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Congregational Leadership: An Art in Context

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these lists for the present, a coherent structure appears..." (p. 114). To Throntveit's credit, however, he does attempt to explain the intrusive nature of the lists, and does so with useful results!

In keeping with the purpose of the commentary, Throntveit stridently avoids being drawn into historical debates. Questions on the authorship of Ezra-Nehemiah, the chronological order of their missions, and the connection of the books to the Chronicler's works, subjects of many volumes, are mentioned only in passing. Theological not historical questions guide his deliberations.

Despite the fact that Ezra and Nehemiah are rarely used in the church's worship life (once in the three year lectionary, never in the one year lectionary, and only as alternatives in the daily lectionary), they are amazingly current. Throntveit's commentary is an excellent resource for opening the doors to these books.

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Congregational Leadership: An Art in Context

Arnold D. Weigel

Vancouver, BC: The Centre for Study of Church and Ministry,
Vancouver School of Theology, 1993

iv + 44 pp.

Congregational Leadership is a book that is meant for anyone who is willing to give some serious thought to leadership that will be both effective and faithful to a vision for ministry stemming from the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In this book, Weigel challenges readers to examine the assumptions upon which their approach to congregational leadership is based.

The thesis proposed in *Congregational Leadership* is that "effective leadership requires leaders to practise leadership as an art" (p. 4). A major part of effective leadership is the fulfilling of four challenges that await anybody who would become an effective leader. These challenges are 1) to develop vision through attentive listening, 2) to furnish meaning through effective communication, 3) to establish trust through availability and accountability, and 4) to use one's gifts with confidence.

A statement by Max DePree about leadership as an art provides a glimpse of the vision of leadership presented in this book. In this vision, leadership is an art of "liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible" (p. 4). In order to fulfil this vision, leadership styles may need to change from what most members of the congregation have been used to in the past, for this is a vision of shared ministry, as opposed to "lone-ranger" or "hierarchical" ministry.

The format of the book is to take four assumptions about leadership and to examine them, one at a time. The first of these assumptions is that "leaders operate from basic beliefs which need to be named" (p. 5). As Weigel points out, the actions of leaders communicate to others what beliefs are behind those actions. Thus, leaders are challenged to answer the question, "What are my theological presuppositions and my ministry assumptions about leadership in the church?" (p. 9).

The second assumption explored is that "leadership is shaped by a primary vision". The vision presented here is of ministry as the task of the whole people of God. This incarnational model suggests "a congregation as organism more than as organization" (p. 15). As a part of this vision, ministry is seen as emanating from baptism, rather than only from ordination. As well, this vision includes "genuine opportunities for and experiences of dialogue on real life questions and issues" (p. 20). In addition, there are to be opportunities for learning that will make a congregation into a community of disciples.

Leadership is described as "an art which releases the creative gifts of the whole people of God" (p. 23). Thus, the third assumption is that "leadership engages creativity in its processes". Three characteristics are called forth in a leader through creativity. These characteristics are commitment, character and competence. Creativity is definitely required if leadership is to be: "An art of the whole community through which relationship building, community formation and justice advocacy in solidarity with marginalized, oppressed and victimized people is treasured as a function of the whole" (pp. 29-30).

The final assumption for examination is that "leadership calls for courage", an assumption which would be unlikely to be disputed by many. Courage is defined as: "That quality in life which is both the motivation and the energy required for leadership which is faithful, genuine, trustworthy, and full of meaning in the nitty-gritty of life" (p. 32).

The source of such courage is God's Holy Spirit, a power that is tapped through "the practice of spirituality" (p. 31).

At the end of each section of the book, there are helpful questions which could be used either for discussion or for personal reflection. These questions are an added feature in a work that is already quite focused and thought-provoking. Through the examination of the four assumptions about leadership outlined above, readers are led to the call "to re-examine our task and to re-define leadership's dynamics in the midst of proclaiming the Gospel as God's *disciples* in a pluralistic world" (p. 35).

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