



## Formation

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### Pastoral Leadership



When we talk about “pastoral leadership,” what does the word “leadership” imply? Since the egalitarian kerfuffles of the 60s there has been significant ambivalence around pastoral leadership. Many of us have been unwilling to offer strong leadership, and many have been unwilling to receive it.

Strong, skilled and intentional leadership is required both by churches and orchestras.

Imagine an orchestra playing Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. Every musician is focused on the musical score with one eye on the conductor. Each section of the orchestra joins in at just the right time in perfect harmony. Bows are drawn over strings. Cellos are plucked. Lips blow streams of air into woodwinds. There is music. Beethoven’s Fifth comes alive!

In what ways does an orchestra conductor illustrate effective pastoral leadership?

Both pastor and conductor have to “know the score.” A good conductor will have more than a head-knowledge of Beethoven or Brahms. Likewise, a pastor will bring a deep commitment to know the Scripture and the heart of the text being preached or taught. The conductor is called to conduct the whole orchestra. It will not do to ignore the first violins or the ‘little man’ who plays the triangle! Likewise, the pastor’s attention will be taken by the whole flock.

Both conductor and pastor have to actually lead. However, some of us have pulled back; we are no longer leading. We have put down the baton and joined the orchestra. We have concluded that the best way to lead is by example, so we are blending in with the trombones, hoping that others will lead. Some have grown tired of the bad music our orchestra is playing. They will not stay with the score. Nor will they practice. Some are even playing from the wrong score! They have concluded that if there is going to be good music, “I am the one who will play it.” So, they have begun doing free-lance solo work.

Some of us may be feeling tempted to step down because we are discouraged with our own grasp of the score.

Pastoral leadership is a priestly craft that is conducted from that perilous, vulnerable place-between: between God and the people. There the pastor prays to God on behalf of the people and speaks to the people on behalf of God. From that in-between place the pastor administers communion and offers spiritual direction, counsel and healing. There, pastoral leadership is exercised as spiritual direction for the congregation. There, Paul’s description of pastoral leadership is fulfilled.

*The gifts he gave were that some would be ...pastors and teachers...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of the son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.*

Then beautiful music will be heard!

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