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Leadership *in Ministry*

LOST RIVER, WV

BOSTON, MA

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

in Ministry

Organizations that want to "get unstuck" need to change their thinking first before thinking about change.

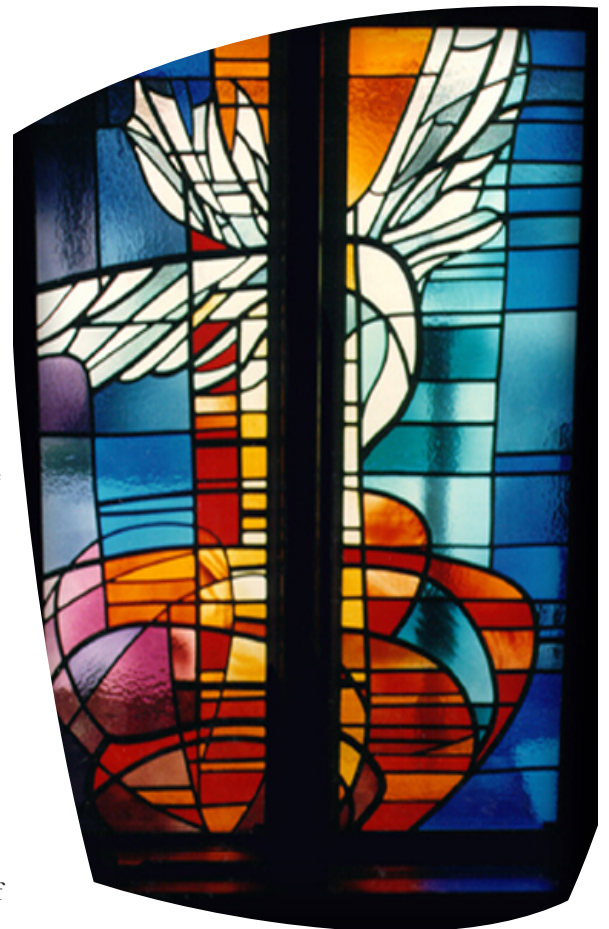
Imaginative Gridlock

Israel Galindo

I've been working with a couple of organizations that are "stuck" but motivated enough to get moving toward becoming "healthier." As I witness the process of working with the leaders and employees of both organizations I'm reminded of some universal truths about systems. First, while motivation is a necessary component for bringing about change, it's not sufficient. For example, if the motivation is to simply ease acute anxiety or pain a system will settle on pragmatic "instant" solutions that will ease the symptoms.

But once the pain (the symptom) eases, the temptation is to ignore working on the fundamental issues that will move the system toward health. That's logical since working toward health often brings about more, or different, "pain." Any system that lacks tolerance for pain will always settle on being medicated rather than go the "no pain, no gain" route.

Second, the role and the function of the leader is key. I've witnessed two common leadership liabilities in these organizations. In one, the leader has a pattern of



Imaginative Gridlock, cont'd



Israel Galindo is Dean and Professor of Christian Education at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. Visit his website at: www.galindoconsultants.com

“adapting to weakness.” Specifically, rather than moving toward the most mature persons in the system, inviting their input, and giving them permission to act, the leader tends to give over-attention to the most fearful, anxious, and needy in the system (in this case, a group of persons who are self-identified “victims” seeking “protection” and “privileges”). The natural tendency of this group to “herd” and “glum together” is perceived by the leader as a “voting block,” when in fact, it is the leader’s cuddling and over-attention to the “needs” and feelings of this group that empowers them.

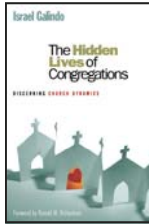
In the other, the leader lacks an appreciation for the tenacity of the destructive forces in the system, and fails to appreciate the necessary corrective function that the leader must provide, namely, to inhibit those forces’ capacity to sabotage progress toward a vision. Admittedly this is tough since those “forces” often are manifested as personalities in the organization.

Third, both organizations exhibit what Edwin H. Friedman called “Imaginative Gridlock.” Friedman identified three characteristics of imaginative gridlock:

The Treadmill Effect. Both organizations are very busy doing the same things and following the same procedures they’ve been doing for years, and which has gotten them stuck. Yet they seem to have an inability to get off the treadmill. Breaking patterns of behaviors and practice is proving to be a huge challenge to both organizations. It seems it’s just easier to run in place and get nowhere than to get off the treadmill, change their ways, and make progress.

A focus on answers. It’s always amazing how quickly the call for answers comes when acute anxiety is present. In one organization this happened in the first meeting! They weren’t interested in exploring what “the problem” may be or what their part in it was. They wanted to know not only what I was going to do, but how I was going to do whatever it was that would help them get out of their stuckness (I jokingly had to remind them that a consultant doesn’t actually “do” anything).

In the second organization one person kept pushing for “data.” That’s a sure sign of imaginative gridlock: an inability to move toward adventure, vision, and imagination rather than a search for certitude. When certitude is your highest value, boldness goes out the window as a resource. The fact is that innovators, visionaries, and trendsetters don’t work off of “data.” They move on imagination fueled by vision.



Israel Galindo is the author of *The Hidden Lives of Congregations* (Alban) named “one of the ten best books of 2005” by the Academy of Parish Clergy.

Imaginative Gridlock, cont'd

The polarization of false dichotomies. The third characteristic of imaginative gridlock is “either-or thinking.” When the mind is anxious it cannot be imaginative. It tends, therefore, to create false dichotomies and to polarize concepts, options, and opinions. And then it doesn’t take long to begin labeling and personalizing issues, leading to an inability to listen and dialogue. In one organization the result has been the formation of “factions” or “camps.” Once someone became identified in a “camp” his or her opinions and thoughts were always discounted by another faction—regardless of the merit of the content.

Change comes hard to organizations, but even harder to systems that suffer from imaginative gridlock. In these cases it’s necessary to focus on changing the way the culture thinks first, and then work on change. As Einstein said, “Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them.” ♦

LIM Faculty News

Here is news about what our Leadership in Ministry faculty members are up to:



LIM faculty member Betty Pugh Mills is pastor of Grace Baptist Church In Richmond VA

James Lamkin, pastor of Northside Drive Baptist Church, has an article in the Winter 2008 issue of *Review & Expositor* titled “Kum . . . Ba . . . Yah . . . ALLAH!”

Margaret Marcuson Margaret’s book, *Leaders Who Last: Sustaining Yourself and Your Ministry*, will be published by Church Publishing in 2009. Sign up for her monthly newsletter, *The Leadership Adventure*, at her website, www.margaretmarcuson.com, and get a free article, “How to Avoid Burnout in Ministry.” Find out about her monthly free teleconferences on leadership with church leaders from around the country and across denominations. Visit her leadership blog at: www.margaretmarcuson.com/blog.

Betty Pugh Mills is engaged in a study of long term pastorates as part of her sabbatical. She led a retreat for her church titled “Family: The Cradle of Theology” with central components of life story, BFST, biblical parables, and work with early childhood memories. She will do a session for The Divorce Recovery Workshop at First Baptist Church, Richmond in the fall. In January, 2009 she will be doing a presentation on BFST for the ABC Nehemiah Project in PA, a ministerial excellence initiative.

Israel Galindo will have a new book out in the fall from Chalice Press titled *Planning and Organizing for Christian Education Formation: A Community of Faith Approach*. He co-authored the book with LIM participant Marty Canaday. Galindo is also the illustrator for the book *Compelling Faces of Christ* by William P. Tuck (Mercer Press) also available in the fall.

The Myth of the Shiksa

LIM faculty member and consultant Margaret Marcuson reviews Edwin Friedman's latest posthumous book

Let me commend to you the latest of Edwin Friedman's writings to be reissued by Church Publishing, *The Myth of the Shiksa*. The book includes a number of other essays beyond the title one, including, "An Interview with the First Family Counselor," "Secrets and Systems," and "Metaphors of Salvation," and a fascinating foreword by Friedman's daughter, Shira Friedman Bogart, "Growing up Friedman."

Many of the chapters were published as articles during Friedman's lifetime, but they have not been collected in book form before.

They show Friedman's characteristic wit, boldness, and ability to see things at a tangent. Several of them are written from his perspective

as a therapist. But church leaders so often work with families that his perspective is radical but tremendously valuable, as in the interview, "Empathy Defeats Therapy." This is the one piece new to me. I marked this comment as being particularly relevant to clergy: "When members of the helping professions do not have personal goals for their lives—I mean aside from rescuing or helping others—they lose perspective on their clients, and then they can't distinguish their empathy from their anxiety." (p. 120)

Worth the price of the book alone is "Mischievous, Mystery, and Paradox: Bowen Theory and Therapy." This essay was originally published

in *The New Handbook of Family Therapy*. It's a terrific summary of Bowen Family Systems Theory. Whether you still feel like you're struggling

to grasp the theory, or you've been working with it for decades, you'll find the essay a valuable resource.

My favorite quote from the book, which I used in my workshop presentation

this spring, is this one: "The average person will resist efforts to will them by willing the willer with equal determination to stop willing, or by applying their own will to themselves. In a way that frustrates the will of the willer." (p. 18). As a leader I find that both sobering and comforting.

Get this book, and



look for a third Friedman book from Church Publishing next year. It will be titled *What Are You Going to Do With Your Life?* and will include unpublished essays and diaries. ♦

Margaret Marcuson works with clergy who want to be better leaders and churches who want to develop their ministries. She has been on the faculty of LIM since 1999. Her book *Leaders Who Last: Sustaining Yourself and Your Ministry* will be published by Church Publishing in 2009. Visit her website at:

www.margaretmarcuson.com.

The Facts About Reactivity

Israel Galindo

Leaders often get caught off guard by reactivity. That's no surprise given that reactivity often feels like a dose of intense raw emotion. That kind of energy goes right to the amygdala (that almond shaped organ in the brain that processes emotions) triggering reactivity on the part of the recipient that results in a "fight or flight" impulse. A sudden assault of intense reactivity can turn off our brain, leaving us with an inability to tap into the resource of cognition—thinking through the problem. An important skill, therefore, is to learn to recognize reactivity for what it is. The ability to distinguish between reactivity and passion, for example, can help us know how to respond to a person

in the grips of emoting anxiety. In those moments it can be helpful to remember four basic characteristics of reactivity:

- It is not rational
- It is fueled by acute anxiety
- It is a response of the non-differentiated

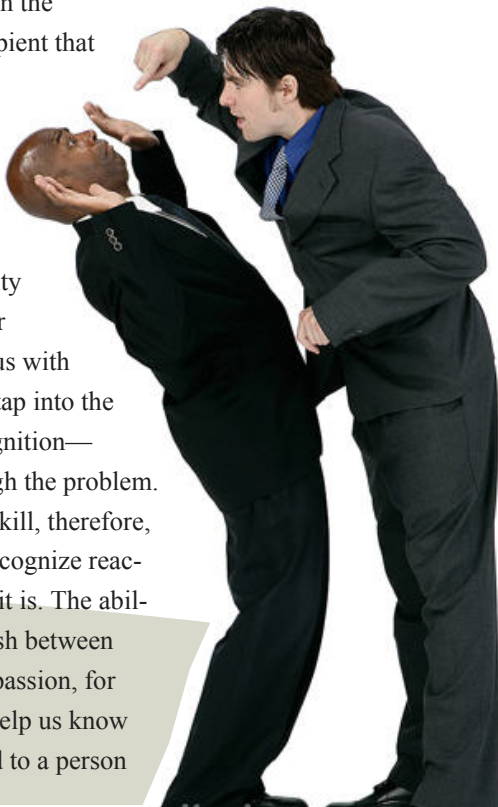
- It is usually displaced. **Reactivity is not rational.** Since reactivity is a non-thinking state of being leaders appreciate that trying to "reason" with a reactive person is a waste of time. Setting a calm emotional tone through self-regulation is a more helpful strategy than trying to compose an eloquent argument.

Reactivity is the product of acute anxiety. Acute anxiety is intense but situational and momentary. Effective leaders appreciate that a reactive response during a time of acute anxiety is episodic and has a short lifespan. Therefore, sometimes just getting past the moment in a non-reactive posture often facilitates better functioning for all.

Reactivity is the result of a lack of differentiation. Differentiation is not a state of being, it is, rather, a way of functioning in the

moment. Reactivity is a sure sign that someone is not functioning in a self-differentiated manner. Therefore, a leader who can avoid feeding off of the reactivity and function in a self-differentiated manner in-the-moment becomes a resource to the system, if not merely to the person in the grips of reactivity.

Reactivity typically is misdirected at the wrong object. Because leaders occupy the position of greatest responsibility in a system they often are the focus of misdirected and misplaced reactivity. Leaders who have the capacity to know that "This is not about me" can avoid taking it personally or making the expressions, messages, and behaviors of reactivity a personal issue. Effective leaders learn to recognize reactivity for what it is, and work on managing their own reactivity as well. ♦





MID-ATLANTIC
Lost River, WV

Workshop A Sessions

March 23-25
October 26-28

Workshop B Sessions

April 20-22
September 14-16

NORTHEAST, Newton, MA

May 18-20
October 12-14

WESTERN
Colorado Springs, CO

May 4-6
September 28-30

See our web site for registration information and updates. Call us for current space availability at these workshops.



Click here for a
registration form

A Message from the Coordinator (cont'd from p. 10)

2008 is also a year of transition. This spring two new faculty coaches stepped up to that leadership position. In the fall another new faculty coach will have to fill the position left vacant by Israel Galindo's appointment as Dean of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. I am thankful that Israel will continue to edit our newsletter, but after 14 years his leadership and presence will be greatly missed by LIM and at the Lost River, WV, workshops in particular. Other leadership transitions are on the horizon, but so are the gifted persons ready and willing to fill them.

Yes, life 'comes at us fast', even in LIM. The good news is that we have had, and continue to have, leaders who thrive on challenge in their life-long process of differentiating a self. ♦

What is Leadership In Ministry?

Since 1991 the goal of the **Leadership in Ministry Workshops** has been to teach a way of conceptualizing emotional phenomena rather than merely teaching techniques for handling specific counseling or ministry problems. Through study and application of Bowen Family Systems concepts we offer a way of thinking that affects every aspect of leadership in ministry and integrates administration, supervision, preaching, and counseling through the concept of self-differentiation.

WORKSHOP FORMAT

The workshop format follows the themes of the minister's three interlocking families: church member families, the congregation as a family system, the minister's own person family. Workshop sessions include faculty plenary presentations, but the major emphasis is placed on small groups in which participants present ministry-related case studies and work on their genograms. Guided by an experienced faculty, the overall emphasis in both group setting is upon the practical integration of theory and the practice of ministry.

WHO MAY ATTEND

Pastors and rabbis, other staff members, interim pastors, chaplains, denominational staff, lay leaders and counselors from 20 denominations and 32 states and Canada have participated in the program. Several participants in non-ministry or non-congregational contexts, such as health care, schools, or industry, attend our workshops through our Leadership in Organizations heading. See our website for details about registration, locations, and additional resources. ♦



Mike Winters, Liz Shoop, and Geoff Gwynne participate in the Lost River WV LIM Workshops.

LIM Peer Groups: “Between Sessions”

Murray Bowen is said to have quipped that “therapy happens between sessions.” Several LIM participants seem to be living out that philosophy through participation in peer learning groups that meet “between sessions” of the LIM spring and fall workshops.

Mike Winters, Liz Shoop, and Geoff Gwynne (pictured left to right in the photo) are part of one group that has met monthly in Harrisonburg (VA) from October 2007 through the present. “Our plan is to continue meeting. We are clear in regard to any newcomers that our bias is going to be a family systems approach,” says Winters. This group meets for three hours during which each participant presents a case study. “Case studies inevitably lead back to our genograms,” said Winters, adding, “The meetings have been invigorating and ramp up the learning and application process between our Lost River Workshops.”

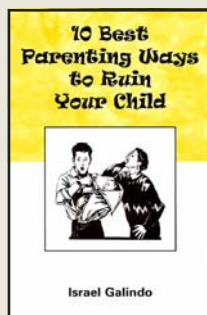
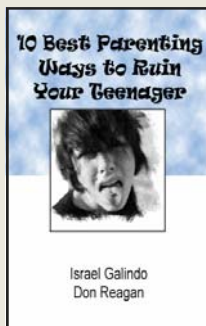
Another group meets in Richmond, VA at River Road Church, Baptist, facilitated by LIM faculty member **Bob Dibble**. That group meets once between the LIM sessions. Participants present case studies or family of origin issues. Other systems peer learning groups are in:

- Chapel Hill/Raleigh, NC (Susannah Smith: sr-smith@mindspring.com)
- Worcester, MA (Paul Thomas: paulthom@charter.net)
- King of Prussia, PA (Kim Egolf-Fox: lkef@comcast.net)
- Portland, OR (Margaret Marcuson: margaret@marcuson.com).

Check the Leadership in Ministry website for information on other peer groups and continuing education opportunities in systems theory and ministry. ♦

Condolences

*We extend our condolences and sympathy to LIM faculty member Betty Pugh Mills on the death of her mother, **Virginia Mason Herndon Pugh** (Ginna) who died June 6, 2008. And, to LIM faculty member James Lamkin, on the death of his father, **J. M. Lamkin, Jr.**, who died May 23, 2008.*



10 Best Parenting Ways to Ruin Your Teenager, Israel Galindo and Don Reagan; and *10 Best Parenting Ways to Ruin Your Child*, by Israel Galindo.

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Family Ties: Blessing and Curse

Joey Olson

I have studied Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST) since 1990 when I heard Ed Friedman present his work at a Minister's Week at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. There are times when I am referred to by the cabinet as "the District Superintendent who knows family systems." If you listen closely to that statement, you hear that it can be blessing *and* curse. Recently, I was asked by a colleague to do a presentation on family system thinking at a district training day.

The title of my presentation was the same as this article. Early in the presentation, I asked how many had read "The Bridge" in *Friedman's Fables*. I was surprised that out of 22 participants only one had. When I asked for feedback on the fable after I read it, some were already beginning to think about their own family. One woman said, "Well, it's my family. My mother is dying and I am the oldest and I am doing it all."

While a member of Ed Friedman's seminar in Bethesda, Maryland, I presented my family genogram and related it to Bowen's eight concepts of family system theory. Of the eight concepts, the three that seemed to evoke the most discussion from this group were: differentiation of self, triangles, and emotional cutoff. The key to the discussion of differentiation of self was Friedman's statement: "Differentiation means the capacity of a family member to define his or her own life's goals and values apart from surrounding togetherness pressures, to say "I" when others are demanding 'you' and 'we'."¹ (Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, p. 27). The discussion of triangles in church systems opened doors for clergy and laypersons to continue to become aware of communication patterns that can lead to dysfunction and stuckness. The subject of cut-off began with discussion of individual family members and led to insights about the need of leaders to be connected.

Why present BFST at a church workshop? One answer came as I was conducting a supervisory session with a pastor which seemed to be getting 'nowhere.' As this pastor sidestepped issues, I asked him how he dealt with his family of origin issues. His response was that he didn't have a clue to what I was referring. I later mentioned that interchange to the president of a United Methodist seminary I was visiting. Her response was that she didn't think their students graduated with adequate appreciation of the importance for ministry of insight into one's family of origin.

I have come to value the journey into my own family of origin and the lessons I learn in my continuing study of BFST. It is a framework for viewing life that reveals a world filled with adventure and full of surprises. One evaluation that I received from the recent training day was: "I feel like I have been given a treasure box." A willingness to begin the work of family exploration is a treasure indeed. ♦

Joey Olson is in the process of leaving her position as a District Superintendent in the United Methodist Church and moving back into pastoral ministry. She is a long-time member of the Colorado Springs LIM workshop.

The Pastoral Leader as Coach

Effective pastoral leaders have a broad repertoire of functions. One of those, suggests Israel Galindo, is to be “coach” to other leaders.

Israel Galindo

I'm often surprised at the disconnect that we clergy have from our congregation in several areas. One I see especially seems counterintuitive. We go to conferences to feed our own growth in spirituality and faith, and then fail to share those very things with our congregations. It seems that we somehow assume that the faith of our congregants, and the ways it needs to be nurtured, is somehow different from ours. Similarly, we get coaching to help us gain perspective, learn, and function better, and then we don't see the connection that we should do likewise with our congregational leaders.

This can be a good experiment for learning to function differently and to

follow those basic systems principles for the leader as coach:

Remember, the leader is the regulator for health in the system. Therefore, he or she should make a priority of investing in (coaching) the most mature persons in the system—those capable of learning, growing, and changing their ways of functioning.

The effective leader solicits health and maturity through challenge. When you issue a challenge, those who can be assets to the system will step up (and those who are either benign or liabilities are quickly identified) Work with, and invest in, the most motivated. Trying

to get people to change can tip us into a willful posture. Willfulness is what does the harm in any system and is the quickest route to getting stuck.

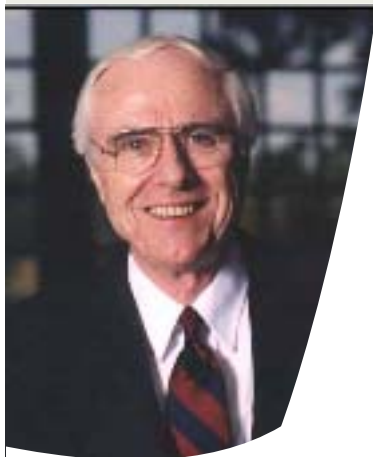
The leader as coach also shares information and educates. Sharing information reduces anxiety in the system. And educating leaders to “think systems” helps provide perspective, fosters imagination, and facilitates shifts in patterns of thinking.

Sometimes leaders need to do two things at the same time: containing the pathogens while cultivating the strengths and resources for health of the system. Like good coaches they strengthen the weakest players on the team

through challenge and they let loose the experienced and strong players to do what they do best.

Edwin Friedman has some good material on the leader as coach in *Generation to Generation*. I address that concept in the book *The Hidden Lives of Congregations* in chapters 8 to 10 and in a section titled “Focus on Coaching and Consulting” that describes this aspect of pastoral leadership. ♦





A Message from the LIM Coordinator

Larry Matthews, coordinator of the Leadership in Ministry Workshops shares his reflections.

A currently running television commercial opens with the statement: “Life comes at you fast!” It’s true for Leadership In Ministry workshops as well. 2008 is proving to be a year of challenge, celebrations and transitions.

The basic challenge is financial, but it goes to the heart of the founding philosophy and goals of the workshops. I began the first workshop in 1991 to offer training in relating Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST) to congregational clergy and lay leadership whose limited financial resources prevented their entering Ed Friedman’s Advanced Seminars in Family Emotional Process. I was a member of Ed’s seminar faculty and knew firsthand the quality of the training it offered. The question was: given the absence of Ed Friedman as

leader, could the new venture provide such a quality experience? I believe that question has been answered in the

affirmative for 18 years. The key to the success of LIM residential workshops has been the quality of the faculty coaches who spend most of their time in small groups dealing with family of origin issues and ministry case studies through a BFST lens. These thirteen faculty coaches, along with guest presenters and workshop members, also do large group presentations relating BFST to congregational leadership issues. We have three workshop sites and, although faculty coaches available in some areas, we transport faculty all over the USA. Airline fares increased as much as 40% this spring. Even though the workshops are still an amazing value, we are having to increase our fees each year. Between rapidly increasing air-

line fares and rising retreat center costs, one of the basic goals of LIM is facing a serious challenge.

But 2008 is also a year of celebrations. All of our workshops are at maximum capacity and all of them have reached new levels of highly motivated participants, both veterans and new registrants. This response of one of our new 2008 participants was typical: “I thought I was registering for a two session, one year experience. I now know that it will take me years to begin to think emotional process and I can’t imagine being without this kind of ongoing resource for my ministry.” Another goal of the founding of LIM is being achieved; to provide an ongoing resource for the growth and support of congregational leaders.

Continued on p. 6

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

www.LeadershipinMinistry.com



Leadership in Ministry Workshops

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Feel free to share this newsletter with others. Past issues of the newsletters can be found on the website.

Please check the website for updates on registration openings at the upcoming workshops.