



LARRY PEERS

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Larry Peers is a consultant for the Alban Institute. Prior to his work at Alban, Larry served as a director of congregational development and growth with a national denominational office for ten years, as a minister in a local congregations, and as a therapist. He has worked on several national congregational research projects and most recently on the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence project, funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc.

Larry draws from a rich array of insights and methods developed from his extensive background in congregational studies, organizational development, large-group interventions, coaching, narrative therapy, and spiritual discernment processes. His personal spiritual journey encompasses a wide variety of experiences that enable him to comfortably move within a broad range of faith traditions.

PHILOSOPHY OF PRACTICE

Congregations are places to grow the soul and influence something broader than ourselves. They are places where people are encouraged to fulfill their potential, to pursue a deeper relationship with God, and to offer a prophetic witness or externally-focused service.

In my work with congregations and religious organizations in various faith traditions, I take an integrative and comprehensive approach, often focusing

on identifying strengths and building capacity. This usually involves leading the whole system of the congregation to take a panoramic view of its own history, its contextual challenges, and its possible futures so that it can own its new directions. I work with clergy to engage them in taking up new leadership practices and the soul work that can re-center and revitalize their ministry.

I consider my consulting with a congregation to be successful when the congregation can move forward into its future with a big-picture perspective, engage in illuminating dialogue on significant questions, analyze their situation from various perspectives, and commit to a purpose that focuses on their own unique calling. Along the way, congregations often find that conflict can often be transformed into a constructive and strengthening experience.

AREAS OF FOCUS

- **Congregational Planning and Visioning:** To help congregations create a common vision and discern the strategic directions that will get them to it, I often use a large-group intervention, which is similar to a future search conference or an appreciative inquiry summit. This approach brings together stakeholders from across the congregation, including the young and old, the new and the established. Together the whole congregation participates in a process of gathering information about the congregation and the community, interpreting discoveries, and drawing conclusions. Integral to this approach is building the capacity of a congregation's membership to listen, learn, analyze, and discern together.
- **Conflict Transformation:** Transforming conflict is all about helping people have conversations they haven't had before so they can get to places of new agreement and move forward. By conducting interviews and creating forums for what I call "essential conversations," I help congregations and their leaders move from reactivity to responsiveness on to reconciliation.
- **Multiple Staff and Board Development:** My work with multiple staffs and with boards is tailored to the specific developmental and situational needs of the staff or lay leadership team. In congregations, middle judicatories, and national denominational offices, I help build effective working relationships and address concerns that inhibit leadership potential.
- **Theme Speaker and Presenter:** I have been the theme presenter at numerous national and regional conferences on topics related to leadership and "deep change," congregational growth and renewal, and innovative approaches to ministry.
- **Clergy Coaching and Clergy Retreats:** I work with clergy retreats, seminars, or one-on-one, focusing on issues and challenges of leadership. In particular, I help clergy to do the soul work that accompanies each season of ministry and to help congregations address adaptive challenges.

EDUCATION

- B.A., Eckerd College
- M.A., Developmental Clinical Psychology, Antioch University
- M.T.S., Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts
- D.Min., Congregational Studies, Hartford Seminary, Hartford, Connecticut
- Ed.D., Organizational Change, Pepperdine University, Malibu, California

ARTICLES

- "Preventing Burnout in Board Members", 2005, Issue 61, *Alban Weekly*
- "Creating a Vision that Makes a Difference", Winter 2005, *Congregations*
- "Re-Creating Congregational Stories: Insights from Narrative Therapy", Fall 2005, *Congregations*
- "The Truth Shall Make You . . . Odd: Seizing the Authentic Moment in Congregations", Spring 2004, *Congregations*