

## Post-Modernity and Organizations

In pondering leadership in congregations and other faith-based communities or agencies, it is important to ask: How are organizations affected by the forces of post-modernity and what administrative questions arise? Consider the following as a “primer” for discussion:

There could be clues to how denominations will fare in a post-modern world or a modern/post-modern mix, by looking at how organizations in general might be affected. William Berquist offers such a view. In his book, *Post-Modern Organization* (1993), Berquist describes the effects of these developments on five aspects of organizational life. The issues have to do with:

- Size and complexity—Can the center hold?
- Mission and boundaries—Who are we?
- Leadership—Who moves us and how?
- Communication—How do we tell our story?
- Capital and worker values—What matters in this organization?

The bottom line is that the post-modern organization will need to be clear about purpose and identity, develop creative ways to build community around identity and purpose, and strengthen ways to handle internal disagreement and conflict while moving together towards a shared future. And in what seems like a contradiction, boundaries will have to be drawn that are simultaneously porous and inclusive. This challenge for post-modern organizations applies to mainline denominations . . .<sup>1</sup>

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Are our identity and purpose clear and supported?
2. Are we building community around identity and purpose?
3. Are mechanisms in place to handle internal disagreement and conflict?
4. Are we moving toward a shared future?
5. Are the boundaries of our congregation or organization *porous* (people can enter and become participants) and *inclusive* (we know who we are and have expectations and standards) at the same time?

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<sup>1</sup> The citation is from: Robert Bacher and Kenneth Inskip, *Chasing Down a Rumor: The Death of Mainline Denominations* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Books 2005), 31-32. Used by permission of Augsburg Fortress Publishers.