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## Eremos Consulting Group

*Facilitating Transformation for Clergy, Congregations, Nonprofits and their Leaders*



### ***Across the Generations***

Working with various Eremos clients this summer we have been thinking a lot about *generations*.

As a society we have reached a watershed moment when power and cultural influence is being daily transferred from the pre-1946 generations (**GI generation** 1910-1928; and the **Silent generation** 1928 - 1945) to those born after the Second World War. **The oldest Baby Boomers** (1946-1964) have reached retirement age but are not so sure they are ready to step aside. After all 70 is the new 50. [It must be true; I saw it on the Internet.] **Generation X** (1965-1980), meanwhile, too young to remember the struggles over Civil Rights, Women's Rights, Vietnam, waits impatiently and pessimistically for the self-absorbed boomers to retire and to shut up already about the 1960s and how much better the music was before MTV. And over their shoulder they see a huge new cohort of tech-savvy 20-somethings, **the Millennials** (1981-1999) who see no reason why they couldn't be the boss after six months or so on the job. Unfortunately for the Millennials, the Boomers wrecked the economy just in time for the Millennials to graduate and enter the work force. Sorry. You can always move back in with your parents.



**But what lessons can congregations and non-profits learn from the culture and value distinctions of the various generations?** Did the lessons of delayed gratification, harshly taught by depression and war, imprint themselves upon the older generations? Did this create a worldview distinct from the indulged boomers who were taught that if J.C. Penny didn't

Summer 2012 - In This Issue

[Across the Generations](#)

[It's Lonely at the Top!](#)

[Thriving on the Edge Workshop](#)



### **Using Nature's Dynamics to Create Resilient Leaders and Organizations**

Wednesday, August 22  
9 - 10:30am

Presented by:  
**Elizabeth Thompson**



**A workshop being presented the Colorado Nonprofit Association**  
1st Floor Conference Room

have what they wanted, Macy's will? Gen X, of course, gave us on-line shopping.

**In their excellent book on congregational planning, *Holy Conversations*, authors Gil Rendle and Alice Mann devote an entire chapter to value system distinctions between pre and post war generations and how they manifest themselves in congregations.** Among their insights are how the GI generation values responsibility and deferred personal pleasures for the greater good. These folks make loyal and generous members. After all this is the generation that grew up on the Social Gospel and gave us the Great Society. But this comes with a belief that newcomers should maintain the established patterns of the congregation rather than initiating changes. Once a well ordered pattern has been established, people should keep doing it the same way.



**Likewise the pre-1946 group has a strong sense of group identity and**

**a sense of the sacredness of place.** The arrangement of worship spaces should not be tampered with once settled upon. Another distinction is the response to conflict. For this generation the accepted process is to identify the issue, find out who is on your team by looking for people like you who agree with you, focus on the solution, and never give up. After all, this is how they beat the depression and won the war. But when multi-generational congregations are in turmoil this can manifest itself when long-tenured members hold secret "by-invitation-only" meetings with those with whom they agree in order to organize their displeasure. When the authors pointed out that secret meetings among people who already agree are unhelpful because they break communication with the very people who need to be talking and listening to each other, long tenured members expressed surprise that anyone would object because they assumed that this was the way people naturally handled these situations. For that generation, it may be so. **For the consumer driven Boomers, raised on instant gratification, inventors of instant credit, fast food and the microwave oven, organizing to solve a problem at church may not be worth the time.** It may be much easier to just go shopping for a new church. Which method is better? The Millennials, of course, wonder why everyone doesn't just put their thoughts on their Facebook page for everyone to see.

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\$40 Association members  
\$55 non-members

Questions?

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**[Click Here to Register](#)**

### About this Workshop

Nonprofit leaders frequently find themselves on the edge between stability and chaos. Learn what that's nothing to fear! Science reveals that this is exactly where living systems thrive. This interactive workshop will explore key principles needed to lead and thrive on the edge. Case studies will also be explored.

Please join us!



[About Elizabeth and Phil Thom](#)

**About those Millennials.** They are now at the age when many people simply expect them to drop out of church for a while and maybe, hopefully, come back when they have children of their own. Isn't that the pattern that has always existed?

Well, no. Prior to 1946 there was no particular drop off in church attendance during a person's young adulthood. I'm afraid the boomers invented that trend, too. Sigh. And who raised the Millennials and taught them what they know about religion? You guessed it. And this new generation, while optimistic, upbeat, and the best educated generation ever, is getting married later and having children later than any preceding generation. Economic conditions being what they are, can you blame them?



Millennial Cousins

**When they come back to their faith communities, if they come back, it could be after an exceptionally long time away.** And how has their faith been formed, and how much do they understand and accept from their faith traditions of their parents and grandparents? In the next newsletter we will present findings from two major sociological studies of the religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers and Millennials.

In the meantime, for those of you here in the West, pray for rain, remember those who have lost everything in the fires, and enable those in your congregations and agencies who seek to help. It is for a time like this that you were called.

**Have a safe Independence Day!**

***Phil Thompson***

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Phil & Elizabeth Thompson

## Eremos Consulting Group

**Elizabeth**, a principal with Eremos Consulting Group (Greek for wilderness), is a former executive director with a 30 year background in leadership coaching, nonprofit management, group facilitation, and leading organizations in transition. She is a discerning guide for leaders and organizations "wandering in the wilderness" to facilitate positive transformations.

**Phil**, a principal with Eremos Consulting, was a hospital executive for twenty five years before joining Eremos. He brings two decades of experience in managing people, boards, budgets, finances, strategic plans, information systems, legal compliance, and accreditation readiness.



## Suggested Reading

***Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice in Congregations***

Gil Rendle & Alice Mann. Alban Institute,

A book about congregational planning as an exercise in spiritual discernment. An excellent resource for congregations undergoing a "visioning" process. There are several helpful resources at the end of the book including the one referred to in this newsletter entitled Generational Watershed.

***Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2060***

Neil Howe & William Strauss.  
William Morrow & Co., 1991

This lengthy "history" of American generations, from the 16th to the 21st centuries, discerns a four-

## Deadline Approaching ...



## Nonprofit Executive Director Leadership Groups starting Fall 2012

It's lonely at the top ... especially if you are an Executive Director of a nonprofit.

Eremos Consulting Group has found that by participating in ongoing small groups of peers, nonprofit leaders can

**Reinforce** each other's passion for mission,  
**Deepen** their commitment over the long haul,  
**Rekindle** their energy for positive change,  
**Achieve** personal as well as professional goals,  
**Ignite new visions** for doing good and doing it well.

5-8 Executive Director group members meet monthly:

- \* diverse non-competing nonprofit missions represented
- \* grouped with comparable budgets if possible
- \* Minimum of one year commitment
- \* Fee is billed monthly

**All discussions in the group are strictly confidential.**

**A professional facilitator** from Eremos will keep the group on track and provide additional outside materials and information to stimulate group discussions. If you or someone you know is interested in joining a small group of fellow executive directors please contact us for an application.

[Click Here for Details](#)

or contact us directly:

Phil Thompson

pattern in civic attitudes and engagement by a generational cohort from the early Puritans to that of the Millennials. According to the authors a generation has much in common spiritually with the generation four cohorts ahead of them. If this is our new Millennial 20-somethings will resemble now fading GI generation in their civic minded character. While a lot of fun for history buffs, it takes effort to keep all the cohorts and their types straight as they move through time.

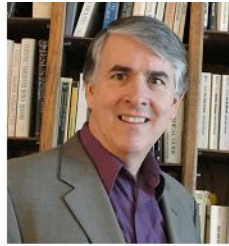
### **From Boomers to Bloggers**

Misti Burmeister  
Synergy Press 2008

A practical and insightful book on how older and younger generations can better understand each other in the workplace. Northern Colorado graphic designer Misti Burmeister offers practical advice to both young and older workers on how to communicate with colleagues from other generations. Anyone mentoring a new graduate will find this helpful.

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