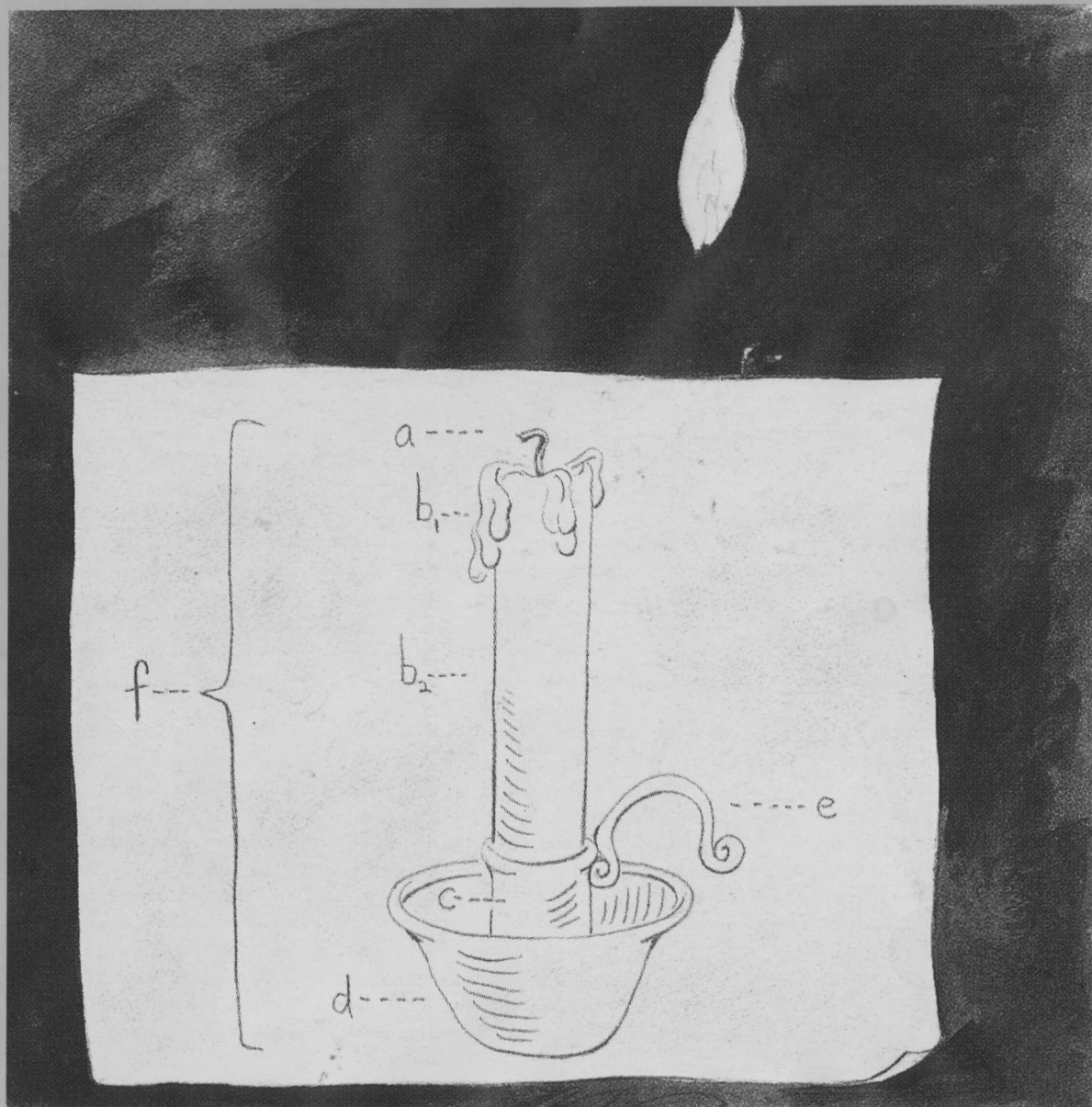


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The Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest  
Austin, Texas

*The Witness*

Volume 80 • Number 5 • May, 1997



*Church structures and leadership:  
looking for spirit-filled change*

## Grieving rituals

I'VE JUST RECEIVED YOUR MARCH '97 issue, all about death. Exceptionally timely since I am remembering the first anniversary of the death of my last grandfather (I have had three). One thing that concerned me, and perhaps someone there can just quickly answer: In the article, "Blood Brothers," the Native American spiritual leader is not mentioned by name, though practically everyone else is. What is the reason for not including this leader's name? By their request, or vagueness, or what? I think it is essential whenever possible to honour our leaders with their names, unless they have a reason to be anonymous.

Mayne Ellis  
Victoria, BC

AN OPEN LETTER to The Rev. Cate Waynick from a member of her parish:

You told me I wouldn't like what you said in your interview for *The Witness* [3/97]. Well, you were right. Not only do I not like it, but I am deeply saddened by it. My sadness is caused by the fact that I personally know you to be an advocate for justice. I can cite many, many instances where you have boldly taken and spoken unpopular positions with the hope of righting injustices. I also know that you make decisions thoughtfully and prayerfully. But I am concerned that the first words to the church-at-large after your election do not convey the sense of justice which I know you to hold so dearly.

You have gone through an ordination process in a diocese where the bishop and standing committee considered all the gifts and skills that you bring to the ministry. You were encouraged by the bishop in response to your call to the ordained ministry. You were called to and have served as rector of a parish that was free to consider your candidacy. You did not suffer at the "conscience" of your bishop.



Many would say that you have been privileged. I believe it is more than privilege. I believe it is your right. I believe that same consideration is the right of all women. However, when the right is enjoyed by only a few, then the few who enjoy it are privileged. That is unjust. I implore you to openly confront those bishops who deny other women the same right which you have exercised.

You, and the other women bishops, and women clergy throughout the Church, represent to many of us the promise of justice. When my friend from Fort Worth recently visited our parish, your presence at the altar made her weep. She cried for her ordained friend who was not allowed to function as a priest in Fort Worth where she lived. She cried for her daughters who have not seen a woman celebrate the Holy Eucharist. She cried for the women who are called to be priests in her diocese, but who will be denied. She cried in anger that you are still "in tension" over the issue. The bishop in her diocese has institutionalized his conscience. He has used his ascribed power to do that. As a result, she is not able to act upon her own conscience. Her position, her own theology with regard to ordained women, is negated. She is oppressed. This is a blatant, flagrant misuse of power that has been shrouded in the cloak of "conscience." The use of ascribed or authoritative power to oppress others cannot be tolerated. I know you believe that power should not be used to oppress others because you've told me so. I know you believe that power should

not be used to oppress others because I've seen you confront it.

So, dear Cate, please, in this very beginning of your episcopacy, confront and question why only the ones with the ascribed power have the right to exercise their conscience. Hold them accountable. Do not allow your colleagues in the House of Bishops to deny women the opportunity to explore their call to the ordained ministry. Do not allow them to make a mockery of the canons. But most of all, please continue, as you have always, to not allow yourself, for one minute, to languish in the ranks of the privileged.

Bonnie Anderson  
Bingham Farms, MI

## Clergy misconduct

I APPRECIATE YOUR ONGOING coverage of clergy sexual misconduct, especially the article by Patti Klindiest (December 1995) and Gay Jennings' review of *Restoring the Soul of a Church*, Nancy Myer Hopkins and Mark Lasser, Ed. (Nov. 1996).

What remains mysterious to me is why as a church we continue to tiptoe around the role bishops have played in the perpetuation of clergy sexual misconduct. "Things were different 10 years ago," people say, as if that could explain and excuse former failures to take effective action.

I know of a bishop who remains adamant to this day concerning one case of repeated, confessed, predatory misconduct, that the damage to the accused clergyman's career is of more serious concern than the damage to scores of targeted women and their congregation.

I know of another bishop who to this day maintains that although he had a confession, his failure to take strong disciplinary action was justifiable because he believed the perpetrator had "only put his hand down (the complainant's) blouse."

Within the last year I heard another bishop excuse his failure to act, saying he "forgot" the previous reported history of misconduct and so did not consider a current complaint serious. And of course we have all heard more and more about cases in which bishops are themselves perpetrators of sexual misconduct. Yet it remains very difficult, not to mention costly, to hold these bishops ac-

Letters

countable for their behavior either through canonical disciplinary procedures or civil action. It is impossible for a diocese to require the resignation of a bishop, even if he/she has confessed to repeated acts of sexual misconduct, and, amazingly, under current Church Insurance Corporation policy, bishops are exempt from having to complete the background check required of other clergy.

I believe the good efforts of many to bring about justice in the church and make it a safer place for all people are bound to fail until we have the honesty to face the role bishops have played in the perpetuation of clergy misconduct and the courage to institute through canon law methods of holding them accountable for their actions and for their failure to act.

**Pamela Porter  
Heath, MA**

### Church renewal

**AS I LOOK AT OUR EPISCOPAL CHURCH** today, I am saddened and angered because we have inflicted a serious spiritual illness on ourselves, namely our constant and deeply self destructive criticisms — of our own Church. What, in the name of God, is the matter with us, to act in such a way?

Organizations such as the Episcopal Synod, the (1928) Prayer Book Society, the Christian Challenge group, Episcopalians United, and other groups, proclaim inaccuracies, deliberate distortions and just plain lies about our Church. These organizations neither care nor know about the logical and theological mistakes that they are making.

But I myself do know, from my own experience, that our great Church is vibrantly and gloriously alive, in so many parishes in this nation. Since 1992, I have served in four dioceses, Chicago, New Jersey and Bethlehem, and am now in Northern Indiana. Here are some facts about parishes that flourish mightily.

In this diocese there are eight parishes and missions where attendance, and stewardship, are doing very well indeed. My neighboring parish, St. Andrew's in Valparaiso, where Dean Patrick Ormos is rector, is so jammed with worshipers every Sunday, at several services, that you had better get there 15 minutes early if you want to get into a pew. This is also true, most Sundays, at my wife's

parish in Lockport, Ill., St. John's.

I recently attended the convention of my own diocese, Chicago. The Spirit produced a day of loving fellowship for clergy and laypeople. In the diocese, the deeply imaginative ministry of Fr. Sam Portaro, at the University of Chicago, is especially encouraging. And Fr. Tolliver, at St. Edmund's, in a difficult area of Chicago, is showing us all how much an urban parish can do to maintain and improve its neighborhood.

In the state of New Jersey our Church is doing very well, also. It has become a sport among negativists to constantly attack Bishop Spong of Newark. But, to judge from the vitality of his very diverse diocese, where he has now been bishop for over 20 years, he is doing precisely what a bishop ought to do. In Fort Lee, at Good Shepherd, Richard Gressle took his parish's name seriously and he and his members created as fine a ministry to those with AIDS as any parish anywhere; he recently moved to Nyack, N.Y.

And at St. Mark's in Teaneck, N.J., Lucinda Laird is rector of a most lively parish, filled with small kids. She has made an excellent video of children asking questions about God, and she has her own TV program.

In the diocese of Bethlehem, the superbly pastoral episcopate of Mark Dyer ended recently; he did so much to fill Bethlehem with active grace. When I took a service at Grace Church, our parish in Kingston, I saw a lot of older adults, but no children. But as soon as my sermon was finished, a cloud of 40 or more lively kids came rushing up from the undercroft, to worship with their parents. All praise to Mr. and Mrs. David Laquintano!

These experiences, and quite a few others, give me such great hope for the future of our Church. But the chief ground of this hope comes from getting to know our younger clergy. My own generation of priests tended to be a bit arrogant, and rather uniform in attitude. But today's young priests are a marvelous group. Their educational and life experience backgrounds are very diverse, and they are experts at looking at our world with a critical eye. And their commitment, to God and the Church, is profound! I deeply believe that a most blessed renewal of our Church is just around the corner.

**Alex Seabrook  
Laporte, IN**

## Classifieds

### Position wanted

Bilingual (Spanish) layman seeking ministerial position in NYC area. Three years as Director of Religious Education. Seven years as Youth Minister at inner-city parish. Five years as a Substance Abuse Counselor. M.A. in Theology. Available to begin Aug. or Sept. 1997 — earlier negotiable. Excellent references. Fernando Arzola, Jr., 239 East 21st St., N.Y., NY 10010. Day #212-475-1966.

### Position open

The Equity Trust, a small, nonprofit organization with innovative national programs of land reform and community development finance, and special initiatives on community supported agriculture and stewardship of religious lands, seeks a loan fund manager and an office manager. Compensation modest, according to need; room and board provided. Contact Chuck Matthei, 539 Beach Pond Rd., Voluntown, CT 06384; 860-376-6174.

### Episcopal Urban Intern Program

Work in social service, live in Christian community in Los Angeles. For adults 21-30. Apply now for the 1997-98 year. Contact: The Rev. Gary Commins, 260 N. Locust St., Inglewood, CA 90301. 310-674-7700.

### Vocations

Contemplating religious life? Members of the Brotherhood and the Companion Sisterhood of Saint Gregory are Episcopalians, clergy and lay, married and single. To explore a contemporary Rule of Life, contact: The Director of Vocations, Brotherhood of St. Gregory, Dept. W, Saint Bartholomew's Church, 82 Prospect Street, White Plains, NY 10606-3499.

### Travel education

Celtic Pilgrimages 1997. Prayer and study programs to Ireland July, Sept.; to Wales May, August. Emphasis on deepening relationship with God through lectures by outstanding scholars; visits to holy sites, worship. Sr. Cintra, Convent St. Helena; 134 E. 28th St.; New York, NY 10016; phone 212-725-6435; fax 212-779-4009.



# The Witness

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*The Witness* offers a fresh and sometimes irreverent view of our world, illuminated by faith, Scripture and experience. Since 1917, *The Witness* has been advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those people who have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." We push boundaries, err on the side of inclusion and enjoy bringing our views into tension with orthodox Christianity. *The Witness'* roots are Episcopalian, but our readership is ecumenical. For simplicity, we place news specific to Episcopalians in our Vital Signs section. *The Witness* is committed to brevity for the sake of readers who find little time to read, but can enjoy an idea, a poem or a piece.

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# A chicken-or-egg choice

by Julie A. Wortman

A number of years ago a Roman Catholic publication ran a cartoon that showed a huge, Trojan-horse sized Easter egg in the process of being pecked open from within. Ropes and tape in hand, dozens of lilliputian-sized clerics on tiny ladders were scaling its ornately decorated surface in a vain attempt to patch the rapidly multiplying cracks — as scores of interested onlookers, mainly women, eagerly sought glimpses of the emerging life within.

The appeal of that image was strong to Roman Catholic women and men disheartened and wearied by “inerrant” Vatican pronouncements about women’s ordination, marriage for clergy and homosexuality. The life force that gave us the church, it proclaimed, is not yet finished with its creative work.

This is good news, as anyone with much experience of institutional church structures and leadership is well aware. The problem, says organizational theorist Margaret Wheatley (p. 14), is that the unpredictability of that creative work scares most of our leaders to death. Newton’s vision of a machine universe, kept running smoothly by a master-technician God, offers a more comforting vision of rational order and the possibility of control. Comforting, but problematic.

## Shifting ground

Newton’s scientific understandings are being superceded by those of the “new sciences,” shifting the very ground under our feet. This is not a machine universe and chaos is not the enemy. Natural, living systems demonstrate their life through self-creation and the irrepress-

ible search for connections.

In the Episcopal Church, the efforts of those in the world mission community give us a glimmer of how the “self-organizing” life force at the core of human endeavors is manifesting itself (p. 20). Their motley coalition will be coming to this summer’s General Convention with a proposal for an Episcopal Partnership for Global Mission. Instead of giving massive attention to how to restructure old programs and mechanisms for more effective world mission, it focuses on goals. Groups would be invited to sign on to the goals, even though organizationally they may be apples and oranges. The coalition recognizes and accepts difference as it affirms common cause. Passion for meaningful faith-based connections worldwide, not the national church, would drive the work and the decisions about means. It’s an organic, not mechanistic, organizational structure that makes sense.

## Signs of life

The national church’s Standing Commission on Structure will also be coming to the General Convention with a proposal of its own (p. 26). These recommendations, however, seem disengaged from any compelling sense of purpose. And that is the problem. The search for the best structure, the most helpful mechanism for pursuing a goal should never be the first — or an isolated — question. Focus on the chick, not the egg.

Everywhere in the church people and groups are self-organizing themselves around lively passions — around economic justice, around Native Americans’ need for self-determination. Will our leaders stop trying to organize the church and let the church organize itself?

Historical theologian Fredrica

Thompsett believes this is a “liminal,” threshold time for a change in leadership models (p. 22). Many have long hoped that women could help make the shift and in many ways they are. But the forces of patriarchy and orthodoxy — preserving the beloved egg by boiling it and killing the embryo inside — are still strong and, as one report from Texas indicates, angry (p. 27).

## Nurturing the prophetic

We in the churches are long overdue for leadership that values the life within. For educator Parker Palmer (p.8), this means attending to the connection between spirituality and action in the world. Spirituality, he says, “is primarily an effort to penetrate the illusions of the external world and to name its underlying truth — what it is, how it emerges, and how we relate to it.”

Sounds like the basis of “prophetic leadership” to me, although the church is full of those who would manipulate a call to deeper spirituality in the service of *status quo* piety.

My thoughts remain in flux. As I write this I sit surrounded by packed boxes and the distant hum of a washer in spin cycle — the last load of washing before the moving van arrives to pack up my family’s goods and cart them 960 miles to Tenants Harbor, Maine. A new life awaits us there, one among friends attempting to live with intentionality lives of faith and conscience. Together we are reinventing our lives, attempting to know life — and God — before it is too late. Maybe we, like so many others in so many other self-organizing ways, will be helping to reinvent the church. **TW**

editor's note

Julie A. Wortman is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

# Leadership means to be led

by Henri Nouwen

Let me tell you about an experience connected with my move from Harvard to L'Arche. It was clearly a move from leading to being led. Somehow I had come to believe that growing older and more mature meant that I would be increasingly able to offer leadership. In fact, I had grown more self-confident over the years. I felt I knew something and had the ability to express it and be heard. In that sense I felt more and more in control.

But when I entered my community with mentally handicapped people and their assistants, all controls fell apart, and I came to realize that every hour, day, and month was full of surprises — often surprises I was least prepared for.

When Bill agreed or disagreed with my sermon, he did not wait until after Mass to tell me so! Logical ideas did not receive logical responses. Often people responded from deep places in themselves, showing me that what I was saying or doing had little if anything to do with what they were living.

Present feelings and emotions could

no longer be held in check by beautiful words and convincing arguments. When people have little intellectual capacity, they let their hearts — their loving hearts — speak directly and often unadorned.

Without realizing it, the people I came to live with made me aware of the extent to which my leadership was still a desire to control complex situations, confused emotions, and anxious minds.

It took me a long time to feel safe in the unpredictable climate, and I still have moments in which I clamp down and tell everyone to shut up, get in line, listen to me, and believe in what I say. But I am also getting in touch with the mystery that leadership, for a large part, means to be led. I discover that I am learning many new things, not just about the pains and struggles of wounded people, but also about their unique gifts and graces.

They teach me about joy and peace, love and care and prayer — what I could never have learned in any academy. They also teach me what nobody else could have taught me, about grief and violence, fear and indifference. Most of all, they give me a glimpse of God's first love, often at moments when I start feeling depressed and discouraged. **TW**



Ida May Sydnor

*The people I live with made me aware of the extent to which my leadership was still a desire to control complex situations, confused emotions, and anxious minds.*

## Help spread the word!

It's helpful to us when subscribers suggest others who might like *The Witness*. Send us their names and address; we'll pass along a complimentary copy.

This essay by the late theologian, **Henry Nouwen**, is from *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, Crossroad, 1996. Artist **Ida May Sydnor** works through the Southwest Community Center in Philadelphia, Penn.

# Novaya Zemlya

by Alla Bozarth

Explorers at earth's  
pinnacle below the Pole Star  
may, without going mad,  
hear directly the growl  
of the Great Bear,

see sunrise in a solar mirage  
hours before it happens,  
encircling the world  
in a single hour  
they believe to last days.

All inner adventure  
begins here.  
This is the place  
of illusion and  
unfinal reality.

No one escapes  
the caution:  
all things are  
fashioned oddly,  
the joints of the universe  
mysteriously hinged.

Do not, therefore, attempt  
to name things too clearly,  
or imagine the crystal vision  
you see to be precisely itself.

All things are born  
and flow again  
in realms of the magi.

— *from Stars in Your Bones: Emerging Signposts  
on Our Spiritual Journeys, by Alla Bozarth,  
Julia Barkley and Terri Hawthorne (Northstar  
Press of St. Cloud, Inc., 1990).*

The word "Poetry" is written in a white, cursive script font. A thin white line extends from the top of the letter 'y' and curves upwards and to the right, ending near the top right corner of the page.



# Seeking new leadership — from within

by Parker Palmer

One of the most remarkable speeches ever delivered on the floor of the U.S. Congress was given in 1990 by Vaclav Havel, playwright, dissident, and then president of Czechoslovakia:

*What I'm trying to say is this: We must all learn many things from you, from how to educate our offspring, how to elect our representatives, all the way to how to organize our economic life so that it will lead to prosperity and not to poverty. But it doesn't have to be merely assistance from the well educated, powerful and wealthy to someone who has nothing and therefore has nothing to offer in return.*

*We too, can offer something to you: our experience and the knowledge that has come from it. The specific experience I'm talking about has given me one certainty: Consciousness precedes being, and not the other way around, as the Marxists claim. For this reason, the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility. Without a*

*global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which this world is headed — be it ecological, social, demographic or a general breakdown of civilization — will be unavoidable.*

I don't know if there has ever been, from a more remarkable source, a stronger affirmation of the role of spirituality in the world of human affairs than Havel's words, "Consciousness precedes being," and "The salvation of the world lies in the human heart."

Matter, he is trying to tell us, is not the fundamental factor in the movement of history. Spirit is. Consciousness is. Human awareness is. Thought is. Spirituality is. Those are the deep sources of freedom and power with which people have been able to move boulders and create change. Havel's images resonate deeply with all the great religious traditions.

But let me say something that Vaclav Havel was too polite to say: It isn't only the Marxists who have believed that "matter" is more powerful than "consciousness" or that economics is more fundamental than spirit or that the flow of cash creates more reality than does the flow of

ideas. The capitalists have believed these things too, and Havel was simply too nice to say it. But we can remind ourselves that we have a long and crippling legacy in our own system of thought of believing in the external world much more deeply than we believe in the internal world.

## Overemphasizing the external

How many times have you heard, "Those are good ideas, inspiring notions, but the reality is ..."? How many times have you heard people try to limit our creativity by treating institutional and economic realities as absolute constraints on what we are able to do? How many times have you waited for a foundation grant before taking a step? How many times have you worked in systems based on the belief that the only changes that really matter are the ones that you can count or mea-

sure or tally up externally? This is a human problem, at least in our 20th-century, technological society.

The great insight of our spiritual traditions is that external reality does not impinge upon us as a prison or as an ultimate constraint. The insight of our spiritual traditions is not to deny the reality of

the outer world, but to help us understand that we create that world in part, by projecting our spirit on it — for better or worse.

Vaclav Havel has said some hard things to his own people about how they conspired in the domination of a tyrannical Communist system through their passivity. We, too, are responsible for the existence of tyrannical conditions, of external constraints which crush our spirit, because we are responsible for co-creating

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*Leaders feel a need to "psych themselves up" even if it means ignoring the inner shadow. Of course, American culture wants to externalize everything, to see the good life as a matter of outer arrangements rather than of inner well-being.*

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**Parker J. Palmer** is a writer and teacher who works on issues in education, spirituality, community and social transformation. His new book, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* will be published in the fall of 1997. He can be reached at P.O. Box 55063; Madison, Wis. 53705. This article was adapted from a talk Palmer gave to the Indiana Office for Campus Ministries. Artist **Ron English** lives in N.Y.C. Artist **Helen David Brancato** works at the Southwest Community Center in Philadelphia, Penn.

the world through the projection of our internal limitations. The spiritual traditions tell us that we have complicity in the making of the world as it is. We are not victims of the world, we are its co-creators. This is both a source of awesome responsibility and a source of profound hope for change.

Spirituality is not primarily about values and ethics, not about exhortations to do right or live well. The spiritual traditions are primarily an effort to penetrate the illusions of the external world and to name its underlying truth — what it is, how it emerges, and how we relate to it.

The insight that I want to draw from the spiritual traditions, and from Havel, is an insight that may be best expressed in a word from depth psychology — “projection.” We share responsibility for creating the external world by projecting either a spirit of light or a spirit of shadow on that which is “other” than us. Either a spirit of hope or a spirit of despair. Either an inner confidence in wholeness and integration or an inner terror about life being diseased and ultimately terminal. We have a choice about what we are going to project, and in that choice we help create the world that is. “Consciousness precedes being.”

What does all of this have to do with leadership, and with the relation of leadership to spirituality? I’ll give you a quick definition of a leader. A leader is a person who has an unusual degree of power to project on other people his or her shadow, or his or her light. A leader is a person who has an unusual degree of power to create the conditions under which other people must live and move and have their being — conditions that can either be as illuminating as heaven or as shadowy as hell. A leader is a person who must take

special responsibility for what’s going on inside him- or herself, inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more harm than good.



No one becomes depraved in a moment, trust an expert.

Ron English

### Projecting light

I’m not talking simply about the heads of nation states. I’m talking, for example, about a classroom teacher who has the power to create conditions under which young people must spend half of their waking hours, day in and day out, five days a week. I’m thinking about a clergy person who has a choice between creating conditions in a congregation which are of the light, or conditions which are of the shadow. I’m thinking about the CEO of a corporation, large or small, who faces the same choice day in and day out — but often does not even know that the choice is being made.

The problem is that people rise to leadership in our society by a tendency toward extroversion, which means a tendency to ignore what is going on inside themselves. Leaders rise to power in our

society by operating very competently and effectively in the external world, sometimes at the cost of internal awareness. Leaders, in the very way they become leaders, may tend to be people who screen out the inner consciousness to which Vaclav Havel is calling us to attend. Many leaders’ confidence in the external world is so high that they regard the inner life as illusory, as a waste of time. But the link between leadership and spirituality calls us to reexamine that denial of the inner life.

Leaders often feed themselves on “the power of positive thinking” because their jobs are hard. They face many external discouragements. They don’t get a lot of reward and so they feel a need to “psych themselves up” even if it means ignoring the inner shadow. Of course, leaders are supported in this by an American culture that wants to externalize everything, that wants (just as much as Marx did) to see the good life as a matter of outer arrangements rather than of inner well-being.

Let me share a remarkable quote from Annie Dillard, from her book *Teaching a Stone to Talk*:

*In the deeps are the violence and terror of which psychology has warned us. But if you ride these monsters deeper down, if you drop with them farther over the world’s rim, you find what our sciences cannot locate or name, the substrate, the ocean or matrix or ether which buoys the rest, which gives goodness its power for good, and evil its power for evil, the unified field: our complex and inexplicable caring for each other, and for our life together here. This is given. It is not learned.*

Annie Dillard is saying, first of all, that the spiritual journey moves down-

ward and inward, not upward toward abstraction. It moves downward toward the hardest concrete realities of our lives. Part of the gift of feminist spirituality is a reversal of what we traditionally understood spirituality to be, which was up and out.

Annie Dillard is saying that we must go in and down. And she's saying that on the way down and in we will meet the violence and terror we have within ourselves that we project outward onto our institutions, onto our society. She's talking, for example, about our tendency to make enemies by projecting what we hate within ourselves on somebody else because we don't want to go down and in to meet the enemy in our own souls.

Great leadership comes from people who have made that downward journey through violence and terror, who have touched the deep place where we are in community with each other, and who can help take other people to that place. That's what Vaclav Havel is talking about, because the downward journey is what you take when you are "under a stone" for 40 years. That's what you do when you are a victim of oppression.

### Naming monsters

I'd like to deal specifically with the shadow side of leaders because those shadows get projected onto institutions and onto our society. I'd like to name some monsters that leaders need to ride all the way down if we are to create less shadow and more light.

One of the biggest shadows inside a lot of leaders is deep insecurity about their own identity, their own worth. This insecurity takes a specific form that I have seen many times (especially in men), and I see it in myself. We have an identity that

is so hooked up with external, institutional functions that we may literally die when those functions are taken away from us. We live in terror at the thought of what will happen to us if our institutional identity were ever to disappear.



Helen David Brancato

The tragedy I see in our institutions when leaders operate with a deep, unexamined insecurity about their own identity is that these leaders create institutional settings which deprive *other* people of *their* identity as a way of dealing with the unexamined fears in the leaders themselves.

A simple example makes the point: I am astonished at the number of times I call an office and the person who answers

the phone says, for example, "Dr. Jones' office; this is Nancy," because the boss has said to do it that way. The leader has a title and no first name; the person who answers the phone doesn't even have a last name. This is a powerful example of depriving someone else of an identity in order to enhance your own.

Everywhere I look I see institutions that are depriving large numbers of people of their identity so that a few people can enhance theirs. I look at schools and I see hundreds of thousands of students who have been deprived of an identity by the educational system so that teachers and administrators can have more identity for themselves.

But if you're ever with people (or in an organization led by a person) who know "all the way down" who they are, whose identity doesn't depend on a role which might be taken away at any moment, you are with people and in settings which *give* you identity, which *empower* you to be someone. I think that's a core issue in the spirituality of leadership — because the great spiritual gift that comes as one takes the inward journey is to know for certain that "who I am" does not depend on "what I do." Identity doesn't depend on titles. It doesn't depend on degrees. It doesn't depend on

functioning. It depends only on the simple fact that I am a child of God, valued and treasured for what I am. When a leader knows that — the classroom is different, the hospital is different, and the office is different.

### War talk

The second shadow that is inside a lot of us is the perception that the universe is essentially hostile to human interests and that life is fundamentally a battleground.



As I listen to everyday discourse, it is amazing to me how many battle images I hear as people go about the work of leadership. We talk about tactics and strategy, about using our “big guns,” about “do or die,” about wins and losses. The imagery here suggests that if we fail to be fiercely competitive, we’re going to lose, because the basic structure of the universe is a vast combat. The tragedy of that inner shadow, that unexamined inner fear, is that it helps create situations where people actually have to live that way. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

But some of the best places in our world, some of the best corporations, some of the best schools, are learning that there is *another* way of going about things, a way that’s consensual, that’s cooperative, that’s communal. They are fulfilling a different prophecy and creating a different reality.

The spiritual gift we receive as we take the inward journey is the knowledge that the universe really isn’t out to get anybody; the structure of reality is not the structure of a battle or a combat. Yes, there’s death, but it’s part of the cycle of life, and when we learn to move with that cycle there is a coherence and great harmony in our lives.

### Functional atheism

The third shadow in leaders I call “functional atheism.” This is the belief that ultimate responsibility for everything rests with *me*. It is a belief held even among people whose theology affirms a higher power than the human self, people who do not understand themselves as atheists but whose behavior belies their belief!

Functional atheism is an unconscious belief that leads to workaholic behavior, to burn-out, to stressed and strained and broken relationships, to unhealthy priorities. Functional atheism is the unexamined conviction within us that if anything decent is going to happen here, I am the one who needs to make it happen. It is the

reason the average group (according to studies) can tolerate only 15 seconds of silence; people believe that if they are not making noise, nothing is happening! Functional atheism is an inner shadow of leaders that leads to dysfunctional behavior on every level of our lives.

The great gift we receive on the inner journey is the certain knowledge that ours is not the only act in town. Not only are there other acts in town, but some of them, from time to time, are even better than ours! On this inner journey we learn that we do not have to carry the whole load, that we can be empowered by sharing the load with others, and that sometimes we are even free to lay our part of the load down. On the inner journey we learn that co-creation leaves us free to do only what we are called and able to do, and to trust the rest to other hands.

### Fear of chaos

The fourth shadow among leaders is fear. There are many kinds of fear, but I am thinking especially of our fear of the natural chaos of life. I think a lot of leaders become leaders because they have a lifelong devotion to eliminating all remnants of chaos from the world. They’re trying to order and organize things so thoroughly that the nasty stuff will never bubble up around

us (such nasty stuff as dissent, innovation, challenge, change).

In an organization, this particular shadow gets projected outward as rigidity of rules, procedures, and personnel manuals. It creates corporate cultures that are imprisoning, rather than

empowering. What we forget from our

spiritual tradition is that God created out of chaos. Chaos is the precondition to creativity and any organization (or any individual) that doesn’t have an arena of creative chaos is already half dead. When a leader is so fearful of chaos as not to be able to protect and nurture that arena for other people, there is deep trouble.

The spiritual gift on the inner journey is to know that creation comes out of chaos, and that even what has been created needs to be returned to chaos every now and then to get recreated in a more vital form. The spiritual gift on this inner journey is the knowledge that in chaos I can not only survive, but I can thrive, that there is vitality in that chaotic field of energy.

### Denying death

My last example of the shadows that leaders can project on others involves the denial of death. We live in a culture that just does not want to talk about things dying. You see this all the time in our institutional life. You see leaders all over the place demanding that they themselves, and the people who work for them, artificially maintain things that aren’t alive any longer and maybe never have been. Projects and programs that should have been laid down 10 years ago are still on the life-support system even though they’ve been in a coma for decades.

There’s fear in this denial of death, the fear of negative evaluation, the fear of public failure. Surprisingly, the people in our culture who are least afraid of death, in this sense, are the scientists. The scientific community really honors the fail-

ure of a hypothesis because they learn

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*Great leadership comes from people who have made that downward journey through violence and terror, who have touched the deep place where we are in community with each other, and who can help take other people to that place.*

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something from the death of an idea. But in a lot of organizations, if you fail at what you are doing, you'll find a pink slip in your box.

The best organizations and leaders, I think, are asking people to take action that may sometimes lead to failure, to understand that from failure we learn. The spiritual gift on the inner journey is the knowledge that death is natural and that death is not the final word. The spiritual gift is to know that allowing something to die is also allowing new life to emerge.

### Recovering healthy leadership

The failure of leaders to deal with their own inner life is creating conditions of real misery for lots and lots of folks. Too many organizations in our society are in deep trouble around the leadership shadows I have tried to name. One way out of trouble is for leaders to start recovering the power of the inner journey. How might that happen? A few quick thoughts:

It would be wonderful if the phrase "inner work" could become a central term in our schools and in our churches. If we could help people understand that the phrase truly means something. There are things that you can do that constitute "inner work" that are as real and as important as any outer project or task.

A second thing we can do is to remind each other that while inner work is a deeply *personal* matter it's not necessarily a *private* matter. There are ways to be together in community to help each other with that "inner work." I have been very touched in my own experience by the Quaker tradition where they know how to come together around people who have deep "inner work" to do. In *Letters to a Young Poet*, the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke says, "Love is this — that two solitudes border, respect, and salute one another." He avoids the invasive and prevalent notion of "getting in there and fixing each other up" that we have in our

culture. But he affirms the possibility of being present to a person's solitude, a person's mystery, while that deep "inner work" goes on.

Finally, since the journey inward is a fearsome one, we need to remember that all the great spiritual traditions, when you boil them down, are saying one simple thing. *Be not afraid!* They don't say you can't *have* fear, because we all have fears, and leaders have fears aplenty. But they say you don't have to *be* your fears, and you don't have to create a world in which those fears dominate the conditions of many, many people.

A new leadership is needed for new times, but it will not come from finding new and more wily ways to manipulate the external world. It will come as we who lead find the courage to take an inner journey toward both our shadows and our light — a journey that, faithfully pursued, will take us beyond ourselves to become healers of a wounded world.

## No more 'lone rangers'

by Jack M. McKelvey

*[The following reflections by Jack McKelvey, suffragan bishop of Newark, come out of his recent sabbatical research into new forms of church leadership.]*

No clergy person and no congregation should be happy with one clergy person working alone. As more and more congregations lose their multiple staffs, redeveloping the interpersonal sharing, planning and resourcing which such staffing once provided through "teaming up" in other ways can infuse new life into tired and staid forms of ministry.

The basic premise of team ministry in this sense is that the resources we have to offer together are greater than the sum of our parts. Self-correction

can take place when others review our work with us; a colleagues group can deepen self-reflection; a lectionary group can enrich the study of Scripture and sermon preparation.

But for many clergy this isn't so simple. We have not been trained to reach out in a collaborative style. The lone ranger image is much more familiar and practiced, especially among men. We are comfortable with Jacob's ladder as the symbol of leadership, or the pyramid with the lone leader at the top. In the church, however, some of us are learning that Sarah's circle is another model worth trying. Is it not in Acts that we hear "the community shared everything in common for the building up of the body of Christ"?



### STUDY GUIDE PROGRAM

*The Witness* presents multi-faceted topics in a style intended to create conversation. The magazine's study guide program enables small group exchange around myriad societal, cultural and religious concerns by providing thought-provoking study material. The study guide program is a perfect educational resource for any small group which enjoys challenging dialogue and values divergent opinions. The cost is \$25 for a study guide packet, which includes eight copies (of one issue) of *The Witness*, plus a helpful leader's guide. For a list of available study guide issues, call 313-962-2650; fax 313-962-1012, or e-mail [The\\_Witness@ecunet.org](mailto:The_Witness@ecunet.org).



## New Party in Supreme Court

The Supreme Court recently heard arguments in a case brought by the New Party against the State of Minnesota, which is seeking to ban the New Party's "fusion" electoral strategy. Fusion allows minor parties to maximize their influence by nominating candidates who are also running under another party's auspices.

"The specific issue before the Court was straightforward," wrote New Party Executive Director Dan Cantor in *New Party News* (Winter '97). "Can a state prohibit a minor party from nominating the candidate of another party on its own ballot line, presuming that the candidate consents to both nominations?"

The lawyer for the State of Minnesota argued that voters would be confused by a ballot listing two parties for the same candidate. The New Party argued that "any electoral rule that infringes on a minor party's right to association is a violation of the First Amendment."

The New Party presented amicus briefs from the Reform Party, the Republican Party, the ACLU, People for the American Way, the Brennan Center, the Liberal and Conservative Parties in New York, the Center for a New Democracy, and a group of prominent historians.

## 'Are you decent?'

Nearly two-thirds of households in poverty in the U.S. have a full-time worker in them. The Decency Principles is a grassroots movement, begun in Seattle, to respond to poverty among working people. The project asks every employer, from the big-name corporation to the household that hires a babysitter or a leaf-raker, "Are you decent?" and offers them four challenges:

- Provide a living wage for all workers, lifting them above the poverty line.
- Assure health care and other basic benefits to all workers, prorated for part-time employees.
- Work for access to affordable housing for all workers and their families.
- Work for access to dependable, safe child care for all workers who need it.

When a group decides to launch a Decency Principles Project in a particular area, they are encouraged to initially choose a large employer and prepare a Decency audit questionnaire. The audit does not aim to lay blame on employers who fall short, but rather to challenge them to join in projects to find solutions.

The Decency Principles have already affected public policy and employer practices in Salt Lake City, Seattle, Baltimore, southern Indiana, and Clearwater, Fla. A county commissioner in southern Indiana decided to apply them to businesses requesting tax abatements. In Salt Lake, county commissioners rewrote the requirements for private contractors applying for a large building maintenance contract.

Trinity Parish, St. Louis, helped launch the Decency Principles in Missouri. When the Decency Principles came to Trinity, the vestry's first task was to ask if the parish is decent to all whom it employs. Vestry members reviewed wages and benefits of workers and planned steps toward improvement of remuneration for poorly paid part-time workers over the next few years as a budget priority. The vestry also agreed to ask contractors who bid for work for the parish about their decency as employers.

— *Jennifer Phillips, rector,  
Trinity Parish, St. Louis*

## More than our work

The current generation of undergraduate recruits is openly asking questions about work-life balance in interviews with corporate recruiters, *The Wall Street Journal* reports (1-29-97). Concerns about issues that impact personal and family life — such as travel, flextime and job location — often surface in initial interviews. "While Baby Boomers have typically kept silent on life-balance matters for fear of being seen as 'uncommitted to the job,' these new recruits see no point in pulling punches," Sue Shellenbarger writes. While some recruiters are turned off by these questions, others say that candidates who ask them know what is

important to them, are able to set priorities, and perform well on the job.

## Reforming corporate welfare

John Kasich, a Republican Representative from Ohio, has launched a coalition to oppose federal handouts to huge corporations, *The Progressive* reported in March.

"This is an issue of fairness," Kasich says. "Since we reformed welfare last year for people who don't have power and don't have lobbyists, I think it enhances our case to be able to reform welfare for people who do."

The group, which includes Ralph Nader, "has identified a 'dirty dozen' — 12 programs that sop up billions of federal dollars. These include the Market Access Program (\$347 million), which helps U.S. multinationals like McDonald's peddle their goods to the Third World; the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (\$281 million), which underwrites the export of U.S. nuclear reactors; and the International Monetary Fund (\$3.6 billion), which strangles Third World economies until they open up to foreign capital."

## Down with chants

*Eat the State*, a "forum for anti-authoritarian political opinion, research and humor" out of Seattle, lists chants "we never, ever, ever want to hear again." The top three: 'Two, Four, Six, Eight, . . .!' (We're policy advocates, not Big Bird.); 'Hey Hey, Ho Ho, . . .!' (We're policy advocates, not the Seven Dwarfs.) 1. 'The Whole World is Watching!' (The most embarrassingly and obviously false statement imaginable.)"

— *letter from Geov Parrish  
to Nonviolent Activist, 1-2/97*

*short takes*



# The 'new story' of self-organization

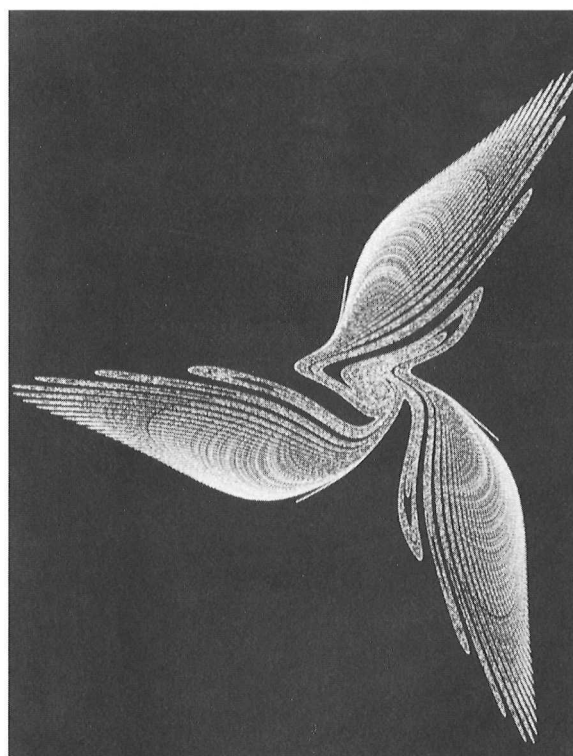
by Margaret J. Wheatley

*Margaret Wheatley has catalyzed a new way of thinking about how to shape and run human organizations. In her 1992 book, *Leadership and the New Science: Learning About Organization from an Orderly Universe*, she suggests methods that run counter to many long-held assumptions about how best to operate a company or institution. Increasingly, faith-based organizations—including a number of religious denominations—have been seeking her help. Her latest book, written with consulting partner Myron Kellner-Rogers, is *A Simpler Way* (1996), one of the few publications in the "Business Management" section of bookstores that one might imagine taking on a religious retreat. Reared in the Episcopal Church, Wheatley now calls herself a "Christian Buddhist." She lives in the mountains of Utah.*

**I**n both recent science and poetry we are remembering a story about life that has creativity and connectedness as its essential themes. As we use this new story to look into our organizational lives, it offers us images of organizations and leaders that are both startling and enticing. It offers us ways of being together where our diversity—our uniqueness—is essential and revered. It offers us an arena big enough to embrace the full expression of our infinitely creative human natures. And for the first time in a long time, it offers us the recognition that we humans are, in the words of

George Daniell's work appears on cards from Borealis Press, 800-669-6845.

physicist Ilya Prigogine, "the most striking realization of the laws of nature." We can use ourselves and what we know



A chaotic strange attractor—a shape that reveals the order inherent in chaos—from the work of Mario Markus and Benno Hess, Max-Planck-Institut, Dortmund, Germany.

about ourselves to understand the universe. By observing with new eyes the processes of creation in us, we can understand the forces that create galaxies, move continents, and give birth to stars. No longer intent on

describing ourselves as the machines we thought the universe to be, we are encouraged now to describe the universe through the life we know we are.

As we look at life through the lens of human nature and human desire, we are presented with some wonderful realizations. Our own desire for autonomy and creativity is reflected in all life. Life appears as boundlessly creative, searching for new possibilities and new capacities wherever it can. Observing the diversity of life forms has become a humbling experience for many biologists. At this point, no one knows how many different species there are, or where the next forms of life will appear, except that now we even expect them to appear elsewhere in our solar system.

Life is born from this unquenchable need to be. One of the most interesting definitions of life in modern biology is that something is considered alive if it has the capacity to create itself. The term for this is *autopoiesis*—self-creation—from the same root as poetry. At the very heart of our ideas about life is this definition, that life begins from the desire to create something original, to bring a new being into form.

As I have read about and observed more consciously the incredible diversity of life, I have felt witness to a

*Many designs, many adaptations are possible, and organisms enjoy far more freedom to experiment than we humans, with our insane demand to "Get it right the first time."*

level of creativity that has little to do with the survival struggles that we thought explained everything. Newness appears not for simple utilitarian purposes, but just because it is possible to be inventive. Life gives  
*cont. on page 16*

# The 'new story' and the church: an interview with Margaret J. Wheatley

by Julie A. Wortman

**Julie A. Wortman:** Where do you find examples of organizations that are living by the "new story" you write about?

**Margaret Wheatley:** Self-organization — the ability of life to create itself — is not new, it is just that we haven't had either the lens to see it or the words to name it. People are all the time creating what they need to get something done, going outside the boundaries, ignoring the rules, ignoring roles, but they cover it up because it is not part of the accepted operating procedure. What makes the "new story" feel new is that over time in Western culture we have so lost track of who we are and what's available in our humanity. Welcoming this back into our organizational lives and figuring out how to accept all this creativity seems like a new thing.

**J.W.:** So the "new story" is also happening in churches?

**M.W.:** Yes. Churches should be institutions with the greatest awareness of the human spirit and of what we are capable of from our divine selves, yet they get into these incredibly heavy, burdensome structures that are not about recognizing and supporting our divine, creative nature, but instead are meant to insure that a whole doctrine of belief — in some churches a whole doctrine of practice — is maintained. So we move away from affirming this great creative spark in order to achieve compliance and control.

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**Julie A. Wortman** is co-editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

**J.W.:** In the Episcopal Church, tradition is such a strong piece. I don't sense that you are rejecting the heritage of wisdom that is passed down?



Margaret J. Wheatley

**M.W.:** No, but if it blocks people from being invited in so that they are just told what's important and what the truth is, then what you've done is lost all creativity. Over time no living being can survive a life that does not acknowledge its creativity. As I understand our own spirits and the spirit of God, I see this constant creating and this constant newness.

**J.W.:** How would you advise an institution like the Episcopal Church to become more of a self-organizing institution?

**M.W.:** You mean a more spirit-full institution? I would ask everyone to go back to what some Catholic sisters I know call the "founding energy." What was it they were trying to bring forth? What was it they believed was important enough to give their lives to? And I'd ask them to be

in that questioning as a shared inquiry so that as an organization they can develop a sense of what it is they are trying to bring forth in the world. Because if you are just talking about structures and orders and policies you're not talking about the "why."

Once you are clear about your particular contribution to the world, your particular gift as an organization, then you ask the question, "Okay, so how can we organize in ways that would move that gift into the world?" That's where you try to become educated about alternative models of organizing.

**J.W.:** People in church circles often feel betrayed by the institution because it claims as its purpose something that is very important to them, but then doesn't live up to the promise.

**M.W.:** I find the contrast between "what we came to do" and "how we can't do it in the structure that we came to," strongest in religious organizations, because that's where the call was the most "spirit-full." We haven't seen that there are alternatives, that there are ways to take this great passion to do good and help it move into the world without all this structure. It's a much bigger dilemma than if you're in a corporation because then you can say, "Well, we really are here only to make money."

It is really important to recognize that the ideas about organization that have been handed down to us for centuries have gone unexamined. Our ideas about hierarchy, performance and control are only one set of ideas, only one world view. As congregations and assemblies we have to understand that we don't have to just tinker with the old models, that a truly radical approach is available if we change our thinking about how organizing happens.

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to itself the freedom to become because life is about discovering new possibilities, new forms of expression. Two Chilean biologists, Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana, observe that life responds not to “survival of the fittest,” but to the greater space of experimentation of “survival of the fit.” Many designs, many adaptations are possible, and organisms enjoy far more freedom to experiment than we humans, with our insane demand to “Get it right the first time.”

The freedom to experiment, to tinker oneself into a form of being that can live and reproduce, leads to diversity that has no bounds. In my own telling of a new cosmic story, I believe that the great forces of creation are focused on exploring newness, that newness is a primary value embraced by all life, a primary force that encourages life into new discoveries. The need and ability to create one’s self is a force we see quite clearly in human experience, but which we have greatly misunderstood in our organizations.

### **Webs of relationship**

The second great force I would like to add to this new story is that life needs to link with other life, to form systems of relationships where all individuals are better supported by the system they have created. It is impossible to look into the natural world and find an individual. As an African proverb states: “Alone, I have seen many marvelous things, none of which were true.” Biologist Lynn Margulis expresses a similar realization when she comments that independence is not a biological concept, it is a political concept. Everywhere we look, we see complex, tangled, messy webs of relationships. From these relationships, life creates systems that offer greater stability and support than life lived alone. Organisms shape themselves in response to their neighbors and their environments. All respond to one another, co-evolving

and co-creating the complex systems of organization that we see in nature. Life is systems-seeking. It seeks organization. Organization is a naturally occurring phenomenon. Self-organization is a powerful force that creates the systems we observe, and testifies to a world that knows how to organize from the inside out.

Self-organizing systems have the capacity to create for themselves the aspects of organization that we thought we, as leaders, had to provide. Self-organizing systems create structures and pathways, networks of communication, values and meaning, behaviors and norms. In es-

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*Self-organizing systems  
do for themselves most of  
what we believed we had  
to do for them.*

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sence, they do for themselves most of what we believed we had to do for them. Rather than thinking of organization as an imposed structure, plan, design, or role, it is clear that in life, organization arises from the interactions and needs of individuals who have decided to come together. We see the results of these relationships in the forms that arise; but it is important, especially because we are so easily seduced by material forms, to look past these manifestations to the desires for relationship that gave birth to the forms.

The new story teaches us that when we join together we are capable of giving birth to the form of the organization, to the plans, to the values, to the vision. All of life is self-organizing and so are we. But the new story also details a process for organizing that stands in shocking contrast to the images of well-planned, well-orchestrated, well-supervised organizing. I can summarize the organizing processes of life quite simply: Life seeks

organization, but it uses messes to get there. Organization is a process, not a structure. Simultaneously, and in ways difficult to chart, the process of organizing involves creating relationships around a shared sense of purpose, exchanging and creating information, learning constantly, paying attention to the results of our efforts, co-adapting, coevolving, developing wisdom as we learn, staying clear about our purpose, being alert to changes from all directions. Living systems give form to their organization, and evolve those forms into new ones, because of exquisite capacities to create meaning together, to communicate, and to notice what’s going on in the moment. These are the capacities that give any organization its true liveliness, that support self-organization.

In the new story, we enter a world where life gives birth to itself in response to powerful forces. These forces are the imperative to create one’s self as an exploration of newness, and the need to reach out for relationships with others to create systems. I could similarly describe them as the forces of creativity and freedom, and the need to join with others for purposes that enrich both the individual and the system. These forces do not disappear from life, whatever approach we take to leadership, organizing, or relating. Even if we deny them, we never extinguish them. They are always active, even in the most repressive human organizations. Life can never stop asserting its need to create itself, and life never stops searching for connections.

We fail to acknowledge these unstoppable forces of life whenever we, as leaders, try to direct and control those in our organization. Life always pushes back against our demands. But instead of learning about life, we tend to see their “difficult” behaviors as justification for a more controlling style of leadership. I believe  
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**J.W.:** I think it would be very difficult to get a denomination to do the kind of self analysis you advise.

**M.W.:** Well it's not so much analysis as starting conversations and engaging more and more people. It's actually a very low-tech process. We believe it is the way all great change happens. It starts with humble conversations that matter to people, conversations in which they start to share their dreams and frustrations. Out of that comes social action and change.

The big conferences and programs and all the ways we devise for talking at each other are enormously expensive and actually push us farther apart. So we need to figure out how, over time, we can be in a conversation with each other about our deepest desires for this institution. Everything springs from the "agreements of belonging" at the heart of an organization — the agreements about how people have decided to belong together, around what shared faith or beliefs.

Let me offer an example. I have worked a lot with large corporations that are trying to become "learning organizations." They bring in training programs, lifelong learning, learning skills, learning styles. They do all this work in helping people become good learners, but there is not a shared belief at the core of these organizations about the value of learning. The shared belief is more about "Don't get caught making mistakes — you have to make it here on your own so never reveal a weakness." This runs totally counter to learning.

Interestingly, though, in the Army, which is the best learning organization I've ever seen, the attitude is different. One colonel told me, "We

learned long ago that it is better to learn than be dead." When you have *that* as an essential agreement you're going to *want* to talk about mistakes so that you can save yourself the next time.

In a lot of churches, we think we hold these wonderful, pure ideas about each other, but if you then look at the institution's structures you realize that some of the beliefs we hold about each other are pretty dark. If you look at all the structure and control, then I'd say that somewhere there is a belief that people can't be trusted, that people can't be trusted as adults, that people want to be told what to do.

**J.W.:** What is effective leadership in light of this?

**M.W.:** A CEO once said that the leader's primary task is to make sure the organization knows itself. I see leaders as mirrors for the organization — and conveners so that people can look into the organization's integrity together and see who they are. Most leaders spend their time doing what the organization can do for itself.

**J.W.:** Is the particular structure an organization chooses important?

**M.W.:** Structure is not neutral. Structure comes from our beliefs about one another. Hierarchy, for example, comes from a belief system that says some people should have more authority than others and some people are more worthy of asserting dominion. It is a structure that by its very nature and shape disconnects — all those boxes on the organizational chart disconnect. "Management" in such a system is a strategy for mending the brokenness that the system itself creates. That's why management doesn't work.

There is hierarchy in nature, but it is very different. It's a concept of nested wholes. The energy shifts at different levels, but it is not about dominion.

**J.W.:** The Episcopal Church has a legislative system for making decisions. Most believe that this kind of "democratic" system is a good way for moving forward with decisions.

**M.W.:** I think legislative decision-making is a cop-out for spirit-based organizations. It shows a lack of faith that the spirit is willing to work with us. Why couldn't church members sit together in silence and contemplation and come to know what to do? This is true for the Quakers and for many indigenous, tribal people — that you sit with it, sit together, sit in silence, in conversation, in dialogue. The being together is about being open to the spirit and believing that its presence is available.

The legislative approach says that it's all in our heads, it's all in our own expertise, it's all in our ability to convince others. But I think the spirit is always hoping that we're going to be willing to listen.

**J.W.:** So a denomination like the Episcopal Church could make decisions, even at the national level, by sitting together?

**M.W.:** Yes. It might involve a period of preparation in which local groups first come together — to sit open to the spirit rather than to prepare their positions — but then everyone could come together with that great intent to be available to each other and to the spirit and see what comes forth.

If anyone needs convincing, they can look at the church's history with legislative action and note the times it has led to increased divisiveness and the times it has not. Legislative action just does not give rise to community. It starts with a belief that participants are separated and in opposition and that this needs to be worked out. **TW**

*Continued from page 16*

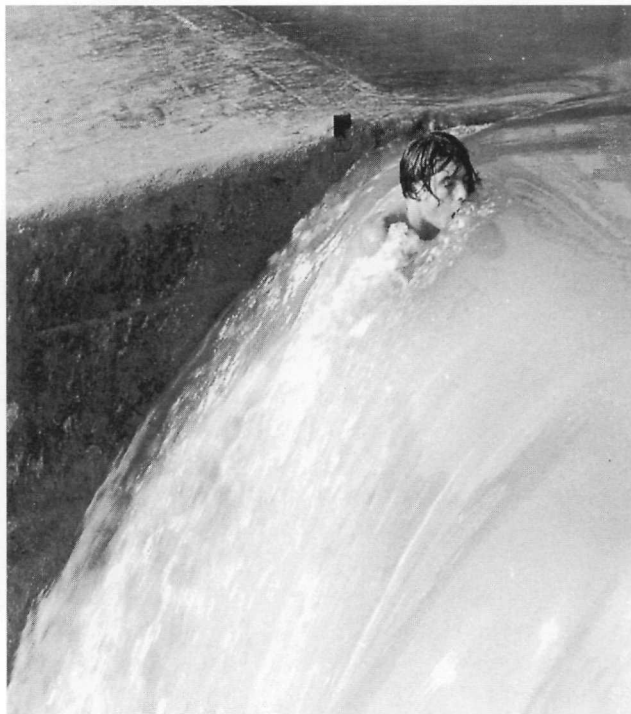
that many of the failures and discontents in today's organizations can be understood as the result of this denial of life's forces, and the pushing back of life against a story that excludes them.

As an example of these competing forces, think about how many times you have engaged in conversations about "resistance to change." I have participated in far too many of these, and in the old days, when I still thought that it was me who was "managing" change, my colleagues and I always were thoughtful enough to plan a campaign to overcome this resistance. Contrast this view of human resistance to change with Kevin Kelly's images of life (in *Out of Control*, Addison-Wesley, 1994) as "further processes of becoming and change ... circles of becoming, inflaming itself with its own sparks, breeding upon itself more life and more wildness." Who's telling the right story? Do we, as a species, dig in our heels while the rest of life is engaged in this awesome dance of creation?

The old story asserts that resistance to change is a fact of life. Locked into a world image that sought stability and control, change has always been undesired and difficult. But the new story explains resistance not as a fact of life, but as evidence of an act against life. Life is in motion, constantly creating, exploring, discovering. Newness is its desire. Nothing alive, including us, resists these great creative motions. But all of life resists control. All of life pushes back, against any process that inhibits its freedom to create itself.

In organizations of the old story, plans and designs are constantly being imposed. People are told what to do all the time. As a final insult, we go outside the organiza-

tion to look for answers, returning with benchmarks that we offer up as great gifts. Yet those in the organization can only see these packaged solutions as insults. Their creativity has been dismissed, their opportunity to discover something new for the organization has been denied. When we deny life's need to create, life



George Daniell/Borealis Press

pushes back. We label it resistance and invent strategies to overcome it. But we would do far better if we changed the story and learned how to invoke the resistant creativity of those in our organization. We need to work with these insistent creative forces or they will be provoked to work against us.

And most organizations deny the systems-seeking, self-organizing forces that are always present, the forces that, in fact, are responsible for uncharted levels of contribution and innovation. These fail to get reported because they occur outside "the boxes of preconceived possibility." There is no better indicator of the daily but unrecognized contributions

made by people than when a municipal union decides to "work to rule." Cities cease running, civil functions stop — even though the rule books and policy manuals were designed to create productive employees. No organization can function on the planned contributions of its members. Without acknowledging it, we

rely intensely on individuals going beyond the rules and roles. We rely on them to figure out what needs to be done, to solve an unexpected problem, to contribute in a crisis situation. But we seldom take this experience and use it to question our beliefs about structure, leadership, or motivation.

We also deny these system-seeking forces when we narrow people to self-serving work, when we pit colleagues against one another to improve performance, when we believe people are most strongly motivated by promises of personal gain. When we deny people's great need for relationships, for systems of support, for work that connects to a larger purpose, they push back. They may respond first by embracing competition, but then lose interest in the incentives. Performance falls back to pre-contest levels. In organizations driven by greed, people push back by distrusting and despising their leaders. In organizations that try to substitute monetary rewards for a true purpose, people respond with apathy and disaffection.

It is possible to look at the negative and troubling behaviors in organizations today as the clash between forces of life and the forces of domination, between the new story and the old. Once we realize that we cannot ever extinguish these creative forces, that it is impossible to deny the life that lives in our organizations, we can begin to search for new ways of being together. **TW**

# Networks and the future church: an Episcopal Church case study

by Ian T. Douglas

The structures of liberal American Protestant churches have morphed over the last few decades from that of large, centralized, self-assured, programmatic organizations to down-sized, disparate, scandal-wracked agencies struggling to find a way forward in a changing church and world. The transformation is not unrelated to the rise of independent conservative Evangelical churches as the new American Christian establishment. Whereas heads of denominations used to have the ear of key players in business and government, Ron Reed now entertains these dons at power breakfasts. This sidelining of the old mainline elite, with concomitant organizational decline, has severely shaken the identity and sense of mission of most liberal American Protestant churches.

Mainline, or now "oldline," denominational structures and the faithful who work in them are not the only casualties of these changes in American religiosity. Ecumenical councils of churches, whose leadership models and *modus operandi* were immediate outgrowths of the big church organizations, have also suffered. The National Council of Churches in the U.S., the World Council of Churches, and most local Christian councils are all struggling with cuts in funding, staff and program.

The future seems bleak to the many who have dedicated their lives to con-

ciliar interchurch cooperation and coordination.

Craig Dykstra and James Hudnut-Beumler, key observers of American religion associated with the Lilly Endowment, have surveyed the history of national organizational structures of American Protestant denominations. They suggest that in the late 18th century to the late 19th century denominational structures were best understood by the constitutional confederacy metaphor. In the first half of the 20th century, big church coincided with big business and big government. The corporation was the dominant metaphor. But since the late 1960s, Dykstra and Hudnut-Beumler say, de-

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*Heads of denominations used to have the ear of key players in business and government. Now Ron Reed entertains these dons at power breakfasts. This sidelining of the old mainline elite has severely shaken the identity of most liberal American Protestant churches.*

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nominal bu-  
reaucracies have acted less like corporations and more like regulatory agencies concerned primarily with adjudicating the distribution of dwindling resources and governance of denominationally related institutions. Further, they see that the faithful in the pews are becoming increasingly upset with the regulatory agency now that the goods produced by the former corporate church, such as the sending and support of missionaries and the development of Christian education materials, have been taken off line. Cries for structural change, both within the denomina-

tional structures and outside of them, are heard all across liberal American Protestantism.

The metaphors outlined by Dykstra and Hudnut-Beumler fit Episcopal Church history. From the late 18th century until the turn of the 20th century the Episcopal Church was organized as a constitutional confederacy. Dioceses functioned independently of each other, coming together only on a triennial basis in General Convention to act on the relatively few areas of mutual concern they shared.

One such area was missionary outreach. Founded in 1821 and reorganized in 1835, the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society advanced the Episcopal Church on the Western frontier and outside of the U.S. By the end of the 19th century the Episcopal Church celebrated its contribution of "good schools, good hospitals, and right ordered worship" in urban centers of the East, on the Western

plains and in various foreign mission fields.

At the turn of the 20th century, Episcopalian support of the social gospel combined with a rediscovered sense of Anglican establishmentarianism resulted in a new vision, or ideal, for the Episcopal Church, that of a

"national

church." The national church ideal triumphed at the General Convention of 1919 when the structures of the Episcopal Church were revolutionized. A constitutional change provided for an elected Presiding Bishop. The staff and programs of the Domestic and Foreign Mis-

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**Ian T. Douglas**, a member of *The Witness'* Vital Signs advisory board, is director of the Anglican, Global and Ecumenical Studies program at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass.



sionary Society, the Board of Religious Education, and the Commission on Social Service were centralized in one National Council (Executive Council). A very successful nationwide campaign and diocesan assessment plan provided ongoing financial support. For close to five decades this corporate model of the Episcopal Church successfully advanced its mission of sharing the richness of Anglican tradition — and the riches of American democracy — at home and around the world.

In the 1960s and 1970s the mission of the national church ideal came under attack. The Anglican Congress of 1963 and its manifesto, “Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ,” challenged the Episcopal Church to move from paternalism to partnership with newly emerging autonomous churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America. At the same time, the civil rights movement and urban unrest in the U.S. tore at the fabric of the Episcopal Church. The church responded with the 1967 General Convention Special Program that attempted to redirect the national church budget to support the poor and those working for civil rights and social justice. Dioceses who saw the national church as funding the Black Pan-

thers protested by cutting their financial contributions. Many women and African Americans, who had historically been excluded from the decision-making bodies of the national church, called for restitution and reform. In the emerging post-colonial world, the national church’s mission of social uplift at home and abroad through Christian moral truths and Ameri-

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*Today the national church is but a shell of its former self with many Episcopalians regarding the Executive Council as nothing more than a regulatory agency.*

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can democracy seemed hollow and misdirected. Loss of support for the national church ideal resulted in ongoing, severe cuts in budget and program. Today the national church is but a shell of its former self, with many Episcopalians regarding the Executive Council as nothing more than a regulatory agency primarily concerned with governance issues unrelated to the struggles and hopes of individual Christians in their daily lives and home parishes.

In recent years Episcopalians at the grassroots have begun to challenge national church structures. In 1993, for example, the Diocese of East Tennessee’s “Shaping Our Future Symposium” challenged the 1994 General Convention to rework the structures of the Episcopal Church. Such ideas as a unicameral General Convention and the return of the office of Presiding Bishop to that of a diocesan bishop were proposed. But many deputies and bishops at the General Convention believed the symposium’s recommendations were driven by a reactionary conservatism aimed at ousting the national church’s liberal leadership. As a result, most of the proposals never made it beyond the first steps of the convention’s legislative process.

A more promising sign of new life lies in the efforts of other church members to organize themselves into networks of common interest and activity beyond the purview of the Executive Council. One such group with which I have been intimately involved is the Episcopal Council for Global Mission (ECGM). For years church mission groups, some legitimated by the national church and others functioning as independent societies, engaged in sometimes hostile debate and animosity. But recently the world mission lead-

## Dioceses stress local focus and identity

Episcopalians are looking for national church leadership that supports and facilitates local ministry, according to an Executive Council report on diocesan consultations held during 1996. After visiting 95 dioceses and participating in roundtable discussions with diocesan leaders, the council identified this concern as the “overarching theme” of their consultations, although there was recognition that in ecumenical and Anglican/global relations, “the

National Church must continue to have a primary role.”

The report also stated that “there seems to be a movement away from the issues that plague the church to a serious interest in the advent of structural changes, organizational change and a great cry for clarification at all levels.”

Episcopalians “want to be understood for who they are and what they are doing,” the document stressed. “They want to understand who they are as Anglicans

and they want to connect with other Christians and the world around them.”

The council’s recommendations include: strengthened support for congregational development; strengthening of the Linkage Program between diocesan and national staffs; making networking/facilitating and resourcing a high priority for national staff, with special sensitivity to small churches; better training in the use of QUEST/Internet and other emerging technologies; and realignment of the current provincial structure.

ership of the national church and the independent societies in the Episcopal Church agreed that their common commitment to working internationally far outweighed the divisions that separated them. They organized as a network of over 30 education, funding, and missionary-sending organizations in 1990.

The new coalition uses open communication, dialogue, and the sharing of information to improve mission. Arguably one of the most diverse and eclectic networks in the Episcopal Church, the ECGM embraces a wide variety of mission theologies and organizations. Voluntary missionary societies, parishes, dioceses, seminaries, funding agents such as the United Thank Offering and the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, as well as constitutional bodies of the church like the Standing Commission on World Mission (SCWM) all participate in the council as colleagues.

The strength and organizing power of the ECGM as a network in support of world mission became clear at the 1994 General Convention, when ECGM activists successfully lobbied the convention to turn back proposals of Executive Council that seemed to gut the missionary-sending programs of the national church. At the same time, a process was put in place by which the Standing Commission on World Mission, in partnership with the ECGM, would develop new ways to enliven world mission programming in the Episcopal Church. As a result, the standing commission, with the support of the ECGM, will propose to the 1997 General Convention a new Episcopal Partnership for Global Mission.

Emphasizing that the mission of God is one of reconciliation and that unity with each other and with God in Christ is the heart of mission, the proposed new partnership is a vehicle by which all the various Episcopal agencies and organizations involved in world mission could

deepen their cooperation and develop shared programs. In this model, the national church would be a key player, but the partnership would not be directly accountable to the executive council, but would work through mutual consultation

Structure of the Church, will also be coming before this summer's General Convention. This commission is calling for changes in the makeup of General Convention legislative committees and interim bodies, the role of the Presiding



*Noah's Ark series: Genesis* by Charles McGee

Detroit Institute of Arts

and consensus with all who choose to participate.

The Episcopal Partnership for Global Mission proposal, although widely supported by the church's world mission community, has strongly challenged the assumptions behind the old "national church" ideal. Thus many adherents of that old ideal oppose the proposal, some because they believe that General Convention money should not support programs that are not directly under the auspices of the Executive Council, and others because they see the partnership as duplicating tasks that should be performed exclusively by the staff of the national church.

Another proposal for revising the way the national church operates, this time from the Standing Commission on the

Bishop and the organization of the Executive Council (see *Vital Signs*, p. xx). These recommendations, too, have their critics. But in this case, the debate completely sidesteps the question of whether the regulatory agency model of the church works any longer for mission-minded church members.

The Standing Commission on World Mission, on the other hand, will be lifting up a partnership model which just might. If the General Convention endorses its proposal for an Episcopal Partnership for Global Mission, perhaps the church will begin to move beyond a preoccupation with governance to a truly new organizational model — one in which the common sense of mission lifted up by self-organizing networks of grassroots organizations provides the leadership. **TW**

# Enlarging religious leadership: have women made a difference?

by Fredrica Harris Thompsett

Women's religious leadership is a hot topic in the Episcopal Church, my denominational home, as it is today in many other North American churches. Joyful occasions and historic events have been providing ample opportunity to ask if women's leadership in the church has indeed "come a long way." As part of the Ecumenical Decade in Solidarity with Women, more than 600 women joined in an exuberant international celebration and exploration of women's leadership at the Worldwide Anglican Encounter of Women held in Salvador, Brazil in 1992. A 20th anniversary celebration at my home institution, Episcopal Divinity School, marked the first ordinations to the priesthood of 11 U.S. Episcopal women at Philadelphia's Church of the Advocate in July of 1974, and a current issue of *Journal of Women's Ministries* (Autumn, 1996) focuses on women's leadership with the implicitly promising title, "Moving into the Millennium."

I also recently attended a conference where almost 150 ordained Episcopal women clergy responded to an open invitation from three women leaders — Bishops Barbara Harris, Mary Adelia McLeod

and GERALYN WOLF (who serve three New England dioceses) — to discuss: "What gifts and differences do we bring to ordained ministry?" The intentional focus was on ordained women, yet as a so-called "lay" woman I have always known that cultural perspectives on clergy women reflect how the gifts and talents for leadership among the rest of us are welcomed and/or tolerated within a religious world that is still largely patriarchal. Years ago when many saints, living and dead, worked diligently for women's expanded and ordained leadership, we hoped to transform traditional patterns of hierarchy and domination in our churches. Are women leaders making a significant difference, or is it too soon to tell?

## Reactionary forces

I do need to report from the start that all the news is not good. Although there are more lay and ordained women leaders at work in this country and elsewhere, misogynist elements within church hierarchies have attempted to silence the powerful voices of women leaders. Examples are found in the cries of heresy that greeted Chung Hyun Kyung's address on spirituality to the 1991 World Council of Church's Assembly in Canberra, and in the harsh attacks by conservatives on denominational women leaders who participated in the 1993 "Re-Imagining" Conference. In her new book, *Leading Women* (1996), Carol E. Becker warns that when women at the top make white male leaders feel uncomfortable, retaliation "can be surprising, brutal and swift." Feminist theologian Letty Russell cautions that there are many who still act

as if "the Lord has spoken only through white, western male theologians." In a sociological study entitled *The Stained Glass Ceiling: Churches and Their Women Pastors* (1995), Sally Purvis describes the difficult work of women clergy striving to meet "transgressive" role expectations both as traditionally gendered feminine women and as spiritual leaders, pastors and administrators. Becker sees this as part of a "Cinderella Syndrome" in which women have to "work twice as hard" even to stay in place.

## From glass slipper to glass ceiling?

On tough days, I am tempted to title the research I am currently doing on women's leadership in the church: "Moving from the 'Glass Slipper' to the 'Glass Ceiling,'" that is, moving only from the pedestalization of a handful of outstanding, so-called exceptional women, like the patriarchalized Blessed Virgin Mary, to the reality of woman after woman bumping up against unseen obstacles that limit her abilities to rise, let alone stand on level, common ground.

Am I being too gloomy? I don't know. I am a historical theologian and as I face the future, I worry about widespread historical amnesia. This baby-boomer culture of ours tends to validate history only if it is something "that happened to ME!" My faculty colleague, ordained foremother, and historian of women's ordination in the Anglican Communion, Sue Hiatt, suggests in a 1996 article that historically, women are in danger of quitting too soon: "We fight to enter patriarchal institutions and are so overcome with gratitude on our admittance that we fail to continue to work to change and humanize those institutions."

For generations, indeed for centuries, dominant cultures have worked steadily (if not always successfully) to keep women "in their place." Typically, like others whose lives are seen as trivial or marginal to dominant cultural norms, such women were

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**Fredrica Harris Thompsett** is academic dean at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass. Author of *Courageous Incarnation in Intimacy, Work, Childhood, and Aging* (Cowley, 1993), she is currently working on a book on women's leadership. Feminist artist **Meinrad Craighead** lives in Albuquerque, N.M. "Women in the church" is used with permission from *WomenWord: A Feminist Lectionary and Psalter*, by Miriam Therese Winter (Crossroad, 1990).



“seen but not heard.” Today too, many women religious leaders are actually “stuck” in place, seemingly blocked by glass ceilings and plastic cosmetic shields, polite assumptions about where we are best “suited,” unseen yet prevalent cultural curbs designed to keep us, structurally yet unerringly, “in our place”.

Let me share a few pointed anecdotes. A professional church worker — a single woman in her early fifties — was told by an interviewing church staff member that she did not “fit” the creative, youthful “image” they desired! In the secular world such an exchange would be viewed as legally discriminatory. Another woman, a respected diocesan leader and the rector of a mid-sized parish, was informed by a visiting search committee that they could not “see” her in their “larger corporate-sized” parish. Lee McGee, in her book on women’s preaching, *Wrestling with the Patriarchs* (1996), documents cultural resistance simply to “hearing” women’s voices. While women in the pulpit may be “seen” and accepted, their powerful voices are not easily “heard,” let alone validated.

### Limited images

Our images of leadership in the church are far too limited. While many doors have been battered down by some women, and/or patronizingly or liberally opened for others, the struggle for women’s leadership in religion is not over. There are those who are unable to pursue fully their vocations whether they are lay or ordained: Roman Catholic and Southern Baptist sisters for whom forms of ordained leadership are not yet options, sisters of color oppressed throughout this land by modern racism, lesbians who are categorically rejected as “fitting” leaders

by most judicatory structures, and women who are considered too old, too fat, too single, too working class, too ... whatever!

The best analogy I have for leadership models in the church is to North American standards for “fashion,” culturally dominant projections of acceptable



*Women in the church* by Meinrad Craighead

“beauty.” Such images are too skinny, too narrow, and too shaped by romanticized male fantasies to fit the abundant and diverse beauty of women in this or any land. Instead we need “extra-large” images of leadership to fit the immense work we are given to do! Expansive models of leadership need to be amply tailored to suit the great range and diversity of cultural, racial, ethnic, class and other special gifts women bring to ministry. Feminists and others inquiring into the qualities women bring to religious leadership must not be reductionistic. To convey valid insight our reflections need to be profoundly multi-cultural, valuing the difference incarnate difference makes!

### Diverse models emerging

Meanwhile there is some evidence, at least in terms of rhetorical consensus, that diverse models of leadership are

emerging under women’s influence. Katherine Tyler Scott among others suggests that we are moving from a paradigm of competition to one of cooperation, from a “power-over” to a “power-with” understanding of leadership. In her still influential analysis of power, feminist and witch Starhawk (*Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery*) denotes helpful distinctions among communal types of power: Power-over is linked to domination and control, power-from-within is linked to the mysteries that awaken our deepest abilities and potential. Power-with is social power, the influence we wield among equals.

Saint Paul would have agreed. In the only passage in the New Testament explicitly naming “leadership,” Paul commends various “forms of leadership” as God’s gifts to the new church, gifts which have everything to do with building up the community, with encouraging a discipleship of equals (I Cor. 12:28). Some church women’s groups speak of practicing a “circular” style of leadership based on groups consensus and shared norms for working together. Similarly there are now standard depictions of women’s leadership as more relational, connectional, flexible, passionate and nurturing. It is no wonder that clergy women, as at the recent New England conference I attended, speak about encountering and handling frequent projections on them of being their congregation’s or parishioner’s “mother.” They cautioned other women leaders not to fall into the “leadership trap” of the multifaceted nurturer who can always handle at least three things at once. Rather, they advised one another to see such episodes of projection as teaching moments, occasions when loaded assumptions about power can be clarified

and more realistically distributed among the wider church community.

While some religious leaders talk as if new leadership models are already in place within church structures, I think this is a liminal time, a threshold time when the old “power over” ways are still very much in evidence. Typically when things are calm, church leaders speak effusively of mutuality, collaboration, shared ministries, partnerships, etc. Yet I have found that especially when there are competition and conflict (as there so often are in the church), habitual “power over” ways snap back in place with a vengeance. Leadership has not *yet* shifted to a paradigm of cooperation and liberation. The current situation is transitional at best, one in which paradoxically hier-

archical and equalitarian models of leadership are juxtaposed in complex ways. Twenty years from now our sisters and brothers will have the right to ask whether current generations of women in religious leadership have truly made a day-to-day difference in the ways leadership is exercised within church structures.

### Gains in imaginations and hearts

What then is “new” about women’s religious leadership today? Where are women making a difference as church leaders? Primary gains have and are being made in the most formative and subjective places: that is, in the imaginations of our children and in the hearts and prayers of open-minded women and men everywhere. Massachusetts Bishop Tom Shaw engagingly tells a story about his

African-American colleague, Bishop Barbara Harris. Bishop Shaw was introduced to a young girl in a parish where Bishop Harris had already visited. The young child stared at him, looked rather nonplussed, as her mother told her: “This is the Bishop.” A few minutes later, the child emphatically declared, “Black women are bishops!” Another precocious child, a young boy, cried out at the installation of a clergyman whose predecessor was an ordained woman, “Where’s the *real* priest, Peg?!” Many of us have heard other stories about young children asking, “if men can be priests?” Upon occasion, we have overheard childhood prayers in which God is confidently addressed as a woman. For many, truly, seeing is believing!

## The ‘rotating circle’ at Brigid’s Place

Four years ago, a group of women came together at Christ Church Cathedral, Houston, to talk about a new outreach ministry. They wanted to create a space where women could work on their spiritual and psychological growth — and they wanted to pursue this aim in a way that was faithful to their values of mutuality and non-hierarchical community.

What emerged was a Women’s Assembly with a “Rotating Circle” of leadership. Once a month, about 30 women gathered to set goals, make policy and establish programs. Everyone was welcome, and all decisions were made by consensus. People were free to rotate in and out of the circle.

The project evolved into Brigid’s Place, a ministry with a physical space at the cathedral and a full-time director, Jennifer Elkins.

Brigid’s Place has offered experiential meditation and body movement

workshops, lecture series on women’s poetry and women in the bible, and forums on women in the workplace. About 3200 women participated in their programs during the past year, Elkins says.

“Many are not connected with the cathedral,” she says. “I think we have been most successful in giving women who have left the church, for one reason or another, a door back in.”

Elkins is deeply committed to non-hierarchical leadership.

Although Brigid’s Place now must incorporate in order to apply for foundation funding, the Rotating Circle will retain its authority, she explains.

“We need to fit into the old system — a board of directors with a president, a vice-president, etc. — so our plan is to have that on paper. But we will continue to operate and make decisions just as they’ve always been made.”

Elkins believes that the Rotating Circle has worked well, in part, because of the

caliber of its members.

“It’s a group of incredibly empowered women, who have done a lot of psychological and spiritual work,” she says. “They are here because they are committed to a vision. People who had other motives, like needing power, dropped out early on.”

With a circular model, it is important for people “to bring all their feelings to the circle,” she says. It is also important for people to be “clear on their own motivations and needs, what they want to bring to the circle and take away,” she says.

Elkins’ role is to help catalyze and enfold the group’s vision.

“I see myself as a leader in the sense of carrying out the decisions made by the Rotating Circle and giving creative input,” she says, “not in the sense of knowing more than others. The women together know much more than I know. I will go to my grave believing circular leadership can work.”

— Marianne Arbogast

It is too soon to say whether these young people will during their lifetimes strive for more expansive models of leadership. Yet Letty Russell once observed, "New leadership makes new naming happen." Diversely incarnate realities of women leaders call forth and suggest new naming patterns, new emphases and creative possibilities for relating and claiming power within community. Inclusive and expansive language in prayer may some day also shape more culturally embracing ways to thinking and behaving that honor women as well as men. Some churches are further along this path than others. Women clergy, of course, are making a difference simply by bringing their diverse gifts of service to many contexts, providing new incarnations of Christ-like love in action. Yet, both lay and ordained women leaders, and those who support their efforts, still have a long way to go in bringing about meaningful change. We must travel this path together as a discipleship of equals, not as lay women led by women clergy.

### **Cutting across four dimensions**

In thinking about the complex dimensions of freeing ourselves from oppressive and restrictive notions of leadership — whether for reasons of gender, race or ethnicity, class, age or ability — it might be helpful to envision change as cutting across four dimensions: the personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural. As is the case with the multidimensional efforts needed to combat subversive and persistent forms of modern racism, real gains are needed not only at the personal and interpersonal levels. Strategies are required for empowering and enlarging access to leadership within institutional structures. Similarly, dominant cultural expectations about leadership need to be challenged so that others may claim, define and offer leadership. To date, while many gains have been made at the per-

sonal and interpersonal levels of leadership in the church, widespread institutional and cultural changes are much less in evidence.

### **New models at the margins**

Where there are new models, they are often found at the margins of institutional life. At the edges of "official" church structures there are diverse gatherings and communities of women who persistently work to transform inherited patterns of privilege and domination. Typically assemblies of women are neither

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*Both lay and ordained women leaders still have a long way to go in bringing about meaningful change.*

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well-funded nor encouraged overtly by establishment leaders. For example, the international meeting of women at the Anglican Encounter, sponsored by my denomination in Salvador, Brazil, was largely a grassroots movement among church women. For women worldwide, the powerful presence of women's leadership emanating from the United Nations' Fourth World Conference in Beijing provided another model of women's leadership linked across different cultures and religions. The slogan at Beijing — "Women's Rights are Human Rights" — is particularly poignant in a world in which poverty and brutality, according to a recent United Nations' survey, increasingly define the lives of women and children. In such large, public, international gatherings, increasingly powerful groups of women seek to name and leverage change on behalf of countless others.

Closer to home there are models and groups at work to extend women's leadership, health and creativity. One of the oldest models of women's leadership,

drawn from and still evident in matriarchal tribal societies, is finding renewed appreciation today as expressed in ceremonies for "wise women" or "crones" whose leadership and influence increase with age and experience. Skilled leadership is also advanced at the grassroots by leadership training events, such as Women of Vision, sponsored by an official Episcopal Church women's group.

There are also groups who choose to support women's leadership without giving any more energy to official institutional agendas. I have in mind Greenfire, an intentional multi-cultural feminist community in Maine. Greenfire offers individuals and churches a creative opportunity to join (as one of the founders, Judith Carpenter, describes it) "a contemplative space in a circle to speak/listen at the deepest levels and thus be changed at those levels." Learning and healing together is a part of Greenfire's intentional path to meaningful change. Similar settings and communities such as Wisdom House — established later in her ministry by one of the eleven Philadelphia Episcopal ordinands, Alla Renee Bozarth, in Oregon — seek to guide women and men toward spiritual health and transformation. These and other communities offer support to women serving in transitional leadership contexts by providing respite and relief for those of us working amid more hierarchical church structures.

Are we headed toward more promising days, times when we can expect the full empowerment of women and other leaders in the church? I hope so. The current situation is at best mixed, promising and transitional. Such liminal times call for boldness and not for timidity. Shedding old fragile slippers, breaking through glass ceilings, and proclaiming new extra-large visions of leadership are all part of the journey ahead. **TW**



# Challenging corporate mission

by Carol Cole Flanagan

To reorder the national church requires vision — and lots of agreement about the purpose of the Episcopal Church in the U.S. (ECUSA). But that is precisely what is absent from a report and set of proposals aimed at restructuring the church that will be considered by the church's General Convention meeting in Philadelphia this July. Prepared by the Standing Commission on Structure, the report does, however, identify "a basic set of guiding General Principles" upon which its recommendations are based, although no concrete, objective data are offered to support them (the commission apparently ignored the church's most recent self-study, namely the 1993 report of the Partners in Mission II Consultation in which representatives from other denominations and provinces in the Anglican Communion offered their observations about the state of our church and issues that need addressing). These principles are:

#1. This Church is a national church participating fully in the Anglican Communion.

#2. This Church is one diverse community of Christ's reconciling ministry in the world.

#3. The Church will commit to the dioceses and provinces only that mission and ministry which cannot be accomplished effectively by parishes and congregations.

#4. This Church will commit to national structures only that mission and ministry which cannot be accomplished effectively

by dioceses and provinces.

#5. The form of this Church will follow function and the structure of this Church will follow ministry and mission.

#6. This Church must be structured at all levels so that structures do not inhibit deliberate change."

Luckily the General Convention will not be voting on these principles. The deputies and bishops could easily spend an entire convention debating what it means to be a "national" church alone. Those who wish to see increasing decentralization will be pleased to find the word "only" in #3 and #4, while those who do not will welcome the word "effectively." The concept that "form follows function" arises from the field of architecture, rather than ecclesiology (#5). Is its application to the church useful? If structure follows mission and ministry, can the reverse also be true? Can structure be used to inaugurate new ministry? To advance mission? Although not adequate as standards of evaluation, these may evoke some fruitful thought and discussion.

## Role of General Convention

Proposals in the report concerning the role of General Convention are based on the commission's sense that convention should "debate major issues of concern to the Church," and legislate on "only those of major policy concern." The question is, who will determine what is major and what is tangential? It goes without saying that what is major in the minds of some is tangential in the minds of others. Some remember a time when women, who were not eligible to serve as deputies, thought the admission of women was a major issue, while the majority of the men, who were seated, did not.

The commission is content to leave such questions to the "regular legislative process." Given the changes they propose to make to that process, however, we should proceed with caution. For example, the commission proposes to reduce the

number of resolutions by requiring that all resolutions be proposed by one deputy and endorsed by no fewer than two others. Individual deputies would be restricted to proposing or endorsing no more than three resolutions. There are a number of difficulties with this proposal, but the chief is that, while it may improve the quality of the resolutions proposed, it limits access to the process. If the regular legislative process will determine what is "major" and worthy of the convention's attention and what is not, the more open the process, the better.

## Program or mission?

Among the more controversial recommendations in the commission's report is the proposed elimination or consolidation of what it calls "Programmatic Standing and Joint Commissions." The report proposes a "reduced and contracted national program in favor of expanded parochial, diocesan and provincial programs." The difficulty is that what is "program" in the minds of some is "mission" in the minds of others.

Let me offer an illustration. Having served for the past six years on the Standing Commission on Health, I am acutely conscious of the dramatic changes in health care during that time, and its increasing impact on our people, especially the most vulnerable. The old social contract has changed, and the pastoral, theological and ethical implications for patients, practitioners, and our church and society are considerable. Following the example of Jesus, the church has been engaged in healing throughout all of its history. We now need to be looking at the role of the church anew. Is this program? Our federal government has eliminated funding for maternal and child health and Aid for Dependent Children. If these neediest are to be served, churches will need to develop strong networks and services. Training and leadership may help. However, if we plan a conference to train people, and to develop such a network, is that program or mission?

In addition, under the structure commission's proposed consolidation

Episcopal priest **Carol Cole Flanagan** lives in Ellicott City, Md.



plan, the work of a body like the Standing Commission on Health (other commissions slated for termination include those on the Church in Small Communities, Health, Human Affairs, the Church in Metropolitan Areas, Peace with Justice, and Evangelism) would be subsumed under one of three new commissions. Is this in the cause of efficiency or will it gut the church's corporate mission? Indeed, with the drastic reductions in national staff that have occurred over the past decade, our corporate capacity for mission and program has already been severely curtailed. In spite of much rhetoric, there is no evidence that congregations, dioceses or provinces have the capacity and resources to fill this void, even where they have the will. At the very least, we need to ask the bodies targeted for elimination or consolidation what the effect on our corporate mission and ministry will be. Since these recommendations are not based on hard data, it would also seem prudent to undertake a needs assessment.

Another problematic area in the report is in the area of worship. The commission recommends a single Standing Commission on Common Worship, but absent from the report are proposals concerning the role of doctrine and the role of the Custodian of the Book of Common Prayer. The only provision we have for addressing matters of doctrine is

through the unofficial theology committee of the House of Bishops. This is not adequate. The establishment of a body on worship and doctrine would make the relationship between the two more visible and intentional, and allow for the appointment of our best theologians from all orders. Today, much of the actual work of a Custodian of the Book of Common Prayer is done by an Episcopal Church

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*The concept that "form follows function" arises from the field of architecture. Is its application to the church useful?*

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Center staff member, and probably should be. This is not an honorary position or a lifetime appointment.

#### **Of CEO's and Chief Pastors**

There is merit in the report's recommendation that an executive director be appointed to serve as the chief operating and administrative officer of the Executive Council, with accountability to the chair of Executive Council, an office held by the Presiding Bishop. However, the various references to the Presiding Bishop as "Chief Pastor to the bishops of this Church and their families" are potentially misleading. The Presiding

Bishop is the chief pastor of "the Church." In certain circumstances, a Presiding Bishop who serves as a bishop's primary pastor would be abdicating his or her duties to the church at large.

There are also a number of proposals in the commission's lengthy report which seem simple and sensible. For example, the proposal that a member of standing commission can be dismissed if absent from two meetings "unless excused by the Commission for good cause," is a useful mechanism. Likewise, a proposal that the chair of a commission be jointly appointed by the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies is a substantial improvement over the current provision, which makes the most senior bishop appointed responsible for convening the first meeting at which the Chair is elected. The report also recommends greater continuity between the legislative committees of General Convention and the interim bodies, which seems a good one principle to follow.

The Standing Commission on Structure has given us much food for thought. If restructuring is to be more than an exercise in reactive deconstructionism, however, much work remains to be done. Those who view this report as "The Contract on the Episcopal Church" will be pressing us to safeguard the mission of the church, and I agree. Let's not cripple our mission for the sake of a new structure. Let's tailor our structure to fit our mission.

## **Taking the pulse of the church in Texas**

by Muffie Moroney

It is ironic that much recent mischief over sexuality has originated in Texas' several Episcopal dioceses, including a campaign to withhold money from the national church and the presentment brought against Bishop Walter Righter for ordaining a gay man in a committed relationship. Why ironic? If the annual council (convention) of the Diocese of Texas accurately indicates the state of the church's health in this part of the Seventh Province, the institutional patient is moribund indeed.

How incongruous that such an unhealthy sector of the church can cause such tumult. The agenda and outcomes of the gathering of some 1,000 delegates and observers that filled an Austin convention center in February surely will be replayed in some form at General Convention in Philadelphia this July.

#### **Hostile territory for women, gays**

The council passed a new diocesan canon on "moral discipline" by a vote of 89 to 79 in the clergy order, 261 to 175 in the lay

order. It reads, "All members of the clergy, having subscribed to the Declaration required by Article VIII of the Constitution of the Episcopal Church [affirming the authority of Scripture and the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church] shall be under the obligation to model in their own lives the received teaching of the Church that all members are to abstain from sexual relations outside Holy Matrimony [the physical, spiritual, and lifelong union between a man and a woman]." Based on an Episcopal Synod of America model, the language of this canon has been introduced in numerous dioceses around the church in the wake

of the dismissal of "heresy" charges against Bishop Righter. Texas' diocesan bishop, Claude Payne, could not say how he expected to enforce the new canon.

Several proposals sympathetic to the status of women and gays were overwhelmingly defeated. These included non-discrimination amendments to the diocesan canons based on national canons that govern rights, status, an equal place in the life of the church, and access to the ordination process (I.17.5, III.4.1); and a resolution addressing problems with the title "Father" for male clergy and proposing forms of address for clergy that both recognize parity between men and women and also promote mature, mutually responsible relationships between clergy and laity.

Other aspects of the meeting only underscored its sexist/heterosexist flavor. For instance, the diocese's highly touted advertising campaign aimed at tripling the current membership in 10 years into a "community of miraculous expectation," features several famous male Episcopalians (e.g., Walter Cronkite and General Colin Powell) - but no females. When asked about that omission, the reply was that only Barbara Bush had been approached, and she had turned out to be a Presbyterian! Presumably Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and U.S. Senator Sandra Day O'Connor (to name a few) just didn't measure up.

Finally, the opening eucharist featured seven male bishops and one female priest as worship leaders. Only the men were assigned places at the altar, so it was clear that asking this woman to participate was merely an afterthought. A front page photograph of the bishops who participated in this service appeared in

the diocesan newspaper. The caption, "Starting Lineup," speaks volumes.

### Rancor and win-lose fervor

Throughout the council, the generally accepted adversarial model of conducting business, based on votes in which some win and others inevitably lose, case an unpleasant pall. Coupled with rancorous

debate, the win-lose model worked to undermine any possibility of building a sense of community. During consideration of the equal rights legislation, for example, a delegate opposed to homosexual rights was allowed to freely impugn the character of gay men and lesbians when

using inflammatory language he charged that adoption of the proposal would force parishes in the diocese to accept as church school teachers, youth group leaders, and priests, individuals who engaged in acts of necrophilia, bestiality, and pederasty.

All efforts to introduce compromise legislation were ruled out of order. In a particularly callous exercise of power, the

election to the Standing Committee of Philip Masquelette, an esteemed layman known to be an independent thinker, was later summarily ruled invalid. A person few people knew was then elected instead.

### Institutional amnesia and denial

An insightful observer noted that the Diocese of Texas no longer has an institutional memory of how to disagree in a civil fashion and remain in dialogue. As one prominent conservative priest wrote me in a letter rejecting a proposal for ways to bring opposing factions together, two churches co-exist in this diocese, and he expected his to win.

Bishop Payne's vision of this diocese as "one church" growing threefold in numbers by the year 2005 is flatly unattainable, short of a miracle. The leadership is in denial over the reality of deepening polarization, making no efforts to encourage bridges between the factions. We are a far cry from "one church," and denial of this fact only reinforces the impression that full membership status depends not on baptism, but rather on one's sex, sexual orientation, and social status. Rancorous disunity does not promote growth, especially when so many both within the outside the institution are made to feel unwelcome.

Muffie Moroney is a Houston lawyer and member of the Vital Signs advisory group.

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*The Diocese of Texas no longer has an institutional memory of how to disagree in a civil fashion and remain in dialogue. One prominent conservative priest says two churches co-exist here, and he expects his to win.*

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## Witness' dinner to benefit the Advocate

The Witness' General Convention dinner on July 18 will benefit Philadelphia's Church of the Advocate. We alert readers now, because we would be delighted for subscribers as well as Deputies and Bishops to join us.

The historic church, which celebrates its centennial this year, has a long history of advocacy regarding race, gender and economic justice issues (about which there is more to say

in upcoming pre-convention issues). It is an honor to be able to make a contribution to the survival of this gorgeous and elaborate structure which is currently in danger of literally falling down!

The dinner will also be a wonderful chance for Witness supporters and their friends to share their common vision for a church committed to peace and justice.



# Pursuing the art of leadership

by Berit M. Lakey

Finding effective leadership in this late 20th-century world of global communication, swift technological change, and information overload is a tricky business. Organizations are searching for structures and processes that will help them keep up while maintaining a clear sense of purpose. The church is no exception.

Many books have been written about effective leadership for today's world. I want to introduce three that I have found particularly insightful in my work as an organizational development consultant to churches. The authors are no-nonsense people who function both in the practical world and in the world of ideas — and who also appreciate the spiritual dimension of any organized human enterprise. Even though two of them are behavioral scientists, it is significant that the word “art” is found in the titles of all three books. They all recognize a dimension of leadership that goes beyond having necessary skills or natural charisma: an emotional and intellectual openness that allows one to listen perceptively to a variety of voices in order to develop a deeper understanding of issues and creative strategies for moving forward.

Of the three authors, Peter Vaill most clearly presents the leadership implications of a turbulent environment. His book, *Managing as a Performing Art: New Ideas for a World of Chaotic Change* (Doubleday, 1989) uses “white water” as the metaphor to describe the environment in which most organizations now function, and art forms like jazz and street

theater as metaphors for organizational relationships best suited to a chaotic environment. All organizational decisions are based in values, Vaill says, and “leadership is the articulation of new values and the energetic expression of them to those whose actions are affected by them.”

The book in my library with the most underlinings and scribbles in the margin is Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (Doubleday Currency, 1990). It presents several “disciplines”

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## *Vaill uses jazz and street theater as metaphors for organizational relationships.*

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necessary for creative organizational responses to an uncertain environment: mental models (“deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations or ...images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action”), personal mastery (“the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience”), building shared vision (gathering “people together around a common identity and sense of destiny”) and team learning (until people working together learn something together as a group, not just as individuals, they will not function as a team).

Senge's fifth discipline is systems thinking, “the discipline that integrates the disciplines, fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice,” the realization that there is a two-way relationship between cause and effect, that we are both influenced by and influencing our reality, including our organizational structures. Basic to systems think-

ing is the perspective that “there is no outside” and that solutions to problems may be found in interactions beyond a system's boundaries. Leaders of “learning organizations” learn from each other and from their members and do not expect personally to have all the answers.

Max DePree's *Leadership is an Art* (Jossey-Bass, 1989) is an inspiring book — short, wise, and simple, not at all what I would have expected from a corporate executive (stereotypes die hard!). He describes leadership as “something to be learned over time” and “more a weaving of relationships than an amassing of information.” The book is a personal statement about the importance of developing congruence between personal and organizational values, and a rebuttal of the false choice between “the bottom line” on the one hand and people-centered organizational policies, structures, and actions on the other. For DePree “the art of leadership lies in polishing, liberating, and enabling” the variety of gifts people bring to their organizations by fostering participation and building relationships of trust while ensuring organizational accountability and effectiveness.

While these three books do not provide blueprints for how organizations should be structured at times of rapid change, they describe real-world experience and an understanding of the need for paradigm change. Most importantly for those of us in the church, they call for leaders who are able to “roll with the punches” without compromising the values by which they want their organizations to live.

**TW**

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**Berit M. Lakey** is an organizational development consultant to non-profit and church organizations working in the Washington, D.C. area.

What Bishop Jacques Gaillot likes best about his diocese, Partenia, is that it doesn't exist.

"That's precisely what's interesting," the Roman Catholic bishop explained, through a French interpreter, at the Call to Action gathering in Detroit last November. "Everybody can belong to it."

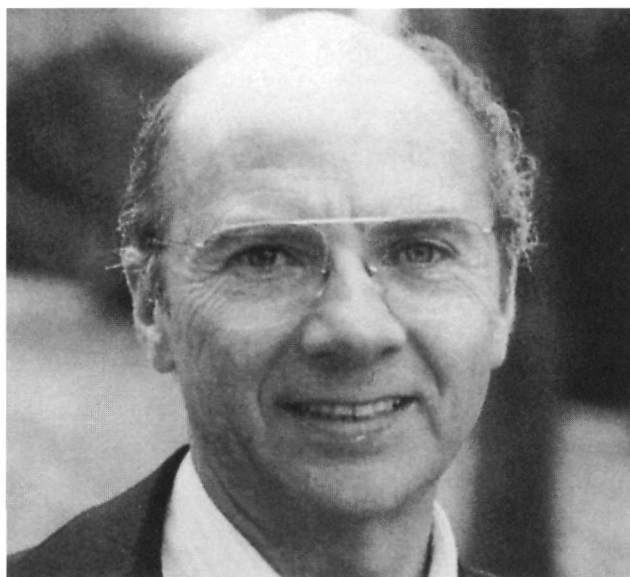
Gaillot's summary removal as Bishop of Évreux, France by the Vatican in January, 1995, and his assignment to Partenia — an extinct "titular" diocese in the Sahara desert — has borne fruit that is likely the opposite of its official intent. Far from silencing Gaillot — whose advocacy for the marginalized and relaxed approach to church protocol led to charges of disunity — the disciplinary action thrust him into the international spotlight. By popular acclaim, Gaillot has become bishop to Catholics around the world who hunger for a new kind of church leadership.

In the weeks following Gaillot's removal, protest marches were held at cathedrals across France and letters of support poured in from all over the world. His farewell mass in Évreux, near Paris, was attended by more than 15,000 people.

Less than a month later, the bishop launched a web site for the Diocese of Partenia (<http://www.partenia.org>) which was visited by 165,000 people in its first three weeks on the Internet.

Gaillot reflects on his life and the events surrounding his removal in a new book, *Voice from the Desert: A Bishop's*

*By liberating me  
against my  
wishes, Rome  
offers me more  
than I dared to  
hope for.*



Jacques Gaillot

## A virtual bishop by Marianne Arbogast

*Cry for a New Church*, released in English by Crossroad in 1996.

He notes that the Vatican directive is the second time he has been sent to Partenia.

"Almost 40 years ago now, I was ordered to go there, in the same authoritarian way," he writes. "I was not yet 22 years old, and they ordered me to take up arms — which, needless to say, seemed to me incompatible with my religious vocation — in order to defend the French presence in Algeria. I had to pass back and forth many times over the land of Partenia."

As a conscientious objector, Gaillot was assigned to unarmed service, but his experience in a war zone confirmed his commitment to nonviolent struggle. He also relates that it was "there, around Partenia, that I experienced the shift from a received faith to an interiorized faith."

After his ordination, Gaillot served as

a seminary professor and director, and as a diocesan vicar-general, before his consecration as Bishop of Évreux in 1982.

Viewing Jesus as one who "spent his life awakening our freedoms," Gaillot sought as bishop "to make sure that ordinary people got a hearing, to awaken consciences, to reveal individuals to themselves and others."

Leadership blossomed among lay and ordained members of the diocese. The diocesan synod affirmed "an option for the poor and the outcast, both in France and in the third world," and committed itself to live this option in its financial decisions, its ministries, its representatives and the responsibilities entrusted to lay people.

Not everyone appreciated the direction things were taking in Évreux. Gaillot was accused of being a maverick, away from his diocese too frequently and negligent in observing the required courtesies.

*Witnesses,  
the quick and the dead*

Marianne Arbogast is assistant editor of *The Witness*.

sies on other bishops' turf. His frequent media appearances also drew criticism.

He spoke out on Palestine and met with Arafat, questioned the exclusion of divorced and remarried Catholics, criticized a bishops' statement which legitimized nuclear weapons and embarrassed government officials with a scathing critique of anti-immigrant policies. In *Gai Pied*, a publication which dealt with gay and lesbian issues, he related his meeting with a gay couple "to say a prayer, a sign of welcome and understanding."

To Gaillot, it seemed necessary to meet the world on its own terms.

"If a bishop wants to communicate, to participate in society's debates, he cannot observe delays that were appropriate in the last century," he writes. "When journalists stick a microphone under your nose and cameras are trained on you, should you, if you think you would be performing a useful service by expressing yourself, nevertheless lower the curtain and wait for a painfully drawn up common statement, which won't be issued by the appropriate commission for several weeks?"

Gaillot's openness to modern communications processes precipitated—at least in part—the events that led to his becoming the world's first "virtual bishop." Through the Internet, his perspective and concerns now reach a worldwide audience. A recent browse through Partenia's web site brought up a letter from Gaillot on African refugees and an appeal to support Mumia Abu-Jamal, the radical African-American journalist on death row in Pennsylvania. *Call to Action News* reports that Gaillot "keeps five helpers busy fielding messages and responding pastorally to e-mail callers."

Though the French bishops voted to continue Gaillot's salary and have offered him a prison or hospital chaplaincy, he has opted to focus on his role as Bishop of Partenia.

"By liberating me against my wishes, Rome offers me more than I dared to hope for, much more than a diocese, much more than a bishopric," he writes in *Voice from the Desert*. "It offers me Partenia—to me, who previously had been asked to jog only between the rue Saint-Louis and the cathedral, who was accused of seeing, listening and speaking far beyond my authorized limits ... Partenia is a phantom that goes through walls, passes over many lands, and crosses oceans. It cuts through protocol, intolerance and prejudice. As vast as the world, Partenia does not begin or end anywhere."

Upon leaving the bishop's residence, Gaillot moved in with a group of homeless squatters who had taken over an abandoned apartment complex at Rue Dragon in Paris. But, taking full advantage of his newfound freedom, he is away from home more than ever. He has sailed with a Greenpeace ship obstructing nuclear testing and occupied a Paris church with North African immigrants displaced by new French legislation.

While declining to take a leadership role in the protests surrounding his removal, Gaillot is delighted that so many have found the courage to demand a voice in their church.

"They no longer wish to be taken for children to whom one would say, 'You have made a mistake; don't try to understand, just obey,'" he writes in *Voice from the Desert*.

We live in a society that creates outcasts, Gaillot declared at last fall's Call to Action gathering. Eyes twinkling, he concluded a description of the growing homeless population on the streets of Paris: "This can happen to people who have college degrees, people who are in the professions ... It could even happen to a bishop!"

"We should be a church of the outcasts and not a church which excludes or makes outcasts," Gaillot said. **TW**

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