

HUMAN UNDERSTANDING & AWARENESS

Module Seven



Episcopal Diocese of Florida

Deacon School

June 2020

Opening Reflection

Reflect on these words prior to beginning this module and then, again when you complete all assignments.

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer p. 815

Objectives

After completing this module, the Postulant will be able to:

- ✓ Conceptualize congregations as emotional systems;
- ✓ Recognize the role anxiety and reactivity play in creating conflict;
- ✓ Identify ways of managing their own anxiety and tolerating the anxiety of others; and
- ✓ Avoid triangulation with the rector and other clergy in a ministry setting.

Required Reading

Steinke, Peter L, *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006.

Drawing on the work of Bowen and Friedman and on his many years of consulting experience, Peter Steinke shows how to recognize and deal with the emotional roots of such issues as church conflict, leadership roles and congregational change.

Gilbert, Roberta M, *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking About Human Interactions*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 1992.

Dr. Gilbert is a psychiatrist whose special interest is Bowen family systems theory and its extensions and applications to individuals, families, and organizations. She is the founding director of the Center for the Study of Human Systems and is on the faculty of the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family. *Extraordinary Relationships* is a blueprint to better relationships explaining how the principles of family systems theory can be used in all arenas of your life, including intimate relationships, friendships, family relationships, single life, workplace relationships, international relationships, and your relationship with yourself.

Steinke, Peter L, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006.

Anxious times call for steady leadership. When tensions emerge in a congregation, its leaders cannot be as anxious as the people they serve. To remain effective, congregational leaders must control their own uneasiness. This takes self-awareness and confidence to manage relationships and influence behaviors. Knowing how to deal with anxiety and how to work through complex challenges can lead a congregation to new insights, growth, and vitality. Steinke's insights, illustrations, and provocations will carry leaders through rough times, provide clarity during confusing times, and uplift them in joyous times.

Supplementary Resources

Gilbert, Roberta M, *Extraordinary Leadership: Thinking Systems, Making a Difference*. Falls Church, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006.

Today's leaders face increased individual and societal anxiety that affects their organizations. Unfortunately, their training has not provided them with any understanding or guidelines that show how to manage themselves in the emotional chaos and intensity. Bowen family systems theory provides the needed understanding. It has proven itself enormously effective not only in families, but also in non-family groups such as businesses, institutions, and congregations. *Extraordinary Leadership* examines organizations as emotional systems through the lens of Bowen theory.

Human Awareness & Understanding Worksheet

Book: *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*

After reading this book listed, identify two insights that you have found helpful, as well as, two topics from each book that you would like further clarification.

Two helpful insights:

Two topics on which I would like further clarification:

Human Awareness & Understanding Worksheet

Book: *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking About Human Interactions*

After reading this book listed, identify two insights that you have found helpful, as well as, two topics from each book that you would like further clarification.

Two helpful insights:

Two topics on which I would like further clarification:

Human Awareness & Understanding Worksheet

Book: *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*

After reading this book listed, identify two insights that you have found helpful, as well as, two topics from each book that you would like further clarification.

Two helpful insights:

Two topics on which I would like further clarification:

Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times Case Study

St. Elsewhere Episcopal Church is a suburban church with 100 households on its roll and an Average Sunday Attendance of 75. There is one priest and you are the deacon. For the past several years, it has met its budget but with no cushion for emergencies. Some needed building repairs were budgeted in 2020. The congregation is aging and not growing. The Vestry is comprised of eight members – 6 older members who are not tech savvy and 2 younger members who are. The church is an important part of the social life of many parishioners.

The COVID-19 virus is affecting the nation. This suburban area has begun to feel the effects but is not at peak. The Governor has recommended social distancing measures be taken but has not issued a Safer at Home order.

Members of the parish have begun to call the Rector and you. Some are concerned about being around gatherings of people. Others have threatened to withhold their pledge if you do not hold worship services and keep the doors of the church open.

The Rector has asked you to help him think through next steps for the congregation and present recommendations to the Vestry. Identify current and potential future anxieties as they relate to worship, pastoral care and the budget. Identify ways to keep a non-anxious presence. Be specific. In addition to your readings and training in Emotional Systems Theory, draw on scripture, the BCP and theology as appropriate.

Assignments for Human Awareness & Understanding

Mentor: The Rev John DiLeo

- 1) After reading the three assigned books, identify two insights from each book you found helpful as well as two topics from each book on which you would like further clarification. Note your insights and topics on the Human Awareness Assignment form. Send this information to the Module Seven Mentor prior to the first session on Module Seven.
- 2) Consider a crisis situation that you have experienced. How would you describe this situation from an emotional systems perspective? Write a 2-3-page critique of that situation, identify the relationships and how the emotional systems way of thinking would affect your decisions about resolving the crisis. Be prepared to discuss your paper when we gather for the second Module Seven session.
- 3) After the first session with the Mentor and after reading *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*, develop the outline for a presentation to the Vestry using the assumptions in the case study.
- 4) **SYNTHESIS** - Consider how the Bowen family theory has helped your approach to relationships. Has it changed after completing this module? What additional knowledge would you like to acquire? Discuss your conclusions with your mentor.

Module Seven Evaluation
Human Awareness & Understanding

Postulant: _____

The mentor assess the Postulant’s work on each assignment in the module. The mentor will document on this form, whether the assignment was completed satisfactorily. The mentor may add additional comments if desired. If the assignment is not completed satisfactorily, the mentor must add comments regarding the deficiencies. The mentor will review the evaluation with the Postulant and the Deacon School Co-facilitators.

	Assignment	Complete/Incomplete
1	After reading the three assigned books, identify two insights from each book you found helpful as well as two topics from each book on which you would like further clarification. Note your insights and topics on the Human Awareness Assignment form. Send this information to the Module Seven Mentor prior to the first session on Module Seven.	
2	Consider a crisis situation that you have experienced. How would you describe this situation from an emotional systems perspective? Write a 2-3-page critique of that situation, identify the relationships and how the emotional systems way of thinking would affect your decisions about resolving the crisis. Be prepared to discuss your paper when we gather for the second Module Seven session.	
3	After the first session with the Mentor and after reading <i>Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times</i> , develop the outline for a presentation to the Vestry using the assumptions in the case study.	
4	SYNTHESIS - Consider how the Bowen family theory has helped your approach to relationships. Has it changed after completing this module? What additional knowledge would you like to acquire? Discuss your conclusions with your mentor.	

Signatures:

Mentor:

Postulant:

Date: _____

Date: _____