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# Foreword

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# FOREWORD

Arnold D. Weigel

*Editor*

Four words. Inviting words. Engaging words. Challenging words. LEADERS ARE PERSONS WHO... In completing this statement, sometimes the verb is ARE. Sometimes the verb is DO. In either case, the claim is made that leadership is always embodied. Leadership is always embodied in a leader. Hence, “[w]e scrutinize leaders; we ignore leadership.”<sup>1</sup>

Leadership is a pressing issue and a hot topic today. The complexities of life in the modern/post-modern world are so demanding that leadership, leadership styles, and leadership embodiments are constantly being debated. This is no less the case in the Christian church than it is in society. “We need leadership—from all of us—even more than leaders.”<sup>2</sup>

Leadership is many things. Leadership takes on many embodiments. But at the heart of leadership is a sense of humanness. Leadership is “liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and humane way possible.”<sup>3</sup> My thoughts turn to Hal David’s great song of the 1960s: “What the world needs now is love!”

What the world needs now is love, sweet love, It’s the only thing that there’s just too little of. What the world needs now is love, sweet love, No, not just for some but for everyone!

I hear this plea in the pages of Nelson Mandela’s international classic: *Long Walk To Freedom*.<sup>4</sup> I also hear it in a number of scriptures, most notably in Galatians 5:22–23 where love is the first quality named as “fruits of the Spirit”: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

What this world needs now is love. This may mean in context the need to join someone for coffee or tea, provide transportation to an important appointment, go shopping, provide

necessary financial support, work for justice in an unjust world, be an advocate for the poor, stand up and be counted, work with people to accomplish a vision, be in conversation with people to give us the courage to face our fears and to claim our hopes.

Many people hope that leadership will put us on a more promising path. But what of leadership? Here consensus evaporates. Two images dominate: one of the heroic champion with extraordinary stature and vision, the other of the 'policy wonk', the skilled analyst who solves pressing problems with information, programs and policies. But both images miss the essence of leadership. Both emphasize the hands and heads of leaders, neglecting deeper and more enduring elements of courage, spirit and hope. Perhaps we lost our way when we forgot that the heart of leadership lies in the hearts of leaders.<sup>5</sup>

How best to be that? How best to do that? How best to help that to happen personally, interpersonally, communally? How best to do that in context? LEADERS ARE PERSONS WHO.... These are some of the leadership questions explored in the articles within this Number of *Consensus* as authors struggle with what David Whyte says: "The twenty-first century will be anything but business as usual. Institutions must now balance the need to make a living with a natural ability to change".<sup>6</sup>

Beverly Forbes, deeply committed to feminist values as the grounding of effective leadership, names and reflects on ten value-based guiding premises considered essential and helpful in becoming, sustaining and celebrating transformational leadership into the 21st century. Forbes contends that leadership must be multidimensional and inclusive in its foundations, drawing wisdom from indigenous peoples and from nature. Spirit, integrity and authenticity are at the heart of competent and compassionate leadership.

James McCullum searches for "seeds of leadership" in "ancient" and "current" practices of aboriginal elders. From this non-European/North American wisdom, primarily rooted in the arts of story-telling and listening, McCullum draws forward some essentials for effective congregational leadership in these modern/post-modern times.

M. Thomasin Glover identifies herself as a crusader for radical inclusivity in leadership. Her experiences as Chaplain of Brent School in the Philippines, as well as congregational priesting in Canada, enable her to provide valuable

cross-cultural insights, learnings and wisdoms. She cleverly, creatively and prophetically uses a “guerilla” metaphor to explore dimensions of transformational leadership in chaplaincy and congregational contexts. Leadership is very much about trust-building through a partnering ministry.

Jean Stairs sees leadership as seeking to create conditions in which people can be fully human. Appropriately, then, she wonders: How do students—especially theology students—learn leadership in both congregational and non-congregational contexts? Her focus is on three primary questions: What do we need to learn? How do we pay attention to context? How can context become an intentional participant? Stairs appropriately notes that leadership itself constantly needs to be refined through the discipline of critical reflection. In many respects, leadership is about meaning-making, learned best within context.

Arnold D. Weigel’s article on “Inspiring Worldmakers” identifies how it is that leadership is primarily a constitutive process through which the participants are world creators. This being the case, he argues strongly against a controlling leadership and for a collaborative leadership, with the latter in his view being best suited for these times and into the 21st century.

As each of the authors searches for constructive ways to help us reflect on LEADERS ARE PERSONS WHO..., it becomes apparent that to explore the complexities and dynamics of leadership is to explore “the meaning and value of human life itself...[Leadership cannot be] reduced to techniques, quick fixes, or heroics...To study leadership is to study what others have said and then to study ourselves.”<sup>7</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Terry, *Authentic Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993) 4.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard Desroches, *Allow the Water* (Toronto: Dunamis, 1996) 133.

<sup>3</sup> Max DePree, *Leadership Is An Art* (New York: Dell, 1989) 1.

<sup>4</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk To Freedom* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1994/1995).

<sup>5</sup> Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Leading With Soul* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995) 5–6.

<sup>6</sup> David Whyte, *The Heart Aroused* (New York: Doubleday, 1994) 10.

<sup>7</sup> Terry, *Authentic Leadership*, 14–15.