

October 2004, *Equipping*



***Pastors and leaders, I strongly encourage you to offer leadership in prayer and advocacy for the Mennonite Church of Vietnam. Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang continues to suffer imprisonment. See the MC Canada web-site for information.***

“End-runs” and empowering leadership

End-runs can be dazzling bits of magic on a football field, illustrating great athletic skill and brilliant game strategy; but in church leadership practice, end-runs are guaranteed to lead to major losses all around.

An end-run is when the chairman of the church council ignores the deacon of management when he chooses and orders the new paint for the fellowship hall. A pastor does an end-run when she announces to the congregation a new community visitation program without first discerning the new venture with the deacon of outreach or the church council.

End-runs are often motivated out of a sincere desire to see a valued plan or program burst out of the starting blocks. But more often, end-runs come out of impatient unwillingness to work through a process involving time and discernment. We are not willing to work through a committee process, to put up with others critiquing our pet ideas. We want to start our program ... now!

When end-runs are pulled off by pastors over program heads, or program heads over committee members, the ones who are experiencing the end-run being done to them, wonder “what happened?” Did my pastor not consider my competence sufficient to even consult with me before going ahead with his plan, even though I am supposed to be in charge of that department?

The deadly thing about the end-run is that as a pastor or over-seeer you send the signal to your staff or program-heads that they are incompetent and that you do not trust them. End-runs are an effective strategy for under-mining confidence in your leaders.

As pastors and leaders, we are called to empowering leadership. Empowering leaders:

1. Share their vision until the group owns the vision as their own.
2. Identify and develop the leadership gifts of the group.
3. Prepare the group to mobilize the vision.
4. Equip the group with the resources they need to do the job.
5. Miss no opportunity to affirm and encourage.

*Sven Eriksson  
Denominational Minister*