



# EQUIPPING FOR... LEADERSHIP

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## Top 10 Leadership Lessons for Congregations

by Jessica Foy, student at Knox College, Toronto and involved in planning Canada Youth 2016

In 2013 Jessica attended the Annual Recreation Workshop (ARW) at Montreat, North Carolina. Her experiences led her to reflect on how congregations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) develop leaders. Below is Jessica's summary of the lessons she learned with her suggestions of how they might be applied. Questions are offered to help you and your congregation reflect on these lessons.

### How will we lead?

*"Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.... And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another (excerpt from 1 Peter 5:2-3)."*

This passage is one of many biblical passages about leading faith communities. As you read Jessica's lessons, recall stories of leadership in the Old and New Testaments. Who is leading? Who is following? How were people equipped to lead? Reflect on what you and your congregation can learn from these stories.

### 1. Be intentional in planning worship and programs

We often respond to something that is happening "successfully" in other congregations by simply accepting it. We might instead get to know the people we are with and tailor worship, educational and fellowship opportunities for our community. Knowing our community is the first step we can take

in order to lead intentionally and be innovative in our worship experiences and programs. How that looks will differ from one congregation to the next, but the intention and meaning is the same: we are a gathering of God's beloved children.

**Question:** How would a congregation begin to plan intentionally, and implement, programs that are suitable for its people and context?

### 2. Offer hospitality in genuine, caring and ongoing ways

They have a saying in North Carolina, "We're glad you're here", which I heard numerous times during ARW. The message and intention behind it struck me. There was an individual on the planning team whose focus was on the "first-timers." It wasn't simply about greeting us on the first day; this person had time for us to meet throughout the event. As a first-timer, attending on my own, it was wonderful knowing that someone was there whenever I had a question or needed clarification.

I'm not suggesting a congregation needs a slogan, but perhaps it needs a plan for greeting visitors. Are there people each week who ensure that newcomers and visitors are welcomed? Could this become the ministry of a few leaders so that people are welcomed into the congregation in ways that serve them first, before we ask them to serve? How do we affirm

people's gifts without demanding something from them? How do we welcome without scaring away people? In some gatherings, nametags and energizers are used effectively to "even the playing field" while enabling everyone to become part of the community.

**Questions:** How does your congregation offer hospitality to newcomers and visitors? What could be done differently to ensure that everyone becomes part of the community?



**The Annual Recreation Workshop (ARW)** is an experiential 5-day event focused on recreation, worship, community, creativity, and the arts. ARW is designed for educators, youth workers, church volunteers, camp and conference professionals, pastors and anyone

interested in developing more creative leadership skills. ARW is connected to the Presbyterian Church (USA) and welcomes all denominations to participate in the workshop. ARW happens the first full week of May each year at Montreat Conference Center near Asheville, North Carolina.

**The ARW Vision Statement:** To know God's contagious joy and share it faithfully in the world.

**The Mission of ARW:** Responding to God's grace, we are called to intentional leadership development, experiential learning, and spiritual renewal through arts, community, creativity, recreation and worship.

### 3. Permit and enable times of silence and introspection

Throughout the week there were times allotted for silence: in worship, free time, workshops with quieter activities and a slower pace. I appreciated being able to take time on my own and to process my experiences so that I was less overwhelmed.

In congregational worship, do we offer moments of silence for people to catch up or take a breath? Are our fellowship events all lively and active or do some let people rest from their otherwise hectic lives? Is the group Bible study a place where people can wrestle with tough issues, or a never-ending pop quiz? People learn and play in many different ways.

**Question:** How might we honour all people in our congregations, in each place we meet them?

### 4. Encourage self-care

Even registration made it possible for people to forgo a workshop slot each day or a few throughout the week, to take time for themselves. We are so focused on creating disciples and modeling discipleship that we forget to take time. Caring for oneself is not a negative thing and knowing one's own needs helps one care for others and lead effectively.

With our lives often hectic and overscheduled, being able to speak to self-care is a gift congregations can give people. Also, self-care doesn't always mean being alone, it could mean serving others in a way that is life-giving for an individual, being part of an important community, spending time in communal prayer. We need only to look to Jesus to see that self-care is key to leadership and fostering one's life of faith.

**Question:** How would you define self-care and what are some examples? What are some ways that individual self-care could be encouraged in your congregation's life and ministries?

### 5. Create worship that mixes ancient, traditional and contemporary components

At ARW we had varied worship experiences. We were pointed back to the origins of the reformed church; we celebrated our Presbyterian roots; and we sang global songs that admired the richness of new worship music.

In our congregations we discuss our way of worshipping – its style, flow, music, using drama or dance, etc. Blended worship is not easy to facilitate. However, knowing that our worship doesn't have to be just one thing or type, opens us up to the richness of our heritage and to the church's future.

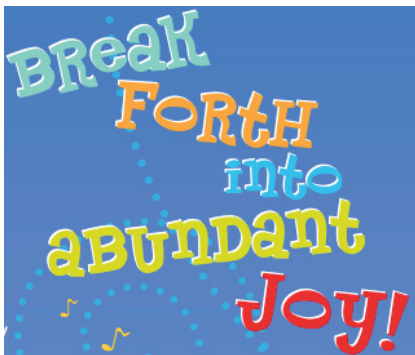
**Question:** Describe worship in your congregation. What are some varied worship experiences that you have had or would like to have?

### 6. Include many voices

Many voices were represented and invited into leadership at the event. Some were on the planning team and held positions of power, while others were asked to lead an energizer or teach a game. Some were used in worship to serve communion or read scripture. The variety and diversity in those leading were appreciated.

I was left desiring more voices in the worship I regularly attend—having children tell the children’s story, teens read scripture, seniors praying, or any combination. Even within the sermon, could we not hear or celebrate other voices? How can a congregation invite new voices without it being tokenism or gimmicky? Perhaps a starting place is to allow it to happen organically, perhaps during a special service, and then gradually have it become a regular part of worship.

**Questions:** Whose voices do you hear in worship and in different group gatherings of your congregation? Whose voices are not being heard? What could be done to include more voices?



### 7. Let your vision be known in all you do

The theme was carefully woven into each moment of the event, not in an obvious fashion but it was done in a way that built on itself in each area. My workshops were on games, but the theme of abundant joy was clear within their style of teaching and facilitation. The worship space was transformed through colourful banners, art installations, the way worship was led and the dress of leadership. Even the dinner table settings and grace prayed built on the thematic foundation.

Could a congregation have a theme for the year, an aspect of its vision that is lifted up? I have seen this done for Christian Education programming or for stewardship campaigns. For a congregation it might facilitate its connections with the community, making it easier to communicate clearly and consistently with outside groups. Also, having one focus that all groups could “hang their hat on” might be like a thread linking each part of the church to another, to be like the unified body of Christ we are called to be.

**Question:** What might be some themes that could guide all parts of your congregation and all their ministries?

### 8. Lead using invitational language

All ARW leadership used invitational language all the time though I don’t think it was something required. It was simply something that has been modeled and become a part of the leadership style. The language encouraged people to participate; it also allowed those in their comfort zone to jump right in and those who were less comfortable to take the time they needed. As a newcomer, I never felt “forced” into any situation or way of thinking, but I always felt that I was a part of the community and welcomed into each aspect of the event. This complemented that way I felt welcomed and cared for.

**Question:** How are hospitality and invitation two aspects of welcoming people into full participation into congregational life and community?

### 9. Use your congregation’s history to move forward

I attended ARW’s 60th anniversary event. Rather than simply celebrating their rich history and traditions, participants spent time seeing how their heritage was moving them into the future. Since recreation is at its heart re-creation, the ARW community takes its past and uses it as a jumping off point for its future. Participants take time to re-create how things are done, honouring how they have “always been done” in the past. As reformed Presbyterians, they live out their passion for recreation through continuously

reforming their methods of faith and fellowship. They utilize their history to heighten their work with today's context and the people who attend the workshop at this particular place in time.

By looking back and learning from our past, our congregations can also move forward in new and exciting ways. They can re-create how church life has been lived, for today's context.

**Question:** How can the history of the PCC and of your congregation be used, in combination with present circumstances, to plan your congregation's ministries?

### 10. Work to equip leaders at all times and gatherings

At the heart of all the ARW experiences were leaders being equipped with tools to guide others faithfully and effectively. This was not only done in service to those who would be led, but also for those in leadership as part of a community. So in turn, the equipping was done in community.

How do communities of Presbyterian leaders do this? These communities include presbyteries, synods and General Assembly. Are these places where leaders are being equipped or are they solely church courts and places of business? Having a community surrounding you as you grow in leadership and faith is a powerful support. Think of the programs offered to youth: summer camps, PYPs, Triennium, Canada Youth and Summer Experience. My teenage years were full of communities that helped me grow. I try to surround myself with friends I've gained through those experiences for continued growth and fellowship today. How do church leaders do this? What supports are there for ministers, particularly in rural churches on their own?

**Questions:** How are your minister and worship leaders supported and equipped on an ongoing basis? How are people in your congregation supported and equipped—those who are new to the church and to faith and those who are in different stages of life? What methods and technologies does your congregation use to equip people?

These 10 lessons are not distinct but complement and overlap each other. How do we lead so that we welcome, invite, serve, involve and equip all people in our congregations—newcomers, members, leaders, people of all ages and of all backgrounds—in the building of communities of faith? Figuring out how to lead and putting a leadership plan into action requires time, effort and discernment. But a community of faith that implements a leadership plan will be better able to “be the church” in today's world.



### Closing Prayer

One: God, you show us the way.

All: Help us see the way.

One: God, you talk to us as we travel.

All: Help us hear your voice.

One: God, you are the way.

All: Help us follow you. Amen

(Blair Bertrand & Colleen Wood, in *Caravan Road Map*, Canada Youth 2006)

### Canadian Ministries wants to hear from you!

What parts of this resource are most useful? Share your story of equipping for leadership. Recommend a resource! Make a suggestion or ask a question!

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