

*July 3, 2020*

## **A Genius with a Thousand Helpers**

One model of leadership in both secular and religious organizations has been labeled the “Lone Ranger.” For many years, this seemed to work: one singular leader who would tell others what to do and how to do it. This was the case at Plymouth for many years. While the leader is not truly working alone, they can be seen as the “genius with a thousand helpers.” Organizational consultants argue that this model is unable to sustain excellence, effectiveness or equity. The model is limited by the Lone Ranger’s abilities and need to control, and these cut short the creativity of others, often leaving everyone exhausted.

Moving toward a more collaborative model where the lead person is more of a catalyst who supports the work of others and keeps everyone aligned to the mission and purpose of the organization is more sustainable. From the scriptures, we have a great metaphor for this kind of model. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the body is made up of many parts; all are needed but none of which by itself is the whole. No one has all the gifts and skills, including the leader. Paul’s argument strengthens the conviction that the leader must not see themselves as the whole with subordinate helpers or a genius with a thousand helpers but a part of the greater whole in service to God.

This collaborative model is the way Plymouth clergy have been functioning for the past three years. It’s not that there is no one in charge, but rather everyone has opportunity to bring their voice to the table and to decision-making. We have individual responsibilities but no longer work from individual silos, and we work together to carry out the purposes of the church. From my perspective it has created a more creative and happy work environment. The Search Committee is looking for a leader who will continue this collaborative style. It’s an exciting time for the church!

Blessings,

*Paula*