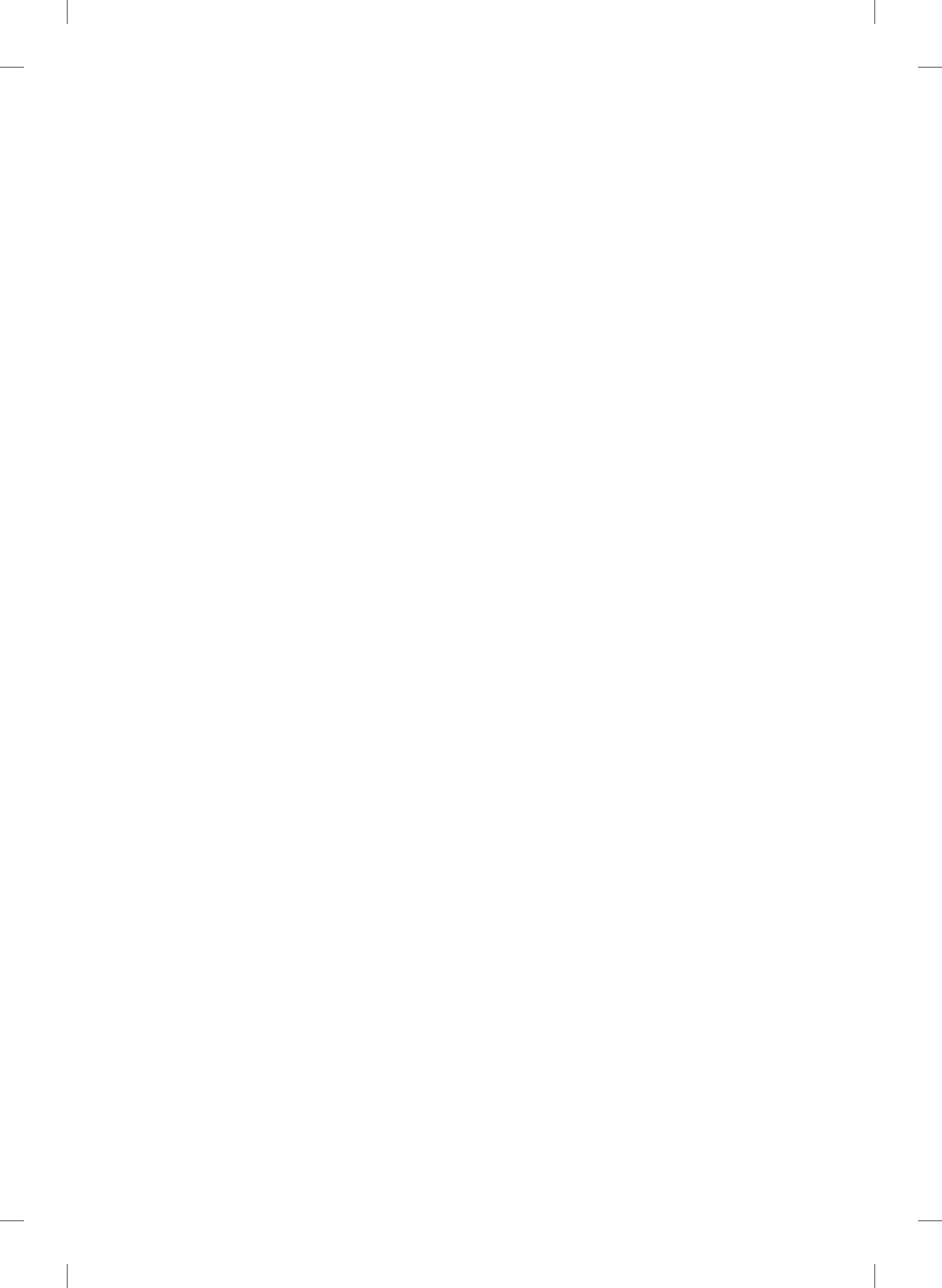


THE GREAT LAKES INITIATIVE  
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

January 16–22, 2011  
National Seminary Ggaba, Uganda

Christian Leadership for Reconciliation  
*“A New Creation . . . The old is gone, the New is here” (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

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## A MOVEMENT OF HOPE AND RECONCILIATION IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

### Introduction: A Movement of Hope

The Great Lakes Region of East Africa is notably one of the most beautiful regions in the world. But it is also a region that is scarred with devastation, deforestation, disease and dire forms of poverty. The region is deeply religious, and more specifically Christian. Furthermore, while Christianity seems to be well and alive here, the region also continues to experience some of the worst cases of civil unrest, war, corruption and poverty. These negative forces of life are the source of much suffering, despair and even hopelessness for many, especially children and the youth who become victims and easy recruitment into violence and other forms of desperate living.

While these social, political and economic challenges are experienced by all, regardless of religious affiliation, they pose a particular challenge to Christians. The widespread realities of poverty, war, corruption, violence and other social ills make any claims to *peace, reconciliation, and new creation*—indeed, the Gospel as Good News—sound empty. We cannot just sing and claim *shalom, peace and new life*; rather the new creation needs to be seen, felt, touched and experienced.

This is what makes the search for peace, healing, social transformation and reconciliation in the Great Lakes Region both a major challenge and opportunity to every baptized and professing Christian. For as St. Paul reminds us, “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The old is gone; the new is here.

To be sure, there are many signs of hope, of new creation, in the region, and not all are connected to or inspired by Christian faith. However, each of us can also name at least ten ministries, initiatives and programs that represent the best Christian efforts in making real and concrete the gospel of *new creation*. Over the last four years, through the programs of the GLI, we have identified, and have been inspired by, stories of Christian leaders who, inspired by the biblical story, are seeking to live out the promise of God’s new creation in their respective locations. These leaders, who shape initiatives and communities, confirm that God’s promise in Jeremiah 29:11

(I know the plans I have for you . . .)

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is not simply a dream and wishful thinking. It is real. In fact, as Maggy Barankitse of *Maison Shalom* in Burundi puts it: God's promise of a new future is not only real; it "is like a train which no one can stop."

That is why the positive initiatives and experiments are not simply isolated *signs* of hope but the shape and form of a movement—God's Movement of Hope. As Christians, we are invited (called) to be part of it but also to act as agents who both help to shape and carry forward this revolutionary movement of God's Hope in the region.

##### **Leadership Institute: The need**

It is in view of deepening this call and sharpening our leadership in relation to it that we have designed an annual Leadership Institute as the cornerstone program of the Great Lakes Initiative.

Among other things, we hope that, through the Leadership Institute, we will be able to:

- Train and equip Christian leaders who inspire, form and support other leaders at various levels of society to live as ambassadors of God's movement of hope.
- Deepen the formation, teaching and content of a biblical vision of reconciliation in a way that inspires and ferments a movement of transformed communities and relationships in the region.
- Connect leaders with other leaders to share stories and other learning experiences.
- Work from and share a common theological vision and language for the movement.
- Provide, through the word made flesh framework, an easy to use theological, practical and contextual methodology, for the leaders to work from.
- Create and share more stories of hope, learning resources and opportunities.
- Provide mentorship opportunities for the next generation of Christian leaders.

##### **The Content: Five Questions**

The curriculum of the Leadership Institute revolves around five critical questions. These questions get to the heart of what a movement of hope shaped by Christian faith

looks like. The questions also point to the skills, disciplines and habits that sustain the movement. In other words, the five critical questions define the vision and practice of reconciliation broadly understood.

The five questions are:

1. Toward what? This is the question relating to the goal, the end toward which the movement leads. This invites the leader to form a scriptural imagination of *new creation*.
2. What is going on? This is the question of context, which seeks to get to a clearer and deeper understanding of the specific challenges facing the region. This question invites the leader to develop the gift and discipline of lament.
3. What does hope look like? This is the question that engages hopeful models, stories, experiments, initiatives, visions and practical skills that shape and sustain a new future in Africa. The question invites the leader into a vision, imagination and capacity for hope.
4. What kind of leadership? This question explores the specific gifts, skills, practices and habits of leadership, and patterns of life that sustain hope for the long haul. The question presses the leader to form a vision, skills and personal manifesto for leadership.
5. Why me and why bother? This is the question that explores issues of personal vocation, calling and formation. The question highlights practices, rhythms, and life-styles, convictions that sustains leadership even in the face of challenges and obstacles, and invites the leader to form a deep and lively practical spirituality, which can sustain one's leadership over the long haul.

### **Methodology: Word Made Flesh**

Participants at the Leadership Institute will be introduced and encouraged to engage a particular methodology, which brings together learning and formation at the Institute in a way that is at once *theological*, *contextual* and *practical*. We have come to refer to this methodology briefly as *Word Made Flesh*.

- Word: “In the beginning was the Word” (John. 1:1). A discussion about reconciliation must begin with God—Reconciliation as God's gift. That is why whatever particular challenge is discussed (war, poverty, tribalism, etc.) must be framed within the wider story of God's creation; God's dealing with mankind and God's promise of a new creation. Both the plenary and seminar discussions at the Institute are informed by and engage scripture in a lively fashion. Worship is also integral to the Institute as it helps to nurture and keep alive this *theological*

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imagination throughout.

- Made Flesh: At a particular time in history the Word became flesh, and was born of a woman in the village of Bethlehem. Among other things, this confirms that history and geography matter. In discussing the various themes and topics, particular attention is paid to context: the historical, geographical, social, cultural, political and religious context of the Great Lakes Region in general, and of each country in particular.
- Dwelt Among Us: Christ dwelt among us; we saw, touched, and ate with him. This observation presses the question of what it means for God to dwell among us here and now. Among other things, to “dwell” points to patterns and skills that sustain Christian living over the long haul. This *practical* angle of the curriculum engages stories, practices, skills, experiments and examples that help to shape Christian life and imagination.

### **The Movement of the Day**

Each day is framed around one key question that helps to get to a holistic vision and practice of reconciliation. The question is engaged in all the major activities of the day, worship, meals, plenary and seminar discussions. The framing question shapes the content of each day by:

- Providing the theme
- Highlighting three major challenges
- Shaping the learning (methodologies)
- Defining (personal) take-aways

**DAY ONE: TOWARD WHAT?**

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17–20a:

“If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation...”

**Theme: New Creation**

“Reconciliation toward what?” What is the end or goal of the movement we call reconciliation? Asking this question helps us to always keep the goal, the big picture, in mind: The end toward which the journey of reconciliation leads is the shalom of God’s *New Creation* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

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**Major Challenges to be avoided:**

- A purely *spiritual* Gospel that has little to do with the social realities: the challenge of the *Evacuation* gospel, or living on two unconnected planes: the spiritual/social; Jesus/Justice.
- A *suspect* Gospel: Christianity as part of the problem of violence, poverty and other social challenges in the region
- *Distraction* or lack of focus: without a clear sense of the goal, we become frantic: endlessly fire-fighting with no clear vision of the ultimate goal or end.

**Learning goal:** to form a lively theological and practical imagination that displays reconciliation not only as God’s gift and promise to the world, but that reconciliation in its social, personal, political, economic and spiritual dimensions is what Christianity is about, or ought to be about.

- A biblical journey is traced as journey into new creation: from *Creation* (Genesis 1) to *New Creation* (Revelation 21).

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- The notion of 'shalom' is employed to depict the promise and reality of this new creation: a comprehensive and holistic picture of *flourishing*. Although often translated as *peace*, that is only one aspect of shalom. Shalom is the hope of the prophets: enemies reconciled, injustices righted, hurts healed, fears calmed and communities prospering. God's mission is to bring the whole of creation into harmony: peace with God, peace between the nations, peace with the created order.
- A conversation around what God's shalom might concretely mean for the Great Lakes Region is engaged. Be concrete and specific. Name the obstacles also.
- Participants are encouraged to *dream* and share what they see in their dreams; but also are encouraged to name some practical ways, e.g. story telling, scripture, worship, study, that help the leader to keep the end (the big picture) in mind.









**DAY TWO: WHAT'S GOING ON?**

Jeremiah 14:17: "Let my eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease, for the virgin daughter of my people is shattered with a great wound, with a very grievous blow."

**Theme: Lament**

What is going on? If God's dream for the land is shalom, the reality is often far from it. What is going on? Why? Pressing this question is meant to lead to a clearer understanding of the reality, nature and causes of the challenges in the Great Lakes Region. The goal is not only to learn to describe what is going on, but also to see the underlying causes that make the realities of war, violence, poverty and corruption ongoing in our region.

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**Challenges to be addressed:**

- *Numbness*: without taking time to see, name and lament the brokenness in our midst, it is easy to become numb or uncaring
- *Despair*: accepting that the way things are is the way things have to be, or the way things will always be.
- *Survival*: lowering one's horizon and expectations in what is possible – thus settling for personal survival and well-being.

**Learning goal:** to engage lament as both a gift and discipline, which allows one to see, name and stand within the brokenness in a way that that does not lead to numbness or despair but energizes and gives birth to hope.

Ways to do this:

- The *biblical* notion of lament is explored, as both a gift and discipline. In the Bible lament is a gift in that lament and hope go hand in hand: there is no hopeful future without lament. Possible resources for the biblical notion of lament include the books of Lamentations, Joel, and the Psalms.

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- *Theoretical* frameworks and methodologies which help participants to learn to describe the challenges within the cultural, historical, social and political context are suggested. Good frameworks move from thick descriptions of what is going on to analyses that help to highlight causes and factors, as well as the effects: on individuals, communities and society as a whole.
- *Personal* stories and experiences: Participants are encouraged (in groups or general session) to share stories and personal experiences of the challenge, to name the brokenness.







**DAY THREE: WHAT DOES HOPE LOOK LIKE?**

Isaiah 43:19: “See, I am doing a new thing. . . . do you not perceive it?”

**Theme: Hope**

What does hope look like? The Christian conviction is that even in the midst of war, violence and poverty, God is sowing seeds of hope. How do we learn to see and live in hope? How does hope become a way of life?

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**Challenges of a life and communities not grounded in hope are addressed:**

- *Despair*: and its many expressions
- *Transference*: communities and individuals who have been constant victims pass on victimization and violence: when victims become killers (Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 2002).
- *Shallow visions* of hope: “They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14).

**Learning goal:** to share and build up practical models of hope, which are signs and manifestations of the Movement of Hope in the Great Lakes region.

- Biblical models and example are engaged. How does hope look like from a biblical perspective? The biblical journey as the form and story of what God’s movement of hope looks like.
- Life stories, models, experiments and initiatives that display Christian hope are shared, and contrasted to other counterfeit models.
- Examples of leaders, skills and practices of leaders who lead into hope are highlighted. Christian leadership in reconciliation is as much about *doing* as it is about *inspiring* and leading hope.







**DAY FOUR: PILGRIMAGE AND PERSONAL JOURNEY**

**Activity: Pilgrimage**

Through a journey together and visit to a site, which represents a concrete sign of hope in the region, and learning from the leader(s) associated with the sign of hope, the key themes of the institute come together in a dynamic fashion. More specifically, the goal of the pilgrimage is to bring together lament and hope in a way that inspires, energizes and helps participants to see a model of hope, while building their own models. The hope at the end of the day is for each participant to begin to shape their own personal leadership manifesto, which includes a statement of vision, dreams, as well as an outline of the relevant capacities and spirituality.

**Key Questions on the pilgrimage:**

What's going on: what is the landscape on which the sign of hope is located: pain and lament?

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What are the underlying challenges to life, peace on this landscape?

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What is the story behind the sign of hope?

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What inspired the leader? How did he/she start?

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What keeps him/her going?

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How is this a sign of hope? For whom?

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What is the most impressive/striking/inspiring insight of the day?

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How does this speak to your own context? To your leadership? To what God may be calling you to be/do?

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What are the key take-aways?

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**DAY FIVE: WHY ME & WHY BOTHER?**

2 Corinthians 5:17–20: “If anyone is in Christ, new creation . . .  
so we are ambassadors”

**Theme: Leadership and Spirituality**

Why me, and Why bother? The work is hard, tiring and often unrewarding. Why even bother? And what keeps one going in midst of setbacks? The question is meant to get to affirm personal call, practices, and a spirituality that keeps one motivated and fresh.

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**Challenges to be overcome:**

- *Shyness*: who am I to lead? Feeling inadequate or exempting oneself because one is not an expert: “anyone in Christ . . .”
- *Discouragement*: carrying on even when there are no immediate results
- *Burn out*: overextension, overwork

**Learning goal:** to construct practical leadership models and personal spirituality

- Time is taken to listen to and share stories of individual calls to leadership and ministry of the participants—which must include a discussion of role models and personal heroes.
- Participants also write out and share dreams: what is the dream/vision that God is writing in your life? Where do you feel called to lead/serve and how?
- Participants build their individual models, to include evaluative tools or landmarks, to help track change, growth, and success.
- The model should also highlight or include practices and disciplines for a personal spirituality and growth.
- Each participant formulates a “personal leadership manifesto.”











