

Strategies for Effective Pastoral Leadership

The Basics

I cannot imagine navigating the challenging and exciting journey of pastoral ministry without a mentor. Through the years, I have been blessed by the coaching of no less than a half dozen wise sages, colleagues and friends. I regularly use trusted cohorts as sounding boards, venting recipients, crazy idea testing, strategic thinking, prayerful discerning, accountability keeping, and unconditional supporting.

Not long after I graduated from seminary, one of my professors approached me and said, “Two final words of advice: 1) Don’t do stupid stuff, and 2) Love them! Love them! Love them!” These are critically important pastoral plumb lines which our mentors invariably help us keep front and center. The Basics!

Several months ago word spread about President Obama’s guiding foreign policy principle – “Don’t do stupid stuff” (that’s close enough to the original phrase). It’s neither sophisticated nor prescriptive, but it is a pretty good mantra! Be measured. Think twice. Share carefully on Facebook. Know that any email you send can be forwarded to others. Resist inflammatory language or mean spirited remarks. Forgive often and hold fewer grudges. Pay attention to clergy ethics and boundaries. Hold confidences as best you can. Pause 24 hours before answering an email or call that has you enraged. Easier said than done, I know! We’ve all failed plenty!! So . . . also give yourself the grace you need. We are God’s broken vessels, God’s sinful saints, God’s wounded healers. Basic 1 – avoid unnecessary mistakes.

Basic 2 – Love them. Love them. Love them. “A new commandment I give to you,” said Jesus, “that you love one another.” If your parishioners can count on one thing from you, let them lean on the trust that that you love them. Not some of them, all of them. Not some of the time, all of the time. You can disagree and disappoint, and people will give you that latitude if they sense down deep that you love them. This is more than an effective strategy for leadership . . . this is nothing short of the model Jesus gave us and the ultimate calling for those whom God has anointed as ministers of the Gospel.

Thanks for letting me share these thoughts about pastoral leadership. I hope to use them in more conversational ways in the coming months, especially in our cohort relationships (mentoring, coaching and Communities of Practice).

Namaste!

Franz

You can find all 10 Strategies for Effective Pastoral Leadership posts on Franz’s [Rev’d Up blog](#).