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Leading change in the congregation: spiritual and organizational tools for leaders

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The final two chapters, “Challenges” and “Responses” represent the bulk of the additions to this edition over the 1988 version. Westermeyer discusses the current attack on “traditional” church music and liturgical worship by the “seeker-friendly” advocates. He acknowledges that church musicians are often part of the problem, but concludes that these current attacks are frequently unwarranted and mean-spirited.

Finally, he deals with youth and children in worship, the term “post-christian”, pipe organs (he is in favour), microphones (he is against), and the phrase, “why should the devil have all the good tunes?” (attributed variously to Augustine, Wesley, Luther, and General William Booth). There is a valuable refutation of the misguided idea that Luther borrowed popular barroom tunes for his hymns. Finally, he gives three criteria for good church music: “Durability, honesty, and treating people well” (136).

This is a well-written, practical, carefully thought-out book. Westermeyer deals sensitively with liturgically-oriented churches of all sizes. Pastors, buy a copy to read yourselves. Then get another copy for *your* cantor!

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Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders

Gilbert R. Rendle
Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1998
184 pages, \$22.95 Softcover

“This volume”, says Speed Leas, “is a goldmine of ideas for helping congregational leaders face or initiate change. The book synthesizes the best and most recent thinking about change and churches, presenting it in useful bite-sized increments that can be used by a group planning to help their congregation be more adaptive to the world changing around it.” I heartily agree with this assessment!

Like Leas, Rendle is a senior consultant with the Alban Institute. He is an ordained United Methodist clergyman with fifteen years of congregational experience. For the past ten years he has been consulting with congregations and judicatories helping them with leadership and change dynamics and realities. Rendle notes: “This is not a book about where your congregation is going. It is a book about how leaders can help your congregation get there.”

Whether clergy or laity, leaders in today's congregations should not regard themselves primarily as "answer" or "solution" or "position" or "fix-it" or "it-all-depends-on-me" persons. "Leaders of congregations today need to develop the calmness of spirit and the skills and tools that address the needs of the congregation in the midst of change...What we often need from our God, and what our congregations often need from their leaders, is not a quick map to the final destination, the promised land, but 'bread for the wilderness' – sustenance and strategies to help us find our ways" (2).

"What, then, is the role of congregational leaders? It is to be faithful to the journey – to the challenge, the experimentation, the trial and error of ministry in a culture of change...We do not live in a time of clear answers; we live in a time when leaders will need to use discernment and experimentation to guide their congregations through changes" (9). "In fact, leaders are not the ones with irrefutable answers but the ones who can support others and help them ask the right questions" (13). These questions, notes Rendle, are not primarily structural or organizational questions; they are what he calls "spiritual questions". The critical question is: "Where is the hand of God in this challenging environment? ...Are the difficulties and dilemmas congregations have been facing in recent decades bad news and an 'affront' to God? Or is the hand of God creating something new out of the old?" (39).

Rendle's passion for a listening, interactive, discerning, caring leadership in the midst of changing circumstances is rooted not only in his personal and pastoral experiences, but also in what he regards as God's call to empower leaders of Spirit-based faith communities and organizations to find "the Way" through change – often chaotic change – and the inextricably bound character of conflict. "If the questions facing our congregations are not just problems, then perhaps they are transforming moments. And transforming moments call for quite different leadership roles and understandings" (41). "To be a leader in a situation of deep change is to hold the people in the chaos or the wilderness long enough for transformation to take place. To be a leader in a situation of deep change does not require the ability to produce an answer. It requires the patience and the courage to help people without an answer close to the pain and possibility that can transform" (99).

Rendle is an engaging, effective, reflective and provocative writer. Each chapter begins with a story from experience. This serves a dual purpose of providing an experiential grounding and of pointing the direction for what follows. At the end of each chapter, Rendle has "Exercises for Leaders". I found these to be extremely helpful – good resources for personal reflection and for group processing. The author has also provided endnote bibliographical resources for those who would wish to do further reading.

Simply another book on leadership and change? Not at all! This is a timely

book for the times – times of rapid and often uncontrollable change. The author notes: “Two fears face our congregations: the fear of too much change, and the fear of too little change” (9) – and times of confusion and uncertainty for leaders. It is well worth reading and using by clergy and laity in congregational, educational or judicatory leadership contexts. Rendle’s book is not only “a goldmine of ideas” but a key resource of practical and creative helps!

Arnold Weigel

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Tending the Flock: Congregations and Family Ministry

K. Brynolf Lyon and Archie Smith, Jr., eds.

Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998

219 pages, \$26.00 Softcover

This volume is one in a series of ten books which address “The Family, Religion, and Culture”. The editors of this book, Lyon (associate professor of practical theology and pastoral care at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis) and Smith (James and Clarice Foster Professor of Pastoral Psychology and Counseling at the Pacific School of Religion and Graduate Theological Union Berkeley), have both done extensive research on the family, religion, and culture. They have engaged the various contributors to *Tending the Flock* to answer the question: What is happening to Western families in general and American families in particular? They use case studies from various religious settings. For example, a wide variety of church communities are explored, such as the CME Church, a Catholic parish, a Jewish synagogue, a Pentecostal church, a community church committed to reconciliation, an urban Presbyterian church, a Baptist church’s family ministry to gay men, and a multiethnic church’s ministry to families of many languages. Some settings are simple, though effective for the families present. Some settings reflect a more radical response to extraordinary families in our culture. All the settings presented illustrate for the reader the importance of different forms of family for engaged communities of faith. One can pick and choose, depending upon the reader’s situation, models of family ministry. The only drawback is whether or not one model can truly be transferred from the particular setting mentioned in the book to another setting – even if the two settings seem on the surface to be quite similar. The editors could possibly be forgetting that individuals who make up the above-mentioned interesting communities, actually enable these ministries to flourish. People make ministry happen, not only the particular model of ministry. Other than this