



Congregational Life

Congregational Life Centre—Consultants to Congregations 780 619-0386

June 2006 Issue Contents

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Church Leadership

What they don't teach at Theological College

By Joyce Madsen

Back in 1992 when we were doing research for the United Church we became aware of the incredible impact a clergy leader has on the life of a congregation. We discovered that leadership was a deciding factor in successful and unsuccessful congregations – the effectiveness of the leader was a primary factor in whether a congregation thrived or died.

Authors and consultants like Jim Collins, Steven Covey, Parker Palmer, Tom Bandy, Margaret Wheatley, and Peter Urs Bender, just to name a few, have been trying to discover a formula that would result in every leader being effective. I gathered up all their books and spread them out on the dining room table trying to find the key to effective leadership. The insight I had was this – all that we need to do is to go back in time to find the best model for effective leadership, namely back to Jesus.

Jesus first and foremost had a vision. He knew that it was possible for every single human to have a personal relationship with God – the kind of relationship that was graceful and accepting, but that would challenge people to get to know and accept their neighbour, whether they were Jew or Samaritan or whatever.

Jesus had a deep understanding of himself and his relationship with God. He knew who he was and he acted from that base of confidence in his own identity. He didn't have to climb a corporate-type ladder or ensure he got credit for acts of healing. He believed in himself and had the internal anchors that allowed him to go out and challenge those who were not being faithful.

Jesus had the courage to risk living out his vision and he paid with his life. He had a plan and nothing was going to deter his carrying it out.

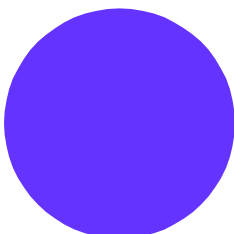
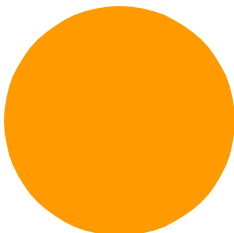
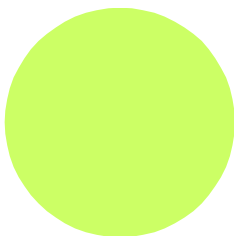
Jesus built a team. He needed the gifts that others could provide and he needed people to share the message so that it could reach as many people as possible. He tapped those with the gifts he needed or those connected to the communities he wanted to include and brought them together.

Then he let his followers go. He trusted those he sent out. He knew they would make mistakes, that some would not follow through the way he would like, but he still let them go with his blessing.

So Jesus model of leadership was:

- ✚ Have a vision
- ✚ Know yourself
- ✚ Be courageous
- ✚ Identify gifts in others
- ✚ Let the people go

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A clear vision invites participation, focuses energy, and releases excitement.

A Downtown Church—continued

Have a Vision

In June of 2004 Clair wrote an article for this newsletter, "What I would do differently ... Knowing what I Know Now." In the article he emphasized the importance of vision and identity. "A clear vision invites participation. It focuses energy. It releases excitement. It opens the door for real leadership."

In his book *The 8th Habit*, Stephen Covey tells us that prior to WW1 the focus for leaders was on character and principles. As we moved into the industrial era, the focus shifted to techniques and technologies. We are now seeing a countertrend back towards trustworthiness and character as the keys to providing effective long-term leadership. "More and more people are seeing the need to look deeply into their own souls," says Covey, "to sense how they, themselves, contribute to the problems, and to figure out exactly what they can do to contribute to the solution and serve human needs."

Everything we create is invented twice – once when we dream it and again when we make it. If you don't have any dreams or visions then nothing is going to happen and life becomes a reaction to events and circumstances. We Christians are people of vision, people of action. The question is, "How do we capture our vision so we can share and live it."

Peter Urs Bender says that vision

- ◆ Creates our reality
- ◆ Shows us where we are headed
- ◆ Helps us fulfill our desires
- ◆ Gives us new direction
- ◆ Helps us make specific choices and decisions
- ◆ Provides motivation and inspires us to keep going
- ◆ Focuses us
- ◆ Moves us towards what we want vs. what we don't want
- ◆ Draws us forward and takes us beyond obstacles
- ◆ Gives meaning and purpose

Why wouldn't we want some of that!

How do you develop or find your vision? You begin by dreaming, spending time in reflection and prayer so you can become clear about the results you want to see. You open your mind to possibilities and

connections. Sometimes you have to change your perspective to see new possibilities.

Begin with some simple questions:

Do you know what role you play in making this a better world?

Do you have a dream for the future of your family, your community, and our planet?

Have you tried seeing things from a new perspective; is your glass half full or half empty?

Know Yourself

Virtually every author we read stresses the importance for a leader to know his or her identity. Stephen Covey names it as "finding your voice". Parker Palmer and Peter Urs Bender talk about "Leadership from within".

Identity involves our relationship with ourselves and with God. This becomes the foundation for all our other relationships and the roles we play as we live out our lives. Jesus was so clear about his relationship with God that it gave him the confidence and courage he needed to carry out the task to which he felt called.

Stephen Covey tells us that we have four needs: to live, to learn, to love, and to leave a legacy. He says that as leaders we must be trustworthy and that begins by being honest with ourselves.

How can we explore our identity?

1. Begin by thinking about what you value. What roles are important to you and how do you want to live them out.

2. Know your strengths and weaknesses. This will require an honest look in the mirror, and maybe discussion with others who know you well.

3. Know where your passions lie. This will take some time and reflection. It can be helpful to begin by creating a list of your accomplishments and then unpacking them to understand why you enjoyed some of those events more than others. What is it that releases your passion?

4. What is your mission in life? What is it that you want to have said about you when you have died? Covey suggests we write 4 eulogies, one by a loved one, one by a friend, one by a work associate, and one by someone you served. How do you become this person?

In our book *Prisms* we offer some

resources that are helpful in understanding your personal identity. Covey has some great resources for exploring identity. You may have thought about your identity in the past, but we often need to be reminded because our lives get busy and we lose focus.

Be Courageous

How courageous are you? We need to be clear about what risks we are prepared to take. Sometimes laying it all out gives us the energy we need to move forward. Sometimes it helps us identify where we need help and support. It can also be insightful to ask the question, "What is the cost of doing nothing?"

There are risks to being a leader today. Many people don't want to be lead and are quite content to stay where they are. What is amazing is how much energy they will put into trying to maintain the status quo, when if that energy was unleashed it would be very powerful.

Identify the Gifts in Others

Jesus sent disciples out in teams of two or more. He trusted them. We humans tend to create organizational structures and policies and procedures designed to control what people do, where they go, and who is in charge. When we do that, we downplay the basic trust our faith was built on.

In his Alban Institute article "Leading for the Future," Jeffrey Jones says, "The leader for the future isn't a person. It is a team. It is a group of people gifted and called by God to lead" The author suggests that this will break down the barriers between professional clergy and lay leaders. It will refocus our attention on gifts and call as being the basis for ministry. To this we say Hallelujah! Having worked in an effective team for nearly 15 years, those words are very empowering. Teams allow lay people to move from being just "volunteers" to living out their call, and we believe that is Jesus vision.

It requires a very clear sense of identify and vision to have the confidence to work effectively in a team. Each individual has to have the strength to operate effectively on their own, but put the benefits of working together ahead of personal glory. Watching the pairs skating at the Olympics, it is clear each skater needs the strength to perform the jumps and spins, but also the trust that

enables them to synchronize the pairs movements that make their presentation such a beautiful thing to behold.

The strongest teams are made up of people who recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and understand those of the other team members. Of course, it is critically important that every member of the team believes the vision and work of the team is more important than who gets the credit. It requires what Jim Collins in *Good to Great* calls "Level 5 Leadership." These are leaders who build enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will, always putting the needs of the organization ahead of their ego needs.

Let Them Go

"Just do it!" Those words come to us today from Nike, but that is what Jesus instructed the disciples to do. We have seen progress stopped and leadership squashed many times by approval processes that were designed to be controlling. We need to become "go until we say stop" kinds of churches rather than the "stop until I say go" many are today.

Jeffrey Jones in his Alban article describes the qualities of a 21st Century leader. Leaders of the future:

- ◆ have the heart of a servant
- ◆ have the mind of an architect
- ◆ have the arms of a hugger
- ◆ have the strength of a gymnast
- ◆ have the legs of a marathoner
- ◆ have the soul of a poet.

What is your role in creating the church that is needed today? Begin by deciding to be a leader, and then explore what it will take for you to become the leader you want to be.

Jesus' Model

Keep an eye on Jesus' model, and you can't go wrong:

- ✚ Have a vision
- ✚ Know yourself
- ✚ Be courageous
- ✚ Identify gifts in others
- ✚ Let the people go

Joyce Madsen is a member of the Congregational Life centre staff team. Reach her at joyce@congregationalife.com.

*The leader
for the
future isn't
a person.
It is a
team.*

Worship Survey

*God
abhores
boring
worship.
Don't do it.*

Do you know if your sermons are boring? Are you clear about whether most of the members of your congregation find your worship meaningful? Can you answer these questions? If not, it may be time to find out the answers and today that is easy to do. That is if you really want to know!

The Worship Survey on the next page is one we offer for your use. Feel free to make as many copies as you need. You can use surveys in a number of ways:

1. Hand the survey out with the bulletin and encourage everyone to complete one and put it in a basket at the back of the church on their way out.
2. Have the ushers ask a few people if they would please fill one out and hand in at the end of the service.
3. You can ask for feedback every week, every month, or on special occasions.

You certainly want to get feedback if you have tried something new and different to see if you got the results you wanted.

4. Have members of the Board, Council, or Vestry complete the survey.

Whatever you decide, I think it should be completed at least four times a year. If you do it over several years you will begin to gather very helpful data. You should also be counting the number of people in attendance when you survey so you have that data to compare as well.

If you choose to do a large number of surveys and aren't sure about how to compile them, you can put them in an envelope to us and we will compile them for you. We are on a mission to stop boring, redundant worship from happening so want to help in any way we can.



CONGREGATIONAL TRANSFORMATION: CREATING THRIVING SPIRITUAL COMMUNITIES

This Internet course is about creating congregations that soar, with all the energy and passion, all the tranquility and spirituality that eagles bring to their magnificent flight. Using the book *Wings Like Eagles*, as a resource, it provides practical ways to enable congregations to reach out to the people in their communities while continuing to serve their current membership. The course brings together the theory, methods and tools that make congregational transformation achievable and exciting.

October 1, 2006 – May 31, 2007

MANAGING PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION: Tools to Meet the Challenge of Change.

This one-week intensive course goes beyond theory to provide the tools and resources needed for personal development and the transformation of an organization. You will use the "Prisms process" to explore your personal gifts and develop facility with this powerful resource for identifying a congregation or organization's strengths. There will be insights around working in a team environment, understanding one's community, and creating a plan for effective action. You leave with a plan for moving forward.

October 24-28, 2005

Instructors: Joyce Madsen & Clair Woodbury
Register with St. Stephen's College: 780-439-7311

Worship Survey

Date and time of Service; _____

	Question	Rating Y - Yes N - No NC - No comment
Flow	The flow of the service was smooth and meaningful.	
	The Order of Service was appropriate.	
Theme	The service had a theme that provided focus and stimulated interest.	
Music	I found the music meaningful.	
	The hymns were familiar and encouraged enthusiastic singing.	
	The theology of the hymns spoke to me.	
	The choir added to the worship experience.	
Prayers	I found the prayers meaningful.	
	There were too many prayers.	
	I would enjoy prayers that allowed for participation by the congregation.	
Sermon	I found the sermon relevant for my needs.	
	I learned something from the sermon.	
	The sermon was the right length.	
	The sermon was delivered with passion.	
	The sermon was well done.	
	The sermon was boring.	
Sacraments	I found the baptism/communion/confirmation was well done	
Comments		

Creating Places to Belong

It's the way of the future—the way to growth, energy, commitment, & spiritual depth.

Small Group Ministry Event — August 15 - 18, 2006

Athabasca Woods Lodge

Small groups are —

- ◆ Places for new people to meet new people and make friends.
- ◆ Places for members experiencing life's transitions to make new connections with God and others.
- ◆ Places to explore faith and ask the life learning questions.
- ◆ Places to try out new hobbies or experiences.

Small Groups can provide these places! Small Groups build on a centre that is our Christian faith, are a place to have meaningful personal relationships, all while we work, learn, cry, and laugh together.



Participation in this program will give you an understanding of the dynamics of small group ministry, experience in being part of a spiritually supportive group, and the beginnings of a plan to develop a small group ministry in your congregation.

We recommend this program for clergy and lay leaders who want to develop or strengthen small group ministry within their congregation.

Some of the topics we explore:

- Why small groups
- Creating a circle
- Covenants
- Developing leadership
- Focus areas for small groups
- How to get started.
- The facilitating core group

Book now. We are limited to eight participants per session. Our 2,000 sq. ft. lodge is equipped with a modern kitchen and all facilities.

The cost of \$250 per person includes tuition, meals and accommodation. The event begins at 10:30 a.m.

Tuesday and ends 3 p.m. Friday. The Athabasca Woods Lodge is 2 ¼ hours from Edmonton, 22 km north of the town of Athabasca.

Phone the Congregational Life Centre at 780-619-0386 or 780-438-6016 to register.

The Role of the Facilitator

By Clair Woodbury

Congregations are finding that small groups are an important way for people to get to know one another. Also, this year we have been asked by the United Church to facilitate a Western Canada Pilot Learning Circle in Alberta. We thought sharing some of our insights into the role of a Facilitator would be helpful for those leading small groups of any kind, be they learning circles, study groups, or Small Group Ministry gatherings.

Lead Goal Setting

The first task of a group is to set its goals, whether they refer to learning in a certain area or accomplishing a particular task. Groups that have the most motivation are ones that come together around an area about which they have passion. Giving the group full opportunity to participate in deciding what they are going to do creates buy-in and releases the group's creative response. Even if the group has been requested to do a certain task or has been assembled for a specific reason, it is important at the very beginning to release people's passion and their insights by involving everyone in the group developing specific goals and an action plan that will guide the group as it achieves those goals.

Give your goals the MEANS test. Goals must be Measurable, Energizing, Achievable, point to something that is truly Needed, and be Specific.

Guard the Essential Three

There are three key components that make any small group a uniquely powerful vehicle. We



call it the RooTS factor. A circle encourages growth in three areas: Relationships, Task, and Spirituality. At some point in every gathering there is an opportunity for people to share where they are personally – a relationship building time. There should also be an opportunity to grow spiritually – to deepen their sense of God's presence, whether through a reading, through drumming or music, sharing a story, a prayer, going for a special walk, or whatever. It usually falls to the Facilitator to

ensure there is a spiritual centre in the room with a candle and any other objects that reflect the group's spirituality or task focus. Then there is the task, exploring the topic about which the group has decided to learn or dealing with the issue that has brought the group together.

The Facilitator's task is to ensure that these three elements are honoured each time the group comes together.

Facilitate Setting Boundaries

If a group is to truly be there for one another and to encourage spiritual sharing, it is important for each member to have the confidence that what is shared of a personal nature stays in the room. One way is for the group to have a written covenant which all members ascribe to. Here's one we have found helpful:

I agree:

- ◆ to be present at all gatherings unless extraordinary events intervene.
- ◆ to be supportive and affirming of the other members during our gatherings – and in between gatherings whenever appropriate.
- ◆ To hold as confidential all personal information shared at our gatherings.
- ◆ To carry out commitments made during our time together, including setting aside the necessary time for reading and preparation or carrying out agreed to tasks.

Whether they are called norms or a covenant, it is important for the group to develop its own norms. The Facilitator's task is made easier by having the group's own norms or covenant to use when handling a situation where someone violates the covenant.

It is important for the Facilitator to take primary responsibility for ensuring that the group not dabble with therapy. When someone shares a personal problem, there is a temptation for people to morph into a counselling persona or therapy mode. A church group is different from counselling and therapy, and it is important for the sake of accomplishing the group's goals to keep this boundary clear.

Relationship, task, and spirituality make any small group uniquely powerful.

Encourage Leadership

A healthy group is one in which everyone takes turns giving leadership, whether it be in the area of spirituality, deepening relationships, or carrying out the task. Stephen Covey's new book *The 8th Habit* says it all. The Facilitator's task – as is the task of everyone in the Circle – is “to find our voice and inspire others to find theirs.”

Meeting Notes and Notices

There are some practices that fall to the Facilitator. It is helpful to pull together a few notes after each gathering and e-mail them to participants. Equally helpful is an e-mail a few days before a group meeting reminding people of the place and time of the next gathering – and any assignments or tasks that people agreed to have ready.

Manage Difficult Situations

Sometimes a member of the group will take it upon themselves to “fix” another member or suggest ways another member of the group can change. There is only one person we can fix, and that is our self. When someone shares a dilemma they face, it is natural to want to help them. Advice is appropriate if asked for, but any attempt to take the decision what to do away from another person is inappropriate.

There will be members who tend to dominate the conversation or group agenda. Some members may break the covenant by being absent too many times for inadequate reasons. Whatever the inappropriate behaviour, it falls to the Facilitator to ensure that this behaviour is challenged by the group in a responsible and caring way.

Encourage Celebration

Finally, what would a circle of any kind be without a celebration to mark the meaningful points on the journey, and the end of that journey when the group concludes its work? A celebration is a time to review goals and to rejoice that they have been accomplished – or to drive a stake in the ground to mark the point the group has reached on its journey in preparation for taking off on a new leg of the adventure.

Clair Woodbury is a member of the Staff Team of the Congregational Life Centre. Reach him at clair@congregationallife.com.

My Personal Creed

*I see God in starlight and sunlight
I feel God in birthing and dying
I hear God in silence and singing
I touch God in loving and giving
I think God in searching and learning
I know God in wondering and not knowing
I am God in accepting gifts and using them.*

*I believe in one God for everyone.
I believe God created our world, all worlds, and the process continues
I believe we are all created to know, to choose and to act.
I believe we all have gifts to share and that sharing is a gift
I believe together we will continue to change the world
I believe the world is the wonders we see, the surprises we can't predict, the realities we don't see, and the things we will later know.
I believe we are all blessed, whether we know it or not
I believe all of this is God.*

*Jeanna Baty
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*Spirituality
Corner*

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The Congregational Life Centre is a not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to assisting congregations to be more effective in their ministry.

