
INTRODUCTION: LIGHT AND LEADERSHIP

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Recently in my consulting and training work, I have begun to use the analogy of light when talking about leadership in congregations. It seems to me that the traditional paradigm for leadership was focused on the personality and gifts of a single leader whose values, goals, and actions appeared in the spotlight. This implied that other leaders were either in the edges of the light or had to share the spotlight, if allowed to do so by the primary leader. The other members of the faith community were more or less in the dark.

For years I taught courses on collaborative leadership, emphasizing the functions of leadership that are shared by group members, and what Joyce Fletcher calls *fluid expertise*. The notion of fluid expertise means that “power and expertise shift from one party to the other, not only over time but in the course of one interaction.”¹ This requires the skills of empowering others *and being able to be empowered*—the ability to learn from and be influenced by those above you, beside you, and below in status or seniority, as well as the capacity to teach and exert influence. So I have been wondering how to present a more circular or horizontal view of shared leadership with images of light.

With newer forms of light such as lasers and LEDs, opportunities abound. What if we thought about leadership in a congregation as multiple LEDs coming on as needed, highlighting different members’ gifts in response to community wants and needs? What if we thought about the kind of indirect lighting that exists in many of our places of worship, allowing even the people on the margins to be seen? What if leadership were fluid and diffused? Sometimes it might also need to be laser-like to make an incision or to cut out a cancer. And of course, leadership could reflect or refract all the colors of the rainbow with the leader as prism.

¹ Joyce K. Fletcher, *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power, and Relational Practice at Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1999), 64.

Leadership might show up as the brilliance of the noonday sun, giving warmth as well as light, though the danger is that if you look at it directly, it can be blinding. Then there is the soft glow of moonlight, especially across water or a snow-covered field. The moon, of course, is not a source of light; it merely reflects the light of an average star that is ninety-three million miles away. And let's not forget the single star that led the magi, or the Milky Way that brightens even a moonless night, when city lights do not intrude.

Hopefully, the image of light will resonate with theories of leadership you hold dear and will invite you to explore new ideas. More importantly, you might think about how the varieties of light might illumine your practice of leadership.

This volume of the *Journal of Religious Leadership* reflects many hues and lumens of leadership. It does not focus on one theme of leadership, unlike the Fall volume in which we publish the presentations of our annual meeting. Here you will find articles on disparate leadership topics by women and men from various cultural, denominational, and professional backgrounds.

Political scientists Ryan P. Burge and Paul A. Djupe discuss the emergent church movement by focusing on how new religious ideas and practices gain a foothold and become dispersed. They are interested in the influence of politics and social theory on the acceptance and spread of religious movements. They are curious about the correspondence of authority and conservative religious beliefs. Their work has implications for missional identity and evangelism.

Lim Siew Pik, president and faculty member of an international charismatic bible college in Malaysia, writes about toxicity in clergy leadership in Asian Pentecostal Charismatic churches. Building on an empirical study, she talks about how leaders exercise personal power, beyond role and function, often in abusive ways. She writes concretely about money, communication patterns, and the use and abuse of Scripture to bolster the leader's power.

Richard M. Smith, a sociologist, youth counselor, and social activist, offers an extended case study of a black church that planted and helped to establish more than one hundred

churches throughout the United States as well as Belarus, Ethiopia, Canada, Italy, Guyana, South Africa, and Indonesia. Borrowing from George Ritzer, Smith refers to the process of growing from a local community church to a global entity with a specific brand as a form of McDonaldization.² He illustrates Ritzer's four dimensions of rationalization (the substitution of logically consistent rules for traditional or illogical rules) in the church he studies. He shows how efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control enabled enormous growth, and he questions whether the process results in communities of mature faith.

Sarah B. Drummond asks, What would happen if the Master of Divinity and the first ministerial call took place concurrently? She goes on to describe a coordinated in-ministry MDiv, with students engaging in apprenticeship, classroom learning, and reflective practice simultaneously. As a faculty dean and associate professor of ministerial leadership, Drummond's diverse roles give her multiple vantage points for viewing and discussing what is both an innovative approach to preparing leaders and a return to an apprentice style of formation that pre-dates seminaries. This method promises to vastly decrease the debt exposure of new clergy and professional lay leaders.

Dustin D. Benac, who writes on theology, institutions, and leadership, posits an opposable inner logic in Christianity that has the capacity to form individuals to respond creatively to either/or scenarios. He uses the work of Roger Martin and Ronald Heifetz to examine Bill Robinson's presidency at Whitworth University. His case study examines walking a narrow ridge that is characterized by a deep commitment to Christ and Scripture while also staying open to a rapidly changing world of new ideas. Because both/and thinking is in the fabric of Christianity, its opposable inner logic, Christian leaders must develop a deep understanding of their history, tradition, theologies, and practices. It is this deeply Christian study and reflection that prepares leaders to understand and

² George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society*, 8th ed. (New York: Sage Publications, 2014).

appreciate new realities as leaders who are embedded contexts not imagined by their ancestors in faith.

We hope these articles will help you see the theory and practice leadership in new kinds of light, thereby enhancing your engagement in ministry and faithful living.

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