

Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 22

How to Strengthen Clergy/Staff Leadership & Relationship Skills

Why are we gifting you this volume? Because the mission statement of our primary publication—*The Parish Paper: New Ideas for Active Congregations*—is to help the largest possible number of congregations achieve maximum effectiveness in their various ministries. *The Parish Paper* is a monthly newsletter whose subscribers receive copyright permission to distribute to their constituents—more than two million readers in 28 denominations. Go to www.TheParishPaper.com for subscription information.

Purpose of this Volume: Provides in-depth answers to questions that readers of *The Parish Paper* ask regarding principles and procedures that help clergy, program staff, and administrative staff to (1) achieve maximum ministry effectiveness and (2) maintain positive interpersonal relationships.

How to Use this Volume: (1) individual clergy or staff member study, (2) group clergy and staff study in five weekly or monthly sessions, and (3) group clergy and staff study at a yearly staff retreat.

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How to Use this Resource

Fact #1: Information on paper does not equal transformation in clergy and church staff. Knowing does not equal doing.

Fact #2: Positive change in clergy/staff leadership abilities more often results from group discussions with respected people than from one person's solitary reading of a document.

Therefore: this resource provides a study/discussion process through which clergy and lay staff can develop new awareness, insights, and action-directions.

Biblical Basis for this Study/Discussion Process

“Without counsel plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed (Proverbs 15:22).”
“The ear of the wise seeks knowledge (Proverbs 18:15).” “Behold, I make all things new (Revelation 21:5).”

Unfolding this Study/Discussion Process

Step #1: If used as a group clergy and staff study in five weekly or monthly sessions, discuss in the opening session the purpose of this experience. The title describes the goal: “How to Strengthen Clergy/Staff Leadership & Relationship Skills.”

This is *not* group therapy, but it is more than a mere academic experience. Ask each participant to vocalize what she or he hopes to gain from this study. Agree on some parameters for the discussion, such as “Honest expression of feelings but no personal attacks or criticisms of other group members.”

Warning #1: This resource assumes that (a) the senior pastor who leads the group discussion has some training and skill in the basics of group process, (b) the associate pastors and staff members enter the discussion with a desire to strengthen their skills, (c) everyone realizes that at a few points the discussions may surface matters that could be painful or contentious, and (d) every participant enters the group discussions with an honest desire for insight and the willingness to talk through such issues.

Warning #2: Do *not* attempt to substitute the suggestions in this volume for a regularly meeting, effectively functioning personnel committee, described in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 21, How to Maximize Personnel Committee Effectiveness*. Like the two rails of a train track, these two aspects of ministry are complimentary; neither can substitute for the other's absence.

Warning #3: Do *not* attempt to use this resource during a period of serious congregational conflict or as a substitute for the use of *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 3, How to Prevent and Resolve Congregational Conflict* or for an experienced conflict consultant from The Alban Institute or some other reputable organization.

Step #2: Schedule five, ninety-minute discussions of “How to Strengthen Clergy/Staff Leadership & Relational Skills.” Make copies and distribute one to each person. Ask them to prepare for each discussion by reading the material in that section of this resource.

Study/Discussion Session #1

Clergy/Staff Member: Prepare for this discussion session by making notes in the margins, especially with regard to the following questions.

1. Do you know of instances in which an insight in this paragraph or section seems to apply to a clergy person, a staff member, or a congregation?
2. What would you like to add to or subtract from this paragraph or section?
3. In what ways do you feel that an insight in this section or paragraph applies to your role in our congregation?

Clergy/Staff Discussion Leader: As you move through this discussion session, ask participants to take turns sharing their answers to the above questions. Additionally, note and circle reflection questions in the various paragraphs, and ask participants to take turns sharing answers from their personal perspective and experiences.

Introduction

A pastor wrote, “Some experts say, ‘Disregard your weaknesses; build on your strengths.’ Is that true? Is trying to fix your weaknesses a waste of time?”

The correct answer depends on *which* weaknesses you mean. What if the absence of a particular skill or personality trait prevents you from meeting a basic expectation of the majority of your church’s members? In that case, no amount of “building on my strengths” saves a clergy person or staff member from mediocre effectiveness in ministry. He or she must either (a) attempt to strengthen that weakness, (b) settle for mediocrity in ministry performance, or (c) seek other employment.

Moving toward the polar star of maximum clergy/staff ministry effectiveness is a complex matter—a multifaceted diamond rather than one silver bullet. This volume of *Nuggets* provides the opportunity to review and discuss ten facets of that diamond—ten ways in which clergy/staff can strengthen their leadership and relationship skills.

Why these ten? On-site consultations with more than 700 congregations in 25 denominations across the United States provided opportunity to interview more than 4,200 lay leaders. The ten expectations detailed here emerged from those conversations. This is not the sum total of all skills needed, but clergy/staff often overlook the influence that these ten skills have on meeting the basic expectations of their church members.

I. Directional Skill

All clergy and church staff consciously or unconsciously choose a “direction focus.” That “ministry model ideal” becomes the lens through which they view all ministry options and select the ones to which they give their primary passions and energies.

A. To identify your trait(s) ask this question: *Which ministry model did I choose during college, seminary, or the early years of my life experiences, as the ideal image of effectiveness?* When clergy and staff link up with a congregation, they bring along that professional preoccupation. What if that ministry model ideal fits with the ideal image held by most people in the congregation? A happy marriage begins. What if the unstated ministry model ideals of the two parties do not match? The relationship moves in the opposite direction. Grounds for divorce begin forming.

B. This section, more than subsequent sections, places special emphasis on clergypersons. However, in this section staff members will (1) be reminded of some clergypersons they have known, (2) see some of their own personal inclinations, and (3) be reminded that hobbyhorse riding is inferior to a balanced ministry focus that also respects the directional focus of other staff members.

C. Ministry model ideals come in at least fifteen forms. Read the description of each model. Check the ones that ring a bell. Most clergy/staff identify in themselves a primary model and one or two secondary models.

- 1. The Sociological Model.** After emerging as an important science and rising to curriculum prominence in some seminaries during the 1950s, sociology became the guidance system of many graduates as they settled into a lifetime of parishes. Example: After growing up in a large metropolitan church a young man majored in sociology in college. After seminary, he became the pastor of a small-town church. His keen sociological observation skills evaluated the culture in his adopted community and found it racially prejudiced at numerous points. Basing his prophetic sermons on that analysis, he battered people with a stream of graceless judgments that they accurately assessed as rejection. Soon, they rejected him. His new role in the denomination's national department that helped the regional organizations select new church sites fit his ministry model ideal perfectly. He served for two decades as a highly respected denominational leader.
- 2. The Psychological Model.** Pastoral psychology achieved prominence as a valuable helping skill following World War II. By the early 1960s many seminaries had developed departments to teach this new science. During that period, many pastors chose pastoral care as their ministry model ideal. During their first few years of post-seminary experience, many such pastors unconsciously or consciously became chaplains. They do not find their primary meaning in leading the congregation to achieve its ministry goals, but in caring about people one at a time. They assume that laypersons should and will take care of leading the congregation.
- 3. The Scholarship Model.** This takes several forms that look different from one another but grow from the same root. Some clergy who adopt this model invest in the several years of academic study necessary to become seminary professors—a ministry role in which transmitting ideas is the primary job. Other clergy spend a lifetime as local pastors who focus on New Testament Greek, biblical archeology (including numerous “digs” in the Holy Land), or some other academic specialty.
- 4. The Administrative Model.** Leaders who adopt this model enjoy church roles similar to that of a corporate executive. They derive satisfaction from managing a productive and effective organization. People with this ministry model ideal are often effective as business managers in large congregations or Christian organizations.
- 5. The Holy Spirit Model.** In denominations such as the Assemblies of God, clergy seldom attain professional upward mobility without a strong emphasis on miracles, physical healing, spiritual gifts (including speaking in tongues), and “Spirit-filled” worship services. Spiritual edification through a sense of God's presence and God's willingness to set aside the cause-and-effect laws of science and biology are the central ministry focus. By contrast, very few leaders in mainline denominations are blessed with professional advancement if they enthusiastically espouse that bundle of beliefs and practices.
- 6. The Teaching Model.** People with this directional focus draw energy from and often excel at teaching biblical information. Many effective associate pastors in

large congregations (including pastors whose major portfolios are youth, Christian education, and music) work from this ministry orientation base.

7. **The Fellowship Model.** People who adopt this ministry model bring a fun-loving nature to their Christian service. Usually warm and caring when relating to individuals, a family reunion atmosphere is their central goal in building group relationships, not the development of *esprit de corps* for the purpose of powering mission and ministry efforts. For these leaders, fellowship *is* the goal. The upside of this directional focus: the congregation is a fun and joyful party. The downside of this directional focus: if that fun and joyful party is on the Titanic, whose gradual membership decline slides the congregation toward oblivion, no one notices the membership slippage and rising median age until too late.
8. **The Preaching Model.** Senior pastors in large churches often possess this ministry model ideal. That internal drive allows them to keep trudging ahead through endless weeks in which they average twenty or more hours in speaking preparation. Some of the unhappiest clergy are motivated by the preaching model ideal but serve as associate pastors who preach four-to-six times each year.
9. **The Social Action Model.** People who adopt this directional focus come in one of two forms, or a mixture of both. Some find joy in helping needy people with food, clothing, housing, etc. Their orientation is selfless service, which manifests itself in setting up soup kitchens or similar endeavors. Other people with this ministry ideal take a prophetic stance. They speak out on public issues from the pulpit and lobby elected officials at the state capital. A few such people combine service with prophecy. They help hurting people, but they also speak out in ways that attempt to improve the systems that create hurting people. They both fight fires and try to prevent fires.
10. **The Overseas & Home Missions Model.** One such individual is a missionary to the Wa people in northern Thailand. Not everyone with this orientation is in another country. Some pastors and lay people see overseas missions as their primary calling. Staff members who lead women's organizations, especially those comprised of women whose age was twenty to forty during the 1930s and 1940s, often have this ministry model ideal.
11. **The Fund-Raising Model.** Some such pastors create a "building vision" soon after arriving, either because they unleash the congregation's repressed motivations for more space or because this is the ministry they know best how to do. Other clergy with this ministry ideal dramatically increase their members' per capita giving level to the operating budget in every church they serve. These people understand the principles that unlock the motivations that unlock the pocketbooks that buy brick and mortar. Piles of money appear in churches previously held hostage by the poverty syndrome.
12. **The Evangelism Model.** This ministry ideal, prevalent during the 1930s in mainline congregations, appeared with rare frequency in mainline denominations during the 1970s. Two decades of full pews following World War II caused many mainline clergy to think evangelization endeavors unnecessary. Beginning in the 1980s and continuing to the present, a slightly higher percentage of young pastors in mainline churches began exhibiting an evangelism ministry ideal. Some of them are entrepreneurial in personality, a trait often seen in second-career pastors who spent the forepart of their lives in businesses and corporations. Meanwhile, in Southern Baptist and other theologically evangelical denominations, the majority of clergy and staff possessed this directional focus during all of the above-mentioned decades.

13. **The Music Model.** For this individual, relating people to God through singing and worshiping is the central ministry focus. Some clergy live out this trait with a lifetime of choir participation or solo worship specials. A few clergy and laypersons enter full-time or part-time church music leadership positions.
 14. **The Small Group Model.** Sometimes called “ring leaders,” clergy who adopt this ministry ideal focus on developing personal faith and congregational vitality through ten-to-fifteen-member adult groups. Meeting at a time other than Sunday morning and modeled around prayer, Bible study, and sharing, these groups sometimes encompass 50 percent of the congregation’s active members. Clergy/staff with this directional focus rarely achieve their aspirations in mainline congregations; such leaders far more often accomplish their goals in evangelical and non-denominational congregations. Why the difference? People attracted to participate in evangelical theology congregations feel stronger desire to engage in Bible Study and prayer development groups.
 15. **The Spiritual Guide Model.** Clergy and lay staff motivated from this inner drive make spirituality the hub of their ministry wheel. Some people choose this path because mysticism is their natural personality bent. Others concentrate on spiritual growth because a personal crisis turns them toward God and prayer. Having drunk this life-changing water, they energetically offer it to others. However they caught this directional focus, they feel that their primary calling is not church work but helping people connect with God spiritually and grow in that relationship.
- (The above list adapted from Herb Miller, *Leadership Is The Key* [Nashville: Abingdon Press])

D. The Bottom Line. In a study of “derailment,” the clinical term for what most people call failure, Michael Lombardo and a research team found “that the absence of a competency isn’t what derails people. In general, derailers tend to be suffering from a strength in overdrive.” They bond to their professional preoccupation. They use it, and use it, and use it. “Achievers, beware: the unsettling truth is that almost any competency can sabotage us if we rely on it too much.” (Monci J. Williams, “How Strength Becomes a Weakness,” *Management Update*, Harvard Business School, 12-96)

“The ancient Greeks would say overdrivers, whether corporate or individual, suffer from a tragic flaw called *hubris*. Most certainly they lack what the Greeks called *sophrosyne*, balance in all things. But it’s precisely that balance that, finally may be the key to sustained success.”

What future does your past directional focus predict? What ministry model ideal does your present congregational role require? How can you achieve the balance in directional focus that benefits both your congregation and your personal satisfaction in ministry?

II. Location Skill

“Which is the greatest determiner of clergy effectiveness?” the seminary student asked. “Is it excellence in performing the various pastoral *roles*? Or is it the quality of pastoral *relationships*?”

“It depends,” his mentor replied, then illustrated as follows: Many factors determine which—roles or relationships?—is the most important in a particular congregation. If, for example, the previous pastor was strong in relational skills but less capable in the pulpit role, people want a pastor with good pulpit skills. If the previous pastor was strong in pulpit and administrative roles but cold in personality, the congregation desires a pastor with good relationship skills.

But this is only one of many factors that determine a congregation’s satisfaction with your ministry skills. The following paragraphs give additional examples.

A. The congregation’s size influences perceptions of your skills. Therefore effective clergy/staff are size-wise and size-skilled.

Generally speaking, the smaller the church, the more its members insist on effectiveness in *relationships*. If, for example, a small-church pastor has exceptional pulpit skills and a cold personality, the members want more of a “people person.”

Generally speaking, the larger the church, the more people insist on a pastor who plays his or her *roles* skillfully; after all, 90 percent of megachurch members have no personal experiences by which to measure the senior pastor’s relational skills.

Three church-size transition points at which this “role or relationships?” question often produce unanticipated clergy stress:

1. **When the pastor moves from seminary to a small church.** Seminaries measure effectiveness by *role* fulfillment. Grades are the achievement criterion. How the students manage their *relationships* matters less than their exam scores. What a shock many students get in their first parish! A highly feeling-level, relational standard of measuring performance has replaced the highly role-oriented, cerebral way of succeeding.
2. **When the small-church pastor moves to a midsize church.** In most midsize churches, part of the members grew up in a small church. Many such members, especially those with pre-1946 birth dates, expect the pastor to drop by for a home visit every few months. Such members are usually disappointed. Pastors in midsize churches do not have sufficient time for those home visits. However, some midsize church members grew up in a large church. They often expect a variety and quality of programming not possible in a midsize church. Some such members therefore tend to assume that their pastor needs more administrative leadership skill. Because of these mixed expectations, midsize-church pastors must focus on *role* effectiveness, while keeping in perspective the opinions of members who have small-church *relationship* expectations.
3. **When the pastor moves to a larger church.** After making the adjustment from seminary to a small congregation, what if the pastor relocates to a midsize church? He or she had functioned somewhat like a “chaplain” in the small church. Serving a midsize church feels more like being a “Y director.” Here, people value the skill of shepherding multiple committees and programs. What if the midsize-church pastor becomes senior pastor in a giant congregation? He or she now feels more like a “corporation president.” The programs must run well—but mostly through staff people. Relationship skills are still important, but leadership-role skills and preaching skills are of paramount importance.

With which standard do your church’s members measure clergy excellence: roles or relationships? Are you presently transitioning through any of these church-size adjustments? How much does the way you handle the role-versus-relationship expectations influence (a) your personal satisfaction level and (b) your congregation’s satisfaction level?

B. The congregation's geographical location influences perceptions of your skills. Is your church's location inner-city, small town, suburban, agricultural-based, all-white, all-black, all Hispanic, racially mixed, ethnically mixed, predominantly Catholic, predominantly Protestant, or predominantly Jewish? An example of how location affects congregational expectations:

- In strongly Lutheran-affiliated Minnesota (in most counties, more than 50 percent of church attendees are Lutheran), pastors give adult Sunday school low emphasis. Lutherans seem to learn in confirmation classes that they never have to do this kind of study again.
- By contrast, in strongly Southern Baptist-affiliated Mississippi (in most counties, more than 50 percent of church attendees are Baptist), mainline congregations expect pastors to strongly emphasize adult Sunday school. In many Southern Baptist congregations, Sunday school attendance exceeds worship attendance, because the pastor and lay leaders expect all adults to attend a Sunday school class.

Another location-influence example: A study of congregations in America's resort/retirement/recreation communities revealed notable differences between such churches and "normal" congregations in suburban communities:

- Worship attendance doubles during the summer months; welcoming newcomers and helping them to feel welcomed is a daunting task.
- The high percentage of retirees among the year-around-residents population in resort/retirement/recreation churches makes recruiting volunteers a more formidable task.
- Retirees who build or buy homes stay an average of three-to-five years, making the recruitment of volunteers not only more formidable but more frequent.
- With only one church of each denomination in the community (many denominations have no congregation there), congregants represent a wider spectrum of theological viewpoints; clergy must accept and help to feel at home people with far more diverse theological viewpoints than in "normal" communities.
- The vast majority of young-adult, year-around residents (a) are in the low per capita income bracket, (b) work in the service industry where pay is low, and (c) hold two or three jobs to make ends meet.
- Time pressures among (a) year-around young-adult residents working two or three jobs, (b) summer-only retiree residents who focus on recreation, and (c) year-around retiree residents who focus on a taking-it-easy change of pace mean most church members prefer not to be bothered during the week and most programming happens on Sunday morning.
- The high percentage of community population in the low per capita income bracket increases the percentage of time clergy/staff give to social service and helping-hurting-people ministries; churches in some such communities form uniquely structured ecumenical community service organizations consisting of representatives from the Salvation Army, various County Social Services Agencies, and the United Way.
- Clergy and congregants operate as if their church serves all community residents, not just the people on their membership roles; in this respect, resort/retirement/recreation churches behave like (a) America's small-town, rural congregations and (b) European churches of centuries ago in which the geographical "parish" boundaries comprised their ministry focus, not just the congregation's members and attendees.

C. The congregation's dominant generation influences perceptions of your skills.

Sociologists have published tons of information describing the different thinking and behavior patterns of four generations: Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters. New research helps us understand the nuances necessary for leading each of these four generations:

- Members of the Veteran generation (born 1922-1943) are conformers who trust and are willing to follow hierarchical authority. Leadership messages that motivate Veterans include “Your experience is respected here.” “It’s valuable to the rest of us to hear what has—and hasn’t—worked in the past.” “Your perseverance is valued and will be rewarded.”
- Baby Boomers (born 1943-1960) are willing to “go the extra mile,” but leaders must gain *consensus* about the goals. Leadership messages that motivate Baby Boomers include “You’re important to our success.” “You’re valued here.” “Your contribution is unique and important.” “We need you.” “You’re worthy.”
- Generation Xers (born 1960-1980) are self-reliant risk takers who value *competence* in the leaders they follow. Leadership messages that motivate Xers include “Do it your way.” “We’ve got the newest hardware and software.” “There aren’t a lot of rules here.”
- Nexters (born 1980-present) are optimistic about the future, tenacious, and will work with leaders who demonstrate one of their most important values—*pulling together*. Leadership messages that motivate Nexters include “You’ll be working with other bright, creative people.” “Your boss is in his (or her) sixties.” “You can be a hero here.” (Zemke, Raines, Filipezak, *Generations At Work* [New York: American Management Association], pp. 49, 77, 113, 145)

An old story describes a traveling theater group that often performed a different play each night and sometimes two different plays each day. One afternoon, the exhausted lead actor forgot his lines. When he got no help from the prompter standing in the wings, the actor froze. “What’s my line?” he whispered desperately.

“What’s the play?” asked the prompter in equally desperate tones.

Effective clergy/staff leadership seems complex because it is complex. What generational play are you in?

D. Your previous type of ministry influences perceptions of your skills. For example, regional denominational executives often observe that ex-chaplains who serve churches face some big handicaps.

1. Ex-chaplains have never had to raise money; the government pays their salary and the upkeep on the base chapel.
2. Ex-chaplains have never had to raise people (evangelization); they never have to worry about where the next generation of worshipers will come from; the military continually recruits and transfers in a new group of attendees.
3. Ex-chaplains are accustomed to “chain of command” in goal-achievement (taking orders and giving orders); they get little practice in the cooperation skills essential to leading volunteer, nonprofit organizations.

Various branches of the military service often ask Robert Stone, a retired, career military chaplain to teach the following principles to military chaplains nearing the twenty-year mark at which many of them retire. Stone emphasizes the following five principles to chaplains who plan a transition into congregational service. (E-mail from Robert Stone to Herb Miller, 11-6-02)

1. Take the uniform off. Rank doesn’t work in the local church or in any other completely volunteer sector. Trying to pull rank alienates and distances volunteers, who will quietly walk away.

2. Learn from the congregation before beginning to develop new ideas and directions. One year is minimum learning time.
3. Discover who the actual leaders are in the congregation and “court” them. They will be the decision makers until the pastor establishes himself or herself as a leader. The pastor is never the only leader, just one who has “CEO-type” responsibilities. That position does not automatically mean leader. Leadership has to be an earned and a bestowed quality.
4. If everything goes well, the congregational workers are credited with the success. If things go badly, the pastor must step up and take responsibility. No committee or group ever fails; the pastor must accept responsibility for those failures. The pastor rewards every success with recognition and praise.

In what ways did the type of ministry role in which you previously served make your transition to serving this congregation complex?

E. Your number of tenure-years influences perceptions of your skills. What personality type does best in long-tenure pastorates? On what factors should pastors who stay more than ten years concentrate? Several years ago an Alban Institute Study of sixty-six pastors in healthy long pastorates answered those and related questions. (Roy M. Oswald, Gail D. Hinand, William Chris Hobgood, and Barton M. Lloyd, *New Visions for the Long Pastorate* [Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute])

1. **The research listed four positives for clergy who serve more than ten years in a congregation:** (a) Deeper relationships between individual members and the pastor. (b) Stronger programming due to greater continuity in leadership. (c) Greater personal and spiritual growth for both members and pastor. (d) More satisfying participation by clergy in community, professional, ecumenical, and larger denominational work.
2. **What downsides did long-term pastors experience?** They feel an increasing sense of pastoral effectiveness coupled with increasing difficulty in providing the strong leadership needed to move the church in new directions to meet changing circumstances. What researchers called the “gap theory” means that the deep relationships between pastor and people make it increasingly difficult for the pastor to encourage lay leadership to revise outdated ministries and procedures. Thus, the relationship bonds can remain strong while statistical factors such as membership and giving can decline. Counterbalancing the negative effects of this tendency requires constant vigilance.

Part of long-term pastors’ skill in handling conflict situations is natural to their personality (90.5 percent of long-term clergy are “feeling-oriented” people, according to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator). Feeling types tend to become very attached to people and communities and have a hard time saying goodbye. They are much in touch with the feelings of hurt or upset people and feel motivated toward helping heal those pains.

On the liability side, feeling-type clergy tend to enjoy working with people rather than with administrative detail. Thus, they often slide into patterns of spending more time and energy on interpersonal relationships than on corporate leadership issues. If pastors do not address this tendency, they can become increasingly dissatisfied with how things are going in the church’s organizational life. Several “thinking-oriented” parishioners who see major, neglected issues usually share that dissatisfaction.

This pattern is virtually always more pronounced in what many observers see as the pastoral “glide pattern” during the last five years prior to a much-loved, long-tenured clergyperson’s retirement. Constant vigilance regarding this tendency in

long-term pastorates and during the five years prior to retirement helps clergypersons to counterbalance the negative tendencies.

3. **The study concluded that five support pillars hold up healthy, dynamic, long pastorates:** (a) effective monitoring of the “gap” between individual trust and corporate leadership, (b) continuing growth, especially in spiritual life, (c) seeking and receiving quality feedback from parishioners, (d) maintaining the parish’s democratic and representative processes, and (e) good self-care practices that help avoid burnout.

Appropriate self-care uses deliberate strategies to maintain physical, emotional, and spiritual health. These strategies must involve time for spiritual formation, good nutrition, exercise, relaxation, development of personal support systems, family-life time, personal interests unrelated to work, assertiveness training, effective time management, therapy when indicated, sabbatical leave, and more laughter.

F. The Bottom Line. In what way does your church’s location influence parishioners’ perceptions of your skills? On what skills do you need to concentrate more? Less?

Study/Discussion Session #2

Clergy/Staff Member: Prepare for this discussion session by making notes in the margins, especially with regard to the following questions.

1. Do you know of instances in which an insight in this paragraph or section seems to apply to a clergyperson, a staff member, or a congregation?
2. What would you like to add to or subtract from this paragraph or section?
3. In what ways do you feel that an insight in this section or paragraph applies to your role in our congregation?

Clergy/Staff Discussion Leader: As you move through this discussion session, ask participants to take turns sharing their answers to the above questions. Additionally, note and circle reflection questions in the various paragraphs, and ask participants to take turns sharing answers from their personal perspective and experiences.

III. Productivity Skill

National research reveals that lay people view three skills as essential for clergy effectiveness: (a) preaching, (b) management/administration, and (c) pastoral care. (Lovett Weems, Jr., Mearle L. Griffith, Judy Copeland Ashcroft, *Pastoral Leadership*, [Dayton, Ohio: Office of Research, General Council on Ministries, The United Methodist Church])

The three clergy skills noted above are equally important to lay staff effectiveness, regardless of one's congregational role or job description: (a) communication, (b) organizational leadership, and (c) caring for people. Productivity research indicates that clergy/staff differ significantly in the volume of ministry they deliver. Some people accomplish two-to-six times as much as others in the same position. What makes the difference? What causes clergy/staff productivity skill?

A. Time management is important. As clergy and staff try to accomplish the unstated part of their job description—chaos control amidst competing demands—they often ask time-management questions. How can I use my time better? If I organized my time differently, would the fifteen-foot chaos waves that pound the beach-front of my ministry get smaller? Those kinds of self-analysis questions are valuable. Incompetent shepherding of hours and minutes leads to inefficiency and stress. To sharpen time management skills, see *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 10, How to Improve Your Time-Management Skills*. Go to www.TheParishPaper.com and download this resource free of charge.

B. But time management is rarely the major challenge. *Priority management is the real issue!* Every church leadership role is multifaceted, even the highly specialized staff positions such as counseling and music. Accomplishing a ministry role is not like inserting a bolt into a widget on a factory assembly line. Paid ministry roles are like running a hospital in which patient health is the central goal, but the employees must accomplish dozens of tasks to achieve that primary objective.

Ministry effectiveness therefore requires sound “priority hierarchy” judgments: Which task should come first at a given moment—ahead of all the others? Which tasks must I *always* steadfastly refuse to allow displacement by other important priorities? Often, the true cause of a leader's feelings of chaos-distress comes from his or her addictive preoccupation with a low-ranking priority (which thereby crowds out a top-of-the-list priority).

C. The big seven priorities: Each person's ministry is different. But every clergyperson and staff member can use the following list to write a hierarchy list that fits his or her role.

1. **Purpose (of the organization)—keeping it clear.** Ronald Reagan's stated plan as he took office in January 1981 was to become communicator-in-chief, inspirer-in-chief, and trend-setter-in chief. Many would disagree with his policies, but few would criticize his number-one priority. Some business consultants say that a CEO's *only important job* is repeatedly reminding the employees, the stockholders, and the public of the corporation's primary purpose. That principle also applies to every pastor and staff member.

A new church that quickly grew to more than 1,200 in average worship attendance uses the following mission statement: *We are seeking to be an accepting, transforming, equipping, and sending community.* The pastor reinforces that purpose by printing it in every church bulletin, in every newsletter, and at the top of every budget proposal. Because the purpose statement is brief, clear, biblically based, and often repeated, church members do not lose sight of their purpose.

2. **Planning (for the future).** Churches that repeatedly state their purpose but lack organization and planning systems are like an airline that prints brochures with cheap fares and departure connections to dozens of cities but purchase no planes, hire no crews, and rent no airport ticket counters. With each ministry, well-organized churches state (a) clear reasons why this ministry is important, (b) specific, concrete ways to accomplish it, and (c) specific dates for completing each part of it.
3. **Programming (of the type that achieves the organization's purpose with this constituency).** People increasingly feel that their church should be purpose driven, not packaged-program driven. They are right! Purpose comes first. Yet, without a variety of programs, few congregations accomplish their biblical purpose of helping people grow spiritually, love other people, and reach out to the surrounding community. Lenten programs, annual stewardship programs, Bible study programs, etc., are essential ways to put wheels under purpose. When people say, "We're tired of programs," what they really mean is, "We're tired of programs for the sake of filling time with activity instead of programs for the sake of purpose-driven, life-changing, and life-fulfilling ministries."
4. **Policies (that determine employees' actions).** All successful organizations have policies. However, leaders often use the wrong sequence in policy development and update. Effective policies *evolve* from purpose, planning, and programming experiences. If policies replace purpose as a leader's number one preoccupation (as sometimes happens in large bureaucracies), the organization declines in value to its public and employees.

Large churches print most of their policies. Small churches transmit many of their policies in oral form (which increases conflict because new members and leaders learn them by accident, over time). In both large and small churches, leaders who want to change an outdated policy should start that change-process by reminding people of the congregation's biblical purpose. After that, appoint a planning group to study whether the policy in question still achieves that purpose.

5. **People (interaction with employees and constituency served).** Clergy and staff tend to make one of two classic mistakes in their people priority:
 - Some leaders substitute warm relationships with people for purpose, planning, programming, and policy development. Members in that kind of church appreciate its fellowship life, but they eventually feel as if they are at a perpetual happy hour on a cruise ship sailing in circles.
 - Other leaders focus on purpose, planning, programming, and policy development but neglect interpersonal relationship with employees and

constituency. Members in that type of church eventually feel it is well-organized to arrive at the right destination but provides the passengers a sparse sense of fellowship and personal satisfaction.

- Which of these mistakes is the most dangerous to leadership success? The answer is yes! Both are dangerous! As with so many endeavors in both life and congregations, a healthy balance creates the best results.

6. **Telephone (receiving and returning calls).** Home visits by clergy are less important to young adults today than forty years ago. Yet, “availability” is as important as ever, maybe even more so. In the high-tech world of e-mail and answering machines, availability says, “I care about you.”

The telephone cannot substitute for occasional face-to-face interaction, but it can reinforce the positive relationship built and maintained in personal encounters. For example, people who do not return telephone calls eventually discover their Niagara of incoming communication dwindling to a trickle. Poor telephone etiquette says to people, “You are not important to me.” They reciprocate that emotion.

7. **Paper (replying to letters and memos and initiating projects through letters).** Paper cannot substitute for personal contact and telephone responsiveness. Yet, well-written worship-bulletin announcements, newsletters, and pastor’s columns add an information element for which nothing else can substitute. Parishioners who lack sufficient paper communication-links lose sight of a church’s purpose, planning, programming, and policies. When that happens, dissatisfaction and conflict increase.

D. What is your priority hierarchy? Which of the “big seven” listed above is missing or deficient? Do you habitually allow some of the lower-ranked items to interfere with the ones higher up?

One pastor said, “God put me on earth to accomplish several things. Right now, I’m so far behind, I’ll live forever.” Like most other people, clergy and staff must choose, not between good and bad but between good and good. If two wrongs don’t make a right, what do two rights make? For most clergy and staff, choosing two or more right ways to spend their time makes constant feelings of chaos and stress.

Steven Covey tells a now-famous story about the instructor who was lecturing on time management. He set a wide-mouth jar on the table next to a platter with some fist-size rocks on it. “How many of these rocks do you think we can get in the jar?” he asked.

After the class members offered several guesses, the instructor put a rock in the jar. Then he asked, “Is the jar full?”

Everyone agreed. The jar was full. The instructor reached under the table, brought out a bucket of gravel, and started dumping the gravel in the jar. It filled the spaces around the big rocks. The instructor grinned and asked, “Is the jar full?”

“Probably not,” the class said. The instructor reached under the table, brought out a bucket of sand, and started dumping the sand into the jar. It filled the little spaces left by the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked, “Is the jar full?”

“No” the class roared. With this he started pouring a pitcher of water into the jar. He got something like a quart of water into that jar. When he asked the class for the point of his picture parable, someone replied, “If we work hard at filling the gaps in our lives, we accomplish more.”

“No,” the instructor said. “Here is the point: Put the big rocks in first. Otherwise, you’ll never get them in.” (Steven Covey, *First Things First* [New York: Simon & Schuster])

E. Four weeks to priority recovery. The following formula has helped thousands of people do what they previously believed impossible.

Week #1: Focusing. Spend five minutes per day for five days developing your life compass—in other words, selecting the big rocks.

- The first day, write on paper the answers to three questions: what are my *lifetime* career goals, family goals, and spiritual goals?
- Jot down one or two goals in each category. Warning: Do not write more than three goals in each category. If you write more than three goals in each category, you have no real goals. You are mixing so much sand with the big rocks that you cannot find them.
- Imagine your funeral ten years from now. What would you like people to say about you? What would you like your obituary to say you accomplished? What would you like your children to remember about you? Your answers to these questions create the compass that defines your destination—your major lifetime goals, the big rocks.

Write these goals *on paper*. A thirty-year study of Harvard Business School graduates found that people who write their goals on paper are ten times more likely to accomplish them. If you do not list your big rocks on paper, you lose them in the sandstorms that periodically blow through your life.

Week #2: Barnacle Cleaning. Ocean-going ships collect barnacles on their hulls that impede their progress through the water. To remove the barnacles, ship owners periodically put them in dry dock.

Spend five minutes a day for five consecutive days with a second sheet of paper:

- The first day, list everything you do each month in your work, family, and church (everything, large and small, into which you put time).
- The second day, put a star beside everything that fits with your big-rock list from week one.
- The third day, review the items that have no stars beside them. Ask yourself two questions: If I were willing to delegate this to someone else and teach him or her how to do it, would it get done almost as well as if *I* did it? Is this item something that no longer needs to be done at all, by anyone?
- The fourth day, write the items that you and you alone must do to achieve your lifetime goals. No one else can do them.
- The fifth day, put on paper *the first steps* you will take to (a) train someone to do some of the non-starred items on your list and (b) stop doing altogether the nonessential items on your list.

Week #3: Fine-Tuning. This week, begin the action steps you identified last week and begin spending five minutes every morning praying these five prayers:

- Give thanks for three personal blessings of which you are especially conscious today. This helps you move toward God by moving away from a sense of your own self-sufficiency.
- Ask God to help three people you feel need God's help today. This moves you toward God by moving you away from self-centeredness.
- Ask God to forgive pain you caused other people and specific sins from yesterday and give you the strength to forgive others the pain they caused you.
- Ask God to help one person you find it hard to like. Ask God to provide that person insights into his or her personal problems. Ask for the power to let God's love flow through you to him or her.
- Ask God to help you achieve your lifetime career, family, and spiritual goals.

F. Refuse violent behavior. Thomas Merton wrote, “There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence which is activism and over-work. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism . . . destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom, which makes work fruitful.” (Thomas Merton, *The Violence of Over-Involvement*)

Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Is that true? It depends on what causes you give to. You can give to causes that do not bless you. Giving your life indiscriminately to too many of those things can do violence to your soul.

G. The Bottom Line. What priority management issues influence your productivity? Which of the big seven priorities seems missing or in short supply? What are some first steps toward better balance?

IV. Attitude Skill

William James, America's pioneering and some say best-ever psychologist said, "Attitude is more important than aptitude." Considerable evidence indicates that James was at least partially accurate. Attitude does not substitute for other skills, but a positive and constructive mental attitude multiplies opportunities to use one's aptitude several-fold.

A. Attitudes essential to result-full ministry. Low altitude accomplishment often stems from low AQ: *Attitude Quotient*. The absence of one or more of the following is especially noticeable:

1. **Optimism.** The Bible calls this hope, ranking it with faith and love in leadership effectiveness. Whatever we call it, few people arrive at their life goals without a positive view of what can happen in the future beyond their present circumstances. People who dispense conversational optimism attract allegiance to themselves and their goals. People who dispense its opposite come across as cynical leaders whose occasional gems of truth cannot sparkle sufficiently to light the darkness that their general gloominess creates.
2. **Sense of humor.** Inability to see the humor in every situation trends a personality toward cynicism and giving up. An overly serious demeanor with low inclination to laugh with others and at oneself is the relational equivalent of a turpentine bottle. Truth often looks grim, but leaders who dwell on that quality seldom qualify as leaders, who by definition must have followers.
3. **Humility.** This person serves without the need for public-recognition limelight. Few people arrive at their life goals unless they project humility regarding their own abilities. Without humility, an unrecognized-by-oneseelf arrogance deadens other people's desire to help you achieve congregational goals.
4. **Cooperative spirit.** This person demonstrates eagerness to help other staff members and church members achieve goals about which they are passionate. He or she is not a recluse on an island of self-centeredness.
5. **Openness to new ideas.** This person conveys an attitude of "why not?" and listens carefully to a proposal. The opposite kind of person blocks new ideas by citing examples of "why this may not work"—before letting people describe their idea. When someone brings up a new idea, is your first reaction one of desiring to cooperate, even though you are unsure that their idea is valid? Do you initially say, "Let's talk about how you see that working," then discuss its pros and cons." Or, do you tell people what's wrong with their roadmap before you let them unfold it?

B. Examples of attitude defect results. The Alban Institute studied a sizeable number of clergy who experienced "involuntary termination." The research shows that church members viewed 23 percent of terminated clergy as contentious, authoritarian, or dictatorial. (Speed B. Leas, *Should the pastor be fired?* [Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute])

Five ways in which those attitude-driven behaviors led to terminations:

- The pastor treated differences of opinion as a threat or signal for conflict rather than as an opportunity to learn.
- The pastor tended to divide people and groups from one another, using separation tactics rather than integrative, pull-together tactics.
- The pastor did not support others emotionally when disagreeing with them intellectually.
- The pastor needed emotional support and approval all the time from everyone to feel comfortable with himself/herself.
- The pastor did not accept responsibility for what he/she felt, thought, heard, or saw—but rather denied responsibility for what was happening and attributed it to others.

C. Anatomy of the promoted-beyond-his/her-skill-level alpha male (and alpha female) syndrome. The personality construct of alpha clergy/staff members is frequently unrecognized until he/she is promoted from a solitary, technical specialty to a people-managing or CEO-type position. (Kate Ludeman and Eddie Erlandson, “Coaching the Alpha Male,” *Harvard Business Review* [May 2004], pp. 59-67) The alpha male or alpha female often operates in the following ways:

- “The Alphas we’ve worked with think very fast, and this rapid processing can prevent them from listening to others—especially those who don’t communicate in alpha-speak. Their impatience can cause them to miss subtle but important details. Alphas, moreover, have opinions on about everything, and they rarely admit that those opinions might be wrong or incomplete”
- “Because their intuitions are so often proven right, alphas feel justified in focusing on the flaws in other people’s ideas or arguments. As a result, coworkers get intimidated, which makes learning from alphas difficult.”
- “The more pressure an alpha feels to perform, the more he tends to shift his leadership style from constructive and challenging to intimidating or even abusive.”
- “Organizations become dysfunctional when people avoid dealing with a difficult alpha and instead work around him [her] or simply pay him [her] lip service.”

(To obtain the complete article, order Reprint R0405c from 800/988-0886 or custserv@hbsp.harvard.edu)

D. The Bottom Line. Which of the five attitudes listed at the beginning of this section do you possess? Which of them do you wish you had in greater magnitude? Do not these five attitudes also define leadership strength for church members who occupy church officer and other volunteer roles?

Study/Discussion Session #3

Clergy/Staff Member: Prepare for this discussion session by making notes in the margins, especially with regard to the following questions.

1. Do you know of instances in which an insight in this paragraph or section seems to apply to a clergyperson, a staff member, or a congregation?
2. What would you like to add to or subtract from this paragraph or section?
3. In what ways do you feel that an insight in this section or paragraph applies to your role in our congregation?

Clergy/Staff Discussion Leader: As you move through this discussion session, ask participants to take turns sharing their answers to the above questions. Additionally, note and circle reflection questions in the various paragraphs, and ask participants to take turns sharing answers from their personal perspective and experiences.

V. Relational Skill

Effective clergy and staff need more than relational skills. But without relational skills other leadership essentials become irrelevant. Failure at relating to others often blocks intelligent, skilled leaders from achieving goals to which their intelligence could easily have transported them. They know what to do. They knew how to do it. But they irritate so many people on their trip toward a worthy goal that the congregation does not get there. People who cannot get along with you do not go along with you.

A. What qualities comprise relational effectiveness? The attitude list noted above, to some extent blends with relational qualities but differs at some points.

1. **Sensitivity.** Such leaders understand people and their reaction patterns.
2. **Caring nature.** Such leaders are interested in and express concern for each individual's feelings and needs.
3. **Indiscriminate affirmation.** Conversational patterns are praise-full, despite a truckload of reasons to go in the opposite direction.
4. **Nonjudgmental nature.** Such people communicate grace (loving you anyway) to those who do not possess identical moral, ethical, or religious standards.
5. **Forgiving spirit.** These people have a bad memory of wrongs others do to them.

B. Associate pastor and staff member roles require additional relationship skills. Without the additional relational skills listed below, these individuals often suffer from low job satisfaction that can produce negative side-effects in the congregation:

1. **Total allegiance to and affirmation of the senior pastor**—which includes the unwillingness to listen sympathetically to a parishioner's negative comments regarding the senior pastor. The clergy/staff consistently express personal trust and respect for the senior minister, which tends to extinguish that parishioner's critical remarks in future conversations. Any other kind of clergy/staff response generates negative results that eventually hurt, not just the senior pastor, but the staff member as well.
2. **Positive self-identity and role-identity**—derived from a healthy self-image. This allows one to laugh off the many ill-informed and demeaning comments some congregants make about employees other than the senior pastor, but who perform vital ministries in other ways.
3. **John-the-Baptist role-humility**—serving without expecting the same level of public recognition and limelight as the senior pastor. Effective associate pastors and staff members feel comfortable in the role John the Baptist played in relationship to Jesus:

“He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Clergy/staff need not place the senior pastor on a pedestal, but if they try to knock him/her off the pedestal, they usually suffer unpleasant consequences somewhere down the road of the future.

C. Practical delivery of relational skill by the senior pastor. Building and maintaining positive relationships with parishioners usually include the following behaviors:

1. High visibility in local hospital visitation. How clergy deliver this ministry depends on church size and location. In small congregations in small towns, the senior pastor may visit the hospital every day; in larger cities, every other day. In midsize congregations, the associate pastor and senior pastor may alternate hospital visitation days. In many large and megachurches, a pastoral care staff member makes hospital visits plus leading and training a volunteer care team that makes visits.
2. In small churches, especially with active members whose birthdates are earlier than 1946, dedicating four-to-six hours per week to home visits is of great relational value. In midsize and larger churches, especially with young median-age members, such visits are often irrelevant to maintaining positive relationships.
3. In congregations of every size, accessibility for conversations is increasingly more important than home visits. In small and midsize congregations, many senior pastors use a time-management pattern in which they are always present in the church office (unless out of town) during a certain block of the day. That could be from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon or some other time block that fits his or her schedule. Maintaining member awareness of this availability through weekly worship bulletin statements and every church newsletter gives people a sense that they have conversational access to the senior pastor if they need it.
4. As part of daily devotions, many pastors move through the church membership list, praying for each of the individuals in five different families each day. Some such pastors write a note to the families for whom they will be praying that particular week.
5. Effective senior pastors write a column in every church newsletter. Studies show that 95 percent of church members read this column, even if they read nothing else in the newsletter. Thus, the senior pastor has the opportunity to communicate with a much larger number of people through the newsletter each week than from the pulpit.

D. Practical delivery of relational skill by associate pastors and program staff. The larger the congregation, the more clergy and program staff members must develop systematic ways to come across as caring persons, not just people with specialized program skills. To ensure that happens, many large congregations institute a process that engages each associate pastor and program staff member, each week, in an overtly caring role. Examples:

- In one congregation, the staff systematically works through the membership list at weekly staff meetings throughout the year, distributing four household contacts to each pastor and staff member each week. The staff members make telephone contacts with their four households that week, in order to express interest, learn about needs, and catch up on what is happening in the lives of individual family members.
- Another church gives each staff member the opportunity to select persons for whom they would like to take pastoral responsibility that year. The staff members divide their list into monthly segments and make contacts by telephone, lunch meetings, coffee meetings, or home visits.

With every system, listening skills are extremely important. The associate pastors and program staff may wish to study that section in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 9, How to Develop a Congregational “Care Team.”* Go to the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site and download free of charge. This resource also describes a system to create, train, and lead a lay ministry team that expresses concern for members and attendees during times of illness, grief, and life stress.

In large congregations, that resource is also a valuable training tool for increasing the listening skills of ten volunteer “Office Angels” who contribute one-half day each week to answering the telephone and serving as office receptionists—thereby increasing the efficiency of church staff by freeing more time for leading and equipping the various committees, ministry teams, groups, and volunteer staff for their various ministries.

E. Why some clergy and staff put paperwork ahead of people-work. All or some of the following six attitudes, feelings, and behaviors can build relationship-destructive barricades that prevent highly intelligent, capable, committed leaders from achieving maximum results in the ministries they attempt to accomplish with other highly intelligent, capable, committed lay and clergy team members:

1. The attitude that the *results* of programs and projects take priority over a caring *relationship* with the people who accomplish programs or projects
2. The behavior habit by which “task-work” always pushes aside “idle talk” about other matters
3. The operational conviction that items in the *material world* always take precedence over items in the *immaterial world*, such as feelings
4. The conviction that we are judged by, and that we should judge others by, what we *do*, not by who we *are*
5. Obsessive-compulsive behavior that inclines toward “getting it done the way we’ve always done it,” without regard for questions such as, “Should we (a) do it this way, (b) do it some other way, or (c) not do it at all?”
6. The operational attitude-behavior of not allowing “relationship issues” to get in the way of a “deadlines mentality”

F. Some ways to push aside the paper. The following are antidotes for the six relationship-blocking attitudes, feelings, and behaviors noted above:

1. Pray for your teammates (clergy, staff, and lay leaders) by name, daily.
2. View people, not projects, as priority one.
3. Daily, or at least weekly, use the MBWA technique—manage by wandering around, asking people how it’s going, and genuinely listening.
(The two lists above adapted from lists by Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* [Colorado Springs: Cook Communication] pp. 40, 50)

G. Avoid triangulation traps. In most cases, conflict and hostility carriers are easy to spot. In some instances, however, the true goal of people bent in those directions is less obvious.

A warning sign: when someone in your church talks to you in a negative way about a third person, and you do not need to know this information, suspect a “triangle” former is attempting to pull you into an emotional equation against that third party.

Another warning sign: confusion. When something seems missing from the information you are receiving, or the situation does not make sense, think about triangles. Wonder what else could be involved.

Still another clue: In any congregation passing through a period of significant change or conflict, expect several people to experience high levels of anxiety. One or several triangles, some of which interconnect with one another, will appear.

Individuals who occupy highly visible leadership roles are especially likely to attract triangles. Church secretary is such a role. Governing board chairperson and personnel committee chairperson are other such roles, as is the clergy spouse role. Each of these individuals is approached, at times, by people who come across as “trying to help” from purely altruistic motives. Close scrutiny of the situation, however, often reveals that the “concerned” individual is

attempting to assuage anxiety and/or assert control by speaking negatively about the absent individual.

The clergy person's personality plays a role in increasing or decreasing triangulation behavior. Some people who occupy such roles are prone to “savior mentality” behavior. That kind of temperament attracts triangers the way a refrigerator attracts magnets. Leaders who develop a reputation for making sacrifices to help people will have many valid opportunities to do so. However, such leaders also get a chance to play many *invalid* roles: triangers quickly learn that these self-appointed savior figures are willing to listen sympathetically to their plights and take arbitrary or unilateral action to right wrongs.

Effective triangle management begins with the recognition that triangles retard rather than improve the chances of resolving conflict. On the short term, they appear to work. The triangler feels better and often praises the third-party trianglee, making him or her feel compassionate, understanding, and useful. On the long term, triangles and the involvement of bystander third parties who are drawn into them prevent the anxiety and conflict from ending. Basic principle: One person cannot fix the negative relationship between two other people by sympathetic listening alone. Efforts to do so usually prolong and/or worsen the situation.

What can a third party do to avoid or handle a triangle that is beginning or already exists? Familiarity with the principles listed below can increase triangle prevention and curing skills. (For more information about triangles and related organizational leadership issues, see *Creating a Healthier Church* by Ronald W. Richardson [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press])

- Recognize that triangulation attempts are normal, reflexive means by which people attempt to reduce their anxiety.
- Recognize and diminish your own triangle-creating tendencies.
 - Can people speak to you directly without fearing that you will become defensive, explosive, or behave like an attack dog?
 - In other words, do you put up a wall that encourages people to talk about you with third parties?
- Identify and modify your tendency to derive satisfaction from acting like a savior for people and situations.
- Resist the temptation to get emotional satisfaction from sympathetically listening to someone who has triangulation needs. Encourage him or her to talk directly with the person with whom the relationship problem has developed.
- As you express sympathetic concern, learn to use constructive questions. Examples: Encourage critics to speak directly to their targets, and resist letting them complain to you. When someone complains about another staff member and says, “Please don’t use my name,” tactfully but firmly suggest that he or she communicate directly with that person. The problem is more likely to get resolved that way. When one person in a conflict tries to remain anonymous, the conflict tends to continue. Sympathetic listeners, if they do nothing but sympathize, lengthen the conflict.
- “Reposition yourself” when you awaken to the role you are playing in an ongoing triangle. Exit the triangle by stopping your participation in the drama, while at the same time maintaining friendly contact with both parties.

Triangulation takes three people. If the third person is willing to continue this emotional game, the triangle and the conflict continue. If the third person decides not to play the game in the way the triangler expects and wants, the game stops.

H. The Bottom Line: Which of the above-listed relational skills do you possess? Which skills do you wish you had in greater magnitude? Do not these relational skills also define leadership strength for church members who occupy church officer and other volunteer roles?

VI. Motivational Skill

People who attain great goals influence the people around them to see the benefit of each goal—both to themselves and to their organization—and to work together for its achievement. Whatever their roles in a congregation, people who achieve significant results build and motivate teams of people. The coordinated efforts of a group win victories that Lone Ranger personalities find impossible.

A. What do effective motivators say? Motivational communication contains content such as the following. (Adapted from George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church* [Nashville: Word Publishing], p. 166)

- Address issues that matter to people in this group.
- Facilitate their enduring focus on a compelling vision.
- Offer them a concise, significant, and challenging role in fulfilling the vision.
- Package the vision in captivating ideas, persuasive words, and an inspiring example.
- Describe your reasonable performance expectations of them.
- Support them with resources, guidance, encouragement, and rewards.
- Always place the needs of the people ahead of the needs of program accomplishment.
- Provide generous praise, selflessly and genuinely deflecting credit to the entire team.
- Celebrate each small win along the path to the ultimate vision.

B. What personality traits do effective motivators possess? To achieve maximum influence, motivational *content* arrives in a motivational *envelope* of human personality that includes the following qualities:

1. **Honesty and integrity.** This person (a) keeps his/her promises, (b) functions responsibly, even with less-than-enjoyable tasks, (c) leads a disciplined moral life, and (d) communicates identical information to various groups and individuals (the opposite pattern communicates what various people want to hear, which creates eventual conflict).
2. **Joy.** This quality does not derive from circumstances but from personal attitude habit. Leaders who lack joy attract few followers. Congregations whose leaders need a happy-manner transfusion attract few constituents and achieve marginal results.
3. **High energy level.** This person has the stamina to maintain a fast pace and juggle several demands simultaneously, without complaining of overwork.
4. **Positive appearance.** This person recognizes that neat apparel, shined shoes, and well-kept hair are prerequisites for people who occupy public leadership roles. Slovenliness seldom motivates people.
5. **Enthusiasm.** Facial expressions, body language, and words convey enthusiasm's presence or absence.

C. What does enthusiasm look like? Meaningful ideas delivered in a listless manner often seem irrelevant. Identical ideas, communicated with enthusiasm, often spark insight and commitment.

On the following page, check the description in each of the ten categories that most often describes your “enthusiasm envelope.” Compare that photograph (a) with an enthusiastic leader you admire and (b) with someone you feel comes across at the opposite end of the enthusiasm spectrum. (Adapted from an idea by Patricia Sanders, *Training and Development Journal*, American Society for Training and Development)

Or, distribute the list on the following page to a group of trusted colleagues. Ask them to check and return their sheets, without signing their names. Count the check marks beside each item. Compare your opinions with their opinions. Use the photograph to modify your behavior.

Confidential Opinion Survey

Without discussing your opinion with anyone, please check the *one* sentence in each of the ten categories that in your opinion most often describes _____.
Please do not sign your name.

1. Eyes:

- Often stares blankly in an unfocused way; avoids eye contact in conversation
- Maintains some eye contact in conversations but often glances elsewhere; sometimes seems preoccupied with other thoughts, especially when listening
- Excellent, appropriate eye contact when talking and listening

2. Face:

- Serious look, little expressiveness, few smiles, closed lips
- Pleased look, occasionally smiles, seems agreeable
- Often smiles; frequent demonstration of broad smile related to subject under discussion

3. Gestures:

- Usually keeps arms at sides or folded; seldom moves arms or hands when speaking
- Occasionally gestures when speaking
- Frequent demonstrative use of hands, arms, and head when speaking

4. Body Language:

- Stands or sits rigidly, seldom moving—or slumps, showing poor posture and presenting a depressed appearance
- Moves occasionally, in concert with the emotion of the subject under discussion; posture generally appropriate
- Quick, demonstrative body movement that adds a sense of energy to the vocal delivery of ideas; posture always erect and presents “involved” appearance

6. Word Usage:

- Few descriptive adjectives; infrequent use of picture language such as metaphor or simile
- Occasional use of descriptive language such as metaphor or simile
- A variety of descriptive language, with frequent use of metaphor, simile, and other picture language

6. Auditory Delivery:

- Usually speaks in a monotone, with few changes in pitch, volume, and speed
- Some variation in pitch, volume, and speed
- Great variation in pitch, volume, and speed—including a range of rapid, loud articulation to a whisper

7. Public Speaking:

- Relies totally on reading from notes
- Effectively integrates notes and conversational instruction
- Rarely refers to notes

8. Behavior in Meetings:

- Silent, often appears preoccupied and disinterested
- Listens intently and occasionally speaks
- Seems totally in tune with the flow of the meeting; interjects appropriate remarks, without dominating the conversation

9. Personal Dress and Appearance:

- Dresses inappropriately for some situations; shoes shabby and un-shined and/or hair poorly cared for
- Usually dresses appropriately for the occasion; presents an acceptable but average appearance in items such as shoes and/or hair care
- Always dresses to fit the occasion; shoes brightly polished and hair care immaculate

10. Projected Energy Level:

- Often appears tired, sleepy, or bored
- Exhibits high vitality levels on all occasions, influencing others to feel upbeat and positive

D. The Bottom Line. Is enthusiasm necessary for clergy/staff? Only if they want to show respect for others and influence people to accept new ideas or take new actions!

Which of the above-listed enthusiasm traits do you possess? Which of them do you wish you had in greater magnitude? Do not these traits also define leadership strength for church members who occupy church officer and other volunteer roles?

Study/Discussion Session #4

Clergy/Staff Member: Prepare for this discussion session by making notes in the margins, especially with regard to the following questions.

1. Do you know of instances in which an insight in this paragraph or section seems to apply to a clergyperson, a staff member, or a congregation?
2. What would you like to add to or subtract from this paragraph or section?
3. In what ways do you feel that an insight in this section or paragraph applies to your role in our congregation?

Clergy/Staff Discussion Leader: As you move through this discussion session, ask participants to take turns sharing their answers to the above questions. Additionally, note and circle reflection questions in the various paragraphs, and ask participants to take turns sharing answers from their personal perspective and experiences.

VII. Spiritual Skill

Change is inevitable in human beings. Transformation is optional. A congregation's primary purpose is transforming people toward spiritual maturity, as defined by the apostle Paul: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

A. What causes spiritual growth? Research indicates that people grow spiritually through fourteen experiences. Different people cite different experiences as number one among these fourteen. However, the overwhelming majority of Christians identify one of the following seven experiences as their *primary* source of spiritual growth (the other seven are on the next page):

1. **Worship**—focusing on God and sensing God's presence
2. **Music**—feeling moved to give God greater attention
3. **Prayer**—relating to God
4. **Fellowship**—receiving God's love through others
5. **Preaching**—hearing God speak to me
6. **Service**—giving God's love to others through time and talent
7. **Stewardship**—giving money to help with God's work in the world

In most ways, pastors and laypeople report similar views regarding what causes spiritual growth. At some points, however, they differ greatly! Examples:

- Laypeople rank "Fellowship" as a much more important source of spiritual growth than do clergy. Does not this "red-flag data" warn clergy that facilitating fellowship is a more important leadership task than they tend to believe?
- Laypersons rank "Stewardship" of money as far more effective source of spiritual growth than do clergy. Thus, clergy tend to underestimate the spiritual value of annual stewardship campaigns.

Birth dates make a difference in what people say helps them to grow spiritually. Examples:

- "Retreats" are more important to people under age 24.
- "Fellowship" is more important to people age 25-44 than to people age 45-64.
- "Bible study" is more important to people age 45-64 than to people age 25-44.

By using the short survey form on the next page on Sunday morning and counting the total number of items checked, churches can (a) learn how their members best experience spiritual growth, (b) motivate them to consider ways to say yes to God's call to spiritual-growth-producing experiences and (c) help pastors detect their blind spots—spiritual-growth facilitators that are important to most of their congregation's members but do not seem important to them personally. (Herb Miller, *Connecting with God* (Nashville: [Abingdon Press], pp. 26-27).

Warning: mailing this form or using it in any other manner than on Sunday morning distorts the data and renders the results meaningless, as will changing the wording.

Spiritual-Growth Opinion Poll

This information-gathering process will help us to determine the directions our church should take in providing spiritual-growth opportunities. You have a limited amount of time, so begin filling it out when you arrive for worship. A quick, feeling-level response is desired, rather than a lengthy reflection.

Early in the service, five minutes of meditative background music will provide you time to complete the sheet. Ushers will collect them immediately thereafter. Please do not sign your name.

Please check the items that you feel have produced *the most* spiritual growth in your life:

- 1. Worship—focusing on God and sensing God’s presence
- 2. Music—feeling moved to give God greater attention
- 3. Prayer—relating to God
- 4. Fellowship—receiving God’s love through others
- 5. Preaching—hearing God speak to me
- 6. Service—giving God’s love to others through time and talent
- 7. Stewardship—giving money to help with God’s work in the world
- 8. Bible study—trying to obtain God’s guidance for daily living
- 9. Books—receiving inspiration, information, and motivation
- 10. Encouragement—helping others grow spiritually through affirmation, counseling, inclusion, and spiritual mentoring
- 11. Leadership—providing vision that helps Christians set goals consistent with God’s will, and working together to accomplish God’s work in the church and the world
- 12. Administration—carrying out and helping others to carry out one or more of the church’s ministry tasks
- 13. Retreats—experiencing inspiration and insights in a physical setting apart from my daily life and the local church
- 14. Evangelism—helping others find God
- 15. Other. Please describe (use the reverse side of sheet, if necessary)

I am a (please check *only* one):

- Very active layperson
- Somewhat active layperson
- Not very active layperson
- Local church clergy
- National, regional, or district church staff member

My age is (please check *only* one):

- 0-19 45-54
- 20-24 55-64
- 25-34 65-74
- 35-44 75-84
- 85 plus

B. What clergy and staff behaviors facilitate spiritual growth in people and congregations? Leaders in spiritually transformed and transforming churches emphasize the following spiritual behaviors:

- 1. Preach, talk, and teach a “God is alive” theology.** A consultant interviewing a layperson in a healthy, growing congregation asked what their pastor did best. The man replied, “Communicates a live God to people.” Effective spiritual leaders provide more than psychological help, more than good ideas, more than emotional experiences, more than a social group. They encourage people to make a spiritual connection with God. They do not confuse the bread of life with the crumbs of religion.

When people think God is alive, they think God is present rather than historical. That conviction translates into what theologians call a “high Christology.” God is incarnated in present-day culture to transform the quality of individual lives. For people in churches that teach a high Christology, the Bethlehem stable is a continuous event. God is still among us. He still walks the Emmaus Roads of daily life, communicating with people who are willing to talk with him.

- 2. Preach, talk, and teach the value of personal prayer.** A pastor facing life-threatening heart surgery visited the office of a clergy friend. In case anything went wrong, he wanted his friend to preach his funeral. After they chatted a few minutes, his friend said, “Let’s go down to the prayer room.” The two entered a small room that contained an altar and kneeling rail. His friend prayed for his safe passage through and recovery from the surgery, revealing in his prayer that he had listened carefully to every aspect of his friend’s emotional stress.

Later, after surgery, the pastor told his daughter how much his friend’s prayer had meant to him. She said, “No wonder that church has more than 1,000 people in worship each Sunday. My pastor would have listened empathetically and given me a pep talk about how capable my surgeon is. Even if our church had a prayer room, I doubt he would use it.”

Everyone has a spirit of some kind, and that spirit can change with circumstances. People can have a peaceful spirit, a negative spirit, an angry spirit, a fearful spirit, or some other kind of spirit. Spiritually skilled clergy and staff members know that the best way to help people shift to a new spirit is by helping them connect with the spirit of Christ. Prayer is the primary way that happens, which is why scripture urges us 103 times to “ask.”

- 3. Preach, talk, and teach the life-transforming power of Bible study.** College courses such as “The Bible as Literature” have educational value. However, transmitting facts is not the primary purpose of a church; changing lives is the goal. H. Richard Niebuhr warned against “biblicism,” reminding us that such an approach makes scripture the object of its study, instead of God. (*Reflections*, Summer-Fall 1995) Yes, biblioatry is dangerous. It can block God’s truth by putting it into unusable, deadening forms. Yet “rationalolatry” can be as dangerous for some congregations as fundamentalism is for others.

Rational thinking, when divorced from a spiritual focus, becomes an invisible form of “salvation by intellectual good works.” The Christian faith is not merely right behavior (as some moralists would tell us). The Christian faith is not merely right thinking (a viewpoint that many conservatives and liberals share, which explains why they argue so vehemently). Nor is Christian faith merely right feeling, as some congregations seem to emphasize in their worship format and content. Christian faith

is a gift God gives to people who form and maintain a right relationship with him. That is the primary objective of Bible study in transformed and transforming churches. Their Bible study concentrates on helping people to form and maintain a personal relationship with God.

The people in an African coastal village were physically stronger, more mentally alert, and more culturally advanced than their relatives in the country's interior. A physician discovered why: the seacoast families got adequate protein from their diet of fish.

We are what we eat—in more ways than one! Clergy and staff who facilitate spiritual growth feed people spiritual food.

C. The Bottom Line. Which of these skills do you possess? Which of them do you wish you had in greater magnitude? Do not these skills also define leadership strength for church members who occupy church officer and other volunteer roles?

VIII. Organizational Skill

We cannot overstate the difference one person can make, the value of individual initiative. Yet leaders more often succeed when they train ten people than when they try to look like Superwoman by attempting to do the work of ten people. Leaders who fixate on the old axiom, “If you want it done right, do it yourself,” are often unknowingly admitting their own inability to equip and train people through organizational leadership.

A. What personality traits tend to accompany strong organizational skills?

1. **Objectivity:** The ability to accurately assess reality protects leaders from viewing events through a carnival mirror of personal prejudice or emotional distortion.
2. **Receptive listener:** The ability to gather information necessary for effective discussion of important issues and concerns.
3. **Forthrightness:** The courage to sensitively communicate a concern to others, even at the risk of alienation.
4. **Effective conflict manager:** This person diplomatically handles both personal and organizational conflict issues.
5. **Tenacity:** A give-up-thirty-yards-from-the-goal-line attitude blocks many people from achieving a touchdown for which their experience, training, and intelligence adequately prepared them.

Do most people tend to assume they have all five of those traits? How can an individual find out which two or three of the five she or he exhibits? List the five and their descriptions on a piece of paper. Make a copy and distribute it in a group of trusted colleagues. Without discussing the matter with anyone and without signing their names, ask colleagues to place a check mark by each item in which they feel you have strength. Collect the sheets. Tabulate the results. What you are looking at in these totals is the mirror no one is able to hold up to himself/herself. If you want to strengthen one of the traits in which you have a low score, tell one-to-three people you trust that you are trying to strengthen that trait. Ask each one how you come across and what you might do to strengthen that trait. Listen carefully. Avoid defensive responses. Practice shifting your behaviors. Enjoy the benefits!

B. What behaviors are important to building organizational skills? An executive coach who works with both churches and corporations lists five prescriptions for successful leaders of organizations.

1. **Get clear regarding goals and objectives.** Understand what you are trying to accomplish and how you will measure the results.
2. **Communicate goals and standards.** Make sure that everyone is clear about expectations and feels accountable for results.
3. **Set direction for and coordinate the work of others.** Develop a disposition toward delegation—the inclination to coach the team rather than try to play all the positions. But stay highly visible to the congregation and highly accessible to the staff.
4. **Address problems sooner rather than later.** Instead of running from potential conflict, approach it as an opportunity to care about people and increase their satisfaction with a job well done.
5. **Provide feedback to team members.** Frequently applaud actions that support the organization’s goals. When things do not go well, explain why a change in approach is beneficial. (Scott Eblin, “Pastors and Managers,” *Congregations*, September/October 2001, The Alban Institute, pp. 22-24)

Can you think of clergy and staff who lack one or several of these organizational leadership skills? In what ways does that deficiency damage their leadership ability? Which of these qualities is extremely important in your present leadership role? In what ways can you strengthen the qualities in which you sense a deficiency?

C. What makes the senior pastor an effective CEO? Congregations that move beyond 170 in average worship attendance add staff. This new configuration thrusts the senior pastor and lay leaders into a new role for which few of them feel adequately equipped: personnel management.

Most laypersons understand that the senior pastor in a multiple-staff congregation is, of necessity, the chief of staff. The big question: *what factors determine whether a congregation's senior pastor is an effective CEO in an organization comprised secondarily of paid staff and primarily of part-time, unpaid volunteers?*

Not one of the seven principles listed below, by itself, guarantees CEO effectiveness in such an organization. But when all seven principles are present, they bring lay leaders and the senior pastor closer to achieving their dual goal of (1) caring about staff members and (2) maximizing the congregation's ministry effectiveness through the staff persons' gifts and skills.

1. Effective pastor-CEOs understand the nature of their leadership roles. The

various ways leadership experts define a CEO's role have much in common:

- The leader must have vision, visibility (out and about), and versatility (always with a new word, new idea, new method, new suggestion).
- Charles Kinder says the leader must see the vision, state the mission, and set the tone.
- D.A. Nadler says the leader must envision, energize, and enable.
- Leith Anderson says that the pastor must focus on leadership, communication, administration, and interpersonal relationships.

Senior pastors who do not exhibit those behaviors will not effectively lead, regardless of their title, job description, or authority base.

2. Effective pastor-CEOs help their congregations develop an appropriate

governance system. More than 50 percent of congregations, closer to 85 percent in mainline denominations, use a governance system that worked well during the 1950s. Generally speaking, congregations whose worship attendance exceeds 200-300 tend to leave out one or more of the five organizational gearwheels essential to effective functioning:

- A quarterly or not more than bimonthly meeting *policy and oversight group* (the governing board, which has different names in different denominations)
- On alternate months from the governing board meeting, a monthly or quarterly meeting of the *visioning-calendaring-coordinating-communicating group* (the chairpersons of committees, work areas, or commissions—whatever the denomination or congregation calls these ministry-management groups)
- Six-to-eight *ministry-management groups* (committees, work areas, commissions, or whatever the denomination calls them) that meet later the same evening as the above-described chairpersons come together as a visioning-calendaring-coordinating-communicating group
- One-to-three dozen or more *ministry teams* that serve both inside the congregation and outside the congregation in the community, such as worship greeters, ushers, food pantry, used clothing store, first-time worship guest contact, etc. (the total number of ministry teams depends on church size; one congregation with 4,000 in worship attendance has more than 200 ministry teams)
- An annual procedure that encourages long-term members, new members, and regular attendees who are not yet official members to consider how God is calling them to use their spiritual gifts in one of the numerous ministry teams noted above.

For a detailed description of and instructions regarding how to institute and use these five gearwheels, obtain *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 23, Fine-tuning the Organizational and Communication Engine*. Download this resource free of charge at the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site.

When congregations exceed 1,000 in average worship attendance, the governance system must change again. The *policy and oversight group* (governing board) gets smaller, usually not more than twelve. The *ministry management groups* (committees, work areas, commissions) get fewer, sometimes only three: personnel, finance, and programming. *Short-term task forces* institute most of the major visioning and programming changes, led by the senior pastor and staff. The congregation remains lay-governed but is mostly staff-led by numerous specialized part-time or full-time paid staff. The lay persons, who formerly served in committees or a large governing board, plus many more other members, serve in *ministry teams*.

3. **Effective pastor-CEOs understand how to lead the congregation's ministry-delivery system.** The senior pastor pays attention to the management of four essentials:
 - **Vision**—managed through the governing board and multifaceted communication
 - **Staff**—managed through job descriptions, ministry objectives, and communication
 - **Time**—managed through joint-planning and calendaring with the staff
 - **Volunteers**—managed through staff leadership and the numerous ministry teams
4. **Effective pastor-CEOs understand the source of their authority.** Leadership authority in a multiple-staff church comes from the following:
 - **Vision** that continuously states the ideal to which God calls the congregation
 - **Board Member** selection by working with the nominating committee
 - **Staff** selection by working with the personnel committee
 - **Budget** building and monitoring by working with the finance committeeSenior pastors who stop paying attention to one or more of those four authority sources in favor of micromanaging staff, committees, or ministry teams become increasingly frustrated as their authority fades away. Their frustration compounds as their lay leaders share it, wondering “why things don’t seem to go well around here.”
5. **Effective pastor-CEOs learn how to select staff.** Competent staff members exhibit ten traits:
 - Same vision for the church as the senior pastor
 - Theological orientation similar to the congregation and senior pastor
 - Personality strengths complementary to, but not necessarily identical to, those of the senior pastor
 - Giftedness in one or more specific ministry areas
 - Self-motivation
 - Responsible in delivering on promises and commitments
 - Follow-through on programmatic details
 - Effective interpersonal relationships
 - A team player with other staff
 - Loyal to the senior pastor

Use the detailed staff-selection procedure outlined in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 21, How to Maximize Personnel Committee Effectiveness*. Download this resource free at the www.TheParishPaper.com Web site.

6. Effective pastor-CEOs use appropriate staff supervision/relationship procedures. Leadership effectiveness increases with the creation and maintenance of a climate that includes the following elements:

- Responsibility
- Trust
- Listening skills
- Several teams
- Problem-solving by each team
- Praise
- Recognition for ideas
- Each staff member's knowledge of why he or she is important to the congregation
- Flexible controls
- Direction (clear key-result areas, measurements, goals)
- Knowledge growth (continuing education, on-the-job training, information-flow)
- Support (approval, coaching, feedback, encouragement)
- Readily available resources
- Upward and downward communication.

Removing one or more of those ingredients erodes the climate in which high creativity and productivity happen—making the senior pastor's vision for the congregation difficult to accomplish, no matter how hard she or he works.

See the detailed how-to outline for growing and maintaining those ingredients year-around in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 21, How to Maximize Personnel Committee Effectiveness*, noted in the paragraph above.

See the detailed how-to outline for growing and maintaining those ingredients year-around in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 21, How to Maximize Personnel Committee Effectiveness*, noted in the paragraph above.

7. Effective pastor-CEOs have appropriately functioning personnel committees.

See the detailed how-to outline for an effective personnel committee in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 21, How to Maximize Personnel Committee Effectiveness*, noted above.

Expecting a senior pastor to function as an effective CEO without one of those seven factors is like trying to build a house without one or more of the following: foundation, windows, roof, doors, kitchen, bedrooms, or electrical system. The result looks like a building, but the spiritual family that lives there finds it functionally defective in ways that (a) damage interpersonal relationships and (b) inhibit ministry effectiveness.

D. The Bottom Line. Which of these organizational skills do you possess? Which of them do you wish you had in greater magnitude? What can you do about those that are absent?

Study/Discussion Session #5

Clergy/Staff Member: Prepare for this discussion session by making notes in the margins, especially with regard to the following questions.

1. Do you know of instances in which an insight in this paragraph or section seems to apply to a clergyperson, a staff member, or a congregation?
2. What would you like to add to or subtract from this paragraph or section?
3. In what ways do you feel that an insight in this section or paragraph applies to your role in our congregation?

Clergy/Staff Discussion Leader: As you move through this discussion session, ask participants to take turns sharing their answers to the above questions. Additionally, note and circle reflection questions in the various paragraphs, and ask participants to take turns sharing answers from their personal perspective and experiences.

IX. Arrival Skill

“You have between 30 and 60 days to make an impression as the new leader, to convince everyone that you’re the right person, and to show people that you’re doing something.” (Nina Disesa, “Unit of One,” *Fast Company*, April 2001, p. 81)

Does that advice from a corporate turnaround specialist apply to clergy and staff in their starting weeks of service with a new congregation? Considerable evidence indicates that the answer is yes! How clergy/staff *begin* predicts how they finish two, seven, or twenty-six years later.

Why do 40 percent of new corporate managers fail within the first eighteen months? Placing that group under a microscope reveals four principle reasons for their flameout:

- 82 percent fail because they do not build good relationships with peers and subordinates
- 58 percent fail due to uncertainty about what higher-ups expect
- 50 percent fail because they lack corporate political skills
- 47 percent fail because they do not achieve the two or three most important objectives of their new job. (Anne Fisher, “Don’t Blow Your New Job,” *Fortune*, June 22, 1998, pp. 159-162)

Do those four flameout-causes provide insights for clergy and staff members during their first weeks with a congregation? Considerable evidence indicates the answer is yes! Whether (a) the new clergyperson or staff member reaches high-level personal satisfaction in his/her ministry role and (b) most members of the congregation feel positive about his/her performance is greatly influenced by arrival skills. Failure at the starting blocks and the first quarter-mile of this marathon predicts early dropouts and where clergy/staff place at the finish line.

Arrival skills cluster under four headings.

A. Leadership requires relationships. As noted in the section on relationships above, effective church leaders have ministry-role skill and people-relationship skill. Without relationship skill, ministry-role skill becomes irrelevant. The following questions and answers address relationship issues specific to the starting weeks and month of service in a congregation.

Do you want to come off the starting blocks with positive relationships? Do not spend your first week organizing the office, unpacking your books, and getting your desk in order. Instead, use that first week (at least most of it) to demonstrate that you care about people. The first day, unpack one or two boxes that contain office essentials such as desk items, a few books you use weekly, and two or three mementos that add a personal touch to your office. Leave the other boxes stacked in your office for several weeks. This symbolic action signals that you value

people-work more than paper work. (Michael J. Conyer, *Making A Good Move* [Nashville: Abingdon Press], p.72-73)

Do not assume that recognition of your skill and knowledge arrived with the moving van. Past achievements or academic degrees give you no authority here. You are accepted as the new pastor. *Period!* On that sacred ground, you must pour a foundation of positive relationships on which you can build a framework of consensus about the congregation's ministry goals. Four behaviors help you move in that direction:

- Indicate by every word and action that you enjoy this community and these people and like being their pastor.
- Ask someone to provide a list of members who are in the hospital or in personal distress and the names of groups or individuals that seem to feel "outside the fellowship circle." Visit those persons during the first week after you arrive.
- If the church is small or midsize, many of the older adult members (pre-1946 birth dates) expect clergy to make home visits. Request that an informant who is well acquainted with the congregation write "A," "B," or "C" beside each name on an active membership list to indicate "always attend," "occasionally attend," or "seldom come." Methodically making four-to-six home visits each week, call on the "A" group first, then the "Bs," and eventually the "Cs." The "A" list people spread the word on the congregational grapevine that they like you and you are a caring, friendly pastor. This raises your relational stock's value on the trading floor of congregational opinion, making other ministry goals easier to achieve.
- Think of the congregation as a big teenager. If you expect perfection from church members, you are self-inflicting emotional stress. Adults do not act like adults all the time. Love them anyway.

What if you are a senior pastor who wants to begin building positive relationships with staff? Schedule meetings with each staff member during the first three weeks. State that you want to get acquainted with "how we do things around here." In preparation for their meeting with you, ask staff members to write a detailed description of what they do, their schedule, and to whom they report. Study those role descriptions and ask clarification questions at the meeting. Then, ask these questions:

- What one or two or three ministry tasks occupy 70 percent of your time?
- What one or two or three skills do you feel are most important for someone in your ministry?
- What one or two or three things do you find yourself doing that make you wonder whether they are a waste of time?
- What can I do to help you succeed in your ministry?

Follow those initial staff interviews with quarterly conversations using the communication-conference framework suggested in *Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 21, How to Maximize Personnel Committee Effectiveness*, noted above.

What information facilitates the general getting-acquainted process with the congregation, its leaders, and the community? New pastors do not want to erase all blind spots. When they are not fed preconceived negative notions regarding individual church members, the new pastor sometimes develops positive relationships with people, despite their negative experiences with a previous pastor. But when attempting to perform effective pastoral ministry with a new flock, a bit more information than most new pastors usually receive saves time, reduces stress, and improves results. The list on the next page provides that kind of information.

In advance, ask the governing board chairperson to hand you a set of files that contains the following information:

1. List of severely or terminally ill members—names, addresses, telephone numbers
2. Active households list—names, addresses, telephone numbers of each household—ranked A, B, or C to indicate “always attend,” or “occasionally attend,” or “seldom attend,” a star (*) by the name of each person in the household who holds membership in the congregation, and a “(Y)” to identify children living at home.
3. Inactive member household list (non-attendees during the past twelve months)
4. Homebound and retirement home list—names, addresses, telephone numbers
5. List of new members who joined during the last twelve months—names, addresses, telephone numbers
6. List of people who attend regularly but are not members—names, addresses, telephone numbers
7. List of governing board members
8. Minutes of the three most recent governing board meetings
9. Copy of constitution and bylaws (if applicable in congregations of this denomination) and/or this congregation’s most recent vision, mission, and values statement.
10. Regular meeting times for governing board, committees, etc.
11. List of committee chairpersons
12. Treasurer’s reports submitted at the last three governing board meetings
13. Church budget for the current year
14. Classification of financial pledges for current year—showing amounts, not names (number of families giving \$200 per week, \$100 per week, \$50 per week, \$20 per week, etc.)
15. Denominational yearbook report for previous year, including worship and Sunday school attendance averages
16. List of church school classes and teachers
17. Names of youth groups and sponsors, meeting times, and average attendance of each group
18. Summer camp facilities locations and next summer’s youth event dates
19. Description of prayer-chain procedures and/or other prayer groups
20. Certification of insurance on church property
21. Copy of church contract with janitorial services or custodian’s job description
22. Most recent long-range planning committee report
23. Job descriptions of church secretary and other personnel
24. Names of full-time and part-time custodians, nursery workers, and other personnel
25. Sample letter currently sent to all first-time worship visitors
26. Copies of three recent church newsletters
27. City and/or county map
28. Chamber of Commerce fact sheet
29. Directory of counseling and health/welfare resources in the city, county, and state
30. A twelve-month calendar for the regional denomination structure

Summary: to land on your feet, ask for advance assistance.

B. Learn what the congregation’s leaders want and expect. Never assume that members of the “call committee” (or in clergy-appointed dominations, the district superintendent) have accurately defined this congregation’s principle needs. Sometimes they have. Other times their pet preferences put their opinions far wide of the target.

If you are the senior pastor, meet with the personnel committee (called staff-parish relations committee in some denominations) during your first week on the scene. At that first meeting, say that your effectiveness depends on their willingness to communicate with you honestly and often.

Begin that communication by asking *everyone* in the room to take turns answering three questions:

- “In your opinion, what one or two good things are happening in our church right now?” Listen carefully. Take notes. (*They are telling you what the congregation highly values.*)
- After everyone shares, ask the second question, insisting that *everyone* give an answer: “In your opinion, what one or two issues should we be concerned about as we work together to build the best possible ministry for future years?” Listen carefully. Take notes. (*They are giving you some of the congregation’s dreams.*)
- Finish with a third question. Again, insist that *everyone* express an opinion: “Which of the several issues we just mentioned should we put on the agenda for review at our next staff-parish relations committee meeting three months from now?” (*They are giving you some of the congregation’s priorities.*)

This procedure prevents domination by one or two people who usually do most of the talking. It gives the group a sense of unity and a desire to work together as a team with the new pastor. Meet with this group at least quarterly throughout your tenure (bimonthly is better). Repeat the three questions. Listen carefully. Take notes. *Dependable Axiom*: The stronger the history of conflict in the congregation, or the greater the conflict with the last pastor, the more frequently the new pastor should insist the personnel committee meet. During periods of extreme stress in the congregation, monthly meetings of the personnel committee may be warranted.

If you are an associate pastor or a program staff member, ask that the senior pastor (or your immediate supervisor in large and megachurches) meet with you quarterly to help you maintain effectiveness in your ministry role. At the first meeting, hand your supervisor a one-page sheet that includes the following: (a) Listed below are goals I’m working toward during the next three months. What observations do you have regarding these goals? What would you add, subtract, or modify? (b) Listed below are some of the biggest challenges I’m facing right now. What coaching observations would you make about any of them? (c) Listed below are some areas in which I’m trying to increase my skill level. Any suggestions?

Use the same procedure at each quarterly meeting. These sessions (a) develop and maintain close communication with the senior pastor or your supervisor, (b) create a forum to talk about small issues before they grow into big problems, (c) reduce time wasted on conflict, (d) help you feel more fulfilled in your ministry role, and (e) increase the possibility that your supervisor reciprocates by sharing his or her three-month goals and challenges with you. What if your supervisor views these quarterly meetings as unimportant? Firmly insist that you need his or her guidance.

If you are a supervisor, initiate the quarterly coaching process described above with all of the people who report to you. Regularly communicating with these colleagues protects you from the ignorance that leads you and them over a cliff toward failure.

If you are shopping for a new position, accomplish these four objectives before you say yes to the job.

- Find out what results are expected from you in the first year.
- Ask for a timetable spelling out what is supposed to happen and when.
- Ask how your supervisor and/or the lay committee or governing board to whom you are accountable will measure your performance.
- Find out how often the supervisor and/or the lay committee or governing board to whom you are accountable want progress reports and will provide feedback. This information protects you from the painful experience of being held accountable for performance standards of which you were not aware.

C. Immediately identify the “invisible power group.” Every congregation has such a group. In small churches (fewer than 100 in worship attendance), that group may number only one or two people. These individuals may or may not occupy church officer roles at present, but the church members defer to that one- or two-person monarchy. In midsize congregations, the power group may be the choir, an adult Sunday school class, the women’s organization, the trustees, or the senior pastor. In a few instances, especially in larger churches, the power group is the executive committee or the governing board.

How do you find out who the power group is? Ask three or four people, “What person or group in this church must affirm a new idea before it can become reality? In other words, what group can veto a new idea if we do not include them in discussing the idea at an early stage?”

Whoever the power group is, it has emotional needs and unwritten rules. Learn what it takes to “pay the rent” and be part of that team instead of its adversary. If you do that, the power group—and everyone else in the church—usually give you wide latitude to accomplish your personal aims.

D. Know the “CFOs” (the Critical Few Objectives) in this ministry position. Most people who flame out did not discern their CFOs during their first few weeks on the job. They worked hard but achieved irrelevant objectives. Why? They (a) did not ask enough questions of bosses, peers, or direct reports who knew the Critical Few Objectives in this church or position, or (b) they did not listen carefully enough to the answers.

Never assume that what got you promoted to this position (what you did well in your last job) is the CFO in this one. It may be. Or, focusing on that skill may be the kiss of death in your new position. The CFOs differ slightly in every congregation and in every staff position—even staff positions with the same title in different congregations. Clues:

- If you are the pastor of a small church, the prime CFO is genuinely caring about each member and becoming well known for that trait.
- If you serve a midsize church, skill in working with committees (leading and supporting them without dominating them) is a CFO.
- In a large church, the senior pastor’s three CFOs are (a) strong preaching ability, (b) effective pastoral skill, and (c) competent administration leadership through vision-casting and personnel management.
- If you are an associate pastor or a specialized staff member, your three CFOs are (a) skill in the ministry specialty for which you are responsible, (b) skill in people relationships, and (c) skill in relating to and helping the senior pastor accomplish his or her ministry goals.

What methods can surface the CFOs from the congregation at large while beginning a shepherding and ministry-focusing process? The following options provide how-to instructions for accomplishing those goals.

Option #1: The appreciative inquiry approach. Pastors who begin their service with a congregation encounter a wide range of thinking. They want to help people move forward in a positive direction. In the classic problem-solving approach, pastors often hold a series of cottage meetings with several households each evening—asking questions, listening, and developing strategies for fixing problems.

The problem-solving approach asks questions such as the following: How could our church better meet your needs and expectations? What one or two issues do you feel we should be concerned about as we try to strengthen congregational health and effectiveness? How can we improve our worship service?

Those questions create lively discussions and provide instructive information. Every church has obvious, easy-to-list inadequacies. However, this format provides negative, critical

personality types the enjoyable opportunity to spotlight weaknesses, which become the focus of everyone's attention.

By contrast, the "appreciative inquiry" approach advocates an opposite tack based on social constructionist theories such as the following:

- A congregation's "story" is constantly being rewritten by everyone who attends.
- Congregations create their futures through their members' interpretations and conversations about reality.
- The type of inquiry process used influences the direction of change.
- Inquiries based on feelings of achievement, joy, hope, and inspiration get better results than identifying and trying to cure weaknesses. ("Change through Appreciative Inquiry" by Tom Krattenmaker, *Harvard Management Communication Letter*, October 2001)

Using the appreciative inquiry approach in a series of cottage meetings to which you invite twelve and not more than sixteen people (a greater number per cottage meeting means some people will not express their views) provides opportunity to ask questions such as the following:

1. What factors drew you to this congregation?
2. What do you remember as the most important event in this congregation's life since you began attending?
3. What was happening during a time when people felt extremely positive about our congregation, a time when we were at our best?
4. What are our congregation's three greatest strengths?
5. What are some of the best things you see happening in our congregation?
6. Which methods, programs, or special aspects of our congregation seem unique—seldom seen in other congregations?
7. In what ways is our church most meaningful to you?

People who feel positive about themselves often dare to attempt the impossible—and frequently achieve it. People whose self-evaluation is negative may have difficulty finding the courage to get out of bed. That principle is equally true of congregations.

A leadership education expert writes, "Change is 30 percent logical and 70 percent emotional. The soft stuff is the hard stuff." (Price Pritchett, *Managing Sideways*, [Dallas: Pritchett]) What emotions will the pastor's initial interactions generate within a congregation's members? That depends on what questions he or she asks.

What if the congregation averages 400 or more in attendance? The senior pastor will grow weary before reaching the end of the cottage meeting schedule. However, few time expenditures are as educational for the pastor, as motivational for the people, and as likely to draw back into active participation some fringe area and inactive members.

Option #2: What is our story? Why did Charles Lindbergh's biographer begin that best-selling book by sketching the values and beliefs of Lindbergh's ancestors? The past shapes the now. Human behavior is rooted in previous moments, not just present moments. A life story is better understood when readers know the origins of adult thinking patterns, ambitions, and behaviors.

Every congregation has a life story. Hidden in that story are thinking patterns and cherished values that powerfully influence "the way we do things around here." A congregation often keeps behaving by core values rooted in that "story," despite plans a new pastor champions, the goals its lay leaders set, or its mission statement. Without knowing that story, new pastors fly their leadership planes in a dense fog.

How does a new pastor learn a church's story? Ask the right questions, under non-threatening circumstances. Ask the questions early, before developing long-range plans and attempting new projects.

Pastors use a variety of models for this purpose. Examples:

“My wife and I hosted two ‘Listening Dinners’ a week for three months. We combed the church list and attempted to invite everyone to a dinner.”

Other pastors ask governing board members to host dessert fellowships in their homes and systematically invite the entire congregation.

In such a setting, questions such as the following surface useful information:

1. Looking back over the years and decades, what was the peak time of this congregation’s strength and effectiveness? (These answers picture the “good old days” to which some people always attempt to return their church.)
2. What was happening during that period? (These answers tell you how several people measure their congregation’s effectiveness.)
3. Looking back over the years, which pastors brought exceptional leadership skills to this congregation? What did they do best? (These answers predict some of the ways people measure your skills.)
4. During the past five years, what are some of the best things that have happened in our church?
5. No organization is perfect. During the last five years, what are some things that seem less than positive? (This identifies major problems and provides clues to why some people criticized the previous pastor.)
6. Looking down the road toward the next five years, if you were asked to list some of the challenges our congregation is facing, what would you put on that list? (While identifying some of its present convictions, this answer also reflects some cherished values from the church’s historic story.)
7. Looking down the road to the next five years, what are some of your hopes and dreams for our church’s ministries?

Some of these answers inevitably surface (a) weaknesses in present program and staff, (b) points at which the church has insufficient staff, and (c) major criticisms of the last pastor—without having to ask direct questions.

Option #3: How did our congregation’s personality develop? The following questions are best asked in a small group of key leaders, such as the governing board and/or the personnel committee or informal conversations with six highly respected, long-term members. These questions surface old congregational visions, some of which are usually blocking movement toward contemporary mission and ministry effectiveness. (Adapted from a list by Robert Dale, *To Dream Again* [Nashville: Broadman Press])

1. How would I describe our church’s first pastor and charter members?
2. Was our church born out of positive circumstances or out of negative circumstances?
3. What are the most unforgettable stories from the early years?
4. What was the greatest growth period(s) of our church?
5. Who was the pastor then? For how long? What were the pastor’s slogans and mottoes?
6. What projects and new programs were initiated during the growth period?
7. Which events and persons from that era were “magic” and are still remembered and discussed? Why?
8. What or who are the “traditionalizing,” status quo maintenance forces?

Invisible beliefs and core values strongly influence a congregation’s leaders to take action and to avoid other actions in its now and tomorrow. How can you learn your congregation’s story?

The Bottom Line: Which of *the four flameout-causes* limited your effectiveness in your last position or pastorate? How can you use the flameout-prevention tips listed above to make a great start in your new location?

X. Change Skill

“We’ve never done it that way.”

“We’ve always done it that way.”

“Why change it?”

Change proposals produce change reactions. Many are negative. A few are explosive. How can church leaders minimize change-reaction damage?

A. Understand what type of change is being advocated. Some types of change require far more skill than other types. Every proposed change falls into one of the following two categories.

First-Order Reactive Change: incremental course corrections as a response to unpleasant circumstances. Example: adjusting the thermostat after four teachers complain about cold rooms.

Second-Order Proactive Change: major alteration of the entire system to prevent a detrimental future outcome. Example: after years of declining elementary Sunday school attendance, shifting to the “Rotation Model,” a totally different learning method. (See www.rotation.org for a description; obtain curriculum titled *PowerExpress* at www.cokesbury.com.)

First-order reactive change requires *transactional* leadership: “I’ll do this for you if you will do that.” Translation: “I’ll turn up the thermostat if you stop complaining.”

Second-order proactive change requires *transformational* leadership. Example: “Should we discuss the possibility of replacing our elementary classes with a completely new approach that (a) achieves our Christian education goals and (b) doubles attendance?”

Proactive transformational leadership requires a complex mixture of skills. A few examples:

1. Transformational leaders show consistent trustworthiness in their servant-hood and role-authority behaviors.
2. Transformational leaders exhibit excellent relational skills with the congregation’s members and lay leaders. An old bromide says that most leaders are either task-oriented or people-oriented. Transformational leaders excel at both.
3. Transformational leaders recruit many willing workers and learn how to manage the 5 percent who are control addicts.
4. Transformational leaders place in leadership roles people whose track records indicate they are effective leaders.
5. Transformational leaders involve several lay leaders in effective planning for the future.
6. Transformational leaders persistently energize people to look at big-picture issues. Their leadership methods extend far beyond the boundaries of “I will do this for you if you do that for me.” They ask questions such as, “What would we need to do to double our Sunday school attendance? What would it take to grow our worship attendance from 90 to 150?”
7. Transformational leaders recognize that people less often change what they do because someone gives them *analysis* that shifts their *thinking*—than because someone *shows* them a truth that influences their *feelings*. (John P. Kotter, *The Heart of Change* [Boston: Harvard Business School Press], p. 1)
8. Transformational leaders focus much of their energy on one-to-three priorities crucial to the congregation’s future health, rather than spending all of their time on problems that require transactional fixes.
9. Transformational leaders repeatedly cast God’s vision regarding those one-to-three big-picture priorities.
10. Transformational leaders work hard, passionately, and persistently to achieve those one-to-three crucial visions. Example: A pastor retired after thirty years in the same congregation. He understood that relational skills, vision, and hard work accomplish

much. The church grew in numbers and ministries. At age seventy-eight he became part-time interim pastor of a 100-year-old, rural congregation, membership twenty-five. Three years later, membership is 150. The church has completed a quarter-million-dollar building campaign. He is awaiting replacement by a full-time seminary graduate.

Summary: Does your congregation need transformational leadership? If so, which of the ten skills listed above need implementation?

B. Understand the anatomy of change resistance. Like individuals, organizations use ego defenses such as denial, rationalization, and fantasy to maintain their existing identities. They fear forging new identities and developing new competencies.

People do not process change proposals rationally. Change begins at the emotional level, not the rational level. The process by which individuals emotionally commit to change happens in three stages:

Awareness: "I know a change is happening."

Buy-in: "I believe this change will benefit the congregation and me."

Ownership: "I take personal responsibility for helping to implement this change."

Awareness of these three stages helps you abandon the myth that change is an event. Change is a process. Appeal to multiple audiences over a long time period. Seek feedback. Find out whether your message is moving beyond information-transfer to emotional ownership.

Develop answers to classic change-reaction questions.

- *What are you changing?* Translation: Can you explain it clearly? Can you explain it in less than sixty seconds? Better still, can you explain it in one sentence that pictures the change and its benefits?
- *What will be different because of the change?* Translation: The people from whom change requires a *behavior* change need to know precisely what you are asking them to change.
- *Who will lose what because of this change?* Translation: Endings come before beginnings. Even the changes that bring people positive benefits begin with some kind of loss, a setting aside of familiar routines. (William Bridges, *Managing Transitions*)

Develop a game plan for managing change reactions. Plan steps such as the following:

1. Avoid taking emotional change-resistant statements personally. Just as water runs downhill, the threat of change produces resistance to change.
2. Avoid blaming people who make change-resistance remarks.
3. Realize that people's initial reaction to a new idea often bares little similarity to their final opinion about it at a later date. With time to think, resistance can change to acceptance.
4. Ask people how they feel. Change resistance is rarely rational. Look for and try to address the emotional threat they fear.
5. Help people identify differences between this change and similar ideas that did not work.
6. Put change-resistant people on a committee to develop implementation procedures. Let them exert their "control needs" that way, rather than via resistance.
7. Pay more personal attention to change-resistant people. Sometimes, resisting change is a way to command attention.
8. Let others in your board, committee, or group answer change objections. Peer pressure often disarms change reaction far better than pastor pressure.
9. Give it time to percolate. Avoid rushing something to a vote before change-reactions can mature beyond initial resistance-reactions.
10. Avoid letting fear of change-reaction prevent change proposals.

Summary: treat change as an *emotional process*, not a *rational event*.

C. How to practice safe change. A parishioner wrote, “Our church has longevity, a rich heritage, and important traditions. However, too many older people who do not like change run our congregation. Our membership has declined for two decades. We have very few young adult families and less than a half dozen teenage youth. Yet, the majority of our board members vote against the necessary changes. What can we do?”

1. *Build self-esteem.* Many once-strong-but-now-declining-membership churches feel endangered. Board members frightened about the future cling to the security of their cherished traditions, so they unconsciously resist essential insights. Understanding that “mental color-blindness,” change-agent leaders affirm the intent of those cherished traditions before they try to change them.
2. *Identify a crisis.* Make sure it is a “consensus crisis” on which most members agree, not just a “potential crisis” that is far out on the horizon.
3. *Strengthen trust.* Spend time with and genuinely care about each individual board member. Anxiety increases when people consider changes. Change-agent leaders reduce anxiety through warm personal relationships, not through the brilliance of logic and frontal attacks on bronzed traditions.
4. *Increase the level of discontent.* Slowly turn up the burner of urgency. Create numerous opportunities for discussing the crisis over several months. People need time to reflect. They often change their minds after, rather than during, meetings.
5. *Beautify the proposed change.* Make field trips. Gather information from congregations that made a similar change. Let board members experience themselves toward a new way of thinking.
6. *If possible, experiment with change before making a final decision.* Saying that “we will evaluate this after several months” reduces anxiety.
7. *Suggest that this change is a way to reclaim our heritage.* Lead a charge back to the good old days or “back to the basics.” People love to follow leaders who connect the future with the past.
8. *Connect the change with a biblical mandate.* People feel more secure with a change that seems to serve God more effectively.
9. *Announce the change as a way to express love and concern.* “Love your neighbor” is a widely affirmed biblical principle. If *not* changing appears to violate that principle, change begins to look better than not changing.
10. *Remember that a few board members will resist the change to the end and beyond.* Rational thinking, warm sincerity, and personal caring do not grant you immunity from the lunatic fringe. Love them anyway. They know not what they do.

What are the great traditions in your church? Affirm them! Build on them! What are the change-resisting traditions? Help people move beyond them!

Conclusion

Are all ten of your leadership skills equally strong? Which is strongest? Which is weakest? Do you secretly entertain the hope that your strong points compensate for your weak points? If so, you probably suffer from “delusions of grandeur.” When any one of these ten skills is weak, leadership and relationship effectiveness becomes defectiveness at that point.

What first steps can you take to make all ten points of equal strength?