

# GREVILLEA

May, 2011

Welcome to the seventeenth edition of **Grevillea** an e-magazine to stimulate your thinking!

Why "Grevillea"? The Macquarie Dictionary defines "grevillea" as any shrub or tree of the very large, mainly Australian genus Grevillea family. Many are attractive ornamentals and a number are useful trees. It is also worth noting that grevillea can be very toxic.

So Grevillea is an Australian e-magazine which will cover a large range of subjects as time goes on. We trust they will be interesting (not just ornamental), useful and stimulate (not irritate) your thinking. We aim to have articles that will be short, practical and worth your opening them as attachments.

This edition focuses on **Teamwork**.

If we are to achieve the things we want to do then doing so as part of a team is required in most instances. We may admire the individual, probably too much in our culture, but as part of a team we can do things that we would not be able to do alone. Teamwork does not happen well without intentionally developing and maintaining the team and moving towards a common goal.

In this edition there are four articles on teamwork. Chris Lockley outlines how lay teams function drawing on his experience in his previous presbytery role in the Mid North Coast and his work on resource ministry in the Board of Education. As an example of teamwork in practice, Elizabeth de Réland writes about Parramatta Mission using both historical and recent examples. Peter Powell, from the Pastoral Counselling Institute, draws attention to psychological considerations in relation to teamwork. David Reichardt provides an interesting approach to teamwork and leadership utilising Steve Waugh's cricket career. Finally, there are some recommended books with regard to leadership and teamwork.

Email me if you have some thoughts to share. My email address is [chrisw@nat.uca.org.au](mailto:chrisw@nat.uca.org.au). I hope you find this edition of Grevillea a stimulus to your thinking and action. Let me suggest you print it out and read it at a convenient time.

Grace and peace  
Chris Walker

# LAY MINISTRY TEAMS - LESSONS FROM PRACTICE AND REFLECTION.

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Lay Ministry teams have been a part of the Uniting Church since its inception in one form or another, with varying terms of reference and degrees of responsibility. The development of Resource Ministry over the last decade has been accompanied by a growth in the number and variety of lay teams. Whereas in the past such teams usually operated in conjunction with a minister in placement, the absence of full time pastoral placements in many congregations has changed their shape and function.

In some places a lay team works with a Resource Minister whose primary role is that of mentor of lay leadership across several (or many) congregations. In other places lay teams operate under the umbrella of a Presbytery's oversight but without the intentional support a Resource Minister can provide. Sometimes lay teams are formed as part of an intentional strategy for building a congregation's discipleship and mission. At other times they are seen as almost a last resort because stipended ministry is no longer possible. Such teams can experience a difficult formative stage, arising as they do out of necessity rather than preference. Experience shows, however, that such congregations can experience significant transformation, growing in grace and confidence. One cluster of congregations has experienced a transformation to such an extent that they would want to keep their lay ministry teams even if they could afford a minister in the future.

The functioning of lay ministry teams is as varied as their contexts. Some lay teams have a specific task within the overall mission and ministry of a congregation e.g. worship, pastoral care or a specific community project. A congregation may have several teams, each overseeing a particular aspect of its ministry.

**Case study 1.** Congregation X was supported by a Resource Minister in a 50% placement. She invited all the members of the congregation to join a worship team. 6 worship teams in all were formed, with a mixture of ages (including children) and leadership experience. Each team was responsible for worship once a quarter. The Resource Minister mentored and encouraged each team, was a part of their planning meetings, and provided resources as needed. Some people were encouraged to undertake a Lay preacher's course. In developing such teams the congregation's prime anxiety was addressed: their ability to have worship services in the face of an uncertain financial future. Over time the confidence gained by these teams relieved the congregation of its anxiety and made way for new missional thinking. A new team, initiated by congregational members, emerged for the purpose of a service ministry in the community.

In other contexts teams work together to fulfil the functions previously provided by the presence of an ordained minister, with individual team members

having different responsibilities e.g. pastoral care, administration, or oversight of worship.

**Case study 2.** Congregation Y has had a lay ministry team for the past 14 years under the oversight of its Presbytery. They had previously shared a ministry agent, but with a restructuring from a parish to congregational model, decided to explore the possibilities of lay ministry. The size of the team has fluctuated between 3 and 4 people. Each member has particular responsibilities based on their perceived strengths and experience. Although it has not had a Resource Minister as mentor, the team, in a sense, resources itself, with congregational support and encouragement. The budget has an allocation for lay training and the team regularly accesses available training and education, often travelling long distances. It is estimated this congregation has accessed more training opportunities than any other congregation in the Synod! An important feature of this congregation is that the 'official' team is not considered an 'elite' group by the congregation. It exists within an awareness that the *whole* congregation is a team, and everyone is working together as the Body of Christ.

A number of common factors that contribute to effective mission and ministry can be identified across the diverse range of lay ministry teams, whether they function within a large congregation alongside multiple paid ministry agents and staff, a small congregation sharing a ministry agent, or in a congregation without any ministry agent.

- **The primary focus of any ministry team is the mission of God**, not the maintenance or survival of the congregation. As congregations we exist for the sake of the mission of God – though sometimes it appears congregations act as if mission were for their sake! One congregation which relied on lay leadership reported that they were “doing well” without a minister. “Doing well” translated into: they had services every Sunday and everyone was happy. An inward focus on the congregation’s wellbeing may in fact work against what it is hoping for. It can isolate the congregation from its community and restrict its future. Ministry teams formed out of financial necessity seem especially prone to this temptation, particularly in their early stages. Shifting the focus of ministry to God’s mission – what God is doing in the community and congregation – enables meaningful engagement with the gospel and New Testament patterns of ministry.
- **Lay teams function best within a framework of discipleship formation.** When a congregation focuses on deepening people’s connections with God, each other and themselves; equipping people to discern their ministries (both within the church and the community) and resourcing them for those ministries, it is creating space for people to participate in teams as part of their natural growth in *discipleship* (see *Traveling together – a guide for disciple-forming congregations* by Jeffrey D. Jones (The Alban Institute, 2006).)
- **Lay teams work well when people work with their strengths.** This should be self evident, but often we choose to fill vacant positions in congregations (including ministry teams) with willing volunteers, or those who can be nicely coerced into volunteering – regardless of their experience or personal strengths! The discipleship model (above) suggests it is a far more natural process to help people identify and develop their strengths, and discern ways of exercising them. Lay teams can even develop around a mix of gifts and strengths (and common concerns) rather than the

need to plug the gaps in congregational leadership. As well as remaining true to our God-given selves, it's also more fun to work in a team built on strengths! And where there is fun, there is energy and drive! (see *Lead with your Strengths* by Peter Kaldor and John McLean (N.C.L.S. Research, 2009) for some excellent resources for building leadership teams based on strengths. A workbook is also available.)

- **Lay teams don't have to do everything!** In the absence of a minister in placement, it is easy to think that lay teams have to tick the box for everything that ministers usually do. This is not the case. If anything, this can lead to burnout and discouragement for team members. A lay ministry team is more than a group of lay people doing what a minister would otherwise do. It is O.K. to let some things go undone and concentrate on what *can* be done. It is useful, too, if the whole congregation sees itself as part of the wider ministry team, and does not develop an unhealthy dependence on the 'official' team/s. Lay teams may have particular responsibilities within the congregation, but all of us within the Body of Christ have been gifted for some form of ministry. It's also good practice for lay teams to identify new and future leaders and help equip them for their ministry.
- **Teams need time to develop.** It is well recognised that any group goes through certain stages as it develops, so teams (and congregations) need to be gracious and allow time for that process to take place. These stages are often called *forming, storming, norming and performing*. A team may commence with everyone being nice, polite and co-operative (*forming*), but individual differences, preferences and perspectives will inevitably lead to difficulties (*storming*). It is important that the team can work through such differences respectfully. Some suggest a Christ-like dying to self is required for this *norming* to take place – and then they can begin *performing* with confidence and ability. Be aware that when new people join a team, it will most likely cycle back to the *forming* stage, and need to go through the process again.
- **Teams don't last forever.** A final stage of group life is *mourning* (or *adjourning*), as a group or team comes to the end of its life, and says its goodbyes. Lay teams don't have to go on forever! Its good practice to review the team's life on a regular basis (say, annually), to consider where it is going, and whether it *needs* to keep going. The group might ask itself: "what would happen if this team ceased to exist?" or "why should this team stay together?" It may be that it has come to the natural conclusion of its existence, and new and different teams are needed for the congregation's future mission. It's a good practice to recognise such endings in worship, celebrating the team's contribution, and releasing its members for future ministries (and a good rest!).
- **Good teams are learning communities.** Teams grow as they reflect on their experience of ministry. We don't have to have all the answers, but we can learn from challenges, new experiences and even mistakes. For this reason it's useful for a team to have a mentor who can assist this reflection, and help it set learning goals, or to at least have regular team reviews for the purpose of affirming what is going well, and what could be done differently. As well as theological and personal reflection on its practice, teams can also identify resources and forms of learning that will enhance their ministry. (see *chapter 12 from Lead with your Strengths, above*.)
- **Team members need time out.** Since lay ministry team members have a life apart from the team (and many have jobs and families) it's important to look after each other! Self care and peer support can help avoid burnout and build resilience. Some practices mentioned above (e.g. leading from your strengths, and reflective learning from experience) can provide a healthy basis for this. Ensure that time is

given to your important relationships, that church meetings don't become an end in themselves, and that you look after yourself physically, spiritually and mentally! If you have been on a ministry team for some time, consider taking a sabbatical – intentional time out for personal and relational rest. Use this time for discernment about your future ministry. Seek out a mentor to support you in this time.

All indications are that the call for strong lay ministry will be a continuing factor in congregational life. Beyond recognising the practical reasons for such teams in many places, hopefully we can affirm the important theological and biblical grounds for supporting lay ministry teams as a vital expression of the ministry of the whole people of God.

## **TEAMS THROUGH TIME**

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If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea. (*Antoine de Saint Exupery: 1900 – 1944*)

On Monday 21 June 2010, Leigh Memorial Church Parramatta (named in 1899 after the first Wesleyan Missionary to NSW, Rev. Samuel Leigh) - celebrated a special anniversary. 125 years before, the consecration of the Wesleyans' imposing, new Victorian Gothic church, had engaged the whole town in a frenzy of excitement and brought together its large and diverse congregation in an event filled with great anticipation. The *vision* of a few had become a highly absorbing *reality*. Moreover, it was one that provided an identity, inspiration and direction for the incumbent congregation and which would, by the latter twentieth century, culminate in the formation of Lifeline Western Sydney and that of Parramatta Mission – still 'Transforming Lives' through multiple support projects in Sydney's Greater West.

With its spire soaring higher than any other in Parramatta at the time - and its congregation (including various civic and Methodist luminaries) - the new church certainly represented local, nineteenth century Christianity at its most ambitious. Yet, records of its foundation stone laying ceremony (1884) and official opening (1885) indicate a surprisingly forward thinking - and in our lexicon: 'team' focussed and democratic - approach by the congregation and its leadership. From the inception of the church building idea/ debate in the 1870s, to the ultimate division and handling of both essential and celebratory tasks a decade later, the Wesleyans consistently worked together in the interests of their goal.

At the 'Laying of Foundation Stones' ceremony alone, the involvement of Rev. Schofield's wife Ellen and Trustee, Mr. G. T. Hunt's wife, Elizabeth, plus Trustees that included timber merchants, local preachers and a couple of Sunday School Superintendents - alongside VIPs such as ex-Parramatta Mayor, The Hon. James Byrnes, Methodist advocate Sir Wigram Allen, the current Colonial Secretary and Chief Justice and the President of the Methodist Conference – publicly demonstrated

the ‘many hands’ that had facilitated and characterized the event. In fact, from the appointment of architects to presiding speakers and preachers - to the church painters and the tea and scone makers – there is evidence of both social and generational variety in the choice of contributors and the ready utilization of congregational teams and committees in order to ‘get the job done’ on such a broad scale.

These ‘teams’ of the mid-1880s included both the exclusively male church ‘Trustees’ and the church’s women – who banded together to plan and deliver the post ceremonial ‘Tea and Public Meetings’ for 600 – 700 people in Parramatta Town Hall and the old Methodist Church (Macquarie Hall) in 1884 and 1885. This same group of women, undoubtedly inspired by their success and the formation of many civic and Christian women’s groups at the time (along with the first international stirrings of the Suffragettes), eventually formed the Leigh Memorial ‘Women Workers Society’ (led by Miss. Marion Byrnes) in 1894. This team of dedicated women went on to raise enormous funds for the church in the early 1900s, and were credited by Rev. Carruthers with no less than saving Parramatta Methodism itself from ‘disaster’. However, the determination brought about by a sense of shared purpose amongst the Parramatta Wesleyans at the time, and the practical benefits of their team based preparations, were probably no better demonstrated than via the relaxed re-allocation of official duties when key speakers for their special events were suddenly taken ill (such as Rev. Fletcher in 1884) - or when the 1885 ‘Tea’ suddenly needed re-scheduling due to extreme weather. In fact, Parramatta’s *The Weekly Advocate* reported at the time that any and all problems experienced by the congregation were handled with great aplomb. From our perspective and in terms of teamwork – it is clear that there were plenty of ‘reserves’ on the bench and contingencies in place – all of which contributed to the quality of the celebrations and exemplified the saying: “Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.”

Interestingly too, the winning architectural entry in the new church’s design competition (by Wesleyan firm ‘Hart & Lavors’) was entitled ‘Ecclesia Nostra’ – which translates from the Latin as ‘Our Church’. This choice, which emphasized the very team-based *Our* in the title, further reiterated the Trustees’ desire to imbue the project with a unifying sense of community and inclusiveness - and to stamp the church’s future life and work with a similarly strong, mutual vision. It is unsurprising that the same title was adopted by the Festival 2010 organizers for their commemorative book, published to celebrate Leigh Memorial’s 125 years and to provide the first comprehensive written histories of both Parramatta Mission and its Fijian and Westmead congregations.

That Leigh Memorial has clearly survived 125 years of immense socio-cultural upheaval and demographic change in the heart of Parramatta - while retaining a broader community focus - would seem to justify the original hopes expressed by both Messrs. Hart & Lavors and the church’s Trustees. In fact, while the building required extensive re-modelling in 1905 (funded by Philanthropist Ebenezer Vickery) to make it ‘user-friendly’ and genuinely accessible (an irony not lost on the congregation of the day) - and while enduring 70 years of suffocating building debt and the eventual demolition of its beloved spire in 1921 due to safety issues – all setbacks were ultimately viewed as less of a blot on original good intentions - and more of a timeless lesson in the inevitable pitfalls of haste and pragmatic denial.

Certainly, when Leigh Memorial's 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary came around in 2010, all the above mentioned features of its history and the 'teams' of congregation members who had followed through on their initial vision - made the event an appropriate 'hook' on which to base a contemporary team building opportunity: Parramatta Mission's month long 'Festival 2010'.

Encompassing a variety of activities, the Festival's aim was to bring together and build bridges between all the congregations of Parramatta Mission: Leigh Memorial, Leigh Memorial Fijian, Ermington Fijian, Westmead and the Korean Faith Community – and to engage and envelop old and new friends as well as the broader community. As a result, a program was developed which included a public concert at Leigh Memorial by the Sydney Welsh Choir, both Anniversary and 'Back to Leigh' church services and community morning teas, a Sunday School '1885' costume re-enactment, an Oral History Project (starting with congregation members 65 years and over), a 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Historical Exhibition/Church Tours, a Women's Anniversary 'High Tea', a Presbytery Dinner, an Arts & Crafts Afternoon and an Inter-Congregational church service & luncheon with the President of the Assembly.

The entire program was designed to encourage a cross-pollination of creativity, worship, reflection and inspiration – which could in turn filter through to the local community and help build both understanding and connectivity. Towards this end, the Festival's theme became: 'Valuing the Past, Claiming the Present, Seeking a Future' – not an original wording, but one which found freshness in the project to which it was applied. Furthermore, from its inception, the Festival was arranged using an inclusive, inter-generational, inter-cultural approach and one in which 'team work' in all aspects of its organization and execution – was encouraged in the hope that it would add to the project's immediate workability and the perpetuity of its achievements. Similarly, to assist a sense of unified purpose and inspiration - despite the multifarious nature and extent of the Festival's program - a easily identifiable and visually engaging Festival 'logo' was created by one of the Sunday School children and a colour scheme of red, black and white (also the colours of Parramatta Mission and the Uniting Church) was selected for all materials promoting Festival 2010, or pertaining to it.

Of the many 'teams' associated with Festival 2010, including the Local Arrangements Committee, the Exhibition Volunteers (mostly Seniors), the Women's Anniversary High Tea Committee and the Sunday School @ Leigh '1885 Re-enactment' team – it was the group undertaking arrangements for the High Tea which most closely exemplified Antoine de Saint-Exupery's assertion that for something significant to be achieved - the team of people working on it must be deeply inspired by their goal. The High Tea was such an undertaking. For those involved, the goal was two-fold: the success of Festival 2010 as a whole and the success of the High Tea itself. Yet, it was somewhat more than that too. It was, in its most literal sense, a 'labour of love'.

Included in the High Tea's considerable program - which included the serving of a traditional afternoon tea to more than 180 guests - was also a Guest Speaker, (Margaret Reeson - past Moderator of the Uniting Church and Author of 'Currency Lass'), a Vintage Fashion Parade and an extensive display of Vintage Wedding Gowns. In preparation for the event, a committee comprising a group of women aged 35 – 75, from both the Leigh Memorial and Leigh Fijian congregations, was formed and quickly set about meeting regularly, participating in 'working bees', undertaking

individual assignments for the group (such as tracking down garments/ preparing food etc), and jointly promoting the event/ selling tickets. Simultaneously too, these same women were happily participating in various other Festival 2010 committees. This high degree of fluidity between the various teams - involving a constant sharing of personnel, ideas and experience - added greatly to the sense of teamwork and richness of input which characterized both the Festival's preparations and their realization.

Across time - and with the all encompassing 'vision' which de Saint-Exupery believed a successful team must wholly embrace - it is clear that healthy teamwork requires inspiration and a goal that surpasses all the routine practicalities and niggling setbacks of event preparation. From the 1884-5 celebrations at Leigh Memorial Church, to its 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Parramatta Mission's 'Festival 2010' - expressions of congregational unity, community outreach and creativity were typified by a deeply engaging, collective vision, the hard work of many and a fundamental belief by those involved that their efforts truly *mattered*.

## Teamwork - Psychological Perspectives

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### Abstract

This article proposes that teamwork in ministry can be both an exciting, positive experience for some people as well as being threatening and overwhelming for others. I will argue that teams often fail because of assumptions made about the team's goals as well as the people involved in those teams. I will further argue that a lack of awareness of personality development, particularly related to the development of a healthy self, interferes with the ability of some teams to function. People enter teams with self-needs as well as altruistic attitudes, but are not always aware of how those self-needs operate to sustain their own sense of well-being. Rather than being a sign of dysfunction in a team, differences of perspective and conflict are inevitable aspects of a team's life; consequently, successful teams require members who are self and other affirming and who accept that part of the function of the team - in addition to the ministry provided for others - is to sustain the well-being of individual members as well as the team itself. Then, and only then, can team members develop communication processes and conflict resolution strategies that assist in sustaining a healthy team.

### Introduction

The thought of being invited to be part of a ministry team will inevitably excite some people and cause others to pause long and hard. Some personalities enjoy the cut and thrust interactions of a creative team; even when that team becomes involved in tense exchanges of ideas. Others may prefer the safety of belonging to a team, where their gifts can be contained and used within a collegial group, rather than them being isolated on their own. Whatever the reasons, different people have a variety of needs when it comes to participating in team ministry. Some of the issues critical for working successfully in a team ministry are now described.

### Assumptions

Despite all evidence to the contrary, some people still live in a naive belief that Christians have a more effective way to relate to each other than others. There is biblical material that demands our adherence to qualities of interaction that are respectful, even submissive towards others (Philippians 2:1-5 and 4:2-3; Galatians 5:22-23). Some Christians, however, seem not to have paid much attention to the interactions Jesus had with those whose desires were somewhat less than Godly (Matthew 16:4).

It may well be that members of a particular ministry team are completely sincere in wanting to work creatively and effectively together; however, that desire for good working relationships does not overcome the natural human desire for people to create structures within which they can function safely; structures that are not necessarily supportive of the team's goals. Not to do so would, in fact, indicate poor mental health. The critical question for team members is not, 'Am I self-interested in what I do?', but, 'How can I be aware of my self-interest and how it interacts with the individuals with whom I work?', as well as, 'How does my self-interest enhance the functioning of the team?' To assume that my desire to serve God will protect me from the destructive elements of my self-interest and then to assume the same process will be operating for my fellow workers, is to walk headlong into very dangerous territory indeed. This is not an invitation to become cynical; rather it is a call to take seriously the biblical and psychological narratives. This leads inevitably to another critical issue: a basic understanding of human personality and development.

### **Human personality and development**

Personality theory is a complex topic. The critical issue of early childhood interactions with significant parental figures for the development of a healthy self is particularly relevant to the development of teamwork. In early development children perceive themselves to be the centre of the world with little recognition of others. Over time, as children develop in healthy family systems, they develop a sense of an emerging self separate but in relationship with others. In these healthy systems, parental figures - not necessarily the biological parents - are able to empathically resonate with the needs of children and demonstrate sufficient warmth and affection. In less healthy families the interaction between the parental figures and children is less consistent and more emotionally withholding; consequently, children develop a greater sense of anxiety in their attachments to others.

It can be disturbing to discover that it takes very little inconsistency and emotional withholding for some less resilient children to become extremely anxious in their attachments; consequently, it is not necessarily people who emerge from dysfunctional families who become problems in teams. Some church workers who come from apparently quite stable and loving families may still have internalised a poor self-concept, due to the particular way they interacted with the significant parental figures in their early development.

The result of the development of a poor self-concept - which may be well hidden by the church worker from themselves and others - is that other systems within which they live and work become the object of their desire to

develop a sense of a 'good' self. In other words, becoming a ministry worker may well be one way a person strives to develop a sense of belonging to a family which is responsive to their needs and within which they can respond to the needs of others: this can then enable them to feel they are 'good enough', despite the earlier rejections experienced. So the desire of the worker may well be sincerely altruistic; however, if the inner need for belonging to a loving system is projected on to the church community, that person will be unable to function well within a team, particularly when conflict and differences arise. That is why some teams are surprised when apparently effective workers, who have functioned quite well within the teams for significant periods of time, suddenly unravel and reveal less mature and more frightened sides of their personalities. This can range anywhere from angry outbursts in meetings right through to a variety of sexual acting out behaviours.

It is not surprising then, when assessments are made with ministry workers who have become involved in activities leading to suspension or dismissal, that a poor sense of self is identified. When investigating their perceptions of their experiences growing up in their families of origin, inconsistencies about attachment and belonging are usually identified.

### **Conflict strategies required**

Given what has already been said it is not surprising that some people working in team ministries have no clearly defined conflict strategies and, due to personality difficulties, are often unable to use the ones that are available. If it is assumed that Christians can work well together, then it is not surprising that conflict resolution strategies are not developed. In over forty years of ministry I have never found a congregation that had such strategies clearly defined in their protocols. On numerous occasions I have listened to the painful stories of church workers and their partners as they recounted episodes of rudeness, rejection and even betrayal.

Once the person in ministry recognises the frailty of human life and the ambiguous nature of personal desires and goals - including their own - they can begin to develop creative strategies to work with conflict. There are a variety of models for resolving conflict. Suffice to say in this short article that an effective model will include at least three basic elements.

Firstly, each person involved in the conflict recognises that there is no ultimate 'truth' to be discovered but, rather, an awareness of the perceptions each person brings to the conflict.

Secondly, each person involved in the conflict demonstrates respect for the perceptions of the other persons. This is shown in both attitude and language.

Thirdly, no conversation continues and no attempt is made to resolve the conflict unless the first two principles are operating. It is better to walk away from the conflict and come back later than it is to try and pursue a resolution in the context of disrespect for the integrity of the persons involved and the perceptions they hold.

### **Summary**

The implications flowing from this article are that we need to pay a great deal more attention to the personalities of members of teams. This is not an invitation for team members to become amateur psychologists; however, it is inviting them to pay attention to attitudes, behaviour and language that may reveal a dysfunctional interpersonal style, resulting from a poorly developed sense of self. Teamwork often breaks down, and conflict resolution strategies fail, due to the inability of one or more team members to be able to sustain the intensity of interpersonal relationships required within teams. Strategies to improve communication and resolve conflicts will inevitably fail if the underlying personality issues are not addressed.

## **Steve Waugh and Me, Leadership and Teamwork**

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Lost somewhere in the Reichardt family archives (a dignifying term if ever there was one!) is a framed photo of Steve Waugh, the former Australian test cricket captain, that has helped me a great deal in my understanding of leadership and teamwork in the Church, particularly in a former placement.

Waugh has a CV to die for if you're into this sort of thing. He was rated the world's best batsman, and finished his career as one of the elite who achieved a Test batting average of over 50 per innings. An allrounder, he also took almost 300 international

wickets with his bowling. He was another photo awkward but the gigantic, often Indian bowler while on his way to series win.

threateningly over being restrained by although he had

times by a hard ball travelling at well over 100kph, Waugh is clearly up for the blue!



medium-paced famously obdurate; shows him in an defiant stand-off with devastating West Curtly Ambrose, a score of 200, and a Towering Waugh, Ambrose is his captain, but already been hit many

Waugh's combative instincts came especially to the fore in such adversity. His nicknames, "Tugga" (as in "Tug-o-war") and "Iceman", attest to this. So does the saga of how he led the Australian team to the first of 3 consecutive World Cup victories in 1999. With his team in dire straits against the powerful South Africans Waugh scored a century. On the way he was dropped by the overconfident Herschelle Gibbs. "You've just dropped the World Cup, son!" Waugh is reputed to have sledged Gibbs as he ran past. And so it proved!

Until last year Waugh was the most capped player in the history of test cricket, and he is still its most successful captain. In a sport (in)famous (at least among Americans!) for its many undecided results and its love of statistics Waugh led his champion side to 41 wins, 9 losses and only 7 draws. The 4.55 win/loss ratio and the 71.92% of

matches won, among them 16 won in a row, are unprecedented stats, up there with Sir Donald Bradman's legendary 99.94 batting average and record as Australian captain. True, Waugh had great players to work with. Names like bowlers Warne and McGrath, openers Hayden and Langer, middle order batters Ponting and Waugh's twin brother Mark, and the inimitable, theologically-named batter-wicket keeper Adam Gilchrist would all feature in discussions about who would be selected in the best ever Australian team, or the best world team of their era. But as has frequently been said, there is a great difference between a team of champions and a champion team. Waugh's way of handling some of the team's lesser lights, for example, his habit of not shielding his tail-end batsmen, but encouraging them to "back themselves", just as he always backed himself, says much about his quality, capacity and approach as a leader.

Nevertheless, this great success did not come easily. Waugh was not part of a winning test team until his 13th Test match and had to wait until his 26th before scoring the first of his 32 test centuries. At one point he was replaced by Mark in the Test side. However, motivated by the desire to be the best he could possibly be Waugh was recalled. Speaking of how he dealt with adversity Waugh remarked: "It really was about training hard and working hard and also enjoying what you're doing. That's important when you play professional sport—you don't want to lose sight of the fact that you actually love playing the game...Like everyone, there are personal issues to face [during those difficult years], definitely. But as a professional sportsman, you've got to learn to compartmentalise. If you've got problems off the field, wherever they may be—in business, family or whatever—once you get on the field, once you cross that line, you've got to be totally focused on what you're doing...It's a learned skill. It doesn't just happen overnight. You learn how to put things in different boxes and to deal with things in front of you, and then go back to others when you need to."<sup>1</sup>

In retirement Waugh has been, though typically quiet and unassuming, no less inspirational than when he was facing down opposing fast bowlers and crushing opposing teams. During a visit to India in 1986, right at the beginning of his test career, he was struck by those suffering from leprosy and their families, and was prompted to get involved in helping such people. In 1998, having lost a test match in 4 days, he accepted an invitation to be shown a number of charities around Calcutta (now Kolkata) on what would have been the final day's play. One of these charities, the Udayan Home in Barrackpore, takes children out of their leprosy-dominated environment and provides them with education, healthcare and opportunities in life. Waugh has been assisting Udayan ever since. In 2009 he started the Steve Waugh Foundation to help people, particularly children, who suffer from rare diseases, both in Australia and abroad.

This combination of sport and philanthropy has brought great recognition for Waugh. In 2004 he was named Australian of the Year. The following year then Prime Minister John Howard launched his autobiography, *Out of my Comfort Zone*, and he was named Father of the Year, and in 2006 the National Trust declared him to be one of

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<sup>1</sup> Voysey, Sheridan *Steve Waugh: Cricket's Living Legend* Signs of the Times  
<http://www.signsofthetimes.org.au/items/steve-waugh-cricket-s-living-legend>  
Adapted, with permission, from [Open House Volume 2: Sheridan Voysey in Conversation](#), Strand Publishing, 2009.

Australia's  
Treasures.

and  
however,

in the  
not just that  
like many  
unlike the



National Living  
For all the  
achievements  
recognition,  
Waugh remains  
uncomfortable  
limelight. It's  
he's humble;  
ministers, and  
ebullient Shane

Warne, although a high achiever, he is an introvert. For this reason, as we think about leadership and teamwork in our contexts, consideration of Steve Waugh's approach may help us. In cricket, at least, one does not need to be a full-on, extroverted go-getter to succeed as team leader.

The photo in our archive struck me like a thunderbolt when I first saw it. In 1997 I had recently returned from 6 years' living and ministering in Sweden, to a two minister placement in Eastwood, and was reacquainting myself with Australian culture. While I was in Sweden the Australian cricket team had emerged from almost 20 years of domination by the West Indies to, under the captaincies, first of "Captain Cranky", Alan Border, then the convivial, shrewd Mark Taylor, to be one of the world's best. For the past 8 years they had succeeded against "the Old Enemy" England, but in this series, held in England, things were looking worrisome. England had won the first Test and Australia had scraped a draw in the second. In the third, played on a treacherous pitch at Old Trafford, Manchester, the scoring was low. Only Steve Waugh scored a century, and he managed two of them, one in each innings, to win the match, and eventually the series for Australia.

The photo which summed up Waugh's contribution captured him playing a vicious bouncer from English pace bowler Darren Gough. Both his feet were off the ground, and his back was arched, almost hyper-extended as he fended the ball from his face. Waugh was at that time vice captain under Mark Taylor. I was then working out my working relationship with Rev Greg McConnell, a former UTC classmate who had been instrumental in calling me to Eastwood, where the important work of amalgamating two significant congregations into one, on one refurbished site, was in progress. The challenge was clear enough, but in typical, non-hierarchical Uniting Church fashion, our working relationship was not going well! I had recently realized, and communicated to Greg that there needed to be a "captain" in the team, and that it had to be him. Steve Waugh's gritty heroics, summed up by this photo, taught me that vice-captains can win matches too!

So what leadership qualities did vice-captain, then captain Waugh exhibit that might be helpful for those of us who exercise ecclesiastical leadership? Though a fine human being he does not claim Christian faith. Neither does the Bible tell us what characteristics are needed to lead cricket teams! Yet if God has created all humans one might expect there to be commonalities across different pursuits, both "spiritual" and "secular" concerning what constitutes good leadership.

Both writers in sports leadership who claim to be Christian and those who do not emphasize the importance of *good character*. Steve Waugh has this in spades. The

photo that galvanized me demonstrated Waugh's *loyalty* to the team's cause and his *courage*. (He played in this match with a damaged thumb.) Repeatedly, over the years, he prioritized his team and their cause above his own physical wellbeing. His family life, particularly when his wife Lynette underwent treatment for cancer, has demonstrated this loyalty in another sphere.

People thrive under leaders who they believe have "*walked the talk*". The searing Pink Floyd line,

    "Forward!" he cried from the back,  
    and the front ranks died,"<sup>2</sup>

is a savage critique of defective leadership in all kinds of situations. One of Greg McConnell's more memorable lines concerned the inadequacy of spiritual leaders who have not been where they tell their people to go. Jesus famously called the Pharisees "blind guides".

People also thrive when they feel *cared for, appreciated, encouraged and trusted*. The quiet pastoral care Waugh now shows for those afflicted by leprosy he also showed for the members of his team. Vitally, he encouraged and trusted team members to "back themselves". In doing this he strove for success, and risked failure, rather than trying to control those under his leadership in the attempt to avoid failure.

That of course speaks to the importance of leaders *remaining positive*. The Australian team Waugh led included a number of players famous for their mental strength and positive outlook. Apart from Waugh himself, Justin Langer practised Zen-like calm, Matthew Hayden marched towards the bowlers, Shane Warne exuded confidence in all situations and Glenn McGrath predicted the scoreline of series, and announced who would be his "bunny". This attitude is not the same as faith, but the similarities are striking. Oh for a similar positive outlook in the Uniting Church today!

Then there is the relationship between *talent and sheer hard work and determination*. Although Steve Waugh was a sporting prodigy his early years in and out of the Australian team were not easy. His longevity and great success came as the result of a great deal of hard work. This determination, arising from adversity and often described as *ruthlessness*, led to the Australian team winning 16 consecutive matches.

Perhaps the one area of leadership for which Waugh has sometimes been criticized is that of *tactical and strategic nous*. Traditionally leaders are judged on this. Great strategies win wars, strokes of tactical genius win battles, ministers who came up with the great idea(s) that changed the life of their congregations are remembered for generations to come. Yet perhaps for all that, the importance of being really smart is overrated. Mark Taylor and Shane Warne were both said to be better tacticians than Waugh, yet Taylor won a much lower proportion of matches and, for reasons of personal character Warne did not become the Australian captain. It was under Waugh's captaincy that a very fine Australian cricket team attained its greatest successes.

Finally, there is what might be called *charisma*. We all know people who have the ability to take others with them. I have seen one such person have a normally sceptical

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<sup>2</sup> Pink Floyd    *Us and Them*

meeting of a presbytery “eating out of his hand”. We can easily think that this attribute, often associated with but not the same as being an extrovert, is necessary to be the pastor of a large Pentecostal church. Sometimes we lament that our traditional denominational system, filled with many ageing, declining, traditional congregations, selects introverts as its spiritual leaders. I suggest that vice-captain and captain Steve Waugh demonstrates that it is possible to be an introvert, and still be a highly successful team leader.

But one MUST...walk the walk.

### **Recommended books on Leadership and Teamwork**

- Robert Banks & Bernice M. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership* (Baker, 2004)  
Kennon Callahan, *Effective Church leadership* (Harper & Row, 1990)  
Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Free Press, 1989, 2004)  
Bill Easum, *Leadership on the Otherside* (Abingdon, 2000)  
Adam Hamilton, *Leading Beyond the Walls* (Abingdon, 2002)  
George G. Hunter III, *Leading and Managing a Growing Church* (Abingdon, 2000)  
Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Zondervan, 2002)  
Ian Jagelman, *The Empowered Church* (Openbook, 1998)  
Jeffrey D. Jones, *Traveling together – a guide for disciple-forming congregations* (Alban, 2006)  
Peter Kaldor & John Mclean, *Lead with your Strengths* (NCLS Research, 2009)  
John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders Around You* (Thomas Nelson, 1995)  
Herb Miller, *Leadership is the Key* (Abingdon, 1997)  
R. Paul Stephens & Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor* (Alban, 1993)  
Alan J. Roxburgh & Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader* (Jossey-Bass, 2006)

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