

Introduction to Leadership Interim Event, October 20, 2019
Grace and Holy Trinity Church, Richmond, VA
The Rev. Bill Queen, “Christian Leadership”

GHTC has been through leadership changes and challenges over the last several years; the event today is not meant to name names or lay blame upon any persons or groups in their leadership roles; today’s event is rather an attempt to take a step back in perspective and to recognize the patterns of leadership that have been prevalent at GHTC over recent time; to some people leadership may seem more like a secular business term than a sacred church concern; yet in Acts (5:31) Jesus himself is referred to as “Leader and Savior;” from that and from these other examples to follow, I hope we will see leadership’s importance in both a biblical and a theological sense

many people also tend to think of leadership in terms of one individual leading a large group of people; images such as a conductor leading an orchestra, or a guide leading a group of tourists , or a CEO or a politician leading a corporation or a government entity may be prominent in our minds; what we see is that while certain individual leaders are very important in the Bible, there are many places where shared leadership is equally, or even more, important; collaborative leadership and mutual ministry are, what the Bible testifies to, over and over again, and also in my experience, the ways the church works best; so let’s look more closely at the prayer and Bible passages

Collect for Proper 10

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

this recognizes that all of us faithful people need to call upon God, prayerfully, to seek knowledge and understanding; without that, we can neither know what to do, nor can we expect God’s grace and power to assist us in carrying out what is God’s, ultimately, work; and how much more true that is for church leaders who need to be prayerful in asking for God’s help in carrying out the responsibilities with which we have been entrusted by the church;

and I do mean a collective “we,” because everyone in the parish has some involvement in leadership; more about that later

Numbers 11:14, 16-17, 24-25a

Moses said, “I am not able to carry all this people alone, for they are too heavy for me.” So the Lord said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tent of meeting, and have them take their place there with you. I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people along with you so that you will not bear it all by yourself.” So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied.

here we see how Moses is overwhelmed by the burden of his leadership tasks, so he wisely asks God for help; God has Moses choose seventy elders; these people will not only share the burden of leadership with Moses, but will also receive the same spirit from God, as Moses did, to help them carry out the responsibilities of their leadership; all leadership must be empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit

Psalm 112:1-7

Hallelujah! Happy are they who fear the Lord and have great delight in his commandments! Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches will be in their house, and their righteousness will last for ever. Light shines in the darkness for the upright; the righteous are merciful and full of compassion. It is good for them to be generous in lending and to manage their affairs with justice. For they will never be shaken; the righteous will be kept in everlasting remembrance. They will not be afraid of any evil rumors; their heart is right; they put their trust in the Lord.

this reminds us that good management, like good leadership, is a biblical concern; it is still true that those who stand in awe of God—which often

conveys more accurately the sense of the Hebrew phrase to “fear God”—those who stand in awe of God and who delight in learning from God’s ways are the ones most suited to leading and managing the church’s affairs; and that they better understand how to carry out the church’s business with justice and with equity

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 27-31a

There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts.

in this Paul includes “forms of leadership” in his list of spiritual gifts; note that it is “forms,” plural, because leadership gets exercised in many different ways, depending upon differing circumstances; by ranking leadership as one of the spiritual gifts, Paul is reminding us of God’s role in equipping and empowering all leaders; he also reminds us that the purpose of leadership, like that of all of the other spiritual gifts, is to serve “the common good;” which means that any individual leader has to be attentive to wider concerns than to their own personal ones

Luke 10:1, 17-20

The Lord appointed seventy other disciples and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!” He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

in this we see Jesus sending out seventy—the same number as Moses’ elders—seventy “other disciples,” meaning ones in addition to the inner circle of the twelve, people whose names are never mentioned; they are being sent to places where Jesus himself intends to go; it’s important for us to remember that our leadership and ministry should also focus on the kind of places and the kinds of people where and with whom Jesus himself worked; these other disciples are sent out to experience for themselves what they never could have experienced had they just sat around and watched Jesus perform his works; they are given authority to take on higher levels of responsibility in carrying out Jesus’ ministry; and by going out as ministry leaders on their own they witness and experience, as we do too, firsthand, God’s power at work



finally, look at the image above; you see several hands supplying pieces that fit together into a whole; every parish needs four groups of leaders: its congregation, its Vestry and lay leaders, its staff, and its clergy; each group contributes an important piece that must fit in with the other pieces; the lack of any one of those leadership groups leaves us with an incomplete community; if the leaders are providing pieces that don’t fit together then there will be a disconnect in our ministries; and if the real hands that are

involved in those leadership groups do not represent a diversity of races, backgrounds, economic levels, gender identities, and abilities, we will not have the inclusivity that gives the best leadership and the best decision making

perhaps you may think that the congregation itself does not have a leadership role, but it does; you select your Vestry members; you respond to the calls for participation from other parish leaders; no ministries could happen here, not even Sunday morning worship, without your involvement; and you are leaders in the way you take your witness and your ministry out into the world to the people who are not yet a part of this congregation; without every member of the congregation's engagement, much less would get accomplished; everyone has an important role in ministry and in leadership at GHTC

so now we will try to understand better the ways our many hands of leadership fit together here at GHTC; God has given us much to do together as a Christian community; understanding our Christian leadership can help us all do a better job of carrying out our great responsibilities; so, with these biblical and theological perspectives in mind, we'll continue with our Leadership Event's activities