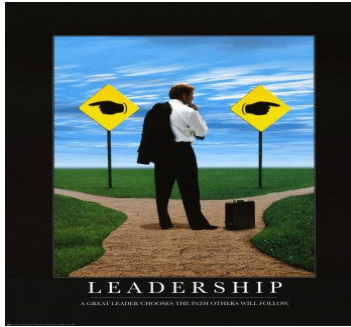


## THE HIDDEN STORM



It is no secret that the past decade has been a tumultuous one for the Church of the Brethren. Same gender marriage and other social and political issues have dominated our time and competed for resources.

During that same decade, seismic shifts have occurred in the availability and calling of pastoral leadership. When I first became District Executive Minister in August 2012 it was not unusual to hand a congregational search committee five to seven qualified pastoral profiles from various regions of the denomination. Indeed, candidates would take the initiative and request their profile be shared with specific congregations.

This is no longer the case. The Shenandoah District Placement Team and I consider ourselves fortunate if we come to search committees with one or two pastoral profiles in hand. It is also unusual to be able to share profiles from other Church of the Brethren Districts. Candidates are frequently relocating within their district of origin.

This is the hidden denominational storm which will have significant long-term impact. Congregational vitality is much simpler than we sometimes think. Yes indeed, there are multiple complex reasons, not related to leadership, which impact the health of a congregation and the faith community's future. However, the simplest equation is still this: Strong, creative, committed, well-trained leadership continue to make a significant difference in congregational life. Without this leadership congregations will flounder.

I have shared on multiple occasions that 75% of the District Executive Minister's role should be spent in the development and call of leadership. There is no other arena of responsibility that is equal to this in potential impact on District and Denominational life.

I will be sharing various ideas around aspects of leadership call and development in future communications, e.g., reshaping educational models. Following, however, is a brief description of efforts already underway to reconfigure our District Leadership Team(s) to reflect our common commitment to this task. These revisions have begun to take shape over the past months and will be acted upon by the District Leadership Team prior to District Conference 2019. We look forward to sharing these with the delegate body. These include but are not exclusive to:

1. Changing and narrowing the focus of the existing *Leadership and Spiritual Formation Team* to that of assisting congregations to create a culture of call. This means helping congregations to look within their own membership for developing potential pastoral/lay leadership (This team will be renamed to mirror that change of focus).
2. Creation of a *Discipleship Ministries Team* to assist pastors and congregations in building practices of encouragement and nurture for their pastors. This team, with District staff assistance, will examine in depth programming and support that builds sustainable pastoral ministries.
3. Creation of a *New Church Development Team* to encourage and develop the gifts of pastoral entrepreneurship in creation of new ministry opportunities. This team will be especially focused on cross-cultural partnerships.

It is with joy and delight that I believe the Shenandoah District is ready to embark upon this endeavor. This will require our very best thinking and seeking God together. I invite you to this task.

Serving Christ Together  
John Jantzi  
District Executive Minister