



# For Elders

**MAY/2006**

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Dear Elders,

Effective leadership is a blessing. This issue of *For Elders* includes resources we hope will help the leadership in your congregation become even more effective.

**Thinking Styles:** The Rev. Dale Woods, minister at First Presbyterian Church in Brandon, Manitoba, drew our attention to this resource. It is one he has integrated into his work in Brandon. We pass on to you a slightly edited version of Dale's summary of five thinking styles described by Allen Harrison and Robert Bramson in their book, *The Art of Thinking*. Dale has found it takes time to read through the material but ultimately it leads to an appreciation of how a variety of thinking styles can provide a richer understanding of any issue at hand. Dale suggests a session or board could use this material as the basis of a workshop.

**Situational Leadership:** Dale also introduced us to the concept of Situational Leadership. Unfortunately, Ken Blanchard's *Leadership and The One Minute Manager*, a book that delves more thoroughly into the concept, is currently out of print but you may learn more by exploring [www.chimaeraconsulting.com/sitleader.htm](http://www.chimaeraconsulting.com/sitleader.htm). We will watch for other sources that teach the same approach to leadership.

**Developing your leadership skills:** Dorothy Henderson has prepared a workshop that will enable sessions or other groups to explore and apply appropriate leadership styles to their ministries.

**Leading Effective and Spiritually-based Meetings:** Someone once said, "A meeting is where minutes are kept and hours lost." Cathy Gale, an elder at Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church in Calgary, Alberta, provides us with a resource that challenges this statement and can make meetings more productive and meaningful.

May God bless you richly in the vital work of leading and serving in the name of Christ Jesus.

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# Thinking styles: Why others don't see the same picture you do



## Introduction

Ofentimes many of us believe that if we think through a problem carefully, consider the possible solutions, and then make a clearly articulated presentation everyone else will come on board. If only it were that simple! Consider this imaginary session meeting:

*Welcome to Second Presbyterian Church located in Anywhere, Canada. The minister has called a special meeting of the session. The only item on the agenda is a question: "What things do we need to change around here to be more faithful to the gospel?" The question was circulated well in advance of the meeting so expectations are that elders will come prepared and ready to share their thoughts. The meeting opens with prayer and then the minister says: "Well, what do you think?" At first, people are cautious about expressing their views about what needs to be changed because they don't want to risk offending someone or having their ideas rejected.*

*Mary is the first to speak: "Well, actually, I thought things were going pretty well. I can't think of anything I would change and I don't think I'm alone. A lot of people like things the way they are." More silence follows. Then Peter raises his hand: "I'm glad we're having this meeting because I've thought for some time that we need to make some serious changes in this congregation. When I look at the budget, I see about 98% of our finances go towards serving ourselves. I know the building and activities within it are important, but I think we need to look at ways we could reach out to the community more. I think we've lost sight of that." Jean nods in agreement. "I agree, and I think one of the ways we could reach out is to add a more variety to the music part of our worship. I'd like to hear more modern music and maybe even a set of drums in the sanctuary." Paul barely waits for Jean to finish: "Over my dead body. This is the Lord's house, not some local bar! If you put drums in this sanctuary, half of the people will leave, including me."*

*More silence follows. Robert speaks: "I remember about fifteen years ago when we tried to change the order of service in the bulletin. It didn't go over very well. Mrs. McDonald left and hasn't been back since. She just couldn't see why the Lord's Prayer had to come after the sermon and not before it."*

Sharon raises her hand. "I'm not sure about changing things in the worship service but I think we need to reach out to the youth. If we don't have young people coming to church, we'll eventually die out. We need more church school teachers. The ones who have been teaching for the last ten years are getting worn out." Jim nods in agreement and then says: "Yes, I agree but we mustn't forget about the seniors. We need to provide better ministry to the shut-ins and to those who are having a difficult time as they get older. We need ministry to youth and to seniors although I do think that visiting is really the minister's job."

Sarah shakes her head in disagreement. "I think that's one of our problems. We're always trying to be all things to all people. What we need is greater focus. We can't do it all." The discussion continues but no decisions are reached. Partly out of gratitude and partly out of frustration the minister closes in prayer.

Everyone at the meeting is part of the same congregation yet everyone sees a different picture. Most of us know by experience that any two people will not only look at a situation differently, they may well see two entirely different pictures. The more people involved in the discussion, the more complicated it becomes. Studies show that people solve problems in different ways.

### Understanding how we approach problems and how others approach problems can help

Studies have shown that all of us have preferred ways of thinking that not only affect how we see things, but what we actually see. It follows then: The more attuned we are to our own preferred way of thinking and the preferred thinking styles of those we are working with, the more likely we are to see the 'blind spots' and strengths that come with each thinking style.

This is the main argument in a book by Allen Harrison and Robert Bramson called *The Art of Thinking*. In the book, the authors describe five thinking styles. There is a questionnaire in the book that allows the reader to identify his or her own preferred thinking style. The book can be purchased at the WMS Book Room (416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301 or [bookroom@presbyterian.ca](mailto:bookroom@presbyterian.ca)) or at [Amazon.ca](http://Amazon.ca) for \$10. A separate resource guide, which includes the inventory and synopsis of each style, can also be purchased through Alice Kienholz Assoc. in Calgary at 403-241-6566.

Below is a brief summary of each of the style's strengths and limitations and suggested ways to work with people with differing styles. People often have more than one preferred style and the authors give several examples. Below is a brief summary of each style. Perhaps you will find a description of yourself!

## **A Summary of the Five Different Styles follows:**

**THE SYNTHESIST** (11% of people have this as a preferred style.)

**Favorite scripture:** "Behold, I make all things new."

**Worldview:** "In constant change."

### **Main characteristics**

- Constantly seeks new ways to do things
- Tends to be speculative: favorite phrase is "What if..."
- Seeks creativity rather than compromise or consensus and therefore enjoys verbal disagreement
- Likes change - even if only for the sake of change itself
- Tends to see the world as constantly changing
- Gets bored with the status quo, routine, things never changing
- Likes to question people's basic assumptions about things
- Works well in unstructured situations

### **Strengths**

- Is open to new ideas and willing to take risks
- Is able to help others examine underlying assumptions
- Encourages debate and discussion

### **Liabilities**

- May spend too much time considering new ideas and ignoring the routine and mundane things
- Tends to speculate. This may indicate a lack of attention to details and lack of follow-through
- May take unnecessary risks or risks that are too big because they ignore relevant facts

### **Ways a Synthesist Influences Others**

- Tends to influence others through argument and debate
- Is hard to influence because of a burning need to discover things themselves

## **THE IDEALIST** (37% of people have this as a preferred style)

**Favorite scripture:** "Behold what manner of love is this that we should be called the children of God."

**Worldview:** The world ought to be a place of harmonious relationships.

### **Main Characteristics**

- Tends to be future-oriented and goal-oriented
- Favorite question is "Where are we going and why?"
- Is value-oriented: focus is on the needs of people or society
- When problems arise or decisions need to be made focuses on values rather than facts
- Tends to avoid confrontation and seeks reconciliation or consensus
- Has high standards and is often unaware of how high they are. Can be easily disappointed in themselves or in others
- Can be resentful of those whose standards are different
- Enjoys the participation of others, therefore open to a diversity of views
- When problem-solving, they look for solutions that give something for everyone
- Strongest in areas where values and feelings are needed and weakest in areas where calculated data and 'objective' decisions need to be made
- Avoids conflict and wants people to be nice and to agree
- Enjoys discussions that deal with people and their problems but dislikes data-bound discussions that move away from values to facts

### **Strengths**

- When an overview is needed, an idealist is required
- Gets others to take ownership of goals
- Is able to get people to work together by focusing on agreement on broad goals
- Biggest asset: is able to work towards seeing the whole picture and looking towards future

### **Liabilities**

- Tends to look for the 'right' decision and therefore finds it difficult to make decisions because they don't like to go against the group
- Tends to nurse resentments and frustrations inwardly
- If they feel their values are being violated they can become extremely rigid. May become overloaded by the big picture
- Biggest liability: Often can't see how high their standards are and feel guilty for not reaching them, or feel disappointed in others for not living up to them

### **Ways an Idealist Influences Others**

- Idealists work on the assumption that the world can be a better place and harmony can be achieved
- Focuses on the whole, with concern for people's feelings
- Takes a long-range view and works to get others to do the same
- Emphasizes process and the need to know why, what and how before making commitments to decisions.
- Uses a participatory approach and finds places of agreement.
- Discusses problems in terms of how decisions might affect the people involved.

## **THE PRAGMATIST** (18% of people have this preferred style.)

**Favorite scripture:** "Divide your merchandise among seven or perhaps eight ventures, since you do not know what disasters are in store for the world."

**Worldview:** The world is piecemeal, one day at a time kind of place.

### **Main Characteristics**

- Favorite saying is "Win a few, lose a few"
- Sees the world as an experimental place. The future is uncertain so one must experiment and have contingency plans. Doesn't mind long-range plans but doesn't take them seriously
- Tends to go with whatever works; therefore, not tied to convention
- Major concern is to find a solution. Can see immediate opportunities
- Values innovation over convention or process and may cut corners if necessary
- Because they appreciate innovation, like synthesists, they like ideas and brainstorming
- Not interested in the big picture. Tends to do things one thing at a time
- Is solution-oriented. Tends to be good at putting themselves in other people's shoes
- Is enthusiastic and agreeable

### **Strengths**

- Is the best fundraiser and marketer. Has a feeling for what will sell
- Never expects to get everything they want so they are open to win-win situations
- Tend not to take themselves seriously
- Sees life as a game where you win some and lose some
- When you need to know how to get from here to there ask a pragmatist
- Always has a contingency plan and seldom puts all the eggs in one basket

### **Liabilities**

- May not understand that others are not as adaptable and may need long-range goals
- May dismiss long-range plans and say, "We'll deal with that when we get there"
- May rely too much on what 'sells'
- May try too hard for expediency
- May appear over-compromising

### **Ways a Pragmatist Influences Others**

- Focus is on the problem at hand and not an over-all plan
- Takes an incremental approach to solving the problem: i.e. one step at a time
- Does not have a strong need to know where they are going and therefore are open to experiment and innovation
- Like the synthesist, is creative but, whereas the synthesist wants something new and profound, the pragmatist is focused on the payoff

Because s/he looks for a payoff, they are able to act step by step whereas an idealist tends not to act unless the whole ideal can be accomplished at once. That's the greatest contribution of the pragmatist to the organization; looking at what is do-able, the pragmatist can help the organization lower its sights to what it can do rather than be locked into some grand plan. It allows the organization to at least take some step forward.

## **THE ANALYST** (35% of people have this as a preferred thinking style.)

**Favorite scripture:** "Consider the lilies of the field."

**Worldview:** Orderly and structured

### **Main Characteristics**

- Is logical and methodical and pays great attention to details
- Plans carefully, gathering as much data as possible before making a decision
- Focuses on facts but finds it hard to see that all facts are selective facts
- Looks for the best answer by following a step by step approach
- Interested in predictability and stability
- Tends to focus on objective data rather than values or goals
- Likes to be sure of things and what's going to happen next
- Would rather listen to a lecture than brainstorm
- While the pragmatist's approach is more personal and experimental, the analyst looks for the best way
- Because they look out for details, they are picky, which is a necessary aide to the synthesist and idealist
- Likes to be sure of things, to know all the facts, and what's going to happen next
- Likes to work by listing and prioritizing objectives in order to see the dimensions of the problem (something intuitive people do not like to do)

### **Strengths**

- If a project needs to be done meticulously with patience, orderly procedure, and endurance, ask an analyst
- Works hard to find the one best way but finds it hard to accept that there may not be one best way
- Will emphasize the importance of data. Whereas the idealist likes to look at the big picture, the analyst wants objective data, right procedure, best method

### **Liabilities**

- Finds it hard to delegate because detail is so important to them
- Searching for more data (which drives a pragmatist and a realist crazy)
- May screen out values over facts
- May over-plan or over-analyze
- May have tunnel vision with 'one best way'

## **THE REALIST** (24% of people have this preferred style.)

**Favorite scripture:** "Of course he was with him, he must have been; he's a Galilean."

**Worldview:** What you see is what you get.

### **Main Characteristics**

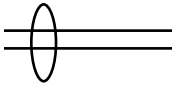
- Realists go by what can be seen, touched, heard, observed, and experienced.
- Motto is "facts are facts"
- Has difficulty with the synthesist who works on perceptions rather than the notion of "perceived facts"
- Agreement and consensus is important because it validates the belief that 'facts are facts' which we can all see
- When there is a problem, the realist seeks to fix it by getting people to see the facts
- The facts at hand are sufficient and, unlike analysts, does not want to spend time getting more and more facts
- A synthesist will ask about basic assumptions; a realist will ask "what are the facts?"
- Favorite expressions: "It's obvious to me." "Everybody knows that..."

### **Strengths**

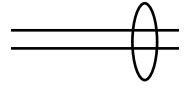
- Keeps their focus on hard facts and visible results
- Helps create initiative by getting others to pay attention to the facts
- Good at planning because they are able to set objectives and allocate required resource. Thus, help idealists who are looking at the big picture
- Prefers to move ahead and can help the analyst, who prefers to calculate and plan
- Is able to help groups get through the subjective and focus on the objective.
- Brings strength by getting people to define objectives i.e. to have a clear idea of what results are really intended
- Tends to be good at identifying the resources that are available
- Keeps others focused on specifics, especially the specifics of what is hoped to be accomplished
- Tends to draw attention to the usefulness of experts in an area. Rely on experts more than other thinking styles

### **Liabilities**

- Can have firm opinions because 'facts are facts' and, therefore, seems stubborn
- Because the realist does not like speculation, one is often able to simplify a problem although this may be a double-edged sword since it may make a complicated problem a simplistic one
- Likes to have control over situations so if they do not know the facts they like experts who can give them the facts and then they can stay in control
- Tends to be direct and incisive and corrective; a strength that needs to be used carefully and judiciously
- Has a low tolerance for ambiguity and are best in structured situations
- It is difficult to get a realist to change his/her mind



# Situational Leadership



The title “Situational Leadership” refers to a highly adaptable style of leadership that is driven by the work assigned and the people who are being led. To some degree most of us do this naturally. We ask the gregarious elder to greet visitors at the door and we normally don’t ask the extremely introverted elder to lead the worship service during a Sunday when the minister is absent. We are patient with those who are attempting a task for the first time and we send reminder notes to those who have a tendency to procrastinate or forget their tasks altogether. All too often, however, we are tempted to ask people to perform duties for which they are not trained and ill-prepared. For example, the Sunday school needs another teacher, so we ask someone to take the class. If the individual has taught children effectively for years, she may require very little input from the leader. However, if this is the first time she’s been to Sunday school since she was 12 years old, she may require a leader to guide her for a period of time until she is comfortable with the role and the curriculum.

In the 1960’s, Ken Blanchard, author of the “*One Minute Manager*” series, and Paul Hersey created a model for situational leadership that enables a leader to analyze the needs of a situation and then to adopt the most appropriate leadership style to suit it. Dale Woods has employed this at his church and has found it to be a most helpful reminder of effective ways of leading, preparing and encouraging those who take on responsibilities on the session or in the church at large.

Blanchard and Hersey offer four leadership behaviours. Very briefly they are as follows.

## **Leader Behaviour:**

- Directing:** Leaders define the roles and tasks of the 'follower', and supervise them closely. Decisions are made by the leader and announced, so communication is largely one-way.
- Coaching** Leaders still define roles and tasks, but seek ideas and suggestions from the “follower”. Decisions remain the leader's prerogative, but communication is much more two-way.
- Supporting** Leaders pass day-to-day decisions, such as task allocation and processes, to the “follower”. The leader facilitates and takes part in decisions, but control is with the “follower”.
- Delegating** Leaders are still involved in decisions and problem-solving, but control is with the “follower”. The “follower” decides when and how the leader will be involved.

Effective leaders need to be versatile enough to know which leadership style is needed for a specific task and for the people asked to perform that task. The leadership style should be driven by the competence and commitment of the follower. Blanchard and Hersey suggest four levels of competence and commitment that they call development levels.

### Development Level:

<p><b>High Competence High Commitment</b></p>	<p>Experienced at the job, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. May even be more skilled than the leader.</p>
<p><b>High Competence Variable Commitment</b></p>	<p>Experienced and capable, but may lack the confidence to go it alone, or the motivation to do it well / quickly.</p>
<p><b>Some Competence Low Commitment</b></p>	<p>May have some relevant skills, but won't be able to do the job without help. The task or the situation may be new to them.</p>
<p><b>Low Competence Low Commitment</b></p>	<p>Generally lacking the specific skills required for the job in hand, and lacks any confidence and / or motivation to tackle it.</p>

The development levels are also situational. One person might be able to dream up wonderful ideas for the youth group, but has no idea how to relate to the young people or implement the ideas. Another person might have great rapport with the young people and be a great motivator, but has no imagination for programs.

Here are two examples of how the leader behaviour with the development level might clash or merge.

The session chooses a new clerk of session. The minister hands over the minute book and a box bulging with paper files then moves on to the next task. The new clerk might fall into the low competence - low commitment development level while the minister adopted a delegating leadership behaviour. The result is that everyone loses because the new clerk is overwhelmed and the minister, who has offered no support, is frustrated with the way the session minutes are recorded. If the leader had adopted a directing leadership behaviour and carefully supervised the new clerk until she felt comfortable with the new role, the work would have been properly completed and a good relationship between minister and clerk might develop.

The new clerk might fall into the high competence - high commitment level. She served competently as session clerk for 10 years in another congregation. She knows more than the minister about being a clerk. If the minister adopts a directing leadership behaviour and outlines in minute detail how each motion should be recorded, each marginal note prepared, and so on, the new clerk may feel angry because the minister is treating her like an incompetent beginner. However, if the minister adopts a delegating leadership behaviour, trusting the clerk to handle the job well but be on hand for advice as necessary, the work will be done and a trust between minister and elder may well develop.

*God has called us to lead and serve.*

*God has granted us gifts to do just that.*

*May God bless each one of us as we strive to  
employ our gifts efficiently and effectively for the kingdom.*



# Developing your leadership skills

## A Workshop for Congregational Leaders

### Developing your leadership skills A Workshop for Congregational Leaders

By Dorothy Henderson

who is grateful for the ideas on pages 15-17 which come from the book  
*Courageous Leadership* by Bill Hybels, Zondervan, 2002

#### Prior to the event

- Set out hospitality items: signs on doors, name tags if needed, refreshments.
- Gather up scissors, photocopies of pp. 15-17 for each participant, extra coloured paper, markers and masking tape.
- Provide for each participant pens and a sheet of paper with a large circle on it; divide circle into three parts with one of these statements in each segment of the circle:

Draw a picture of yourself acting as a leader.

What are your questions about developing leadership?

Write words here that describe an “ideal” leader.

#### As People Gather

10 min.

As people arrive, welcome them, offer them refreshments, and ask them to individually fill out their leadership circle page. Invite them to tell a partner or the whole group about the picture of themselves as a leader. What are some of the questions people have about leadership?

#### Introduction to the Workshop

5 min.

Introduce the workshop by explaining the three goals of the workshop, which are to:

- determine the main leadership styles in your group
- explore, as a group, what leadership styles would be needed to accomplish specific tasks or ministries
- think about how leadership awareness is helpful in recruitment.

Invite people to call out some words that describe an “ideal” leader. As they are called out, ask one of the participants to jot the words on coloured paper and post them in the room.

*Say: We learn about leadership from a lot of sources—reading, having mentors, going to workshops, just jumping in and doing it, then reflecting on it. These words posted around us describe something about leadership...but there is more to learn and that is why we have gathered for this workshop. No matter how experienced we are in providing leadership, there is more to learn.*

## **Exercise on Leadership Styles**

20 min.

**Step 1:** Give each person the handout on pages 15-17 of this workshop. Ask each person to cut apart the 10 cards. Explain that each card describes a particular style of leadership. As the workshop leader reads through the cards, one by one, each person must decide if he/she is definitely this kind of leader (give that card a 3!) or a 2 ("I could perhaps give this type of leadership with the right support")—or 1 ("I definitely would not feel comfortable giving this type of leadership"). People may end up with several 3s—i.e. they are able to provide several types of leadership.

Also, as the leader is reading the cards, if this type of leader sounds like a familiar person (e.g. that sounds like my father, my co-worker....) ask participants to jot down the name of that person on their card.

## **Discussion**

10 min.

In the whole group, talk about these things:

1. What kinds of leadership styles do we have in this group? (Write the variety of styles on chart paper e.g. we have in our group 6 visionary leaders, 4 managerial leaders, etc.)
2. What does this tell us about how our group provides leadership?
3. Are there missing leadership qualities in our group? If so, what can we do about that?

## **Try-it-out simulations**

10 min.

Choose one or all of the following scenarios to decide how leadership can be recruited for a particular task.

**Scenario 1:** Part of your church building has been damaged in a wind storm. You need to recruit an ad-hoc committee to oversee the reconstruction (including the fund-raising) of the building. Using the leadership cards, identify what kind of leadership is needed.

**Scenario 2:** Several young families with babies have started to attend your church. You want to provide some programming and support for these young families. Using the leadership cards, identify what kind of leadership is needed.

**Scenario 3:** Your minister has discovered a wonderful new book on church development and would like a group to study it in order to use some of the principles in your congregation. What kind of leadership is needed to work with the minister to achieve this goal?

## **Recruiting for leadership**

Talk about how an awareness of the various styles of leadership will positively affect recruitment. Your group may, for instance, conclude that your congregation is better served with ad hoc leadership groups rather than long standing committees. Or they may conclude that, when leadership is needed, it is important first to go through the process they just used with the cards to determine what type of leadership is most

helpful. The group may also reflect on how things can go wrong if the wrong type of leader is chosen for a particular task. The leadership style should match the task. You may also choose to use the cards as a tool to identify other leaders in your congregation who are not in your workshop. Here is an example:

You want to do some regular, positive communicating with the congregation about the importance of giving regularly, rather than at the end of the fiscal year. You look over the 10 cards. What kind of leader is needed to accomplish this task? You decide that your congregation needs a gentle approach so you think that strategic and shepherding leadership is the most effective to meet your goals. You then ask, "Looking at the characteristics of strategic and shepherding leaders, who does this describe in our congregation?" Recruitment, then, consists of a visit by two people to the leaders you have identified. After explaining the situation, the visitors say something like this, "We have carefully prayed and considered the leadership skills needed for this task. We see in you... Would you consider assuming some of the leadership in this area for the period of time...?"

## **Wrap up**

5 min.

Invite workshop participants to name one thing about leadership which they learned from the workshop. How will this awareness affect how the group "does business" in the church?

## **Visionary**

- You have or like a clear picture of what the future holds.
- You have enthusiasm for turning visions into reality.
- You enjoy appealing to people who will get on board with the vision.
- You are idealistic and faith-filled.
- You are not easily discouraged or deterred.
- You respond to opposition by digging in your heels and re-asserting your vision.
- You may or may not have the natural ability to form teams, align talents, set goals, or manage progress toward the achievement of the vision. To be effective over the long haul, you need other people who work with you.

Example: Martin Luther King

## **Directional**

- You have an uncanny, God-given ability to choose the right path for an organization as it approaches a critical intersection.
- You can clearly answer the question, “Should we stay the course or, is it time for wholesale change?”
- You make up your mind after sorting through all the options.
- You like to assess mission, the strengths and weaknesses of a ministry, the resources, personnel and openness to change.
- Directional leaders may not feel comfortable speaking publicly but are the “wise people” behind the scenes, so may be the “secret heroes” at times of critical choices.

A negative example of what can go wrong if directional leaders take the wrong turn:  
Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:1-24)

## **Strategic**

- You have the ability to take an exciting vision and break it down into a series of sequential, achievable steps.
- You have the ability to form a game plan that everybody can understand and participate in.
- You challenge team members to “stay with the plan,” and not go off on tangents. You take the plan one step at a time.
- You work to bring various sub-groups into alignment so that all the organization’s energy will be focused on realizing the vision.

Example: Football coach

## **Managing**

- You have the ability to organize people, processes, and resources to achieve a mission.
- You love the thought of bring order out of chaos.
- You find deep satisfaction in monitoring and fine-tuning a process.
- You motivate team members by establishing appropriate mile markers on the road to the destination.
- As a managing leader, you love the day-to-day operational world.

Example: Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2-6)

## Motivational

- You have a God-given ability to keep your team-mates fired up.
- You are on the constant lookout for “sagging shoulders and dull eyes.”
- You have a keen sense of who needs public recognition and who needs just a private word of encouragement.
- You often create a positive workplace because you call out the best in people, cheer people on through their progress, celebrate accomplishments and tell people that they were important to the cause.
- You don’t get bitter or vengeful when morale sinks. You view it as an opportunity to dream of new ways to inspire and lift the spirits of everyone on the team.

Example: Jesus with his disciples

## Shepherding

- You build a team slowly, love the members deeply, nurture them gently, support them consistently, listen to them patiently, pray for them diligently.
- You draw team members into a rich community experience.
- While visionary leaders tend to attract people because of the compelling nature of their cause, shepherding leaders tend to draw people together almost regardless of their cause.
- Group members may be heard to say, “We want to stay in community and keep our shepherd.” What really matters are the community dynamics.

Example: David in 2 Samuel 23 where David is thirsty and his men go behind enemy lines to get him water

## Team Building

- You know and understand the vision, but you realize that it will take a team of leaders and workers to accomplish the goal.
- Team-builders have a supernatural insight into people; they can successfully find and develop the right person for the right task.
- After you have found the right person for the right task, they say, “Go ahead and do it. I’ll be here for support and encouragement, but you have permission to just get the job done.”
- The difference between the shepherding leader and the team-building leader is that the team-builder is driven more by a clear understanding of the vision than by the desire to nurture and build community.
- You may or may not be skilled at managing your team. You may think that management isn’t all that critical; if the right person is in the right slot for the right reason, right things will happen.

Example: Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Church

## Entrepreneurial

- You function optimally in start-up mode.
- If you can’t regularly give birth to something new, you begin to lose energy.
- Once the venture is up and running, once the effort requires steady ongoing management, you tend to lose enthusiasm, focus, and sometime even confidence.
- If you can’t give birth to something brand new every few years, something inside you begins to die.

Example: The apostle Paul

## **Reengineering**

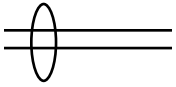
- You are at your best in turn-around situations.
- You thrive on the challenge of taking a troubled situation—a team that has lost its vision, a ministry where people are in the wrong positions, a department trying to move forward without a strategy—and turning it around.
- You love to reevaluate personnel, strategy, and values.
- You love to meet with team members and help them figure out where the “old” went wrong and what the “new” should look like. Then you prod members into action.
- You love to patch up, tune up, and revitalize hurting departments or organizations.
- When things are patched up, you may or may not be motivated to stay around.

Example: Interim ministers

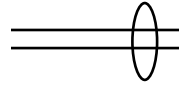
## **Bridge Building**

- You are able to bring together under a single leadership umbrella a wide range of constituent groups.
- You can help a complex organization stay focused on a single mission. You care about the big picture.
- You are diplomatic, have ability to compromise, negotiate and think outside the box.
- You are flexible, able to listen and understand.
- You love the challenge of relating to diverse groups of people.
- Leading a multi-faceted organization energizes rather than defeats you.
- You probably meet privately with heads of various sub-groups to keep them focused on their goals and to hear their passion.
- You are an effective advocate for each constituent group, focusing the efforts of all the groups in such a way that it creates a win-win situation for everyone involved.
- You help each group develop a healthy perspective and realize that they can meet the needs of the sub-ministry and contribute to the achievement of the overall goal.

Example: Many fine ministers, school principals



# Leading Effective and Spiritually Based Meetings



By Cathy Gale, elder, Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church, Calgary, Alberta

*The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After much debate...* Acts 15:6-7 NRSV

Love 'em or hate 'em, meetings are essential to our understanding of Reformed theology. Meetings do the church's work; we owe it to God and ourselves to optimize our time and gifts. Can meetings be efficient, effective and enjoyable? Yes!

Well-run meetings achieve their purpose. They give voice to all members, sharing influence and power, encouraging service by many rather than few. They increase enjoyment and motivation of participants, minimizing conflict and disruption.

In his book *Transforming Church Boards...* Charles Olsen urges us to consider meetings as worshipful work. Rather than draining us of time and energy, meetings become sources of spiritual life. Experiencing this, people willingly engage in church life beyond their assignment, and recruitment of new members is made easier. Seen as worship, work becomes a source of individual faith development. Within committees, relationships of trust develop in an atmosphere that encourages and shares spiritual reflection. Worshipful work lifts the level of congregational commitment as it models Christian community and ministry for all.

## **Well-managed, effective and spiritually based meetings show these characteristics:**

**They consider timing and the use of time:** Keep in mind how much can be realistically tackled when scheduling meetings. Dealing with trivial or overwhelming information lowers morale. Once gathered, be a steward of the group's time together. Outline a reasonable timeframe, with estimates for each item; share it with the group. Call to order on time, greeting latecomers with reference to the agenda. Use time wisely; keep discussion on topic, one issue at a time. Recognize when it's time to move on: points are repeated, discussion slows or time guidelines are reached. Remind members of budgeted timeframes if necessary.

**They use organizational tools:** Key here is an agenda: it organizes time, clarifies purpose, sets priorities and guides follow-up. Distributed with lead-time, members can confirm attendance, contribute items, consider questions, and prepare. Organized as an order of worship, an agenda sets the context of worshipful work. Look to the order of service in your congregation's Sunday worship service for inspiration. Gather in God's name, reflect on scripture appropriate to context, pray for individual and corporate discernment. Respond to God's word with discerned decisions and go into the world after reflecting on both accomplishments and unfinished work.

Recording the meeting's progress is essential; minutes provide clear records of decisions and direction for follow-up. Use visuals or guest speakers to add variety and interest, but only if they add to the meeting's purpose.

**They consider logistics of location:** When participants are too hot, too cold, can't hear/see well or are cramped for space, meetings lose authenticity. Individual pre-occupation with physical needs affects the group's discernment as a whole. And what is Presbyterian decision-making if not done corporately?

**They keep in mind group needs and behaviours:** In his book *Church Meetings that Work*, Gaylord Noyce reminds us that without cohesion, morale and effectiveness drop, therefore leaders must model behaviours that build and maintain cohesion. Sincere, respectful and open attitudes, calmness and focus, encourages participation by all. Staying attentive to process and conversation helps leaders clarify, balance and summarize discussions or encourage the group to consider different approaches. This also coaches group members to improve their work, helpful from a mentorship perspective. Church leaders who understand leadership as servanthood keep the work of Christ at its centre. Olsen calls it giving the meeting "simple elegance", with imagery focused on God and scripture leading the way to discerned decisions for that community at that time.

Our humanity throws off our efficiency: inappropriate or irrelevant conversations, silence or worse yet, harsh conflict. Because we are who we are, these possibilities exist, more so in community.

## **We approach challenges of human nature gracefully by:**

**Listening carefully, speaking thoughtfully:** Listen for break-in opportunities to keep a meeting on track: redirect unconstructive conversation back to the agenda, use guided questions, rephrase and summarize a contribution or ask for different perspectives. Use eye contact, shift body position or intensity, to indicate it's time to wrap up, move on, share the floor or make a decision. With problematic inefficient discussion, remind the group about the importance of timing and focus as the meeting begins. Use humour as an ally!

**Pondering the silence:** Is information overwhelming, too sparse or lacking clarity? Backtrack to summarize or rephrase information then ask for thoughts of others, directly if necessary. Remember silence can be useful, providing time for us to prayerfully reflect and consider our actions, especially true in a spirit of worshipful work. Silent observers are not necessarily non-participants; keen observers often respond to invitations to share those observations when comfortable.

**Keeping the Christian perspective:** Navigating a group through conflict, leaders are called to be compassionately attentive to those whose need is greatest; this includes times when some lose self-control. In remaining calm and objective, leaders maintain the meeting's integrity

and dignity of all members. Focusing on issues, looking for items of mutual agreement and working toward win-win solutions is crucial for the immediate moment and future group cohesion. Passionate emotions generate energy and skilled leadership channels that energy into positive, creative purposes. Gaylord Noyce reminds us these times are a potential gift of the Spirit, a way of moving the work of the church ahead.

Avoiding conflict represses issues and withholds the community of the healing we receive in forgiveness and reconciliation, the very essence of Christ's life.

Expecting and accepting these foibles challenges us to more faithful interactions. See these times as gifts, knowing individual members bring wisdom and experience of many. As leaders, these are opportunities to learn and grow, consider our role and influence and what God is truly calling us to be.

### **Finally, remember... a committee is a community:**

Expression and nurture of our social nature is an often-overlooked purpose of meetings, according to Gaylord Noyce, who goes so far as to say that incorporating social needs into meetings deserves as much attention as planning for efficiency. Designated social time, understood as fellowship, builds trust and cohesion, decreasing potential for conflict.

Tendency to chat diminishes and meetings flow more smoothly. As Barbara McLean reminds us (*Elders Institute in a Box: Building Circles of Faith*), sharing food and drink is a biblical constant, reminding us it is God's gift of nourishment we consume and each other's talents of preparation we appreciate. Charles Olsen observes that worshipful work can faithfully include communion and follow with a time of fellowship.

Incorporating fellowship into a meeting's time allotment means clearly defining the shift in focus. If beginning with social time, consider moving to a different location to mark the transition to work or at the very least purposefully begin with specific acts of worship such as prayer. Closing a meeting with fellowship allows those who want to linger that option, while accommodating those that need to move on. For a different twist altogether, consider gathering purely for socializing occasionally! However accomplished, providing opportunities for fellowship are an important aspect of the building up of God's community represented in your group.

Understanding leadership of committees as servanthood in the context of worshipful work, our path is clearer to see, challenges easier to work through and results are more worthwhile. Just as God calls us to be good stewards of our talents and time, we are called to be compassionate with each other within the community God calls us to be. Most importantly, to know that it is God's community, and God guides it and its leaders every step of the way.

*Called to be partners with God in creation,  
Honouring Christ as the Lord of the nation,  
We must be ready for risk and for sacrifice,  
Worship and work must be one.*

*Book of Praise, Hymn 555 "Worship the Lord"*



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In addition to the above reading, congregational leaders may find the resources listed below helpful:

Tools for the Elder's Toolbox: *Tool 3 Helping Committees Work as Effective Teams and Tool 4 Reaching Consensus*, and *On the Road Workshop: Spiritual Meetings*, Elders' Institute. Can be accessed through the Elders' Institute website: [www.eldersinstitute.com](http://www.eldersinstitute.com)

ideas! For Church Leaders: *Ideas for Leading Meetings* is a point form article in the summer 2003 issue of the PC(USA) online magazine "ideas! For Church Leaders". Can be accessed at: [www.pcusa.org/ideas/2003summer/leadingmeetings.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/ideas/2003summer/leadingmeetings.htm)