

Luke 9:1-6 & Luke 10:1-17
“Sharing Leadership”
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Roslindale Congregational Church, UCC, Roslindale, MA
Second Sunday in Lent, March 13, 2022

The Readings:

Luke 9:1-6

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. ³ He said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. ⁴ Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. ⁵ Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” ⁶ They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

Luke 10:1-17

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ² He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³ Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ ⁶ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; ⁹ cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, ¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹² I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

¹³ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But at the judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades.

¹⁶ “Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.”

¹⁷ The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!”

In his book *God's Potters*, Jackson Carroll presents sociological facts about pastoral leadership in Christian congregations, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, and among the Protestant groups, Mainline denominations like our own, plus evangelicals, and historic black churches. His conclusions derive from the research project called "Pulpit & Pew," and were correlated with data from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey.

Carroll shows that ministers generally lead in one of four styles: 1) those that make most decisions with laity generally following; 2) those that encourage and inspire members to make decisions, though acting alone if necessary; 3) those that exert some influence, while the laity make most decisions; and 4) those that enact the laity's decisions. Of these four styles, number 2, is preferred by large numbers across all four church groups.

The study also found that churches value *shared leadership*, that is, styles 2 through 4, when clergy and laity share in decision-making and leadership, which correlates to congregational effectiveness.¹

These two mission stories in Luke show us that Jesus shared leadership too.

Jesus did not carry out his ministry of preaching the Reign of God, healing, and combatting evil all by himself. At this stage of the Messiah Movement, Jesus shared power and authority with The Twelve so that *they* could do the work of the gospel. He also later commissioned an even larger group of disciples to go into towns and villages to spread the good news. Jesus didn't have to be present for the Reign of God to come "near" and help people!

I think that the instructions that he gave to both of these groups also manifest a shared style of ministry. For instance, the seventy went two-by-two to preach and heal; they were *not* lone rangers (well, even the Lone Ranger was not alone!), but mutually supportive and accountable. The fact that these missionaries were open to the strangers they would meet, greeting people with "Peace" and accepting their hospitality, indicates that they would not only give, but *receive* blessing. The good news of God's rule was not exclusive, but inclusive – shared.

Why do you think that Jesus shared leadership in this way? It surely wasn't because it was trendy, or American, or the UCC way! It certainly *wasn't* common in the socio-political culture of 1st century Palestine! Why, then?

One reason that you have probably guessed is that **you can get far more accomplished when more people than just one are trained and deployed.** Jesus was at the stage of this ministry when he could not physically be everywhere for everyone. In order not to lose momentum and in order to reach more people, Jesus had to 'get ahead' of the demand, divide the labor, cover more territory, and multiply the impact. In other words, like an expanding business, Jesus needed to invest in more people in the field. This is why he spoke of needing more laborers for the harvest.

I mean, who doesn't like getting more done?! I know it's silly, but for example, I love the feeling of doing laundry. While the machines are running, I can work on something else. So sharing leadership can increase the *quantity* of ministry.

¹Jackson W. Carroll, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), ix, 132, 133, 158.

In good time, you will be calling a new pastor to RCC. I know that it has been your desire over many years to have your minister involved in the Roslindale community. Well, a shared leadership approach would likely mean that not only the minister, but each of *you* would be out there too, empowered and equipped to represent RCC and the good news of God's leadership.

But there are *qualitative* reasons, as well, why Jesus shared leadership.

He was interested in growing the gifts and potential of all his followers. It was not enough just to "catch" these 'fish.' Jesus wanted to give them opportunities to develop into great fishers. Jesus knew their personal and collective potential, and he wanted to nurture it.

Jesus' style resembles that of a coach. My brother-in-law, Don, for example, coached Junior High boy's football for about thirty-five years. Of his players, 124 went on to play on Division One college teams! Success for him was not just in tackles and touchdowns; he was involved in shaping quality human beings. When he retired, many of these young men returned to testify to the positive difference Coach Vandergrift had made in their lives.

Think about the ways that you and your new minister could nurture young people when you share leadership with them!

Jesus also led this way because it was through give and take, when his followers collaborated, that they gained clarity about what God wanted them to do. To say it differently, when you and I hash it out together, "the Reign of God comes near." We become more able to discern and follow God's lead – the ultimate aim of our 'dance.'

John Woolman was a tailor, minister, writer, and abolitionist about a hundred years *before* the Civil War. He let his Quaker meeting, in which several were slaveholders at the time, know that he thought God was calling him to work for their liberation. It was important to him that his church confirm his call, and they did. Even though some were not convinced of the rightness of his cause, they and Woolman shared in community, listened to each other, and sought more light. Eventually, his meeting *and* the wider Quaker community agreed that God indeed wanted slavery abolished, and they were readied to labor to this end.²

As you well know, it isn't always easy to perceive God's will in complex situations like a pandemic, the work for racial justice, global peace, and living in ways that support the environment! But when we take counsel *together*, coming from our different perspectives, and *with* the Holy Spirit, we are more likely to perceive where God is leading us.

Sharing leadership, then, with your next pastor is your best bet for discerning and dancing well to God's lead.

²Suzanne G. Farnham, Joseph P. Gill, R. Taylor McLean, and Susan M. Ward, *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 1991), 49. Plus other articles online from the Quakers, etc.