

mission. This is the nature of community. Good done within and for any facet or segment of the community enhances and enriches the whole of the community. Think on these things.

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Application to the church

by Randall Bradley



Terry York's thoughtful and reflective piece offers broad application for the church or agency that is seeking to assist caregivers in the formation of their children, and it offers helpful insights into the church leadership and decision-making processes.

Following are specific ideas regarding the implementation of this article into the life of the local parish or into the mission and operation of an agency.

PARENT/CAREGIVER FORMATION

Often when working with parents and other caregivers, we assist with parenting problems and offer little help in the area of Christian formation; i.e., many parents are not able to guide their children toward appropriate goals and behaviors because they are not deeply grounded themselves. This article provides a discussion of some of the core values of Christian family units and could be used effectively as the backbone for a conference or study on parent/caregiver formation. This article could be discussed weekly within small groups and could form the core of a weekend retreat. Additionally, this article might be reprinted and distributed to parents who turn to the church for guidance with their children. A synopsis might also invite continued discussion by printing it as a series in a church or agency newsletter.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

As a means of initiating discussion among a Christian education advisory team, this article could inspire healthy dialogue about what is important in the Christian education of children and could serve as a broader philosophical template for some of the areas/issues that are sometimes neglected. For example, Christian education programs may teach biblical material, i.e., stories and scripture without giving adequate attention to broader issues such as respect, kindness to others, and reaching out to those who are different.

ANALYZING DECISION MAKING

Every church needs to reflect on how it makes decisions. Churches establish patterns that become the norm for congregational decision-making; however, these patterns may fail to reflect genuine Christian community. This piece serves as a call to think carefully about how decisions are made. Does the majority always rule in your church or organization? Should it? Do the loudest voices win in every discussion? Are church/organization-wide decisions made out of fear? Is change embraced without appropriate discernment? Are changes that affect the life of the church imported from other congregations without appropriate

discussion? In order for an organization to remain healthy, a discussion of this process should occur prior to a moment of crisis when the discussion is difficult and often unproductive.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

Leadership is as much about listening as it is about vision and forward thinking. This article encourages leaders to know those they lead, to understand the heartbeat of the organization or church, and to respect the group's history. Imagining how our leadership will harmonize (rather than providing counterpoint) with those we lead can help us to lead from a position of respect and authenticity. This article could assist leaders in evaluating their leadership styles. It could also serve as a discussion starter for a church staff or organizational leadership team. Consider building a staff retreat around the first part of this article using it as core reading. Church staffs and other leadership teams tend to become insulated from the group they lead, resulting in a team that loses touch with the people, i.e., fails to hear the voice of the congregation.

CONGREGATIONAL RECENTERING

For churches and organizations that believe in congregational or constituency input, this article is a fresh way of imagining this concept. As admonition to listen to the poets and the prophets – groups often ignored – this piece encourages us to consider the voices of the people who sometimes find themselves on the periphery. For example, in congregational meetings, prophets can be perceived as too far ahead of the crowd, and their input can be ignored. On the other hand, poets can be perceived as having thought not rooted in firm logic, and their intuitive input can likewise be diluted. Perceptive leaders will find these voices and will ask for their perspectives regarding the church or organization.

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Scattering New Blessings

Edwina Gateley

Often we anxiously seek the will of God,
as if God had gleefully hidden dreams for us
deep in unfathomable places.

As if it were God's intention
that our whole lives be spent
in endless searching for signs and directions
buried in obscurity.

The will of God is that which brings us
peace and fullness of life.

The will of God is the seed of our dreams
ever gestating with possibility
and longing to leap forward
scattering new and surprising blessings
in our gray reality.

Source: A Mystical Heart