JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP FOR POLICE IN CRISIS
ALEX EVANS

Abstract

Using the horrific shootings on the campus at Virginia Tech in April 2007 as a significant case study, I explore and clarify the essence of faithful pastoral leadership with police officers who have known violence and trauma, an all too frequent occurrence in our culture. This article intends to deepen theological reflection and encourage faithful pastoral ministry with these public servants who are too often underpaid, under-appreciated, and forgotten amidst the turmoil.

Introduction

In Romans 12, the apostle Paul provides a summary in how to live the faithful life following Jesus Christ: "let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, and serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer" (Romans 12:9f.).[1]

Like some of Paul's other words in the New Testament, that summary offers a poetic and appealing tone. Yet, how are these words practiced, especially in the violent culture in which we live? And how might Paul's words be applied to pastoral leadership for police officers who often find themselves in the midst of violence and heartache, hurt and loss, all related to life in law enforcement?

On April 16, 2007, a deranged student, Seung-Hui Cho, on the serene campus at Virginia Tech (later referred to VT) in Blacksburg, VA planned, plotted, and

Alex Evans is the pastor of Second Presbyterian Church, Richmond, Virginia

---

[1] All scriptural citations are from the *New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990).

killed 32 students and faculty members. Cho also wounded 25 additional students, and then committed suicide. This violent event, which transpired mostly in a prominent classroom building in the center of campus, remains the largest mass shooting in our nation's history. While this trauma changed the lives of many people, police officers found themselves at the epicenter of this violent tragedy. In my role as a local pastor and police chaplain during that event, I sensed firsthand the physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological toll on local police officers. These experiences of trauma leave indelible impressions on the psyche and soul. Moreover, police officers in all of our towns and cities find themselves daily in crisis, in vulnerable situations of life and death.

Using this event at VT as a case study, this article seeks to explore and clarify the essence of faithful, pastoral leadership with police officers who have known violence and trauma. I elaborate on my specific role in this incident as police chaplain and pastor in that community. I analyze data from personal conversations with police officers. I share observations and insights from this intense scene along with data from my experience of pastoral leadership with police during the ensuing months after the shootings. Finally, I advocate for a more effective model of ministry for police officers who experience trauma in the line of police work.

Because of my unique relationship to police, and my ongoing ministry among police officers, the focus of this article remains on pastoral leadership with police in crisis. However, inferences and insights could be applied to many places of ministry where God calls us to serve, to "be ardent in the Spirit,…to persevere" in faithful ministry. As agents of God's love, healing, and peace, pastoral leaders and congregations striving to "let love be genuine," can convey support in many ways. God certainly calls us to effective ministry of listening, encouragement, support, help, and hope for police officers in our communities.

A Violent and Traumatic Event

Monday, April 16, 2007 emerged as an unusually cold day in Blacksburg, VA. Clouds and even snow flurries presented a heavy gray across the sky. The wind blew a biting breeze. Students at VT, which was then the largest university in the Commonwealth of Virginia, moved toward the final days of classes for the spring semester challenged with final papers, tests, and projects. Yet this particular Monday brought unexpected darkness, violence, and trauma that shocked the entire Blacksburg community and the Commonwealth of Virginia and echoed across the whole world.

At 7:20 a.m., the police emergency call center received notice that two students, one male and one female, had been shot in West Ambler Johnston Hall on the VT campus. Within minutes, police and university personnel arrived in that campus building to proceed with a full investigation. Both students were pronounced dead at the scene as a result of gunshot wounds. No witnesses heard any gunshots or any altercation. No witnesses saw anyone in or around the area of the dormitory room. All protocols were followed. The Police Emergency Response Team (sometimes known as SWAT) was activated and investigations were implemented around the campus and town.

At 9:42 a.m., the first call of an active shooter in Norris Hall, a prominent classroom building at the center of the main campus at VT, arrived at the police call center. All police units responded, including campus and town police, as well as the SWAT team, already on campus. Within one minute, police units arrived at Norris Hall to hear shots being fired apparently from the second floor classrooms. Initially, police determined that no gunshots were hitting outside the building. This situation indicated an active shooter inside the building, not a sniper shooting outside the building. Police rallied to enter the building and found the doors chained shut from the inside. Three teams of police gained entrance at three different locations using shotguns to blow open the chain locks. Upon entering the building, officers encountered

shooting victims—wounded and dead—in the stairwells, hallways, and classrooms. At 10:08 a.m., police discovered Seung-Hui Cho, the lone assailant dead in classroom 211. The search for additional suspects continued. Additionally, police immediately began the rescue operation to assess the victims, remove the wounded, restore order to the chaos, and maintain safety.[2]

The following photos depict police officers at the epicenter of this tragedy.

---

[2] Details and photos from Blacksburg Police sources and national news services.

In the confusion and intensity of the morning, police officers balanced security and rescue. Many of the classrooms had numerous students and professors wounded or dead. Eventually, emergency medical technicians arrived to assist with the carnage. But initially, the scene included only two groups of people: victims and police officers. The wounded were carried, dragged, pulled from the building. Some were loaded in police cars for transport to medical care. One Blacksburg police officer spoke, months after the shootings on April 16, about the wounded students that he hauled out of the building and into his police cruiser to transfer to an ambulance away from Norris Hall. The screams of wounded students in pain, the ringing question "Am I going to die?," and the blood stains inside his police car all became overwhelming images that seared the pain and suffering deep into this police officer's heart and soul. Other officers shared, months later, the horror they encountered in the hallways and in the classrooms on that dark day on the VT campus.

Throughout that Monday, the campus remained on lock-down for numerous hours for fear of other suspects. Many of the victims died on the scene but others died at the hospital. In total, 32 people were killed and 25 others had gunshot and other wounds. Countless others, including people who were not even in the building, carry emotional scars and trauma because of this incident.

However, police officers were at the epicenter. Police officers arrived first at the scene, raced toward the building during the shootings, fought their way into the classroom building, and confronted the violent crime *and* the wounded and dead as they entered. Police officers juggled fear and security and personal safety and first aid for victims. They struggled to balance response and rescue and guns and wounded victims. They were challenged with the adrenaline of entering a building with an active shooter, and the necessary compassion appropriate for bloody victims and screaming college students. Police officers were at once defending life, protecting their own lives, and stepping over those who

had already lost their lives. These kinds of moments generate lasting psychological, emotional, and theological carnage for police officers.

As one of two volunteer chaplains with Blacksburg Police, I was called to assist with this trauma scene as the second round of shootings was unfolding in Norris Hall. The department instructed me to go first to the two regional hospitals. My role was to assist with the chaos and confusion as the hospitals were overwhelmed first with numerous wounded patients and then with hundreds of students and others looking for information about victims. By late morning, as the hospital administrators rallied their own personnel, I left the hospitals to offer support to the police officers on campus, still on high alert, and in shock and disbelief about the morning's tragic events. These officers, first on the scene that morning, were beginning to move through their own shock and fear. These officers blasted open chained doors, ran into a building filled with gun-smoke, stepped over victims, slipped on blood in the hallways, and discovered classrooms full of chaos with dead and wounded and frightened college students. As the intensity of the morning settled into disbelief about how this event could have happened, as the adrenaline rush subsided, and as the body bags were being removed, the gaze on each officer's face gave only a glimpse into the depth of complications related to this traumatic reality.

Throughout the afternoon, I spent time with police in a classroom in a building adjacent to Norris Hall. This student space had been converted into a break-room for officers to find refreshment and nourishment from the day's horrific events. Police officers were lounging in the auditorium style chairs, consuming bottled water and sandwiches that had been delivered. Few words were exchanged. The shock and emotional fatigue showed clearly through the body language and facial expressions of each officer. Televisions mounted on the wall were already broadcasting the news story from this traumatized college town. Newscasters were already raising doubts about the security on campus. This incited rage among

the police officers who heard portions of this story as they tried to rest and find refreshment. They had just risked life and limb, had been exposed to horrors that people cannot imagine, and pundits were picking apart the day's events while the campus remained on "high alert."

I also spent time that afternoon in the police mobile command center, established on campus in the immediate hours following the shooting. The command staff and officers tried to guide the community from trauma to some new normal, as the "high alert" shifted to decisions about what to do next. All of these encounters for me, especially reflecting back on them, were full of mixed emotions—disbelief in the harsh realities; sadness mixed with the "high alert" and adrenaline of the cops on campus; uncertainty about what to do and how to respond with effective care; worry about individual cops who appeared particularly in shock; and concern about members of my congregation who work in Norris Hall, in my church, and more. I knew we were all moving into a long and complicated journey full of heartache, grief, confusion, and complexity.

Several months following the shootings on campus, I spent an evening riding along in a police car with one officer in the Blacksburg Police Department who seemed to be discouraged about life and police work. This particular officer was struggling with depression and finding difficulty balancing family life. As he drove through dark streets with me in the passenger seat, with the police chatter coming through the police radio and after a long pause, he turned to me and said the following:

> You know, preacher, I had my doubts about the chaplain program when it first started. I was leery of preachers hanging around the department. I think of myself as a Christian, even though I only occasionally attend church. But I just wasn't sure about the "God Squad" around here. But here is the truth: on that horrible day at Norris Hall, with all the blood and fear, death and craziness,

everything was so dark for me. The screaming, the sight of dead kids everywhere—it was so terrible. And then you showed up…I saw you…And it made me realize that God was there too, which had been so far from my mind. Just your face, and you didn't even have to say anything, made me realize that God was in that terrible shit with us. Thank you, preacher.[3]

These words continue to be so important as I work on pastoral leadership for police in crisis. This heartfelt sentiment screams of the need to find ways to embody God's presence in the darkest places where police often find themselves. Pastoral leadership for police in crisis, how this might work, effective pastoral presence and care in those bleakest of places, remain very complex. But these are the places where God's servants are called to go, to embody God's light and hope, to convey God's care and support even without words and to pour presence and purpose into the bleakest moments.

By the early evening of April 16, 2007, and in addition to some looming pastoral duties related to my congregation, the police department asked me to partner with the police chief and others to begin to notify victims' families. Police work involves more than the required emergency courage and varied response to the morning's violence on campus. Police work demands that the police command staff be present to verify and relay the death notices from the morning's violence to the parents and loved ones of those who died. While the protocol says that the chief relays the bad news, the police chaplains are expected to carry the major weight in these difficult moments. This proximity to the pain and suffering can become a heavy burden. Chaplain work demands a willingness to confront the harsh realities of life, to dwell amidst the intensity and loss that comes with police work.

From soon after 8:00 p.m. on April 16, and for most of the next 19 hours, as the confirmation of the identities

---

[3] Officer #1 from Blacksburg Police Department, June 2007.

of the victims was slowly conveyed from the morgue, we met with family after family to speak the news that no parent or loved one would ever want to hear—that their college student child, or their professor spouse, was murdered in a mass shooting in university classrooms on a Monday morning on an otherwise serene and unlikely campus in rural Virginia.

Again, police work involves body, mind, heart, and soul. It involves courage, discernment, compassion, and faith; and police work engages all aspects of life.[4] As recent studies with first responders confirm, with the trauma and violence of a day like April 16, 2007, with such unspeakable sadness and death, police officers from this event will have lasting psychological, theological, and other circumstances with which to deal.[5]

Pastoral Leadership with Police—in the Short Term

Prior to the recent years, police officers who had experienced physical, psychological, and emotional trauma in the line of police work were expected to "tough it out" and "get back to work." Violence and trauma were long considered routine parts of police work. Indeed, many police departments include long-serving officers who still hold this philosophy: emotional or psychological wounds from the job remain a sign of weakness. Moreover, according to some "old-school" officers, chaplains are not needed in police departments and mental health professionals who emerge on the scene, especially after a traumatic incident, remain viewed with suspicion. These "old-school" officers generally hold the opinion that such helping professionals have not had police training, cannot understand police work, and therefore cannot be helpful to police officers.

---

[4] Kate Braestrup, *Here If You Need Me: A True Story* (New York: Little, Brown and Co, 2007)

[5] Hampton Hides, "First Responders, Rescuers, Come Forward with PTSD," NPR, under "Hampton Hides and PTSD," http://www.npr.org/2010/12/30/132476507/first-responders-rescuers -face-ptsd-struggles (accessed Dec. 30, 2010).

However, across the recent decades, police departments have learned from sociologists and psychologists about the effects of stress and trauma on human beings. These learnings have increasingly encouraged police departments to implement regular *"debriefings"* for all officers involved in critical incidents in the line of duty. Debriefings ordinarily include trained officers, not just chaplains or mental health professionals, but sworn officers, trained in debriefings, along with mental health professionals with experience in law enforcement, arriving from other police departments to lead group conversations for those involved in critical incidents. This protocol has become common practice as police departments and others have learned the value of having officers talk through what he or she experienced, to express feelings, to be aware that stressful and critical incidents in police work can affect all aspects of a person's life such as, sleep, diet, relationships, depression, and more.

While no officer can be forced to talk or share, and while these moments do not always provide clarity and insight into the souls and psyche of officers, nor do they guarantee a road toward health, these debriefings have become commonplace in police departments. As chaplain to the Blacksburg Police, I had been invited to and participated in these debriefings with officers in incidents prior to April 16, 2007.

In the days immediately following the shootings at VT, numerous officers and agencies volunteered support and leadership to Blacksburg. Because hundreds of officers from various departments around the campus were involved in the emergency and response, many debriefings were offered and even required of all police involved. In the days immediately following Monday, April 16, 2007, I attended three debriefing sessions. Various law enforcement personnel, including those from North and South Carolina, led these sessions. These sessions invited officers from Blacksburg to discuss the events of April 16 and answer the following questions: 1) Where were you and what was your assignment? 2) What

were you thinking and feeling at the time? 3) How are you doing and feeling now?

Through the recent years, police department personnel have become familiar with this protocol. For some officers, this remains a helpful endeavor. For others, it is a duty, even a burden that detracts from the more important work of patrolling the streets and keeping the town safe. Indeed, in the days immediately following the mass shootings on campus, these debriefings were held even as the campus and community were center-stage for the world news, hosting the President of the United States at a major convocation, planning funerals for dead victims, recovering from the chaos, discerning how a university community could move forward in its intended work and goals with classes, exams, other activities, and more.

In those initial days following the campus shootings, all of the region's police departments were simply striving to cope in the best ways possible with the complexity and magnitude of the incident. While the debriefings took place and the protocol was followed, hindsight confirms that the appropriate care, compassion, and support for these officers fell far short. Officers were visibly exhausted, required to work extra hours, dealing with the world press on the scene, hosting the President of the United States and the Governor of Virginia, processing the crime, and providing safety to a community in turmoil. While the debriefings went as scheduled, the community's needs and the continuing and major demands on the police department to provide safety and security took priority above the care and support of these civil servants. This example only reiterates the important need for pastoral leadership for police in crisis. During difficult times, police continue to work instead of getting help. During crises, officers keep putting on their uniforms and answering the call of duty, often at the expense of their emotional, psychological, and spiritual health.

Moreover, in my role as volunteer chaplain, though I was checking on various officers and spending time at the

police department, the demands of my own congregation proved overwhelming. My church was hosting two funerals for shooting victims. My church members were traumatized in various ways. Numerous calls and requests for interviews came to me from international and national news agencies. Worship and sermon plans for the most important Sunday service provided great stress. Too many demands and too little time shaped the week and weeks following the tragedy. Clearly, communities, congregations, and pastors can never adequately prepare for incidents such as this one.

In those long days, struggling to balance the demands of the police, the needs of my congregation, my own fatigue and stress, family and personal life, the "volunteer" in my role as chaplain lost all of its meaning. I received great support from minister friends who knew I was in the middle of the storm. They called, wrote emails, added expressions of care and support. I also spent countless hours with my chaplain colleague and close friend, Tommy, who was doing all that I was doing. We tried to support one another. My family rallied to support me. My colleagues in ministry, the Associate Pastor and staff at my church, were particularly intentional at tending to specific needs so I could serve the police and the community. Tragedy of this magnitude calls forth extra energy from everyone, especially care for the caregivers.

Pastoral Leadership with Police—the Long Term

The scriptural mandate from the Apostle Paul, which urges us to "love one another with mutual affection, outdo one another in showing honor,…to be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord," calls us to consider long-term support for police officers who carry around the horrific wounds of police work. Several officers' comments convey how deeply the memories and moments from April 16 affect hearts, souls, and psyche.

> I cannot rid my mind of the pool of blood that I saw in that first stairwell. You have never seen so much blood. It was everywhere. I slipped in it. And

that was a professor who left his office on the third floor to help students on the second floor. What a sacrifice. He died in the stairwell.[6]

Imagine a classroom full of college kids. Then think about them dead. That is not right, man. And some of them were shot in the head—executed. I have seen a lot of shit as a cop, but that haunts me, big-time.[7]

All these and other comments from police officers remain confidential and emerged in private pastoral moments or from the secure setting of chaplain work. They reflect the depth of pain, the intensity of emotional and psychological scars that go with police work:

You know what? There is not a single person in our department who lets his cell phone ring. It does not matter what ring you have set on your phone. All of us who were in Norris Hall that day, who heard all those phones of those kids ringing, it does not matter where you are or what you are doing, every time you hear a cell phone ring—that is what we think about—the phones of those kids ringing in those rooms that morning. We were trying to help them, and those phones just kept ringing. Try to get that crap out of your head. It's hell.[8]

When we got up to the second floor, there was this haze of smoke that like dropped down from the ceiling to chest height. It was weird. He had fired so many shots in such a short time that smoke filled the whole floor. Then there was the smell of blood everywhere. It took me several days before I

---

[6] Officer #1 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, July 2007.
[7] Officer #2 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, July 2007
[8] Officer #3 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, June 2010.

felt like I was not breathing gun-smoke and blood. It was awful. You don't forget that stuff, ever![9]

These comments demonstrate police officers longing for help and support. These are bright, well trained officers, who carry just below their clean appearance and crisp uniforms, the darkness that most of us cannot even imagine:

> When I went into those rooms, it was the dead college kids lying all over the place! That is what I cannot forget. These kids were hiding behind desks, looking for cover under their textbooks. They had no defense.[10]

> We went flying across campus to Norris Hall when we got the call of the shots being fired. And guess what, I had the shotgun. I had to blow the fucking chain off the doors. And then because I had the shotgun, I had to lead the "V" formation into the building. I was so scared. I was at the front going in,…figured I was going to be the one shot. But then I figured, well, at least I'm going to die doing something useful,…and we went in.[11]

In his reflections on pastoral care, theologian Eugene Peterson notes that "pastoral work is a decision to deal, on the most personal and intimate terms, with suffering."[12] The words above embody sincere suffering—suffering of police officers involved in the line of duty. Peterson confirms that pastoral work

> does not try to find ways to minimize suffering or ways to avoid it. It is not particularly interested in finding explanations for it. It is not a search after the cure of suffering. Pastoral work *engages*

---

[9] Officer #4 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, July 2009.
[10] Officer #5 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, July 2008.
[11] Officer #6 from Post Critical Incident Seminary, July 2007.
[12] Eugene Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 93.

suffering. It is a conscious, deliberate plunge into
the experience of suffering. The decision has its
origin and maintains its integrity in the scriptures
which shape pastoral ministry.[13]

Peterson continues, "where the sufferer is, God is."[14]
Moreover, where God is, God's people and God's
servants are called to be too. Police officers need and
deserve compassion and care along with support and
solidarity in their suffering, especially when the
memories, images, and burdens can be so overwhelming.
Peterson explicates this beautifully:

> When private grief is integrated into communal
> lament, several things take place. For one thing the
> act of suffering develops significance. If others
> weep with me, there must be more to the suffering
> than my own petty weakness or selfish sense of
> loss. When others join the sufferer, there is
> 'consensual validation' that the suffering MEANS
> something. The community votes with its tears that
> there is suffering that is worth weeping over.[15]

Police officers are notorious for "stuffing" their
feelings, getting on with the job, and assuming that the
trauma is part of life. But the act of sharing, or lamenting
the difficulties, or speaking to the deep pain, proves
redemptive. It is especially redemptive when police can
support one another by sharing the pain and hurt that
only they know and understand.

The weeks after the shootings on campus brought
meager and uncertain efforts to provide pastoral
leadership to the police department. Along with the other
volunteer chaplain, and all the while juggling intense
pastoral duties with our congregations, I tried to make
regular appearances at the police department, participate
in "ride-alongs" with cops, and inquired of the command
staff about what would be most helpful. Many officers
seemed to be functioning well, although nearly every

---

[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 94.
[15] Ibid., 115.

conversation around town and with the police circled its way back to the horrific day of the mass shootings and the current state of the campus community. While the world is quick to move on to the next hot story in the news, the campus and town of Blacksburg remained in a state of grief. Though the school year ended, and students departed for summer break, wounds were slow to heal. Ribbons adorned the town. News reports replayed the shooting and offered updates about various victims' families. More and more people realized how traumatic the event was for the entire community. Then an invitation came to the Blacksburg Police Department.

Post Critical Incident Seminar

Among the legions of police and support personnel who arrived in Blacksburg on April 16, 2007 was Eric Skidmore, a Presbyterian minister, my seminary classmate and friend, and the Chaplain/Director of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program—a state agency that offers counsel and support to several law enforcement agencies in South Carolina. Skidmore has devoted much energy, counsel, and compassion to law enforcement personnel. His work has earned him recognition and credibility in the region among police departments. Through his leadership, an entity called "Post Critical Incident Seminar" (PCIS) has provided care for police in crisis. By the afternoon of April 16, 2007, law enforcement leadership in the Blacksburg area had invited Eric Skidmore to come to Blacksburg with his team of counselors and support personnel to assist with the major critical incident on campus at VT. Skidmore helped with debriefings and applied his experience and wisdom in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy.

As the weeks passed from April 16, Skidmore encouraged the leadership of the Blacksburg Police Department to bring any affected officers to South Carolina for the July meeting of the PCIS. This July event was one of several gatherings each year of police officers in South Carolina who had been involved in critical

incidents. Involving a combination of peer team support and teachings about the effects of trauma on the body and spirit, PCIS includes therapy, small group conversations with other affected police officers, and a retreat setting that builds trust for healing. The real success of PCIS lies in police officers helping police officers with the challenges and trauma that only police officers understand.

Every police officer comes to the PCIS with a story: the specific details of a traumatic event that turned quickly dangerous, even deadly. Each of these stories begins with the routine work of police, like a random call to a domestic dispute, but then the shooting started; or a traffic stop that led to some major violence; or a car crash that proved to be particularly grotesque; or any number of traumatic events involving images and intensity that have seared themselves into the psyche of police officers. At the PCIS, participants tell their stories in a confidential setting surrounded only by law enforcement officials and others with skills and credibility to offer help and healing. The common stories and the setting create a close community unlike anything else. Police officers remain notoriously suspicious of psychologists and chaplains, but they will share deeply with one another. The mutual respect and sharing of pains and loss and the peer support provide a fertile ground for healing and movement beyond the trauma.

The PCIS involves psychotherapy-Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), which helps with people who have been exposed to extreme trauma. In moments of real intensity, when the body is on high alert, like a shooting or an accident, the visual images of those moments gain overwhelming prominence in the memory and on the brain. This psychotherapy works to re-process those moments so these horrific images that tend to "flashback," or dominate, can move along in the memory and eventually lose their prominence. EMDR therapy has proven effective in facilitating help and healing for traumatized officers.

In July, 2007, six police officers from Blacksburg
Police, along with the two chaplains, and several others
from nearby departments including VT Police and
Virginia State Police, were invited to attend the PCIS
event in South Carolina. All these individuals from
Virginia had been among the first officers into Norris
Hall or at the epicenter of the tragedy that April 16. Each
came with variations on the same story—the mass
shootings on the campus of VT. Each shared with the
larger group of police officers, all of whom came with
their own stories of shootings, car wrecks, knife fights,
and accidents, haunting images of police work and more.

The first day of the PCIS always feels heavy. Police
officers prefer guns, cop cars, and uniforms, to seminars
and conversations about critical incidents. Moreover, all
the officers present for the occasion know they have
come to put their critical incident behind them and to
return to work and life without the burdens that they
have been carrying. Most of these officers feel that they
should not need this kind of help. They would prefer to
"tough it out." But each year the group grows in number
and credibility. Following some introductions and
overview of plans for the seminar, each police officer is
invited to tell his or her story, in detail and in full
confidence, to a room of people who have similar stories,
including peer team members. Each officer explains the
critical incident: "I went to this house," or "I ran into the
building" with all the details of actions, responses, shots
fired, or shots taken, feelings of fear, explanation of how
life has gone since that incident, and anything else that
might be pertinent. The telling of each story, in vivid
detail, creates a sacred canopy over the seminar. These
are stories of life and death, of courage and fear, with
tears and anger and other emotions. These are shared
memories and explanations best understood by police
officers and shared in confidence, basically only to police
officers. With so many officers participating, and with the
desire to listen and share fairly, this telling of the stories
of the critical incidents takes the entire first day. And it is
such a litany of horror and heartache, story after story,

that one person described listening and participating in the day as "drinking from a fire-hose of suffering." All those who hear these stories are transported into each horrific police scene, one after another, of crime and violence, of fear and pain, and of adrenaline and suffering.

Throughout the PCIS, as the seminar unfolds, participants are invited into small groups where police with similar issues and challenges can discuss and share with other police officers. For example, those police officers who were involved in car crashes get together; those who were shot form a group; those who have been shooters unite; and those with deep-seated emotional scars related to family matters might get together. This emphasizes mutual caring and support. Police officers and peers from the leadership team with similar experiences to those in the small group facilitate the discussion. The commitment remains on police officers feeling safe, talking, and finding support from other police officers.

Throughout the seminar's final two days, practitioners offer psychotherapy-Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). Those officers who appear to be good candidates for this therapy—ones who shared the vivid memories of particular images seared on their brains, ones who keep referring to specific and difficult aspects of their incidents—are recruited for EMDR. Again, in moments of real intensity, when the body is on high alert, certain visual images of those moments gain overwhelming prominence in the memory and on the brain. The PCIS has employed psychologist Dr. Roger Solomon, one of the premier teachers and proponents of EMDR, who works with traumatized police officers and police departments throughout the USA and Europe.

Officers at PCIS have verified EMDR therapy's impact on their lives. "I have been given my life back," commented one officer who had been so overcome by a critical incident. Another officer reflected: "I did not want to come to this seminar. But I feel like I have lost 100 pounds of burden and doubt." One more added,

"EMDR seems crazy. But it has changed my life. I feel like I can be myself again with no more flashbacks. No more haunting thoughts in the night."

We all know police officers are human beings. Human beings need help with trauma. Paul urges us to "let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, and serve the Lord." PCIS remains a stellar attempt to respond to this faithful call for ministry with police officers in crisis.

In July, 2007, at the PCIS in South Carolina with numerous police officers from the VT tragedy, encouragement and hope emerged for all involved. Several of these officers were strongly "expected" to attend because command staff had sensed some change or reason for concern. Several volunteered to attend in hopes that the fellowship and time away would provide needed refreshment. All who went found genuine healing.

For example, the officer with the shotgun, who blew the chained doors off of Norris Hall and led the "V" formation into the building, attended with his wife. Her presence at the seminar and the shock on her face illustrated how these traumatic events reach well beyond the officers, affecting marriage and family life. The chance to talk and listen, to claim the pain and participate in the sharing of the larger group and small groups, proved most beneficial to both officers and spouses. Two other officers who were first in the building as part of the SWAT team found the fellowship and support transforming and agreed to be part of future peer teams. Another officer, who was responsible for processing so many details of the crime scene and could name every body in every room, and whose life had been consumed by this major crime, had a chance to vent and find the support and care he needed.

Another example of the seminar's effectiveness, and EMDR's importance, relates back to my colleague chaplain from Blacksburg, who attended this PCIS and

experienced profound transformation. He initially agreed to go with sincere hopes that certain officers would also attend and find the help and strength they needed. Yet at the seminar, and with the offer of EMDR therapy, my colleague, Tommy, experienced relief like he had not anticipated. Ever since the week of April 16, Tommy, who had been involved in all aspects of chaplain ministry with me, had been having flashbacks. While driving in his car, and looking in his rearview mirror, or in other moments, perhaps in the night, the vivid image of the face of one of the murdered college students would jump into his view. He kept seeing, at unexpected moments, the same image of this familiar and beloved girl who attended his church, whom he had last seen lying on a gurney in the back room of the funeral home. Tommy had been called to the funeral home to meet with the girl's family. She had been shot in the face, and that view of her face from the gurney kept flashing unexpectedly in his face. This made Tommy a perfect candidate for EMDR therapy. That unfortunate image had been seared into his mind, heart, soul, and psyche. That image needed re-processing.

It was my privilege to observe and participate with Tommy in this therapy. The therapist had Tommy revisit that image, with increasing intensity, to recall what he saw and how he felt. As he moved his eyes rapidly, as he re-imagined that horrific day, recalled that terrible scene, it became fresh again, with all the emotion and angst. Yet in that setting, with a therapist and friend helping him, with rational conversation and increasing clarity, that image was released. Since that moment, Tommy has had no more flashbacks or sudden images in his face as before.

Others from the VT shootings shared their burdens and tears and their sadness and fears. Other officers spoke of other incidents—car crashes that involved terrible deaths, gun violence, even where officers accidentally wounded or killed partners, or failed their departments, or were dragged along the highway. All these critical incidents were discussed, processed, and

released. This is the trauma of police work. This is
evidence of how trauma stays with those who have been
close to it. These experiences certainly relate to soldiers
on the battlefield, first responders in other moments who
deal with highly tense situations, violence and gruesome
sights. As it would be for all those bonded by the
brutalities of life, this is the sacred fellowship and care
where officers can find help and wholeness.

In a small group setting, with one particular officer
who was "encouraged" to attend the PCIS (the command
staff knew that an order for this officer to attend the
seminar might back-fire, so "encouraged" was used; and
those involved understood fully the variables on all
sides), this officer finally shared how he had been a cop
for six years. He loved his job. He appreciated his fellow
officers. He had support from his wife and was proud of
his family, which included two small boys. But ever since
that morning in April when he ran into Norris Hall,
confronting the blood, screams, smells, and smoke, he
was beginning to doubt everything about his life. At first
he admitted that he was just mad. He was mad that
"some mental case college student" could go so far off
base and murder so many with such abandon. He said he
was mad "at the fucking stupid world" that we live in. He
was mad that he had to work all those extra hours
through that week. He could not go home to take care of
his kids. But before he realized it, as the weeks unfolded,
the anger turned to despair. He wondered why he was a
cop. He wondered why he was married. He started caring
less about his job, even acting like a jerk to fellow
officers. He said he was "encouraged" to attend the PCIS
because his department knew he was not acting right, not
acting like himself. Without even realizing it, he had lost
his bearings. He had been overtaken by the horrors of a
particular day on the job. That critical incident had been
the catalyst for implosion in his life.

Across the weeks, this officer had become impatient
and irritable. He had seen his marriage falling apart. He
had even come to the brink of being fired by his
department. When he was nudged toward the mental

health professional affiliated with the department, he had refused to go, insisting that he was "fine." When he kept calling in sick, and his fellow officers knew his personal life was moving toward a crash, the command staff "encouraged" him to go to the PCIS.

In the secure setting of other officers, after all the stories, the sharing of pain and the small group connections, this officer finally realized how the horror and fear in Norris Hall, on the VT campus on April 16, 2007, had shattered so much about him. He admitted how full of fear he had been on that day running into the building. He admitted how vulnerable he felt admitting his fear. He confessed how unsettled he was seeing so many dead and wounded kids, especially as a parent of young boys. He realized how he wished he "could have killed the mother fucker, Cho." Instead, Cho was dead, the victim of his own gun. But that left him feeling more sad and angry and confused. Too many people died and suffered, including this troubled cop. He realized how much of his life was snatched away on that day. He remained ashamed that his joy, his marriage, his focus, and his sense of commitment as a cop had been taken away in that critical incident.

It was a beautiful scene to see the other cops in this small group rally as peers and comrades. The group assured him that his feelings were quite normal. To run into a building where people are getting shot pushes the limits of fear. To encounter blood and death in such magnitude can wreak havoc on normal life. Real trauma can become so destructive to so many aspects of life. And while this officer was just beginning to name and deal with some of the issues facing him and his journey, he was on the road to finding a way forward toward purpose, help, and healing. The words of Peterson again confirm the significance of such communal moments:

> Community participation insures a human environment. The threat of dehumanization to which all pain exposes us–of being reduced to the level of 'beasts that perish'–is countered by the presence of other persons whose humanity is

unmistakable. The person who, through stubbornness or piety, insists on grieving privately not only depersonalizes him or herself but robs the community of participation in what necessarily expands its distinctiveness as a human community as over against the mob.[16]

This particular officer continues to deal with the ramifications on his life of the mass shootings on the VT campus. But he has remained with the police department, found some stability with his fellow officers, and come to grips with the power of fear and trauma at unsettling all aspects of life. This officer has not only regained his bearings but also has been promoted within the department. This all testifies to the extreme weight of crises in police work and the extreme importance of leadership, care, and support that pours help and hope into the lives of police officers.

By the end of three gut-wrenching and emotional days at the PCIS, of listening and sharing or struggling with hard realities and the promise of hope, police officers form a powerful community. It is a community forged in police work and more specifically forged in suffering. The sharing of difficult police stories and the discovery of healing and hope empower these officers. And the mere presence of the VT officers provided solace and comfort for the other officers who admitted that a particular shooting in a certain South Carolina locale found its proper perspective in comparison to the major trauma of VT.

The following comments confirm, in sincere words from police officers who participated, the value of the PCIS model:

> Coming to this seminar, I didn't know what to expect. Going around the room hearing everyone's story is a great way to start the day. Hearing the different instructor's stories and how they have worked through situations proved most helpful…I came into this with the attitude I don't need help.

---

[16] Ibid., 115.

After this week I realized I am now a better person and the whole time I was begging for help. Thanks to all the staff. I hope I can attend in the future, and will make it known that this is a much needed class.[17]

This seminar was exhilarating for me. The group clearly has created a structured seminar to facilitate a positive transition for those who have been in a critical incident.[18]

I believe this course is necessary for anyone who has gone through a critical incident, has a family member, friend who has gone through one or who has been affected by it in some other way. I can definitely see that it has helped a great deal of officers in the class today.[19]

I have a new outlook on my relationship with my job and my family. I learned that I can cope with the stress and not let it control life.[20]

This course allowed me to explore myself during a negative time of my life. I have been humbled by the transformation that took place within me. It has allowed me to focus on being alive and honoring my support system. It has truly been the most beneficial law enforcement training I have experienced.[21]

You are not less of a man or cop to seek help.[22]

---

[17] Officer #7 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, July 2007.
[18] Officer #8 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, July 2007.
[19] Officer #9 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, July 2007.
[20] Officer #10 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, July 2008.
[21] Officer #11 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, July 2009.
[22] Officer #12 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, June 2010.

This has been one of the most intense seminars that I have attended in my 17 years of law enforcement. It's always helpful to talk things out and to be able to relate to others than have been through similar situations.[23]

The famous Holocaust survivor, Elie Weisel, puts his pastoral admonition on the lips of a character in his novel, *Gates of the Forest:*

It is inhuman to wall yourself up in pain and memories as if in prison. Suffering must open us to others. It must not cause us to reject them. The Talmud tells us that God suffers with man. Why? In order to strengthen the bonds between creation and Creator; God chooses to suffer in order to better understand man and be better understood by him. But you, you insist upon suffering alone. Such suffering shrinks you, diminishes you. Friend, that is almost cruel.[24]

Certainly the Christian gospel affirms that God suffers with us. The Apostle Paul says it clearly: "He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?...Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:32, 39). And in another letter, Paul also offers encouragement: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God" (II Corinthians 1:3-4). Clearly, week in and week out, in our violent culture, in our cities and towns, police officers deserve our consolation and care. They deserve our efforts to connect them to God, to wholeness, and to hope.

---

[23] Officer #13 from Post Critical Incident Seminar, June 2010.

[24] Elie Weisel, *Gates of the Forest* quoted in Eugene Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 116.

Pastoral Leadership for Police in Crisis

In the face of violence and death, what does faithful, pastoral ministry look like with police officers?

Communities, congregations, and pastors need to take seriously the commitment to care for and support police officers, especially in crisis. Yet given the complexity of relationships involved, and the importance of credibility between police department personnel and possible care-givers, there exists no simple formula for effective ministry with police in crisis. However, several avenues might strengthen the possibilities for effective ministry.

First, faithful ministry of compassion and care is always rooted in sincere relationships. My own relationship to the Blacksburg Police Department emerged from their invitation to serve as a volunteer chaplain. The Blacksburg community had experienced some difficult moments that greatly challenged the police department and the command staff determined that volunteer chaplains might add strength and support. The Blacksburg Police then approached me and my Session to inquire about my interest and availability.

In the early years of this relationship, my role as volunteer chaplain seemed mostly ceremonial. Neither I as the Chaplain, nor the police department, were quite sure of the breadth and depth of this new relationship. In an effort to get to know the people and culture of the department, I did "ride-alongs" with various officers on duty. I dropped by the police department to chat with office staff. I attended some staff gatherings, like roll-call for the various shifts, and staff celebrations. In these early days, I felt very much like a visitor, like an outsider. Yet as the experiences and time increased in this role, in many ways like an unfolding pastorate, the relationship developed; unfortunately, difficult critical incidents in and around the department proved most significant in deepening the relationship. A shooting in the town, the rape of a police officer's spouse, a car wreck, the injury of an officer, and other events all increased my presence and activity, my connections with officers and my

credibility with the department. By the time of the violent shootings on campus, I was known, recognized, trusted, and with credibility among the police officers in Blacksburg.

This experience only verifies the centrality of credibility and relationships for effective ministry with police in crisis. Communities, congregations, and pastors can understand the needs and complexities and then explore ways to build relationships, open doors for effective ministry, and provide care and support for officers. As with pastoral ministry, effective pastoral relationships with police officers must be nurtured over time, with patience along with sincere understandings about the reservations cops might have regarding ministers. Moreover, the goal in these relationships is not conversion to the Christian faith or getting members of the police department into membership at the pastor's church. The sole goal is care and support for police in crisis.

Second, because the sole goal in this ministry is the care and support of police, especially police in crisis, this ministry remains dependent on the ethos, personality, and openness of police departments. Police departments might be encouraged to consider how pastoral leadership can be helpful and effective with police officers in crisis. Police departments might be coaxed into thinking about new ways to support their police officers. But faithful, effective ministry with police departments will only emerge through patience, caring perseverance, and support that highlights only the health and wellbeing of the department. Most of us are particularly leery of those who come up with the best ideas and intentions for us. Undoubtedly, police departments would be especially skeptical of those who want to sell them on the next best idea, even pastoral care. Instead, caring ministry for police can only happen as the departments open the doors and hearts to credible, compassionate leaders with something significant to offer officers, especially those in crisis.

Communities, churches, and pastors can work closely and carefully with police departments to make available the empathy, support, and care. Communities and pastors can convey in various ways the support for those servants who work the long shifts, who sacrifice, who do difficult duty with low pay, and who remain forgotten or under-valued by our society. Churches can have "an Officer Appreciation Sunday," can rally church members in expressing affection for police devotion, can raise the congregation's awareness of police officer needs, and can do other things to embody support and care. Following the tragedy at VT, and at my urging, congregations took turns providing refreshments for police on break. On the anniversary of the shootings, some congregations showered the department with cookies and other expressions of care. These efforts begin to raise awareness and help the community remember what is so often forgotten: police are human; police often work long, unappreciated hours; police carry emotional baggage. These efforts would connect the congregation to community needs, awaken the department to the sincerity of support of the community, and build bridges toward effective ministry with and for police officers.

Third, as the PCIS model proves increasingly effective, communities, congregations, and pastors can offer financial and spiritual support to this event. When traumatized police officers come together to share their stories and find healing, they can greatly benefit from the compassion and care of the community.

The Commonwealth of Virginia has hosted three PCIS events in the past three years with great success. Building on the South Carolina model, and with help and even personnel offered from South Carolina, these three successful PCIS events have actually "saved the life" of many Virginia officers. Yet funding and state support for these events remain a low priority in a season of economic downturns, falling state revenues, and budget cutbacks. This opens the door for communities, congregations, and pastors to advocate, even raise funds for effective programs, including PCIS, that directly

nurture hurting police officers and provide pastoral leadership for police in crisis.

Unlike the state of South Carolina, the Commonwealth of Virginia does not have anything similar to a statewide law enforcement assistance program. Each police department remains generally on their own to provide for the care and support of traumatized officers. This too opens the way for communities, congregations, and pastors to explore various means, both financial and otherwise, to assist law enforcement agencies. My own goal, already emerging with official certification and legal information, is the Virginia Law Enforcement Assistance Program (VALEAP)—a new 501c (3) program. The recent success of three PCIS events in Virginia provides significant momentum for such a venture. My own congregation has committed funds for this project. We have also won support from foundations and individuals, and received words of sincere appreciation from various law enforcement agencies. I will continue to solicit funds and recruit others for pastoral leadership for police officers in crisis.

Fourth, as communities, congregations, and pastors strive to give leadership to police in crisis, the desire to assist police officers also means being willing to join the police in the ugly, horrific moments of police work. Once credibility and relationships have some footing, and police departments open the door for chaplains and support for officers, those chaplains must be willing to carry Christ's light and presence into the dark and bleak places of police work. This is a particular and even peculiar calling. Not everyone can handle the challenges that come with pastoral leadership with police in crisis. This peculiar calling in the Lord's work is not for the faint of heart or the squeamish.

As my time with the Blacksburg police department continued, I was called increasingly to the scene of critical incidents. My ministry was no longer ceremonial; it was real and included the breadth and depth of police work. I was called into the emergency room many times

to assist with difficult and delicate issues, like identifying comatose students with carbon monoxide poisoning, sitting with an officer in the middle of the night whose wife had been in an accident, counseling another officer who was having dire emotional problems, advising the chief of police on personnel issues, and more. I was also called to the most horrific scene of a car crash of a 17 year-old student, who had consumed too much alcohol and tried to drive home, only to be decapitated when her car flipped on the guardrail. The officer first on the scene of that accident was a newly sworn policeman. The car ended upside down far down an embankment. The girl's body parts were strewn along the highway. The police called me in the darkness of the early morning to help with this accident. Chaplains who provide sincere leadership and care for police departments must be willing to see what police officers see, feel the heartache and sense the emotional pains in order to best support police amidst such trauma. To stand with officers beside the destroyed vehicle, to watch the emergency medical technicians claw her body from the car and pick up pieces along the road, all create vivid and harsh images that are not easily forgotten. Yet this is the context for important ministry with and for police officers.

That same morning of the horrific car crash, I went with the police lieutenant to inform the girl's mother that her child had been killed. Again, to hear the screams, to sit in an unfamiliar home, with someone heretofore unknown, to attempt to offer care and support in the most ungodly moments, challenges all of us. The police officer left for more police work while I remained with the traumatized mother to make arrangements and plans, to offer comfort and care as she dealt with the shocking news of the horrific death of her daughter. This too is the context for ministry with police in crisis.

Then as that morning unfolded, I went back to the police station to attend the debriefing for that incident, to offer care and support to the officer first on the scene, who handled the horrible crash scene with aplomb despite his short time as an officer. Following all the

heartache and other challenges of the morning, in that debriefing, this young officer could not seem to remove his hands from his face. He was hiding his pain and tears and confirming the trauma that police work can sear onto heart, souls, and psyche of police officers. Pastoral leadership with police in crisis is not for the squeamish; it is too gruesome for many and cannot be for everyone. Yet this remains exactly where God calls us as agents of healing and hope to go, to do God's work, into the darkest places of life, into people's deep pain. We go there to convey that God goes with us and that nothing separates us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It would be kinder and safer to avoid such turmoil of the heart. But God calls us to shed light in the darkest places, to convey God's care in all moments, which means the most horrible. While this type of ministry remains most difficult, any effective ministry with police in crisis means getting into the crisis with them. Pastoral leadership with police in crisis demands pastors be ready, as the moments come, as the police departments open the way, for ministry in crisis.

Conclusion

The author and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel has written much about suffering and its toll on human life. Wiesel had a conversation with a renowned rabbi and asked the rabbi the question that had long haunted his heart, "Rabbi, how can you believe in God after Auschwitz?" The rabbi did not answer immediately, but remained silent for a long time. Then, in a barely audible voice, replied, "How can you not believe in God after Auschwitz?" We too often see and know the evils of the world. They happen every day for police officers. Some days can be absolutely overwhelming. Some events, like the shootings on the VT campus, approach the mega-evils of Auschwitz. Yet Weisel offered this response to

the rabbi: "Apart from God, what was there in a world darkened by Auschwitz?"[25]

The good news of the gospel affirms that while evil is real and powerful, God prevails. While people commit horrific crimes that cause major suffering, while guns kill people, and violence can overtake even a serene college campus, God redeems the world in Jesus Christ. The suffering and evil that we know are defeated. There will come a time when trauma and violence come to an abrupt end.

In the meantime, communities, congregations, and pastors can give leadership to the healing of the world. Among those who need focused attention are police officers, those who serve with commitment and care, who deal daily with potentially violent and traumatic situations, who continue to serve though often over-worked, and under-paid. With sincere planning and intentionality, with compassion and purpose, we can offer to police officers and police departments some glimpse of Christ's healing love and light.

As servants of God, as followers of Jesus, we seek to "let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, and serve the Lord." We also trust that nothing is irredeemable in God's good time and intentions. Our calling is to strive for redemption and hope for those in our community, police officers, who have sworn to keep us safe and secure. May God guide us in useful and effective ways of offering pastoral leadership for police in crisis.

---

[25] Elie Weisel quoted in Phillip Yancy, *What Good is God?* (New York: FaithWords, 2010)*,* 30.

A Theology for Transcending Culture In Leadership: The Mission of God in Conversation with the Cultural Dimension of Power Distance
Shelley Trebesch

Abstract

Our leadership, for better or worse, is influenced by our cultural contexts. Yet the formation of the image of Christ in us may lead us to affirm or correct cultural values and practices. This article explores the cultural dimension of power distance by first describing power distance and its variance in different countries and highlighting subsequent implications for leadership. I then propose two theological/biblical interactions with the topic of leadership that create catalysts for analysis, discernment, and if necessary, transformation of cultural leadership values and practices.

Introduction

Thomas, after completing a certificate focused on the study of leadership at Fuller Seminary, returned to India to continue his ministry amongst the poor. He became the president of his organization and pursued his vision to "take the organization to the next level." Several years later, while conducting a leadership workshop in Thomas' organization, I learned that a handful of leaders had recently left the ministry. Thomas' interpretation of their resignations was that he had now discovered who were the "truly committed" leaders. That was the first wave of resignations.

Commitment to Thomas meant absolute, unquestioning loyalty to himself. Thomas conducted appraisal sessions to determine this loyalty and even monitored email and phone conversations. Later the Trustees discovered irregularities in the finances (the

Shelley Trebesch is Assistant Professor of Leadership and Organization Development at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

organization received donations from overseas), and that Thomas had even transferred the land and buildings into his name. The Trustees proceeded to remove Thomas from leadership (eventually through a costly legal intervention), but it was too late to protect the assets and good name of the organization.

Later, when asked why he behaved this way, Thomas replied that it was his "right" as a leader. "This is what leaders do in my context."[1] I realized that despite his study in seminary and of leadership, even biblical leadership, we had not helped Thomas understand his culture's values and practice of leadership nor how these correlated to Jesus-like leadership. Even our definition of Christian leadership, which is normally something like "a person with God-given capacity and resources who influences people toward God's purposes," may not help a leader be more "godly" if he or she does not invite transformation of un-Christian cultural values.

While Thomas' extreme adherence to power distance (unquestioned, authoritarian leadership) may be an exception rather than a rule in the Indian context, we know that leaders around the world participate in or "act out" their culture's approach to leadership. And again, we must ask, if a culture's values and practice of leadership is unethical and not aligned with Jesus' invitation to proclaim and live in the freedom of the kingdom of God, is transformation possible? Can we transcend culture? If so, how?

> …all human beings are prisoners in their distinctive cultural cells of disobedience…we must be delivered from the communities of the flesh into the 'community of the spirit.' The community

---

[1] Coincidently, higher corruption and lower civil liberties correlate with higher power distance countries, Robert J. House et al., eds. *Culture, Leadership and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies* (Thousand Oaks US: Sage Publications Inc., 2004), 558 and (www.transparency.org).

of the spirit is the community of faith formed by those who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.[2]

That we have cultural differences is easy to attest. Whether one uses chopsticks or a knife and fork or a spoon and fork exemplifies the various ways our ancestors effectively resolved the problem of getting food into one's mouth. Many such solutions for life's problems, which have been passed from generation to generation, form the basis of culture. And we know that we all have cultural biases. These biases not only impact how we eat, but our relationships, leadership, exegesis of Scripture, rituals, ceremonies, economics, and so on. In fact there's not a single aspect of life untouched by culture.

Modern researchers have studied culture and cultural differences, often categorizing and contrasting them for understanding and meaningful cross-cultural relations.[3] These differences are named cultural dimensions. Self and community awareness of such differences make it possible for cross-cultural communication and for Christians, deeper, living, nuanced understanding of Scripture within their cultural contexts. Leaders' awareness of their own culture is particularly crucial because leadership is normally more influenced by cultural patterns than churches, denominations, or seminaries. Awareness permits leaders to interact with their culture's normal practice of leadership in order to determine if these practices demonstrate kingdom of God living/ethics (therefore gifts to be offered to the global

---

[2] Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Agents of Transformation: A Guide for Effective Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Grand Rapids US: Baker Books, 1996), 9-10.

[3] Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations Software of the Mind: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005); Robert J. House et al., eds. *Culture, Leadership and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies* (Thousand Oaks US: Sage Publications Inc., 2004); Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids US: Baker Pub. Group, 2003); Charles Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars, *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997).

church), are neutral, or are "cells of disobedience," not in alignment with God's purposes (and thus in need of transformation.)[4]

This article explores the cultural dimension most often described as "power distance." First, I describe and define power distance. Second, I show how cultures vary in this dimension and highlight subsequent implications for leadership. Third, I propose two biblical interactions with the topic of leadership that create catalysts for analysis, discernment, and if necessary, transformation of cultural leadership values and practices. I propose that a vibrant, living, theological understanding and experience of the Trinity, as revealed in the mission of God in Jesus' life, ministry, and future coming, encourages transformation and has the potential to affirm and/or correct culturally-bound aspects of leadership.[5] In the following pages, I expound this proposal, but first, I work with the concept of power distance.

Power Distance[6]

Power distance[7] is "the degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be shared unequally."[8] In high power distance

---

[4] I agree with Sherwood Lingenfelter in *Transforming Culture: A Challenge for Christian Mission,* 2nd Ed. (Grand Rapids US: Baker Books, 1998) when he opines that not all aspects of culture are neutral. All cultures have "the pervasive presence of sin" that are revealed "in the lives and thoughts of human beings," 16.

[5] While we can never completely remove our cultural blinds, nor should we (all cultures are affirmed—"every nation, tribe, people and language," Rev. 7.9—and have gifts to offer the universal church), we must discern and participate in God's transformative process.

[6] Aside: Even though they may be related, the concepts of power distance and leadership are not interchangeable. Leadership is not power distance; power distance is not leadership. Leadership takes place in both high and low power distance societies.

[7] A term first created by Mauk Mulder in 1977 to describe emotional distance between employees and their bosses. While originally coined by Western researchers, the all-continent researchers of the GLOBE study kept this phrase, as it is the most descriptive of what the dimension identifies (House, et al., eds. 537).

[8] House et al., eds., 517.

societies, for example France, certain individuals have unquestioned power, which is "unattainable by those with lower power."[9] In low power distance societies, for example the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, "each individual is respected and appreciated for what that person has to offer, and people expect access to upward mobility in both their class and their jobs."[10]

Origin of Power Distance

Historically, the concept that certain persons in society should have more status and power than others seems to have no origin.[11] Plato argued for the general equality of all people but concluded that an elite class should lead.[12] Confucian philosophy—in a quest for harmony and reciprocal relationships—classifies five hierarchical relationships: ruler/subject, father/son, older brother/younger brother, husband/wife, and senior friend/junior friend. In these relationships, the lower-status person should obey and respect the higher, while the higher-status person should protect and support the lower. Harmony is achieved when persons know their place in the hierarchy. The caste system of India is another example of strict hierarchy in relationships. One's place in the hierarchy depends on one's karma from a previous life. Faithfully living in one's "place" in society enables the person to advance to a higher level in their next life.

Value systems embedded in the religious or philosophical roots of countries predisposes a culture to power distance and has the most impact on whether the

---

[9] House et al., eds., 518.

[10] House et al., eds., 518.

[11] Perhaps the story of humanity's rebellion against Creator God ultimately demonstrates the origin of power distance. One aspect of the resulting curse after humans tried to be independent from God was that one human would "rule over" another. Adam would "rule over" Eve, Gen. 3.16. Jesus begins to reverse this curse in his announcement of the Kingdom of God, and ultimately, it will disappear when all humanity is invited to reign with God in the new heaven and the new earth, Rev. 22.1-5.

[12] House et al., eds., 517.

society accepts or rejects power distance. Besides the religious and philosophical roots, three other factors predispose cultures to power distance. These factors are the role of democratic principles of government, the role of the middle class, and the role of a high proportion of immigrants.

> …the respect for experience and tradition in the Confucian and Hindu societies, and the emphasis on hereditary class roles and spiritual leaders in the Hindu, Islamic, and Roman Catholic societies, predispose members of these societies to accept strong power distance. In contrast, emphasis on individual initiative for enacting one's dream and attaining high status in the Protestant societies, make these societies less accepting of power distance. Similarly, the Buddhist societies are expected to endorse low levels of power distance due to their thrust on bridging the social castes and their emphasis on a community spirit."[13]

The Mission of God and the Trinity

> The mission of the triune God is to establish God's reign throughout the whole of creation. This is being realized through God's redemptive mission. The character of the mission of God is defined by God's Messiah, Jesus the servant, whose servanthood was empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is by the Spirit that the church is endowed with spiritual gifts and empowered for ministry as the messianic community. God's redemptive mission will be consummated in the eschaton, but in the interim the promise of the eschaton infuses the messianic community with hope and power as it continues its witness amid oppression and suffering. The interaction of these elements

---

[13] House et al., eds., 523. I must say that I question this statement based on my experience with Buddhist influenced societies such as Thailand and Japan. In these countries, it is accepted that certain people have power while others do not.

represents the mission dynamic that is the basis of the vocation of the disciples in the world.[14]

I chose to address leadership in the context of participating in God's mission, because this is where most of our leadership takes place, whether in the marketplace or vocational, fulltime ministry. I first explore the mission of God through the matrix of the Trinity.

Theologians in the Twentieth and Twenty-first centuries have renewed interest in articulating the doctrine of the Trinity. Much of the research and writing address contextual, experiential, and theological deficiencies from earlier work. For example, some theologians in the West reorient the Church toward the Trinity as they wrestle with the results of Enlightenment and its impact on spiritual and societal life.[15] Others address the contextual inadequacies of theology written during the Enlightenment (e.g., dualism, the excluded middle, rational vs. experiential, etc.) and endeavor to rearticulate the theology of the Trinity for their contexts.[16] These, along with others,[17] address the problem of theology—especially theology of the Trinity—divorced from experience and practice. Advances in Trinitarian thinking have specific implications for our discussion of power distance. But before summarizing Trinitarian thought in the Twentieth and Twenty-first centuries and connecting it to power distance, I first briefly summarize key Trinitarian

---

[14] Wilbert Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (Maryknoll US: Orbis Books, 1999). 11.

[15] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom,* (Minneapolis US: Fortress Press, 1993) and Mirsolov Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids US: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1998).

[16] Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas?: The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Eugene US: Wipf and Stock Pub., 2009) and Jung Lee, *The Trinity in Asian Perspective* (Nashville US: Abingdon Press, 1996).

[17] Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove US: InterVarsity Press, 1998) and Eugene Petersen, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids US: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2005).

foundations in history since they are, in Kärkkäinen's words, "the mother of contemporary theology" and therefore shape future dialogue.[18]

Early Theologizing

Understanding the basis of Trinitarian theology is key for any discussion of the Trinity in today's context. Early Christian writings reveal the debates that led to foundational conclusions regarding the Trinity. These conclusions act as the starting point for further research and writing for theologians at various points in history, including contemporary theologians. And they are the basis for cultural and contextual application and thus, my discussion of power distance.

The impetus for the early church fathers to comprehend the Trinity began with the church's acknowledgement of Jesus' Lordship and the experience of "another Advocate" (Jn. 14.16-17) within the context of the Old Testament's absolute teaching of monotheism.[19] "Scriptural passages deemed implicitly Trinitarian were the final basis for affirming their divinity."[20] Through the crucible of various controversies stemming from Arius and Macedonius (and their disciples), councils of bishops convened to debate and write definitive conclusions regarding the deity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Arius believed that the Father's generation of the Son was a temporal movement within the divine life—that there existed one transcendent, unique God, but the three persons were external to the divine. In other words, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not God.[21] In response, the First Council at Nicea met, debated, and acknowledged the deity of Christ (325 A.D.).

---

[18] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville US: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 20.

[19] Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God. The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis US: Fortress Press, 2004), 7.

[20] Kärkkäinen, 26.

[21] Grenz, 7.

Macedonius, a disciple of Arius and Bishop of Constantinople, proposed that the Holy Spirit was the first creature of the Son.[22] The Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.), however, acknowledged the deity of the Holy Spirit and wrote the Nicene Creed. The Holy Spirit is "worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son." Once they agreed that the three persons are divine and at the same time there is one God, scholars then endeavored to understand the relationships within the Trinity. How can three persons comprise one God?

The Cappadocian Fathers and Augustine were the key thinkers leading up to and beyond the Council of Constantinople. The Cappadocians, from the East and using the Greek language, referred to the Trinity as one being (*ousia*) and three realities (*hypostases*). Their focus tended toward the Three rather than the unity, the One. Also, the Cappadocians emphasized the role of the Father who begets the Son and from whom the Spirit precedes.[23] Thus, they had a hierarchical view of the Trinity.

Theologians in the West, using Latin as the primary language, spoke of the Trinity as three persons (*tres personae*) and one essence (*una substantia*). Their formula led to an emphasis on the oneness of God and the unity of God's acts in creation and salvation.[24] Augustine was an early exemplar. For him, the key to knowing and understanding the Trinity is the love consciousness in human beings since they are created in God's image. Humans know God because of love. God is love and therefore, God must exist in tri-unity—exist in the relationships of the Trinity—"he that loves, and that which is loved, and love."[25] "The Father is Lover, the Son the Beloved, and the Spirit the mutual Love that connects

---

[22] Grenz, 8.
[23] Grenz, 8.
[24] Grenz, 9
[25] Grenz, 9.

the two."[26] Augustine rejects any possibility of asymmetry or subordination within the Trinity and taught that the Spirit proceeds from the Father as well as the Son (*filoque* "and from the Son").[27] This addition to the creed led to the eventual Great Schism of Christendom,[28] which produced separate Orthodox and Roman Catholic communions in 1054 A.D.[29]

One may conclude that the Eastern Orthodox view of the Trinity leads to increased power distance in cultures influenced by the Orthodox Church. A case can be made for this proposition.[30] One might also conclude that because of Augustine's rejection of any type of subordination in the relationships of the Trinity, that cultures influenced by the Roman Catholic Church would have decreased power distance, however, this is not the case. Research demonstrates that cultures highly influenced by the Roman Catholic Church also have high power distance dynamics.[31] Perhaps this is due to the doctrine of apostolic succession and therefore strict hierarchy in the Roman Catholic Church—the

[26] Kärkkäinen, 46. It should be mentioned here that scholars critique Augustine's view of the Spirit as Love for biblical and theological reasons. The Bible says that God is love (1 Jn. 4.8) and if the Spirit is merely a "connector," it sounds like the Spirit is not a person (50).

[27] Grenz, 10.

[28] Stated reasons for the split are the West's adoption of the *filoque* clause into the ancient creed and the East's rejection of the *filoque* clause and accusation of heresy. However, consolidation of political centers of power was more to blame—in the West, the Holy Roman Empire and in the East, Constantinople. (Andrew Walls lecture, OMF International, Singapore, January 2008).

[29] The Eastern Orthodox Church did not adopt the *filoque* clause leading to the Roman Catholic pope and the patriarch of Orthodox churches excommunicating each other in 1054. William C. Placher, ed., *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville US: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 58.

[30] For example, John Zizioulas, a contemporary Orthodox theologian articulates this view. See Mirsolov Volf's *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids US: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1998). Also The GLOBE Study found that countries influenced by the Orthodox Church, such as Russia, Greece, and Georgia, have high power distance, House et al., eds., 539.

[31] For example, El Salvador, Argentina, and Ecuador, House et al., eds., 539.

congregation submits to the priest, the priest submits to the bishop, the bishop submits to the archbishop, the archbishop submits to the cardinal, and the cardinal submits to the pope.

We turn now to the Reformers who built upon the foundation of the early church fathers. While the Reformers did not necessarily add new research or information to the theology of the Trinity, I note several insights and movements. One, due to the elitism of scholastic theology during this period (only certain people—the priests—knew the way of salvation), Reformers tended to emphasize the Bible (*sola scriptura*) over external creeds and human reason.[32] Second, the Reformers' emphasis on every human's ability and responsibility to come to God on their own terms (not through the mediation of a priest) produced an equalizing factor in societies. Undergirding this right and responsibility was the theology of creation—every human being is created in God's image—and the practice of translating the Bible into the vernacular. So every human, not just church leaders and priests, reveal the Divine. Every human should learn and interpret Scripture, not just those who have studied theology.

As we know, the Reformers' influence on their societies was far-reaching. Over time, Europe, and eventually North America, acknowledged and encouraged individuals' contribution to society, politics, and governments. In countries where the Reformation had the most impact, power distance rapidly decreased and today has the least influence in relationships and leadership.[33]

Recent Scholarship on the Theology of the Trinity

The Enlightenment leading into the modern era produced few contributions to the doctrine of the

---

[32] Grenz, 15.

[33] For example, the U.S., Switzerland, Canada, and Sweden. Interestingly, Germany is one notable exception with its relatively high power distance (in the upper one-third if you include eastern Germany), House et al., eds., 539.

Trinity. The Age of Reason, with its focus on humans, marginalized the doctrine of God in general. Schleiermacher, an exemplar of theological writing for this period, placed a small section on the doctrine of God at the end of his systematics.[34] The turn into the Twentieth Century, however, saw the beginnings of renewed interest in the Trinity. I have selected key scholars to trace this movement.

Martin Buber seemed to connect with Augustine and was one of the first modern theologians to re-personalize discussion regarding God. Because humans and the Trinity exist in an "I-Thou" relationship and not "I-It" relationship, they relate subject to subject and not subject to object. "For the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* is a different *I* from that of the primary word *I-It*. Primary words do not signify things, but the intimate relations."[35] "I-Thou" relations in and of themselves are "mutual, reciprocal, symmetrical, and contentless."[36] Thus, we live in conversation with God—not content but rather relationship-focused. God cannot be reduced to systems or classification; only "It" can be treated this way. "Theology must learn to acknowledge and wrestle with the presence of God…God's revelation is not simply a making known of facts about God, but a self-revelation of God."[37] Karl Barth offers similar conclusions.

Karl Barth, through his *Doctrine of God*, set the stage for subsequent theologizing regarding the Trinity. He maintained the emphasis on the personal and relational character of God and additionally focused on God's self-revelation. The divine initiative and revelation in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ reveal the Trinity. Therefore, if one desires to know the Trinity, one must first observe God's self-revelation in

---

[34] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction,* 3rd Ed. (Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 334.

[35] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* 2nd Ed. trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh UK: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 3.

[36] McGrath, 272.

[37] McGrath, 272.

Jesus Christ. "God reveals himself. He reveals himself through himself. He reveals himself."[38] "God…is Revealer, Revelation, and Revealeadness."[39] Yet even though God reveals himself in time and history, Barth maintained that the Trinity exists eternally. "Revelation is the reiteration in time of what God actually is in eternity."[40]

Following and building upon Barth's starting point, seminal writings on the Trinity flourished. His breakthroughs spawned new, creative research and theology. A number of writings are important for our discussion on power distance. Before turning to them, however, I offer these summarizing statements. Most contemporary theologians agree that the personal, relational within and without of the Trinity should be central.[41] "God is personal because God is relational…God's being is fecund, intrinsically dynamic, and therefore intrinsically relational."[42] Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three ontological persons existing in united, inseparable *koinonia*.[43]

Jürgen Moltmann, working from Karl Barth's divine self-revelation premise, locates the nexus of revelation of the triune God in Jesus Christ. Jesus' life, revealed as the promised Messiah of Israel and witnessed in the four gospels, demonstrates the heart of the triune life of God. The gospels disclose "three persons at work rather than one."[44] "[A]ll three 'depend' on each other in the dynamic process of the shifting of the kingdom from one divine person to the other."[45] In time/space history, the activity

---

[38] Karl Barth, quoted in Grenz, 39.

[39] Kärkkäinen, 69.

[40] McGrath, 335.

[41] Grenz, 118.

[42] Catherine LaCugna, "The Relational God: Aquinas and Beyond." *Theological Studies* 46 (1985): 650, 654.

[43] Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Divine Energies or Divine Personhood: Vladimir Lossky and John Zizioulas on Conceiving the Transcendent and Immanent God." *Modern Theology* 19:3 (July 2003): 367.

[44] Grenz, 79.

[45] Kärkkäinen, 108.

and relationship of the Three moves from one Person to the Next Person. This process continues until the eschaton when God's kingdom is fully and completely established.

Like the Cappadocians, Moltmann starts with Three Persons at work and moves to the question of how they are One. He identifies his research as the social doctrine of the Trinity. Moltmann first renews the Cappadocian legacy and reaffirms that "being" is communion. For the Cappadocians, the Persons of the Trinity exist in koinonia and oneness. Like Buber, Moltmann asserts that unity assumes "otherness" and communion of "otherness." "Relational personhood, which characterizes the inner life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is fundamental to human personhood as well. Because we're made in the image of the triune God."[46] A person is a person only as they are in relationship with others. "To be a person is to be made in the image of God: that is the heart of the matter. If God is a communion of persons inseparably related, then…it is in our relatedness to others that our being human consists."[47]

Moltmann commends the Gospel of John and the patristic idea of *perichoresis* to describe the divine community. "By virtue of their eternal love, the divine persons exist so intimately with one another, for one another, and in one another that they constitute themselves in their unique, incomparable, and complete unity….the three persons form their unity by themselves in the circulation of the divine life."[48] Theologian Colin Gunton states it this way, "God is no more than what Father, Son, and Spirit give to and receive from each other in the inseparable communion that is the outcome of their love….There is no 'being' of God other than this dynamic of persons in relation."[49] In this sense, the

---

[46] Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove US: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 33.
[47] Colin Gunton quoted in Seamands, 35.
[48] Quoted in Grenz, 81.
[49] Quoted in Seamands, 34.

Trinity is fully egalitarian and nonhierarchical, mutual and reciprocal.

Synthesizing the work of the Cappadocians, Barth, Rahner, Moltmann, Pannenberg, and Jenson, Mary LaCugna offers an understanding of the Trinity that endeavors to move beyond the West/East divide and re-imagines theology inseparable from soteriology and soteriology inseparable from theology.[50] Theology, in the doctrine of God, is not talk or knowledge about God, but God's shared life with us through redemption; "the comprehensive plan of God reaching from creation to consummation," is that "God and all creatures are destined to exist together in the mystery of love and communion."[51] Working from the Cappadocian texts, LaCugna's interpretation and conclusion regarding *monoarche* are different than current Eastern Orthodox theology (hierarchy in the Trinity). With perichoresis in mind and because of the relationality in the triune God, the patristics concluded God's *arch* is not *mono arche* but *triadike arche* (threefold rule). This patristic deduction promotes mutuality and challenges all types of hierarchy in human beings' relationships.[52]

Regarding Power Distance

I turn now to the discussion of power distance. Recent theologizing in the West, Africa, and Latin America rejects hierarchy in the Trinity. African theologian A. Okechukwu Ogbonnaya builds from Tertullian's theology of "the Divine as community—one which enhances ontological equality, personal distinctiveness within the Divine, and a functional subordination among the persons of the Trinity that is temporal rather than ontological."[53] As stated earlier, other theologians propose temporal mutual subordination/submission in the Trinity as well. The

---

[50] Kärkkäinen, 39.
[51] Mary LaCugna quoted in Grenz, 153.
[52] Grenz, 157.
[53] Ogbonnaya quoted in Kärkkäinen, 371.

Father sends the Son and the Spirit into the world; yet the eschatological flow is from the Spirit to the Son and the Father. "The Spirit's activity leads to the glorification of the Father and the Son."[54] The Father is dependent on the self-giving surrender of the Son as well as the work of the Spirit who calls humans into relationship with God until the climax of the process in the eschaton and the final establishment of the kingdom of God.[55] In other words in the divine activity, all persons in the Trinity surrender and submit to the work of the other two. If human beings are created in the image of God, redeemed by the saving act of the Son, transformed by the Spirit, and will participate in the rule of God in the eschaton, is power distance Christian?

Numerous theologians propose that because of the relation-ness of the Trinity and because humans are invited into these relationships, human relationships should be the same as the Trinity's—mutual, reciprocal, and egalitarian. This further leads to socio and political implications.

> Whenever the doctrine of Trinity disintegrates into "abstract monotheism," this erroneous 'political and clerical monotheism' is used to support civil and ecclesiastical totalitarianism. Divine monarchy in heaven and on earth provides justification for earthly domination and makes it a hierarchy, a holy rule…future kingdom of glory is not universal monarchy but a harmonious fellowship of liberated creation with God.[56]

Latin theologian Leonardo Boff agrees. "The community of Father, Son, and Spirit becomes the prototype of the human community dreamed of by those who wish to improve society and build it in such a way as to make it into the image and likeness of the Trinity."[57] The Trinity models what a just, egalitarian society could be; where

---

[54] Grenz, 81.
[55] Grenz, 80.
[56] Grenz, 84.
[57] Boff quoted in Grenz, 121.

each person's identity and dignity is cherished while at the same time the fellowship of purpose fully unites.

While we observe an obvious swing in scholarship toward reaffirming relational mutuality and nonhierarchy in the Trinity and the extrapolation of this nonhierarchy for relationships in community and the church,[58] there are theologians, as well as local theologies, that maintain the hierarchical necessity of the Trinity. Hierarchy within the Trinity is the official Roman Catholic (with obvious exceptions of liberation theologians and those already mentioned) and the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Some scholars writing contextual theologies also propose hierarchy in the Trinity. I turn to these now.

John Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict the XVI, wrote his theology of the Trinity while still the chief protector of doctrine in the Vatican. Like ancient Western theologians, Ratzinger focuses on the oneness of the divine nature and maintains the *filoque* clause. He goes on to highlight apostolic succession, which brings hierarchy from the divine to human leadership. The one divine nature is appropriated by one Christ, one Pope, and one bishop (of a community of churches). Therefore, hierarchy is innate in the ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church.[59]

Eminent Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas builds his theology of the Trinity from the Cappadocians and particularly highlights the ontology of communion. God's identity is three persons in relationship, and it follows that humans only have identity as they are in relationship with God and each other.[60] However, the doctrine of the Trinity is asymmetrical in Zizioulas' theology and the Orthodox Church. "The Father is the source of the Son and Spirit, and so also of the Trinitarian communion."[61] Zizioulas writes that the Father is primary over the Son and Spirit because he "constitutes" the Son and the

---

[58] Volf, 218.

[59] Volf, 214.

[60] Kärkkäinen, 92.

[61] Kärkkäinen, 94.

Spirit, while the Son and Spirit only "condition" the Father. Likewise, the Son constitutes the church while the church conditions the Son; therefore, hierarchical relations in the church must proceed as well.[62]

Jung Lee argues for the preeminence of the Father over the Son and the Spirit as well. First, Lee offers an insightful analysis of yin and yang[63] and demonstrates their reciprocity as "relating" concepts by using the analogy of light and darkness. Light and darkness exist in relationship to each other. They also exist in relation to the whole of light and darkness; "light is not only relative to darkness but also relative to both darkness and light at the same time."[64] Similarly, yin and yang exist in complementary relationship to each other and to the whole. Thus, the principle of *both/and* defines the Asian worldview rather than "opposites" or "polemics." Yin and yang complement each other; when one decreases the other maintains the harmony of the whole and increases. They are not, however, dualistic concepts. Neither can act independently of the other.[65] Discussion of yin and yang may cause one to conclude a more egalitarian approach to relationships and perhaps, even to God's nature in the Three. However, this is not the case for Lee.

Because of Chinese cosmology and Confucian philosophy, God the Father is preeminent in the Trinity. Contextualizing for Chinese cosmology, Lee likens the Father to the Tao of "above-shaped" or heavenly (*li*). The Spirit is "within-shaped" or earthly and material (*chi*). The Son is the mediator between the two; therefore both the Spirit and the Son are inferior to the superior Father. "The distinction between heaven and earth is the foundation of all other relationships. High and low with value differentiations lead to the differentiation of

---

[62] Volf, 214.

[63] Yin and yang are not ontic realities but symbols of relationship and change. Lee, 32.

[64] Lee, 30.

[65] Lee, 29.

superior and inferior."[66] Connecting the doctrine of the Trinity to Confucianism, the father in the Asian family is the moral, spiritual, and ethical standard of the family. He is hierarchically "above" the wife and the children. It is his love that holds the family together in harmony.[67]

Summary Regarding Power Distance and the Trinity

So, do contemporary theologies of the Trinity offer insights for Christian leaders grappling with the cultural dimension of power distance? Presumably we could argue for both hierarchical and nonhierarchical theologies of the Trinity, which could result in high or low-power-distance-Christian leadership. Key Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox scholars maintain earlier centuries' hierarchical view. Other theologians, Protestant and Roman Catholic, argue for an egalitarian view based on the personal nature of God in relationship—within the Trinity and with human beings. Others maintain the relational character, but emphasize the transcendence and power of God, which may in turn offer a hierarchical or nonhierarchical approach to relationships within the Trinity.[68] So, Trinitarian theology (or any theology for that matter) is influenced by culture, and therefore high as well as low power distance may be rationalized. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate another litmus—the life and leadership of Jesus.

Accepting Karl Barth's premise that the Trinity can be known through God's self-revelation in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, I now explore Jesus' life and leadership and highlight insights for Christian leadership regarding power distance. Did Jesus live in a culture with high power distance? If so, did Jesus adopt the cultural practice of power distance?

---

[66] Lee, 131.

[67] Lee, 132.

[68] For example, some African theologians and Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of the Christian Life* (Downers Grove US: InterVarsity Press, 1998). For their contexts, where Enlightenment dualism has not shaped the worldview—and thus separated physical and spiritual—people need an all-powerful, transcendent God.

The Trinitarian Mission of God Revealed in the Life of Jesus Christ

> God has imparted himself to us through Jesus Christ in his Spirit as he is in himself, so that the inexpressible nameless mystery which reigns in us and over us should be in itself the immediate blessedness of the spirit which knows, and transforms itself into love.[69]

It is likely that the revival of theologizing regarding the Trinity will continue and through it, the implications for *praxis* in our faith communities. Perhaps Simon Chan is right when he proposes, "no single *theology* of the Trinity can adequately encompass" the "complex world in which the Christian life is lived."[70] Yet, the Trinitarian life of God is revealed in Jesus Christ, and thus, our immersion into and understanding of his life, death, resurrection, and ongoing ministry offer insights for culturally transcendent leadership. Did Jesus live in a culture with high power distance? Every aspect of Palestinian society—politics, economics, religion, and family—was highly stratified (high power distance). Did Jesus adopt the cultural practice of power distance? In the following sections I argue that Jesus, by word, symbols, and actions, decisively and prophetically challenged his high-power-distance culture and chose not to operate with power distance.

Announcement of the Kingdom of God

That Jesus viewed himself as an oracular, leadership prophet, in the vein of the Old Testament prophets, is clear. [71] Jesus pronounced coming judgment on Israel if they did not turn (repent) from their ways, and he proclaimed a different way, that of following him and

---

[69] Karl Rahner quoted in Grenz, 61.

[70] Chan, 45.

[71] Note: I rely heavily on the work of N. T. Wright because of his seminal research of the context of Jesus' time and its historical connection with the covenants of the Old Testament.

living in the Kingdom of God.[72] Jesus' praxis both entailed the Old Testament prophets—through proclamation and symbolic acts—and went beyond them, as he became the embodiment of God's rescue and salvation. In Jesus' announcement of the reign of God, he both evoked a story his listeners knew well and redirected the story so as to subvert and change the normal plot.[73] Yes, the kingdom of God fulfills the hopes of Israel (return from exile—theological—and defeat evil). This was the story they longed to hear, but the story was different than they imagined.[74] "On the contrary, Jesus announced, increasingly clearly, that God's judgment would fall not on the surrounding [pagan] nations but on the Israel that had failed to be the light of the world…Jesus himself and his followers…were now the true, reconstituted Israel."[75] And Jesus' death would bypass the temple entirely, forever, and offer people what normally would have been provided through the sacrificial system—forgiveness of sins.[76]

So, how does God's reign connect with power distance? We find the answer to this question in Jesus' life as well.

Much of first-century, Judaic hopes centered on the violent overthrow of their oppressors, the Roman government. When Israel's God "became king, the whole world…would at last be put to rights."[77] Yet, while Jesus affirmed Israel's election and destiny, he asked them to consider another way (repentance); Israel must *"abandon revolutionary zeal"*[78] and have faith that Jesus *"is acting climatically,"*[79] by offering healing and forgiveness, to

---

[72] N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis US: Fortress Press, 1996), 167.
[73] Wright, 199.
[74] N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove US: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 41.
[75] Wright, *The Challenge*, 49.
[76] Wright, *The Challenge*, 90.
[77] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 203.
[78] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 250 (author's italics).
[79] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 262 (author's italics).

establish the long-awaited kingdom of God. Jesus wanted Israel to realize that the real enemy is not Rome but the Evil One and the systems of evil he establishes and promotes. Therefore, Israel must not "buy-in" to this normal practice of overthrowing and establishing new governments. Jesus did not lead as the Israelites expected and in fact, rejected the existing power structures. Obviously he was very political, however, Jesus did not manipulate the systems of politics to critique or overthrow governments.

Religious Practice

Jesus indirectly challenged the identity of the people of God (the Jews) by challenging (and sometimes redefining) their symbols of identity, especially the Sabbath, purity, and Temple. Now that the kingdom of God had come, "it was time to relativize those god-given markers of Israel's distinctiveness."[80] In doing so, he also rejected the high-power-distance, religious structures of the time.

First, I address Jesus' concept of Sabbath. Jesus ultimately demonstrated what Sabbath is all about. Rather than strict Mishnah rules that can only be interpreted and followed by religious leaders, Sabbath was to be release from work and especially, rest after trouble, e.g. deliverance. As Jesus confronted the Jews' Sabbath practices, he revealed that Israel's longing for Sabbath was fulfilled in him, so of course healing and every type of restoration should happen on that day. "Israel's great coming sabbath day *was already breaking in* in his own ministry,"[81] and everyone was invited and had access.

Second, Jesus claimed that his interpretation of the Torah regarding purity is correct over and against the Pharisees. Even though the food taboos were God-given, Jesus made them redundant, because purity is a matter of the heart, a cleansed heart. Thus in the kingdom of God, laws surrounding food (taboos or hand washing) would

---

[80] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 389.
[81] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 394-395 (author's italics).

no longer be needed.[82] Those who strictly practiced food laws, especially the Scribes, Pharisees, and teachers of the Law, did not have greater power or favor in the kingdom of God than others.

Finally, Jesus made the Temple—the central symbol of Judaism—obsolete. For Jewish people, three aspects of the temple were important: the presence of God, the sacrificial system (forgiveness of sins and cleansing from defilement), and the political system (the people who took care of the building had great prestige).[83] As a prophet (warning of judgment and offering a new way), Jesus intentionally integrated his actions in the temple with the rest of his ministry (breaking down barriers and offering healing and forgiveness).[84] His actions in the Temple symbolized its imminent destruction.[85] Jesus, and his ongoing ministry after the resurrection and his presence in the people of God, would fulfill the covenant originally operating through the Temple system.

To summarize then, the first century, Judaic religious system, by its very nature, exemplified levels of power—some had great favor and influence because of their position and practice while others, especially women and those with diseases and demons, were excluded. Jesus subverted the religious power structure by redefining the meaning of Sabbath (an invitation to God's rest) and purity laws (purity is internal, a cleansed heart through Jesus) and by making the Temple unnecessary, because he sacrificed his life (thus eliminating the need for a blood sacrifice system) and his presence would dwell in his followers, every follower (thus eliminating the need for a physical locality where God's presence dwells). Not only did Jesus' actions and teaching address the political, military, and religious systems, they cut through any marginalizing system and even hierarchy in the family structure.

---

82 Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 389-399.

83 Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 406.

84 Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 414.

85 Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 424.

Jesus' actions and teaching inaugurated a new social order without stratification and oppression. Rigid, social hierarchy dominated First Century society. The priests and religious leaders evaluated and declared who was "in" (clean) and who was "out" (unclean) and connecting to our topic of power distance, who had power and who did not have power. Jesus, however, violated stratification boundaries when he ate with "sinners" (those outside strictly held religious laws) and when he declared the unclean clean (Mk. 1). In radical opposition to the religious structure of the time, he invited all to belong, thus nullifying the power of the Chief Priests and Pharisees. In fact, Jesus' table fellowship acted out the presence of the kingdom of God. Here, all are welcome, forgiveness is offered, and the time of jubilation has come. And this eschatological blessing was offered "outside the official structures, to all the wrong people, and on his own authority."[86] "His welcome to all and sundry was balanced by the quite sharp exclusivism implied by his controlling categories: those who 'heard his words' and followed him were part of the true people, and those who did not were not."[87] Seemingly then, Jesus cut through attitudes and structures that serviced and maintained high power distance.

Jesus also envisioned a new definition of family. First-century, Palestinian families were highly patriarchal and stratified. Jesus established that God is Father, ensuring that in the new communities there would be no "fathers" (patrons) and ending the patriarchal social structure.

> Fathers are deliberately not mentioned in the second part of the saying [Mark 10:29-30], because in the new family there are to be no 'fathers.' They are too symbolic of patriarchal domination. Jesus' community of disciples and together with it the

---

[86] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 272.

[87] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 389.

true Israel is to have only a single father, the One in heaven.[88]

Obviously, Jesus' words regarding family would have shocked first-century hearers. Family and property provided religious and cultural identity as well as security; yet they were possibilities for distraction from the kingdom agenda. Thus, followers of Jesus needed to renounce them.[89] Wright comments on Jesus' words in Mark 3:31-35 regarding family.

> In first-century Jewish culture, for which the sense of familial and racial loyalty was a basic symbol of the prevailing worldview, it cannot but have been devastating….the remarkable demands for Jesus' followers to 'hate' father, mother, siblings, spouse and children—and even their own selves…was not just extraordinarily challenging at a personal level; it was deeply subversive at a social, cultural, religious and political level…[90]

Jesus invited his followers to form a mutually reciprocal community (family) around him. In fact, he encouraged his followers to enter into the circle of relationships between the Father, himself, and the Holy Spirit—loving, self-revealing, and mutual reciprocity and submission. The relationships of the Trinity are the model of relationships in the new communities (the Church). As such, he transformed his culture's view of family and removed the preferred associations for power and connection through blood and patriarchy.

Jesus did not affirm the "power distance" structures and practices of the first century and his culture. Commenting on Luke 14:7-14, Green states it this way: "he [Jesus] is toppling the familiar world of the ancient Mediterranean, overturning its social constructed reality and replacing it with what must have been regarded as a

---

[88] Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community* (Minneapolis US: Fortress Press, 1984), 45.

[89] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 405.

[90] Wright, *Jesus and the Victory*, 278.

scandalous alternative."[91] To what extent, then, is the maintenance of power distance structures biblical in our own cultural contexts?

Some Conclusions

Thomas studied Bible, theology, and Christian leadership in our seminary, yet the academic work did not seem to lead toward his own transformation of unethical practices and abuse of power. His studies did not connect with questioning the extremes of his high power distance context, and therefore he practiced leadership in the usual manner. I often wonder what could have made a difference for Thomas and those he served.

As a Caucasian woman from a culture that affirms, more often than not, lower power distance, I recognize my potential bias in encounters with God and any subsequent theologizing, and especially, in the teaching of Christian leadership. Yet the Spirit calls me to transformation and to reject any values and practices not of Jesus. For me, realizations toward transformation have occurred in the context of experience and dialogue with partners from other cultures and our theologizing together. At times, they affirm the gifts of American culture (e.g., generosity, creativity, entrepreneurialism) and recognize Jesus in them. Other times they confront the ways my American-ness hinders people from living in the kingdom of God (e.g., independence, individualism, power/control). This is the beauty of the diverse Body of Christ.

I have proposed that a deep, transformative, theological understanding and experience of the Trinity—as revealed in the mission of God in Jesus' life, ministry, and future coming—encourages transformation and has the potential to affirm and/or correct culturally-bound aspects of leadership. While this proposal informs all cultural dimensions (for example, individual vs.

---

[91] Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke. The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids US: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1997), 550.

communalism; success achieved vs. ascribed; etc.),[92] I applied it to the dimension of power distance in this article. In my analysis, I conclude that an understanding of the theology of the Trinity and the life of Jesus challenge the practice of maintaining power distance. This does not mean, however, that we do not lead. But can there be leadership without power distance?

Returning to Jesus' example, I conclude that Jesus strongly led. Yet he did not lead by using power distance; in fact, he challenged all power-distance-producing systems. I also conclude that Jesus used power. Yet he did not use power to "distance." He used power to challenge the systems of power distance and serve others. Yes, leadership is needed and power is used, but both are to break down walls of exclusion and serve the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of others.

If we affirm that life within the Trinity is mutual, reciprocal, and nonhierarchical and that the life of Jesus illumines this inner life, can we insist that churches and communities decrease power distance and move toward mutuality? Yes, but no. We live our lives in cultural contexts. A radical dissolution of power distance in some contexts may lead to chaos; in some it may lead to dignity and value. Yet, as communities invigorated by God who is Three, we must, in this grace, move toward the eschaton where perfect love and communion—with our God and each other—have no need for distance. As leaders, we must continually evaluate whether we hold onto or give away power, whether we invite or exclude others in our use of power. In other words, we must join the process Jesus initiated. We must progress in the already, not yet.

---

[92] Topics to be explored in my further research and writing.

Leadership in Effective and Growing Australian Congregations: A Study of Three Cases

Ian Hussey

Abstract:

This article reports on research into clergy leadership in three effective and growing Australian churches. Using qualitative methods a description of congregant's experience of their clergy leaders is developed and presented. The themes of realness, gender mix, equality, coaching, informing, example and rhetoric are identified and interpreted. From this interpretation a theory to explain the contribution of the leaders to the effectiveness and growth of the three churches is developed. Suggestions for further research based on this theory are made.

Introduction

Church attendance, as a percentage of population, is declining in Australia.[1] However, the National Church Life Survey (NCLS), which in 2006 involved 300,000 participants from 7,000 churches and nineteen denominations, has identified a number of churches that are growing. Some of these churches have large percentages of what the NCLS calls "newcomers"—those who have joined their church in the previous five years and had not previously attended a church.[2] These churches are "doubly effective" in the sense that not only

Ian Hussey is Lecturer in Pastoral Ministry, Malyon College, Brisbane, Qld, Australia

---

[1] Phillip J. Hughes, "Are Australians 'Losing Their Religion?'" *Pointers: Bulletin of the Christian Research Association* 20, no. 2 (2010): 1-6.

[2] Sam Sterland et al., "Attracting and Integrating Newcomers into Church Life: Research in Four Countries," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 27, no. 1 (2006).

are they benefitting from a "circulation of the saints"[3] but they are growing by drawing people into church life who previously had no such engagement. As Sterland, et al. point out:

> Newcomers joining churches for the first time, or rejoining after an absence of years, are important to the future of the churches. In many respects they are a measure of the relevance of the churches beyond their own walls. For newcomers to become part of church life some relevant engagement between a church and the wider community has occurred. Rather than being simply a circulation of attenders between congregations, they represent a true addition to the total number of attenders within church life.[4]

Given that most churches have as a goal to be relevant and engage with the wider community and that many churches, especially evangelical ones, have the explicit goal of growth, these churches with high levels of newcomers may be considered effective.

Leadership has been identified as a factor in church effectiveness. Research based on the U.S. Congregational Survey of over 300,000 worshippers and 2,000 congregations has highlighted the importance of leadership in congregational strength.[5] Woolever and Bruce identified ten strengths that place congregations in the top 20% of strength and effectiveness. One of these strengths, identified as Empowering Congregational Leadership, includes the concepts of leaders taking the ideas of worshippers into account, a good match between the congregation and the leader, an inspiring leadership

---

[3] Robin D. Perrin, Paul Kennedy, and Donald E. Miller, "Examining the Sources of Conservative Church Growth: Where Are the New Evangelical Movements Getting Their Numbers?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 1 (1997).

[4] Sam Sterland et al., "Attracting and Integrating Newcomers into Church Life: Research in Four Countries," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 27, no. 1 (2006): 40.

[5] Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary: Ten Strengths of U.S. Congregations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

style, and the leaders encouraging people in the church to find and use their gifts.

However, understanding the meaning that participants attached to the responses they made to these surveys is not possible simply through statistical research. Indeed, the language used in the survey questions limits the description of the reality to those words. In order to develop a deeper understanding of leadership in effective and growing congregations, a different research approach is necessary. As a result, a case study of three churches with high levels of newcomers was undertaken. In particular, the research focused on congregant's experience of the clergy leadership of their church. From these descriptions a deeper understanding of leadership in these church contexts emerged. The purpose of this article is to report on the findings of this research into leadership in effective and growing churches. It seeks to describe how congregants experience their leaders and, on the basis of this, develop a theory that explains the contribution of leadership to the effectiveness of these churches.

But before commencing this research, a review of the literature possibly related to church leadership behaviors was undertaken in order to construct a framework for investigating and understanding these behaviors and their impact.

Models of Church and Organizational Leadership

In seeking to understand leadership in these churches it is prudent to draw upon existing leadership research. However, there are many different leadership models from which to choose. Leadership paradigms—such as those of autocratic vs. democratic leadership, directive vs. participative leadership, and task vs. relationship oriented leadership—have dominated leadership research for the past 50 years.[6] In 1985 it was estimated that there were

---

[6] Bruce J. Avolio and Bernard M. Bass, *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Manual* (Menlo Park, CA: Mind Garden, 2004).

over 850 definitions of leadership[7] and there are probably now even more concepts about what leadership is and what leadership does.[8]

Given the environment of this research—Australian churches—it was decided to initially focus on the constructs related to leadership developed by the NCLS because of its sensitivity to the context. The NCLS has statistically identified nine Core Qualities that contribute to the vitality of church life.[9] One of these is "empowering and inspiring leadership." The NCLS has contrasted three leadership styles in the survey: strongly directive leadership, leadership that inspires people to action, and leadership that allows other people to start most things. Of the three approaches, leadership that inspires people to action is the approach most statistically associated with church vitality. Leadership that places a high priority on encouraging others to find and use their gifts and skills (what the NCLS has called "Empowering Leadership") has also been related to church vitality.[10]

The use of the word "inspirational" by church attenders when describing their leaders suggests that the Transformational Leadership model would provide a lens to examine and build understanding about this behavior. This is due to its focus on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation and the use of the word "inspiration" in one of its components.

According to Burns,[11] the transforming approach to leadership creates change in people's perceptions and values, and changes their expectations and aspirations. Unlike the transactional approach, which is based on a "give and take" relationship, the leader's personality,

---

[7] Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 4.

[8] Steve Echols, "Transformational/Servant Leadership: A Potential Synergism for an Inclusive Leadership Style," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 8, no. 2 (2009): 91.

[9] John Bellamy et al., *Enriching Church Life* (Adelaide: Openbook, 2006), 10.

[10] Peter Kaldor, Keith Castle, and Robert Dixon, *Connections for Life: Core Qualities to Foster in Your Church* (Adelaide: Openbook, 2002), 50.

[11] James M. Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

traits, and ability change their followers through example, articulation of an energizing vision, and challenging goals. Transforming leaders are idealized in the sense that they are a moral exemplar of working towards the benefit of the team, organization, and/or community.

Bass and Avolio developed Burns' ideas and developed the concept of Transformational Leadership.[12] The following have been identified as the distinct components of Transformational Leadership:

- Idealized influence. These leaders are admired, respected, and trusted.
- Inspirational motivation. Leaders behave in ways that motivate those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work.
- Intellectual stimulation. Leaders stimulate their followers to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways.
- Individualized consideration. Leaders pay attention to each individual's need for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor.

The Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was developed to expand and build upon the dimensions of leadership measured by previous leadership surveys.[13] The major leadership constructs used in the MLQ—Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and passive/avoidant leadership—address both the lower and higher order effects of leadership style. Because of its breadth of coverage—including Transformational Leadership—and frequency of use, the MLQ is a helpful tool to better understand the concept of inspiring leadership in churches.

The other leadership construct the NCLS has developed has been given the name "empowering leadership." Much has been written about empowering

---

[12] A. Gregory Stone, Robert F. Russell, and Kathleen Patterson, "Transformational Versus Servant Leadership: A Difference in Leader Focus," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 25 no. 4 (2004).

[13] Avolio and Bass, 4.

leadership.[14] A popular model is that developed by Conger.[15] This model is used to inform the research process by alerting the researcher to possible empowering leadership behaviors. Another model is that of Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, and Drasgow.[16] Using an inductive and then empirical process, they identified five factors in empowering leadership: Coaching, Informing, Leading By Example, Showing Concern/Interacting with the Team, and Participative Decision-Making. They then developed an instrument, the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ), to measure each of these factors.

The social scientific literature on inspiring and empowering leadership provided a framework for developing a better understanding of the leadership behaviors reported in effective and growing churches. This literature influenced the Research Design, which is now described.

Research Design—Case Study

A constructivist epistemology and a methodology of case study provide the best approach to understand, describe, and interpret congregant's experience of clergy leadership at a deeper level. It also allows for a refined understanding of the meaning the respondents attach to various terms when they respond to empirical surveys such as the NCLS, the MLQ, and the ELQ.

Qualitative research methods have previously been used to gather information-rich data that contributes significantly to our knowledge of leadership processes.[17]

---

[14] For a summary, see Robert P. Vecchio, Joseph E. Justin, and Craig L. Pearce, "Empowering Leadership: An Examination of Mediating Mechanisms within a Hierarchical Structure," *The Leadership Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2010).

[15] Jay A. Conger, "Leadership: The Art of Empowering Others," *Academy of Management Executive* 3, no. 1 (1989).

[16] Josh A. Arnold et al., "The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire: The Construction and Validation of a New Scale for Measuring Leader Behaviors," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 21 (2000).

[17] Alan Bryman, "Qualitative Research on Leadership: A Critical but Appreciative Review," *The Leadership Quarterly* 15 (2004).

In fact, key paradigm shifts in the study of leadership have come from qualitative studies.[18] Because it is a dynamic process, qualitative research methods can add depth and richness that is lacking in data gleaned from mass surveys. Further, because leadership is considered by some researchers and theories to be a socially constructed role, qualitative methods can aid in understanding the construct from multiple perspectives.

The use of case study methodology is not without criticism. A weakness of the case study methodology is that the findings cannot be generalized—at least not in a simplistic fashion. However, carefully chosen experiments, cases, and experience have contributed significantly to knowledge. For example, they were critical to the development of the physics of Newton, Einstein, and Bohr. Similarly, in social science the strategic choice of cases, as in this research, can do much to develop knowledge and new theory.[19]

The cases for this research were three churches with relatively high percentages of newcomers (people who had attended the church for less than five years and had never attended a church before). The NCLS wrote to the fifty churches in Australia with the highest percentages of newcomers in 2006, requesting them to be involved in this research. Eight churches responded to the request and three were chosen on the basis of their geographical, demographic, and denominational diversity. The three churches studied each had over 30% newcomers and were either moderately or well above average in terms of the NCLS Core Qualities which contribute to the vitality of church life. EACH had also grown significantly in the period before and after the 2006 survey. The churches, studied during 2009, were:

---

[18] Jay A. Conger and G. Toegel, "A Story of Missed Opportunities," in *Grounding Leadership Theory and Research*, ed. K.W. Perry and J.R. Meindl (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2002).
[19] Bent Flyvbjerg, "Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (2006).

- A Salvation Army church in regional Victoria composed of about 120 adults
- An Anglican (Episcopal) church in the western suburbs of Sydney composed of about 500 adults
- A Pentecostal church on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland composed of about 500 adults

These churches represented three quite distinct demographics. The Salvation Army church was in a depressed rural region with much social dislocation. In contrast, the Anglican church was in an upper middle-class area where there was a high percentage of nuclear families. The Pentecostal church was in an area dominated by nuclear families and retirees. The fact that all three churches were evangelical is acknowledged. However, no churches of non-evangelical traditions responded or satisfied the growth criteria. Nevertheless, the theological, demographic, and geographic diversity of the cases should also be noted.

Given that the NCLS data was collected in 2006, it was necessary to confirm that there had not been any major changes (for example, the exit of senior clergy or major conflict) in the life of the church in the intervening years which would have dramatically changed the qualities of the church. Enquiries confirmed that all three churches had been stable during the last five years.

During the three case studies, multiple research methods were used to understand the phenomena and triangulate findings. Interviews, three focus groups, observation over three days or more, and a questionnaire were used in each case study. This enabled the development of an holistic and contextual portrayal of the real life situations.

The participants from within each church were drawn from four major groups: the staff (including the Senior Clergy Leader), lay leaders, attenders, and newcomers (who have attended for less than five years). Over one hundred people from these churches participated in the research in some way.

During data gathering, the primary question was: "How do you experience the leadership of this church?" This open question allowed the participants to respond without any influence from the researcher. Questions informed by the literature review were only used subsequently to stimulate further discussion in the focus groups and interviews with leaders. The researcher interrupted only to verify emerging understandings and themes.

The in-depth interviews and interactions in the focus groups were recorded and transcribed. The raw data was prepared for further analysis by organizing it into categories (nodes) using a coding system. The large amount of data generated by the focus groups was managed with the assistance of NVIVO computer software. Using this tool, analysis was undertaken to identify themes and recurring patterns of meaning embedded in the data.

The anonymous closed question questionnaire was used with the lay leaders, attenders, and newcomers after they participated in the interviews and focus groups. The questionnaire incorporated the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ), and the NCLS questions related to inspiring leadership, empowering leadership, and the extent to which leaders took church attenders' ideas into account.

The questionnaire component of the research provided a distinctly different format for data collection from the verbal and spontaneous methods of interview or focus group. It gave the participants the opportunity to reflect upon the discussions in the focus group and integrate that reflection into the data they offered in the questionnaire, thus enhancing understanding of the phenomena being examined. It also provided them with a previously developed language to reflect upon and describe their experience of leadership in the church. The relative frequency of the phrases they most strongly agreed with when describing their leaders served to

demonstrate which aspects of the leader's behaviors had the biggest impact on the participants.

Initially, the tentative grasp of emerging themes from the focus groups was confirmed and refined through further interaction with the participants during each case study. Triangulation was achieved by reference to observations made by the researcher, interviews with leaders, and the questionnaires. Reflection, informed by the literature review, enabled the evolution of a more sophisticated understanding of the phenomena which incorporated the language of the focus groups and interviews but also utilized other findings, language, and concepts. The meanings derived from the first case study were verified, refined, or rejected by findings from the subsequent case studies. A number of factors related to leadership in these vital and growing churches emerged from this process and form the basis of the Findings and Discussion.

Findings

The findings from the focus groups related to the question, "How do you experience the clergy leaders of this church?" are summarized in Table 1. The questionnaire (n=89) contained of eighty-five items related to leadership: three NCLS questions, the thirty-seven items of the ELQ, and the forty-five items of the MLQ.

Table 1: Categories and Themes Related to Leadership Emerging From Focus Groups

Salvation Army	Anglican	Pentecostal
Leaders like us too (RL)	Leaders informal (RL)	Leaders like us (RL)
Leaders real (RL)	Leaders authentic (RL)	Leaders real (RL)
Leaders humble (RL)		
Leaders show care and concern (CL)	Leaders care (CL)	Leaders know us (CL)
Leaders support (CL)		Leaders willing to listen (CL)
Leaders relate to all ages (CL)		
Leaders empower (EL)	Ministers approachable (EL)	Leaders support when we fail (EL)
Leaders help us grow (EL)		Volunteers honored and needed (EL)
Leaders help us find and use our gifts (EL)		
Leaders inspire (IL)	Leaders give outward focus (IL)	Leaders inspire and encourage (IL)
Leaders challenge (IL)	Leaders work hard (IL)	Leaders impart vision (IL)
Leaders energetic and enthusiastic (IL)	Leaders lead by example (IL)	Leaders challenge and hold accountable (IL)
Leaders set example (IL)		Leaders have integrity (IL)
		Leaders love or sacrifice for church (IL)
		Church is his family (IL)
Husband wife team effective (TL)	Husband wife team effective (TL)	Husband wife team effective (TL)

The categories were allocated to emerging themes, coded as follows:

    RL = Real Leaders
    CL = Caring Leaders
    EL = Empowering Leaders
    IL = Inspiring Leaders
    TL = Husband/wife Team effective

The fifteen most strongly affirmed of the eighty-five statements related to leadership in the questionnaire are presented in Table 2. The instrument from which the statement was derived and the particular factor it is related to are also presented:

Table 2: Most Strongly Affirmed Statements about Leadership

Statement	Level of Agreement	Instrument-Factor
The leader works as hard as he/she can.	76.4% strongly agreed	ELQ - Leads by Example
The leader leads a group that is effective.	75.3% said frequently if not always	MLQ - Effectiveness
The leader leads by example.	75.3% strongly agreed	ELQ - Leads by Example
The leader sets a good example in the way he/she behaves.	75.3% strongly agreed	ELQ - Leads by Example
The leader works as hard as anyone in the church.	74.2% strongly agreed	ELQ - Leads by Example
The leader treats church members as equals.	71.9% strongly agreed	ELQ - Showing Concern
The leaders take into account the ideas of the people.	70.8% said to a great extent	NCLS
The leader talks optimistically about the future.	69.7% said frequently if not always	MLQ - Inspirational Motivation
Leaders encourage me to find and use my gifts and skills.	68.5% said to a great extent	NCLS - Empowering Leadership
The leader articulates a compelling vision for the future.	68.5% said frequently if not always	MLQ - Inspirational Motivation
Leaders help our church focus on goals.	68.5% strongly agreed	ELQ - Coaching
The leader sets high standards for performance by his/her own behavior	67.4% strongly agreed	ELQ - Leads by Example
The leader shows concern about church member's well-being.	67.4% strongly agreed	ELQ - Showing Concern
The Leader provides help to church members.	66.3% strongly agreed	ELQ - Coaching
Leaders here inspire me to action.	61.8% strongly agreed	NCLS - Inspiring Leadership

By taking the emerging themes from the focus groups, interviews, questionnaire, and observation and triangulating the findings, the following emerged as the salient leadership factors in the followers' experience of the leaders in these vital churches:

- Realness
- Caring/showing concern
- Husband-wife teams
- Leadership by example
- Empowerment through coaching and taking ideas into account.
- Inspiration by rhetoric.

They are discussed below in light of the literature and theological reflections.

Discussion of Findings

These churches can be considered effective because, as evangelical churches, they have achieved their goal of growing significantly through the integration of non-church people into their congregations. They also consider themselves effective as reflected by the high level of affirmation of the statement: "The leader leads a group that is effective." Given that leadership has been identified as a factor in church effectiveness and growth, this section will discuss the findings related to leadership in these churches.

Realness

"They are real people and they share their lives."

"They are not plastic."

When asked about their clergy leaders, "realness" was the first response in many of the groups. Attenders and newcomers at these vital and growing churches experience the leaders of the church as "real" people—just like them. "They don't have a Sunday face." This experience is in contrast to the real or perceived nature of clergy in other churches. Newcomers described perceptions of other clergy as unapproachable in contrast

to the highly approachable nature of the leaders in the strong and growing churches.

This realness is created by the openness of the leaders to describe their own weaknesses and struggles. "Just their own lives, their own stories, they are very, very real people." It is enhanced by the strong commitment of the leaders to be personally involved in the lives of many people in their churches, even if the churches are quite large. Despite this realness, or probably because of it, the leaders of these vital and growing churches are held in high esteem by regular attenders and newcomers alike.

The leader's honest transparency is a key component in building this realness. This transparency is only possible through humility. In order to appear real, leaders must be willing to acknowledge their weaknesses and struggles. It is not surprising, then, that attenders experience the leaders as humble people: "[They are] in no way puffed up about themselves. They are very humble." This humility is a component of the biblical model of servanthood:

> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! (Phil. 2:5-8)

Honest acknowledgement of personal struggles is sometimes seen as weakness and counterproductive. Yet humility is true strength, and enables leaders to be real.

The realness of these leaders also serves another purpose. A precondition of effective role modeling and of generating viable vision is that leaders need to be knowledgeable about the realities of life for those served.[20] Leaders must be seen to be broken and human

---

[20] Milbrey W. McLaughlin and Shirley Brice Heath, "Casting the Self: Frames for Identity and Dilemmas for Policy," in *Identity and Inner-City Youth*, ed. M. W. McLaughlin and S. B. Heath (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993).

as well, or their examples and encouragements to invitation and service are hollow. Church leaders can only be inspirational role-model leaders if they are first seen to be human. In order for this perception to develop the leaders must also be open and humble to share their weaknesses and struggles.

Of course, the apparent relationship of this described "realness" to the construct of Authentic Leadership must also be recognized. George[21] popularized Authentic Leadership in the general community as did Luthans and Avolio[22] for the academic community. Authentic leadership includes consideration of the leader, follower, and the context. There appears to be general agreement on four factors that cover the components of Authentic Leadership:[23] balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness. Relational transparency refers to presenting one's authentic self through openly sharing information and feelings as appropriate for situations. The realness reported by the participants in this research would seem to reflect this aspect, especially of Authentic Leadership. There is scope for future research on the other aspects of Authentic Leadership in the congregational setting.

Caring/Showing Concern

"They never rush you to think that they haven't got time to talk."

"The first day we came [to this church] we had three out of the four ministers come and say hello and K came up and said hello as well. And J and K came and spent

---

[21] Bill George, *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

[22] Fred Luthans and Bruce J. Avolio, "Authentic Leadership: A Positive Developmental Approach," in *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, ed. K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton, and R.E. Quinn (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2003).

[23] Bruce J. Avolio, Fred O. Walumbwa, and Todd J. Weber, "Leadership: Current Theories, Research, and Future Directions," *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2009): 424.

quite a lot of time with us finding out who we are and where we were from."

This research indicates that members of these vital and growing churches have a strong sense of being cared for by the clergy leadership, even if the church is quite large. The leaders at all three churches were observed by the focus groups and the researcher to have meaningful personal relationships with a very large number of attenders.

Two of the ELQ statements related to the "Showing Concern" factor were strongly affirmed: "The leader treats church members as equals" and "The leader shows concern about church member's well-being." Showing Concern refers to the ability of leaders to demonstrate a general regard for members' wellbeing and taking time to discuss their concerns. They reflect the pastoral injunction to "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers" (1 Pet. 5:2).

Whether this is a natural gifting or something that they deliberately work on, the outcome is that most people in the church have a meaningful connection with the leader, believing the leader cares about them as people rather than as means to an end.

It would be possible for a church leader to rationalize that the size of their church makes it impossible to know many people in the church at a significant level and so they do not attempt it. However, in order to be able to lead effectively, as these leaders in effective and growing churches are doing, leaders need to recognize the importance of having meaningful relationships with a large number of people in the church. By meaningful, this does not mean hours of investment in each person, but the remembering of names, some personal circumstances and details of the attender, physical contact and a smile. This seems to be sufficient to communicate care to the attender and this experience is extremely significant in their lives.

In the same way that realness allows for effective leadership, this expression of personal care creates the environment where the leader can influence church

attenders. Until people know leaders care, they don't care what leaders know. When they know that the leader cares for them personally they are more open to accept advice and guidance and to make personal sacrifices.

The caring quality of these leaders is congruent with the theory of Servant Leadership. Robert K. Greenleaf is credited with initiating the Servant Leadership concept.[24] In Greenleaf's opinion, the focus of Servant Leadership is to serve and meet the needs of others, which optimally should be the prime motivation for leadership. Speers, after some years of considering Greenleaf's original writings, concluded servant leaders are essentially *caring* leaders[25] who demonstrate ten characteristics of effective, caring leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Further research in a congregational setting would demonstrate whether it is these servant leadership behaviors which create a sense of care in strong churches.

Husband-Wife Teams

"An outstanding partnership—I have never seen anything like it, between a Minister and his wife."

"There are not many pastors that work together as a team so well."

The wives of the clergyman in the three strong and growing churches all had a very high profile in the life of the church.

In the Salvation Army church, the woman has the status of "Officer" although the man is recognized as the "Senior" Officer. But there is a widespread perception in the church that this is a team effort and ministry of the wife is fully validated and recognized by the church.

---

[24] A. Gregory Stone, Robert F. Russell, and Kathleen Patterson, "Transformational Versus Servant Leadership: A Difference in Leader Focus," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 25 no. 4 (2004).
[25] Larry C. Spears, "Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders," *The Journal of Virtues & Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2010).

Even though the Sydney Anglicans do not ordain women or grant them authority to be official leaders of the church, clearly the wife of the Anglican minister exercises powerful leadership in the church. Not only does she lead a group of 70 women in a mid-week Bible study but many in the church recognize that she has not only a contributory role, but a leadership role in the church, albeit only informally.

Again at the Pentecostal church, even though they hold to "male headship" of family and church, the Senior Pastor's wife also carries the title "Pastor" and is clearly a very high-profile leader in the church. She appears next to her husband in most of the promotional material of the church, plays a significant role in church worship, and is held in equally high esteem as her husband throughout the church.

It has been asserted that the sustainability of community in fundamentalist churches depends on the acceptance of male authority and rigid conceptions of gender roles.[26] According to this view, as much as the weekly church services work to reinforce community relations, they are simultaneously rituals of patriarchal display. The ideology of domesticity is acted out and reinforced in a way that is no longer possible in the world outside the church.

However, women in these strong and growing churches have powerful, but sometimes less visible, influence. The women-only activities in churches create and sustain a "parallel world"[27] within the organization where women exercise leadership and are able to alter the patterns of congregational life. Women leaders in these vital and growing churches play a significant leadership function, especially with women, but sometimes with men as well.

---

[26] Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[27] Brenda Brasher, *Godly Women: Fundamentalism and Female Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutger University Press, 1998).

Even though all three churches have theologically conservative positions relating to the role of women in leadership, all three, whether formally or informally, benefit not only from having a female role model to complement her husband, but from the individual leadership of the women. Though these churches have not officially placed the women leaders in the senior leadership role, as some denominations have, they have enabled the women to lead powerfully and effectively within the existing structures of the church. The lesson to be learned may well be that the issue is not female leadership or male leadership, but team leadership.

Leadership by Example

"I think they are great examples of selfless people. They are forever putting others before themselves. I think that is a great model to follow within the church. To be so God-focused. I couldn't ask for better leaders in the church."

"They love the church. They live and would die for the church."

The first ELQ factor, Leading by Example, emerged as particularly important. The example of the leaders was often cited in the focus groups as a strong motivator for participants. Setting an example of hard work emerged as particularly significant. The statements, "The leader works as hard as he/she can" and "The leader leads by example," were among the most strongly affirmed statements in the questionnaires. Participants told stories of how the leaders themselves had been, and still were, directly involved in leading people to become Christians and involving them in the church. All three leaders set an example in their community involvement and efforts to invite non-Christians to attend church.

Given that the leading by example factor of the ELQ was so strongly affirmed by the participants, it seems reasonable to conclude that this is the key element of empowering leadership in these churches. Although the leaders in these churches are inspiring orators, it is in actually "living out" their teaching that they empower

their followers and move them into action. Referring again to 1 Peter, these leaders do not motivate by "lording it over those entrusted to you, but by being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3).

Of course, the attenders do not know for sure whether the leader does work hard, as many would only see him for a couple of hours per week. However, the clear perception is that they do. This perception is generated by the stories of their own evangelistic activities and their personal involvement in outreach events. Whether the church leaders consciously foster this perception or not, the outcome is the same.

Empowerment Through Coaching and Taking Ideas into Account
"They believe everybody has a gift. They're here to help us find what that gift is and to help us develop it and use it. It doesn't matter what the gift is."

Two of the statements related to the ELQ factor of Coaching were also strongly affirmed: "Helps our church focus on our goals" and "Provides help to church members." According to the ELQ model, Coaching refers to a set of behaviors that educate team members and help them to become self-reliant. While expressions of value from the leader may empower the follower psychologically, practical skills are also needed for full empowerment.

This finding provides an important insight into the NCLS construct of empowering leadership. It explains how these empowering leaders are able to encourage the attenders "to find and use their gifts and skills." Explaining how their ministry fits into the goals of the church and helping members become self reliant are the essence of this empowering leadership activity. Casting vision is an important part of leadership, but equally important is showing followers how they can contribute to the fulfillment of the vision and equipping them to be able to do it.

The leaders also demonstrate a second ELQ factor— Participative Decision-Making. The statement: "The leaders take into account the ideas of the people to a

great extent" was strongly affirmed in each church. When asked about their experience of being part of their church, the focus groups identified an experience of egalitarianism and informality. This communicates to the attender that they are competent and valued and so gives them confidence to participate in the activities of the church. When attenders perceive themselves to have an equal value and an equal part to play in the life of the church as others, their sense of empowerment is enhanced.

These churches are not democratic—they are hierarchical or lead by a non-elected board. However, the leaders are able to create the perception that they personally value the ideas of all attenders in the decision-making process. Members believe that the leaders take their ideas into account to a large extent.

The leaders are psychologically empowering to the congregants in another way. The statement, "The leader frequently if not always leads a group that is effective," was strongly affirmed. Yet, despite the apparent "success" of the leaders in their personal lives and evangelism, they are also "just like the rest of us," thus providing hope that each member in the church can be as successful as the leaders.

It was also observed that the leaders demonstrate the empowering leadership through their language, as described by Conger.[28] They provide a positive emotional atmosphere through speaking positively about the future and through their example of enthusiasm for the cause. They also reward through encouraging and visible ways, the prime example being the "Unsung Hero Awards" at the Pentecostal church. The award winners received some gifts from the church in recognition of their service, but equally important was the opportunity to have a photograph taken with the Senior Pastors. Hence, the leaders empower by allowing relatively close contact to themselves, as those in authority, and expressing approval from that position.

---

[28] Conger, 17-24.

These leaders also express their confidence in people during sermons, meetings, and casually. "I think they just believe in you. If you make a mistake they do not walk away…" "But now I am doing things I thought I could never do, but I can. So he just has that gift of inspiring you and challenging you." They persuade people that they possess the capabilities to master given tasks and so promote greater sustained effort. The focus groups confirmed that the leaders foster initiative and responsibility. People in these churches feel free to make suggestions and fail. Participation in meetings and decisions, appropriate resources, and network-forming opportunities are all present in these churches. Finally, these leaders build on success. They use the success of the church, and individuals in it, to empower others to strive for success as well.

These churches reflect the idea that "It was [God] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:11-12). The clergy leaders serve the other members of the body through empowering (preparing) them for works of service, for the building up of the entire body.

Inspiration by Rhetoric

The leaders of all three churches were also frequently identified as being imparters of vision. Of the forty-five questions in the MLQ, some of the highest-scoring questions related to vision. The MLQ revealed that the leaders of these vital and growing churches frequently, if not always, "talk optimistically about the future." They also "articulate a compelling vision for the future." The leaders in these churches enunciate powerful visions of the future which motivate and inspire the attenders to greater levels of outreach and service.

As suggested by this finding, the leaders in these churches, both male and female, are outstanding

communicators. They "frame"[29] the organization's purpose with accompanying values and beliefs in such a way that it is an appealing and motivating force for change and transformation. Then they use symbolic language ("rhetorical crafting") to give emotional power to his or her message (for example, the motto at one church was, "Storming the Fortresses of Darkness.") While the message provides a sense of direction, rhetoric heightens its motivational appeal and determines whether it will be sufficiently memorable to influence day-to-day decision-making. While the leader's message is critical, the process by which it is communicated appears to be just as significant.

Being forward-looking is important for leadership. Leaders are expected to have a sense of direction and a vision of the future. People are unwilling to commit themselves to an organization where the leaders do not have a clear idea of where it is going. The followers' perceptions of self-efficacy or confidence, as well as their developmental potential, are enhanced through the confidence expressed in them by their leaders. The leaders also motivate followers to transcend their own immediate self-interest for the sake of the mission and vision of the organization.

Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to report on the findings of research into clergy leadership in effective and growing churches. It sought to describe how congregants experienced their leaders and on the basis of this, develop a theory of leadership that explains the contribution of leadership to the effectiveness of these churches.
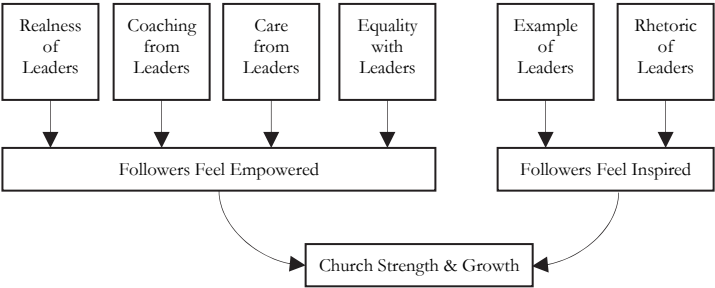
As discussed, the clergy leaders in these churches are experienced as real people who truly care for their followers. They are part of husband/wife teams where the wife has exercised a significant ministry in the life of the church and provided a female role model to complement her husband. The leaders have empowered

---

[29] Conger, 17-24.

their followers through their treatment of them as equals, through explanation of how they contribute to the goals of the church and through equipping them for ministry. The leaders have inspired by example and speaking eloquently, optimistically, and compellingly about the future.

On the basis of these described experiences, it is possible to develop a theory which explains the role of leadership in these effective and growing churches. In order for an organization to be effective it must have a strategy and then mobilize resources to implement the strategy. Each of these churches had a successful strategy for growth. However, the role of the leaders in the success was not only in the design of the strategy but in the inspiration and empowerment of the congregants to implement it. The congregant's experience of the leaders informs a theory of how this happens.

The realness of the leaders in these churches communicates to the followers that the leaders are just like them—with limitations, weaknesses, and struggles. Yet, simultaneously the followers believe that the leaders are highly effective, as reflected by their response to the MLQ Effectiveness item (see Table 1). This means that the follower can reasonably aspire to be as successful as the leader, whether they are male or female. When the leader affirms this through his/her care for the followers, through expressing their equality and through helping them to identify and use their skills, they are empowered towards the achievement of organizational strategies and goals. The leader's example of hard work and use of rhetoric provide further inspiration towards the achievement of these goals. As individuals and the church attain these goals the church develops strength and grows.

This theory cannot be simplistically generalized. However, the contextually specific findings suggest a model of leadership in effective and successful congregations. The theory can now inform more rigorous empirical research on leadership in effective churches.

It should also be noted that the case study of these churches has highlighted the interrelatedness of models of leadership. This research has shown that the leadership behaviors demonstrated in this context strongly reflect elements of different popular models of leadership, but no single model adequately describes all the phenomenon.

Table 3: Factors/Components of Leadership Theories Demonstrated by Leaders in Case Studies

Leadership Theory	Trans-formational Leadership	Empowering Leadership (ELQ)	Authentic Leadership	Servant Leadership
Factor/Component demonstrated in this context	Inspirational Motivation	Leads by Example; Showing Concern; Coaching	Relational Transparency	Caring

Although the Empowering Leadership Model (ELQ) best describes leadership in these churches, as Echels[30] points out, the complexity of leadership means we are unable to encapsulate leadership in a single universal

---

[30] Echols, 114.

definition. The effectiveness of husband-wife teams do not feature in any of these popular models. This further supports Echels' observation. However, that does not mean that we cannot discern important leadership principles such as those described and test their validity in different contexts.

The Theorist, the Tactician, and the Translator: Faith-Based Peacemaking and Leadership
Peter M. Sensenig

Abstract

How do religious peacemakers lead people to connect their vision of a better world to the reality of conflict? A profile of three influential twentieth-century religious peacemakers reveals three important principles for the process of leadership. Mohandas Gandhi, the Theorist, demonstrates that peacemaking leaders articulate a worldview, an entire framework for action. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Tactician, shows that peacemaking leadership requires attention to both moral and effective practices for change, and that leaders are organically tied to those they lead. From Martin Luther King, Jr., the Translator, we see that peacemaking leaders seek a common language for justice and peace. Scholarship in both leadership and peacemaking theory confirm these three principles as integral to the process of leading people to connect voice and touch.

Introduction

Max De Pree writes, "At the core of becoming a leader is the need always to connect one's voice and one's touch."[1] Connecting the vision of a better world to the everyday messiness of life, especially in situations of conflict and injustice, is one way to describe peacemaking. Peacemaking leadership, like leadership in general, is a process rather than a condition. In this sense the peacemaker is always on the way, seeking to narrow the gap between the peace-less reality and the peaceful possibilities.

Peter M. Sensenig is a Ph.D. Candidate at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

---

[1] Max De Pree, *Leadership Jazz* (New York: Dell, 1992), 3.

I contend that connecting voice and touch requires engaging the heart of what drives religious people to conflict or peace: their faith. Peacemaking does not demand leaving one's particular faith at the door in the quest for universal principles; on the contrary, peacemaking emerges from the deeply held beliefs that fundamentally shape the way people of faith view the world. Rather than appealing only to academic elites, peacemaking solutions must speak to the average person's sense of what is true.[2]

The question I am addressing is this: What sort of peacemaking leadership helps ordinary religious people, sometimes in great numbers, connect their visions of a more peaceful world to the difficult reality of conflict? A profile of three effective twentieth-century religious peacemakers reveals three important aspects of the process of connecting voice and touch: articulating a worldview, forming a strategy, and seeking a common language. My definition of a peacemaker is someone who a) brings together diverse or divided peoples b) for the cause of justice. Peacemakers are often radical in both their goals and tactics but are decidedly distinct from violent radicals in a crucial way: for religious peacemakers, reconciliation is the ultimate goal, while for the extremist the goal is victory over the enemy.[3] Following De Pree, I define a leader as one who helps people to connect their voice—the deeply held values that shape their worldview—and their touch.

I begin with several assumptions. First, while faith can be and often is a source of division, in many cases religious traditions and their saints move toward peacemaking rather than against it. Second, following Paul in 2 Cor. 5 I take the ministry of reconciliation, both between humans and God and among humans, to be at the heart of Christian identity and mission in the world.

---

[2] Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 15.

[3] R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 13.

Paul identifies Christians as ambassadors of reconciliation, which implies the negotiation of multiple identities and loyalties. The role of ambassador of the Reign of God in a violent world is necessarily a peacemaking one.

My objective in this paper is to apply the leadership theory of Max De Pree, the ongoing process of connecting voice and touch, to three examples of religious peacemakers. These three leaders are each of a different faith—a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Christian. All three demonstrate many qualities, but for the sake of this essay I examine one in particular for each person. Mohandas Gandhi I label the Theorist, and the principle I derive from his work is this: Peacemaking leaders articulate a worldview, an entire framework for action, that *seeks the best for everyone involved.* I call Abdul Ghaffar Khan the Tactician; the principle from his life is that peacemaking leadership requires attention to both *moral and effective practices for change*, and leaders are organically tied to those they lead. Martin Luther King, Jr. I describe as the Translator; from his life we see that peacemaking leaders seek a *common language* for justice and peace. The theorist, tactician, and translator offer hope to contemporary leaders for the movement to and participation in God's justice.

Mohandas Gandhi—the Theorist

Principle: Peacemaking leaders articulate a worldview—an entire framework for action—that seeks the best for everyone involved.

Mohandas Gandhi was born in 1869 in Gujarat, India. After training as a lawyer in London, in 1893 he took a job at an Indian law firm in South Africa. Gandhi was dismayed by the treatment of Indian immigrants there, and joined the struggle to obtain basic rights for them. During his two decades in South Africa he was imprisoned many times. Influenced by Hinduism, but also by Christianity through the Sermon on the Mount and the writings of Leo Tolstoy, Gandhi developed *satyagraha* (soul force), a nonviolent theory of social change. After experiencing some success in social reform

in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India. In 1919, British plans to intern people suspected of sedition prompted Gandhi to announce a new campaign of *satyagraha,* which attracted millions of followers. A mass demonstration against the British policies resulted in a brutal massacre by British troops. By 1920, Gandhi had become a key figure in Indian politics. His program of peaceful non-cooperation with the British included boycotts and strikes, leading to thousands of arrests. In 1930, Gandhi organized a new campaign of civil disobedience to protest a salt tax, leading thousands on a symbolic March to the Sea.

After several years in prison, Gandhi withdrew from politics and devoted himself to improving Hindu-Muslim relations, which had deteriorated significantly during the quest for independence. In 1945, when the British government began the plan to form the two new independent states of India and Pakistan, divided along religious lines, widespread violence broke out between the two communities. Gandhi was opposed to the partition, and engaged in an extended fast in an attempt to bring calm. On January 30, 1948, perceived as being too sympathetic to Muslim enemies, he was assassinated in Delhi by a Hindu fanatic.

Known as *Mahatma* (Great Soul), Gandhi articulated a doctrine of nonviolent protest to achieve political and social progress that has been hugely influential in the years since his death, serving as an inspiration and a guide for nonviolent social movements around the globe, including the US Civil Rights Movement. Commenting on Gandhi's leadership, biographer Judith Brown observes that "Few men have elicited such vitriolic opposition or such devoted service,"[4] from the scoffing ignorance of Winston Churchill and the mistrust of both Muslims and Hindus, to the thousands who followed this frail figure and recognized his spiritual and moral authority.

---

[4] Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1.

What gave Gandhi such extraordinary power as a leader? As De Pree writes in *Leadership is an Art*, "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality."[5] This Gandhi certainly did; as he wrestled with issues of nonviolence in conflict situations, and with the economic and social problems all around him in India, especially among the poorest and most vulnerable, "he questioned the assumptions of Hindu orthodoxy, Western capitalism, and varieties of socialism…ask[ing] questions which are still uncomfortable…he still inspires, aggravates and annoys."[6] Gandhi recognized the remarkable power of a unified people to challenge the dominant definitions of reality, which were the result of the ubiquitous ravages of colonialism and religious divisions. In the midst of these dominant realities he cast a vision of a better possible world, one that caught on with his people beyond all expectations.

Another powerful statement from De Pree that resonates with the life of Gandhi is that leaders do not inflict pain—they bear pain.[7] This was the case in a most literal sense regarding Gandhi's hunger strike against the violence between Muslims and Hindus. There were many voices pushing him toward resorting to violence as an efficient way to effect the change in leadership toward an independent India. What Gandhi recognized, however, is that violence is not a tool that people use; on the contrary, violence shapes people in ways beyond their control. Gandhi's vision for a free India refused to usher in political change at the expense of the humanity of the Indians, the Pakistanis, or the British. In light of the person under discussion, De Pree's phrasing is comical: leadership is characterized not by the strength of the head but by the tone of the body.[8] What he means of course is that a leader is only as strong as the community she fosters. What the brilliant head on Gandhi's frail

---

[5] Max De Pree, *Leadership is an Art* (New York: Currency, 2004), 11.

[6] Brown, *Gandhi*, 2.

[7] De Pree, *Leadership is an Art*, 11.

[8] De Pree, *Leadership is an Art*, 12.

body knew was that the people of India would only be free if they had the strength that comes from nonviolence, the *soul force* at the center of the universe.

De Pree writes that people follow leaders with a real vision, which is not just seeing the way things are but the way they can be. Paradoxically, however, fragility is part of the nature of a strong vision.[9] Gandhi accepted that a nonviolent movement was risky business; the British reacted with violence, and many people were killed or injured. But behind the movement was an unshakeable faith that nonviolence is real strength. This is the meaning of Judith Brown's description of Gandhi as a "prisoner of hope;"[10] he embraced the weakness of rejecting weapons of steel for the strength of *ahimsa* (nonviolence). The people who followed Gandhi in the independence movement saw what De Pree does: one recognizes a movement from the inside. A movement requires spirit-lifting, enabling leadership, and competence; "In movements, stories give life; in organizations, stories manipulate people."[11] Under Gandhi's leadership, nonviolence became less a rule than a mode of being, a guiding and life-giving principle that told a different story from the dominant narrative of redemptive violence.

A movement like that in India depends not only on a strong vision from leaders but on the extent to which that vision is shared. A team is not just a collection of individuals but an entity with a common cause. Effective teams are characterized by a shared vision (like a rope that binds rock climbers together for a common purpose) and shared values that result in interdependence.[12] When leaders and teams are on the same emotional wavelength,

---

[9] De Pree, *Leadership Jazz,* 40.

[10] Brown, *Gandhi.*

[11] Max De Pree, *Leading Without Power* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 25-30.

[12] Walter C. Wright, *Don't Step on the Rope!* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2005), 4-7, 146.

the result is "resonant leadership"[13] that engages both the emotions and the intellect of the team. Toxic, dissonant leaders, in contrast, play on the fears of their followers and extend arbitrary rewards for loyalty. Eventually such a relationship turns into a control myth, a deeply held belief about what one can and cannot do to confront toxic leadership.[14]

This contrast between resonant and toxic leadership sheds some light on Gandhi's effectiveness as a peacemaking leader. Rather than playing on the fears of his followers (such as the mutual fear of Hindus and Muslims that the transition into independence would result in inequality and violence from the other side), Gandhi instead took that pain upon himself in the form of a hunger strike. The underlying principle for him was the deep interdependence of all humanity, and that is what lent his vision such power for both Hindus and Muslims—and eventually for people all over the world.

Turning to peacemaking theory, John Paul Lederach asks the question: how do we transcend the cycles of violence that beleaguer our human community while still living in them? The answer, he surmises, is that both the skill and art of building peace are derived from the moral imagination, which is "the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist."[15] The moral imagination requires the ability to envisage a web of relationships with our enemies included. Social change is necessarily an act of reimagining the world. It is a messy process but has unlimited potential.

Marc Gopin frames the moral imagination in terms of myth, which he describes not just as ancient stories but as

---

[13] Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 20-28.

[14] Jean Lipman-Blumen, *The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians – And How We Can Survive Them* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 45, 137.

[15] John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), viii-x, 5.

the foundational narratives that shape our identity and practices. Myth matters because it can either be used to demonize and alienate, or become part of the process of reconciliation. Writing in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Gopin notes that it is crucial to address the reasonable rejectionists who are a majority on both sides but see peace as central to their faith. Peacemaking must take place at many levels, from government treaties to grassroots initiatives for peace, all of which require courageous leaders. One of the most important tasks for a leader is confronting the fear of the followers; says Gopin, "remove fear and everything else becomes possible."[16]

Gopin observes that all religions begin with creativity, which becomes increasingly limited over time as innovation is discouraged and finally forbidden. A peacemaker, on the other hand, provides a vision that both resonates deeply with religious traditions and looks creatively at a conflict, always seeking those actions that will redress injustice without excluding the "enemy" from the imagined goals. Gopin writes:

> It is our job to enter the damaged and strange world of enemies and enemy systems, to suspend judgment, to see truths on all sides, to see justice and injustice on all sides, to engage in a level of empathy that is enormously demanding, all to help evoke peace processes that resonate at the most profound level of human consciousness and experience.[17]

One way of imagining a just and peaceful future that is gaining traction is the theory and practices of just peacemaking, originally articulated by Christians but now also by Muslims and Christians in the volume *Interfaith Just Peacemaking*.[18] Glen Stassen, one of the key developers

---

[16] Marc Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 55-57, 198.

[17] Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace,* 87, 228.

[18] Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, ed., *Interfaith Just Peacemaking* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

of the movement, rejects the false choice between realism and idealism. Realism sees a world characterized by power struggles and conflicts of interest. Idealism urges us to focus on ideals and imagine how we can move the world toward them. What we need, Stassen states, is hope with realism, which consists of identifying what God is doing in the world. The practices of just peacemaking happen empirically in the world, in the context of real threats, power struggles, and drives for security, making power's expression in war less likely and peace more likely. The church has a special role of nurturing spirituality for peacemaking, as well as modeling that reconciliation is possible. One of the ten practices of just peacemaking is Cooperative Conflict Resolution, which is the shared enterprise of devising beneficial outcomes.[19]

Gandhi offered his followers, ordinary Hindus and Muslims with deep hostility for one another and for their British occupiers, a way to connect their religious images of a more peaceful and just world with the realities they faced. What we see in Gandhi as a peacemaking theorist and practitioner is an unwavering devotion to the vision of a just society that includes even enemies. Connecting voice and touch, Gandhi demonstrates, involves absorbing rather than inflicting pain. The path to justice is not domination but nonviolent (*ahimsa*) suffering, not the manipulation of fear but gathering around a shared vision.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan—the Tactician

Principle: Peacemaking leadership is strategic, drawing from the resources of those one leads.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988) was a Pashtun leader (a people group inhabiting present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan) and a close friend and disciple of Gandhi. Khan is known for his nonviolent opposition to British Rule in united India and his efforts for peace between Pakistan and India following independence. A

---

[19] Glen Stassen, ed., *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004), 30-33, 63.

lifelong pacifist and a devout Muslim, he was also known as *Badshah Khan* (King Khan). Khan witnessed the repeated failure of violent revolts against the British occupation. Seeking a better path, he led the formation of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* (Servants of God) movement, a nonviolent army of more than 100,000 soldiers.

The British army responded harshly to the success of the movement, with mass shootings, torture, the destruction of fields and homes, imprisonment, and exile. Khan himself spent fifteen years in British prisons, as well as time in exile. In the late 1920s he formed an alliance with Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. Along with Gandhi, Khan strongly opposed the Muslim League's demand for the partition of India. After partition in 1947, Ghaffar Khan was arrested frequently by the Pakistani government because of his association with India and his opposition to the government's authoritarianism. He spent much of the 1960s and 1970s either in jail or in exile. In 1985 he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

A few snapshots from the life of Khan give insight into his character. When he arrived in India in 1969 for the celebration of the centennial of Gandhi's birthday, he engaged in a fast to protest the violence between Muslims and Hindus. He was described by newspapers as "pulling no punches and speaking with touching sincerity reminiscent of his mentor."[20] Khan rejected the idea that religion was at the heart of the communal violence, stating that selfish people were rather exploiting communal violence for economic and political gain. According to his biographer Eknath Easwaran, Khan's fast "electrified India and the bloodshed stopped. 'I have considered myself a part of you and you a part of me,' he told his former countrymen."[21] According to Gandhi, Khan's love and service of his people made him the ruler in "the undisputed kingdom of their hearts. There is

---

[20] Eknath Easwaran, *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam: Badshah Khan, a Man to Match His Mountains* (Tomales, California: Nilgiri, 1999), 205.
[21] Easwaran, *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam*, 228.

no humbug about him. He is an utter stranger to affection."[22]

Mohammed Abu-Nimer cites Khan's nonviolent army as one of the best examples of nonviolent political movements in Islamic contexts. Khan was deeply rooted in Islamic values, but in the mystic spirituality of Sufism rather than in the theology and practice of the politically powerful mullahs. His description of *sabr* (patient endurance) as the weapon of the Prophet demonstrates an alternative reading of Islam than some of his fellow Muslim revolutionaries. Among the reasons for his success, Abu-Nimer observes, are his sense of minority identity, his devotion to a just cause that was widely shared, and his insistence on deliberate strategies in order to maintain the enemy-loving focus of the movement. Abu-Nimer notes that the first Palestinian Intifada, which was mostly nonviolent, drew heavily from Khan's example and strategies.[23]

Khan possessed a genius for organization, setting up a network of committees that were modeled after the traditional tribal councils that have maintained Pashtun law for centuries. He also set up volunteer brigades of nonviolent soldiers (including women), the *Khudai Khidmatgars* mentioned above, who established schools, did work projects in villages to improve the lives of the poor, and maintained order in public gatherings. They even performed long military-style marches in the hills of Pakistan, singing:

> We are the army of God,
> By death or wealth unmoved.
> We march, our leader and we,
> Ready to die.
>
> We serve and we love
> Our people and our cause.

---

[22] Easwaran, *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam*, 230.

[23] Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam: Theory and Practice* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 88-90.

Freedom is our goal,
Our lives the price we pay.[24]

The weapons wielded by this army were not physical
but spiritual. Admonishing his followers to spread the
movement and its commitment to Islamic nonviolence,
Khan told his followers:

I am going to give you such a weapon that the
police and the army will not be able to stand
against it. It is the weapon of the Prophet, but you
are not aware of it. That weapon is patience and
righteousness. No power on earth can stand
against it…. When you go back to your villages, tell
your brethren that there is an army of God and its
weapon is patience. Ask your brethren to join the
army of God. Endure all hardships. If you exercise
patience, victory will be yours.[25]

One of the most striking features of the life of Abdul
Ghaffar Khan is the power of mentoring. This is an
emphasis shared by De Pree, who writes, "Mentoring has
become, for me, one of the chief duties of any leader."[26]
The mentor helps the mentee not only with difficult
decisions, but with the skill of building important
relationships. A true mentor develops keen insight into
the giftedness of each person, and guides a group into
becoming a community where people can thrive. Good
leadership is "liberating people to do what is required of
them in the most effective and humane way possible;"[27] it
is about recognizing the diversity of gifts, polishing those
gifts, and allowing sincere respect of each person to guide
policy and practice. For De Pree, relationships and trust
count more than structures.[28] An important characteristic
of peacemaking leaders is a strong sense of identification
with the people. Obery Hendricks notices this as a central

---

[24] Easwaran, *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam,* 112-113.

[25] Easwaran, *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam,* 117.

[26] De Pree, *Leadership is an Art*, vii.

[27] De Pree, *Leadership is an Art*, 1.

[28] De Pree, *Leadership is an Art*, 25-28.

trait of Jesus; "Jesus was an authentic leader because he was organically tied to the people he served. He was recognized as their leader for one reason and one reason only: because he treated them and their needs as holy."[29] Both Gandhi and Khan were recognized as authorities by their people because they regarded the needs of the poor, the necessity of justice, and a peaceful future as sacrosanct.

The role of mentoring for Khan can be observed in two directions. First, the influence of Gandhi in his life cannot be overstated. From Gandhi he learned the power of nonviolence, the strategies of resistance, the sheer risk and audacity of neighbor love without boundaries. Remarkably, and a fact which should be both sobering and delightful for Christians, the Muslim Khan learned the way of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount not from the Christian British occupiers of his land but from his Hindu mentor. When Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 an aggrieved Khan stated, "He was the only ray of light to help us through these darkest days."[30] With his mentor gone, Khan continued to wage his nonviolent campaign. He told his followers that their region could become a demonstration to the world of the constructive power that is released in returning love for hatred. But the mentorship of Gandhi in his life multiplied in the many thousands mentored by Khan. When confronted by a skeptic of nonviolence in the conflict-ridden days leading up to independence, Khan said, "Why do you despair of unity? No true effort is in vain. Look at the fields over there. The grain sown therein has to remain in the earth for a certain time, then it sprouts, and in due time yields hundreds of its kind. The same is the case with every effort in a good cause."[31] That Khan used an agricultural metaphor is appropriate to the effect of his life; his undying commitment to just causes with peaceful means returned a hundredfold through the people he mentored.

---

[29] Obery Hendricks, *The Politics of Jesus* (New York: Three Leaves, 2007), 109.

[30] Easwaran, *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam*, 223-224.

[31] Easwaran, *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam*, 233.

Investing in people, as both Khan and De Pree understand, yields the only payoff worth having.

Part of the effectiveness of Khan's leadership can be seen in the above response to a skeptic. Rather than dismissing someone who failed to understand something so essential to Khan's entire worldview, he nurtured those whose faith was not the same as his own. Goleman et al. call this "emotional intelligence,"[32] recognizing that teams fail for lack of harmony or the ability to cooperate, which largely depends on the collective emotional intelligence of the group. Good leaders can monitor the collective feelings of the group through difficult changes, such as those faced by Khan's people in the struggle for independence.

Peacemaking theorists describe the importance of what Khan knew intuitively: that peace must be built from the resources of the people it involves, rather than relying on solutions that are imported from the outside. Lederach describes this as an elicitive approach, which is "built on drawing out and using what people bring you, even when it is not understood by them as a resource." [33] Anyone involved in peacemaking across cultures must do their homework about what cultural assumptions are implicit in the models they are bringing, and must be intentional about including the shared knowledge of the participants. This means that peacemaking takes different forms in different contexts. According to Gopin, the best peacemakers have internal qualities of peace and patience, and not too strong a connection with immediate outcomes; that is, they do not feel the need to win arguments. Peacemaking involves evoking the peacemakers in each culture, who are people uniquely suited to the compassionate, active listening that can spark spontaneous outbursts of powerful reconciliation, putting a new face on the enemy. Compassionate actions are also crucial, such as demonstrations of awareness of

---

[32] Goleman et al., *Primal Leadership*, 173-186.

[33] John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 83, 121.

the other's pain and of our common humanity. We must fight violence with its own weapons, which are imagination and symbolic action.[34] Only people within the parties of a conflict know what those symbols are, and therefore hold the key to peacemaking action.

Khan's life affirms the principle that peacemaking by and among Muslims is always more effective when carried out by local parties themselves. Islam contains many resources for peacemaking, such as the emphasis on *adl* (justice), social empowerment, *ummah* (community), *hikmah* (wisdom, savvy action), as well as practices that can be conducive to collective nonviolent action, such as Friday gatherings, fasting, prayers, and chanting.[35] Khan drew from all of these as the basis for his work within his particular context.

The enduring challenge, however, is to draw the connection between strategies on the ground and these Islamic values. In other words, connecting the voice (the deeply held religious values of ordinary people) and touch (peacemaking action in the midst of conflict) requires the kind of leadership that is profoundly familiar with both the everyday struggles of the people and with the peacemaking resources of their faith. Khan's influence in connecting voice and touch for the Pashtun people was massive, but his life and teachings have further untapped potential to transform the practices of Muslims and others toward nonviolent peacemaking.

Martin Luther King, Jr.—the Translator

Principle: Peacemaking leaders seek a common language for justice and peace.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) was a Baptist minister, activist, and prominent leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement. He is well-known for his nonviolent methods modeled after the teachings of Gandhi. King became a civil rights activist early in his career. He led the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott and

---

[34] Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace*, 95, 166-170.

[35] Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam*, 9-10, 82-84, 125-126.

served as the co-founder and first president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). King's efforts led to the 1963 March on Washington, and in 1964 he became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. He is widely recognized as one of the greatest orators in American history. By the time of his assassination in 1968, King had refocused his efforts on ending poverty through a living wage and other measures and on stopping the Vietnam War.

King's "I Have a Dream" speech is established as an icon of American history. He demonstrated an outstanding ability to blend hard-hitting prophetic speech with the best of American style liberalism. This skill is what I mean by translation: the aptitude to seek a common language for the cause of justice and peace, even within a society as diverse as the United States. Although King, like Gandhi and Khan, was both a theorist and an activist, I intend to focus on his skill as a communicator, drawing upon these aspects of his leadership.

De Pree writes in *Leadership is an Art*, "The best communication forces you to listen."[36] Since communication is a commitment to a convention, a culture, and based on respect for individuals, it is somewhat like learning a language. Elsewhere De Pree describes effective leadership as connecting one's voice and one's touch, which is another way of saying that communication springs from connecting the deepest part of who one is with the way one interacts in the world. Listening to one's voice comes more from mistakes than from achievement, from listening than from talking, and from one's teachers than from one's own understanding.[37] It is striking in reading King how often he references his teachers, to whom he owes the strength of his voice: Walter Rauschenbusch, Howard Thurman, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Mohandas Gandhi, among others.

---

[36] De Pree, *Leadership is an Art*, 102-103.

[37] De Pree, *Leadership Jazz*, 3, 112.

Another important aspect of King's role as a translator is the way he drew from communal memory for the strength of the movement. Building community is one of the main goals of a team; community creates the necessary social capital for team enterprise. Community is about belonging, contributing, being valued, and growing. An integral part of community is memory, which both learns from the past and creates momentum for the future. Remembering well keeps the shared vision alive and the shared values clear.[38] As an heir of a rich tradition of African American Christianity, King employed the resources of the black church as the fountain of strength for the Civil Rights Movement. The painful memories of slavery and violent oppression, and the entire history leading up to the brutal segregation of the American south under Jim Crow, paradoxically served as a reminder of God's sustaining and delivering power, a promise for the future that allowed King to appeal to nonviolent justice-seeking as the "arc of the universe."[39]

King's spiritual background provided him with a wealth of prophetic resistance to evil, which he employed readily in many different contexts, referring with frequency to the Exodus, the Hebrew Prophets (especially Amos' famous image of righteousness and justice flowing down like a mighty stream), and the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and parables like the Good Samaritan. King did not stop, however, at what Scott Appleby calls the "dead end of 'first-order' religious language,"[40] but proceeded to articulate an ethic of justice in a public language. King was one of the specially-gifted translators of what the justice of Amos looks like in an American context, which is why the label of prophet so aptly applies. It is impossible to understand King apart from his conflicted view of the United States; he both saw the possibility for

---

[38] Wright, *Don't Step on the Rope*, 79-81, 91-101.

[39] James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: HarperCollins, 1986), 207.

[40] Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*, 279.

a nation to do good, moving toward the "beloved community,"[41] and to do evil, which he so staunchly criticized in the actions of the United States toward its poor, its minorities, and its perceived enemies. James Washington writes, "He certainly was an Americanist, but not a nationalist ideologue…Some black leaders, such as Malcolm X, argued that King's vision was only a tragic fantasy. If so, that fantasy was shared by many children of African slaves and a nation of voluntary European immigrants."[42] Many black leaders saw America as a hermeneutical situation, a context ripe either for a degree of healing or for further abuse. The ambivalence of King's relationship to America is evident in the theme he gave to what turned out to be his final campaign: Repent, America! King focused his Poor People's Campaign on low-cost housing, full employment, and the end of poverty in order to move what he called a "sick, neurotic nation"[43] toward a level of health. In so doing, he appealed to and reframed the American ideals of democracy, liberty, and human rights.

Peacemakers who are translators recognize that conflict resolution itself is a socially constructed phenomenon. According to Lederach, "Understanding conflict and developing appropriate models of handling it will necessarily be rooted in, and must respect and draw from, the cultural knowledge of a people."[44] Elsewhere he writes, "Peacebuilding requires a vision of relationship. Stated bluntly, if there is no capacity to imagine the canvas of mutual relationships and situate oneself as part of that historic and ever-evolving web, peacebuilding collapses."[45] King saw America as a School for the Moral Imagination of the kind described by Lederach: mixing people of different backgrounds together, trying to build something resembling the beloved community. America

---

[41] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 56.

[42] Washington, *A Testament of Hope*, xix.

[43] Marshall Frady, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Viking, 2002), 194.

[44] Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*, 6, 10.

[45] Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 35.

is not the primary subject or guide for the ethics of King. But it is a part of the historical situation in which King found himself, and as a peacemaker he saw it a part of his calling to articulate what that meant, and to imagine what good could possibly come of it.

As a peacemaking translator, King recognized and utilized the power of words. Words are severely limited, especially when they are not accompanied by promised action. But words can also be a tremendous source of healing, and can be peacemaking gestures in themselves. The most effective peacemakers focus on relationships bigger than just dialogue, while recognizing that the messages we send to one another are crucial. Words matter because they can help transform the attitudes of large numbers of people quickly.[46] One reason King's speeches, especially at the March on Washington, have had such an effect is because they served to diffuse white fears about the social changes occurring in the country. Assurance of a shared future serves to replace anxiety with hope.

King was so effective in communicating the vision of a just society from his African-American Christian tradition because he worked hard to draw connections to the values of even his opponents. For King, the task of connecting voice and touch in American society meant not glossing over injustice but confronting it with the ideals drawn directly from his Christian faith, which he shared with many Americans. The fact that King could imagine, along with millions of people of all colors, what it might mean to have a modern-day Exodus from oppression, or to be Good Samaritans in a highly racialized society, or to see justice flow down like a mighty stream, demonstrates the necessity of the act of translation in movements toward peace.

Conclusion

Connecting voice and touch is not simply a matter of integrity, in the sense that one's life should match what

---

[46] Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace*, 150-159.

one claims to value. Certainly each of the above peacemakers was described by those around him as possessing a deep well of spiritual energy from which to draw. This deep well was not a measure of the faith they could muster, but rather of the extent to which they encountered the divine and submitted utterly to God's will, as they discerned it through their tradition. Yet with respect to religious leadership, voice and touch are much bigger than the life of the individual; they refer to entire patterns of thought and practice stemming from the most profound beliefs that shape the way ordinary people see the world. The most successful leaders do not depend on a cadre of intellectual, economic, or political elites. Their authority stems rather from the fact that they show people how to connect their visions of the way the world should be to the reality of the way the world is. Good leaders pay close attention to the religious hopes and fears that shape behavior, as well as the experiences of their lives that produce suffering or joy. According to Max De Pree, one becomes a leader by doing the work of a leader.[47] In this sense, it is only through identifying with people's fears and hopes that one becomes a leader.

One of the primary ways in which we learn how to connect voice and touch is by observing the examples of effective and compelling leaders. We have seen that from Gandhi's example we can learn that peacemaking leaders articulate a worldview that seeks the good of all. From Khan we are taught that peacemaking leadership is strategic, drawing from the resources of those one is leading. King shows us that peacemaking leaders seek a common language for justice and peace. Contemporary religious peacemakers can appropriate each of these three leadership principles in their own specific contexts.

Those in pastoral leadership can draw wisdom from each of these leaders. An important aspect of pastoral leadership, for example, is articulating a mission and vision for the congregation. This process involves engaging both Scripture and the historical values of the

---

[47] De Pree, *Leadership Jazz,* 13.

congregation and denomination. Just as Gandhi appealed both to the particular context of his followers and to the Hindu values they embraced, in articulating a mission and vision for a church a pastor must bring together the deepest convictions of Christian faith with the needs of the community. Learning from Khan, church leaders draw from the gifts and culture of the congregation rather than imposing external concepts of what shape the church's mission should take. This approach cultivates an organic tie between the congregation and the pastor.

In situations of church conflict, pastoral leadership must take care never to be dismissive of any perspective that is offered, no matter how absurd it seems. Even ugly and shameful beliefs or behavior should not be dismissed as relics of the past, a tendency that leads to demonization, the great enemy of peacemaking. Marc Gopin writes, "I do not dismiss any behavior as 'crazy,' which is our word for what we cannot comprehend. To me such behavior presents a golden opportunity to see an injury."[48] Particularly within a congregation, a community devoted explicitly to mutual care, it is crucial to learn from religious leaders who managed to embrace rather than dismiss, to love opponents rather than alienate them.

Finally, religious leaders, whether pastors or seminary professors or in some other capacity, are guides in the ever-changing task of relating to the other. This is perhaps the most critical aspect of connecting voice and touch, because otherness challenges one's deepest beliefs about what is true. Religions, and therefore religious otherness, are here to stay. The interface between religions, especially the most liberal adherents, is expanding. At the same time, radicalization within religions will likely continue as global inequalities grow and human needs remain unmet. In light of this challenge, we must avoid the temptation to retreat into safe enclaves of like-minded people.[49] All three of the

---

[48] Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*, 122, 224.
[49] Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*, 223-226.

leaders profiled above faced the challenge of religious radicalism in the form of Hindu, Muslim, and Christian militants. Their response was not to demonize or dismiss these groups, nor to concede to their arguments for the necessity of violence. Instead, they acknowledged the pain of their adversaries and included them in their visions of a better society, choosing to bear pain rather than inflict it, and helping each community face its own legacies of suffering.

The Abrahamic faiths share a vision of primordial goodness, and religious leaders must undertake to describe the Eden that we seek not as a world without scarcity or work, but one in which its struggles do not lead to bloodshed. Contemporary peacemaking leaders will face stern opposition from those who insist on an Eden free of otherness. Jesus' admonition to count the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33) applies as well to peacemaking, demanding courage that none of us can find on our own. The language of cost, however, assumes a payoff that is worth the trouble. All people of faith can find strength in the hope that a shared future is worth whatever it demands of us. The calling to connect voice and touch is not only about building that shared future, but also creating the space for others to thrive. The contemporary heirs of the thought and practice of Gandhi, Khan, and King continue to receive the gift they bestowed on peacemakers for generations to come: their commitment to understanding both the suffering and joys of people and to the best hopes of their faith.

MAPPING INTERFAITH LEADERSHIP IN RICHMOND, VA
DOUGLAS A. HICKS AND RACHEL TEMPLETON

Abstract

This article analyzes the current state of interfaith leadership in a mid-sized U.S. metropolitan area, drawing upon twenty semi-structured interviews with congregational and non-profit leaders.[1] It presents the historical and contemporary religious contexts of Richmond; offers a typology of interfaith leadership, considering both congregation-based and non-profit agencies; delineates those aspects of interfaith leadership that are functioning well in Richmond; provides an analysis of current challenges; and presents a constructive model for strengthening the organizational framework for interfaith leadership. This model has implications for understanding interfaith efforts in various metropolitan areas.

Introduction

A mid-sized metropolitan region in the United States, Richmond, Virginia includes communities from every major faith tradition and many smaller ones. Since the post-1965 wave of immigration, religious diversity of this breadth has been highly visible in major American cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, and

Douglas A. Hicks is the Provost, Dean of Faculty, and Professor of Religion, Colgate University, Hamilton, New York

Rachel Templeton is in the bachelor of arts program at University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia (B.A., 2013)

Washington.[2] But smaller cities have had a slower, and quieter, transition—particularly those communities in which Christian expression of faith has had an influential public role.

Our interviews with twenty interfaith leaders from across the metro area indicate that the demographic and civic landscape of Richmond has shifted dramatically in recent decades. These semi-structured interviews were conducted in the summer of 2011; of the twenty interviewees, ten were leaders of religious congregations—Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist—and ten more were leaders of not-for-profit organizations with either an explicit interfaith purpose or with strong ties to religious communities. Some of these twenty interviewees had leadership roles in a combination of congregations and organizations.

In addition to longstanding—and more recently formed—Christian and Jewish congregations, religious congregations representing Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism have established themselves over the past four decades. During this same period, Richmond has become home to many Latin American immigrants, who come from Catholic, Pentecostal, and other Christian backgrounds.

This remarkably broad diversity raises key questions about the interfaith and civic fabric of the Richmond region. How do the members of these religious communities view each other, and how do they interact? To what extent do these individuals and communities view themselves as full participants in Richmond's civic life? In what ways have leaders from various faith communities attempted to join together—and connect with "secular" leaders—to strive for civic collaboration? This research project is the first sustained research effort to answer these questions in Richmond. Implications from our findings have significance not only for

---

[2] Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Now Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*, Revised ed. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2002).

interfaith leadership in this locality, but for metropolitan areas across the United States and beyond.

This article proceeds in the following way. Section II presents the historical and contemporary religious contexts of Richmond, providing a background narrative for understanding the rise of interfaith challenges and efforts. Section III offers a typology of interfaith leadership, evidenced in Richmond but applicable to other metropolitan areas as well. The distinctions among approaches employed by congregations and non-profits add both complexity and precision to analyses of interfaith leadership. Section IV delineates those aspects of interfaith leadership that are functioning well in metropolitan Richmond, whereas Section V provides an analysis of challenges facing Richmond's current situation. The concluding part, Section VI, presents a constructive model for strengthening the organizational framework for interfaith leadership. This model should have implications for understanding and contributing to interfaith efforts in various metropolitan areas beyond Richmond itself.

Richmond, Virginia:
Historical and Contemporary Contexts

Richmond stands as one of the most historic cities in the United States. It dates to 1609, when colonists from Jamestown sailed up the James River to settle the area. Permanently founded in 1637, it was an important town in the Colony of Virginia and became the state capital in 1780. Notably, Richmond holds a prominent place in the history of religious freedom, having been the site of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, drafted by Thomas Jefferson, lobbied for by James Madison, and passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 1786. This law marks the first instance of legislated, comprehensive religious freedom in the world. It paved the way for religious freedom and non-establishment clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom was framed with a broad purview. Jefferson criticized those

delegates who had sought to tack on a preamble that would have constrained the act within a Christian frame—an amendment, he noted, that had been easily voted down. Jefferson maintained that the Statute "meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and the Mohometan, the Hindoo, and Infidel of every denomination."[3] The labels may be dated, but this vision of a broadly inclusive Virginia—and America—was articulated and first given a legal foundation in Richmond.

To be sure, Richmond's history is far more checkered than this one event alone conveys. This river city became a major site of the slave trade—it grew to become the largest slave market in the Americas. Richmond also served as the capital of the Confederacy; its iron works—which supported a munitions industry—and its river and geographical location gave it this prominent and, indeed, infamous role. Across the twentieth century, racial discrimination against African Americans continued. In response to the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision that made segregation illegal, Virginia leaders' "Massive Resistance" against desegregation framed two decades of high-profile racial struggle, culminating in a Richmond busing case that reached the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973.[4] This legacy has made race a perennial stumbling block for accomplishing any sort of community leadership in metropolitan Richmond.

The City of Richmond is in fact quite small—just over 200,000—but what locals refer to as the Greater Richmond area incorporates the surrounding counties of Henrico, Chesterfield, and Hanover, raising the metro population to nearly one million people. (The even-larger

---

[3] Thomas Jefferson, *The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1790*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005 [1914]), 71.

[4] Robert A. Pratt, *The Color of Their Skin: Education and Race in Richmond, Virginia 1954-89* (Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 1992); James E. Ryan, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart: One City, Two Schools, and the Story of Educational Opportunity in Modern America* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

Metropolitan Statistical Area of Richmond, which includes the City of Petersburg and some twenty jurisdictions, includes some 1.3 million people.) Racial diversity is central to Richmond's identity. According to U.S. Census data, within the city limits of Richmond, 50.6% of the population is African-American, 40.8% is white, 6.3% is Hispanic or Latino, and 2.3% is Asian-American.

Growth in Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, and Buddhist communities has accompanied an increase in immigrant populations; according to one of the leaders at the Hindu Center of Virginia, located in Richmond suburbs, the Hindu population in Richmond has grown seven-fold in the past decade, today estimated at around 25,000 people. Large religious centers, such as the Islamic Center of Virginia, the Sikh Gurdwara, and the Hindu Center of Virginia, with its recently built temple, diversify the landscape of Richmond, historically dominated by Christian populations along with a small but influential Jewish community.

Another aspect of ethnic and religious diversity that is significant for providing a picture of Richmond today is the growing Hispanic community, much of which is located in the South side of the metro region. Official estimates of Latinos/as in the Richmond area now fall in the range of 50,000—with unofficial estimates significantly higher. Within this key minority exist many religious communities, with representatives from most major Christian sects and many minor ones as well. Though the numbers are difficult to specify, there are approximately 100 Latino churches in the area, according to the DJ of an influential Hispanic Christian radio station, Radio Poder, and that number is growing. A prominent clergy leader among Latinos in Richmond concurs with this estimate of Latino congregations, referring to her own list of over fifty clergy colleagues in the area.

With such a rich and diverse religious landscape, interfaith work in Richmond takes on many different faces and names. Two longstanding organizations, the

Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) and the Interfaith Center of Greater Richmond (ICGR), play very different roles in the community. For example the ICGR, founded in 1924 and the oldest interfaith group in Richmond, emphasizes its educational work in the community, especially among and across people of differing religious identities. In contrast, the VICPP lives up to the public-policy component of its name in drawing from an interfaith constituency to push politically and legislatively for a host of issues, from reforming environmental law to combating childhood obesity.

Many other smaller organizations also fill in this complex interfaith network, some that can easily be labeled as interfaith, others that remain more difficult to define. For example, the Virginia Muslim Coalition for Public Affairs (VMCPA) is an organization formed in reaction to post-9/11 anti-Muslim sentiments whose purpose is to unite the Muslim community and connect it with the greater public sphere through service and relationships. Another example is the Virginia Council of Churches (VCC), which is a key player in the interfaith network as well, yet (as the name implies) is composed of Christian religious bodies. Other organizations, such as the Richmond Peace Education Center (RPEC) and the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC), incorporate interfaith components while not solely dealing with interfaith issues. Finally, key efforts such as Richmonders Involved in Strengthening our Communities (RISC) and the Interfaith Trialogues that take place in Bon Air, a suburb of Richmond, are congregationally based initiatives—one with a community-organizing, social-change model, and the other with an educational and relationship-building approach. As this brief overview suggests, the interfaith network in Richmond is comprised of multiple organizations and initiatives, varied in their structure and interpretations of the practical implications of interfaith work. See Table 1—Selected Non-Profit Organizations.

Table 1: Selected Not-for-Profit Organizations

Interfaith Council of Greater Richmond
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Virginia Muslim Coalition for Public Affairs
Virginia Council of Churches
Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities
Center for Interfaith Reconciliation
Richmond Peace Education Center
University of Richmond Chaplaincy
Hispanic Liaison Office of the City of Richmond
Radio Poder

Mapping Interfaith Leadership by Type or Function

Interfaith leadership is an extremely fluid concept. While abstract in nature, in day-to-day workings it is manifested, or made real and practical, in multiple functions. One of the standard interview questions posed to each local leader was to ask what he or she meant when using the term *interfaith*, and what forms it took in his or her work in the greater Richmond area. Not only did interviewees express different definitions of the term, but they reported enacting this concept in multiple ways in their individual efforts and through their organizations and programs. Below are four approximate functions or "types" of interfaith leadership, a typology that provides one means of distinguishing the organizations and programs. This typology is quite broad, and many organizations undertake work that fits within two, or even three, functions. Yet listing organizations by their principal function reveals the multifaceted nature of interfaith work, as well as the potential value and the limitations associated with each function. Table 2 lists twelve not-for-profit organizations by Dialogue, Education, Service, or Advocacy. It should be noted that religious congregations could also be understood according to such a categorization of activity(ies) or function(s), though the challenges of identifying a congregation's principal emphasis would be, arguably, at least as difficult as classifying non-profits.

Table 2: Selected Richmond Organizations,
by Key Approach to Interfaith Leadership

Dialogue	Education	Service	Advocacy
Interfaith Trialogues at Bon Air	Interfaith Council of Greater Richmond	Virginia Muslim Coalition for Public Affairs	Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Virginia Council of Churches	Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities	Hispanic Liaison Office	Richmond Peace Education Center
Center for Interfaith Reconciliation	University of Richmond Chaplaincy	Radio Poder	Richmonders Involved in Strengthening our Communities

The first and most common type is *Dialogue*. In Richmond, interfaith dialogue groups abound, spanning from groups solely involving clergy, to those involving congregants, to those with a mixture of clergy and lay. Dialogue has occupied one of the major positions in interactions between faiths over the past fifty years, in particular Jewish-Christian dialogue. However, the events surrounding September 11, 2001, catapulted Muslim groups into interfaith dialogues in the attempt to create bonds between these "Abrahamic" traditions—in order both to deal with the rash of anti-Islamic expression in the U.S. and to prevent further crisis if another attack were to take place. Thus, one of the dialogue groups that exists in Richmond was initially created, in the words of a prominent Christian clergy leader: "to build and nurture relationships so if anything was to happen again like a 9/11 we would have already begun the discussion, we would have already known each other; we would be able to help mitigate the outcome of any future kind of event." While many dialogue groups exist within the greater Richmond area, many leaders question whether these dialogues that discuss theological differences and similarities are simply "a mile wide and an inch deep,"

not truly creating engagement and real relationships between groups.

The second type of interfaith work taking place in Richmond takes the form of *Education*. Richmond's oldest interfaith group, the Interfaith Council of Greater Richmond (ICGR), takes this approach to interfaith work, holding workshops and talks around the city to educate a primarily Christian, but increasingly diversifying, constituency about other faiths. As voiced by the current president of the ICGR, this approach attempts to create "an understanding of different faith traditions in the general populace." Yet, as with the other approaches, education isolated from other interfaith activities has its drawbacks. For example, one key rabbi in the area commented that most interfaith work that involves non-Abrahamic faiths, such as Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus, etc., "are generally meant to be educational about each others' faiths," and thus these groups are often relegated to a merely educational grouping and not included in more engaged activity. Additionally, as with interfaith dialogue, there is a question of how much substantial engagement an educational approach creates. Stated more positively, how can and do interfaith educational efforts connect with other activities?

A third grouping of interfaith activity centers upon *Service*. One key organization in Richmond which promotes interfaith service is the Virginia Muslim Coalition for Public Affairs (VMCPA). While this organization is comprised of members of the Muslim community in and around Richmond, its purpose is to connect the Islamic community to other faiths and the greater Richmond community through acts of service. This interpretation emphasizes engagement as the key aspect of interfaith leadership. As the president and founder of the VMCPA, Dr. Imad Damaj, explains, "we kept this tradition of service because our guiding idea is that we have to be engaged in society. The only way we are going to be able to tell our story is to be a part of the story." The Interfaith Trialogues at Bon Air have also incorporated a component of service for at least three

consecutive years in order to bolster and complement their community-building efforts that are grounded first in dialogue or, in this case, trialogue. Other organizations serving the Hispanic community—one supported by the City of Richmond and another a for-profit radio station—provide a service to their diverse constituents and, just as important, are liaisons connecting their constituents both to service opportunities and to social services available to them.

Advocacy is the final category of interfaith leadership within this typology. What is distinctive about this kind of work is that different faith communities together become a constituency that can be mobilized to support common causes and better their own communities. Similar to service-oriented groups, this approach requires highly-focused engagement with the community. However, what sets it apart is the instrumental understanding of religious communities. Thus organizations such as the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy view interfaith connection as a tool that can be used to advocate for issues such as environmental responsibility and children's health. In this way organizations focused on advocacy "try to use people of faith particularly as well-motivated and mobilized actors in the public square." As another example, Richmonders Involved to Strengthen our Communities, comprised of about fourteen Christian and Jewish congregations in the metro area, seeks to hold public officials accountable for working for justice on issues such as education, public safety, and affordable housing by mobilizing mass meetings that express the political clout of the interfaith community.

All four types present different aspects of interfaith leadership, each approach bringing something important to the table. While each has strengths and weaknesses, they all value interfaith work as important to the interactions between faith communities and other communities in the United States. As the imam of the Islamic Center of Virginia remarked, "The fact is that interfaith can be all kinds of things, that's not what's

important. The important thing is that it exists." At the same time, what is sometimes lacking is strategic and sustained coordination of the groups that focus on these different approaches to interfaith leadership.

Interfaith Leadership in Richmond: What Works

Efforts to communicate with and share common work across religious congregations and traditions are widespread in Richmond. Local leaders of religious communities and of interfaith organizations generally express a positive regard for the "state of interfaith relations" in metro Richmond. Unlike other cities that may have experienced crises—such as hate crimes, violence, or some other polarizing public event—Richmond has experienced a relatively event-free climate. There is broad-based sentiment that interfaith leadership holds a great deal of potential to be realized within the distinctive context of Richmond. One interfaith leader commented, "I see more and more that there's an opportunity in Richmond that is as great as anywhere in the country—in some ways greater because interfaith diversity is a newer phenomenon here, and because, to my delight, most of what I have experienced is some people in strategic roles who are very interested in this."

This is not to say, of course, that there are not significant, if isolated, events and tensions. These have included hateful graffiti painted on a gas station owned by Sikhs; public debate and a legal fight over whether a Wiccan would be permitted to perform the invocation for a county supervisors' meeting; controversy about a teacher's descriptions of Islam and subsequent training sessions for teachers in a local school system; and, most recently, a fight over zoning of a future mosque and Islamic Center. Yet, as one prominent Muslim leader stated, "There's nothing that is urgent, in the sense that there's no urgent negative faith relationship…you know that some cities do have these kinds of problems…we have avoided that."

Indeed, the leaders of minority religious communities that we interviewed emphasized the positive aspects of

relating with neighbors. Here is one typical comment: "With all our neighbors we have very good neighborhood relations. We invite them to whenever we have festivals and stuff, and we also go and tell them if we have some late night service or something." The interviewees are, of course, individuals recognized for their ability to build bridges, and thus their own comments may reflect their own positive attitudes as well as a diplomatic framing of current realities.

Leaders of both congregations and interfaith organizations convey the good intentions of a cadre of local clergy and other prominent figures within religious communities and various organizations. This common description of the interfaith community should be highlighted. One non-profit leader stated: "So I think there are a lot of very, very well-intentioned and hard-working people who have individual programs or projects." A clergyperson stated: "You know, we have to thank God for peace-loving, open-minded people."

Connected to this sentiment of general goodwill is the often-repeated description of Richmond's culture as "polite," "genteel," and "conflict-avoiding." Seen one way, the politeness has discouraged the public manifestation of disagreements or disapproval—say, through hateful statements or actions against minority groups. Many leaders in Richmond, whatever their political or theological positions, would vigorously oppose any actions that overtly attack a religious minority.

Yet, this approach does not imply that discrimination does not persist on a less overt level. As one example, a recent hearing of the board of supervisors in Henrico County ultimately resulted in the board voting unanimously to re-zone a tract of land on metro Richmond's northside for an Islamic Center. During the hearing, a resident against the Center began to make an anti-Islamic comment. The chair of the meeting cut off the resident, declaring that there would be no anti-

religious comments made at the hearing.[5] Yet this "polite" and even respectful ground rule disguised the reality that, for three years, the board of supervisors had rejected the re-zoning and thus blocked the Islamic Center by couching their argument in claims about noise and traffic. Progress was not made until the U.S. Department of Justice weighed in with guidance about nondiscrimination against religious communities, particularly minority ones.[6] On a positive note, support for the proposed Islamic center—including vocal presence at the final hearing—came from neighbors of an affiliated local Islamic congregation (in Bon Air), which had established strong relationships with its neighboring residents and faith communities as well as from local Christian clergy near the proposed site in the Lakeside area of Henrico County.

The relationships that created at least some support for the proposed Islamic center are reflective of a strength of interfaith leadership in Richmond. The metro region is small enough that a group of roughly two dozen clergy and other leaders know each other and work together relatively well. When a national controversy and debate was generated in the summer of 2010 over a proposed Islamic center near Ground Zero in New York City, Imad Damaj, of the VMCPA, reached out to his network of "likely candidates" to stand together in solidarity with the Islamic community of Richmond. On a few days' notice, a group of clergy stood together, barefoot, in the Islamic Center of Virginia, behind a bishop, a rabbi, and an imam who made statements concerning religious freedom and the need for peaceful disagreement. It is this personal network of key leaders that drives interfaith work in Richmond.[7]

---

[5] Jeremy Slayton, "Henrico Supervisors Pave Way for Mosque," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 10, 2011.

[6] Bill McKelway, "Mosque Approval in Henrico Followed Federal Intervention," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 7, 2001.

[7] Staff editorial, "RELIGIOUS LEADERS: Tolerance," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 4, 2010.

The Challenges of Individual, Personality-based Leadership

Notably, there is no Richmond-area clergy association. A number of interviewees observed this fact with some concern. Although there are various organizations, each with significant missions and activities, these tend to draw the individuals and groups that have a predisposition to interfaith activities. The wider universe of religious people and communities are not a part of these inter-religious groups. Stated differently, a few dozen leaders in Richmond stay in occasional or regular contact across religious boundaries. But the vast majority of religious clergy and other leaders tend to stay within their religious communities or denominations. This finding is consistent with national studies showing that clergy and their parishioners place relatively low value on community work as compared to pastoral work or worship leadership within the congregation.[8]

Within the interfaith community, or overlapping network of congregations and organizations interested in this work, the structure is very loose. Coordination is highly dependent upon individual figures, and not necessarily organizations. One leader (from among this group of movers) commented, "I would like to believe that some of these organizations can step forward, but frankly when movement occurs it's because certain individuals get together, and oh by the way they also happen to be connected to one or another of these organizations." The leader of a prominent interfaith organization described how he created an interfaith discussion at the request of a Catholic leader whom he respected; a clergy figure stated that he would do anything in interfaith work that a particular Muslim colleague requested he do. Leadership always depends to some extent upon the initiative taken by individuals to

---

[8] Jack Carroll, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

accomplish certain outcomes, such as increased understanding or common action. But leadership is properly understood as a combination of individual initiative and effective structures not dependent upon any particular individual.

One prominent clergy member captured the significance of another leader—who happens to come from a different tradition—for Richmond. "A number of things that go on between the three Abrahamic traditions are because…of him. He is just such a kind of endless spring of energy and ideas. And I would think that he's really the reason there are Jewish-Christian-Muslim things happening more than anything. Because he's made the determined effort to make that happen." This evaluation is a tribute to the interfaith colleague's efforts, and it reflects the strength of the interfaith relationships that a small group of people have developed.

Yet this individual-leader-centered state of affairs also raises significant potential problems. What happens when this leader leaves Richmond or retires from this work? More cynically, what happens to interfaith leadership in Richmond if one of the critical figures in town somehow—however unjustifiably—has his or her credibility undermined? A healthy, longtime approach to interfaith leadership must have the structures in place to be able to work around the loss of any particular leaders.

Another challenge of this limited number of "likely candidates" is that it is not fully clear how deep is the pool of individuals who are involved in or committed to interfaith work within their congregations. As one example, the Bon Air Trialogues—a collaboration among neighboring Muslim, Jewish, and Christian congregations—started through clergy conversations and friendships. The annual meetings and service projects are considered highly successful, and the Trialogues contributed to the formation of at least one book club, at which women from these communities read and meet together. Yet, the depth of these Trialogue conversations within these respective congregations is still unclear. One of the clergy leaders, although holding an overall hopeful

perspective, expressed his concern: "So it's really not so much filtering out into the larger congregations...My sense is that you have a dedicated core. I think the reality is that the congregation, the particular congregation that hosts one of these trialogues, tends to have more of its people at that point."

Thus a key question remains here, not only for the Trialogues, but for interfaith efforts generally in Richmond: Do leaders have buy-in from their congregations/constituencies, or do they really just tend to speak for themselves? An imam stated, "I personally don't like things where it's the same cast of characters at every function. And you know, we have to thank God for peace-loving, open-minded, nice people. But if we see those same faces at every function I start wondering if this is going to be a bad thing." And, for his part, a Hindu leader acknowledged the same challenge: "Maybe it is a weakness that we see only a certain number of people who show up for these events, maybe."

Organizational scholars David Nadler and Michael Tushman describe the dangers of depending too much on individual leaders and neglecting the significant "instrumental" task of building up strong structures that can guide and even constrain individual leadership. This balance of individuals and structures can help avoid some of the dangers of high-profile leaders, sometimes well described as *charismatic* figures who could create, according to Nadler and Tushman, an excessive reliance on the leader, an unwillingness to express disagreement, and the marginalization of others.[9]

The reality of a group of key individuals who dominate the typical interfaith scene has another important implication. This network is not as inclusive as the demographic breadth of metro Richmond. According to Rabbi Martin Beifield, interfaith work in Richmond made important strides forward in the 1960s and 1970s,

---

[9] David A. Nadler and Michael L. Tushman, "Beyond the Charismatic Leader: Leadership and Organizational Change," *California Management Review* 32 (Winter 1990): 77-97.

particularly in relations between white Protestant and Catholic Christians and Jews, particularly Reform Jews. This movement reflected the national Postwar trend of the Americanization of religion, particularly the *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* connections described in Will Herberg's classic book of that title.[10] As the sociologist Herberg himself noted describing national realities, African Americans were not really included in this engagement.[11] In Richmond during this period, African Americans were marginalized from various aspects of social life, and the interfaith movement was no exception. This is not to say, however, that there was no cooperation between white and black churches and especially their leaders on key Civil Rights issues; there was significant cooperation on Civil Rights, but that work remained largely apart from the explicitly interfaith efforts noted by Beifield and others.

In the current moment, African American churches are relatively absent from interfaith efforts, particularly on the educational and dialogue fronts. "[I]nterfaith work is dominated by the white groups; there is not much of African American churches represented there. It's weird. And like I said, some people are just not interested. But I think a strong effort [could change that]…sometimes you're used to where you're at, and you don't push to change it."

One notable exception to the relative absence of African-Americans is the work of RISC, an advocacy organization built upon a coalition of local religious congregations. RISC is comprised of a roughly equal number of predominantly African-American churches and predominantly white churches and a synagogue. Yet, according to prominent African-American clergyman— and now a Henrico County supervisor—Tyrone Nelson, black church leaders and congregants remain willing to engage in interfaith relations but continue to be hesitant

---

[10] Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960).
[11] Herberg, 114.

to join into structures that have been largely constructed by white mainline Protestants.

A strikingly similar note was struck by leaders of largely immigrant traditions and communities. A Sikh leader noted that his community is open to invitations to take part in interfaith efforts; without such invitations, the Sikh community is not clear on how to engage what has been a Christian-Jewish, and now an Abrahamic, enterprise. "We really have not [engaged] because, it may be more because of lack of knowledge."

And again, a parallel response from Latino leaders. In response to the question of whether Hispanic pastors would be interested in being connected with other congregations to improve their schools, etc.: "Yes. But you need a liaison, you need someone who speaks their language and tells them why this is important...One thing is sharing it, sitting down and saying this is why this is important, this is why we make changes, this is how to improve this and improve that." A clergy member stated: "And there's always that fear of, Will my voice be heard? Am I really...and I guess it really takes a lot of decision and determination to be a part of those groups."

A related condition for having an inclusive interfaith community would call for a greater presence and participation of conservatives, particularly conservative Christians. An imam stated, "And so if, for example, all the people who participate are really liberal denominations, you're closing out a lot of people; you need to find ways to include people of a more conservative bent." To be sure, religious conservatives may be less willing than liberals to engage in dialogues that appear to require participants to check their truth claims at the door in some quest for a least-common-denominator form of truth. Yet, the descriptions of the vast array of interfaith work in Richmond should make it clear that from education and dialogue to service and advocacy, there is no simple way to describe or discount interfaith work as being relativistic. In any case, addressing such perceptions of some religious

conservatives is an essential step for realizing a more inclusive leadership.

Art and SCIENCE: A Constructive Model for Strengthening Interfaith Leadership

On issues ranging from dialogue to advocacy, it may seem that interfaith leadership is ephemeral and hard to analyze. It might be tempting to say that interfaith leadership is more art than science. But as the economist-philosopher Amartya Sen has stated, it is important to capture complexity with precision, rather than through oversimplification. Thus, in order to emphasize that interfaith leadership—in all its complexity—can be understood and, perhaps, improved, we offer our constructive framework using the acronym SCIENCE, which is a mnemonic device for these key descriptors of strengthened interfaith leadership: structured, continuous, inclusive, expansive, narrative, connective, and efficient.

Structured

The study of leadership has advanced the conception of leadership not as a *person* who holds a high-profile role, but as a *process* that engages various parties—leaders and followers of different kinds—to work together toward some common goal. The interfaith movement in Richmond continues to be dominated by a set of personalities who are tied together by a close personal network. Lacking is a tight, well-designed, sustainable structure that supports dynamic leaders but that goes beyond, and constrains in some ways, their personalities. One religious leader made this point succinctly: "[T]here is no unifying organization that could serve as a vehicle to mobilize people, mobilize congregations. So that's something I wish there was, whether it was a congregational base or a clergy base."

We have identified the various ways in which Richmond's interfaith arena is dominated by a relatively small number of individuals who command a lot of influence. We have pointed to the dangers of such

dependence upon a limited number of persons. There are various initiatives that do bring together congregations into larger bodies—RISC and the Bon Air Trialogues are two distinct examples. Yet, all things considered, there is a very weak structure at present in Richmond's interfaith community, and more coordination and organization would strengthen its leadership. Such coordination could take the form of a metropolitan-wide clergy association, or it could be an umbrella organization of the groups noted above and various other organizations. It might be as simple, at least as a significant initial step, as a website that functioned as a clearinghouse, calendar, and media outlet for the organizations that already exist.

Continuous

Interfaith leadership is too often driven by a short-term, even a crisis, mentality, undertaken in reactive mode after negative events. Whether it is a local, national, or international emergency or tragedy, Richmonders have responded quickly, but after the fact, in face of tragedy or threat. Examples have included an interfaith service after 9/11 and an interfaith leaders' press conference and statement of solidarity with Muslim Americans during the controversy surrounding a proposed Islamic Center near Ground Zero. Locally, leaders from across traditions rallied against the hate-mongering Westboro Baptist Church's demonstration at the Virginia Holocaust Museum, and Christian clergy stood with Muslim leaders to support a rezoning for an Islamic Center in Henrico County. One prominent clergy leader exposes the problems with such an approach: "An issue rises, a coalition forms, and then the issue, I'm not saying necessarily gets resolved, but the reason why everybody gets together dissipates so the coalition then breaks down. I think that's what happens here a lot. I don't think it's because people don't care."

The challenge is to transform people's caring into a sustained movement. The leader of the Center on Interfaith Reconciliation reflects, "[A] candle here, and candle there, and little group here a little group there, a

few people or a group has a trip, gets excited and interested. But how do you gather this up into something that is larger and sustained in terms of interfaith understanding?" Such a shift would require leaders and organizations to take a proactive approach and to communicate a vision of interfaith leadership as an ongoing process that requires continuous participation of leaders and followers.

Inclusive

We have emphasized a key finding of our interviews—that participation in interfaith leadership is not as inclusive as the demographic realities of metro Richmond are. Anglo Christians, Reform Jews, and Muslims from immigrant communities comprise the leadership of interfaith efforts in Richmond. Important groups, including Latino Christians, Conservative and Orthodox Jews, African American Christians and Muslims, and members of non-Abrahamic religious communities tend to be less active in interfaith work. A Muslim leader urges his colleagues to broaden the interfaith tent: "I tell the interfaith community and the civic community: It is your responsibility that this region continues to be inclusive, welcoming, and people feel that they have something on the table." Conservative Christians in the region, who arguably make up a majority of the population, are not proportionately engaged in interfaith leadership.

Closely tied to being inclusive—reaching a broad spectrum of the population—is not merely welcoming people to a conversation already in progress, but also of encouraging or allowing newcomers to help shape that very conversation. To shift the image, some interviewees indicated that they did not merely want to be invited to have a seat at another person's table. They wanted to help build, in this image, a table together. This sentiment was articulated by some leaders of the non-Abrahamic traditions that have a significant presence in Richmond.

Expansive

The discussion of various types of interfaith work—in Section III, above—offers one way of understanding the array of components of leadership that are possible. One way to invite in new participants is to maintain or even expand further the variety of activities of interfaith work. Service undertaken together and advocacy through religious congregations for better local schools are things that can be undertaken by members from divergent theological or ideological positions.

Intentional efforts to frame interfaith leadership in expansive directions will avoid simplification and reflect the complexity of society and create a place for all current interfaith work. The integration of the four functions—dialogue, education, service, and advocacy—would go a long way in making interfaith leadership expansive. Of course, the need for structured coordination, mentioned above, is even more critical for such broad-based interfaith leadership. It is easy to lose focus amid a movement that seeks to work on many fronts.

Narrative

The Harvard expert in education and leadership, Howard Gardner, has helped scholars and practitioners alike realize the importance of narrative for effective leadership. For a leader to reach his or her audience, he or she must appeal to the followers' "five-year-old mind."[12] Religious communities have long understood and practiced the sharing of stories. In crossing religious lines, stories are similarly valuable.

The Interfaith Trialogues at Bon Air have focused at times on telling the stories of the respective broad traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—as well as the stories of the particular local congregations. Indeed, the narrative of the Trialogue's creation is now a part of the culture of the meetings: In the aftermath of 9/11, a

---

[12] Howard Gardner, in collaboration with Emma Laskin, *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

young girl from the Bon Air Methodist Church was concerned that the Muslims in the Islamic Center of Virginia, just down Buford Road, would face a backlash. She convinced her church to send flowers and a word of support to their Muslim neighbors, and the Islamic Center reciprocated with a gift of appreciation. This story has helped set the tone for the Trialogues.

Connective

Religious difference is closely connected to differences along lines of nationality, ethnicity, culture, race, and language, and connective interfaith leadership would draw no easy lines among these. In response to a question of what the connections the gurdwara has with other faith communities, a Sikh leader affirmed strong ties "with Hinduism and Islam, primarily because a lot of the Sikhs and Hindus and Muslims are from India. And so we interact with them socially, and then we're able to go to their various places of worship, the Hindu center and occasionally we will go to the mosque."

And, of course, in Richmond, interfaith relations must be closely connected with constructive work to improve race relations. Speaking of the need for a connective approach to interfaith leadership, a Jewish leader stated, "[T]here can't be anything broad-based unless it's interracial. And how much interracial stuff goes on in town? Very little. I mean there's some, but there's not a lot." One organization in Richmond, Hope in the Cities, has done notable work on race relations and, more recently, has incorporated a focus on Christian-Muslim understanding as well. More connective work of this kind will be needed by congregations and organizations focused on interfaith work.

Efficient

The interviews for this project were undertaken in the months preceding the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Many congregational and not-for-profit leaders referred to different events to commemorate this anniversary. Whereas some leaders did not know of other

events, others complained about a lack of coordination—and even competition—within the interfaith community to hold the most prominent commemorative service or meeting. Although there was lip service paid to collective efforts, and some collaboration, the overwhelming sentiment was frustration over the failure to form a unified voice at a moment when unity was a central message.

The need for efficiency, then, is certainly about minimizing the duplication of efforts that many interviewees noted—and lamented. But it is about more than that. It would require attention to organizing the good intentions of interfaith leaders and identifying clear, achievable goals that would promote a healthier community. Various other components discussed above—not the least of which being structure—would help achieve efficiency of interfaith leadership.

Conclusion

This analysis of interfaith leadership, drawing upon twenty in-depth interviews with congregational and organizational leaders, suggests that the interfaith and civic community would benefit from a more intentional, coordinated, and strategic approach aimed at the long term. Leadership, after all, is both about providing vision and helping groups to attain that vision as effectively as possible. Richmond has a lot of good will within and across religious communities, but as a metropolitan area it has more inspirational individual leaders than it has a clear or coordinated structure to maintain those good intentions and transform them into a strong interfaith or civic community. Richmond and other metropolitan communities will be strengthened by focusing on the art as well as the science of interfaith leadership.

BOOK REVIEWS

BUILDING CULTURES OF TRUST
BY: MARTIN E. MARTY
Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010
184 PP. Hardback
ISBN 978-0-8028-6564-5

Martin E. Marty reflects on trust in the public sphere in *Building Cultures of Trust.* He begins by claiming that those who are old enough to remember pre-9/11 United States also remember their notions of security at that time. Post-9/11, he argues, these notions for our generation have morphed into conspiracy theories, mistrust, and war, encompassing a long list of culpable, blame-worthy institutions and situations.

In this context, Marty invites readers to think about creating new cultures of trust in which people learn to count on other members of community by understanding that community members will keep commitments. Marty states his thesis: "…the development of cultures of trust will hold more promise and can draw on the energies of more citizens if there is a concentration on the building blocks of society" (43). He addresses cultures and their subcultures in three areas—science, religion, and public life—to develop his model.

Marty's case study, the public mistrust displayed between many scientists and religionists, begins by examining definitions of trust in the religio-secular world. Chapter 3 investigates biblical and theological narratives in the Judeo-Christian spectrum that illustrate trust and mistrust, faith and fear. Chapter 4 explores humanistic philosophy, invoking thought from Plato, Hobbes, Hume, Kierkegaard, Kant, and Onora O'Neill, about a millennia-long discourse on the nature of trust. Marty raises an important assertion here from his historical survey: the greater the sense of security or assurance, the less need for trust.

Chapter 5 engages the case study, public scientific and religious debate. Mistrust occurs between these two worlds,

Marty asserts, because each makes the mistake of offering irrelevant conclusions by applying a category mistake (*ignoratio elenchi*), based on misplaced rhetoric for the purpose of persuasion. In other words, the argument itself becomes a category mistake when it functions on premises that are not related directly to the issue at hand. Marty claims that it would be more helpful for building trust when each representative gives distinctive voice to a mode of experience in a mutual conversation that is at its core open and hospitable. Chapter 6 speaks to the nature of such conversation, formulating it as following a question wherever it may go—in the mode of dialogue or civil discourse. Marty relies on English philosopher Michael Oakeshott and Roman Catholic theologian David Tracy to articulate the significance and qualities these conversations might exhibit. Chapter 7 describes what happens when conversations between science and religion move specifically to the public square, where conversation becomes controversy. Marty takes on politics, theorizing that good example (one who sheds light), and cultivation of trust through binding customs of behavior and honoring contracts in public life are the components of trust-building necessary for fruitful human interaction.

Marty ends his work with the "how to" chapter. He cautions that building communities of trust is difficult and incremental work. He reminds us that universes of discourse in the private and public sphere overlap and affect each other. Again, relying on Oakeshott, Marty claims that creating a meeting place in discourse requires a "distribution of ideas and their convergence," perhaps inconclusive, unending, or even playful, while at the same time contributing to human good. Argument, inquiry, and information are components of the conversation but may not be the most captivating. Dialogue creates deeper understanding, forming meeting places where disciplines uphold their integrity and acknowledge their weaknesses. For example, science and religion are interacting enterprises, working to discover the mechanism and meaning of the universe. Civil discourse might weave together a more significant, deeper pursuit of both enterprises for the common good. Marty ends with an outline of the *Religion and*

Public Discourse document, developed at Park Ridge Center in Chicago, which lists behavioral commitments that promote effective civil discourse. The epilogue is a playful narrative that drives home his thesis.

Marty shows noteworthy research initiative in his book, though he spends a significant amount of space defining terms and introducing a rationale for his method before he actually tackles the approach and substance of his thesis. The book is a massive historical and literary survey about the evolution of trust and community, interlaced with current political, social, and scientific narratives as supporting information for each chapter's focus. At times the argument gets lost in the detail of a well-read author who is interested in everything. Nonetheless, Marty's conclusion about meeting places and civil discourse for the sake of the common good, illustrated by the science-religion conversation, makes a convincing case for our efforts to bring about a more humane, trusting world.

Reviewed by
Lisa R. Withrow
Associate Dean, Professor of Christian Leadership,
Methodist Theological School in Ohio

LIVING INTO COMMUNITY:
CULTIVATING PRACTICES THAT SUSTAIN US
BY: CHRISTINE D. POHL
Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012
248 PP. Paperback
ISBN: 978-0-8028-4985-4

Christine Pohl has created a multifaceted jewel in *Living into Community*. Her purpose is to illumine four practices that sustain all types of human communities but are perhaps most crucial for communities of faith. The practices of gratitude, promise-making and keeping, truthfulness, and hospitality are each explored in detail in their own section, although she notes that the practices are intertwined and support each other. Each section opens with a chapter situating the practice within theology, scripture, Christian tradition, and other traditions. The second chapter in each section delineates how implementing each practice is more difficult and complicated than it appears. The final section chapter explores how each practice is deformed by sin and frailty. Pohl closes each section by offering ways of strengthening the practice individually and within congregations. She also includes questions for group reflection for each practice at the end of the book.

Pohl begins by exploring the practice of gratitude—a response to understanding that our lives are redeemed by grace. Gratitude is central to sustaining our communal lives and its absence kills. However, gratitude is complicated by obliviousness, feelings of obligation, and the expectations of others. Pohl is most adept in describing how gratitude is deformed, both individually and communally. She eloquently depicts the effects of envy and its destructive impact on the community as well as the results of grumbling and using gratitude to gain power and favor. It is obvious she has spent much time considering how these deformations are played out in congregations. To offset these deformations, Pohl suggests creating habits of grateful reflection, testimony, blessing, and Sabbath-keeping.

Pohl moves to promise-making and keeping in the second section. Promises and the related topics of fidelity and commitment are the internal framework that supports relationships. Yet, like gratitude, promises are complicated. Our culture no longer supports promise-keeping. Utilitarian attitudes and carelessness undermine our capacity to honor trust-filled commitments. Here again, Pohl does not hesitate to delve into the messiness of communal life. We often betray and abandon each other and fail to endure hard times patiently. We too-easily cast aside vows. As this section concludes, she suggests ways leaders and congregations can assist their members as they struggle to keep commitments large and small.

The third section examines the practice of living truthfully. Living truthfully involves much more than just conveying the facts, but instead consists of "truth-shaped living." As such, it encompasses reliability, faithfulness, and the telling of many types of truth. Truth-telling is not easy and Pohl identifies every complication, especially how those complications play out in a congregation. She has a keen eye (and ear) for how deeply the various forms of lying are embedded in our lives and our communities. In the final chapter of this section she explores the many ways we deform the truth. Once again Pohl suggests practical methods for strengthening truth-shaped living, both individually and communally. One of the strengths of this section is that the question of whether it is ever proper to lie is explored from different viewpoints.

The final section explores the practice of hospitality. Pohl has written extensively on hospitality in *Making Room* and states that she does not wish to review that material here. Thus, the section on hospitality consists of one chapter, which succinctly explores the history and tradition of hospitality, its complications, and deformations. For complications and deformations she moves to a question and answer format to explore common difficulties in offering hospitality to those who need it most but are often unable to respond to it or openly abuse it. The chapter closes by offering the ways in which the four practices are intertwined.

This book is full of wisdom for individuals and communities. It underlines practices that are often overlooked as we focus on getting things done in our congregations. However, its real strength is in highlighting how difficult these seemingly easy practices are and how all of us fail in them. I highly recommend this book to communities wishing to deepen their life together.

Reviewed by
Diane Zemke, Independent Scholar and Consultant
Spokane, Washington

KNOW YOUR STORY AND LEAD WITH IT:
THE POWER OF NARRATIVE IN CLERGY LEADERSHIP
BY: RICHARD L. HESTER AND KELLI WALKER-JONES
Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2009
156 PP. PAPERBACK
ISBN 978-1-56699-388-3

> "Our aim in this book is to show ministers how to explore their story of reality, how to tell it to other group members, and to consider how it can be used as a resource for leadership. This narrative perspective holds that because there's always more than one story about a situation, we have choices about which story we will embrace" (3).

Know Your Story and Lead with It is the fruit of a six-year project sponsored by the Lilly Endowment's Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Project in Raleigh, NC. Twenty clergy were involved in the project, participating in long-term groups that provided safe space and structure for exploring their personal stories and developing their own narrative leadership approaches. The project's co-directors and the book's authors are a Baptist minister, professor, and pastoral counselor (Hester) and a United Methodist pastor who coaches in a children's creative problem-solving program (Walker-Jones). True to their topic, they begin by telling something of their own stories. Both describe moving from thinking of themselves as experts always expected to know the answers and provide solutions, to what they call a not-knowing stance. This means approaching every situation with curiosity and openness to learning more.

Hester and Walker-Jones are keenly aware of the difficulties clergy face. They note that pastors are answerable to a whole congregation, and since so many people have access to them, daily life is often unpredictable. Lay leadership may shift frequently so there may be a deficit of workers and at the same time a surplus of advice-givers. The work is of course never-ending. "Clergy leadership is an acid test for any leadership approach. If narrative leadership works here, it can surely work in other settings" (6).

In the authors' view of narrative approach, a story is an account of connected events. A story has a plot including an intention to head somewhere, a phase of uncertainty or crisis, and a resolution. Storytelling has a context—the situation that calls forth the re-telling—and a purpose. But storytelling always leaves things out; information is dropped like scraps on a cutting room floor, unnoticed or forgotten. And so "the gap between what actually took place and what people can tell of it is the place where a narrative approach does its primary work" (11). A first step is to pick up some of what's on the floor and "thicken" the story with more information and detail. As stories are told and heard in more depth and detail, previously unrecognized resources are discovered, and leadership capacity increased.

Subsequent chapters tell the story of the clergy groups and how they functioned. Practices of hospitality and clear group covenants created relatively safe places set apart from participants' day-to-day contexts. Thus the groups became liminal spaces where participants had room to explore alternative understandings of themselves and the important others in their lives. The authors recommend core activities that include writing down one's earliest childhood memory, asking how a favorite biblical narrative might be connected to that memory, drawing a family genogram, and telling of a leadership experience before age twenty. Participants also experienced a structured process for presenting case studies and opportunities to meet individually with mentors. Along with the themes of not-knowing and thickening, another theme in the book is that of overhearing. The clergy groups in the project were set up to promote people overhearing others' responses to their stories, thus opening up more possible meanings.

The book moves on to explore how this open, not-knowing approach can shape a pastor's style of leadership, allowing social power to build and the leadership of others to emerge. Signs of transformation in clergy are identified and "little narratives of hope" affirmed as an alternative to grand narratives. The concluding chapters give instructions for forming and leading narrative clergy peer groups.

As with many Lilly Endowment projects, the tremendous resources available to participants opened many possibilities for learning and transformation. And not all of this would be easy to replicate. The type of narrative peer group the authors recommend requires time, commitment, and probably money at least for travel. However many ideas and approaches could be applicable to classroom case study work, informal peer consultations, and individual reflection on ministry and leadership. There is rich reflection on a number of topics including liminality and ritual, overhearing, assumptive covenants, self-differentiation—and a very useful list of "questions to ask when put on the spot" (58). The encouragement to let go of the expert, fix-it role is an especially powerful word to all in positions where training and the expectations of others impose those expectations.

Reviewed by
Karen Dalton, Associate Dean and Director of the Claremont
Extension, Claremont School of Theology

LEADING GOD'S PEOPLE:
WISDOM FROM THE EARLY CHURCH FOR TODAY
BY: CHRISTOPHER A. BEELEY
Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012
149 PP. Paperback
ISBN978-08028-6700-1

Christopher A. Beeley, in *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today*, focuses on the ministry of bishops, priests, or pastors of the early church, whom he refers to as "primary leaders of the church," people engaged in the core task of shepherding God's flock. Early sources, the author argues, depict that bishops were the primary leaders of local churches who devoted much more of their time to pastoral ministry than to mere administration.

Beeley contends that pastoral ministry in the early church was characterized as servant leadership. Authority and service in pastoral ministry involve the demonstration of God's formative and redemptive power in the absolute humility evident in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Gregory the Great avidly accentuates this idea as he describes the key job of bishops as "servants of the servants of God" (11). Beeley references the epistle to the Ephesians, and notes that leaders are endowed with spiritual gifts to equip the saints for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ. He further asserts that our accomplishments as leaders should be measured against the maturity of people in Christ (14).

The gist of pastoral ministry is the imitation of Christ, the Great Shepherd. Beeley invites pastoral leaders to minister as fellow shepherds of God's flock, and he grounds his discussion in examples from the early church. He cites, for example, Gregory Nazianzen and Augustine, who remind us that Christ is "always the source, the standard, and the primary agent of ministry" whom leaders need to emulate closely (23). Beeley describes pastoral ministry as the "cure of souls," involving "mending, healing, and restoring individual and social life" (57) and, ultimately, "participation in the ministry of Christ himself" (74). Teaching and preaching of the word, as Augustine emphasizes, are the

primary vehicles in the cure of souls. Although pastoral ministry focuses on the "hidden person of the heart" (1Pet. 3:4), Beeley strongly asserts that it is no less concerned about the physical and social aspects of life.

Holiness is the main constituent of spirituality of pastoral leaders, adorned with the virtues of love, hope, and faith (34). Authentic leaders command credibility as they demonstrate these virtues in their life and ministry. Leaders, thus, shun vainglory, which Gregory the Great refers to as the prostitution of oneself "to the corrupting spirit in [one's] lust for praise" (39). Pastoral holiness, on the other hand, is characterized by a continual humility and repentance, counter to the "moral rigorism" that was evident in the movement of Novatianism in the early church (53). Highlighting the needfulness of repentance, Beeley further avers that "repentance is the way to holiness for all Christians, but it is especially necessary for the leaders of the church" (51).

Church leaders encounter many challenges as they carry out the Trinitarian mandate of "leading people toward God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit" (24). Leadership challenges have to do with time management in not only the discipline of study and nurture of God's flock, but also in administrative and philanthropic matters. Many of the early pastoral literatures indicate that church leadership is one of the most difficult of tasks. Gregory Nazianzus, for instance, reflects that "the leadership of men and women, the craftiest and most complicated of all creatures, seems to me the art of arts and the science of sciences" (54). The difficulty of guiding people, moreover, arises from the reluctance and unwillingness that people usually show toward endeavors to address their internal needs and the influence of satanic forces. Pastoral leadership, with all its challenges, however, remains a rewarding ministry for its immeasurable value in "building up the entire body of Christ" (120).

Wisdom from the early church can be used to enlighten our leadership practices within the church today. Beeley's *Leading God's People* could be an important source of wisdom both for leaders of a congregation and for training church leaders at every echelon, in spite of its tendency to emphasize the rather monochromatic pastoral leadership at the cost of

team leadership, which was an equally important and dominant type of leadership in the early church. This and other aspects of the early church leadership, therefore, remain fertile fields for further research.

Dinku Lamessa Bato, Luther Seminary,
Saint Paul, Minnesota

WOMEN, CHURCH, AND LEADERSHIP NEW PARADIGMS: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF JEAN MILLER SCHMIDT

EDITED BY: EUNJOO MARY KIM AND
          DEBORAH BETH CREAMER

Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012
185 PP. Paperback
ISBN 978-1-60899-901-9

Inspired by the writings, teachings and leadership of Jean Miller Schmidt, the nineteen contributors to this work honor their colleague with essays on women, church, and leadership. Schmidt was a pioneer and leader in theological education at the Iliff School of Theology. The authors take cues from her life and speak to women today about the steady, deep roots that are needed for bold, engaging, adventurous, and authentic leadership.

The construction of the book honors Jean Schmidt's life-long quest to take her theological musing from within the academy to the local church, to practice her theology in various ministry contexts. The chapter authors write from the context of theological education, while each respondent is a practicing minister, giving the view from the local church.

In the introduction, Eunjoo Kim and Deborah Creamer set the stage for the three-part volume by reminding us that changing gender roles, globalization, consumerism, and advances in technology and communication are causing decisive shifts in the theory and practice of leadership. The three chapters in Part One offer a socio-historical analysis of leadership in the American church, based on women's experiences and theological insights. Four chapters in Part Two focus on fundamental areas of pastoral leadership—preaching, vocation and identity, spirituality and pastoral care/counseling. Each chapter proposes a new paradigm of leadership from women's perspectives. Part Three, "Women and Scripture," is a single essay that helps us explore the feminine metaphor of Zion as refuge—a place where God is present and available to God's people.

The audiences for these essays and pastoral responses are women and men preparing for ministry, experienced ministers currently serving in diverse ministry contexts, and those looking for insights to help them refuel and find renewal. The book could be used in a variety of teaching settings, from the academic classroom to the weekly, small group conversations that happen in church communities of all denominations. It lends itself to an eight-part or eight-week study.

For this reviewer, the book was an engaging reflection on diverse issues of pastoral leadership. For years I have had the practice of skipping over a Foreword, Preface and Introduction, in favor of jumping into the meat of the volume. I did the same as I began this review, ending with a reading of the Foreword. To my surprise, I found myself wishing that the editors had used the Foreword by Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore as the final word for the whole work. Moore does a brilliant job of pulling together the book's diverse content into a few summary pages about the images of leadership—the roots, risks, and rudders. She notes that:

- God is the taproot of leadership—the roots for one leader may seem strange to another—*Missio Dei* is shared, but the particular roots of an individual leader of community of faith differ according to the gifts and challenges that are particular to them.
- Risk is involved in following one's deepest passions—community is strongest when it is rooted in a common mission, yet people function best when they draw upon their unique gifts, passions, and experiences.
- God's Spirit is the primary rudder, and various rudders developed through years of experience and wisdom support people with extraordinary calls—leadership is deeply challenging and we need new models and courage.

The book is a refreshing read, a wonderful recognition of the work of Jean Miller Schmidt, and a much-needed addition to the conversations we have been having around the table of the Academy of Religious Leadership (ARL). It should be added to the reading list for all future church leaders and part of the renewal reading list for us all.

Reviewed by
Christina T. Accornero, Chairperson, Division of Social Sciences and Professor of Intercultural Studies Southern Wesleyan University, Central, South Carolina