Role Negotiation and Congregational Leadership

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Abstract: This paper addresses the question of how leaders of religious communities (ministers and lay representatives) may effectively review and renegotiate changes to their respective pastoral roles and responsibilities. An account is given of the implementation of Role Renegotiation Models used with leadership groups in four Christian congregations in Queensland, Australia, and outcomes are evaluated. Suggested changes to such processes are discussed in the light of recent leadership literature and negotiation research. A conclusion reached was that in congregational contexts priority be given to relationship issues and deployment of ministry gifts/skills to enhance collaborative team work.

Introduction

The significant part played by many in designated pastoral or spiritual leadership roles in Christian congregations in facilitating healthy growth and effective functioning of their communities has received particular emphasis in recent decades.[2] A spate of books and articles have been produced to address issues pertinent to understanding the role of the contemporary religious

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[2] See for example an early study by David A. Roosen, William McKinney, and Jackson W. Carroll, *Varieties of Religious Presence: Mission in Public Life* (New York: Pilgrim, 1984); and Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

leader.[3] Of course, this development has not happened in a vacuum. Research into leadership in business and the professions, as well as many other fields of human endeavor, continues to contribute enormously to our understanding of the factors associated with effective leadership of organizations.

In introducing this article I want to make reference to two significant (but as yet largely untapped) areas of social science research with implications for leadership of religious communities, namely: negotiation theory and research[4] and research into emotional intelligence and its application.[5] Although negotiation theory is now widely used in legal and industrial dispute-resolution contexts and was popularized for a lay readership by Fisher and Ury,[6] its relevance and potential benefits for religious communities and their leadership have not yet received adequate attention. While the notion of emotional intelligence is not a new phenomenon,[7] in reports of

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[3] For example, see British publication *Creative Church Leadership: A MODEM Handbook*, ed. John Adair and John Nelson, (Norwich: Canterbury, 2004) that includes a database of relevant resources for church leadership and management; and the small book by Robin Gill and Derek Burke, *Strategic Church Leadership* (London: SPCK, 1996), that addresses the issue of how British church leaders can promote qualitative and quantitative growth in the midst of rapid change. For a North American perspective see Alban Institute Publications such as Loren B. Mead, *The Once and Future Church* (1991); Loren B. Mead, *Five Challenges for the Once and Future Church* (1996); and William Chris Hobgood, *The Once and Future Pastor* (1998).

[4] See for example *Negotiation Theory and Research*, ed. Leigh L. Thompson (New York: Psychology Press, 2006).

[5] See for example the recent study by Ryan Williams LaMothe, "Types of Faith and Emotional Intelligence," *Pastoral Psychology* 59(3) (2010): 331-344, in which the notion of emotional intelligence is used to differentiate among four types of relational faith and their adaptive and maladaptive manifestations.

[6] Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to YES: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In*, (London: Arrow Books, 1987).

[7] See the historical overview and discussion of emotions research and the academic study of religion in the introductory chapter of the volume edited by John Corrigan, *Religion and Emotion: Approaches and Interpretations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

research by Daniel Goleman and associates[8] the critical role emotional competencies play in a wide range of leadership contexts is presented and discussed. In an organizational leadership setting Emotional Intelligence (EI) signifies giving priority to acquiring and exercising particular emotional competencies in the organizations within which leaders serve. In essence, EI competencies are understood as "vehicles of primal leadership"[9] and are characterized by people possessing the capacity to handle their behaviors and their relationships in ways that drive emotions positively and thereby create a culture of resonance rather than dissonance in the work environment.[10]

On the basis of North American studies, some healthcare researchers have called for a higher priority to be given to the quality of interpersonal relationships in the interests of enhancing workers' spirituality.[11] In similar fashion, evidence is emerging that healthy relationships and effective teamwork are key factors in providing effective pastoral leadership of religious communities.[12] Not surprisingly, how ministry colleagues relate and how effectively these ministry leaders and their key lay people work together are vital factors contributing to the promotion of the spiritual and psychological health

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[8] Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam, 1998); for a description of the four domains of Emotional Intelligence and their respective leadership competencies see Appendix B (327-332) in Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, *The New Leaders: Transforming the Art of Leadership into the Science of Results* (London: Time Warner Books, 2003).

[9] Goleman, et al., 42.

[10] Goleman, et al., 6.

[11] See Verner Benner Carson and Harold G. Koenig, *Spiritual Caregiving: Healthcare as a Ministry* (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2004).

[12] See, for example Peter L. Steinke, *Healthy Congregations* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996), and the chapter on spiritual and relational vitality in the book by Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

of congregational life. George Cladis[13] has asserted that "the most effective churches today are the ones that are developing team-based leadership," and contends that transformational leadership of a congregation has to be a collaborative effort involving both the designated ministry leader and others (whether lay or ordained), who have ministry leadership roles and responsibilities and who together comprise the local congregation's ministry leadership team. In general, these principles would appear to have relevance regardless of the size of the religious community or structure of the leadership team.

However, without having an agreed strategy in place to review mutual expectations regarding ministry roles and responsibilities, it seems unlikely that major ministry and mission goals adopted by a congregation and its leaders will be achieved to anything like the extent hoped for. Moreover, the long-term viability of interpersonal relationships and the effectiveness of the ministry leadership team may well be placed in jeopardy by the absence of such mutual accountability processes. It is not so much a question of whether ministry agents and their key lay leaders engage in some form of negotiation about their roles and responsibilities. Rather, the pertinent question is, what form do those negotiations take, and how effective is the team leader in executing the skills of negotiation?[14] If conversations about complementary roles and responsibilities are not intentional and explicitly planned, the chances are that tacit negotiation is already taking place and messages are being conveyed

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[13] George Cladis, *Leading the Team-based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey - Bass, 1999), 1, 88-106. See also the work by Fran Ferder and John Heagle, *Partnership: Women and Men in Ministry* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 1989).

[14] Negotiation skill, identified as one of seven execution (in contrast to diagnostic) skills of team leaders, has been defined as the ability to work persistently and constructively with peers and superiors to secure resources or assistance needed to support one's team. See the chapter by J. Richard Hackman and R. E. Walton "Leading Groups in Organizations" in *Designing Effective Work Groups*, ed. P. S. Goodman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986), 72-119.

indirectly or covertly, perhaps by means of hints or obscure signs that may be subject to misinterpretation and misunderstanding.[15]

This paper reports on the application and evaluation of three Role Renegotiation Models used with the key leadership groups in four Uniting Church congregations in South East Queensland, Australia. Before providing an overview of the project and offering some reflections on the processes and their outcomes, some background information in relation to the project is provided.

Background to Role Negotiation Project

In 2005, the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) through a Role Renegotiation Task Group commended to local congregations and presbyteries[16] three particular models for what was termed "Role Renegotiation Processes."[17] This action was initiated by Synod leaders mainly in response to their perceived need to resource specified ministry leaders (ordained or commissioned) and their church (parish) councils with guidelines for dealing with stress or conflict associated with differences in viewpoints on controversial and potentially divisive issues. One of these prevalent at the time was the question of whether it was appropriate for ministers in same sex relationships to exercise congregational leadership roles and responsibilities.

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[15] James A. Wall Jr., *Negotiation: Theory and Practice* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1985), 4.

[16] Presbyteries are the UCA's regional pastoral and administrative judicatory bodies with responsibility for exercising oversight of local congregations and their ministry leaders.

[17] The term "Role Renegotiation" rather than "Role Negotiation" was possibly chosen to emphasize that the process is to be understood primarily as a renegotiation of an already established agreement or covenant that to some extent prescribed respective roles and responsibilities of the parties concerned; and perhaps also in an effort to avoid the inference that there were already conflicted relationships that required negotiation and the involvement of a third party (e.g., a Presbytery representative) to facilitate the negotiation. Although the terms "Role Renegotiation" and "Role Negotiation" are both employed in this paper, a rationale is provided for preferring the latter.

My main rationale for undertaking this project was a growing conviction arising from personal ministry experience and observation that there is often great value in encouraging ministry leaders and their cadre of local leaders to be proactive in regularly reviewing their respective roles and responsibilities, even if there are no particular issues creating anxiety or conflict. In addition, I recognized that such engagement had the potential to enhance the quality of working relationships and the effectiveness of teamwork by identifying those issues causing concern and seeking ways to deal with these as an integral part of the role negotiation process. Some recent negotiation research,[18] including works cited by Kathleen McGinn,[19] appears to provide support for these assumptions. If the establishment and maintenance of relationships between the parties concerned is regarded as one of the key purposes of business negotiations in the world of commerce, should this purpose be regarded as any less important in the context of role negotiations by leaders in churches and other religious communities? Fisher and Ury have pointed out: "Most negotiations take place in the context of an ongoing relationship where it is important to carry on each negotiation in a way that will help rather than hinder future relations and future negotiations."[20] It would seem this approach could certainly have great value for religious leaders and their communities as they explore processes of negotiation that not only produce effective outcomes but enhance working relationships.

In the Uniting Church in Australia, it is usual in recognizing a new ministry appointment (Placement) for a formal written contract or covenant to be established between the ministry agent and the congregation/s to

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[18] J. W. Salacuse, "So, what is the deal anyway? Contracts and Relationships as Negotiating Goals," *Negotiation Journal* 14(1) (1998): 5 -12.
[19] See the article by Kathleen L. McGinn, "Relationships and Negotiations in Context," in *Negotiation Theory and Research*, ed. Leigh L Thompson (New York: Psychology Press, 2006), 129-143.
[20] Fisher and Ury, 20.

which the ministry leader relates. However, in my experience the degree of clarity about the nature and parameters of ministry roles and responsibilities to be fulfilled varies considerably. In some instances little or no consensus or agreement may be sought or documented about ministry role expectations by the parties involved in establishing a new placement. As a consequence, there may be few attempts made to address such issues in a proactive, intentional and systematic manner before they become problematic. All too often in practice, conflicted relationships between ministers and their colleagues, or with their lay leaders, develop and come to the attention of the presbytery, perhaps through the presbytery minister (judicatory officer), only when a dispute or conflict remains unresolved and has begun to have negative impacts upon a particular religious community. By then the focus may have moved from being substantially issues-based to involving a general breakdown of communication and an erosion of goodwill and trust between the key protagonists. The situation may rapidly deteriorate and lead to a polarization of the members of a congregation and possibly to the resignation or premature termination of a ministry leader's placement.

What Is Role Renegotiation?

The role renegotiation processes or models purport to offer frameworks for ministry leaders (lay and those in a specified ministry—commissioned or ordained) to engage purposefully with each other in periodic and structured pastoral conversations. The intention is that parties meet and reflect together, usually with the assistance of a facilitator/negotiator (for example, a presbytery representative), on their respective roles and responsibilities, and to review their mutual expectations. The process is designed to provide for timely preventive work as well as constructive problem solving before issues escalate and begin to impact negatively upon the functioning of the organization and/or individuals

involved. Basic assumptions underlying role renegotiation processes include the following:

1. Changing circumstances over time frequently mean that roles and responsibilities of people working together in ministry contexts also may alter and therefore require renegotiation.
2. They may be applied in a variety of relationships and contexts. For example, two or more individuals, or two or more groups of people may find such processes useful.
3. They are designed to provide periodic reviews of working relationships between church council members and ministry leaders that may lead to more effective and productive teamwork.
4. They are not specifically designed to deal with major conflict, but some could assist in dealing with disputes or disagreements, especially where expectations regarding roles and responsibilities have changed or are unclear. However, as indicated below, Model Three does provide a framework for understanding the dynamics of conflict and dealing with breakdowns in communication and the reestablishment of healthy working relationships.

Models of Role Renegotiation

(a) Model One: Annual Pastoral Dialogue

In this model constructed around the notion of an annual Placement Pastoral Dialogue, the aim is to assist the person in a specified ministry placement, the ministry context, and the relevant presbytery, to maintain healthy and productive working relationships. Usually three people are involved, namely: a trusted lay leader from the congregation or agency, the person in the ministry placement, and a representative of the presbytery. The process is not meant to be a performance appraisal of the minister, but rather to provide opportunity for a conversation on how things are going and what is envisaged for the future. Issues of concern may also be raised before they become problematic.

The dialogue focuses on relevant issues in the relationships and seeks to clarify expectations of respective roles and responsibilities of the parties involved. The presbytery representative records the agreed outcomes and provides a summary statement to those participating. The conversation and recorded outcomes remain confidential to those involved in the process, and to the chairperson of the pastoral relations committee of the presbytery. Three elements comprise the Pastoral Dialogue, namely:

1. Preparing for the conversation by reflecting on questions addressed to each of the participants;
2. Sharing perspectives by the three parties on what is working well and what needs renegotiation; and
3. Recording by the presbytery representative of the outcomes agreed upon and adopting an action plan for follow-up as well as noting details of the next meeting.

(b) Model Two: Major Pastoral Dialogue

In this second model, the aims and personnel involved are the same as those mentioned for Model One. The main difference is that Model Two places more emphasis on looking toward and planning for the future rather than on reviewing the past. For example, there is provision for a Major Dialogue that relates to the next twelve months and there is also provision for a Dialogue Review that may take place midway between the major dialogues.

In addition, eight elements are identified in the review process for prime consideration by the ministry agent. These include the following topics: role clarity, evaluation of work outcomes, roles and responsibilities in the light of self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses, vision for ministry, learning and development, life plans, communication, and assessment of the role of the placement and presbytery. In the Dialogue Review, any changes to the details of the Major Review are noted, and these are to be approved by the parties involved.

(c) Model Three: Restoring Violated Role Expectations

This model of role renegotiation is based on communication theory outlined in a seminar workbook produced by a North American training organization known as L.E.A.D. Consultants Inc. and used by participants in their Lab 1 Seminars.[21] Four main stages in developing relationships and renegotiating role expectations are identified and described in the workbook, namely:

1. Sharing Roles and Expectations,
2. Commitment,
3. Productivity, and
4. Pinch.

A theoretical framework is also provided for dealing with "pinches"—the issues that signal violation of role expectations may have occurred. In cases where the issue is of relatively minor importance, it is likely that a pinch will be readily and easily negotiated by a "quick-fix." A productive and efficient relationship is usually rapidly restored, but in some instances the issue of concern will be addressed by a planned renegotiation process. The difficulties being experienced are understood as a breach of agreed roles and expectations within an organization and these are revisited with a view to renewing commitment to and productivity in the relationship. Where a pinch leads to disruption in the relationship and a breakdown in communication, the outcome is described as a "crunch."[22]

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[21] John S. Savage and Kenneth J. Mitchell, *Lab 1 Skills for Calling and Caring Ministries "Learning the Language of Healing"* (Reynoldsburg, OH: Lead Consultants Inc., undated).

[22] Any of the following five possibilities may be present in circumstances that represent a "crunch":

- Stalemate (people retreat to entrenched positions and although there may be a relationship there is insufficient motivation to seek to resolve the difficulty);
- Mute Termination (one party severs the relationship without engaging in any meaningful dialogue);
- Recommitment (the parties re-engage the relationship but without addressing the issues or seeking to deal with their differences in respect to roles and expectations);

The intent expressed in offering this model to presbyteries and congregations was the building of healthy relationships between those in specified ministries and the presbytery, as well as with the wider church and with local congregations. There was the expectation that the initiative would be taken by presbyteries in determining ways to implement this model, and as was the case with the other models described above, the major focus would be on clarifying role expectations.

Project Planning and Preparation

In the absence of information about the outcomes of other attempts to implement any of these three role renegotiation models, a flexible and experimental approach was adopted in planning to undertake this project. The aim was to raise awareness about these processes and their potential with particular groups by providing an orientation to each of the three models. In addition, it was hoped that consideration would be given by some of the groups to the invitation to implement one or another of the three models. In identifying four suburban congregations and their ministry leaders as potential participants in the project, two characteristics were selected as desirable criteria, namely: (a) having different sized congregations represented, and (b) having at least one congregation with a sole ministry agent, and also at least one with a collegial ministry team.

Four ministry leaders of particular congregations were approached and arrangements made to meet with each

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• Renegotiate under stress (the parties are willing to work together toward renegotiation of their roles and relationships, usually with the support or facilitation of a third party, with the hope that in spite of the stress involved in the process, satisfactory levels of commitment and productivity can once again be achieved);

• Planned Termination (the parties having engaged in renegotiation under stress of their mutual roles and expectations conclude that these can no longer be fulfilled or may already be fulfilled; so a planned termination of the relationship is implemented, with or without the recognition or celebration of what has been achieved through working together).

individually. The project was explained and each indicated their willingness to encourage their respective council of lay leaders (church council) to commit to an initial meeting where the process would be explained in detail, and opportunity given to raise questions or issues of concern. Letters were prepared and sent to all four ministry leaders for distribution to their church council members. The letters set out the purpose of the project and provided responses to the following questions:

1. What is Role Renegotiation?
2. What are the main features of the three models?
3. What will the project involve in terms of time and energy for members of church councils?
4. When will evaluation and relevant feedback about the project outcomes be available to church councils?

Written draft agendas were also prepared for each of the meetings held.

Implementation of the Project

During a two-month period, initial meetings were held with each of the church councils and written reports were produced that described each event and its context, along with a situational analysis, a theological reflection, and the meeting outcomes noted.

(a) Response of Church Council No. 1

The first Church Council (CC1) has had the most intensive involvement in the process, and consequently has been the major contributor of data for evaluating this project. Factors noted were the relative non-involvement of some council members early in the process, and the impatience of one member in particular. This may well have been due to the general anxiety being experienced by the group in being confronted with what was for some a relatively new concept, along with the uncertainty felt by some participants about what may be required of them personally or as a group as the process unfolded. There was perceived to be a measure of resistance at first on the part of some; this resistance found expression in needing to control or direct the process. The discussion centered

on the question of whether it was necessary to do more than become aware of the three models. It was reiterated that while raising awareness was a key purpose, there would be value in the group selecting one of the renegotiation models and committing to engaging in the process. Agreement was reached that Model One be implemented, but with all members of the church council being directly involved in the process, rather than only one representative.

During the second meeting with CC1 different expectations were expressed about the purpose of the meeting, and there were different viewpoints about whether the whole membership of the church council should form the task group to engage the process. It was decided that two members from the church council, along with the minister and presbytery representative, would comprise the task group. A third person was designated as a reserve should one of the council representatives be unavailable. The secretary of the council agreed to seek feedback to ensure that all members had opportunity to provide input to the process via one of the council representatives on the task group. There was also agreement that the process be regarded as much more than a simulation or training session. Actual current issues were to be discussed and the process engaged in seriously and intentionally, with the expectation that there would be outcomes that may well have implications for the participants, church council and congregation. Several questions were raised in clarifying the concept of Role Renegotiation, such as:

- Did Role Renegotiation involve a performance review of the minister?
- Is the process a renegotiation or review?
- How confidential is the process meant to be?

In a written qualitative analysis of the process followed and outcomes of the meeting, the following observations were made:

…some church council members and the minister came to this meeting with differing expectations concerning what was about to

happen; and apparently with different motivations for engaging in the process. Nevertheless, there was genuine engagement with the concept and a positive outcome achieved; including plans being set in place for the next stage of the process.

The meeting highlighted the importance of clarifying with the group the basics about the concept of Role Renegotiation as it was being presented. It became evident from the questions being asked that individuals brought to the discussion of the concept quite different understandings, and therefore a variety of expectations. These needed to be thoroughly clarified and agreement sought before engaging in discussion about the implementation of the process. In line with the decision of the second meeting, it was agreed by the task group that a third meeting be convened and that its main focus would be the points set out in relation to Model One on the agenda for the previous meeting. These points are summarized as follows: The process is to provide opportunity for a time for conversation on: How things are going; what is envisaged for the future; and what are the issues that may need to be addressed before they become problematic. The dialogue focuses on these points: relevant issues in the relationships; clarifying expectations of the respective roles of the parties involved; and mutual expectations of the parties involved.

Feedback was provided by the two church council representatives on the task group under the headings of Worship, Pastoral Care, Administration, Things that were going well and "What issues of concern need to be addressed?" The presbytery representative also raised particular matters regarding relationships between the presbytery and church council; the presbytery and the minister; and vice versa. The minister responded and also raised other issues for consideration by the church council. It was agreed that the presbytery representative prepare a report and send it to other task group members for comment prior to the next meeting of the church council.

The report noted a spirit of collaboration and cooperation evident in the meeting as issues were

identified and discussed with candor, yet with care and sensitivity. This was no doubt due in part to the dynamics of this small group, but also to the fact that the church council representatives were presenting on behalf of other council members. It was recognized that identifying the specific issues of concern was perhaps the least threatening aspect of the Role Renegotiation process. At a fourth meeting with the church council the task group's report was presented and discussed. Little attention had been given to what was envisaged for the future, and no attempt had been made to identify priorities. In discussing the report the key issues raised were the need for relationship and team building between the minister and church council; clarifying the respective roles of the minister and youth worker; pastoral visitation and the function of the worship committee; and preference for a lay leader to chair church council meetings.

Members were invited to give feedback on their experience of the process to date. Some indicated a positive aspect of the process was that it did facilitate dialogue, although some reported feeling confused about the context. Others reported that the gathering of information from church council members for the task group meeting was too rushed. There was also perceived to be a lack of clarity about what Role Renegotiation involves. What was considered helpful was the opportunity to have the conversation about roles and responsibilities in a structured guiding process that helped the group move forward by addressing particular issues of concern. What was considered unhelpful was the confusion created for some people and not having benchmarks established to gauge the effectiveness of the process. Another evaluative comment was that the concept of Role Negotiation involving a boss and subordinate in the workplace has been confused with the application of the Role Renegotiation process. A date was set for a fifth meeting, and it was agreed that the main agenda items would be to identify particular matters for renegotiation and to prioritize these, as well as to

formulate changes to roles and responsibilities and set timelines for their implementation.

Initial meetings have been held with the three other church councils involved and their responses are briefly summarized below.

(b) Response of Church Council No. 2

In the case of Church Council 2 (CC2), both the ministry leaders and lay members came to the initial meeting ready to engage enthusiastically with the process of Role Renegotiation. Some positive outcomes were achieved, including plans being set in place for the next stage of the process. There was little consideration of either Model One or Model Three; the former being regarded by some as applicable mainly to a smaller church. Several options regarding implementation of Model Two were discussed and the decision made that the focus initially should be on the role of the church office administrator, with other significant roles (including those of the senior minister) being reviewed subsequently. It was decided that a Role Renegotiation task group would be formed and convened at an early date by a person with the appropriate skills and experience, preferably from outside the membership of the congregation. The membership of the task group would include the senior minister; the church office administrator; a lay member of the church council; and the presbytery representative.

(c) Response of Church Council No. 3

In the case of Church Council 3 (CC3), there was general agreement that Model One best suited the needs of this medium-sized suburban congregation led by a sole ministry agent. However, it was also agreed that some aspects of Model Three should be incorporated. (Model Two was regarded as more suitable for larger churches with several paid employees.) The view was expressed that having Model One in place would help prevent problems arising in future. The model could also work with leaders of ministry task groups in the congregation.

The Role Renegotiation process was seen as one that could be incorporated into the Annual Church Council Leaders' Retreat Program, where open and honest sharing by participants can take place. It was resolved that the following action steps be implemented:

- Two members produce a flow chart combining Models One and Three.
- A presentation be made to the church council describing the process; church council's views on the process be sought; and agenda items be listed for discussion at the next meeting.
- A church council representative; the minister; and the presbytery representative would meet to carry out the Role Renegotiation process as described in the flow chart.
- The church council representative would report back to the members of the church council with the outcomes and any recommendations at the upcoming retreat meeting.

(d) Response of Church Council No. 4

At the initial meeting of Church Council 4 (CC4) of a large multi-staff congregation about half of the total council membership was present and although there was interest evident, no recommendation was adopted in relation to the Role Renegotiation models. However, a number of observations were made and some issues were discussed. It was noted that the models provide positive frameworks for church councils to monitor the health and self-care of ministers, and that the process could be effective if used every twelve months by church councils. A question was raised about whether the Role Renegotiation process is similar to a role performance review, and the observation made that church councils need to ensure that the process is compatible with other review processes in use. Also the comment was made that presbytery needs to be clear about what Role Renegotiation model it is proposing to recommend to a congregation. It was decided that the question of what

further action would be appropriate would be considered at the next meeting of the church council. Perhaps the relatively poor attendance at the initial meeting can be partially explained by the fact that there is already in place an annual review process for the pastoral and administrative leaders of the congregation.

The different approaches adopted by the respective church councils to the Role Renegotiation models may be summarized as follows:

CC1: Chose to implement Model One (with two church council representatives on task group providing input from other council members),

CC2: Chose to implement Model Two (with an external convener of the task group and focus on administration staff role in the first instance),

CC3: Chose to implement Model One (but incorporating elements of Model Three in the process), and

CC4: Interest was expressed in the process, but no decision to implement any of the models has been communicated.

Evaluation of the Project

It would be premature to seek to identify firm conclusions or make too many specific recommendations regarding this project, given that none of the Role Renegotiation processes commenced have yet been completed. Even in the case of CC1, which has involved a series of four meetings to date, a fifth and final meeting is yet to take place. As indicated above, only in the case of CC1 has specific feedback been sought in terms of evaluation of the Role Renegotiation Model used and its processes. Although the contexts for applying these models of Role Renegotiation would not usually be described as adversarial, nevertheless some of the temporal phases identified in such negotiation processes that reflect changes in the way participants interact over the course of their meetings are clearly evident.[23]

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[23] Note for example the three stages identified by James A. Wall Jr., 8, in most negotiations: (Establishing the range, Reconnoitering the range, and

In respect to the other three church councils, each has engaged in an initial meeting, and both CC2 and CC3 have mapped out plans and are committed to implementing these. On the other hand, CC4 has not yet taken that step. Nevertheless, it is clear that in general the responses to the notion of Role Renegotiation processes by ministers and their key lay leaders has been very positive. There has been acknowledgement of the potential value of implementing a regular process that reviews roles and responsibilities and the mutual expectations that shape these in particular ministry contexts. Feedback indicated that both the intentionality of the process and flexibility of its application were valued characteristics. It is noteworthy that each church council chose a different approach to implementing the process, and at least three of the four groups have perceived a need to adapt one or more of the models presented for use in their own context by changing the prescribed format or increasing the number of representatives actively participating in the process.

It should be noted that although Model Three is regarded as a *bona fide* Role Renegotiation Model, it was used only as an additional resource, and then only by one of the four groups. There are indications that its optimum application was assessed as relevant mainly in contexts requiring clearer communication and strategies for seeking to resolve or manage conflicted relationships, rather than in reviewing roles and responsibilities and ensuring that the expectations of all involved are clearly understood and mutually agreed upon.

Precipitating the crisis or agreement); and the four stages (Opening moves, Positioning, Problem solving, and End game) described by Michael W. Morris and Dacher Keltner in "How Emotions Work: The Social Functions of Emotional Expression in Negotiations," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 22 (2000): 1-50, 23, to represent the process typically moving from initial cooperation to contention, then to collaborative interaction and finally back to an aggressive tone as ultimatums and threats are transacted.

Outcomes and Issues for Further Consideration

An important outcome of the project has been the identification of issues that require attention if such Role Renegotiation models are to fulfill their potential for enhancing the quality of congregational life. One issue that emerged several times in engaging with church councils and their ministry leaders was confusion about the meaning of the term Role Renegotiation. For some there was little or no awareness of the concept or its meaning in a church-related context. Perhaps this is understandable, since the term appears to have virtually no currency in Christian theological literature, and very little in contemporary church life. For others, the confusion arose because of familiarity with role negotiation techniques now prevalent in most industrial, business and professional organizational contexts.[24]

Secondly, for some Christian leaders the term appears to carry quite negative inferences because these important pastoral conversations are understood to be taking place by means of a predominantly secular technique or methodology that frequently still carries adversarial and self-seeking overtones for so many. However, it should be noted that this understanding of negotiation processes has been changing significantly in recent years as an outcome of negotiation research.[25] Nevertheless, in spite of similar terms being used and the confusion this tends to perpetuate, the purpose and methods associated with these two processes are quite distinctive.

A third issue is that the term Role Renegotiation seems to carry a strong emphasis on the process itself that may somewhat obscure the importance of the

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[24] Note the quote from: D. Brown and P. Harvey, *An Experimental Approach to Organizational Development,* 7th ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006): "Role Negotiation is directed at the work relationships among team members. The technique involves a series of controlled negotiations between participants. During the role negotiation, managers frankly discuss what they want from one another and explain why."

[25] Note the approach described as "integrative agreement" (win-win) in *Negotiation Theory and Research*, ed. Leigh L. Thompson (New York: Psychology Press, 2006), 2.

personal interaction of the participants involved. In the first instance these processes are intended to facilitate the meeting of people already committed to a covenantal relationship (e.g., through a ministry appointment process) to review that relationship and its implications for their future together.

A fourth concern about using the term *role renegotiation* is that it does not immediately convey a sense of the importance of the group context in which the conversations concerning expectations regarding ministry roles and responsibilities take place. Like role negotiation in its earliest expression, the emphasis is on negotiation between individuals rather than members of a group.[26] Even when a small group of individuals is involved in a role negotiation process, as was the case in the present project under review, people preferred to work in small task groups to negotiate agreements.

A fifth issue that needs addressing is that any review of roles and responsibilities by church leaders in church councils needs to take account of the variety of ministry gifts and diversity of experience that the members bring to the process of renegotiation. These elements surely need to be acknowledged in the structured conversations and reflected in the decisions made, as well as in how the outcomes are implemented.

A sixth matter is that some church council members participating in this project observed that an apparent lack of explicit theological language in describing some of the models was experienced as unhelpful. However, it needs to be acknowledged that Models One and Two were both purportedly designed for use in congregational contexts. Even in the case of Model Three, its presuppositions and strategies have been formulated by an organization whose primary focus has been to train

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[26] Note the foundational work of Roger Harrison "Role Negotiation: A Tough-Minded Approach to Team Development," in *Social Technology of Organizational Development,* (La Jolla, CA: University Associates, 1976) emphasizing that Role Negotiation typically takes place between two individuals rather than in a group context.

and resource Christian leaders in the pastoral ministry of "calling and caring." Nevertheless, it could be argued that the criticism about the paucity of explicit theological language does have some validity, given that church councils typically constitute their meetings with acts of Christian worship or prayer, reflect together theologically in seeking to discern the mind and will of God, and plan or engage in pastoral and Christian mission-related activities. There is strong rationale for using a process that is culturally congruent, rather than one that is experienced by some as uncomfortable if not alienating. In addition, it is argued that establishing a viable dialectic between theological reflection and role negotiation processes is imperative.

There is a range of other relevant questions that have not been dealt with in this paper. For example, there is the issue of mode of communication. In the models discussed in this paper there is an assumption that face-to-face communication is usually preferable, and this mode has the general support of some researchers,[27] who report better joint outcomes in such circumstances. However, these positive effects do not appear to be associated with all kinds of negotiation. Under certain conditions, face-to-face communication may lead to adverse outcomes; for example, dominance tactics may be adopted or aggressive staring may lead to an escalation of competitive motives.[28] Another issue relates to the place emotion should play in negotiation processes. Theorists diverge in their assumptions about whether emotions serve positive functions in guiding behavior or whether they have a disruptive effect.[29] On the other hand, according to Goleman, research into leadership effectiveness and Emotional Intelligence indicates that "the emotional task of the leader is primal—that is,

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[27] Morris and Keltner, 23
[28] Morris and Keltner, 39
[29] For example, see Morris and Keltner, 7.

first—in two senses: It is both the original and the most important act of leadership."[30]

Or again, it may be asked, what part education and training should play in such negotiation processes? There is evidence emerging that when it comes to the acquisition of Emotional Intelligence leadership competencies, these skills can be acquired and maintained given the appropriate motivation and effort expended. Likewise, it is claimed that the best negotiators are self-made over a lengthy period of time, rather than being "manufactured by their parents."[31] An implication is that it is likely there will be better outcomes for all concerned if the rudimentary elements in effective negotiation processes are better known and understood by all participating in such processes, given that there may be quite different approaches adopted or goals embraced. For example, in undertaking the process of negotiation some parties could be committed to interest-based or principled bargaining, while others may have a much narrower focus, namely, seeking only to achieve their own adopted position or goal.

Towards a Revised Role Negotiation Process

On the basis of the feedback received from church councils and their ministry leaders, it is recommended that a revised approach to role negotiation processes be adopted. Because each church council chose to adapt one or more of the models presented, perhaps there is a need to offer a generic process or model along with a range of options that accommodates local congregational needs or circumstances.

It is suggested that such a process would also need to recognize the preference of some church councils and their church leaders to function within an overt theological framework. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the use of theological language in

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[30] Goleman et al., 5

[31] Leigh L. Thompson, *The Truth about Negotiations*, (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: FT Press, 2008).

itself is also fraught with risk. Real-life issues may be masked or avoided in such a way that the integrity and potential benefits of the negotiation process may be compromised. In addition, it seems that the adoption of a different label is desirable for this process of engaging in periodic reviews of ministry roles and responsibilities. Terms that have become more prevalent recently in the literature on leadership of congregations and which seem to represent positive alternatives are *teamwork*,[32] *collaboration*,[33] and *partnership*.[34] Collaboration not only has the advantage of incorporating the notion of teamwork alongside that of negotiation between partners, but also serves to emphasize the place of the gifts people bring to their teamwork and relationships for the sake of the church's mission. For example, Cladis defines collaboration as "[t]he art and skill of negotiating community, networking gifts, and focusing individual contributions to fit into the larger movement of the faithful fellowship."[35]

It is the inclusion of a larger vision of Christian mission in the concept of collaboration used in this context that is particularly significant. It is also identified as "a theological concept, not merely a management or organizational principle."[36] The identification of ascending levels of collaboration in the culture of groups and their patterns of functioning perhaps sheds light on why some church councils struggle more than others with implementing role review processes.[37] Cladis also asserts

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[32] See, for example, Chapter 9 in Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

[33] Note the definition of collaboration as: "the identification, release, and union of all the gifts in ministry for the sake of the mission" offered by Loughlan Sofield, and Carroll Juliano in *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 2000), 17.

[34] For example, see Fran Ferder and John Heagle, *Partnership: Women and Men in Ministry* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 1989); and James D. Whitehead, and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Promise of Partnership* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

[35] Cladis, 89.

[36] Cladis, 47.

[37] Sofield and Juliano name these as Co-existence; Communication; Cooperation; and Collaboration. The characteristics of achieving level 4

that "[b]uilding a collaborative team is first the responsibility of the principal leadership team."[38] In a local congregation this would normally be the members of the church council (or its equivalent) and the appointed ministry leaders.

Conclusion

The outcomes of this pilot project suggest that periodic renegotiation of respective ministry roles and responsibilities by key leaders in church congregations and similar faith communities may help meet a vital need in some contexts. But there are strong indications that such models or processes may best achieve their objectives by a significant shift in focus signaled by an appropriate name change.

The shift involves understanding the negotiation process as designed to create and strengthen relationships between collaborative teams of leaders, rather than merely to clarify or realign roles and responsibilities and share information about respective expectations, important though these dimensions are. Ideally, the process should not only be culturally and theologically congruent, but also incorporate the recognition, affirmation, and deployment of the ministry gifts and skills that both church council members and ministry leaders bring to their collaborative work as a team.

Furthermore, this modified approach to role negotiation processes takes seriously the need to match ministry gifts and experience with specific roles and responsibilities. This in turn is likely to enhance the sense of personal fulfillment for individuals as well as create greater synergy within church councils as these key leadership groups in local congregations strive to be effective collaborative teams intent on addressing the

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(collaboration) include a sense of ownership of a common mission, unity in working together for a common goal, and identifying and bringing together the various gifts.

[38] Cladis, 47.

opportunities and challenges for ministry and mission in their particular contexts.

To avoid unnecessary confusion and to make clearer the wider agenda proposed, it seems a new name that reflects a significant shift in emphasis for what has been termed "role renegotiation processes" is certainly warranted. One possibility that reflects some of these proposed changes would be to refer to a Collaborative Leadership Review Process. Whether this or some other name is adopted, it seems imperative that the conversation continue about these and other related issues with the aim of promoting stronger relationships and greater transparency in processes for negotiating changes to key roles and responsibilities among congregational leaders. When sensitively appropriated, the potential for enhancing the health and vitality of congregations, faith communities, and their incumbent ministry leaders is considerable. Of course, taking such initiatives can never guarantee better outcomes, but may certainly increase the probability of achieving these worthwhile goals. As Hackman has stated, "No leader can *make* a team perform well. But all leaders can create conditions that increase the *likelihood* that it will."[39]

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[39] J. Richard Hackman, *Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2002), ix (original emphasis). The five conditions identified by Hackman are: having a real team, a compelling direction, an enabling team structure, a supportive organizational context, and expert team coaching.