

From the Ministry Desk of Stephen A. Macchia

LTi E-Newsletter March 2008

www.LeadershipTransformations.org

Personal Reflections

Pride and Prayer

According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.

Does this seem exaggerated? If so, think it over. The more pride one has, the more one dislikes pride in others. In fact, if you want to find out how proud you are, the easiest way is to ask yourself, "How much do I dislike it when other people snub me, or refuse to take any notice of me, or shove their oar in, or patronize me, or show off?" The point is that each person's pride is in competition with everyone else's pride. Pride is essentially competitive – is competitive by its very nature – while the other vices are competitive only, so to speak, by accident. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest.

From Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

Pride is ugly...to the eyes of all who see it, to the ears of all who hear it, and to the hearts of all who feel it. Worse yet, it's downright despicable when it's made apparent from within me (or you). It hurts to admit that it has a home in me...but that's my reality as a sinful man in daily need of God's grace.

The antidote to pride...humility. How does that occur? Not by human effort, but only by prayerful dependence on God. Henri Nouwen puts it this way in *A Cry for Mercy*, "When you are not the one who fills me, I am soon filled with endless thoughts and concerns that divide me and tear me away from you. Every day I see again that only you can teach me to pray, only you can set my heart at rest, only you can let me dwell in your presence. Let me at least remain open to your initiative; let me wait patiently and attentively for that hour when you will come and break through all the walls I have erected. Teach me, O Lord, to pray."

Struggling with pride? Humble yourself and release it with prayer.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus...who humbled himself and became obedient unto death—even death on a cross!

Philippians 2:3,4,8

Coming Alongside

Each day our team has the privilege of serving leaders and their teams in a variety of ministry venues. I thought you'd like to hear from a few members of our team:



Stephen A. Macchia
Founder and President



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From **Diana Bennett**, coordinator of Spiritual Leadership Communities and Small Group Leadership Consultant:



Jesus had a clear vision of an authentic spiritual friendship community. In response to his loving initiative, it has been our desire to create spiritual leadership communities where each participant is reminded of their giftedness as God's creation, encouraged to cultivate practices that stir and rest the soul, and committed to a journey with like-minded Christians who yearn to love God and seek His face more intentionally. Eleven of us have met every other month to consider the basics of spiritual formation through the study and practice of prayer, fasting, Sabbath renewal, spiritual storytelling, and a personal rule of life. We are about to complete the most amazing year! To learn, love, and live out more fully what God honors in response to His great gift of grace has become a strategic and life-transforming experience for us all.

From **Susan Currie**, coordinator of Spiritual Direction Training:



LTi's Selah, our training program for spiritual directors, met at a retreat center on the rocky coastline near Mystic CT for four days in February. This was our second of six residencies, and we experienced pure delight in seeing how the Lord had already grown the 18 of us as a community of practitioners since our first meeting last November! As one intern shared about the at-home work between November and February, "I am very grateful for the prep time between residencies in which we are not only reading and writing but directing, being directed and supervised. It has been such a profitable time for me....time that has hardly seemed like work, because I have so enjoyed it!" The enjoyment continued in our seaside residency together, where program faculty led the interns through teaching, silent reflection, and shared practice of spiritual direction in small groups.

From **Rick Anderson**, Vice President and chief architect of our Church Health Assessment Tool (CHATSM):



In just over a year, we've had 38 churches and over 3,000 individuals participate in our online and automated Church Health Assessment Tool (CHAT). I'm excited to see church leaders who are allowing the "voice of the flock" to enrich the ongoing discernment of God's desired path for their church. Discernment starts with a listening ear and this resource empowers leaders to listen to their entire church without breaking a sweat or a bank account. I'm encouraged by feedback from users about how easy, insightful, and affordable CHAT was to use. Here's what one pastor said just this past month, "CHAT gave us a clear picture of our present situation and what we needed to work on for a healthy future." We're praying for this tool to exponentially empower the Church to listen and discern – and we're pursuing strategic partnerships across the English speaking world to that end.

**Inviting you to become the person God intends...
... on retreat with fellow leaders.**

Soul Care Retreats offer you a two day experience of listening to God in prayer, biblical reflection, and community conversation. As a result, we grow in our awareness of being the beloved, broken and blessed children of God. Our next Soul Care Retreats will be held on March 18-19 (Women's Lenten Retreat) and April 17-18, 2008. Sign up today!

In addition, we continue to come alongside leaders and teams in a variety of ways...Spiritual Leadership Communities, Soul Care One-on-One's, Selah Certificate Program in Spiritual Direction, Team Care Retreats, and Team Care Intensives. Visit www.LeadershipTransformations.org or call toll free 877-TEAM-LTi for more information on these services.

Recommended Resources

Every church has a unique thumbprint given to them by God. Enter into a discernment process with your church by listening to your leadership team and congregation. Our Church Health Assessment Tool (CHATSM) has already been used by churches spread across the country and internationally on three continents. CHAT is a listening tool for church leaders who are interested in having a "heart to heart conversation" with every member of the congregation. It's a 72 question assessment based on research with thousands of churches and individuals. Over the past decade, this survey has been used by hundreds of churches – but in its original paper form (which required labor intensive tabulation from the church). The newly revised online version is completely automated and comprehensive, giving users the opportunity to get a holistic view of their church's health in 30 days or less. The survey questions are biblically centered and based on the cross-denominational, principle-based traits from *Becoming A Healthy Church* (BakerBooks, 1999/2006).

**"THIS IS A FABULOUS TOOL!
IT IS INTERNET BASED, AMAZINGLY COST EFFECTIVE, AND EASY TO USE FROM BOTH THE CHURCH SIDE AND THE RESPONDENT SIDE. WE INTEND TO DO A FOLLOW UP SURVEY IN THE FUTURE. WE HIGHLY RECOMMEND CHAT!!"**

**BOB GRABAU
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE PASTOR,
THE CHAPEL AT CROSSPOINT, NY**

CHAT is both easy to use and cost-effective. Since it's web-based, all surveys can be completed in as few as 20-25 minutes from the convenience of home or office. CHAT also tracks the responses of the congregation and leadership team separately for direct comparison. Best of all, CHAT does all the work but the church is in the driver's seat from start to finish via our Pastor's Console. At the end of the data collection window (dates chosen by the church), an easy to read, full color report is sent directly to the church contact's email inbox. This user friendly report will clearly identify the strongest areas of your church as well as the soft spots, discrepancies between congregation and leadership team responses, participant demographics, open-ended comments from the participants, and suggested next steps which will empower you and your leadership team to make needed adjustments for increased ministry health and effectiveness.

CHAT is unlike any other resource available to the Church today – check it out at www.HealthyChurch.net and recommend it to your church leaders...it's the best way to listen intently to your leadership and congregation.

Visit our newly updated website for additional resources for leaders and teams:

www.LeadershipTransformations.org

Here you will find the full complement of ministry services and resources LTI is currently providing our constituents.

Becoming A Healthy Church (available in English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese and Thai), Baker Books, 1999/2006 –a Baker Bestseller!

Becoming A Healthy Church Workbook, Baker Books, 2001

Becoming A Healthy Disciple, Baker Books, 2004

Renewal Yearnings

The Bible does not prescribe the time or length of prayer, but it does offer guidelines. In Psalm 88 prayer is offered in the early morning (v. 13), and in Psalm 55 prayers are said evening, morning and noon (v. 17). The author of Psalm 119 advocates prayer seven times a day (v. 164). Daniel knelt for devotions three times a day (6:10). Jesus prayed before sunrise (Mark 1:35) and in the evening when the day's work was over (Mark 6:46). Peter prayed at the third, sixth, and ninth hours. On the basis of Scriptural testimony Luther suggested that prayer should be the 'first business of the morning and the last at night.' Calvin urged that we offer prayer 'when we arise in the morning, before we begin daily work, when we sit down to a meal, when by God's blessing we have eaten, when we are getting ready to retire.'

From *The Struggle of Prayer* by Donald G. Bloesch

May the longings of your heart be filled by the presence of God's Spirit, sustained by the living Word of God, and fulfilled daily in Christ. I trust this year will be an especially rich one for you and yours...let's be sure to share the prayerful journey together. It's the only way we'll conquer the pride that's lodged deep within us and in need of full release.

Your Colleague, Brother and Friend,



Stephen A. Macchia, D.Min.

Founder and President

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“A HEART TO HEART
CONVERSATION
WITH EVERY
MEMBER OF THE
CONGREGATION”

www.HealthyChurch.net



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