



Fall 2003

## I N S I D E

Gary L. Redcliffe of Emmanuel College describes his research of **SpiritWork**, a process of renewal for Toronto Scarborough Presbytery. This research enterprise is made possible by the financial partnership of Emmanuel College, Toronto Conference of The United Church of Canada and Toronto United Church Council

- 1 **Responding to the big issues**  
*Paul MacLean*
- 5 **Practical research on change**  
*Gary L. Redcliffe*
  - Adaptive and transformative change
  - The function of myth
  - Leadership
  - Partnership in research
- 23 **SpiritWork: Planning for future ministry**
- 28 **Project partners**

# Hope for Transformation

*Potentials in association with  
The Centre for Research in Religion,  
Emmanuel College*

## Responding to the big issues

*By Paul MacLean*

When the normal way of being a church no longer seems to be working, church leaders know they have to understand and engage afresh with the changed culture in which they are placed, and find radical new inspiration and direction from the Christian faith. However, despite the best efforts of ministers, pastors, priests and lay leaders to move their congregations into a new future, and despite the willingness of congregations to consider fairly significant change in order to be faithful to the Gospel, sometimes the issues are too big to handle. How does the church express a contemporary mission with confidence? How does it find a voice that attracts, connects and challenges? How does it make difficult and risky choices? The church's response feels inadequate. Increasingly there are circumstances in which

there are no satisfactory answers for these questions at the congregational level.

For many years most of our resources and training in congregational development were aimed at smaller, manageable issues. They helped us become better stewards, do better volunteer management, improve our worship, make our facilities accessible, increase our awareness of local and global outreach, cope with a modest increase or decrease in numbers, deal with conflict, build our capacity to create disciples. These were programmatic responses that assumed our existing congregations are more or less on the right track, but need to adapt or renew in order to be more effective in their mission to be God's people. These improvements also assumed that the resources and capacities exist within our congregations to carry them

---

The first sense of relief for church leaders happens when they realize they are not alone.

---

out. The church was confident in its mission, had a voice and knew how to make choices. We knew what the church was for.

This approach to congregational development is still very active and can be useful in many cases. However, we are seeing a shift in the issues and problems facing congregations. The shift is both exterior and interior: it involves the issues themselves and the way in which we talk about them. For example, how do congregations tell the story of a dramatic decline in their Sunday School, an experience shared by many? Is this a problem of adaptation or a big issue? Suburban neighbourhood churches built in the 50's typically had Sunday Schools of 800 children (it's amazing how often this figure of 800 is quoted). Now there may be a dozen. However, the church is left with the memories of a vital children's ministry of 30 years ago, large Christian education facilities (perhaps used by community youth groups or day care centers with no connection to the church except through rental agreements), and a sense of profound unease about its ministry with youth. Sometimes, in a vain attempt to reverse the trend and to treat this decline as a manageable problem, a church will hire a youth worker. Has their memory become the vision? Has this church treated their decline as a big issue that raises the uncomfortable, contemporary question, What are we here for now?

Congregational leaders can feel under immense pressure to solve the big issues on their own. The first sense of

relief for church leaders happens when they realize they are not alone, and that the big issues of declining resources, of uncertain mission, of a dramatically changed context for ministry are not all their fault. Even congregations that are managing fairly well will usually have leaders who can look ahead 5 or 10 years and see that they too will be engulfed by the same changes affecting their neighbours.

Seeing the big issues and accepting that more of the same won't solve them begins the call to transformation. Knowing we're not alone opens up new questions about collaboration and judicatory responsibilities.

What is the church for now? Are there circumstances where we can address this question more creatively at the judicatory level, while at the same time remaining acutely aware of the question's strong roots and tensions at the congregational level? (Judicatory is not a term commonly used in the Canadian church. By judicatory we refer to the episcopal function of oversight of congregations that is exercised by an authorized individual such as a bishop, or by a body such as a presbytery or synod, or by a combination of the two.)

In our work at *Potentials* we have seen a shift from working primarily with single congregations to working at the judicatory level of presbytery, synod, deanery, cluster or diocese. In this research paper we begin to explore some of the motivations, benefits and difficulties of working at this level to make the church a more effective

---

Christian witness, based on a research intervention into the **SpiritWork** project in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery.

From the outset we were aware that **SpiritWork** had the potential for being an innovative project in that it was dealing with difficult and significant issues in a new way. We felt that whatever the outcome of this project, it posed a unique opportunity for learning about transformative change at both the judicatory and congregational levels of the church. With this opportunity in mind we gathered an ecumenical group of church leaders, educators and academics to reflect on the activities and progress of **SpiritWork**. Out of this group came the research enterprise led by Gary Redcliffe of Emmanuel College, which he describes in detail in the main body of this paper. Our next publication will summarize the results of Gary's research.

What are the issues that are too big to handle by congregations on their own and that lead to transformative change in a larger body such as a diocese, presbytery or synod? While this list is not exhaustive and will not apply to all situations, in our experience some form of these issues usually is present.

1. Significant demographic changes in population numbers, age profile, culture, race, economic status and faith.
2. Significant changes in people's attitudes and lifestyles.
3. Perceptions that congregations are becoming increasingly out of

- touch with the people of their neighbourhoods and communities.
4. Perceptions that church leaders feel they lack the skills and resources for the leadership they are being asked to provide.
5. Decline in the energy and resources of congregations and the emergence of initiatives to amalgamate, cluster or close.
6. The desire to have a shared, articulated vision and direction at the judicatory level that will guide difficult decisions that have to be taken.
7. The desire to focus energy and resources towards ministry and initiatives that will build a vital Christian presence and will make a difference in people's lives both within the church and the neighbourhoods.

(Note that dramatic increases in population can also result in transformative change for congregations. In many cases these congregations need considerable outside resources to help them manage an increase in their numbers and negotiate radical changes in their ministry.)

It's not easy sailing. Getting people to agree that there are common issues to be addressed (let alone agreeing on what those issues are) and that they are better dealt with together than apart is never an easy task. Secondly, no matter what the denomination, people's loyalties tend to reside at the congregational or parish level. This is after all where they express their Christian faith and go through

---

**SpiritWork** was dealing with difficult and significant issues in a new way.

Move beyond congregational thinking to talk of Christian presence in a larger geographical area.

---

meaningful life transitions and rituals. Except for a chosen few, the judicatory level is normally well removed from consciousness. And yet at times of transformative change, we suspect it is this level that suddenly becomes the locus for initiatives that will have a profound and lasting effect on the future of congregational life.

We find this tension is often expressed in terms of ownership. What level of support and cooperation from congregational leaders, clergy and lay, is necessary for a larger initiative to have any chance of success? Often the proposal involves considerable or even dramatic reallocation of resources – closing buildings, realigning staff, more money, new ministries requiring volunteer time. People who have taken responsibility over many years with stewarding the resources of a single congregation may well be highly suspicious of such changes.

Although the judicatory level usually has the formal authority to take decisions for the common good, affecting congregations and ministry in a wider geographical area, in practice the competing loyalties at the congregational level will often render this authority ineffectual. Here then is a key challenge: to move beyond congregational thinking to talk of Christian presence in a larger geographical area. There is a related challenge, and that is to move from the limited vision of rationalizing resources in order to continue congregational life much as it always has been to a vision of new ministry that will be a more effective witness

in a radically changed environment. Is it possible to address these challenges in a more effective way at the judicatory level? It will probably mean that the judicatory will start to exercise its formal authority and become a locus of decision making.

So here are the key questions we are starting to explore, using **SpiritWork** as our research base:

- How do churches go through transformative change?
- What are the conditions for success?
- Can churches shift from their congregational loyalties to the vision of a larger Christian presence and ministry?
- What is the leadership required for transformative change?

What we learn will have implications far beyond our research project. It has the potential for charting a new pathway that will give direction and inspiration to those church leaders entrusted with the care of congregations in a time of transformative change.



*Paul MacLean is the executive director of Potentials.*

---

# Hope for Transformation

## Practical research for change

By Gary L. Redcliffe

### *The question*

What can we learn from one judicatory body that set out deliberately to introduce substantial change? In my travels in and around churches in Canada, I have asked for and heard many stories of life-giving changes in congregations and parishes. But when I ask, as I frequently do, the same narrators to give me a story of vital change in their diocese, presbytery or synod, what I get back is usually a blank stare and a sigh. Once in a while, I hear of a church judicatory with a story of exciting change to tell, which suggests that it is possible for these church bodies to seek and find significant change. This article is part of an effort to answer the foregoing question. It is directed toward members of church judicatories and congregational leaders who are interested in a method of assessing their efforts at change, in particular when their work has involved external facilitators as consultants.

### *Practical research*

We will follow a practical research method in partnership with The United Church of Canada's Toronto Scarborough Presbytery, where *Potentials* was invited in 2001 to lead and facilitate a process of re-visioning and renewal that anticipated substantial change in the life and work of that presbytery. We hope that our process will encourage members of other church judicatories to assess their efforts at change, especially their work with designated external facilitators. We will follow the five steps normally associated with practical research.

The first step of practical research typically identifies an area of concern (for example, a need for developing lay leadership in a congregation) and the practices of faith associated with it that seem to fall short of faithfulness or effectiveness in the current context. The second step describes the theological significance of those practices. The third step deepens the

---

What can we learn from one judicatory body that set out deliberately to introduce substantial change?

---

Powerful social and cultural influences shape the behaviours of a congregation.

reflection and analysis of the named practices through social sciences studies of the area of concern and related practices, including the congregation's social and cultural history. The fourth step is usually a specifically designed action with attendant and intentional reflection, analysis and evaluation. The final step revises or transforms the practices of faith identified in step one but for the purpose of improving ways of building a renewed church and a world that more nearly reflects the reign of God.

Our general research interest centres on assessing the effectiveness of the project to stimulate change in a particular presbytery. But first we need to look at the unique fact that this kind of research is taking place within a church judicatory.

*Why undertake a practical research project in a church judicatory?*

The answer, not surprisingly, comes from the success of studies in congregations, a relatively recent exercise. Until 20 years ago there had been virtually no attempts to discover the underlying socio-cultural influences within congregations. But in the mid-1980s James Hopewell's unfinished manuscript was published posthumously as *Congregations: Stories and Structures*. Hopewell showed how there was, not far beneath the surface of immediate appearances, a set of powerful social and cultural influences at work to shape the behaviours of a congregation at least as much as its professed beliefs.

His work must have hit a nerve, because there has followed a flood of published research investigating and reporting on numerous theories to help understand and explain congregational life, structures and dynamics. Congregations have indeed received a recent burst of energy from researchers, publishers and funding agencies in the field of congregational studies. These efforts were meant to encourage and support congregational life. They have served that purpose well. But what about research in church judicatories?

Similar energy and commitment to studying and publishing about judicatory bodies, such as presbyteries, dioceses, conferences or synods, has been notably absent. While some books do draw lines of exchange between congregations and their judicatories, I am not aware of any written resources intending to help these bodies strengthen their life.

Perhaps one good reason is that publishers do not see a market for the circulation of research on church judicatories. Another reason might be that the pressure to maintain congregations is stronger than the pressure to maintain judicatory bodies. The narrow focus on local communities of faith might have to do with the long Protestant tradition that Christian faith is forged in the crucible of daily life and weekly worship. For centuries Protestant churches have been instructing their members that the daily exercise of faith at home and work is where the gospel becomes enfolded, or where

---

it withers and dies. If the test of faith is made in daily living, then congregations are where faith is nurtured, strengthened and supported. Without the local community of faith doing this work it is hard to imagine how the Body of Christ could extend its hopes, grace and justice to the world. On the other hand, congregations need nurture and support too.

*Who supports and nurtures congregations and their ministry personnel?*

In the United and Presbyterian Churches the body with episcopal oversight of congregations and ministry personnel is the presbytery. For Anglicans and Lutherans authority lies with bishops, synods and their structures. These are the authorized leaders and companion church bodies best situated to provide nurture in the Spirit's life to congregations, their members and structures. I argue that church judicatories need encouragement to ask questions about who they are and what they do, how to change and how to facilitate that change.

*The SpiritWork Story*

Questions were percolating in the minds of a small group of United Church presbyters in Scarborough in late 2001. They felt the Spirit of God calling them to enliven their presbytery as a court of the church and as the Body of Christ. They wondered whether the presbytery was living in a climate of healthy and vital faith in its structures, functions and common life. They wondered if their vision and

hope for a vital and healthy presbytery was possible and what it would actually look like, if indeed their vision were to materialize. Or were they indulging in an impossible fantasy?

They were aware that congregations were feeling increasingly dissatisfied having to make difficult decisions (cluster projects, amalgamations, staffing decisions, closures) without a larger vision or plan to guide them. They wondered whether a healthy and vital presbytery would create the conditions where members and congregations are nurtured and supported in their life of faith. They knew and acknowledged from the beginning of their conversations that they were thinking of congregations as living organisms, in effect, as the Body of Christ. They also knew and acknowledged that they were inviting the presbytery to see itself as a living organism, and therefore, in its nature, open to new life and change, as all living beings are. Part of the task of this research is to test whether it is possible or even desirable for a church judicatory such as a presbytery to alter itself in a significant way.

The questions and commitments of the presbytery members in their informal "parking lot" conversations led them to ask if there was a need for change in the way the presbytery lives its faith. When they gave voice to their questions about the presbytery's current reality and to their hope for a renewed life, they discovered that others shared their concerns. With the help of *Potentials* they got together, they talked about what could be done,

Congregations were feeling increasingly dissatisfied having to make difficult decisions without a plan to guide them.

---

---

We believe that what has occurred in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery is unique.

they invited others to join their conversation, they eventually were given an identity in the presbytery and they deepened their conversations about the need for change. They put two words together, **SpiritWork**, to create a name that invited reflection and thought.

They asked *Potentials* to design a plan and invited the presbytery to risk spending some resources. The presbytery quickly agreed, contracted with *Potentials* to facilitate the process and the **SpiritWork** project was under way. The result was an intense year long series of congregational gatherings, careful demographic surveying, analysis and reporting to congregations and presbytery, and several well-attended presbytery consultations. A lengthy report of the statistical data was circulated and a report to the presbytery was written, circulated, discussed and formally accepted. At a meeting on June 10, 2003 the presbytery agreed in principle to move into a second phase of the **SpiritWork** project.

From the beginning of the process *Potentials* and **SpiritWork** created a series of partnerships to support, reflect upon, analyze and steer the project that aimed for change in the presbytery. One of the partners was the **SpiritWork** team, a group of active presbyters and members of congregations who met regularly to oversee the work of *Potentials* and to report to the presbytery. Another significant partner in the project was the research support group formed by *Potentials*. This ecumenical group

included representatives from the Lutheran, Anglican and Presbyterian Churches, as well as United Church representatives from the Toronto United Church Council, Toronto Conference, Emmanuel College and the **SpiritWork** team.

### *The research question*

The goal of this research team was to learn about and assess the process, the content and the outcomes of the project in Scarborough. We are committed to the vision that the first to benefit from this research process should be Toronto Scarborough Presbytery and the **SpiritWork** team. We believe that what has occurred in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery is unique, and warrants careful study and assessment. This paper sets the stage for that study as it prepares the framework for the questions we will ask in a questionnaire, in semi-structured interviews and in focus groups. The “big question” for this research project, the one out of which all other questions arise, is this:

Has the **SpiritWork** project created any change in the dynamics, governance, and work of the presbytery in relation to its support of its congregations as they confront a changing social and cultural context?

### *Understanding change for this research*

Following the pattern of Jesus, when church members want to know whether their church can change, we ask in return, “What do you mean by change, for there are many understandings of change?” In the change theory literature there is a

---

generally agreed-upon typology of change.

Different types of change produce distinct observable patterns of organizational behaviour (Nadler et al., 21ff). There are two fundamental types of change. One maintains the existing equilibrium in the organization, and, in fact, only occurs during periods of relative calm. This type of change is sometimes called fine tuning, minor, developmental, alpha, single-loop, linear, incremental, first order, enhancement, continuous, etc. However, no matter the names for these patterns of change they describe a type of change where the elements being changed remain within their existing framework. We prefer the term “adaptive change” to describe the category for frame-sustaining changes. (Our use of the term “adaptive change” is distinct from Ronald Heifetz’ well known and more technical use of it, as will be made clear later in this article.)

The second type of change upsets the equilibrium and causes a landslide of subsequent changes. These changes usually happen during periods when there is already disequilibrium at work. Among researchers in the field of study this type of change is variously called second order, deep, revolutionary, gamma, double-loop, nonlinear, structural, quantum, advanced, multi-dimensional, transformative, discontinuous, radical, etc. (Levy and Merry, 3-9). No matter the name for the second type of change, it is qualitatively different from the first.

The frame of the organization is changed, modified and reshaped. Nadler et al. note that there are two basic variations of this type of change.

Organizational frameworks can be re-oriented (organizational frame-bending) or re-created (organizational frame-breaking) (29-31). We prefer the term “transformative change” to refer to frame-bending (re-orienting) and frame-breaking (re-creating) change. Will **SpiritWork** result in some changes in the presbytery, and, using the categories just described, what kinds of changes?

If there have been changes, are those changes adaptive or transformative, re-orienting or re-creating of the basic theology, polity, practices and visions for United Church congregations in Scarborough and their presbytery? Why and how does change occur in a church judicatory?

#### *Customers or disciples*

A significant foundation for this research is the difference between research in the very different environments of church and business organizations. Most authors writing for the North American church audience have translated the business-oriented research into guidance and direction that is supposed to help churches change into more intentional marketers of their brand of religion. Most such books on church change and transformation adopt the business sector literature without asking how the fundamental goals of change in the business organization differ from the



---

fundamental goals of change in the church.

Kirk C. Hadaway, in an article, "We Are Called to be God's Prophets," (*The Christian Century*, September/October, 1998) formulates a very clear statement on the difference between church and business. He indicates that many in the church growth and church renewal literature see the "church as an organization that must be run like a business, viewing members as customers and other churches as competitors.... The people of God are either owners or customers – but not disciples" (34-35). Too often the goal is expansion, not transformation. Hadaway makes a further clarification that the underlying goal of a business organization, whether large or small, is to satisfy its customers; the goal of the church is to transform itself and its people into disciples. The verbs "satisfy" and "transform" are placed as parallel terms with intention. Their positioning places the underlying values in stark contrast to one another. The importance of that difference cannot be overstated.

The church works in order to transform itself and its people into a life of discipleship. Disciples work to grow in faithfulness to the Christ they follow. Disciples, together with other disciples, seek direction from God, care for the church and one another in compassion and justice, and safeguard the church, its people and the world from harm. Following Hadaway's reminders we have limited our search in the vast literature on change and transformation to those that are

understood and explained in terms that can be correlated in a "friendly" dialogue with ecclesial understandings. One such source is Harrison Owen.

### *The function of myth*

Harrison Owen, one of the early gurus in the field of organizational change, notes that transformation consists of making an organization different "because the environment is so unstable and/or radically altered that the prior form, structure, way of being is simply unworkable" (6).

Readers of his work will easily see the theological influences that came from his graduate studies in Old Testament literature and theology. Owen recognizes that there is in every organization a *mythos* that is the record of, among other things, the organization's history of transformation (38). *Mythos* appears in the first place as the little stories about the way things are done "around here" (18). They originated in some act or other, but in the telling over time the stories become part of the pool of tradition from which members and groups of the organization draw meaning and vision for the work of the organization.

There are two ways for these myths to lose their power. If the myths become frozen or taken literally, allowing no change, for example, the power of the stories shrinks. Alternatively, a myth may, as an expression of its own internal dynamics, create the conditions for change. When understood from this latter perspective the mythical stories themselves carry

---

If the myths become frozen, the power of the stories shrinks.

---

the seeds that will create a new one. By consciously and intentionally dropping the mythical story on its head, leaders in an organization can create a space where new direction and new visions can emerge, directions that are not incongruous with the preceding *mythos*.

*Mythos*, while usually serving to preserve a given order, sometimes becomes an agent of transformation. Concealed within its larger narrative occasionally exists a sub-plot that in the right conditions can gain prominence, and “break” the myth in which it has nested. What emerges is a new or altered myth that explains old realities in new ways and tills the soil for the sprouting of new realities. A more directly theological understanding of narrative and myth is provided by Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley in their book, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*.

Myth, according to Anderson and Foley, captures something of opposing realities and explains the tensions and struggles between these opposites in ways that are time-tested and produce reliable outcomes. “The double function of myth,” they say, “is to resolve particular contradictions and, more important, to create a belief in the permanent possibility of reconciliation” (14). Mythic narrations provide comfort by assuring us that everything is going to be all right. At the same time myths allow us to dream and take risks because they lead to a better future, for example,

since they tell us that the outcomes are assured to be good for us.

Myths serve to preserve order in human affairs, which translates into preserving what is known or what is accepted as “real” for a given people in a given moment of time. The mythic representation of who we are as a people depends upon stability and sameness. People have a problem believing, enacting or ritualizing the myths about who they are, for example, when the conditions of stability and sameness no longer exist.

It seems to be the case in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery that conditions have changed in the organizational world of the presbytery so that its fundamental myths of stability are less and less credible. When the presbytery asks itself who it is these days the people now have to say that they are a group of congregations who live in a different reality than they did a few short years ago. For example, their public gatherings no longer reflect the demographics of the Scarborough area. What they can say, but are naturally reluctant to say, is that there are a number of declining and dying congregations in the presbytery. So the myths that have fed belief in stability and growth are folding fast.

#### *What is a presbytery to do?*

What can a presbytery do? How can a presbytery be faithful, or even seek faithfulness when the underlying myths of stability and growth as a God-given and God-blessed mission of the church in Scarborough do not

The double function of myth is to resolve contradictions and to create belief in the possibility of permanent reconciliation.

---

---

Change begins to occur when a significant number of members see that they face a new reality.

---

match current reality? It may turn out to be more than a passing curiosity to know what myths have been upholding the life and work of Toronto Scarborough Presbytery.

When the presbytery tells its story there are narratives that sound like myths. Some of them appear to be told in order to hold things in place. Others seem to carry within them a gestating process that, from time to time, gives birth to some form of new life in the presbytery. We see indicators of each kind of myth, and will be looking for more detail about them as our research moves ahead.

Resistance to change seems to come from folks in any organized group who are unable or unwilling to question the reliability of the myths around which their life has long been organized. This is likely true in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery, and in many other church judicatories as well.

Change begins to occur when a significant number of members in an organization see and understand that they face a new reality, that the narratives that they use to interpret themselves no longer hold true, when those mythic narratives begin to be questioned and when stories emerge which express faithfulness and discipleship in new ways.

There are voices that are questioning long-held myths in the presbytery. They are asking members to consider who they are now, in light of new realities. They are beginning to seek

and find new language to tell a new story. They are inviting the presbytery to consider how to grow in faith with a renewed sense of mission in the face of their emerging new mythic narrative – a mythic narrative which seems to be saying that faithfulness looks different now than it did in the past. What kind of leaders can facilitate such transformative change?

Theologian Douglas Hall identifies a tendency in our middle class congregations that may well find its way naturally into our judicatories. He notes that it is not easy for most of our congregations to find expressions of hope in their current situations of decline because they understand hope in terms of material progress and increase rather than in terms of faith or spiritual fruitfulness.

Translated, this means that we deny our reality as long as we can, and hold onto as hard as we can what we believe is our “best reality.” Hall urges us to confront openly the despair and sense of hopelessness that we work so hard to hide. Only when we do will we be able to see that when we desperately cling to hopeless hopes to maintain our status quo we are deluding ourselves and failing to live in real hope, the kind that the poor and dispossessed of the earth understand and embrace so readily. Perhaps this helps us understand why many of our congregations and presbyteries are so tired: they expend all their energies sustaining an organization that fundamentally puts its hopes in the wrong places.

---

Hall, and not too grudgingly, confesses that there is indeed hope for the church. But in order to embrace a living hope the church will have to face its realities, and in doing that will have to become “extraordinarily willing to critique the very way of life that the entire modern experiment has conditioned them to expect” (quoted from *The United Church Observer*, June, 2003, 35). In other words, transforming ourselves as a church is not a straightforward strategic exercise. Our soul will be shaken, and our spirits challenged. And especially crucial to the revitalization of the church will be a challenging of the longstanding relationships between the values of our dominant society and those of our churches.

Most of the literature we have read in the field of church transformation leaves this crucial dimension to one side, like liver and spinach on a child’s plate at the dinner table. It seems more and more improbable that the church can “borrow” the values and language of change, transformation, and especially of growth from business without being co-opted by values that are not transferable to the life and spirit of the church.

When Toronto Scarborough Presbytery tells its story, we are likely to hear a mixture of the myths that provide stability, myths that carry within them the seeds of change, and multiple forms of well-intentioned resistance to change. Transformative change is not easy or simple; it takes time, deep commitment, and a capacity to live with paradox and ambiguity. Effective

leadership is a necessary ingredient for a vital change process.

#### *Questions about leadership*

One of the assumptions about organizational life and behaviour is that changes take shape in response to dramatic events. Strong visionary leadership is most commonly believed to be the agent of deep change, according to the studies in the field. Most frequently the leader who creates change is seen as an individual with a lot of authority who takes a clear and strong position that moves the organization to leave the past behind and follow a different and new vision.

Harrison Owen tells the story of a leader in a telephone research laboratory who declared to his assembled workers one morning, “...the Bell System was destroyed this morning, and our task is to rebuild it totally anew”(33). That leader went on to say, “For the next year we will assume nothing from the prior system...” This kind of leadership creates and defines the conditions for discontinuity between the old and the new (Nadler et al., 151-156).

Behaviour that acknowledges the positive attributes of past products is no longer applauded, and may even be scorned in the new system of values. Language that refers to previous days or former structures is discouraged. Those who continue to believe in the efficacy of the former processes and products will be ousted. The values associated with the previous times are replaced with new values that reflect

---

Congregations and presbyteries expend their energies sustaining an organization that puts its hopes in the wrong places.

---

the new vision and mission. What has emerged is now utterly discontinuous with what has gone before. But is the kind of leadership described by Harrison Owen, Nadler and most other students of change effective in a church judicatory? There are some problems with that approach.



One of the issues we will try to discern with this research is whether or not a group of church leaders can effectively and faithfully lead a change process. Does the church have a theological inclination toward a consensus-building group process of leadership rather than the heroic-warrior model of leadership? Mark 10:35-45 (also found in Matthew 20:20-28) suggests that the question of leadership was a live issue for the early church. In that narrative the disciples James and John ask Jesus to give them the seats of honour in the coming reign of God that Jesus was preaching and teaching about. By instructing the disciples Jesus was also informing the early church that this way of secular leadership and authority gave leaders complete power and authority over their people.

However, Jesus emphasized, this is not our way. "One who wants to be great will be the servant of the rest" (Mark 10:43). This narrative still should make church leaders question their power and authority if they want to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. It suggests that the church seek alternatives to leaders who claim absolute power and authority over others. A group process just could be an alternative. We will test that possibility with this research.

### *Questions about leadership and authority*

Leadership is critical in any change process, but what kind of leadership, and exercised by whom? Are there different leadership requirements for facilitating adaptive or transformative change? It is worth noting that there have been significant shifts in the understanding of leadership and authority for both types of change. Previous generations of change theorists of both types have upheld the long-held assumption that processes of change are most successful when led by strong individual leaders who have been handed unquestioned authority to initiate change. The usual method, up to the present time, has been to hire someone with a vision and give that person the authority to use power to change the organization into a shape that reflects the leader's vision.

In the literature that reports studies of transformative change there are significant challenges to the earlier unassailable certainty that the "heroic" model for leading change is the only effective approach to change. Kegan and Lahey, for example, claim that their experience with change in organizations points to the fact that effective change leaders are now relinquishing displays of "power-over-against" in favour of an ongoing regard for the worthy contribution of everyone in the organization. They suggest that any approach to change that divides reality into a correct view of the world versus a wrong view of the world leads to distortion, and distortion leads to failed plans for change, because either side of the

---

dualism is susceptible to creating a distortion of current or future reality.

To avoid duplication of potential distortions, faithful action should seek not so much to follow a path that is prescribed by authoritative leaders as to step boldly with others into a place that is claimed equally by those who hold different visions, a space where there are no clear outcomes. Transformative change in a faith setting calls for a communally authorized leadership who are expected to become agents for new life. Here we see a significant shift to understandings and practices of shared leadership and authority in respect to transformative change.

A similar move is being reported by those studying adaptive change. One of the most respected proponents of adaptive change is Ronald Heifetz from Harvard University. In his recent writing he offers a deepened understanding of leadership in adaptive circumstances.

The term “leader” denotes people who have authority or who have a following. “Authority” has two different connotations. Formal authority often refers to an office holder who has been given and who has accepted certain promises to meet explicit expectations, such as those set out in church manuals or canon laws where some core mandates are legislated.

Informal authority promises to meet implicit expectations, such as trustworthiness, reliability or ability.

Leadership has commonly been associated with informal authority, denoting the ability to gain and deploy non-coercive power, that is, the power to persuade and inspire a following (Heifetz and Laurie, 56).

For many problems currently being experienced in organizations, including in church structures, no adequate style of leadership has yet been developed, according to Heifetz and Laurie. New adaptations are required because social learning is required for making the kinds of changes that are being demanded by crumbling structures in church and society. They are too complex for leaders in the old style to understand and solve by themselves. Therefore leaders who want to guide an effective adaptive change initiative have to share their leadership and their authority in a process of discovery and analysis of the conditions that create a need for change.

In the words of Heifetz and Laurie, “We believe that the prevailing notion that leadership consists of having a vision and aligning people with it is bankrupt ...” (63). With this understanding Heifetz deepens his own definition of adaptive change. The significance for this study is that adaptive change has become a lot harder, more complex and difficult than we first thought, and leadership promoting adaptive change will need to have a more broadly based authorization than it previously considered necessary. Kegan and Lahey, as well as Heifetz and Laurie, are directing attention to the kind of

---

Transformative change in a faith setting calls for a communally authorized leadership who are expected to become agents for new life.

---

Deliberate change springs out of a profound theological hope for the church to live by radical faith.

leadership and authority that moves organizations into and through frame-bending and frame-breaking change, which is what we are calling transformative change.

Both adaptive and transformative work, as we have seen above, demand widespread shouldering of responsibility for change. Researchers who study leadership and authority issues in change theory seem to be reaching a consensus that mere authoritative behaviour is not enough; no clear expertise, no single sage, no established procedure will suffice. Does the experience in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery match up with the foregoing statement? This is an area that we will want to investigate carefully.

In light of the foregoing, one of the questions we will have in mind during this research project is whether or not Toronto Scarborough Presbytery has been able to work together with a small group of people to effect change. Has the presbytery actually authorized **SpiritWork** as a group to lead the presbytery toward any kind of change?

*Practical research as God's call to faithfulness*

The principal reason why the research group is interested in looking further into the **SpiritWork** project is its commitment to the church of Jesus Christ. The members profoundly believe and hope that God's Spirit lives in relationship with all creation, with the people of the world and with the church as an instrument of saving peace in local communities and

around the globe. Their commitments to the church and passion for its life lead them to want to learn more about how the church, in its many manifestations, can always be faithful to the call of Christ and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

We do this research in a spirit of humility, genuinely wanting to learn from the Toronto Scarborough Presbytery experience and genuinely wanting the church everywhere to be a vital and healthy witness to God's reign, which we see in Jesus and which we proclaim in his Body, the church. We want to be part of a church that seeks faithfulness to Jesus Christ, lives freely with the Spirit's call and depends upon God's grace for all its life.

Deliberate change springs out of a profound theological hope for the church to live by radical faith. Such hope makes examination of its life a regular feature of the church's life. Its outline germinates from deep within Jewish and Christian scriptures and theologies. Some of the ancient prophets, for example, proclaimed that Israel and Judah corrupted their relationship with Yahweh by establishing a temple, a priesthood and religious laws and practices that made religious faithfulness almost impossible for the poor, the outcast, the homeless and others like them. These were turned into an underclass that was religiously and socially devalued.

The prophets called their people back to the time of desert simplicity when

---

the people of God depended radically upon God's goodness for their life, a time when hope and faith walked hand in hand. This pattern of judgement has a permanent home in the Hebrew Scriptures. It makes people of faith ask constantly what they must do to live faithfully in the reign of God.

The gospels reflect this same pattern. The early church presented Jesus in the gospels as one who, through the story of his life, death and resurrection, through the parables and even through the healing narratives, was challenging the religious authorities of his time to turn away from relentless religious lawmaking and instead to follow his way and proclaim the reign of God.

As with the prophets before him, Jesus reminded his listeners that God wanted the people's love and their love for neighbour instead of complex and forbidding laws. Jesus called people to question and evaluate their patterns of belief and behaviour. The kernel of Jesus' teaching about this was captured in the overturning of the tables in the courtyard outside the Temple, one of the only stories recorded in all four of the gospels. This story is the most dramatic gospel example of how faith reads the life of communities of faith, whether Jewish or Christian, with a critical eye. New life, Jesus assured his hearers, comes when the ways of death are rejected and the ways of life are chosen.

Canadian theologian Gregory Baum (193-196), claims that theology is the critical task of the believing community.

Called to a life of faithful belief and practices, spurred on by faith itself, Christians have a vocation to ask what are the trends in their religious traditions that turn out to be less than faithful. Christians are called to faithful discernment of those trends, and to seek ways to address and change beliefs and practices that do not do the good they intend.

The effort to examine critically who we are, what we believe, and what we do in the name of Christ, requires extraordinary faith. Is that kind of faith at work in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery, prompting its members to seek faithful change? One of our foundational commitments is that faith itself necessitates careful evaluation of behaviour and belief.

#### *Practical research practices partnership*

Our research is collaborative and co-operative, and thus involves a number of partners working together. The partners for the **SpiritWork** Research Project, include myself, the principal research partner. I am a professor of Pastoral Theology at Emmanuel College of the Toronto School of Theology and I previously served United Church congregations for 16 years. A second partner for the research is a Research Assistant, Jennifer Balls, a United Church minister with experience in pastoral ministry and currently a graduate student in theology at Emmanuel College. She will conduct most of the interviews that are a part of this research. The 9 **SpiritWork** team members are closely involved partners

Theology is the critical task of the believing community.

---

---

What we are doing focuses on research *with* people rather than research *on* people.

---

in the research component of their project. The staff of *Potentials*, Paul MacLean and Janet Marshall, is another significant research partner. The ecumenical Research Team have been meeting for over a year and have had considerable influence in shaping this project. Finally, and most significant, is the partnership of the members of Toronto Scarborough Presbytery; they will be full partners in the research.

What we are doing focuses on research *with* people rather than research *on* people. The research partnership that has been developed during the course of the **SpiritWork** project is one where the researchers share the commitments, concerns, visions and hopes of the participants in that project. The model for our research depends upon the mutuality of a passionate faith. With it, we learn more and we act more faithfully than we do without it. We are all involved in the subject of our learning.

***Practical research practices critical questioning***

Our research design for practical research is meant to investigate the points and the moments that exist between present realities and a gospel-centred vision for a life of communal faith. This kind of faith is essential for undertaking an action research project with a Christian community. Critical discontent combines with radical hope to form the basic pre-condition for change. The bottom line is that the kind of research planned for investigating the **SpiritWork** project invites participants into a process that

will create knowledge about themselves (who they are) and their world (their congregations, presbytery and contexts) and that will help them describe, explain and transform their mission and ministry in that world. How does this happen and how does it work?

A couple of concrete examples might tease out how practical research creates new or revised knowledge. Whether new knowledge creates significant change (or the conditions for it) or not is something we hope to be able to answer after we have the data from the inquiry process.

Here is the first example. It is not a news flash that, as *Potentials'* demographic research has noted, the region of Scarborough has changed. An area that was formerly populated by Scarborough's dominant ethnic group (WASP) is now home to many visible ethnic minorities. For example, 13% of all immigrants to Canada settle in Scarborough. The news is that our churches do not seem to know what to do about the change. This change alone has created a new and different context for the life of the church, so obvious and yet so difficult to adapt to.

As noted by David Nadler et al., external forces can by themselves create the conditions for change (154-155). Does the new demographic situation give us new knowledge, and if it does, will it change who we are and what we must do now in order to be faithful disciples? Does describing the world of our presbytery differently,

---

in and of itself, create some kind of change? What kind of change? What theological significance would this kind of change carry?

What about new knowledge of our internal life? A second example might begin with the following assumption: it is significant for individuals that many factors of which they are unaware deeply influence their attitudes and behaviour. Sometimes psychotherapy or psychoanalysis helps individuals become aware of unconscious influences. That is, they acquire new knowledge about themselves and that new knowledge helps them describe themselves differently, thereby giving them power to explain and transform their inner life and their interactions in society.

Would the knowledge that communities, such as presbyteries, have feelings analogous to individual feelings help them explain and transform their common life? Response to new circumstances within and outside the church has given birth to a culture of loss and grief in mainline churches in North America. Is there a feeling that death visits our churches, bringing with it a powerful emotional effect in congregations and judicatories? Do we see signs of depression, including listlessness, lack of focus, poor concentration, short attention span, lack of attention to appearance, heightened anxiety, disproportionate responses, conflict, rising anxiety and so on in our church life?

Our research will ask about this dimension of our church life, and how

it might affect attitudes and approaches to change and whether knowledge about it helps a change process. These examples serve to point out that there is a great deal to learn about the processes of change in faith communities and especially in church judicatory bodies. We are intent on learning more because that learning is part of a change process itself.

#### *Describing our reality*

We anticipate that just asking the kinds of questions that arise with respect to the two examples in the preceding paragraph gives respondents the latitude to begin the work of describing their world in ways that make transformation a possible outcome. A central part of practical research is asking questions that encourage participants to describe their reality, in this case, describe their experience and responses to the **SpiritWork** project. Good questions open up a possible world and invite full and honest responses. The answers form the core and heart of the research results, which, in this case, will be reported in a subsequent article.

Some questions will inquire about possible dissatisfaction (or satisfaction) with current realities.

- What hope do they have (or not have) that change is possible?
- What kind of changes did they hope for?
- What kind of changes are not desirable?
- What level of commitment do they have to supporting (or resisting) changes?

---

Good questions open up a possible world and invite full and honest responses.

---

We undertake this inquiry because the asking of critical questions is a central practice of faith.

- Do they feel any ambivalence about the projects and what are they?

We will create a series of questions directed toward surfacing the conceptual, emotional and spiritual conditions perceived by the respondents before and during the project.

Some questions will attempt to discover what the presbyters think happened as a result of the interventions by **SpiritWork** and *Potentials*. These queries will ask participants to reflect on the presbytery's processes dealing with issues of leadership and authority. These questions will ask about the content and the premises of the interventions.

- What do they think was accomplished and how valuable was it?
- How are they evaluating what happened and what are their criteria?
- What has changed as a result?
- How significant are the changes?
- How would an observer know anything has changed?
- Where is the impact of the changes felt most – congregations? presbytery? certain groups or committees in presbytery?
- What practices of their faith life together have changed?

These kinds of questions should help us see how change happens or does not happen in a church judicatory, such as a presbytery. With the information we gather from this series of questions we hope to be able to

evaluate whether a small group can successfully initiate change in a judicatory. From the responses to this second set of questions we should have what we need to begin answering whether any potentially lasting changes to the life of the presbytery have been introduced, and to identify what they are.

Other questions will ask participants about the faith and theology that was operative in the initiatives in the presbytery.

- Where was faith understood to be active (if at all) in the project?
- How was faith articulated or visible (or inarticulate and invisible)?
- Was there any language or action that suggested the presbytery was seeking greater faithfulness? If so, what were the key words or actions?
- How did the participants call on God in this process?
- Have we seen a need for conversion, for turning away from our former ways? Was there any element of such a need?

These questions should help discover some specifics of the relationship between belief and behaviour in a change process in a church judicatory.

#### *Practical research takes time*

How much time does a practical research component require? Time and energy have to be allowed for design, planning, reading and study of resources related to the area of concern (change theory and theology in the Toronto Scarborough Presbytery case), lots of consultation, mailing and

---

mail-back of questionnaires, interviewing, transcribing, collating, organizing focus groups, detailed reflection, analysis and evaluation of the information gathered from the questionnaires, interviews and focus groups, as well as all the writing, and yes, more consultation. All this makes this kind of research a richly rewarding collaborative effort, but a very time consuming one. A commitment to the time is, however, a necessary part of the process of transformative change.

This proposal, for example, aims to take a close look into the life of Toronto Scarborough Presbytery during the period of time from late 2001 to late 2002 when the presbytery undertook a process that they hoped would lead to fruitful changes in its life. The research partners have a precise plan in place for collecting the stories that should answer the questions noted above. By the time you read this, all the data-gathering procedures will have been completed. From May 15 – July 15, 2003 we distributed and collected a questionnaire and conducted interviews. After transcription by our faithful research assistant and a preliminary collation of the data we organized focus groups by gathering together research participants with symmetrical responses in defined areas of questioning. The findings from all this process will, in the first instance, be reported and shared with **SpiritWork** and the presbytery in late 2003 to early 2004 and be published in a later edition of this journal.

The long term plan of the Research Team is to conduct two more research

interventions, one in 2005 and the other in 2007, from their belief that transformative change is a lengthy process.

This research component of the **SpiritWork** project in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery asks about change in a church judicatory. We will inquire about the role, functions and reflections of the presbyters, the **SpiritWork** team and the *Potentials* team. We undertake this inquiry because the asking of critical questions is a central practice of faith. We expect that information gathered from this inquiry, and the attendant reflection and correlational dialogue between theology and change theory in organizations will support every partner in the project to continue with renewed vision and effort their contribution to building a lively and faithful church which lives for a just and peaceful world.

*Gary Redcliffe was raised in a small church community on Southern Ontario and attended university in Montreal at Sir George Williams and McGill. He was ordained in 1970 in the United Church of Canada and served parishes for 16 years in Montreal, Toronto and Saskatoon. He completed his Ph.D. in 1982 in biomedical ethics at McGill University. He has been teaching and researching in the field of Pastoral Theology at Emmanuel College in Toronto since 1986. He believes that communities of faith and their leaders need to practice faithful compassion and justice in their organizational life if they want to claim those values and activities as their mission in the world.*





## Reference Works

Anderson, Herbert and Edward Foley. *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Baum, Gregory. *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology*. Paulist Press, 1987.

Brewerton, Paul and Lynne Millward. *Organizational Research Methods: A Guide for Students and Researchers*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2001.

Coglan, David and Teresa Brannick, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001.

Conger, Jay A, Gretchen M. Spreitzer and Edward E. Lawler, editors. *The Leader's Change Handbook: An Essential Guide to Setting Directions and Taking Action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.

DeWitt, M. Ross. *Beyond Equilibrium Theory: Theories of Social Action and Social Change Applied to A Study of Power Sharing in Transition*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2000.

Heifetz, Ronald A. and Donald L. Laurie, "Mobilizing Adaptive Work," in Jay A. Conger, Gretchen M. Spreitzer and Edward E. Lawler, editors, *The Leader's Change Handbook: An Essential Guide to Setting Directions and Taking Action* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 55-86.

Kegan, Robert and Lisa Laskow Lahey. *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work: Seven Languages for Transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

Kottler, Jeffrey A., *Making Changes Last*. Philadelphia: Brunner-Routledge, 2001.

Levy, Amir and Uri Merry. *Organizational Transformation: Approaches, Strategies, Theories*. New York: Praeger, 1986.

Nadler, David A., Robert B. Shaw and A. Elise Walton. *Discontinuous Change: Leading Organizational Transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

Owen, Harrison. *Spirit: Transformation and Development in Organizations*. Potomac, Maryland: Abbott Publishing, 1987.

Quinn, Robert E. and Nancy T. Snyder, "Advanced Change Theory: Culture Change at Whirlpool Corporation," in Jay A. Conger, Gretchen M. Spreitzer and Edward E. Lawler, editors. *The Leader's Change Handbook: An Essential Guide to Setting Directions and Taking Action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999, 162-194.

Rendle, Gilbert R. *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders*. Bethesda, MD.: The Alban Institute, 1998.

---

# The project plan for **SpiritWork** (2002–2003)

A project to discern future directions for the United Church in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery

## **Objective**

To find a vision for ministry within Scarborough Presbytery that will evoke peoples' motivation for ministry and lead to a shared sense of direction, purpose and action for congregations and the Presbytery as a whole.

## **Scope**

The journey to evoke a vision for Scarborough Presbytery will involve paying attention to and learning about the following:

- the stories, identities, shared concerns, capacities and resources of the Scarborough congregations
- our changing neighbourhood context for mission and ministry within Scarborough
- the role of presbytery in supporting, advocating for and keeping the vision and the short and longer term changes it will bring
- an articulation of the theological basis of the mission of the United Church presence in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery
- research on the process and implications of visioning for a presbytery.

## **Congregational Profiles**

Congregations are the most influential means for realizing the Christian faith in the lives of people and society. At their best, they are places in which people of all ages are fashioned into a Christ-like community. These communities, following the mission of Jesus, equip and lead their members into ministry (from *Potentials'* Vision Statement). It is through congregations that the presence of the United Church of Canada is expressed in any geographical area. Listening and learning about the experiences of congregations is a crucial component to finding a vision and mission that feels right for the future of Toronto Scarborough Presbytery (TSP).

---

## GOALS

1. Engage with the stories, identities and concerns of TSP congregations.
2. Create an inventory of resources and capacities of the congregations.
3. Build trust and shared ownership over time through processes that allow congregational leaders and members to speak, reflect and hear their own voices in feedback.
4. Create a comprehensive picture of individual congregations and their connections (clusters, amalgamation processes) within an overview of the United Church presence in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery.

## METHOD

1. Focus groups: *Potentials* consultants, Paul MacLean and Janet Marshall, will facilitate one conversation in each congregation to hear the congregation's values, hopes and concerns from a variety of perspectives. A member of the steering team may act as an observer.
2. Short questionnaire: to focus group participants asking about congregational identity, challenges, opportunities and one ministry initiative in which they take pride.
3. Longer questionnaire: to the Chair of the Board, asking about the congregation's internal demographics, its relationship to its neighbourhood (i.e. age and ethnic profile, how the church connects with its neighbourhood), its attitudes to and pastoral relationships with Presbytery and its ministerial history.
4. Collection and analysis of statistics: *Potentials* will gather statistics on each congregation from Yearbooks (1975 to 2000) and the Annual Report 2001 of each congregation.

## Demographic Research

Paying attention to and learning about the world around us will help us create a vision that connects with peoples' longing to express their faith through ministry that meets the world's deep needs. The church is part of an ecology. It exists in relationship with a changing social environment, being affected by that environment, and also having effect on it. So we investigate not just the context or environment for our ministry, but the way congregations make connections with that context.

## GOALS

1. Build a shared picture of the changing neighbourhood context of TSP congregations by gathering data that has value and meaning.
2. Build a shared picture of how congregations are connecting with their neighbourhoods.

## METHOD

1. Collect statistical information on the area of Toronto Scarborough Presbytery (divided into 4 quadrants) in relation to that of the GTA.
2. Provide a synopsis of the patterns of change evident in the area.
3. The longer congregational questionnaire will ask about the congregations' relationships with their neighbourhoods and their outreach activities.
4. Collect demographic studies already done by congregations through JNAC and other processes.
5. Collect projections from planning councils and other agencies.

---

Information will be collected from sources such as: the congregations, StatsCan, District Health Councils, city planning, school boards.

## **Presbytery**

One of the greatest challenges of creating vision and mission for an area rather than a particular church is that there needs to be a group who can take on the role of advocate, guide and authority for the vision. Helping Presbytery take up this role as vision keeper will require some renovation of how the group is understood to function, both by itself and by congregations.

### **GOALS**

1. Examine the role of Presbytery for long term vision and change.
2. Build the role of Presbytery as keeping, sustaining and advocating for the vision.
3. Explore the strategic role of Presbytery in implementing the vision in ways appropriate to the court (e.g. through allocation of resources, decision making, initiating projects, developing viability criteria, implementing congregational and program reviews and putting into effect methods of accountability).
4. Explore the role of Presbytery as support to the development and growth of ministries for common cause among congregations, including models for cooperation.

### **METHOD**

1. Focus groups: *Potentials* consultants and the Steering Team will facilitate small group conversations during the November Presbytery meeting.
2. Short questionnaire.
3. Regular times of reflections on the information and ideas being collected through the process at Presbytery meetings.
4. Consultation on governance with Presbytery and representatives from the congregations.
5. Reflection on the final report and appropriate decisions for accepting and implementing the vision.

## **Finding Vision & Direction**

All the work represented by the goals and methods outlined in the previous pages will result in the discernment of a vision, sense of purpose and direction and ideas for living this vision for Toronto Scarborough Presbytery.

### **GOALS**

1. Engage the participation of many people.
2. Articulate a vision with goals.
3. Discern short and long term ministries and initiatives to support the vision.
4. Identify ministries based on common cause or shared concerns among congregations.
5. Connect with peoples' motivations for ministry on a broader community base, beyond a single congregation.
6. Develop a theology of mission for the United Church Presence in Toronto Scarborough Presbytery.

---

## METHOD

1. 3 half-day consultations with representation from all the congregations on the topics: demographic context and mission; congregational development; governance and vision keeping.
2. Full day final event for as many people from all the congregations as possible to discern projects, initiatives and ministries to live the vision.
3. Theological reflection as a component in each consultation, and as an activity of the steering team as they make this journey towards discernment.

## Research Component

We are proposing to include a research component to this project. Other United Church presbyteries and the judicatories of other denominations share the issues that have led Toronto Scarborough Presbytery to undertake this project. There is an opportunity for the wider church to learn from the experience of TSP. Knowing that the Presbytery is the subject of research may also increase the commitment of participants in the project to a successful outcome. The research could also enhance the TSP visioning project by making leaders aware of other efforts in this field.

## GOALS

1. To learn about the process of visioning for transformative change in a presbytery.
2. To share learning broadly in the church.
3. To gather wisdom and insight around similar grass roots change processes.

## METHOD

In consultation with the Steering Team *Potentials* will gather people to form a research reflection group. Ideally this group will be ecumenical. Members will be sought from or through contacting the Steering Team or another member of Scarborough Presbytery, the Toronto United Church Council, other presbyteries and academics (Emmanuel, TST). This group will develop a research proposal, approve or adapt an existing methodology and secure funding for the research.

## Steering Team

### RESPONSIBILITIES

- Communicating with congregations
- Presentations to Presbytery
- Advocacy for the project and promoting the 3 consultations and final event
- Logistical arrangements and hospitality for the 3 consultations and final event
- Debrief and reflect on data and consultations
- Development of scenarios in preparation for each consultation
- Development of recommendations on vision and implementation
- Contextual theological reflection (in concert with vision)
- “Vision cleaning” ... wordsmithing the results of the consultations
- Option for participating as listener and recorder in one or more focus groups
- One member of steering team to participate in research dimension

---

## Project Phases

### PHASE ONE

1. Generation and collation of data for the congregational profiles.
2. Generation and collation of data for the demographic context.

### PHASE TWO

1. Consultations on demographic context for mission and ministry and congregational development.
2. Steering team develops scenarios in preparation for 2 consultations.
3. Steering team begins work of contextual theological reflection.
4. Steering team begins work of shaping vision from 2 consultations.
5. Generation and collation of data for the role of Presbytery.

### PHASE THREE

1. Consultation on the role of Presbytery.
2. Steering team develops scenario in preparation for third consultation.
3. Steering team ends work of contextual theological reflection.
4. Steering team ends work of shaping vision and proposing recommendations for implementation.
5. Steering team develops strategies for reception of report and engaging congregations.
6. Report writing.
7. Final event.



# Project Partners

## Members of the SpiritWork Research Team

Vince Alfano, Toronto United Church Council  
Doug DuCharme, East Toronto Presbytery  
(Presbyterian)  
Ron Ewart, **SpiritWork** steering team  
Roger Hutchinson, The Centre for Research in  
Religion  
Brad Lennon, Anglican Diocese of Toronto  
Barbara Lloyd, Toronto Conference (United  
Church of Canada)  
Paul MacLean, *Potentials*  
Janet Marshall, *Potentials*  
Gary Redcliffe, Emmanuel College  
Alan Rush, **SpiritWork** steering team  
Arnie Weigel, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary  
(corresponding member)

## Advisors

Sandy Cotton, School of Business, Queen's  
University  
Conan MacLean (project advancement)

## Researchers

Gary Redcliffe  
Jennifer Balls

## Members of the Toronto Scarborough Presbytery SpiritWork Steering Team

Ron Ewart (chair)  
Gail Barkic (ret 2003)  
Paget Blaza  
Harry Brown  
Catherine Hions  
Michael Kooiman (ret 2003)  
Pam Lock  
Brian Perkins-McIntosh  
Alan Rush  
Drucilla Travnicek  
Nick Walker  
Joanne Wise-Gillap (ret 2003)

## Sponsoring body

The Centre for Research in Religion, Emmanuel  
College

## Funding bodies

Emmanuel College  
Toronto Conference (United Church of Canada)  
Toronto United Church Council

## Project management and publications

*Potentials*



Artwork used in this newsletter was reprinted from Conference of  
European Churches, *Prayers, Hymns*, copyright April 1989, as reproduced  
in Maren C. Tirabassi and Kathy Wonson Eddy, *Gifts of Many Cultures*  
(United Church Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 1995).

Layout and design: Gord Oxley

---

## Potentials

A Canadian Ecumenical Centre for the Development of Ministry & Congregations  
761 Queen St. West #309 • Toronto, ON • M6J 1G1  
416-504-3664 (ph) • 416-504-3675 (fax) • potentials@tap.net • www.potentials.ca

©Potentials 2003