

SKILLS AND QUALITIES OF CHURCH LEADERS

Lovett H . Weems has said:

Leadership is in essence a ministry of stewardship. It is through the proper stewardship of purpose, time, resources, opportunities, challenges and energies of the people of God that vital ministry and mission takes place.¹

Leadership is that; but it is also more than that, as Weems himself indicates a little further on in his book. Stewardship carries with it the connotation of good administration - doing things right - and good management - doing the right things.² While both administration and management are the results of effective leadership they are not the constituent components of it. "Leadership," Weems says, "is the development and articulation of a shared vision, motivation of those key people without whom the vision cannot become a reality, and gaining the cooperation of most of the people involved."³ Moreover, effective leadership is always values-driven.

Weems definition begs a task list. First, develop the vision. Second, motivate the key players. And third, gain cooperation. It all sounds good. The question is just how does one do it?

In considering the how, it becomes apparent that it is not just about knowledge and skills. In talking about the leadership potential of students in his own seminary, Weems said:

During their theological education, they will gain much knowledge and will develop skills that will allow them to function as competent professionals in ministry. However, the strongest determinant of their future leadership will be who they are as persons. This cannot

¹ Lovett H. Weems Jr., Church Leadership, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 17

² *Ibid.*, 34.

³ *Ibid.*

take the place of the learning and skills , but it will be the most powerful factor in their long-term development as leaders.⁴

There are, then, two kinds of attributes a leader requires – skills and qualities. Having one, without the other is not sufficient.

The task of this essay is to establish just what are the skills and qualities required for professional leadership in ministry, with reference to Weems and the other materials presented during the course. In the opinion of the writer, this means essentially with reference to Weems, and Robert Greenleaf as presented by the Rev. Canon Dr. Margaret Murray. The other presenters contributed materials and concepts that are very useful from the standpoint of management and administration; which, as we have seen, are important but flow out of rather than inform leadership. Owen's material is predominantly about a specific philosophy of leadership and tools that relate to it. It is not about primary skills and qualities.

Skills

According to Weems, leaders require the following skills:

- ⊕ Foresight: The ability to anticipate the future based on the past and the present.⁵
- ⊕ Perception – the ability to know and understand what the group members are thinking and feeling.⁶
- ⊕ Intuition: A sense of where the organization is going and where it must be if it is to grow and thrive.⁷
- ⊕ Versatility: The ability to shift roles among leader, peer and follower, and knowing the appropriate role in the circumstances.⁸
- ⊕ The ability to build community.⁹ This is done in large part in team-building, through:

⁴ Weems, 124

⁵ Ibid, 58.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, 60.

⁸ Ibid, 65

- Treating everyone with respect.¹⁰
 - involving people.¹¹
 - Fostering collaboration.¹²
 - Strengthening others through sharing power.¹³
 - Communicating effectively.¹⁴
 - Being present with the people.¹⁵
 - Recognizing the contributions of others.¹⁶
 - Developing and nurturing others.¹⁷
 - Loving the people
- ⊕ The ability to establish a relationship of trust and respect with the people with whom one is working. Everything depends on this bonding.¹⁸
- To this list, Robert K. Greenleaf would add:
- ⊕ Listening first¹⁹
- To build strength in others, and
 - To seek understanding
- ⊕ Pacing oneself by appropriate withdrawal.²⁰
- ⊕ The ability to persuade.²¹

Qualities

The skills listed above will be truly effective only when they are accompanied by the following personal qualities in the leader:

⁹ Ibid, 65.

¹⁰ Ibid, 75.

¹¹ Ibid, 76.

¹² Ibid, 78.

¹³ Ibid, 80.

¹⁴ Ibid, 82

¹⁵ Ibid, 83.

¹⁶ Ibid, 85.

¹⁷ Ibid, 86.

¹⁸ Ibid, 128.

¹⁹ Robert K. Greenleaf, The Servant As Leader, 17.

²⁰ Ibid, 19.

²¹ Ibid, 30.

- ⊕ Integrity: a coherence among daily actions, personal values and the basic aims for the organization; ²² demonstrated through consistency between articulated values and behaviour.
- ⊕ A sense of Self-worth.²³
- ⊕ Character.
 - Moral values and ethical principles²⁴
 - Honesty
 - Caring (empathy),
 - and cooperation²⁵
- ⊕ Judgment and wisdom²⁶
- ⊕ Responsibility²⁷

To these, Robert Greenleaf would add:

- ⊕ Servant Leadership.²⁸
- ⊕ Initiative²⁹
- ⊕ Vision (pointing the direction)³⁰
- ⊕ Confidence in facing the unknown.³¹

I have listed servant leadership as a “quality” rather than a “skill” because it is not something that I believe can be taught effectively using theory. Rather, I believe that it is either innate - perhaps in the nature for many women who seek first to serve - or acquired through experience, and trial and error. The latter is how I see it being acquired by men, who are more used to relationships that are hierarchical - one up or one down. Servant leaders seek to facilitate the growth of those they serve as persons - to benefit, rather than deprive them. Initiative, likewise, must be innate. It springs out of inner conviction, and requires courage; as do

²² Weems, 123.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. 124

²⁵ Weems, 126

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Greenleaf, 7

²⁹ Ibid, 14

³⁰ Ibid, 15

³¹ Ibid, 28

vision and confidence. All of these develop with time and experience. If they manifest out of ego, rather than knowledge, they generally have insufficient depth to be sustained.

Taken together, these qualities add up to being Professional - exhibiting responsibility in making decisions and judgments requiring character, principles and commitments.³²

Application

The other purpose of this paper is to evaluate the progress of the writer in acquiring the skills and qualities enumerated above.

The medium for evaluation is the small group research project on Church Budgets. The writer was part of a group of four who came together serendipitously to work as a team on this project. In addition to myself, group members included Teena Brown, Joan Cavanaugh-Clark, and Adolfo Makuntima. None of us have worked together on a cooperative project previously.

Since it has not been possible to poll the others due to the time pressures we are all under at this time of year, the commentary that follows is based on the perceptions of the writer. Hopefully the input of the other three will be appended before the paper is submitted.

The subject matter of the project is not something that the other members of the group had much prior experience with. It is however, within my professional experience, since I hold designations as a financial professional. In addition, I have experience on Parish Advisory Boards, and as a member of Corporation, that the other members did not have. My background was known to Joan, who told the others. Given this, and the fact that I am somewhat older, it was - perhaps - natural that they looked to me for leadership in this project.

As it turned out, the others did not have much familiarity with the internet or with computer graphics and presentation programs either.

³² Weems, 126

Both were a component of our presentation – the internet in doing the research on Narrative Budgeting and the Diocese of Toronto’s Sustainable Ministry Policy, and Powerpoint for the communication of our findings to the larger group. Because of my professional background, I am also experienced in putting together and making such presentations.

Throughout the course of this project I was conscious of the fact that it would have been easier for me to have just done the whole thing; and completed everything according to my own timetable and preferences. However, I was also aware that my doing so would not have really served the others. They would not have learned very much through that process, or grown in skills and competence.

The group agreed to meet on Monday evenings, before class, in the Buttery to work on the project. I endeavoured to lead by suggestion and consensus – pointing out possibilities and seeking the group’s advice and consent as to which direction we should head. I endeavoured not to be directive, but to offer resources for the others to try or consider. In one of the early meetings, for example, I took everyone through the Narrative Budgeting presentation from the Diocese of Niagara’s website. I had downloaded it to my computer and the others had yet to see it.

As the project progressed, everyone sought financial information from churches of their acquaintance; and we shared and discussed the information among us. Our purpose was to develop a consensus as to which parish we should present to the class. In the end it was St. Thomas’s, the parish I attend. In part, this was because we had more direct information about St. Thomas’s – Teena did not attend the parish she was able to get the financial information for, Joan could not get the financial information for either her old or new parish because her move was too recent, and Adolfo’s experience of St. Stephen’s was with the French congregation, so he had little insight into the financial affairs of the parish proper. I had been a member of the Financial Committee at St,

Thomas's. In addition, St Thomas's presented an opportunity to present the class with a teaching moment – the consideration of a parish that appears to be healthy, under the scrutiny of the Diocese's new Parish Sustainability Policy. The other members accepted my suggestion, and we agreed on a presentation outline and divided up the work.

Adolfo would present the St. Thomas's budget as it had been provided at vestry, and make observations stemming from it. Joan would discuss the Diocesan Parish Sustainability Policy. Teena would apply the Sustainability benchmarks to St. Thomas's based on the vestry financial information. I would introduce St. Thomas's, and make concluding remarks about the importance of narrative budgeting in such a situation. In addition, since I had the equipment and expertise, I would put the computer presentation together from the information the others provided to me.

The evening of our presentation we met in the Buttery as had become our custom; and I took the others through the assembled presentation which they had not yet seen. In particular, I made sure everyone had the opportunity to work with the computer and rehearse their part of the program. I helped each one become familiar with the computer and the "remote presenter" device that they would use to advance the slides through their part of the presentation. In the classroom I set up and enabled all of the equipment.

Through the process of this project, each of the members worked on their own portion. We all agreed on the project design and on the allotment of responsibilities. Each person's portion of the presentation made in class was the material that they had prepared. I simply put it into the Powerpoint format.

I believe that my facilitation enabled the others to grow in knowledge and competence in the course of this project. With my support each member participated fully in the analysis and research. All could feel

that their parts were meaningful and truly their own, They were also given the confidence to attempt a level of presentation that they would not have done on their own; and did their own part of the presentation competently, without assistance. Afterwards, all were happy and felt good about what they had achieved collectively.

I believe that I have demonstrated leadership skills and qualities during the course of this project. However, it would be presumptuous of me to state so categorically. I invite the reader to make his or her own conclusions based on the above narrative, using the checklist appended to this document.

J. Brian Bartley