

# VESTRY PAPERS

To Encourage and Guide Those Called by God to Lead Episcopal Congregations



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FOUNDATION

## Fit to Go the Distance

by William G. Andersen, Jr.

Don't read this piece if you are looking for some McGod off the shelf, for religious leadership in uncertain times is not about a quick fix. Call a consultant or read one of the thousands of books with "leadership" in the title for that kind of help.

A response to clergy and lay leaders about leadership in uncertain times is a two-handed answer — on the one hand, it is easy — on the other, it is hard. It is easy because what you need is already at hand. It is hard because it may take another way of looking at things to know how to uncover and use them.

One of the most valued things I learned from a former rector/mentor was how to apply practical theology to parish decision making. And in fact, that is a distinction in what is religious about religious leadership. We

consciously or unconsciously draw on our Christian heritage, our journey experience, and how, at the moment, we hear God's call.

*What does that mean for leadership in uncertain times?* Certainly, on a macro scale, what has happened in the church post-General Convention has added a measure of uncertainty or unease to the church's life. But at the congregational level, we experience uncertainty at different times as well — for example, when there is a significant shift in leadership during a transition, or when the congregation is conflicted over a challenging issue. (In that regard a Duke study, "Pulpit and Pew," found that the top three causes of conflict in congregational life did not include issues of sexuality, but rather, leadership style, program emphasis and finances.)

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## Vestries: Catalysts for Healing

by Titus Presler

"What do you think is going to happen?" is a question I hear often in discussions of the aftermath of the sexuality decisions of the 2003 General Convention. "I don't know," is the most frequent and the most honest answer. So this is an uncertain time.

All times are uncertain in that we cannot know the future. Strategic planning in congregations, though, is based on a discernment of what's happening in the town or city, what trajectories are developing, and how God might be calling the congregation to respond in mission.

Conflict within the church is what makes this time especially uncertain. The sexuality issue has provoked conflicts in congrega-

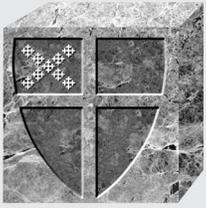
tions, dioceses, the Episcopal Church as a whole, and the Anglican Communion. This conflict blurs the identity of the "we" when you want to say, "We are called to participate in God's mission in the world." A congregation might have been planning an innovative outreach, but conflicted feelings about the Episcopal Church's direction have sapped the commitment of key people in the initiative.

Conflict evokes fear. We fear being hurt and hurting others. We fear encounters becoming volatile. We fear taking initiative and then being left out on a limb. Ultimately, fear undermines our commitment to engaging with one another. Fear produces isolation.

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*Vestries are often on the front lines when things get tough — whether it be making budget cuts, responding to national events, or figuring out the best way to deal with community hardships. What does leadership — authentic, Spirit-filled leadership — call for in such times? In this issue, six church leaders explore that question from spiritual, theological, practical, and pastoral angles.*

*This Issue:  
Leadership for  
Uncertain Times*



# Vestries: Catalysts for Healing

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## **Reducing fear, building trust**

What is the role of vestry members in the uncertainty of this conflicted time?

A leader is a person whose presence and vision catalyze commitment and action in others. In personal presence, the leader stays engaged and makes a special effort to avoid isolation. In fearful times especially, leaders need to be conveners, gathering people specifically to talk with one another across the divides of theological differences.

In this convening role, vestry members can take their cue from the church's bishops, who in the half-year since convention, have spent much time and energy gathering the people of their dioceses for conversation with one another. This ministry has been crucial in helping the church hold together as well as it has. Many congregations have undertaken similar conversations, and it is important that vestries and clergy continue that practice as events continue to unfold. Wisely guided, conversation reduces fear, builds trust, and restores community.

## **Staying the mission course**

In vision, the leader stays the mission course. In the midst of fear and turmoil, the leader stays deeply and passionately engaged in the mission to which God is calling the community. Seekers off the street and church members alike want to be part of communities that are doing God's work beyond themselves — "out there in the world" — and they get discouraged when a congregation's energies are preoccupied with internal conflicts.

At the same time, vestry members need to embrace mission *through* the current conflict, not *instead of* the current conflict. People on all sides of this conflict have important mission concerns *in* the conflict. In fact, mission concern is what makes people as passionate as they are about their views. So this is a good time to return to your parish's mission statement. Talk as a vestry and as a congregation about how your mission relates to the conflict and how you can engage God's mission *through* the dynamics of the conflict.

## **The long view**

In presence and vision, leaders take the long view and the wide view. Taking the long view means realizing that the course of the church's current conflict will take some

time. No one can say how long, but certainly years, not months. Realize that, like your diocese and the general church, your congregation's evolution over this conflict will be long-term. So pace yourself. Avoid expending all your patience and energy over a few months. Plan to stay with the issue for several months, at least. Be creative about how the congregation moves forward with the issue in spirituality, community life, education, and mission outreach.

Taking the wide view right now means staying in touch with and learning from Episcopal and Anglican companions in other places. If people in your congregation are generally of one mind, work with your rector and vestry members talking with the clergy and vestry of a differently-minded congregation nearby. Take the opportunity to talk with visitors from other parts of the country.

Visitors from other parts of the Anglican Communion are especially helpful to engage, whether they're from Nigeria or Nicaragua, Canada or Cameroun. Recently a bishop from Malawi observed to me, "Colonialism had the effect of broadening our horizons, so that we in Africa had to think globally." Ironically, we within what is currently the sole global superpower can often be quite local in our perspective, and that applies to our church thinking as well as our geopolitics.

Missionaries from your diocese to other parts of the world can help you gain access to viewpoints around the communion, both from their own experience and through connecting you with fellow Anglicans. Trolling the worldwide web can help you make connections and sample other perspectives.

Such presence and vision in you as a vestry member will catalyze commitment and action in your congregation. The Catechism says our mission is to "restore all people to unity with God and each another in Christ." That's reconciliation. That's what God is up to in the world. That's your leadership task in this moment.

*Dean and president of the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas, where he teaches Mission and World Christianity, the Very Rev. Titus Presler, Th.D., served congregations full time for 19 years and has mission experience in Africa and Asia.*

*Mailed five times a year, Vestry Papers encourages, inspires, and guides vestry members as they share in the spiritual, financial, and programmatic leadership of their congregations. The winner of four national awards in 2003, Vestry Papers is published by Cornerstone, a ministry of the Episcopal Church Foundation. To subscribe, call (510) 644-9941.*

*Editor's note: Bill George, Episcopalian and former chairman and CEO of Medtronic — the world's leading medical technology company — is author of the current top-selling business book: Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value.*

## The Spirituality of Authentic Leaders

by Bill George

We are all pilgrims, together on a journey through life. On our journey we are searching for our unique way to make a difference in the world. For those of us who believe in God, that search becomes a spiritual journey, tapping into our deeper yearnings to “hear the call” for our lives and to heed that call.

Poet Pablo Neruda spoke to that call in one of his first poems:

*Something ignited in my soul, fever or  
unremembered wings,  
And I went my own way, deciphering that  
burning fire.*

That fire to decipher the call burns in each of us. But if we go sleepwalking through life, the fire gradually dies out and is eventually extinguished.

When we join with others in pursuing that call, we become fellow pilgrims. In that

sense, we are also called to help others and lead them on their journeys.

This is what authentic leaders do. They are true to themselves in pursuing the call as they hear it through their inner voice, yet they are bonded together with others on a similar path.

### Discerning our calling

When I was just a teenager, I was strongly influenced by the passage from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says, “Let your light so shine before people that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” I heard it saying to each of us, “We are born with gifts given us by our Creator. Develop those gifts and use them in

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## Avoiding the Quick Fix

by Peggy Treadwell

The greatest gift vestry members can give their churches is creative, positive challenge and support of their rector(s). Many rectors and churches are done in — particularly in times of uncertainty — by dependent, blaming, reactive parishioners, including vestry members who fail to recognize the importance of their leadership position; they seek quick fixes rather than ask the questions that support their rector's vision and the church's mission. **Never underestimate the power of one true leader, a non-anxious presence in the face of the storm,** especially in these times of high anxiety fueled by terrorism, war, anxious politicians and the media.

### The law of triangles

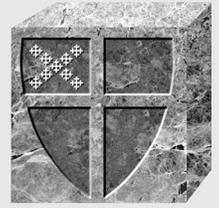
A new rector accepted the call to a church she later described as “dysfunctional in familiar ways like my own family.” Her inherited senior warden, a fine leader throughout the interim period, began acting like he was the rector, taking over areas where she needed to lead, and talking about

her to the vestry and administrative staff rather than being direct with her. This paralleled her growing up experience with an alcoholic father who undermined her abilities and refused to let her grow up.

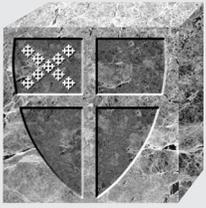
With coaching, she thought about her issues in both her church and family (the hot spot in one system can be illuminated by the other). I taught her the law of emotional triangles — when two people become uncomfortable with one another, they will use a third person to avoid the risk of direct connection. While this action may seem stabilizing, it in fact keeps the system stuck.

After a month of practice, the rector reported, “Nothing has changed in the situation at my church, but everything has changed because I'm thinking differently about it. I'm detriangling all over the place, asking for direct communication with me rather than through others. I'm going to hang in here for at least four years, keep my vision clear and rise

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*Leading by example:  
Shoe repair shop owner  
Bob Fischer of  
Wayzata, Minnesota,  
sleeps outside through  
rain and snow  
beginning in mid-  
November each year  
until the local food  
shelf has reached its  
fund raising goal. Over  
the past eight years,  
Bob has helped raise  
some \$3 million. He's  
usually in his tent for  
about a month and in  
Minnesota, it gets  
pretty chilly.*



# Avoiding the Quick Fix

*continued from page 3*

above the reactivity." That Sunday she preached a brilliant sermon about her dream for the church and vision for the parish.

## **Vision: Seeing systems differently**

Vision is a capacity to see the system differently. What does it take to develop this vision and leadership ability in oneself? In *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, my mentor, Rabbi Edwin H. Friedman, defines leadership by differentiation as the ability to take maximum responsibility for one's own being and destiny while staying connected with others in the system.

When church leaders — including vestry members by definition — practice thinking and acting on the following four characteristics of leadership by self differentiation, they tell me, "I now have a direction that makes life and work more interesting and fun!" Jesus' life is our best example of this model of leadership; see biblical references below.

## **Clarity about one's beliefs**

A leader must develop the ability to pull himself out of surrounding emotional tensions and think — a challenging task in itself. Recognizing that loneliness and isolation are inherent in their positions, leaders who stay the course often learn to love solitude. *Working at being well-defined oneself takes precedence over trying to understand another.* Practicing clarity on small issues energizes important experience when the larger decisions come along. (Mark 1:16-28, 1:35-39, 6:45-52)

## **Self definition in relationships**

Thoughtful clarity in the way we present our beliefs and ourselves moves people and organizations forward. Non-anxiously saying "I believe, think, perceive..." when others are demanding the togetherness position of "we" and being able to take a calm stand in an intense emotional system is a lifelong pursuit. Even so, no one ever achieves 100%.

Next vestry meeting, experiment with simply containing your reactivity to others (which includes the ability to avoid becoming polarized) by asking yourself, "How can I refrain until I can respond without reacting?" The habit of holy silence can be the best self definition. What would happen if everyone around the table practiced self regulation, honoring where one's own self ends and another begins? (Mark 1:40-44, Luke 2:11-52)

## **Preventing polarization**

The poet Rilke once defined love as the capacity of two solitudes to "protect and border and greet each other." That kind of love — knowing where I end and the other begins — is key to preventing polarization, mere gaining of distance, leaving, or cutting off to solve problems.

In my practice of family psychotherapy, I find that cutoffs from others in one's life prevent healing. Further, the tendency to distance and cut off gets passed to the next generation until cutting off becomes the major source of family or parish pathology.

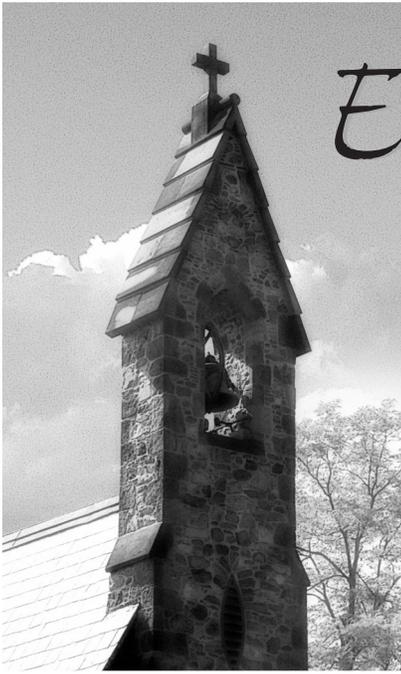
A bishop in one of my groups has begun to take the church genogram (like a family tree covering multi-generations) on his parish visits. He hopes to show how the processes of cutting off, joining, and self differentiation are deeply influenced by the way those processes were handled in previous generations, gaining more force as parish life evolves. He illustrates how the capacity of a leader to maintain himself or herself while staying in relationship to God and others is crucial to institutional health and is a balance that one always can improve. (Matthew 18:15-20, Mark 2:13-17, 14:22-26.)

## **Self regulation in the face of sabotage**

Leadership by self-differentiation always triggers reactivity. Fearful of change and seeking the comfort of togetherness, people resist new, innovative ideas often when leaders are being most visionary, and feel best about their work. In other words, a wise leader can never assume change until he or she has refrained from changing back to the former way of being to calm down the reactivity in the system. *Leadership in uncertain times works best when one takes the elongated view, thinking and acting as if he is in this for the long haul.* Most sabotage is mindless, but some is intentional like the betrayal of Jesus; the moment of truth comes when the leader stays on course. Jesus' ability to "keep on keeping on" despite sabotage led to His resurrection. (Mark 14:10-11, 43-51, 16:5-8, 12-20, 10:46-52, Luke 8:43-48.)

*The co-editor of A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix, family psychotherapist Margaret M. "Peggy" Treadwell, M.S.W., L.I.C.S.W., is the director of The Counseling Center at St. Columba's in Washington, D.C. She has been active in education and counseling for thirty years.*

*"Churches that are clear about their mission and purpose are more likely to be growing congregations. This relationship is consistent with all of the literature on church growth and vitality. Healthy churches know why they exist. They do not take their purpose of 'being the church' for granted and evolve into social clubs with a chapel and chaplain."  
—A Report on Episcopal Churches in the United States, C. Kirk Hadaway, 2002*



# Editor's Note

When we first began planning this issue, the events of General Convention 2003 were still fresh. Our intent was to give some tools to vestry members in how to be a leader in what we knew might be a tense time. But as the issue progressed, we were reminded that any number of issues affect ministry on the local level.

Whether it be the removal of a pew to fit a wheelchair, the calling of a new rector, or the ongoing debates about memorial gifts — one of our clergy colleagues was scolded recently for removing withered “memorial” bushes that blocked the church sign — uncertain

times, large and small, are not uncommon in the life of the church. And we know that from simply being Christians and looking at our history.

Such times will always be around us, but we need to learn ways of staying grounded so that when anxiety and tension rise, the vestry and rector can take the lead in responding faithfully.

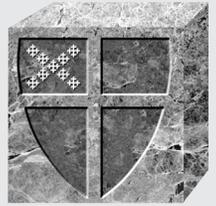


If you notice that this issue of *Vestry Papers* is larger than our normal six page edition, you're right. Every two years, we mail to each parish and mission in the Episcopal Church. This time, we've also included an update (see centerfold) on the work of the Episcopal Church Foundation, our sponsor and partner in ministry. *Vestry Papers* is published by Cornerstone, which serves as the leadership development arm of the Foundation.

And developing leaders for God's work in congregations is central to the future of the church. So take a minute, read about the work of the Foundation as you explore this issue, and know that we are all grateful for your work in God's vineyard.

If you're not on our regular mailing list, we invite you to order a *Vestry Papers* subscription by calling Cornerstone at (510) 644-9941 or visiting our website at [www.EpiscopalFoundation.org](http://www.EpiscopalFoundation.org)

— Lindsay Hardin Freeman



*“Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.”*

*Ephesians 4:15*

*Next issue:  
Planned Giving*

# The Episcopal Church Foundation

*“In response to the world that is being hurled into our hearts, we believe that God is calling us to equip leaders of unmistakable spiritual depth.”*

ECF Board of Directors, 2003

**Equipping leaders for the Episcopal Church:** it's what we've always done. Our core belief is that congregations are the mission frontier, whether they are located in Topeka, New York, or Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Every congregation is a seminary, and our objective is to help support those learning communities to enable leadership for mission.

Standing independently alongside the Episcopal Church since 1949, the Foundation is a place that helps provide energy for things to happen, not a factory floor to turn out widgets repeatedly for a static ministry.

You're probably familiar with one or more ministries of the Episcopal Church Foundation. Here's the whole picture:

## *Philanthropic Services*

*The Academy for Episcopal Philanthropy*  
*Gift Planning Services*  
*Investment Management Services*

## *Research*

*Zacchaeus/Emmaus/Search for Coherence*  
*Global Anglicanism Project*  
*Cornerstone*  
*Fresh Start*  
*Vestry Papers*  
*Mutual Ministry Review*  
*Vestry Resource Guides*

## *Education*

*The Graduate Fellowship Program*  
*The Fellows' Forum*  
*Strengthening Campus Ministry*  
*Improving Funding for Seminary Education*

We provide tools to equip leaders and suggest system realignments to meet changing conditions. Like you, we are devoted to building up the Body of Christ. We work hand in hand with national partners (see list) to undergird competent, compassionate and faithful ministry.

As a vestry member, an elected leader in your congregation, you may wonder:

**How can I be a leader for education?** What does it mean to support others — children, youth and adults — in their learning about God? What do I need to know about Christian formation? What are the best current resources?

**How can I help give financial leadership?** What does it mean to encourage others to give from their hearts? How do economic downturns affect stewardship drives? In times of national stress, how is local giving affected? How do annual, capital, and gift planning campaigns intersect?

**How can I help be a spiritual leader?** How can we best set a tone of prayer and faithful discernment as a vestry? How can our vestry encourage parishioners in their prayer lives? What do we offer new families looking for a spiritual home?

*Vestry Papers* explores the answers to many of these questions.

Behind *Vestry Papers*, however, is the Episcopal Church Foundation working toward answers on a national and international scale.

## **TOOLS FOR LEADERS**

Some of the resources we provide for congregations and the Episcopal Church as a whole:

### **Education**

- ✦ Identifying and supporting emerging scholars to become seminary faculty and leaders who sustain a lively intellectual life in the church.
- ✦ Nurturing the spiritual life of young children.
- ✦ Creating a stronger support base to identify and nurture young adult church leaders on college/university campuses.
- ✦ Broadening financial support for seminary education to open it to prospective younger and more diverse leaders.

### **Leaders for congregational vitality**

- ✦ Identifying elements through national research that contribute to the transformation of the church at the grassroots.
- ✦ Exploring ways that bishops are changing their leadership practices to better support clergy and congregations.
- ✦ Developing training components that help clergy and congregations get their new ministry off on the right footing.
- ✦ Identifying elements in church life that contribute to coherent religious leadership practice.

### Leaders for building financial resources

- ✦ Training diocesan and congregational leaders to conduct effective annual, capital, and planned giving programs to gain the resources for assuring lively future ministry.
- ✦ Helping generous Episcopalians support local churches and ministries, through bequests and life-income gifts.
- ✦ Providing professional investment advice, custodial and administrative services with church-friendly customer service and efficient economies of scale.

### The Search for Coherence

The Foundation has sponsored two major research initiatives in the past three years: *The Zacchaeus Project* and *Emmaus*. Between them, hundreds of conversations were held throughout the country to understand the driving forces and dynamics behind ministry on the local level today. The Foundation's latest study, *The Search for Coherence: Soundings on the State of Leadership Among Episcopalians*, draws from that research and explores how we understand ourselves and our congregations.

The findings? Episcopalians long for a focus on mission. They envision innovative patterns of evangelism and education; they want fresh attention to families, children and people in need. As they search for ways to address such issues, they seek leadership that will bring tangible hope that renews their unity and vitality as the Body of Christ.

Increasingly, an emphasis on spirituality rather than institutional identity influences the things Episcopalians do, the networks they build, the loyalties they embrace and the leadership they envision. Their focus is on the quality of community. We have found immense vitality in congregations of all sizes, locations, and theological orientation. However, a paradox of leadership also exists among Episcopalians: there are abundant initiatives and fresh energies for mission, but the connection between leadership ends and means shows uncertainty about how to identify goals and to find consensus on achieving them.

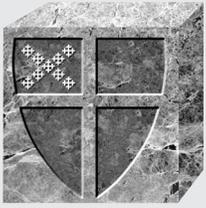
Much more information is contained in *The Search for Coherence*. If you would like a copy of the report, call the Episcopal Church Foundation at (800) 697-2858.



The Episcopal Church Foundation is directed by lay leaders from around the country. To learn more about the Foundation's ministry, visit our website at [www.EpiscopalFoundation.org](http://www.EpiscopalFoundation.org).

## Collaborating with the Foundation

*The Council of Deans*  
*The Institute for Religion and Civic Culture*  
*Cambridge University, The Faculty of Divinity*  
*The International Study Center*  
*Canterbury Cathedral*  
*The College for Bishops*  
*Global Anglican Partners*  
*North India*  
*Tanzania*  
*New Zealand/Polynesia*  
*Brazil*  
*The Church Pension Group*  
*The Office of the Presiding Bishop*  
*The Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury*  
*Individual Seminaries*  
*The Office of Pastoral Development*  
*State Street Global Advisors*  
*The Church Deployment Office*  
**CREDO**  
*The Episcopal Network for Stewardship*  
*The Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes*  
*The Office of Ministry Development*  
*The Luce Foundation*  
*The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine*  
*The Office of Congregational Development*  
*The Parish of Trinity Church, New York City*



We asked Loren Mead, former head of the Alban Institute, for his thoughts on leadership in uncertain times. When he responded with the following essay, we almost felt like pulling up chairs by a fire, cups of cocoa in hand.

## Wisdom Gathered, Lessons Learned

by Loren Mead

There ARE crises that come along that you have to meet. Most of us fumble our way through and manage not to sink the boat while we're doing it. Trust that in most cases, even the most terrible crisis will look different in a month, and may be forgotten in a year. Take a deep breath. Do the best you can. Here are suggestions of things I've found helpful:

✦ **Work as a vestry/clergy team on building the team.** Work on simple skills — how to treat each other decently in the middle of tensions; how to listen to what other people are saying — both their words and the emotions behind the words. Avoid getting impatient and pushing for decisions before others are comfortable with what's up. Look out for “ganging up” by

one “side” of an argument against the others. Be sure you have clear rules about how you make decisions. Make sure that committees and working groups include people who don't agree with each other. Don't let somebody's panic infect the whole vestry. Don't let the loud voices push actions or decisions prematurely.

✦ **Keep your eye on what members of the congregation really care about.** Keep the roof on the place. Be sure the pastor is freed up to do the pastoring people need, seeing that visitors are received hospitably, and looking out for people who society neglects (the poor and homeless).

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*Based on lessons learned at Ground Zero in 2001, author Courtney Cowart explores reasons why Christian leaders often encounter suffering and loss as part of their own ministry.*

## SACRIFICIAL SERVICE Leaders Bear the Burdens

by Courtney Cowart

In May 2002 I packed my bags in Manhattan for the West Coast in order to lead a retreat for clergy of the Diocese of Northern California. The theme for the weekend was 9-11, and the tumultuous but life-changing eight months since that stunning day for many, like myself, whose lives had been connected to Ground Zero and Trinity Church's St. Paul's Chapel.

In New York the trees in St. Paul's churchyard were beginning to show signs of new life, but the scars of trauma were not proving so quickly or easily healed. The topic of suffering was certainly top of mind.

Andre Delbecq, an expert on the spirituality of leadership, and former dean of the Leavey School of Business at Santa Clara University had been chosen to respond to our presentations. And what he honed in on was the topic of suffering, and the vital need for an understanding of suffering by those who lead.

According to Delbecq, this is the role of the leader: *not to deal with the solvable problems, but with the knotty complex ones that are not immediately or easily resolvable.* Paradoxically, leaders are called to be the bearers of burdens: of bad news, of brokenness, our powerlessness, and the toxic aspects of life in community — just to name a few. Leadership is by its very nature self-sacrificing. It is impossible to be a leader, a true leader, without experiencing many types of sacrificial suffering in service to the organization and the people one is leading.

Strangely, however, Delbecq points out, we live with a widely accepted fallacy in our culture that says when one has “arrived” as a leader, suffering ceases, and instead one will enter into an era of life full of success and triumph. This myth does us a great disservice, not least to the leader him or herself.

*continued on page 12*

*“A great storm of wind  
arose, and the waves  
beat into the boat,  
so that the boat was  
already filling. But  
Jesus was in the stern,  
asleep on the cushion.  
The disciples woke him  
and said, ‘Teacher,  
do you not care if we  
perish?’ And he awoke  
and rebuked the wind,  
and there was a great  
calm. He said to them,  
‘Why are you afraid?  
Have you no faith?’”  
Mark 4:37-40*

# Spirituality of Authentic Leaders

*continued from page 3*

such a way that they honor your Creator, and that other people will honor Him as well, as they see your deeds.”

But how do we discern our calling? What is our purpose in the short span of time that we dwell on this earth? And how do we know when we are following God’s call or just pursuing our own ego needs and our self-aggrandizement?

The hardest part of all for me is discerning every day whether I am pursuing God’s call or my own ego needs. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus admonishes us, “No one can serve two masters..You cannot serve God and money.” In recent years too many of our leaders have ignored or abandoned their calling, to pursue the God of money. In doing so, they have abandoned their fellow pilgrims.

The line between using our gifts to honor our Creator and advancing our own egos is a very thin one. I have learned this repeatedly throughout my lifetime. No one can serve two masters.

## **True North**

We are all *called* to be leaders, each of us in our own way. We are the servants of the people we lead, and stewards of the assets of the organizations we are chosen to lead, most important of which are the human assets.

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***Authentic leaders lead with their hearts, with a sense of compassion and passion for those they serve.***

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In becoming leaders, we are called to be the *authentic* person that God created — to be our own person, true to our unique gifts and to our values. Authentic leaders lead with their hearts, with a sense of compassion and passion for those they serve. They establish deep relationships over many years that are characterized by connectedness.

Leadership is not about image, it is not about charisma, and it is not about style.

It is about having a clear sense of purpose for your leadership, based on your calling as you discern it, and practicing your values every day, especially when no one else is looking. To stay true to those values, we must know the “true north” of our moral compass. It is all too easy to rationalize the small steps that give us immediate gratification, yet lead us away from our true north.

This is how so many corporate leaders got in trouble. They didn’t start out to do bad things. But little by little, bit by bit, they made marginal decisions that benefited them personally in the short run — winning them

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***The line between using our gifts to honor our Creator and advancing our own egos is a very thin one.***

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praise from their peers and outside observers — yet taking them farther and farther away from their true north. And no one had the courage to tell them they were on the wrong course.

Then one day they realized they were in deep trouble and couldn’t hide it any longer. That’s when the real trouble began: the gross errors, the defensiveness, the cover-ups, and ultimately, the destruction of the very enterprise they were responsible for leading.

## **Staying centered**

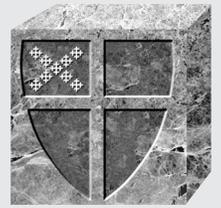
To avoid these temptations we need to develop practices and relationships to help us stay centered. In addition to regular prayer, I practice meditation twenty minutes twice a day and use exercise like jogging to clear my mind and body of distractions.

But it is my relationships that help me the most in staying centered. In addition to my family, I have the benefit of a men’s group where we talk about our lives, our struggles, our dreams, and we pray together.

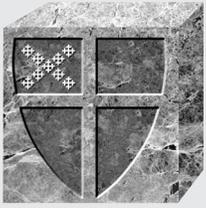
And my wife Penny and I have been part of a marvelous couples’ group over the years who come together monthly in a spirit of sharing our beliefs and our lives. Having these groups in our lives is one of our greatest blessings — a gift that helps us stay centered.

Envision yourself at the end of your days with your granddaughter on your knee. Hopefully you will be able to say: “I did my best to use the gifts I received from God to help others...I let my light shine.”

*Bill George is teaching at Harvard Business School, having taught previously at Yale and IMD International in Lausanne, Switzerland. He sees his current calling as developing the next generation of authentic leaders through mentoring, teaching and writing.*



*Would this work for Episcopalians? Some Presbyterian friends have found an effective way of raising funds. They set up plastic pink flamingos in the yards of church members. When a small fee is paid, the flamingos are moved on to the next family on the list. Hmmm...*



# Fit to Go the Distance

*continued from page 1*

## **Health, wholeness and holiness**

So in an uncertain time, whether an unsettling church wide issue, a poor economy that generates scarcity thinking, or program conflict, what is a vestry leader or warden to do? A foundational start is to remember that what we seek for clergy and congregational life is health, wholeness and holiness. Years of research, fact finding and practice by the Foundation have proved the need for those qualities to sustain congregational vitality.

How, then, do we emulate those qualities in our leadership — how are we healthy, whole and holy leaders? Jim Fenhagen, in his book *Invitation to Holiness*, gives us a clue about what it means to be that kind of religious leader. “Wholeness,” he says, is to be “...in tune with the spirit of God who moves within me.” Wholeness is the “seed bed for holiness.” Holiness is leaning towards God.

Jim adds “...it is the way we perceive reality and the way we act on those perceptions.” I call it our sense of “Godness.” He adds that “conversion and transformation” are also ingredients in the mix. For those like me who are feeling a bit intimidated by that job description, think about the definition of the church “as a group of people who are slowly getting the idea.” It fits.

Let me use as an example what the Foundation heard in the aftermath of General Convention’s “consent” decision. As we compiled all the reports from our contacts, it was clear that the majority of people in congregations did not have an ideological stance about the decision. What they were feeling was bewilderment about the momentousness of the decision’s impact. Many felt that “it crept up on us” without warning and without a plan for dealing with how to understand it. *How did this happen? What does it mean? Who will help us figure it out?*

## **Be proactive, neutral, and non-anxious**

In a situation where there is unease, or tension is building, it is time to quietly work at your information gathering activities. Be proactive, neutral and a non-anxious presence. And remember that as chief

listeners, you are not required to be the chief on the spot fixers! Rather, it is time to mine coffee hours and other occasions to hear what people are saying and feeling. Instead of declarative statements about the topic-du-jour, it’s time for the “I wonder” questions. During times of stress, more intentional listening is in order.

My colleague warden and I used to conduct “fireside chats” when needed. We simply announced that the wardens would be available at a certain time at the church and invited anyone with particular concerns to come and talk. (The only time we were slightly overwhelmed was when the sale of the rectory was being considered—it was more like a public hearing than a quiet conversation!)

Once the pulse taking is concluded, the next step involves discernment about an appropriate response to the community. It is time for the vestry to be a self-energized, collective, theological resource, asking: How does Scripture guide us? What prayer supports us? How does quiet time allow the spirit to speak? And remember the importance of pausing to ask, “What are we learning?” Some recording of events for future reference will be helpful.

## **Religious leadership is different**

This simple repeated cycle of Scripture, prayer and quiet time during a meeting will provide the leads to a healthy, whole and holy outcome. After all, it is what distinguishes us as religious leaders from corporate or civic leaders.

And, above all, we shouldn’t forget the scriptural mandate we all bear to build up the Body of Christ. For in the midst of stressful times, it is easy to choose sides and look for winners and losers, and that usually is not helpful. Because, in the end, building up the Body is a Spirit-led, collegial activity — God, people and priest engaged with each other.

*The executive director of the Episcopal Church Foundation since 1992, Bill Andersen is former senior warden of St. George’s Church in Maplewood, New Jersey.*

*Volume III of the Vestry Resource Guide will be published in the*

*spring and will focus on leadership, using expanded articles by*

*several authors in this issue of Vestry Papers.*

*Volume I of the Vestry Resource Guide is now available in Spanish.*

*For more details, see*

*[www.EpiscopalFoundation.org](http://www.EpiscopalFoundation.org)*

# Wisdom Gathered, Lessons Learned

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## ✦ Work on keeping some perspective:

- Be sure you get to church regularly and pitch in to the worship. Sing your lungs out. I find that when I'm tense-est it helps to get to an extra Eucharist (early morning, sometimes in another parish is what works best for me).

- Do some reading that gets behind the uncertainty of the times. See the resource section below.

- Look out for "the common wisdom" or "what everybody wants us to do." Although those words can seem compelling, it is remarkable how often they are wrong. In dealing with a big issue (war and peace, sexuality, abortion) we often do the very thing we've found out works least well — gather up proponents of the different points of view and launch a debate. Almost always that strategy, which seems so simple and useful, only exacerbates the issue and makes people madder at each other. There are ways to work at those controversial issues while building our sense of community with each other. Debates don't do that.

- Remember that the work of the vestry/clergy team is to build ministry. Not to fix everything. Not to determine who or

what is "right." Uncertain times by definition are uncertain. No amount of shouting at one another will reduce the uncertainty. Indeed, if you are in a boat in turbulent seas it doesn't help to jump up and down or try to throw some folks overboard. That's likely to capsize the boat, not fix the problem.

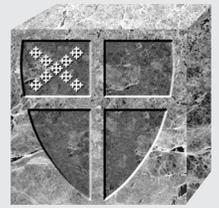
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***Christians have several stories of boats in turbulent waters, and we ought to remember Who is really in charge.***

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*The turbulence of the seas comes from the wind, not from how the people in the boat are acting. Christians have several stories of boats in turbulent waters, and we ought to remember Who is really in charge. Not us. We do the best we can. We lean to the oars. We try to keep our nerve. The final outcome is not up to us. Our job is to hold steady and to use this challenge to become a stronger, steadier team for the NEXT storm, which is surely just beyond the horizon.*

*The author of numerous articles and books, The Rev. Loren Mead served as founding president of the Alban Institute in Washington, D.C. from 1974 to 1994.*



*Learn about planned giving and capital campaigns for your parish or agency at the Academy for Episcopal Philanthropy in San Antonio, Texas, from April 14-17. Sponsor: The Episcopal Church Foundation. (800) 697-2858.*

*all@EpiscopalFoundation.org*

## Resource Section

### Resources for Leadership Development in Congregations

There are many resources for leadership development, and these are only a few. For more information, go to the Episcopal Church Foundation website ([www.EpiscopalFoundation.org](http://www.EpiscopalFoundation.org)) and click *Vestry Papers* or call (510) 644-9941.

### From the Foundation and Cornerstone:

*Fresh Start*: a program for clergy and congregations in transition with new clergy leadership.

*Living into our Ministries: The Mutual Ministry Cycle, a Resource Guide on Conflict Resolution.*

*Vestry Resource Guides* — Volume I (also available in Spanish) and Volume II, Volume III to be released in early 2004.

*The Zacchaeus Project Report & Video* — Episcopal Identity and Vocation

*Emmaus Project* — exploring creative initiatives by episcopal leaders.

### New books from our authors:

Bill George, *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*, Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Imprint, \$27.95, [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com)

Margaret M. Treadwell, co-editor, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*, The Edwin Friedman Estate/Trust, 6 Wynkoop Court, Bethesda, MD, 20817. \$67.00, includes shipping and handling.

### Here's more good reading:

*Restoring the Ties that Bind: The Grassroots Transformation of the Episcopal Church*, by Bill Sachs and Tom Holland, \$25.00. Call Church Publishing at (800) 242-1918.





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**Mission**

To inform, inspire and affirm  
Episcopal vestries in their work.

**Subscriptions**

\$35 annually. Sent in  
packages of 15 copies per issue.  
Published in January, March, June,  
September and November.

Call Cornerstone at (510) 644-9941  
or subscribe online at  
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# Leaders Bear the Burdens

*continued from page 8*

**An opportunity for spiritual growth**

This kind of suffering — the mysterious suffering that comes upon us — provides a great opportunity for spiritual growth. The challenge is to become present and open to the suffering within oneself, in order to draw closer to the suffering of others. That means embracing a “thin place” where the mysterious power of our vulnerability is unlocked.

As is witnessed in the life stories of great leaders, situations of pain are often the ones where people begin their journeys to develop profound integrity and even heroism. These can be times of emergent creativity, for acknowledged pain can be a great incentive to reach for creative humanitarian responses we never would have been inspired to bring to birth otherwise.

**Pain forges strength**

Joan Chittister, author of *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*, has traversed similar ground as Delbecq. Both advise us similarly on the subject of suffering, in order that we might come to know how pain potentially forges great human strengths and capacities much needed in this world.

***The challenge is to become present and open to the suffering within oneself, in order to draw closer to the suffering of others.***

I have come to treasure the following steps which she suggests. All proved life-giving in the context of St. Paul’s as we attempted to adapt gracefully and wisely, and would prove valuable for leaders living through other types of unpredictable or uncontrollable congregational change as well.

**Acknowledge** the reality of the suffering rather than displacing it through neurosis, scapegoating, withdrawal or projection.

**Accept** that sometimes change we are powerless to control is visited upon us, and

seek the gifts born of that vulnerable reality: gentleness, a kinder tongue, a broader vision of the human condition, compassion.

**Try to see** that change is calling us to conversion; be open to surprise, to pain, to hurt, to difference, in order that we may become new again and again.

**Gather.** Resist the forces of isolation which accompany pain, knowing that suffering is the place we are all likely to feel least known, least seen, most alone.

***It is impossible to be a leader, a true leader, without experiencing many types of sacrificial suffering in service to the organization and the people one is leading.***

**Let go.** Before suffering we normally live with the illusion we are in control. When our desired outcomes are thwarted, we have an opportunity to learn detachment — openness to the many manifestations of God’s will in our lives, not just the ones we’ve desired.

**Meditate** on God’s faithfulness in the depths of the heart — a place where God’s presence can never be extinguished.

**Insist on being present** to your own fear. Fear denied is the enemy of the creative solutions and innovations that can bring a better world out of tragedy.

**Let fear catalyze courage:** what you do to embrace and enact change regardless of criticism when your heart is ready.

*Courtney Cowart, the former grants officer for spirituality and development at Trinity, Wall Street, assisted in the ministry of St. Paul’s Chapel following the events of September 11. An adjunct professor for the Center for Christian Spirituality at General Seminary in New York, she is writing a spiritual history of the Civil War for Alfred A. Knopf.*