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## HELPING CHURCH LEADERS MAKE THE TRANSITION FROM THE PRESENT TO THE FUTURE

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### TEN OBSERVATIONS ON CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP

Much is being written about leadership and how the role of the leader is changing in a society where change is constant and rapid, making the environment turbulent and unpredictable; there is a knowledge and information explosion; there is distrust of institutions and the leaders of those institutions; and institutions are undergoing radical transformations or else they are dying. What does this mean for congregations, lay leaders, and pastors who are called to be leaders of congregations?

- 1. A leader is someone who has followers.** Leadership is less a matter of official position and more a matter of personal capacity to motivate and lead others in accomplishing what needs to be done.
- 2. Leadership begins with self-leadership.** Leadership begins with clarifying one's own heart, soul, and mind, not with focusing on the followers.
- 3. Leaders ask, "What needs to be done?" and "How can I make a difference?"** They do not allow their personal agendas to get in the way.
- 4. Leaders are not afraid of having strong associates.** Andrew Carnegie wanted his epitaph to read: "Here lies a man who attracted better people into his service than he was himself."
- 5. Leaders understand that Jesus was right, namely, that the leader is at the bottom of the organization not the top!** If you work for your people, your purpose as a leader is to help them accomplish their goals.
- 6. Leaders create more leaders.** By listening to their followers, leaders will not be primarily players or even coaches, but designers of the game who bring out the best in others. And when they do their job of indirect leadership well, the people will say, "We did it ourselves."
- 7. Leaders must also be followers.** Leaders can exercise followership by asking questions instead of giving answers; providing opportunities for others to lead them; doing real work in support of others; becoming matchmakers instead of central switches; and seeking common understanding instead of consensus.
- 8. Leaders must encourage experimentation and innovation which means risk and the likelihood of mistakes which in turn can produce learning.** The old pyramid organization wanted no mistakes and therefore discouraged innovation and experimentation.
- 9. Leaders opt for authority more than for power.** Power means being in control. Authority means being taken seriously. Leader preoccupation with power tends to breed an organization that is either passive or rebellious.
- 10. Leaders pay attention to their own growth.** Leaders must manage their stress; set priorities and control their calendar; live a balanced life; have time to reflect on the big picture; build a support system including mentors and teachers; engage in continuous learning; and pay attention to their spiritual journey.

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