

Susan Beaumont, *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going: Leading in a Liminal Season* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019). xi and 171 pages. Paperback. \$20.00.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *liminal* as “Of or pertaining to the threshold.” Organizational life is full of seasons of liminality—that time and space between endings and new beginnings. In pre-pandemic times, things like leadership changes, budget crises, and significant community events triggered a temporary state of liminality. In COVID times, it feels like we are living in a season of perpetual liminality that shows no signs of abating.

Susan Beaumont’s *How to Lead When You Don’t Know Where You’re Going* is not new. Published in 2019, Beaumont could not have foreseen the impending pandemic disorientation that would soon affect every facet of institutional life, which makes the staying power of Beaumont’s wisdom all the more impressive. Readers may consider revisiting the book with some regularity and may find that it speaks differently depending on the threshold(s) on which they find themselves standing.

Beaumont doesn’t provide a roadmap out of the disorientation and anxiety that often accompany the “already but not yet”; instead, she acts like a midwife, offering fresh encouragement where exhaustion reigns, curious questions when words fail, and reminders of the resilience of individuals and communities that is often overshadowed by the enormity of the task before us. Her approach allows us to attend to what is unfolding, deepen group discernment, shape institutional memory, and clarify organizational purpose as we prepare to reorient and emerge into something new.

In a time when leaders feel isolated by circumstances well beyond their control, Beaumont’s book draws us back to a center that is easily forgotten. Through prose that weaves stories, scholarship, and scripture, Beaumont reminds readers that the divine is a partner in this work, carefully tending to the soul of our institutions. Beaumont makes it clear that—despite all that suggests otherwise—we are not alone in the in-between times. This is a reminder that leaders need to receive before they can share it with the communities they serve.

How to Lead When You Don’t Know Where You’re Going is a book for this time because it offers accessible tools to reframe the myriad disruptions we’re experiencing. Without dismissing the grief and ambiguity that many

feel, Beaumont invites us to consider that, like the Israelites in the wilderness, our current unknowing just may birth something sacred. And that's a promise that all leaders need to hear.

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