

Is this for you?

This book is primarily designed for the professional staff and key leaders of your congregation. It is a guide for evaluating your existing leadership development efforts and a practical handbook of useable leadership strategies, programs, and tools.

Congregational leaders are tempted to look for the definitive answer or program that will solve their dilemmas. You will not find any quick fixes in this resource. You may find some helpful ideas, but you won't find any miraculous cures. What you will find are ways to rethink and restructure your congregation that can result in greater participation by the members. You will also find some ways of doing leadership development that are not only faithful to our traditions, but profoundly rewarding to those who participate. Be prepared to experience personal growth yourself as you take the lead in training and supporting others. Identifying leaders and helping them to grow is not an easy task. Anyone who tells you it is has never attempted it, or is stretching the truth. This is a process with several steps:

- Identifying individuals' gifts matching those gifts with real needs
- Giving permission to those who want to try something new
- Motivating others to accept new responsibilities
- Faithfully training all the recruits for effectiveness
- Providing them with a solid support system
- Holding them accountable for their actions
- Carefully evaluating their labors
- Genuinely thanking them for a job well done

This process isn't easy, but it is incredibly rewarding. You will experience that reward when new people volunteer for old jobs, when new members bring new ideas, when discipleship is alive and thriving, and when a renewed sense of joy and celebration permeates the congregation.

Using this book

Several individuals and groups will find all or part of this book valuable:

- The pastor and professional staff
- The congregation council
- The Mutual Ministry Committee
- New member classes
- The Nominations Committee
- The Long-Range Planning Committee

After you have reviewed the material, decide how best to use it in your setting. Individually or in a group, use the checklists at the end of each chapter to answer the following questions:

- What is going well in our congregation? Do we act in ways that are consistent with the basic values and principles involved in this chapter?
- Based on this chapter, does our congregation have any areas for improvement or important responsibilities that are not being carried out at this time?
- How can we celebrate what is going well? What are the next steps to take in any areas for improvement or change?

All-day workshops or overnight retreats provide the greatest opportunities for building enthusiasm and motivation, while introducing the material in smaller segments over a greater period of time (such as in monthly council meetings) has the benefit of greater learning. By doing both, you will deepen participants' comprehension and their excitement for leadership development.