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LEARNING TO BE CALM IN THE STORM

Abstract
When the level of anxiety goes up in a congregation and the clergy leader becomes anxious, that leader tends to revert to old family patterns and ways of functioning. Clergy persons without an awareness of their habitual patterns and reactivity often exercise their leadership in unhealthy ways that are damaging to their congregations. This qualitative case study described eight positive changes in the leadership attitudes and practices of clergy who took a Clergy Family Systems training which included theoretical content and experiential learning exercises. This article includes one of the three composite narratives that were used to reveal the real-life experiences of the 14 clergy persons who applied these concepts personally and professionally. Three years after the training these clergy were interviewed and found to be stronger leaders who were not only less reactive, less blaming and more calm themselves, but were also more calming to others even in anxious circumstances.

Keywords: *Family Systems, Anxiety, Reactivity, Calm, Clergy, Training, Composite Narratives*

"I'm Finished!"

"I've completely blown it now! I'm finished! I'm going to have to find another job." Carl sounded more distressed than I (Mike) had ever heard him before.

"Whoa! What's going on, man? What's happened?" I asked.

"I'm just *so* stupid! I don't understand it. Why is this happening to me? Any pastor should know better! You just can't do things like that and be a pastor! I've just completely blown it, Mike." It seemed Carl couldn't stop himself from a fast, steady stream of frustrated phrases. His voice alternated between the sound of hot self-contempt and drained-empty despair.

Carl was pastoring several states away and had been struggling in

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his pastorate, where he had been for almost two years. The previous pastor there had resigned the ministry. We had been talking "shop" together on the phone every couple of weeks lately, so I knew his anxiety had been growing with various challenges he had been facing in the congregation. But I had no idea what had just happened that brought him to such a hopeless state.

"Can you tell me what's just happened, Carl?" I queried carefully. It was after 10:00 pm and the Caller ID showed he was calling from his church office.

"Yes, I'll tell you. I just 'told off' a lady on my church board, stormed out of the board meeting, and slammed the door behind me! Stupidist thing you've ever heard of, right?" Carl finally stopped for a moment and took a breath, waiting for me to confirm that he was indeed "finished" as a pastor.

"Wow. That sounds pretty tough. But, I have to tell you, Carl, I honestly don't think you'll win the prize for 'stupidest.' I have heard some pretty stupid ones, and I've done quite a few myself." I tried to be just a little bit lighthearted and also join him as one who has made plenty of mistakes, too. "Can you tell me how this all came about?"

As the story came out, I learned that while Carl had been getting more and more worried about some of the church issues, most of his leaders seemed to be getting more "on edge" also. The overall anxiety level in the church was getting pretty high. As he listed things off, I realized that they had recently experienced a number of the most common triggers of anxiety in congregations (Steinke, 2006, pp. 15-17). In the process, one woman in particular, Mrs. Robins, was really getting under Carl's skin. She was becoming a real problem to him. He described how it seemed that she just had a way of somehow triggering some of his worst reactivity. Carl had enough awareness to realize that the financial problem they were wrestling with wasn't bad enough to warrant the kind of reactivity he was feeling towards her.

"I know this sounds really strange," Carl said hesitatingly, "but it is almost as if this woman holds some hidden combination—of, I don't know, maybe facial expressions, tones of voice, phrases, body language, or emotions, or *something*—that magically unlocks some secret vault of frustration and anger inside of me that just blasts out! It's like I can't even stop it!" Carl paused for a moment. "Now I sound *really* stupid, don't I?"

"No, Carl, you don't." I tried to choose my words carefully because he had obviously just risked a lot to try to somehow put this huge and painful frustration into words. "I'm hearing that you have just been through a very painful experience that is really embarrassing and humiliating to you, and you feel like you've messed up bigger than ever. Is that right?"

"Yep."

"But what I'm *also* hearing is that instead of just blaming the 'trouble-making Mrs. Robins' for what's going on, you are *insightful* enough to realize that there is something about this situation that is *in you.* Something you are probably responsible for—that 'vault' you mentioned—but that you just don't understand it or know how to handle it. Is that right, too?"

"Yeah, I guess it is," Carl said slowly.

"I'm guessing that if you thought there was some way to figure out that 'vault' and how that 'combination' works and how you could deal with it in a positive way, you would pursue that with all you're worth. Wouldn't you?" I asked.

"You bet I would!" Carl said with a slight bit of hope in his voice. "I would rather *quit the ministry* than go through anything like this again, and yet I do *not* want to walk away from the calling that God has given me, either."

For the next few minutes I asked a few more clarifying questions and then shared with Carl a very brief synopsis of a way of understanding and dealing with the very church relationship dynamics he had just related to me. It's called Clergy Family Systems Theory, and it can bring tremendous relief to clergy who are struggling like Carl was. For some, the symptoms are less dramatic and often get overlooked or passed off as something else or blamed on someone else. For others it can be even *more* disruptive and painful. Fortunately, the results of my recent research bears good news for clergy like Carl who find themselves in difficulties in anxious times (Aufderhar, 2010). Clergy who took training in Clergy Family Systems and applied it in their personal lives and in their professional ministry were more calm and less reactive—along with six other positive changes in their leadership attitudes and practices.

What Is Clergy Family Systems Theory?

Clergy Family Systems Theory is built on the Family Systems Theory of

Murray Bowen (1966, 1978; Bowen & Sagar, 1997; Kerr & Bowen, 1988), which is commonly known as "Bowen Theory." The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, also known as the Georgetown Family Center, continues to carry on Bowen's work since his death in 1990. The Bowen Center website briefly describes Bowen's theory this way:

> Bowen family systems theory is a theory of human behavior that views the family as an emotional unit and uses systems thinking to describe the complex interactions in the unit. It is the nature of a family that its members are intensely connected emotionally. . . . The connectedness and reactivity make the functioning of family members interdependent. A change in one person's functioning is predictably followed by reciprocal changes in the functioning of others. (Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, 2009, para. 2)

It is this system interrelatedness that has significantly changed the shape of family therapy ever since. Other authors have tried to help readers get an image of this interrelatedness by using various visual illustrations or metaphors. John Bradshaw (1996) demonstrated the concept of a dynamic homeostatic principle by using a mobile of a family. After starting the mobile moving, he would point out how it would always come to rest with the various pieces in basically the same balanced relationship with each other as before. Virginia Satir (1972) also used the mobile analogy, stressing that all family members must be taken into consideration to understand the type of balance (or homeostasis) that exists within a family.

Bowen (1978) describes typical relationship patterns, or habitual ways of relating, that family members take on to keep the family "in balance." This "balance" isn't necessarily healthy. It just means that everyone in the family continues to play their part to keep things the way they are. These patterns become so habitual that they are done without thinking, and the same patterns tend to get played out by the individual even when they are interacting in a completely different system of relationships.

Rabbi Edwin H. Friedman took Bowen Theory and began to look at how it might apply not only in clergy families, and in the families of congregations, but also how it might apply to the larger "family of God" or the congregation. As he studied further, he found the application to be extremely insightful and helpful. Friedman's (1985) landmark work, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*, is what really started the wealth of literature we now have on Clergy Family Systems. Friedman's thesis was this:

> All clergymen and clergywomen, irrespective of faith, are simultaneously involved in three distinct families whose emotional forces interlock: the families within the congregations, our congregations, and our own. Because the emotional process in all of these systems is identical, unresolved issues in any one of them can produce symptoms in the others, and increased understanding of any one creates more effective functioning, in all three. (p. 1)

Friedman goes on to show that employing the models and approaches of Bowen Family Systems Theory "will demonstrate how the same understanding of family life that can aid us in our pastoral role also has important ramifications for the way we function in our congregations" (p. 1). He addresses the dynamics and implications for each of the clergy's "three families"—the families within the congregation, the congregation as a family system, and the personal families of the clergy.

Valuable case studies, additional research, and metaphoric descriptions of these Family Systems concepts applied to clergy and congregations have been added to Friedman's work to give clergy even better foundations for applying it (see Herrington, Creech, & Taylor, 2003; Richardson, 1996, 2005; Steinke, 1993, 1996, 2006).

Speaking as a clergy person himself, Ron Richardson (2005) sums up the basic theory from Bowen through Friedman this way:

> Our development and experience within our family of origin is a major but usually hidden component of how we function emotionally within our congregations as pastors. The family we grew up in is the first, most powerful, longest lasting and nearly indelible training we get for how to be a part of a group and to function within it. While our later professional training adds a layer of sophistication and expertise that normally serves us well in ministry, *when the level of anxiety goes up in a congregation and we become anxious,* we tend to revert to our old family patterns and ways of functioning. In some cases this will be a good thing. (p. ix, emphasis added)

Obviously, there are other times when it will not be good at all. But becoming aware of these patterns (like the one Carl discovered in the story above) and finding ways to keep the good and replace the not so good will help us to apply this theory to improve clergy leadership in our congregations—even in anxious times.

Does It Work?

Naturally, when I (Mike) first learned about this theory, what I wanted to know was, does it really work? Fortunately, I had an opportunity to join a continuing education program for clergy that taught and coached

clergy persons in applying this theory in their current ministry contexts. I took the opportunity to make it both a personal and professional growth experience as well as a research project.

The training program was offered by the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (LPTS) in Louisville, Kentucky. The first year of the program, called "Family Systems Seminar," was offered as continuing education for practicing clergy of all denominations. It also offered a track for Doctor of Ministry students to take it for elective credits. This seminar met monthly from the fall of 1999 through the spring of 2000. Then an advanced seminar was offered in 2002-2003. The subjects of my study were those who had participated in both the first-year program and the advanced seminar.

The clergy came from many different backgrounds and experiences. Denominations represented included Baptist, Catholic, Church of God in Christ, Episcopal, Lutheran, non-denominational, Presbyterian, Quaker, Unitarian, United Methodist, and Seventh-day Adventist. The age span was from the mid-20s to the early 60s and included both male and female clergy.

Content on the theory was covered in class and experiential learning exercises were conducted in small groups in which there was plenty of time for dialogue. Participants took time to diagram their *own* family trees and discuss the relationship patterns found there. Emphasis was always put on the participants discovering their own role in the patterns they identified through questions: To what degree does the anxiety of another upset me? How much do I depend on another's calmness or happiness to make me calm or happy? How well am I able to stay connected to people and take a position when the emotional atmosphere is intense? To what degree am I able to be neutral, refuse to blame or diagnose others, and refuse to take other's reactions and behavior personally? (Herrington et al., 2003, p. 25).

In the advanced program, most of the time was invested in participants taking turns bringing case studies from their own ministry situations, analyzed against the background of the personal family work they had done earlier. Attendance stayed strong throughout the program and clergy expressed great appreciation for the experience.

Nearly three years later, I selected this topic for my dissertation research project. I got all the appropriate academic approvals to conduct person-to-person interviews to explore the results in these clergy

persons' lives after three more years of applying the theory in their own families and ministries. I was able to interview 14 out of the original 17 participants for this qualitative case study. The interviews were transcribed and imported into MaxQDA2 Qualitative software, where they were coded and analyzed for emerging themes, using the constant comparative method of data analysis (Merriam, 1998, p. 159). Methods used to enhance internal validity included triangulation, member checks, peer examination, and "clarifying the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study" (p. 205).

To present the data as realistically and "life-like" as possible and still carefully protect the identity of the participating clergy, three composite narratives were created that drew from the actual data of all 14 participants. While all names, most places, and even denominational references were changed to protect the privacy of these individuals, the creation of three blended stories protects them further still, allowing their voices to be heard. Hearing these voices through the stories allows the reader to form an image of how leadership attitudes and practices change in clergypersons who come to understand and personally apply Family Systems Theory to the congregational context and their leadership as clergy. This image provides readers the ability to assess for themselves whether the results of this analysis fit a particular situation (Eisner, 1998, p. 199), thus providing external validity or generalizability. Following is one of the three stories from this study.

Greg's Story: Reacting No More!

"I just can't believe how well that turned out! I mean, six months ago, I thought it was all over for me here," Pastor John said as he and his mentor, Pastor Greg, walked out to the parking lot.

"You handled the meeting well," Greg said.

"Thanks, Greg. I guess that is part of it, too. I actually feel like I *did* do a good job handling the meeting. I'm coming out feeling positive, and I'm not anxious about what is going to happen next. I'm just not worried about it! You know, my wife used to *hate* board meeting nights because I would come home all worked up about what had happened and practically terrified about what might happen next. I would be worried about what Mr. Sanatuli thought, or wondering what Mrs. Doubletree would say to her sisters and the ladies at the quilting club, or what someone else might be griping about even though they didn't say a

word about it in the meeting. I would be so anxious about everything that it would make my wife anxious, too. Then in the angst of all our discussion about it we would forget about our kids and wind up putting them to bed late without having worship or doing anything with and for them. I didn't really understand then why it seemed like the kids would wind up getting stressed and would cry over some dumb little thing that wasn't even related. That would make me angry and I'd snap at them, and *then* I would feel bad about *that* and worry that maybe my ministry wasn't good for our kids! What a mess!" John finished with a big sigh.

"Those were some tough nights, weren't they?" Greg said gently.

"They sure were. Talk about *emotional systems!* We were living a textbook case of how intertwined and unhealthy systems can get. I'm glad I'm not still there."

"You know what I think is great about how you feel about this meeting tonight?" asked Greg.

"What?" John was curious.

"You feel good about the meeting, but it's not because everybody agreed on everything and so there was nothing to argue about. There were different opinions and very different viewpoints, and yet you handled it well, and you stayed clear about yourself and your leadership role in the meeting. You weren't all entangled in the seaweed of the congregation's emotional system. You were standing strong as yourself, with your views, and yet you were gentle, open, and still connected with the people."

"For example," Greg put his hand on John's shoulder to add emphasis to his next phrase, "Mr. Sanatuli really wasn't happy about the worship committee's request, was he?"

"No, he wasn't," John said with a chuckle. "But the great thing about that is that his 'unhappiness' didn't hook me and cause me to veer off course and later wonder what happened to me."

"That's exactly what I mean, John! You listened respectfully. You let him have his say, you still kept firm with your position, and you let the board make their vote. That is an example of what self-differentiation looks like! Then you set the board up—not to vote according to *your* opinion—but to understand that they could hear *all* the different opinions and still vote what they each believed was best for the church. That was nudging *them* to act in a self-differentiated way. You weren't manipulating or arm-twisting. *And,* you weren't letting anybody else do

that, either! Hey, I've got to get on the road, John, but I'm really glad I came and sat in on your meeting with you tonight. I'm really proud of how you're doing." Pastor Greg gave Pastor John an encouraging slap on the back and opened his car door. "Keep up the good work, and I'll be interested to hear how the first week with two services goes. Let me know, OK?"

"Oh, I'll definitely keep you up to date all the way along," John said.

Greg got in his car and started it up for the drive home. As he pulled out of the church parking lot, he realized he was smiling. Yes, he felt good about the meeting, too. He felt good because it had been fun to help John make some changes that were paying off in his ministry. He also felt good because it reminded him of himself a bit—and all the changes that he had made over the last several years.

Ever since Greg had gotten into the training program on Family Systems Theory at LPTS, he had done a lot of thinking, studying, praying, and changing. He had had quite a number of "Aha!" experiences as he studied and put the concepts into practice. He could easily remember when he had been sitting at the board table in his previous church across from a woman who seemed to have some unseen power to make him mess up in his leadership and then hate himself for it afterward. Now he understood why that happened. It had happened because he was unconsciously a part of the emotional system of the organization. He quite naturally played his own little part in the sick system. "His part" was one he was well-suited for because it was the "part" he had always played in his own family as he was growing up. So he knew it well. It felt comfortable, familiar, in a very frustrating way, and like he really did not know how to do any different. Now it was not that he consciously thought of all this and did it intentionally—not at all! In fact, his first step in changing had been simply to see and understand what was going on.

"The strange thing," Greg thought to himself, "was that even though I sort of knew that something was wrong, I always used to come to the conclusion that it had to do with what someone else did wrong, or how they behaved. It wasn't like I was *trying* to shift the blame—but I just didn't understand what *I* was contributing to the system and I had to come up with some explanation for what happened."

The Bowen Theory, or what is sometimes just called "Systems Thinking," was what had put all the puzzle pieces together for him in a

way that allowed him to understand what was happening. Then he began to be able to see his own patterns and be able to predict for himself how he would likely respond in various situations if he did not make an intentional effort to do otherwise. Once he could see that and understand the dynamics, then he was able to begin to work on interactions in his own original family tree. As he worked through this, he was able to apply it in the system relationships at work and in his current nuclear family with his wife and two daughters.

"It's just like the professor kept saying in our clergy class at the seminary," Greg thought. "'When you move higher on the scale of self-differentiation, you are less of a conduit for passing anxiety on through your systems—of whatever kind.' So when I learned to be more differentiated in my family of origin, I was less anxious in all the systems I function in—work and home especially, and in turn I wasn't as impacted by others' anxiety and I passed much less on through the system."

Just then Greg's cell phone rang. The Bach Sonata ring tone meant it was his daughter Christy calling.

"Hi, honey. How are you doing?"

"Great, Dad. How are you?"

"I'm good. I'm driving home happy tonight."

"Where have you been today?"

"I had a meeting with Pastor John down in Millersburg. It was a good meeting."

"Oh, that's great, Dad." Christy hesitated like she had something more serious to talk about than this small talk.

"What's on your mind tonight, Christy?" Greg asked.

"Oh, not much, Dad." She paused and then went on cautiously, "I just thought I'd tell you about something I did today, uh, I mean . . . got done today. It's no big deal or anything. . . . Just something I thought I'd tell you about before you got home—that's all."

Greg thought something sounded familiar about his daughter's approach on the phone. It kind of sounded like her old way of trying to break some foreboding news to him gently over the phone—rather than in person so as to avoid getting the full brunt of his blowup right in her face. It saddened Greg a bit to realize that this had been necessary. For many years he had been very reactive to his daughters—and he felt bad about that—especially as he realized that she had been forced to come up with this well-planned strategy just to talk with him about difficult

subjects on which they might disagree. Here she was 19 now, and according to societal norms she wouldn't even *have* to talk to him about it—whatever "it" was.

Suddenly Greg realized there had been a several-second pause, so he quickly spoke up. "So, you just wanted to talk to me about it while I was at a safe distance, is that it?" he said with a chuckle.

"Oh, no, it's not *that,* Dad."

"Oh, okay."

"It's just that . . . well, uh . . . okay, yes, I guess it is that, Dad. I'm sorry."

"Oh, you don't have to apologize, honey. I understand. I know my history."

"Well, I *am* sorry, Dad, because I know you're not like that anymore—well, at least *hardly at all!* But sometimes I kind of forget and I just do things like I always used to—just kind of out of habit, I think. But I really don't mean to be saying I don't trust you, or that I'm afraid of you or anything. I'm really not, Dad. I really like what all that 'systems junk' has done to you."

"Well that's nice to hear, honey. Thank you. Thanks for being such a good sport as your poor old Dad has tried to change."

"Well, I know I've had to do a little changing and adjusting too, so it's okay. And I really don't want to stay stuck in my old habits, either. So, I'll tell you what, Dad. How about we end this call, and I'll just wait 'til you get home to tell you about my new belly button ring! Okay?"

"Belly button ring!?!" Greg was truly surprised but responded with a light-hearted mock outburst, "What kind of lame-brained, ridiculous, outlandish, ludicrous, weird, hillbilly, hippie, insane kind of thing is that to do??"

Greg's "outburst" was so over-exaggerated and long-winded that Christy just burst out laughing. They both laughed together as Greg tried to go on with some more feigned rage but soon ran out of steam and words.

"Okay, Dad. That was pretty funny, and I'm glad you can be so easy-going about it. I really am. But I also want to know what you really think."

"You really want to know what I think?"

"Yeah, Dad. I do."

"Well, my dear . . ." Greg chose his words carefully. He realized that this really could have been a huge issue between them a year or two

before this. He was thankful that he really did not feel uptight or stressed out about it. He actually felt calm inside, and he wanted to be honest and say what was really true for him but to do it from this place of calm. He felt that she really wanted to know and was willing to hear—that was kind of amazing in itself. He sensed that she actually felt pretty safe asking him—and so he wanted to respond with complete honesty in a gentle and loving way.

"I think you know that I think you are a *very* beautiful young woman." He stopped as if that was all he had to say.

"I know, Dad. Go on."

"And I think you're plenty beautiful without adding anything more to yourself." He paused briefly and then went on. "I think you also know that I'm not generally in favor of people poking holes in their bodies for such things. But I also want you to know that I love you dearly, and if that is something you want to do, it really is completely up to you—it's your decision. And it is not going to make me love you any less—nothing you do could make me love you less. You know that, right?"

"Yes, Dad. I do. But I really want you to see it, and I hope, well, I guess I kind of hope you'll like it."

"Well, I promise you this, dear, I'll look at it and appropriately admire it, and whatever I think of it, I'll still like *you*. Okay?"

"Okay. Yeah, I guess that's really good enough. Thanks," she said with a little bit of sheepish embarrassment. "So, you're not really mad at me, are you, Dad?" She asked the question even though she really knew the answer already. She just wanted to hear him say it again.

"I am *not* mad at you, honey. I love you 'ooodles!' You're a lovely young adult woman moving out into the world, and you will make some decisions that may not be the same as I would make. But that doesn't make you wrong and me right, or you bad and me good. It means we sometimes choose differently."

"I know, Dad."

"I know you know. I just wanted to say it again."

"Thanks."

"Well, I'm almost home. Did you guys have something good to eat tonight? I'm starved."

"Julie made some spinach ravioli tonight, and there's still some left for you."

"Mmmm. That sounds awesome! See you soon. Love you."

"Bye, Dad."

Greg closed his cell phone, smiling to himself and kind of chuckling as he turned off the highway onto his street. He was so thankful for the things he had learned. Some of his friends still liked to bug him a bit about how "into" this theory he was, but he remembered Roberta Gilbert's (2006) comment that "the better one is able to understand theory, the more one can use it and the more it becomes a way of thinking about life" (pp. 42-43). Greg was pleased with the changes this theory had made so far in his life.

He pulled into the garage and put the car in park. "Here I go!" he said to himself, "Belly button rings and spinach ravioli!"

Results

Greg's story reveals many of the key findings of my study on Clergy Family Systems Training and how it changes clergy leadership attitudes and practices (Aufderhar, 2010). It also shows the kinds of changes that Carl (from the opening story) can anticipate if he chooses to pursue personal and professional growth in this way.

Participants in the LPTS training stated a very high *Overall Value* that the training had for them. They indicated that Clergy Family Systems Theory provided a way of looking at things and dealing with challenges that they would continue to value throughout their lives. Here are just a few of their statements:

"It was very apparent, very quickly, that the course was exactly what I needed. . . . The most significant learning for me was just how connected my family-of-origin stuff is with how I approach ministry, even when I don't want it to be."

"This learning experience has had the deepest impact of any continuing education I've done. It has opened up a whole new way of looking at things."

"It has changed my direction. . . . You can't be a [denominational administrator] these days without understanding systems."

"Out of all the resources available to me, this is the most consistently utilized."

Participants were found to be *More Aware of Systems* and to be *More Aware of Self*. When they saw the concepts of the theory playing out in real life around them, they were then more aware of how they personally

played into it as well.

Their attitudes and practices had indeed changed since participating in the LPTS program. These changes showed up in their being *Less Reactive, Less Anxious, Less Entangled, Less Taking Things Personally, Less Blaming, More Understanding, More Calm,* and even *More Calming* to others. These changes took place both in their families and in their leadership in their congregations.

Based on these positive findings alone, it would seem obvious that this is an experiential educational process that has great potential to dramatically improve the health of clergy leadership and the health of congregations as well. The improvement comes through clergy being willing to take a serious look at their own emotional process, their own families, and their own families of origin. They will find habitual patterns of functioning that increase anxiety and decrease healthy function, and others that will be strengths that can be built upon. As they become aware of these patterns and take steps to begin to shift them, this cannot help but improve the corresponding health of the congregations that they serve.

It is good that much effort goes into training pastors in many things that will be helpful in their future leadership of congregations. But as Ron Richardson (2005) points out, training in Clergy Family Systems takes things to the next level:

> Experience teaches us, through some unfortunate but dramatic pastoral examples in recent years, that it is not just biblical or theological knowledge or level of piety or amount of prayer or depth of devotion or particular pastoral skills that lead to a successful ministry. Success also has to do with a pastor's level of emotional maturity. (p. 2)

Training, coaching and support in Clergy Family Systems can help to increase this level of emotional maturity that is so necessary in the anxious times in which we live.

Leading in the Midst of Anxious Times

We who have witnessed or experienced the pains of *dys*-functioning clergy and congregations long to see greater health and more functional relationships in our churches. And this is not just something that "would be nice." Neither does it have quite the same meaning as a hotel chain wanting their employees to be more courteous and polite so that they can get more customers and make more money. As followers of

God, we believe it is crucial to our mission to the world that we represent Him well by fulfilling Jesus' own words, "All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:35).

Herrington et al. (2003) point out what would have to happen for this to be what the world sees in our congregations:

> Pastors must first focus on managing themselves rather than managing others and begin to think in a different way about how people in living systems affect each other. As pastors learn to manage themselves, they can lead more calmly in the midst of anxious times. (p. 66)

Pastors who have been willing to prayerfully humble themselves and seek this growth through Clergy Family Systems training have become stronger leaders who are not only less reactive, less blaming and more calm, but are also more calming to others. What church couldn't use *that* in their church family?

One pastor described this training as "the best tool in my ministry toolbox." May pastors and those who lead, train, or coach pastors, do whatever they can to see that this tool becomes "standard equipment" in many more ministry toolboxes around the globe!

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