2. Knowing what we are called to do and doing it can be two very different things. When have you been blessed because you were obedient in following Jesus’ example? How can you help others understand and desire this blessing?

Prayer

O make me all like thee,
Before I hence remove!
Settle, confirm, and 'stablish me,
And build me up in love.

Let me thy witness live,
When sin is all destroyed;
And then my spotless soul receive,
And take me home to God.

Charles Wesley

Module Three: Organization for Ministry

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