

11-1-1995

# Dry Bones Live: Helping Congregations Discover New Life

Matthew H. Diegel

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus>

---

### Recommended Citation

Diegel, Matthew H. (1995) "Dry Bones Live: Helping Congregations Discover New Life," *Consensus*: Vol. 21 : Iss. 2 , Article 25.  
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol21/iss2/25>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Consensus by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact [scholarscommons@wlu.ca](mailto:scholarscommons@wlu.ca).

familiar understanding and repeats the themes and ideas in the various sections of his presentation. Personally, I did not find this resource all that helpful for sermon preparation.

Julianna Wehrfritz-Hanson

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church,  
Calgary, Alberta

### **Dry Bones Live: Helping Congregations Discover New Life**

Robert H. Craig and Robert C. Worley

Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992

128 pp. \$9.99 U.S.

Craig and Worley have completely revised their original work, *Dry Bones, Breathe* (Chicago: Center for the Study of Church Organization Behavior of McCormick Theological Seminary, 1978). They see a need for members to be less passive, to see the congregation as “a covenant people called by God to be actors in their faith communities and in the world” (p. 2). Those who are leaders are to support this by having “a facilitating style or set of processes to help members live out commitments to the church” (p. 2). One way of accomplishing this is through “transformational change theory”. “Values are applied to understanding, through participatory processes, in order that constructive change may result. Such activity is not merely rational but mobilizing, full of mandates that require accountability” (p. 3).

What does this mean? In other words, the authors assert the usefulness of questionnaires, or “survey instruments”, in the congregation as a means of understanding and empowering mission, of revitalizing the church. To this end, they study what role vision should play in ministry; the responsibility of parish leadership in shaping the ministry of the congregation; and the interaction necessary between the members and the leadership. They provide examples of how to develop and use such surveys to aid the naming of, and achieving, vision and mission.

One of the strengths of this book is that it not only examines setting up initial surveys, but also shows how important it is to share the results with the participants, and to work beyond the initial self-assessment to set goals, train, obtain resources, evaluate progress, and refine ministry. We are bombarded with questionnaires every day, and wonder if our answers really make any difference. Craig and Worley demonstrate how to silence these doubts, by keeping the leadership in constant communication with the members. The writers offer a convincing argument that showing the members that their opinions count will make them more active. This book

aids local leaders to ask the right questions, to listen, and to involve the members in responding to what is learned.

Yet this strength also reveals one of the weaknesses: one wonders when the paperwork ever stops! So much time is to be committed to preparing and analyzing and giving feedback, that it may seem there is very little time to do any work. The authors would challenge this assessment by saying the communication described is the work, not just a nice extra. They also provide many surveys that can be used as models or adapted very easily. Further, they caution against pitfalls to avoid in the process and chart clearly how to maintain forward progress. Doing surveys is to become almost second nature.

Craig and Worley challenge the traditional committee and council leadership of the congregation, but with the view to strengthening the congregation's effectiveness, inclusiveness, and activeness. Those pondering whether to write a Mission Statement, use a questionnaire on worship times, or develop a five-year plan would do well to begin by reading this book.

Matthew H. Diegel

Immanuel and Our Saviour Lutheran Churches, Thunder Bay, Ontario

### **“Hymn Texts in the Aboriginal Languages of Canada” Occasional Monographs, No. 1**

Hugh D. McKellar

Fort Worth, Texas: The Hymn Society in the USA and  
Canada, 1992

50 pp. \$6.00

Hugh D. McKellar is an educator who lives in Toronto and who has published short material on hymnody for many years. This monograph, subtitled “Three Historical-Bibliographical Studies”, is the first effort by the Hymn Society in the USA and Canada to enter the field of scholarly publishing on hymnody. The three studies are “A History of Hymns in Aboriginal Languages of Canada”, “A Bibliography of Aboriginal Hymns in Canada”, and “The Huron Carol Jesus Ahatonia”.

In the first study we learn that one-third of all Canadian hymnbooks ever published have been in aboriginal languages! This process of inculturation is documented since 1634, when the Jesuits began translating hymns in Quebec. The Jesuits and Recollets used the natural inclination of aboriginal peoples towards chant to encourage them to sing French and Latin hymns in translation.

Not all the early work was done by French Roman Catholics. In 1772, Moravians who worked with the Inuit people of Labrador, had prepared a hymnbook in Germany for use in Canada's north.