

General Board of Discipleship of  
The United Methodist Church  
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## THE GENERAL BOARD OF DISCIPLESHIP

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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*This is a periodic newsletter to resource  
FaithQuest congregational leaders.*

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## HAVE YOU MOVED?

Help us keep you in the FaithQuest network. Send your new email or ground mail address to [jnewell@gbod.org](mailto:jnewell@gbod.org), Joan Newell, General Board of Discipleship, PO Box 340003, Nashville, TN 37203-0003.

## Looking ahead ...

The FaithQuest website featuring new resources and lesson-by-lesson helps will launch later this summer. When you receive this newsletter, look for the new website at [www.faithquest.net](http://www.faithquest.net). (You will still be able to link to the FaithQuest site through [www.gbod.org](http://www.gbod.org).)

Share your experiences and discoveries as we build FaithQuest knowledge! We welcome email reflections, book reviews, and recommended website addresses that relate to FaithQuest.



**You can order FaithQuest materials toll-free at 877/899-2780, Ext. 7674.**

# FQ

## REVISED leader notebook available!

You asked for it, and now we've done it. The former leader's guide and supplemental notebook have been combined! The new leader notebook has added resources – music suggestions, a transcript of the video subtitles for Lesson 16, and teaching helps. You can replace your notebook pages for \$13: Call toll-free 877-899-2780, Ext. 7674 or email [jnewell@gbod.org](mailto:jnewell@gbod.org).

# FQ

## NEWS & NOTES FOR FAITH QUEST

# TOPICS

THEME:  
CHANGE AND  
CONFLICT  
(add to Tab B in your  
leader notebook)

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 5

SEPTEMBER 2001

## Facing Hard Issues

In 2000, I was Bible study teacher for a School of Christian Mission. I had agreed to what I assumed would be a pleasant study of First and Second Corinthians (I thought, "Oh, yes—the love chapter and being the body of Christ"). As I read the study guide, I discovered what you already know if you participated in last year's UMW Bible study: the study is all about conflict in the church!

The study guide focuses on the church at Corinth and invites participants to imagine what we don't have—the other side of the story. We don't have the letter Paul received from the people of Corinth—the letter he was responding to in the New Testament. What a contentious place Corinth was! Even today, in places where people are passionate about their faith, there is often contention!

Notice how Paul deals with hard issues at Corinth in the opening sentences of his letters. First, he directs attention to God. He greets people in God's name and reminds them that each is precious in God's sight. Then he deals with the contentious issues head on!



The articles and resources in this issue are intended to help you think about dealing with hard issues in your congregation. Guest writer Aileen Williams shares insights from her own experience in congregations.

*Betsey Heavner is Director of FaithQuest at the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, Nashville, TN. You can e-mail her at [bheavner@gbod.org](mailto:bheavner@gbod.org).*

## Leaders Respond to Difficult Issues

In *Leadership and the New Science* Margaret J. Wheatley describes "energy fields" that exist in organizations. We have all heard friends describe a church they visited as "friendly" or "cold." People form immediate impressions when they enter organizations. Unknowingly, they have testified to the presence of Wheatley's energy fields, which can feel positive or negative.

Most of us can remember attending a meeting where we felt an unspoken agenda was fueling the discussion, obstructing any creative work. Such an experience once happened in a FQ group that became stuck after a few sessions. With some skilled leading, the participants revealed unresolved conflict from an

incident that had happened in the church almost fifteen years before. The negative energy field from that incident was still being felt.

I have encountered tension-filled situations in several different congregations. A partial list includes drug abuse by a pastor, money misused by leaders, leadership clashes, and lay and clergy sexual misconduct. Most often, the issues surrounding these situations were not clearly identified and were not addressed in ways to build confidence and trust in the congregation. The result was a downward spiral of negative energy fields. People left the church. How many people exit the church because they feel harmed, diminished, or disillusioned due to silence and suppression of

information on crucial issues in the life of the community?

We can change a negative energy field by injecting **new positive energy**. This takes time and intent, but congregations, like individuals, can learn to deal with hard issues. And when they do, they discover new peace, stronger relationships, and transformation. What can leaders inject into a negative energy field to make a difference?

**Injection #1: Invite focused prayer.** Name the issues and ask the congregation to pray for God's guidance in resolving them. What they discern through prayer is vital to further discussion.

## IN THIS ISSUE

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*Continued on page 2*

**Injection #2: Ask critical questions** to reveal the values of the congregation: Is every member of equal importance? Do we provide ample settings for people to listen and to be heard? Do we acknowledge that disagreement will be part of our life together? Do we

*There were many divisive issues in the early church. Paul spoke directly about the issues. It is Paul's guidance and gentle reproof and the Holy Spirit that guided the early Christians—former Jews and Gentiles—to move beyond their conflicts. Paul's frequent admonitions about loving one another point to his awareness of the power of God's creative energy to transform the church.*

commit to one another in love and prayer even in disagreement?

**Injection #3: Communicate sources of accurate information.** Many conflicts grow in intensity because of assumptions and rumors concerning an incident or a decision. Where can participants go to get the facts?

**Injection #4: Help people distinguish between confidentiality and secrecy.** Parishioners appreciate confidentiality. They need to know the issues involved, but not personal details. Secrecy only creates further mistrust and feelings of betrayal.

**Injection #5: Choose trusted leaders to narrate the processes** to change the energy field in the congregation. Spiritual leaders

who yearn for the health of the congregation must be invited and encouraged to speak up. Like Paul, they will discover God's presence. They will sustain the efforts that help people move toward healing and creating positive energy fields in the congregation.

What is your experience with transforming a negative situation? Can you suggest other "injections"? Email comments to [bheavner@gbod.org](mailto:bheavner@gbod.org).



Aileen Williams, former lay leader (Minnesota Annual Conference) and missionary to Pakistan, has been a delegate to several General Conferences. She is on the Commission on 2004 General Conference.

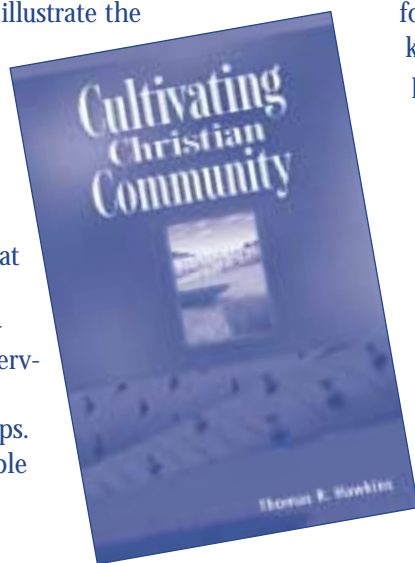
## The Bookshelf

### Cultivating Christian Community

Thomas R. Hawkins (Discipleship Resources, 2001)  
ISBN 0-88177-327-1

Hawkins' latest book is important reading for leaders who want to (1) transform existing committees and groups from activity-centered to faith-forming; (2) nurture the spiritual life and relationships in strong existing groups. Hawkins uses clear practical examples to illustrate the characteristics of faith-forming groups. You might have group members read one chapter before each meeting; then lead discussion by asking: What struck you as important in this chapter? How can we apply what we have learned to our group?

Recommended for accountable groups, covenant groups, service and support groups, study groups, and administrative groups. 112pp; \$15.95 (discount available for church professionals)  
Order online, [www.discipleshipresources.org](http://www.discipleshipresources.org), or by phone, 800-685-4370.



### Managing Church Conflict

Hugh F. Halverstadt  
(Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991)  
ISBN 0664251854

Note the title of this book—the author reinforces what experts know: Conflict, an ever-present sign of life and growth, is only *managed*, never totally *resolved*! Individual issues may be resolved, but new ones will always present themselves! Study *Managing Church Conflict* for basic information on and understanding of conflict in the church setting. Learn to deal with antagonists and collaborate effectively with opponents. *Managing Church Conflict* is available online (new and used)—to find the best prices, go to [www.bestwebbuys.com/books](http://www.bestwebbuys.com/books).



## Handling resistance to change

To the old saying, "Nothing is certain but death and taxes," we need to add **resistance!** That's the conclusion of a helpful article in the January/February 2000 *Circuit Rider* magazine (available online; go to [www.umph.org](http://www.umph.org) and click on *Circuit Rider*). The author is G. Robert Gary, former executive director of the Emory Center for Pastoral Services and Clinical Professor of Pastoral Care at Candler School of Theology. Bob now serves as pastoral counselor at the Georgia Association for Pastoral Counseling, Atlanta, GA. In 1998, he conducted training events for General Board of Discipleship staff. His ideas are represented in the material in Tab B of your FaithQuest leader notebook.

In the *Circuit Rider* article, Bob describes resistance in the church and practical helps for leaders. He adds an adaptation of information from Peter Block's book *Flawless Consulting* to remind leaders of the critical need to be both professional and pastoral with resistance. This task is hard for church leaders who are tempted to "fix things" and "keep the peace." Leaders need to be constantly growing in faith and knowledge to handle this difficult task.



## FaithQuest Photos



FaithQuest trainers met in Nashville to improve both the FaithQuest training and their skills. Clockwise, starting at 12 o'clock, are Dave Kruse, Barbara Heywood, Linda Wiberg, Betsy Heavner, George Olive, Pete Kufek, Steve Poole, Mike Bealla, Steve Blazina, Naomi Garcia, and top left is Greg Crispel.



Leaders in Southwest Texas Conference prepare to lead FaithQuest.

**Are you forming new FaithQuest study groups?**

Call toll-free  
877-899-2780,  
Ext. 7674 to order FaithQuest  
study materials.

**CONFLICT=**  
2 or more ideas in the same  
place at the same time!