

Results of Social Science study of trust-building in the interim setting

The Rev. Christopher E. Hagen

Rebuilding trust is fundamental in most interim situations. Just the event of a pastor leaving throws awry a congregation's expectations and behavioral patterns. Suddenly one who symbolizes spiritual and emotional stability, and perhaps the one who is the anchor in many ways, has been taken away from the people. The person of the pastor is tied to the symbol of God's presence that is associated with the office of the pastor, so that when the person is missing there is at some emotional level a sense of God's presence leaving.

An interim pastor who is assigned to the vacated position does not automatically take on the symbolic role. Trust and identity has to be earned.

Add a strained relationship to a vacancy, and the task of trust-building becomes complicated. When a group outgrows its organizational behaviors and structures, stresses appear and are often met with suspicion. As promises fall short and expectations remain unmet, confidence in leadership is shaken. When personalities cannot find a way of cooperating, alliances form in opposition.

This past January and February I conducted a mixed-method research project on Lutheran congregations in both St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota. My hypothesis was that in preparing a congregation for its next pastor, there is a difference between the ministry of an experienced, trained interim specialist and a non-trained or inexperienced pastor. Six dependent variables were studied: congregation identity, missional understanding, humor, addressing problems, expressing expectations, preparedness for ministry with the next pastor, and building trust.

Using ordinary least squares regression, among the results was a significant correlation between trust-

building and the fact that the pastor was trained in interim ministry. It seems that interim training contributes to a pastor's ability to generate trust among the membership during the interim period.

Trust is built through consistency of behaviors, integrity between promises and actions, delivering what is required, forthrightness and respect for others. Ascribing to these attributes is not enough, one has to deliver on them in order to gain trust. Every personal contact, every conversation, every decision is to express these qualities. As others experience them in the interim pastor, trust is slowly built.

Vicarious trust is useful at the early stages of an interim period in a highly distrustful environment. At first the interim pastor is unknown to the members and thus not known to be worthy of trust. Surrounding oneself with familiar, respected leaders of the congregation can immediately garner member trust until one has opportunity to demonstrate trustworthiness. An interim advisory team can have this initial function.

One group in which trust-building is essential is the church staff. The reasons that lead to mistrust are often numerous and addressing the reasons does not necessarily resolve the mistrust. A strategy to regain trust with staff is that of clarifying job scopes and expectations, enforcing existing policies and procedures, introducing needed policies and procedures, duplicating communication, reducing intermediaries in the communication links, and providing regular feedback on performance.

In congregations where the previous lead pastor was ineffective as staff supervisor, it is sometimes necessary for the interim to claim a direct and decisive role with staff. On the other hand, where the previous pastor was heavy-handed, the best posture

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among people depends mostly on consistency of behaviors and the ability to deliver on expectations. Building a congregation's trust in God seems to depend mostly on remembering God's promises and on experiencing the Holy Spirit's work among the people of the congregation. It can be argued that a key interim task is to improve a congregation's trust in God by calling attention to the Spirit's work that continues among them.

Next issue: correlations between interim training/ experience and the congregation's role in God's mission.

The Rev. Christopher E. Hagen is in his tenth interim and serving his fourteenth congregation. He has served as solo pastor, associate pastor and senior pastor in rural, urban and suburban congregations, Lutheran and Presbyterian, in Minnesota, Chicago, Baltimore, Delaware and Pennsylvania. In addition he has volunteered in seafarers ministries and at two state prisons. He served as lay missionary in Senegal, Africa and was a member of two mission teams to Haiti. He currently is earning a Doctor of Ministry in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN. The field of study integrates theology, social science, and missiology.

Bridgebuilders for Interims

Bridgebuilders is a process structured to help congregations in conflict. The initial training started in 1994, and since then, more than 600 clergy and professionals have been trained. One third of those trained have been interim ministers. The training is based on the Bowen Family System Theory and Biblical principles. The purpose of the training is to help congregations make good decisions for themselves and move beyond polarization.

Key Elements of the Bridgebuilder intervention: A process of growth; A multi-step process of several months; A way to conceptualize emotional systems; An objective view of the congregation's emotional system; Empowering the congregation to manage the situation; Lessening of anxiety to promote greater clarity; A focus on assets, not liabilities; Redefining situation as an opportunity; Finding a vision for the future; Renewal of purpose and mission; Creating a healthy future; and Increasing the leadership capacities within the congregation.

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Opportunities for Bridgebuilder Training in 2007:

Jan 29-30 Sioux Falls, SD (four synods in Region 3)

Apr 23-25 Dallas, TX (National Training Event)

Several other training events are being discussed with judicatories for 2007.

Cost is \$625.

Contact: Peter Steinke, PO Box 300939, Austin, TX 78738

New companion DVD goes with the new book 'Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Conversations and Reflections with Dr. Peter Steinke. He discusses issues in each chapter with lay and clergy leaders. A study guide accompanies the DVD. The DVD can be purchased from Seraphim Communications, 1568 Eustus St., St. Paul, MN for \$89 plus \$5 for shipping.

Peter Steinke

Much of the rest of this issue is a summary of many resources available to assist you in finding interim ministry resources. We hope you find them helpful. *Ed.*

Recommended books, etc.

Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What by Peter L. Steinke

The long awaited book, by a pastor, educator and therapist for clergy is now available. Peter Steinke has written the best selling books 'How Your Church Family Works' and 'Healthy Congregations.' He is internationally respected as a congregational systems consultant and a trainer of Bridge-builders.

With the increased anxiety in all areas of our lives, church leadership needs to provide calm and courageous leadership. Just as the shepherd confronts the prowling lion, today's congregational leadership serves the church with calm courage and cannot be as anxious as those served.

In the 'Preface' Peter Steinke writes: "My hope is that the ideas, stories, realities, and provocations in this book will both enlighten and embolden your leadership in the local congregation. Knowing and understanding what is happening is certainly significant. But awareness is not enough. Someone has to be bold enough to suggest and take action."

He inspires courage in church leadership and encourages us to maintain the course, weather the storm, deal with our own fears and doubts, improve our acumen, endure the rage, understand and deal with sabotage.

At times, I found it very hard to put this book down. His insights and stories take away the fog of confusion during the difficult times and lift you up during the times of celebration. Thank you Peter Steinke.

Dan DeBlock

Silos, Politics and Turf Wars: A Leadership Fable About Destroying the Barriers That Turn Colleagues Into Competitors by Patrick M. Lencioni

No one hopes for a crisis, and rightly so. Certainly this applies to teams and organizations. Most leaders would probably say one of their primary responsibilities is to prevent a crisis from occurring. While the book is written for the business organization some of our church organizations are experiencing the same issues the business community is dealing with.

The book begs the question, why wait for a crisis to rally your organization? Create a sense of sharing and a compelling purpose all the time. Who knows? You may find that by doing so, you'll avoid a crisis. There is nothing wrong with being proactive in your church as a leader.

This book came to my attention after discovering several camps in a congregation. I considered them nothing more than "cliques" until Bishop Wangberg of the Northwest Minnesota Synod opened my eyes to the concept of "silos."

Lencioni doesn't become legalistic in how to create an alignment of values within an organization. Rather, he, recognizes the differences inherent within the groups of an organization. Instead he sets up some simple guidelines for getting these divisions to pull in the same direction and focus on shared objectives.

The book is entertaining, informative and thought provoking. Lencioni has some quite serious objectives in mind. "To tear down silos, leaders must go beyond behaviors and address the contextual issues at the heart of departmental separation and politics. The purpose of this book is to present a simple, powerful tool for addressing those issues and reducing the pain that silos cause. And that pain should not be underestimated."

I certainly recommend this book as a good one to have in your shepherd's toolkit.

Dan DeBlock

Never Call Them Jerks

by Arthur Paul Boers

"I wish I could say that all churches are immune to problems that arise from parishioners misbehaving. But alas we cannot always blame clergy leadership. Responding to such situations with self-awareness and in a manner true to one's faith tradition makes the difference between peace and disaster."

Arthur Paul Boers is a Mennonite pastor in Waterloo, Ontario who has served rural, urban, and church-planting settings in the USA and Canada. Boers has an MA in Peace Studies from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, an M. Div. from McCormick Theological Seminary, and an M. Th. in Pastoral Counseling from Waterloo Lutheran Seminary.

Boers uses stories to bring across his point and examines how a better understanding of difficult behavior helps congregational leaders when the going gets rough. He encourages leaders to face the tough situations and take care of self.

The author emphasizes that conflict is inevitable. Rather than the elimination of conflict, he addresses healthy ways to confront conflict. In the author's own words, "Responsible church leaders serve as models of a firm and assertive approach to conflict that is flexible but not floppy, compassionate but not 'sloppy agape,' steady but not immovable."

William H. Willimon, Dean of the Chapel and Professor of Christian Ministry, Duke University, Durham, NC, writes: "Arthur Paul Boers pours a wealth of pastoral wisdom and clinical insight into his book...he helps us to see how our 'worst' members, our most trying congregational crises, can, by the grace of God and our skillful and caring leadership, be transformed into opportunities for redemptive ministry."

Dan DeBlock

In Sheep's Clothing: Understanding and Dealing with Manipulative People by George K. Simon

George K. Simon, Jr. received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Texas Tech University. He has studied manipulators and their victims for more

than 10 years and given numerous workshops and seminars on covert aggressive personalities. Dr. Simon consults for various agencies and institutions and maintains a private practice.

Simon puts the responsibility for abusive behavior squarely on the shoulders of the perpetrator. Manipulative behavior must be confronted. It is unlikely you will change the behavior of such people. Therefore, it is up to you to change the pattern of your interaction with the wolf in sheep's clothing.

We have to meet, work, and communicate with so many people in our communities. Even in the church it is very easy for some ill-tempered people to cause uproar. We are such a mobile society with communities constantly changing. Into that constantly changing community the "anti-social" and "covert-aggressive" people find they can cause pain and confusion to their surroundings all their lives without ever having to take responsibility for their actions.

The book is based on practice and reality. We often try to rationalize the 'bad' behavior of others. In reality, not everyone is well intentioned. Many are unrestrained by conscience. We would be well advised to see the wolf in sheep's clothing and know how to deal with them.

Dan DeBlock

Association Dues

Annual dues for the Interim Ministry Association of the ELCA (IMA) are \$50. Dues are tax deductible.

Please make all checks payable to **Interim Ministry Association** and mail them to:

IMA
ELCA Vocation and Education Unit
8765 W. Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631

Interim Ministry Educational Opportunities—2007

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Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

The 2007 Educational Program co-sponsored by NALIP and Luther Seminary began on a strong note with 22 participants from nine states and one Canadian Province. The event was led by Dr. Paul N. Svingen, currently serving as interim senior pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Aberdeen, South Dakota. A Minneapolis Area Synod Interim Pastor, Paul also serves Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, as Adjunct Professor in the Doctor of Ministry Program (which includes a track in Interim Ministry).

The second 2007 Discernment Event at Luther Seminary is scheduled for September 13-14, 2007. The tuition for this 11-contact hour seminar is \$125.00.

The 20th Annual Intentional Interim Ministry Basic Training Event (Phase I) will be presented at Luther Seminary (www.luthersem.edu/lifelong_learning/kairos), beginning on October 29 – November 2, 2007. The Phase III of this 60-contact hour event will be presented the 4th week of April, 2008, at the Mt. Olivet Retreat Center (www.mtolivetreteat.org), Farmington, Minnesota. The \$695.00 tuition does not include room/board costs for either Phases I or III. You may contact the Kairos Web site (see above) for room/board costs.

The concluding 20-contact hour 2007 NALIP/Kairos Seminar at Luther is entitled “Interim Ministry: Essentials Beyond Basic (Training), and is for interim pastors/consultants who have completed the three-phase basic training course for intentional interim ministry. This seminar addresses: the interim process in relation to the work of visioning; responsibility, authority and accountability issues in the congregational system, a self-discovery exercise to strengthen leadership capacities so that as the designated interim leader, the Intentional Interim Pastor (IIP) can assist others in the congregation to increase their potential for effective ministry in the interim period; the IIP’s role in relation to human resource

issues; the process tasks in relation to appropriate systems insights; and, interim leadership and self-differentiation related to family of origin issues.

Please consult the Kairos office for details on course requirements. The tuition for this event is \$295.00. Room/board is not included in this fee. The course begins Tuesday, December 4th at 2:00 p.m. and concludes Friday, December 7th at noon.

Previously-offered advanced courses on “Effective Multiple-Staff Interims” and “Mission, Vision, Self-Study in the Interim Process” will not be offered at Luther Seminary in 2007.

NALIP Education Courses – see NALIP web site for details

DISCERNMENT FOR INTERIM MINISTRY 12-hour events

This short course introduces the options and challenges of interim ministry, and helps determine whether this form of ministry is a viable option for you. Recommended before investing time and energy in the Basic Education course.

The Discernment course is offered regularly at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO, and at other sites by special arrangement.

BASIC EDUCATION FOR THE PRACTICE OF INTENTIONAL INTERIM MINISTRY

This course is designed to connect you with your synod, district or judicatory and offers a foundation for working with congregations facing important issues during pastoral transition. The program is

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Here’s a thought...

Print an extra copy of this newsletter and share it with someone else doing interim ministry.

designed in three sequential phases over six months: a residential week, fieldwork in a parish or other ministry site, and a concluding residential week. The course is currently offered in the fall and spring at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

CONTINUING INTERIM EDUCATION – 12 & 36-hour events

Specialized and advanced interim ministry courses are offered each year. Check the NALIP web site for descriptions and schedules.

OTHER OFFERINGS

NALIP

The National Association of Lutheran Interim Pastors (NALIP), is a pan-Lutheran body currently made up of two member Associations: the Interim Ministry Association of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (IMA-ELCA) and the Interim Ministry Conference of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (IMC-LCMS). NALIP's goals are to:

- Promote general awareness of Intentional Interim Ministry and its issues,
- Advocate high performance standards in its practice,
- Support the Church's servants called to interim ministry,
- Develop and offer programs for the training and continuing education of Lutheran Interim ministry practitioners, and
- Exercise good stewardship of resources, and pursue sources of funding.

Each year NALIP sponsors an Annual Conference featuring quality continuing education, personal and professional networking, and an opportunity to talk with local judicatory leaders about interim ministry issues.

Information on NALIP and its educational offerings can be found at www.nalip.net.

See the next page for information about this year's speaker.

Interim Ministry Network

Since 1980, the Interim Ministry Network has dedicated itself to the health and wellness of church congregations. The wellness of churches is influenced by three kinds of learned leadership skills - prevention of unhealthy practices before they take root, maintenance of congregational health during times of stress or change and restorative care when it is required. Information on IMN resources can be found at www.IMNedu.org.

The Alban Institute

AI is an ecumenical interfaith organization, founded in 1974, which supports congregations through book publishing, educational seminars, consulting services, and research. It offers practical assistance in working with congregations, garnered by continually learning from – and sharing learnings with – thousands of congregations and denominational bodies. Alban is dedicated to pursuing new knowledge in the fields of sociology, human relations, and organizational development, and disseminating original research through books, educational seminars, and consulting and training services. Information on the Alban Institute and its work can be found at www.alban.org.

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

LMPC is a non-profit ministry that works to encourage the nonviolent transformation of conflict in relationships in homes, workplaces, schools, churches, and throughout our world. Its programs and resources address ways of resolving conflicts and building healthier relationships in all of these various settings. Information on the programs and resources of LMPC can be found at www.lmpeacecenter.org.

12th Annual NALIP Conference

May 24 - 26, 2006



Presenter:

Gilbert R. Rendle

Friday, May 25, 2006

Author, Seminar Leader, Senior Consultant, the Alban Institute

Before joining the staff of the Alban Institute, **Gil Rendle** served as senior pastor of two urban congregations in Pennsylvania for sixteen years and as a denominational consultant for the United Methodist Church for nine years. Gil has an extensive background in organizational development, group and systems theory, and leadership development. He frequently consults with congregations on planning, staff and leadership development, and issues of change. He is well known for his work with middle judicatory offices and staff as they wrestle with the issues of both denominational and congregational change. In training workshops and leadership retreats, Gil has led numerous large and small groups in practical learning that directly impacts the decisions and behaviors that participants practice in their congregations. He is the author of four books, as well as a contributor to two other books and the author of numerous articles and monographs.

Workshop Title: "Telling the Better Story"

Howard Gardner points out that a primary function of the leader is to help the people tell a better story about themselves. Some congregations are so rehearsed in their problems and their scarcities that they lost the better story of how they have been called by God for great purpose. Other congregations are doing well institutionally but fear boldness and can't tell the larger story of the "more" that God is calling them to do.

This workshop will help interim pastors reconsider leadership as helping people have a "holy conversation" about questions that can change the story of the congregation. Real steps and tools will be offered to begin the search for the better faithful story of the people.

Gil Rendle and Alice Mann are authors of *Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*. Gil suggests that reading this book before the Conference may be of benefit.