

Using this book

Welcome to the joy of leadership in the church and welcome to the *Congregational Leadership Series*, a series designed to give you basic tools for managing the mission and ministry of your congregation.

Unless it has its roots sunk deeply into the mission and vision for a congregation, a strong emphasis on organizing can be a sign that a congregation is in deep decline. To be clear about this, without a powerful vision for the future, a stand-alone organizing process will drain the joy out of a congregation and its leaders. Do not consider how you will organize for mission and ministry until leaders are properly trained and the congregation has identified its mission and goals.

Different congregations have different needs for organizational structure. Congregations with fewer than 350 baptized members are probably best served by a less formal organizational structure. Mid-sized congregations will need a more formal structure in most cases. Congregations with more than 1500 baptized members will find useful information here—ideas that can be adapted to their particular settings—but they should also consult other books and resources that will help them make the most of their strengths.

This book is written for congregational leaders who do part of their work through groups. These leaders include those who serve in paid staff positions (such as pastors, associates in ministry, and volunteer coordinators) and those who are unpaid (such as officers of the congregation council). This book also might be helpful to all the people who serve as members of your congregation's planning teams, committees, task forces, or other working groups.

You may read this book on your own, but you might also read sections, or even the entirety of the text, in group planning sessions. Arriving at a shared understanding of the issues involved in organizing a group might heighten your productivity and deepen the satisfaction of group members, who will be glad they gave of something tremendously precious in our age—their time.

The material in this book can be used as part of a leadership development or training program in your congregation, synod or judicatory, or region. Some congregations conduct a systematic leadership development program for officers, council members, ministry coordinators, committee chairs, and other leaders. In some areas, workshops, seminars, and skills training for professional and lay leaders are offered for groups of congregations. Check to see what is available for leaders in your congregation. If no such programs exist in your area, you might want to take the initiative to start a program.