Being Transformed for God's Emerging Future

Session Fourteen

Online 2020-21

Excellence in LEADERSHIP

Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA
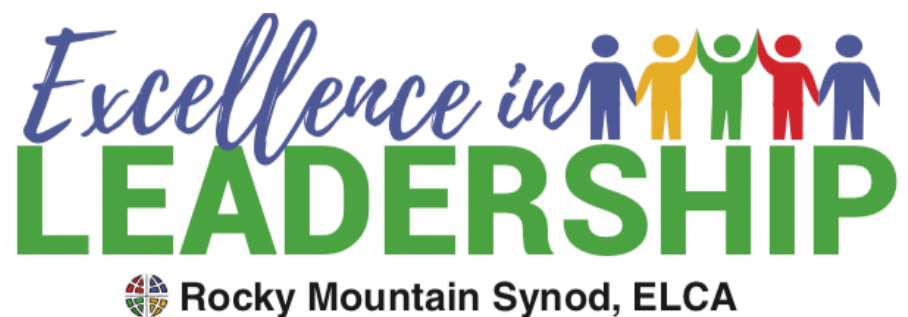
Courageous, resilient, and faithful leaders for the sake of the world

Being Transformed for God's Emerging Future

Session Fourteen Participant Outcomes:

1. Create a process of transformative change for an area of ministry.
2. Articulate growth in leadership during this program.
3. Celebrate course completion.

Preparation for this Session:

- Read this section of the manual and bring it with you.
- Meet with your ministry team and talk about ideas for a project to implement over the summer which will enable your faith community to become healthier.

Found in this Session:

Leading for the Emerging Future

> *"Transformed people transform people."*
> **Richard Rohr**

Transforming the Quality of Awareness and Conversation

The challenge of leadership today is to cultivate the capacity for awareness in oneself and for groups to move beyond the small self to the sense of the "whole" and to discern God's leading. The openness of the leader for transformation is imperative. Leaders need to reflect on their readiness by ascertaining their adaptive capacity, self-differentiation, willingness to be appropriately vulnerable, and centeredness in God. Leaders will also need to assess the group's readiness for creative and discerning conversation:

- Does the group have the capacity to be in the "productive zone" to address openly the challenge before them?
- Can trust be developed within the group so they can lean into vulnerability to have creative perspective sharing and dialogue?
- Are group participants willing to commit to the process that will require change in the system?

In this last and final session, we want to explicitly name both the intent of our work together these past two years and review how all the pieces fit together to give us the tools to lead healthy and life-giving communities. This spiritual journey has been one of opening ourselves up as beloved children of God, as human beings, and as leaders in our communities. By **opening our minds, hearts, and wills** to God, ourselves, and the people around us, we experience abundant life. Abundant life is the promise of Jesus. "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

Our work is to create "holding spaces" for transformational conversation and creativity. Holding spaces are sacred spaces where deep connection happens. Holding spaces are those spaces where we feel the presence of God surrounding us, holding us, inviting us forward. These holding spaces are meant to transform the quality of awareness, conversation, relationship, and thought. The transformational path of Theory U takes the community from downloading the past to seeing with fresh eyes and **open minds**, to feeling diverse perspectives with **open hearts**, and to acting with collective creativity and **open wills** to God's emerging future. In this session, we will review and integrate what we have learned throughout the course in creating these "holding spaces" and a process for transformation which can be used in faith communities, workplaces, and one's personal life.

Influencing the World Around Us

As leaders, we are called to do what we can to influence and motivate people to lean into and participate in the world God intended. Following God's will for us takes courage and skill. Behavioral science research can help us learn the skills we need to make a positive difference in our world, to co-create and co-evolve our communities of faith. Human beings can begin to change their surrounding system using three basic strategies: 1) discern a few vital behaviors which will bring about the desired change, 2) implement recovery behaviors for resilience, and 3) reinforce change through experience. The strategy works by bringing about change on three levels: personal, social, and structural.

Strategies to Influence Change

1. **Choosing Vital Behaviors:**

   The question that needs to be answered is: "What do people actually have to do to bring about the desired change?" A few behaviors can drive a lot of change, so it is important to choose two or three behaviors to emphasize. Choosing too many priorities can lead to unfocused and diluted attention. Focus on two or three behaviors that can be easily adopted across a wide spectrum of the community. For example, during the coronavirus pandemic, two behaviors—social distancing and mask wearing—have helped to slow the spread of the virus. Also, in a church setting, a congregation chose to shift their culture toward a more discerning posture by asking everyone and all committees and groups to begin their time together with *Lectio Divina,* sacred reading. This widely adopted behavior brought about a change that was transformative.

   It is important not to confuse outcomes with behaviors. Outcomes are more generalized, such as a healthy vibrant faith community. Behaviors will be more specific, like practicing empathy, deep listening, or rumble skills. Specific behaviors that increase self-differentiation might be reflecting on one's own reactivity or stuck-ness, naming one's own particular embodiment to lessen defensiveness against others, or becoming curious about difficult situations rather than allowing oneself to be overwhelmed by everyone else's emotional reactivity.[1] Other self-differentiated behaviors might be taking a learning stance rather than a knowing stance, practicing daily gratitude, or being clear about what you need and what you can offer.[2] The BRAVING Inventory[3] from Brené Brown's work also contains specific behaviors that may be helpful for a leadership team or faith community to embrace as the cultural shift is being contemplated.

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[1] Friedman, Edwin, *A Failure of Nerve*, p. 231.
[2] Brown, Brené, *Dare to Lead*, pp. 76-77 and EiL Session 6, pp. 8-9.
[3] EiL Session 12, pp. 4-5.

2. Implementing Recovery Behaviors:

Learning and practicing new behaviors takes time and works better with the support of a community. People will make mistakes and default to former ways, especially when anxiety increases. Before you implement the new behaviors, make a plan for how you will encourage each other when people get off track. People will always get off track, so it is necessary to identify ways to get back on track when this happens. Think about building resiliency on three levels: personal, social, and structural.

On the **personal level**, people need to attend to their own resistance. Practice becoming more self-aware and using skills of self-regulation. Think about how you express your emotions, both positive and negative. Do you share your thoughts and feelings with others in constructive ways? Are you able to think for yourself and not just go along with what others in the group think? It may involve being aware of your vulnerability shields and practicing resiliency. It may mean being aware of how you get hooked and climb the ladder of inference, jumping to assumptions and noble certitudes.

On the **social level**, implementation will involve calling one another back to the desired change: holding one another accountable, collapsing un-healthy triangles, challenging the shadow sides of polarities, engaging in rumbles and tough conversations, naming default behaviors, and setting appropriate boundaries.

On the **structural level**, implementing change might mean dealing with policies or practices which impede the desired change. During the pandemic, those in faith communities had to drill down to uncover the essentials of worship and sacraments. People had to ask the 'why' questions that kept communities faithful to tradition even as changes needed to be made. Another example of an assumed structure that has always been used is Robert's Rules of Order in decision making. Many congregational constitutions state that Robert's Rules ought to be used for official meetings. Yet, in many situations, Robert's Rules may get in the way of really listening and hearing one another. A more receptive stance might be consensus decision making.

3. Inspiring Change Through Experience:

The best persuasion for change is the lived experience. We can preach and teach really good theology, but personal experience of grace, love, salvation, healing, hope, peace, and joy truly bring transforming change. Helping people to name their lived experience of acceptance, forgiveness, and belonging allows them to imagine God's reign in life changing ways. Finding ways for people to experience the change—small group community building, immersion experiences that get people out of their heads and into relationship, retreats where people encounter the Holy, sharing our stories, studying the Word of God, vicarious experiences such as movies, plays and liturgies—make a profound difference in our thinking and being. We must learn to move beyond just talking/telling and toward experiential learning. We need to ask

ourselves, 'how might I embody this reality,' instead of just standing in front telling people which way they should go.

A Strategic Plan for Influencing

When strategically thinking about making a difference in community, two underlying components ought to be considered: ability and motivation. Do individuals (including yourself) and the community as a whole have the ability or capacity to accomplish the desired changes? Will the changes make the desired difference? Is there enough or the right motivation to bring about the change?

The following outline will help you think through a possible plan for influencing your community in ways that will make a positive difference:

Personal Motivation:

1. Does the proposed change align with your personal core values?
2. Can you think of ways to make the change playful and fun?
3. Does the change need to be reframed in desirable ways?

Personal Ability:

1. Spend time reflecting on your personal ability.
2. Can you accomplish what is being proposed?
3. If you currently do not have the capacity, can you stretch yourself past what you think you can accomplish?

Social Motivation:

1. Engage in community discourse to discuss changes linking to community values, goals, and vocation.
2. Enlist support from respected leaders.
3. Leverage the human desire to be accepted, respected, and connected.
4. Create a village in which everyone has a part and desire to look out for the common good—BETTER TOGETHER!

Social Ability:

1. Find strength in numbers. Having a critical mass working toward the same goal will help move the community toward success.
2. Work as a team, invent as a team, risk as a team.
3. Give one another feedback to avoid blind spots.
4. Do NOT tolerate debilitating behavior.

Structural Motivation:

1. Design and expect accountability.
2. Recognize people who are enacting and embodying the change.
3. Maintain appropriate boundaries around people who are impeding change. Remind them of community goals and how the change will benefit and be a blessing to the community.

Structural Ability:

1. Set the emotional and physical environment for the desired change. Consider the space, ways of communicating and decision making, networks, use of social media, etc.
2. Mind the data stream. Observe, observe, observe. Listen, listen, listen.
3. Keep the work at the center of people's attention.
4. Make the invisible visible. Use posters, liturgy, website, worship space, fellowship space, meeting space, etc. to highlight the changes.

The order of personal, social, and then structural is important in influencing the change. The first level is intrinsic satisfaction. We want to begin with everyone having an internal commitment and ownership of the change. The second level is the social support, utilizing the human desire to belong. And last comes the level of external rewards. Although it is tempting, do NOT start with rewards; rewards come after intrinsic satisfaction and social support.

The Invitation to Go Deeper

Throughout this course we have used Otto Scharmer's model of Theory U. We begin this journey of the U by listening and observing, continually going deeper, and understanding our connection to the world around us, all the while connecting to God, humanity, and creation. The deeper space at the bottom of the U calls for a different quality of relationship and thought to open us to God's new possibilities and ways of being. Holding sacred space in the community invites transformation, co-creating, and co-evolving with God and one another.

Co-initiating

Co-sensing

Co-inspiring

Co-creating

Co-evolving
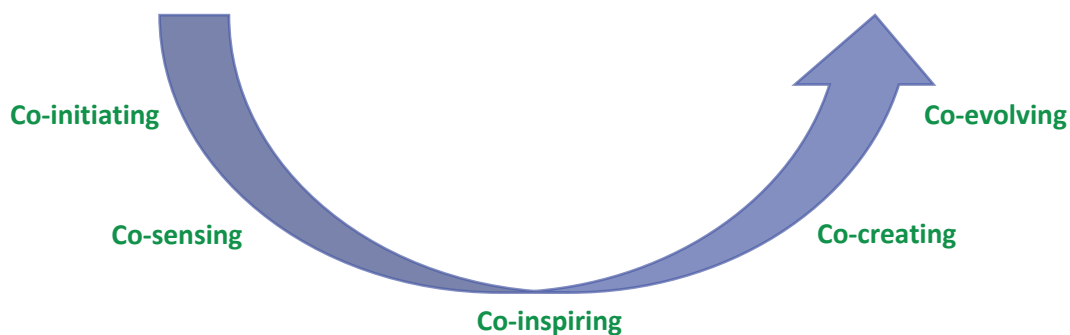
1. **Co-initiating:** The first step is to assess and cultivate the need for change. If a group is complacent, it may require raising awareness and anxiety so that there is motivation to change and move into the "productive zone" to meet the challenge before them. Finding ways to meeting a challenge may include gathering data to observe more clearly, immersing the group in a different perspective, or helping the team understand the problem at hand.

2. **Co-sensing:** The next step moves the community to open minds, seeing their world from a broader perspective, beyond their own purview. The process enables group members to see how they are a part, a contributor to the situation in which they find themselves. Co-sensing requires bending the beam of observation to more accurately see the self individually and collectively.[4] Conversation in this co-sensing space involves becoming more vulnerable to see and embrace our shadow side so that we may respond intentionally and consciously. Co-sensing calls for open hearts in relationship to one another and beyond the group.[5]

    Dr. Linda Hill, professor and innovator from Harvard, in her book *Collective Genius: The Art and Practice of Leading Innovation*, calls this space "creative abrasion." It is a place of debate and dialogue. We need to challenge ourselves to increase our capacity for heated and constructive conversation. Nice, polite conversation will not get us to places of transformation; neither will angry, over and against other monologues. For this kind of conversation to happen, people need to feel safe, heard, honored, and trusted, knowing that their viewpoints are valued. Brené Brown's research offers insights into braving trust, rumble skills, and daring leadership (as opposed to armored leadership), all of which help us become courageous, resilient, and faithful leaders.

3. **Co-inspiring:** The third step is created through "deep reflection practices and intentional moments of stillness that help people connect to deeper sources of knowing."[6] Spiritual practices of silence, meditation, centering prayer, breathing, Biblical study, and journaling can be cultivated for this space. Giving people space to rest with possibilities, options, and discerning God's direction inspire us beyond our own imagining. In this space we watch for signs of the Holy Spirit such as peace, joy, life-giving energy, and wholeness.

> *"The mystical gaze…happens…by some wondrous 'coincidence', our heart space, our mind space, and our body awareness are all simultaneously open and nonresistant. I like to call it presence."*
> Naked Now *(p. 28) by Richard Rohr*

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[4] Lenses and tools that help us observe are the iceberg model, genogram, force field analysis, critical mass theory, trust development theory, the renewal/apostolate model, our embodied perspective, conflict management, polarity management, and others.
[5] Many of the vulnerability and differentiation tools can help open our hearts: vulnerability shields, daring leadership, empathy, rumble skills, self-differentiation, core values, and Braving Trust.
[6] Scharmer and Kaufer, *Leading from the Emerging Future*, p.115.

4. **Co-creating:** Moving out of inspiration we step into this generative step. Playfulness, experimentation, and prototyping define this space. Here we give one another permission and resources to develop new behaviors, programs, and ideas. Linda Hill calls this space "creative agility." Building on one another's ideas, the community discovers, re-invents, learns, and creates in new and life affirming ways. A co-creating framework can: a) clarify the community's objectives and understand the 'why' behind addressing the situation; b) commit each member of the community to the purpose; c) relax and allow the flow through the community; and d) follow the spark.

5. **Co-evolving:** In this space, communities begin to enact and embody the change. The community begins to live into the new reality. For example, during the coronavirus pandemic, people adapted to the new reality in social behaviors, business models, and thinking beyond themselves. This co-evolving space is a time of "creative resolution" to combine and reconfigure to something new and useful, consistent with God's reign on earth.

Cultivating Co-inspiring Space

For a community to remain in a discerning posture of participating in God's emerging future, these holding spaces need to be cultivated continuously. Even though we have presented this material as a linear process, it is actually a dance between all these spaces. A group may be *co-evolving* and need to do more listening and *co-sensing* as well as listening deeper to God in the *co-inspiring* space before continuing to develop and *co-create* the change. The discernment stance of the *co-inspiring* space is foundational to the whole process and needs to be cultivated throughout.

This idea of a co-inspiring dance is grounded in the model of the Trinity. in her book *Radical Optimism*, the Christian philosopher Beatrice Bruteau talks about the model of the Trinity being simultaneously process, unitive love, and highly personalized existential differentiation. The persons of the Trinity are differentiated beings of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and continuously giving themselves to one another in unitive love, while listening and creating, redeeming and challenging, in a process of bringing God's reign to earth as it is in heaven.

This co-inspiring way of being requires vulnerability, self-awareness, self-differentiation, an awareness of the whole system, and spiritual receptivity. It takes intentionality to set the environment for deep listening every time the group meets. It takes agility and permission to move between all the movements in the U as the community follows God's call. It takes a safe container of braving trust to be able to have those abrasive creative conversations or rumbles where all voices are heard and valued. It takes courageous, resilient, and faithful people to participate in God's emerging future.

A Process of Transformative Change

To apply what you have learned, the Excellence in Leadership Team invites you to implement a process of transformational change in your faith community/ministry or in your professional or personal life. The process needs to be something which will move you as a person and leader, and/or your community or ministry area to a healthier state, a deeper place spiritually, a more adaptive stance, or into the transformative spaces of the U. The process needs to be something which can be implemented over the next year. It might be something you are already working on and want to perhaps do with more intentionality, utilizing some of what you have learned. You may wish to begin by thinking about the Theory U process and where your ministry/community is functioning on the U trajectory. Consider the steps of co-initiating, co-sensing, co-inspiring, co-creating, and co-evolving. What is the next step in the development for your ministry/community?

The Process Development Worksheet will help you think through what the process might look like. Work with your faith community team members or a small group of other individuals to develop and implement this process for your faith community, your own personal development, or your workplace.

Process Development Worksheet

Process Goal: (Something which will address your growing edge as a leader or the growing edge of your faith community to better participate in God's Reign—free to adapt, emerge into God's new future, engage the world around you, and be transformed. This can be something you are already doing or it can be something new.)

Co-initiating (observing the faith community system)

- What tools, models, or frameworks will you use to observe your system and how will you use them?

- How will you get other people to be involved and initiate this process?

Co-sensing

- What skills are needed to open the minds and hearts of your faith community? To re-direct attention to God's purpose and way of being? To deal with the voices of judgment, cynicism, and fear?

- How will you and your group listen beyond the faith community?

Co-inspiring

- How will you set the environment to create space for connecting to God?

Co-creating

- What impulse of change is emerging and how might you develop it? How might you use the Influencer Model to motivate change?

Co-evolving

- What needs to be honed or re-worked to better embody and "re-freeze" the change?

Self-Assessment for Leadership Growth

This tool is to help you reflect on your growth throughout the course. It is for your personal use.

Emotional Intelligence

- Take the EQ 2.0 inventory online again and compare it with your results from the beginning of the course. Observations?

- In what ways am I more self-aware?

- How have I grown in self-control?

- What models and tools have been helpful for me to improve my community awareness?

- What has been helpful in managing my community relationships?

Family Systems

- In what ways have I become more self-differentiated?

- What are some insights I have gained about my family of origin that affect me today?

- What has been helpful for me to be able to see my community/family systemically?

- What else has been helpful?

Vulnerability

- What are the greatest insights/skills (vulnerability myths and shields, empathy skills, rumble skills, Braving Trust, etc.) I am taking with me from Brené Brown's work?

- How has my leadership changed because of this work?

- As I apply these skills, how have my relationships been affected?

- What else has been useful or do I want more of?

Adaptive Leadership

- How has my leadership been affected as I transition from technical solutions to adaptive thinking?

- How have I become more adaptive? How has my community become more adaptive?

- What skills/models/processes (Critical Mass, Trust Development, Force Field, Political Landscape, DNA questions, etc.) have been most useful in understanding and managing change in my community?

- What else do I need to work on and/or need more information or training in?

Theory U

- What has been most useful in learning about Theory U to implement deep change?

- How have I employed Theory U in my community or personal life?

- What is most challenging about engaging in a Theory U process?

- What more would I like to learn about employing Theory U in a group?

Spiritual Practices

- What spiritual practices have been helpful?

- Which ones have deepened your leadership?

- Which ones have impacted your community?

- What else might be included in the course to be helpful?

References for this Session

- Grenny, Joseph and Kerry Patterson, David Maxfield, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, *Influencer*, McGraw-Hill, 2008.
- Hill, Linda, TED Talk, www.ted.com/speakers/linda_hill
- Scharmer, Otto and Katrin Kaufer, *Leading from the Emerging Future*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2013.