



Leadership for Today

by Clair Woodbury & Joyce Madsen

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The following is the "Introduction" from the new book by Clair Woodbury & Joyce Madsen, Leadership for Today — Putting Jesus' Model to Work for You. It will be published by the Congregational Life Centre in the very near future. Watch for the release date.

Jesus' leadership was so effective it changed the world. What kind of leadership did he offer? Is that a leadership model that could be effective in the church today?

The Synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke – provide a very good picture of **what** Jesus did. Insights into **why** have come through those who have examined what was happening in Palestine during Jesus' lifetime. Archaeology has unearthed new evidence about the Roman occupation and Jewish resistance. Ancient texts like the Gnostic Gospels that were lost but have now been rediscovered are giving us a deeper understanding of the times.

Other insights have come from the New Quest for the historical Jesus. Authors like Robert Funk, John Dominic Crossan, and Marcus Borg have gone to great lengths to identify how Jesus' actions were meaningful responses to the challenges of the day. The consensus today is that each gospel writer altered the original story slightly, and in doing so provides fresh insight into the challenges facing the young Christian community at the time when they were writing.

When we consider what we are learning from the new scholarship about Jesus and his times, we recognize that it was rooted in the past, the present and the future. We can discern eight facets to his leadership style. It was

- ◆ spiritual,
- ◆ visionary,
- ◆ flexible,
- ◆ story-based,

- ◆ team-based,
- ◆ courageous,
- ◆ action oriented,
- ◆ and authentic.

In *Leadership for Today*, we explore these eight facets of Jesus' leadership in detail, along with stories of leaders who are using them effectively, but in this introduction we want to briefly define them.

We do not pretend that these totally account for Jesus' ability to attract followers and build the movement that has resulted in the Christian church – but they are the characteristics that we the authors feel are needed by leaders in the church today.

Leadership that Makes it Happen

Jesus' leadership was *three dimensional* in time. He was anchored in the past, able to clearly point out the basis for his actions in the Hebrew scriptures. He had a powerful and passionate vision of the future he called the Kingdom of God. A better translation today might be "God's New Community." It was a future when God's way of treating all people with compassion, equality, justice, and care would be reflected in the way we deal with each other. At the same time in his ministry Jesus was able to deal head on with the current issues of his day. "Is it proper to pay tribute to Caesar or not?" he was asked. "Show me a denarius. Whose picture and name are on it?" he answered. "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Give to God what is God's" (Luke 20:22-25).

Jesus' ministry was profoundly *spiritual*. It began with a transforming experience of the presence of God. There is no doubt that people felt a deep sense of the presence of God when they were with Jesus. That is a gift that saints like Francis of Assisi learned from Jesus, and one that is a key to leadership in the church today. Many

This book is for everyone who wants to explore opportunities to become leaders, and for those who are already leaders and who would like their leadership to become more effective.

Small Group Ministry II this summer in Athabasca for three days, August 24 – 26, 2009

This event is for people who have taken Small Group Ministry training or have an experience of just how effective small groups can be. These three days will give you an opportunity to share your insights and gain new enthusiasm and expertise.

The event begins 10 a.m. Monday Aug. 24 and ends 6 p.m. Wednesday Aug 26. (dinner is provided). Stay Wednesday night at no extra cost if you are travelling a distance. All inclusive cost: \$195.

This event takes place at a retreat lodge in a woodland setting two hours north of Edmonton. For recreation and relaxation, the 80 acre wooded site is laced with walking trails. We relax beside the 25' swimming pool. Evening campfires provide time for talk and entertainment.

Take advantage of this opportunity to review what it takes to develop a strong small group ministry. The event will be facilitated by Joyce Madsen and Clair Woodbury, staff team, Congregational Life Centre.

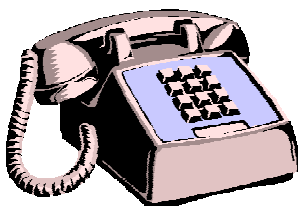


Basic Small Group Ministry

August 17–21

There may be space in the five day basic program, but please contact us very soon. The cost of \$295 per person includes tuition, meals and accommodation. The event begins at 1:00 p.m. Monday and ends at 1 p.m. Friday.

This five day event takes place at a retreat lodge in a woodland setting two hours north of Edmonton. We explore the steps to take in creating a small group ministry in your congregation —and give you an opportunity to enjoy the spiritual enrichment of being part of a small group.



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

people want to experience the presence of God in their lives in ways that give them meaning and a sense of worth.

Jesus had a powerful *vision* of a new society in which people are cherished for who they are, not just for what they can do, where the love that wants the best for everyone is the law of the land, where people's need take precedence over political domination, economic exploitation, and religious legitimization of these structures. It is a vision that has inspired people for 2,000 years and continues to be a driving force behind much social reform today.

Jesus was an *initiator*. He was a master at adapting his ministry to the challenge of the moment. He was able to address large crowds, then in a flash be totally present to a woman who touched his robe. There were major shifts as his ministry took new directions.

Jesus had a gift for *communication*. He talked about digging around fig trees, planting seed, harvesting grapes, and building watch-towers in those vineyards – experiences all his listeners would be familiar with. He used poetry to communicate. The cadence built into the Beatitudes makes them easily memorable. He used parables to catch people by surprise. By challenging many of the established practices of the day he was able to reveal God's way of looking at the world.

Jesus put time and effort into *developing a leadership team* for the future. It is quite amazing that the rag-tag collection of people Jesus gathered from fishing villages and rural Galilee eventually worked together to change the world, but they did.

Jesus *risked everything* when he took his movement to Jerusalem, the centre of Temple power. A current television program shows us each week what it takes to overcome the fear factor. Facing down the opposition in Jesus' day was, however, much riskier than bungee jumping or balloon flying. Mahatma Gandhi is a towering twentieth-century figure who knew the importance of overcoming one's fear in order to resist injustice. Nelson Mandela is a contemporary example of someone who was not afraid to resist injustice. He put his years of imprisonment behind him in order

to lead his country into a new social order – transforming fear into forgiveness. The Mothers of the Disappeared risked a great deal to bring about political change in Argentina. It took courage for Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan to lead a peace movement dedicated to ending the violence in Northern Ireland, for which they received the Nobel Prize in 1976.

We admire the fact that Jesus was a man of action, taking his leadership on the road and walking to Jerusalem, knowing every step brought him closer to confrontation.

Jesus is still an incredibly attractive figure 2000 years later because his leadership was *authentic*. "He walked the talk" as we would say it today. The collection of his teachings we call the Sermon on the Mount stresses authentic prayer, authentic relationships, and authentic giving – a life where motives and actions are one.

The Jesus Leadership Model

This is the Jesus' leadership model. It is an exciting model. Paul picked up Jesus' model, and the result was the church's explosion across the Roman Empire and beyond. From our experience and research, we know that this model is the basis of every congregation that is making a difference in its community today.

We live in a new culture. The starting point for the church being able to speak to that culture is an experience of God. It is that contact with God that gives the church the courage to articulate a vision of where God is calling it to go. This is a journey in which those in the church must do five things: initiate new forms of ministry, learn new languages, multiply leadership, overcome fear, and act on convictions. All this must be done authentically.

In this book we invite you to come with us on a journey as, in the next chapters, we explore Jesus' leadership style. Jesus was authentic, adaptable, spiritual, a communicator, a team builder, courageous, an initiator, and first and foremost a visionary. We want to use one of Jesus' powerful tools in doing so, namely stories. We will share stories of people who are demonstrating the Jesus kind of leadership today.

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Telling the Story

There is an insight from the 1960s attributed to Marshal McLuhan, the “media is the message” guru. It was during the time of Vatican II. When asked by the priests of his parish to tell them how to communicate better with the people, McLuhan said simply, “Tell the stories.”

Jesus was above all a story teller. We would like to carry on that tradition, and we would like to tell you why.

We were in the final stages of a Saturday workshop with two congregations that formed a pastoral charge. It had been a great day with people expressing their enthusiasm for the tasks that were involved. When it came to the question of how to share some of this with the whole congregation on Sunday, we asked “Why don’t some of you share why you are volunteering for the role you play in your congregation?”

What happened that Sunday morning was a moment in time we will never forget. One after another, the treasurer, then the Board chair, then various committee people told the story – not just of their role, but of the deep Christian commitment that empowered their lives and turned their contribution into what was for them a deeply fulfilling ministry. We could tell by the hush in the congregation that something very significant was happening.

We were reminded of the power of personal stories. There was an era fifty years ago when all young clergy peppered their sermons with what were termed “sermon illustrations.” There were whole books of them to draw from. They were stories, but about someone else from another time and another place. They had one great gift – they were safe. Those using them did not have to reveal anything about how they felt personally or what they believed, or where they had made mistakes. Most lessons in life are learned from mistakes. It takes a lot of courage, however, to reveal our mistakes in public – but doing so means we can share what we learned in the process.

In her book, *Storycatcher*, Christina Baldwin tells many stories. The most powerful ones, however, are her personal accounts. She tells, for example, about an

evening with her grandfather in his study. He was a clergyman who kept bees to bring in a little extra income. He had a jar of honey on his desk along with a Bible that night. Together they looked through the crystal clear honey at the words of Isaiah. He asked her to read what she saw. “Good,” he told her, when she had finished. “And where he touched my hair,” she adds, “I thought it smelled of honey. And where he touched my heart, there is honey still” (7). At a workshop we conducted, talking about this story created an occasion to celebrate the lives of people who had put honey into the hearts of those taking part.

Stories and Small Groups

Jesus gathered a small group of followers around him, and we know small groups are a great place for storytelling.

Clair remembers what it was like to be turned loose on the world when his contract at St. Stephen’s College ended. Five years from retirement is not the best time to go looking for a call or a congregation. A couple of possibilities had turned into blind alleys. Then a small group, just four people, gathered around a meal, a bottle of wine, a flip chart – and the Congregational Life Centre was born. We had all been involved in one way and another in a five year research project investigating what it took to develop and sustain new congregations. We knew if we didn’t do something, those research reports would be put in boxes and gather dust in the hidden recesses of some library. What inspired us was the thought of keeping those insights alive as we worked with congregations eager to become truly alive.

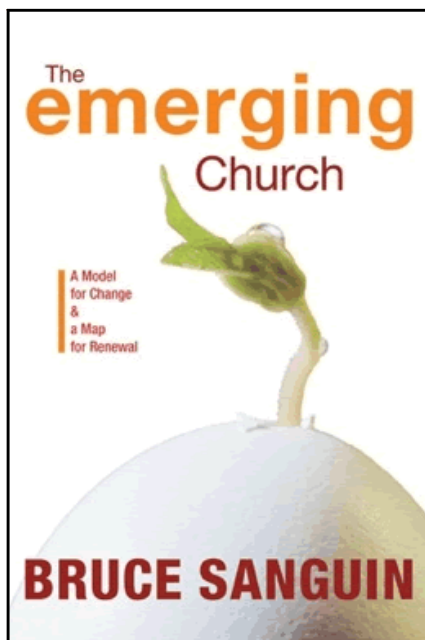
We each told our stories – where we were at personally and what we felt the church needed for its ministry to be more effective. That led to the idea of becoming consultants who could help congregations do just that. That there was no money, no structure, and only four of us didn’t matter. We told each other a story of possibilities that night that sustained those of us involved in the Congregational Life Centre through those start-up years.

* * * *

Jesus’ ministry was ... spiritual, visionary, flexible, story-based, team-based, courageous, action oriented, and authentic.

The Emerging Church

Book Review by Sandra Godel



Whether you are a lay leader or ministry personnel, if you are ready to stop the snoozing in the empty pews on Sunday mornings, Bruce Sanguin's book, *The Emerging Church: A Model for Change & a Map for Renewal*, is for you and your congregation.

Sanguin ministers at Canadian Memorial United Church in Vancouver, the "model" church in the book. He is also the author of *Darwin, Divinity and the Dance of the Cosmos*, a challenging book about ecological spirituality.

In *The Emerging Church*, Sanguin promises to provide us with a guide, not just for renewal of our mainline liberal congregations, but one that will transform us and the communities in which we live. He starts the book with a litany of complaint about how we have mucked up the Christian movement so far. We have too much busyness, meeting time and niceness in our churches, and not enough ministry, prayer time or leadership grounded in God's spirit. We wear out our ministry personnel with too much expectation, and we have forgotten our congregational purpose.

Sanguin tells us there is a fix for these problems, and it starts with a process for choosing our leaders. He refuses to let us be complacent with whoever shows up for the job; instead, he insists that potential leaders arrive with Spirit-given gifts for leading and become well trained to use them. Then, when the inevitable conflicts that come with change develop, he helps us to understand that the clash is due to differences in our stage of development of Christian values, as some of us operate from a more evolved state than others. This fascinating analysis of value development is depicted cleverly in a color insert.

The Emerging Church is sarcastically humorous and well organized with one meaty topic per chapter followed by an

exercise for church leaders to complete – the "map" of the renewal. The book contains an example of an organizational chart, a values statement and a board agenda; a thorough bibliography; and a very helpful (but too short) review of what went wrong during the transformation of Sanguin's Central Memorial Church.

Does the process in the book, work? Sanguin reports that his church has doubled in size since they started the renewal, and a peak at the church website (<http://www.canadianmemorial.org>) lists many opportunities for personal and spiritual growth, a pastoral care ministry, environmental initiatives, and outreach efforts locally, globally and for all ages. If all our churches were this vibrant, there would be no need for the book!

Alas, few churches in Canada have the demographics and resources of Sanguin's affluent congregation. Many churches in need of renewal are in isolated rural areas with a rapidly aging population. Ministers there struggle to provide worship services to multiple-point charges, without adding leadership training and initiating an organizational change process to their list of duties. For them, advice from Sanguin to discover the "color of their Christ" (Chapter Six), and to embrace the naysayers of change as though they were angels (Chapter Seven), sounds just a tad too New Age for their practical realities.

Since transforming a congregation can be such a difficult task with slow results, I'd rather attend a church where the pay-off from the change has begun: Canadian Memorial United Church. Unfortunately, since I don't live in Vancouver, I'm stuck with my ho-hum church. However, after reading *The Emerging Church*, I find I have energy, hope and a vision for the future of my congregation--and a guide to get us there.

Bruce Sanguin, *The Emerging Church: A Model for Change & a Map for Renewal*. CopperHouse. 205pp., \$24.95

Sandy Godel attends Trinity United Church in Cold Lake where she admires the work ethic of her congregation while she strives to invite space for spiritual presence.

Doing Church Mathematics ...

In a New Way

Editorial
By
Clair Woodbury



I was reading a comment some time ago that the statistics you keep track of are how you count success. In the church we most often keep track of attendance on Sunday morning. It was a good criteria for many years, but I wonder just how meaningful it is today — and if we just might need to change the way we do church mathematics to reflect the difference that congregations are actually making in people's lives.

It used to be that regular attendance meant every Sunday. Today, many church leaders tell me, regular attendance means every third Sunday in many congregations. Hockey and vacation travel take families away. Many of us cherish those weekends once a month at the cottage. Then there are people who lead incredibly busy lives and just want to veg out on a Sunday morning once in a while.

A New Way

What I see happening in churches these days are a great variety of activities, some involving hard-core church attenders, but many having a mix of regular attenders, not so regular attenders, and people who do not attend Sunday services in the congregation at all.

It used to be that all church groups were geared strictly for church members or adherents. The United Church Women and Anglican Church Women — or the equivalent in other denominations — were the backbone of the congregation. There were Men's groups, an Altar Guild, the Choir, and perhaps a Mission Society — along with the plethora of Committees that used to be mandatory.

Today we hear churches complain about not being able to fill committees. Yet church space is being used by an adult bell choir, children's chime choir, walking group, bible study, community choir, yoga practice, book club, film night, Green Team

(read care of the environment), and a host of others. Every active congregation could add many of their unique activities to this list. Yes, many of these people show up on Sunday morning. But a lot of them do not, sometimes because — as many people tell me — “I'm spiritual but just not into religion.” Religion meaning the formal Sunday morning part of church.

My Proposal

Let's do the math the right way. Why not count everyone who comes through the doors of a church at any time during the week, rather than just those on Sunday morning? Wouldn't that give a more accurate picture of the number of lives the congregation was affecting?

In my Baptist Sunday school days, the Superintendent posted the attendance and offering for the previous Sunday on a board at the front. Why not have a spot at the church entrance to post the number of people who made the church their spiritual home at some point in the previous week or month.

Of course this new thinking requires a new look at church finances. The Finance Committee wants people there on Sunday morning because that is when the offering plate is passed. What if at least once a year a finance awareness person paid a visit to each group meeting in the church. Let people know they can play a financial part in helping the congregation make a difference in people's lives. Perhaps even suggest to groups they could take on a needed project that would give them a first-hand sense of participation.

That's the proposal. Let me know what you think. Just drop us an e-mail. We're always glad to get feedback.

Thanks.

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