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Book Review of Empowering Laity, Engaging Leaders: Tapping the Root for Ministry, by Susan E. Gillies and M. Ingrid Dvirnak (2012)

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that change and morality are mutually dependent in all situations. Regardless of context, change without morality is unsustainable, and morality that does not result in change is hollow. In Fullan's words, "it is time to marry purpose and action. . . . The only thing that counts at the end of the day is moral purpose realized" (p. 76). Leaders and helpers in all fields would be wise to remember this message.

BARBARA J. SPENCER is a doctoral candidate at Andrews University.

## **EMPOWERING LAITY, ENGAGING LEADERS: TAPPING THE ROOT FOR MINISTRY**

*By Susan E. Gillies and  
M. Ingrid Dvirnak  
Valley Forge, PA, Judson Press (2012)  
Paperback, 140 pages*

*Reviewed by DAVID PENNO*

*Empowering Laity, Engaging Leaders* is the third volume of the *Living Church* series edited by J. Dwight Stinnett. The goal of the series is to address eight key dynamics that are devastating the Christian church today, so that congregational leaders are empowered to address these negative forces. Gillies and Dvirnak are responding to the "declining leadership base" (p. viii) with which many churches are struggling.

The authors identify the root cause of the decline in non-clergy leaders in the Christian church today as disillusionment, which leads to disengagement. They identify three causes of this disillusionment: the misalignment of purpose and structure, individual resistance, and the misuse of

leaders. To function effectively as the Body of Christ, all three must be addressed. Church leaders will not endure the tension when the organizational demands on them do not fit with the mission of the church. Serving as a leader in the church must be about serving people, not maintaining an organization. The resistance of unchurched or "dechurched" people makes serving the church less appealing to many leaders. And those who are overworked or not working in their area of giftedness soon burn out and quit.

Gillies and Dvirnak use Jesus as a model for genuine leaders in the church today. Humility, assurance of God's calling, good communication skills, and focusing on the potential of those we serve are all aspects of effective leadership in the church. The focus on potential includes helping members discover their spiritual gifts and mobilizing them while investing in the areas where they are strong. This opens the way for God to work mightily through his people. Spiritual maturity is also a key mark of good leaders. "Spiritually unhealthy leaders endanger the congregation" (p. 91), while those who are mature are a great blessing.

One of the interesting suggestions about caring for leaders is the idea of rotating leaders. Rather than leaving people in the same position for year after year, the authors suggest that every three years or so members could change the leadership position in which they serve. This allows them to be challenged to grow into new areas of service, and it opens up opportunities for others to serve in the place they have vacated. They also suggest that the church should help leaders do periodic self-assessment so that they continue to grow in their proficiency as leaders.

The book also encourages church

leaders to lead balanced lives by living their faith at home, at church, and in the world. Leaders should be active witnesses in the workplace and marketplace so that the church does not become too inward focused. Ministry to those outside the church gives energy to ministry within the church. The leader must also live the values of Christianity in every area of life, being an authentic example of what a servant of Jesus is really like: “Effective leadership demands personal wholeness” (p. 79). Ministry should grow out of who we are in Christ. The authors offer seven steps in the journey toward wholeness (pp. 81-91), and suggest that leaders engage with an accountability partner to keep them on course.

*Empowering Laity, Engaging Leaders* also affirms the need to train the children of the church to lead, so a new crop of leaders is always being cultivated. “When adults who teach youth recognize that the youth have something to teach them as well, wonderful growth can occur at all levels” (p. 69). Another valuable suggestion involves members who have retired from the workforce and may not want to continue in full-time ministry positions: they can still serve effectively via “short-term, project-oriented opportunities” that do not demand ongoing involvement and commitment (p. 76). The book espouses a true team approach to leadership in which no one is the overall expert, but all learn from each other as they develop as the Body of Christ.

Another key element for engaging leaders is to move the church toward a missional approach to ministry and mission. This will motivate and excite leaders as they see themselves and the congregation accomplishing the work that the Lord has assigned the church. This will also help in retaining leaders in active service. The

church must constantly cast this vision, and periodically revisit its mission and vision statements to keep it all fresh and vibrant.

*Empowering Laity, Engaging Leaders* is a good read for those who are beginning the work of identifying and deploying members as leaders in the church. The book outlines some important concepts and practical steps on recruiting, training, serving, and retaining these leaders. Though the authors seem to wander a little sometimes in describing these aspects of empowering and engaging leaders, they are very effective in using the stories from current churches to illustrate their ideas. I would recommend this book to churches that are serious about tapping the human resources that God has placed in their congregations to serve and expand His kingdom.

DAVID PENNO, PH.D, serves as project coach for the Doctor of Ministry Program at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

## RESOLVING EVERYDAY CONFLICT

*Ken Sande and Kevin Johnson  
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books (2011)  
Paperback, 128 pages*

*Reviewed by FENADES OBINCHU  
and STANLEY E. PATTERSON*

This book is written as a guide to peacemaking in everyday life—turning a troubled relationship into a peaceful one. Ken Sande, founder and president of Peacemaker Ministries, collaborates with conflict management specialist Kevin Johnson. Sande is a lawyer who chose to become a full-time conciliator as a means of moving beyond legal resolution of conflict via litigation to a biblical model of resolu-