



UU Congregation of Phoenix

January 2019

Leadership



Leadership is not a Kayak

A reflection by Anthony N. Johnson

When I think of leadership, I think of a person in charge. Yet, to be in charge implies there is someone to be in charge of—and I believe that starts with one’s self. When I looked up leadership, Webster defined it as, “the action of leading a group of people or an organization. A leader is someone who is responsible for attaining results, usually with other people, in a joint effort to accomplish a goal.” I was pretty close. Leadership does begin at home but not home alone. True leadership involves a full crew, pulling together to keep the ship both afloat and heading to the farther shore. Being a sole kayaker is an awesome feeling, there is a place for solitude, of that there is no doubt. However, leadership implies we debark from our kayak and contribute to the navigation of the self as well as other folk. “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.” So, spoke Antoine de Saint Exupery, French writer and pioneering aviator.

Upon reflection within our Unitarian Universalist context, I resonate fully with our concept of congregational polity or the idea that leadership rests with the congregation as a whole. That means, in a sense, that everyone who is reading this blog is a leader. I wonder why the word leadership strikes terror in the hearts of some of us? The idea of serving and being responsible seems to be a daunting task for many congregants. Why is that? I think it has something to do with the belief that a leader is alone. News Flash--within Unitarian Universalist congregations, congregations have the power of leadership. A congregant is never alone—unless they have failed to get the memo or the message.

UUCP members are leaders, by tradition and by declaration. Getting to really know your fellow shipmates as people with a dream, folks with a story to tell and listening in a meaningful way may lead to alliances and agreements to live into our faith together, as leaders. What’s at risk for us to claim it? What’s the payoff? I offer it is the same payoff one gets when one gives an anonymous gift, somehow it lifts the Spirit. We serve others to become bigger and better selves. Ah, the paradox of giving in order to really receive. It can be scary, but so what? I guess I’m on a French ship because another Frenchman named Napoleon comes to mind to encapsulate my leadership offering this day; “A leader is a dealer, in hope.”

Inspiration

A reflection by Rev. Margret A. O’Neill

I have a clear vision of what a Unitarian Universalist congregation should mean to its members; what it should offer and provide to those who are part of its extended community. The core of that vision is the congregation as a “learning laboratory” – a place we come, not to find security and comfort (though those should always be available) but rather a community we join in order to be inspired, to become more of who we are, to live more fully into who we might be. My hope for all our UU congregations is that they equip their members of all ages to live with power and presence in the world, to create transforming change within their lives, bringing hope and possibility to all of humanity, in ways large and small.

I remain curious about why “leadership development” is so often shunned in our congregations; perhaps it is because people think it is a sort of trap – that if someone knows you are a “leader,” you will be asked to do more than you are comfortable doing, to give more or spend more hours serving the congregation. My hope is just the opposite: that our congregations will support people to do exactly as much as they wish of what they most love to do; that we equip them to be more effective in their paid work, their family and community life, and of course, invite them to live into their passion within the congregation.

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” This quote from John Quincy Adams, Unitarian sixth President of the United States, pretty well sums it up – but then we encounter the core question, how do we help people act in those inspirational ways? How do we encourage them to dream and to learn, to do and to become people who live into their most cherished values at all stages, and in all arenas of their lives?

My training in appreciative leadership development leads me always to begin with the stories: When have you found yourself inspiring others? What were the gifts you brought to that experience? In what ways would you like to further develop those gifts, and where would you like to offer them? So that is the invitation I offer now, as we enter the fresh promise of a new year – may you always be welcome here to explore and to offer your gifts freely, in the ways you most love -- and as always, I hope to see you at UUCP!

Quotes and Thoughts for Reflection Leadership

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader. - John Quincy Adams

If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea. -- Antoine de Saint Exupery

Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. - Warren Bennis

To lead people, walk behind them. - Lao Tzu

To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart.— Eleanor Roosevelt

If you want to rebel, rebel from inside the system. That's much more powerful than rebelling outside the system.— Marie Lu, Legend

Great leaders create more leaders, not followers.— Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

Power isn't control at all — power is strength, and giving that strength to others. A leader isn't someone who forces others to make him stronger; a leader is someone willing to give his strength to others that they may have the strength to stand on their own.— Beth Revis, Across the Universe

A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus.
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

A leader is a dealer in hope. - Napoleon Bonaparte

Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things. - Peter Drucker

When the best leader's work is done the people say, 'We did it ourselves.' - Lao Tzu



Session Plan
Theme: Leadership
January 2019

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

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Brief Check-in

Focus Reading:

Leadership is not about a title or a designation. It's about impact, influence and inspiration. Impact involves getting results, influence is about spreading the passion you have for your work, and you have to inspire team-mates and [those you serve]. - Robin S. Sharma

Focus Questions:

- Who are the people who have inspired you in your own life?
- When have you found yourself inspiring others?
- What were the gifts you brought to that experience?
- In what ways would you like to further develop those gifts?
- Where would you like to offer them?

Checkout/Likes and Wishes

Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be. - Lao Tzu