



Rev. Dr. Daris S. Bultena, Pastor
Minister of Word and Sacrament

February 8, 2009

Leadership These Days

Dear Readers,

I've been thinking a lot lately about leadership in the church in the 21st century. As I look back over the course of my ministry (which is about 20 years at this point), I see that the issue of leadership has really changed some along the way from where I began to where I am now.

Only a few decades ago we recognized leadership in various traditional terms. We looked at the business world and took our lead in the church from what was happening there. So, leaders in the church were understood as people with the right set of skills. They were understood as people who had gifts for mobilizing people, creating a result, and bringing about the kind of goods and services that churches should both do and perform.

While I was doing my doctorate at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia, I took a course on leadership. In that course we used a handful of different instruments and measuring tools in order to test and evaluate our leadership abilities as pastors of churches. Those tests and evaluative tools helped us as students to realize where our leadership gifts and challenges are located.



One of the greatest gifts of that course was the concept of getting in the balcony. It is the teaching of an expert on leadership whose name is Ron Heifetz. Mr. Heifetz challenges us to get in the metaphorical balcony and survey what we see in order get perspective. That perspective helps us to see what steps we need to take next, and it enables us to grasp a longer view of where we are headed.

As I get in the balcony and look at the issue of leadership, I am convinced that leadership in the church for this century has less to do with a set of skills than it has to do with sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. The strong leader and the most powerful leadership is that which discerns and responds to the call of God. It is not a program, or set of techniques. It is rather as life lived in reliance upon God. It is a life lived knowing the power and awesome wonder of God's favor. It is a life lived in the foundation of love and practice of grace and mercy.



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Leadership now is more about compassion and passion. Leadership is about a deep and abiding faith that is contagious and loving. It is attractive and spiritually commanding. I see that in Jesus. I see it in what he did with that leper in Mark 1:40-45.

Blessings,
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www.holy411.org