

Transformational Leaders

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Writer: Boyd Lien

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Meet the Writer

Boyd Lien, an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), recently retired from Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Georgia. Boyd has served as pastor and educator with congregations in Verona, New Jersey; New Castle, Pennsylvania; Eugene, Oregon; Houston, Texas; Richmond, Virginia; and Augusta, Georgia. As a church educator, he has pursued his passion to share the good news by creating and publishing a wide variety of educational resources through Abingdon Press, the Logos Program, and the Kerygma Program. As an artist, he has designed logos, illustrations, and brochures for individuals, congregations, and the denomination. Most recently, he is the author of the revised resource book and leader's guide for Kerygma's *Discovering the Bible: A New Generation*.

Introduction to *Being Reformed: Faith Seeking Understanding*

Reformed and Presbyterian Christians are people of faith who are seeking understanding. From the beginnings of our Reformed tradition, Presbyterians have realized God calls us to explore ways the Christian faith can be more fully known and expressed. This vision has driven concerns for the education of people of all ages. Presbyterians have been big on providing resources to help us delve more deeply into Christian faith and the theology that gives our living tradition its distinctive heritage.

This *Being Reformed* curriculum for adults is one expression of the desire to open up what it means to be Presbyterian Christians in the world today. Our purpose is to enhance, enrich, and expand our insights. We want Presbyterians to grow in understandings of elements that are foundational and significant for their faith. Encounters with theology, church, worship, spirituality/discipleship, and social righteousness will guide our ways.

These studies engage our whole selves. We will find our minds moved by new ideas, our emotions stirred with responses of gratitude, and calls for action that can lead us in different life directions. Heads, hearts, and hands will be drawn into the joys of discovering what new things God is calling us toward.

We invite you to join this journey of faith seeking understanding. Celebrate the blessings of our Reformed and Presbyterian tradition of faith. Be stimulated and challenged by fresh insights that will deepen your understandings. Find a stronger commitment to the God who has loved us in Jesus Christ.

To the Leader

The authors of *Being Reformed: Faith Seeking Understanding* emphasize essential Reformed theological principles that relate to our lives of faith. These sessions will help you lead a group into the theology and thoughts inspired by the challenging and interesting articles in the participant's book.

You might choose simply to begin the session with the prayer that precedes each session in the participant's book, then reading through the articles together, stopping when you or a student wishes to comment or raise a question. You could then close the session by discussing the questions at the end of the session and encouraging the group members to do the spiritual practice.

Unfortunately, that style of leading does not meet the needs of every kind of learner. The session plans encourage group leaders to try some new things to light up the hearts and minds of more people. Most teachers teach the way they like to learn. Choosing one new activity during each session will stretch you and open a door to someone who learns differently than you. Over the weeks, you will notice what your group enjoys and what they are unwilling to do. Let that, rather than your preferences, be your guide as you prepare to lead.

These session plans are designed to encourage group participation. Discussion and sharing create community and provide practice that all of us need in expressing our faith and wrestling with our questions. When asking questions, get comfortable with some silence while group members contemplate a response. Resist the urge to fill up the silence with your words.

If your group members like to talk, you might not be able to ask every suggested question. Also it will make a difference in your group session if group members have read the articles prior to the session. If you find it necessary to read from the participant's book during the group session, choose the passages that convey the core ideas.

You are more than a dispenser of information. In your role as group leader, you cooperate with God in the formation of faith and in the transformation of lives. You are the lead learner, modeling a way that faith seeks understanding. You are not trying to cover a lesson, but to uncover truth. Pray for yourself and your group members, prepare your session, relax, and enjoy!

May God bless your faithfulness!

Presbyterians in Changing Cultures

Scripture

Ephesians 4:7, 11–13; Romans 12:1–2

Main Idea

God alone is able to transform the church and world. As beneficiaries, we are called to bear witness to God’s transformative work and engage in relationships with diverse peoples who stand with us in appreciating and enjoying the richness of God’s redemptive work.

Teaching Points

This session invites participants to:

1. Define key words, such as *transformation*, *transformational leaders*, and *culture*.
2. Examine the effect that significant cultural changes and a diversity of cultures have on the church.
3. Explore a vision of transformational leadership in their local church and community.
4. Commit to a transforming action in the coming weeks.

Resources Needed

Bibles

Participant’s books

Blackboard, whiteboard, or newsprint

Marker

Handout of Romans 12:1–2 in various translations

Prepared “What’s the Question?” game (p. 9)

Christ candle, matches

Leader Prep

Before teaching, preview the scope of the course by looking through the themes, Scriptures, and activities of the six sessions. To prepare for leading each session, read the participant’s book,

underlining its major points, highlighting questions to pursue, and noting significant insights. Involve the participants throughout the course by inviting them to share in the readings of the Scriptures, quotations, and prayers.

For Gather, place a Christ candle on a table in the center of your teaching space. Each session begins by lighting the candle, reading Scripture, and uniting in the author's prayer. Enlist members of the group to share in the reading and in lighting the Christ candle.

For Head, prepare a handout of Romans 12:1–2 containing three or more translations and/or paraphrases of the passage, such as New Revised Standard Version, Common English Bible, The Message, and J. B. Phillips New Testament. Make a copy for each participant.

In Heart, you'll notice the answers in the "What's the Question?" game are statistical. Copy the categories and answers from the table on page 9 (leave the questions blank) on a blackboard, whiteboard, or newsprint.

In Depart, you will offer three transforming actions for the group to choose from. These are listed on page 11 of the participant's book.

Leading the Session

Gather

- Light the Christ candle while speaking these words from the letter to the Ephesians:

Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7, 11–13)

- Pray the prayer in the participant's book.
- Introduce the purpose of the course by reading from Dr. McKim's introduction: "A number of new initiatives are being put into motion in the denomination. This includes the adoption of strategic directional goals by the 220th General Assembly (2012). One of these goals is the establishment of transformational leaders for the PC(USA). The goal is to 'inspire, equip, and connect the church to cultivate, nurture, and sustain diverse, transformational leaders for Christ's mission.'" Ask:

What do you hear expressed in this goal? What does the term transformational leaders say to you?

- Introduce the scope of the course by previewing the themes of the six sessions in the participant’s book.

Head

- Distribute the handouts with at least three translations and/or paraphrases of Romans 12:1–2. Invite a volunteer to read each version, and ask the group to note differences in wording in the versions.
- Indicate that the Greek word in Romans 12:1–2 translated “transformed” is *metamorphousthe*. Write the Greek and English words on a blackboard, whiteboard, or newsprint.
- Examine each of the translations on the handout to see how *metamorphousthe* has been translated into English. Ask: *What is the distinction between “be transformed” and “transform yourself”? In what ways is “transformation” different than “change”? Where have you experienced transformation in your life? Where have you witnessed transformation in the lives in others?*
- Read a portion of Dr. McFayden’s introduction: “We are quite limited in our capacity to transform the church, the cultures around us, and the world more generally. God transforms. As we receive and respond to God’s grace, we are being transformed. As we bear witness to God’s transforming power and work in the world and in our lives, we may have some capacity to offer transformative ministry. As others respond, they follow our lead and respond to God’s initiative. As such, church leadership is an expression of followership—or better said, of discipleship.” Ask: *What have you found to be true in that statement? What doesn’t quite ring true? How can people be transformed against their wills?*

Heart

- Play a game based on *Jeopardy!* Use the “What’s the Question?” table on page 9 and the prepared game board. You will provide the category and the answer; the participants will provide the question.
- The word *culture* is used forty-one times in this session in the participant’s book alone! It is helpful to look at defining our particular culture. Read the following definition aloud:

Culture has been defined as “the sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is transmitted, through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next.”¹

- Explore the culture of your church. Ask: *What is our primary language? What material objects help define us? What rituals do we engage in? What institutions are in place? What art helps reveal our beliefs? Why is it important to consider our particular culture?*

Hands

- Read and discuss Dr. McFayden’s statement: “Many congregations would love to grow. Fewer are willing to change in order to grow. For most, growth will come by developing the capacity to adapt and engage changing cultures as contexts for ministry.”
- Read and discuss the three questions raised by Dr. McFayden: “I wonder, are we open enough to God’s gift of diversity to change? Might new relationships, new alliances with others who differ from us, offer new sources of hope and energy, renewal and revitalization? Do we believe our calling, mission, and purpose are to engage the rich cultures with which we interact, anticipating that we may uncover within our diversity the redemptive presence of God?”
- Direct attention to the section titled “A Vision for Leadership: Transforming, and Being Transformed.” Read the section beginning with “Here is my vision for leadership . . .” and ending with “emerging communities of faith and practice.” Point out the repeated affirmation that serves as a litany—“We have the capacity . . .”—and encourage the group to respond together when this phrase is read.

Depart

- Introduce the participants to the three options for transforming actions on page 11 of the participant’s book. Challenge them to commit to a transforming action for the coming weeks.
- Begin a prayer expressing gratitude, joys, and concerns, and invite everyone to join in.
- Extinguish the Christ candle.

What’s the Question?

Category	Answer	Question
Our Changing World	249,186,000	How many Christians are in the United States?
	516,240,000	How many Christians are in Africa?
United in Diversity	337 (either spoken or signed)	How many languages are spoken in the United States?
	350,000	What is the number of religious congregations in the United States?
Can You Hear Me Now?	50 million each day, 600 each second	What are the number of tweets?
	blog, hashtag, tweet, social media	What are some of the newest words?
21st-Century Presbyterians	187	What is the membership of the average Presbyterian church?
	1 in 1956 and 4,435 in 2012	What is the number of ordained women serving as teaching elders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?
Passing It On	2	How many people are needed for teaching/learning?
	100 million worldwide	How many Bibles are sold yearly?

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Presbyterians in Changing Cultures

Scripture

Ephesians 4:4–7, 11–16 Unity is a gracious gift from God that allows us to celebrate a variety of gifts that equip people for the work of ministry and build up the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:4–7 The variety of gifts is a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for the abundant gifts you lay before us: the gift of life in a beautiful creation; the gift of faith, nurtured by people who have believed in you and served you; and the gift of relationships, which deepen our joy and purpose as we live each day. Stir within our gratitude a desire to follow you. Embolden us to bear witness to your transformative work in a world too often marred by brokenness. Empower us to work transformatively as you so call and equip us, that other people may experience your redemptive power, grace, and love. Amen.

Introduction

Transformational leadership is a popular topic in today's church and culture. Our search for transformational leaders is fueled by deep yearnings for new sources of hope and energy, renewal and revitalization. Amid significant cultural change and church decline, we despair over an apparent dearth of effective leaders and a leadership crisis.

Given our concerns and yearnings, we need to understand the implications of transformational leadership in relation to the congregations and cultures in which we serve. Here are a few key points to consider about this critical topic.

First, leaders are not merely doers. Where there is a leader, there is a vision and followers of that vision. Without vision, followers, and movement toward the vision, there is no leadership.

Second, leadership implies a dynamic relationship between leaders and followers. Unfortunately, we sometimes lose ourselves in the tasks and outcomes that are part of leading and put aside the relationships that are central to the exercise of leadership.

Third, transformational leadership centers on deep and substantive change. What is transformed likely includes our identities and the values, norms, attitudes, and actions that express and reinforce those identities. Understanding *transformational* in this way, we must ask, “Are we ourselves willing to be transformed by our leaders?”

Fourth, when we think about transformational leadership in relation to culture, do we aspire for the church to transform culture? Or do we seek to bring culture into the church to make the church more relevant? These questions center our attention on our views on how the church and culture relate to each other.

Fifth, we are quite limited in our capacity to transform the church, the cultures around us, and the world more generally. God transforms. As we receive and respond to God’s grace, we are being transformed. As we bear witness to God’s transforming power and work in the world and in our lives, we may have some capacity to offer transformative ministry. As others respond, they follow our lead and respond to God’s initiative. As such, church leadership is an expression of followership—or better said, of discipleship.

Our Purpose in Engaging Diverse Cultures: What Drives Us?

I am a native of Raleigh, North Carolina. After completing seminary in 1986, I moved to Alliance, Ohio, an old steel town of 25,000 people. While I had no idea I was in a different cultural context, its residents knew I was from a different culture. I spoke with an accent. Their worship services, with a blue *Worshipbook* instead of a red *Hymnbook*, had their own accent. As winter arrived, I clearly was in a foreign land as I searched for and eventually found grits on the international food aisle in a grocery store.

As I settled into Alliance, I needed to learn the uniqueness of this culture to minister effectively in the congregation and community. I had energy, enthusiasm, and a desire to do well. I knew I had much to learn.

I remained in Alliance for four years. Over time, my accent diminished and I came to a deep appreciation of the culture and climate of ministry in northeast Ohio. I grew deeply attached to the congregation and community. We had formed, it seems, an alliance

that heightened my appreciation of cultural differences—whether mild, moderate, or strong—in relation to church and community norms, customs, and traditions.

I since have traveled to churches in various parts of the United States and the world. I have become more appreciative of cultural differences, whether nearby or far away. Increasingly, these travels have come during an era when many Presbyterians want to engage diverse cultures. I wonder why?

Perhaps the deep expressions of others' faith in worship, education, and service inspire us. Maybe their commitment and vitality stir our hope. Perhaps we see God at work in a variety of contexts that rekindles our imaginations of what is possible in God's world. Whatever the reasons, we appreciate more the beauty of diversity at a time when our neighborhoods are changing, recent immigrants are becoming our neighbors, and familiar ways of being are shifting for social, economic, and technological reasons. As we imagine how to engage diverse cultures and cultivate leaders who can help us in casting new visions, inspiring followers, and generating new movements, I wonder, why? What is driving us toward new initiatives and relationships?

Many congregations would love to grow. Fewer are willing to change in order to grow. For most, growth will come by developing the capacity to adapt and engage changing cultures as contexts for ministry. I wonder, are we open enough to God's gift of diversity to change? Might new relationships, new alliances with others who differ from us, offer new sources of hope and energy, renewal and revitalization? Do we believe our calling, mission, and purpose are to engage the rich cultures with which we interact, anticipating that we may uncover within our diversity the redemptive presence of God?

Our responses to these questions will shape our vision and ministry and affect how others relate to us. How we respond will bear witness to our faith. *Why* we respond is a fundamental question of leadership.

Do we believe our calling, mission, and purpose are to engage the rich cultures with which we interact, anticipating that we may uncover within our diversity the redemptive presence of God?

A Purposeful Shift: From Engaging Diverse Cultures to Engaging People in Diverse Cultures

As we envision what it means to be Presbyterian amid changing cultures, we often celebrate diversity as a gift of God and aspire to deepen our knowledge and appreciation of the beauty and richness of other cultures. We seek to learn about the norms, values, and stories of other people and to identify ways in which we and those from other cultures may mutually enrich each other.

In these engagements, we often focus on relating to diverse cultures rather than to *people* within different cultures. I believe our task centers on how we engage people in changing cultures in mission and ministry. This nuance is critical so that we do not lose sight of individuals, families, and groups. Perhaps the conversation is richer when we reframe the question and ask, “How might people in the church adapt and engage people in diverse and changing cultures?”

When I conducted a word search of *culture* in the *Book of Order*, I found it only in our Directory for Worship. Its preface states that “a rich heritage of traditions and a diversity of cultures in the Presbyterian church are reflected and encouraged by this directory.”¹ In describing the language for worship, the directory acknowledges that “the Church in every culture through the ages has used and adapted biblical symbols, images, stories, and words in worship”² and emphasizes the measure of their appropriateness in relation to the biblical witness to God in Jesus Christ. Additional references to the richness of cultural diversity are located in our principles for the ordering of worship and in describing elements that compose a worship service. Clearly, we aspire to celebrate the richness of various cultures as we praise God in worship for the gifts of diversity and unity that allow for multiple languages, music styles, and symbols.

Similarly, a word search in the *Book of Confessions* locates *culture* predominately in the Confession of 1967. This seems to align our confessional engagement with culture in relation to God’s ministry—and our ministry—of reconciliation. Consider this passage:

The members of the church are emissaries of peace and seek the good of man in cooperation with powers and authorities in politics, culture, and economics. But they have to fight

1. *Book of Order*, Part II of *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church [U.S.A], 2011), Directory for Worship, Preface, a. Reprinted with permission of the Office of the General Assembly.

2. *Book of Order*, W-1.2005.

against pretensions and injustices when these same powers endanger human welfare. Their strength is in their confidence that God’s purpose rather than man’s schemes will finally prevail.³

These word searches within our constitutional documents suggest that church and culture meet most visibly and formatively in relation to God. God calls and gathers diverse peoples to worship. God calls and gathers diverse peoples through reconciling work. God engages people in diverse cultures. Following God’s lead, we are called to do likewise.

Church and culture meet most visibly and formatively in relation to God. God calls and gathers diverse peoples to worship. God calls and gathers diverse peoples through reconciling work. God engages people in diverse cultures. Following God’s lead, we are called to do likewise.

These connecting points between church and culture, as we gather to worship and in our witness to God’s reconciling work, are realities through which God’s transforming work is evident. As such, they are expressions of God’s work to which church leaders bear witness to God’s transformative power in people’s lives.

A Vision for Leadership: Transforming, and Being Transformed

“Where there is no vision, the people flounder.”⁴ This version of Proverbs 29:18a reminds us of the importance of vision. The second half of the verse emphasizes that any vision we cast must be aligned with God’s vision for the church and world.

Here is my vision for leadership as we seek to engage people in changing cultures.

First, we must acknowledge that God alone is able to transform the church and world. As beneficiaries, we are called to bear witness to God’s transformative work and engage in relationships with diverse peoples who stand with us in appreciating and enjoying the richness of God’s redemptive work.

Second, we are called to transformative ministry that lies within our human reach. While we are not able to transform the church,

3. *Book of Confessions*, Part I of *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church [U.S.A], 2007), 9.25. Reprinted with permission of the Office of the General Assembly.

4. Kenneth J. McFayden, *Strategic Leadership for a Change: Facing Our Losses, Finding Our Future* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2009), 67.

we have the capacity to transform the church's structures, patterns of interaction, and expressions of mission and witness in church and culture. As such, we are responding to God's transformative initiatives and leading those willing to follow as we transform what we are able.

What might we be in a position to transform? What is within our power to change? Consider the following topics in this study.

Worship: We have the capacity to envision new expressions of worship that remain faithful to God, adapt to changing cultures, celebrate diversities, and invite people to praise God with us.

Congregational life: We have the capacity to reorder our congregational life in ways that remain faithful to the church's mission, reinforce the purpose of communal life, pursue our visions for ministry, express our identity within a particular context, and relate hospitably to members and neighbors.

Education: We have the capacity to pursue new visions for educational ministries in the church that transmit the essence of our faith, form and develop disciples of all ages, and use models of teaching and tools of technology that facilitate our growth as people of God.

Communication: We have the capacity to clarify our message, communicate it with passion, develop our abilities to speak and listen, and use diverse media to build and deepen relationships with people of diverse ages, backgrounds, and contexts.

At the heart of our transformative efforts, we will encounter God's continuing, inspiring, and renewing presence. God's presence will increase our vision for the church in the world, our capacity to bear witness to God's redemptive work, and our determination to follow God's lead, even to places we might not envision on our own.

Mission and ministries: We have the capacity to identify the needs we face in the church and world, prioritize our responses as stewards of precious resources with which God has entrusted us, and work with existing and emerging communities of faith and practice.

At the heart of our transformative efforts, we will encounter God's continuing, inspiring, and renewing presence. God's presence will increase our vision for the church in the world, our capacity to bear witness to God's redemptive work, and our determination to follow

God's lead, even to places we might not envision on our own. Along the way, we will experience anew the richness of faith and our resiliency amid periods of significant change. And we will grow in our relationships with God and neighbor, including those who seem different but with whom we have more in common than we ever could have imagined.

Spiritual Practice

Read a story that involves a person, family, or group from a culture dissimilar to yours. Reflect on the differences you perceive between you and the other(s), the richness of diversity that reflects God's creative power, and the basis upon which you might engage the other(s) if given the opportunity.

Questions for Reflection

What new perspectives do you have about *transformational leadership* as a result of this session?

What might motivate your church to engage people from different cultures in a new way?

How might your church's engagement with diverse people have a transformative impact on you and your congregation?

Transforming Actions

1. Take a cultural treasure hunt. Listen for one language other than your own. Discover one tradition different from yours. Search for something in a store that appeals to a different culture than yours.
2. Review your church's worship bulletin, newsletter, or website. What does it communicate about the church's mission and ministries? How effectively does it reach out to engage others? What changes could you suggest?
3. Pray for openness to God's transformation. Offer a prayer to cooperate with God in all that God is seeking to accomplish.