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## THE TEACHING OF LEADERSHIP

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### **Abstract:**

Images of teaching and of leadership shape the learning community. Through examining our ecclesiology we can discover our theology of methodology. How we teach teaches as powerfully as what we teach. As teachers of leadership become skilled in a wide variety of methods, they gain confidence in their competence to achieve congruence of subject, method, and objective. Key is setting trustworthy learning environments to be different together. The goal: to prepare leaders for challenge now and for a lifetime, within a congregation and in a pluralistic, public world.

### **Images of Teaching and Leading**

What is the teaching of leadership essentially all about? Equipping? Training? Forming? My purpose is not to define but to clarify and expand our images. Whether a seminary or divinity school professor; a graduate student; a judicatory leader at the regional or national level; someone in the congregation engaged in formation and candidacy, or at the boundaries of church and world; we, together, are leaders and teachers of leadership. The Academy of Religious Leadership (ARL) stretches around the world, including all religious faiths. We want to shape and influence one another as a wonderfully pluralistic, global-learning community.

Years ago, while teaching at Yale Divinity School, I proposed a course for graduate school students on teaching methods. Some administrators and, yes, some professors, wondered why anyone would want or need such a course on teaching teachers how to teach.

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So what do we mean by teaching leadership? Do we train? Yes and no. Do we equip? We would hope so, but that's not all. Is formation central? Methods come in and out of fashion: open-classroom, individualized learning, case studies, action/reflection, service-based learning, my story/the biblical story/peer groups. Too often they are pitted against one another: "exciting experiential methods" versus "old-fashioned, sit-and-be-bored methods." Well, experiential learning is powerful—and not new. And sometimes, sitting and listening to a lecture may be totally engaging.

For at least four decades, many scholars and practitioners have studied and engaged methods beyond knowledge acquisition through lecture and readings.<sup>1</sup> Still, not enough attention is being paid to how we teach. Such teaching—and I use that all-inclusive term very broadly—takes place in classrooms of every kind, and before, and beyond. Remember the many places where you were trained for a specific task or vocation. Think of the many people in all sorts of settings who equipped you for ministerial leadership. Ponder the multifaceted ways in which you were formed and are still being transformed. Picture those places and people and methods, and imagine the possibilities for your own teaching.

I like to begin seminary classes and continuing education events with the questions—asked around a speaking-ourselves-present introductory circle—"How do you learn? How do you like to learn? How do you teach? How do you like to teach?" "What languages do you speak?" By that I mean not Swahili, German, or French, but carpentry or computers, farming or pharmacy? And what dialect of music do you speak? Percussion or vocal? Similarly, in courses or formation events on leadership, I ask, "How do you lead? How do you appreciate being led? When were you equipped well? Or not?"

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<sup>1</sup>For example, see Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), which became a foundational work in epistemology and shared praxis methodology. See also Thomas Groome's recent *Will There by Faith?* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

This is not for the purpose, as is too often the case in our consumer-oriented, cafeteria-style culture, of serving up exactly what each person wants at the moment. Rather, it is a way of finding out who each of us is, and how we have been formed. The ways we learn often determine the ways we teach. We need to listen to and learn from people in their own languages. Our experiences of leadership shape decisions, consciously or subconsciously: “I’m going to lead just like that,” or “I’m surely not going to do it that way.”

Such questions also probe our own methods and motives. To desire to shape you in my image or even in my image of who I think you should be is actually idolatry. However, I, and we collectively in our ecclesial communities, do have responsibility for instructing, training, equipping, inspiring, empowering, forming leaders for service in the world.

How do we measure our teaching of leadership? We have become accustomed to outcomes-based objectives for classroom and institutional measurement. In terms of our own teaching, do we think far enough into the real mission we have?<sup>2</sup> Consider this progression of questions:

(1) *How well did I teach?* The conscientious teacher of leadership will continuously be asking this question; however, to ask only this question focuses merely on our own performance. Then students, too, will focus only on whether the professor was interesting or amusing, criteria which produces passivity except at the time of teacher-evaluation. The implicit mission: to perform. But this does not go far enough.

(2) *Did the participants bear and understand?* There are numerous ways to measure this, such as testing for facts remembered or the ability to interpret and critique resources. This focus might give educators assurance that

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<sup>2</sup> Letty M. Russell, *Christian Education as Mission* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 13, 14, 37. In one of her earliest works, Russell, shaped by of her ministerial leadership in the East Harlem Protestant Parish, wrote that education is participation in God’s mission in the world and that anything less is mis-education.

they communicated what they intended and that it was received and remembered, at least for a short period of time. The implicit mission: to convey information.

(3) *Did the participants incorporate the material and change?* Requiring a more sophisticated measuring instrument, this focuses on the learners, taking into account their specific gifts, backgrounds, and potential. The implicit mission: that the student grow and develop.

(4) *Are these people now better equipped to be leaders of faith communities?* Evaluation carried this far moves beyond the learning setting into the contexts in which each leader is using his or her gifts to serve in the world. It focuses on the participant's action. The mission: to equip people for the discipleship of leadership. Even this does not go far enough.

(5) *Are these leaders able to serve people so that they might know and experience God's gracious love and be engaged in ministry in the world themselves?* This focus carries evaluation well beyond the professor's performance and the participants' own growth and performance to the people among whom they will lead. The mission: to affect the world with God's justice and love.<sup>3</sup>

What difference does our teaching of leadership make for individuals and for the immediate future of faith communities? And what difference will it make five or ten years from now as these faith communities themselves change and are changed in a pluralistic culture?

*Questions for Reflection and Conversation:*

1. What are your images of leadership? What are your images of the teaching of leadership?
2. How did you become the leader and the teacher of leadership that you are? When did you recognize your own leadership emerging? Who were your role models?
3. Reflect upon stories from your classrooms and other settings about seeing people grow as leaders.

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<sup>3</sup> Norma Cook Everist, *The Church as Learning Community* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 260, adapted.

How have they become the leaders they were meant to be? What opportunities have you had or might you have to see these leaders later in their faith communities?

## Ecclesiology

“Ecclesial” comes from the Greek *ekklesia*, which refers to the “gathered people,” or the “called out ones.” People are leaders of communities of believers and the teaching of leadership takes place within faith communities, whether within Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, or any other global or indigenous group. I write from the perspective of being a Christian leader, a professor in a Lutheran seminary who also has taught in a university divinity school. For the broad readership of ARL, I will often use the term “faith community” as well as the Christian word “church” to discuss how our belief systems inform our concepts of being a community, of leadership, and of the teaching of leadership. I will be thinking inclusively about various types of leaders in faiths communities; within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, to which I belong, that would include various forms of diaconal, pastoral, and lay leadership.

Our theology of the called out ones determines how we teach leadership. People are shaped by their leaders and people in turn shape their leaders. Make no mistake; I put high priority on role clarity. There are God-given gifts for leadership; however, leadership can also be learned. I do not believe leadership is ontological. As a Christian holding a body-of-Christ theology, I believe my identity is not in my role as leader but in Christ. With my identity in Christ, I am free to take on and relinquish any number of roles. I need to responsibly fill the leadership role for which I have authority. I may be leader, as professor, in a classroom in the morning and go to a lunch-hour meeting where a student is leading the group. We need to teach when to exercise authority and when to relinquish it. My own personhood need not be diminished when I know my leadership in any variety of

offices and roles is for the sake of the mission of the faith community.

The communities of which students have been a part before coming to seminary or divinity school have shaped them dramatically. This is a psychological and sociological statement as well as a theological one. Speaking from the Christian tradition, I say I belong to the church that was, that is, and that is to come. Individuals carry within them the histories of congregations and their leaders. Some students, who have left the church for a while, may bring wounds of authoritarianism with them.<sup>4</sup> Others, new to the faith, will bring ideas of what they think the church is and what leadership means. Students will bring with them explicit and implicit images of what a leader should, or should not, be. How do we not only acknowledge, but also make use of that diverse information, indeed *formation*, in our teaching?

Who is the person inside the leader? How can we teach so that leaders can productively use both their past and ongoing experience in leadership to continue to grow? Those are theological questions if we believe that God has created people to grow and designed them to develop.

People learn in order to work; people's work also teaches. As we move through ministerial years, we, as adult learners, also are shaped by who we have become, reinforcing or augmenting leadership styles, skills, and concepts of authority. How do we as teachers of leadership help that process be a healthy and productive one for the adults we have taught? How does teaching at the seminary and divinity school impact and empower ongoing growth for a lifetime? I do not particularly appreciate "all that you didn't learn at seminary" approaches. Rather, what if we teach in a way that is seamless with the sending forth, so that students leave and yet "never leave behind" seminary in the best sense

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<sup>4</sup> James D. and Evelyn E. Whitehead, *The Promise of Partnership* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), chapter 3.

of that word? Likewise, neither then do graduates lead or teach as just a replication of seminary, but rather build on that learning in context.

Ecclesiology shapes the teaching of leadership. If one holds a theology that the leader is protector of the faith community, one who provides, perhaps singularly and fully, the vision, ideas, and guidance for the faith community, then one might teach in that style, using mostly lecture that informs, fostering what the leader would consider an appropriate dependency. A teacher of leadership would want to model a strong, directive leadership style for the student to emulate.

If one's theology is connectional, one will envision the leader as building relationships. One might minimize lecture and forego direct-response questioning in favor of discussion that fosters creative and interactive thinking. Within this ecclesiology, if the leadership role would be primarily pastoral care of individuals, one would model care-giving. If building strong communities were the goal, one might teach leadership of small groups. In an age when "relational leadership" tops many students' list of choices, one might want to broaden both leadership and teaching styles. Also note that many people teach "connectional leadership" only through lecture, therefore depending unnecessarily on peer learning only beyond the classroom rather than within.

If one's ecclesiology is missional in the sense of being change agents in society, one would want to equip leaders through experiential methods that build skills for active leadership in the public world. This might include confrontation. (There are some teachers, however, whose only or primary style *is* confrontation and the use of power that diminishes students.) A missional theology of the church's role in the world would need to include study of the context, ecumenical and inter-faith partnerships, and ways to help people engage in dialog and to become change agents in the world.

We could carry this list further. Not only do different religious bodies have differing ecclesiologies, but within them, each leader and member has a working theology

and many different views of leadership, as well as a vast range of formative experiences of having been taught leadership and what it means to be led. The point is that it behooves us to pay attention to ecclesiology and to the theologies of teaching leadership with the goal of congruence.

*Questions for Reflection and Conversation*

1. What theological beliefs of your faith tradition shape your concepts of leadership?
2. How does one's ecclesiology inform the teaching of leadership?

### **Congruence of Leadership Styles and Teaching Methods**

How we teach teaches as powerfully as what we teach. How do our various methods of teaching shape leaders?<sup>5</sup> And in what ways do our leadership styles inform our teaching? Over the years at annual meetings and in the journal there has been much discussion about the nature and styles of leadership. Building on that, let us consider the importance of congruence of subject, method, and objectives in the teaching of leadership. What happens when we plan to teach leadership that engages and empowers others while continuing to use only lecture and teacher-dependent discussion questions (Guess-what-I'm-thinking questions)? What if our objective is to inform people about the tenets of the faith, and we use only inductive styles of reflection and discussion? Gaining skill in a wide range of teaching styles and thereby being able to choose the methods to meet our objectives is crucial.

We begin using the three images of teaching in the theme for the 2012 annual meeting—equipping, training, forming—and then we move on to eight broader categories of methodology.

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<sup>5</sup> Sharon Daloz Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught: A Bold Approach for a Complex World*, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2005)



*To Equip*

We equip religious leaders with skills and tools, church history, bible and biblical interpretation, theology, and with ethics, ethnography, educational ministry, preaching, pastoral care, liturgy, administration, and more. To equip means religious leaders not only have received these gifts—and they are gifts—but are prepared to use them and use them well. To equip is to prepare men and women who, as leaders, equip laity for their ministries in daily life. Some may fear that religious leaders then will be threatened by the emerging skills of the laity they lead; however, in the economy of the Holy Spirit's gifts, the Spirit's power is unlimited. If the person I equip becomes more able and empowered for ministry, I will not be lessened. My power will not be taken away. I will not become ill-equipped. Rather, ministry is multiplied. We continue to equip one another for more and more challenging ministry in the world.

*To Train*

Some may consider training a narrow image, fraught with directive discipline, leaving little room for creativity and flexibility in leadership. However, on the positive side, we need only listen to surgeons, ice skaters, or military personnel: "My training and countless repetitions of the same task allowed me to develop excellence in precision in using the knife, and now laser technology, as we cut and repair delicate tissue." "When I think about the jumps and rotations on the ice, I fall. But if I rely on my training I do not let myself become distracted." "They call me a hero, but it was simply what I was trained to do; in the face of life and death situations, we depend on all of those training exercises." Religious leaders, well trained, need not be robotic, but, on the contrary, so confident in their skills that they are able to respond to the person or the faith community with confidence, and, yes, with flexibility appropriate to the precise need, in the moment. Training happens early, needs to be precise and experiential, and is perfected over time.

### *To Form*

Each religious tradition will have a different concept of what it is to be formed for leadership. As a Christian, I think in terms of the three articles of the Creeds. The First Article: The Creator God: People are formed in the *Imagio Dei*. That is an awesome concept. The danger, of course, is that I as a pastor may, over time, begin to think that I *am* God, needing to carry the weight of the world on my own shoulders. But when we lack hope, or confidence, to remember we are created in the image of God empowers us. The Second Article: Christ Jesus, being born in human likeness, took the form of a *doulos*, slave or servant (Phil. 2). We strive to provide formative experiences for servant leadership. Third Article: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Church. Before, during and after seminary, beyond, and, yes, within the classroom, we make room for the Spirit. We teach people as though they are people in whom the Spirit dwells—because they are—and we teach always remembering that they, and we, are part of the church universal.

Having said that teaching of leadership is broader than the classroom, we need not dismiss the classroom or continuing education center. I will summarize eight categories which encompass the vast range of methods we can use.

Community includes the range of methods in which people are learning from one another simply by being people of God together, such as through role modeling and mentoring, cross-generation and multi-cultural events, and social media. This would include communal celebration and grief. The community teaches and learns leadership through doing embodied theology. Inclusion is key.

Presentation includes lecture, direct instruction, story, multi-media presentations, art exhibits, concerts, and more—any situation in which participants are primarily audience or recipients. Their silence does not mean absence of activity or uniformity. Each can be engaged when this method is not overly used and when done very well.

Discussion Despite the large role it plays, discussion is often ignored as a method to be honed. It can be merely a competitive bull session where people are bruised and beaten down, or it can be a place where people discover what they already know through using their own voices, learning how to learn from classmates, weaving ideas together. Teacher as midwife helps people give birth to creative new concepts.

Study While some would isolate this methodology as the only true learning style, it is only one among these eight, including reading, exploration, research (including, of course, electronic), and writing. Key is building skills for study that become self-directed for life-long learning. Study includes deductive and also constructive theology. Rigor is welcome.

Individual People learn in groups, but we do not conceptualize, conclude, or create at identically the same moment or in the same way as another person. We are all differently-abled. Even while in community, we can provide for choice in readings, assignments, field work. This goes beyond flexibility to ownership of our own learning.

Confrontation is a powerful method and needs to be used in congruence with our goals; not just automatically, but purposefully. Debate is useful. Certainly “deconstruction” and “disorientation” are appropriate when ideas, biblical interpretations, and world views need to be challenged, even corrected. But is the goal that we might have a blank slate upon which to write? Paulo Freire, years ago, showed us the imperialistic motivation in that approach. The concept that a people need to be conquered before they can be properly led may be more than implied.

Experience includes learning how to be a leader before and after being in the classroom, and also within. Role play, simulation, dramatization, field education, case study all engage participants as actors, as their real selves or vicariously. These are memorable, powerful ways to do

inductive, contextual, relational, constructive, and transformative theology, shaping people for leadership.<sup>6</sup> We can do brief role plays in the midst of lecture and reflectively debrief the most exciting or even the most common experience.

Reflection While some would assign this cluster of methods to “Spirituality,” journal-keeping (on a computer, with a trusted friend, or in a leather-bound book), action-reflection, guided meditation, minds-eye-journey are all credible ways of teaching leadership. Certainly they foster formation but also promote insight and wisdom through taking time to reconsider the past, dwell deeply on the present, and envision the future. Key focus: Who am I called to be?<sup>7</sup>

Our goal as teachers of leadership is to gain competence in a whole range of leadership styles and teaching and learning methods so that, with confidence in our competence, we can select and use well the most appropriate one for the people in a particular context so that they can grow to be the people of God in ministry that God is calling them to be. In so doing I believe we find great joy in the teaching/learning engagement.

*Questions for Reflection and Conversation:*

1. In your arena of service, what are your most prominent teaching styles? What methods are growing edges for you? Ones in which you would like to gain more confidence?

2. As you consider goals for growth in leadership, what images and styles of teaching might you consider congruent with the various objectives you have for your particular students, content, and context?

3. What congruence or incongruence of leadership objectives and teaching methods do you find *among* those

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<sup>6</sup> Norma Cook Everist, “Integrative Theological Formation,” in *Theological Practices That Matter*, ed. Karen L. Bloomquist (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2009), 170-171.

<sup>7</sup> Everist, *The Church as Learning Community*, 103-148.

with whom you teach and within the preparation for leadership process?

### **Trustworthy Environments to be Different Together**

Whatever teaching methods we use, establishing a safe, healthy, hospitable, trustworthy learning environment is essential. By environment, I mean classroom, congregation, camp, campus, peer group, on-line cohort, continuing education center, church body, community, nation, as far as the globe itself. The essential task for leaders and teachers of leaders is to set the tone and engage the participants, the community itself, in helping sustain a trustworthy environment to be different together.<sup>8</sup>

Is the environment one of intimidation or invitation? At a workshop, in a supervisory relationship, in the classroom, on-line, what kind of environment are we setting for the learning of leadership? That will be the environment these emerging leaders will in turn set as they lead people of faith in becoming actors in the drama of faith in the world, ministers within the faith community and in daily life.

People bring their own insecurities to meetings and to the classroom, not all of which are immediately observable. They may be thinking, “Will I have anything useful to say?” “Will they listen to me?” “Do I even belong here?” All of these, and more, are part of the human propensity to devalue ourselves, mistrusting that God has created us to live in community.

On the other hand, people also have the propensity to fail to believe that others—all kinds of others—are of worth in God’s eyes, having gifts to offer. Inside are thoughts such as: “What are *those* people doing here?” “My time is too valuable to waste on this discussion.”

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<sup>8</sup> See Martin E. Marty, *Building Cultures of Trust* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). Although writing from a different perspective, Marty’s work intersects: “people take risks upon entering the ‘universe of discourse’ of the ‘world’ of their conversation partner.” 17.

“How can I persuade them to come around to my viewpoint?”

A trustworthy environment is not devoid of different opinions, even disagreement. On the contrary, in an unsafe environment, a wide range of views may never surface. When a leader and teacher of leaders are not trusted, they may never know what people are really thinking. Ideas, creativity, and diversity are lost. But when people are respected as persons, their voices carefully heard, their opinions honored, diversity will enhance community, both within the learning community and in the communities they will eventually lead.

Some people think that a “safe” environment lacks risk. On the contrary, classes and congregations where trust is solid will have the courage to care about and engage in daring learning and courageous ministry in dangerous places in need of justice and love. A healthy environment fosters calm, not chaos; respectful conversation, not disdain; openness, not closed-mindedness. A hospitable environment offers generous welcome, even and especially to strangers.<sup>9</sup>

We could take any learning environment as an example. I will use on-line distributed learning. Learning leadership at a distance presents challenges; however, many of the same principles apply. It is not a matter of just linear learning, simply posting responses back and forth. Rather the environment is a matrix, or a community of learning communities: the on-line cohort and the places people live virtually. People with their past, present, and yes, future experiences are called upon to befriend the distance, hospitably. How do we set that environment? That question needs to precede and permeate consistently the questions of congruence of methods. Who are the participants now? What are they doing there? How do we incorporate field experience, service-learning? Will they be observing leaders?

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<sup>9</sup> Norma Cook Everist and Craig L. Nesson, *Transforming Leadership: New Vision for a Church in Mission*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 6-7; Everist, *The Church as Learning Community*, chapter 2.

Be mentored by leaders? Reflect on the qualities and characteristic of that leadership? How do we see them and they see themselves growing as leaders? How do we who are schooled and skilled in religious leadership monitor the mentors, or perhaps we should say, mentor the mentors? All of this is part of tending the learning environment as we choose and use a variety of action-reflection methods, as well as books and on-line conversations.

Whatever the arena, when we set a learning environment of mutual respect, we are ready for independent and interdependent rather than dependent learning. (We are thereby teaching a leadership style of mutual accountability.) The goal is not to “master” the material, finish reading the required number of pages, or write a paper *for* the professor. (The goal of leadership is not to master, or dominate, the parishioners or give them assignments that will be graded, or even merely delegate responsibilities.) Adult learning theory, for more than forty years, has moved from pedagogy to what Malcolm Knowles’ coined as andragogy (we might say anthropogogy). Western education for centuries was built on the concept of the learner as dependent, whereas the adult learner is independent. Under pedagogy learning is directed, transmissive, and subjective-centered whereas in andragogy learning is self-directed, mutually oriented, and problem-solving centered. In pedagogy the person’s self-concept is student and experience is that which happens to them, whereas in andragogy one’s self-concept is adult in society and experience is who we are.<sup>10</sup>

Knowles’s work has been criticized for being too centered on the individual rather than the community,<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Malcolm Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy* (Chicago: Follett, 1980). This 1980 edition was already “revised and updated.” One finds references to Knowles’ work in many books, e.g., Malcolm, S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III, Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 6th ed. (London, San Diego: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Kent L. Johnson and Nelson T. Strobert, “Principles of Adult Learning,” in Rebecca Grothe, *Lifelong Learning* (Minneapolis: 1997), 65.

which is why I stress the importance of not stopping at moving from being a dependent to being an independent learner but of going further to fostering a learning environment of interdependence. Institutional structures by their nature are pedagogical, but leadership and the teaching of leadership need not be. Dependency is habit-forming. Therefore, one needs to teach interdependent leadership consistently. One need not fall back to dependent, competitive learning environments, but build trustworthy places of respect that foster love of learning, scholarship, responsibility for one's own learning, and mutual accountability. Leadership taught in such environments, in all sorts of settings, can form leaders that use appreciative inquiry to discover people's gifts, generate curiosity, use their ideas, help them equip one another, and have high expectations of mutual accountability. Leadership that helps people become actively engaged in ministry further builds community. Jürgen Moltmann wrote, "It is not the Church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill to the world; it is the mission of [God] that includes the Church, creating a church as it goes on its way."<sup>12</sup>

Impossible? No. I have seen it and so have you. Energized by the Spirit, such faith communities themselves become communities of lifelong learners. Our faculty discusses the importance of welcoming students through building on their past experiences, uplifting their gifts, strengthening and utilizing their already-present leadership skills. The Wartburg Seminary community has been doing this well for years.

At a recent regular monthly convocation of the community, almost the entire student body, professors, and some staff gathered around tables at 9:30 to talk deeply about multi-cultural ministry, not just in urban centers, but in rural, small towns and small cities in every place across the land. The model of such convocations is very brief presentations by 2-3 people and then table

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<sup>12</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 64.



conversation. Not unusual, except perhaps for the consistency of the commitment to this model for over a quarter century. At one table, the issue was raised to strengthen our Spanish concentration for diaconal ministry students as well as master of divinity students. The words were not only “reported” to the plenary, but immediately following the convocation the academic dean spoke to the student who had raised it, the diaconal ministry students spoke to each other, and, by the time of their 10:40 class, they reported that that addition to the curriculum was well on its way to happening. Likewise, a student at another table had connections with multicultural field work sites he had discovered on his own in downtown Dubuque. A professor saw him in the hall immediately after the convocation and called out, “I’d like the names of those sites to add to my list of educational ministry field work possibilities for students for their self-selected field work.” By noon the student, not particularly perceived as a leader in the community, had e-mailed his list to the professor and multicultural ministry leadership educational opportunities were expanded.

Simple? Yes. But picture how these things might not have happened. Student initiative might have been interpreted as mere student complaint. Ideas from other than the “usual” campus student leaders might have been disregarded. Layers of institutional oversight might have dampened emerging student leadership. Now, of course, ideas need to be vetted, proper channels traversed, committees consulted. But we sometimes needlessly miss opportunities for people’s emerging leadership to be utilized and ministry multiplied. Translate these scenarios to a congregational leadership system.

One more issue needs to be raised: Trustworthy learning environments means learning leadership across boundaries, receiving the leadership of those different from ourselves, those who have historically been considered “beneath,” from the underside. This means addressing power inequities and realizing that even with the evidence of much progress we have not yet attained

full partnership across racial, class, and gender lines. We add to those isms, “ablism” where the normates, or non-disabled, have difficulty seeing that people with disabilities are very capable of exercising various forms of leadership.<sup>13</sup> Currently in the United States, there is fear of leadership being open to all. Put “them” back in their place. How far do we yet have to go to attain a global, a national, as well as an ecclesial environment of openness, safety, hospitality, and respect? Trustworthy environments where we can be different together?<sup>14</sup>

*For Reflection and Conversation:*

1. What do you believe to be characteristics of a trustworthy learning environment?
2. How do we set such environments? How do we together help maintain such environments?

### **Courage in the Face of Challenge and Conflict**

We cannot write about the teaching of leadership without addressing the challenges leaders face in the world and, just as often, within the faith community itself. Pastors turn to judicatory leaders in times of personal and congregational crisis. The church body itself goes through a difficult, potentially church-dividing decision. At these times, not only is our leadership tested, but our faith is as well. How can I lead when they won’t be the church? How can we continue when trust has totally broken down?

However, it is not just times of crisis that test one’s courage. Just as often, if not more often, I hear the discouraging accounts of appalling apathy. Leaders are disappointed that laity say they are too busy to take on leadership roles, or don’t show up for meetings. Leaders’ own energy lags; they may become despondent.

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<sup>13</sup> Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 108.

<sup>14</sup> See Letty M. Russell, ed. By Shannon Clarkson and Kate M. Ott, *Just Hospitality: God’s Welcome in a World of Difference* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

Surely our teaching has failed these faithful religious leaders. And yet, I pose that it has not, and need not. By the grace of God, we who are called to teach leadership are called to uphold and guide leaders in the most depressing situations, the most critical times and in the midst of the most gruesome events.

A graduate of four years calls. There's been a church fire in the middle of the night. "Can I lead them through this disaster, Norma?" "Yes, yes, you can," I reply. And we talk. And she begins to remember who she is, who she has become, the skills she has learned and has been using in building community in that place. It will be hard. I don't pretend to know how she will lead them through it, but I know she will. And she knows she can call again. An intern returns to campus, having been called to emergency leadership because a tornado went through their town. (This has happened a number of times over the years, just again this March.)

And there's more of course, for example, Kim, a pastor on Long Island, a Wartburg graduate, whom I called after the Twin Towers fell. I had made a visit to learn from her leadership at Bethlehem in Baldwin a year and a half earlier. An intelligent woman with a gentle spirit, she questioned her leadership style because other clergy saw her as not directive enough. But I had seen her guide a congregation through church conflict. An Iranian man, an architect had become a deacon and a man of West Indian heritage an assisting minister. Under her quiet, caring leadership, the congregation, wrestling with budgets, hearing, "We need to feed hungry people" from their pastor, would say, "We can't afford..." So she put a jar in the back of the church and little by little it was filled. Finally there was enough money to offer one meal. By the time of my visit they were serving over two hundred meals a month. They didn't need the jar anymore; they had two freezers.

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, I relived my journey on the commuter train out from Manhattan to Bethlehem. I called the pastor. (We talked regularly on the phone thereafter. I was a voice from outside the

disaster area.) She had been calling everyone she knew who might have a family member in lower Manhattan. Then she called the shut-ins and then everyone one else in the congregation. On the third day Bethlehem held a prayer service open to the community. Kamy, from Iran, led the prayers.

The second week was a week of despair; members reported racist rumors about Arab Americans. On Thursday of that week the community held an interfaith prayer service and one thousand people came. This quiet, gentle leader had been chair of Baldwin Interfaith Clergy Fellowship. She said, “The fact that religious leaders here had vibrant relationships before the crisis was so helpful.”<sup>15</sup>

How do we teach leadership for times of crisis? Although we cannot presume to know what they will face, we can teach people to claim their own personhood, their own gifts, and their own styles of leadership. We can instill values of justice and eagerness to reach out and network, and equip them with a variety skills to be able to empower people for ministry and to care for one another when the crisis comes.

Challenge may come from the skies or from within. There was the pastor whose trusted church council president was discovered to be a mass murderer, causing this pastor to revisit the very depths of the question of evil. And yet, he led, and he empowered his congregational lay leaders to speak clearly when the media swarmed around. Kim from Long Island and Mike from Kansas called, and in each of these cases, later, at Wartburg Seminary’s invitation, returned to campus for rest, reflection and a chance to regain perspective and to teach present students. Our campus is like a mission center, gathering, sending, providing opportunity to return, and sending forth again.

And then there is the diaconal minister serving as campus chaplain at a large university tested to the core by

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<sup>15</sup> Norma Cook Everist, *Open the Doors and See All the People: Stories of Church Identity and Vocation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 88-93.

the sexual abuse scandal that rocked the campus in the heart of football season. When the powerful fell, the students were shocked, confused, at a loss to know where to turn, in what to believe. Whom could they trust? The institution and entire town had to deal with legend and power and tragedy and shame and image and mission. What are your experiences? How do you continue to teach leadership when those you have taught are in times of challenge and conflict? These are not relationships of dependency, but transformed interconnections of people who have also become life-long colleagues.

Among the many aspects of leadership, I am convinced we need to teach how to lead in the midst of conflict. Our ecclesiology will shape how we image conflict and the skills we teach. In an argumentative culture that seeks the entertainment of contention, there are theological bases for a collaborative approach to conflict. Conflict is the story of human history. It is important to help students learn skills of discerning when a conflict is over beliefs, or differing interpretations of truth, or values, or mission (goals) or ministry (means). Future leaders need to learn different types of conflict and their own histories with conflict. They need to develop skill in a range of responses to conflict and then consider which role they can play. The issue is not the simplistic advice, "Pick your battle." Rather, we say, "Pick your role."

This is about religious leadership, because there are biblical and theological groundings for various responses: avoidance (Jesus sometimes chose to avoid, because "his time had not yet come."); confrontation (Not just a stand-off, but standing side-by-side to face unhealthy abuse of power); competition (Were we or were we not created to compete? When and when not?); control (The good news is "I am not God" and the bad news is "I am not God." When do we need to take control and when are we merely controlling?); accommodation (Christ came into an inhospitable world. How do we make room for each other's ideas and personhood without relinquishing our own? Mutual accommodation); compromise (What

does it mean to not be compromised but to live together in the promises of God?); collaboration (The work of laboring together through conflict takes time.)<sup>16</sup>

Some of the people we are called to teach go on to become judicatory leaders. A half dozen or more students who have sat in my Church Administration class have become bishops, in the United States and also in Malawi. Of course who is to say that those bishops do not face as much conflict as they receive honor?

We teach people to build up communities of faith; but what if it turns out that a graduate in first call finds the ministry something quite different? The metropolitan Phoenix area continues to grow out into the desert, so it seemed incongruous to me that the Church of Hope was closing. "Psalms and poverty," the pastor said. The congregation had been there for forty-nine years. "I had hoped they would make it to fifty," the pastor said. "We need someone with a lot of energy to turn this church around," she had been told when interviewing. In essence, she had been called to close a dying church. Had she "failed her test?" Had we failed her? Had the church failed its community? As we walked from room to room through the building, she told how she visited youth from the congregation and the neighborhood imprisoned in Tucson. And there were baptisms and weddings of people never before members of a Lutheran church. Was this not still a mission congregation? Until just two weeks before my visit, fifty to sixty children came to Hope for day care. "It's so quiet now," said the pastor. The toys remained, but no children. A little help for financial support had come, but too little, too late. The warm sun was deceiving. This is prime land...or will be again. But redevelopment won't be for the homeless.<sup>17</sup> What are the questions for the teaching of leadership, the questions of ecclesiology, and mission and ministry, not just for Hope, but for all of us?

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<sup>16</sup> Norma Cook Everist, *Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004)

<sup>17</sup> Everist, *Open the Doors and See All the People*, 54-56.

A graduate of 15 years ago, now a senior pastor of a 1700 member church, quoted me back to myself this spring: “Love the people,” and added, “Love them through it, no matter what that means.”

*Questions for Reflection and Conversation*

1. When you think of leaders whom you have taught or known, what are some of the challenges they have faced? How do the foundations of leadership continue to inform and up-build them during such times?

2. What have you learned from leaders of faith communities you have taught or known that is shaping and will shape your own teaching of leadership?

3. I’ve mentioned visits. What about Facebook? How do we, should we, should we not, keep “teaching” through social media connections? What are our roles and relationships?

### **Teaching Leadership for a Pluralistic, Public World**

What difference does our teaching of leadership make for the immediate future of faith communities as well as five or ten years from now as these faith communities themselves change and are changed in a pluralistic culture? Religious bodies and theological schools are parts of global religions. The scope of our teaching of leadership is and needs to be global. Likewise, the people whom we teach are—and need to realize they are—embodied in and ministering among global ecclesial communities. How do we prepare people to be global leaders in a local place? H. Richard Niebuhr wrote many years ago that the church is both local and universal. The localized church implies the global and historic Church. But without becoming localized and specific, the Church does not exist.<sup>18</sup>

The teaching of leadership needs to include leadership in the public world. In the United States, in 2012, questions concerning the place of religious

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<sup>18</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 24.

communities in a pluralistic culture are in the news. Is there, as some have said publicly, a “war” on religion? Or a war on some religions by other (segments) of religions? What are the issues of the division of Church, mosque, synagogue, and state? What are the roles of leaders of faith communities in the public world? As individuals? As leaders of their faith communities in the community? As faith leaders among other leaders?

In a pluralistic culture, we are called to teach leadership that connects communities for the common good. There has been a significant change in the President’s Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives recently.<sup>19</sup> I was privileged last summer in Dubuque to attend a meeting of about 200 people representing many faith community and non-profit organizations at the Northeast Iowa Community College Town Clock Center. We had an invitation to real partnerships in a religiously plural nation. Dallas Tonsager, Under Secretary, USDA’s Office of Rural Development said, “Thank you for your expressions of your faith.” The mayor of Dubuque, Roy Buol and the interim president of Northeast Iowa Community College, Dr. Liang Wee, told of how the city and the college have grown to be places where diversity and collaboration for the common good are welcomed and appreciated.

We need to work together to create a trustworthy place for us to be different together. So, why is it that the narrative that receives the most press is one that professes this is and should be a “Christian” nation? Ray Suarez, in his book, *The Holy Vote: The Politics of Faith in America* makes clear that Christianity is not an

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<sup>19</sup> J. David Kuo, *Tempting Faith: An Inside Story of Political Seduction* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2006). Kuo, writing in the early 2000’s, said he reached the heights of political power, but after three years of being second in command in the President’s Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives, he found himself helping to manipulate religious faith for political gain.



American religion and that the American state is not necessarily Christian.<sup>20</sup>

How do we connect people in our communities for conversation and work together for the common good? We teach by modeling. While teaching at The Lutheran Seminary at Philadelphia a year ago, the very first week there, I was invited to join with faculty colleagues and some students in silent vigil outside of a gun shop to make a collective, common call for responsible gun sales. At Wartburg Seminary, we worked together with others for years on the cause of the liberation of Namibia from apartheid South African rule. Our Global Concerns Committee and Center for Global Theologies have continued in robust activism through the years and continue today, with faculty and student leadership.

Personally and communally, as congregations and church bodies, how do we lead? What means do we use? What roles can we play? These are significant questions. We have our own blogs and bumper stickers. And we have ecclesial national offices. We need trustworthy places to be different together politically. We need to teach leadership for working together for peace and justice, even while having different means and methods. This includes preparing people for ecumenical and inter-faith leadership locally, nationally, and internationally.

The issue of separation of church and state deserves much more space than can be given here. Suffice it to say in regard to the teaching of leadership that there are various kinds of separation: absolute, functional, institutional, transvaluative, equal. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), in its constitution (4.03n), pledges to “work with civil authorities in areas of mutual endeavor, maintaining institutional separation of church and state in a relation of functional interaction.”<sup>21</sup> That is another way of saying that we hold to both the

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<sup>20</sup> Ray Suarez, *The Holy Vote: The Politics of Faith in America* (New York: Harper, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> See John R. Stumme and Robert W. Tuttle, eds., *Church and State: Lutheran Perspectives* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

establishment and free exercise clauses of the First amendment; we also believe that all faith communities are called to work together for the common good, yes, carry out our various “vocations” in the public world.

We live in a time when people in the public sphere cry for leadership while disdaining or rejecting leaders. The role of clerical leadership in the community has been redefined. There may be a paradox of leadership. Today, the greatest gift clerical leaders may bring to community leadership is a sense of God’s calling to serve our neighbors, working together with leaders of other faith communities, non-profit organizations, and the network of civic and other leaders.<sup>22</sup> The questions revolve around the specific role of the leader, the role of the faith community itself, and the various roles of members of faith communities in their ministries in daily life in the community. How do we teach leaders so that they in turn are able to equip people for leadership in all sorts of arenas in daily life?

How do we make sure children in our communities are well-nourished? How can churches and the government work together so that children do not go hungry when school is out in the summer? How can churches and local community leaders work together to help people create new business opportunities and jobs? How can leaders of faith communities, government, and non-profits coordinate efforts in times of natural disaster? All of these partnerships are welcome and needed. As people of many faiths, we can and need to work together. And we need to tell these stories. We need a new public narrative of what people of faiths (plural!) in America are doing together. This is indeed a broad and significant task for the teaching of leadership in the Academy of Religious Leadership.

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<sup>22</sup> Nelson Granade, *Lending Your Leadership: How Pastors Are Redefining Their Role in Community Life* (Herndon, Virginia: Alban, 2006), 5, 92-93.

*Questions for Reflection and Conversation*

1. Where, in the world, are you? Your church, synagogue, mosque, school? How does one teach for leadership that is both local and global?
2. From where do students come? And where do they go? How does that affect how you teach and learn while you are together?
3. How do we prepare leaders of faith communities for ecumenical, interfaith, and community partnerships in a pluralistic world?