

The Kingdom at Work Project



Bulletin 9 November 2016

‘Servant leadership’

This issue of the Kingdom at Work Project’s *Bulletin* focuses on the concept of ‘servant leadership’. It does so because we believe that the concept lies at very heart of Christian life and work and offers a redemptive alternative to a number of other destructive forms of leadership evident in our society and world today.

We are delighted that this issue of the *Bulletin* has been enriched by contributions from their members commissioned by MODEM, more about which is said below.

They and our other contributors make many important points which, taken together, help to clarify and give new impetus to the meaning and significance of servant leadership.

Editorial

‘Servant leadership’, as many of our contributors note, was a term coined by Robert Greenleaf, an American businessman and Quaker, over forty years ago. It caught the imagination of many who at that time were trying to pursue a style of business leadership which was as much concerned with the well-being of employees, and indeed customers and clients, as with making a profit. However, there has been an ongoing problem with the concept. Like many terms, such as the common good, community, mindfulness and Brexit (!), ‘servant leadership’ can often appear to mean all things to all people. This editorial seeks to offer a means by which we might be able to give the concept of servant leadership the theological clout it deserves and demonstrate its immense importance for church and world.

Defining leadership

We begin with some insights which the secular world, especially that of organisational theory, offers us. ‘Leadership’ is usually taken to mean the exercise of authority, by an individual or group, to provide a sense of direction to collectives, small or large, in the fulfilment of their primary task. (The primary task is that which a collective has to achieve if it is to survive - if Marks and Spencer cannot sell its goods it goes under.) Leadership is thus inevitably about furthering change because our society and world are ever-changing.

However, the meaning of *servant* leadership cannot be defined until five preliminary questions are addressed. These are:

1. Who (individual or group) commissions the leader?
2. What is the nature of the leader’s commission or task?
3. Who is being ‘led’?

4. What are the relevant features of the environment (economic, social, cultural, physical, etc.) within which that task has to be undertaken?
5. How is the communal strength of the collective to be sustained in the process?
6. Taking the response to all these questions into account - what is the nature of servant leadership required?

Servant leadership as a commission

In the context of the six questions set out above, servant leadership is in a position no different from that of any other form of leadership. Thus its meaning (question 6) cannot be clarified until we have addressed the five preceding questions. Leap-frogging to question 6 (the nature of servant leadership) and offering ethical bullet points which we assume reflect the meaning of 'servant' is simply to short-circuit the task of discernment. Instead, we must begin by addressing question 1 (Who commissions the leader?). Indeed, I would argue that this is the all-important question, especially when we are trying to discern the value-added qualities which Christian faith offers to a secular understanding of servant leadership,

A necessary addendum needs to be made here. In both secular *and* theological contexts, the assumption that being a 'servant' primarily means engaging in some form of 'service' (in the sense of welfare) must be rejected. John Collins (see *Diakonia Studies: Critical issues in ministry*. (2014) Oxford University Press) argues in his meticulous biblical study of terms associated with *diakonia*, traditionally translated as 'service', 'servanthood' or similar, that *diakonia* in fact derives its meaning from the person who is commissioning the servant and defining the task (our questions 1 and 2). This remains the case when, to fulfil that commission, a *diakonos* also needs to exercise some form of leadership.

The Christian contribution to servant leadership

In the publications which undergird the Kingdom at Work Project (see page 3), we argue that, from a Christian perspective, the commission to all leaders (in church *and* world) ultimately comes from a Trinitarian God. We contend that this commission is to work for the transformation of humankind, with all its strengths and weaknesses (question 4), into the kingdom community. In this undertaking, the church (in this context as a collective 'leader') is commissioned to become the servant of the Trinity and the kingdom community which is coming into being. Such servanthood lays upon the church the responsibility (mission) of making manifest and enriching the gifts of the kingdom community in every aspect of daily life and work. We have identified these gifts elsewhere as life, liberation, love and learning - the 4Ls. To be true to this Trinitarian commission, the church needs to lead in a servant-like way which exemplifies and furthers the gifts of the kingdom community.

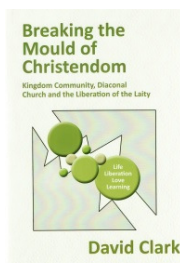
In all cases, it is only after addressing questions 1 to 2, as well as the more pragmatic questions 3 to 5, that it is possible to discern the particular qualities of servant leadership required and the associated roles which need to be played. From a Christian perspective, we believe that these roles are likely to include those of visionary (reflecting all 4Ls), strategist (reflecting all 4Ls), animator (reflecting the gift of life), enabler (representing the gift of liberation), intermediary (reflecting the gift of love), and education (reflecting the gift of learning) (*The Kingdom at Work Project*, pp 113-116). Nevertheless, if the answers to questions 1 and 2, and to our four subsequent questions, differ radically from that of the Kingdom at Work Project (as, for example, would be the case with ISIS!), then the features and role of servant leader would be very different. All of us, therefore, need to be alert to the fact that servant leadership has the potential to be a power not only good but also evil.

David Clark (Project Co-ordinator)

Publications by David Clark relating to the concept of servant leadership

Breaking the Mould of Christendom: Kingdom Community, Diaconal Church and the Liberation of the Laity

(2005, reprinted 2014) £14.99 - also in e-book format
Peterborough: Upfront Publishing



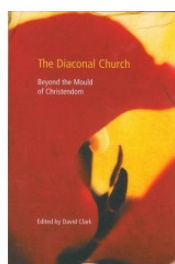
In this ground breaking text, David Clark provides a comprehensive vision of church and ministry from a diaconal perspective. He challenges Christians to convert their institutions and practices to support a diaconal vision of the church as the servant of 'the kingdom community.

[Stephen Pattison, then Professor in Religious and Theological Studies,
Cardiff University, UK]

The Diaconal Church - beyond the mould of Christendom

(2008)

Peterborough: Epworth Press (currently out of print)



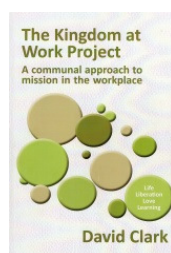
David Clark and his distinguished conversation-partners have issued a compelling challenge to the churches: adapt or die. These essays represent a manifesto for a diaconal church that breaks the mould of introspection and conservatism. They will resonate with all those who are looking for a bold new vision of Christian discipleship for changing times.

[Elaine Graham, then Samuel Ferguson Professor of Social & Pastoral
Theology, University of Manchester]

The kingdom at Work Project - a communal approach to mission in the workplace

(2014) £14.99 - also in e-book format

Peterborough: Upfront Publishing



An extraordinarily stimulating book... Its huge strength lies in the sheer comprehensiveness of the vision, combined with a myriad of practical ideas, structured responses and imaginative, evocative prayers.

[Roger Walton - President of the Methodist Conference (2016-2017)]

Building Kingdom Communities - with the diaconate as a new order of mission

(2016) £6.99

Peterborough: Upfront Publishing



This book explores how the gifts of the kingdom community - life, liberation, love and learning - might be offered to a fragmented world and how a servant church, through the creation of its diaconate as a new order of mission, could be instrumental in this. The Methodist Church in Britain is taken as a case-study for what might be achieved.

MODEM



MODEM was formally launched at the Free Church Federal Council's Council Chamber in June 1993. It is a body in association with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and registered as an ecumenical Christian charity. As a national ecumenical Christian network, it encourages authentic dialogue between exponents of leadership, organisation, spirituality and ministry to aid the development of better disciples, community, society and world.

Its stated purposes are:

- To create, maintain and share a relevant body of knowledge on Christian leadership;
- To support and promote understanding of 'good practice' and 'know how' in Christian leadership;
- To be an open channel of communication for (furthering the ministry of the church);
- To build and strengthen communities in society.

It has an established track record of publishing substantial books in the areas of leadership, management and ministry. It also publishes a journal for members, covering spirituality at work and the latest news, views and reviews.

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www.modemuk.org

Introduction to the contributions from MODEM members

David Sims

I am grateful to David Clark for the opportunity to encourage some of my colleagues in MODEM to submit pieces for this issue of the *Bulletin*. As our Website says, **MODEM** is a national ecumenical Christian network, which encourages authentic dialogue between exponents of leadership, organisation, spirituality and ministry to aid the development of better disciples, community, society and world (www.modemuk.org). We think of ourselves as a big conversation, where we can talk through the mutual relationship between what we know about organizations and how we live as Christians in churches and other organizations.

Some years ago, an MBA student of mine did a dissertation on the way his investment bank was using the idea of servant leadership. They had taken the idea seriously, done their reading and listened to their consultants, and undoubtedly had gained considerably from the experience. In the end, though, their servant leaders were paid a lot more than those they were serving. Servant leadership has always been bedevilled by such ironies.

Our contributors

Jonathan Emptage discusses the characteristics of servant leadership and its relationship with trust, in the contexts of John Lewis and of Christian faith. **Simon Caudwell** puts servant leadership in context with other recent thinking about leadership and offers a

finessing of the concept that gives it new life and applicability. **Richard Fox** gives two examples of servant leaders from his consulting experience, and describes what servant leadership might look like in practice. **Tim Harle** contributes a critical viewpoint in which he points out that Greenleaf did not say what has sometimes been later attributed to him, and that there are important questions to be asked about whether 'servant' is a helpful metaphor when thinking about the behaviour of Christians, or about the service of Christian ministers. **Sue Miller** thinks that the concept of leadership may have run its course, and that we need to be thinking of new ways of understanding how people move each other around.

In talking about management and leadership, it is easy for an attractive phrase to take on a life of its own, unencumbered by the context and subtleties within which it was developed. These contributions help us to stand back from the phrase 'servant leadership' and begin to explore some of the contributions that the idea can make, as well as some of the confusions it can cause if not handled with care.



David Sims is Emeritus Professor of Organizational Behaviour, Cass Business School, City, University of London, and Chair of MODEM.

Servant leadership – some reflections

Jonathan Emptage

Once upon a time...

Apparently it all began with a story - a story about a journey. It then took root, it nurtured, and it flourished. That story? Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East*, which inspired Robert Greenleaf (a Quaker) to think about the relationship between followers and leaders and led him to write an essay in 1970 *The Servant as Leader*. And that thinking continues to influence people's behaviour today. (I wonder what inspired Hermann Hesse to write his story?)

Greenleaf (1970) wrote: 'The servant leader is servant *first*. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?' Now, there's a call to ministry!

Putting a name to it

Let us stop and pause for a moment... before you reach the end of this paragraph, can you think of two or three people who illustrate by their behaviour the qualities of a servant leader? My answer includes people I feel I can trust, with whom I have a healthy relationship, and who have no messy power issues: so, to me it's about trust, relationship and power.

On trust: At the John Lewis Partnership where I work, there are three managers, one of whom, Mrs KM, is trusted far more by Partners than the other two. Why? Because the relationship is based on respect and friendship formed through shared experiences. There is a reciprocity between the manager and the Partners; each affects and is affected by the other.

Through time, the relationship has deepened from the traditional hierarchical command and control style to a more transformational service leadership, one of mutual trust.

On relationships: Someone who demonstrates healthy relationships with those around him is Desmond Tutu of South Africa, based on his work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the principle derived from indigenous African spirituality, *ubuntu*, meaning (in one sense) 'A person is a person through other people' (MacIntosh and Carmichael (2016).

On power: The British Member of Parliament Jo Cox was murdered outside her constituency office in Yorkshire earlier this year whilst serving her constituents. Her obituary in *The Economist* stated that, to her, 'Principles mattered; tribalism did not.' She dealt with the reality of power in everyday life – its legitimacy, the ethical limits on it and the beneficial results that can be achieved through the appropriate use of it. She was not one to abuse her position of power. Not like Rocky the rooster in *Chicken Run*: 'Now, the most important thing is we have to work as a team which means - you do everything I tell you.'

So what?

Developing Servant Leadership is an iterative, on-going, process – you could say it's like a journey into understanding. And a key part of that journey is learning to ask 'good' questions about our Christian service. As Ladkin points out, 'The word "question" itself has as its foundation the word 'quest' – a journey into the unknown' (2010:167). What question lies at the heart of your Christian service? 'The point, very simply, is that we are part of it all, and the moral and practical issue for all humans is to learn to live in a way that does justice to this participation' (Marshall, Coleman and Reason, 2011:44).

We should go out with the frame of mind which Jesus encourages his followers to have in Matthew, 5: 16 - 'In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven' (*The New Jerusalem Bible*). And with the sense of prayer reflected in Graham Kendrick's song *The Servant King (From Heaven You Came)*:

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving.

Equipped to serve, we can thus engage our Christian faith with the world of work as we continue our journey to influence people's behaviour today, and strive to pass the test set us by Greenleaf.

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Jonathan Emptage is Membership Secretary of MODEM. He worked for twenty years in Scotland in local government in waste and resource management. He moved to Lincoln, and now works for the John Lewis Partnership. Jonathan achieved a MA in Leadership for Sustainability at Lancaster University Management School which sparked his interest in leadership.

Leadership - servant or host?

Simon Caudwell

Servant-leadership has an instinctive appeal to Christians. Its connotations of humility and of putting others' interests first are consistent with our understanding of agape love.

Servant-leadership contradicts the prevailing discourses of leadership where elite leaders, with access to arcane knowledge or superhuman powers, are affirmed in pursuing self-interest, as well as the interests of the institutions and people they lead. Simon Western (2013) charts the development, through the 20th Century, of three such discourses: the Controller leaders with their strict management approach; the Therapist leaders (and their HR departments) with their emphasis on meeting workers' needs for self-actualisation; and, finally, today's Messiah leaders who are revered – until they fail, to be replaced with another hoped-for saviour. At least stereotypically, all these heroic leaders are required to be charismatic and visionary and must be able to pull off the trick of transforming the world for shareholders or for the electorate. They must remain aloof and untouchable – very unlike our ideas of servant-king messiahship.

Another problem with these discourses is that leaders are thought of as operating from outside the organisational 'machine'. From such an external position, an individual designated as leader can 'pull the levers' and somehow modify outcomes and control the future. In his excellent 'Very Short Introduction' to Leadership, Keith Grint (2010) contrasts this individualistic focus (on a person or position) with other recent creative notions of leadership such as a 'process' of initiating and guiding. This latter view opens up new possibilities for collaborative leadership, where leader activities are no longer tied to a particular position but may be highly transient, allowing many participants to exercise leader and follower behaviours temporarily and interchangeably. An excellent explanation of the underlying basis for this kind of fluid leadership process is offered by Donna Ladkin (2010) through her account of the 'leadership moment'. Here, leadership is a phenomenon; one that is highly context-specific and which is shaped by the particular participants engaged in a purposeful social process of collaborative sense-making (Caudwell, 2014, Ch. 9).

Such models of leadership pull the leader back into the room – into the ordinary, local conversations of organisational life. Ralph Stacey (2012), drawing strongly on social psychologists George Herbert Mead and Norbert Elias, is strongest in denying any privileged external vantage point for a leader. In Stacey's model, it is the influences we all exert, and which serve either to reinforce or to change existing patterns of organisational conversations, that constitute leadership. These influences are mediated through our gestures and responses to one another and, while some may be stronger than others, backed up, at least for a while,

by notions of ascribed authority, the reality is that everyone can act with influence. If we accept this, then any ideas of Servant-Leadership that retain the notion of a hierarchy seem problematic.

We therefore need a different understanding of Servanthood. One of the key roles for those who find themselves with a label of leader is to act neither like a hero nor a slave but more like a host (McKergow, 2009). A host serves others, not through unquestioning deference or subservience but by catalysing conversations in order to elicit, and sometimes to amplify the unique contributions of each participant. With this more relational model in mind, leadership cannot have anything to do with forceful authority. Instead, where we still need 'leader' labels for certain roles, we perhaps need to explore the idea of the servant-leader as 'last among equals'.

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Simon Caudwell is a member of Wycliffe Bible Translators. With his wife Lynn, he worked in Ethiopia for 13 years, first as a linguist and latterly as Country Director, before handing over to an Ethiopian successor. Simon lectures in Intercultural Leadership at Redcliffe College, Gloucester,

Servant leaders in practice

Richard Fox

Leadership coach and MODEM member Richard Fox offers two examples of encountering servant leaders in person. The names of the individuals have been changed.

Barry

My first experience of working with a servant leader was when we were facilitating a major change programme in a global life sciences business. We were working with one of their divisions and Barry was the MD. One of the things that struck me was his ability to consult people before a decision was made and really to care about and listen to each person. On one occasion I had just completed a two day workshop. All the participants went back to their offices and after about 20 minutes Barry returned to ask if he could help me clear up. With most other clients I would have been put on my guard, suspecting them of wanting to quiz me about my views on particular participants. With Barry it was clear that he was only there to support me in getting the room straightened out so that I could get home earlier. Every one

enjoyed working with Barry. He was genuinely interested in people and got the best out of his staff. Two years later he was promoted to a position in the States.

Geoff

My second example is Geoff, a senior member in the Education Department of a global technology company. Over an eighteen month period we regularly co-facilitated a two day personal leadership programme for his company. The workshops commenced at 9.00 and ended at 5.30. I used to arrive at around 8.20 and on every occasion Geoff had already been in the training room since about 7.40 setting up the room for the day. There was no need for him to do this, particularly as he was the client and I was the supplier. It was one of his ways of being of service to me and to the participants.

Geoff was highly trained. He had been certified in using, for example, Myers Briggs and he had attended NLP and many other courses but he never mentioned this with the groups. He shared his knowledge in an understated and authentic way and modelled effective relationships. He is one of the most integrated people I know.

Over lunch on one occasion he told me that he got home around 7.15 each day and cooked dinner for his wife and four school aged children. He then washed up, put stuff away and ended the day at 10.30 by changing the cat litter tray! At the mention of the cat litter tray I blurted out, 'Don't you resent doing all this work?' Geoff replied, 'Richard I could choose to resent doing all this work around the kitchen but I love my wife and children and it is one way I can show them that I love them'. Like Barry he has moved on to a senior position in another global business. I feel honoured that we are close friends.



Richard Fox is a long standing member of MODEM and the author of 'Creating a Purposeful Life'. He is a partner in The Learning Corporation LLP, a pan European firm of leadership coaches and facilitators and has worked extensively with church leaders. See www.churchleadership.org.uk

Revisiting Servant Leadership

Tim Harle

I first realised there may be more to servant leadership than meets the eye when I was tentatively embarking on my post-corporate career in learning about leadership. I had, not unreasonably I thought, made reference to Robert Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership in an essay which drew attention to the idea of the church minister as servant.

The draft article drew a response from a (fortunately) anonymous reviewer that could best be described as a tirade. Page after page of criticism included reference to vaguely familiar German philosophers, quoted in their own language. My subsequent career might have taken a different path if it wasn't for the unflinching support I received from the editor.

Ever since, I have sought to tread cautiously around servant leadership. My purpose here is not to dismiss it - it has important things to teach us - but to plead for a fuller understanding of what Greenleaf was getting at (and, indeed, what he did not mention). His

original essay, *The Leader as Servant* (1970) has its origins in the searing scenes of the late 1960s, especially the response in American universities to student unrest following the epoch-defining events of 1968. Greenleaf begins his essay with Herman Hesse and ends with Albert Camus: hardly representatives of any orthodox Christian tradition. Greenleaf was an executive at AT&T, and was strongly influenced by the Quakers: in his essay, he struggles to imagine how Quakers were once slave holders.

Greenleaf's inspiration was not Jesus of Galilee, but the servant in Hesse's *Journey to the East*, the sometimes unnoticed Leo, who led the enigmatic group known as The League. There is no mention of coming 'not to be served, but to serve', no Servant Songs from Isaiah. The only mention of Jesus is the late addition to John's gospel recording his encounter with the woman taken in adultery, which led to the radical insight; 'Let the one without sin cast the first stone'. Reflecting the essay's origins, it is noticeable how much Greenleaf refers to the institution and not just individual leaders (he wrote a subsequent essay, *The Institution as Servant*).

The most thoughtful critique of servant leadership, of which I am aware, is Edward C Zaragoza's *No Longer Servants, but Friends* (Abingdon Press, 2000). Zaragoza explores the theology of ordained ministry rather than leadership in its wider sense. He pleads for servanthood to be carefully examined from a socio-cultural perspective. From his own Hispanic heritage, or that of African Americans, or women, the Greek equation of servant with slave, *doulos*, deals a fatal blow, from which it is hard to recover. The servanthood paradigm enshrines the master/slave [servant] dichotomy as normative. If I may offer a rather different cultural context, we must not be seduced by the goings on at Downton Abbey.

Zaragoza has more theological critiques. An emphasis on servanthood in Jesus' earthly life denies the reality of the crucifixion and resurrection. A theology of service gets in the way of a theology of love. The cross can become a means of passive suffering and redemption, rather than a way to engage both radically and eschatologically with evil.

To come back to Greenleaf, I encourage people to reread the original essay. I'm not asking for the concept of servant leadership to be discontinued. I am asking that we use the term with more awareness of the issues which surround it.



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Past issues of the *Bulletin* can be downloaded from -
www.saltleytrust.org.uk/faith-and-work-in-theological-education-and-training/

Post-leadership

Sue Miller

I was recently involved in facilitating an event for a group of Year 10 students, entitled 'Liberating the leader in you', which released the leadership egos of over 150 schoolgirls! It was an excellent event, but it brought me back to my difficult relationship with 'leadership'... and forced me to examine why I am so ambivalent about what it has to offer and so concerned at the way in which it 'appears to have been sanctified' (Huczynski, 2006).

I am not alone in my ambivalence – note the term 'leaderism', a label which has been coined to describe the spread of a particular ideology in public service policy which privileges a certain conception of leadership: those who apply the appellation do not mean it as an endorsement! Meanwhile, Tourish, whose book explores the 'dark side of transformational leadership', notes 'our enduring preoccupation with leader agency', suggesting that the particular popularity of transformational leadership 'can be viewed as a form of nympholepsy'! (Tourish, 2013)

'Leader' and 'Leadership' are certainly much-used - some might say over-worked words – and their use is accompanied by an explosion of leadership courses and conferences. Becoming a leader, regardless of the focus of that leadership, much like 'becoming famous', has almost become an ambition in itself. And therein lies the difficulty... leadership is not an end in itself.

Discussions about leadership are not helped by the 'interpretive flexibility' (Fairhurst in Bryman et. al., 2011) associated with its meaning. It may be instructive to return to a primitive definition: leadership is about moving people in a particular direction. It is inextricably linked to followership, but also to change in that movement by its nature alters the parameters. Arguably, what is paramount in this maneuver is trajectory and purpose... and the place of individuals in determining the direction of travel is worthy of deeper consideration if we are to unpick what is really needed from leadership in current organizational life.

The traditional notion of leadership, with authority vested in key individuals who are required to take decisive action, has its place, particularly in contexts and situations where immediate action is required, and where, arguably, the desired end point is relatively clear. Further, structures of authority and associated accountability do continue to be necessary components of organisational life, but not everything in the complex systems we call organisations can 'be subservient to the will, vision and action of leaders' (Smith and Graetz, cited in Hughes, 2016), while the increasing complexity and the unbounded, 'messy' nature of many organisational problems, means that the desirable direction of travel may rarely be clear.

So what is required, and do leaders have a place? The movement may not constitute a straight trajectory from A to B, the journey may take longer, and will involve deep reflection and collaboration of a particular quality. I am not talking 'simply' about the consultation, the sharing of power and the nurturing of followers' interests which is fundamental to 'servant leadership', although the alternative approach which I am advocating shares some of these values. Otto Scharmer explains it in his book 'Theory U' – and the book's subtitle is significant too: 'Leading from the future as it emerges'. Central to the approach is the

concept of presencing: the generation of heightened awareness so that individuals and groups can tap into the deeper places from which they function. The website of the Presencing Institute – www.presencing.com - provides a much more coherent explanation of Theory U than can be provided here but, suffice it to say, the approach provides a framework and a methodology, it has a distinguished following and proven impact in an array of contexts across the globe... and it presumes to tackle complex, intractable problems: it is worthy of investigation.

So what of leaders and leadership? Perhaps we are approaching a new era of collective discernment?

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Sue Miller is Deputy Director of the Susanna Wesley Foundation. Sue came to this role from a post in the Methodist Church, and, before that, from academia where she was a Principal Lecturer in a Business School.

Views from other contributors (some of whom are also MODEM members)

Servant leadership – or not?

Malcolm Grundy

Servant Leadership is an aptitude to be learned through patient application and review. It is not a set of skills but an approach to particular responsibilities. The uses and abuses of Servant Leadership are legion.

To be the ‘leader’ of any organisation is a great privilege. It will have an element of effectiveness if certain approaches are discernible by others. The Servant Leader concept, first advocated by Robert K Greenleaf in a 1970 essay, begins by insisting that the person appointed to a particular responsibility wants to serve: first to serve the cause or occupation or profession and then to want to serve or meet the needs of those they work with.

Greenleaf’s concept poses questions, with answers difficult to measure: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more

autonomous, more likely themselves to become servant leaders? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society?

The use of models is significant and says much about a leader's own self-understanding (Morgan, 1997). My own approach has been to explore the many models which those committed to leadership in our churches use. These begin with the example and teaching of Jesus. This is particularly significant because his use of the servant model is mentioned in each of the gospels (Mt 20:26, Mk 10: 42-45, Lk 22:26, John 13: 12-15). Jesus was influenced by the redemptive servant songs in Isaiah, especially 52:13-53:12. Servant in this practice of leadership differs in kind from that described by Greenleaf.

Other models abound in the Bible and in my survey of attitudes to leadership I have listed those which church leaders and theologians of ministry use (Grundy 2011; 2015). When classified I conclude that leadership as service understood as the 'oversight' of an organisation (*epi-skope*) has three essential elements: Organic – to ensure that people grow and develop: Directional – that those involved in a church locally or nationally feel that 'it is going somewhere' and Authoritative – that boundaries are clear and that those who are part of a congregation, diocese or organisation can trust their leaders.

The greatest abuse of the concept of Servant Leadership is that it can be used as a front for manipulation and is oppressive. Those involved either see through it immediately, or begin by trusting their leader and then move to a sense of disappointment and disillusionment. Integrity on the part of any leader professing servant principles is fundamental.

The underlying danger of Servant Leadership, or any other participative approach, is when personality change occurs, sometimes caused by the pressures of leadership. The proper name for this is hubris and can be seen as an over-emphasis on personality and an increasing growth in ego, accompanied by an unwillingness to consult or listen to others (Tillich 1964, Owen 2007).

It is always good to have a collection of models for leadership needs and styles. Some fit specific situations while others can have a more general application. Servant Leadership appeals by its very title but requires continuing description and analysis in order to remain a credible approach embodied in the quality and integrity of a particular leader.

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The qualities of servant leadership

Keith Lamdin

Robert Greenleaf, an American Quaker who worked for ACC, first put these two words together in 1970 in a famous essay, entitled *The Servant as Leader*. There followed a number of related essays and the creation of a foundation - see <https://www.greenleaf.org>

In his seminal essay, Greenleaf identified key differences between those whose drive was to serve, and therefore aspired to leadership, and those who aspired to leadership, and chose to do so in a servant way. He used the short novel by H. Hesse – *Journey to the East* as an example of a servant who was also the leader. In his essay, Greenleaf put forward what he called the best test of a servant leader:

Do those being served grow as persons; do they while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?

This test is difficult to administer, but it reinforces the idea that successful servant leadership has a positive effect on those being led. It is therefore a 'people building' type of leadership and not a 'people using' one. Such an orientation for leadership comes from within. Servant leadership is about *being* as much as *doing*. Being a servant by nature and nurture first, and then as a leader, doing by pointing the way for others to follow. It is at its base a spiritual leadership - by the example of the core values of servanthood others follow and give authority to the leader.

Christians have used the idea willingly because of the words of Jesus (John 13:12-20 - Mark 10:41-45- Matthew 20:20-28 - Luke 22: 24-27). However, on the whole, they have taken the idea to be about an attitude of care rather than a narrative about power which the context of the texts clearly demonstrates.

Most leadership texts, both secular and Christian, link leadership to being in charge. The more creative ones show that leadership is a human quality which is needed at every level of any organization. See for instance Ladkin, D (2015) 'Leadership, Management and Headship: Power, Emotion and Authority' in *Leadership, contemporary critical perspectives*. London: Sage.

However Jesus distinguishes between those who have power and his own calling to be a servant. What is distinctive here is that the servant may have a great deal of influence (see Jeeves and Wooster), but in the end does not have the power to make the decision. This is the difference between the centurion who says 'I can control you' and Jesus who says 'I can love you and seek to persuade you but can never force you'. Not many churches have tried the latter approach. However, the Society of Friends has done so and continues to maintain it as the fundamental way in which they structure their life, organization and decision making.

Robert Dale (in his book *Pastoral Leadership: A Handbook of Resources for Effective Congregational Leadership*. 2001. Abingdon: Abingdon Press) sums up servant leadership as follows:

- ***Servants lead out of relationships, not by coercion***
Servants don't demand obedience or submission
- ***Servants lead by support, not by control***
Servants give from themselves rather than take for themselves
- ***Servants lead by developing others, not by doing all the ministry themselves***
- ***Servants guide people, not drive them***
- ***Servants lead from love, not domination***
Authority, in part, grows out of 'the consent of the governed'
- ***Servants seek growth, not position***
Servants are not ambitious.

Servanthood is obviously a demanding, high-risk leadership stance. But faith is demanding and risky too. Servanthood is as full of crosses as of towels and basins.



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Servant leadership in the Church of England today?

Jane Charman

In the 40 years since the publication of Robert Greenleaf's seminal *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness*, corporate culture in both the US and the UK has been extensively permeated by his novel leadership paradigm. His ideas continue to be widely saluted as both morally admirable and of demonstrable practical value, even by those who cannot or do not aspire to actually implement them!

Within the Church, the concept of servant leadership ought to find a natural home, founded as it is on the person and witness of one who said of himself that he 'came not to be served, but to serve'. Greenleaf drew heavily on the Judeo-Christian tradition and became a Quaker, although his writings were addressed to individuals, institutions and businesses of all faiths and none.

At a time when the Church of England is making a fresh foray into the area of leadership development it is fascinating to set the thinking of Greenleaf alongside two of the Church's own recent publications, the so called Green Report: *Talent Management for Future Leaders and Leadership Development for Bishops and Deans*, and the Faith and Order Commission's *Senior Church Leadership Report*, now published in a volume which includes theological reflections from a range of contributors. Although the second of these was not written in response to the first, many people have found it instructive to read the two together.

What might Greenleaf have made of Green? A word search for instances of 'serve', 'servant' or 'service' in the Green Report yields a very small number of examples, most which are either tangential or general. The words 'leader' and 'leadership' occur frequently, a contrast that would not have been lost on Greenleaf who distinguished sharply between the 'leader-first' and the 'servant-first' style of leadership. Greenleaf's 'leader-first' aspires to be of service, in that he believes or hopes that his activities and achievements as a leader will contribute to the common good. His 'servant-first' begins with the vocation to serve and with the activity of actually serving, out of which arises the opportunity to inspire and influence others in a way that promotes their flourishing. Greenleaf captures the distinction in these words:

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? (Greenleaf, 27)

One of the severest criticisms of Green has been that it promotes an instrumental view of leadership in which the flourishing of the institution becomes the primary goal rather than the flourishing of the people within it.

Since its publication, the wording of the Green Report has been disavowed as not truly representative of the spirit and intention which lay behind it. Another view is that the wording reveals with unmistakeable clarity the true nature of the underlying concept framework and assumptions. Could it be that Greenleaf's profound insight into the nature of servant leadership has with the passage of time worn a little smooth? Do many of us, both within and beyond the Church, too easily assume that we are being faithful to its principles, and how might that be tested?

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The servant leader and change

Jennifer Tann

Without change there can be no growth, whether it is the human body, plants and animals in the natural world, or organisations. And incremental change is no longer adequate, if it ever was; 'Like never before, discontinuous organisation change is an important determinant of organisation adaptation' (Nadler and Tushman, 1990).

Change, to succeed, requires effective leadership and 'charismatic' leadership in the sense of the larger than life personality identified in the past as a 'great leader', is inappropriate. However if, by charismatic, we mean a person with a gift for leading the envisioning process and articulating it, a person with high expectations for the organisation and its people, a person who energises the organisation, affirms and shows confidence in people, employing humour along the way, then this is an appropriate term. A charismatic leader does not necessarily have to be the chief executive/managing director but will need to be someone who has access to senior levels, can open doors, prevent blocking by interested parties, someone who seeks to ensure that project leaders are accountable in terms of organisational values, timescale and budget.

The Harvard Business Review published a collection of essays on 'The Mind of the Leader' in 2005, the opening essay concluding with the stark reminder that 'leadership is not a moral concept... to assume that all good leaders are good people is to be wilfully blind to the human condition.' Manfred Kets de Vries, psychoanalyst and professor at Insead, interviewed for this book, asserted that, in seeking to identify effective leaders, 'The first thing I look for is emotional intelligence.' He added that the right hand side of the brain – responsible for more intuitive processes 'is not stimulated in business school,' a result being that too few business graduates develop the skill of emotional intelligence. He drew attention, in passing, to the fact that the Dutch word for leader can have two meanings, one of which is 'martyr', a leader being someone who suffers.

Emotional intelligence is present in outstanding leaders, its absence being quickly discerned. Following the publication of Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*, the case for EQ being essential for effective leadership (IQ being a threshold competency), has been well publicised. The qualities of EQ, highlighted by Goleman: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management, are crucial talents (the skills for which can be learned, and for which some people have an instinctive gift) yet, even today, they are not necessarily highlighted in job descriptions. The basic premise that an individual cannot manage him/herself in relationships with others unless they have self-awareness and can self-manage (and be prepared to invite and accept feedback) is crucial.

There are many Biblical examples of the 'mirror' being held up to an individual who has transgressed in this area. Social awareness, in organisational terms, requires a dedication to the service of others, combined with empathy. Leaders with these talents listen, really listen to others, are politically astute and can 'read' both written and unwritten principles and values in an organisation. They focus on service both towards all staff within the organisation as well as for clients/customers. With regard to relationship management they inspire and influence, help others to learn, share their own learning, manage conflict and are catalysts for change. While many leaders high in EQ may have no faith, it is clear that some do and are, perhaps, characterised by a noticeable humility.

As much of the huge published output on organisational innovation and change shows, most situations require different leaders to play different roles, characterised by distinct talents or gifts, people of faith believing these to be God-given (1 Cor.7.7). Of the five gifts identified in Ephesians 4.11: leaders, evangelists, prophets and pastors are necessary in contemporary change, perhaps with some altering of terminology; while of the eight gifts identified in 1.Cor.12.4: wisdom, knowledge, prophesy and, perhaps, healing are necessary. Some of these roles can be combined.

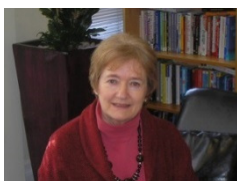
All contemporary discontinuous change requires an overall Leader/sponsor, who might be the MD/CEO; an Innovator who may, perhaps identify the change required and contribute to the strategic plan; an Implementer who will be responsible for ensuring roll-out to time and budget; a Harmoniser who will soothe anxious staff; and a Change agent who has, in metaphorical terms, one foot in and one outside the organisation. The change agent brings unlikely people together, seeks ideas, makes connections and is most akin to the prophet in Paul's letters. The talents required for this latter role have been described as 'Grace, magic and miracles, namely the spontaneous non-linear logic that is necessary to support transformation' (Lichtenstein). To conclude:

Change Agent

Envisions possibilities;
values all gifts, listener, confidence builder,
encourager, risk taker, pain sharer.
Sees patterns, makes connections.
Builds up, is playful;
networks.
Sustains, draws out, moves on.
Seeks silent feeding; negatives and stereotypes put aside.
Inviter to the Threshold.
Intentional transformation. God in all.

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Servant Leadership: symbol or substance?

Duncan Munro

According to Wikipedia, ‘Servant leadership is both a leadership philosophy and set of leadership practices.’ While servant leadership is a timeless concept, the phrase ‘servant leadership’ was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay first published in 1970.

To the extent that servant leadership is to be understood as a ‘timeless concept’, how does this relate to the specific meanings of ‘servant’ in the Old and New Testaments? To the extent that it is a phrase coined by Greenleaf in 1970, how does his philosophy and practice relate to other modern theories of leadership, and how do these interact with Christian social thinking?

The Old Testament principally uses the word ‘servant’ to emphasise the priority that should be given to service to God as against the allegiance owed to other legitimate authorities. The concept is also understood as a corporate, as much as an individual responsibility.ⁱ In the context of Israel the role of stewardship is also a key theme in relation to the way in which resources are owned, managed and distributed. This is in sharp contrast to its timeless and modern usage, where the focus is on service to others, and on individual rather than corporate roles and responsibilities.ⁱⁱ

The New Testament builds on this usage in the light of Jesus’ teaching and example. It uses three principal Greek words to express the roles and responsibilities of ‘servant’: *doulos*, *diakonos* and *oikonomos*. Each requires detailed study to draw out the relevant meaningsⁱⁱⁱ, but in summary: *doulos* denotes *status*: a slave is someone, who owes total obedience to his master; *diakonos* denotes *function*: someone who fulfils a specific task or service for their master; *oikonomos* denotes *stewardship*, the responsibility to handle affairs on a master’s behalf. All three meanings are relevant to how Christians understand discipleship and leadership. We should, therefore, exercise caution before conflating them into a single concept.

How then should a Christian understanding of ‘servant’ relate to modern theories of leadership? The Pontifical Council’s report on the *Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection* is a helpful resource. The report reflects on how Christian social principles within the Catholic tradition, accompanied by reflective practice, can be used to guide business leaders to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the modern business environment. It also illustrates a potential danger.

Section 13 is the paragraph of the report which specifically refers to ‘servant leadership’. This includes the statement that:

Well-integrated business leaders can respond to the rigorous demands placed upon them with a servant attitude, recalling Jesus who washed the feet of His disciples. Leadership in this servant spirit is different from the authoritarian exercise of power too often present in business organisations.^{iv}

Jesus’ action addresses the importance of equal status and mutual support as a model for all disciples - including those in positions of leadership. But this is more than an ‘attitude’ or

‘spirit’, and there is a risk of emptying both the Catholic social tradition and modern leadership theory of critical substance, if the incident is adopted as a symbol of ‘servant leadership’.

A similar problem exists with the use of the phrase as a heading in David Clark’s *The Kingdom at Work project: A communal approach to mission in the workplace*.^v By summarising the principles and practice outlined in *Vocation as a Business Leader* as ‘Servant leadership’^{vi}, the author gives it a profile and significance that is not reflected in the main substance of the report. The translation of the report’s practical principles for business into six complementary roles of ‘Servant leadership’^{vii} compounds this shift in emphasis by subtly altering the focus from the principles and practice of leadership to the role and style of the leader. The attributes summarised have a remarkable likeness to those commended by modern leadership theory rather than the Catholic social tradition^{viii}.

In summary, without wishing to deny positive connotations, I suggest that more caution is required before adopting the term ‘servant leadership’ as a definitive phrase to describe Christian leadership, without first giving careful thought as to how the concept relates to the full range of scriptural meanings implied by the word ‘servant’, and to the risk of confusing or conflating it with one particular school or dimension of modern leadership theory and practice.



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ⁱ e.g. ‘O Jacob, my servant, Israel whom I have chosen’, Is:44.1

ⁱⁱ The increasing profile which has been given to governance in recent years is a welcome counter-balance.

ⁱⁱⁱ For Anglican contributions to the meaning of *diakonos*, see Rosalind Brown (2005) *Being a Deacon Today*. Norwich: Canterbury Press; Steven Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions* (1999) London: DLT; *The distinctive diaconate in the Diocese of Sheffield: discerning and encouraging vocations* - http://www.sheffield.anglican.org/UserFiles/File/Training/distinctive_deacon.pdf

^{iv} *ibid*, p.7

^v David Clark (2014) Peterborough: Upfront Publishing

^{vi} *ibid*, pp. 121-123

^{vii} ‘Visionary, Strategist, Animator, Enabler, Intermediary, Educator’, *ibid*, pp. 113-115

^{viii} And with particular application to senior executives (‘visionary’ and ‘strategic’), as opposed to leadership at every level e.g. supervisory staff, middle management

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