

LMPC Newsletter

Lombard Mennonite Peace Center

Fall, 2003

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Leadership in the Midst of Anxiety: New Seminar

Leadership and Anxiety in the Church: A Family Systems Perspective is a new one-day seminar being offered by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. It looks at the challenge presented by the rising levels of anxiety experienced in churches today and the role that self-differentiated leadership can play in calming such anxiety.

The topical outline is comprised of four sessions. **The Road to Damascus: The Church and Change in an Age of Anxiety** includes a congregational case study and input on a variety of topics such as: linear cause-effect thinking vs. systems thinking; acute anxiety and chronic anxiety; the impact of societal anxiety on the church.

The nature of the challenge confronting churches is further amplified in **"They Know Not What They Do": The Scapegoat Mechanism and Church Conflict.** The session includes congregational case studies that highlight the scapegoating phenomenon, as well as input on the family projection process, a key concept of family systems theory, and how it applies to church systems.



Reflections on the scapegoat mechanism, as understood in the work of René Girard, bring further insight toward understanding the mindless reactivity that can become focused on leaders in the midst of church conflict. The session closes with a slide-illustrated meditation on Christ's passion as depicted in art: how it exposes the scapegoat mechanism, while shattering the accompanying myth of redemptive violence.

The third session, **The Importance of Not Being Ernest: Reversals, Playfulness, and Paradox**, highlights one aspect of the kind of leadership required for overcoming anxiety's impact in the church. Lessons are drawn from video clips showing Murray Bowen and Edwin Friedman, two well known practitioners in family systems thinking, on how leaders can manage self in the midst of emotional triangles in a manner that demonstrates nonanxious presence.

The seminar concludes with **The Road to Damascus: Lessons for Leadership in Anxious Times.** It includes a slide-illustrated meditation on the conversion of Paul – as depicted in Medieval,

Renaissance, and Baroque art – to examine the lessons in self-differentiated leadership that can be learned from Paul's experience with radical change.

The full seminar – comprised of PowerPoint presentations – would be appropriate for an educational event for pastors and other leaders. Any of the topics can also stand alone as a plenary address for a larger gathering. **The Road to Damascus** would be appropriate for an annual judicatory assembly, since it would be readily accessible to clergy, as well as laity with little background in family systems theory.

Anyone interested in hosting **Leadership and Anxiety in the Church: A Family Systems Perspective** can contact LMPC at 630-627-0507.

2003 - 2004 Events

Mediation Skills Training Institute:

- Sept. 22-26, 2003 - Seattle, WA
- Nov. 17-21, 2003 - Chicago, IL
- Feb. 16-20, 2004 - Glendora, CA

Healthy Congregations:

- Nov. 7-8, 2003 - South Bend, IN
- March 26-27, 2004 - Cuyahoga Falls, OH

God's Own Peace: Systems Theory and Spirituality:

- Nov. 5, 2003 - Prairie Village, KS
- Feb. 18, 2004 - Cleveland Hts., OH
- March 30, 2004 - Denver, CO

Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations:

- Oct. 10-11, 2003 - Nashville, TN
- Feb. 27-28, 2004 - Raleigh, NC

Here I Stand:

- Oct. 21-23, 2003 - Brookfield, WI
- April 19-21, 2004 - Dallas, TX

For registration brochures contact
LMPC at 630-627-0507.

LMPC Celebrates Twenty Years of Ministry

Begun in 1983, LMPC has now been proclaiming the message that Christ is the path to peace for twenty years. The anniversary was commemorated at a dinner program on August 11, 2003, held at the Carmelite Spiritual Center in Darien, IL, in conjunction with the annual retreat of the LMPC Board of Directors. Board members were joined by LMPC staff, former staff, as well as long-time friends and supporters in an evening of fun, fellowship, and sharing memories of the LMPC ministry.

Letters read from friends across the country – and beyond – testified to the scope of LMPC's impact. Personal reminiscences of LMPC's founding years and vision were shared by Joe and Emma Richards, pastors of Lombard Mennonite Church at that time. A brief video with musical accompaniment, compiled by David Gladstone, gave a visual history of the peace center, from its inception to the present. The evening closed with reflections on the continuing vision and future dreams for the LMPC ministry in a presentation that paired biblical texts with great masterpieces of Christian art.

The eight-minute video, available in VHS or DVD, will be sent to those who donate \$100 or more in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary during the fall months.

Commentary

Reaping What We Sow

by Marty Farahat

The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. — Galatians 6:8

Sometimes as I was growing up, in the flurry of some activity in the house we'd get an instruction that was backward from one of my parents. The result was an absurdity: "You must go to bed before you brush your teeth!" Often we kids would respond gleefully, "OK!" Invariably, my mother's comeback was something like "You know what I mean. Do what I mean, not what I say!" Depending on our mood at the time, we'd either laugh or argue: "How can I know what you mean, if it's not what you say?"

Over the summer the White House reported that President Bush had already "made up his mind" about the two British citizens who were detained at Guantanamo Bay. Under pressure from the British Prime Minister to release them to British custody, the President refused to indicate their fate, but said, "I know these are bad people."

The President has repeatedly referred to other countries and their leaders as "evil." More recently in the hunt for leaders of the former Iraqi regime the unabashed statement is "we want to capture or kill them." When speaking of those being hunted, "ratlines" is the word used for escape routes. The rhetoric is that which might be

employed more appropriately in reference to a rabid, wild animal.

It is certainly language that serves to foster hate: hate on the part of people in the U.S. for the country or persons involved; hate toward us from the citizens of those countries who have been dubbed part of the "axis of evil." Do we realize that the predictable fruit of such epithets will be more terrorism?

I cringe inside every time I hear the President refer to a person or a country as "evil." When the President dismisses another person as simply "bad" or evil," he's saying no change is possible. Is that what he means?

Our parents never said to me "you're a bad girl!" when reprimanding me. While I was growing up we were told that we should not use phrases like "I hate him" or "She is bad." Rather we were supposed to concentrate on the behavior that made us angry. By focusing on the behavior rather than the person, we left open the door for change. We kept alive the belief that improvement was possible, that through reason, or even simply through the miracle of grace, behaviors can change. This was explained to us often, and from an early age. I can't remember ever believing otherwise.

When the behavior is so terrible that nearly all agree that it is evil, distinguishing between the behavior and the person who is acting reprehensibly may seem at first to be an unimportant difference. However; I see it as primary. It is central to my understanding of Christ's gospel message of salvation and peace. If we claim the possibility of redemption for ourselves, we cannot deny it to others.

The President says without apology that he is a Christian, that the most influential book he has ever read is the Bible. Similarly, we as Americans say we value human rights for all — a laudable thought. But in our public

policies we have sown other seeds, the seeds of hate, greed, and duplicity — and these are the seeds that in fruition breed more strife.

We may not have the power to change the political rhetoric directly, but we *can* refuse to use that rhetoric ourselves. We *can* challenge leaders to mean what they say as professed Christians, to reflect both in language and deed, the fundamental tenet of Christ's teachings: that all are children of God. If we dehumanize others, we will reap violence. Only when we begin to sow seeds of peace, to address the root causes of terrorism — poverty, powerlessness, social injustice — will we be able to reap the harvest of peace that we say we desire.

So let's say what we mean, and mean what we say. If we proclaim that all are children of God, and act accordingly, we will reap a righteous harvest.



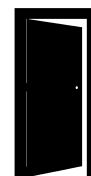
The Prayer Closet

On the edge of Monrovia, café patrons joined in the chorus to a new song: "no more running; no more fighting; no more war; war no more."

As new hope for peace emerges, the people of Liberia need our prayers. Relief workers estimate that more than 85 percent of Liberia's 3.3 million people live below the poverty line. There is a shortage of food, water, medicines and cooking oil.

We pray for Christ's peace to prevail among the people of Liberia. We pray for healing for women whose abuse has been a tool of war. We pray for the rehabilitation of children forced to take up arms. We pray for reconciliation among ethnic groups seeking peace and mutual respect.

We join the people of Liberia in praying: no more running; no more fighting; no more war; war no more.



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The *LMPC Newsletter* is published four times a year by Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. A minimum subscription donation of \$10 per year is encouraged. LMPC bases its peacemaking in a biblical view of salvation and Christian discipleship as understood in the Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. LMPC is a 501(c)(3) organization to which donations are tax deductible. LMPC Staff: Richard Blackburn, Executive Director; Bob Williamson, Associate Director; Marty Farahat, Assistant Director; Erin Dalian, Assistant for Communications; Oliver Lawrence, Administrative Assistant; Sheryl Reynolds Slack, Secretary.

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The Bookshelf

Let It Begin With Me

by Bob Williamson and
Richard Blackburn

The Leader's Journey: Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation by Jim Harrington, R. Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003. 188 pp. \$23.95.

The Leader's Journey invites pastors and other church leaders to change. Those who expect a "how-to" guide for changing congregations will be disappointed. But those congregations whose pastors work on transforming self, in the ways outlined by these authors, will change nevertheless.

The book proposes good questions for church leaders to ask themselves. "How do I get to the place where I am consistently able to choose a response rather than simply to react? How can I grow emotionally and spiritually to the place where I am capable, more often than not,



of choosing what I believe to be God's will in my role as leader rather than yielding to the pressures to do something else?"

The Leader's Journey examines the functioning of churches and their leaders in light of family systems theory. A strength of the book is that the co-authors draw directly and substantially from the work of Murray Bowen, a pioneer in family systems theory and therapy.

Moreover, the co-authors regularly integrate biblical teachings to highlight the relevance of applying family systems thinking to the church. Their reflections on the life of Jesus and his ability to pursue his mission, in the midst of powerful relationship pressures to do otherwise, are particularly helpful. The inclusion of illustrations drawn from the co-author's clinical experience in working with pastors also helps bring understanding to the principles being discussed.

The Leader's Journey also goes beyond family systems theory by advocating the use of meditation and other spiritual disciplines as a way to work at greater differentiation of self.

The authors define effective leaders as those who have "the capacity to know and do the right things." *The Leader's Journey* then focuses on the challenges of *doing* – of taking principled action in the presence of relationship pressures. The book gives less attention to the prerequisite challenge of becoming clear about what one really *knows* or believes, independent of those same pressures.

For example, the authors suggest that differentiation of self can lead one to "redeem and recover our original calling, separating it from the expectations and influences of family and making it our very own." This begs the question of whether – in some cases – one's original calling was itself a pseudo-self posture adopted to make important relationships more comfortable.

The Leader's Journey, nevertheless, offers much for church leaders to think about. It will be useful for pastors and clergy families seeking a guide for personal self-assessment and renewal. It can also serve as a shared study guide for clergy groups, church staffs, and others in leadership.

Until November 30, 2003, *The Leader's Journey* may be purchased from LMPC for \$21.55 (10% off the regular price), plus \$3.00 shipping. Illinois residents please add 6.75% sales tax (\$1.62).

Previews

A Selection of LMPC Fall Events

Mediation Skills Training Institute:

- At Unity of Louisville, Louisville, KY, September 8-12.
- At Seattle Mennonite Church, Seattle, WA, September 22-26.
- For London Mennonite Centre at Westbury Upon Trym Baptist Church, Bristol, England, October 6-10.
- For Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ, at First Congregational Church, UCC, Glen Ellyn, IL, October 20-24.
- At LaSalle Street Church, Chicago, IL, November 17-21.
- For Shalom Zone Ministries, Texas Annual Conference, UMC, at St. Luke's UMC, Houston, TX, December 1-5.

Here I Stand:

- At Calvary Lutheran Church, Brookfield, WI, October 21-23.

Here I Stand Clinic:

- At LMPC, Lombard, IL, September 30, November 25.

Clergy Clinic:

- At LMPC, Lombard, IL, September 4, October 2, November 6, December 11.

- At Fox Valley Presbyterian Church, Geneva, IL, November 10-12.

Advanced Clergy Clinic:

- At Blanchard Road Alliance Church, Wheaton, IL, October 27-29.

Facilitating Healthy Pastor-Congregation Relations:

- At Westminster Presbyterian Church, Nashville, TN, October 10-11.

Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches:

- At Union Church, UCC, Hinsdale, IL, September 14, 28.
- At Grace Lutheran Church, Pembine, WI, October 4.
- For the Classis of Chicago, Reformed Church in America, at Faith Community Church, West Chicago, IL, November 1.

Healthy Congregations:

- For Okaw River District, Illinois Great Rivers Conference, UMC, at Central United Methodist Church, Decatur, IL, September 5-6.
- For the Presbytery of Santa Fe at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Albuquerque, NM, September 19-20.

- For East Iowa Presbytery at Collins Plaza Hotel, Cedar Rapids, IA, September 26-27.

- At Hope Lutheran Church, Dearborn, MI, October 18.

- "Healthy Congregations: An Introduction" for Prairie Association, Illinois Conference, UCC, at St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Hinckley, IL, November 1.

- At Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, IN, November 7-8.

- At Grace Lutheran Church, Cleveland Heights, OH, November 7-8.

God's Own Peace:

- At Colonial United Church of Christ, Prairie Village, KS, November 5.

Other:

- "Leadership in Religious Congregations: Personal Style and Family Systems Dynamics" for Franciscan Sisters of Mary, St. Louis, MO, October 30-31.

- "Conflict Transformation Skills for the Workplace" at St. Francis High School, Wheaton, IL, November 12.

- "Glorify to God in the Highest and On Earth Peace": The Christmas Story in Art" at Riverside Presbyterian Church, Riverside, IL, December 7, 14, 21.

The A-V Shelf

The Dream — Forty Years Later

by Erin Dalian

Martin Luther King, Jr.: The "I Have a Dream" Speech, 18 min.
Fighting Fair: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For Kids, 18 min.
L.A.: Voices from the Ashes, 29 min. Free Indeed, 23 min.
Beyond the News: Racism, 23 min. The Shadow of Hate, 40 min.

As I write this, we are commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington, D.C. and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

It has been four decades since Dr. King lifted up his vision "that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.'" Sadly, we must acknowledge that the fulfillment of that dream has still not been realized today.

LMPC seeks to encourage reconciliation and justice in all arenas, including in the area of race relations. We have a variety of video resources (all VHS format) that address the issue that we are offering for free loan in the coming months to encourage their use.

Martin Luther King, Jr.: The "I Have a Dream" Speech shows the entire speech and would provide a wonderful introduction for children and adults alike to begin a discussion on the Southern Freedom Movement.

L.A.: Voices from the Ashes documents the April/May, 1992, uprising in Los Angeles, CA and the impact on its residents. The accompanying study guide raises questions about the underlying injustice and racism that led to the uprising.

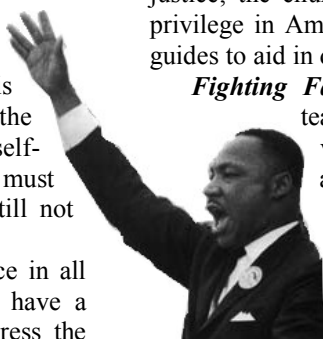
Beyond the News: Racism and Free Indeed would be excellent discussion starters for adult groups. Beyond the News examines five topics or arenas requiring attention: prejudice and privilege; children and education; jobs and economics; justice; the church. Free Indeed explores the issue of white privilege in America. Both videos have accompanying study guides to aid in discussion.

Fighting Fair: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For Kids teaches children conflict resolution skills. The video shows kids in an argument and how they address their concerns by following Dr. King's principles of nonviolence.

The Shadow of Hate is an excellent resource for teaching about the history of intolerance towards people of different races in America. The teaching kit includes a video, lesson guide, and a booklet with further historical information.

Let us raise our voices to continue Dr. King's dream for a just America. LMPC video resources can help toward teaching tolerance and understanding in your community.

To borrow these videos, call LMPC at 630-627-0507.



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