

Holding the Mission in Trust; Effective Board Leadership

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Introduction

Religious human and social service organizations, like other organizations in our society, find themselves facing rapid, significant, and challenging change. There are new expectations, new constituencies, new problems, and new opportunities. Congregations and religious organizations are confronted simultaneously by financial constraints and rising demand for services.

This reality has been identified and studied by researchers, both religious and secular. Peter Vaill, one of the best, has described this fast and ferocious change as resulting in a “whitewater society”: a society in which people and

organizations feel as if they are rafting on difficult, fast-moving, and treacherous whitewater rapids. Things move fast, and immediate responses are required. Often, Vaill notes, traditional responses do not work. A new repertoire is required.

Stories of congregations in such whitewater change and circumstances abound. One congregation struggles to welcome the newcomers that their rapidly growing suburban area offers up to them. A congregation in the heart of urban America has faced decline in its community and membership and works to provide needed programs of outreach and compassion. One congregation faces a serious shortage of financial resources, while another wonders how to use new endowment resources wisely and in keeping with its faith.

These challenges are not limited to congregations alone. They are found throughout all religious organizations. Seminaries face declining enrollments because of the changing profile of individuals seeking ordination. Social and human service ministries and programs face increasing demand as government programs are cut. National and denominational bodies search for new vitality and identity because they can no longer assume traditional and familial loyalties from their members.

Amid this change, congregations, religious organizations, and secular organizations need competent and caring leaders. In fact, the quality of leadership remains the most significant ingredient for organizational success and effectiveness. Strong leaders and leadership accomplish the following work:

- Define a mission that is authentic and vital
- Are stewards of its human and financial resources.
- Know the organizational context.
- Build connections and collaborations for mission.
- Envision its future and develop strategies and responses to that future.

The scriptural stories of Judaism and Christianity are full of images and reflections on leadership. In the Hebrew Scriptures, leaders such as Moses and Aaron lead people through immense difficulties, anxieties, and insecurities in their wilderness sojourn to enter a land of hope and promise. The prophets of God provide leadership by speaking truth to power, calling for justice, and proclaiming God's Word. Great women of faith lead, often at the boundaries of society, as they demonstrate faithfulness and integrity. In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth models and calls for a leadership rooted in servant hood, not domination; in compassion, not competition. His followers emulate that leadership in their practices of invitation, love, and service.

In the Qur'an, the stories of the Buddha, and the Hindu texts of law, stories of leaders and leadership abound. There exists a compelling and powerful dimension in them all. Leadership is a gift given by God to people. Leaders receive gifts from God to lead-Gifts of spirit, perseverance, compassion, insight, discernment, and vision. These gifts equip leaders to guide

communities of faith, and these gifts have remained operative among the leaders of communities of faith today.

Organizations need leaders, but individual leaders alone are insufficient. They need a strong community of leaders and leadership as well. This community of leadership often is met informally as individuals move into positions of responsibility as need demands. Projects and programs emerge for which an individual or group is particularly well suited or about which they are particularly passionate. Such constant and continuous movement not only is healthy for an organization, it is wise stewardship of the different gifts that individuals bring.

This chapter address the element of formal leadership, particularly the institution that has been given legal or functional responsibility for organization: boards of directors or trustees and their functional equivalents. Virtually every religious organization (and most secular ones), have boards to provide leadership. These boards are essential and can offer powerful leadership to the religious organizations that they lead. Often, however, they are underused, caught up in day-to-day, operational, and managerial issues instead of being equipped and freed to provide the deeper and more powerful leadership for mission and vision that they are called to do.

Ronald Heifetz (1994) makes an important distinction between the technical and the adaptive. Technical problems and issues can be met with responses of technique and mechanics.

Leaders can call on tried, true, and often traditional methods to meet an issue or problem that is readily defined or contained. If the roof needs to be fixed, leaders know the technical issues

and responses necessary to do it. Adaptive problems and issues are much more difficult and challenging. They are complex and often involve deep philosophical issues that reflect the core purpose and meaning of an organization. They allow no easy answers. Leaders cannot call on the tried and true. These problems cannot be solved with technical expertise. Instead, leaders need to do adaptive work. They need to probe deeply into the meaning, values, and purposes of an organization and address questions of deep social change and shifts of understanding. Often leaders attempt to solve serious. Adaptive issues with technical responses, thereby avoiding the deep, substantive, and often painful questions that are the real issues at hand.

The boards of congregations and other religious organizations are called to lead in both technical and adaptive ways. They have responsibility for setting policies and developing plans that reflect good governance. Board services requires commitment, perseverance, and discernment and corporately board members have responsibility for substantive areas of organizational life.

Development of Human Resources

Human beings are the greatest single resource in all organizations. This is particularly true in faith-based organizations. People lead, people serve, people care. Religious organizations depend on people to accomplish their

mission. Because they are religious, they have a particular calling to the value of these individuals. Faith-based service organizations, especially those run by congregations, often are volunteer intensive even when there is professional staff.

Boards have responsibility for the development of human resources. This responsibility includes establishing clear personnel policies, guidelines, and evaluation procedures. Job descriptions for professionals and key volunteers are of great importance. Defining work relationships and organizational structure belongs to the board as well. Although sometimes overlooked, boards are responsible for nurturing and sustaining the human beings who serve. Whether the religious organization is large or small, the board must have specific and intentional ways of nurturing people who serve the organization's mission.

The same is true to for the board itself. Many boards now have governance committees that have expanded on the tasks of traditional nominating committees. Although still responsible for raising up and nominating good leaders to shape and implement mission, a governance committee also has the duty to identify and create opportunities and methods for the development of the board itself. For example, a governance committee can assist the entire board in developing ways to evaluate its effectiveness; chart ways for the board to engage in its adaptive work by providing occasions (such as board retreats) to go deeper into mission reflection and planning than general meetings allow; and provide input

into meeting agendas to balance time spent on reports and decision making with time for prayer and reflections.

A fundamental theological stance should undergird the board's development of human resources: that God has given people gifts for ministry and for mission, and people bring these gifts to the community of faith in which they serve. The board of a religious organization ignores these gifts to the peril of its call and mission. The board has the duty to set the tone and create the structures for equipping people to use their gifts and for ensuring that these gifts are used wisely and with integrity.

Support of Clergy, Senior Executives, and Staff

Boards need to relate to clergy, senior executives, and staff in intentional and supportive ways. This means, among other things, having a clear awareness that the professional staff (and often senior volunteers) have the responsibility for the organization's daily ministry and operation. This is a realm usually separate from the board's responsibility for setting policy and providing general oversight. When these boundaries and responsibilities are ignored, much misunderstanding, anxiety, and even anger emerge. Stories abound of board members' intruding inappropriately into the daily life of an organization. Such actions often undermine the work and authority of clergy, senior executives, and other staff and lead to internal dissension.

The truth is that it is difficult to be a religious professional today. A preeminent danger for ministers and staff is being overwhelmed by fatigues and anxiety. At its worse, the stresses and challenges of leadership for ministers and staff can be toxic. One of the primary responsibilities of the board is to support clergy, senior executives, and staff. The marks of this support are awareness of the challenges of clerical leadership, open communication with ministers and staff, and clear policies of support and accountability. Boards should ensure that personnel policies ensure just and adequate compensation, continuing education, and professional growth. The stewardship responsibility of boards extends to individuals who work professionally in religious organizations and boards should attend to that responsibility carefully.

Development of Financial Resources

Boards have primary responsibility for the development of financial resources to support the organization's mission. Experienced board members know what a challenging responsibility this is. The threshold for financial viability has become increasingly higher in many religious organizations, particularly congregations. Individual giving has not increased

proportionately with increased responsibilities or with the increased income of members and supporters. When faced with financial tensions, leaders feel stretched and confused.

As a result, they attempt to approach the challenge through technical solutions. They search for techniques to address the financial pressures – a new stewardship plan, different fundraisers, or new visitation methods. Although good methods for financial development are important the overall financial health of an organization is at its heart an adaptive challenge and needs to be addressed as such by boards. The board needs to focus on the development and articulation of a compelling mission that attracts financial support. Only out of that mission can the board work to create financial resources that support it. Implicit in much of the emphasis on “the ask” is the sense that many people feel uncomfortable with asking because they are not sufficiently convinced of the importance or power of the organization’s mission and to ensure that the work being done is equally compelling. Such adaptive work is the key to financial viability.

Although annual giving is part of the whole picture, boards need to expand their horizons of financial giving. They need to look for ways to generate planned gifts and endowment resources, as well as seeking funding from new sources and in new ways. Most important, board members need to examine their own giving to them- the individuals who are most intimately connected to its work- to give, then how can they expect significant support from others?

Boards also are called on to be stewards of financial resources. Legally this is the most important function the board has. Policies for clear accountability are the responsibility of the board. Regular financial reports and audits, intentional financial plans, and open disclosure are required. All of these technical activities are essential for building institutional integrity.

Clear and consistent accountability measures serve to build confidence within the organization and within the wider community. They aid greatly in seeking funds. Most important, however, they express the organization's values of integrity, honesty, and respect. Ensuring commitment to such values is the responsibility of the board, as is requiring the implementation of procedures that reflect that commitment.

Relationship to the Wider Community of Faith

No faith-based organization exists apart from the wider community of faith. One of the important responsibilities of boards is to overcome isolation within organizations and connect them to the other levels of religious organization and with other entities. Although there is considerable variety in the structure of connection, depending on the various polities of American religion, the board still must keep its eye on wider relationships and collaborations.

Some of the most effective collaborations are to be found in the local community. Other faith-based services,

congregations, and interfaith and ecumenical organizations can be powerful local partners. Resources can be maximized and presence intensified as local churches synagogues. Mosques, temples, and missions work collaboratively for a common goal. Boards have the important responsibility of seeking these collaborations on a local level through their communication linkages and vision for services.

Boards also are the points of connection with regional and national partners. They are stewards of collaboration with these wider bodies. And in congregations they often shape the flow of human and financial resources to them. There is no question that the primary lens for viewing religious life at the beginning of the twenty first century is through local organizations, especially congregations. Since the local is where most people function on a daily level, these organizations determine much of the nature of religious life. This tension has created much hostility and suspicion. Local faith based organizations have questioned the effectiveness and stewardship of middle judicatory and national religious bodies, which in turn have accused the former of parochialism and isolationism. What is called for is not recrimination and accusation, but the forging of a new spirit and style of collaboration between these levels. Local organizations need to discover new ways to forge partnerships with middle-level judicatory and national religious bodies, which in turn have accused the former of parochialism and isolationism. What is called for is not recrimination and accusation, but the forging of a new spirit and style of collaboration between these

levels. Local organizations need to discover new ways to forge partnerships with middle-level judicatory and national religious bodies, and these bodies must realize that their vitality and support depend on the effectiveness of their support for local religious life. In addition, depending on the policy of a faith community, a faith-based service organization's board may actually have no ultimate governance or legal function. When this is the case, the board of the local organization and the responsible judicatory board must develop clear lines of responsibility.

Defining and Support Programs

The special relationship that boards have to program definition, implementation, and evaluation begins with the board's success in defining mission clearly and succinctly so that it provides the foundation for the organization's programmatic activities.

The sheer proliferation of programs presents a danger to American religious life. Often leaders of religious organizations feel that the number of programs they initiate expresses the vitality and effectiveness of their work. That is not the case. Numbers of programs simply as numbers can drain the organization of effectiveness, energy, and resources. A clear understanding of organizational mission is the way to shape coherent and connected programs.

Board members must understand and support the organization's programs. When they are not sufficiently

informed about the programmatic life of the organization, they are unable to monitor and evaluate effectiveness. Boards need to develop clear lines of communication regarding programs. These should include regular presentations by the program units and board participation in program activities for the purpose of learning.

As stewards of the organization's mission and resources, board members have to understand how each program serves that mission and whether it does so effectively. Good programs that are misunderstood by the board often may fail to receive the support they deserve. They also may be terminated during periods of financial retrenchment or administrative reorganization, to the organization's detriment.

In the absence of good information, lethargy may allow outmoded, ineffective, or inappropriate programs to continue unnecessarily, draining organizational resources and energy. Occasionally such programs may even be an embarrassment to the organization.

Only with complete information, presented in a coherent and understandable manner, can boards make good decisions regarding programs. The gathering and analyzing of this information must be a collaborative undertaking by the board senior executives, and appropriate staff and volunteers.

Board members not only review programs for their appropriateness to mission and their effectiveness, but also are called on to be advocates for those programs, interpreting them

to the public and supporting them aggressively. They can do this only if they understand those programs well.

Legal and Fiduciary Responsibilities

Boards today have increasing legal and fiduciary responsibilities. Unfortunately, many boards choose to remain oblivious to these obligations. Ignorance, whether willful or inadvertent, will protect neither the board nor the organization. Governmental and legal responsibilities relating to finances, personnel, property, and reporting cannot be avoided. Every board must meet these responsibilities, using outside expertise and counsel as necessary.

A good source for assistance is the insurance company that provides coverage for the organization. Insurance companies are good partners, because they desire to limit their liability and exposure. Many do property and liability audits for clients as a part of their services.

Boards are also responsible for financial review (and many times for audits) to ensure that they are sound and faithful fiduciaries. The board's careful attention to financial control mechanisms can eliminate the potential for massive difficulties. Even where no one has done anything illegal or unethical, the public airing of financial incompetence cannot help the organization.

Board members must be aware that the expectations for fulfillment of legal and fiduciary obligations become greater all the time. Today's world requires a certain level of sophistication of every board. Boards can increase their capacities in this area by calling on outside resources to assist them in policy definition and decision making. (Chapter Seven provides a detailed discussion of how to improve financial accountability.)

Theological and Ethical Foundations

There are significant theological and ethical foundations for the boards of faith-based organizations. Unfortunately, awareness of the theological and ethical imperatives often escapes leaders. A recent study of congregations in one Christian denomination with large endowment resources discovered that leaders seldom undertook explicit theological reflection or used it to guide their decision making. In a similar vein, the sociologist Robert Wuthnow (1988) concluded that many of the financial crises and challenges in mainline Christianity are directly connected to the pervasive spiritual malaise in the same religious traditions.

Board members in faith-based organizations are called to be aware of the theological foundations that enable and empower their service and their leadership. Rich resources of

prayer, spirituality, Scripture, and tradition undergird their work. The board itself ought to be a community of prayer and theological reflection, and a certain amount of its time together should be spent in these activities and practices. If faith-based service organizations are distinctive from secular ones, it must be that the spirit of God enriches their work and their deliberations. The tradition of so many faiths in viewing decision making as a spiritual and prayerful process needs to be reinvigorated and revived.

The board also has important ethical responsibilities. It is even more important for those who serve the weakest and most vulnerable populations. Board members have numerous ethical responsibilities or duties.

- A duty to serve the common good
- A duty to treat all publics and other stakeholders as children of God
- A duty to act honestly and fairly
- A duty to ensure that all applicable laws are followed in letter and spirit.
- A duty to refrain from self-dealing and directly using board membership for private gain.
- A duty to oversee the management of the organization actively and impartially.
- A duty to donors to ensure their funds are used for the designated purposes and in a wise and prudent manner.
- A duty to those served that guarantees quality service, a safe environment, and respectful treatment.

- A duty to volunteers that recognizes and respects their effort, diligence, and passion.
- A duty to staff to ensure fair, equitable, and respectful treatment for all, to guarantee a wage appropriate to their abilities and the organization's financial state, and to provide those benefits necessary for a safe and healthy life
- A duty to self to follow the dictates of one's conscience.

The ability to realize these rules in practice often is hindered by the fact that the realization of one may prevent or hinder the realization of another. Although this list does not attempt a ranking of these duties, except for the duty to the common good, clarity about the duties and about what is unacceptable increases the likelihood of making the right decisions in difficult times.

The theological and moral framework of the organization demands serious and ongoing attention and response by board members and indeed by everyone else affiliated with it. These religious and moral demands, however, should not be perceived as burdens. They reflect the great traditions and strong foundations that undergird the work of boards in faith-based organizations. Theological virtues and moral perspectives are given to the leaders of religious organizations for their practice of leadership. Not only do these religious and moral imperatives strengthen the faith and commitment both within the board and the organization as a whole, they provide

powerful models for the wider society. They are a gift of good leadership.

Certainly the responsibilities of leadership are significant and profound, as well as demanding. The stewardship of human and financial resources, building and maintaining connections with the wider community of faith, defining programs and seeking support, legal and fiduciary responsibilities, and maintaining the theological and moral foundation all mean that board service is not casual and a great opportunity for services.

Adaptive Work

For a board to do adaptive work, moving from the technical to the substantial and entering deeply into the life and mission of the organization, it must expand its horizons of understanding and reflection. Board members need to consider a wide and deep frame-work for their service.

At the heart of this consideration is the meaning of trusteeship itself. Board members are trustees of the religious organization they serve. They hold the organization, and its mission and vision, in trust. The work of Trustee Leadership Development, a national organization that works with varieties boards and their leaders, has yielded these insights:

- Leaders enter a deeper level of their service and work by realizing that they hold powerful and rich things in trust.
- Trusteeship as trust holding is a vital perspective for understanding the work of board service.

- Boards that spend time to consider that which they ought to hold in trust have the potential for greater mission faithfulness and effectiveness.

The power of the dynamic of trust should not surprise leaders of religious organizations. Trust is the foundational component for communities of faith and service. It joins human beings in relationship to God as creator, sustainer, and redeemer, and it builds a sense of connectedness and union within a community of faith. Trust is at the very heart of leadership.

Leaders can lead because of the trust given to them by the organization they serve. In turn, they constantly weave a fabric of trust within that organization that empowers people to serve, to be committed, and to give of themselves.

Leadership is trust holding, and board leaders are trust holders. They bring, or ought to bring, qualities and characteristics of trust holding to bear on their leadership: commitment, vision, perseverance, truth telling, nurturance, love, and faithfulness. Leaders hold important and vital things in trust: the institutional mission, the people who are served, institutional resources (including staff and volunteers), the tradition of faith, and a vision of the future. A board's capacity for leadership is strengthened when its members seriously reflect on their trusteeship obligation – on what it means to hold

powerful and important things in trust-and the responsibilities that come with this position of trustees.

Trusteeship is a call to servant-hood, to servant leadership. Thanks to the work of Robert Greenleaf, as a society we are much more aware of the nature and pattern of leadership as servant-hood. Greenleaf (1977) is direct: "The servant-leader is a servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first.

Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead." Greenleaf call for a trusteeship revolution rooted in leaders' awareness of the call to serve as their primary motivation and foundation.

This is particularly true for the leaders of religious organizations. An entire pattern and structure of servant-hood undergirds this special and particular form of leadership. The biblical and theological tradition underscores the call to servant-hood for this leadership. They exist to serve-to serve God and to serve human beings. Boards of religious organizations need to be particularly alert to this call and meaning. Unfortunately, other issues often cloud this call. Day-to-day operations, competing demands of stakeholders, and the sheer volume and pressure of work all draw the attention of leaders away from their primary vocation of servant-hood have a better of realizing their authentic mission.

Trust holding and servant-hood are deep and powerful dynamics for leadership. They help a board and its members to see their work much more clearly than they otherwise would be able to do and give a board greater capacities for

discernment and mission than they would otherwise possess. Boards that are congruent and committed to their leadership have natural instincts and inclinations toward these dynamics, but every board needs shaping and education to realize these more fully.

A different form of education is required for boards that aspire to lead in this way, approaching their adaptive responsibilities and service as effectively as possible. In the descriptive words of Robert Lynn, former senior vice president of the Lilly Endowment, this form and type of education would best be described as depth education, that is education that allows leaders to go deeply into the elements of an organization's life that truly reflect its purpose, service and vision (personal communication). Depth education requires a board to move from the technical and managerial to analyze the deeper issues of why the organization exists, whom it serves, and what it hopes to accomplish in its services.

Depth education requires a board to step out of its usual patterns of work and deliberation, to delve into organizational patterns of purpose and meaning. To be truly successful, this form of education cannot be momentary and occasional. Its goal is to affect the on-going life and nature of the board and of the organization itself. A board must consider four essential elements as it pursues its education in depth: history, mission, public, and future. These elements are interconnected and of ongoing importance to leaders and to effective leadership by a board. They are particularly essential for boards of religious organizations to attend to.

[Organizational] History

A board needs to make a deep and careful review of the history of the organization it serves. This is more than a cursory look at a few key events or people. The board should examine the entire stretch of organizational history, reflect on the developing patterns of mission, and hear the stories of organizational life. James Hopewell's classic *Congregation: Stories and Structures* (1987) describe in rich detail how the history and stories of congregational life over time shape the realities of congregational life in the present.

Deep and careful consideration of the organization helps board members see how current issues are rooted in past patterns and decisions. It frees them to plan for the future from a sense of awareness of how the organization reached its present form.

Mission

Mission—which encompasses purpose, identity, foundational beliefs, and the reason for existence of an organization—is the heart of an organization’s life and work. Board members are responsible for the mission and its definition. A depth education approach requires leaders to examine organizational mission carefully and intensely. It seeks to assist leaders in reflecting on the organization’s core beliefs and activities to ensure congruence among them. Many boards fail to do this important work. They assume that a mission exists or quickly write a mission statement or description. Depth education asks them to take the time to enter deeply into mission consideration so they understand and can communicate the essence, identity, and purpose of the organization they serve.

Publics [Stakeholders]

Religious human and social service organizations serve people. This harkens back to the basic vocation of religious organizations to service and servant-hood. Boards of religious organizations have the responsibility of knowing who is served and how. In addition, they have the obligation to be aware of those who are affected by their work and those whose actions affect their work—those individuals identified as stakeholders.

Time and again boards fail to focus on the people who are served, and they rarely possess the mechanisms

necessary for identifying those individuals, let alone for conversations with and learning from those individuals, let alone for conversations with and learning from those who are served. Depth education invites board members to a new level of knowledge and relationship with people who are served or affected by their organization's activities. It asks leaders to identify these individuals and groups, establish communication with them, and learn their hopes and needs. This undertaking enables boards to make better-informed decisions about program and the use of resources.

Future [Conclusion]

“Without a vision, the people perish,” proclaims the Book of Proverbs. The ancient wisdom writer's words remain true today. Vision is essential for the continuation of the life and service of any organization. One of the most significant opportunities and responsibilities of the board of a religious organization is that of envisioning the future. The leaders of the board dream the dreams for the future of the organization they serve, dreams grounded in the understanding of history, mission, and the people who are served and that stretch the vision and possibilities of the organizations. In the work of depth education, boards are encouraged to envision the future of the organization, and then to develop goals and plans for that vision to become reality.

The depth work of a board is full and invigorating. It allows the board to enter the organizational life fully and to

make plans and decisions out of that fullness. Boards that engage in depth education are more competent and prepared to approach the adaptive challenges and issues that confront them. The deep knowledge that they have gained through their own assessment, reflection, and work enables them to lead more effectively. To date Trustee Leadership Development has worked with over six hundred boards (more than twelve thousand board leaders) to assist them in their work of leadership. It has discovered the potential and vitality of board trust holders and leaders who do this work and make it a continuous part of board life and leadership.

Board service is an important ministry, call, and opportunity for people. People give their time and talents (and often their treasure) to this service because they care deeply for the religious organization and the human beings that are served. They experience a congregation or another religious organization as a community in which people are changed and transformed in trust and faith. These leaders serve on the board because they have known and experienced this transformative power and want to ensure its vitality for others.

It is the responsibility of all the leaders to develop their capacities for leadership within the board. Leadership is sustained as these capacities are strengthened through depth education, as well as improvements in technical skills and abilities. They are strengthened through the practices of prayer and discernment that belong to a board. The board can be a locus for spiritual growth and renewal, especially if the board leadership shapes occasions and structures for that dynamic.

Leaders bring commitment to board service. It is the responsibility of the board as a whole to nurture and encourage that commitment. Some of this nurture and encouragement occurs through the common work of the board. Much of it happens as individual leaders seek ways to discern their own personal gifts and strengths for the leadership and to identify ways to put them to service for the organization.

Certainly there are forces that resist good leadership within all boards. The danger of intrusion into daily operations has been identified, and there are also other forces of resistance. The inability of the board to recognize or address conflicts openly hinders board effectiveness. Board work can also be resisted by passive, antagonistic, and pessimistic members. It can be adversely affected by the lack of commitment by members to do the work that they are called to do. This lack of commitment often combines with a lack of faith and hope, therefore retarding the strength and future of the board and the organization's success. Sometimes individuals are recruited or elected to the board without having been given a clear picture of what will be expected of them or of the degree of commitment required. This too common occurrence hinders the board's effectiveness.

This is a critical time for attending to the development of boards of religious service organizations. Resources that offer frameworks, learning, and support for the building and sustaining of leadership exist to assist boards in their work of leadership. At the same time, there is a growing awareness of the challenges and opportunities that face religious

organizations. People served on boards want to make a difference as they meet these challenges and opportunities. They want to lead their organization, to be good servants, to be faithful trust holders.

Every board of religious organization needs to examine its own life and its effectiveness. Individual members need to examine their commitment, their focus, and their gifts. Leaders cannot be casual or timid in this. They must understand their own capacities and potential and seek the structures and resources that will enable them to make a difference in the mission in which their organization is called. They need to lead. It is a time of unique and special possibility for the boards of religious organizations. Gifts for leadership exist within the membership of these boards. And gifts are given by God for the exercise of leadership. What is necessary is this: each and every board must be called to move from a stance of management to a stance of leadership. They must be called to approach the adaptive issues and challenges and to go deeply into their purpose and future. Boards that do these things will not be disappointed. They will find rich and abundant new possibilities for leadership, faithfulness, and effectiveness in their service.