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## Healthy Congregations

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center provides a variety of programs in Christian peacemaking to churches, schools, and community groups. *Healthy Congregations* is a workshop designed by Peter Steinke, author of the books *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* and *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*. A key concept at the heart of *Healthy Congregations* is "self-differentiation," people's capacity to calmly articulate what they think and value, and to act on that basis, while staying in active relationship with those who disagree. This crucial training for both clergy and lay leaders is designed for presentation as a single, nine-hour workshop. It can be adapted for formats such as leadership retreats or an adult Sunday School series.

One possible outline for a weekend workshop would be:

Friday: 7:00-9:30 — **What is Systems Thinking?**

**Video Case Study: "The Anxious Congregation/The Responsible Congregation"**

Saturday: 9:00-10:30 — **Healthy Congregations Respond to Anxiety**

**Healthy Congregations Invite Differentiation of Self**

10:30-10:45 — Break

10:45-12:00 — **Healthy Congregations Focus On Strength**

**Healthy Congregations Manage Conflict**

12:00-1:00 — Lunch

1:00-2:30 — **In Healthy Congregations, Leaders Challenge People**

**In Healthy Congregations, Leaders Focus On Mission**

2:30-2:45 — Break

2:45-4:30 — **In Healthy Congregations Leaders Promote Health Through Their Presence and Functioning**

**Planning For a Healthier Congregation**

The facilitator for such a program would be either Richard Blackburn, LMPC Executive Director, Bill Blank, LMPC Associate Director. Both are accredited training facilitators for the *Healthy Congregations* workshop. Moreover, LMPC staff have extensive training in family systems theory, as well as broad experience consulting with pastors and congregations from that theoretical framework. In order to continue the educational process after the workshop, LMPC books on promoting healthy congregational systems can be made available to participants.

Groups interested in exploring the possibility of hosting this event can contact the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center at the above address or phone number.