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Moving From Leadership 1.0 to 2.0

by Susan Lang

Not only has the Internet, particularly social media, changed the way we operate, but we can use it as a lens to view congregational leadership from a different perspective, a network perspective. Digital strategists talk about the development of the Internet in terms of Web 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0. What does this delineation mean and how, coupled with some theological reflection, does it inform leadership in 21st-century congregations?

World Wide Web 1.0 generally consists of static content posted or broadcast for others to read and digest. The majority of congregational websites fall into this category. Congregations post their worship times and upcoming events. They may share their ministry philosophy and mission statement and list volunteer opportunities. Some ministry leaders even blog, adding new content on a regular basis, but the emphasis is still on broadcasting information.

Web 2.0 is moving toward engagement, conversation, and even the development of new relationships. Think Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and the wide range of social media platforms and tools that exist today. Web 2.0 is no longer about merely broadcasting. It is all about relationships and the discussions that develop as a result. My nephew posts pictures of his newborn son on his Facebook page. I download them to my computer, so I can show my family, and then leave a congratulatory post for the proud parents. Or I read a question posted in the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) Clergy Facebook group and add my thoughts to the long line of responders. Here, ELCA clergy from around the country meet and share questions, concerns, and joys—something that could not happen in quite this way prior to Web 2.0. And on Twitter I can follow and converse with a wide variety of people, depending on my interests. I just have to do it in 140 characters or less. The use of social media can deepen relationships we already cherish and create new connections with those around the world.

While there is still debate over what exactly Web 3.0 is and how it is emerging. Meredith Gould, sociologist, digital strategist, communications consultant, and author of *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways*, refers to it as "portable personalized content and search functions"[1] that we carry around on our tablets and smartphones, both of which are basically portable computers. For many of us, the primary function of our hand-held communications device has shifted. We carry computers in our pockets that just happen to function as phones, too. Technology is altering our lives. Walk into any crowd and observe how many people are checking their handheld devices for text messages or using them for Internet surfing on the go. No longer do we have to sit in a restaurant with a friend wracking our brains to remember who starred in a favorite movie. Now, we can pull out our phone and look it up using one of dozens of search engines. We are always connected. Says Gould, "Social media has led to significant changes in culture in terms of values, beliefs, attitudes as well as social structures such as groups, organizations, institutions. People who do not use, let alone study, social media are probably unable to trace their sense of how culture and society has changed due to social media."[2]

Now I will look at leadership through the lens of our highly relational and networked world.

Church Leadership 1.0

Church Leadership 1.0 developed with the growth of Christendom. It began with the creation of councils and structures to formalize the Christian faith. It developed into the pre-

Internet and late-twentieth-century leadership with which many of us are most familiar. Its focus was on the organizational structure. It exhibited—and where it is practiced, still exhibits—the "broadcast" characteristics of Web 1.0. Because of this, it is also centralized and hierarchical. Think mainline denominational offices, judicatories, and congregations that have typically been organized based on a traditional, top-down flow chart. While leadership may be vested in a council or board, Leadership 1.0 still looks to a central figurehead. In denominational offices a bishop or executive officer is typically at the top of the organizational pyramid. Many congregations have looked to their pastors to act as theological CEOs.

When I attended seminary, we joked about the "Herr Pastor" style in the Lutheran congregations in which we grew up. The pastor was the ultimate authority, and he (only men were pastors in the Lutheran church when I was growing up) knew it. This was an age when people relied on expertise, and the presumption was that since he had attended seminary, he was the only one trained in theology and congregational leadership. I recall that in the 1960s in my Lutheran congregation in Trenton, New Jersey, the pastor was the president of the congregation council, the norm for some Lutheran congregations at that time. In most areas of the congregational life, the pastor had final say, especially concerning worship. Members deferred to him as the trained expert. The congregation mirrored what was happening in society at the time, and it worked. In the mid-twentieth century, corporations flourished and so did congregations.

Leadership Shifts

This type of leadership worked for many years and is still working in some places. However, with the rise of Web 2.0, we no longer assume the sources of expertise and authority are limited or controlled. Instead, we assume we live in a wiki-world where anyone can, and does, contribute to the body of information available to all of us. Anyone can be a publisher via his or her own website or blog. Anyone can locate information necessary for work or entertainment via his or her favorite search engine. This major shift in how information gathered and disseminated is changing the way many people view leadership and the expectations surrounding it. We are shaped, in large part, by our context.

Given that Leadership 1.0 is based on structure, expertise, and authority, the thought of moving to Leadership 2.0 might be frightening to some. Face it: there is a certain security in leading from a position of expertise and authority. But there are also several downsides to such a stance, especially in the church. First, it usually creates a dependency on a few leaders, undermining the fullness of the priesthood of all believers, a biblical ideal raised up in the Protestant Reformation. The few make decisions for the many.

Second, Leadership 1.0 is often more focused on following a plan than discerning what God is stirring up in and among the people, the congregation, and the community. Over my years of serving in parish ministry, I can recall a number of interviews with congregational leadership that opened with the question: "Pastor, what is your plan for us?" People wanted to know my agenda for ministry in their context, before I even fully understood them or their context. The funny thing, though, is that God does not typically follow our agendas. God's stirrings among us tend to be much more creative and life giving than our human agendas.

Third, if our cultural context has changed, the greatest thing we have to lose as leaders is relevance. Recent studies have already shown that digital natives, beginning with the millennial generation, are more interested in authenticity of belief and behavior than they are in participating in leadership structures of the past and in attending churches where people say one thing and do another. We are being watched, and closely.

Fortunately, the cultural context in which we minister has not only changed but has also given us new insights into the theological foundations of our faith. In his book, Leading the Team-Based Church, author and nonprofit executive George Cladis points to the Trinity as the foundation of a style of leadership that is grounded in a relational, networked approach rather than a hierarchical one. He draws attention to the Trinitarian relationship known as "perichoresis," a theological concept attributed to John of Damascus, an eighth-century Syrian monk. Perichoresis is a dynamic relationship, or "circle dance," in which the three

persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are constantly and equally linked and always in motion. This relationship is nonhierarchical and consequently, Cladis says, serves as a model for leadership in the twenty-first century. He explains:

> The perichoretic symbol of the Trinity is more helpful to the church living in a postmodern world. Although we, as the creatures of God, are not equal to God, the divine community of the Trinity provides a helpful image for human community that reflects the love and intimacy of the Godhead. Hierarchical distinctions in human community give way to a sense of the body of Christ, with each part equal and important (1 Cor. 12–14).3

Christianity points to a networked God in a world where a network mindset of connectivity and collaboration predominates. This image, in fact, should empower us as we rethink leadership for the twenty-first century. As leaders, we need to trust that God is working in new ways in our ever-changing networked world and as always, is providing us with the tools and resources to adapt. So what might some characteristics of a more relational, networked style of leadership be and what might it look like?

Church Leadership 2.0

Web 2.0 is all about developing and nurturing relationships, and that is where Leadership 2.0 needs to start, too. The emphasis is less on preserving any specific organizational structure than on connecting in deep and meaningful ways by developing relationships. Leading from a 2.0 stance would first mean being sure you, as a leader, are deeply connected with God through prayer and spiritual practices. The Trinity icon by Andrei Rublev portrays the three persons of the Trinity sitting at a table. Cladis and other writers invite us to think of God as inviting us to the table for spiritual communion with the divine. This critical connection then empowers our connections with others.

Then lead with questions, not answers. The focus here is facilitating conversational leadership, rather than making pronouncements as an expert. The goal is to identify and incorporate the gifts of the community into ministry and mission planning. I like to think of this kind of leader as a coach who walks alongside people and draws out the potential of the individual or the group. This is the approach I take when I am called in to work with planning groups. Those most grounded in Leadership 1.0 will ask me to be the expert and tell them what their mission goals should be. I do not. I have developed processes similar to Open Space4 or The World Café5 that facilitate conversation. Spend time identifying good questions, such as: What ignites your passion for Christ? What might your mission look like if you lived out your passion for Christ in both the congregation and your community? (Hint: The latter part of the question is frequently omitted.) Leadership 2.0 is not about just preserving your congregation and keeping the doors open for the future. It is about mission, real mission and engagement outside the congregation walls. It is about extending the network.

Invite collaboration. As a student of network theory, I know that for true transformation to happen, one needs to draw into conversation those on the periphery of a network. That concept applies to congregational life, too. Look at your congregational leadership and decision-making processes. Are the same old people involved in the same old discussions? If they are, you are missing out on the gifts of those who lack voice and visibility in your community. List the characteristics of those currently involved in leadership conversations. Are all generational cohorts included? Are community members invited in, too? Identify those who are not currently heard and seen. Personally seek them out and invite them to the table.

Practice discernment. You also need to be fluid and flexible, paying attention to what is emerging in your midst. When Fred Nelson and Carol Breimeier, who are married to each other, started serving as co-pastors at Redeemer Church, a Lutheran congregation in Park Ridge, Illinois, they already knew the congregation had decided to enter a three-year process with the intention of doing something different, because the congregation was in a spiraling

pattern of decline. The congregation had committed to change.

Nelson explained, "The congregation wanted us to invite unchurched families in the Park Ridge community. Those who came were 20s and 30s outside of Park Ridge. Some would drive a half-hour to get here." The congregation's plan did not unfold as expected, however. Wisely, the leaders paid attention to what was actually going on and shifted direction. Redeemer's website succinctly describes their newfound call: "following Jesus • empowering 20/30-somethings • changing lives." Note all three emphases are strongly rooted in relationship. The congregation took a leap of faith, and now, as people "age out" of the 20/30-something cohort, their role shifts from being served to mentoring others. "We've used the image of the bulls eye," said Nelson. "The bulls eye is the 20s/30s group. The target is multi-generational." Everybody is invited to join in the conversation, and everyone has a role to play.

In fact, Redeemer Church has also developed a leadership path that is built on a relational coaching model. They call the five-step process "ICNU"—"I see in you." Based on a model described by Dave and Jon Ferguson in *Exponential: How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement*, the process is one in which a leader walks with another person identified as a potential leader and coaches her as she cultivates the skills she needs to lead a group or study. Once the apprentice feels secure as a leader, she walks with her own apprentice through the process.

In fact, not only has this congregation developed a way to birth leaders, it has also birthed another congregation, Redeemer Church—Chicago, using relational evangelism, connecting with the neighborhood through events such as block parties and car washes. Other congregations are building relationships through gatherings such as "Theology on Tap," which meet in bars to engage in real conversations about real-life issues or late-breaking local, national, or world news. Some congregations are encouraging sharing through Tweeting during worship services, recognizing it as a way of sharing the good news.

A large part of Leadership 2.0 is a willingness to take risks and even to fail. Many leaders want to be sure something will work before they even try it. But as Redeemer—Park Ridge illustrates, sometimes God has in mind something more surprising than our well-thought-out plans. Relational, networked leaders recognize and celebrate the abundance of gifts that we have been given in our work as congregational leaders. They walk confidently by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7), trusting in God to give them the tools to do the ministry God has in mind for them.

The Internet and social media are transforming the world and affecting the cultural context in which we live and minister. The question we must grabble with is, how are we as leaders going to move into this new world?

Leadership 1.0 grew out of Christendom and the movement through the Industrial Age. It has these characteristics:

- Organizational—Think hierarchical organization flow-charts. A strong emphasis was placed on putting the correct structure in place.
- Centralized—Mainline denominations were generally the central holders of resources and information, which they dispersed from a given location.
- Authority-based—Established authorities and expertise provided the answers to questions.
- Agenda-driven—Ministry grew out of a set agenda and often used a "command and control" model.

Leadership 2.0 is growing out of the post-Christendom and the Internet age. Note that the shape of relational, networked leadership is still emerging and will be very contextual. Leadership 2.0 is:

- Relational—The focus is on developing and nurturing relationships and links.

- Decentralized—Resources are distributed throughout a networked congregation and ministry. Each person is recognized as a connector to his or her own resources and networks.
- Collaborative—Collaboration builds on conversations and recognizes that we are all teachers, we are all learners, and we are always stronger together than we are alone.
- Focused on emergence—Recognizes that discernment is important for leaders, because God's presence and action among us emerge and often change over time.

Discussion Questions:

1. How aware of, and connected to, social media are you and your leadership team? What might the fact that the Internet is changing our cultural context mean for you?
2. What surprises you in the author's descriptions of Leadership 1.0 and 2.0?
3. What aspects of Leadership 1.0 have worked well in your ministry? Which have not? Explore the reasons for your responses.
4. What aspects of Leadership 2.0 are you exercising in your ministry? What might some of the challenges be if you attempt to move into a more relational and networked leadership style? What might be some of the benefits?

Notes

1. Meredith Gould, *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 4.
2. Interview with Meredith Gould, July 17, 2013.
3. George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 5.
4. See Open Space World to learn more. http://www.openspaceworld.org/
5. See the World Café website: http://www.theworldcafe.com/

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