

A Transforming Testimony: Up-Front or Out-Back?

**Roy Schaefer
(2003)**

Sometimes it is very helpful to know whether we are Up-Front or Out-Back. The following true story will give us some interesting perspectives about this.

Once upon a time . . . a congregation was formed from part of the leadership and members of another congregation. For several years the new congregation met in the facilities of the host congregation. They began with a membership base of a little more than one hundred people and a priesthood support base of about twenty.

The new pastor and leadership team decided, with the support of the priesthood, to have a monthly priesthood gathering on the last Saturday evening of each month, just prior to the congregation sharing in the first Sunday sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

After doing this each month for more than two years, the pastor felt a need to make a difficult decision. At the close of one of the monthly priesthood gatherings, he shared the following declaration. He indicated his deep appreciation for those who were striving to fulfill their calling in ministry. He, however, shared his deep concern for those who seemed to function only if they were asked to be Up-Front (i.e., to preside at a worship service, read scripture, share an invocation or benediction, preach, serve Communion, or receive the offertory). Some were merely not willing to serve Out-Back. Rarely, if ever, were they available to visit in ministry in the homes of members and friends. Rarely, if ever, were they available when people were in pain due to the loss of a loved one, or a tragedy in the family or neighborhood. Rarely, if ever, were they visiting the sick in area hospitals. Rarely, if ever, were they available to build neighborhood relationships and partnerships.

So the pastor announced that for a time he would not be inviting those who were apparently not serving Out-Back to be sharing Up-Front. The closing hymn was sung and a prayer offered.

Before the pastor could leave the church to return home, three of the priesthood confronted him and for what seemed an eternity (but was probably fifteen minutes), they let their pastor know how they felt. They let him know in no uncertain terms that they had never shared in a congregation where a pastor took such action. They loudly confronted him with the assurance that they would report him to his supervisor. Further, they indicated that they were personally offended by his edict, and that they had never been addressed in such a manner since receiving their priesthood. The pastor chose to listen, thanked them for sharing their concerns, left the church, and returned home.

It was of some interest to the pastor (and a number of the dedicated, functioning priesthood) that the following week all three of the very upset priesthood were observed ministering in the homes of families. Yes, my friends, there really is a need to bridge what we enjoy doing Up-Front with what we equally enjoy Out-Back.

Bridging Cultures and People

David Schaal

(2001)

When I was a child, I remember being on a vacation with my parents one summer in which we were going to visit a historic site-an old fort as I recall. As we approached the fort, we came to a place in the road in which it was necessary to drive across a wooden bridge that was supported by suspended cables. As my father drove across the bridge, the wood creaked and the bridge swayed and I remember experiencing both fear and excitement at the same time. While I remember feeling relief at having crossed the bridge safely, I also remember the excitement of knowing that we would be going over it again on the trip home. As an adult, I look back on that bridge and it takes on a new, symbolic meaning. Given its location between the main road and the fort, the bridge was a link between the present and the past; between the familiar and the unfamiliar; between persons I knew and persons I was about to meet for the first time.

I remember the bridge creaking and swaying, but it did what it was supposed to do. It brought diverse people together and introduced them to meaningful story and meaningful experience.

In both the church and the world around us, there is a profound need for bridges.

For example, imagine that you are sitting in a congregation-perhaps your congregation-on a Sunday morning. You hear the sound of someone entering the sanctuary, and a quick glance over your shoulder reveals that it is Jimmy-a 15 year old who comes to church with his mother. His mother makes him take off his headphones while in church, and out of respect he stands quietly as the rest of the congregation sings from the hymnal. When the service is over, the headphones go back on and Jimmy makes his way out the door. *Someone needs to build a bridge.* Three rows behind Jimmy are two women who sit quietly and think. One thinks about her discomfort with how rapid change seems to happen in the congregation. She longs for the way things used to be. Next to her, the other woman sits quietly and thinks about how long it takes for change to happen in the congregation. She's frustrated and wishes it could happen quicker. *Someone needs to build a bridge.* As the prelude music continues, a man and his little daughter walk by the church and can barely hear the music as it drifts out toward the street. For a moment, he wonders about church, about God, and about his life. He wonders what it would be like to belong somewhere...anywhere. *Someone needs to build a bridge.*

Today, we are suggesting that High Priests are called to help build these bridges.

Not only is bridging needed between persons, but between cultures and subcultures as well in a world which consists of both profound connection and painful separation. On one hand, we can sit at our computers or telephones, and within seconds be in touch with persons or institutions half way around the world. On the other hand, suspicion,

prejudice, fear, and the misuse of power keep many people isolated from one another and robs the body of the unique gifts which each culture brings to the table.

Today, we are saying that one calling of the High Priest is to stand in the midst of the world and the church, seeking to create bridges between cultures. We do so in order for the God-given gifts of each culture to find their place in the celebrating, healing work of Christ's kingdom. We do so in order for persons in each culture to know the joy and grace of being loved as a child of God.

To engage in such bridge-building, High Priests are being challenged to invest in honest personal introspection so that we may be sensitive to our own background and culture and consequently become more aware of some of our own blind spots.

High Priests are being challenged to become more aware of the persons, cultures and subcultures within our own congregations and communities who are in need of bridges being built in their direction.

High Priests are being asked to relinquish whatever needs we may have to be "in control" in order to free ourselves to be servant ministers who build relationships between cultures and people.

To persons who are lonely, broken, and pushed to the margins of life, access to the roadways of healing and reconciliation is hard to come by. The Quorum of High Priests is being called to go out and build bridges so that more persons can find their way to the Lord's table.

Building Support Systems

Jane Watkins

(2001)

The Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier wrote: “Me lift thee and thee lift me, and we’ll both ascend together.”

It is my privilege to touch briefly today on the subject of “Building Support Systems.” If we consider the arrowhead graphic used on the high priest materials as a dynamic arrow [*hold up book cover*], moving toward the future, then we might consider this area, “support systems,” as the location for the twin rocket boosters! Or perhaps there is merit in setting the design upright on this base, for indeed it is the “stuff” of a firm foundation.

In the Temple School course PA-212, *High Priests: Ministers of Vision*, you will find only one small paragraph devoted to this subject. It states, “If high priests are to engage in the . . . ministries [elucidated in this course], it will be vital for us to support one another. We are not talking here about “just another meeting” filled with rhetoric. We *are* talking about the experience of ministerial colleagues coming together to open their lives to each other as we share the journey, support one another, and explore new possibilities for ministry. In the future, both the quorum and field jurisdictions will be working together to foster more effective ministerial support systems.”

My role today is to act as a cheerleader-an encourager of your efforts to reach out and seek out to support each other’s ministries. The fact that you are even watching this presentation is an affirmation of your commitment to this support system. There are countless opportunities ahead for developing a network of caring and supporting each other. With internet access, the possibilities of electronic support systems and round-robin notes of encouragement or education are only a “click” away. Forming covenant groups, if you live in proximity of other high priests, is another excellent possibility.

In October of 1999 I had the privilege of sharing guest ministry with the Saints in the Southeast Texas District conference. On Saturday evening, I met with ten high priests at a restaurant in downtown Houston, Texas. I shared some details of the quorum revisioning process and discussed plans for the 2001 area conferences. We chatted about the Temple School course and the High Priest Certificate Course. We had a joyful evening of sharing, good fellowship, and frank discussion on the role of the high priest. As the evening was drawing to a close, one of those present stated, “I’m not sure why we have waited so long to meet together like this. We should meet quarterly.” His comment was received enthusiastically and they eagerly made plans to meet again in January. A covenant group was born. In a follow-up e-mail, the organizer of this group described this as a “Lazarus experience.” They had not only met again in January, but had made plans to take the Temple School course together. They were also exploring ways they could work with area pastors to empower discipleship within congregations. They are my “poster children” for building support systems.

Take the Temple School course! Come to the Congregational Leaders' Workshop at Graceland each August or Winter Field School at the Temple to share heart-to-heart with other high priests in the Seminar on the High Priest. Find a mentor to share with and work on the Certificate Program. Meet with members of the leadership team as we travel among you. We need your support, too, and meeting with you on your own turf is invigorating and informing for us. Even your attendance at world conference quorum sessions is a significant show of support.

So often we work day-to-day and week-to-week, shouldering the blessings and burdens of our ministry all by ourselves. We agonize over difficult decisions and wonder to which direction we will next be called. We should note that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who could turn water to wine and raise the dead, chose companions for his journey. He didn't select only one or two, but twelve! Jesus found friends with whom to preach and teach, travel and dine, and laugh and cry. Shall we, mere mortals, attempt to do less?

There is a story of a father and son who sought some quality time and camaraderie in taking a nature hike together. They savored the many wonders along the pathway: a bubbling brook so clear you could see the crawdads at the bottom; the smell of pine and the wonder of pinecone; velvety moss coating the north sides of trees; chattering squirrels. The boy dashed over to a boulder nearly his height that roosted on the side of the path. He said, "Dad, if I use all my strength, do you think I can move this rock?" His father said, "Yes, son . . . if you use all your strength." The lad planted both hands firmly on the side of the rock and began to push. He rocked and pushed. He pushed high. He pushed low. He put his shoulder into it. He put his back to the rock and groaned with effort. The rock wouldn't budge. Disappointed, he said, rather accusingly, to his father, "You were wrong!" To this his father replied, "You didn't use all your strength. You didn't use me."

During the final quorum devotion at last world conference, I stood with three of you, our heads bowed, quietly praying together. I found myself beginning to "weave" as I seem to do at times when standing still in one spot. As we prayed, we simultaneously reached up and placed our arms around each other's shoulders. With a brother on my left and a sister on my right, I was suddenly steadied-rock solid! At that moment I was pierced with the truth of how dearly we need to feel this support of one another. May we reach out to each other, in encouragement and support, that we might be steadied, strengthened, and empowered for our personal call to discipleship for the Christ.

Discerning God's Will

Jane M. Gardner

(2005)

On February 27, 2005, the Sunday designated as a “Day of Prayer and Preparation” for the upcoming World Conference and the discernment process for who the new president will be, I was privileged to be ministering in the Sedalia, Missouri, congregation. They took the request for prayer and preparation from the First Presidency very seriously by planning a Prayer Vigil. For twelve hours that day, individuals were scheduled to pray for a half hour, with the whole group meeting at 6:30 that evening for a special prayer service. The pastor’s study was transformed into a place of prayer with candles, fresh flowers, and a list of World Church leaders.

Mary Jo Sartin, a co-pastor of the congregation, shared, “The prayer vigil went very well. It ended with a special service that included some historic hymns and revelation about seeking the Lord’s direction and the prophetic nature of the church, as well as related recent scripture. There were some specific prayers and then an open time of prayer. Several people commented on the strong spirit they felt throughout the day. One woman even went so far as to say that the congregation should have prayer vigils more often....”

It strikes me that this congregation applied a rich spiritual discipline to this special day of prayer. I am confident that strength and blessings were the result of this effort for church leaders involved in the discernment process, as well as the people in the congregation. As so often is true, they were “blessed to be a blessing.”

As high priests, we can be in the forefront—assisting congregations with the spiritual practice of discerning God’s will with patience and perseverance. There are individual and corporate dimensions to this experience. Individual prayer, fasting, scripture study, and meditation are some of the tools of discernment. However, it is not wise to attempt spiritual discernment by yourself, without input and feedback from other committed disciples. We are enriched by the variety of opinions and perspectives resident within the body of Christ. In a manner of speaking, “the church was created to discern and to implement God’s will” (Morris, D. E. & C. M. Olsen. *Discerning God’s Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church*. Nashville: Upper Room Books in association with The Alban Institute, 1997).

Acts 2:46–47 is an interesting model:

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

Discernment takes place in the temple, in the homes, and in the hearts. It may begin in secret (as referenced in Matthew 6:6). Jesus took time for solitude, away from the crowds. But he didn’t stop there. There were times of intimate community-like gathering

with the twelve, or visits to disciples' and seekers' homes. Then, in addition to the large crowds that followed Jesus throughout his ministry, he spent time preaching and teaching in the synagogues and in the temple—places where relationships grew and mystery was acknowledged. All three settings for discernment are interdependent, and movement through the discernment process goes back and forth among them.

At the core of spiritual discernment is the willingness to listen, to be open to change, by “honoring the past and visioning the future.” It is especially important to note that in times when we are able to sense God’s will, that this gift of grace-filled sensitivity is bestowed with an implied willingness on our part *to act* on the information. Sometimes this action is difficult because it may require us to have a change of heart.

Enhancing Leadership Effectiveness

Jane M. Gardner

(2001)

What can be said to high priests about leadership? Many of us have defined our life of service by providing leadership in congregations, districts, stakes and regions. Some among us have particular gifts in the area of administration, but is there more? What makes our leadership effective and how can we improve?

Leadership has been closely tied to the concept of power. At its worst, leadership has been the naked use of this power to prevail. However, new models and theories are emerging which include more shared methods of goal setting and achievement.

James MacGregor Burns identifies one such leadership style as:

"...inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations--the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations--of both leaders and followers."

This "transactional" leadership has "give-and-take" at its foundation. While this kind of leadership moves closer to a Christian style, Burns goes on to hold up a more sensitive and constructive approach, identified as 'transformational leadership.' He says, "Transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both."

As others gain a richer quality of life, we are also blessed. As leaders, we are called to be transformational; to be agents of change in the lives of others, to take people beyond where they think they can be, to be ministers of vision.

Jesus Christ models servant leadership. As high priests, we are called to live out this model in our everyday lives. Quite frankly, as high priests we have, at times, been self-serving rather than 'servant.' This may be because of our backgrounds, training, accomplishments, personalities and a whole host of other factors. However, we are called to be like Christ: humble servants to those we are called to lead.

This is a good time to share my testimony of Eleanor. As a child in the Chicago District, I attended a girls group led by Eleanor. There were 9 or 10 girls spread throughout the metro area and on Sunday nights we gathered at the church to learn, worship and have fun. Eleanor reminded me of my grandmother.

One special weekend Eleanor invited all of the girls to her home. My mother drove me to Eleanor's on Friday night. We were the first to arrive. We sat and talked while we waited for the others. But as the appointed hour passed, it became obvious that no one else was coming. My mother offered to take me home and reschedule the activity for another weekend.

I will never forget Eleanor's reply. She said, "No, you leave Jane with me. We have much to do. I'll bring her to church on Sunday." Eleanor and I spent the weekend together. It was one of the most special times in my life. She taught me, she played with me, she coached me, she LOVED me. Being a child from a large family, I had never received so much individual attention in my life. She fed my soul.

I realize now that Eleanor was my grandmother's age. Her children were grown and on their own. I am so thankful that she didn't say, "I served my term while my children were at home. It's someone else's turn." Eleanor and I formed a life-long bond. Until the time of her death, I was the recipient of her love through cards, letters, and visits. Every exchange included words of encouragement and vision, pulling me beyond the status quo. She was a servant leader to me.

Peter O'Toole has said: "Leaders must become leaders of leaders." This seems especially appropriate for high priests to consider - we are called to nurture servant ministry in others.

The Covey Leadership Center espouses that a principle-centered leader understands the different approaches required for people and things: in management the focus is on things, efficiency and control; in leadership the focus is on people, effectiveness and release. Leaders are to be efficient with things, but....effective with people.

The Leadership Center lists three factors that they believe determine a leader's effectiveness:

1. pathfinding - creating an exciting vision;
2. empowerment - teaching people to become relatively independent and part of interdependent, self-managing teams; and
3. team building - involving people in activities that improve the team's productivity and cooperation.

Sounds like a good match with 'ministers of vision' to me.

Enhancing the Effectiveness of High Priests through Synergy and Comentoring

Dale W. Lick

(2001)

How can an institution become more serving? I see no other way than that the people who inhabit it serve and work together toward synergy—the whole becoming greater than the sum of its parts The stimulus and support that individuals need to be open to inspiration and imaginative insight often come from the nurture of groups.

—Robert K. Greenleaf *The Power of Servant-Leadership: Essays* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1998)

How can high priests interact and assist priest-hood members, groups, and congregations in the creation of more effective priesthood and inter-personal relationships and congregational and church enhancement? In response to this critical question, Leonard Young, in his statement to the Quorum of High Priests, "Becoming Ministers of Vision," (Quorum of High Priests Newsletter (spring 2000), suggested that high priests are called to engage in at least one of four areas of ministry: (1) building bridges between cultures and people, (2) enhancing leadership effectiveness, (3) standing for peace and justice, and (4) fostering spiritual growth and wholeness. He went on to say, "If high priests are to engage faithfully in these ministries, it will be vital for us to support one another. We are not talking here about 'just another meeting' filled with rhetoric. We are talking about the experience of ministerial colleagues coming together to open lives to each other as we share the journey, support one another, and explore new possibilities for ministry."

The essence of what Apostle Young was talking about is building meaningful human relationships with all the elements of our ministerial environment to effectively share with and inspire one another and utilize available resources to their fullest potential. Functioning together with the Spirit of God, two of the key tools necessary to accomplish these ministerial goals are synergy and *comentoring*. These approaches were fundamental to and thoroughly expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus and his model of servant ministry that brought life and fullness to all God's creation.

Relative to our high priest ministerial goals, this paper outlines a step-by-step, practical, intentional process for building synergistic and comentoring relationships between high priests and other groups and within such groups, leading to *team learning* and *community learning* and increasing the ministerial and congregational effectiveness of all concerned.

Synergy and Teams

Synergy commonly means that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. In a *synergistic relationship*, individuals and groups work together to produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of their individual efforts. In a genuinely synergistic group, members energize and inspire each other. The diversity of ideas and openness available to them provide the basis for new creative ideas, knowledge, and problem solving (Murphy and Lick, 2001). Examples of synergistic groups might be a symphony

orchestra or a healthy marriage, where the spouses create a mutual support system, fostering each other's growth and ability to deal with problems and opportunities.

Synergy is the *authentic team* process within a group. A synergistic group is a team with potential to be especially effective in its operation and outcomes. Synergy is what differentiates an effective team from a typically less successful group or committee.

The four prerequisites required for a synergistic group are (Conner, 1993)

1. Common Goal or Goals. A group agreeing to a common goal or goals, putting them in writing, and sticking to them throughout their efforts.

2. Interdependence. A group functioning in a genuinely cooperative and mutually dependent fashion.

3. Empowerment. Group members have a sense of empowerment when they believe that they have something of value to contribute to the situation and its outcome. (Not delegation!)

4. Participative Involvement. When group members feel encouraged to openly express, in a balanced fashion, their thoughts and opinions.

An illustration might be a high priest working with the planning committee of a congregation to set the goal of developing a congregational vision statement. Members work in a genuinely cooperative manner that shows respect for each other and their ideas and opinions. All members overcome their sense of vulnerability and share openly and fully, arriving at a compelling, supported, and inspiring vision.

An effective four-step process for building synergy is (Conner, 1993)

1. Interaction—communicate effectively, listen actively, and generate trust and credibility.

2. Appreciative Understanding—create an open climate, delay negative judgments, empathize with others, and value diversity.

3. Integration—tolerate ambiguity and be persistent, pliable, creative, and selective in determining the best solution or course of action.

4. Implementation—strategize, plan, implement, monitor, reinforce, remain team focused, and update.

Applying the concepts and approaches discussed above should help create synergistic relationships of high priests with other priesthood members and groups and within such groups to increase their effectiveness. From time to time, it is helpful to use the

following eight sets of questions as a synergy checklist for assessing the level of synergy in the group.

1. Common Goals. Has your group discussed, agreed on, and written a clearly and precisely stated goal or goals for your efforts

2. Interdependence. Are your discussions, interactions, and sharing interdependent (i.e., mutually dependent and genuinely cooperative)?

3. Empowerment. Does each member of the group feel a sense of empowerment? Does each one feel that what he or she has to offer is important to the group and possibly valuable to the final outcome?

4. Participative Involvement. Is each member of the group openly participating in the discussions and activities of the group?

5. Interaction. Do all the members of your group, individually and collectively, interact fully? Do they communicate effectively and actively listen? Is there a spirit of trust and credibility among the participants?

6. Appreciative Understanding. Does the group exhibit an open climate? Does it value diversity? Does each member delay judgment and empathize with others and what they are offering?

7. Integration. Do members of your group tolerate ambiguity and exhibit persistence in deliberations? Are they flexible, creative, and selective in considering the issues? Are they effective in moving toward accomplishing the goals of the group?

8. Implementation. Is the implementation process being managed toward a successful conclusion? Is there a written implementation plan? Is the action plan continuously updated and evaluated? Have group efforts remained team focused?

Comentoring and Team Learning

A comentoring group is one in which members of the group mentor one another from their areas of expertise and knowledge. In a constructive comentoring group, each person acts as a sponsor, advocate, and guide. Members teach, advise, critique, and support each other to express, pursue, and finalize goals while being competent, non-exploitive, positive, and involved (Cronan-Hillix, et. al., 1986). Ideally, in a comentoring situation, each member of the group offers support and encouragement to everyone else, which expands individual and group understanding and learning—group learning—improving the group's potential learning capacity, effectiveness, creativity, and productivity (Lick,2000).

As discussed earlier, synergistic groups are teams. Similarly, synergistic comentoring groups are teams in which all members teach and mentor while at the same time all are taught and mentored by other members. This approach provides what learning

organization expert Peter Senge (1990) calls "team learning," where there is "a free-flowing of meaning through a group, allowing the group to discover insights not attainable individually" and where "the intelligence of the team exceeds the intelligence of the individuals in the team, and where teams develop extraordinary capacities for coordinated action. "Synergistic comentoring provides a transforming vehicle for groups to have the potential for becoming *learning teams or learning communities*.

Consequently, the significance of the synergistic comentoring approach to high priestly ministry with groups and within groups is that it creates a model of service where there is a co-learner relationship of high priest with others and each person is receiving and contributing. By so doing, all are lifted up to new levels of inspiration, understanding, learning, and effectiveness.

How to Begin

Creating an effective comentoring team of priest-hood members and others requires initial planning, patience, and taking the necessary steps to build a synergistic group. Developing such a team will necessitate high priests being proactive and intentional in their ministry and leadership, requiring substantial commitment and effort. However, these efforts and this powerful approach to ministry have the potential for increasing the effectiveness and quality of all ministry. As you move forward in faith and prayer, the following suggestions will help you get started (Lick, 1999).

1. At an initial meeting, introduce the general concept of synergy, and discuss how it can help the group become a team, an effective synergistic group.
2. If the group is amenable to synergy, the group and its members should take time to learn about synergy and comentoring and their implementation. An early understanding and application of synergy and comentoring can pay handsome dividends later.
3. Once the understanding of synergy and comentoring has been established, develop an agreement to the effect that the group and all its members will strive to function as a comentoring team and together fulfill the synergy and comentoring guidelines.
4. If someone exhibits nonsynergistic or noncomentoring behavior, this should be diplomatically dealt with by the leader and members of the group, either during the meeting or immediately following the meeting.
5. Periodically, the group and its members should apply the synergy checklist and comentoring characteristics to assure themselves that the group is continuing to function synergistically and in a comentoring fashion or to determine which areas of synergy and comentoring require additional attention.
6. Follow the processes as outlined in this article, pray together often, and allow the Spirit to lead you as a synergistic comentoring group—a learning team committed to serving God's people and building his kingdom.

Conclusion

As you prayerfully apply this new approach to ministry, you will be both blessed by and a blessing to those who serve in various groups and, in turn, to individuals, families, and congregations that receive their ministries. As your synergistic mentoring group functions in an open, genuinely cooperative manner under the guidance and support of the Spirit, the diversity of gifts, experience, and calling will bless group members, their congregation, the church, the world, and especially you.

Embrace the blessing of your many differences. . . . Be reminded once again that the gifts of all are necessary in order that divine purposes may be accomplished.

—*Doctrine and Covenants 161:4b*

Enough and To Spare—Transforming Testimony

John VanderWalker

(2005)

"I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and builded the earth as a very handy work; and all things therein are mine; and it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine; but it must needs be done in mine own way; and, behold, this is the way, that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints; that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low; for the earth is full. and there is enough to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves."

—Doctrine and Covenants 101:2 d-f

I had the honor of serving communion at Spectacular, always a special service during the week. The service was arranged so that the participants in the sacrament had to leave their seats and walk to a designated area to receive their portion of the emblems. Those coming to the area I was serving in had to walk down a hallway past tables laden with bread and wine to the eight servers who stood waiting. As the service proceeded I was aware of the diminishing heap of bread on the plate that I served from; I also noticed that the wine servers were being regularly restocked. I looked at the tables and found that the bread was gone and all that was left was on our plates and a fear struck me that there wouldn't be enough.

Just as that fear hit, other servants came loaded with heaps of bread and trays of wine, and I realized that there would be enough and to spare. It was at this time that those desiring to be fed ceased to come, and I kept looking down the hallway asking myself, "Where is everyone? There is plenty." It was impressed upon me that there was enough and to spare, and that the body of Christ is for the whole world. If we so choose, we can feed the world the bread that is eternal life.

As I read the scripture above, I realize that there are many down-trodden and poor people in this world who need to hear the story of Jesus of Nazareth. The impact that Christ has on our lives is part of our stewardship. There are many who are rich in material things that are made low because they do not know the bread of life, and they, too, live in poverty. Our story is not for us, but for the world—there is enough and to spare!

Fostering Spiritual Growth and Wholeness

Carolyn Brock

(2001)

In the deserts of northeastern Kenya, a small garden grows. Covered by a humanly constructed shade during the scorching mid-day sun, irrigated by water carried from a nearby well, it produces vegetables that the nomadic Turkana people have never before had in their diets. The vision for the garden came from Alicia and Elkana Odupa, Luo church members who moved to Turkana to work for the government in the mid-1980's. They brought the seeds and taught the people how to plant, fertilize, and cultivate. Over a period of years the Odupa's presence brought transformation to a desperately poor community.

It's not so much that the poverty is gone in that place or that all problems are resolved. No, we cannot really say that. But what we can say is that there has been growth toward wholeness. The well-being of the community, the quality of life has been nurtured, supported, and changed in a variety of creative ways. The people of Lodwar, Turkana are becoming whole because the Odupa's heard the Spirit calling them to become a healing, empowering presence in their community.

When we speak of wholeness we mean God's dream of shalom, the scriptural vision of Zion, the healing of the entire created order. We mean a condition in which there is justice, health, well-being, goodness, beauty, and peace for every person, every creature, the creation itself. This kind of radical transformation of life is rooted in our relationship with Spirit. In scriptural language it is the metaphor of the branches drawing life from the true vine. (John 15)

Alicia and Elkana responded in compassionate but practical ways to the movement of God's Spirit in their hearts, minds, and bodies. They found that spiritual growth issues could not be addressed unless wholeness and healing issues were also addressed in the lives of their Turkana friends. And unless spiritual life and growth was continuously attended to, the practical material programs began to fall apart. All aspects of human community had to be held together around a central dream, a central calling, a central source of life.

This story speaks to me of the call to be ministers of spirituality and wholeness. Our districts, stakes, and congregations are somewhat like gardens, some of them perhaps quite small, some of them perhaps struggling not to die from spiritual dehydration. How can high priests foster their growth, nurture their spirituality, empower them to move towards wholeness?

High priests are called to be ministers of integrated vision. In other words those who see the whole, the big picture, the way things fit together, the relationships between things. The ability to see in this holistic, accurate way is a spiritual capacity. It is a way of knowing that goes beyond logic and rationality, though these too are spiritual gifts. Yet for transformational spirituality and integrated vision we must draw on other ways of

knowing, we must explore other dimensions of the intuitive, the mysterious, the non-local nature of mind and consciousness, the sacramental nature of the universe and our own beings.

High priests themselves are called to spiritual growth and wholeness, invited to deepen their spirits, care for the wholeness of their own bodies and lives. Growing a garden, bringing transformation to a congregation or a community are strenuous callings demanding time, energy, compassion, practical wisdom. Neither can be done from a state of physical depletion or spiritual pessimism. Who must we be, then, how must we live if we are to be whole and full enough to respond? What is the central reality that holds all the pieces together and allows us to discern what is most essential?

One definition of wholeness is life integrated around a spiritual center. It is my belief that what heals and energizes, what fills and renews, what inspires and empowers, is our relationship with God's Spirit. If we are to be ministers of vision, integrators, planters of new seeds, those who nurture and support, those who "foster" wholeness and spirit in others, we must begin by placing Spirit at the center of who we are and what we do.

In the fall of 2001, the theme for the Temple Peace Colloquy will be "Seeds of Spirit, Harvest of Shalom: Healing for all God's People." Reflecting on the imagery of this statement I hope that you will experience a rich planting of seeds of the Spirit and that the seeds will take root in your hearts; that you will feel them swelling and expanding and starting to grow. And when they do, may you and those you serve know a rich harvest of shalom. May you become a tree of life bearing the fruits of healing and wholeness in your life together and in God's world.

High Priests as Mentors

Ken Robinson

(2006)

Over my thirty-three-plus years of being a high priest and working with high priests as a colleague and administrator, I have learned that a constant concern about being a high priest is defining the role. Most other priesthood roles, including the special ministries of high priests—bishop, evangelist, apostle, president—have clearer and perhaps narrower definitions. The broad role of high priest can be so many things to so many people.

I suspect this is so because a high priest by definition is not a functional role but rather a calling reflecting depth of understanding and relationship. A high priest has a deep, wide-ranging understanding of the gospel and the church, a passionate commitment to follow Jesus Christ, and an abiding sense of the love and presence of God. Expression of that understanding and relationship can occur in numerous ways, depending on the circumstances and the particular experience of each high priest.

Being a mentor is perhaps one of the roles in ministry that most high priests can do. In fact, I want to suggest that it is a ministry that all of us should attempt to provide if only for what it will do for our own ministry. I'll get back to that later.

Jesus modeled this ministry with his disciples. A significant portion of the years of his ministry was devoted to the teaching and preparation of his disciples. They all knew with certainty that he could do far greater things than they could ever hope to accomplish. So often, they were simply astonished at the teaching, the miracles, and the wisdom that came forth from him. Then he astonished and confused them by declaring that he was going to leave and the ministry would be entrusted to them. He declared that they and other believers would be able to accomplish greater things than he had accomplished because he was going to the Father. He promised the strengthening, affirming presence of the Holy Spirit would be with them.

Likewise, each of you giving ministry out of your depth of passion and understanding, and out of your extensive experience, could likely accomplish more than most of the less experienced priesthood members around you. Greater foresight would suggest, however, that your gifts can be multiplied and your ministry magnified by others whom you mentor. Together they will accomplish more than you could ever hope to do.

Individually, they will bring their energy and their understanding of the world, expanded by the insights and strengthening that you provide, and they may do greater things than you have been able to do.

The dictionary says that a mentor is a wise and trusted counselor. Mentors have always been present in every society and organization. Often though, wise and experienced ministers haven't perceived themselves as mentors, and others who have needed mentoring have struggled along without the enormous benefit that mentoring provides.

We believe it is vital for this principle to be intentionally lived out in our congregations and mission centers if the church's ministries are to thrive.

I am especially conscious of the many younger men and women being called to priesthood service, and also to new responsibilities in church leadership. They value and honor the sacraments and teachings of the church but many have not yet wrestled with the meaning of them or the subtle nuances of the powerful impact they have in people's lives. They often have excellent knowledge of systems and technology in the modern world but surprisingly little detailed knowledge of the procedures of the church and the underlying rationales for those procedures. They are frequently very willing but have had little opportunity in their formative years to stand alongside experienced ministers. They need your presence and wisdom to accompany them on the journey.

I was fortunate as a young priesthood member to have had such mentors. One of our congregational leaders took me every week for almost a year on a home visit to one family, prospective members who eventually chose to be baptized. We traveled some thirty miles each way and often stayed as long as two to three hours. We had lively chats to and from each visit, and those chats, combined with the actual visits, were formative for me.

Then in my mid-twenties, the high priest/ appointee in our area, Brother Jack Imrie, approached me to share his sense that it was time for me to consider offering myself to be pastor of our congregation for the coming year. I was shocked. More than half the members of the congregation were my relatives, many of them experienced priesthood members. What had I, a relatively inexperienced priesthood member, to offer to this congregation of my family elders? Would they not be critical and dissatisfied with what I could offer?

In the end I was chosen as the pastor and survived through some very difficult and some very good times. The congregation also survived! The key, however, was the constant mentoring from Brother Jack. He instructed me thoroughly in the basics. He was always available to talk things through. Most important, when he noticed some issues developing, he took the initiative to raise them and discuss possible responses with me. Many others had a lot to say to me, but occasional outbursts or even occasional well-measured counsel do not necessarily stick. The words that made me more effective were mostly from this high priest as he listened, coached, urged, and generally was there for me. The keys were his commitment to be there in a long term way for me, his evident knowledge and wisdom, and my awareness of his commitment in support of my growth.

We had opportunity to serve together in later years when I was also an appointee. In those days it was more of a mutual mentoring that we provided for each other. A deep respect and affection marked our relationship as colleagues and friends. Years later, at his memorial service, I was able to offer the message, lifting up his life of service in ministry.

This is the kind of bond and the kind of experience that is available to each high priest. Somewhere in the circle of your influence is an individual who is deeply desirous of being a worthy minister and servant but who needs a mentor. That person who is new to priesthood or new to a particular responsibility needs someone who will perceive possibilities, offer challenge, coach and teach, and be there in support.

It's not as easy as I am portraying here. Most experienced, successful people get great satisfaction out of doing things themselves. Likewise, in the church, it is too easy to simply say "I'll do it." I know many of you at this point are saying: "Yes, but we actually do need a few more people who will agree to do things in the congregation and I need to do my share." My answer is a "yes, but." No congregation needs the same people doing the same things for many years on end. Fresher, younger ones need to be brought into ministry and leadership. Such individuals will be more effective with good mentors. This means, however, that you and I have to learn how to defer to others and then assist them. That's no easy task for most of us. Let me take this a step further.

Deferring to others and then choosing to be there for them, and in the meantime seeing responsibilities in the congregation sometimes handled less well than we could do, is frustrating and difficult to accept. Let's face it, we are used to being self-starters, resourceful, and reliable. Being a mentor may bring with it inner conflict and restlessness. We are not comfortable being in a position where our satisfaction is dependent on the actions of someone else. Maybe there is a silver lining here.

Learning to cope with a more dependent, rather than independent, position takes trust, prayer, discernment, and believing in the one we are mentoring. It is in some respects an expanded version of the parental role. If you can exercise the spiritual disciplines that will help you get through this, you will find a new and deeper spirituality emerging in your own life. You will be more sensitive and more patient with others, less sure at times of your own rightness, but more open to the presence of God's voice within you. Others will increasingly enjoy being in your company and will seek you out, because in your presence they will discover more clearly who they are and what their life is about.

All of this may seem to you something of an oxymoron – high priest/mentor who is not always as certain about everything as in the past. After all, high priests are traditionally called to lead and preside. I want to suggest that in the midst of all that leading, being a mentor may lead you to wonderfully fulfilling places in your own ministry. There is much more to it than I have indicated here. There are skills to learn and materials available to assist that learning. However, it is essentially about choosing to be that wise and trusted counselor and then getting on board for the journey. You won't know for sure where it is going to take you but most certainly you will discover new depths and new friends.

Honoring the Past, Visioning the Future

Richard Hughes

(2001)

As a community of faith, few things are more important than our collective story. Our story shapes our identity and informs our mission. It reminds us where we have come from and who we are called to be. Because of this, we rightfully give attention to the need to “honor our past”. Honoring our past can remind us of the dreams of a better world that motivated those who have gone before us and of the values that we share in common with one another. Honoring our past can instill within us a sense of belonging and community that binds us together in ways that are intimate and precious.

- In the beginning, God created. We sense with awe the vastness of creation and the beauty that our Creator has provided as God has moved, and continues to move, in all of creation.
- As a part of creation, we are able to view ourselves through our secular and religious histories. We see the Community of Christ in the context of that great story of humankind.
- We view our Scriptures through understanding the historical contexts of knowing where, when, and under what circumstances they were written. We then understand better the issues faced by our forebears. By understanding the contextual meaning of the Scriptures we may see current situations that are similar to those faced by the early church mothers and fathers. This understanding can also help us avoid the pitfall of interpreting the Scriptures in ways the authors might never have intended.
- The Gospel of Love as taught by Christ, the Apostle Paul, and others is a major component of our current paths as High Priests in the Church. We interpret events with an understanding of Grace.
- The Restoration movement was created in the “ferment” of nineteenth century America. The early restoration movement incorporated, or flirted with, many of the experimental notions current in America during that period. Observing the interaction of Joseph Jr. and the early Church to their 19th century environment may help us understand how religious and secular movements effect our society and our Church today.
- We recognize and deeply appreciate the sacrificial living of others in the historic Christian faith, the early Restoration movement, and of those living today. We have been nurtured, taught, loved, cajoled, corrected, and inspired by the Saints of the present and near past. They are a part of who we are as individuals and as a church.
- We recognize, also, that we would not be in this conference today were it not for many noble persons who are a major part of our own individual personal histories.
- Honoring **our** past however, carries with it a challenge. Namely, **our** story is one that is rooted deeply within a **prophetic tradition**. Consequently, we are a people who are forever standing on the threshold of God’s creative action that calls us to be explorers in new arenas of faith and ministry. As such, **we are deeply appreciative of our heritage, but we do not camp there**. We affirm and stand on the treasures of our story, but we do so in order to catch a better glimpse of how God is calling us into the days ahead.

It is at this **intersection** of the past and future that High Priests are asked to stand. We stand here not only for ourselves, but as ministers committed to helping our community of faith engage in the path of discipleship that is set before the church. Many in our congregations struggle with the rapidity of change today. We sometimes struggle with

how we can be true to the past and still be fully integrated into the future which is opening before us. Do we need to have modern music in our services? Do we really need to change our styles of worship in order to reach out to others? What happens when one generation's values differ markedly with another generation's values? As high priests we are called to stand at the intersections of the past, present, and future; to stand at the intersections of differing cultures; to stand at the intersections of differences between age groups; to stand at the intersections of the myriad of challenges that the church faces today. As high priests, we are challenged to honor our past as we envision and move into the future.

In his 2000 Conference address, President McMurray invited the church to walk the path of the disciple. High Priests are asked to be ministers who not only are pilgrims on that path themselves, but who are also willing to be companions along the way for others who have heard the call and wish to respond.

How we do this is a central question now before the Quorum of High Priests. It is the question which the new Temple School course *High Priests: Ministers of Vision* attempts to address. It is the question that this area conference is being asked to consider. We trust that your exploration of this matter will be graced by God's Spirit as you pray, worship and discuss together. With our wonderful past in mind, let us move into the future together.

Iconoclasm

Harry A. Dennis
(2003)

Breaking with tradition has been a painful experience for many people steeped in history and loyal to the past. Yet tradition can be binding and a major deterrent to growth.

Some religious denominations have seemed to become victims of tradition by their resistance to change, even while the world has become different in many respects. How do we find the proper balance between honoring the past and still allowing adjustments and changes that new times demand? Surely a dynamic church must not only review its traditions, but be willing to forego those that inhibit growth.

The Bible is laden with traditions that have been adopted by many religions as scriptural imperatives. For many churches, liturgical sayings and various symbols have become the essence of worship instead of the means by which people connect with Deity. This is not to suggest that the words in scripture and the sacramental practices are meaningless and not efficacious for many believers, but rather it is to suggest the need for scrutiny and evaluation of traditional patterns and liturgical expressions that may now be passé.

The Community of Christ has come a long way toward loosening the shackles that chain it to the past. Some members, however, sought shelter among those who would not accept change.

As members look back to some changes it is easy to see, for example, why the church gave up the common cup at the Lord's Supper and why close Communion fostered exclusivity. However, the ordination of women and a different name for the church were changes that were much more dramatic and painful to many. Yet, in such changes the church has been blessed by breaking with tradition and addressing the future with enriched human resources and shedding some negative images associated with its historical name.

In addition to these changes, the church has made dialogue a feature of its methodology in dealing with controversial issues. There are many issues that are yet to be considered, such as those related to rebaptism, human sexuality, and authority. The church is called to mission in this day and time. To change it is not blasphemy, but worshiping tradition may well be.

Change is inevitable and often necessary. Resistance to new ideas and ways can be barriers to growth. A church that stays viable in today's world cannot turn its back on history, but neither can it be bound by tradition. Iconoclasts should not be "believers in exile" but be allowed to help move the church forward.

Learners and Teachers of What?

David Schaal

(2006)

Not long ago, my daughter asked me to look up information on the internet to help her with her health science homework. Specifically, she was doing research on a particular birth defect. As I went to the website that my daughter had suggested, I was fascinated by the breadth of research topics that were at my fingertips at that one web site alone. There were numerous things that I was interested in learning about and since that time have returned to learn more. At *that* time however, the pressing need was to focus on a specific topic that my daughter was “calling” for my help with.

In like manner, there are many important and meaningful things that high priests might concern themselves with, based on their personal gifts, interests and sense of calling. As ministers of vision however, high priests are called to apply their personal gifts and interests to the cutting edge of where the church is being prophetically called. In our current context, we have been commissioned to share the peace of Jesus Christ, which calls congregations to be places wherein the spirit of invitation and generosity is fostered. Consequently, if high priests are to be learners and teachers, then it is important that they be learners and teachers of how to create congregational environments wherein this spirit of generosity and invitation can grow and develop. There are many ways to do this of course, but I would like to mention three characteristics that high priests can incorporate into their lives if they are to be learners and teachers in this way.

Humility. High Priests are veteran ministers. They are disciples who bring a breadth of experience to the table and often have a maturity of insight. No matter how mature one may be however, effective high priests understand that there is much to be learned about how to nurture disciple-making congregations in contemporary culture. The root meaning of humility is to be “teachable”, and effective high priests are eager to learn as much as they can about what is working in today’s environment. It is easy to find opinions within our congregations regarding what the church must do to make new disciples or to generate more income. Some of these opinions are well-founded, while some are based on methodologies that no longer speak effectively to current realities. High priests, however, should inspire others through their humble eagerness to be learners of principles that have been found to be effective in their *current* cultural context. There are many ways to learn this information, including conversations with congregational leaders where growth is happening, as well as tapping the insights of authors who have done good research on the matter. While there are many good texts to read, one should not hesitate to contact the World Church Missionary Office for suggestions. As learners *and* teachers, high priests can create wonderful dynamics by finding ways to talk with others (including congregational leaders) about what they’re discovering, drawing them into the loop of learning, and providing mature ministerial support as persons attempt to integrate new thoughts into their lives.

Engagement. I remember teaching my kids how to fish at a lake that I had never been fishing at before. We stood on the shore as I explained some basic concepts—most of them having to do with safety (which did not prevent my daughter from burying a hook in my thumb on her first cast). After a while though, the only way to learn the new lake and the only way to teach was to actually start fishing. In like manner, high priests cannot limit our learning and teaching to discussions and studies alone. To the contrary, ministers who wish to be on the cutting edge of church life will be fully engaged in actual congregational ministries that result in invitation and generous giving. This does not mean that high priests will do all of the work, but it does mean that high priests should be fully engaged in helping to establish and support ministries that are worship seeker-friendly, that create the environment of hospitality, that establish Christian education and fellowship ministries that speak to real life, and that transform congregational life into ministries that are relevant and compelling to young adults. In other words, high priests will be personally engaged in congregational work that helps the congregation become the kind of place that persons readily invite their friends to and that inspire people to give generously.

Vision. The above can be challenging work. Many of our congregations have become accustomed to “doing church” in a manner that may not nurture invitation or generosity, but is nevertheless comforting in its familiarity and cherished friendships. Consequently, in many places there may not be a great deal of “drive” to learn new ways of being that might lead to increased generosity and invitation. At the same time, the church is clearly being called to reach out with greater vigor—both in our witness and in the sharing of our resources. What is needed in many places is the opportunity to capture the vision of what God is calling us to be. People will not change their behaviors just because the church chooses a particular emphasis, but they often do change when they find their lives being intercepted by a compelling vision of what God is calling *them* to do and to be. We cannot simply convince or persuade people to embrace a vision, but we can help create environments wherein the vision of God’s desired future can be caught. As *ministers of vision*, it is a high priestly stewardship to give attention to this. While there is no one way to do this, the principles involved have to do with a) helping congregations give attention to prayerfulness and discerning how God has been and is with them; b) helping people discover what gives them joy and how that can be used for the kingdom; c) keeping the mission of the church before the people, including stories of the exciting, life-changing things are currently happening in the church because of people’s generosity and witness.

In sum, it’s a powerful thing when a vision of God’s call intersects with a humble eagerness to learn and a commitment to be engaged in implementing what is being learned. High priests are called to live at that intersection. It’s a busy intersection, with lots of traffic noises to distract us and pedestrians walking every way imaginable—many of them calling for followers. This is why ministers of vision are needed. Someone needs to stand at the intersection without being distracted by the frantic noise and help realign the congregation’s streets in a manner that leads people to places wherein they can more readily discern God’s call.

The intersection may be noisy, but it is where the action is. It's where high priests stand.

Let's Face It . . . High Priests Are Relics

Gary Logan

(2003)

In 1971, I was a young college student beginning to consider what life had to offer beyond girls, money, and fun. I had been coerced into driving a carload of youth to the Joplin District Conference. (Something I would not encourage a 20-year-old to do today!) I admit it; I was out of touch with "church life." The conference was in the process of electing a new district president. I leaned over to my friend sitting next to me and said, "Who is that? I don't recognize him," referring to an older gentleman sitting along the side of the sanctuary.

My friend replied, "That old relic? He's the new caretaker for the campgrounds, and we're about to elect him district president." That was my introduction to Noble Gault, who would become my mentor and my friend.

I was sitting next to Noble in the High Priest Quorum in 1986 when a document was read to the quorum. As President Tyree was reading the paragraph on what we now refer to as the "ordination of women," Noble gripped my knee so tight with his hand I thought my circulation had been cut off. With tears streaming down his face, he leaned over toward me and said, "I've waited all my life for this moment." In that instant, all self-doubt was erased and with clarity and purpose, I knew how I would respond to the prophetic voice among us. Noble died a few months later.

My college friend was right. Noble was a relic. A relic is something that is a link to the past. It is steeped in culture and geography. It points to a particular place in time, yet it remains timeless. It tells a story. Held in the light of present and future, relics often invoke wonder and mystery. They are precious and priceless. They sometimes provide clues to value systems, universal understandings, and theological perspectives.

At other times, relics lead us into an everyday world of joy and sorrow, work and rest, pain and healing. Relics enrich our lives. Relics spark the surprise of discovery and the enthusiasm for adventure. Relics lead us into worlds where we would otherwise never venture and introduce us to people, places, eras, and ideas that change our world view and broaden our understanding of the here and now. Relics link the lessons of the past to our hope for the future. Relics speak to us on an emotional, intellectual, spiritual, theological, cultural, and physical level. Because of their unique link, relics are always relevant.

Noble served in my life as a precious link to the message and ministry of Jesus Christ. He was a witness of the timeless and timely story of the gospel. He sometimes filled me with wonder through the prophetic imagination, while at other times grounded me in the mud and muck of everyday life as we traveled the district, shared in hospital ministry, fixed plumbing, built cabins, and repaired campground equipment. Through Noble's encouragement, I developed a lifelong love for the exploration of scripture and the discovery of the divine in unexpected places.

We need more relics like Noble.

When I hear faithful ministers express a sense of loss of direction and focus because they are no longer serving in a key administrative position and wonder, "What do I do now?" I find myself thinking that the church needs a corps of seasoned ministers who will serve as relics within congregational life: a people linking the mission and message of the gospel to the everyday lives of our people—mentoring, nurturing, leading, engaging. Visioning men and women can become wellsprings out of which new generations of ministers are born and cared for, encouraged and challenged, strengthened and tempered to carry forward the story of what God has done and is doing in Jesus.

I would like to relate this relic image and how it can inform the ministry of the high priest to trends I am seeing within our congregations.

It has been my privilege to participate in a wide range of discussions over the past two years in my role as director of Congregational Ministries, with congregational leaders, young adults, jurisdictional officers, and members and friends at reunions, high priest gatherings, and congregational meetings. I have also tried to research a number of resources in an attempt to analyze, understand, and project how we might best respond to the needs and challenges before us as a faithful expression of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ in our world today. Here are some observations from conversations, researched studies, and anecdotal data that I believe speak to the quorum today.

- **Relic high priests are needed in every congregation to identify, recruit, coach, encourage, and nurture faithful, authentic discipleship among the members and especially the priesthood, linking the calling ministry of Christ to our day and time.**

There is reluctance on the part of many to serve in key leadership positions within our congregations. Many young adults express the opinion that active priesthood ministry is too demanding and unmanageable; the boundaries between personal, professional, and ministerial expression are blurred and the variety of leadership roles available within the local congregation are so broad that they bring unreasonable expectations and confusing standards of evaluation. They lament that with a lack of mentoring and training, faith formation, and leadership skill development, there is little motivation to volunteer—and even when they do, their gifts are not appreciated or accepted by the congregation. This parallels a study sponsored by the Association of Theological Schools regarding a concern for the competence of women and men entering ministry who do not have the talents, skills, aptitude, or knowledge to become effective leaders. Research found that "students came to seminaries with low levels of religious literacy and with high personal therapeutic needs."

- **Relic high priests are needed to mentor young adults in outward expressions of servant ministry and inward reflection on life-giving themes linking the servant leadership model of Christ to current ministry practice.**

Congregational members who desperately want to support the ongoing mission of the church sometimes feel that young adults lack maturity, are unwilling to take responsibility for their own actions, have poor leadership and interpersonal skills, and fail to keep traditional ethical norms and boundaries. Some have expressed despair at their lack of grounding in scripture and doctrine. Others have rightly expressed discouragement for never having been mentored or "trained" in servant ministry and priesthood function. Let's face it, leaders within congregations often are not efficient and effective models of decision making, communication, gift enhancement, and leadership development. Other denominations face the same concern. The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. recently cited concern for "the unacceptable failure rates on standard ordination exams, especially in biblical exegesis, theological competence, and church polity."

- **Relic high priests are needed who are willing to see congregations, communities, and cultures with "new eyes" and cultivate relationships of inclusion and compassion as seen in the prophetic vision and pastoral style of Jesus as he modeled inclusivity, affirmation, and compassion.**

While we preach a gospel of inclusion and compassion, the worth of all persons, and the giftedness of all, our practice tells a different story. Leadership within the church is increasingly reflecting the abilities and gifts of women, but statistical data will confirm that as a movement we are still struggling with embracing and nurturing leadership irrespective of ethnicity, generation, sexual orientation, culture, or economic background.

- **Relic high priests are needed who understand the sacrificial nature and divine mandate of responding to the call of God in our world today and will passionately link congregations and congregants to the cross in whose shadow we stand.**

In conversations with leaders and priesthood, I often hear expressions of ambivalence and burnout regarding the demands of ministry. I would estimate that fewer than 30 percent of us view our function and work in ministry as vitally important, significant in the lives of those around us and in the life of the church, and as role models for those beginning their ministry and leadership. While serving as stake president in three different jurisdictions, I would regularly ask pastors to share challenges and concerns that impacted their ministry. Pastors frequently thought they were mismatched in their role, had difficulty motivating priesthood, felt poor support from family and friends, placed upon themselves grossly unreasonable expectations, despaired at the amount of pettiness and in-fighting within congregational families, and were often blocked by controlling members. Yet these pastors often tirelessly engaged in pastoral and administrative ministry while advancing demanding careers, caring for families, and participating in community leadership. Congregational pastors and leaders need

seasoned ministers around them who nurture, encourage, instruct, protect, and counsel through their own selfless giving to the cause. Being commissioned in Doctrine and Covenants 104, I am surprised that I do not see more high priests serving in congregational nurseries, engaging in Aaronic ministry when appropriate and, as necessary, seeking out youth and young people for friendship and support, actively embracing and promoting the organizational mission and goals of the church worldwide, and volunteering for congregational and community teaching and training opportunities.

I have been richly blessed in the opportunities for ministry that have been mine while serving in the Community of Christ. I will confess that it is my intention to "continue always to be aware of the need to render unreserved and fully accountable service—good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" until my one-hundredth birthday. Then, like Jethro of old, I think I may return to my homeland. And if my great-grandkids call me a relic, maybe that won't be so bad.

On the Road . . . Together

William M. Barnhard

(2004)

(Following is the closing address given by Brother Barnhard, president of the Quorum of High Priests, at the final quorum session of World Conference 2004, April 3, 2004)

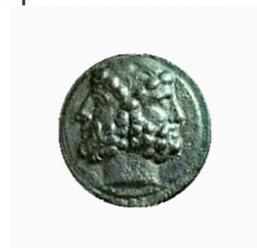
Every World Conference I have attended brought me new and sometimes surprising thoughts; our time together this week is no different. The following ideas have germinated after thoughtful conversations with you, sharing in worship together, and the conference debates that not only show passion for various points of view, but also show respect and caring for others who may not warm to some offered perspectives.

The past few months I have wondered about what we will do when we leave here this week. How will our lives be changed? How will we be inspired and challenged to work with others to create sacred relationships and sacred community?

In some ways it will require, as William Coffin reminds us, “a recklessness of faith. First you leap, and then you grow wings.” He goes on to say, “It is terribly important to realize that the leap of faith is not so much a leap of thought, as of action. For while in many matters it is first we must see, then we will act; in matters of faith, it is first we must do, then we will know, first we will be, then we will see. One must, in short, dare to act wholeheartedly without absolute certainty.”

Faithfulness is what counts and patience is required as new vision sharpens our focus and clarifies our message.

Over the past eight years, we listened as the high priests of the church focused on concerns about ministry and those whom we are called to serve. We, like the Roman God Janus, have had the chance to look back and see where we have been and take inventory of successful ministries. But we also look forward to see what new possibilities lie ahead.



We must emerge from where we have been, in order to see the future with new eyes.

For me, this opportunity requires a spiritual journey that creates an uncomfortable tension. As I look ahead, I know that a deeper commitment to God will be required in order to sharpen my awareness of God’s movement among the people and our responsibility to meet their spiritual needs. Twenty-first century high priests have a huge responsibility for visioning, mentoring, bridge-building, working for peace and justice, supporting each other, and developing spiritual awareness. Part of our challenge is to hear, see, and feel the message and be prepared to minister in concert with one another. It is entirely possible that we will spend the rest of our lives playing our part of the symphony over and over again. Sometimes we will need to hold back and be willing to listen to the Conductor give us direction, so that we can make our message more

sweet and clear. Our ministry may be more behind the scenes at the watering places of life or under a banyan tree with one or two seekers.

The task to hear God's voice and serve where we need to go is one thing, but there is a huge gap between where we are most of the time and where we need to be. Standing in the breach is not easy. Not only do we have to fill the gap, but we are also called to build a bridge so others, too, can be led to new vistas of opportunity.

My thirteen year old granddaughter has run for class office many times, and we have encouraged her as she has fashioned each campaign. We have begun to notice the importance of friends, clothes, parties, sleep-overs with girlfriends, and boys calling. All of this occupies more and more of her time along with the demands of her education. That places grandparents further to the sidelines, or behind the scenes, rather than closer to the action.

Grandpa makes points by threatening to screen new boyfriends, or suggesting that a larger size dress or shirt might be more comfortable. She knows that it's not her comfort, but my peace of mind that's behind my suggestions. There is one thing that I have found that gets her attention. Our conversations are never long because her cell phone rings or she is late for this or that. So I talk to her about why she thinks people vote for her to be a class officer. Is it popularity? Good looks? Or is it the quality of the standards by which she lives?

Whenever I am around before she heads for a school function or a social event, I say, "Taylor Ann, leaders lead. Leaders help others who might wander off the road to get where they need to be." Now all I have to say is, "Taylor Ann," to which she replies, "I know, leaders lead."

That is our task. High priests are visionary leaders. We have the tools, the skills, and when we offer ministry effectively, people will say that they have done it themselves. We must start from the premise that leaders produce more leaders, not more followers. Our leadership must relate directly to how to make life better for everyone. Leaders lead.

We need to help God's people take the next step. It's good to have more questions than answers, as Dr. Lovett Weems reminded us. Those questions should include, but not be limited to the following. Who are we? What is our mission? Who are our neighbors and what are their needs? What is our mission? What do we discern to be God's vision for us in this time or the near future?

How do we do all that? It is our faith that allows us to act wholeheartedly without absolute certainty. Faith puts us on the road, hope keeps us there. I pray that God will bless you on the road.

Reflections on Jesus as Model

Roy Schaffer

(2003)

I personally believe some factors to consider in our journey as high priests to “lead the way” stimulate the following as I’ve prayed and studied the contemporary roles of the high priest:

1. Press up against the role of high priest the best “model” that disciples have—Jesus.

2. Jesus’ leadership by recorded example included the following:

a. A deep commitment and calling to responsibly meet people where they are “hurting” or “in pain” is important. He calls all people uniquely to understand “one being is as precious in his sight as the other” (Jacob 2:27).

b. The liberation theologians affirm that “Jesus leaned toward the poor and oppressed.”

3. High priests, I believe, need to spend time developing their role by the characteristics demonstrated in what the New Testament affirms was the action-centered ministry Jesus daily experienced. What did he mean where it is recorded “I call you my friends...”? This is a simple but significant insight of Jesus as a high priest.

4. I recently started making a list of the unusual ways Jesus ministered, as recorded in the New Testament, where he broke the laws of his time. My preliminary list has over twenty, but I’m sure there were more. But why? I don’t know except he ministered where needed, rather than be hampered by secular laws. What does this say to high priests today? Maybe high priests need to minister much more among the poor, sick, marginalized, abused, jobless, those in prison, and those enslaved—in the forty plus nations where the church is established.

5. William Barclay, a well-respected Christian author, in his book, *Jesus as They Saw Him*, affirms the following:

a. The name Jesus was a common name used almost 600 times in the Bible. But by the second century the name Jesus was used less.

i. In Hebrew the name Jesus meant Savior.

ii. In Greek the name Jesus meant Healer. Barclay chose a hymn related to this: “Jesus the name that calms our fear ... it is life and health and peace.”

iii. Then Barclay articulates in each of his forty-two chapters the characteristics he resolved related to Jesus. But then he writes in one chapter, “The title servant is the title in the light of which all of the other titles must be seen—Servant. (For me, it is servant and friend.)

6. I personally feel—after much prayer, struggle, light and darkness—the time is now for high priests to model the servanthood of Jesus. Our sisters and brothers internationally

can help us if we “listen” rather than “tell,” mentor rather than dominate, and pray unceasingly rather than dominate.

7. Let us all reflect regularly on the reality that we affirm as a church that is “led by example” and should indeed be following the One who is our leader. We need to be leading by prayer, mission, vision, calling, faith, love—and express ourselves as action oriented. Jesus prayed and meditated, but centered his life on vital ministries 80 plus percent of the time. The sacred record expresses these centered in healing and less in the other two: preaching and teaching.

8. As a wise Christian leader once wrote, “We need people with fire in their bellies.” It is time to help ignite our ministry with fervor, vision, and risk taking. People in every community are in pain. Theologian Paul Tillich addresses this ministry as the “theology of doing.” A number of years ago I did a study of the priesthood in my home congregation. We had over 250 priesthood members on our roles, but less than forty were showing any evidence of the ministry of doing. Why? I have some ideas and you do too.

9. It will be extremely important that high priests center their ministry in the congregation and their calling in the community they are privileged to serve.

10. High priests can help set a renewed pattern for all priesthood of our faith to facilitate. I’m personally delighted with the World Church leadership decision to include the president of the Quorum of High Priests on the World Church Leadership Council. May we “struggle together” as high priests in the church to daily uphold our quorum president and her team in prayer. May she sense regularly the enlightenment that is enriched by the One we call Jesus—a faithful friend and servant.

Side by Side Leadership

Ron Romig

(2003)

Defining a New Model of Leadership

Having plowed through thousands of research write-ups and absorbed the significance of the relatively few that had a scientific basis, I felt I had gathered enough information to answer my original question: “What leadership practices and skills could be taught to people that would make a positive difference?” In fact, I could even identify the simple, unifying idea that underlay the most successful of the leadership practices. The problem was I didn’t know what to call my discovery. “Mutual” leadership? That was close, but it didn’t have the right ring to it.

Around this time, I attended a training session at the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family in Washington, D.C., to learn more about natural systems theory. One evening I went to dinner with a friend and colleague, Dr. Paul Radde. As friends will do, we took turns telling each other our problems and ideas.

In the good spirit of the evening, I threw my terminology problem out to Paul. What would be a good name for mutual leadership that wouldn’t sound like behavioral science jargon? Paul listened politely. He agreed with me that I needed to draw a distinction from “top-down” and “bottom-up” leadership.

Immediately my mind filled with images of great leaders in world history who had led “side by side.”

I thought of Martin Luther King Jr. leading his famous march for desegregation in Birmingham, Alabama, walking alongside women and men from all races and all walks of life. King’s Side by Side Leadership conformed to the vision to which he gave his life, a future America in which all races could live and work together in peace and equality.

I remembered reading that George Washington, the first president of the United States of America, visited with each of his cabinet members to ask their advice before he made any important decision; that Mohandas Gandhi, the revered liberator of India, walked side by side with the other leaders of the independence movement to the Indian Ocean to protest the British monopoly on the sale of table salt. I also recalled the little-known fact that Albert Einstein, the twentieth century’s most famous physicist, developed his theories of relativity working with two close colleagues around dining room tables and on walks.

As I prepared an overview of Side by Side Leadership for Community of Christ leaders prior to the 2002 World Conference, I envisioned other images of leading side by side. Jesus traveled the roads of Galilee with the disciples at his side. There was DaVinci’s depiction of the Last Supper with Jesus in the center. I have seen the lineage of first presidencies with three presidents in the Community of Christ sharing leadership.

In 1989, one congregation selected a newly ordained elder to serve as its pastor. This woman, while having served her congregation as Sunday school teacher and in many other branch offices, had never been a priesthood member. To assist her and her two counselors (both ordained teachers), she selected a high priest to mentor her. The high priest came to the pastor's monthly planning sessions and provided counsel and experience.

When people walk side by side, they are journeying in the same direction together. When people work and plan side by side, they also face the same direction—their shared vision of the future.

A New Definition

Side by Side Leadership: what comes to your mind when you read this term? When I mention it to organizational leaders, many of them grasp the main idea immediately. Almost spontaneously, they begin to work side by side with others to set goals, plan work, solve problems, evaluate performance, draw up budgets, and create new ventures. They get out from behind their desks and join others around conference tables. They go where the work is being done. They ask contributors for ideas, listen to workers, and sometimes roll up their sleeves and go to work alongside them.

If we are to begin the process of achieving a new model of leadership, we must get beyond thinking of leadership as a one-way process. One-way processes leave little room for actively involved contributors. I propose the following definition:

Leadership is facilitating Side by Side relationships in pursuit of shared goals.

When I present this new definition to old-style, top-down bosses, their immediate reaction is often, "But my workers act like children! They have to be told what to do, and how to do it!"

"I agree with you," I respond. "That is exactly the problem we propose to solve with Side by Side Leadership."

The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family, in Washington, D.C., discovered that family and other close interpersonal relationships form natural systems. According to natural systems theory, as taught by Drs. Micheal Kerr and Daniel Papero, current leaders of the interdisciplinary center, leader/follower or leader/contributor relationships are reciprocal. In the old, top-down model, the followers adapt to being told what to do at work and stop thinking for themselves. Often they resist; sometimes they rebel.

Natural systems theory predicts that if workers are treated as fully equal contributors in leadership processes, they will behave as such and work performance will improve. The hard-data research we have seen supports this prediction. Followers, when allowed or invited to participate in making decisions, invest themselves in the work and become contributors.

There are other conclusions we can draw from natural systems theory:

1. Leadership is an interactive process.
2. The kind of leadership that achieves dramatically improved performance is a two-way street.
3. Often the most effective way for leaders to influence subordinates is to change their own behavior.
4. Contributors have a greater positive impact on results than followers.

Thus, the leader's role must become one of facilitating and coordinating the two-way influence process. Effective leaders get others to work together to achieve extraordinary results. They listen and respond to their contributors, and they share leadership with them.

Natural systems theory also proposes that relationships inside the organization are influenced by what happens both outside and inside. The effective Side by Side leader is aware of all these influences on the team and organization and knows that front-line people—the employees who are in daily contact with customers and suppliers—are often the first to discover new opportunities and threats to the organization. By maintaining a two-way dialogue, Side by Side leaders and their contributors can respond quickly to changes without losing sight of their goals.

Leadership vs. Management

We have traditionally expected people in management positions to be leaders as well. However, the statistics tell us that being a manager does not equate to being a leader. They also show that people who have no position in the organizational hierarchy can be leaders.

What is the difference between a manager and a leader?

- Managers influence results from their position at the top of the organizational hierarchy; leaders can affect results anywhere in the organization.
- Managers make their presence known by boxes on an organization chart; leaders, by their breakthrough results and their facilitating presence throughout the organization.
- Managers utilize existing resources; leaders create new resources.
- Managers improve efficiency; leaders improve effectiveness.

A fundamental difference in the new organizational structure is the dramatic loss of managerial authority and control. Today, when commerce and competition move fast, hierarchical management does not work. Top-down management is no longer the best way to influence an organizational outcome.

Many executives state that they want everyone in the organization to act as a leader—to use initiative, take responsibility, and be accountable. This means that everyone is

expected to be on the alert for trends in new products and services, as well as for competitive risks. At Intel, for example, anyone could e-mail CEO Andy Grove with a problem, an insight, or a trend. Grove knew that people at the edges of the organization would spot early trends before he or any other headquarters executive became aware of them. The spectacular success of his company speaks for Grove's leadership skills.

The Evolving Organization

Adapting the rapidly changing national and global business environments, organizations have changed both in form and in function. Global companies, not tied to any particular country or region, can form anywhere, gather the necessary resources, and coordinate production and marketing across oceans. Corporations lease or rent workers, rather than hiring them directly, and organize everyone into self-managed and shared-management teams. The stable, long-term, hierarchical corporate structure has been replaced by highly flexible organizations like Dell Computer, which reorganizes several times a year to meet changing needs.

The traditional pattern of horizontal or vertical integration, with subsidiaries owned or controlled by the core company, is being supplanted by the virtual corporation, consisting of joint ventures and partnerships. In this system, the partners in the extended enterprise are as important as the core in achieving the company's business goals. The business is only as successful as the weakest link in the chain that runs from its suppliers to its customers.

In this new business environment, the old vertical, hierarchical leadership models do not work. The organization of the future must be highly interactive; it must work horizontally with its customers, suppliers, research organizations, and alliance partners.

Of all the organizational innovations of the past ten years, shared-management teams are the most likely to endure. In terms of their effectiveness at improving performance, they have been compared to the invention of the assembly line. Some groups of employees, it has been shown, can manage themselves better than the managers who used to direct them.

Side by Side Leadership is the key to maximizing the effectiveness of empowered workers and shared-management teams. With the rise of knowledge workers and increased availability of knowledge, more and more organizations are finding that top-down leadership simply no longer works. How can a manager order her subordinates to do a job in a particular way when they know how to do the work better than she does? Leaders must learn and practice Side by Side behaviors that promote productivity in themselves and their workers.

In the jigsaw puzzle formed by rapid changes in the business environment, more teamwork, greater worker empowerment, and increased worker knowledge, Side by Side Leadership fits with all the other pieces to promote outstanding performance by all.

Excerpted from pages 41–47 of *Side by Side Leadership: Achieving Outstanding Results Together* by Dennis Romig (ISBN 1-8851-6751-2). Romig and his wife, Laurie, head up Performance Resources, Inc., a management consulting firm in Austin, Texas. They are active members in the newly created Bluebonnet Mission Center in Texas. To order your copy of *Side by Side Leadership*, call Herald House at 1-800-767-8181 or visit them on-line at www.HeraldHouse.org. The book can also be ordered through your local bookstore.

Editorial Comment

Does Side by Side Leadership apply to high priests? Do corporate principles have application to ministry? Absolutely! For many years high priests have at times been seen in an old traditional image of the high priest as an authoritarian administrator, sitting aloof on the pinnacle of a perceived congregational hierarchy. In reality, we are called to model our ministry after Jesus, “the great high priest,” whose example is one of servant ministry. Jesus was a Side by Side Leader! Jesus was present at Jacob’s well, on the boat, with the children, and at Lazarus’s tomb. His was a ministry of humble presence. High priests are called to live “side by side” with those whom we serve.

Standing in the Breach

(2007)

Rick Maupin

The restoring of persons to healthy or righteous relationships with God, others, themselves, and the earth is at the heart of the purpose of your journey as a people of faith. —Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b

From time to time in ancient cities, the walls surrounding the city would become damaged and a gaping hole would be left. That hole left the inhabitants in a vulnerable position to possible intruders. When this would happen, a call would go out for someone to come and stand in the breach—to stand in the place that had become weak and vulnerable. Those persons standing in the breach would stand there on behalf of those living behind the wall, providing protection and caring for them. On more than one occasion we find in the Old Testament how God called on persons to stand in the breach on behalf of their community. At the heart of our purpose is restoration, requiring some persons to stand in the breach on behalf of others.

Becky Savage

Nurses are required to complete continuing education courses to renew their professional licensure. The purpose of the training is to provide updated information on crucial topics that affect the level of care of at risk groups of people. One of the required courses for nurses working in Florida, USA, includes a study of domestic violence. Most people are familiar with the results of physical trauma inflicted primarily on women and children. There are numerous other, less obvious, consequences of domestic violence. Domestic violence is the use of physical abuse, verbal or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or economic abuse (e.g., withholding money, lying about assets) to exert power or control over someone or to prevent someone from making a free choice.

Domestic violence is a crime in all fifty states. Three-fourths of domestic violence victims are women. Domestic violence is a major public health problem in the United States and around the world.

An abuser inflicts more than physical injury. Examples of modes of violence include sexual violence, threats of physical or sexual violence, emotional and psychological violence, and stalking—including cyberstalking.

Abusers often inflict emotional trauma through control. Controlling behaviors include humiliation, withholding information, denying necessities, prohibiting conversations with family or friends, insisting on excessive work, or denying activities outside the home.

While working as an emergency room nurse, I cared for women who suffered from domestic violence. It was common for the women to give vague or inconsistent explanations for their injury or illness. Because of the emotional trauma, the women

were reluctant to fully disclose the reasons for their ER visits. Through the control of the abuser, the victim often loses their voice and ability to protect themselves.

The nurse can function in the breach as a voice for the voiceless. They can provide victims with privacy and safety from their abusers. The history and examination time allows the nurse to ask sensitive questions that would not be answered in the presence of the abuser. This is also a time when information regarding safe houses and community resources may be provided.

High priests stand for justice and peace. Learn the signs and symptoms of abuse. Collect community resource information and keep it available. Stay alert to signs of emotional and physical distress. Partner with another minister and offer assistance when it is safe for the victim. It is advisable to include a woman when offering such ministry. Prayerfully ask for guidance regarding where your ministry is needed. You, too, can stand in the breach for persons suffering domestic violence.

Standing for Peace and Justice

Gary Logan

(2001)

My Aunt Clara used to gather the children around her and tell tales of the Cherokee "Trail of Tears". In one of her stories she would describe a "dream catcher." A dream catcher looks like a simplistic version of a spider's web woven on a hoop, adorned with a few decorative feathers and beads.

My Aunt would tell us that before the Trail, when her tribal ancestors lived in peace along the eastern coast of the United States, young parents would hang a dream catcher over their newborn's cradle. The "web" would catch only the child's good dreams, while letting the bad dreams escape through the spaces of the web's strands. This symbolized the hopes of the parents that their young child would grow and mature into the person she or he was meant to be. They would instill in their children the idea that no dream was too great and that dreams can come true. It is a beautiful symbol.

Then came the death and cruelty, violence, injustice and hopelessness of the trek to the Great Plains where they were relocated to "Indian Territory." As new parents continued to place the dream catcher over the cradles of the newborn, the meaning changed. The dream catcher snagged only the bad dreams; those of hate, despair, envy and vengeance -- and kept these destructive dreams from free-floating around in our atmosphere. The dream catcher then became a symbol of the power within humanity to "catch" our darkside and to protect one another from the nightmares of human behavior.

The nightmares within cultures across the globe such as the continued enslavement women and children, the genocide of aboriginal peoples, the dehumanization and devastation of war and internal conflict, the disenfranchisement of women and the exploitation of emigrants, refugees, and the poor continue to be issues with which the people of God struggle.

Additional barriers are erected by individual choices, our decisions about where we live and with whom we socialize, our belief in stereo types, our refusal to change, our infliction of abuse on others, our self-absorption, our denial that there are such problems all contribute to the creation of walls that divide us. Being created female and male keeps us apart. Class distinctions continue to be embraced. We segregate ourselves by racial designations and sexual orientation. Theological differences can divide us.

High Priests, as followers of Jesus Christ, find ourselves called to ministry with those struggling with the same realities as the larger society. The High Priest is called to stand *with* those who are living the nightmares of their lives and to stand *for* ideals, attitudes, practices, policies, actions and organizations which allow those with whom we stand to live their dreams as we would uphold the dream of Zion.

The first step in standing for peace and justice is to acknowledge realistically our own unsuitableness as peacemakers. A High Priest is able to be a minister of peace and

justice only when he or she can give up self-righteous judging and controlling and begin to rely on the transforming initiatives of God's grace.

In ministering on a personal level, we are challenged to have such respect for the worth of others, that we are willing to stand with them in their struggle with issues with which we may completely disagree -this doesn't mean we support the issue. It means that the bond of God's grace and love between us is stronger than the issue.

Secondly, a High Priest stands with others in taking transforming initiatives. Jesus consistently places the emphasis not so much on what we are *not* to do as on transforming initiatives, the way of deliverance. He suggests four specific and surprising initiatives by which High Priests can stand with the people. They are:

Turn the other cheek.

Give up your coat.

Go the second mile.

Give to one who begs.

These are all expressions of seizing initiative that can transform oneself, the other person, and the relationship between us.

Jesus himself was struck and slapped, and his garments were taken from him. Turning from violence, giving of ourselves, making an extra effort are all actions imitating Christ. The call to follow Jesus' way of peacemaking is also a call to take up his cross. If we accept the challenge of standing in the midst of God's people for peace and justice, it will involve some sacrifice. But it is not sacrifice for the sake of sacrifice, or for the sake of purity and withdrawal from the world. It is sacrifice for the sake of deliverance from the alienating processes that destroy us. It is sacrifice of our dependence on the vicious cycles that have us in their grip, and it is participation in the redemption of relationships made possible through God's grace.

Third, standing with others challenges High Priests to affirm efforts to love one's enemies. Jesus identifies the process of alienation; loving neighbors and hating enemies. Hating enemies is a common human experience, not an Old Testament teaching. Nowhere does the Old Testament or the Talmud teach us to hate our enemies. Many Christians have blamed it on the Pharisees, but Jesus suggests we check out the log in our own eye. Blaming others for what we do ourselves is part of the process of alienation.

Jesus points to the process of deliverance; Love your enemies. Love means action, deeds, and initiatives. Love also means we seek to understand and affirm our enemy's valid interests. Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." This means we affirm their valid interests. It does not mean, however, that we affirm all the enemy does.

Fourth, often the High Priest can end the relational nightmares of those in difficult circumstances just by creating an environment where one can talk with the enemy. People do not resolve conflict if they do not talk. Nations will not solve problems if they do not talk.

Fifth, We have a unique obligation and opportunity to pray with others who are in difficult relationships. Matthew 5:44 says, "Pray for those who persecute you." Luke 6:28 says, "Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." Romans 12:12 and 14 say, "Persevere in prayer" and "bless those who persecute you."

When we pray for our enemies in the presence of God who is known in Christ as grace, mercy, deliverance, and love, the appropriate prayer includes forgiveness. In the Lord's Prayer and the explanation following it, Jesus emphasizes forgiveness as strongly as possible: We receive God's forgiveness only if we forgive others of their sins against us.

The sixth step in "standing with and standing for" is to seek human rights and justice for all, especially the powerless, without double standards. The lack of human rights is itself the absence of peace, holistically understood as shalom.

Oftentimes the church is seen as a mediator of God's grace. Sometimes it has also been a part of the problem of violence and oppression. There cannot be reconciliation without justice. The church must stand for truth in its entirety if it is to be a witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The spirituality of reconciliation is where the High Priest in the 21st century can take a stand. A new society has to be constructed on the rungs of the old society. The society will need those who will stand with those who are living the nightmare and stand for the creation of communities that promote joy, hope, love, and peace. Reconciliation becomes a calling in which we move to a holy new place where we serve in a prophetic way for the whole of society.

The Prophetic Task of Engaging with Culture

Andrew Bolton

(2001)

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As an Englishman I love my language and literature, soccer and cricket, my country's landscape and flowers, and its Christian traditions of ethical non-conformity found in the Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers and Methodists. I rejoice in my country's developing pluralism. As a family we really enjoyed living in inner city Leicester, a city where half the children are from ethnic minorities. I am proud of our unarmed policemen and the National Health Service with virtually free medical treatment for all according to need, including free emergency treatment for visitors from overseas. Anglican Archbishop Temple is reputed to have said in the 1940s that our commitment to a health system for all was the most Christian thing we had ever done.

Yet, I also feel personally ashamed at the violence and injustice my small nation has inflicted on the world in its creation of an empire that exploited a quarter of the globe in its heyday. The industrial revolution, which began in my nation, was funded by profits from the slave trade. These slaves, amidst the tears and unimaginable suffering of humans torn from family and home in Africa, picked the cotton in America that supplied the textile mills of Lancashire. It is in Lancashire that I was born and grew up—both sides of my family benefited from the Lancashire cotton industry.

All of this is by way of introduction to the main purpose of this essay: to explore the prophetic task of engaging with culture. I define culture as the way of life for a people. It includes language, stories, beliefs, values, institutions, and technology. In exploring the prophetic task of engaging with culture I want to consider two questions:

- What does it mean to be a prophetic people?
- What is a possible agenda for prophetic people today?

What Does It Mean To Be A Prophetic People?

The Hebrew prophets reveal what it means to be a prophet. A prophet is one sent to speak justice, God's justice, to a people and their culture. Consider first the call of Moses::

Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.... So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.—Exodus 3: 7-8, 10 NRSV

Hear Isaiah:

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.—Isaiah 1:16-17 NRSV

And see how Amos judged a religious culture:

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on Mount Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their husbands, "Bring something to drink!"....I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them;.... Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.—Amos 4:1, 5:21-24 NRSV

I see this prophetic tradition being lived out in the life of Jesus as he confronted his own culture and spoke against participation in systems and actions that violated the sacred worth of persons. When challenged by the religiously devout as his hungry disciples plucked ears of wheat on the sabbath, Jesus said:

Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath."—Mark 2: 25-27 NRSV

The sabbath institution was originally created for a people who had escaped from slavery. It was to be a day of rest equally for all (Deuteronomy5:12-15). It was a cultural institution for blessing humans. When understandings about the sabbath did not serve human good, Jesus challenged them: "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath." Likewise Jesus challenged the whole temple system. Intended to be a house of prayer for all nations it had become a den of thieves in which the priestly aristocracy, under the cloak of religion, ripped off the poor in collaboration with the Roman taxation system. Religious and imperial taxes could take forty or fifty percent of a poor peasant's income.¹ As Jesus angrily cleansed the Temple in a prophetic action (Mark11:15-19 and parallel passages) we glimpse the anger and sorrow of God at human perversion.

"The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath." Culture is made for humans, not humans for culture. When our cultures (stories, language, values, institutions and technology) serve and express the equal worth of persons, then God's will is being revealed. When a culture violates any human, especially the vulnerable, then we are confronted with the judgment of God. The story of the people of Israel is a prophetic story. Prophetic leadership freed the enslaved Hebrews of Israel from the exploitation of Pharaoh. At Mount Sinai Prophetic leadership presented God's teaching, the Torah, a new constitution for a freed slave people, to help the poor, to reduce slavery, to protect the vulnerable, to respect the stranger. The people of Israel were not

to repeat with one another what they had suffered at the hand of Pharaoh. Some have called the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai a second Exodus, this time not from slavery to the promised land, but from an old culture of exploitation and death to a new culture that saves and enhances all of life. The amazing thing about the people of Israel is not that they frequently faltered but that they institutionalized the role of prophet and allowed themselves to be called back to the original vision of shalom—God’s peace and righteousness.

The Spirit of prophecy is the song of the worth of persons. This is the Spirit that challenges what is cruel, oppressive or dehumanizing. We see this Spirit of prophecy in the Hebrew prophets. It is in this tradition that Jesus unmistakably stands. Luke portrays this vividly when Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry is given the scroll of Isaiah, one of the greatest of the prophets. Jesus read:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”—Luke 4:18-19 NRSV

This is the scriptural manifesto of Jesus, his vision statement, his mission purpose. We cannot understand Jesus if we do not understand his passionate commitment to creating out of his culture that which will save the poor, free the captive, ennoble the despised, include the outcast, heal the sick, and serve all humans equally.

As we seek to become a worldwide movement dedicated to the pursuit of peace, reconciliation and healing of the Spirit, then this prophetic task is for all of us in every family and congregation in every land. In the story of the Hebrew prophets and the life of Jesus we have a model of engaging creatively and redemptively with culture. We are called to be more than a people with a prophet. We are called to be a prophetic people. God called the prophets of Israel so that all of Israel might be a light and blessing to the Gentiles. Jesus calls us to be a prophetic people so that we might be salt, a city of light on a hill (Matthew 5:13-16).

How can we be a prophetic people? I discern the following method from the biblical tradition:

- Listen to the voices and tears of those who are hurting and let that pain touch us. See the statistics of war and poverty and imaginatively see the persons they represent.
- Hear God’s call to liberate the suffering and oppressed from their pain and the causes of their hurt
- Confront the powers, institutions and values that oppress and exploit, be it government, bureaucracy, business, the military, multi-national corporations or the local school.

- When repentance begins, when the truth is being heard, when the victims find healing and new hope, then seek mercy for and reconciliation with the perpetrators of evil.

We see this prophetic method lived out from Moses to Malachi among the Hebrew prophets, in Jacob and Abinadi among the Nephites as recounted in the Book of Mormon. We see this prophetic witness particularly clearly in the early ministry of Joseph Smith Jr. as he sought to give expression to radical justice for the poor in zionic consecration of surplus. We see this prophetic witness in Thoreau, Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. who all modeled that it is as important to not co-operate with evil as it is to cooperate with the good. We are privileged today to see courageous prophetic ministry in Ed Guy in Guatemala, Rupa Kumar in India, and Kathy Bachman in her work with Amnesty International. However, not just a few people are called to be prophetic. All of us are called. If all are called to be prophetic what might be an agenda for a prophetic people to consider today?

Endnotes

1. See Dennis C. Dulling and Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: Proclamation and Parenthesis, Myth and History* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishing, 1994), chapter 3.

The Spirit Enters in Joy

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I've been struck recently by the place of suffering and prayer in the development of a deepened spirituality. I recently attended a workshop by Franciscan priest Richard Rohr, OFM (Order of Friars Minor; Franciscans—Order in the Roman Catholic Church). During that retreat he dealt with the place of suffering and prayer—two differing paths—as pathways of deepening the roots of spirituality. It resounded with me. At times I have experienced suffering, angst, yearning—all as tools to hear with a fresh way the call and claim of God in my life.

And I've discovered another path—to be surprised by joy and caught off guard by God's delight. My experience has led me to conclude that when we permit ourselves to be open to the surprise of God and we are caught off guard, we are shaped by God. Four significant things happen to us. By the use of personal story, I want to illustrate what happens.

1. When we are surprised by God's delight, we are released from the moment, but at the same time we enter more deeply into the moment.

I am privileged to live in Sydney, Australia. Sydney not only contains a beautiful harbour and accompanying rivers that find their way through the suburbs, rubbing up against ancient sandstone cliffs, but also very large areas of bushland and forest reserves. Our home, deep in the suburbs of Sydney, backs into such a forest reserve of 2,000 acres of picturesque trees, creeks, walking tracks, and native flora and fauna. While it poses a massive bush fire risk to residents, resulting in local residents being trained in fire - fighting, it also provides a sanctuary for the spirit.

On one occasion I was working in the yard, sweating and focussing on the task at hand. The weather was hot, my hands sore and red, and I was concentrating on getting done what needed to be done. At that moment, two large cockatoos flew overhead. Cockatoos are native Australian birds and live in our neighbourhood. Their large white bodies and broad wingspans are only matched by their almost prehistoric scream, which at times causes backyard conversation to cease due to the inability to hear over the noise. They are cheeky, vibrant, loud characters of the bush.

So here I was, working in the yard, doing what needed to be done, and two cockatoos, chasing one another, flew just over my head, screaming their prehistoric scream, shouting at me and each other.

And in that moment, something extraordinary occurred. I was released from the moment, released from all matters of significance—the yard work, painting I needed to do, and the jobs filling up my list. I looked up and laughed, joining their cry—a moment of liberation and release that went way down into my soul. A moment of wonder and sanctuary. My release was deep—from responsibility, worry, the future, and living.

But at the same time, I was drawn into the moment by being swept away with the wonder of the bird song. I felt like I was swept away from the experience of the suburban, backyard life, yet strangely drawn more deeply into that life. In that moment, the yard looked different. My task seemed new. Life had a different flavour. God was shaping me. When we are caught off guard by the Spirit of God, we are released from the moment, yet at the same time we are drawn more deeply into the moment.

2. When we are surprised by God's delight, we are drawn toward others and into community.

My life is fairly full. A young family, home renovations, full-on vocational commitments, personal interest—it leads to plenty on my plate. Since I often travel on weekends, Saturday at home is a very enjoyable experience. One of my delights is to accompany one of our children to their sporting activity. I'm one of those parents who are able to juggle reading the weekend paper and encouraging the team (much to the disdain of some!)—and if there is a cappuccino handy, I'm in seventh heaven!

So here I was, reading the paper, enjoying the sunshine, and keeping an eye on the game, when I felt the feet of a small boy tapping into my back. I was sitting on the grass, landscaped with terracing, and a boy probably not much older than three had pulled his mother's chair right up against me, his knees and feet touching my back.

He was a stranger to me, as was I to him.

Pretty soon he had his arms around my neck, swinging his head around to look at me, as kids like to do when climbing on your back. By now, I'd put the paper down, a little regretful that my introspective and quiet Saturday morning was being disturbed by the game of this young boy.

When he came and sat on my lap, straddling me as he was, I was glad to see plenty of other adults around. "Child Protection Policy"—my mind reminded me! A rather intimate way for another to sit on my lap—straddled and facing me, face in my face, arms around my neck, talking, laughing, and playing—as though we had known each other all his life. The game went on—holding my hands and swinging backward, giggling, learning each other's names (his was Thomas), trusting each other, being vulnerable, open, and caring.

In the midst of this encounter with a stranger, his mother sitting a few feet away, I heard the Spirit of God remind me of the need for balance in my life, of the need to be open to others, of the need for touch, and of the power of presence. I was encountered by God's presence in that moment and found myself, because of God's presence, understanding in a way as though God was smacking me on the side of my head, something already new. It happened in community, in public, in a joy-filled encounter. And I wanted to be there. God was shaping me.

When we are surprised by God's delight, we are drawn into relationship with others. My encounter with Thomas reminded me that God yearns for me to be in relationship and community, and when I am open to God's presence, I find myself drawn into community.

3. When we are surprised by God's delight, our spirits are nurtured and confronted.

It was for the occasion of my father's seventy-fifth birthday that my family and I journeyed down the highway to Melbourne—a trip of 1000 kilometers(600 miles) that provides plenty of opportunity for the kids to learn to get along better!

For Dad's birthday, Tere and I prepared the meal, the kids the table, and Mum and Dad simply enjoyed being both host and guest. Zoe, our daughter who was twelve at the time, wandered into the kitchen looking for something to do. In talking with her, I suggested she might like to say the blessing for the meal, a special blessing since it was her grandfather's birthday. With a few ideas from me, off she went into a quiet place and prepared her prayer—which was to be one of the most significant gifts a family can receive.

The table was well prepared. The food was brought out, drink poured, and all seated around the feast. Zoe announced that she had prepared a blessing, and it would be she who would offer it.

So she began, reading with seriousness and care. She named Dad by the many names we know him—Grandpa, Grandad, Dad, Fred. She talked of the blessing of her grandfather, of his childhood, and his experiences of war. She thanked God for his immigration, for his love for her grandmother, and for his faith and discipleship. And so it went.

When Zoe finished her prayer the adults gradually looked up. Every face was wet from tears. We were speechless, caught up in the beauty of the moment, the profundity of the confession, and the extraordinary spirit at that table.

At that very moment of grace, we were nurtured by Zoe's gift in claiming God's presence in the life of our family. Yet at the same time, we were confronted by the reality of God's companionship and journeying with Fred's life, our corporate life, and Zoe's life. Confronted in our forgetfulness. Confronted in our individualism. Confronted in our surprise—as though God were saying, "How dare you be surprised by my presence as your guest and host." Confronted by our unawareness of God's presence, God was shaping me.

When we are surprised by God's delight, such as at that moment of simple meal time, our spirits are nurtured and confronted.

4. When we are surprised by God's delight, we are drawn into God.

The occasion was the Elementary School Choir concert at the Sydney Opera House. One of our daughters was part of the local choir who joined with 750 other children to sing and make music in this distinguished and magnificent international place. The audience was full of proud parents, grandparents, and siblings, eager to enjoy the simple and heart-felt performances. Our family sat scanning the children seated facing the audience looking for our girl, friends, and faces we knew.

Toward the end of the concert the children all joined in a song with a gentle, haunting harmony. The noise swept through the concert hall, filling every nook and cranny. And it was then that I became aware of the tears rolling down my face, the overwhelming sense of awe and wonder. I realised at that time the overwhelming presence of God in that place—it was as though the sounds of the children were the voices of God, beckoning me, us. It was as though God's presence was swirling around, washing over us, gently blowing through the hall. Calling. Loving. Caring. Not wanting anything. Just being with us. God was shaping me.

In this moment of surprise and delight, caught absolutely unaware and without wanting anything, I suddenly knew God again and again.

When we are surprised by God's delight, such as in this moment when I was listening to the voices of children, we are drawn into God.

Finding God in the ordinary sometimes gets lost because of the intensity of our focus. Seeking God in the detail seems like it doesn't work. Yet our experiences of extraordinary seem sometimes to be so far apart, we forget how to recognise God. But on occasion, when we least expect it, in the midst of the suburban and mundane moments of our lives, something happens. We are surprised. We are captured by delight. These moments of finding God in the ordinary are full of paradoxes: release from—drawn into; nurtured—confronted; freed—captured. And it is in the paradox that I have discovered a lot more about this surprising and delighting God.

I believe that God yearns for us to discover God's presence in all that we do. I hear the cockatoos screech differently now. Children's voices sometimes have a different ring. I am reminded to be playful. There's something wonderful about being alive and knowing God's Spirit is dancing in my midst.

High priests are called to point to God in our present. That's what being a minister of vision is.

I've discovered the experience of being surprised by God's delight.