

A congregation calling upon the team is expected to pay for the mileage and expenses incurred by the team members. Normally, two team members are deployed to work in each congregation with the process being as simple as a one-time workshop to a six month to a year engagement in situations that require long-term work and attention. In this lengthier time commitment, the congregation is asked to sign a contract which helps to ensure that the work with the team will be carried to completion and assures that the team will remain in relationship with that congregation.

It is the team's goal to work widely throughout the synod in order to nurture healthy mission and ministry. We invite you and your congregation to contact the Congregational Resource Team to explore ways in which this valuable information may be best utilized in your setting.

For more information about the work of the CRTeam, contact Mary Ann Schwabe, Assistant to the Bishop, by calling the synod office at 330-929-9022.

A group of clergy came to me from one of the major religious denominations in our society and said, "We are about to start a project that will raise 50 million dollars for our 500 most troubled ministers.

How would you spend it?" they asked.

I responded, "Why would you put the 50 million into your 500 most troubled?"

You will advance your denomination and our society far more if you put it into your 500 best."

They answered, "But we could never raise the money for that."

Friedman

AIM Mary Ann Schwabe
Northeastern Ohio Synod
1890 Bailey Road
Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221-5259

Congregational Resource Team

Advocates for Healthy Mission



A ministry of the ELCA in
Northeastern Ohio
to its congregations
and leaders.

The Congregational Resource Team (CRTeam) was formed in the Fall of 2005 to facilitate congregational health and wholeness with a related focus on mission and vision. The team is being utilized in a variety of ways in congregational settings. It has been an aid in enhancing congregational communication, it has mediated discussion between congregation and pastor, it has served as an impetus for renewed mission, and it has fostered healthy discussion and planning in the congregational call process.

The team has developed, and continues to develop, formats by which all of these conversations may occur with careful listening and focused response. That said, it is necessary to boldly underline that, while the team remains in relationship with the congregations to which it is called, the work of renewal and health belongs to the congregation, not the team. Walking alongside a congregation and its leaders is part of the team's ministry, not living in its midst.

Change, motivation and renewal are the outcome of some degree of pain, but the current thinking in society is, "Let's just get it over with." This quick fix mentality is addressed by Rabbi Ed Friedman in A Failure of Nerve. "The desire for a quick fix throughout the Greater American Family evidences a search for certainty, a penchant for easy answers, an avoidance of the struggles that go into growth, and an unwillingness to accept the short-term acute pain that one must experience in order to reduce chronic anxiety."

Call process

The call process is an exciting time as congregations look forward to receiving a new pastor, associate in ministry, deaconess or diaconal minister. It is a time of renewal, anticipation and new energy – a time when minds and ears are open to hearing fresh ideas and new perspectives. It is during these pivotal interims that the work of the Congregational Resource Team is especially meaningful and productive. The team challenges the congregational leadership to take a look at patterns and behaviors that might impact upon a new partnership in ministry. Normally, the team works with the congregation's council and call committee for a period of three to four months prior to the call and will remain throughout the initial phases of the new call so that the rostered person and congregation may work together for a short period with the team's guidance. This process is strongly encouraged for every congregation seeking a pastor, associate in ministry, deaconess or diaconal minister.

Workshops

One way for healthy and mission-focused congregations to become even more so is to invite the CRTeam to lead a single workshop or series of workshops based upon the Healthy Congregations and Family Systems material. These workshops have proven to be the impetus for furthering the vision and mission of congregational ministry. The corporate thinking and conversation that is a result of working together with the CRTeam is the seed for the growth of new "vines" and can

facilitate the pruning that is necessary to produce new fruit. Though it is most beneficial to schedule a series of workshops, an initial introduction may be presented as a one-time event and often piques the interest to learn more.

Congregational Struggle

In the midst of struggle, relationships strain and it becomes difficult to listen to one another constructively without extreme reaction. Often these situations can be handled with grace by pastor and parish, but sometimes the situation seems to take on a life of its own. At these times, it is beneficial to seek outside help in order to create an environment that can foster better communication and seek change. The Congregational Resource Team, since its inception, has been working to develop a process by which the team and the congregation partner in the effort to achieve wholeness. This partnership can be dramatically helpful, but the congregation must see itself and not the team as the vinedresser. Just as these situations take time to develop, they also take time to resolve. Living with some discomfort is always the key to lasting change. The vinedresser's hard work takes time and energy to produce good fruit.

