



# Congregational Life

## The Birth of a Book

by Clair Woodbury & Joyce Madsen

### September 2009 Contents

The Birth of a Book	1
Who Are You?	3
Workshops & Resources	3
Small Group Ministry Athabasca August 4	

Three years in the making, and there it is in your hand. The feel of fresh creativity brought to life. The scent of new paper and ink. It's a book, and it's beautiful.

That was our experience, holding the first copies of *Leadership for Today* fresh off the press. It has been an exciting journey, one we'd like to share.

Many of us have long been concerned about the decline that is happening in every main-line denomination. What is the issue? What is the problem? Is it something that can be fixed, or is it a trend of the times we just have to live with?

We began to sense an answer when we came across a column in the United Church Observer some years ago written by a minister from North Vancouver. He observed that there was a crisis in leadership in the main-line church and went on to wonder why for so many years leadership had been a bad word in his denomination. Clergy were told to facilitate, enable or coach – but not to lead.

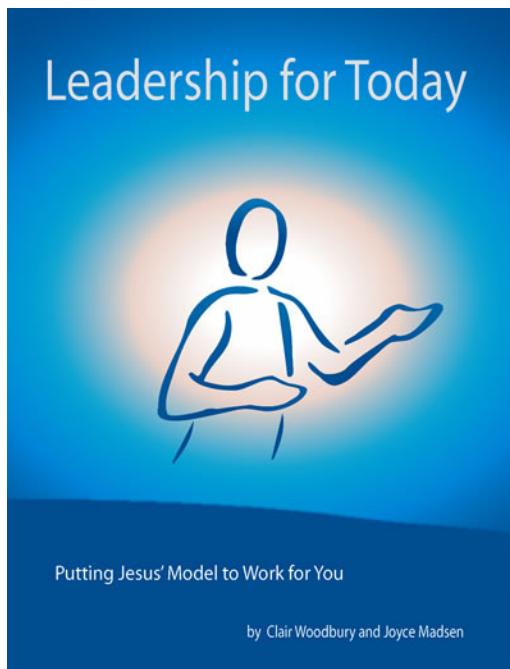
Leadership is not only a good word, but in today's church, an all-important crucial word. We're not talking about a power play or Lone Ranger do-it-yourself kind of leadership. We are talking about true leadership, one that seeks to bring out the best in people and make it possible for them to become everything God intends them to be.

Our next question was where to find insights into that *agape* motivated leadership. We read books on leadership that were available from the Alban Institute and church writers in Canada. We assessed what books dedicated to leadership in the business world had to say. We combed the Internet for insights. We thought back to the congregations we had worked with where leadership was making a difference. We taught a course at St. Stephen's College on *Managing Personal and Organizational Transformation* that featured leadership as a major component.

A definite, if somewhat fuzzy picture, began to emerge. Everyone talked about vision. They talked about dedication. They painted a picture of an effective leader as one who put results before personal prestige, who cared more about people than profit.

We are not sure just when it happened, but there was a moment of clarity when we realized everything we were reading about and observing to do with leadership was right there in Jesus' ministry. It was the leadership we see as Jesus travelled

around Palestine gathering followers, speaking of the Kingdom of God and setting his face toward Jerusalem. There were



(Continued on page 2)

eight facets to that leadership that for us stood out very clearly.

1. Jesus was anchored in a spiritual experience of God.
2. He had a vision of what he called “the Kingdom of God” that continues to energize us today.
3. He took a flexible approach, always looking for more effective ways to get the job done.
4. He told stories that truly communicated.
5. From the very beginning, he created a team to work with him and carry on when he was gone.
6. Never one to play it safe, he was willing to risk whatever it took.
7. When the time for talk ended, he took action.
8. He was truly authentic, walking the talk and relating on a person-to-person level.

When we were writing *Wings Like Eagles* one of our basic rules was that we would not include anything unless we had personally seen it work effectively in a congregational setting. That same rule remained foremost in our minds as we expanded the eight facets of Jesus’ leadership style into the eight chapters that occupy the centre of our book.

We made a list of the congregations we had observed being effective and recalled what we had observed by way of leadership. Some of the insights we had already captured in articles for this newsletter. Then we got on the phone and set up interviews with the leadership of other congregations that were making a difference. The journey enriched us immeasurably, and our thanks go out to the thirty or so congregational leaders – both lay and clergy – who shared so openly with us.

That done, all we had to do was write it up – and remind ourselves of just how Jesus’ model worked for him by including that picture at the start of each chapter.

We gave the manuscript to our Board at the Centre and also to ten leaders who were making a difference in their congregation, asking for their comments and suggestions. The last step was a final

edit by Heather Marshall, a former book publisher and skilled editor.

This book contains a lot of material. It looks at Jesus’ three years of ministry with new eyes. It explores the nature of vision and spirituality and authenticity, to name only three of the eight. There are stories and more stories, because we Christians are above all story people. It has some specific “how-to-do-it” advice, recognizing that every situation is different and will require a unique approach.

But above all, this book is a prayer for the church, that it become the place of spiritual support our grandchildren need as they take on the challenges of a future world we can hardly imagine. That is the way we hope people will read it – with a candle burning as a reminder of God’s presence, and a passion burning in their hearts for a church that is dedicated to the primary task Jesus left his followers and us – the task of transforming lives into everything God intends them to be.

\* \* \* \*

*What some readers have said about Leadership for Today:*

*I have found affirmation for the direction in which I want to go, language to help me name some of the steps I need to take if I am to go in this direction, and have really appreciated the stories.*

*Alan Richardson  
Camrose United Church*

*This is a wonderful book! It walks the reader through a practical application of Christ’s leadership teachings and role modeling and applies to today’s issues.*

*Ralph Westwood  
Spruce Grove*

*A basic rule  
— to include  
only what we  
have  
personally  
experienced  
to work  
effectively.*

### *Leadership for Today*

*Putting Jesus’ Model to Work for You*

Order from the

Congregational Life Centre,  
#1405, 5328 Calgary Trail  
Edmonton, AB T6H 4J8

Cost: \$24.95. Make your cheque for \$24.95 payable to the Congregational Life Centre.

## Who are You?



Joyce Madsen and Clair Woodbury are the staff team for the Congregational Life Centre. A number of new people are perhaps not familiar with the Congregational Life Centre and have the question, "Who are you?"

Joyce has served in management positions in a number of computer and high-tech companies and conducted training programs across Canada. She chaired two new church development congregations in Edmonton and the St. Stephen's College New Church Development Coordinating Committee. She served as co-chair of the United Church's national Commission on Congregational Mission and Church Development. During the Centre's first year she chaired the founding Board and as a volunteer helped lead many of the workshops.

Clair came to the Centre after five years as director of a research project in new church development based at St. Stephen's College, Edmonton. A graduate of Royal Military College, Clair studied theology at Queen's University and received his Ph.D. in theology from Drew University in the United States. He has served a number of pastorates and a term as President of Alberta and Northwest Conference for the United Church. In a varied career, he has worked in the black ghetto of Chicago, served as Canadian NGO Coordinator for the U.N. Vancouver Habitat Conference, and as Director of a village development project in the hills of Italy.

The Centre has been assisting congregations to be more effective in their ministry for over 15 years. It is a great thing to be doing, because we get to meet some of the greatest people there are in those congregations.

### **Congregational Life**

Sept. 2009

Vol.16 No.1

is published by the Congregational Life Centre  
#1405, 5328 Calgary Trail, Edmonton AB T6H 4J8  
Phone: 780-619-0386 or 780-438-6016

CongregationalLife.com

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Joyce Madsen &  
Clair Woodbury

## Workshops and Resources

Congregational Life Centre staff have worked with many congregations and leaders over the last 15 years and can design a program that will meet your needs.

**First and Second Impressions** – A workshop that designs a process that will truly welcome and integrate new people.

**Small Group Ministry** – Workshops that focus on Where to begin, Training the facilitators, Growing this ministry. 4 days in Athabasca can provide a foundation for a successful ministry.

**Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church** – What are the skills required. It begins with knowing yourself and then deciding how to lead in your environment.

**Becoming a Team** – Creating and maintaining effective teams requires a commitment to putting the team first and then learning how to work together effectively.

**Transforming a Congregation** – This is a process that will take time and commitment. It requires knowing your gifts as a congregation, understanding who lives in your community, and discerning what God's call is for you.

**Coaching** – We provide individual and group coaching for leaders who are working to make changes in their communities.

**Learning Circles** – This new learning style is supported by the UCC. Circles of people who are exploring and learning together provide both opportunities for growth and accountability.

Congregational Life Centre

(780) 619-0386 or (780) 438-6016

# Small Group Ministry Seminar

Athabasca 2009



“The sessions were wonderful, warm and compassionate. The setting is perfect in that it ensures that everyone is comfortable, safe and able to commune with God, through nature and each other.”

Each day began with our small group in the Circle Tent. Great sharing, great spirit.

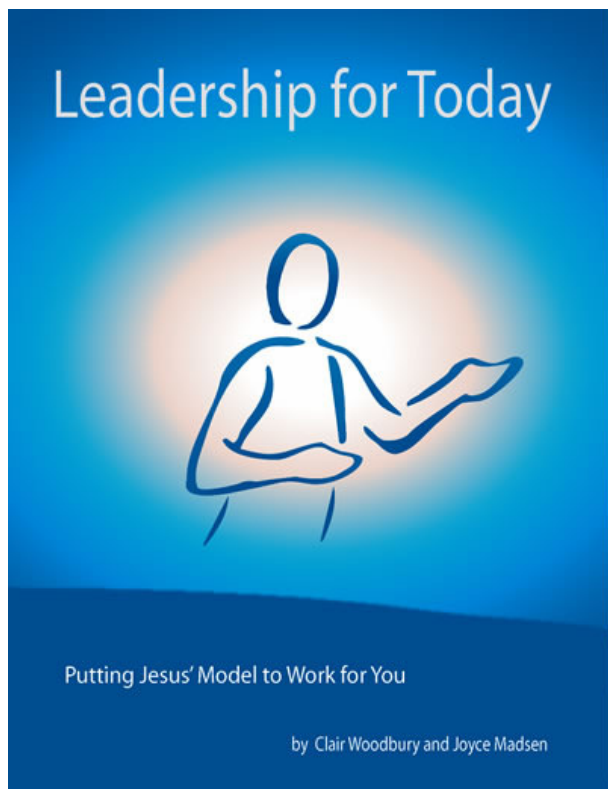


The outdoor classroom was a great setting.

Our cook “extraordinaire” was Kathleen James-Cavan, taking a break from her role as professor of English at the University of Saskatoon, and preparing for United Church ministry.



# Leadership for Today



## Putting Jesus' Model to Work for You

Jesus leadership was so effective it changed the world. What kind of leadership did he offer? Would that a leadership model be effective today? Our answer is YES!.

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I enclose my cheque for \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

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A new book from the Congregational Life Centre ...

## Contents

1. The New Culture
  2. Experiencing God
  3. Knowing Where You're Going
  4. Initiating Change
  5. Communication is Key
  6. Multiplying Leadership
  7. Overcoming the Fear
  8. Making It So
  9. Being Authentic
  10. The Last Word
- Appendix: Six Steps to Success

## Leadership for Today: Putting Jesus' Model to Work for You

By Clair Woodbury and Joyce Madsen

This book looks at Jesus' three years of ministry with new eyes. It explores the eight key facets of leadership that made his mission so effective. His leadership was spiritual, visionary, flexible, story-centred, team-based, risking, action-oriented, and authentic. There are stories and more stories, because we Christians are above all story people. It has some specific "how-to-do-it" advice, recognizing that every situation is different and requires a unique approach.

But above all, this book is a prayer for the church, that it become the place of spiritual support our grandchildren need as they take on the challenges of a future world we can hardly imagine. That is the way we hope people will read it — with a candle burning as a reminder of God's presence, and a passion burning in their hearts for a church that is dedicated to the primary task Jesus left his followers — transforming lives into everything God intends them to be.

What readers said about  
*Leadership for Today:*

I found this book very readable. It challenges the deep vital aspects of effective leadership – being authentic, having a vision, knowing the specifics of where you are going and what you need to get there.

Rev. Gordon Oaks  
Chancellor, St. Stephen's College

Lots of great good-news stories of congregations and their leaders with whom readers can readily identify. Very readable and exciting!

Rev. Lynn Maki  
Executive Secretary,  
Alberta & Northwest Conference

It caused me to generate ideas of my own about things to do in our own church. I think it is one of the most helpful books I have seen on rebuilding the modern church.

Shirley Kabachia